

## White

By Bradley Lloyd

For once he was looking at her like she had always wanted him to—sort of.

He sat hunched over in the black chair in the corner of her studio. The room was lit only by candles, so as she finished putting on her makeup, it was hard for her to make him out clearly. His eyes were hidden by shadow, but she could feel it more than she could see it. His whole body said that he was looking.

He was leaning towards her, his bare arms weightless at his side. He was wearing black pants and a very tight black shirt—the tightest she had ever seen him wear. In the dim light, with the black chair and black clothes, it was almost as if his head was disembodied. It was just floating there, in the shadows—looking at her. His brow was furrowed, his eyes hidden. But underneath the dark, arching brows, she knew his blue eyes were looking at her.

The hundred bucks was worth it, she decided—just for that look. The hours and hours of planning, of making every detail perfect—it was all worth it.

Finished with the makeup, she sat down on the black velvet body pillow that lay across her bed, so that her eyes would be even with his. She lightly fingered the velvet, looking down briefly at her hand as it made a spontaneous swirling shape. Why wasn't he saying anything? She could still feel his eyes. He had never taken them off of her. She looked to her side, in the mirror that covered the wall above her dresser, where all the candles were spread out. She could smell their sweet and musty aroma above her own cologne and hairspray. She pretended to admire her own reflection, but really, she was looking at him. Just to make sure he was looking. He was.

She was careful to keep her head slightly lowered as she looked up at him.

“Do you like them?” she finally asked.

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He didn't want to believe his eyes. When she was finished, she truly looked like something that had crawled from a swamp.

“My God, Steph. That's repulsive,” he said.

He wasn't surprised by her clothes. They were gray and baggy like they always were, but this time a little torn and marked with blood. Typical Stephanie, he thought. But God, her face . . .

She had worked some sort of voodoo with the hair gel, and the strands that were normally tied back softly behind her head now hung from her scalp in ragged tendrils.

It was partly the hair, he thought. She was wearing a plastic mask, but the hair hung down at the sides of her head, hiding any lines that would give the mask away as an illusion. As a result, the bluish welts on the mask seemed to rise from her own face, the purple veins to spider her own white skin.

Only her eyes weren't hidden by the mask. Her eyes were her own, and that's what made it so frightening.

She had put white makeup around her eyes and on the mask, so no seam showed, and mask and skin were blended together. It focused all attention to the middle of her sockets, where he now stared. Even in the smoky candlelight, he could see them plainly.

Her eyes were pure white.

And he couldn't take his eyes off them. "That is so repulsive," he said again.

"Cool."

"How much did those cost you?"

"Don't ask."

"How much?"

"A hundred bucks."

"You're crazy." He paused for a moment, still looking. Her head was slightly lowered, so that as she glanced up at him, she looked positively satanic. "You look so real."

"Cool." She was probably smiling beneath the mask, and he couldn't even tell.

"Can you see out of those things?"

"Yeah. They're prescription."

"Oh my God. You're so crazy."

"C'mon. I'll do you now."

He smiled. "OK."

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This would be fun.

She rose from the bed and walked across the room to flip on the light. She let her fingers pause before she flicked the switch on. She liked the control. This was her illusion. But she would let there be light. She knew it wouldn't matter—her costume would hold up, even when the shadows were gone. She flicked the switch.

“Where should I sit?” he asked her. In the light, now, she could see his eyes. He was still looking at her. Hell, that gaze almost made her feel tingly. She was good.

“Sit in front of the mirror, silly. On the bar stool.”

He stood up, pulling his shirt down as he rose. Jason had a nice chest, she thought. His pecks were large enough and his stomach flat enough that every time he would rise, the shirt would lift a little. He would be pulling that shirt down all night.

“Do you know what you're going to do to me?” he asked her as he sat down.

What was the boy asking? “Jason,” she said. “Look at me. Don't you think I know what I'm doing? I'm the master.”

She saw him look at his reflection—no, actually, he was looking at her reflection. He smiled. “OK.”

She grabbed the pallet from her dresser, full of splotches and globs of colored makeup. This is really going to be great, she thought. He usually never let her touch him. He was really uptight that way.

“So, am I going to know anybody there tonight?” he asked her.

“You'll know Angela and Mike. And a bunch of people that you met last year at my birthday party that you probably don't remember.”

