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Ravyn said nothing as I pressed against her that night. I half expected her to tell me to take a walk of shame, we'd continue the game later. After the deed had been done, my only real thought was I never imagined my asshole could be spread apart that wide.

At least he was gentle. Lexy was tyrannical.

My darkest fantasy became a reality. I just had sex with and slept with Ravyn Taylor. I was thirty-four and this was somehow still exciting. To the hundreds of women I plowed through, it was leading to this moment. Her horse cocked friend was barely an inconvenience.

She had called a male escort and his name was Jim. He could have come up with a good alias. Longjohn. The Pulverizer.

Anything besides Jim.

I would forever have him carved into my memory. Jim.

I found myself now asking; Why do most men live for conquest?

Is it the lizard brain? Are we but like our mammal counterparts, compelled *to mate and mate and mate*, constantly moving on to the next one?

I think so.

We just have the illusion of free will. Some people do, I suppose. Free will is choosing not to follow your instincts. I have no free will, I am a God damn slave to my desires.

It's the other one that makes me question chemical imbalances.

This feeling was absurd. The butterflies, the high, are currently clouding my ability to seriously rationalize anything. I was doing what the kids call simping.

What people call love is just an overload in dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin, where rational thought is tossed to the wayside. It only lasts long enough that by the end of it you've jackhammered your partner every way imaginable and hopefully as far as evolution is concerned there is a baby in there waiting to be spit out.

I wonder how much she knew. I try to imagine how Ravyn's thinking works. It's hard. I am speculating and she would never tell.

Did she know that I would view it as such or was this truly to be a challenge? Was it tit for tat?

Am I just being manipulated for her amusement? What comes next? I mean, if she just sees me like the stereotypical mold of a prideful alpha male, this was unthinkable. Historically speaking this isn't true where little boys have historically been the most desired bosom to drill by men in all societies. But, we're talking in today's terms.

I am not a little boy for this particular metaphor, further signaling to me I am not thinking rationally in the slightest.

What does she think I will make her endure as a consequence of this?

Was she hoping to push me a certain way?

I don't know. I likely never will.

I was always fascinated and drawn by her. I'd like to think the proof is in the fact I had cum dripping out of my asshole not so long ago and I'd have likely accepted that just to kiss her.

I should probably go ahead and accept that she'll throw me away like a used condom in the wind the moment she gets bored.

A part of me is broken and there is nothing that is ever going to fix that.

I can't read her mind so, really all I can hope for is baffling her with mine.

I am absurd. That's what I have going for me. An absurdity.

Sleep did eventually come.

It didn't feel like it lasted long before I was back to peering down at her and then around me. I don't know what time it is. I am not sure what I should be thinking, it's been a rather long night. I wasn't sure what I was going to tell Lexy. I figured the night would be short and Ravyn and I did something silly, start off small. I am an idiot, expecting something simple with her. Staring out toward the dresser where Ravyn had the noose propped up, I wondered if I'd just be better off hanging myself.

'Hey Lex. Yeah, I really took care of the Ravyn problem. No, she's probably still going to be going after Autumn hard at the PPV. What did I do? Oh we just shagged a couple times and a dude ejaculated inside of me. Boy, was that a first! I'll be sore for a day or two but you know what? I had a blast!'

I can't help but chuckle at the thought. I don't know if Ravyn's a light sleeper but it was enough to jolt her to consciousness. She turns her head and glances up at me. At first with annoyance, likely at being awoken. Then with a smile.

“Good morning. How was your night?”

Think of something witty.

“Pretty good, you?”

That’s not witty.

“I’ve had better,” she mumbles. See, that’s what I should have said.

She turns and yawns, before stretching her arms up and behind the back of her head. This wasn’t even the tenth time I’ve seen her naked form, yet I am a pretty simple creature. The motion made her exposed tit move in a way that drew my attention. Awkwardly my gaze is going back and forth from it to her eyes. I am twelve again.

Turning over I am at least thankful our friendly neighborhood escort left in a hurry. Always more customers to chase off to. Sitting up, I grimace.

“You’re still here?” She asks.

“This is going to be an incredibly boring conversation if you just keep using my morning after lines.”

“Then be more creative.”

“I have nothing. I am generally pulling lines out of my ass and that’s not happening today.”

She giggles before turning away.

“In any case, I am probably going to eat breakfast and- What time is it? You’ll have to go either way. I have things to do.”

