II

From that point forward, Amber found herself saddled with not one, but two jobs.

The first was ensuring that Mayor Kline—Sherry, as she had asked to be called—was prepared for the long hard days of mayoring that she had ahead of her. Even in a small town like Knubbig, there were a lot of day-to-day responsibilities that nobody that *wasn’t* in charge of the town would even think of. Sherry had a lot on her shoulders (though, perhaps not as much as she might have acted like it was, at times) and it was up to Amber to make sure that she managed to survive whatever the day might have thrown at her!

Which… sort of lead into Amber’s *other* job. The one that had been given to her by someone who was more than a little bit higher up than her new boss…

“Apple Dumplin’s, again?”

Her new boss looked at her and Amber instinctively froze like a deer caught in headlights. Like she was a raccoon rooting through someone’s trash…

Like she was an assistant, intentionally sabotaging her boss’s diet for ulterior motives.

“Um… yeah?” Amber laughed uneasily, “You, um… you said that they were your favorites.”

“Well, you got me there.” Sherry laughed as she reached into the box, pulling out a freshly baked apple-filled donut, “Even after a week straight, I still haven’t gotten tired of these things!”

Sherry tittered to herself, and brought the box closer. It looked as though Amber was in the clear.

*You’ve got nothing to worry about, Amber.*

A voice in her head soothed her, one that was not her own.

*The more you work at corrupting her, the longer I can blind her to your hand in any wrongdoing…*

Just what everyone wants to be told by the voice in their head.

“Mm—so good.”

Sherry slipped her finger into her mouth to suck off the excess glazing. Pulling it out with a light ‘pop!’, she paused to smack her lips a few times before turning her attention back to her assistant. Already reaching for a second donut of the morning.

“Do you think that you’d be up for a little field trip this morning?”

“S-Sure thing, Ms. Kline.” Amber nodded, “What’d you have in mind?”

“I need you to go down to the Police Station and drop off a file folder with Chief Curtason.”

“…You just need me to go drop something off?”

“That’s the gist of it—normally I’d scan it and send it over in an e-mail, but somehow *I* wound up with the original documents, and she needs them for an arrest.”

There had been a time, just a little less than a week ago, that this kind of thing would have blown up in Amber’s face almost immediately. She never would have been able to handle something like this due to her awful luck—but now that she had someone else pulling the strings for her, keeping the odds and probabilities stacked in her favor, she didn’t have to worry about accidentally smudging the ink so that it looked like *her* name on the arrest record, or losing the papers in a forest fire that only started because she tried to put out a lit cigarette.

It was so… *surreal* to be able to just go out and do an errand without worrying about the whole world coming down on top of her.

“You got it, Ms. Kline!” Amber saluted playfully, “Do you want me to grab you some lunch on my way back?”

“Oh, you are going to be a *bad* influence on me, aren’t you?” Sherry laughed, “It’s only nine now—this won’t take you more than an hour or so.”

Amber’s smile turned a little queasy as she grabbed the door handle.

*She has no idea…*

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Amber hadn’t needed to look up directions on how to get to her destination—she’d already been their once this week.

The Knubbig County Sherriff’s Office was, like a lot of the buildings in town, easily dated back to the fifties. Or the seventies. The old hollow porch and wood side paneling had thrown her off in her guessing. The wallpaper hadn’t been touched up since the early 00’s, that much Amber could say with certainty.

Either way, it wasn’t exactly the most expensive building in town, but it looked a lot better from the lobby than it had looked from the jail cell. Amber supposed that it was due to Knubbig’s relatively scarce population and low crime rate. After all, why spend money on a jail when there was almost no one to put in it?

The fact that there were just three people in the entire building—one of them the *receptionist* at that—was surprising to someone like Amber, whose hometown had a crime rate taller than the biggest building in Knubbig.

The only thing more surprising than that was just *who* Sherriff Curtason was…

“Don’t I know you from somewhere?”

Amber froze right there in the middle of the police department when she came face to face with Knubbig’s Chief of Police. She had been wondering why that last name sounded familiar for the entire ride over from the Mayor’s office, and now she knew why—Linda Curtason was the police officer who had arrested her! And on her first day in a new town, no less! All for allegedly trying to assault an officer, and over a *huge* misunderstanding!

“Nnnnnno?”

Whether or not Devlin was helping her here, or if Sherriff Curtason was just really that forgetful, Amber didn’t think she’d ever know. But frankly, this was making her very uncomfortable.

“Sure I do—you’re Sherry’s new gal, right?”

“Sh—oh yeah, that’s me!” Amber chuckled awkwardly, “Just, um… dropping off that thing that you needed.”

“Well, I appreciate that.”

The file folder hit her desk, and Sherriff Curtason stood to her full height of five and a half feet tall. She was shorter than Amber, but even from about a half a head higher up, she knew that this woman was not someone to mess with. Having her hold both of your hands behind your back while she read you your Miranda Rights tended to leave a lasting impression.

