Schadefreude

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He knew he had made the correct decision to hire her when she began working without arranging her desk. The phone calls were neatly recorded, memos were all typed before noon, and she had a sweet ass. It was tough to get a look at it though. He caught a quick flash of it when she signed for the fed-ex. The deliveryman smiled politely at her before leaving.

"Stay away from my woman," he thought reflexively.

She came in that first day with cowboy boots on. He filed that little detail away, secretly hoping she would be barefoot by the end of the day. She wasn’t. After two weeks summer dresses and cowboy boots gave way to muted blouses and flats.

“She’s not trying to impress me anymore,” he thought.

A small plush teddy bear discreetly appeared on her desk, nestled between the stapler and the phone. He found himself staring at it, searching for its meaning. Was it a gift from a friend? It was too new to be a childhood relic. The bear’s left eye had been sewn in too sharply, giving it a permanent cockeyed glare. It was a meaningful item for her. What was inspirational about the bear? It was a useless item. A lover’s memento? He saw the bear on the rack next to the cigarettes at the gas station check out counter. A thoughtless gift. The next day he saw her place a rubber troll doll next to the bear. It once had purple hair, but this doll’s hair was trimmed down to the scalp with only a small fuzz of purple hair remaining.

“Lesbian troll,” he thought.

He firmly believed she would sleep with another woman. Only another woman would give such a useless gift. He waited a week and then placed the toys in a compromising position on her desk as he left the office. The next morning he waited and waited for her to accuse him, but no mention of it was made.

He was soon spending his free time between phone calls and spreadsheets visualizing her going down on him under his desk. The whole thing was perfect: loose tie and him on the phone when someone would walk in unannounced. She would stop in mid-stroke and quietly wait for the person to leave, never noticing her shoes protruding
from under the modesty panel.

“She swallows,” he thought.

He snatched a quick look at the troll, newly repositioned on the top of her monitor.

“No, she probably doesn’t.”

A few days after the bear and troll became intimate friends, she came in with the sheer blouse and off the shoulder bra on. That night he insisted on anal sex with his wife.

“You like it. You like it,” he sputtered when she arched her back and tensed her shoulders.

* * *

The next month went by in a blur of over sugared coffees and unstapled reports. She came into the office on time with almost exactly three minutes to spare every morning. One day she finished working and absent-mindedly pulled a nail file from her purse. Each digit was then carefully rounded. He wondered if she chewed her nails as a child. Perhaps she grew out of it, or substituted thumb sucking or hair twirling.

“She’s a nervous person,” he thought. “She’s always been that way.”

He tried to imagine her with her first lover. The image didn’t appear so he drew even further back to her first sweaty exploration of her own body. Waiting patiently for the orgasm and then feeling sore and angry when it didn’t happen.

“She did it to fit in. Everyone else was doing it,” he thought.

She finished her nail buffing and got up to carry out a half-full bag of garbage. He was disappointed that she did it without hesitation.

“That was far too random. That’s unacceptable,” he thought.

He briefly toyed with following her home after work but decided it was too soon and settled for coffee and a new fantasy. Her head was to be shaved trim and spiked into purple tufts. Her body casually tied to a rocking chair, and her eyes darting from fear to recognition and back again as he brought a belt flat against her breasts. A penumbra of sweat staining the wood beneath her legs and her broken, willing rocks forwards to receive the next hit.
It wasn't a coincidence it was inventory season. Piles of faxes and summary sheets filled his desktop as he fired off emails and phone calls in quick succession. As the piles dwindled his rage grew. She had been quietly leaving work several minutes early. This was to stop immediately. He had prepared for this. When he approached she tilted her body slightly forward in her chair.

“She's pretending to work,” He thought.

“Why?”

“I have some additional things that need to go to the third floor before you leave tonight,” he said. A dusty cardboard box passed between them and she nodded her assent, wrapping her arms around the box as she made her way toward the elevator.

It was a good interaction. Immediate submission, immediate action. He felt his penis stiffening and quickly stifled a smile when she returned from the elevator with the box in tow.

“I'm not sure where you wanted me to put these. I didn't see any space last time I was down there,” She said.

“Are you sure about that?” he asked.

She nodded.

“I'll come down with you. I'm sure you were just looking in the wrong place.”

He sensed his voice sharpening into disapproval as he finished the sentence.

The two stepped into the empty elevator. He stood slightly in front of her, staring at her amorphous reflection in the stainless steel doors.

“She's watching the numbers”

13...12...

The elevator stopped and opened its doors, but no one entered.

“I guess people get tired of waiting for it,” she said. There was a twinge of nerve in her voice. The doors slid closed and the elevator resumed its drop.

11...10...9...8...

She had a rhythmic, nasal breathing that matched the grinding of the gears. The fluorescent bulbs hummed in monotone overhead.
The light suddenly flickered off. There was a heavy, high-pitched grinding noise from somewhere above and it slammed to a stop, throwing the two to the floor and scattering the box of papers. The elevator went dark.

“Are you OK?” he heard her say.

“I lost my glasses,” he said. He rolled from his back to all fours and began patting the ground blindly. His hand brushed against a knobby bone. Her ankle.

“Hello?” he heard her say.