I nod before shaking my head frustrated with myself. What the hell are her responsibilities? She wrestles. She can go to the gym later.

“Okay, well, can’t that wait?”

“I slept with you one time and you expect me to change everything for you? This may have been a mistake, you’re way too possessive,” she responds bored. I assume she’s jesting.

I continue trying to stumble upon my great wit for a response and it fails miserably. Instead I try thinking of something to DO to her or have her do. She continues smirking, entertained with the ordeal.

“I figured we could do one more round. What do you say? Truth or dare?”

“Hmm… I don’t know.”

“Are you chickening out already?”

I stare at her, waiting for more. She rolls her eyes.

“Fine. One more.”

“Good!”

“Dare.”

I nod while continuing to consider something *different*. “I always wondered what you actually think of me,” I confess. I smile, trying to buy myself a little more time to contemplate. I was sentimental before. I remember the first dare was a simple one back in the day. I had her publicly bend over my knee while I spanked her, creating a display that embarrassed the hell out of Zoe who had been present. Her response was to have me go up and kiss a dude.

She clearly remembered her first challenge and decided to be sentimental as well, cranking it up from 1 to 1,074,138. Or I could just blame myself. I didn’t think she’d actually agree to an anal session. Or that I’d get one in return.

I don’t really think a spanking would be appropriate or even exciting. I could only spank her so hard before it’s just assault.

“Is that a thought that really concerns you?”

“Not generally. I mean, everyone has their own preconceptions. And everyone is entitled to their views. I just don’t care about theirs. With you I am quite fascinated.”

She sighs. “Why? Feeling intellectually inadequate?”

“I mean, yes. But that’s not the reason I am interested in your thoughts.”

I keep looking around. What does she actually expect out of me at the moment? Could I actually surprise her?

God, why am I worried about it? Why am I suddenly getting my tongue twisted into knots? I am too old for this.

Scooting over toward her at the ledge of the bed, I smile.

“Right. Dare it is. Dare it be!”

She stares at me expectantly. I imagine horrible things.

I imagine tying her to the bedpost. Tying pantyhose around her neck and using it for leverage, a whip in my other hand getting ready to sexually reenact my version of Passion of the Christ. I imagine piledriving her non Asher Hayes style in every hole, until she’s submissively in the corner giving time out signs begging no more. I imagine turning her into an ice gimp.

Is that what she was expecting? Vengeance in a BDSM scenario? That’s probably just Sunday morning tea for her. How boring. I want excitement. Not just foreplay! I want to feel alive damn it. Which also meant she needed the proper motivation.

I smile. I am thinking of the other week now when we first made contact. The night the Alexs tossed me into a fucking dumpster.

“Would you like to know what’s on my mind?”

“I am still listening if that counts for anything?”

“I am thinking way too hard about this. Have you ever masturbated in front of someone?”

Her expression momentarily appeared slightly amused.

“I hope you’re not expecting me to do it in front of a crowd? There are likely children in this building.”

“I like where your mind goes. However, no! No, no no. See, right now, it’s just us which darling, is far more sentimental. I like when it’s just us.”

“I figured you’d go with me having to get Zoe involved next.”

I blink, questioning if this is the right direction to go in now. She smiles and I shake my head. Save it for another day. I doubt Zoe would be interested anyway.

“Maybe next time,” I say while shrugging. Standing up I wince from the pain coming straight from inside of my bowels and for a second I consider going out to buy a whip. Stepping over toward the chair in the corner facing the bed, I sit down and remain quiet.

She stares at me for a while before frowning, her patience growing thin.

“So what? You just want to watch me put on a show?”

“I mean if I told you it all now, it wouldn’t be as fun. Ever see that movie True Lies? Arny, Jamie Lee Curtis- God she was amazing for a woman at her age in that. That display of exhibition as far as I am concerned is something for people to strive for. Fantastic performance there. Was just-”

“Would you rather just go watch that movie instead?”

“And miss out on you giving a performance? I am straight up asking you to do nothing more than bare with me here while you get yourself off. This couldn’t be any easier. Have the greatest orgasm you can. Not even an easy night for the bad girl, it’s a walk in the park. Alexis Dear, I dare you to get yourself off for my viewing pleasure, while ignoring everything I do in the meantime!”

She looks up thinking it over for a split second or plotting my death in whatever absurdity she'll have me do over what likely sounds pretty tame. A thought hits me and I stand up while holding one finger up.