“All those people from the warehouse?”

“Yeah.”

“Which Mike? Antwan or Dummyhead?”

Which Mike did he think! “Angela's Mike. Antwan. It's his party, silly.”

“What about the other Mike?”

She knew that he was going to ask about him. She knew it. “He won't be there.”

“Why not?”

“He's having his own party.”

“What?”

“Angela and Mike didn’t formally invite him, so he’s having his own party.”  
“That sucks. That’s really rude. They lived with him; why didn’t they invite him?”

“They did. He’s just being snotty. They asked him to come.”

“Damn. Now I’ll know all of two people.”

“You’ll know me.”

“Let’s go to other Mike’s party.”

“No, he’ll have all his gay friends there.”

“Yeah. It’ll be fun.” He was looking at her in the reflection, and he had that obstinate look. Fuck him.

She spun him around in the stool to face her.

“Don’t talk. Hold still, or you’ll make me mess up.”

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Go ahead and mess up if there won’t be anyone there to impress, he thought.

He tried to invisibly scrunch back into his seat as she leaned into him. What the hell? Was she going to straddle him? That face was directly in front of him—no, the eyes were directly in front of him. He noticed that if he looked very closely, he could see a purplish ring where her pupil hid. She got within inches of his face, and he could smell the gel and hairspray on her. Cologne, too, he thought. She always wore men’s cologne. The irony of that pissed him off.

She did the white makeup first, taking a glob on two fingers and working it around the skin on his face. The makeup was cold, and it was hard for him to keep still. Every time he moved his face, he could feel the makeup, greasy and thick. And, he couldn’t stop looking at her. He hated that.

“You’re so freaky.”

She made a noise, like a blast of air coming from her nose—the precursor to her giggle—but it sounded muffled and hollow behind the mask. Her face was immovable.

“Don’t talk. Hold still.”

Her fingers went back to the palette, renewed their whiteness, and then traveled around his lips, pressing delicately on his skin. As she touched the dip on his upper lip, where the pink flesh met his paler skin, he couldn’t suppress a smile. “That tickles.”

“Hold still,” she said. He heard smile in her voice, even though he couldn’t see it. “You’ll make me mess up.”

She moved from his lips around his face, almost as if she were massaging his skin, rather than putting makeup on it. Was she doing that on purpose? If she was, he was going to ignore it. He closed his eyes. She was good, though. He had let her give him a backrub once. Normally, he hated backrubs. Getting them was fine, but the thought of his own fingers on someone else’s greasy back made him squirm. He would never return the favor, so he avoided them all together. Except for once, with her. She knew how he felt, and would never ask for one in return. Even so, he had only let her once. She was good, though. He’d give her that. She should quit the job at the stocking house and become a masseuse. At least that would be more suited to her.

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She saw him close his eyes. She thought she’d be sorry when he finally stopped looking at her, but she wasn’t sorry now. She knew she was good with her hands. She’d do this anytime. She liked it.

Mike Dummyhead always let her do it. Ironic that he was gay, as he was one of the few guys who’d flirt with her. But she didn’t want to think about him, now. But dammit, if Dummyhead did it, why wouldn’t Jason let her do it? She was done with the white makeup, but she spread it around his face for a few extra moments, messing it up and then fixing it again.

Ah well. She stopped, and watched him open his eyes. “There. Now the black.” She wiped her fingers on a nearby piece of paper towel, took a small brush, and dipped it onto her easel.

She moved in closer to him, painting the skin under his eyebrows. She watched his blue eyes follow her white eyes until his head turned upwards. She smiled under her mask. “Hold on,” she said, putting her hand on top of his head. His hair, which looked wet, was actually dry and crunchy from hair gel. “Don’t look up,” she said, pushing his head down. “Look down.” He was tall on the barstool. She stood on her tiptoes and leaned into him.

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She was leaning into him, and her chest was in his face.

“Nice boobs,” he said. The stained and torn gray dress shirt hung loosely on her. Her shape was perpetually disguised.

“Shut up,” she said, pushing his head down further. The brush danced across his brow, lightly licking his skin as she drew it back and forth.

“Steph, that really tickles. It itches, too.”

“But it looks cool. Now hold still, dammit.”

