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Three terse knocks rattled the steel-skinned door. Dressed in beige cargo pants and a cropped olive t-shirt, Anna sprinted along the dim corridor toward the door, her pink-streaked hair flouncing about her shoulders. As she ran down the hall, tiny bits of grit pressed into the soles of her bare feet. She reminded herself to vacuum the apartment.

“Hold on. I’m coming.” Reaching for the doorknob, Anna wondered why the person hadn’t buzzed her. Was the lock on the security door broken again or was another of her neighbors coming to complain about the lacquer vapors?

She opened the door. A woman slightly taller and older than her stood on the dingy landing, inspecting dirty smudges on her knuckles. The woman’s white Capri pants and electric blue blouse with its floral pattern glowed against the yellowed walls of the stairwell.

“Your door is filthy. Look what it did.” She showed Anna the dark splotches on her manicured hand.

“Kate?” Anna paused, remembering how her sister despised the childhood nickname. “Katherine, how are you?” She stepped onto the landing to embrace her sister, but Katherine pushed her aside.

“Don’t pretend you’re happy to see me.” She strode past Anna and down the hall toward the living room, the wooden soles of her sandals clacking on the pine floorboards.

Closing the door, Anna followed her, somewhat worried. Katherine had never visited her apartment, and they hadn’t seen or spoken to each other since their parents’ wedding anniversary two months ago.

In the living room, early summer sunlight streamed through the window behind the faded red sofa. The acrid odor of lacquer from a recently refinished nightstand lingered in the air. Katherine stood beside an old metal desk, staring at a half-eaten ham sandwich that sat on a chipped plate on the coffee table. She glanced at a stoneware

cereal bowl on the far end of the coffee table, an unidentifiable mound of mush surrounded by warm milk cradled in its bottom.

“Do you want something to drink? Iced tea? Soda?”

Katherine looked at her. “No, thank you. I don’t want to add to the collection of dishes already on display.”

Removing a strapped t-shirt from the arm of an overstuffed chair, Anna rolled it into a ball and tossed it into the adjacent bedroom. “So what brings you to Brooklyn on a Sunday afternoon? Brunch at BAM?”

“I’d rather not be here, ever, but this demands a personal explanation.” She took two folded sheets of paper from her purse and thrust them into Anna’s hands.

Anna unfolded the top page and stared at a color image of herself. She stood with her back to the camera, a navy blue bra dangling from her hand, the waistband of a matching thong visible around her hips. She had a surprised expression on her face.

She looked at the second page. She was kneeling on her bed, completely naked, her legs slightly spread, her hands cupped under her ample breasts. She smiled at the camera, the tip of her tongue peering between her lips, a playful gleam in her eyes. She glanced at Katherine. “Where did you get these?”

“From one of those Internet sites for voyeurs who take pictures with their camera phones. I didn’t find them, Richard did. I refused to believe him at first. I thought you had a little more couth and sense, but he insisted it was you because of the pink hair. When he showed me the pictures, I couldn’t deny it. My little sister is an Internet porn star.”

Anna refolded the pages and curled them into a tube. “This isn’t porn. They’re just some nudes. They’re artistic if you ask me.”

“I wouldn’t call a photo of you with a penis in your mouth art, and I don’t think you could convince any museum to hang it on their walls. And those other photos showing close-ups of your crotch with it in you—if that’s not pornography, I don’t know what is.”

Her stomach convulsed. “Shit. Those are there, too?”

“For every pervert and horny twelve-year-old to see.”

Anna lowered herself onto the overstuffed chair, her legs weak. She looked at the cover of the *Cosmopolitan* that laid under the coffee table; a teenage model with an unnatural tan and too-blonde hair smiled at her. “That asshole. He promised me he was only going to download them to his hard drive.”

“Did your worthless boyfriend Zachary do this?”

“Zach’s not worthless.”

“Does he have a full-time job with benefits and a 401K?”

“He’s a freelance web designer, and he makes good money when he works.”

“Yes, when he works.” Katherine stepped around the coffee table and perched on the edge of the red sofa, her feet together, her electric blue blouse shimmering in the sunlight. “You know, if he found a real job with a real company, he might earn some real money. Then he could provide you with something more substantial than an unwanted pregnancy.”

* * *

Nearly four years earlier, Anna sat at an outdoor cafe in the East Village, a blue-and-yellow striped awning shading her from the late morning sun. Her elbows rested on the cool marble tabletop, her small hands cupped around an over-sized mug filled with cafe latte. Her bare legs bounced nervously beneath the table.