"One second! Let me just set the mood." Going over toward where my pants are on the floor I pull out my phone. It doesn't take long to scroll through apps and within moments the slow opening rifts to 'Physical' by Nine Inch Nails begins to play. I heard it once in a strip club and damn near lost my mind.

"You're really *challenging* me here."

"Oooh, you can give up whenever you want! You'll have to tap out. It's time to zip it. Daddy is tired of your bullshit, his little girl has gone too far this time. That's a rule now. Besides, you're going to find it hard to talk anyways."

I assume she assumes I am shoving my cock into the back of her head. Hope so, I live to disappoint. Both her and me. Not like it matters.

I am still very much going with the moment here. Like always. Just me and the moment. Regardless, she at least moves up into a more provocative position.

On her knees at the end of the bed, she spreads her legs further apart while gently laying back. That's about as provocative as she was going to get at this point which I'd give a ten. I assume it was a comfortable enough position. I lean down to watch as her hands drop down and with two fingers she begins rubbing across her pussy. I might as well just make it awkward if at all possible. For all I know she does do this publicly from her balcony before a standing ovation. She was kind of shameless too.

She could pretend to be bored all she wanted, it was apparent pretty quick the idea was still sensual enough in her head, her clitoral hood retracting fairly quickly.

A thought occurred to me. I have no clue how fast a woman can orgasm if that is her goal. I should ask that, I imagine sex education with Ravyn would be very detailed and elaborate. I understood it would be determined both by how turned on she was and how fast she was trying to do it. Glancing between her spiralling finger motions and her face as her eyes slowly began to unfocus on everything around her I stood up and made my way over to the dresser. Picking up the noose, I turn around and make a show of flexing it in my hand.

She gazes over and stops, staring at me suspiciously.

"Are you quitting, sweetie?" I ask.

She resumes the movements, now peering at me expressionless. I do wonder what she thinks. She's fascinating. I hope she feels the same way.

Stepping back over to her I sat beside her.

"Okay, this is going to be a new one for me too. You know, I remember reading about this a long time ago when you really started hearing about it being a growing thing a few years back. Where people were wanting an orgasm worth dying for. I couldn't wrap my mind around it."

She pants, her breath disorganized as her hand continues rubbing at a steady consistent pace. Placing the noose around her neck with the end dangling out over her chest, I gently begin to rub at the base of her neck causing her to shiver. Either my touch turned her on more, revolted her or she had an iron deficiency. One of the three, I'll assume the most favorable.

"Now, as far as my earlier monologue to this bit here, I was going somewhere with it. I am extremely fascinated with how you think. In understanding, in knowing. At the same time? The mystery just adds intrigue. See, I don't give a damn what most people think. They look at me, and they think I am that guy from high school. Just some punk ass jock, some meathead and that's as far as it goes."

The noose was really just for show at this point. It was symbolic. Leaning back onto the bed I reposition myself slowly behind her. I felt something slowly coming over me. It was primal in nature. My chest felt lighter. My head hadn't been this clear in some time.

There was a small twang of fear in the exhilaration.

"And that's fine. Most of those guys are like everyone else really. They hold shitty mundane jobs, just like everyone else. They mature, have children, carry on with their shitty lives just like the people who hated them." I smile. The easiest common denominator is going to be what people go for in terms of easy associations and everyone was once a kid. "Some do better, some do worse. By the end of it, they've all been programmed to become the same damn thing. But I am pretty and smug. So people think of high school and college antagonists."

Pressing one bicep against the side of her neck, I could feel her breathing. She leaned back, making my job easier.

"To me, most people are at the end of the day, the same. Their community shapes them. They are *extremely* boring. I fear I'll get to a stage where everything bores me. You don't though. I've always seen us as kindred spirits in a way."

Wrapping my arm entirely around her neck I proceed to tighten my forearm across the other side of her neck from my bicep. She gasps as the air is blocked off. I release shortly after but keep my arm tight. Her breathing becomes panicked as the air flow is being clearly restricted. I look in the mirror to see her fingers still hard at work. My goodness, is this really happening? Smiling, I lean my head down to whisper gently in her ear.

"I am not a genius but I am very much a black sheep. If nothing else a man built on over indulgence, every custom, norm and rule be damned. Some people go with food. Some go with drugs. Some go with sex. There is a hell of a list for vices people all choose in one form or

another to cope with the daily grind of living. I went with everything. I bleed vice! Cut me open and drink me, I imagine you'd overdose on mindless self indulgence."