His hand carefully slipped off the shoe. Her left foot. She was not wearing nylons and he traced the contour of the arch with the tip of his index finger. She held her body immobile and he slid his fingertip past her ankle to her calve and up to the hem of her skirt. His hand grasped her leg and she exhaled sharply in response.

“She didn’t scream,” he thought. His eyes had become accustomed to the dark and his gaze fixed on her shape in the black.

“Hello?”

The elevator doors had opened onto the third floor and he stood immobile in the elevator.

“Are you awake? We’re here,” she said, pushing past him to exit.

He watched her turn and then blinked several times to clear his head before following her into the hallway.

* * *

She came in on a cloudy Monday wearing a red sweater and black slacks. He made a point of casually bumping into her to get a sense of the sweater’s texture. She said nothing of it, and he retreated to his desk and began a new thought.

Soft red blindfold. Silk, and firmly tied so that if she opened her eyes anything she saw would be covered in a red haze. There was a leather neck collar and wristbands. She was otherwise nude. He led her to a chair and bound her hands behind her. He let his hand linger on her shoulder as he walked behind her. The hand gripped her neck as he bent over to breathe in her ear.

“You will not speak. You do not exist”.

He released her to raise a lamp in her direction to warm her skin. In a few minutes she would sweat out the warmth in discomfort. An hour would pass and she would be
in the same position. He would wait for her to move and invite punishment.

When he looked up from his desk she was casually typing at a spreadsheet.

* * *

The rest of the week she remained locked up in his room, sweating in anticipation.

On Friday he led an older woman into the room. Her lover. She was a squat woman with short curled hair. She found her blindfold and removed it. She looked from the woman to him and back to her. Did she recognize her? There was no movement. They would perform for him. They would... She sat immobile on the chair waiting for a command. He was indecisive. Her lips betrayed a smile and he slapped the image away, fuming.

Just then she came out of the elevator into the yellow light of the parking ramp. He stood concealed behind a truck watching her. She moved purposely down the ramp toward her car, keys in hand, eyes scanning for potential trouble.

“She’s going to check the backseat,” he thought, and she did, peering into the car before opening the door and releasing the handle. With a click her headlights were up and he was down, watching her wheels spin by on the way to the exit.

* * *

As he sat in his office the next morning, he led the two women by the neck through a darkened hallway. They both wore collars attached to a pair of leads he held firmly in his palm. The group climbed a set of stairs and found themselves on a stage in a vast auditorium. Glowing red spotlights bathed the room with just enough light to give shape to hundreds of silhouettes calmly seated, anticipating their arrival.

“Get undressed,” he whispered. The two stood and removed skirts and stockings. She began to pull off the red sweater, but it caught on the lead and she let her hands fall to her sides. He dropped the lead and stepped in behind her revealing a knife with a curved blade and serrated edge to the audience.
"I'll take care of that," he said.

He grabbed the sweater at the waist and pulled the knife against it, slicing it neatly up the back. When he reached her neck he let the tip of the knife rest against her skin. He dragged it slightly to create sensation, but not damage.

The other woman moved in front of her and pulled the sweater from her arms. She stepped upstage and held it out for the audience before tossing it aside.

"Disobedience," he thought. He walked to her and led her back to his secretary, positioning her so her breasts would press into her back. She was shorter than the secretary and her face fit squarely between her shoulder blades. The two women stood rigid and breathed in tandem. In a swift motion he reached in front of her and slashed her throat, spraying her blood across his secretaries neck, leaving a wet film of blood soaking into his fingernails.

* * *

"I'm expecting a last-minute delivery. Let me know when it gets here," he said. As he finished the elevator doors opened and a tall man in uniform stepped out carrying an envelope.

"For... Thompson?" He said, holding the envelope in midair.

"Malik?" he heard her say.
"Sherie? Oh my God!"

She sprung from her chair to embrace him, and they grasped each other recklessly.

"I almost didn't recognize you, that uniform does nothing for you."

"You haven't called me forever."
"I know. I just started this job and everything was so hectic. Do you have time to talk?"
"I've got two more deliveries but they're both in this building. I can talk for a few minutes then."
"Can I meet you downstairs when you get done? I was about to leave anyway."

"Yeah. I'll, uh. Oh. I need you to sign here."

She signed and tossed the envelope to her desk, already reaching for her purse. The deliveryman left for the elevator and she looked up and smiled, giving a wave.
She turned. “You don’t mind if I leave a little early today, do you?”

He reached for the envelope and said nothing. His head burned as he opened the door to his office. He leaned back in his chair and tried to call up her image. All he could get was her talking on the phone. Typing. Making photocopies. He scratched at his Adam’s apple and closed his eyes. She was his secretary. She was filing. She was clearing a printer jam. He opened his eyes and stared at her empty desk for a moment. The bear and the troll smiled back at him unaware.

“You’re fired,” he thought.

L. Anton Dencklau...

is a thin, observant man who will graduate in spring 2001 with his second bachelor’s degree in business. He likes to refer to Iowa as a “wasteland with telephone poles inserted into the ground at 84 degree angles, surrounded by the air of impotence and misery.” He has never seen the ocean.

On Right:

Kelly Schwantz wishes to decline from revealing herself. Though, she will say that she lives in a basement with her most loyal admirer and roommate, Forrest. She would like to add this message is compliant for the hearing impaired.