

Unbelievable

I have accomplished a lot with what I was given. God's honest truth. Maybe mine isn't such a great power as powers go. Still, I've tried to wield it with great responsibility. Isn't that what they say about people like myself these days? The bar seems awfully high. Since receiving my power, even the most critical of observers would have to admit that I have used it to accomplish a lot of good for a lot of people.

I have worked to reform prisoners and facilitate their return to society. I've healed relationships, or where necessary, helped people ease out of them. I've lifted indigent people out of poverty, and brought justice to those who forced them there. Gotten kids out of gangs and off of drugs, diverted attention and funding to struggling artists, lobbied for humanitarian causes, distributed healthy food options to children in inner city schools.

Am I a saint? No. Far from it. Have I done anything on a grand scale, like brokering peace in the Middle East? That's a tall order. I'm only making the case that since I discovered the extraordinary thing I could do, it has been my mission to make sure that much happiness and joy comes of it.

Now try not to lose sight of that as I enter my retirement phase. Is that the right term for it? I'm old enough to need a break, so perhaps retirement won't take. Nevertheless, for now, for a man who isn't much of a long-term planner, that is the plan. Take some time off and for a change, use my power to relax and unwind.

What's my power? That's a great question. It isn't anything flashy. You won't see guys like me lighting up the silver screen. Superman, I am not. You see, all I can do is...

You know? It's probably easier to show than tell you. Allow me to provide a small example.

"Excuse me, Professor Connelly?" asked a young woman entering the lecture hall.

I smiled indulgently. "Sorry, no. My name is Ed. Short for Edgar, not Edward. I'm a student, same as you."

"Oh wow, sorry! It's just you're so, um... Nontraditional?"

A graceful save on short notice, I had to credit her. I, of all people, knew the importance of choosing one's words carefully. "Nontraditional? Last I heard they were calling it 'old.'" I laughed. She laughed. "Though that's just the vibe I give off. Steve Martin effect, you know?"

"Who's Steve Martin? Does he go here? I'm a transfer too."

"Who's...? He's a comedian. His hair turned white really early. Anyway, I'm only twenty-one. I'm a senior, newly transferred to Lakeview."

I am forty-six years old. My hairline has held, mercifully, but the gray and white can't be helped. I could dye it, but why? There's nobody who could see me from within

fifty paces who'd believe I was a day under forty. A roll of the eyes, a laugh to humor me, a sneer at a weird thing to say... These would all be reasonable responses to my claim.

"Oh, wow! Don't I feel dumb. I'm a transfer myself. Where'd you transfer from?" was what the young woman said instead.

I could have said anything. Yale. Oxford. The University of American Samoa. Homeschool in my mother's den. Whatever I said, she'd have believed it. That, you see, is the power.

It's taken some getting used to, the Midas touch in my vocal cords. Before I buckled down and took my circumstance seriously, I'm sure I caused quite a little bit of mayhem. Imagine, if you will, the first time I was playing a video game with a buddy and announced, "I am so going to kill you!" Luckily for me he erred on the flight end of the fight or flight spectrum. Or the time my bus was stuck in traffic and I groaned that I was so bored I could die. One kind stranger made it his mission to entertain me for the rest of the ride, though his tactic was mostly to inquire after my strange medical condition that could render tedium fatal.

However it may sound, rest assured that it's not all-powerful. It comes with a lot of limitations, in fact. Some of them I was grateful for. Idioms and figures of speech, for instance, aren't taken literally. I can still say "it's raining cats and dogs" without people losing their minds. Or take paradoxes. I worried for some time that I could melt someone's brain by uttering conflicting statements. Eventually I slipped up, told a man I was born in Winnipeg when I met them, then months later that I was born in Atlanta. After a moment, he fainted dead away. No permanent damage, thankfully, but it was a factor of which I've learned to be mindful. I'm grateful that it keeps me honest, if you'll pardon a pun.

Other limitations I'm less grateful for, though I've learned to work with them. Scope, for one. One on one, small groups? No problem. Put me in front of a packed crowd, however, and it drains me like I was running wind sprints. Before I knew the risks, I made the mistake of trying to amuse myself with an entire concert hall and I landed in the hospital for weeks, teetering on the brink of death. It's a rather annoying limitation for a power with no off switch other than silence.

That wasn't the only restriction. Technology interacted with it in some weird ways. The power didn't work over the phone, or via recordings. Amplify my voice with a microphone, though, it still mostly worked. (Not that I often reached for one, considering the crowd size problem.) Sign language, too – that was even weirder. Whether people heard me or saw me, the power was the power.

Not that it was flawless, even then. There are some extremes that people simply won't swallow. Telling someone it's midnight at noon, for instance. Trying to implant memories doesn't work, either, like if I told someone I was their friend from high school,

or that they spoke fluent Spanish. Individual reactions vary, but they range from the afore-mentioned shrug to, in one case, a seizure. I've had to learn to keep it real.

That said, it still allowed broad room for meddling, to which this woman's casual acceptance of my halving my age was a testament.

"Oh, nowhere interesting. Not as cool as here, for sure," I replied. Vagueness was good. Not only was my intention to lay low, but it was always easier to add details later when you omitted them in the first place.

"Well welcome, Ed. Ed, right? I'm Stephanie Margulies. Oh! Excuse me, I'm pretty sure that's actually Professor Connelly. But I'll see you around, yeah?"

I'd already decided that she would, but as I watched her walk away, I redoubled that sentiment. Stephanie was a pretty one. The degree of it wasn't easy to assess in a brief meeting, and in those baggy clothes, but there was definite potential. Is it unseemly, to inspect a young woman in that way on first meeting her? Then perhaps I am unseemly. You see, as I said, I have decided to retire. Where better to enjoy myself than lounging around one of America's fine establishments of higher education? Learning, limited responsibility, and of course, the night life. It had been a no-brainer.

To be precise: Yes. Yes, I had come here to get laid. Not exclusively, mind you. I'm not so single-minded as that. But like I said, I've put in my time making the world a better place. I'm due.

The class began. It was a big lecture hall, hundreds of seats, more than half of them full. That was why I'd staked this place out for opening day – a perfect place to meet people, to scope out the local fare, and see what courses I might want to audit. Stephanie wasn't the hottest girl in that class, though she was very pretty. Our meet-cute was enough to push her ahead of alternatives. Young – though they were all young – but she had a sweet little heart-shaped face, and I've always been partial to pretty faces.

I put her on the list, and before class was over, I went to work.

It was a month before it bore fruit. I made good use of the interim weeks. I slept with one girl named Krystal, who I met at a frat party and obtained carnal knowledge before we left. I chatted her up in line for the keg, and dropped in the midst of it that I'd enjoyed our first night together, and had been thinking about her a lot since.

"Wait, what? Our... I'm not sure I understand." Krystal frowned, but even frowning looked sexy on her.

Hers was a normal reaction; like I explained, I can't implant memories. I can, however... "Remember? Last semester, that huge party? We were both pretty drunk, and I guess one of your friends took you home before I got to wake up next to you."

"I... We did? Oh my gosh, I didn't remember at all! I feel like such a ho! Oh god. We... shit! Yeah, that must have been right between Devon and Curtis. Devon and I had this really bad breakup, and I kinda went through this phase where I..." She shook her head. "I probably told you all about it that night, huh? God, stop talking about your ex-boyfriends, Krystal!"

"Very OK. I like hearing you talk. I like hearing you lots of things. And you were a very noisy girl that night."

She grinned, flattered. That I was more than twice her age didn't matter to her; by then, I had a reputation as that old-looking junior. "Yeah? I must've liked you, too, 'cause I don't get loud unless I'm having a good time."

"Then let's get loud, shall we?"

And that was that. We drank shitty beer, and then I went upstairs and helped myself to a night in the legacy suite, for visiting former brothers of prestige. Krystal had been right. She wasn't noisy. Perfect tits, though. She wasn't my only conquest, but she was hands down the easiest in those early days. I couldn't change people's emotions, and that ham-fisted drunken hookup line had only worked because she'd had that slut phase between heartbreaks. Numerous other girls had rebuffed that same approach with ease.

Luckily, I had plenty more tricks in my arsenal.

Which takes us back to Stephanie Margulies.

She was sitting alone on the day I finally decided to act. She looked sullen, as she usually seemed to of late, but I was glad to see her smile as I took a seat beside her. We were situated near the back of the lecture hall. She'd sat near the front in the first few me. For a time, there had been no shortage of guys eager to claim a seat beside the sweet-faced sophomore.

"Hey! You're... Ed? Right?" she said, hope thick in her voice.

"Guilty. Stephanie?"

"Guilty!" she giggled. Her voice was scratchy, and she had to clear her throat. I wondered how long it had been since she'd had a conversation with someone.

"Is it all right with you if I sit here?"

“You, um, want to sit by me?” She sounded surprised, but pleasantly.

I arched an eyebrow. “Is there some reason why I shouldn’t?”

“No!” she said, far too insistently. “I mean, no. No, it’s just, um, people... don’t. For some reason. It’s weird.”

“Oh. Well then, if there’s no reason I shouldn’t...” I took the seat next to Stephanie. Though she smiled at me invitingly, anxiety shone through in her eyes.

The lecture began soon. I kept wondering if anybody would say anything, but other than some fretful glances in my direction, they kept mum. It took until the two of us were out of the lecture hall, on our way to grab coffee at Javawocky’s, a little cafe in the student union, before at last some noble soul interceded.

“Hey, buddy, ah, can I talk to you for a sec?” He glanced at Stephanie, who had already read the situation and begun to wilt. “Privately?”

“This isn’t some kind of solicitation thing, is it? She and I were having a nice time.”

“No. Just... trust me. You’ll thank me later.”

Stephanie, eyes wide and desperate, craned her neck into my field of vision. “You know, I should go.”

“What? Nonsense. I’ll be right back. Don’t move an inch, OK? I want to hear more about your old college.” I patted her arm. She looked like she wanted to die, but to her credit, she didn’t run off. A smile diverted her way every few seconds kept her hooked.

“So, what’s this about?”

The young man regarded me with a gaze full of noble empathy, as only a college guy who still thought he might save the world could. “Look, I really hate to intrude, but you need to know. That girl? Stephanie? She’s bad news. Like, *really* bad news.”

I arched an eyebrow. “Oh? She seems harmless enough. Tell me this isn’t some ham-fisted attempt at a cock block.”

“Sort of? But blocking for benevolent purposes, I swear. Hear me out.” He jerked a thumb in Steph’s direction. (She’d invited me to call her Steph.) “That girl? She’s... Well, I guess she’s not a murderer, per se. But she’s the closest thing to it.”

I managed a guffaw of disbelief. “What? Get out of here. She’s a buck twenty soaking wet. She couldn’t hurt me if she tried.”

“No. It’s not like that. See...” He leaned in. “She’s got AIDS.”

“Uh, what now?”

“I’m serious, buddy!”

I shook my head. “Come on. Even if she did, this is the twenty-first century, not 1986. There’s treatments, therapies, and oh yeah, condoms...? Besides, we’re going for coffee, not a quickie. I appreciate what you’re trying to do, sort of, but maybe you should mind your business.”

His impatience built palpably during my lengthy rebuttal. I had to hand it to him, he was committed to the Good Samaritan life. He was probably one of the hundreds who'd heard me planting that rumor directly, instead of the thousands who'd heard the salacious tale secondhand enough times to believe it. "I'm serious. It's not just that. She gave it to three other people since she's been here." His eyes narrowed, directing an icy glare over my shoulder at Stephanie. "*On purpose*. They call her Syndrome Stephe." "

"I don't believe you." Once upon a time, I might have misspoke and gone with a "no way, she would never" and talked him down. This poor noble creature might have passed out right there in the hallway as his brain struggled to square two opposing yet incontrovertible truths. Maybe. They usually just sneezed it off. Still, no sense repaying his kindness with such mischief.

"Everyone's been talking about it. We made a facebook group. You know, to warn people? The whole campus was invited. Except for her, anyway. It's actually pretty cool. Took off – we use it for promoting events and parties and stuff now." He sounded rather proud, but then he remembered the mission and regained his intensity. "But it's a fact, documented, established. Three people, dying slow, because of that evil fucking bitch over there. Three that we even know of. One of them?" He shuddered. "One of them was her *second cousin*. Guess he tried to tell her to reign it in, and she rufied him or something and then she..." He looked like he wanted to throw up. On Steph, maybe.

It *was* established, though not factual. Public opinion could be a powerful weapon, I'd learned. Years past, I had grown frustrated by my inability to address the masses in a single fell swoop, but time and experience taught me that setting a day aside was easier on me and even more effective for my purposes. Grandstanding announcements from charismatic strangers could be juicy, at least if the stranger could turn gossip into gold as I could, but strangers were tautologically strange, which rendered the announcement as story-worthy as the story. That is to say, it distracted. Muddied the waters, you could say.

So instead, I would find someplace public, but not too public, pick up my phone, and sputter out in righteous indignation the news I was just then hearing. "What? Stephanie Margulies? The sophomore transfer? Cute little Latina girl? That's horrible! That's the most horrible, god-awful, morally bankrupt thing I've ever heard!" Add to that my acting panache, and suddenly there were eavesdroppers waiting to hear just what this Stephanie Margulies girl had done. Once the seed was planted then I could relocate and repeat the process for a fresh audience. Half a dozen people on this bench, a few folks at the dog park. I'd actually gotten started in the line at Javawocky's, coincidentally. By the end of the first week of classes, there wasn't a willing ear on campus who hadn't heard about the incestuous plague-infected killer hiding in plain sight among us.

To be fair, I hadn't included the second cousin bit in every telling. It so happened that this fellow had been party to one of the incidents when I'd embellished. Mixing up the lines helped keep the delivery authentic, I'd found. It didn't need to be, but it felt better in my gut.

"Thanks for the heads up. I'll be careful. I think for now... I guess I'm curious enough that maybe I'll look into it close up. Thanks, friend."

The most surprising part of his interaction was the fist-clenching bro hug that sealed our bond. He was a warrior for truth to his core. We introduced ourselves belatedly, and parted ways.

Stephanie had waited for me. She was trembling like a leaf, watching what had seemed her first shot at making a friend at Lakeview butchered in its infancy. Still I smiled. "I can explain!" she blurted.

I stopped her short. "It's OK, Steph. Really."

"No – I didn't do what he told you I did! And don't tell me he didn't tell you. I could see the way he was looking at me. The way they all look at me. You have to believe me! I didn't do it! I didn't!"

Her voice had carried, unfortunately. Unfortunately for her, anyway. "Fuck you, murderer!" yelled someone not far off down the crowded hallway. It was impossible to say who. "Death to Syndrome!" cried another. A lot of people had overheard her denial, and a lot of people regarded the perceived lie with hostility. It was her word against mine and the hundreds of people I'd duped. No contest, tragically.

I seized Stephanie's hand and led her away from the scene quickly. She looked ready to faint; I practically dragged her. I didn't know where I was going, simply moving where it looked sparser, sounded quieter. A stairwell was empty presently, but wouldn't remain so for long, so up the stairs we went until we reached the ladder that went up to the roof. The trap door was padlocked, but that was no barrier to me. It was a simple matter to convince the right people that the newest addition to the maintenance staff needed a full set of keys.

"Um, where are we going? I don't know you very well..." Her voice was still tremulous, but her wits seemed to be recovering from her panic. College girls. Even when everyone around them thought they were a disease-spreading tramp, they still thought someone might try to molest them.

"I won't hurt you. Let's get ourselves a little fresh air, away from those jerks. OK?"

My assurance satisfied her. Naturally. I climbed up first, and once outside reached down to help her up. She really was a delicate little bird. I could have climbed up that ladder with her riding on my back.

"I didn't do it," she repeated, looking around the vacant rooftop like another jeerer might be hiding under a pebble. There was no one up here, just the student

union's prominent flag pole, broken paving bricks, and pebbles strewn about from where they hadn't even bothered with the bricks.

"I know that. You don't think I know that?"

Her soft brown eyes brimmed with tears. They had been lurking there since the Good Samaritan whose name I'd already discarded from memory pulled me aside. Poor dear. "You... you do? You believe me?"

"Of course I believe you. That's the most awful, obviously false rumor I've ever heard in my life. Someone would have to be a complete fool to put any stock in it. I think you seem like a very nice person."

Oh, the wonders of lukewarm compliments on a woman with a shattered sense of self-worth. Before I knew what was happening, the girl was throwing her arms around me, squeezing me almost uncomfortably hard and confirming what I'd said about her physical harmlessness. Steph was sobbing in the next breath, and for some time, we stood in the late morning sun atop the roof of the Lakeview student union holding each other. I patted her back soothingly, but no more. This wasn't that sort of embrace. Not yet. It was pleasant enough, however platonic. A short half wall surrounded the rooftop, but it did nothing to obscure the view. From our vantage point, I could make out the sparkling water of a lake a mile or so off at a lower elevation. Apparently it wasn't just a name after all.