Tightening my hold again, I block air off fully causing her to lean her head back, her mouth dropping wide open. I quickly stop again, continuing to apply a small pressure. Too long risked so much and too long was mere seconds. She could already be seeing stars. I didn't want her to pass out or worse.

"I've ditched marriages, friends, family- everyone I've ever been expected to care for. I don't know if I was just meant to be a lone wolf, breaking into any den of sheep that would have me but, that's just the way it's often gone. I feel it's easier that way. For everyone really. To love me is to love disappointment and pain. Because I'll give you both every single time. Maybe it's just because I am a wrestler?"

God her eyes are beautiful. If eyes were windows into the soul she'd be an angel. Clearly that's not accurate.

"Have you ever met too many of those in your life? We're all sociopathic, psychopathic, narcissistic, attention starved whores out to get what we can and we hate ourselves and the world for it when we aren't getting it. Sadly even most of them bore me. As I imagine they bore you. Lately?"

She makes several quick gasps as I go to reapply the hold. She isn't turning blue yet. So very, very red though.

"I fear I've become docile. I've forgotten what risks are. I miss the real rushes. The real reminders of living. Which is why I give this gift to you!"

Releasing the hold I smile up, contemplating. Can she orgasm while being choked to this degree?

“Fight or flight has kicked in, your body has no real way of knowing what in the hell it is that is seemingly trying to kill you. The flood of adrenaline, endorphins and other little goodies being pushed through your bloodstream every single time you’re able to get more air in your system- Nevermind the lightheadedness mixed in with that euphoria, the fact you’re currently rubbing on the most sensitive and pleasurable part of your body. *Why*, I am jealous. It’s mind numbing toxicity.”

Restricting her breathing once more, I turn away, some figure catching the corner of my eye. I turn and see nothing.

“You’re the most fascinating person I’ve ever met. You’re different. Why wouldn’t I hope for a connection? And here we are, me, reciting my feelings. You, choking in front of a mirror, rubbing one out.”

I continue glancing around. I swear I saw something. I feel Ravyn then shifting around violently before frantically tapping my arm. It occurred to me I was in the process of strangling her for real. Immediately releasing her, I move to the side and lay her down on her back. She begins gasping for air, shaking. I stare down at her, concerned. This is officially awkward for everyone, I could potentially be joining Asher in prison.

"Give up?" I ask.

Just play it casually.

It takes her a moment to respond, as she coughs several times. Finally as her eyes begin to adjust she shakes her head. She stares up at me and smiles.

"No... No, I finished."

Jesus Christ.

Her face was flushed and her neck showed signs of the exchange. At least she didn't turn blue.

Grinning, I ignored the fear that I went too far while running a finger down the side of her head, pulling strands of hair from her face. She'd tell me if I did. Or just plan a car accident or something, I don't know what the fuck evil geniuses do.

"How was it?"

"Your self-indulgent rambling was making it harder." She says before coughing again, her breathing now begins to get far closer to normalized. Everyone's a critic.

She closes her eyes and reaches a hand up, gently rubbing at the base of her neck before letting her fingers explore the sides where the pressure had been applied. After another awkward pause she opens her eyes and looks at me with another unreadable expression. She sat up and for a moment I figured she'd tell me to leave so she could finally have her breakfast.

"Truth or dare?"

"So how did it go?"

I looked across the table at Autumn who stared back expectantly. I tried stopping myself from drooling. The valium made sitting not an issue. Other basic functions? They were in question. I expected a dry mouth. Maybe I took too many.

"Don't be silly! He's like our emissary! Doing all the heavy lifting behind the scenes!" Lexy piped in cheerfully. I turned and smiled for her as she had both elbows on the table to allow her

hands to rest under her beaming grin. I had to immediately go for my napkin as I felt drool sliding down from the corner of my mouth.

Autumn noticed.

“Ace… Okay, what did you talk about then? I mean we're still facing each other. I am just lost at what you were hoping to achieve.”

I nod, understanding her worries.

She stares at me as I find my eyes closing.

“Ace? Are you with us?”

Shaking my head I nod frantically while rubbing my eyes.

“Yeah, yeah I am fine. I uh, we talked.”

“And?”

