

Vainglorious

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I guess I'll start by saying a little about myself and what was going on at the time it all started. I had just turned eighteen and it was a little ways into my senior year at high school. I was making okay grades. I didn't really have any close friends, but I was popular enough, I guess. Yes, I was a cheerleader. I didn't really like it, but it just seemed like the thing to do. I had a boyfriend who was cute, but I really wasn't in love with him. The sex was alright, but it just didn't do very much for me to be honest. It was just something to do. I didn't know what I was going to do after high school. I figured I'd go to college like everyone else, get a part-time job waitressing or something. I had no clue what I wanted to do for a career or anything. I was just going through the motions like everyone else, hoping I'd find out where I fit in.

I guess I must be coming off as really boring and superficial. I'm not, really, but there just wasn't much interesting going on in my life. I'd go shopping with friends, I'd go on dates, sometimes went to parties with my boyfriend. I was pretty enough by most standards, I guess I might even dare to say beautiful, but the one thing I was most proud of was my hair. Full, thick, reaching down to the small of my back, naturally wavy, a lustrous honey brown: the perfect head of hair. I got compliments on it practically every time I went out. I totally pampered it. I'd spend hours every day washing it and brushing it and keeping it looking as good as possible. I admit I was pretty vain. I guess most of my self-esteem was tied up in my looks and most especially, my hair, which is pretty sad, but that's the way it was.

I wasn't super-popular, I just wasn't outgoing enough to reach that status. I was always pretty quiet and I guess I was happy enough just to follow along and be part of a group instead of trying to lead it. It's embarrassing to admit, but I was also kind of a bully. I was pretty mean to other kids who didn't fit in. I guess I got in a lot of fights. I didn't *want* to be thought of as mean, I didn't *want* to hurt anybody's feelings, but I had such a short temper and whenever I opened my mouth, it always seemed to end up that way. Anyway, I always figured it was better to be on the giving end than the receiving, when it came to that sort of thing.

At home, well, things weren't great. I don't mean they were awful; the just weren't that good. See, I lived alone with my step-mom, Rebecca. She and I never got along too well. My mom died when I was really young and my dad died right after I turned sixteen. It was a job accident. I was pretty well adjusted

to it by the time I was eighteen, I mean, what else can you do? It was a pretty rough time for me for a while, though. I guess it was rough for Rebecca, too, but I was pretty self-centered and didn't think much about her. It's not something I want to dwell on.

Anyway, dad met Rebecca when I was thirteen and they got married soon after. I wasn't too happy about it. I thought that my dad and I got along fine on our own and we didn't need her. I just couldn't figure out what he saw in her other than her looks. She really was pretty, with curly red hair and a pretty good figure. And don't take me for a total snob, I mean, we weren't rich or anything but my dad made pretty good money, and like, she was a hairdresser. I liked hairdressers—they took care of my hair and helped it look good, but I figured it he *had* to get remarried, then he could surely find a better match than her. Besides, she was barely fourteen years older than me; it'd have been more appropriate to call her my big sister instead of 'mom.' She smoked in the house and I hated that. She also chewed gum all the time and made it crack in her mouth and I hated that, too. And her sense of style, while not exactly slutty or trashy or anything, was pretty unusual, at least it seemed so to me. She liked tight things and retro kind of stuff like from the 50's and 60's. I guess it was something like a gimmick at her job, but she liked to wear it at home, too. At least she didn't style her hair in a beehive.

And then there was her attitude.. I don't know, she wasn't exactly cruel or anything, but she was pretty bossy, sometimes even kind of mean to my dad. He was henpecked all the time. It made me mad to see my own dad doing things like serving her dinner, fetching things for her she could easily get up and get for herself. Funny thing was, he seemed pretty happy to do it. He didn't even seem to mind when she blew smoke in his face. I just couldn't figure it out. It only got really bad between Rebecca and I a few times in the beginning. After that, we pretty much agreed to stay out of each other's way. My dad understood some of how felt and really doted on me those last few years. I guess I got pretty spoiled.

So, anyway, Rebecca and I were at odds from the beginning for dozens of reasons. She wasn't mean to me, but it was pretty clear she didn't want kids and saw me as like an inconvenient necessity that came with marriage. She left the parenting to my dad. After he died, Rebecca found herself as a single mom responsible for a child that she didn't really want in the first place. She didn't rub it in, but it was pretty clear how she felt. I knew she couldn't wait until I was eighteen and gone so she could go on with her life. She tried to do the mommy kind of things, but it was all kind of perfunctory. She scolded me when I was bad and congratulated me on doing something well, but that was pretty much it. We never really did anything or went anywhere together. She tried to be chummy sometimes, but most of her jokes involved teasing me about the

attention I paid to my hair, and that just got annoying. My dad's work and the accident settlement left us pretty well off, but Rebecca still went to work as a hairstylist, even though we would have gotten by okay if she wanted to retire early. I guess she enjoyed it, or it kept her busy, or something. She wasn't very good at housekeeping, and I was lazy, so our house was usually a little messy. I'd do as little around the house as possible to keep her nagging to a minimum.

The pathetic thing is, part of my resentment towards Rebecca, all the way from the beginning, was because my feelings for her were pretty conflicted, beyond all the normal stuff I already mentioned. I didn't really realize it at the time, it was all sub-conscious and buried really deep. The truth is, I had a crush on my step-mom. I didn't even know why, and I certainly didn't admit it to myself, but there it was. Looking back it's all pretty obvious to me now. Not only was I jealous for my dad's attention to her, which is like normal, I was jealous of the attention she paid to him. Like I said, I was young, and it was sub-conscious, but I wanted her to look at me the way she looked at him. Even when she was being mean to him. I secretly liked the way she looked, the way she dressed, the way she acted. I wanted her attention, and not in a motherly way. I wanted her to blow smoke in *my* face, instead of my dad's. I imagined, in a juvenile way, maybe when I grew up I'd marry a woman just like Rebecca and then I'd be happy. Pretty fucked up, huh? I mean, it's not like I actually fantasized about having sex with her, but shameful, erotic, envious feelings were definitely there since I was young, all mixed up with everything else.

What's even sadder is that it wasn't just some passing crush that went away as I got older. If anything, it got stronger as I matured. Again, it's not something I admitted to myself. I didn't want to be a freak and it would've been hard enough to admit that I had a crush on a woman, especially if that woman was legally my mother. I just learned to live with keeping my feelings tightly bottled up and went on trying to act as normal as everyone else. It still effected me in everyday life, though. Like, I'd watch her around the house, glancing at her when she wasn't looking, feeling some kind of unnameable longing I couldn't pin down. I would get uncomfortable when we had to sit close together, or when she touched me for whatever reason. I'd get to feeling all frustrated, desperate, and not even know why. I started to get depressed when thinking about graduating school soon, because it would mean I'd have to move out and not be near her anymore. Even though we hardly ever interacted and were little more than roommates with family ties, I didn't want to have to go away. And worse was the knowledge that she wanted me gone, and I couldn't confess to either her or myself why I really wanted to stay. Anyway, that's pretty much all the background stuff and leads up to my eighteenth birthday.

I'd gone out carousing with my friends, as a celebration, straight after

school and ended up at some house party that evening. After a couple hours I was blind stinking drunk—on Amaretto, of all things. To make a long story short, the cops came because of noise complaints, discovered lots of underage drinking, and I got a free ride home in the back of a cruiser. I was too fucked up to worry much about being in trouble. At least, I wasn't worried until they got me home and I saw Rebecca's expression. She sent me to my room to wait while the cops had a talk with her.

A little later, after the cops had left, Rebecca called me out. I took my time getting out into the hallway, wearing a drunken smirk on my face. I knew I was going to get a lecture, probably get grounded. Nothing I hadn't dealt with before. There Rebecca was, at the bottom of the stairs. She was wearing these snug, red capris and a pale green, off-the-shoulder blouse that clashed with her red curls. Well, that's just the way she was.

"I can't believe you," she began. "What was going through your head? Tell me, what were you thinking?"

I just wobbled and swayed against the banister. She went on like that for a while, but I was only half-listening. I felt a little guilty, but mostly I just felt dizzy.

"And to see you brought home by the *police*?" she was saying. "Look at you. You're not hearing anything I say."

"I can hear you," I mumbled, then loudly, "*I hear you*. I just..."

"Don't care," she finished. "You're so irresponsible. You're too drunk to even know what's going on. Anything could have happened to you! You didn't even call to say where you were."

"You're not my mother." God, how many times had I used that line during an argument with her? Whenever Rebecca put me on the defensive, or if I felt guilty about something, I'd always find away to twist it back on her. "What does it matter to you? I can do what I want, anyway. I'm an adult now."

She folded her arms. "Oh, you're an adult now, are you? Do you want to leave? Fine. Go be an adult on your own. See how you like it. Then you could fuck up however you wanted. Well? Do you?"

"No! No, I... I... just... stop treating me like a child. You treat me like—"

"Like what? Like a spoiled little brat? Because that's how you're acting."

"So what? What do you care? You don't care about me. You never wanted me. You hate me! Well, I hate you back!" I was goading her, I knew it. I guess I made for a mean drunk.

Rebecca was coming up the stairs now. "Lily!" she said (that's me, Lily). "That's not true, and you know it!"

I was backing away towards my room. "You're just a... you only married my daddy for the money and you can't wait til I'm gone so you can have the

place all to yourself!"

I thought she was going to hit me, but instead she grabbed my shoulders and was shaking me, her dark green eyes and heart-shaped face inches away. "Stop talking that this instant!" she shouted. I could smell her smoke-and-bubblegum breath.

I got all emotional and started blubbering and going on like, "You hate me, you hate me." Then she started rubbing my shoulders trying to say something comforting. I felt like shit since I knew the only reason I was being mean to her was because I couldn't admit how I really felt, and that frustration almost always ended up with me directing my anger at her.

But there I was, being drunk and stupid, right in her arms and she was stroking my arms, trying to quiet me down. I was so dizzy that I had to lean against her for support. She was so soft. Before I even knew what I was doing I lifted my face up and kissed her clumsily on the corner of the mouth. It only lasted a second, but I felt her tense up, her arms stiffening to hold me apart from her.

I was so horrified at what I'd done that I ripped away from her before I could even register her expression. I ran, stumbling, into my room, slammed the door behind me, and ended up being sick in the bathroom. Happy Birthday to me.

The next day I woke already late for school. I just hid under the covers. I didn't have much of a hangover, amazingly, but I didn't feel too great either. It took a while to remember exactly what had happened the night before. There was the police, the fight with Rebecca, and.. the kiss. Had it really been a kiss? Maybe I just imagined it, or blew it out of proportion in my Amaretto-hazed recollection. I wondered what Rebecca thought. What would she say? Had she even noticed? If she did, was she going to call me something awful and kick me out? I just couldn't believe how much I'd screwed things up in one night, and there was no way to rewind and make it not happen.

When I finally dragged myself out of bed I noticed a slip of paper sticking under my door. I picked it up, afraid of what it might say, but all it said was:

Lily

Gone to work. Called in sick for you at school. There's cake in the kitchen if you want some. Rebecca

That didn't tell me anything of what she was thinking. After a long shower, I spent the rest of the day moping around the house. I discovered Rebecca had gotten me a birthday cake the day before, and that just made me feel worse. It was lemon, my favorite. She went and got me a cake made out to me, and I hadn't even come home. I was an inconsiderate bitch, and I knew it. A few friends called later on to see what happened to me and gossip about the

party last night, but I was too distracted to talk long. I was a nervous wreck as I waited for Rebecca to get home. I kept crying on and off and felt about as sick as I had been the night before.

I was sitting in my room pretending to write in my journal when she finally got home. After a few tense minutes, she came knocking on my door. I didn't turn from my desk when she came in. "How's your head?" she asked.

"Okay, I guess."

"That's good. Look, I know you were drunk last night and said a lot of things you didn't mean. Right?"

"Yes." *Said and did things I didn't mean*, I was thinking. It sounded positive, though. If she was willing to chalk everything that happened last night up to me being drunk, so was I.

"Right," she said. "Well, I don't want you hanging out with those people at that party anymore. Got it?"

"Okay."

"And I want you to come straight home after school from now on. No borrowing the car. No shopping. You're grounded for two months."

"I supposed I was," I said. No point in arguing.

Rebecca was silent for a moment, then came up behind me. "I know I haven't spent as much time with you as maybe I should've. I know I haven't been a great mother to you, but... oh, Lily, do we have to be enemies?"

"We're not enemies," I said quietly.

She was quiet again long enough for me to start getting uncomfortable, but I still couldn't turn and look her in the face. I felt her touch my hair and I stiffened. "Your hair's so nice. You're really very proud of your hair, aren't you?"

"Uh... yeah?"

"I can understand why. I've always wanted to get my hands on it. I could do so much with it. I've always wondered something. How come even though you have a hairdresser right here at home, you've always gone to a salon to get it done?"

"Um, I don't know," I said. Actually, I did know why. If simply sitting close to her was intimate enough to make me feel uncomfortable and frustrated, imagine what having her hands all up in my hair would do to me. "I guess I just figured it'd feel weird."

"I can understand that, I suppose," she said. "But I was thinking. I thought maybe it would help us get closer, help us be friends, if we could do more things together. I know it's too late to make everything perfect and start all over, but... there could still be something between us. Why don't you let me do your hair? It'll be fun."

"I.. I don't know." I wanted to say yes, I wanted her to pay that extra attention to me, but I was afraid it would just make me crazy. She was combing her fingers through my hair. It felt really good.

"Tell you what. Let's make a deal. You know how you've been after me for getting you your own car for years? Well, I'll get you a car, a used one, *after* your grounding is over, if you behave right, and... *and*," she repeated because I was starting to bounce up and down with excitement at the thought of getting a car, "if you stop going to a salon and let me have total control over your hair."

I hardly even heard the last part. I mean, I did, but I was hardly important compared to finally getting my own car. Wow! I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Not only was I *not* getting kicked out like I'd feared, not only was I getting off with a simple grounding, but I was getting a car and all I had to do was let Rebecca do my hair. That was hardly a huge sacrifice. Hell, I'd put up with any amount of frustrated, shameful desires to get my own car. Most of my friends already had cars—some got them the day they'd turned sixteen. I'd leapt out of my chair and was hopping around, hugging Rebecca. A perfectly plutonic, happy hug, mind you. I could be normal *sometimes*, you know.

So, anyway, that's how Rebecca got access to my hair. It really wasn't as rough on me as I'd feared, once I got used to it, anyway. Sure, having her leaning over me while shampooing my hair over the edge of the basin was kind of distracting. Her nearness while she fussed over my hair, drying, teasing, and styling it, wasn't easy on me, either. She habitually smoked while she styled my hair, too, and that made it hard to breathe sometimes. But I could handle it. Doing my hair really seemed to make her happy, and I was all for that. I discovered I really being able to make her happy. I know I was often at odds with her, but I really did want to be able to please her, to see her smile just for me. Rebecca was right about one thing, for sure—it did bring us closer. We probably talked more in a couple weeks than we had in the past year. Well, she did most of the talking. She had always been chatty, and I was still a withdrawn teen type, after all.

Things pretty much got back to normal for a while. It wasn't til a couple weeks later that it started to get a little strange. See, like, Rebecca was getting more and more obsessed with my hair. You'd think someone who worked with hair all day wouldn't want to touch another strand after hours at work, but not with Rebecca. Messing with my hair was like a hobby for her. And besides being kind of weird, it also got a little boring having to sit still for her for an hour or two every day. I really didn't have much to complain about, though. Her skillful scalp massages during shampooing were practically orgasmic, and my hair always looked fabulous. It just about glowed from all the attention being paid to it. Who wouldn't want to go to school every day looking like she just

stepped out of the salon?

What was especially strange to me was that Rebecca was getting sort of, like, all possessive of my hair. Like, if we were sitting in front of the tv, she'd just reach out and start playing with my hair, twirling it around her fingers and stuff. You can imagine how that effected me. It was torture letting her do that because of the way it made me feel. I didn't want her to stop doing it either. I honestly figured she was just being friendly in her own way, being touchy-feely like. And when she'd find me brushing my hair in front of my vanity, she'd take the brush from my hand, totally without asking, and start brushing away, looking all contented. A few times when I wasn't really happy with how she styled it and I went and fixed it to my liking, she actually seemed to get angry. She ordered me to sit down so she could redo it the way it was. She didn't like me messing with her handiwork, I guess. I was too surprised by it to protest, so I just let her do what she wanted. I was late for school twice because she had to fix a hairstyle that I'd messed up. After that I didn't bother trying to change my hair from how she wanted it again.