After some time, Stephanie at last released me. Following my example, she sat down on the dusty roof, carefully folding her dress for modesty. "Um, I hope that wasn't too weird. It's just you have no idea what it's been like. For like the first week after I moved into my dorm, things were great. I was meeting people, making friends. I'd joined this knitting circle our RA set up. Then out of nowhere, this... this... this freaking *lie*, this nightmare of a rumor blindsides me! I have no idea where it even came from. I barely talked to any guys here, much less slept with any! I tried asking around back when anyone would still talk to me, but the best I ever got was that some middle-aged guy on a bench was blabbering about it on the phone? How crazy is that!"

There was no suspicion in her eyes, but just to be safe, I interjected, "It wasn't me, rest assured." I put a little humor in my denial, if only for conversational cadence. Tone didn't matter when it came to my power. I could have sucked down a balloon full of helium before replying and she'd still not doubt my sincerity.

She giggled. "What? Ed, you're barely older than I am. Some guys' hair just goes gray early. Or white – like Steve Martin! Remember, you mentioned him when we first met. I asked my dad, and he went on and on. I guess he was a pretty big deal."

"Yes, my dad introduced me to his work years ago. Some comedic genius transcends generational barriers."

She smiled, but it faded fast. "Anyway, it's been... horrible. Horrible isn't even close, but I don't know a better word. I already had to transfer once because out-of-state

tuition and expenses were so, um, expensive. I grew up here in town, went to high school here. I was already going to move back in with my folks after this all started to get away from the whole mess, but my roommate bailed before I could. She left this note when she moved out, she said I was..." Her little snuffle was heart-breaking. For a long moment, she tried to summon the words, but I shook my head to give her permission to let it go. "Anyway, at least now I have somewhere to not have any friends all to myself."

Gingerly, I put an arm around her shoulder. She stiffened a bit, but permitted it. "That sounds awful."

"I can't even tell you. Being hated for something you didn't even do? Something *that* awful! And *gross*! You know some people are saying I, um, slept with my own cousin?"

Second cousin, I corrected her internally. "Ghastly."

"And the nickname. Syndrome Stephie. Everywhere I go, people know me by that name. It's like they sent out a freaking newsletter or something, warning everybody."

"Perhaps I should be offended that my name was left off the mailing list."

"I'm glad it was. You're the first person I've talked to in weeks who didn't seem to know. At first I thought it was some weird prank, you know? Like maybe some college improv group was going to jump out from behind a potted plant and go 'you've been AIDS punked, yo!' But nobody ever did. The whole school really thinks I'm a... a slut. And a murderer."

"Not the *whole* school." I patted her shoulder.

Steph smiled up at me, and the gratitude there vindicated my decision not to deploy this more extreme tactic against one of the campus 9's or 10's. My little 8 was going to be delectable.

"Maybe this is forward, and if it is, totally tell me to shut up or whatever, but... Do you, um, want to maybe... go out sometime?" Her lips fidgeted so much they practically twiddled. "With me?"

"Oh. Yeah. See, I don't really... date? It's *not* because of the rumors," I assured her before she could throw herself off the edge of the building. "It's only that I know me, and I'm just... not built for dating, if that makes sense."

There was a chance that Stephanie would take that moment to offer herself to me on the spot, convert the date rejection into a more direct negotiation of grander intent. Not odds on which I'd have placed a bet, but a slim chance. Steph was pretty enough that male attention was a given, and the tub of ice water recently stuffed down the panties of her social life might have made the girl desperate. A quick fuck, just to assure herself she was still desirable, that the rest of it was a fluke.

She did not, however. For her sake, I wish she had. An artless fuck with a total stranger in the open air might have preserved more of her dignity than what followed. "Oh. Um, that's honest, at least. That was a dumb idea anyway. I mean, you seem like

such a nice guy. I wouldn't want everybody to turn on you because you were with me. Or to think..."

She trailed off, but it was clear she was afraid people would think I was victim number four. If she knew how well-liked I was around campus – I might have spread some rumors about my various feats of minor heroism, omitting my name so listeners wouldn't even realize I'd been touting my own legends – she would have been more frightened still. The man who'd funded a rescue center for displaced polar bears (Lakeview's mascot) could never be permitted to sully himself by catching the HIV from Syndrome Stephanie.

"Hey." She didn't look up. "*Hey.*" She looked up. "Don't talk like that. You are beautiful, and sweet, and smart." She'd gotten into at least two colleges anyway, though my own limited interactions had not in fact suggested that she was especially bright. "Now let's talk about something other than these stupid lies. Let's talk about something that makes you happy, and enjoy the morning. OK?"

She fought down tears. Right as the sun peaked out from behind a cloud, her smile dared to return. "OK, Eddie."

Steph and I hung out after every class meeting for several weeks after that. At my insistence, I continued to sit beside her. When anyone confided in me their concerns about this nefarious affiliation, my explanation that I was investigating whether she might have infected anyone else satisfied them, and further bolstered my burgeoning humanitarian notoriety. An excellent secondary benefit to my circuitous route to Steph's pussy. Truth combined with street cred was a winning combination.

At Steph's insistence, we left the classroom separately. She said, and probably meant, that she didn't want people to think less of me, though it was obvious she was also terrified of having to endure another incident like that first day with the Good Samaritan. We found private places to affiliate. The student union roof, the chapel, various classrooms vacant at the time of our rendezvous.

I'll be honest: it was kind of annoying. It's not that her company was abhorrent, but neither was it especially engaging. She was an emotional wreck, after all, and tended to fixate on her misery.

We did make some progress, at least. The two of us exchanged confidences. She told me about her overbearing father; I told her some colorful lies about my travels abroad. I told her about how my last three relationships had ended bitterly because I couldn't keep it in my pants; she told me about how close she'd come to killing herself before I came along and befriended her. An awkward girl, that Stephanie Margulies.

Neither of us liked to hear the other talk about such things. Steph was no Puritan, though. She was vague about the particulars, but did share that she'd had quite a lot of sex in high school, though these days preferred to take things slow. The last thing I desired was to have her attempt to suck me into some sort of romantic entanglement to fill the hole I'd punctured in her life, so I made sure to be as up front as I could be about my sexual proclivities. I was a man with a nigh insatiable libido – though I promised her that I was so moved by her plight that I wouldn't make a move on her. I framed it as having too much respect for her to make her a target of my lustful shenanigans, and she took it as a compliment, somehow.

That she had grown up here in town seemed to pose a threat to my tactics, but fortune favored me. Despite being a local girl, she claimed that her friends from high school were "off the table" with a vagueness that I could have envied, had I not pitied her so. None of this would work without her ostracization.

It was a waiting pattern. I could always walk away from it, I knew. (And don't fret; if it came to that, I would restore her reputation and grant her due restitution. You have my word.) Still, this sort of project always worked better when I waited for my quarry to come to me. Which meant waiting for the day when Steph broached the topic I'd been so eager for her to pursue.

"So, um, sounds like you're making the rounds, huh?" This close I could see the hair on her neck standing up, though it could have simply been the chill. It was October

by then, midterms looming. (Not a source of stress for me; I simply didn't take them. It helped prevent any wrong answers permanently implanting false information in the minds of the professoriate.)

I winced. "Uh, oh. What'd you hear?"

"Hey now, you don't get to be shy about your rumors, Eddie." She nudged me playfully with an elbow. Steph was not one for touching, and aside from that first morning when she'd broken down on me, I never initiated so much as a handshake. I wanted her to think I saw her completely platonically, a dutiful friend and reliable confidante. The elbow was our most intimate contact since the week before last when she'd offered a sympathetic squeeze on the shoulder after I told her I was hungover from the previous night's revelries. That was actually true, though I neglected to explain that those revelries had entailed a rare threesome with a pair of vindictive roommates who each thought they were engaged in stealing the others' new boyfriend.

"I can't be accountable for the rumor mill. Seriously, what'd you hear?" Moreover, who had she heard it from? The isolation tactic I was employing should be very effective at centering me in Steph's mind, but it did make leaking information to her considerably more difficult.

"Oh come on. Bryleigh Dalton? She wrote it on your wall. It wasn't subtle."

"On my...?" Oh, right. The facebook. Kids these days and their social media jargon. I'd set up a few accounts when I arrived here as alternate avenues for communication, but I seldom checked them unless it pertained to one of my plans. "I've been unplugged for the past couple days, studying," I lied. "What did she say?"

Steph pulled out her phone and showed me. We weren't friends – her idea, since she feared being her only contact from Lakeview could make life awkward for me – but apparently whatever passed for privacy settings let any old AIDS murderer off the street see what I was up to.

You forgot your medal in my car, Captain lol ;) I'm holding it hostage until you call me. You better not of lost dat number!

"Captain...?" Steph probed, bemused.

Bryleigh Dalton was in my chemistry class, and my lab. I hadn't needed to do much research to find out she grew up an army brat and had quite the rigid lady boner for military men. During Friday's class, I'd let slip within her earshot that I'd done a tour overseas, but that my work was the sort of thing Uncle Sam preferred I keep to myself, and not good fodder for polite conversation. She'd all but accosted me after class, hunger written in her eyes, at which point I "reluctantly" filled her in on the salacious details of my traumatizing and patriotic heroism. The allure of being in on a secret, plus her own kink for men in uniform, were all that had been required. She had been an excellent lay, probably my best thus far at Lakeview. There were still hundreds of worthy cunts to compete with her, though, including Steph's.

“It’s a long story,” I told her.

“Oh, that’s too bad, because I have all those other friends I need to run off and hang out with,” she said dryly. “C’mon. Medal? Were you in the service? That doesn’t make sense, though. If you’re twenty-one and a junior, hard to imagine you had time to join the army.”

Astute. “Army? Oh god, no. No, we both play volleyball in the intramural league. We got to talking after a game – her gals clobbered us – and she thought it was funny to tease me when I made the mistake of putting on airs, calling myself team captain.” Not astute enough, though.

“They give out medals for intramural volleyball?”

“We are the participation trophy generation, are we not?” I was a Gen X-er, in point of fact. As was presently bearing out, we were the looking out for number one generation, and proud of it.

Steph nodded acceptingly. “Ah, gotcha. That makes sense. Sounds like she’s trying to stake you out pretty hard, putting that out where everybody can see it. Think you got a shot with her?”

“You assume I even want a shot with her.”

Steph rolled her eyes. “Come on. Certain classified activities aside, I’m barely left of pure hetero and I almost want a shot with her. Pussy hound like you, I’m surprised you didn’t already nail her.”

I allowed for a salient pause. From her, it was dramatic tension. For me, it was pondering those classified activities. (How big of a slut had she been back when?) Then I hit her with it. “How do you think I lost my medal in her back seat, Steph?”

She swallowed down her embarrassment with an audible gulp. “OH. Oh wow. Nice work. Captain Eddie, working the Greek circuit.”

“I do what I can. I’ll have to delete that post before the whole world sees it. She’ll scare away the fish.”

“Freshman? You cad.”

“The heart wants what it wants.” That cliché, in fact, summarized my entire purpose for enrolling at Lakeview University. As for her quip about fish, I had so far been with only two freshmen. The first had been on the first day of classes, employing the same misapprehension from which Steph had initially suffered to make her believe I was her professor, and quietly whispered that I’d give her an A for the semester if she sucked me off. Daddy issues or simple laziness, it had worked, sparing me the “you misheard what I said” walkback that sometimes kept me from getting slapped upside the head when I grew too brazen. The other girl, to her credit, had required a little elbow grease to drop those barely legal yet certainly unethical panties.

“You have some serious game, my friend,” Steph said, lying back on the blanket we’d deposited here to render our clandestine rendezvous more cleanly and cozy. “Not

many guys who'd have the sexy blonde DAT girl chasing them down and actually consider it a problem."

"I'm not most guys."

She looked up at me with just a ghost of innuendo in her eyes. "No, you aren't."

"Don't go falling in love with me now," I chided.

But she was going to a serious place, and I read the room, wiping the grin from my face to give her room to operate. Steph cleared her throat. "So, have you ever thought about... that, um, with... me? You know, not as something you'd do, necessarily, but just... thought about it."

I curled up beside her, head propped up on my palm. I kept my distance, though perhaps an inch or three less than I normally might have. "Of course I have. You're gorgeous, Steph. But you're not one of those disposable flavor of the week kinds of girls, and I respect you too much to treat you like you are. Let's be real; you have enough drama going on without this flavor of the week kind of guy."

"At least you own it," she said, but the grin lasted a moment, then vanished. "But you know, I don't think you're a superficial guy, Eddie. You like sex, yes, and sure, you're kind of a man-ho, but not like you're unusual for a college boy."

"You know me so well."

"But I see the way people react to you. People trust you. They like you. They respect you."

"Maybe not *that* well."

"I'm being serious. You don't talk much, but when you do, people perk up. And you're actually really well-spoken, too. Like you're choosing every word for a good reason. I like listening to you talk."

"Now you're just buttering me up."

"Um, kind of. No, I was... Look, I'm going to say something, and I just need you to listen, all right? I've been thinking about this for a while, and it's something I have to do."

I locked my lips shut. As a wise man once said, never interrupt your opponent when they're making a mistake.

"I like you. I'm attracted to you. You just said you're attracted to me. And I was thinking, maybe, that could be... fun." She paused, and for a moment I thought that might be all there was to it. An offer I would have gladly accepted, but it would have been less than I'd hoped for. Fucking Steph was the primary goal, but I'd put in orders of magnitude more effort into her. It would be a shame if that was all that came of it.

To my delight, she went on.

"More than that... Um..." She took a few deep breaths. I didn't dare say or do anything to reassure her. Her anxiety was the catalyst fueling this escalation. "I was even

thinking maybe we could, you know... Let people... find out? So when people see that we did it, and you're fine, they'd be able to see that *I* was fine, too."

I realize that the response I was about to give was unkind, to say the least. Still, she had cracked open the door, and I hadn't spent months of labor to not bust it all the way open.

I sat up. "Stephanie... Did you only befriend me so you could... use me? Trade on my reputation to solve your problems?"

She rose to look me in the eyes in a flash, seizing my hands and squeezing them pleadingly. "Oh my god, no! I would *never*. You have to believe me, Eddie, that's the last thing I would ever do. You were nice to me when literally nobody else would even talk to me. Except to tell me to throw myself in front of a bus. Please tell me you don't really think that. I couldn't live with myself if my only friend here thought I was some no good moocher."

I locked eyes with her, appraising, though I already knew her exact quality. "I believe you," I said once it looked like she might cry if I didn't say something. "Forgive me. I should have known better than to say that. Of course you wouldn't."

In a just universe, that's when she would have slugged me, at minimum. Throwing me off the roof might have been more appropriate. Instead, I was rewarded with another of those tiny spine-cracking hugs of hers. She didn't let go until I did.

"I probably should have rehearsed my sales pitch better instead of just blurting it out like that, huh," she chuckled, sniffing down tears. "I'm sorry. Forget I said anything, OK? Let's just go back to how things were, and you can tell me about all the crazy sex you're doing with random sorority chicks, and I'll tell you about all the crazy Apple TV I'm binging alone in my dorm room."

I patted her knee. There it was, the barest suggestion of intimate contact, from me this time. Having her ask for it first was important. Touching her now meant giving her what she'd come to realize she wanted rather than giving me what she presumed I wanted. Touching her now was a favor from a close and trusted friend.

"Look. We're smart, you and I. Maybe you're onto something. And I'm not just saying that because you're the hottest girl I know."

"Oh, stop. I've met some of the girls you've 'known.'" The compliment landed, though. She might have been coy in her retort, but nevertheless she believed I believed as much.

"All right, there's some competition, but I'm allowed to play favorites with the really special girls, aren't I? But as I'm thinking about this, us," I said slowly, conveying that this was the first time I'd considered it, "there's a problem with it. People have seen us together. Yes, we hang out in private, but they still know we're friends."

"I'm pretty sure they think you're investigating me to find out where I bury the bodies. Even if not, they still like you."

“I have had people ask me if I’m working with the campus police,” I said grimly. “I always tell them to fuck off. That lie was probably spread by the same jackass who started the rumor about you.”

“Ugh, yeah. If I ever find that sonofabitch...”

“You’ll have to get in line behind me.” I scowled at her unseen malefactor.

“Anyway, say we did do it, and say I did go out and reassure the masses. There’s still too many wrong assumptions people can and would make.”

She sidled up closer. Our legs were sandwiched together like the teeth of a zipper. I could feel her crotch against my knee. “But why, Eddie? Why wouldn’t people believe it? I’d believe it, if you told me.”

“Would you?” Of course she would. Sometimes I had a hard time not rolling my eyes at my own hubris. “Imagine the kind of slack-jawed idiot who believes this damnable lie to begin with. If they think we’re friends, then they’ll think I’m just bailing out a friend. If they think I’m a secret agent or whatever, then they’ll conclude I couldn’t dig up any dirt. Oh man, or that I’m victim number five—”

“There’s only three now. You’d be four.”