“Oh stop heckling the hunk of a man! Just be comforted by the fact it’s being taken care of!” Lexy states while clapping.

“Fine, whatever. I was just worried about him, that’s all. They could have seen it as an opportunity to send us a message or something. It’s not like she doesn’t have a history of sending those. Were Alex and Xander with her?”

I blink in confusion before just nodding along. Whatever, she would probably know things I don’t, I pay attention to so little these days.

“Yeah, yeah, CHBK and Xander Valentine were there. Still baffled at their odd alliance. He’s a real sweetheart in person though, a gentle giant.”

The expression on Autumn’s face made me uneasy. She was just staring at me like I slapped her.

“What?” I ask.

“You’re seeing Xander Valentine now?” She turns to face Lexy now, seemingly forgetting I am right here. “I think it’s starting to get worse.”

“I am right here.”

“Oh he’s fine!” Lexy says brushing off the accusation.

“Lexy, he needs help,” Autumn says determinedly.

“I am right here!”

Groaning as the wooziness begins to kick in, Autumn turns back to me while reaching out to place her hands over mine.

“Ace, I was thinking, you’ve seen it yourself where Adam is now getting help from Matt Hodges, haven’t you?”

“How in the hell is that narcissist a counsellor?” I moan, finding my head hurting.

“He’s clearly certified. That’s not really the point, he is here and he is helping Adam who has clearly let things go too far.”

“Do you think Ravyn should start seeing Matt Hodges?” I ponder.

“That’s brilliant!” Lexy exclaims. “If anyone can take out an evil genius it’s an evil doctor. He’s way more qualified to fight this for us.”

Autumn shakes her head, sighing before completely ignoring Lexy in that moment.

“I think he could be the answer for you. I am not an expert here. I feel like we should really get outside help and with this new initiative, It’s an opportunity for you that wasn’t there before.”

I finally muster enough strength to raise my hand up and motion for that to be brushed off. There was nothing that would be more depressing than sitting in a dark locker room with Adam Allocco in SCW’s version of Alcoholics Anonymous/rehab.

“Autumn, I appreciate your concern, I feel, I feel fine,” I say, beginning to seriously feel sick.

“Ace, you’re high now, it’s clear as day. What did you take?”

“Nothing, just uh, some pain stuff. I eh,” Oh no. Stop. No, no. For love of God, don’t talk about it.

“My ass hurts.”

You stupid asshole.

Autumn shakes her head. “Ace, that’s a silly excuse, you have a drug dependency problem and for the sake of your career and your **life**, it needs to be addressed.” That’s easy for her to say. I doubt Ryan split her open with a nine and half inch log.

“No, I, Ravyn she, had The Alex Brigade throw me into a dumpster.” Smooth. It’s not a lie. Just the wrong time and place.

Lexy leans over, placing her hand on my shoulder as Autumn shifts back, contemplating over what I just stated.

“Oh no! I am sorry honey-boo-”

“Please don’t call me that.”

“-I can’t believe my father would stoop this low!” She continues. “I’ve tried everything to make him see reason. Oh no, Ravyn is still going to bring war to us, isn’t she?!”

Her hope seemed gone at the hearing of my physical abuse.

“Don’t even start with him, I cannot believe he showed up to my house. This is getting silly, I just want it to stop. I am going to make it stop one way or another,” Autumn declared.

I nod, trying to raise my glass up. I drop it on the table, pouring Italian soda all over it and me. Lexy reaches over with napkins and tries to save me a mess as Autumn stands up surprised.

“Ace, please. Something needs to change here, this can’t be a new standard. I don’t want to tell anyone else how to live but it’s directly influencing people I care about.”

I wanted to apologize, that I didn’t want to spill the soda either.

“You’re one of them now. I hope you realize that.”

“Autumn, he’s fine! Just a little woozy is all after that mean old evil, psychopathic, demon possessed, mean spirited, father snatching, pervert had him thrown into a dumpster!” She leans over and tries holding me up as I just about fall over.

“I’m sorry, I overdid it this morning. I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” I muttered.

I really was. I didn’t understand the house bit involving CHBK at all. All I knew is I went to talk to Ravyn, triggered an affair, went back out with them to lunch and Autumn is still worried about my wellbeing while Lexy trusts me completely.

She deserves better.

Which will always be the case for anyone with me. Outside of I suppose Kennedy, she got exactly what she deserved.