We were sitting watching tv one weekend. I was on the floor and she was on the sofa behind me, brushing my hair. That had become our usual position. I was messing with the remote when she said, "How come you've never colored your hair?"

I shrugged. "I dunno. I like it the way it is. Besides, coloring it can hurt it, right? I've been growing it for too long to risk damaging it."

"It's not damaged if you take decent care of it. I should know, I'm an expert." She played with my hair a few moments. "I've decided. Come on upstairs, I want to color your hair."

I twisted around to face her. "No way! I don't wanna do thaaat," I whined.

"You don't want to? That's fine, it's not up to you, anyway. Or is it that you refuse?" She smirked at me. "Remember our deal. Do you want a car or not?"

All I could do was make stupid stuttering noises. She took my hand and lead me up to her master bath, where she had tons of hair stuff and samples from work. Before I knew it, I was sitting under a cape with my hair dripping wet. "You're going to be careful, right?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied as she rummaged through packages. "Ah, this one. Blond'll look nice on you."

"Blond? That's bleaching! You didn't say anything about bleaching! I'm not doing this," I said, struggling to get the cape off.

"Oh, yes you are, if you know what's good for you," Rebecca said, pushing me back into the seat. She leaned close to me, her green eyes flashing.

“Now are you going to be a good girl and let me have my way or do I have to tie you to that fucking chair? Either way, I’m going to get what I want.”

I swallowed loudly. She had never said anything quite like that to me before in my life. If anyone else had talked to me that way, I would already have been up and shouting. With Rebecca, all I could do was sit there like a deer in the headlights. Hearing her say that, I felt instantly disengaged from my body, sorta like the ground had dropped out on me, all dizzy and floaty.

For a second I imagined Rebecca tying me up and having her way with me, and for a second I thought that I might really, really want her to. What was wrong with me? Why did she make me feel so confused? I finally just shrugged a little and looked down. Then just like that she was all friendly and joking around again as she started mixing up the bleaching stuff.

It took a long time to get all the pasty stuff on my hair, since I had so much. I sniffled and whined a little, but that didn’t bother her. I wasn’t so dumb that I didn’t realize what had just happened was some kind of power play. But why now? Why over something like this? Why not like when I was brought home by the cops? Sure, she got angry then, but she wasn’t so... *intense*. What did it matter to her what color my hair was, anyway? It was mine, after all, not hers. For whatever reason, Rebecca was having a blast bleaching my hair, giggling, cooing over how she could see it turning color.

“Come on, Lily, cheer up,” she told me. “Everybody loves to try out being blond.”

Great. All I could think about was how that damn stuff was sucking the natural colors out of my hair, stripping it. I know it’s melodramatic, but it felt almost like my hair was getting raped or violated or something. Lots of girls I knew bleached or colored their hair, but mine was beautiful without it. I didn’t *need* to try to make it look prettier. Like, any change could only be for the worse, right?

It took another couple hours for Rebecca to finish bleaching, toning, rinsing, conditioning, and styling it. When I finally got to see it, I hardly recognized myself. I mean, you get used to looking a certain way in a mirror over the years, you know? I was amazed at how something as simple as a change of color could make me look completely different. My hair was still soft and silky smooth and didn’t seem to be hurt. I guessed Rebecca knew what she was doing, after all. Actually, I thought it turned out kinda sexy, but I wasn’t going to admit that to my step-mom. I was still in pout mode.

Rebecca couldn’t keep her hands off it. She was all telling me how good it looked and how cute I was. I was flattered, but a little intimidated, I guess. She was just acting so different towards me, like I was seeing a side of her I’d never really seen before. That’s a little unsettling when you’ve been living with

someone as their child for six years—you figure you know all there is to know about them. I finally had to go to bed early just so I could get a little peace and sort things out.

My new hair was a hit at school that week, by the way. Everybody just loved it. The compliments felt great, but I just brushed them off. Weird as it sounds, I felt like I was being deceptive in some way. I mean, the whole thing wasn't even my idea, and was practically forced upon me. Well, not really forced, but you know what I mean. I guess seeing me as a blond drove Corbin, my boyfriend, crazy. He wouldn't leave me alone about going on a date with him that night, even though I was grounded. He got mad at me when I refused to sneak out or something to hook up with him. He told me I was being a tease and we got in a big fight over that.

So anyway, other than getting used to my new hair, nothing much happened that week, other than me starting to get stir-crazy from not being allowed to go out. Then that Friday, Rebecca totally surprised me by announcing she wanted to color my hair again. I couldn't believe it. I'm not going to bother going into all the details, since it was pretty much a repeat of the previous week. We had a little argument, I lost, and I left Rebecca's bathroom with dark, shiny, chestnut brown hair. Rebecca wasn't all over it like she had been the first time, but she had a really self-satisfied look about her. I was really confused and off-balance. I was angry at the liberties she was taking with *my* hair. I was pissed off at myself over how I couldn't stand up to her. At the same time I was, I dunno, I guess fascinated by the way she made me feel.

I found I kinda liked having dark hair, for a change; the contrast really made my blue eyes stand out. You can probably guess people at school thought it was weird that I should change my hair again so soon. I could hardly say my step-mom made me do it, so I just said I decided I didn't like being blond. I guess people accepted that excuse.

Rebecca told me I had to do more stuff around the house, like cleaning and stuff. I still didn't do any more than I had to. One evening, she was lying on the couch and told me to rub her feet. I'd never rubbed anyone's feet before, I always thought feet were kinda gross. She coaxed me into it, saying it was fair exchange for the scalp massages she gave and that her feet were really sore from standing all day. That was typical—she had complained about her feet for as long as I'd known her. It was those pumps she wore all day.

So before long I had her feet in my lap and she was moaning with pleasure. I decided that it was pretty cool, after all. Maybe it would have been gross doing it for anyone else, but not for Rebecca. It made me happy to be able to give her pleasure, and from something so simple. I found having her feet and wriggling toes in my hands was sort of exciting, in some way. I mean, I was

rubbing her, caressing her, being intimate even if it was just her feet. I suddenly had an overwhelming curiosity as to what it would be like to have her toes in my mouth, sucking on them. Luckily, I resisted the urge, but it disturbed me. I was so mad at myself for getting turned on at the thought of having my step-mom's feet in my mouth I could've cried. Unluckily for me, she said I was so good at it that she ought to have me do it every single day. And she did.

I guess it wouldn't surprise you to hear that that weekend she wanted to do my hair again. It shouldn't have surprised me, but it did. I mean, I was starting to understand that this was getting to become a hobby to her, maybe even some kind of obsession, but I thought it was getting a little out of control. And what was worse, she told me she wanted to make me blond again! Even blonder than before! The mere thought of the bleaching required to make my freshly-dyed, dark brown hair blond again was enough to make my ends split. I had to put my foot down.

"What do you mean 'no?'" Rebecca asked. She looked amused that I was standing up to her, and that just made me angrier. "It's not your place to say yes or no. I thought you'd figured that out by now."

"I mean it! You can't keep doing this. This is getting out of hand," I said. "What'll people think?"

Rebecca sighed, like she was being indulgent or something. I hated it when she did that. "What's it matter what people think? You're always worrying about that. Your hair practically owns you. Sometimes, I think you might even be better off without it. Besides, you agreed to let me have my way."

"I didn't agree to this. This is my hair you're messing around with! Part of my body! You think it's all fun, but it's gonna hurt my hair, all this stuff!"

She was putting her cigarette out. "You're going to make me lose my temper."

"Go on!" I shouted. "Lose your temper! See if I- *ow!*"

Rebecca had slapped me. Pretty hard, too. No one had ever slapped me before. And then, before I even had a chance to say or do anything, she did it again! I staggered a little, mostly from surprise. My cheek was burning and my eyes started tearing up on their own. It had happened so suddenly I was more shocked and amazed than frightened or angry just then. All I could do was cup my cheek and stare at her.

She was staring back at me. At first she appeared startled at what she'd done, even apologetic, but I guess as we stood there she saw something in my eyes that made her confident again. "Like father, like daughter," she murmured. I flinched as she reached up to my face, thinking she was going to slap me again, but she didn't. She slid her fingers under my hand, where I was cupping my cheek, and tenderly stroked my skin. "Lily. Look at me. I know you don't

understand yet, but that was something I needed to do. You needed me to." She paused. "Do you want to be a good girl? Do you want to make me happy with you?"

I sniffled and made a noncommittal nod. I didn't know what I wanted anymore.

"I want you to go to your room and get your hairbrush, the big black one. Bring it to me. Go on."

Dazed, I went down the hall and into my room, moving on automatic. I knew which hairbrush she was talking about since I used it every day. It was a large, oval-shaped bristle brush made of shiny, black plastic. Did she want to brush my hair now? Could this night get any weirder? I caught a glimpse of my face in my mirror and saw two clear handprints on my left cheek. I turned away and went back to my step-mom's room.

She was sitting on the edge of her bed. She looked very calm, but she was breathing kinda heavily. I held out the brush and she took it. "Good," she said. "Pull down your shorts. Take them off."

My shorts? "Wha-?"

"Don't be afraid. Just do it."

I had no idea where this was heading. Everything had turned so surreal. I felt like I was floating, like it was all just some crazy dream. Funny how you never notice how important a pivotal moment in your life is while it's happening. If I had decided then that the situation was getting way too weird and just walked out, my whole life would have been completely different. Instead, I did what she told me. Not that I wasn't hesitant, but I just had to know where this was going. For some reason, I felt compelled to do what she told me. I wondered if I'd been hypnotized or something. I slowly pulled my denim shorts that I wore around the house down and over my feet. I was just wearing a white cotton top and a colorful, paisley thong. Rebecca had seen me wearing less in the past, but I'd never felt so exposed in front of her.

"Good girl. Get on the bed. Lie across my lap. No... Lily... face down."

So there I was, half-naked, spread across Rebecca's lap with my butt in the air. I think I might have giggled, but more hysterical-like, not because I thought it was funny. I kept thinking *this isn't happening*. But it was. She hugged an arm around my waist so I was snuggled up against her. I felt her other hand touching my butt. So many thoughts were going through my head I couldn't even sort them out.

"I don't want to have to punish you, Lily.. no, that's not true. I'm going to enjoy this. But I don't enjoy having to punish you because you've been bad. You need to learn your place. First, don't ever raise your voice to me," she said, followed by a loud *whack* and suddenly my ass was stinging.

"Ow!" *Oh my god, I thought, she's spanking me! With my own hairbrush!* I wondered what my friends, or anyone else, would think if they saw me, an eighteen-year-old young woman getting a bare-assed paddling on the lap of her step-mom. "What the hell—"

"Shut up. Second, from now on you do what I say, when I say. Don't argue with me." *Whack, whack!* She continued to spank me while she spoke. "You've deserved this for so long, Lily. You're a spoiled, foul-mouthed brat and you know it. You're so fucking vain. All you worry about is your precious hair and how you appear to others. Is that all there is to you? Is there nothing else to Lily but pretty hair and a cute face? Are you really that superficial?"

That hurt. Was that really what she thought of me? I didn't want Rebecca thinking of me like that. That would be horrible. But was she right? Was I really just a spoiled child that hid behind her pampered looks because there was nothing else of her worth showing? "No!"

"Well, from now on you're going to get all the attention you'd ever want paid to your perfect hair, and then some."

She kept paddling me for a long time. It wasn't too bad at first, but it really built up after a while. Before long my whole ass was on fire, and she just wouldn't stop. I guess most people, normal people, wouldn't have stayed around after the first smack. Hell, most people wouldn't have been lying on their step-mom's lap in the first place. But even when it really began to hurt a lot, I still couldn't move. I could no more have sprouted fairy wings and fluttered away than I could have willed myself to move off of Rebecca's lap. Maybe there was a part of me that thought I deserved it. Maybe I was just fucked up.

I tried not to cry, but I could only hold it in for so long. When I finally started crying, it was like a dam breaking and I couldn't stop. I mean, bawling and nose running and everything. It wasn't just from the paddling; I don't know what all I was crying about. I guess I hadn't really cried in a long, long time. Rebecca just forced it all out of me.

Eventually, the paddling stopped. I kept on crying into Rebecca's comforter, which I'd bunched up around my face. My butt was burning and tingling all over, but Rebecca was stroking it with her cool hand and that felt really nice. I kept crying until I ran dry, then she sat me up and hugged me. She was a little sweaty. I just hid my face in her shoulder.

"There, there," she said, being all motherly, rocking me a little, patting me on the back. "God, Lily, you've been making me feel things I haven't felt in so long. Making me think about things I haven't thought about in forever..." she trailed off. She slowly disentangled me from her and lit one of her long cigarettes. "Nevermind. Now, do you feel better?"

Amazingly enough, I did. I discovered I felt.. pretty good! I felt kinda floaty and peaceful. Totally drained, but in a good way. Suddenly I started giggling a little, at myself and at the whole situation. Who would have thought that getting paddled until I was in tears would end up making me feel so good in the end? And how did *she* know?

Rebecca smirked. "Yeah. You're fine," she said and exhaled a stream of smoke in my face. I don't know if she even realized she did it, but she'd never done that to me before. It's what she used to do to my dad. "Go on, giggly, get me a water. I'm thirsty. Turn off the lights while you're down there."

I got up and went downstairs to get a bottled water from the fridge, turning off lights along the way. I still felt light-headed and, I dunno, disconnected, I guess, going through the house. Same old house, nothing had changed, and yet everything had changed. For me, anyway. I diverted into the bathroom to get a look at my butt, which still burned, but not as bad as before. It was all dark red with white splotches here and there. I was a little shocked at the sight of it, but I was also perversely proud in some way. Like, I'd endured it and it was a badge or something. Weird.

I returned to the bedroom and handed her the water bottle. "Have a seat. No, down there," she said and wiggled her foot, as I was about to sit on the bed. I sat on the floor next to the bed while she finished her cigarette. For some reason, that didn't bother me. I had to giggle again at the image of myself sitting there, at my step-mother's feet, half-naked, with a red, freshly-spanked bottom. It was just so unlike anything I'd ever experienced. She smiled at me and rested her hand on my head, petting my hair. After a minute she shook her head and chuckled. "Paisleys."

Paisleys? Oh, she was talking about my panties. "What's wrong with them?"

"Nothing. Just struck me as funny," she said. She stood up and stretched her back. "Well, it's getting late. Let's go ahead and get started on your hair or we'll be up all night."

"What? Oh no. No," I said weakly. I'd hoped she'd forgotten about that, at least for another day. I'd had such a weird night, but at that moment I was feeling pretty good. I didn't want it to be ruined by more hair trauma. "Can't it.. can't it wait?"

"No, I want to get it over with. Then you won't have to worry about it. *Now*, Lily."

I had a feeling she wouldn't hesitate to start paddling me all over again if I argued. She was going to get her way, anyway. I found I *wanted* her to get her way, I just wished it wasn't at the expense of my hair. I whined as she tugged me into the bathroom, and started sobbing when she sat me down in the chair.

The hard vinyl made my butt hurt worse. "But, but I don't want to."

"I know you don't. What you want doesn't matter much. Not anymore. Not with me. You'll learn," she said, not saying it to be mean, just matter-of-fact. I sniffled some more. She looked around and pulled a couple pairs of pantyhose off the shower rod where they'd been left to dry. Setting my arm on the armrest, she quickly knotted a pair of hose around my wrist.

"What are you *doing*?" I cried. Obviously, she was tying me to the chair. Just like she'd threatened she would. Just like deep down I'd kind of hoped she would. And now she was doing it for real. Should I let her? Should I struggle? Should I just sit there, staring like a dumbass with my mouth hanging open while she tied my other wrist down? The third choice, apparently, because it was already done.

"There," she said, lightly, as she covered me with the cape, "does that make you feel any better?"

I wasn't sure if it made me feel better. It sure made me feel powerless, though, and I was floating again. It was only hose on my wrists, so I guess if I tried hard enough I could have gotten loose. Question was, did I even *want* to try? At least it gave me the freedom to struggle when she started putting that bleaching stuff on my hair.