“Oh. You haven’t heard.” I grimaced. “Anyway, all that is to say nothing of what people might think of the value of a man’s word after he just bragged to the world that he slept with a woman. ‘Yo dudes, I totally banged Steph, it was awesome, and also she’s a great person and doesn’t have AIDS.’ If anyone would even believe we did it in the first place.”

“Oh my god, you’re right,” Steph said with a groan. Anxious as she’d grown, it had become all too easy to play on those fears. Even had I been an ordinary man, it was entirely plausible her gambit might work as she’d described. But after hearing the world’s most honest man prognosticate its failure, it was easier to trust me than attempt to poke holes in my assessment.

“Hang on, though. What if...” I shook my head. “No. Never mind. Sorry, I don’t always think well in the moment.”

“No, go on. Come on, Eddie, I just invited you to sleep with me and tell the whole campus about it. We’re in brainstorm mode – no bad ideas.”

“No, I was only thinking, if we were really obvious about it? We play the part of the lovey dovey couple, kissy kissy giggly giggly, can’t get enough of each other.”

“Gross!” Steph protested with a giggle.

“Right. So if we were sufficiently shameless about it, we could probably get people to believe we’d ‘done it.’ We could always arrange to get caught, if we absolutely had to. But anyway,” I rushed ahead before she could analyze that idea, “that’s not what threw me. The problem is, how would anyone believe that I, and by extension you, were clean? If there’s one thing I learned in my psychology courses, it’s that people have a

challenging time acknowledging when they were wrong about something. Especially a juicy, albeit terrible, story like this.”

Steph’s chin fell to her pert, lovely chest. I really couldn’t wait to get those tits in my mouth. I fell silent, giving her a moment to retake the pilot’s seat. “OK, hold on. People obviously know that you know about the rumor, right?”

“Assuredly.”

“So it would be reasonable, then, if we did that, for you to get yourself tested. Right? You and I know there’s no need, but couldn’t you just get yourself tested, and the next time some jerk gets in your face about it, you throw the documentation in their face and go all, ‘ha! See! We *don’t* have fucking AIDS!’ and there it is. Right?”

I tapped my chin, considering. “An intriguing concept. But the average Joe doesn’t know the difference between a doctored note that some murderer drafted to dupe her victim, and the real thing. Right? I sure wouldn’t. Would you?”

“Well, no... And I guess the odds of someone confronting you, publicly, so we can really get some mileage out of it, aren’t great.”

“That could be staged if it had to be,” I pointed out, inwardly disappointed she hadn’t considered that herself. Maybe months of being shunned had made her forget about basic tactics like using a friend as a plant, or else she had lived a sufficiently honest life that she never had. “Still, if it were as easy as getting a blood test and showing it to people, you’d have done that months ago.”

Her eyes widened. “Oh shit, I never actually thought of...”

“So let’s start thinking about it, yeah? You can do this, Steph. And I’ll do it with you.”

“You’ll... do it with me?”

We had a laugh. Then I let her craft the plan I’d lain out for her the day we met.

“Is... is that Stephanie Margulies...?” Someone asked as they entered the lecture hall.

The two of us were situated in the corner. Conspicuously so, in the furthest two seats from the entrance, where the overhead bulb had burned out and not yet been replaced. We were the seating equivalent of wearing a tip-toeing about in a ski mask; that we were so withdrawn from the public eye only invited scrutiny. I knew this; Stephanie was learning it. The acoustics of the room were top notch, however, and so person after person expressed their individual blend of incredulity, disgust, concern, and simple curiosity. For me, this was nothing novel. I'd had so much sex this past eight weeks that the presence of a scantily clad college girl on my lap was nothing to be fazed by.

As for Steph? She was taking it better than I'd anticipated.

“Yep, Syndrome Stephe, all right. In the so much flesh,” said a woman's voice, thick with scorn.

It was fairly standard slut-shaming, really. Per “her” plan, Steph had donned an outfit that was less than seasonal, one might say. She looked like she was on her way either to the gym, or to bed. A skimpy white tank top (no bra beneath it, dark nipples visible through the sheer white cotton fabric), then a strip of lean, flat, tawny skin, then a pair of shorts that... Well, she claimed she had worn them a lot in high school, but they would surely trample any high school dress code I'd ever heard of. Doubtless she'd attended one of those progressive institutions that lacked one, and taken advantage during an early onset skank phase. I was grateful for it.

That alone might have turned a few heads, particularly on a young woman as lovely as Stephanie, but the fact that she was seated on my lap, the two of us carrying on a conversation from a distance of not two inches between our lips, cemented the impression. It was cunning of her, really. She didn't look like she was trying hard to attract attention. No, she looked like she'd climbed out of bed and grabbed the first hot thing her fingers touched in her drawers. The allure was her own natural beauty. It was casually sexy. No one looking would suspect she was embarking on a PR campaign, with them the target.

We left Professor Connelly with the unenviable decision of whether it was better to ignore our radiant sexuality, or speak up and make an issue of it. He chose the latter. Who could blame him? Anything to do with a professor and expressions of student sexuality had potential to show up in a headline somewhere. Or perhaps I give his conundrum too much credit and he simply lacked the visual acuity to notice us? No, as I considered, the most likely explanation was that he found it tiresomely annoying and thought I deserved whatever bug she gave me. In any event, Steph remained perched on my lap for the entirety of the day's lecture, and while she turned forward enough to pay some attention, my roaming hands kept us perpetually on the cusp of making out.

The hands had been her idea. Most of it had been, or at least that was the corner I'd painted her into without her knowing it. The lap sit would have been plenty, but she concluded that clingy wasn't enough. That could be construed as her forcing herself on me, pinning me down, a hapless prisoner of her soft round behind. I had to look like I wanted her there. Facial expressions weren't enough. It could be I was simply being polite about an awkward and unwanted advance – if, that is, observers were close enough to make out our faces, and if they even bothered inspecting my face with her sexy little body adjacent and available for admiration. Or revulsion, depending on the observer's mindset.

So I ran my fingers over her stomach, her thighs. Steph hadn't invited me to do more than that, but I made sure to graze the underside of her breasts at intervals, too, whenever the instructor was looking elsewhere. She stiffened the first time, but what could she do? She needed to create the façade. It was a favor, not an imposition. Moreover, she needed to make sure I remained committed to her salvation, so whether it was uncomfortable for her or not, she needed me.

Steph would endure much more before I was done amusing myself with her. For today, however, a few brushes with her boobs would be plenty.

Professor Connelly reminded everyone of the final reading before midterm exams, and dismissed the class. It was time. I gave her the slightest of nods. She took a breath, flung her wrists to get circulation going, and then leaned in and kissed me.

As first kisses went, it was... an experience. There was a moment where it was painfully awkward, our lips exuding all the fire and romance as if we were instead touching our elbows together. I'd seen people kiss their dogs with more passion. My eyes, which had closed by reflex on her approach, popped open, perplexed.

Then, in the next breath, her tongue slid into my mouth like it had taken lessons.

Steph's tender fingers seized my hair, teasing my scalp. The semi erection I'd been nursing all class long was suddenly trying to lift Steph into the air. Her hips rocked, a veritable lap dance in full view of our classmates. I *moaned*. In spite of myself, I moaned. It only spurred her on. This wasn't making out. This was foreplay. Never in my life had a woman promised me sex using her lips and tongue yet without uttering a word.

"You know she's fucking dirty, right?" came a woman's voice from... somewhere. Somewhere not Steph.

She broke off, eyes wide, panicked, but her back was to our critic. I peered around the glossy blue black curtain of her hair, and amended that to critics, plural. A small gang of women, arms folded in disapprobation. I thought one of them might have been the bitch who'd shamed her on her way into class. "Feels clean to me," I answered.

“No, I mean... you know what I mean. That’s Syndrome Stephie. The AIDS Avenger?” That was a new nickname to my ears. They sure seemed to enjoy their alliteration around Lakeview.

Steph was trembling on my lap. This was *not* unfolding per her design. “So...? What’s it to you?” I said for her.

“So, she’s gonna give you AIDS, Captain,” said one of her friends. Somehow Bryleigh had made that nickname stick. Not as well as I’d done with Syndrome Stephie, but as a normal, powerless girl, it was at least as impressive. It amused me. Perhaps I should return her texts one of these days and tell her about another of my secret missions.

“Do you believe everything you hear? I sure don’t.” It earned me a small smile from Steph, who had no way of knowing or appreciating my use of the rhetorical question to avoid a decisive countering of my own prior lie. “Besides, even if it were true, there’s all kinds of things you can do risk-free. Isn’t that right, babydoll?”

I rubbed my fingers suggestively over Steph’s lips, sparing her the need, and ability, to reply.

“Oh, gross. Come on, let him have fun with his little blowjob queen. I can’t stand here and watch this happen. Don’t say we didn’t warn you!”

The mob dispersed, as did a few dozen observers of the brief altercation. I slid my finger into Steph’s mouth. Even in her state of humiliation and disappointment, she sucked it with gusto. Perhaps the blowjob queen moniker bore some merit. Hard to imagine, squeamish as she tended to be.

Soon the lecture hall was empty, and finally, with a little kiss on the tip of my digit, Steph stopped sucking and managed to speak. “What happened?”

“Sorry. I probably didn’t handle that great. I didn’t mean to suggest... We didn’t rehearse it going like that, and I apparently need to cultivate better talent at improvisation.”

“No, I mean, where was your friend? He was supposed to swoop in and be all George McFly and try to save you!” Until the night before, Steph had never seen *Back to the Future*, which I suppose I ought to have anticipated. When Marty and Doc Brown had time traveled thirty years forward, they arrived in a world in which Stephanie Margulies was beginning what would turn out to be a very successful bout of puberty. I’d made the reference, and she’d used the movie as an opportunity to not be alone for another two hours. I probably could have fucked her right there in her dorm room if I’d made a move, but moves were not mine to make. Not yet.

“I don’t know. Here, stand up, let me...” Once she complied, I retrieved my phone, quickly “finding” and “reading” a text message that did not exist. “Shit. He lives off campus – looks like he missed his bus. He said to tell you he’s sorry, and he’ll be here next time.”

“Oh god. So we did all that for nothing?”

“It was good practice, I guess,” I answered sheepishly, as if I’d been taking advantage of her rather than she of me. That was indeed the case, but it wasn’t how she ought to see things. “It will certainly get people talking.”

“Talking about me being a ‘blowjob queen’ you mean! Nobody’s called me that since...” She grit her teeth in frustration. “Sorry. It’s not your fault. You were doing the best you could.”

“Pretty sure that girl is friends with Riley, too, so there goes my Friday night plans. Damn.”

“Oh crap. I’m sorry, Eddie.” She planted a little kiss on my cheek. It made me miss her prior demonstration.

“No, it’s...” I sighed. “Maybe this was all a bad idea, you know? It feels so... dishonest. We’re running a full-on con here, you know? Costumes and all.”

“You’re worried about your reputation, if we get caught?”

I shook my head, then relented with a small affirmative nod. “Well yes, I suppose a little. But mostly I mean being able to look myself in the mirror. I wasn’t raised to go around lying to everybody. For a good cause, yes! But lying, still.”

“Oh. Um, sure. I didn’t mean to make you do anything you’d regret. You can say no at any time.”

Someone entered the lecture hall, early for whatever class met there next. He did a double take at Steph’s delectable ass, not knowing whose ass he was admiring. She really ought to have an easier time of college with a face and body like hers. To think I had once doubted the shape of her. “Why don’t we put a pin in it. You know? Take a week or two, or however long, and see if we can’t come up with something better. Or... you know, eventually this might blow over on its own anyway. These things do that, sometimes.”

Probably’s and maybe’s, the twin blades in the arsenal of hope’s assassin.

“Right. Yeah, totally. I get it. I wouldn’t want you to do anything you’d regret later.”

“Thanks, Steph. I know we were going to move onto phase two after class today, but I think I better get in touch with Riley, see if I can salvage things. Is that all right?”

“Of course! Absolutely. Can’t blow things with a real date for a fake one, you know?” The effort it took for her to force a smile had to have been so draining for her. “Good luck. I hope I didn’t ruin anything for you.”

I made it out of the lecture hall right in time to miss the first sounds of her crying. It was time to move onto phase two of the real plan.

Steph wasn't in class the next session. The one after that, she arrived late, just in time to receive her copy of the midterm. (I was only there to amuse myself by seeing if I had managed to learn anything so far this semester, and moreover, to monitor Steph.) Students weren't permitted to sit beside one another during it anyway, but the session after, she once more arrived late and kept her distance. As predicted.

It wasn't until after the tests had been returned that she finally hit her breaking point, overcame whatever shame and bitterness afflicted her, and reached out to me again. Steph was living in miserable isolation at a level almost as effective as solitary confinement, and in some ways more. That Thursday night, close to midnight, I received a text from her.

Hey, I know this is sudden and out of nowhere but can I see you?

Sudden and out of nowhere like an on-coming train. *Sure thing. After class tomorrow?*

Um is tonight too weird?

It's late, and we have class tomorrow... I wrote, adding, *Is it urgent?*

Please? was all she said. "Please" was a good look on her.

I'm with someone right now, but I can get out of it. Give me an hour?

<3 <3 <3 <3 <3 <3, she answered. Old school text emojis. Didn't see much of that from these girls.

I was, in fact, with somebody. Lucky for Steph, it wasn't going very well. I'd found a sweet semi-thicc girl named Virginia working at one of the campus food courts, and struck up a conversation. Charm alone had enticed her to meet me after her shift ended. As we walked around campus, buffered from the early November temperature in the tunnels that connected many of Lakeview's major sites, I let slip that I'd had my eye on her for a while. Asking around, though, person after person kept saying she was too big, too heavy. "A butterface," a term I claimed to have learned in these dialogues working up the nerve to approach her. Of course, I didn't think so. Virginia was trending towards the thinn side of the scale, working hard to bring cessation to her flirtation with obesity. Her self-esteem, however, still lagged behind her dietary discipline, and so my tactic was working better than it deserved to. Only, once we'd gotten back to her place after a classic dinner and a movie date, she'd changed into the also classic something more comfortable, alerting me that she had not yet made the progress I'd thought she had.

"I'm so sorry, Ginny. Really. A friend just texted me, and I don't know what it is, but it's urgent. I had a great time, and I'll call you later. I promise." *How long would that promise keep a tight seal on the wound of my departure?* I wondered.

I took the time to head home, freshen up, check the scores. Some of that sow's lipstick was still on my neck, but I decided to leave it. I'd planned on making that move soon, but now was good, and there was a certain charm to authenticity.

Upon arriving at Penderdast Hall, Steph's dorm, I talked my way past the locked door and onto her floor, where moments later Steph's RA intercepted me. There, I had a little fun and told her I was undercover with the DEA. Sometimes I enjoy a lark and abuse the power for a little harmless fun. Finally, I made it to Steph's room, where she was waiting for me in a "casual" outfit not unlike what she'd worn to my lap that day, only she'd swapped the tank top for what appeared to be a one-piece swimsuit stretching down into her shorts. No midriff, but the clingy shape of it made for a fair trade-off.

"Hi, Steph. Sorry it took me so long. Are you OK? Did something happen?"

Her dorm room was exquisitely clean, its only flaws built in via the aged furnishing and chipped tile. The lighting was dim, only a small bulb glowing above the built-in desk that barely even reached where she'd pushed the bunkable beds together after her roommate's departure. Steph closed the door behind me, sagging back against the doorframe as if to barricade me in.

"It's not blowing over," she said simply.

"It... What? The rumor, you mean?" She nodded. "Oh, Steph. I didn't mean in a week. These things can take time."

"It's been *months*," she said in a fragile voice. "Months of having everybody hate me. I can't take it any more. I felt like we had a plan, a really good plan, and suddenly there was hope and I actually had something to look forward to – something besides dying – and then you jumped ship at the first hiccup, and..."

She trailed off. Not because she didn't have more to say, but she didn't trust her voice. I stepped in. "I am truly sorry if I hurt your feelings. I wasn't rejecting you – I was rejecting the plan. That's it. Did you really call me down here at midnight on a school night for a gripe session? I was on a date, Steph." I scratched at my neck near where the lipstick clung to it to make sure she noticed what she'd so greedily disrupted.

"Oh man. Look, I'm sorry, too. I'm not mad at you. Honestly, Eddie, you're my only friend here. I don't want to lose that, to lose you, because some guy I've never met missed the bus one morning!"

"You know that's not why. Come now. What we were doing was ill-considered, for both of us. For you, no guarantees of results, and for me, it was going to be a major sacrifice to not achieve them."

Steph sat down on the edge of her bed and patted the space beside her. To keep her frustrated and on the offensive, I instead took a seat at her desk chair. "What, you mean the lying? It wasn't *that* bad of a lie, was it?"