She moved from his brow to the thin skin around his eye, and he automatically closed his eyes again. The light pressure of the brush on his eyelids felt somewhat soothing. People should touch that skin more often, he thought. It’s one of those secret sensitive spots you read about in those erotic books, probably.

“OK, open,” she said. He opened his eyes, and again was face to face with her whiteness. “Now, don’t look at me, look up.” He turned his eyes to the ceiling. He was looking at Baltic Avenue. She had a giant monopoly board on her ceiling.

“Hold very still,” she said. He couldn’t focus, but he saw the blurred shape of the eye pencil coming at him. It pressed against his skin, much harsher than the brush.

“Ahhhh.”

“I know. Don’t move. Don’t blink.” Baltic Avenue began to blur as he teared, struggling to keep his eyes open. The ledge on your eyelid was not meant to be touched, he decided. Not with a pencil.

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Cool. She had made him cry.

She had never actually seen him cry before. He said that he’d cry in movies, but he never did with her, even though they always went to the movies together. She pushed the pencil down just a little bit harder than she knew she had to.

“Can you see my scar?” he asked.

“What?”

“Remember—when I split my eyelid open sophomore year of high school on the metal latch of that doorframe? There’s a little scar where my eyelid isn’t quite even.”

Shit, she had forgotten that. She felt a little guilty. Dammit, that was three years ago. She was fucking old. “Sure enough,” she said. “Of course I remember that.” And

indeed it was there. It was the tiniest of scars, barely even distinguishable. Only two crisscrossing eyelashes betrayed its presence. She wished she had lashes as long as his.

She sighed, and the sound echoed within the plastic confines of her mask.

“All finished,” she said, throwing the pencil on her dresser.

He looked good. The black clothes, the pale skin, the dark eyes. She stood back and looked at him. Tonight, he was her creation. Everyone that looked at and admired him would have her to thank. She turned him around in his stool to face the mirror, and looked at him in the reflection. She was good.

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It wasn't what he had hoped for. His face wasn't white enough. Around his eyes were dark circles, trailing into points at the side of his head, as if he were wearing a black mask. The lines weren't straight enough, though.

“Cool. Thanks. That looks really awesome,” he said. He stood up. At least his clothes looked good. He always looked good in black, he thought. The shirt was a nice touch. He had bought it only hours before. He came home from the store with a medium to try it on, only to decide that it wasn't quite tight enough. He went back and bought a small. He was glad he had. When Dummyhead Mike—or better yet, Mike's friends—got a look at him, they'd want to keep looking. He liked it when people watched him.

He sucked in his stomach, and was pleased at how the shirt bulged at his chest. He undid his belt buckle and opened his pants, tucking his shirt in. He fastened his belt a little tighter this time, as a reminder to keep sucking in, and placed the thick silver buckle directly in the center of his torso.

“You look really good,” she said. He could sense the admiration in her voice, and knew she was being genuine. That's what made him feel slightly uncomfortable. She was wiggling him out tonight, in more ways than one. God, Steph, just drop it. Don't make me feel like shit tonight. How many times had he thought that recently?

“I don't think people are going to know what I'm supposed to be,” he said.

“Even if they don't, you still look good.”

“Thanks,” he said, and studied himself in the mirror. These people didn't know him anyway, so why should he care?

His eyes were drawn from his reflection to hers as she stood by him.

“You’re looking at me,” she said.

“I know. I can’t help it.” He looked at the eyes in the reflection. He could see his eyes looking at her. He couldn’t tell where she was looking.

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She was looking into the darkness ahead. She couldn’t fucking believe it. She couldn’t fucking believe she was in this car, going to the one place she was determined not to go to tonight. The things she did for him. And what did she get for it?

“Lighten up. It’ll be fun,” he said to her. “We’ll make a game of it. I’ll tease him, and you can help. You like teasing him.”

“I guess.”

“Besides, the other party was really lame, Steph.”

“Those were my friends.”

“Mike is your friend.”

“Mike is gay.”

She didn’t turn to look at him, but she knew he was raising an eyebrow. She wondered if he would take this up and argue with her. She wondered what she would say if he did.

“Steph, the party was boring.”

Maybe she shouldn’t be so mad. He was right, Angela and Mike Antwan’s party had been pretty boring. But she had had fun. Everyone had loved her costume. Everyone had gotten to see the elusive best-friend Jason, the hot boy that she bragged about continually at work. She had gotten what she wanted, right? She had been the center of attention. So why was she so pissed?