Lexy wraps her arm around me, I guess I was making for a sad display. I just didn’t want my walking to obviously display some degree of pain.

I was now feeling downright pathetic. The rest of our get together was rather uneventful. I suppose Autumn felt content in making her declaration. If she was expecting me to volunteer myself to Doctor Hodges she was out of her mind.

Regardless of whether or not I needed assistance.

I had a new drug, one there was likely to be no recovery from.

I was also a fool, there would be no happy ending if I was expecting more out of anything with Ravyn Taylor. I needed to accept that here and now. One day it would end and there would

be nothing but the memories to reflect on. Whatever choices I made between now and then would be in vain if I expected anything more.

It was still a weird feeling I wasn't particularly used to. Hadn't in quite some time. It was the worst one. Worse than love. It was the one feeling that should be considered the bane of all existence and banned from considerations. If it could be plucked away from us as a species it needed to be.

It was a feeling people could hold for a lifetime, ignoring the obvious and letting it ruin them from beginning, middle and end.

Hope.

I hoped. I don't know why I hoped but I did. Know better. Least I think I do.

And yet it lingers.

I reflect back on having just about strangled her in the hotel room, her sitting up to me, actually giving me a dare.

It was a cruel one. Maybe funny, maybe not.

It was the first real challenge I hadn't forced on her and it felt blatant in that moment this was not the same game to her that it was last time at all. She was blatantly using me for manipulation. I was to be a tool. Something to string along and break and I was willing to accept that.

It took a couple hours but slowly coherency returned. I didn't even question what I was going to be doing tonight. It was settled. Just a minor dare. Silly as it was.

After Lexy and I watched a movie, she proceeded into her little workshop. She had her podcast she enjoyed doing still. Was probably the most proactive person I'd ever been with.

As time went on and darkness crept in, I felt a little nervous about what would come next. At the same time it would be pretty damn easy. Kat and Lexy both wouldn't stay up too late. I wasn't sure where I should do it but opted for the one room someone was going to enter.

Ravyn had given me a box. A gift from her to Lexy, entirely for Ravyn's amusement.

As Kat's light went off and I thought more and more of dares and tributes of sorts, I went toward the bathroom Lexy always used in the morning.

Standing beside the open shower, I peered up at the ceiling and contemplated how to best proceed with this simple dare. Mostly from an artistic perspective.

I was but a humble tool. A very proud one who took these things seriously.

I could play her game. Because then she'd then have to play **mine**. And somewhere in there? Hope blossomed.

Nevermind the obvious.

I was going to push her buttons, some way. I wasn't a genius but I wasn't just any fool.

Satisfied with the image developing in my head for this particular dare, I made short work of the task at hand. With that I made my departure.

This was too easy. Maybe if I had a soul this would bother me more but I suppose her real objective was to drive Lexy insane, finding amusement there?

That I felt guilty for which, may have been the point?

Guilt never stopped me from doing anything before. Honor was for the damned.

I went to sleep that night not far from there in the hotel I stayed from time to time. I only stayed at Kat's occasionally. Lexy was afraid she'd force her out to get her own place if I just moved in.

Sleep came fairly easy. It was waking up that was a bitch.

It came in the form of seventeen texts and three phone calls. Lexy had sounded the alarm. Sighing I got up and was thankful there was just a slight agitation crawling up my ass in that moment.

And so the dreadful monotony of living proceeded mostly as normal. I showered. I ate. I would go to the gym after but first I needed to answer the call.

Lexy had sent out an alert summoning **EVERYONE**.

The animal people, Autumn, the weird foreigner named Ryan, both Kat 1.0 and Kat 2.0. I stepped in and Lexy ran into my arms in absolute horror.

"Ace, OHMYGAWD, IT FAILED! SHE'S COMING HARD. TOO HARD."

I wrapped my arms around her and lifted her off her feet before swinging her for dramatic effect. It caused her to at least stop melodramatically screaming, even letting out a little '*weeee!*'

Unfortunately as I set her down the panic seeps back in immediately.

I felt the room drop. My heart give. It was just terrible. Absolutely the worst. Stepping into the bathroom I saw what they were murmuring about. It was the nooses Ravyn had me hang up for them to see.

Two of them. One with LEXY written in big pink letters. The other Purple with AUTUMN over it. A fitting gift I suppose.

"Do you see what you've done?!" Lexy shouts at Katsumi, on the verge of tears.

Katsumi to her credit, plays dumb.

