

-SYLVIA-

Revenge. Something to snap me right out of depression and focus all my energies. I'm going to do some public humiliation on a national scale. I fix mom dinner as soon as I get home and I head into my room to begin the montage.

He's endowed with a teensey, little pencil-dick and everyone will know now.

A cycle through my photo collection gives me some great shots. I highlight his whole naked bare ass body. I find another shot zoomed in on him from the waist down. Copy and Paste.

I cycle through again: photo after photo. Oh, Ew. Perfect. One shot with him bent over and his gaping asshole showing. Copy. Paste.

In the background I log on to a proxy site. It's untraceable. I log on to a second proxy through the first. That's just in case

Cuffer. That big arrogant prick. It wasn't even two hours ago. I was doing almost exactly what I'm doing now. Just highlighting and editing pics for the school newspaper. I was alone in the A/V room, editing action shots. Cuffer who is rather pale, but with black hair and a plastic smile he leans in from the door.

"I like your photographs." He says

I wanted to flirt with him. That's what makes me so disappointed with myself.

I turned in my chair, trying to be cute. I spread my legs just a little and brought myself forward to close the hem of my skirt with my hands. I was smiling cutely.

"Really?" I asked him "I'm just working on some right now."

He caught me feeling a little lonesome, so I welcomed the company.

"Can I see?" he asked.

I told him sure, and he hesitated to look down the hall. I should have seen it coming then. Just me being stupid.

He came over and leaned on my chair as I type up; 'Lakeland Cobras: Shooting to score.'

I had the photo cut into layers so that the words seem to be in the picture. It was behind some players, in front of others.

"Hey that's me." Cuffer said, pointing to the screen.

“Yep. You look good.”

He moved his pointing hand over my hand on the mouse. Too far. Too fast.

What might have felt romantic felt really harsh.

“I like how small you are.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

He leaned in close to my ear.

“Like I could tuck you up and put you in my pocket.”

His hand got a real tight grip. It hurt.

Very quickly he spun me around in the chair. I got a whiff of his breath, and leaned back. He still had my hand pinned, only now on the arm-rests of the chair.

“Hey. What are you doing?”

“What? What do you mean?”

“I mean stop. Get off.”

“I'm just a romantic kind of guy.”

He rolled the chair back to the corner of the room. I was pushed up against the painted cinder block wall. 'Now I'm scared' went through my mind. I tried to get up, and he just shoved the chair to one side, swiveled it back to the desk and pinned me down instead.

Before I could even notice, he had his hand up the back of my shirt. I was even to scared to scream, though I wanted to so badly. My skin crawled as he worked his fingers under my bra and I just lost it. I pushed him back as hard as I could but he was just too big. He just pressed me right back. I was up against the wall.

“What? Hey. What? Sylvia. Relax.”

“No.”

His head came over mine like a canopy. Without waring I go up above his head and then his shoulders were pressing me down. He'd lifted me off the ground, and his hand was under my skirt. Oh, Shit, even now I can't believe it.

“There you go? You see?”

I just started hitting him. His head, his shoulders, his back. Wherever I could hit. He put me on the desk, and pinned me there. I was still hitting with one hand when he grabbed the other.

“Stop it. Stop it. Stop. Stop.”

“You aren't hurting me. You're just making this harder.”

“Cuffer, Fucking stop. Right now.”

“Just let me soothe you a bit.”

With his big cow-tongue he licked my hand, and then brushed it across his acne and sandpaper chin. He was still under my skirt.

“There you go.”

I had to do something. There was a pen on the desk. I didn't even think about it. I just got a tight hold of it and jabbed it into his arm as hard as I could. When he reeled back I kicked him away from me and went into the corner. I was shaking and holding the blood-dripping end of the pen at him.

“You crazy bitch!” He screamed. “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

His blood trailed down the length of the pen and it rolled into paint-like drips to my sleeve. My right hand was very red.

So we stayed there a bit. What was once really scary became kind of awkward.

“Get out.” I told him.

“Fuck you. Hyper ass lunatic.” Clutching his bleeding arm he walked out. I went over to the desk and wiped up as much of the blood as I could with some tissue paper. I didn't leave the room for 20 minutes. When I finally did I was checking both ways and behind me to make sure.