Her face itched like hell. All night, she could feel drops of sweat flow down her face under her mask, and she had been powerless to wipe them away. She had to sit there and feel them, all night. She shifted the car into overdrive, and took a drag of her cigarette.

“Besides,” he said, pulling his inhaler out of his pocket. “I couldn’t fucking breathe at that house. I still can’t.”

“I know,” she said. “It’s fine.”

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This had to be the funniest night of his life. He sensed that she was pissed, but he didn't care. He didn't drive all the way from the city to waste his time. Routine told him that she'd do what he wanted, and she'd eventually get over it. And anyway, he was way higher quality than anyone she had left behind at that party.

"What did you think of my friends?" she asked.

He couldn't help smiling. "They were fascinating."

"Did you like Jackie? She really liked you."

Ahh. Jackie. The thrice divorced twenty-eight year old who had brought her four kids to the party and proceeded to knock back those cheap plastic hard-liquor shots that you bought out of a bin at the liquor store for ninety-nine cents. The Jackie who wasn't wearing a mask, because she was ugly enough already.

"She seemed really nice," he said.

He used his inhaler, and as he breathed in he could still smell the smoke on him. He had sat at the bonfire for over an hour, not saying anything, but watching everyone as his make-up had melted in the heat. It had been one of those rare instances where he had immediately recognized the irony of his situation while he was experiencing it. Anonymous faces, blurred by the smoke, faces that unmasked he wouldn't have been familiar with, regardless.

"How did you like Mike's parents?" she asked.

"Dear God," was all he could get out as he started laughing and wheezing in the passenger seat. He had never been to a party before where he had spent a majority of the time with the host's parents. That's how lame the party had been. And he couldn't help it. That family was like an infomercial: tedious yet oddly fascinating at the same time, so that you couldn't pull your eyes away.

"So did Mike Antwan's dad have cancer, or what?"

"Yep. He had the operation five years ago."

"And he's still smoking like a chimney?" The whole time in their living room—over two hours—he had been watching the dad. The man's thighs alone would fill up a chair, his pudgy fingers completely dwarfed the frail cigarette that was continually in hand. And, the whole time he had been watching him, he had been waiting for Mike's dad to put that cigarette in the hole—not in his lips, but right up in the ungodly black hole

in his neck. In two hours' time, though, the man had never done it. He'd always plug the hole with a fat finger and take a drag.

"Yep. That whole family smokes," she said.

"Yeah, I know." He wheezed and took another puff of his inhaler.

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She took a long drag from her cigarette.

"Those fucking things are going to kill you if they don't kill me first," he said to her.

She took one more drag and threw it out the window, looking in the rearview as it hit the road and shattered into a hundred bright little orange lights in the darkness, all of them disappearing behind the car. He was right, of course. Didn't he know that that's why she did it?

"How would you like to have one of those holes in your neck?" he asked.

Actually, she thought it might be cool. She'd be the type of person that if she had a stoma, she'd put the cigarette right into the hole. She'd walk around public parks, and frighten small children by flashing her hole. "Having one of those would be really cool," she said.

She looked from the road over to him, and saw him smile very slightly. "Yeah, actually, I bet you would like that, wouldn't you?" Damn straight I would, she thought. What do you think of that?

She looked back at the road. She wondered if having a stoma would make her good at giving head, since she wouldn't ever have to come up for air. She moved her hand from the steering wheel to the spot on her neck where she envisioned the hole. Giving good head would be a mighty fine compensation, dammit. Beneath her fingers, she felt the stickiness of the makeup, hours old. In one quick move, she pulled off her mask.

"Hey! What did you do that for? Now Mike won't get to see."

"Oh, that's a shame," she said.

"Steph, you're being rude."

She sunk a little low in her seat, and placed both hands on the wheel. "I'm sorry. It itched."

They drove a moment in silence, and she was left to wonder what he was thinking as she watched the dotted yellow lines enter the beams of her headlights and whiz by in an almost rhythmic fashion. She started counting them. It was kind of cool to be driving along a road like this in the middle of the night on Halloween. She looked over at him; his face was dimly lit by the green lights of the dash. He was looking at her, and she saw that even now, without the mask, he was still looking at her eyes. Maybe this wouldn't be so bad, after all.