"The lying, yes. But if your aim was really to compel public interest in an elaborately validated blood test, that also means weeks and weeks of waiting for an appointment, then months of waiting for the results!"

(During our planning, I'd extravagantly exaggerated the wait time. It could likely be done in under a day, even without resorting to my power. Here, tonight, was the

reason for my prevarication. In case Steph conducted any independent research, I made sure to add that the delays were due to back-up in the system, which I'd learned of from a relative in the industry.)

"So? I'm the one waiting. You can keep living your life! It would get the clock started on me getting back to living mine!"

I shook my head. "No, I can't. No woman wants to go home with the last known lover of Syndrome Stephie, Steph. Plus, if I keep it up, what happens if I get unlucky and catch something from someone else? Then you have your big moment, opening the envelope and revealing your results to the world, only to have everyone think you're spreading herpes instead!"

It was almost laughable. The timeline, the strategy, the goals. It barely made sense. The house of cards I'd erected for her could crumble if she breathed on it wrong. This was me, however, and this young woman was a special project. I'd seen it play out before when I really put the screws to someone. Steph trusted me. Cared about me. Needed me. Add to that my power, and the so-called truths I whispered in her ear became an ironclad guarantee of future events.

She was trapped in a dark room, my words her only guide – and she knew it, even if she didn't know why.

"What if..." She began in a tiny voice.

"What if what? I can hardly hear you."

"What if I... actually... did it."

"Did what? I don't follow."

And then, Stephanie Margulies, chipper young transfer student from Whogivesafuck University, slid off the bed and down to her knees, then crawled across the floor of her bedroom, stopping at my feet.

She lifted herself back to a kneeling position with her hands on my thighs, and then put them to the task of stretching the slinky checkered spandex off her shoulders to bare her breasts. They were rather incredible, two pert, apple-sized tits capped with dark nipples hardening by the second. The swimsuit hung down over her shorts, ready to fall if I asked her to shuck those as well.

"I want to suck your cock, Eddie."

YES! There it was. Goddamn finally. "Steph, come on. You don't have to do this. We'll find a way. Just not *that* way."

"Let me suck your cock, Eddie? Please?" Uninvited, she went to work on the fastenings of my pants. Her hands certainly seemed to know their way around a zipper.

I wasn't one for effusiveness, but letting her think I wasn't driving all this remained a priority, so I hammed it up. "Oh wow. Oh shit. You're really... I can't believe... Seriously, I don't know if we should..." I sputtered.

“If I’m asking you to give up those other girls for me, then I need to make up for it, don’t I? I mean, you canceled a date tonight for me. I want to thank you.”

She wanted to bribe me with her slut mouth was more like it. Still, as much as I’d lied to and about her, I could let it slide, this once. “If... If you want to...” I muttered, shy, as if I hadn’t been blown by two of the university cheerleaders back in September after leading them to believe I was a talent scout for the NFL. (Not at the same time. Tandem blowjob was a tall order even for bimbo college cheerleaders like these.)

“I want to. I promise you won’t regret it. I’m very, very well taught. Or, trained. Studied? Never mind.” She winced. No matter. I was far more interested in what was about to go into her mouth than anything bubbling out of it now.

Stephanie Margulies did not suck my cock that night.

No, she made love to my dick. Literally – her words.

As she lavished lick after loving lick on the length of my shaft, she smiled up at me with those sweet brown eyes and told me in an adoring tone, “I want to make love to your cock, Eddie.” The only way it could have been sexier is if Edgar were my real name.

I’m not proud to admit it, but somewhere in the midst of the lengthy, worshipful service of this sophomore’s plump, dark lips, I actually fell asleep. Not right away. No, it was somewhere during what felt like hour fifteen, though was probably less than one. Who knew. She’d towed me to her bed by then using her slutty lips as a hitch. For a cheap dormitory bunk bed, it was actually rather comfortable. The pair of lips striving to slurp my cum out of my balls using my dick as a straw probably had more to do with it. No one had ever sucked me off like that before. Never. Not even close. I’d had slurpy blowjobs, jackhammer blowjobs, perfunctory blowjobs, blowjobs that were really just me fucking the woman’s face, the occasional sixty-nine. Never before had a woman set out to suck my cock like she didn’t ever want the experience to end. In fact, it was generally the opposite.

I didn’t nap long, mind you. I’m a snorer, and even someone as generous as Steph wasn’t going to put up with that for long. Probably. She *was* awfully desperate to earn my aid. She picked up the pace, clamped her pillowy lips just firmly enough to revive me.

“Sorry,” I mumbled. An honest reaction. I was too dizzy from her ministrations for subterfuge.

Steph reverted from sucking to more licking, her silken hair tickling around my pubes. I’d noticed she swept it back every time it threatened to obscure her face, like in pornos. Impressive dedication to her craft. How many guys *had* she blown yesteryear?

Her response to my apology was murmured directly into my cock, the vibrations of her throat traveling right down my shaft. “No, it’s fine. If you want me to suck you to sleep, I can do that. You deserve it, after what you’ve done for me. What you’re doing for me.”

Masterful seduction, Steph. Well played. “No, no, I don’t want to miss a moment of this. You’re a godsend, Steph, truly. I’ve known the men of Lakeview are morons for the way they’ve treated you for some time now, but this adds a whole new dimension to it.”

“I’m doing a satisfactory job?” Her query dripped with hope verging on need.

“Blowjob queen doesn’t begin to cover it.”

“Then I guess that makes you my king, doesn’t it?” She managed to lick my cock and giggle at the same time, and while I’d have been content to let her do that all night, that was the trigger. Somehow she sensed it coming, and before the first droplet tasted free air, she’d taken hold of my shaft and started pumping me for cum, splattering what felt like a quart of the stuff all over her face and titties. (You may object to my use of the term, but scholastically speaking, tits transcend into titties at the precise instant the cum shot commences.) The desk light refracted off of my alabaster slime as her chest heaved with her own excitement, admiring the fruits of her labors as she dragged her finger through the mess. Steph’s eyes squeezed shut as she sucked it clean.

I left soon after. When I closed the door to her dorm room behind me, she was still kneeling on the bed, topless and cummy and looking marvelously pleased with herself. Part of me wanted to pat myself on the back. I had done that, after all, given her that sense of pride and accomplishment.

Still, it wouldn't do to let it go to her head. I knew if I stayed the night, it would constitute an unspoken verbal contract, and I wasn't ready to promise anything yet, not even a promise I intended to break whenever it suited me. (Essentially all of my promises, in fact, but that's neither here nor there.) Yes, when she first peeled that swimsuit down and put my cock in her mouth, I'd thought, this is the end. I finally got there, made the girl desperate enough to be willing to pleasure me in exchange for nothing more than a character reference.

After that blowjob, though? Not a chance in hell I was letting this woman go. She might feel smug about it now, as women invariably did upon making a man quiver in ecstasy. In the harsh light of day, however, she'd realize the truth of what she'd done. That I had made her into a whore. Or, since she lacked certain crucial pieces of information, that she had spontaneously decided to make herself into a whore. Our friendship, sweet as it had seemed to her, remained on some level, but it had also become something else. Now I was a man whose cock she had sucked for a favor. I was a john.

I confess, I was beside myself with anticipation to see how the next morning would play out. Even if she was a no-show, or continued to keep her distance, it would be exciting to see her do it. Her caramel skin tone might not show her blushing, but a careful observer learned to see that same embarrassment in the tightening of the cheeks, the dilation of the pupils. Or she might just save me some squinting and cry. Not my usual kink, but once in a while...

Instead of shuffling in awkwardly, however, Steph strutted in with gusto. For the second time that semester, she'd dialed up the sex appeal to a nine. Black leather boots, fishnet stockings that didn't quite reach the bottom of a black micro mini skirt, itself a far cry from meeting her scrunchy white tube top. It had straps, barely, but if anything they made the ensemble even less dignified, threatening to lift the hem up and over what even skanky tops like that were meant to conceal. She'd even added a fashionable black hat, cocked slightly to the side. She would have looked pretty cool walking into a club like that. As it stood, she looked like a complete fucking attention-starved slut. Which, I supposed, might well be the case.

"Mind if I sit with you? Or on you?" She winked.

It was quite a display of bravado. I knew my Steph, though. Flashy, but thinly layered. Beneath it was the usual stain of desperation and pleading. If anything, last night had etched it deeper.

“Wow, Steph. You look... amazing.” My pause was precise, and deliberate. “Though... maybe we can slow it down a little? I mean yeah, have a seat, of course – you always have a seat saved by me. You know that. But... you can be normal. You don’t need to be Super Sexy Stephe for me. I thought you were plenty sexy the way you were.”

She took a seat, and her sultry look gave way to one of quiet pride. “I think I like that nickname better than Syndrome.”

“Who, the bad guy from *The Incredibles*?” I smiled. She never liked to be reminded of that name, and the pivot played nicely.

“Yeah, him. Terrible nickname. Great movie, though.”

“Agreed.”

Then she grabbed my shirt collar and pulled me in for a kiss. Another scorching hot one, at that. I was beginning to think this woman didn’t know any other level of intimacy than pouring her soul into a man through her mouth. I melted into it, stopping only when Professor Connelly cleared his throat at the podium. In a room with almost two hundred students, he managed to make it clear he was aiming it at the lovebirds in the back row.

With midterms done and gone, Steph was more relaxed about her attentiveness. Or perhaps she realized she’d committed, and could no longer wait. We kept our dialogue to a whisper; pariah that she was, we had the assurance of total privacy with nearly half a dozen rows between us and the nearest classmate.

“Can we talk about last night?” she opened.

“Sure, sure. Should we wait until after...?” I did not want to wait until after. I wasn’t even enrolled at Lakeview, officially. Officially, I was better described as “loveable tramp” than “student.” If I died without hearing another word out of a professor’s mouth, it would be fine by me.

“He’s just going over the readings. It’s fine. I can give you my notes, if you want.”

“Oh. Sure. So–”

She put a finger to my lips. “Let me talk, OK?”

I nodded, giving her fingertip a little kiss. It made her smile, though it wasn’t the warmest I’d seen from her. I’d been an accomplice – *her* accomplice – in last night’s theft of her integrity, and she meant to take her cut of the heist.

“I’ve asked so much from you lately. I was up for hours after you left last night, hating myself for all the pressure I’ve put on you. For dragging you into the mud with me. For even exposing you to the weirdness in my brain. But you know what? Most nights I’m up hating myself for totally different reasons. Totally *unfair* reasons. And I’m coming to accept that I can’t keep living like this, and I can’t *stop* living like this without your help.

“I know, you have reservations. That’s totally understandable. Eddie, any other guy would run away from Drama Incarnate over here in a hot minute, even without that

Syndrome rumor. Plus, you're you. Everybody likes you here. Especially women." Would that there were an opportunity to take a photograph of the way she pensively chewed her lip, remembering, I presumed, her activities the night before.

"I do OK, I suppose..."

There was a junior living off campus I'd been sleeping with on and off all semester who thought I was Timothy Olyphant's son, and the sole heir to his assets. She'd proposed to me last week. I'd said yes. She was already planning the wedding, and no doubt strategizing how to keep me from fucking every woman I took half a shining to. Incredible tits. She fucked me with them at least twice a week. I did OK.

"You do. And you should! You're a great guy. If my life weren't so fucked right now, last night probably would have happened in one form or another anyway. But it is fucked, and I can't unfuck it without you. I know that's a lot to put on you, but it's the truth. I've tried to befriend total strangers, guys who don't even go here, but..." She shook her head.

No doubt my viral marketing experience had done its job there. I might not know facebook well, but it didn't take a genius to get ads out there targeting people with the appropriate location tags, warning them of a certain young woman with a lust for spreading her plague to lecherous men. All it really took to get past the censors was finding a clear picture of Steph, slapping on a watermark to suggest it was stock footage and not what it actually was. Namely, libel. (If Steph had seen it, she hadn't mentioned it.)

"Anyway, I need you. I *need* you. I feel awful even thinking it, much less saying it, but there it is. So here's my revised plan. Now I know you don't do monogamy. But I want to ask you to give it a try with me. I will be so good to you. Last night? I can do that every day. That, and so much more. I will pleasure you any time you want, any way you want. If you want to have sex with me, then fine. I mean, not fine. Awesome." She chuckled self-consciously. Our nearest neighbor glanced back, sneered at her for daring to espouse a moment of happiness, then turned back to the lecture.

"And what do you get out of this?" I asked sotto voce. "I can't imagine being my on call booty call is just some diversion from your troubles."

"No. All I want is for you to... let it play out. You were right. The blood test thing was a stupid plan. It was convoluted, theatrical, implausible, contingent on a dozen things we can't control. I don't even know what I was thinking when I came up with that, honestly."

"It was a bit of a stretch, yes. But—"

The finger returned. "So I was thinking, all we really have to do is make it known we've been fooling around all semester. You've been with, what, half a dozen women?" She cocked her head to the side. "More?"

“A couple more, maybe.” I’d been with half a dozen women this week, and it was only Wednesday. That didn’t even count Steph last night. It was an unusually high count, though; credit was due to the surprisingly tasty groundskeeperess who was willing to fuck the new university vice chancellor if it was the only way to save her job. (Kids made for such powerful leverage.)

“So yeah. We can just be more... obvious – I *swear* I’ll make it worth it – and as your lady friends freak out, get themselves checked, people will start to realize I have to be clean. It won’t happen overnight, but I see now that there was never an overnight way out of this. In the meantime, while we wait, you and I can keep on having an awesome time together, and...” She breathed deeply, and let it out in a whoof. There was a bit of cinnamon on her breath. Refreshing. How had I missed that during her kiss? “You know, if you want to keep on having your fun, that’s actually, like, kind of a good thing.”

Meaning, she wanted to be my girlfriend, entering the arrangement with no mere *carte blanche* privileges to cheat on her, but a heavily encouraged expectation to do so. If I could have lied my way out of the consequences, I might have fucked her right there during the lecture.

Instead, I took a nice long, aggressive look at her body, then shook myself out of it. “Steph, come on. You don’t mean this. You don’t *want* this! I know you said you were... Well, that you were like me, back in high school. Still, what you’re offering, or asking for I suppose, I don’t know that I could bring myself to act on it. How does a man pick up the phone and say ‘yes, I’d like a blowjob, please, chop chop.’ I’d feel like such a creep.”

“I–” She looked to the front of the room self-consciously, then back to me. “At least promise me you’ll give me a chance to convince you before you say no. But let’s talk about it after class. Not in the middle of a big-ass classroom. OK?”

“Um, yeah. OK.”

She turned forward, though her hand dropped to my lap and caressed my inner thigh. It continued doing so for the remainder of class.

It had been too cold for the rooftop for some time now. Instead, she invited me back to her dorm room. It was a bit of a hike, most of the way to that lake I’d so often admired in those rooftop rendezvous, but suffice to say, she’d piqued my interest. Even so, she reassured me with promises that she “wouldn’t bite.”

We didn’t speak much on the walk over. She asked if she could hold my hand, though, and, as a courtesy for the previous night’s exquisite oral pleasures, I allowed it. Part of me wanted to place my hand on her butt instead, but we weren’t there yet. She was still convincing me to sluttify her. I hadn’t acquiesced yet. Not officially.

Chilled but excited, we arrived at Penderdast Hall. Her RA was leaving the communal restroom as we walked past; she eyed me with concern. I assured her Steph was helping me with a case, and she nodded and wished us luck. My aspiring fuck buddy

gave me a questioning look, but I told her she wouldn't understand. Naturally, she believed me.

In her room, we removed jackets and shoes, but no more. More accurately, I removed my jacket and shoes; Steph removed her jacket. The boots, she left on. They were sexy, after all, and her sex appeal was the bait on her hook.

"So, uh, what'd you want to talk about?" I asked, delivering a nervous laugh that sounded, to my ears, reasonably authentic.

Once more I was in the desk chair, playing coy. Steph sat on her bed. Her skirt was so brief I could see the white of her panties with ease. "So you said you'd feel bad using me as your... how'd you put it? On call booty call?"

"I'm sure I was more erudite than that."

"Of course." Her legs spread wide, though she leaned forward on her palms. It wasn't whorish, quite, merely slutty. "Do you like sex, Eddie?"

"I'll assume that's a rhetorical question."

She giggled. "I like it too. You're the only guy I've been with in a really long time. Contrary to popular gossip. But I have had a *lot* of sex. I mean a *lot*. Guys – mostly one guy – but girls, too. Just because the guy wanted me to. You picking up the phone and demanding I meet you somewhere for a beej? That's *nothing* to me. Understand? Nothing."

Wasn't *that* quite the confession. Whoever this guy was, she must have fallen for him hard. She did seem to be a bit of a romantic though, I suppose.

"But it's not nothing to me." With every word out of Steph's mouth, this was becoming a harder role to play. Still, I hadn't gone wrong yet by building her desperation and making her seize the reins.