“Are you *sure* that we ain’t met before?”

“Super sure.” Amber winced, “Very, *very* sure.”

The small, stocky woman narrowed her eyes at her former detainee. Getting this close, Amber could see that there was more to Knubbig’s Sherriff than what that ugly brown uniform made one believe. Her arms were rather toned, and there was a certain looseness to her burlap brown button-up. From this close, and without the sunglasses, even Amber would admit that she thought that the Sherriff was actually kind of pretty—the sharp brown bob that she’d styled her hair in had helped to accentuate her strong, handsome features…

*I like this one.*

The voice in Amber’s head lowered to a purr.

*I get the feeling that you do as well…*

“Wh-What?!”

“What?”

“N-Nothing!” Amber suddenly realized that she had reacted to Devlin’s commentary out loud, “I-I just, uh…”

“I remember you now!” The Sherriff flashed her pearly whites as she put her hands on her hips, “You’re that gal who went crazy on me when I stuck my head in your car window, ain’tcha?”

Amber laughed her hoarse, awkward laugh. For the first time since she’d made her deal with Devlin, Amber felt the whole world coming down around her. Like she was that klutz who couldn’t go fifteen minutes without destroying anything and everything in her path.

However, despite her lapse of faith, it appeared that Devlin was still pulling her strings for her—even in this light.

“Well, I can’t say nothin’ about Sherry havin’ poor taste in assistants.” The Sherriff gave her a good once over, “I can see why she overlooked your assault charge and gave you a second chance!”

“Hehehe…”

Amber felt her face burning up. Was this flirting? She was flirting. Oh God, she was flirting.

“I’m just doggin’ you, girl.” The smaller woman said with a firm smack of Amber’s upper arm, “Me and Sherry talked it over and you’re clear of all charges. It sounds like you just had one heck of a bad day!”

“I… I really did.” Amber smiled weakly, “But ever since I’ve come to Knubbig, things have really turned around for me!”

“That’s good t’hear.”

There was an awkward silence between the two of them. The good kind. The kind that made Amber think that maybe, just maybe, there was going to be a little more to this conversation than she’d initially hoped…

“Maybe, if you ever get a night off, I could give you a good old fashioned tour around town?” The Sherriff said with a little smile, “You know… assuming that you don’t try to grab me again.”

“I didn’t try to grab you!” Amber laughed

God, this was what normal people got to feel like when they didn’t have *unnaturally* bad luck, wasn’t it?

“I would love to.”

“Great—Friday night at Eight?”

“Eeeee!”

“What?”

“I mean… sounds great!”

Amber had walked away from that interaction walking tall—and for probably the first time in her life, she felt like nothing in the world could stop her. She had actually *skipped* to her car, singing merrily all the way over the fact that she had scored a date with the Chief of Police.

“I’ve got a date, I’ve got a date, I’ve got a daaaaate!”

Linda was so cute. She was so small. It was all Amber could do but *not* look forward to Friday—and that was only three days away! And then she’d be out on a date, having drinks, eating food, talking about her life… all for the first time!

*You’re welcome.*

Devlin’s voice had come as a small surprise, her dark tone interrupting what had more or less been a very happy moment, all the way from the back of her mind.

*For the date—you’re welcome.*

“You can*not* tell me that you did that.” Amber answered incredulously, albeit in a hushed voice of her own so that nobody could hear her, “You did that?”

*Through His Infernal Highness, I am capable of all things—but yes, I did score you that date.*

Closing the car door and cranking the ignition, Amber heard her phone vibrate. It was from Ms. Kline.

*Would you mind printing out some copies for me? Printers busted in the office. Sent you an email.*

“Fuck. Is there like a Kinko’s around here?”

*Why are you asking me this? You have Google Maps.*

“It was a rhetorical question, but thank you.”

Even as she plugged in the address for the closest copy place, Amber still couldn’t help but daydream about her upcoming date with the Sherriff—Linda. It had been so long since she’d been out with somebody. Since high school! Twenty-nine years old, and it had been *that* long since she’d asked a girl out.

Why did the media make it look like partnering up with devils was morally reprehensible? Ever since she’d signed on to be Devlin’s Field Agent, everything had been *awesome!*

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*After you pick up copies would you mind grabbing lunch??*

Amber had been happy to respond to this text message in the middle of Kinko’s, since it fed well into both of her responsibilities.

*Sure thing, boss!*

Amber couldn’t help but make a small aside comment about Ms. Kline having changed her mind about lunch. She was sure that Devlin was pulling strings somewhere, but this kind of thing was good for keeping her useful around the office.

Think about it! A date in her first few *days* in this new town, with a *cute* Sherriff who just so happened to think she was cute too, and a deal with a Devil who wasn’t above pulling strings for her so long as she made her boss fat? What wasn’t there to like about living in Knubbig?!