So I was sitting there with this gunk all in my hair, feeling so weird and just plain vulnerable, I guess. I saw Rebecca, standing there with a self-satisfied look on her face, looking like some red-haired goddess in capris, and I was suddenly completely overcome with emotion. She was so beautiful to me just then that it was almost painful. I know it sounds stupid or crazy or whatever, especially given the situation, but it was like all the walls came down and I could no longer deny to myself what I really felt for her. What I'd been feeling for her since she first moved in. I loved her so much, I wanted her so bad, I would have done anything she told me just to see her smile at me. It suddenly didn't matter that she was a woman, that she was older, or even the fact that she was technically my mother. Right at that moment all I wanted was to be with her forever. I wanted her to love me back so much it hurt. I started crying again, 'cause it all just hit me so hard.

"Oh, stop that. It's just bleach, it's not the end of the world."

"No... Rebecca... I... Rebecca..." *I love you. I love you!* Oh, why couldn't I say it? Too afraid she'd get mad at me. Or, even worse, laugh at me. So I stayed quiet for the next few hours it took for her to get my hair the way she wanted it. It took several rounds of bleaching to get it done. Finally, she undid my wrists and I had to rub feeling back into my hands. I saw a total stranger in the mirror. The first time she made me blond it had at least looked natural. This time it was such an extreme shade of platinum blond that there was no question it came out

of a bottle. It was just a few shades of yellow away from being almost colorless. It did kinda make me feel sexy or wicked, in a way, but it was *so* not me. At least my hair was still in good shape. It was still really shiny, which almost made it seem blonder.

"It turned out lovely!" said Rebecca. "What do you think?"

"I feel like a barbie doll."

"Aw, that's sweet! Come on, help me clean this mess up," she said. The whole time I was helping her tidy up the bathroom I was struggling with the secret burning inside me.

She stretched. "That'll do, I suppose. Why don't you go on to bed. It's really late, and you still have school tomorrow."

I didn't want to leave, though. I stood in her bedroom with my blonded head bowed, trying to find words to tell her. If I didn't tell her now, I knew it'd just get harder to do so with every day that passed, but I couldn't make myself speak. What if she got disgusted with me, or something? Funny that I should be worried about that, I mean, she's the one who just spanked me and tied me up, but I still felt terrified of what she'd think.

She nudged me towards the door a couple of times, but I only moved a few steps. She gave me a funny look, then went to the bathroom to brush her teeth and get ready for bed. My legs felt weak and I had to sit down. I think I started crying again. She came back in wearing the black satiny nightshirt she always wore to bed. She looked at me with a worried expression. "What's the matter with you? Is something wrong? Do you feel funny about what happened earlier?"

I nodded, then shook my head. I couldn't look at her.

"Lily, tell me what's wrong."

"I... I... I can't," I sputtered. God, I felt pathetic. I probably could have told her if I was drunk. Where was Amaretto when you needed it?

"Why not?"

"You'll hate me... if I say," I whispered.

"Oh, come on, nothing's that bad. I won't hate you. Tell me," she said, squeezing my shoulder. I shook my head and she sighed. "Do you not want to be alone?"

A nod.

"Would sleeping in here tonight make you feel better?"

Oh, god! Exactly what I most wanted and most dreaded. I let her tuck me in like a little kid, then she turned out the lights and got into bed beside me. It was a king-size bed, so there was still plenty of room between us, but I was still freaking out. There was no way I'd be able to sleep.

Everything was quiet for a while. I thought Rebecca might have already

fallen asleep herself, but suddenly she said, "You know, I've read your little diary."

At first I got really mad. My journal was private! Who did she think she was poking around in my private stuff? Then I realized what she was really saying, and my heart about stopped. Over the years I'd poured out my thoughts in that book, things about my dad, school, my friends, and... my step-mom. I'm sure I'd never written any one thing in there that told of my secret desires, but when pieced all together, anyone could see what my shameful feelings for her were. She just told me she *knew*! All I could say, when I could finally breathe again, was, "When? Did you?"

"A long time ago. I've been looking at it for years."

Years? For years she'd know what I felt and she never let on? I felt so ashamed. All the time she knew she must have looked at me with private disgust, looking at me like a stupid girl with a ridiculous crush that could never come true, and there I was that very night wondering, hoping that she might feel something for me. I tried to stifle my sobs and just ended up making stupid noises.

I was about to jump out of bed and run back to my room when she spoke. "Lily? You kissed me before. You didn't give me a chance to do it back. Do you want to kiss me now? I would like it, if you did."

Oh god oh god oh god please please yes and suddenly we were kissing, and I was doing it clumsily because my nose was stopped up from crying, I was still crying, and I couldn't breathe through it but that was okay because I was finally kissing her and she was kissing me *back* and she meant it and it wasn't a cruel joke and I finally got what I'd been dreaming of for so long even before I could even admit it and we were touching and exploring and it wasn't like when I'd been with anyone else ever it was a thousand times better and she was scratching me and pulling my hair and I loved it I loved every second I loved her and I was so happy and I was in heaven in heaven it was heaven...

I slept more soundly that night than I can remember. I still remember that night so clearly. Everything in my life changed right then and I wouldn't be able to go back to the way it was even if I wanted to. Later on, Rebecca told me her side of things. She did in fact know that I had a crush on her. She didn't know for sure to what extent. For her part, she had been... *thinking* about me for years. She never talked about it with me, or did anything about it, though. She was waiting for me to make a decision on what *I* wanted to do. You know, see if I'd grow out of it. Also, she definitely wasn't going to make any kind of move until I was an adult. What we'd just done might not be illegal, but doing it with an underage girl sure would be. I guess she'd pretty much known what my decision would be weeks before, she was just waiting for me to come to terms

with it. But if you thought all my problems went away after discovering reciprocated love, you'd be wrong. My problems were just starting.

The morning after felt weird. It can be weird enough with like a normal person sometimes. It's extra-weird when it's your step-mom. She was already up and dressed when she woke me. She was sitting on the edge of the bed and woke me up by stroking my head. I hadn't been awakened like that since I was a little girl. I whined that I didn't want to go school. I wanted to stay home and she could stay off work and we could spend all day together. She told me that regular life still went on and we had responsibilities. And besides, it was Friday, and we'd have all weekend together. I dragged myself out of bed and the first thing I did in the bathroom was check my butt. It was still kinda tender, and there were several purple, hairbrush-shaped bruises on my cheeks. Wild.

I was eating breakfast in the kitchen, though I wasn't really hungry. I'm never hungry in the morning. She was standing behind me, brushing and fixing my hair. I mulled over a mouthful of soggy cereal, then asked her, "Rebecca? Do you... ya know, like, regret last night?"

"Actually, yes. I never want to do it again."

I choked on cereal and started coughing. "You... wha..."

She playfully jerked my hair. "Of course I don't regret it, you silly girl. Why? Do you?"

"No." I coughed.

"Well, okay then." She brushed me some more. "Lily, there's something important. Don't have time to really get into it all now, but... well, if you want this to keep going on, if you want this to become a special relationship between us—"

"I do!"

"Great, well... I have special needs when it comes to a relationship. It's contributed to keeping me single for most of my life. I need to have absolute control in a relationship. What happened last night, that was just a tiny taste. The only kind of person I can be with, for any length of time, has to be happy with that kind of thing. Your father was like that. I suspect, I hope, you are too. But anyway, I'm giving you an out. You might not have that chance later on."

"Rebecca I want to be with you. I'll do whatever it takes." I only had a vague understanding of what she was talking about. She had definitely exerted control over me the previous night, and I'd decided I liked it, how it felt. It was uncomfortable to hear about my dad, though. I'd been trying not to think about him. I mean, I'd just slept with my father's wife, in his old bed, in his house. That was weird.

"That's good to hear. We'll see." She finished with my hair. "Alright? Let's be off."

School that day was rough. All my friends were teasing me about my hair. Not because it looked silly, but because it was the third drastic change in as many weeks. I'd been using the excuse that I went brunette was because I didn't like being blond, and there I was, blonder than ever. I couldn't explain that. People were starting to look at me funny, and I didn't like that at all. I also felt paranoid that everybody somehow knew that I'd just slept with my step-mom. No one knew, of course, but it felt like it all the same.

Getting back home to Rebecca made it all worth it. I had this idea that it'd be fun to play housewife for her, so I wanted to surprise her by having dinner ready by the time she got home. Unfortunately, I was never very good at cooking. For food we'd usually either order out or Rebecca would make something simple. My attempt at noodle casserole turned into a crunchy disaster. We ended up heating a frozen lasagna. She told me to do the dishes after dinner, but I was whiny 'cause I'd spent so long at least trying to make dinner and wanted to put it off til later. She threw her hands up and said, "Fine, I'll do the dishes. Why don't you go into the living room and relax, sweetums."

"Uh, okay." Something sounded fishy.

She called me back into the kitchen a few minutes later. She was already elbow deep in suds and steam. "One of the screws came off the pot handle and fell on the floor. I think it rolled under the stove. Can you see if you can reach it?"

I got down and laid my head on the linoleum to see if I could spot it. I felt around a little at the greasy, gross stuff that gathers under stoves. "I can't see anything. Are you sure it went under here?"

"Oh, my mistake. It's still on the pot. Nevermind."

I grumbled and started to get up, but got a sharp pain on my scalp. "Ow! You're standing on my hair!"

"I am? Oh! Sorry about that."

I waited a moment and tugged at my hair. "You're still standing on it."

"How careless of me," she said, showing no signs of moving her foot.

Oh. I get it, I thought. I pulled at my hair again, but it was stuck firmly under Rebecca's pump. I sighed and rested my head on my arm, all sprawled out on the kitchen floor with the little bits of food that had landed down there in the process of cooking. All I could do was look at my step-mom's shoe and listen to the sounds of dishes being done. I decided that it was actually kinda nice and soothing, in a weird sorta way. When Rebecca finished a while later, she looked down and asked, "So, do you want to the dishes next time?"

"I dunno," I replied lazily. "I kinda like it down here." That made her laugh, and I loved that. I didn't always have to do the dishes anymore after that, so long as I stayed at Rebecca's feet while she did them.

That weekend I learned so much about pleasuring women in general and Rebecca in particular. Eating pussy was strange at first, but I was cool with it. I kept cracking up for some reason, I guess I was just excited and nervous. Rebecca understood, she didn't get mad, as long as I kept trying to get better at it. I also learned that I'd have to get used to spankings on a regular basis, even if I'd been well-behaved. She really enjoyed doing that. Fortunately, she didn't always do them as hard as the first time, like, I'd get red but not bruised. Usually.

There were lots of other little things I discovered, such as how getting thoroughly tied up felt. She started easy on me, but soon it seemed like every time we had sex I was tied up in some way or other. It was uncomfortable sometimes, and it was pretty hard to get used to, but she said she loved how I looked like that. She said I looked so beautiful that way. As long as she kept telling me that, I'd have been willing to spend my days wrapped in barbed wire for her. Well, not barbed wire, but you know what I mean. I also finally got to find out what sucking on her toes was like. I really liked it. I totally surprised Rebecca the first time I did it; she hadn't told me to, and I was just rubbing her poor feet after she got home, and then I had her toes in my mouth. She said it felt wonderful, and that just made it better for me. I guess most people would think that was gross, but I was figuring out that just letting go and doing certain humiliating things could be very exciting. Rebecca allowed me the freedom to totally debase myself for her and, like, treated it as a gift from me. That was really cool.

That weird-yet-pleasant happy and floaty feeling was happening a lot more often, too. I guessed it had to do something with when Rebecca exerted control over me. It could easily be triggered while she was spanking me or tying me up. As things went on, I found myself going to that place even when Rebecca would do something as innocent as coming up behind me, hugging me possessively, and talking into my ear. I liked it. A lot. It was like being on a drug, or something.

There were non-sexual type things that I had to get better at, too. It actually took me months before I got any good at cooking. It was kind of fun to play at being a servant for Rebecca, though. One thing I was a slow learner at was how to be 'attentive' to Rebecca. Like, trying to anticipate her needs and do things for her and fetching things without her having to ask. I mean, up until very recently I was a typical, self-centered teen, used to ignoring everything but my own desires. Now I had to focus entirely on someone else, and it wasn't easy.

Rebecca took me to the mall one day and let me go shopping, as kind of a reward for being good, and because I was getting really stir crazy from being

stuck at home. I always loved shopping, and made up for a lot of lost time while Rebecca went off and did her own thing. I got a cute pair of low rise jeans that showed off my tummy and some tops and other things. I realized it's kinda hard picking good matching colors when you have no idea what color your hair is going to be from day to day. You might end up clashing horribly. Anyway, I was in the food court getting lunch, and started kinda flirting with a couple guys long-distance. I wasn't interested in them, I just wanted to know I could still do it. Like, I might be doing weird stuff and sleeping with my step-mom at home, but at least I still *looked* normal enough to be able to flirt and all, and that was good. Rebecca caught me at it, but she didn't say anything or get jealous or anything. She just kinda smiled to herself like she was enjoying some joke. I wondered if that was a bad sign for me.

She'd done some shopping, too, and when we got home she asked me if I'd be willing to do something for her. I'd learned by then that that meant I *would* be doing something for her and she was just trying to be polite about telling me. "I got some things just for you. I'd like you to wear them for me all the time from now on, just for my pleasure. Try them on, I want to see."

"Sure!" I took the bag and ran to my bedroom. I was excited because I thought it'd be some pretty lingerie or something to make me look sexy for her. "Oh. Crap," I sighed. What I found wasn't lingerie at all. It was a really heavy duty, body briefer thing and a long leg pantygirdle to go with it. Like, the kind that old women wear. I'd never even held one before, much less worn one. I put them on anyway. It felt weird having every square inch of me compressed from shoulders to knees in heavy lycra and powernet things. And it wasn't very smooth to the touch, having all these heavy seams and scratchy lace 'control' panels. I felt like an idiot. Rebecca started calling for me. I came out of my room reluctantly.

Rebecca saw me and was all happy, saying, "You look so cute! So precious! God, I love it. Do you like it?"

I glared at her. "No. This is a joke right? I feel like I should be in the Sears catalog or something."

"No, it's not a joke, silly. I think it's sexy. I've always loved how girdles look, and they look great on you," she said, hugging me and feeling my body, squeezing and pinching here and there.

"Well if you like 'em so much, then why don't you wear them?"

"Because they're not very comfortable. Are they, dear?" she asked. She must have seen me getting a whiny expression, because she said, "Don't say it. Just shut it before you say something I'll have to punish you for. I'll get you some more, in different styles. I want you to wear them from now on. Under your clothes when you're out, but these and nothing else when you're at home."

“But why?”

“I told you. It turns me on. And since you can always feel them, they’ll always remind you why you’re wearing them. Remind you who you belong to.”

Then I almost started to cry. “But... my new jeans... I can’t wear them with these. They’ll show!”

“So? You can still wear them. Maybe you’ll start a new fad, lowrise with a hint of girdle,” she teased. I must have made such a theatrical, horrified gasp that she started laughing. “It’s not that bad, Lily. You’ll get used to it.”

I ended up doing what she told me. It was weird going around the house in nothing but girdles. Oh, I was covered up enough. Nothing could show through layers of all that heavy, tight stuff. But it just felt kinda dirty in some way I can’t explain. They made me so self-conscious. Even though a lot more of my skin would have been showing, I’d have felt less exposed in something pretty and skimpy. Maybe it was because I knew they somehow turned her on. She was right about one thing, though; I did get used to them. They were always uncomfortable and sometimes downright painful, at first. They were hot and made me itch and didn’t do much for my self-confidence. But after a few weeks of wearing the damn things twenty-four hours a day, I started to be able to forget I was wearing them.

So, basically, over the next few months I got a pretty intense crash course in being a slave to my step-mother. The sex was wonderful, my adoration for her was only getting stronger, and for the most part I was happier then than I can remember. I say for the most part because there were some bad parts, too. Like, it was getting a lot more serious, for one. It had all started, for me anyway, as just a fun kind of game, but Rebecca took it very seriously. It’s one thing to do it in the bedroom, but having it take over every part of your life is something different.

Like, getting punished for saying something snotty or not behaving the way she wanted was really having an effect on my personality. Or times when I really didn’t want be tied up just then but I had to endure it anyway. I started wondering how much was just kinky games or if she really did want me to totally be a slave for real.