"And I respect that. I think that's actually really sweet. Like I said, if I weren't sitting here asking you to let me take over any and all sexual needs you have, I might be trying to get you to fall for me. But I guess we're past that, huh."

There was an inkling of a real question in that statement, but I didn't bite. I was decidedly not looking for a romantic partner, particularly a desperate slut with major social baggage like Steph. "I guess we are."

"So I want you, right now, to do me a favor. One teensy, tiny favor. OK?"

She waited, so I answered. "Name the favor, then we'll see."

"I want you to look at me, think about what you might want from me – even if it's dirty, even if it's embarrassing, to either of us – and then I want you to tell me to do something. That's it. Hop on one foot. Order you a pizza. Or... something more fun. Just try it on, see how it feels. Can you do that for me?"

My god. Was this happening? I tried to remember a time a woman had even fallen this far, submitted to me this deeply. I came up empty. To think, there had been a

time I'd possessed compunctions against waging such a scorched earth war of character assassination.

As for the character I was playing, his reluctance began to crumble. Not altogether, not yet, but I gave her an inch. "Kiss me."

I don't know what she expected me to say. Likely she had been as curious what I would do as I had been about her that morning. Her face split into a broad smile. She really did have a radiant smile. "Really?"

"You know, no, that was stupid. Never mind." I fidgeted. Before I could squirm away, Steph stalked across her dorm room, straddled my lap, and pulled my lips to hers. She held my face, caressing me, revealing that the back of my head could make for a surprisingly delectable pleasure center. We made out like that for a while. I was as horny as I'd ever been, but I was a quick study, and last night had taught me to take my time with this girl. Steph made sure that I did not regret it. Eventually, we came up for air, and she stopped just shy of resuming.

"Thank you, Eddie."

"Thank... thank *me*? You're the one who did everything."

She giggled. What a fetching sound. Her arms remained wrapped around my neck, fingertips grazing my skin enticingly. "You did fine. But you also gave me my favor. Now humor me just a smidge more.

"I don't know..."

She went on over me. Good. "I want you to imagine you just woke up. It's four in the morning. You have morning wood because you were reliving that kiss in your dreams, and you think to yourself, 'gosh, wouldn't it be swell if Steph were here right now, and we could do it again for real?'"

"That does seem like a thought – and a dream – that I might have in the near future."

"Well if it does, all you need to do is pick up the phone, tell me to come kiss you, and I will come to your place and *kiss* you and *kiss* you and *kiss* you." She accentuated each use of the word with a slow-motion peck on the lips. I felt like I really was the age she thought I was, like I could be content to sit here kissing this girl all day.

"Understand?"

Never mind that she didn't know where I lived. In fact, I bounced around between dorm rooms, hotels, apartments and fraternities as my mood and circumstances dictated. Her point was clear, however. "OK. Um. I think. Man, I don't know, though. It's one thing, coming to your room and making out a little. It still doesn't resonate with me that I could simply—"

"Tell me to do something else. Something not as easy."

"Steph..."

She laughed off my hesitancy. “Eddie, you’re one of the biggest horndogs I know! I appreciate you trying to be a gentleman, but... let it out. Don’t hold back. Maybe there’s something you’ve wanted from me for a while. Or something you’ve wanted from any girl, but were afraid to ask. Or asked, but got turned down. Tell me. Let me.”

I gave myself a moment. Very nearly, I told her I couldn’t and strode away. How desperate could I make her? She was needy now, but I could make her beg.

Except she already was. She’d crawled for me. Knelt before me. She was as mine as she was going to be.

At least until I broke her in.

“OK. Um... Would you, ah, strip? Like, a sexy strip? A dance?”

That was all it took. Steph stood. Her breasts dragged across my face. That scant friction was enough to tug down on her skimpy top, the ensuing friction causing it to snap up and reveal the underside of her tits. She noticed me noticing, and smiled indulgently. It was a smile that told me I had permission to leer.

Leer I did. Steph took a moment to turn on some slutty stripper music on her phone, music she queued up with surprisingly little delay. Had she prepared for this, or did she simply enjoy whore tunes? Her selection wasn’t the sort with the heavy bass line that shakes the walls and sends RAs down to pound on doors, but the slower sort with the twangy saxophone. My preference of the two, though each had their place.

As I watched her move – *studied* her – I began to think she might have prepared a routine for it. What she managed was rehearsed. Graceful. Steph knew how to move her hips, how to arch her back, whip and flip her hair, how to make sure her tits jiggled just so when she moved her shoulders. It was a rare woman in my experience who knew how to remove their shoes sexily, but Steph did it, bending at the waist, her ass gyrating to the music as she undid the zippers and slid her feet out of them. It was a proper tease, too, no rush whatsoever in what was fast becoming her signature approach to activities sexual. I was given glimpses, then the flesh taken away. The skirt was the first casualty, revealing a pair of skimpy, bikini cut panties, white and lacey. They matched her top perfectly, and together contrasted deliciously with her sleek brown skin, a thin sheen of perspiration letting her glisten in the wan light trickling in through the sliver of a gap in her curtains. The top went next, and at last the panties. For those, Steph once more bent over to make sure I was afforded a first rate view of her freely offered cunt. She was a furry one, all right. Sexy as fuck.

“Thanks once again, Eddie,” she said breathily as the music faded out. “I liked doing that for you.”

“I liked watching you do it. A lot.”

“I’m glad you did. You know, if you’re having fun, feel free to keep having fun. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

I permitted myself a coy smile. “Oh, before I forget, you said you’d give me your notes from the reading.”

Steph blinked, then burst into laughter, those cute tits of hers bouncing merrily. “Of course.” I’d been kidding, but she was a woman on a mission to convince me she was at my beck and call. It was no time to refuse a simple order. Obeying the frivolous things was a testament to her willingness to obey *all* the things.

Once she’d tucked her notes into my jacket pocket – after planting a kiss on them, leaving an impressively neat lip print – the impressionable young sophomore once more stood at attention. This time she said nothing. She simply stood there, inviting me to ogle her, and when I did nothing but that, slowly turned in place to give me a view of all sides. I couldn’t decide which I liked best. Then again, I didn’t have to.

“Play with yourself,” I said. My first real, confident command. It felt good to issue it.

“Oh god, I’d love to,” Steph moaned. She hopped backward onto her bed, back against the headboard, legs bent but with her thighs pressed together prohibitively. The way she arched her back, hard black nipples pointed at the popcorn ceiling. They received her attention first, fondling her tits in a way that could only be for the benefit of the male gaze, *my* male gaze, and tugging her nipples until they were so thick we could have hung our jackets on them instead of the rusty coat hooks built into the cinder block wall. Her eyes wandered, unfocused, lost in some fantasy only she could perceive. Then, after a sensuous lick of her fingers, her thighs parted to allow her to properly obey my command.

It was damn good theater. Minuscule whimpers decorated her ragged breathing as she fingered her pussy and clit by turns. Her uncunted hand continued to squeeze at her breasts with enough precision that I began to believe it was an honest focus of her pursuit of pleasure. Fascinating. I’d seen women grope themselves before while masturbating, but only as an afterthought. Steph was focused. She liked it, and wanted it done right.

My puppet was building steadily to climax. I let her for a time. Before she grew especially close to it, however, I decided to interrupt. “You look so sexy.” Open with sugar.

Steph struggled to focus, but soon found me and gifted me a lascivious smile. “Mm, thanks, Eddie.”

“Can I take a picture?” And there was the salt. I didn’t need a photograph, clearly. I believed her when she told me I could see this whenever I felt so moved, and it wasn’t as though I wanted a trophy. If I ever wanted to reminisce about the day I broke Stephanie Margulies and made her my pet whore, memory would suffice, for the urge likely wouldn’t last long. This was exciting, yes, but a vintner didn’t need to save up his corks. He simply opened a new bottle, and drank anew.

Steph was a fine vintage, though.

She skipped a beat, hands freezing. Only a beat, but even in her deliriously aroused state, she could see I'd noticed. The perfection of the act now tainted, she took a moment to process. I'd already processed it. I knew what she had to say, but I wanted to hear her say it.

"Oh. Sure." She laughed self-consciously. "You know, I got nervous for a sec, since, you know, once it's out there, it's out there forever? Not that I think you'd, you know, pass it around. I just mean if you got hacked or some jerk swiped your phone and saw it or something. But I guess the whole point is for people to know we're hot and heavy, so... Yeah. Here, let me get back into the rhythm, so I can look hot for you. OK? And then you, ya know, do what you want with it. I trust you."

She expected me to snap a picture, inspect it for quality assurance, and move on. Instead I maneuvered around the close confines of the room, capturing her naked, masturbating body from every angle. My camera had adequate zoom, and the lighting was adequate, but it was more fun to shove my phone deep between her thighs and employ the flash. Her eyes slid closed, as if that could conceal her embarrassment. I didn't coach her; a proper session could wait for another day, if I decided it would amuse me. (Frankly, after talking a sophomore fashion design major into such an arrangement after informing her I worked for *Vogue*, I'd had my fill of guided looky-no-touchy photo shoots.)

In fact, it was time to move beyond that with Steph. She seemed relieved when I stowed the camera, even when the pants in whose pocket it was deposited dropped to the floor moments after. I'd been plenty hard, but now it was out in the open, like her. She warmed to its presence quickly, locking eyes with me as I loomed over her, jerking off with the inspirational aid of her own breathy, needful masturbatory spectacle. Not that she "needed" to masturbate. No, she needed to obey me. Nothing more.

I had to hand it to her for her mastery of the slow burn. Despite starting second, I finished first. My cockhole locked onto her body as its target and opened fire. Steph took it like a champ, really, not put off her game in the least as I painted her white. As I fell to her erstwhile roommate's bed beside her, she joined me in orgasm, body stiffening, back arching, mouth open wide and gasping. I didn't flatter myself to imagine my cum shower had inspired it, but it was amusing to fantasize that it had.

"That was so hot, Steph," I told her, a rare dribble of real honesty. Without asking, I slid a finger through her oozing, hairy slit, and helped myself to a taste. I don't know why I thought hers might be special, but it was still as good as any pussy. I reloaded, this time inserting the slime into her open, waiting mouth. She sucked it clean without hesitation.

"I'm glad you liked it. I'm glad you asked me to do it. I hope you ask me again next time you want it."

I nodded. "I think I may. Now come on. Let's get you cleaned off."

"Oh. Yeah, there's a box of tissues on my desk."

"No. Let's take a shower."

Steph tensed. I don't suppose she expected me to warm to the arrangement so quickly. She needed to appreciate what she had agreed to, though. "Oh. You mean... together?"

"It sounds more appealing than showering separately. Am I asking too much? Forget I suggested it. I should get going, let you—"

"No, Eddie, wait. Sorry, I'm still getting used to it. That's a great idea. Let's shower together. In fact... hold on." She hopped out of bed, grabbing a bath towel from a plastic hook on one of the closet doors. She wrapped it around her body snugly, heedless of the spunk coating much of it. While Steph checked herself in the mirror to make sure her towel concealed her pussy, I saw there was a robe hanging beside it. This was not her typical attire for the walk down the hallway to the shower. It did, however, showcase the glistening dribbles of my cum splattered across her chest. Her shower caddy at the ready, she turned her attention back to me.

"Ready?"

Clever girl. Here she was, hoping to be seen. It wasn't merely slutty; this level of skankcraft was well into the territory of depravity. I adored her for it more than I ever had for those endless, tedious hours of idle chitchat. The sooner she was seen well and truly coated in my semen, the sooner the counter-rumor could begin to flourish.

Was it too soon? No, a single sighting wouldn't undo the necessity of our arrangement. Would it?

I needn't have worried myself. No one saw us make our way to the shower together. It was hard not to laugh. As we walked past the toilets, I saw one had *STEFFIE STALL – HIV+ ONLY* scratched into the door's paint. A rare bathroom graffito, targeting the outside of the stall.

In the close confines of our shower stall, I allowed her just enough time under the water for a quick rinse, and then washed Steph's delicious body, every nook and crevice, until she was fit for the market. Then I was simply caressing, which was fine by both of us.

Then I was ready to go again. I needn't have said a word. A mere nod, and she'd have placed her palms flat on the wall and done her best to get her pussy up where I could fuck it. *Fuck me Eddie*. It was written all over her. In fact, I traced the letters on her back with my own fingers.

But I was a man of words if I was a man at all. "OK, here goes."

Her hair plastered to her skin, eyes heavily lidded, she waited for the go-ahead. Finally, a man would show her he trusted her over the masses. I think she might have been more excited for the trust than the penetration.

I licked my lips. “Could have another one of those amazing Steph blowjobs? Whatever you did last night, that was... epic.”

Her smile barely faltered, and recovered with commendable alacrity. “I would love to, Eddie.” What else could she do, after all, but obey?

She crouched down low, jets of water splashing down over her face, and took me into her mouth. It was even warmer and somehow even wetter than the shower. Community bathrooms have their share of drawbacks. Firmly ensconced in the pros column, however, is the availability of unlimited hot water. I took advantage of it.

It took her until the weekend before Thanksgiving before she worked up the nerve to say anything but Yes to me.

“Eddie?” She caressed my name on her tongue. “Don’t take this the wrong way, but... do you, um, get turned on by... embarrassing me? It’s not a complaint, just a question.”

I did. I absolutely did. It wasn’t that humiliation was enumerated among my kinks, per se. Yet in the short time since I had begun using her, I found that the power I had over her was an aphrodisiac like no other. Bit by bit, I began seeing how far I could push her, how little positive reinforcement I could get away with. Not a humiliation kink. Eh, I may be splitting hairs. I’d had this power of mine for decades, you see, but with Steph, it was as if I had acquired a whole new talent and got to experience the thrill of learning to wield it all over again.

She tried to filter my coy toying as logical. The more public we were, the more traction the rumor could gain, right? I texted her the day after that shower and asked her if she would come show me her tits. “Breasts,” I called them, but on a woman like that, “tits” is what they really were. She asked where I was; I told her I was at the main library, the one over on 10th Street, and where therein. When she located me, she took my hand and invited me to follow her to a restroom, or use one of the audio labs. I assured her I didn’t want to see them for long, no need to make a production out of it.

Steph took it well. After darting around the aisle to make sure no one was close, she scurried back to me and hastily lifted her sweater.

“Without the bra? Please?” I pleaded, as if she might refuse me. It was a word I meant to phase out of my vocabulary in her presence as soon as I could. She needed to be mindful that I was the one doing her a favor, letting her traipse through the snow to come flash me her tits, not the other way around.

With a little dexterity, the bra slid out through Steph’s sleeve, though she hadn’t brought a purse so there was nowhere to put it. I reached out to offer to hold it for her, and she handed it off before processing that this was no more modest a solution than holding it herself. In any event, she once more flashed me. I stared at them with tunnel vision, refusing her the opportunity to use her eyes to request my blessing to lower her sweater. Finally, as a pair of boots clomped ever closer, I issued a soft, appreciative whistle, and nodded my permission. She lowered it right in time to deny one of the library patrons a show, though from the way the woman hurried on, I think she caught both the tail end of the sweater lowering, and the sight of Steph’s bra in my hand.

The present day, the one in which Steph was non-judgmentally asking if I got off on seeing how many more peg holes she had left to be taken down, was unseasonably pleasant. The high 50’s! Marvelous November day. We had returned to our old stomping grounds on the roof of the union. Our blanket was perhaps a little worse for the wear, held in place under a broken piece of brickwork to keep it from catching a gust, but

exposed to the elements for months now. It was still better than the bare rooftop, though. Not that it mattered for Steph, whom I had invited to settle down straddling my waist. I'd always enjoyed the sight of a woman's breasts from underneath, and now I finally had a posable doll that let me admire them in that fashion whenever the mood struck me.

"Embarrassing you?" *Don't laugh*, I demanded inwardly. I didn't even offer Steph the grace to realize her reference. In fairness, there could have been any number of references she might have been making.

Dressing sexy whenever we might be seen together had been one of her early addendums to our arrangement, but I had been the one to suggest that one of her selections, a pair of peach colored leggings and an off-the-shoulder top that hung low enough to display a good amount of one-sided cleavage, wasn't passing muster. "Would it be better if I looked through your wardrobe, made some suggestions of what I think looks attractive on you?" A stammering Steph conceded, always conceded, and within days I was picking out her wardrobe more days than not. Always, on days we had Professor Connelly's class together. I wasn't subtle. She didn't own much sexier than the micro mini with fishnets, but I made sure she seldom left her room without her breasts on display and her butt clad in something tight enough to dip into her ass crack. If I could get cheeks peeking out top or bottom, all the better. Embarrassing? Probably. But it got me horny, which meant I would use her, which meant word could spread, which meant she might someday claw her way out of hell. And so video chats where she tried on over-sexualized outfits for me became a regular part of her morning routine.