“OK. It's Halloween. Let's have some fun,” she said. “Dummyhead is gonna go a little crazy tonight.” She smiled.

She spotted Dummyhead's driveway in the road ahead, marked by a little blue reflective light. The driveway was completely deserted. They had moved from a dull party to a dead one. She hoped he was happy.

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Dummyhead Mike wasn't attractive. Not to him, anyway. He was neat in appearance, but not attractive. He was a teddy bear—cute, but too soft. Mansex with him would be like fucking two pillows. Gross.

They were in the living room, and Mike was already in post-party form, lying on the couch in jogging pants and a T-shirt. The shirt was tucked into his pants, and the beer bottle in his hand had the label fully intact. Mike was one of those tidy fags—not that he really had the experience to be categorizing them.

“Hey Mike,” he said casually.

He remembered to suck in his gut and stick out his chest. He knew Mike was looking. Not just looking, but really looking, just like that night in the bar a year ago, when Stephanie had lifted up his shirt and poured water down his chest. She had done it just to get a rise out of Mike, and it had worked. Now, his tight shirt was achieving a similar effect—and without Stephanie's help. He pretended to scratch his stomach, but his real intention was to untuck his shirt and lift it just enough to flash his abs for a second or two.

“Nice costume,” said Mike.

“Thanks. Can I use your bathroom? I need to wash this makeup off my face.”

“Of course.”

As he turned to go down the hall, he realized that Stephanie had been watching him, too. She was like the picture of Jesus that had hung on the living room wall when he was a kid—the eyes followed you everywhere. She was like some sort of evil white-eyed deity. It gave him a little chill to turn his back on her and walk down the hall towards the bathroom.

In the bathroom, he scrubbed at his face for five minutes. The makeup wouldn't come off.

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She used a tissue to wipe away the makeup around her eyes. She was waiting for it. She knew it was coming because of the way Dummyhead was looking at her as he rose from the couch. “He is so gay.”

She *knew* that this would happen. “No, he's not.”

“He is so gay. And he's fucking hot.”

“He's not gay. He's just Jason.”

“Yeah, honey. Well, it takes one to know one.”

Damn him. This had been their argument for nearly two years, ever since Dummyhead and Jason had met at her birthday party. She wasn't going to give in now. “Fuck you, Michael.”

“Hell no. I'm gonna fuck him.”

She smiled. She couldn't help herself. She could get into this game. Or at least, she would—just to see where it would take her. “You're not going to fuck my friend, Dummyhead.”

He flashed her an evil smile, but a playful one. He walked up behind her, put his hands on her shoulders, and rubbed his pelvis up against her butt. She could feel his warm breath in her ear, and his wet tongue circled her ear lobe. “I'm gonna fuck him 'till the last drop is out.” He gorged his tongue into her ear.

She was laughing, and playfully slapped at him as she squirmed her head around, trying to dislodge the serpentine tongue. Mike had a huge tongue. He was perverse, but it was fun. He was the only guy that would do this to her. He was one that she didn't have to be afraid of. And, she had to admit, he was good at it. Good old Dummyhead.

He put his arms around her waist, and his chin on her shoulder. She could feel his stubble through the torn material in her shirt.

“So, how’ve you been?” he asked.

“I been OK.” That’s what she always said, whether she was or not. “How’ve you been?” She turned to look at him.

“Jesus!” He slapped at the air in front of her face, like he was trying to whisk away a hornet. “Get those fucking freaky eyes away from me, bitch!”

She smiled.

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When he came out of the bathroom, he could hear her shouting in mocking tones.

“Touch my tit again and I’ll make you swallow your own balls, you dick licker.”

He entered the living room and saw them standing by the couch. Mike’s arms were around her, clasped together under her chest. His embrace gathered the folds of her baggy shirt together, and he could see the shape of her rather ample breasts. Mike certainly liked to mack on people. That’s how he knew Mike liked him. Mike touched everyone—even Stephanie—but not him. Mike was too intimidated. That made him feel good.

“What are you guys up to?” he asked, trying to sound somewhat accusatory.

“Stephanie’s getting a little embarrassed,” Mike said.

“I’m not getting embarrassed. You’re just fucking molesting me.”

“C’mon. You know you like it.”

She smiled.