When she saw Katherine crossing Avenue A, she felt calmer and settled into the chair.

“Hi, Katherine.” She stood and hugged her sister.

“Anna.” Katherine placed her arms lightly around Anna before pulling away and sitting on the opposite side of the table. She smoothed her dark gray skirt with her hands, then tugged at the cuffs of her starched white blouse.

“Would you like a coffee? It’s pretty good here.”

“No, thank you. I don’t have much time since I’m on my lunch hour. You might learn what it’s like to have a fixed time for lunch, if you ever get a job.”

“I’ll find something soon. It’s only been a few months since I graduated.”

“Some of us had job offers before we graduated.”

“I’d hoped they’d offer me something at the ad agency after my internship, but they said they couldn’t afford to hire me full-time.”

“Why should they hire you when they can get slave labor from some other intern?”

“Look, Katherine, I didn’t ask you to meet me so you could lecture me about getting a job.”

“Then why did you invite me to this dismal part of Manhattan?”

“Because I want some advice.”

“About?”

“I’m pregnant.” Anna studied for her sister’s face, waiting for some reaction.

After a moment, Katherine’s lips arched into a vague smile. “I’m surprised. I expected you get knocked up in high school or at art school. It still happened before your twenty-first birthday, so that almost counts as a teen pregnancy.”

“Teen pregnancy? Where’s that coming from? Come on, Kate. Be happy, be angry,

just don't act self-righteous."

"Why not? I've always said you're the most immature, irresponsible person I know, and this proves it." She shook her head. "I warned our parents not to send you to that ridiculous art school."

"What's wrong with the Parsons School of Design? It's well known, it's where I wanted to go, and it's what I wanted to do. It has nothing to do with me getting pregnant."

"It certainly does. If you had attended a real university and studied in a real program that led to a degree that could've landed you a real job with real responsibilities, you would've grown up. You'd be wiser, more mature, and not an expectant mother. Art school didn't teach you anything practical, and it clearly didn't prepare you for life."

Anna slouched in the chair, her arms dangling at her sides.

Katherine crossed her legs and readjusted her skirt. "When did this happen?"

She stared at Katherine, wondering if the difference in their ages was thirty years, not three. "At a Phish concert. At the beginning of June. I think."

"It's almost been two months. Have you seen an OB/Gyn yet?"

"I did one of those home pregnancy tests, so I know I'm pregnant."

"That's not why you see an OB/Gyn. You need prenatal care to ensure the health of your child." She paused. "That sounds awful—your child. You're a child. You shouldn't be having a child. Wait. You're not planning to keep this, are you?"

"I don't know. I was hoping to get your advice."

"I'll give you the same advice I'd give anyone in your position. Abort it. You're not mature enough or responsible enough to take care of another human being, and if you have a child now, you'll completely ruin whatever pathetic life you do have."

"How can you say that? I'm your sister, and you're talking about your niece or nephew."

"I'm telling you this because you are my sister." Taking a spoon from the table, Katherine tapped its tip on the tabletop. "Do you at least know who the father is?"

"Yeah, my boyfriend, Zach."

"You're sure he's the father? There was no one else?"

"What do you think I am?"

Katherine shrugged. "How do I know what you do with your body? How long have you known this Zach?"

"Four or five months. We meet at the agency where I was doing my internship."

"Does he have a stable position with them?"

“He doesn’t work there. He’s a freelance web designer. He was there for a project.”

“Great. No full-time job, no health benefits. You certainly picked a winner. Have you told him yet?”

“No, I wanted to figure out what to do first.”

“Don’t tell him. He doesn’t need to know anything. Just abort it as soon as you can.”

“But I don’t have the money for that.”

“And you think you have enough money to feed a child and keep it supplied in diapers? An abortion costs a lot less than supporting a child. Don’t worry. I’ll pay for it. I have plenty of money, because I have a job, thanks to my business degree.”

“Just drop it, Kate.”

“Whatever you do, never tell our parents about this.” She stood and flattened her skirt. “I have to run. My lunch hour’s nearly over, and I have to catch the 6 train back uptown. You just make the arrangements to terminate the pregnancy, I’ll cover the financial end of it.”

Anna watched her walk toward Avenue A. She didn’t have the emotional energy to resist. When she got home, she would find the name of a reliable clinic and make the phone call.