Or she might be citing the day in class when I "accidentally" dropped my pencil. It rolled underneath a half dozen rows of seats. Much farther than I'd thought it might, actually. A happy mishap. Steph offered to get it for me before I could ask; at that point, she had still been looking for opportunities to do me favors unprompted, to get me in the habit. I stopped her short, though, and whispered that maybe we could get some PR out of it if she sauntered up there and made a show of bending over at the waist to pick it up. She could even look at me over her shoulder and wink, wave, whatever, to make sure people made the connection.

"Um, this dress is really, *really* short, Eddie," she whispered back. "I'm pretty sure people will see my underwear."

"Oh. That's... bad?" I managed to sound perplexed. "My apologies. I thought we were trying to advertise your sex appeal. Sorry, maybe you've spoiled me to the point I've gotten greedy. I'll pick it up after class, if it's still there."

Like a border collie trained to bark on command, my "sorry" activated her need to maintain my investment. I couldn't be allowed to lose interest a mere week in – as if this fascinating new toy could bore me so quickly. Not when I could wind it up and watch it blow me. We hadn't had sex yet, but I'd lost count of the blowjobs.

The next thing I knew, the back eight rows of the lecture hall (sparsely populated, but populated) were treated to the sight of the lower half of Steph's bare ass. I'd honestly forgotten I'd selected a g-string for her that day.

If that hadn't been the antecedent of her reference to embarrassment, certainly this past Saturday would qualify. I'd suggested that after so much time lounging around her dorm room, we go somewhere more public. I'd acquired my own key to her room so I could stop in to get my cock serviced any hour of the day or night, an opportunity of which I took ample advantage. She lit up at the chance to be seen, to show the world she existed, that she had a friend, a man who wasn't repulsed by her.

We headed to the College Mall and spent much of the afternoon window shopping. It wasn't my idea of an enjoyable field trip, but I made hay. While Steph was in the ladies room I even managed to squeeze in a little entertainment. The Frederick's of Hollywood had quite the scrumptious saleswoman working, a darkly tanned blonde with sapphire eyes. The woman evidently either enjoyed or relied upon her employment there enough that when a branch inspector from corporate HQ arrived and demanded proof that she was wearing official company merchandise per her contract, top to bottom, every layer, she took me into the dressing room and gave proof. The daft little twit even let me sign her cleavage, certification in case another inspector arrived. She couldn't hide the sulk in her glower as I patted them approvingly and swaggered on my way. I caught up with Steph in a thoroughfare, and asked how she snuck past me on her way out of the bathroom when I'd been waiting outside the whole time.

Fearful that someone would spit in or otherwise sully her meal if we went to the food court, I ordered for both of us and brought our meals to a bench near one of the fountains. As we ate, she sprang a question that seemed to have been on her mind for some time, as it was blurted without preface.

"Why haven't you had sex with me, Eddie?"

"Pardon?" I said around a mouthful of chicken.

"Do you think that's too serious? Do you not want to? Do you... do you worry there might be truth to the Syndrome story?"

"Of course I don't. You know that. You're my Incredigirl."

She didn't look relieved, though perhaps less anxious. "So why not? Because, to be completely honest, I want to. *Soooo* bad. All this messing around we've been doing, it's been... I mean, I'm *really* horny. Almost all the time. Not that it's your fault! I mean, it's you I've gotten horny for, so it's 'your fault' in that sense but I don't blame you. Does that make any sense? But I keep waiting for you to make a move, but day after day you don't, and... am I doing something wrong?"

I finished chewing before I responded. Let her stew, if she was going to be pushy. "Steph, we're both doing a lot wrong. Has it occurred to you that the memory of these

days is something that is going to haunt us for years to come? The lies, the weird kinkiness of it all?”

She wilted. “Oh. I guess I hadn’t thought of it like that. Are you not having *any* fun? Is it all just... a project, to you?”

“No! Of course it’s not. You’re unbelievable, and you’ve more than delivered on your promise. I’m doing my best to keep up with you, most of the time.” A damn lie. It had been three weeks, and in that time we’d gone from Steph nudging me into meekly beseeching strip teases and quiet tandem masturbation, to me stopping by her room unannounced at two in the morning, drunk, with another woman’s perfume all over me, fucking her tits, coming all over her face and pillow, then having her call me a cab home without so much as a word of gratitude or apology.

“You do well enough,” she said, a bit more dryly than I cared for.

It so happened at that moment that I saw a group of college girls walking down the thoroughfare in our direction, shopping bags in hand. I decided to use the opportunity for a bit of payback for her attempting to force her allegedly filthy pussy on me. “Hold up. Don’t look, but I see a group of Lakeview girls coming our way. Let’s use this, start a *good* rumor. You’re right, you know. I haven’t been aggressive enough getting the word about us out there, creating something to talk about. Let me fix that. Climb in my lap. Facing me.” I snapped my fingers and pointed to my crotch.

“Um, what? What are you...”

“Hurry, Steph! Trust me.”

Her trust remained as misplaced as ever. With a puzzled look, she set down her sandwich and did as I asked. The weight and heat of her pussy radiated through my jeans. “Good. Now keep at me like you were. But *louder*, yeah?”

“What? I don’t...”

I kept my voice low, conspiratorial. “Ask me why I won’t... No. *Beg* me to fuck you. Let them hear you.”

She glanced in the direction of her approaching classmates. They’d spotted her now. She wasn’t subtle in a backless top held on by a single spaghetti strap tied behind her neck, side boob bulging out on either side, more ass cheek oozing out the bottom of her shorts than remaining in.

“You... you want me to beg you to have sex with me...?”

“You trust me. Don’t you?”

Slowly, Steph nodded. “Yeah... But...”

“Do it!” I pleaded. “Today could be the day we start the mill turning the other way!”

Dignity warred with desperation on Steph’s lovely face. There wasn’t time for debate, however, and that trust quickly won out over her better instincts. “Eddieeee!” she whined. “I’m so horrrrrnyyyy! Come on, *pleeeeee*! Don’t make me beg again.”

The *again* was a nice touch for her purposes. I'd avoided the word on purpose in my directions, but once in a great while she displayed the beginnings of ingenuity. I flashed an encouraging smile, then immediately shifted to a staged anxiousness. "Steph, is this the time and place for this?" I pinched her leg on the far side of our intended audience. *Louder*, I mouthed.

"Eddieeeee, I wanna fuu-uuck!" she cried, her voice fit for the stage in both volume and dramatic fervor. "Why won't you fuck me?! I *need* it, sooooo bad!"

I made a show of just then noticing our lookers-on. "Stephanie, I... I will, OK? At least, let's talk about it. But not here, not like this, OK?"

The girl lacked serious acting chops, but it was good enough, likely. I was keeping mine in check as well. "Can we go back to your place? We can 'talk' about it there, yeah?" She giggled, elated at the prospect.

"You cannot be serious right now!" exclaimed one of the women, stopping a short distance away. "Do you know who that is, sir?"

"Um, do I know you?" I would certainly like to. She was rather attractive. If Steph gave into another panic attack, as bullies so often triggered, perhaps I could parlay that into something fun.

"I'm your new best friend, OK? That skank on your lap? That's Syndrome Stephie, the Dick Devil of Lakeview. She's trying to give you AIDS, you horny old perv," she said with a sneer.

"He's barely older than I am," Steph pointed out defensively.

"What? That guy could be your dad."

"I'm twenty," I said quickly. Steph's face wrinkled, contorted, and she turned her head in time to blast three rapid fire sneezes. Shit. "Twenty-one," I amended. She sniffled and turned back to me. There we go. "And I still don't have enough minutes left in my life to be talked at like this by disrespectful busybodies. Stephanie and I were about to take our business elsewhere." I patted her ass, intending to prompt her to get up (and yes, I may have let my fingertips land right up the center of her widely split crack), but she only wriggled into my grip instead. Good enough as a performance, even if it diminished my opinion of her integrity to new lows.

The girls stormed away, loudly muttering deprecations of Steph's character and their concerns for my well-being. The two of us left the mall then. I practically danced to the car, raving about the headway that performance had made. Steph did her best to share in my delight, though when I offhandedly mentioned I meant to drop her off and be on my way, she did get a bit sulky. Between then and our current meeting on the roof, she hadn't brought that subject up.

Perhaps the embarrassment was broader than any individual incident. Those moments above, but also the time I'd wiped the spit and cum off my dick in her hair; the day I fingered her to orgasm up her skirt during class; the "boring" underwear she'd

worn the day I'd ordered her to come suck me off in a McDonald's bathroom that wound up disposed of right beneath the dregs of my sweet and sour sauce; the scores of times I'd pawed at her ass and tits in full view of strangers; the time our discussion of what she thought of the taste of my cum led to my giving her two cups of coffee, one with a few dribbles and one without, and asked which she thought tasted better (naturally, I'd come in both); the pigtails; the glitter; the hundred and one times she'd gotten me off and I'd not so much as attempted reciprocity, not beyond selfish gropes, fondles, and slaps.

Or maybe I'm being overly critical of myself, and Steph was simply easily embarrassed. Some people take themselves entirely too seriously, in my humble opinion.

The enormous American flag snapped and fluttered overhead. Both it and I were at half mast, though I only knew the why of it in one case. Maybe when I was done with her, I could invite Steph to sit on that pole and coax it back up. A gentle wind that was chillier than the ambient air gave us both a soft shiver. "I want to have sex," she said quietly. Her hips were rocking, but barely, thighs gripping my waist possessively.

"I know, Steph. I think we're making progress. You'll be able to have a sex life again soon."

Her eyes flashed. "No. With *you*, dummy." She grimaced. "I meant that playfully. Sorry, I'm just *insanely* horny basically all the time I'm around you."

"Oh."

"Why won't you fuck me? I obviously turn you on. I've invited you to, very explicitly. Since the mall the other day, I've sucked you off three times, gotten you off with my boobs once, and after we got home from shopping you dry-humped my ass and came on my back. But you never put it in *there*. Why not?"

"You told me you were doing this to dispel the rumor. Not to get in my pants," I said defensively.

"I am! And we are! I didn't say anything, but I've had not one, but two guys flirt with me on the bus this week. One of them used the nickname, but still. They *talked* to me. Thanks to you, they probably would have let me... you know. Not sex, but other stuff. I bet. If I asked them to."

Steph sounded pleased. Pleased, that strange men on the bus might deem her worthy of bestowing a lavish blowjob upon them, if she really asked nicely. Truly, she was a work of art.

"So why isn't that enough? If we're getting the job done, why do you care how I handle my end of things?"

Her jaw dropped, exasperated. "Eddie, you've slept with all these random girls all semester long, but now that you have one throwing herself at you, you're putting your cock anywhere but inside her! How do you think that makes me feel?"

I managed to look antagonized. Even a little irate. My, but I was good at what I did. “Well how do you think it makes me feel to have a girl I thought was my friend try to guilt me into sleeping with her? I’ve done my best, playing along with this crazy game you cooked up, and now you’re telling me that it doesn’t mean anything unless I also have sex with you? That’s some rather profound ingratitude right there.” I sat up, bucking her off of me, gently-ish, and took to my feet.

“*I’m ungrateful?!*” she shrieked, rising behind me and spinning me to face her. “You’re doing me this favor, yes, but I feel like I’ve done you, ooooooh, just a few favors along the way, OK? God, Eddie, I let you eat my pussy while I was on the phone with my freaking *dad* last week! There’s no way he couldn’t tell something was weird when you made me come. And you want to say I’m being selfish?”

Oh, right, *that* was probably the embarrassment to which she’d been referring. Though it was more than uncharitable of her to suggest my crotchular generosity had been anything but.

We were glaring each other down, but I made it a point to back down first. I was supposed to be this great nice guy, after all. It was easy, considering I wasn’t actually mad. In fact, I liked Steph better by the day. “You’re right. I’m sorry. I’ve been trying my best, but it feels like I just don’t know what I want, or how best to handle all this. Maybe we’ve gotten in over our heads? I... I think you and I should take a break. I thought you wanted me to... I don’t know. I misread things, I see. And maybe you did, too.”

“Eddie...” She softened.

“No, Steph. It’s OK, really. It was fun while it lasted. Truly.”

“Eddie, no!” She was breaking.

I patted her cheek affectionately and doubled down on the past tense. “You were amazing, Steph. Really. I never wanted to do... *that*. You know. With someone I actually care about. It’s backwards, I guess, but I didn’t want you to be just another notch on my feckless bedpost. Take my word for it, if you don’t know already. You were special. For whatever my word is worth.”

In 2006, I was a passenger aboard a cruise ship that ran out of food subsequent to a mass spoilage. (Supposedly it was caused by someone recklessly fornicating with this smoking hot redheaded piano bar girl in a utility closet and accidentally tripping the breaker on the freezers in the galley.) Widespread illness broke out from the contamination, though their failure to quickly assess the causality led to fears of an epidemic that were so blown out of proportion that it took the vessel’s parent company four days before they allowed a resupply vessel to board us. Four days on rationed pasta and crackers in a ship that, especially those first two days, was backed up in every cabin with the excess vomit and diarrhea of its passengers. It made headlines; the cruise company’s stock took a massive hit that was years in recovering, if it ever did. Upon disembarking, persons in the know regarding my talents of influence asked me to make

the rounds with various small corporate groups, endorsing a pasta brand that the ship hadn't even utilized as the thing that kept the passengers and crew and I alive during those harrowing days. I accepted, after being compensated \$1.5 million. (Cash, of course.)

That was what my word was worth. Though perhaps to Stephanie Margulies, it was worth even more.

She kissed me. For once, I pushed her away. I had never met a woman more predictable about pressing in harder the more I backed away. She had no one else, I suppose, save for a couple of libidinous creeps who took the same campus bus as her.

"Eddie, please. *Please*. I... I think I might love you? You're infuriating sometimes, yes, but at the same time, nobody has ever tried so hard to show me this much respect and courtesy and support. And if the way you show it is sort of twisted now and then, I'm to blame for twisting it. Please, Eddie. I really am begging this time. Please. Stay with me. *Be* with me. Make me a notch. I want to be a notch. It's not even about the plan any more. I want to be good to you, like you've been good to me."

"Steph, I don't know..."

"Get out of your own way, and enjoy yourself. Let go. Quit settling for all these half measures with random , and go all the way. Please. Please. I don't even know what I can offer you that I haven't already given, but I can promise you I'll be yours for as long as you want. One day when we wake up and I've forgotten this whole living nightmare ever happened, you'll still be able to call me and tell me what looks cute on me. To flash you my tits on the Glacier Arena jumbotron, if you want. To kneel on the grimy floor of the Penderdast showers and suck you off until I almost drown from it, all day, every day until getting your dick sucked by cock-starved sluts goes out of style."

Steph deftly shucked her pants. It didn't take much. I'd dressed her in a pair of skimpy red athletic shorts that morning. A single tug on the drawstring and they fell to the dusty rooftop. I hadn't permitted her panties, but I noticed she'd shaved her pussy since I saw it last. I actually preferred it *au naturel*, but that she was reinventing her body to titillate me was more than enough to make up for the missing fuzz.

"Let me give you this. Please, Eddie. It's good in there, I promise you. It's warm – no, it's a goddamn inferno in there. And it's wet, and it wants you *soooo* bad. Please. Please fuck me. I want it more than I've ever wanted anything from any man ever. For once in your beautiful noble life, don't think about respecting me, or protecting me, or saving me from the gossips. I'm begging you. Fuck me. Fuck my pussy. I got it ready for you, see? It's never been readier. Please, please fuck me. My pussy is yours, forever, if you want it. Start today. Take it. Make me yours. Take me. Fuck me, Eddie. Please, please, *please*, please please please, fuck me before I die of needing you inside me."

I studied her for some time. How had I ever thought she was an 8? She was a 9 if ever there was one. Right before she looked like she might attempt another volley, I favored her with the barest hint of a nod. That was all it took.

Steph practically tore my pants off. I made sure they landed on the blanket. She might be all right going around the rest of the day dirty and disheveled, but I had a reputation to uphold. No longer was I at half mast, though I asked her to suck me to hardness nevertheless. She agreed with a fervor. For once, there was nothing gentle, no whorish savoring, no giggly flirtation. She gagged herself on my cock until her makeup streaked down her face in jagged lines like bolts of black lightning.

Steph decided I was ready before I announced it, but I forgave her the impertinence.

“No, not like that,” I said as she dropped to her hands and knees on the blanket, a bitch ready to be mounted by her stud. With the crook of a finger I beckoned her to the half wall around the edge of the roof. Confused but far too desperate to hesitate, Steph obeyed my summons, black hair flowing in the high breeze at our elevation, her sheer blouse flapping as if to join me in shaming that slovenly flag.

“Um, how do you want me, then...?”

I positioned her, hands on slender hips, to stand in front of that half wall. It only came up to about six inches below her pussy, but she didn't stop me. I bent her forward until her hands rested atop the ledge. Kicked her feet apart for ease of access.

Steph looked down, where five stories below, our classmates came and went. We were high enough that she wasn't even in anyone's peripheral vision. “Knox, um, I think people might...”