He wanted to corner Stephanie to find out what Mike said about him while he was in the bathroom. He knew she’d tell him everything. He was the one person she was always honest with, even though there were some things he couldn’t tell her. But he wouldn’t think about that tonight. Tonight, ambiguity would be fun. At least, it could with Mike. Keep things under the surface and keep people guessing. It was like a game.

“You guys want to see my new Halloween decoration?” asked Mike. “It’s in my bedroom. Think you can handle going into my bedroom, Stephanie?”

Mike had said Stephanie, but was looking at him. He may just as well have said “Jason.”

Stephanie allowed Mike to take her hand. “Play nice, Dummyhead,” she said. “You know what I can do if you don’t.”

They went ahead of him and down another hall to the bedroom. He could hear the swishing of Mike’s jogging pants as he led them down the hall. Jogging pants could be a lot of fun, he thought. If he got Mike excited, it would probably be pretty noticeable—especially since Steph said that Mike supposedly had an inhumanly huge cock.

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“So, where is it, Dummyhead?” she asked him.

He opened the door to his bedroom. The one thing she admired about Dummyhead’s gayness was that he had a damn fine bedroom. His walls and shelves had the coolest shit. And, he had good taste in men, as evidenced by the dark featured man with penetrating eyes that hung over his bed. And the bed—it had a large metal frame, and the bedding was black velvet. She had bought him that bedcover. It had cost her half her paycheck.

Dummyhead grabbed a lighter from the bedside table, and reached overhead to a twisting metal spiral ringed with candles. “See Steph. Isn’t it cool?”

It was cool. She loved candles. Damn him for always finding the coolest shit. “It’s OK.”

“I think that’s really cool,” said Jason from behind her. Of course, he would say that.

“Thanks,” said Mike, as he lit each candle. When he was done, he walked back to the door and shut it. The lights weren’t on. The room was lit only by the spiraling candles. “Kind of spooky, huh?”

“I think it gives the room a certain sort of ambience,” said Jason. She raised her eyebrow at him. Ambiance? Big city college boy. He was really going all out. He walked over to the bed, and fell onto the velvet cover, sprawling out on his back. She was speechless as he stretched his arms above his head, and the shirt puckered above his chest, exposing his stomach and the thin line of dark hair beneath his bellybutton. “This is an awesome bed,” he said.

Holy shit.

She looked at Dummyhead. His mouth was also slightly open, and his eyes a little squinty in the candlelight.

Jason faked a yawn. "I'm tired," he said. "What time is it, Steph?"

He knew what time it was. There was a fucking digital alarm clock two feet away from him on the bed table. The kind with huge numbers, too, so that you could see it even if you were fucking blind. It was almost two a.m. "It's really late. Maybe we should go."

Just then a cat jumped up onto the bed, purring loudly, and settling on Jason's chest. "Hey," he said. "I think someone wants us to stay." She didn't like the way he emphasized the "someone."

"Jason, you're allergic to cats."

"I know, but she's a sweetie," he said. "What's her name?"

"Venus." It was the only word Dummyhead spoke. Damn, Jason was good at this. Too good. She reached over and grabbed the cat, casting Jason a glare. She could tell he was making a conscious effort to ignore her eyes.

He sneezed. She couldn't tell if it was real or fake. "Shit," he said. "Now I got cat hair all over me." Indeed, she could see the long white strands on his black shirt. He tried brushing them off, but they were sticking to his chest.

"Oh, fuck it," he said. He reached down and lifted the bottom of his shirt over his head, peeling it away, and unwrapping himself, she thought, like a piece of sticky candy. His flesh flickered in the candlelight, seeming to ripple as he shook out his shirt. "Steph," he said, in a somewhat plaintive tone. "I'm tired. How 'bout a backrub. You give the best backrubs."

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It was so fucking hard for him to keep a straight face when Mike left to go to the bathroom. Stephanie was sitting on top of him, rubbing his back.

"Can he hear us in there?" he asked her.

"I doubt it. I'm sure he's probably whacking off."

"Cool. What did he say about me in the living room."

"He said he wanted to fuck you."

"In his dreams."

"Jason," she said. "Let's go. Right now. Let's just go."

Would she let up, already? God. “C’mon, Steph,” he said. “You know you like this. I’m just having a little fun. Go with it—it’s all a joke. It’s Halloween, and I want to have some fun finally. Let’s really get him good.”