* * *

Sitting in the overstuffed chair in her apartment, Anna glared at Katherine. “Do you always judge people by their incomes?”

“Having a stable, well-paying job says something about a person’s character.”

“If making lots of money on Wall Street turns you into an uptight, prudish bitch, I want to stay poor and self-employed.”

“I can see what poverty’s done for you. You live in filth and degrade yourself for other people’s gratification.”

“How have I degraded myself?”

“By posing like that for those photos.”

“Like you’ve never sucked Richard’s dick.” She watched Katherine roll her eyes. “Maybe you haven’t.”

“You don’t need to know anything about my sex life.”

“I can just guess. You’re probably a straight-missionary-position girl, with the lights out so you don’t have to see anything. You’ve probably never gotten on top, and you’ve probably never done anything to give yourself pleasure. Maybe that’s your problem. You just need a good fuck so you can have an orgasm or two, if you’ve ever had one.”

She studied a series of four black-and-white photographs hanging on the wall behind Anna. Each image showed a young, unshaven man with his hair pulled into a

ponytail riding on a playground swing, the man appearing larger in each successive photo as he swung closer toward the camera. “I don’t see how you can find pleasure in humiliating yourself for some man’s disgusting fantasies.”

“I didn’t humiliate myself.”

“You’re right. You let him humiliate you.”

“I knew Zach was taking those pictures.”

“You just didn’t know what he was going to do with them, did you?”

“I really don’t care what he did with them.”

“You don’t care if he exposes your intimate moments together?”

“That’s between Zach and me.”

“And everyone else on the Internet.”

* * *

Two weeks earlier, Anna stood in her bedroom, her back to the bed. As she unclasped the plastic hook on the front of her navy blue bra, she glanced at Zach over her shoulder. “Guys are so lucky. They don’t have to coordinate their underwear with their outfits.”

“What do you mean?” Lying on the bed, his upper body nestled in a mound of pillows, Zach held his cell phone in the air, its tiny lens pointed toward Anna.

Letting the bra slide down her arm, Anna twisted sideways so she could talk to him. “We need ten different—” She paused, the bra dangling from her hand. “What are you doing?”

“Nothing.”

She spun around, her breasts swaying with the motion. “Did you just take my picture?”

“Maybe.” Repositioning the cell phone, he took another picture. He crossed his outstretched legs at the ankles.

“You jackass, you are taking pictures of me.”

He shrugged. “Yeah, so?”

“If you want to take my picture, ask. Don’t do it when you think I’m not looking.”

“Okay. Anna, can I take pictures of you getting naked?”

“What are you going to do with them?”

“Nothing really. They’re just for me.”

“For you to do what?”

He lowered the cell phone, its screen resting on his stomach. “To look at. When you’re not around.”

“Like that thing even takes good pictures.”

“You’d be shocked.”

“Really?” Crawling onto the bed, she sat cross-legged beside him, her knees pressed against his side. He handed her the phone, and she stared at the screen. “Shit. That’s pretty good. You know, I’ve never seen a picture of myself naked.”

“Not even pictures of yourself from when you were a baby?”

“You know what I mean. I’ve never seen what my body looks like to someone else.”

“It’s awesome, isn’t it?”

She examined the tiny image, the curves of her breasts and hips. She found the image sensual, despite the confused and annoyed expressions on her face. “I do look good. I’m kind of surprised. I only see myself in the mirror or when I’m looking down at my body when I’m drying off or getting dressed, and that perspective’s always distorted.”

“You should see yourself from my view.”

Pushing herself off the mattress, she swung one leg over his thighs and straddled him. “Why don’t you show me?”

“How? You want to pose naked so I can take pictures of you?”

“That, and while we’re doing it. I want to see myself as you see me while we’re doing everything.”

He sat up. “You’re not going to get weirded out or anything?”

“Why should I?”

“Because if I’d have suggested this, you’d have slapped me.”

“Because it would’ve been your idea, not mine.”

“What’s the difference?” He began preparing a mental list of websites where he could post the photos for his friends.

“If you suggest it, it’s porn. If I suggest it, it’s erotic.”

“Naked pictures are naked pictures.”

“It’s how you use them. If you suggest it, it’s a turn-off because it sounds like some creepy fetish. If I suggest it, it’s a turn-on because it adds something to our lovemaking.”

He placed a hand on her knee and stroked her thigh. “What’s it add to our lovemaking?”

“A new level of intimacy. We’ll be showing ourselves to each other in a totally different way when we look at the pictures.”