“I know. I want them to see. I want every last judgmental sonofabitch on this campus to know that I am fucking Stephanie Margulies, and that I am unafraid and unashamed. I want the whole world to know that you are the most fuckable woman at Lakeview.”

Had I been more clear-headed I could have named at least a dozen more fuckable. More, honestly. Nothing like a brunch in the community dining room with Bryleigh to pinpoint the campus's epicenter of fuckability. Still, Steph had earned an attaboy.

I slid inside her. As advertised, warm and wet and so very willing. She moaned. I drew back, then thrust in, balls slapping forcefully against her naked ass. “Louder. Let them hear you, Steph.”

Another thrust like that, and this time, she let out a euphoric howl that shook the limbs of the trees below us.

She'd waited too long for her pedigree-worthy pussy to be properly plumbed. I was a bit taller than her, though not much, so there was no art to it. She raised her cunt up on tip toes and clung to that half wall for dear life. Sweet, submissive Stephanie came

in no time at all. Her first orgasm, anyway. There were several more that followed, and followed, and followed. Mine arrived narrowly in time to empty my balls inside her pussy and allow the two of us to hurry back into our clothes. Our commingled cum dribbling down her leg when the hatch flung open and a security guard hustled up the ladder.

“About time you got here. The fornicators went down the side ladder over there.” I’d ripped Steph’s top off at one point and thrown it over the edge. The sex had been hot, but her fingers were cold, struggling to do up the buttons on her jacket. Keeping Steph and her compromised state behind me, I pointed to a different egress.

“What? But... wasn’t that... Weren’t you...?”

“Of course it wasn’t us. The young lady here alerted me to those freaks, and I thought I could be the hero who restored dignity to the premises. I guess now it’s up to you.” I pointed again.

“Wow. I can’t believe that worked!” Steph shook her head as the campus cop disappeared from sight.

With a jerk, I ripped her jacket back open and helped myself to a couple handfuls of soft, sweaty titty. “I guess I have an honest face.”

Steph made headlines in the *Lakeview Legacy* the next day. Someone – lots and lots of someones – had gotten some very juicy pictures. Not before I'd burst her blouse open and shown the campus her tits, though, so the shot accompanying the article had to be blurred across her nipples. From the ground, her pussy surely hadn't been visible with how little it hovered above the barrier, but they put another blur box there too just to make sure readers' eyes were drawn to the site of her shame.

It was too salacious a tale not to print. They'd had fun with it. "Syndrome Stephie, the Lakeview Leper, Claims Another" read the headline. They even called her, asking if she had any comment on the story. I was there, holding her hand as she cried her way through the phone interview. Me, I'd been too far back to make out in the footage. Steph never once mentioned my name, preventing me from needing to head down to the journalism school and set the record straight. Or crooked, as it so happened. The paper reported that she made no denial of her debauchery, but "once again" refused to divulge the identity of her victim.

Lakeview's dean of students summarily expelled her later that same day.

It was for the best, I decided. Steph had been miserable at Lakeview, and with her no longer attending classes there, it freed up a lot of her time to better take care of my needs. There was real damage inside her, now. I was no mere love interest for her, but rather the only source of happiness left in her life. Or if not "happiness," then at least an occasional source of validation and a respite from her melancholy. No more sulking about why or when or where I summoned her. My retirement plan had been to amuse myself with the coeds of Lakeview, and though Steph no longer technically qualified for that description, I charitably continued to allow her along for the ride.

Since we agreed on the merits of preserving what remained of my social life, Steph had little choice but to move back in with her parents across town. I was surprised they allowed it, myself. They were mortified by the public scandal of their pervert daughter even as they struggled to find empathy for the old news of the AIDS rumor about which she'd theretofore never been able to confide in them. It was a twenty-some minute drive, but usually worth the bother. I told her folks I was an investigator from the Lakeview police, working with Stephanie to determine whether the university might be at fault. Mr. Margulies in particular still looked like he didn't enjoy a strange man, one who appeared to be his own age at that, spending hours alone in his only child's bedroom, especially with her now media-documented sexual proclivities, but I simply assured them (out of Steph's earshot) that I was gay, then went upstairs with Steph and fucked her perfect little ass, just to spite them. Her cries were muffled by this great big teddy bear her parents had given her for her sixth birthday.

As amusing as it was to brush past a gruff father answering the door in his PJs at 2 AM to go upstairs and cum in and on his whore of a daughter, frankly, we had more fun when I summoned her to me. There was no more point in being coy. If I wanted to

squeeze her tits, she didn't care if I chose to do it in the middle of an academic building's hallways. Not any more. If a dozen people were within earshot when I turned to her and said I'd like a blowjob, extra slow and extra noisy, she actually seemed to prefer it that way. Of the limited alternatives available to her, Steph opted to own her reputation as a tramp and a vixen. Being my toy whore was her badge of honor, to show them they couldn't tell her who she was.

It never became a true relationship. Though she was growing more dependent on me day by miserable day, Steph conceded the prospect of romance early on when I pointed out that our lives were moving in different directions. "We'll always be friends, though. I don't want anything about our friendship to change." She agreed. Because I was all she had, and at that point, all she thought she would ever have. What leverage did she have to press for more?

One Saturday night, I had gone home with a member of the campus orchestra, a flautist who didn't do much for me. Something to do, and I'd thought it might please me to test whether her skill with her instrument translated into skill with mine. I had little on her beyond convincing her we shared a passion for music and whatever other banal topics she brought up. Enough to arouse her interest, though throughout our date I found myself working for it like any man would. Not a great flavor for my appetites, but then, she had an ass like a Georgia peach. So.

After the fifth time my phone buzzed, I finally halted our makeout long enough to check. Sure enough, it was Steph.

*Are you lonely? Horny? Can I do anything for you?
Sorry I'm just a drippy slutty mess, looking for someone to drip on ;)
Yeesh that sounds really desperate, huh. I'm so bad at this lol
I'm just bored, so if you're bored, hit me up and we can hang out or whatever
Or boss me around and make me do something slutty and degrading if you
want that instead. You know me, up for whatever lol*

I told my flautist that I needed a moment. She was plainly annoyed, but adding that it was a family medical emergency transmuted her dejection into empathy. I seldom enjoyed a pity fuck, but perhaps that was better than slogging my way into her panties with nothing but good old-fashioned effort.

"Hey."

"Hey! Did you get my texts?"

"All five of them? Yes."

"There were six, I think. I counted because I started to realize it felt like kind of a lot."

I pulled my phone back, and sure enough, there was a fresh notification I'd missed while placing the call. *My parents won't be back for like an hour, so perfect*

timing to sneak in and use me and give them that smirk like you do when you walk by them on your way out lolol my dad HATES you

“God, Steph. Are you OK? This is desperate,” and pathetic, “even for you.”

There was a pause. An audible snuffle. “I’m just lonely, Eddie.”

“Well I’m on a date tonight, Steph. It was proceeding well until my phone began blowing up with texts from someone asking me to cuckold her father for her.”

“I... what? No. Oh shit, I’m sorry. Who with? Someone from Lakeview? Anybody I know?”

“She’s a flautist in the orchestra.”

“What’s her name?”

Hmm. What *was* her name? “Melissa,” I replied. Maybe it was.

“Flautist Melissa. No, I don’t think I do. All right. OK. I’ll let you go. I’ll try not to be so needy.”

“It’s fine. We’ll talk... some other time.”

“Yeah, super cool. Just text me, whenever. If you want. If you don’t, I understand.” A series of snuffles this time. “Ugh, why would you. Why would anyone.”

The phone *clicked*, the call ended.

I managed to suppress my discomfort with what Steph might well be planning just long enough to deploy a condom. (I didn’t want to get any actual diseases, understand. I didn’t trust Maybe Melissa like I did Steph. A woman who will spread her legs for someone just because he chose her over a fake dying grandmother will spread them for anyone.)

“I have to go,” I said, ripping the contraceptive off and tossing it aside. It hit the wall with a tiny *splat* and rolled down, leaving a glistening trail of lubricant.

“What? I thought you said she could hold off for a few hours.”

I found my pants and tugged them back on. “No. I’m going to go see another woman.”

Her eyes flashed wide, livid. “What?!”

“Nothing personal. I was looking forward to having sex with you, but that was her texting me. She needs me. You only want me. It became a choice, and you can’t do for me what she can.”

“But... wait, you said it was... family? Medical? I... I don’t understand.”

“I lied.”

My anonymous flautist blinked. Then she staggered back, reeling, crashed into the wall and down to the floor. She was breathing. I waited long to get verbal responses in case she was having a stroke, and then departed. To Steph, I sent a text instructing her to sit tight, that I was on my way.

It’s fine. Don’t bother.

At the next red light, I replied. *I’m coming over. I want you, and you promised.*

No no no – go have fun with your date. You can't babysit my feelings forever

I was going slowly through a neighborhood, drafting my response, when a lurking squad car flashed its lights and pulled me over. The light of a cell phone was an easy thing to spot in a driver's hand at that hour.

"License and registration."

"Is this about the phone?" I asked distractedly as I continued typing.

"It's illegal to use your phone while operating a vehicle in this state, sir."

"I know. I wasn't." I finished my message, and hit send. *I'm already halfway there. Clean up if you need to. We're going out.*

"Oh. You weren't? Are you...? Oh. But..."

"Anything else, officer?"

"No. No, I suppose not." He frowned at my phone, then at me. "Drive safe, now, all right?"

"I definitely won't text and drive," I said, pulling away as I read Steph's hasty reply. *??? At this hour? What should I wear?*

Something head-turning. Your choice.

She sent me a few photos of options and made me choose anyway. It had been a while since I'd seen her in the micro mini fishnets combo, so I went with that, along with a silver sequined top that fit her fetchingly. She was waiting for me at the foot of her driveway when I arrived. Her father was watching through a crack in the window blinds. I waved.

Neither Steph nor I spoke of what she'd been about to do after that phone call. After a minute, she inquired where we were going.

"A party."

"What? What party?"

"I don't know. A frat party. It's a Saturday night. There are bound to be a few."

Steph studied her lap. "Eddie, they're never going to let me into a frat house. If you're with me, they won't let you in either."

"We'll see."

That was all that was said, aside from a belated command for her to ditch her panties. Not sure what I wanted with them, I tossed them out the window. I suppose I was still a little bitter over my flautist. Meanwhile, Steph fidgeted in the passenger's seat. By the time we reached the Lakeview campus, she was full-on trembling in dread.

My power wasn't much good for achieving optimal parking, so we had a bit of a hike down Greek Row. The sidewalk was thronging with people on their way to this frat house or that, as we were. I recognized four different sorority girls I'd slept with on that walk. We walked quickly, weaving through the masses, because it was that or have them one by one recognize Steph and walk quickly to get away from us. As we passed through, a murmur rippled through the passers-by.

“Is that *her*?”

“Syndrome Stephie!”

“Should we call the cops?”

“The Dick Devil herself!”

“Damn shame she’s damaged goods. Bitch is tasty.”

“The Lakeview Leper in the flesh!”

“Heard she sneaks into pharmacies and puts holes in all the rubbers. That’s true evil, right there.”

I said nothing and kept up my pace. Steph was on the verge of a panic attack, or maybe was having one but letting me drag her along so she didn’t simply die of mortification on the sidewalk. Soon enough I located a house that looked to have plenty of activity, one where I hadn’t already visited yet this semester. It was tricky to keep up with all the deceptions I off-handedly deployed for trivialities like party access, and I didn’t want to risk any more contradiction bombs going off than were necessary. I’d forfeited more than one pussy-rich habitat in the past after giving too many reasons to wonder about strange occurrences around me.

I told the pledge guarding the entrance that I was a friend of whoever was in charge, and that I was expected. His eyes narrowed at Steph. “What about her? That murdering bitch ain’t welcome in here, man. We got good guys in there and lots of booze. Bad combo with her around.”

“She’s with me, and I’m going in.”

The puffed up freshman didn’t have the guts to stop a friend of his chapter house’s president, and grudgingly let us aside. I caught him issuing a warning into his phone, though. “Yo, so you guys know, some VIP just showed up. But he’s got Syndrome Stephie with him. No, you heard right, the Poontang Plaguerat herself.” I couldn’t help but laugh at that one. Steph looked up, but I shook my head, and in we went.

We wended through a few dingy hallways and found ourselves at a fairly typical frat party. No theme tonight. Just loud music, dim lighting, cheap strobes and cheaper beer. Solid speaker setup, at least. The bass thrummed through our bones. Steph’s eyes were locked on me to the extent that she walked into two party-goers and one door frame. I was the sun at the center of her orbit. If I ceased to exist, she would freeze and die.

I took her onto the dance floor and pulled her tight against me, backwards, so everyone could see her face in front of mine. I recognized some people, and even more recognized me. “Captain!” called a few. That girl Bryleigh’s doing. It had spread in certain circles. We’d just walked past her sorority house across the street moments ago, so it made enough sense that this would be one such circle. If Steph found it strange, she said nothing. I plainly wanted her to dance, so she danced. Instinct took over, and she

robotically shook her sweet little caboose against me as she surveyed the crowd in horror.

As a hottie clad in glittering sequins, it didn't take long before someone recognized her. Someone familiar – the Good Samaritan who'd warned me about her that first day I'd walked with her out of the lecture hall, as it so happened. What a small world. Although as someone once said, I wouldn't want to paint it.

After a brief stare, he turned to the couple beside him and said something, likely shouted it to be heard over the speakers. Word spread like a ripple in a pond. In moments, every eye was on us. The song ended before it was over, the beer-stinking room suddenly silent. Someone turned on the main lights, the formerly blinding rainbow radiance now mere dim spots chasing each other across yellowing walls.

Her chin quivering, Stephanie pleaded, "Let's go, Eddie. Please? I'll do anything you want. Please, just let's go. Oh god." The room was silent. Her voice carried, but begging me for help was all she knew.

"Do you know who that is, Captain?" that same fellow asked.

"I do. Her name is Stephanie Margulies."

"Yeah. Syndrome Stephanie. I warned you about her once, remember? You didn't listen. That's your business, friend, but she's not welcome here. If you're with her, then neither are you. Not trying to be a dick about it, but after what she did..."

I smiled at him. I swept it witheringly across the entire assembly. Lord, but there were so many of them. "That was, as they say, hashtag fake news, friend. Steph's cool. She doesn't have AIDS, and would never ever risk hurting someone like that, and certainly didn't lay a finger on her second cousin. I should know. I was the one fucking her on the rooftop that day. Steph's pretty amazing, actually. My best friend in the world."

Someone sneezed. Then a couple dozen more, the ones who'd had the misfortune of hearing the rumor from me firsthand. They blasted out the memories I'd burned into the wrinkles of their brains.

My head was swimming. I had to make sure, though. "That rumor about her was one big lie, everybody. A cruel, awful lie."

My voice carried in the silent room. Fuck, I felt dizzy. Weak. There were spots in my vision. There had to be well over a hundred people here, I realized when I saw there was a balcony overlooking the dance floor also filled with lookers-on. Not good.

Steph saw me teetering and put a supportive arm around me. Her eyes radiated undying love and gratitude.

Good Samaritan's eyes narrowed. "That's not what everybody's been saying." He turned his head and once more sneezed into the crook of his elbow.

"I know. But *I'm* saying Steph is cool. That thing on the union roof was her showing you she's too badass to let you keep her down. She's nothing to be afraid of.

She's the victim here, not the victimizer." I tried to remain stable. Why did I have to pick such a popular frat house? The things I did for this woman.

He looked at her. Looked at me. "Oh. Oh snap, Cap, that's awful. I'm so sorry, Stephanie. God, I feel like such a dick. Hey, can I get you a beer? No, tell you what, I'll mix something good for you – proper apology brew, you know? We owe you that at least for them tatas, eh?" He turned to the gallery and called out, unnecessarily, "It was bullshit, you guys! Steph's cool."

A ripple of surprise went through the room. Then the lights went out, and the next song began. A couple of girls nearby were close enough that they deemed we could make out their voices over the din of the music. By turns, they shouted tepid apologies that were somehow directed as much to me as Steph.

Then there was a woman on me, arms wrapped around my neck, thighs clenching my waist. I grabbed her ass – which had basically fallen out of the skirt the instant she leapt on me – to support her, but I don't think she noticed, much less cared. Her lips smothered me in a hurricane of kisses. Tears of joy flowed like a river.

"Whoa, letting it all hang out a bit much there, Steph!" called our Good Samaritan. Sheepishly, Steph slid off of me and tugged her skirt back into place. He handed each of us a drink, something red and sweet and pungent with alcohol. "Sorry if I was a cock earlier, guys."

She took a long drink. "It's OK. You didn't know better."

"Wish I had! You are rocking that outfit, girl!" He grinned at her, but quickly held up his hands at me. "Not that I'm making a move, Captain. Wouldn't dream of cock blocking you again. You're a lucky fucking guy, man!"