I took the bus home assembling my revenge plan. My first thought was to call Lori. My next was to call the police. I thought about calling Arthur. Then I remembered that I had my camera on me. I figured the fight would be best resolved personally. Just between him and me and anyone I decide to send naked pictures to.

I had all the material I would ever need. I move a big blow up of his face into frame of his bare crotch. He's smiling so wide in this one. I wish his tongue was out in this one, though. I

can't believe I wasted so many shots on him. All that time crouched in a tiny duct, What was I thinking ogling this ape with his tiny penis peeking out from behind his dark bush of pubes. I still thought he was cute. I thought he was alright.

I log onto an image board that runs out of Korea. This one is not blocked by the school firewall. I checked. Any pictures should be up for at least a week. I upload the image to the board. I then log into an anonymous e-mail client. With a new message I paste the image link in, and head to the school's e-mail system. I select all the faculty, and all the students with a few quick click and drags. I type the e-mail title.

“Lakeland district School System: Schedule changes”

I've made sure the message looks official enough. That's it. All the images and all my anger. It's now a portrait hung on a server on the other side of the world. The whole message is only his naked-ass collage. Not threats. No rationalization. No explanation. Just the photo.

I'm ready to go, but I pause. Once I click this button there is no going back.

“Go to hell, Cuffer.” I say aloud

I click the send button, and lean back, making a gun with my finger.

Bang. Dead.

I didn't wash my hand too well at school. There's still some blood on my palm, and sure enough a red smear is on my mouse.

-DAVE-

I was 15 at the time. My youth did not stop it from being the most painful and wonderful love of my life. Nothing stops it.

I love you Anna. Even now. Even today.

The restraining order between us is expired for four years. But nothing has brought her to me. I can't even bring myself to do it. She'll never leave my thoughts, she'll never join my life.

She was a nun. My God, she was a nun. I had sex with a nun. Or she had sex with me. We made love either way.

Here I am at her door. I've been here so long. I can only bring myself this far even four years on of coming to visit.

She's home. She has to be. With less than my usual nervousness I press my finger to the lit plastic of her doorbell. The bell dings, but not dongs. The dong note has been out for at least three months, when I last came.

She was twenty two when she came to the orphanage. There was nothing star-struck about the affair. The building needed repair. I was the oldest of the kids, she was the youngest of the staff. We would set to work nailing up boards in the attic, and doing odd-jobs on the grounds. I was lucky enough to see her hair back then. She would wear the habit in the Orphanage and the adjacent convent. When we got to work she would wear t-shirt and overalls. Freaking adorable. I was the only one that got to see her outside of black and white. I loved her figure. She was about my height back then, and she had a real brick-and-plaster body. Her shoulders were very square, but her sides had nice feminine shape. She wasn't fat at all, but she wasn't light. I bet she had more muscle than I did back then. I was a real scrawny kid for a long time. The rest of her, her plain face, with a cute little hook-nose, her pretty, but dark-blue eyes. She was just right. I couldn't tell anybody. It was all just between us. There was a lot of stuff like that.

The work was never any big deal. We'd hammer nails, pull out old boards and siding, paint rooms, whatever. A leaking ceiling, a squeaking door, a creaking floor we were on the job. We just worked together and we got to like each other. It's the most horrible thing I ever did. It was the one time I wasn't trying to hurt anybody. I've never hurt anybody, anyway. Not really.

We were just measuring a window pane. We were going to fit some replacement glass. Then it hit me. I love her. I love her more than anyone. No logic attached.

Morality said I was seven years younger than her. Reason said she's a fucking nun. Didn't matter. It was true. The truest feeling a heart can be moved by outside of the voice of Christ himself.

I hugged her. No, I grabbed her. I wrapped my arms around her and smothered my face into her back and her curly auburn hair. Nothing was said.

I was expecting her to pull away. She just sat back and put her hand on my head.

“Come here.” She said, and she pulled me around in front of her. I felt so at peace there. She had to ruin it for me.

“I'm not renewing my vows.”

A chill ran through me. “What does that mean?”

I didn't need to ask that. She'd be leaving. She was going to leave me.

“It means I want something else out of this life.”

I held her closer, I tightened my grip. I did not want to let her go.

“So what do you want?” I asked bitterly.