“You are so bad.”

He smiled, because he liked to think so. “That’s why you and me are good together,” he said. “You can be bad, too.” Maybe this was too much. But it could be fun, and screw it—he wanted to do *something*.

She didn’t say anything, but she kept rubbing his back. He knew that somewhere in there, she was probably liking this. He hoped she was. He tried to breathe deeply, wheezing just slightly.

“Yeah,” she said. “I can be bad.”

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Fine, she thought. If this is what Jason wanted, she could give him what he wanted. In fact, she’d give it to him good.

“You have a really nice back,” she said to Jason as Dummyhead finally emerged from the bathroom. “Doesn’t he have a nice back, Dummyhead?”

There was a moment of silence, as she let both her men realize just what it was that she was saying. “Yes, Jason has a very nice back,” was all Dummyhead said. She thought she felt Jason squirm slightly, while Dummyhead raised an eyebrow at her.

“Don’t you have some lotion, or something?” she asked.

“Of course. It’s right under the bed, in case someone just happens to stop by.”

Along with all his other sex toys. He was such a slut. “Get it.”

“Don’t put that greasy shit on my back!” Jason whined under her.

“Shut up. You wanted a back rub. I’m gonna do it right.”

“Fine.”

“You know, Jason, Dummyhead gives great backrubs, don’t you Dummyhead?”

Dummyhead was getting braver now. “Yes. I give the best backrubs when I’m butt ass naked.”

She grabbed the lotion from him, and put a large squirt on Jason’s back. She saw the muscles tense up.

“That’s cold!” he said.



“Be quiet, and hold still.” She started smoothing the white mass around on his skin. The squishing noises it made caused her to want to giggle. “You know what,” she said. “My hands are getting sore. Dummyhead, you take over.”

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Dear God, what was happening? What the hell was she doing? She plopped down beside him on the bed as Mike straddled him and started rubbing in the lotion. He looked at her, and she was smiling. The white of her toothy grin matched the white of her wicked eyes. “Having fun?” she asked.

“Yeah. Mike, you’re really good at this.” He decided he could beat the devil at her own game. He lay still, and let out a nearly inaudible moan. Slowly, he flexed his back, and ever so slightly pushed his rear end up, pushing it into Mike’s crotch as he was straddling him. Mike did nothing—nothing that he could see, anyway.

Stephanie was now lying next to him, and she snuggled in close. “This is a nice bed,” she said. She rubbed her cheek across the black velvet.

The pressure on his back was starting to get annoying. It was pushing him into the bed, and he was trying not to wheeze. Enough was enough. “OK,” he said. “That’s enough. I can’t breath.” He squirmed out from under Mike, turned over, and reached into his pocket for his inhaler. He moved away from Stephanie, and sat on the edge of the bed, his back to them both. He tried to breath deeply, but couldn’t. His chest was tight. He took a puff from his inhaler, and held it in as long as he could.

He felt something at his leg. It was the cat. Venus. He gave it a swift but silent kick, and it went and hid in the corner of the room, glaring out at him from the shadows with bright eyes that reflected the candlelight. Damn cat, he thought, as he let the air out of his lungs. Even with the inhaler, his chest still felt tight.

He turned around, and saw that Mike had taken his spot on the bed next to Stephanie. She was licking the back of his neck, but glaring at Jason with her solid white eyes.

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She was looking at the cat. She couldn’t believe that Jason had kicked the cat. He must be pissed, she thought.

“Hey Dummyhead,” she said, ceasing the licking. “Show Jason what you can do with your tongue.”

“Mmm—OK,” he said in a rather seductive manner. She let him grab her and turn her around. “See,” he said, as she felt his tongue circled her ear. “You use only the tip, and touch here . . . and here . . . and here.” His tongue slid along her ear lobe, the top of her ear, and finally, inside of it. “Or,” he said. “You can go on the neck, starting in the center.” She could feel the wetness on the back of her neck, very low, where she was most sensitive. “And then you go in circles, but not even circles. The shape is very important, and requires some variety,” he said. She closed her eyes, and focused on the sensation.

“The man is good with his tongue, isn’t he Jason?”

“It looks that way,” she heard him say. Her eyes were closed now, but she felt the bed wiggle as he lowered his weight onto it. He must be settling next to Mike. Shit, she thought. She should be in the middle. She could feel a hand on her arm. It must be Jason’s, because Dummyhead’s hands were already on her. Jason was lightly fingering the inside of her elbow.