"It isn't luck," I barely heard Steph say. The frat boy didn't.

"Thanks for the drinks, friend."

"Hey, that's how we do it here! WHOOOO!" With that howl, he was back into the party. Steph didn't climb on me again, but despite the up tempo beat, she pulled me against her and swayed as our tongues danced with vigor more appropriate to the music. The swaying was easy for me. Standing was hard.

The DJ must have seen us. As an act of contrition, he paused to speak into his mic between songs. "This one's for Stephie and her friend Captain Eddie. Grab your boo, yo, 'cause it's gonna be love up in here." His next track was a slow, sensual song. Couples slid together. Perhaps inspired by our example, at least half of them were openly making out. For a frat party, it was a romantic moment.

Then I passed out. I woke up two days later in a local hospital, Steph at my side, still in sequins and a slutty skirt. She'd never left me for a minute.

Word spread after that night. Enjoying the little emotional high of doing a sweet girl a favor, I even nudged it along myself. I gave it a week first for my constitution to recover, with Steph waiting on me hand and foot whenever I wasn't tired of her presence. Soon, anyone who dared mention any of her old nicknames wound up on the receiving end of the shunning once reserved for Steph herself.

Her expulsion expired at the end of the semester, and she re-enrolled, flush with hope for her best semester yet. The paper even printed an apology of sorts, conducting an interview with Steph and framing it as a story about the mental health toll of vindictive gossip and gaslighting. *Rooftop Rumor Girl Speaks Against Slander*, the new headline read. The nickname was less fun, but it was attached to an event and not a person, so at least it would therefore fade. For a time, she enjoyed minor local celebrity as an icon of courage, resilience, and sex-positivity.

I hadn't ever planned on remaining at Lakeview longer than a single semester, but with Steph still making good on her oath, I couldn't help myself. I admit, I'd had a little more fun when she'd been a toy rather than a love slave. Still, any chance I gave her to pleasure me, or even do me a simple favor, she performed with zeal. I'll grant that the reputational credit I received for being the one to save Steph was enough to open the legs of more than one of her classmates, young women who were moved by harrowing memories of false rumors they had endured.

One girl, a delectable blonde with the cutest little mole on her left tit, spontaneously confided in me as we spooned in her bed after a reasonably enjoyable bout of fucking. Apparently, someone had put it out there that she had an ex-boyfriend back home who was a psycho gun nut and had vowed to come after anyone who touched the woman he still perceived as his. Word even had it that a guy who'd worked on a group project with her, a guy who hadn't even been flirting but had dared to set foot in her apartment, had disappeared the day after their presentation. Presumed dead, was the talk.

I'd been so busy in that first week I'd forgotten I'd even done that! How time flies in your college years. Perhaps she'd make a proper Steph herself with a little coaching.

As for Steph herself, she soon had more suitors than she knew what to do with. To keep her from hanging on me every minute of the day, I encouraged her to have some fun. She did, though I think she only blew those guys because she thought I wanted her to. One night she sent me a selfie. She was topless, and, I realized after reading the caption and inspecting more closely, speckled with cum. *Date night! He reminds me of someone ;)* text me if you're up – still horrrrrrrny!!! Want the GOOD stuff!

I was feeling generous, so I let her come over to my fiancée's house and blow me while the gold-digging slut ate her out. "I don't think I could marry someone who doesn't share my sense of sexual adventure," I'd told her, and since then she'd been an even bigger whore than Steph. If not so loving. Kerry was her name, if that sort of detail

matters to you. It wouldn't matter to me much longer. My days at Lakeview were numbered, and there was always some excuse to delay the wedding until that number came up.

One evening late that spring, the end of the academic year in sight, Steph told me she'd met a guy she really liked, and was going to make a try at having a real relationship instead of all the hook-ups and one night stands. "If that's OK with you? I know you just want me to be happy, Eddie."

"What if I wake up one night with a dry cock and don't have anyone to drive over and wet it for me?" I laughed, and Steph giggled. She'd come to take my teasing about her whorish disposition as affection. Maybe it was, sometimes.

"I'm sure you'll find somebody. You always seem to, somehow."

"Somehow," I echoed. "I'm happy for you Steph. I hope that whoever this fellow is, he proves himself worthy of you."

"I hope so too. It's a little weird, having him ask me to do stuff instead of just telling me, but I'll get him there. It's nice, once in a while."

At graduation, I received an honorary doctorate for myriad humanitarian contributions to the Lakeview community. I had to decline their request to be keynote speaker for obvious reasons. It was then time to retire from my retirement. Fucking my way through Lakeview had been quite the lark, but I'd planted so many seeds, rumors, deceptions and schemes that it was exhausting maintaining them to step over the occasional land mine. A man could only be sneezed on or leap to provide first aid so many times. I rather liked this area, however. To maintain a steady supply of satisfaction, I applied for a gig substitute teaching at one of the local high schools. Less convenient in many ways than the university, but at least I'd have a stable persona, and the rumor mill was an order of magnitude more vicious.

Besides, as I said, I took pride in serving the public, and it was high time I got back to my calling. Next to that, a barely legal cunt buffet was a distant afterthought.

I did see Steph again. It was later that year, close to a year after I relented to her begging, fucking her on that rooftop. It was at Chili's, as it so happened. I was there having a meeting with one of the school's vice principals. The two of us were collaborating on a plan to deal with the fallout of the vicious lies circulating the halls. Details varied, but the most serious involved clandestine rendezvous in the women's field locker room with several members of the flag girl corps. Squelching this slander could keep me from suing the school, she had "decided," a feat which could be exactly the catalyst she needed to impress the school board and secure a promotion to the soon-to-be vacant principal position. If only the surprisingly attractive thirty-something redheaded divorcee could find some way to convince me to keep me from taking any hostile legal actions...

She was still working her way up to the sacrifice of her professional dignity when I saw Steph across the restaurant. My old pet was sitting with a young man. Next to him, in fact, on the same side of the table. This must be the fellow I'd foisted her off on, or perhaps his successor.

"Do you like wine, Mr. Edwards? You know, I have this incredible bottle at my house that I've been saving for—"

I shushed her with a raised finger, then walked over to Steph's table. Her eyes shone with delight once she saw my approach. The young man was seated on the outside of the booth, which was plainly the only reason she didn't leap up to give me a hug.

"Eddie Eddie Eddie!" she squealed.

I smiled warmly. "Steph."

"Babe, this is Eddie! The guy I told you about! Eddie, this is my fiancé, Nate."

I ignored him. "Steph, I've missed you."

The man's face darkened in my peripheral vision, though nowhere near as much as hers brightened. "I missed you, too," she answered. Her eyes never left mine.

"Hey, we were just getting ready to—"

"Come with me. I want you. Now."

"Hey now!" barked the man. Nick or whoever. But Steph was already pushing him out of the way. He followed us into the parking lot, demanding explanations, demanding that we stop, that she stop, that I stop. That anyone listen to him. When we arrived at my vehicle, he finally dared to put a hand on my door to force me to acknowledge him.

"What do you think you're doing, man?" he snarled. "Just because you guys used to—"

"I want her. You can have her when I'm done." I looked across the roof of my car. "Tell him we're leaving, Steph."

"Sorry, Nate. I... I know how this looks. But... I owe him. I *promised*. And... Sorry." She slid into the passenger seat. Her fiancé – ex-fiancé, now, one could safely assume – went limp in the arm, and I joined her. I was almost to the exit of the Chili's parking lot before my cock was back in her mouth where it belonged.

"I didn't know if that would work," I muttered to myself, running my fingers through her hair.

She twisted her neck to look up at me. "I thought he might stop you. I'm glad he didn't." She *hmmmed* contentedly into my shaft.

"As am I. Though I am sorry about your friend back there." No reason to stop lying to the adorable little cocksucker now.

There was reluctance this time when she pulled off my dick. "Nate's great. He is. But you're my savior. This mouth, this pussy, they probably wouldn't even be here if not

for you. They'll *always* be yours." A string of those sumptuous rapid butterfly licks of hers followed. The slut's tongue was nearly as dextrous as my fingers sometimes.

"Fuck, I missed this, Eddie. Thank you."

Her blouse had come untucked in the back, and I saw she'd gotten herself a little tramp stamp. I admired it for a moment at a light. It was a lower case "i" in a little oval. "Is that *The Incredibles* logo?" I asked, running my fingers over it.

"Yeah. I got it for you. Because of Syndrome, you know, and because you were my incredible hero."

"That's really sweet."

"*You're* really sweet. God, I can't wait to taste your cum again."

Considering our history, it was a surprisingly lackluster affair that evening. I took her back to my apartment and we had good sex. She was more biddable than any of the girls I found myself with, save for one or two of the supremely underconfident ones, but I wasn't the sort to want to dictate every slap and tickle like I was directing porn. We had good fun, despite an overzealous student named Anya popping by to serve her out-of-school detention. (This was a service I provided to young women who had reason to fear more severe consequences if their behavior were processed through conventional channels. I dismissed her immediately with instructions to reschedule, though I think she still caught a glimpse of Steph licking my ass behind the door.) Then back to using her surpassingly eager talents, all through the night. I slept through school the following day.

None of it was as fun as walking out of that restaurant with her, however.

I continued to see her occasionally. High school girls (and their mothers, teachers, administrators, and one exceptionally sexy bus driver) were harder to set up than the girls of Lakeview. Whenever I was in the mood and between harvests, Steph was there for me. She remained an incredible lay. A great kisser, an enthusiastic fuck, a fearless exhibitionist, the best cocksucker I'd ever met, and never once judged even my more perverse requests.

Still, her real charm lie in being a human vending machine for sexual favors. Hit the buttons F and 8, get her to pretend to pout like she objects to your cum on her face. Press A6, fuck her bent over the hood of her father's car, the paint job fading in ass shaped spots more and more every time you pressed it. H2, spank her until she cries. Good old A1, beg on her hands and knees for the privilege of being allowed to fuck you. But this vending machine's variety was as infinite as my imagination, and was always fully stocked.

My attentiveness to my Lakeview love slave lapsed once again eventually. The disconnect happened while I was overseeing the senior class trip to London, some of the girls receiving my chaperonage even at night, right there in their hotel rooms. While there, I encountered an absolutely exquisite cockney trollop who came to believe I was

the Duke of Edinburgh. It was a one week field trip for the students; I missed the return flight by around eight months, ruling sixteen separate duchies before my presence was required in the states to settle a paternity suit involving my former school district's homecoming queen.

"It's not my baby," I told the judge.

"Hmm. Well then, that's that. Case dismissed," said the judge. Justice served.

Eventually, on a night when my scheme had failed to pan out, I remembered Steph. I'd lost her number, and didn't feel like leaving the house, so I popped online and snooped. She was engaged again, I learned from social media. Good for her. Not to Nolan, though. Can't blame the guy. Who would marry a woman like that?

To satisfy the itch of curiosity, I arrived an hour before the wedding. Steph was in her dressing room in the church's community center across the lot from the chapel. I talked my way past her army of bridesmaids. It would never have been difficult, but it was even easier on account of one of them being a girl whose panties I had dropped by notifying her that I was her hated manager's husband, in the midst of rethinking our whole marriage but fearful the divorce would clean my wife out and leave her on the street, destitute. I simply hadn't been sure if I could convince myself to move on, though... Anyway, she now had the manager job, and thanked me graciously.

Steph was a vision. It was far more chaste than anything I'd have ever dressed her in, but she had a body, and the wedding gown couldn't obscure that fact.

"Eddie?! I tried to get in touch with you, but they said your number was disconnected! Oh my god!" She threw her arms around me, even kissed me. No tongue this time, but still, this superficial kiss was enough to draw narrowed eyes from her bridesmaids, to say nothing of the glower of the lurking Mrs. Margulies.

"Steph. You look radiant. I've been abroad for a while, but I heard about your big day from a friend and couldn't miss it. I just flew in this morning, in fact. Still jet lagged." I had in fact been in town for six weeks, but it wasn't as if I had so little going on in my life that I felt the urge to hasten a reunion with every girl I'd strung along. "Can we speak in private?"

I didn't miss the way one side of Steph's mouth turned up, and she quickly shooed her courtiers away. She shut and locked the door behind them. "Are you going to make me fuck you?"

"I hadn't been, but once I saw you in that dress, I confess it crossed my mind. I wouldn't dream of sullying your wedding day with my shenanigans, though."

But Steph shook her head, plucking the veil from her hair. She put her hands on my chest, dragging them down to my crotch as she sunk to her knees. "A promise is a promise."

As she fished my hardening penis from my trousers – pants; damnable Britishisms – I gave her cheek a tender caress. "You don't owe me anything any more,

Steph. I'll always want you, if you want me, but if there ever was a debt, it's long canceled."

She was already sucking my cock in her sweet, succulent way, and kept at it for a time before responding. "I'm about to owe you again, because once I get my old pal ready, you're going to fuck a baby in me. I stopped taking my pill last week so Rolando and I could start working on a family, but..." Her wistful sigh sent waves through my pubic hair. "I know you're too much for me to keep all to myself, Eddie. But you're the man I'll always wish I could have. It's wrong, probably, but with you, it always feels exactly right."

Well then. What a nice thing to say, no?

"You're sure?"

"Our baby might have a lighter complexion than Rolando might be expecting, but these things happen. Recessive genes and all that, you know? Shit happens." She giggled, then gave me a few more laps, a dog reunited with its favorite bone. "But yes, I want this."

"You're sure." I knew she was, but I was enjoying hearing her say it.

Steph stood up, hiking up the bulky skirts of her gown until her panties were exposed. A skimpy, sexy little pair for a wedding day. I took hold of the thin strap over her hip and, with a jerk, tore it off and threw it in the trash. Steph took my hand and put it between her legs, guiding my fingers inside her. "Don't I feel like I want this?"

I wished I could explain the irony of the reason for my return from overseas and this new turn of events, but there was nothing for it but to smile and finger her steaming hot cunt as she kept her dress raised to permit me. There was no need for her to get back on her knees to get me ready, though her deceitfully white dress already bore the accompanying dark smudges on her knees from kneeling on the bathroom floor even for so brief a blowjob. Steph swept her makeup to the floor and bent over her makeup table, holding her dress in the clear, hips undulating as if to hypnotize me into her pussy.

I fucked her. I fucked her as hard as I had that morning on the student union rooftop. No, harder. She bit down severely on her forearm to keep her cries and whimpers from creating too much noise outside the room. It could only do so much for a girl this happy to have my cock inside her, however. For once, I defied instinct and didn't pull out and paint her body white. I came as deeply inside that velvet cunt as I ever had. Plenty of it dribbled out, but with her panties destroyed and discarded, there was nothing to do but hope it dried up by the time her husband removed the garter at the reception.

She settled on my lap, my pants still down, her dress still up. My cock and her pussy, nestled together one last time.

"If, um, it doesn't take, can I call you?"

"Don't you have a honeymoon to attend?"

Steph rolled her eyes, for once with her wits about her more so than I had mine. “Eddie, I won’t know if I’m pregnant or not until way after we’re back.”

“Of course. And of course! You know I’m always happy for a taste of your exquisite charms, Steph. If, that is, you’re sure that’s what you want.”

“It’s a little late to reconsider now,” Steph giggled. “But I do. I want it so much.”

“You’re not saying that merely to flatter me, I hope.”

She affected a wounded expression. “Eddie, when have we ever been anything but brutally honest with one another?”

“Too right.” I smiled, stroking her hair. Petting my pet.

“You may kiss the bride,” she said solemnly, then giggled and melted into my lips for a time.

“Say, how long before the ceremony?”

She looked to the wall clock. “We were pretty quick... half an hour, maybe? Why?”

“Is it possible to pop your tits out of that dress without taking it off?”

She laughed at my boldness, delighted as ever to be called upon to be of use to her savior. “Um, maybe? It might tear. I don’t know.”

It only tore a little. She married Ronaldo half an hour later, give or take. The ceremony proceeded despite her skirts stained from blowing me, her bodice torn from tit-fucking me, her veil absent after I’d stepped on it and shredded it to get a better angle on her cunt. She spoke her vows with my cum drying on her chest and still more of it working its way through her fallopian tubes. Or at least I assumed that she did. I didn’t stay for the ceremony; I’m not one for weddings.

I only heard from Steph twice more after that. Once seven weeks later to confirm she was with child, and once again when the results of her covert paternity test confirmed that she was with *my* child. She invited me to meet up with her if I desired, for whatever I desired, but I ghosted her. All the fun I was ever going to wring out of that soggy old cum sponge had been wrung.

Perhaps you think I was unkind to her. Perhaps I was. Remember, though, that this was my reward to myself for my many years of selfless service, using my power to help people however I could. A fitting reward for an unsung hero. Looking at me through the filter of what I took from and gave to Stephanie Margulies, it might be hard to believe I’m the same man who did all those noble things I mentioned earlier.

I did, though.

I did.

Believe me.