Another thing was my hair. Rebecca didn’t let up. I’d barely have three or four days to get used to being one color before she wanted to change it again. It was crazy. Like, I must have been eight different colors in the space of the single month after we first slept together: dark red, strawberry blond, black, auburn... it was dizzying. Eventually she got tired of normal colors and started throwing in colors like violet or pink or blue. I guess I got used to it and tried not to think about it too hard, you know, block it out. Part of it was fun, I guess, that part of me that was learning to get off on being helpless, treated like an

object. That small pleasure wasn't really enough compared to the negative side, though.

Like, my hair used to be all thick and shiny and healthy. After months of all that bleaching and dying, it had turned kinda dull and thin no matter how many conditioners were used. I was always getting split ends and there was always some breaking off—in the shower, while brushing my hair, or from running my hands through it. I had plenty to spare, but it was really starting to worry me. Rebecca wasn't blind. She could see the damage being done, but that didn't make her stop. Somehow, in some way I couldn't understand, messing with my hair seemed to make her happy in the same way tying me up did. I worried that if she kept up 'playing' with my hair, pretty soon there'd be nothing left worth playing with. I began to wonder about her motives. I bitched about it, but that would just earn me a really hard hairbrush paddling. I didn't complain much for a while after one of those.

And if that wasn't enough, school was becoming a nightmare. I always used to be pretty popular and stuff, but that didn't last long with my hair changing like that all the time. I couldn't come up with any good excuse as to why, and my silence just made it more mysterious and weird, I guess. People were always gossiping. I got more and more withdrawn and paranoid. I was always afraid of people finding out about my relationship with my step-mom, and even simply afraid of someone finding out I was wearing girdles under my clothes.

People started teasing me, and I wasn't used to that at all. (*Oh hey, Lily, I was thinking of dying my hair that color. Now I see how bad it'd look, so, thanks!*) I'd never had to develop good defenses against that kind of thing and it really hurt. They even started placing bets as to what color I'd show up to school with next. (*Hey, Lily, I lost five bucks betting you'd be a redhead this week. Just between us, why not go blond next time so I can win it back?*) Normally, I was the one making comments about other people who didn't look as good as me or my friends. Those same friends started giving me the cold shoulder. (*Your roots are showing, you better fix that. Freak.*) Corbin and I had drifted apart rapidly after I started sleeping with Rebecca, pretty much a no-one's fault kinda thing—I just had no interest in him, anymore—but he started telling people *he* had dumped *me* because I was getting freaky in private. He told people that I had asked him to have sex with my hair and stuff. (*I heard from the girls in the locker room that her pubes always match her hair. Isn't that sick?*) I mean, really. I started having to eat lunch alone. (*Don't sit next to Lily, all that junk in her hair will stain your clothes if it touches 'em.*) A girl from the 'alternative' clique with green hair and eyebrow piercings even approached me one day, asking if I wanted to eat with them. Getting pity from them made me feel so pathetic, since I used to make fun of

them. I got mad and told her off. That was pretty stupid of me, since they were probably the only people who might accept me now, but I did it anyway and cut myself off from everyone.

I think I was starting to hate my hair.

It was right around early spring when things came to a head. By then I wasn't really grounded anymore. I mean, you can ground your child but it's pretty silly to ground your own lover. And besides, I wanted to stay home with Rebecca rather than go out anyway, so I guess that wasn't exactly a punishment. Anyway, it had been a pretty bad day at school. In algebra class I sat in front a girl named Carrie, who was probably my closest friend since 4th grade. We'd been overjoyed to be seated next to each other at the start of the year. Now I wished I could have been anywhere else. That day my hair was platinum blond with hot pink streaks. Every now and then I could hear Carrie hiss "Freak" under her breath. I was trying so hard to ignore her and not show any reaction, but my throat was tight and I felt like crying. The teacher was busy at the board and Carrie said, "Hey, a split end, I'll get it for you." Then I felt a sharp pain on the back of my head. I spun around my desk to see Carrie unwinding one of my hairs from her fingers. She had yanked it out at the root. I glared at her, and she was like, *what?*, like I didn't have any feelings worth her worrying about. Twice more she did that. I was practically in tears by the time class was over and I ran to the bathroom to let it out.

Since I spent so long crying in the bathroom that I was almost late for cheerleader practice, which we got to do in place of PE. Usually I got there early so I could change into my uniform before anyone else got there. I had to do that so no one would see me wearing girdles; Rebecca let me take them off for cheerleading practice because, well, have you ever tried to do that stuff in a girdle? But since I was late I had to hang out and wait until everyone else had finished dressing and left.

I'd just started changing when one of the girls stuck her head in, saying, "Lily, Coach said she wants to talk you... my god, Lily, what are you *wearing?*" I tried to hide myself, but it was too late. She sniggered, covering her mouth, and ran off, and I knew before long everyone in school would know I wore girdles. I mean, it's not like I was a football player caught wearing pink panties or something, but no girl my age wore that stuff nowadays. Once it got out it would only make me look weirder, could only make the teasing worse.

I dreaded leaving the changing room, and finally the coach came in looking for me. She told me that changing my hair like I had been was okay, as long as it was a natural color, but I couldn't go showing up at games with unnatural 'punk' colors. It wasn't the kind of image that the school wanted to present at sporting events, she told me. I either had to change my hair or quit the

team. So I quit the team.

It was a relief, really. I mean, it's not like I really enjoyed being a cheerleader, other than it helped with my popularity. I only started because all my friends did it, and they weren't my friends anymore. But it was still humiliating. By the time school was over there were all kinds of rumors going around about why I got kicked off, everything from me being pregnant to being on drugs. The news about my girdles hadn't been spread around, yet, but I knew that by tomorrow it'd be all over and I'd be in a fresh hell. It was only Monday and I still had a whole week of it to look forward to until next weekend.

It was great to get home. I was so happy to see Rebecca. I didn't tell her about the day I had, cause I was embarrassed, I guess, and wanted to keep it to myself. Later on that evening, after she had colored my hair again, I was sitting at the foot of the sofa between Rebecca's feet and we were watching tv.

I was wearing a black and white girdle set and my hair had just been straightened and colored black with about two inches of whitish blond at the ends—Rebecca's fashion sense, again. At least I was color-coordinated. Right at the good part of the show she told me to go get her a tissue or something to put her used gum in. I said I would in a minute, then totally forgot about it.

Once the show was over I got up to go to the bathroom and felt something damp touch my back. All startled and thinking it was a bug for some reason, I spun around swatting at it, stumbled and sat down right on the coffee table. Our drinks spilled all over the place and soaked the seat of my girdle before I could get up. Rebecca was laughing so hard that she was having a hard time breathing. And then I discovered the damp thing that touched my back was Rebecca's chewed gum. I hadn't gotten her a tissue, so she'd used my hair, instead.

So I was standing there, humiliated about tripping and having a diet coke-soaked ass, and feeling furious that she'd put gum in my hair. With that added to my anxiety about my hair and what had been going on at school, I guess I just lost it. "Stop it. Stop laughing. Stop laughing at me! This isn't funny! You put gum in my hair? I can't believe you put gum in my hair!"

Rebecca rolled her eyes, making me feel like a stupid, whiny brat again. "Oh, stop it. I'll just cut it out."

"Cut it out? Wha... whe... it's..." I was trembling with rage. "Don't you care what you're doing to my hair? It's totally thrashed from you fucking with it already, and now you just throw gum in and say cut it out? You're ruining my hair!"

"I know I am." Her expression was dead serious.

"Why?" I screeched. She didn't answer. "Why are you *doing* this to me? Fuck this shit! Fuck it, fuck it, fu—"

"Lily! Just relax," she said, trying to get me to calm down. She wasn't

mad, and that made me angrier. "I know you're upset. Come on, I'll take care of you tonight. We'll go upstairs, I'll draw you a nice hot bath--"

"Fuck that! You can't buy me off with a bath. Do you know what I'm going through at school? I used to be beautiful! I used to be popular! Now everybody hates me!"

"I don't hate you."

"Yes you do. You wouldn't do this if you didn't hate me."

"I do it because you're mine and I want to," she said. "I thought you understood that. I can do what I want with you. You said you liked that."

"Well not anymore! I'm through, it's over!"

Rebecca looked stunned. "What?"

"You heard me. I'm not doing this anymore."

"I know you don't mean that," she said with a nervous kind of laugh. "You're just upset. It's okay, honey, it happens. I forgive you. We can talk about this. Now just relax before you say something you'll regret--"

"Fuck you! Forgive shit! I'm not letting you play your sick games with me anymore." I marched into the kitchen to get the scissors out of the drawer. I cut out the patch of gum, quickly, but still trying to do as little damage as possible. Rebecca was still rooted to the spot back in the living room. I threw the hairy wad of gum at her. "There! Is that what you wanted? Are you happy now?"

She turned aside and clutched the back of the sofa. She was shaking. "You're just like all the others. You're all the same. Promise everything. I get my hopes up, and then... it starts to get a little too real and they run away. They always leave me. You all run."

"I'm not surprised they all run, when they find out what a freak you are!"

Her face was white. "Shut up! Just shut up right now, you little--"

"Or else what? You'll spank me? Try it. My dad prolly woulda run, too, if he'd known who you were before he married you. He probably killed himself just to get away from you!"

I know, I know. My dad's death was an accident. I wasn't even thinking about what I was saying. I hated myself for saying it as soon as it came out of my mouth. All of it. Why couldn't I ever just shut up?

"How *dare* you? Don't you dare talk about your father that way! He was good man, and a wonderful slave!"

"Slave? Do you even hear yourself? Is that all you think about? God, you probably just got him to marry you so you could get his money! Or did you marry him to get to me, to get your hands on me, you perverted--"

"That's *it!* That's *enough!* Get out of my house now. You want out? Fine! Get out!"

"Fine!" I ran up to my room where I got dressed and got together a bag of

clothes and stuff. I was crying like crazy. I wanted to throw up. I couldn't believe what I was doing. It was insane.

I passed by Rebecca on the way out. She was sitting at the kitchen table with the heels of her hands pressed against her eyes. She didn't look up to see me go. Outside, on the porch of the house where I grew up, I was thinking that this wasn't how it was supposed to happen. She was supposed to rush out and try to stop me and we'd make up or something. But she didn't. She let me go, just like I said I wanted.

I checked into a nearby cheap motel because I didn't have anywhere else to go. I no longer had any friends to turn to. That was probably the worst night of my life there in that motel room. I hadn't felt so horrible since my father died. I felt so terribly alone. I cried until I was gagging into the pillow. I cried until I ran out of tears, but there was no way to cry out that much pain. I kept thinking of how else it might have gone. Why hadn't I just shut up? Why didn't I just let her calm me down, give me the bath, and we could have talked about it? Why hadn't I gotten her the fucking tissue for the gum in the first place? I hated myself for what I said. I hated her for letting me leave. Why did those horrible words come out of my mouth, where had they come from? I knew she'd loved my dad, and I knew she loved me. I called her a pervert, a freak. I was just as much a pervert as she was. I didn't want it to be over. Why did I say that? I belonged with her.

That night was probably the only time in my life I really thought about suicide. I don't mean really planning on doing it; just thinking what it'd be like, as a way to stop the pain, to stop the fear of wondering how I could possibly get on with life without a home, without my mommy, without my Rebecca. I thought how it'd make Rebecca feel sorry if I did do it, then thinking about how much Rebecca would be hurt just made me cry harder. I didn't want to hurt her anymore.

I hardly ate or slept all the next day and night. My stomach was a hard, painful knot. I ate some peanut butter crackers from the motel vending machine, but they just made me puke. I couldn't even think of what I could do. I certainly didn't go to school. I tried calling Rebecca a few times, but she wasn't answering the phone. We didn't even own an answering machine. All I wanted with all my heart was to be back with Rebecca, like it was, so I could be happy again. She had known what I really wanted and needed even before I did, and she gave it to me, and all I did was throw it back in her face. I'd been happy and I'd thrown it all away because of... what? Vanity? I found I wanted to be her slave, for real, just like she wanted me to be. I wanted to make her happy with me, no matter what it took.

After the second night away I walked back home with my things. It was

only around noon and Rebecca was still at work. I'd forgotten to take my keys with me, and the spare kept under a garden rock had gotten all grimy and rusted and wouldn't go in the lock. I sat on the porch and waited.

I felt light-headed when I finally saw her car come up. She parked and looked at me a few seconds before she got out of the car, then she came up to the porch. Just seeing her felt so great, I just wanted to run up and hug her... but she didn't look like she wanted to hug me. Her expression was blank and a little tired-looking. "You doing okay?" she asked.

"Uh... no. I forgot my keys."

"There is a spare, you know."

"It's rusty."

"Oh. Well, come in, then," she said, and let me in.

Home was just as I'd left it. Maybe a little messier. The ashtrays were full and there were dirty dishes in the sink, and I noticed with some guilty pleasure that the little wastebasket next to the couch was overflowing with used tissues. At least I knew that she'd been crying, too.

I had a whole speech planned, but now that I was there, I couldn't remember a single word of it. Rebecca set down her purse and leaned against the breakfast bar, arms folded. "Your school called. I told them you had the flu. So. Did you find somewhere to stay? Do you need money? I can give you a couple thousand to help you get on your feet. It should get you first and last on a decent apartment and things."

"Noo. Rebecca, I-I'm sorry, I am *so* sorry," I said. I couldn't look her in the eyes.

"You're sorry."

I took a deep breath. "I feel so bad. I feel awful. I guess I freaked out, I guess, and I... I didn't mean anything I said. I truly didn't. I'd had a really, really bad day that day. I think, I think I was yelling more at myself than at you. At other people. I was wrong. So... I'm sorry."

"You want back."

"Y-yes?"

She still wasn't showing any emotion other than being worn out. "And now you're sorry and that puts the burden on me to forgive you. And this is the part where I say 'Aw, how sweet, you're still wearing your girdles for me,' because I can see you that are, and be all moved? And then I pat you on the head and tell you it's all okay and everything goes back to normal? Maybe give you a hard spanking so you can feel properly punished and contrite and everybody's happy? No. That's not gonna happen," she said evenly.

Actually, that is kind of how I hoped it would go, roughly. I felt so shallow and predictable. I started to sob. She went on. "Getting upset is

normal. Shouting is expected, sometimes. Everybody has bad days, *I* have bad days. But the things you said... you hurt me, Lily. 'I'm real sorry' just doesn't cut it. I've been through this so many times before, and I'm tired of it. I'm just... tired. Look... you'll always be my daughter. I'll always love you for that. But that's all." She sighed. "You can always count on me to help you if you need it. I really hope you find what you're looking for, Lily."

I was shaking my head, shivering all over. The knot in my stomach had come back. I felt like I was losing her all over again, and it felt so final. This isn't how it was supposed to go. It couldn't end like this.

"No. No, no, *nooooo!*" I literally threw myself crying at her feet. "Please, give me a chance, just give me a chance, I was wrong, I'll be good, I'll be *so* good, I'll show you—"

"Lily, stop this."

I was pawing at her shoes. "I'll be the best slave ever, I swear, I just want to be with you, I love you! I need you, I'm only ever happy with you. Please! I want to be yours, I *do*, all yours, for real. I'll do anything, anything you want, I'll belong to you just like you wanted, I'll prove it!"

"Lily, *please*." She sounded like she was crying, but I couldn't tell. I was only looking at her feet, and I was crying so hard I could barely see. She stepped away from me, so I crawled after her. I felt pathetic, begging like that, but I wanted to feel pathetic. I deserved to be pathetic.

"I'll be good, you can do anything you want to me, I'll take it, I want it, just please, please, don't send me away from you it feels like dying, I need you so much, more than anything, I love you—"

"Stop!" she shouted. I cringed on the floor, sobbing, staring at the carpet. I was still ranting in my head, *please, please, please*. She turned away from me. I made whimpering noises. "I... I need to think," she said, and went upstairs.

At least that sounded like there might be *some* hope for me. After being curled up on the floor for a while, I blew my nose and managed to compose myself little. I paced around for a while, trying not to think about anything. It was like waiting for a death sentence reprieve. I started to watch tv, just to have something to look at, but then decided that'd piss her off if she saw me, like I was making light of the whole situation. I wondered if I should strip down to my girdles, the way she liked to see me, but then thought she might think it presumptuous or something. I ended up just sitting on the couch, hugging a throw pillow for a couple hours. Times like that I really wished I smoked.

Rebecca finally came back downstairs. She looked at me quietly a minute, then asked, "When's the last time you ate something?"