*It helps when you have someone in your corner, doesn’t it?*

“It really does…”

Amber had answered Devlin out loud without thinking much of it while she was idling in the drive-thru at Bojangles. She hadn’t thought much of it. After all, it was odd enough that there was a devil in her head whispering at her. How much more odd was it that she answered her?

“…are you sure that I should have ordered that extra biscuit?” Amber asked, “Won’t she get suspicious?”

*Laying it on a bit strongly in the beginning is bad—however, through you, I’ll be able to reinforce a sort of ‘new normal’ in her appetite.*

“Ahh…” Amber nodded.

She was suddenly accosted with the fact that, yes, all of this was very, very strange.

“So like… you want her to eat more? Why?”

*Why do any of us do the things that we do?*

Devlin’s voice chuckled in the back of her mind.

“…Because it’s our job?”

*Naturally.*

Amber couldn’t help but think about the natural consequence of her boss eating more. Of anyone eating more. Added pounds slowly crept onto the mental image that Amber had created of her boss in the short time that she had been working for her. The picture of Mayor Klein in Amber’s mind’s eye began to soften steadily.

“So… how long do you want me to keep this up for?”

Amber asked Devlin as she inched closer to the car in front of her in the pickup line. She was just two away from the window now.

*For as long as I tell you to—unless you’d like for things to go back to the way that they were before I showed up.*

It was hard to picture her boss fat. Amber sort of clumsily transfixed her head onto the body of what she thought a fat woman looked like. Growing up in the city, she had seen plenty.

“No no, I’m good.” Amber pumped her brakes, “It’s just… when you said you were a gluttony demon—”

*Aht; assigned to the Gluttony Department. Not a Gluttony demon*.

“Rrrrright.” Amber clicked her tongue, “Is she, like, being punished or something? Did she do something wrong?”

*Not a thing.*

The smile in Devlin’s voice was almost audible. Her perky voice taking on that dark tone that only happened when something overtly tickled her demonic sense of humor.

*I’m just doing my job and tempting her. We tempt everybody. Even you.*

“So Mayor Klein is going to…”

Amber was able to get a clear image of her boss now, albeit one that probably wasn’t very realistic. One of those fat people from that show on TLC was about the biggest she could imagine. And even then, it was still a clumsy transition between what was real and what she could imagine. She pictured Mayor Klein inflating outwards, like someone had pulled the pin on a life raft. Vivid images of her eating, drinking, belching and gourmandizing… even unbuttoning.

*That’s right, Amber. If you do your job right, anyway.*

It felt strange thinking about her boss like this. Wrong, somehow. Scheming and dishonest. But with a twinge of a little something else. Which she supposed was right there in the job description of her *other* benefactor, the woman(?) who had given her a second chance at life. But the butterflies in her stomach, still lingering from having a date with the chief of police, had been twisted into something… different.

*Sherry Klein is going to get very, very fat.*

Amber pulled up to the drive thru window and waited for the employee to take her credit card, falling back against the car seat with a strange feeling bubbling beneath her ribs. A tickle that she couldn’t quite explain, and didn’t fully understand.

*Thanks to you.*

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The rustle of paper bags filled the Mayor’s Office as Amber walked inside. Two white yellow and red bags with a meal in each bounced against the sides, the heavy Styrofoam cups squeaking as they rubbed against one another.

“Well that was fast.” Sherry smiled at her assistant, “Did you make sure to get me jelly?”

“Yup—got it right here.”

Amber placed the bags down and divvied out who had gotten what. It wasn’t difficult to tell which one was her boss’s; it was the one with the extra biscuit.

*Just one extra biscuit, Amber. Trust me, it makes all the difference…*

“Did you mean to get me two?” Sherry asked with a furrowed blonde brow, “I only wanted one…”

“Uh…”

The lie came quick and easy. She barely even had to think before it fell out of her mouth.

“They must have given it to me by accident.”

That seemed to go over well. Sherry shrugged and placed the extra biscuit to the side.

“Well… as long as you didn’t spend any extra money, I guess—that’s Knubbig’s tax dollars at work!”

The two of them shared a laugh as Amber crumpled the receipt behind her back and tossed it into her purse. An action that she wasn’t *not* aware of, but didn’t feel like something that she would normally do.

Amber watched with some scrutiny at the difference that the little lie made. It seemed to have put her boss at ease. She pulled the “extra” biscuit closer towards her as she unwrapped her first, her lips already wrapped around the red straw that housed her drink.

“Oh good, they gave you enough jelly too…”

She popped the top off of her chicken biscuit and spread the grape jelly along the fluffy white surface of its top part before placing it back over the chicken patty. Sherry took a voracious bite, and slurped down some soda to go with it.

“Mm. You know, I am pretty hungry—I guess it’s good that they gave you extra.” She said idly through a mouthful of biscuit, “Lord works in mysterious ways and all that, right?”

Amber chuckled nervously.

“I guess so…” she said in an aside sort of way, unable to shake the feeling that she and Ms. Klein were being watched…