"Ooo, Katsumi get lighter from bad man, make everything better."

She smiles and nods at her own declaration before running off. I've never seen her anywhere for longer than two minutes. I once wondered if she was someone I was imagining.

“Guys, I know this should be shocking but I feel like no one has taken into account that, this crazy bitch had me shot. Like multiple times. On television. And no one seems to give a shit,” says Bear.

Everyone ignores him as Kat keeps fiddling with her security module on the wall in the living room.

“How the hell did she even get in? This is ridiculous,” she mutters.

“She’s an evil genius! She hacked into our house, isn’t it obvious?! We need another genius, this isn’t fair!” Lexy proclaims, finding it harder and harder to remain still in my arms.

Autumn to her credit looked determined. With her arms crossed over her chest, tapping her feet while deep in thought. She was a woman on a mission.

“Yeah this is crazy, who does this?” I ask.

Stop talking idiot. Just blend in.

Thankfully I really didn’t need to be there or say anything. Nor was I really expected to.

Autumn had already deduced what needed to be done.

“This ends at Under Attack. She won’t find it funny when I drive my boot straight up her tight ass.”

And I was hard again. I couldn’t really help it, it was far too soon for anyone to be making references to that particular part of her anatomy.

Lexy peered up at me expectantly and I felt horrible of course. I assume that was one of Ravyn’s goals, the other just being a cunt.

My role as her tool was complete. The next game would be mine. In the meantime, I needed to make Lexy feel better. I remember promising to give her a day with a psychic and desert hunting? Was that it? Some card game- I could be forgiven for forgetting *that* one I think.

Hopefully it would take her mind off of Ravyn and our silly, silly games.

Would be nice if one of us could.

I certainly wasn't going to be able to.



-Shoot-

Under Attack looms so close just over the horizon. Can you see the poster? So many possibilities.

Six special little people, all vying to be your Adrenaline Champion.

Inside of the Elimination Chamber.

Holly Adams must defend her Adrenaline Championship against Shilo Valiant.

A very handsome son of a bitch named Ace Marshall.

Jordan Majors.

Minerva.

I forget the other useless asshole.

It's an event quite worthy of the Challenge of the Year Award. Not an actual award mind you but it likely should be. The Elimination Chamber would be right up there with The Flame.

Certainly a match worthy of the Adrenaline Championship. Why, it might even get to live up to its name.

I don't need to tell you people what an elimination chamber is. You know it's a brutal structure. You know what goes on inside.

Bad things, naughty things. Sadistic things all throughout the night. People scream, people cry, people bleed. It's always set near Halloween I suspect for a reason. It's meant to carry within itself some rather spooky connotations.

In reality? Oh they do hurt.

The last time I was World Champion was going into one of these things. My sidekick would walk out victorious that night in his third match ever and I could do nothing but laugh hysterically into the night because that's what these events often prove to be.

Absurd.

It's always special just for how it seems to get the blood pumping within everyone. It's the night everyone gets to 'oh so fierce' in their determination to win. Everyone always chooses this event to say to hell with safety, it's the night of reckless abandonment.

As it should be. Especially now.

Can you smell it?

*You should practically be able to **taste** it coming off of Jordan.*

The desperation in the air. The need to succeed. The need to make a statement.

I have history officially with every single person in this match.

And while people can focus on their animosities, I'd like to wave and give a special shout out to the ever lovely Holly Adams.

Hey baby. Oh how I've missed you. I feel like we had such a good time in our last bout. I wasn't even upset, you laying out on top, straddling me. Was like old times, I even came a little.

Not to make Autumn jealous or anything. She understands, we had fire.

I will say what no one was nice enough to tell me.

***I pity you**.*

I pity that out of all the Championships in SCW it's yours that is landing in this arena on this night in the elimination chamber.

I am sorry that you were the unlucky one.

It doesn't make it better but I am at least willing to offer you that little olive branch.

I know, I know. You'll be putting up a tough face. You're going to go in headstrong. You're going to do the impossible, defending your Championship.

When in reality? You've gotta be pissed.

You're almost in an unwinnable situation, you're practically being set up for failure.

While Jordan will go on her suicidal tirade about having absolutely nothing to lose, while Shilo dances around a fire to Konrad's blood God's promising to break everyone physically? The fact is? There will be no one in that chamber more desperate than you.