"It's... been a while." I didn't want to say how long. I didn't want her to think I was parading my miseries in front of her for sympathy. I did want her

sympathy, of course, but I didn't want to manipulate her into it or anything.

"There's some tuna salad in the fridge. Come on, I'll make you a sandwich."

I still didn't feel much like eating anything, but with Rebecca there I was able to get it down. She stood beside my chair and touched my hair a little. "If I take you back--"

That was all she got out before I'd latched my arms around her waist, burying my face in her belly, crying in total relief so powerful I could barely stand it. I felt alive again. I think I got tuna salad on her blouse.

She let me do that for a minute before going on. "If I take you back, it's not going to be like before. I've been doing this for too long, waiting for too long, to put up with being teased by only getting part of what I want. You said you want to belong to me. Are you *sure* that's what you want?"

"Yes, oh yes, oh yes."

"If we do this, we're going to do it for real. You've got to learn to control your temper. There won't be anymore second chances. I was trying to ease you into this slower, but I've lost my patience. You'll think I'm being cruel, but there's a reason behind it. It's not just to be mean. This will be mine," she said, cupping my chin. She then took a handful of my hair and held it in front of my face. "And *this* will be mine. You'll have no say anymore. None. Forget what other people think of you. What I think of you is the only thing that should matter from now on. If I have to break you to make you completely mine, I'll do it. Is that really what you want?"

I nodded. Hearing her say those things was both frightening and exciting. She studied me a bit longer, like she didn't trust me. I guessed I'd have a hard time earning her trust back. She stroked my cheek with the back of her fingers, and it felt like water after being in a desert. I can't think of the words to say how grateful I was. I was determined not to let her down. Without another word, she took me upstairs, had me take a shower, then put me to bed. I was so happy being back in her bed. I hadn't slept for a couple days, after all, but now I finally felt safe enough to sleep again. So I did.

Things were a little awkward between us for the next few days, to say the least. Still, since I was so eager to prove myself, things went along pretty smoothly. It looked like we'd be able to get back to where we were. She kept telling the school I had the flu, a pretty bad one, and that I might be out for a couple weeks. That was pretty cool, having a little vacation and all, but I did kinda worry about how hard it'd be to catch up. She took a few days off work, herself, so she could devote a lot of time to me.

She colored my hair again, which by then was fine by me. She could have done it like a rainbow clown wig and I wouldn't have complained, but all she did

was turn it light brown. In fact, though it had been a long time since I'd seen it, it pretty closely matched my natural color. When she was done, she said, "There. I think that's enough messing about with it."

"What do you mean?"

"Coloring your hair. I don't think I'll do it anymore."

I was confused. That didn't sound like a good thing, coming from her, knowing how much she enjoyed it. "But... I thought you liked doing it."

"Oh, I do. But I think it's run its course. Don't you?"

"Uh, if you say so." Secretly, I was overjoyed. I mean, I know I said I wanted her to do whatever she wanted to me now, and I did. But it was nice knowing my hair wouldn't be traumatized anymore as part of it. That was great! I could start being proud of it, feeling pretty again, at least once all the bleach-fried stuff grew out. Maybe I could even start fitting in again once I got back to school. I could say all the different colors in the past months were, like, part of a bet, one that I couldn't win if I told anyone why I was doing it. That might work. I guess deep down I was still the same old vain Lily.

Later that same day a small but heavy package arrived for Rebecca. I always had to hide and wait for the guy to go away before I could reach out and snag the mail, since I didn't want anyone seeing me covered in girdles. Anyway, she opened it with a smile, saying, "I got you a present, Lily. Some jewelry for you."

"Really? For me?" I was all excited. First the good news about my hair, then presents. This was a good day.

"Yep." Rebecca lifted a mess of chains and handcuffs out of the box.

Oh, I realized, 'jewelry.' Should have known.

She tested the keys to make sure they worked in the all the locks, then said, "Turn around, let's see how it looks. I used to have a set a lot like this before, but it was stolen, oh, years and years ago."

It was a standard enough arrangement, I guess. Ankle cuffs of about two feet spread and handcuffs about one foot apart were attached to each other by a long chain. The connecting chain passed through a loop on the front of a leather belt at my waist and the top end locked onto the front of a collar. The end result was that, when I was standing up straight, the chain between ankles and collar was barely long enough to allow me to walk normal. I could only take short steps. I couldn't reach much higher than my breasts with my hands when standing, either. The only way to reach higher was if I bent over or squatted or something to make slack in the chain. She had tied me up with soft ropes and stuff before, but this was the first time I'd been locked into metal things. Even the leather belt and collar had metal bands around the outside. I certainly wouldn't be cutting them off. She was serious about this. I was pretty

intimidated. They just seemed so... sturdy.

"Look at you. Just look at you. Girdles and cuffs. You certainly do look thoroughly constrained. I think it's beautiful. Do you like it?" Rebecca asked.

"I dunno. It's so different. Kinda heavy. I guess I like it," I said, sounding unsure.

"Good. You'll be wearing it for a while, yet. Do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"Good," she said.

That night was the first time we had any kind of sex since the fight. It was kinda hard for me to pleasure her, being restrained like I was, but I guess I did okay. She sure seemed pleased, and I was deliriously happy. At least, I was until bedtime. She said I got to sleep in bed the previous nights because of my sorry condition, but I'd have to earn my way back into her bed in the future. At first, I thought she meant I had to sleep in my bedroom, but no. She locked my collar to the foot of her bed. I had to sleep on the floor. I got a sheet for warmth, but I complained about not even getting a pillow. She got a bundle of her clothes from the hamper and tossed them on the floor for me to bunch up into a makeshift pillow.

I hardly got any sleep. I cried a little, but mostly just from being so uncomfortable and overwhelmed, not so much from being genuinely miserable. I guessed I deserved it, after all. And being on the floor of the bedroom, close enough to Rebecca to hear her breathing, was a billion times preferable to being alone in that awful motel room. And I could smell her perfume and skin on her clothes. I resolved to endure it and show her I was sincere.

After lunch—it was an interesting experience trying to make lunch restrained like I was—Rebecca looked around the kitchen. "You know, this place really is kind of a mess. I think it's time for some spring cleaning."

"Uh, okay, but you know, I can't really clean too good like this." I rattled my chains.

"Don't worry, I'll do most of the work. You can be my little helper. I think I'll start with the windows."

Hey, I couldn't argue with her doing most of the work. I fished the glass cleaner and paper towels for her from under the sink. Those darn chains were getting in the way of everything I did. She started with the windows by the table, spraying them down with cleaner. She told me to turn around, so I did. Then, though it took me a few seconds to, like, process it, she took my hair and started wiping the windows with it. I twisted my head to look, mouth gaping. "What are you *doing*?"

"It's an object lesson, dear. You're the object." She smiled sweetly. I started to pull away, and was rewarded with a sharp, painful yank to my hair.

“Stay put, Lily, or I’ll have to hurt you.”

She went on scrubbing the windows with my hair, drying the panes with paper towels, then tugging me over to the next window. Judging from Rebecca’s dreamy expression, she was actually getting off on it. I was kinda giggling in disbelief. I mean, of all possible things, I never would have imagined this. My hair was long enough to allow me to turn and watch, close up. The glass cleaner smelled really strong, and it was starting to totally soak the bottom half of my hair. I stopped giggling. “Uh, Rebecca? Can that stuff, like, hurt hair?”

Rebecca smirked. “Oh, I’m sure the ammonia will do wonders for your hair.”

“What? Please, stop!” I cried.

“Can’t stop yet, we’ve got a whole house to clean.”

“N-no!” I managed to pull away from her, shuffling as fast as I could across the kitchen. My cleaner-saturated hair dampened the back of my body briefers. “No! You said you... you were done hurting my hair!”

She caught me easily, grabbing me by the chain and spinning me around to face her. “I said I was done coloring it. Now I’m making some practical use of it. You should be glad you can serve me, any part of you. And I told you to stay put. I’m going to have to punish you for running from me, later.”

“But, but, but... but... *why?*” I sobbed. “Why do you hate my hair?”

She laughed. “I don’t have anything against your hair, Lily. I told you. I said if I have to break you, take away everything you have to make you completely mine, I’d do it. Don’t you want to be mine?”

“Yes, but...”

“No buts. This is the way it is. Besides, you can’t stop me from doing what I want anyway.” She pulled the chain and me along with it back to the window, demonstrating my helplessness. I had to follow or I’d fall over. “Go ahead, cry for help. I’ll just have to gag you.”

Judging from her expression, she meant it. I was powerless against her. And that turned me on a whole lot. But being turned on didn’t make me suddenly happy and agreeable or anything. I was so torn between being so aroused by her control over me and me being protective of my hair.

She went back to using it to clean all the kitchen windows with me trailing closely beside her. Rebecca was humming to herself. I kept sobbing and struggling now and then. When she was done with the glass, she started scrubbing the windowsills with a wad of my hair, getting up all the dust and dead bugs and stuff that accumulate in the corners. I was moaning in disgust and wincing every time I heard the sound of a hair snagging on a splinter or something and breaking.

“I think that’s enough with the windows. Let me rinse this out,” she said,

leading me to the sink. She gave the wet part of my hair a quick rinse. I shuddered at the sight of all the brown water and dirt that went down the drain. She dried it roughly with a kitchen towel and lit a cigarette.

"Let's take a break, then we can start on the counters," she said, taking me with her.

I sat in the living room with her, afraid to say anything. When she finished smoking, she said, "Let's get the punishment over with."

"Oh, no!" I wailed, coming off sounding melodramatic.

"Stop that. Go into my room and bring me the paddle that's hanging on the inside of the closet door. Hasn't seen any use in a long time. It's about time it did."

I reluctantly went to get it. I didn't recall there ever being a paddle hanging in her closet. She must have put it there in the past couple days. When I saw it, I almost started crying in pain right there. It was like a foot and a half long and made of solid aluminum, almost half an inch thick. It had these four big holes through the middle of it on the paddle part. I picked it up and, though it was surprisingly light, it looked brutal. I thought that it had to be a joke, or a prop. Surely you couldn't use that kind of thing on a person? Could you? In a daze of fear I took it back down to Rebecca, holding it in front of me like a poisonous snake. "You're kidding right? Please say you're kidding," I pleaded as I handed it to her.

She went behind me and pulled down my pantygirdle and unhooked the crotch of the body briefers so my butt was exposed. She patted it. "There we go. Bend over the back of the couch," she said.

"Oh, god, nooo..." I could barely stand still. All my body's instincts were urging me to run away. Somehow, I managed to obey her and bend over, but I was squirming and fidgeting from foot to foot. "No, pleeease..."

"How many strokes do you think you deserve for disobeying and trying to get away from me?"

"How... many?" I asked. This was awful. I didn't want to, like, participate in my own punishment. It was hard enough just being present for it. Rebecca showed no signs of letting me off the hook. How many times could I get hit with that thing? I had no idea; all I had to judge from was getting paddled by my plastic hairbrush. I'd gotten so I could take maybe fifty strokes with the hairbrush with only some difficulty. "I don't knooow. Tuh-twenty?" I asked, hoping it was enough.

She started laughing. "Twenty? *Twenty*? Oh, lord, Lily, that's hilarious! I *should* give you twenty, just because you asked for 'em. I really should. But I'll be merciful. I think I'll give yooou... eight."

Just eight? That sounded great at first, then I realized the implications. If

eight was acceptable, and twenty was laughable, then that thing must *really* hurt—
(CRACK)

“Ungh!” I yelped involuntarily. My legs almost collapsed beneath me, leaving me hanging onto the back of the sofa. I couldn’t believe how bad it stung. It was like a lightning bolt had struck my ass. I’d never even felt that kind of sudden, overwhelming pain before. I know now in the scheme of these things that there’s a lot of stuff that hurts a lot more, but *I’d* never felt them. This was completely new to me. Rebecca was helping me back up, bending me over again. I couldn’t even cover my butt defensively with my hands being locked up in front of me. “Please! Not again!”

“Be still, Lily, or I’ll make it more.” And then it came again. I hissed slowly and loudly through my teeth as the pain spread through my ass and seemed to go all through me, my legs wanting to collapse again. She ran her hand over my back. “Good girl. That’s good. You can take this.”

By five I started laughing hysterically, maybe from endorphins, or just not being able to believe what I was experiencing. By eight I was crying again. I was all sweaty and shaking, my legs felt like jello, and every inch of my ass was throbbing and burning. But it was over. Rebecca was stroking my butt, cooing over how pretty and red it was.

“That was so good, Lily. It’s over. Now don’t try to get away from what I’m doing to you again, understand? Oh, I knew you could do it. I am *so* proud of you, baby,” she said, hugging me to her. It felt really nice hearing her say those things. It made me feel floaty.

“Well,” I panted, “I think I can do the rest of the twenty now. No problem.”

She chuckled, knowing I was just kidding. “Here, come to the bathroom, you’ve got to see this,” she said, taking me in to look at my butt in the mirror. I couldn’t believe it was a part of me. It had turned all shades of red, the holes in the paddle perfectly visible in places, with scarlet-purple splotches and pinpricks here and there. It hadn’t drawn blood, but almost. She gently pulled the girdles back up to cover me, since I couldn’t do it myself very easily when hobbled. “I think that deserves a longer break before getting back to work.”

She sat with her arm around me, rubbing my shoulder, until my adrenaline shakes had passed. She cuddled me for about half an hour, which was really nice. Later, she smoked, musing about the paddle while she balanced it across her knee. “This was one of your dad’s favorites.”

“Huh?”

“Mm-hmm, it’s true. He really liked this one.”

That was weird, thinking about my own dad and me getting whacked with the same paddle, and by the same woman, no less. I didn’t know if that

made me feel close to him, or what. Weird.

"Of course, he was into pain a whole lot more than you," she said.

"You're more partial to degradation. Aren't you?" She smirked.

"Wha? I'm partial to what?"

"Come on, let's get back to cleaning," she said, pulling me up.

Back in the kitchen, she started to spray counter with tile cleaner and told me to bend down close to it. I was too beaten to do much more than make a high-pitched whining noise and flutter my hands as she scrubbed the countertops with my hair. She had to scrub really hard sometimes, getting up the sticky coke spots and the little bits of dried food and sauce and stuff that stuck like glue. I wished we didn't have so many countertops. "You know, if you were better at cleaning up after yourself," she said, "this wouldn't be as hard on you."

When the counters were done she went on top the stovetop, and my hair was soaking up grease-fighting cleaning stuff. I couldn't believe how humiliating it was having my own beautiful tresses used as a utilitarian scrubby pad, used to pick up grease and burnt-on food. She wasn't being gentle, either, I mean, she was really scrubbing hard. Burned food is really hard to get up, and my poor hair kept catching on it. Rebecca was giggling and sighing, sounding practically orgasmic, while I couldn't do anything more than sob and endure it.

"Well," she said, once the stovetop was cleaned off, "I suppose we ought to go ahead and finish the rest of the room now."

"I-I think we need a break. Don't you want a smoke?"

"Nice try. Get on the floor." She was filling a bucket with hot water and soap.

"Why?"

"Ah, has our butt recovered so quickly that it's ready for another go?" she asked casually.

"Uh, no!" I obeyed got on the floor, my chains making a clattery sound on the linoleum. You might think I'd had, like, a rapid turnaround in behavior, but then, I'd just been beaten with a big piece of metal. That tends to make one especially obedient. She pulled me close to the cabinets and dunked my hair in the water. Getting down herself, she started using it to clean down where the floor met the cabinets, where all the dirt and icky food crumbs collected. I still couldn't believe it was really happening. We went all the way around the edge of the cabinets, picking up tons of crap I'd wished I'd gotten the last time I'd mopped the floor. For someone who didn't like to clean, I observed, Rebecca sure was doing a thorough job.

"Not perfect, but it'll do," she said, wringing my hair out over the bucket. She had to change the water, it had gotten so dirty. And my hair was soaking in

the stuff! She took the sponge mop out of the closet and I thought for a second my hair would have reprieve on the next part. But no, she wrapped my hair around the spongy pad and held it in place with a couple rubber bands. It was pretty tiring, trying to keep up with the mop as she cleaned the floor. My hair was only long enough for short strokes, so I kept having to crawl around, back and forth.

I would have laughed my ass off if I heard about this happening to someone else, but it was happening to *me*, for *real*, and all I could do was whimper and bitch and try to keep up. Thank goodness the kitchen wasn't very large, but it still took probably half an hour. My knees and neck were aching by the time she was done. The whole time I was wondering why she hated my hair so much. Why, when she could do anything to me she wanted, was this way she chose to amuse herself?