“We?”

“Yeah, we. This time, you hold the phone and take pictures of me. The next time, I’ll take pictures of you.”

“You want to take pictures of me while we’re fucking?”

Angling the camera lens toward him, she clicked a close-up of his face. "It's only fair."

"I don't want people seeing me naked."

"Why not? You have such a cute ass."

He grabbed the waistband of her thong and snapped it against her hip. "What about my unit?"

"That's not too bad either. Not like the male organ is anything worth looking at."

"I really don't care if people see my ass. I just don't want them seeing my schlong."

"I'll be the only one seeing these, and I already know what it looks like."

"Yeah, you do." Taking the cell phone from her, he pulled her onto his chest. If he cropped the photos properly, he could avoid exposing too much of himself. "So when you say this time, what do you mean?"

"I mean like right now."

* * *

The previous night, Katherine followed Richard into his unlit study. Even though the nighttime skyline of midtown Manhattan filled the floor-to-ceiling window, the nineteen-inch flat-screen monitor on the sleek black desk attracted her attention because the bright blue glare from its screen reflected on the inside of the window.

"So where are these photos?"

"Right there on the computer. You can see them for yourself." Richard stepped to the side so she could walk behind the desk.

"And you think Anna's in them?" She sat in front of the monitor. The glow from its screen enhanced the paleness of her complexion.

"You tell me. I only met her once, at your parents' anniversary party. The woman in the pictures kind of resembles you, and she has pink stripes in her hair like Anna did."

"There's only one way to be sure." Katherine stared at a series of twenty thumbnail images arranged across the computer screen. "These are so tiny how can you see anything?"

"Click on one to enlarge it." Realizing how technologically inept Katherine was pleased him. She would never find all of the porn he downloaded to his hard drive.

Moving the pointer over the thumbnail in the top left-hand corner, she clicked on the image, and within moments, it spread across the screen. Katherine flinched. "That's huge."

He said nothing.

She studied the image. "It's not the best angle, but it's definitely Anna."

"Click on the Next button in the corner down there to see the next photo. You'll get a

better look at her face.”

Katherine clicked on the button. A large image of Anna standing nude at the foot of her bed appeared on the screen. “You can see her face better, and every other part of her body.”

“That’s not even one of the graphic ones.”

“What do you consider graphic?”

“Just keep clicking the button. You’ll see.”

She clicked on the button a dozen times, each new image filling the screen with varying shades of beige and pink. “This is disgusting. How could she do that?” Katherine pushed the mouse across the desk. “How did you find these?”

“I didn’t find them. Someone told me about them.”

“Who?”

“Samir, one of the guys from mutual funds. When he was in Las Vegas the other week, he took a bunch of pictures with his cell phone, and when he got back, he posted them to this website. After he posted his pictures, he started browsing through some of the other galleries to see what other people had posted.”

She stared at him as he stood beside the desk, the harsh glare from the screen creating deep shadows around his eyes, nose, and chin. “That doesn’t explain how you saw them.”

“Well. . . . Samir stopped by my office to tell me he’d posted his pictures to this website, and he started telling me about some of the pictures he’d seen in the other galleries. Then he noticed a picture of you on my desk, and he mentioned he’d seen some really raunchy pictures of a girl who looked a lot like you, except she had pink hair, so he showed me the pictures to see what I thought.” He had rehearsed this story throughout the day to convince himself of its truth.

Katherine wondered what disgusted her more: Anna posing for porn or Richard feebly explaining how he found it. Dull light from the nearby buildings seeped through the window, illuminating a dozen autographed baseballs that sat on a bookshelf along the opposite wall. The tiny orbs seemed luminescent in the gloom. “Which photo?”

“What do you mean?”

“Which photo of me did this Samir see? You don’t have any photos of me on your desk here. I don’t think you have any photos of me in your entire apartment. So why would you have one on your desk at work, Richard?”

“I have one in the apartment, on my nightstand. It’s of us at that benefit at the Met. And remember that New Year’s Eve party we went to at my manager’s loft? Someone from the office took a picture of us there and gave it to me. I put it on my desk in the

office.”

“I vaguely remember that party. So what did you think?”

“About what?”

“About the photos of Anna. What did you think when you saw her?”

“Well. . . . I thought she kind of resembled you, like she could’ve been your sister. Then I remembered meeting Anna, and when I remembered she had pink stripes in her hair, I figured it must’ve been her.”

“When did you see them?”