If you lose, your Championship reign will be flat out dismissed by the roster that hates you. You may get a rematch, you may be back in the mile long line of challengers praying for another opportunity.

But if you win?

If you could do the impossible?

Honey, darling. You would be entering a level of your career you've been dreaming of. You wouldn't have to lie anymore about your greatness, you'd be there. You would be undeniable.

No one could take this away from you. Coming out of this match with that to your name, you could finally stop hanging around drug dealers and random homeless people. You will be the super star you've always claimed to be.

No one else here is going to give you credit for a damn thing. I will. I won't even make this entire bit about your pussy this time around. I could but I am not going to. Not this time.

However this is the part where I have to inform you, I am going to have to do it again. I am going to have to break your heart.

I know you're a tough girl, more than anyone else in this match. You can handle the abuse. If anyone has the strength to leave the arena a loser with their head held up high, baby, it's you.

Minerva loses a match and becomes homeless? Screaming wildly, like a banshee every other show and still runs away from three quarters of her matches.

Jordan? I think she's finally lost it. Your tweets are a threat to the mental stability of the roster. That is how much people care about your words. Your mouth is like a vacuum and a loaded gun.

But you? You're level headed. Sane. Respectable.

I have faith in you to even go beyond this. To do great things.

Just not tonight.

Becoming your successor to a prestigious title like the Adrenaline Championship will be an honor.

Hell, I may even be able to remind the world what that word even means.

Adrenaline is a drug, people. A natural drug released into the body. It gets you high. It makes you feel alive.

And believe me. I have a history of addiction here folks.

*I **REALLY** need a fix.*

*I **want** to feel alive again.*

*It's wild in that, while Shilo will claim this match broke me last time, I am **CRAVING** this opportunity. I am only jealous of Lucas because he'll likely play with staple guns and barbed wire. But then I think, I get to try putting Shilo through glass and jump off of things.*

I am not a masochist but I admit, this job brings the sadist out in all of us. It's that chemical rush that I've been neglecting. I've been complicit. It's only when I am beating Autumn's head against the bedpost throughout all hours of the night while letting our passions burst free that I get to feel something and now?

I finally get to feel it again here in this moment at Under Attack.

I've been chasing this Championship my entire career. I just spent the first six years of that career believing you could get the adrenaline needed from a needle.

I don't even think I was sober when I first challenged for it in 2009. Does this surprise anyone?

There has rarely been a time where I am not a mess of a man chasing. Always chasing, always wanting. Desire is my name.

There is wickedness in my heart. There is a need in my soul. For you would-be breakers of man, devours of worlds, please! Give me the rush. Make me high. Make me feel alive again.

I am not the dare devil I used to be. I am not the provocateur the simpletons claim me to be. Words are cheap, it's our actions that play a big role in defining us.

Words to live by. Or were they words from a Batman movie? I don't know, does anyone actually care?

I know everyone will bring their very best. I know they are all capable of beautiful, wonderful things.

May Jordan and that guy… What was his name? My trios partner. May they both find it in themselves to feel good about themselves and accept themselves for who they are. Without the Adrenaline Championship.

May Holly find it in her glorious chest to forgive me for what I do.

That's a hope, a fleeting dream.

Look at me, Ace Marshall, the poet.

I wish I had prettier words, I really do. Unfortunately there is nothing pretty or clean about me, I am a smear you can't remove. I want the fantastical or nothing at all and everything about me is absolutely disgusting. From the words I make to the scenes I paint, I am your orbiter of filth.

I am the real deal.

I am a parental nightmare, the man your mother warned you about. Toxic? Sure! I am greed and I am lust. I am envy and I am pride. A glutton, a sloth. There is wrath and he comes to you all playing on the hype. I will represent the world as your Adrenaline Champion as it should be, one transactional dose at a time.

To have potential retribution from 2017?

So sweet. No, Shilo. 2017 didn't break me. I was broken a long time ago. Just like you! The difference is it's only now that my mask begins to crack away.

I am the Sinner Man. We're all chasing the kind of rush that puts people like Asher Hayes into prison. That which convinces Konrad to be strapped to the wall. I see what each and every single one of you do, trying, desperately trying to find that pleasurable tingly feeling that brings joy to your world and it brings a joy to my heart, really. You want the cope. You want the glory. You want that feeling.

And you're all tourists. Tip toeing into my realm.

And I finally have the opportunity to get the fix I've been so desperately chasing.