"Help me pull the stove out," she said. I had to help her as best I could, though I couldn't reach very far. We worked it back and forth away from the wall and out into the room. Rebecca looked behind it. "Haven't cleaned under this thing since... well, I don't think I ever have. Oh my. Oh, my, my, my. It's positively filthy down there," she commented, but didn't sound very upset about it. She didn't sound upset, at all.

I looked around the stove. "No, Rebecca, no, please. Please, can't we talk about this? Please!" I cried.

She forced me back down to my hands and knees. My face was just inches away from years worth of crusty food bits, greasy dustbunnies, grime, unidentifiable gross things, and even a few big, dead cockroaches. Then my hair was dropped down on it with a big, wet slap and she started scrubbing.

Oh, my poor hair! It was horrible, in some ways worse the paddling I just got. Not painful, but worse in a psychological way. My hair was, like, my pride, my self-esteem, and there Rebecca was, just rubbing it into blackened layers of filth. It made me feel so totally objectified, useless, pathetic, revolting. And why, *why*, I wondered, did it seem like it was turning me on somehow, way deep down? Why did it give me that floaty feeling? Why, even though I was crying and stunned with disgust, did it seem to click somehow for me?

She loosened the gunk with my soaking wet hair, then used my hair to scoop it all up and shook it loose in the bucket. The floor got pretty clean after a while. She used a towel to get up the last stubborn bits and the puddles of brown water, and then I helped push the stove back in place. After rinsing my hair in the sink, using dishwashing soap and a stiff, bristly brush to get the grease and gunk out of my hair, she wrapped the towel around my hair to help it dry. I sat down, shaken. I felt so nasty. My hair still didn't feel clean, my arms and legs streaked with dirt and sweat, even my girdles were smudged with dirt from

crawling around on the floor. I asked, "Can I please take a shower?"

"No, I think that can wait. Don't give me that look. I'll order out tonight. Feel like Indian? I feel like tandoori. You can rest up until supper. Okay?" She was so chipper.

I nodded slowly. "Okay."

She took me up to the bedroom. "You know, I'm still very proud of you. You did very good today, honey. Better than I would have expected."

"I guess."

"No, you did! So far, you're making me very happy that I took you back," she said. That did feel good—great, really—but I was too worn out to do much more than nod. "Feel like a nap?"

"Sure." I started to get down on the floor, but she led me to the closet. She pushed me down onto the piles of her shoes at the bottom of the closet, then closed and locked the door. I couldn't reach the handle, anyway, because of the cuffs, so I rattled against the door. "Rebecca? *Rebecca?*" I called, but she was already gone. I had no choice but to make a space for myself among the shoes. I guess I'd have been in heaven if I was into shoes or something, but I wasn't, so I was just uncomfortable. Fitting, though. What else do you do with a dirty old mop when you're done with it but stick it back in the closet?

I had nothing to do but think as I sat there in the leather-scented dark. I remember crying a little, mostly of emotional exhaustion from everything that had happened that day, I guess. My feelings kept swinging back and forth. On one hand I was ecstatic, thinking that she must really love me to give me all this attention. I must have really been making her happy, and that made me feel great. On the other hand, I was unimaginably humiliated by everything that day and very afraid for my hair. My poor hair! Even though it had been rinsed, it was still kinda nasty. I combed my fingers through the damp tangles, shuddering every time I picked out a chunk of something. Burned food? A dead roach? Gross!

I was asleep by the time she let me out for dinner. The rest of the evening was pretty normal—eating, watching tv and stuff. Rebecca was being very affectionate, touching and cuddling me all the time. It made me confused, considering how rough and mean she was to me earlier that day. I wasn't complaining, of course. It just put me off-balance. I wasn't regretting coming back home, though. Funny to think that last summer I could hardly admit I might possibly have feelings for my step-mother, and then somewhere along the way, she had totally become the center of my world.

At bedtime she locked me back to the foot of the bed. I got to listen to Rebecca masturbate once the lights were out, which was weird, because she'd never done that in front of me before. It was kinda strange, but it did feel kinda

intimate, too, even though I wasn't involved. It also felt slightly humiliating at the same time, because, like, it was like I was just a fixture in the room. I was no more worth her getting embarrassed about masturbating in front of than then the nightstand or the dresser. Strange. I didn't cry or toss and turn that night. I slept pretty soundly.

The next morning, I awoke to the sight of Rebecca's pussy. I was on my back and she was straddling my head. That was a surprise. "Rise and shine," she said.

"Uh... huh?"

"Time for breakfast." Then she sat down on my face.

I was pretty taken aback and all. I mean, I'd come to love Rebecca's pussy, but that's a really startling way to wake up. She'd awakened me with kisses and stuff before, but nothing like this. She was riding me pretty hard, too, and I was having a hard time breathing. Eventually, we got into a rhythm and I was able to relax. She was finished with me by the time I'd just started to really get into it and get turned on, though, and she got up and left me. I thought that was kind of inconsiderate. I was left chained to the bed leg while she went to take a shower and get dressed.

Over real breakfast, she told me, "I have to get back to work later today, got a perm appointment after lunch. But don't worry, we'll have plenty of quality time together before then." She blew her smoke at me from across the table. "I think we'll tackle the bathrooms today."

"Whaaat?" My heart sank and I squeezed my hair protectively. I'd dared to hope that she'd satisfied whatever urges she was satisfying with all the stuff we did in the kitchen. It was about to start all over.

Rebecca had put on some pink, rubber gloves and gathered up some cleaning stuff from under the sink. "Come along. It's not going to clean itself."

"Please, noooo." I clung to the edges of the chair seat. "I don't want to!"

She set the bottles down and took hold of my chain, pulling up and making my collar hurt, trying to get me to stand up. I wouldn't let go of the seat until she gave the chain a sharp, painful jerk, and I went tumbling out of the chair. "It doesn't matter what you want," she said while she pulled me into the living room. "You're going to learn to do what I tell you, when I tell you."

I was pushed over the back of the sofa and saw her fetching that horrible paddle from the floor. "I'm sorry! Don't! I'm sorry!" She didn't reply, just held me in place with my hair, and delivered five hard whacks to my butt. I wailed. Even though she hadn't pulled my girdles down, it still hurt a lot on my already badly bruised, tender ass.

"Will you do as you're told?"

"Owow yes, yees!" I cried. My nose was running and I couldn't even

reach up to wipe it. She pushed me into the downstairs bathroom and without ado started cleaning the mirrors with my hair. I just sniffled and let her do what she wanted. Then she went to the countertops and basin, fastidiously getting all the dust and soap scum from around the faucet, handles, and drain. After that, she took me upstairs to get the mirrors and sinks there. She considered doing the tubs, but mercifully decided against it, what with it being so hard for me to bend down into them without hurting myself with the cuffs. She settled with getting around the drains and buffing the fixtures shiny with her new hair sponge.

"Had to wait to do these last, so it wouldn't make a mess of the mirrors and things. Sorry if you thought you were getting away without doing them," she said, sitting me on the floor in front of the toilet in her bathroom.

I stared in horror as she started sprinkling that powdered bleach stuff around the rim and in the water of the toilet. I hadn't thought I was getting away without doing it—what she was planning hadn't even entered my mind as a possibility. Maybe I was just sheltered or something, but this seemed totally... undoable! By anyone! And then she did it. She took my hair and started scrubbing the rim of the toilet. It was actually happening.

I wasn't about to try to pull away, not with my butt still throbbing from a second paddling, so instead I voiced my revulsion with piercing, I guess, 'squeals' of disgust as she worked. That must have been irritating because after a minute she slapped my wet hair against my face and told me if I didn't shut up she would gag me with it.

She got all around the rim and was cleaning down in the bowl. I was horrified. I tried to keep my neck stiff, to keep my as much of hair out of the way as possible without looking like I was trying to get away, but she just kept yanking me back closer. She used my poor hair to try to get that rough stuff that forms right under the rim, where the water comes out, but my hair was too soft for that. As a solution, she took the toilet brush, wrapped my hair all around it like spaghetti on a fork, then scrubbed that way. She even cleaned the sides and in back of the toilet where there was lots of dust and some spiderwebs, and finished by wiping up the floor around the toilet. "This is fun!" she announced after wringing my hair out over the bowl. "Let's do the others."

By the time 'we' had finished cleaning all the bathrooms, I was humiliated to the point of being speechless, on the verge of tears. She rinsed my hair out in the kitchen sink again and dried it a little. "Don't look so glum, honey, you're being very useful!" she said.

"Can I have a shower now?" I asked.

"No, you're clean enough."

I stared at her. "But I'm filthy! I hate being this dirty! Uh... please, can I take a shower? Pleeaaase?" I tried wheedling and looking cute, which I guess

was pretty much impossible being streaked with dirt and having tangled, toilet water-dampened hair.

“No.”

“You... you... but I need one! I still have stuff in my hair from yesterday, it still smells like that cleanser shit, and just I need a shower! Damn it, you have to let me! You have... to...” I trailed off, seeing how she was smirking at me. I suddenly felt doomed. She must have been waiting for me to lose my temper, and I walked right into it.

“Let me tell you exactly what I have to do—anything I want to,” she said, taking my chain and pulling me close. “Oh, Lily, Lily, when will you learn to control your mouth? I know you want to do better. I *know* you want to be good. Right?”

“Yes. Yes, I’m sorry. I’m sorry, please don’t paddle me,” I begged quietly, subdued.

She looked like she was considering something for a few moments. “Do you really want a shower?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Do you really, *really* want one?” She had a mischievous grin.

“Uh... yes?” I had a bad feeling that I was walking into something else.

“Alright. Since you asked so sweetly.”

She took me back upstairs into her bathroom, where she kicked off her shoes and took off her pants and underwear. For a hopeful second, I thought she might be going to take a shower with me. That would be cool. She startled me by pulling me into a kiss. She hugged me to her, kissing me, and her hand felt between my thighs to rub me through my girdle. I responded immediately. It felt so nice. She hadn’t really paid me any sexual attention since I came back, and it was great.

Breaking the kiss, her soft cheek pressing against mine, she seemed about to say something in my ear. Instead, she had me get into the tub and lie down on my back. With some bits of rope, she tied my ankles to my thighs so that my legs were doubled up. Doing that made sure I could hardly change my position, much less get out of the tub on my own. She got into the tub and stood straddling me with her feet at my sides. She looked so beautiful like that, standing above me, looking so strong and lovely and mature and powerful.

Then she started peeing. On me. I screamed.

I was completely and totally shocked. I couldn’t believe what she was doing. I mean, it was totally beyond what I ever thought people could do to each other. Her pee felt surprisingly hot and I could smell it as it soaked the front of my girdles, from my crotch up to my breasts. It ran down my sides and flowed towards the drain, saturating my hair along the way. I held my hands up to

block the stream, but that just made it spatter around and hit my face. It even got in my mouth. I begged and cried the whole time.

She stepped out of the tub when she was done, wearing a beatific smile, and toweled off her thighs and feet. She got dressed. I was panting and staring straight up, trying to, like, process what had just happened to me. She got down and, leaning over the edge of the tub, kissed me again on my piss-spattered lips. "Such a good girl," she said. "I'll leave you to enjoy your shower until I have to go to work." She got up and left me alone in the tub.

At first I cried for while in total misery, feeling so... so like nothing. In the past couple days I'd been chained up, paddled terribly, had parts of me used to clean floors and toilets, and now I'd been pissed on. I wondered why she was being so cruel. Was she trying to force me to run away again? It felt like that sometimes. But if it was just that, why did she seem so genuinely happy about it? Why did she keep telling me how good I was? She had told me that I was into degradation. Well, I certainly felt degraded right then. Did that mean she was doing this just for me? That I should enjoy this?

As I laid there soaked in Rebecca's cooling, drying piss, I tried really, really hard to look at from a different point of view, not just from my initial reaction. Sure, it was gross, but a beautiful woman who I loved had just peed on me, totally degrading me, and she really got off on it. I mean, that was pretty intimate, when I thought about it. Did something in me enjoy it, too? Did I belong there like that, piss-soaked with my legs tied and spread?

I remembered how the other day part of me was getting turned on at feeling so helpless about Rebecca having so much control over me, doing whatever she wanted to me. I loved feeling powerless against Rebecca. She could do anything to me, no matter how disgusting I thought it was, and I liked that. I loved her, and I loved her even if she peed on me. Even though it was gross, did that mean I couldn't enjoy it if I let myself? There was more to what I thought about than that, but after a while, I realized that I had achieved that fuzzy, happy, floaty feeling in spite of lying helpless in a tub of piss. Or because of it.

My fingers slid down my to crotch, but, since I couldn't reach under the girdles, I could only rub on top. I imagined it was Rebecca rubbing me. I started talking in a whisper, saying things like, "I'm dirty, I'm nothing, Rebecca, I'm filthy, I'm stupid, I need you, I love you, pee on me," over and over. I actually had an orgasm in there, which was like a revelation to me. Rebecca had tied me up and peed on me, and I was masturbating about it. Wow.

I didn't want to Rebecca to know what I'd done, that I'd enjoyed it, when she came back. I guess I was embarrassed. "How's it going in here?" she asked, untying my ankles.

"Kinda cold," I said, my teeth chattering a little. Being wet and in an empty tub for a couple hours can get chilly, even though by then I had mostly dried off, except for my back.

"Oh! I'm sorry baby, I didn't think," she said, helping me get up. She wrapped the towel around me, rubbing my back and hair and drying me off. She paid special attention to the chains and belts. "And before you even ask, no, you can't have a real shower."

"I figured," I said, trying to not sound sullen but I probably did.

"Right. You'll be on your own while I'm gone. Do whatever, just don't mess with your hair or try to take a bath."

"Please, can I just change my clothes?" I asked, hopeful.

"Not until I say."

So I spent the afternoon trying not to think about my situation. I made sure the kitchen was really clean, so that if she used my hair on it again, at least it wouldn't be as gross. I had begun to find some measure of pleasure in being degraded and all, but that didn't mean I was ready to enjoy sitting around with sticky, stinking clothes and hair that made me smell like a public toilet. Rebecca forbade me from sitting on the furniture because my smell might rub off. That was humiliating in itself. I guess I might have undressed until right before she came home, but I couldn't take the damn girdles off with the chains in the way. It was such a huge temptation to take a shower. All I'd have to do was turn the water on and wash my clothes and hair clean. But there was no way I could hide that from Rebecca.

In the end, I did get a little sneaky and rinsed my hair out some in the sink. Even then, it still smelled a little like piss and tile cleaner, but at least I wasn't getting sick to my stomach anymore. I desperately wanted to at least brush my hair, even though I didn't know if that would fall under the category of 'messing with my hair.' After I searched a bit, though, I discovered that all the hairbrushes and combs had been Lily-proofed. Rebecca had put them all up on high shelves I could no longer reach. That was completely unfair.

I went to hug her when she got home a few hours later, but she fended me off at arms length. "Whew! I don't think so! Okay, alright... you reek. You can change the girdles. But no bath."

Well, it was better than nothing. After changing clothes with her help, I tried to prepare her a really nice dinner. I'd hoped if I could stuff her senseless with tasty food, she'd be less-inclined to do something nasty to me. It didn't work out that way. That evening she was moved to clean the living room. That meant I had to endure having my hair used as a rag for furniture polish. That stuff has an overpowering odor, when it's all in your hair. 'Fresh lemon scent,' my ass. My hair picked up a ton of dust, too. She was going out of her way to

find the neglected, extra-dirty nooks and crannies to use my hair on. Then, adding insult to injury, she actually cleaned out her ashtrays with my hair, scraping at the black, burned stuff and god, that was gross. She had to sit down on my back to do that, since I was bucking around and fussing so much.

The next day I broke down again and begged her to let me wash my hair. "I get it, I get the point," I pleaded, "you can do anything you want to me and, I guess, I can't stop you..."

"And you don't want to stop me, do you, sweetie?" she asked, rubbing my back.

"I... uh... I," I stammered.

"It's okay, you don't have to answer that. I know the truth."

"But can't I just shower? My hair stinks, and it's sticky and gross! Pleeease, please-please-pleeease?"

She smirked at me. "It's not physically hurting you, though, is it?"

"Well... no. I guess not." I slumped, figuring I knew what her answer would be.