She held my face up in the light of the sun pouring in the window and kissed me. It was unbelievable. She could have left. She could have gone away from all of it. From me. She could have left any time. I don't want to know one way or the other. I've never asked her to say because I'm so afraid to know. I just believe. I dare to believe she loved me back.

We found several nights to be together. Not a wayward sister, or a childish orphan. We were lovers.

Then we got found out. Humiliation and police and a trial all came headlong into us, and we could not stand against it. They called it rape, but I wasn't. She had her name tarnished and reputation ruined. She got leniency and a restraining order was placed on her, so we could not meet for three years. I wrecked her life pretty bad. For so long I've been thinking I owe her more than I could ever steal. Not anymore. Today I can make it happen.

Anna opens the door. Her locks of tumbling red hair are as full as ever. I see that dark look that never makes me feel down one more time. “Hi, kid. Good to see you again.”

“Good to be here.”

“You want to come in?”

“You know I won't.”

“Jeez, I think we're past that point in our lives, Dave. Time to move on.”

“I guess it's just principle, then.”

Behind her I hear the crying of a child that is not mine.

“Oh, damn it.” She says “can you hang on for a second?”

She closes the door, and I sit on the stoop. There's a newspaper on the step, and I flip it open, reading international news. It's not for long. She comes back to the door.

“It wasn't anything. Luke's pacifier fell out is all.”

“How's Evander?”

“Oh, he's well. He'll be home in a couple of minutes. Why don't you stick around?”

I don't know why she likes people being awkward so much. She belongs with him now, but wants me and him to like each other. I don't hate him. He's a good man. That's all I can say.

“Anna, I can finally repay you for the trouble I've caused.”

“What trouble?”

“Just everything. Everything I did.”

“Everything we did, kid. I've made my piece and it was 7 years ago. You don't owe me anything.”

“Don't call me kid anymore, OK?” I've been dying to say that for months.

“Dave. The restraining order, the vows, everything's expired.”

“Some things don't expire 'till we do. Like guilt.”

“OK, Dave. You're staying out of trouble, right?”

“As much as ever. I'll be back soon.”

“Well, you're always welcome.”

I hand her back her paper, about to turn and leave when I glance at the front page, in a column on the side. The headline is bold and black.

“Local School Boy Victim of Internet Sex Crime”

“Let me see.” Anna says as she peeks over my shoulder. “Oh, yeah saw that on the news this afternoon. A bunch of naked pictures of him were mailed to his whole school.”

My eyes go wide, as I read.

“Holy Fucking Shit.”

“I know. Pretty sick, huh? Who would do something like that?”

-ARTHUR-

I press the bar up against 180 pounds of down-force. My teeth grit, and I've clenched my cheeks up to my eyes. My arms burn with the billions of microscopic acid drops along every nerve and muscle fiber. Still, I get my elbows to straighten.

"35"

My cell phone rings. I was going to do five more, but it's Ken, so I decide to answer instead.

"Arthur! It's Dave."

"Ken, did you get any new wheels."

"This is not about any merch. I need you at your front door in ten minutes."

"What's this about?"

"I can't tell you, I've got to show you. Ten minutes." He hangs up.

Shit I need to take a shower. The thing about showers is I love them. I let news or sports roll in the background as I sit there soaking in steam and warmth. No matter what mood I'm in it gives me noteworthy calm.

I take a five minute shower. Maybe my first ever. Now I know I'm hung up. When I jump out there isn't even time to comb before the doorbell rings.

My shorts wrap up my legs, and that's all I'm going to wear. I get to the door, and Ken has a flushed, pale expression on his face.

"Something wrong, Dave?"

He holds up a newspaper.

"Local high school boy victim of internet sex crime."

I take the paper from him. It's front page news.

"What about it?"

"Sylvia."

Fuck. The ten million-dollar liability.

"Sylvia? No way. You're sure?"

"99 point goddamn 99 percent certain. She's got the camera, the knowhow, and most of all: In the two months that I have known her she has never stopped herself from doing the wrong thing."

"OK, then. So we need to talk." I fold up the newspaper. "We need to talk with her right now."

"Let's call her up."

"No. Let's do this personally."

I can't feel the ache of my muscles very much at this point. I feel hot blood in my veins and capillaries. I feel it behind my eyes. It's not anger or fear. It's not mania or depression. This is urgency.

Send questions, Comments, thoughts to

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