“You know where I’m most sensitive?” Jason said.

“I bet I do,” answered Mike.

She was too stunned to move.

“The inside of my arm. Like right here.” He drew his finger up and down her inner arm. It was a strange feeling. Jason never touched her.

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He didn’t like touching her. She had very pale skin that would turn red if you pressed it too hard. Touching her, though, gave him the excuse to put his arm over Mike, who was between them. He moved in close, his chest to Mike’s back; his knees to the back of Mike’s knees. He was careful not to press his torso into Mike, though.

Mike didn’t say anything. He continued licking Stephanie’s neck. After a minute, Jason dropped his hand from Stephanie’s arm to Mike’s thigh, as nonchalantly as he could. He could feel the individual hairs on Mike’s leg through the thin nylon of the jogging pants. It was kind of gross, actually. Very slowly, he moved his hand along the top part of Mike’s thigh, and inward. His heart was beating fast. This was getting really

strange, he thought. He was playing the slut and he had never even actually had sex, not exactly. And now he was half naked, on a bed with his best friend and some fat fag.

So why did he keep going? Why was he going? His hand kept going. Still, he didn't come to anything, though he knew he must be getting close. Finally, he felt the ridge of Mike's briefs through the nylon. He must be only a few centimeters away. He moved his hand no further, but cautiously fingered this ridge and the skin beneath it. He couldn't breathe.

Stephanie turned towards him, her white eyes taking it all in.

He didn't know where to look. He was looking at her eyes, but he also saw her briefly put her arm around Mike, before reaching passed him. He consciously tensed a little as she slowly fingered the inside of his arm. Didn't she know that he was just making that up? He wasn't sensitive there at all.

She was looking at him, and he at her. He didn't know what was going to happen next. He couldn't read her at all. Her white eyes showed nothing. He had the sudden urge to kick her off the bed, like he had kicked the cat. Instead, he just lay there motionless—all except the two or three fingers that continued stroking the inside of Mike's thigh.

And then he felt it, slowly. Mike's hand reaching backwards, finding his leg. It moved upwards, along the inside of his thigh—but Mike moved more quickly than Jason had. He had very little time now. Very little. Mike's hand didn't stop at the inside of his thigh. It kept going, and made a quick grab for the bulging black denim between Jason's legs.

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She couldn't believe what she was seeing.

"OK, that's enough!" Jason had jumped off the bed. She was saved, or she was dead; she didn't know which.

"Someone got embarrassed," said Mike, sounding too casual for the way she felt.

"I can't fucking breath," said Jason. "I think it's that damn cat." He sat down at the foot of the bed, away from her, and pulled out his inhaler. She could see his back rise as his chest heaved. She could hear him wheeze as he tried to breathe in.

"Holy hell, I need some air," he said, grabbing his shirt. He pulled it over his head, and left the room before he had even pulled it down.

Holy hell was right. That was the closest she had ever gotten.

“I think we better go,” she said to Dummyhead.

“He is so gay,” was all he said.

She got up off the bed, without even casting him a backward glance with her evil eye

So close. But to what? What the hell did she want, anyway? Strike that question. She knew what she wanted. She had always known. Jason knew it, too. He had to. And dammit, why shouldn't she have it? She had invested years into this. For what? Tonight? Now what? What would he say when she got out there? What would they say in the car?

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“I can't fucking breath,” he said after slamming shut the car door. He had his inhaler in his hand, and he used it yet again, even though he knew it wouldn't work.

He looked over at her. She sat hunched over the wheel, not looking at him. The key was in the ignition, but she wasn't turning it.

“What the hell happened in there?” he asked her.

“I don't know,” she said.

“That was too fucking weird.”

“It was your idea.”

“My idea? I didn't want that to happen.”

“I didn't want it to happen.” She turned the key, but not all the way. Only the green lights on the dash came on. He could see her face reflected in the windshield, but her face took on a sickly greenish hue.

“It was just a game,” he said. He looked at her reflection in the glass. She seemed pouty. Her face was turned down. She wasn't looking at him. Thank God he couldn't see those eyes.

He turned from her reflection to the passenger window, looking past his own transparent image and out into the night.