"Then you can bear it a while longer."

"But, but...! I can't stand how it feels. It makes my skin crawl."

"Oh my goodness!" she said, in false alarm. "We mustn't have that! My baby can't stand the touch of her hair. Whatever shall we do about that?"

I hated it when she got all condescending. Her suggestion was to put a gaudy, white-with-hot-pink-polka-dots shower cap on my head, to keep my yucky hair from touching my skin. I declined. I didn't like the feel of my hair, but there's only so much humiliation one person can take. If only people at school could have seen me like that. Things were bad there before, but if they saw me chained up, dirty, and wearing a polka dot shower cap to keep my befouled hair under control, I'd be laughed into, like, a fetal position or something. I didn't really think much about what other people would think, at that point, though. The outside world didn't mean too much to me anymore, and it was meaning less all the time.

I was in my own little world of humiliation, frustration, and sexual ecstasy- just me and Rebecca. That week, and the week or so that followed, she was totally relentless. She focused all her attention on me, training me, testing me, remaking me, pushing limits I didn't even know I had. It was a good thing, for my sake, that I had been learning and adapting to living as her slave for the past months, ever since she had first gotten her hands on my hair. If the hardcore stuff had just come out of the blue, way back then, it probably would've scared me away, or something. But I'd been learning, like, how to accept her will over my own wants, so it didn't come as such a huge shock.

Still, it was hard on me, ya know? Some part of me always seemed to be aching, from the restraints and bondage, from sleeping on the floor or in the closet, from crawling around, or from some recent punishment. I was often exhausted from the mental and physical effort of trying to do what she wanted. It was tiring waiting on her hand and foot. It was tiring, even though I loved her pussy, having to eat her out in the morning before I'd hardly woken up, or at any other time during the day when she felt the urge. My body was her toy.

Every time I slipped up, every time my mouth or my selfishness got the better of me, I got punished. It often felt like I was punished a lot more severely than I would have said I deserved, but I was no longer in any place to argue. Even if I wanted to fight back and try to defend myself, I couldn't because of those chains I'd let her put on me. But even if I had been free of them, I guess nothing would have changed. I just couldn't resist her anymore. I guess I was in sort of a constant daze. I was in fearful awe of her. And I was more in love with her than ever.

I don't mean to make her sound that was being especially mean to me, or that I was like some whimpering, beaten dog, or something. She still wanted me to be *me*, she just wanted that me to be just a more slavish version that belonged to her. She totally showered me with affection and encouragement. She made sure that I felt appreciated, that I didn't feel neglected or directionless. She gave me the strength to keep trying. And she could make me come so *easily*. She made me *want* to be a good Lily for her. Even though I was dirty, sore, and often in tears, she made me feel special. When she'd hold me in her arms, it would make me feel so, I dunno, soft and girly. Maybe that sounds silly, seeing as I was a girl to begin with, and she was *definitely* not butch, but that's just the way she made me feel. I liked that. I was just so *controlled*. I felt helpless and vulnerable. She was stripping away all of my defenses against her. I felt exposed down the very center of me. She could have done anything she wanted to me. And she pretty much did.

If those weeks were rough on me, they were hell on my hair. It was just horrible. It was like anything that occurred to her that she could clean, she used me as her sponge. If I balked at doing something, she'd just twist my hair around until it hurt and pull me along. I'd beg her to stop but she wouldn't listen. And she always enjoyed it so *much*. It got so that no matter how much she rinsed it out, my hair always seemed to feel dirty. It always reeked of cleaning fluids or powders of some kind or other. Once we had finished going through the house, doing mirrors, windows, furniture, she took me into the attic. It wasn't a very big room, so we'd always just used it for storage. It was full of dust and cobwebs, and my hair got it all. It was dirty and gross, but at least dust and spider webs couldn't really hurt my hair. I sobbed off and on, especially

when a hair would catch on a nail or splinter in the wood and I'd hear it snap. Maybe she was going out of her way to find splinters.

No longer silky and shining, it had turned tangled and worn. It no longer hung down the small of my back since it was so tangled and mussed up. All the scrubbing and the cleaning sprays and powders had left it dry, brittle, and lifeless. For all I knew, I'd like lost several inches of length due to the abuse, but there was no way to tell. Since I couldn't use a hairbrush, I would lie quietly in the dark after bedtime and try to pick and claw the tangles and snarls out of my hair with my fingers. I tried to be so careful, locating a knot and trying to untangle it one strand at a time. It was getting so many hopeless knots, and the hairs were so weak, that I'd usually end up tearing my hair trying to get the knots out. I'd end up with a hairy clump in my fingers. I'd lie there in the dark with those awful little clumps, tattered bits of what used to be part of my crowning glory, scattered around me. I'd fight a losing battle against the knots, knowing what was being damaged went a lot deeper than my scalp.

It was like, I don't know, a part of me, not just my hair, was being slowly destroyed. Was it my pride? My vanity? I didn't know if it would end up making me better or worse in the end, all I knew was that it hurt. Rebecca knew what I was doing down there on the floor. She had seen the hairballs on the floor in the mornings, heard my hair tearing in my fingers in the dark, heard the sobs I tried to keep quiet and not disturb her. She would tell me, "Shhh, Lily, it'll be okay." That didn't help me much in the state I'd be in at the time, but, at least, she was acknowledging that she understood what I was going through, and how much I was suffering. Yes, suffering. But did I make it stop? No, that would have meant having to leave my Rebecca. Then came the day when I finally became hers.

We were sitting in the living room one afternoon, watching tv as usual. I was on the floor, between her legs, with my back to the sofa. Used to be, when we were in that position, she would be stroking my hair, playing with it, or brushing it. I missed that. She didn't want to touch it now- it was just too nasty. In the past few days, my hair had gotten so dirty that it couldn't even be used to clean counters or glass; it would just leave streaks. All it was good for was scrubbing floors or toilets.

The previous night she had grilled some burgers, which tasted great, but then she used my hair to scrape the grill. It got all clotted with grease and blackened, burned stuff. I didn't even cry about it. I'd gotten over crying about it, or so I thought, but I was still quietly miserable and sobbed a little. Right afterwards, she'd pulled down my girdles and made me come like crazy with her fingers. I was so confused. One minute I'd be horrified and degraded about something, the next she'd have me panting and crying for more. I was used to

that by then, but it was still confusing, how she could manipulate my mind and body so easily. I was like a puppet.

So anyway, my hair was still a greasy mess since she hadn't troubled to give it one of those rinses in the sink. Even that wouldn't have helped much. So we were watching tv, and I was thinking about what I'd make for dinner, like maybe pasta and peapods or something. I noticed she had just finished her diet coke, so I went to go refill her glass.

"Thank you, dear," she said as I returned and handed it to her, but she stopped me before I could sit back down. "Hang on. Kneel down."

"What is it?" I asked, kneeling next to the sofa. Rebecca had that... that *look* in her eyes. I don't know how to describe it right, but I recognized it. It always spelled either humiliation or pleasure for me, and seeing it always made me feel nervous and funny and floaty inside. I didn't think I'd done anything to get in trouble over, so I wasn't worried about that.

She parted her lips and reached up to take the pale pink wad of gum from her teeth. I knew what she was going to do the instant I saw that. She hesitated a moment, I guess she saw conflict in my eyes. And there was conflict, sure. There was the vain part of me, the part that still treasured the beautiful hair that used to get me compliments throughout my whole life. And there was that old, spoiled brat part of me that was screaming at me to say something in my defense. I didn't say anything, though. I bit my lip and lowered my eyes.

She reached over and stuck her used gum on my hair, firmly, somewhere around the nape of my neck. I was sad, I felt so defeated. Then she cupped my chin in her hand and forced me to look her in the eyes, and she smiled at me. "I'm proud of you, Lily."

And then it was okay. I don't know how I could feel defeated and like I'd won at the same time, but there it was. I got back down on the floor between my step-mom's feet and pretended to watch tv. Rebecca seemed quiet and thoughtful. To think, the last time she did that, I freaked out so bad that I ran away and almost lost everything. This time I just accepted it. Not altogether joyously, but I accepted it.

After the show was over, Rebecca got up and picked up the car keys, telling me she would be right back. I thought she meant she was going to the store for cigarettes or something. She pulled the car out of the garage and into the driveway and parked it. Then I thought she was going to wash the car, since that's where we always washed it. She closed the garage door and came back inside. After taking the plastic bucket from under the sink and filling it with hot water, she took it and the rubber, pink cleaning gloves and headed back into the garage. "Come with me," she said.

I never liked staying in the garage any longer than I had to, 'cause it

smelled like car and gasoline. "What's going on?" I asked, because she had that look again.

"Oh, nothing much. I was just noticing the other day, the place could probably use a little cleaning," she observed.

Oh, no. What now? I looked around. The place was kind of dusty, yeah, it was a garage. But I couldn't see what was giving her a particularly mischievous look, or why she'd had to take the car outside. Then my eyes went to the floor. "No. Oh, god, no. Rebecca, please. Fucking please, *please!*"

What was freaking me out so much was something I hardly every noticed, normally. You know how in some garages and carports there's a stain on the ground? Well, there was one in ours. A big, black one, made up of years, decades, worth of layers of clotted grease, oil, dirt, clumpy grit, gray bits of leaves, and a whole cemetery of dead bugs. It wasn't something I usually noticed. It had been there so long, it was, like, just part of the décor. I usually never saw it, with the car hiding it, and otherwise I'd just step around it. But now I was seeing it in a whole new light. I had turned to Rebecca with tears in my eyes.

She was implacable. The funny thing was, even though she was clearly enjoying this, she actually looked a little sorry for me. "I know you don't want to, honey, but you have to. Now, go on, kneel down over there."

I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I knew I was tempting punishment, but it was just too horrible. "Why, Rebecca, why?" I cried through my tears. "Why do I have to? I don't understand! Why are you doing this to me?"

She favored me with an indulgent smile. "Silly girl, I'm doing this because I love you. I'm doing this so you can fully be mine."

"But... but look at me!" I said, meaning the girdles, my filthy appearance, the chains I was wearing, my poor hair. "I've done all this for you! How much more yours can I get? I can't give any more, there's nothing left."

"Yes there is, Lily. You're not all mine, not quite yet. As to why you need to do this, well, I had hoped you would figure that out by now. Maybe you will soon. Either way, you're going to do it." She took me firmly by the upper arm and lead me over to the edge of the oily patch.

"No, I can't, I can't," I was sobbing, but I found myself kneeling anyway. The patch looked even worse close up.

Rebecca unlocked my wrist cuffs for the first time in weeks. It felt strange. "You'll need your hands," she said, passing me the gloves. I managed to get them on even though my hands were all sweaty and shaking. She splashed some of the water from the bucket onto the area to loosen it up, I guess. "Get to work."

"Y-you're not going to do it?" I asked. In the past, it had always been her

doing stuff to my hair. I was just the helpless bystander. I couldn't conceive of trying to do this to myself.

"Not this time, Lily." She leaned against my dad's old workbench to watch me.

I can't. I can't! I stared at her, wordlessly begging her to relent, hoping that she might take pity on me if I looked pitiful and miserable enough. She didn't. I wanted to hate her for being so mean to me, I really did. But I just couldn't. She looked so beautiful and strong, and I was so small and weak. Trembling, I pulled the long, heavy, clumped-up mass of my poor hair over my right shoulder. I felt the wad of gum she had just recently stuck there touch my ear, but I couldn't care less about that just then. Whispering to myself, "I'm not really doing this, this isn't really happening," I leaned close to the ground and, bundling my hair into a thick ball, pressed it into the disgusting mess.

"That's right, Lily. That's a good girl. Keep going," I heard her say. *Not really happening.* I scrubbed at the grease and bugs and stuff with my hair. My once-beautiful hair. It was difficult. The stuff was so dense that I had to scrub really hard. I zoned out for a little while, crying silently, not thinking about what I was doing, not thinking about anything. I was feeling so low and degraded that it was almost transcendent. I was moving on automatic. When one side of my hair would get too clotted up with crap to be useful, I'd just twist the clump to use a less-saturated part.

Hearing Rebecca moving, I regained the presence of mind to look up. She was stripping off her black, satin capris and panties. She looked positively lustful. "Oh, that's very good. What a good girl I have. I want you to see what you're doing to me," she breathed, squatting down across from me. Her fingers were in her little red curls, playing with herself. Her pussy was swollen and wet. "No, don't stop. Keep going," she said.

So I kept going, keeping my eyes focused on my beautiful stepmother, who was pleasuring herself at the sight of my utter degradation. I found myself salivating automatically at the sight of her pussy. What was I, Pavlov's dog? No. I was Rebecca's Lily.

I was getting aroused in spite of my wretched state. *Yes. Yes, watch me,* I was thinking, my fingers clawing into the pile of my hair as I scrubbed. *Watch your little slut do this for you. Look at what I do for you. Only for you. I'm nothing, I'm disgusting, but I love you I love you.* I think I might have been saying some of this out loud, but I can't remember it clearly. I had known, as I started scrubbing the floor, that there would be no way to fix the damage that had been done to my hair. Since there was no way to fix it, I had to give it up for lost. When I accepted that, I actually managed to stop thinking about my hair for a bit. I was thinking only about her.

She seemed to orgasm several times before finally pulling herself together. Breathing heavily, flushed, but with a dreamy look on her face, she pulled her clothes back on. I slowed down my efforts to watch her. I couldn't take my eyes off her. She noticed me. "I think that's enough. You can stop now."

"H-huh? Oh... oh," I said, having a hard time getting my thoughts together. That weird head space I was in was fading away, like I was waking up from a trance or something. The reality of what I had been doing was coming back to me, and I tried hard not to start crying.

Ironically, my efforts had hardly made any noticeable impact on that oily patch at all. All I had really succeeded in doing was fouling up my hair even more. My hair made a disgusting, sucking sound as I straightened up to pull it out of the filth. I was on my hands and knees with my head bowed and my hair, now very heavy, hanging down over the patch. I didn't know what to do, and I started to sob uncontrollably. I felt lost. "R-Rebecca?"

"Hush, baby, I'm here," she said, getting down beside me. She wrapped my hair in a few layers of paper towels so that I could move without getting a mess all over myself and then sat me up. I collapsed against her, clutching at her, crying against her neck. She held me close and rocked me. "It's okay, honey, I have you. I have my girl. It's okay."

We sat there until my shakes and tears had passed. "Did I do good?" I finally asked.

"Oh, Lily, you did wonderful," she told me, her voice full of emotion. "I didn't know if you'd be able to do it, but you did. I'm so, so proud of you."

That was nice, though I still wasn't sure what I had to be proud of. I was still kinda stunned. She told me to give her my hands, then she peeled off the gloves and locked the cuffs back on my wrists. I had gotten so used to them that I actually felt a little more normal with the cuffs back on. She then started to help me up, saying, "Let's go inside. My feet are starting to go asleep on this floor. You know what? I think you earned a bath."

"Really?" I asked, hoping she wasn't teasing. I'd been so long without one I'd practically been dreaming of hot water. Then I remembered the 'shower' she had given me before. "A real one? Not one of those... uh..."

She laughed. "Yes, a real one. Let's go upstairs."

I sat in the bedroom while Rebecca drew a hot bubble bath for me. She unlocked the rest of the restraints, the belt, the ankle cuffs, the collar, and left them on the floor. After stripping out of the soiled girdles, I lowered myself into the steaming water. It was heavenly.

Rebecca was there the whole time, speaking softly to me, soothing me, gently washing the dirt from my body and face with a sponge. I loved every second of it. Since my hands were still shaking a little she had to help me shave

(I had gotten pretty furry from not shaving for weeks). She even shaved my pussy for the first time. I marveled at how sensitive it made me down there, and at how it made me look young and slutty at the same time in an obscene combination. I wasn't really in a condition to linger over it, though; I had more important things on my mind.

Rebecca was smoking a cigarette and rubbing my back with a sponge while I soaked for a while. I asked, "Rebecca? Is there any chance that, maybe now, like, maybe I could wash my hair?" My still-wretched hair was lying wetly and heavily on my shoulder.

"You could try. But I really don't think there's much point in it now. I don't think it's salvageable, honey," she told me gently.