“A couple of days ago. . . . Maybe a week.”

“A week? You see pornographic photos of my sister on the Internet, and it takes you a week to tell me about it?”

“Well. . . . I didn’t want to say anything until I was completely sure it was her because I didn’t want to upset you unnecessarily.”

“And how did you determine that she was Anna?”

“I compared your picture to the ones on the website.”

“So you’ve seen all of them? And all of her?”

He shrugged. “I had to look.”

“Let me guess. Several times.”

“Well, yeah. . . . How else could I have been sure?”

“You could’ve just asked me, Richard. I know my little sister when I see her.”

* * *

“Look, Kate.”

“Katherine.”

“Whatever.” Anna tapped the paper tube against her knee. “The thing is I enjoyed myself when he was taking those pictures. I asked him to take them because I thought it was exciting. It was like having someone watch us without having anyone in the room.”

“I can’t even imagine thinking like that.”

“No, you can’t. You’re so trapped in your uptight, conformist, corporate world you don’t know anything about having fun or enjoying life.”

“I do more to enjoy my life than you’ll ever do. You can’t afford to do anything enjoyable, except flop around on your bed with your trashy, long-haired boyfriend.”

“Zach and I have each other. We don’t need anything else to have a meaningful life.”

“You have each other until he finds some other big-breasted bimbo to pose for him.”

“Excuse me. We’ve been together for over four years now. Most of your boyfriends dump your bitchy ass after a few months, and if they don’t dump you, you end up dumping them because they cheat on you or treat you like shit.”

“My relationship with Richard has lasted for nearly a year.”

“Yeah, your relationship with him is so wonderful he surfs the web looking for porn.”

Katherine glanced out the window behind the sofa. An empty plastic shopping bag, carried aloft by a breeze, drifted past the window. She remembered how Richard had hesitated when he was explaining how he had seen the images. “Someone else told him about those photos. He wasn’t searching for them.”

“If he told you that, he’s lying. Leave any guy alone with a computer, and he’ll be hitting the porn sites in two minutes. He’s just not going to tell you about it unless he sees pictures of your sister naked and wants to make sure it’s really your sister he’s drooling over.”

“What the hell do you mean by that?”

“He’s hot for me. You should’ve seen him at mom and dad’s party. When he wasn’t trying to make eye contact with me, he staring at my ass or looking down my shirt.”

“Richard is not hot for you. You’re not even his type.”

“Right. He just showed you the pictures because he thought you might be interested in seeing them.” Anna felt an arousing surge of adrenaline as she realized, for the first time in her life, she was dominating Katherine.

“He thought I should see them because he knew I’d be concerned about how my little sister is wasting her life.”

“He just wanted to know he saw his girlfriend’s sister naked.”

“Why would he care about that?”

“He needs fuel for his fantasies. Every guy fantasizes about his girlfriend’s sister, and now, Richard doesn’t have to use his imagination to know what I look like naked. He can whack away while he thinks about how I am in bed.”

“How can you even say something like that to me?”

“Because I don’t have issues with it. It’s just part of life.”

“You don’t have issues with what? With knowing that there are perverted geeks out there masturbating to obscene photos of you?” Katherine suddenly understood why Richard owned a nineteen-inch monitor.

“Hey, if that’s what makes them happy.”

“How can you be so blasé about this, Anna? Does knowing what they do when they see you excite you?”

“Why should I mind if they appreciate me or my body?”

“Appreciate you? Masturbating men don’t appreciate anything except their hands and their sick fantasies.”

“What kind of sick fantasies do you think Richard’s had about me after he saw those pictures? Do you think he fantasizes about having both of us in bed together?”

“You’re disgusting.”

“There’s nothing disgusting about masturbation. Everyone does it.” She smirked. “Maybe everyone but you. You’re too uptight to touch yourself.”

Katherine looked at a shiny aluminum vase that sat on the coffee table. She saw a warped silhouette of herself reflected on its surface. “I can’t believe we’re sisters. I’d disown you if I could.”

“Do what you want. I’m happy with myself and my body.” Unrolling the paper tube, Anna touched the image of herself kneeling on the bed. As her fingertips brushed the smooth surface of the paper, she imagined how the caress would feel against her skin. She imagined the sensation of a million eyes caressing her body through computer screens, the sensation of a virtual caress. “Do you know what I’m going to do? I going to ask Zach to take more pictures of me and post them on all the websites he can find so the whole world can enjoy them.”