I bit my lip and hugged my knees, listening to the bubbles fizz and pop around me. What she was saying was that it was too late. My hair was too badly damaged. I already knew that, *had* known it for some time. I could wash it and pamper it but no amount of conditioning could make it good again. It was hopeless. After months of coloring, and weeks of being used as an abrasive scrub pad, soaking in caustic cleansers and grease and filth of all kinds, and tangled into a giant hopeless knot, my hair was lost. It was ruined. I had been so proud of it. I hid my face between my knees and started to cry. I didn't just cry; I mourned. After a while, I looked up at her. "Rebecca?"

"Yes, baby."

"Please," I started, forcing myself to say it. "Could you cut it off, please?"

"Oh... Lily."

My epiphany had come. The fact was, it was my pride, selfishness, and vanity that were keeping me from totally belonging to Rebecca. As long as I still harbored those parts of my old self, I would always be keeping a part of myself from her. And as long as I had those, there was a chance they would take over and make me lash out to defend them as I'd done in the past. As long as I had my pretty hair, I would always, always fight her for control of it. She was right when she once said that my hair practically owned me. I mean, not literally owned me, but my self-serving vanity had controlled so much of my life in the past. I had realized it simply came down to this: I couldn't serve two mistresses. Only one.

I don't mean to sound like all this came all at once, like a magical bathtub revelation, or something. I guess it had been dawning on me slowly over the past weeks, but I couldn't completely accept it until I was ready. Rebecca had been forcing me to face it, forcing me to painfully come to terms with it. I thought of how, in the garage, I had given my hair up for lost. With it out of the way, I had been able to stop thinking about myself, and think only about her. I suffered so much from worrying about what was happening to my hair. If I gave

it up, I would finally be able to stop worrying about it. I would stop suffering. I would finally be able to give her everything I had to give, even what was most precious to me.

"You finally understand, my precious," Rebecca said, looking so happy for me, yet also looking a little sad, because she knew how painful this was for me. "This is what I've been waiting for. Oh, Lily." She hugged me to her, even though I got her all wet and soapy. She helped me out of the tub and slowly dried me off, then she held me for a long time. Finally, she looked me in the eyes and said, "You need to understand, if I do this, I'm going to take it all... and I may not let you have it back. Not ever."

I swallowed and nodded, looking down. That sounded scary, but I discovered I liked hearing it. She would take absolute possession of me. I needed that. More than anything. I *liked* who I was when she was with me, controlling me.

"Are you ready? You want to do this now?"

"Yes. I think I better get it over with, before I start freaking." I wanted it to be over with, now that I had reached that decision. The tangled, sodden, slimy mass of my hair felt like dead weight, even though I had once treasured it, and I wanted it off of me. I couldn't stand how it felt.

"Alright." She went about tying me to the vinyl chair solemnly, almost ritualistically, as if giving special importance to the occasion. I appreciated that. She put a cape on me, tucked a towel around my neck, and arranged me facing away from the bathroom mirror, so I couldn't see myself. I guess I appreciated that, too. Leaning down, she gave me a long kiss.

She lifted my hair up and then I heard her take the scissors from the counter. She stood behind me silently, long enough for me to start fidgeting and trying to glance around, then I felt the cold metal sliding against my scalp. Then came the first fatal *snick*, followed by many more. I was having a hard time breathing. No turning back, now.

I can't say if I was excited, frightened, sad, or in a state of shock—I don't know. I was just kinda existing, experiencing this happening to me. She was cutting it kinda close, worryingly close, down deep where the hair was less damaged from not being exposed to so much abuse. She worked pretty quickly, and almost before I realized it, it was done. My head suddenly felt as if it was ten pounds lighter. It was all so damp and tangled together that my hair pretty much came away in one piece. Then there was the disturbing sound of what had been my hair, a part of me for so long, being dropped into the trash bin liner under the sink with a heavy thud. Just another bit of trash. It was just so sad, it sounded so pathetic, that I started to cry a little. It was gone.

I was about to ask her what next when I heard the buzz of clippers. I

panicked, twisting around. "No, wait!" I cried, but she just pushed my head forward and slid the clippers up the nape of neck. She kept going until she reached the top of my head, then started again at the bottom. The clippers nibbled against my skin and I felt fluff falling down the back of my neck. I squirmed and struggled, but I had been very securely tied to the chair.

Rebecca had told me she would take it all, I know, but I wasn't really expecting this. I don't know what I expected, maybe a short pixie cut or something. There I was, being naïve again. It was just such a shock from going to having tons of hair, messed up as it was, to having none. I begged and pleaded as she finished with the back and went to work on the sides and front.

"Shh," she told me, after the clippers went silent, "it'll all be over soon. Ooh, I want to touch it so bad. Not yet, not yet."

"Rebecca," I sobbed in a tiny voice, "what are you doing? It's too much. I didn't know. How will I... what'll I--"

"There, there, be quiet." Rebecca was in her own little world, and not much in the mood for talking. She was breathing heavily, her fingers rhythmically squeezing my shoulders. When she was ready, she moistened the stubble with a wet washcloth. Then I felt cold shaving lotion being squirted onto my head.

"Oh, god," I said and sank, or floated, or went wherever it was that I went to. She was going to make me bald. She really was going to take everything. I gritted my teeth and made high-pitched whimpers while she spread the lotion around and started to shave me. Front to back, front to back. The razor felt so alien on my head; it didn't *belong* there. Water dripped down my face and neck. It didn't take long, even though she was being careful. She dabbed my head dry with a towel and took the cape off me, trying not get my fuzz everywhere. I was trembling and couldn't really focus on anything. My head felt cold. "Is it... is it... all gone?"

Rebecca's response was to place her ever-manicured fingernails on my forehead and scrape them lightly across my scalp, all the way down to the back of my neck. I gasped aloud and probably would've jumped at the sensation, if I hadn't been tied down. I had never felt anything like that before. I had so many nerves up there that had never really been stimulated, not like that. Rebecca went about loosening the ropes and unwinding them from me. I got to see her face for the first time since we started and she looked so, I dunno, incredibly, dangerously aroused that it kinda scared me. She looked more turned on than I could ever remember seeing her. She was practically radiating lust.

As soon as my wrists were free I reached up to my head. My fingertips *so* expected to feel hair, but the only thing there was smooth skin. It was so fucking *weird*. Rebecca took my hands, pulling them away from their exploration, and

lifted me out of the chair. I felt so weak. She started to turn me around, but I went tense, resisting. "I don't want see," I pleaded in a small voice, "no, no. I can't look."

She took my shoulders and made me to turn around and face the mirror, and my heart about stopped. I stared, wide-eyed, at my reflection, not recognizing myself in the mirror. No hair, just smooth, pale scalp, slightly paler than the rest of my skin. My eyes welled up. I hardly looked human to myself. My shaved crotch just seemed to emphasize the loss of my hair. I was a pink, hairless, trembling thing. That was not the Lily I knew. That was not a pretty, vain girl, and that sure as hell was no cheerleader. I'd been turned into something else. I closed my eyes and tried to turn away. Rebecca was standing right behind me and held on to me, not letting me flee. "Noo, let me go, I'm ugly, I'm a freak! I'm so ugly," I cried, wanting to disappear.

Rebecca made me face the mirror again, supporting me and holding me against her with an arm around my waist. She put her hand under my chin and held my head up, forcing me to look in the reflection again. Pressing close against me, she nuzzled her cheek against me, and I could feel her breath, her skin, the touch of her own red curls tickling my scalp. It was electric. I melted into her, letting her support me.

I had nothing left to hide behind, I was completely and totally exposed before her, stripped bare to my soul. I had surrendered everything. I was in a state of absolute vulnerability; the slightest hint of scorn from the one I loved would have shattered me, broken me beyond repair. Rebecca met my eyes in the reflection, holding my gaze, and finally spoke to me, softly but with passionate vehemence.

"You. Are. Beautiful."

I closed my eyes and started to cry. I wanted to deny it, to insist that I was hideous, but her powerful presence wouldn't allow it. All I felt from her was love. Still holding my head in place, her other hand caressed down over my belly. Her fingers slid against my smooth pussy, forcing pleasure onto me. Her eyelids fluttered and she ran the tip of her tongue behind my ear, along my shaved scalp. I sighed and whimpered. I was her puppet, her toy, for anything she wanted to do to me.

I was taken away from the mirror and over to her bed, where she laid me down. My head was so sensitive to everything—even the feel of the pillow against my shorn skin was shocking. She was touching me all over, drinking in the sight and feel of her creation, being almost worshipful, as if she had never seen me before. I was swept away—flying, gone. She kissed me fiercely again and again. "You're mine, you're finally all mine," she kept saying, crushing me to her possessively. "You've made me so happy, Lily, I've never been this

happy. You're everything I've always wanted."

Rebecca! I couldn't speak. I was owned. She had me.

We made love all that evening, until we were totally exhausted. It was like the first time all over again. And like the first time, I was in heaven.

That night, and most of the following day, Rebecca was in a kind of sexual frenzy, and I was the blissfully helpless focus of her passion. She was a goddess to me, and she shined. She did just about everything to me that she could do. She spanked and whipped me to the limits of my endurance. She peed on me again. I crawled. I begged. I acted like her own personal slut. She took me and used me in every possible way. I ate her out so much that my jaw ached. She masturbated herself against my head, grinding against it, until her juices ran down the sides of my scalp, an act which was so unthinkably objectifying for me that my body was frozen in shock. I came so hard from the sensation that I almost passed out. Judging from how much she enjoyed it, I knew it wouldn't be the last time.

We stopped playing only to nap and eat—she would hand feed me while I was tied up. I was in another world. By the end of the second night, she had made me come so much I was begging her to let me stop. I remember thinking that if it didn't end, I would probably die of pleasure, or at least go insane. Finally, Rebecca's fervor did fade away, allowing us both to come back to Earth and remember how to be human again.

Rebecca made us lunch when we got up on the second day. She served me my food in a silver dog bowl, which she placed beside her chair at the table. I didn't even question or comment about that. I can't say I was really even surprised. It was awkward, but once I got going, it just felt right to me, being down there on the floor beside her with my face in a bowl. I felt like a pet. I was back in the chains, but I wasn't wearing girdles then. She wanted to see me naked... exposed. Occasionally, she'd reach down and stroke my head. She was acting quiet and reserved, but she had a smile that wouldn't leave her face.

I was still trying to cope with being bald. I couldn't keep my hands off my head, and I kept feeling it every chance I got. It was just so strange. It would be days yet before it would completely sink in. I cleaned off my face with my napkin, 'cause eating from a bowl without using your hands is messy. I looked up at Rebecca. She was still picking at her food, still wearing that little smile.

"Um, Rebecca?"

"Mm-hmm?" She looked down at me, then smirked. "You missed a spot."

"Huh, what? Missed?" I must have looked confused, because she took

my napkin and dabbed my cheek. "Oh. Thanks," I mumbled, flustered. "Uh, Rebecca?"

"Yes?"

I hesitated, wanting to order my thoughts. "You said that, um, you might not let me have it back."

"That's right."

"So, like, you're going to keep shaving me like this?" I asked.

"Yes, dear. For a long time."

"Oh. Okay." That was the answer I anticipated. I just wanted to make sure so that I could stop wondering about it. I didn't want to get my hopes up for something that wasn't going to happen. I thought for another minute, then asked, "Rebecca? I'm kinda scared."

"What are you scared about, honey?"

"Well, school. I was worried enough when my hair was... messy. But how can I go back now? I can't go back like this, I can't, they'll kill me. How can I go outside at all?" I had been trying to block the full consequences of being bald outside of the world Rebecca and I had together. The more I thought about, the more upset I got.

"I told you before that what I think of you is all that matters. This is how I want you, lovely." She ran a fingernail across my scalp, making me shudder. I couldn't yet enjoy the fact that I was bald, but I was already starting to learn to love how it felt. "But I'm not going to subject you to that, so don't worry. Silly girl, I'm a hairdresser. You think I don't have access to tons of wigs? You'll do fine in public."

"Oh. I hadn't thought of that. Thank you." I sighed with relief. It hadn't even occurred to me that Rebecca would let me wear a wig or something. Still, I was worried that a wig might just look funny on me.

"And as for school," she continued, "I've already come to a decision about that. You won't be going back."

"Huh? But, don't I have to? I mean, what about... what--"

"Shh, don't worry about it," she said. "You're going to take a GED. You're smart, so I know you'll pass. You don't have to worry about going back to that school."

"But what about college?" This was a lot to absorb.

Rebecca looked amused. "What do you need college for? What do you want a degree in? Is there some career that you wanted to pursue?"

"I-I dunno. I guess, I always just assumed I'd be going... I dunno." It was frustrating to think about. The truth was, I had never been able to think of any career I wanted. I couldn't even imagine it. I had just been drifting along as I grew up, hoping to find my niche. Now I had found where I truly belonged. I

belonged with Rebecca.

“You won’t be going away to college, Lily. I have other plans for you.”

I didn’t know if that should upset me or not. She was making plans for me that didn’t even involve my input. I was a grown-up, I could make my own decisions, especially about things like my own education and career. But the more I thought about it, the more it occurred to me that, though I was able to make my own decisions, deep down I didn’t need to. I didn’t *want* to. As I thought about what would make me happy in life, now and on down the road, the only option that made any sense for me was to belong to Rebecca. I wanted nothing else. I had already trusted her with my heart, now I had to trust her to take care of my happiness and my future.

Life gradually went back to normal, sort of. Stabilized, I guess. Being Rebecca’s slave got a little easier. After that night, she was able to kinda ease up on me. She didn’t need to test me or push me like she had in those weeks following the fight. We had found our places, and we could relax with that knowledge. Rebecca was able to go back to her old, droll self, since she didn’t have to worry about being on top of me all the time. I was able to go back to sort of feeling like a normal young girl again, just with some fundamental changes. Of course, she still kept firm control me to make sure I didn’t start reverting to my old ways. I still got punished for things, but in a loving way. I needed to feel her control. It just made me happy. In public we appeared completely normal, if a little eccentric. At home, I was her servant, lover, and beautiful freak.

My old bedroom underwent some changes, too. It gradually became our special playroom, my dungeon, with a cross thing and a bed I could be tied to. Decorating it was a lot of fun. We didn’t use it every day, but it was nice to have there, because when we did play, it could go on for hours and hours, and it never got old. I should also add that one of her favorite toys was still that black, plastic hairbrush. And, believe me, the irony that a hairbrush was now useless to me except as instrument of punishment or pleasure was not lost on me.

She shaved my head almost every day. I eventually got used to it. It almost became like a comforting ritual, a daily reminder of who and what I was. Although, having no hair was reminder enough. After a time she got tired of shaving and battling stubble, so she started using depilatory creams and stuff. That made me smoother than ever. I really started loving when she would touch my head, back in our old positions at the sofa, stroking and petting my skin instead of playing with my hair. I don’t know if it was just psychological, maybe that, added to the sensitivity that was already there, but my scalp was really seeming to become sorta erogenous.

True to her word, Rebecca brought wigs home for me. Really nice human

hair ones, too, that didn't look funny on me at all. They looked totally natural. I started to get quite a collection. I got to have them in lots of different colors and lengths, and they could be styled just like regular hair. I could actually match my hair to my outfits, or my mood; it was so convenient. It was almost like, why hadn't I done this sooner? Of course, it was still a long time before I felt confident going out in them. I was always scared they'd fly off or something. And, naturally, Rebecca threatened that she'd yank 'em off my head if I misbehaved. She never did. She *could* have, though. I could only wear them in public, anyway, as I was always, always bald when we were at home.

I never had to go back to my high school, except for some red tape stuff. It was kinda funny, in a sad way, when some of my old friends started to call after word got out that Rebecca had pulled me out of school. Not one of them had called out of concern while I was gone for weeks with the 'flu.' They only called when they sniffed something scandalous. I refused to talk to them. They were no longer a part of my life. Anyway, I passed my GED, and so I got really excited that I'd never have to go back to school or sit through classes or do homework ever again. That turned out to be not quite true, though.

See, Rebecca still had plans for me. Turned out I got to have an extended education, anyway. She had me enroll in beauty school! I wasn't unhappy about that. It's not something I would have picked for myself, but I wasn't averse to it. Most of that stuff just came naturally to me. Plus, if it was good enough for Rebecca, it was more than good enough for me. She told me it was fitting, that even if I couldn't be vain anymore, at least I could help other people to be. And it gave me something to do other than sit around the house pining for her all day, every day. I was worried that it might make me upset or depressed or something, working with other people's hair when I had none. It did a little, at first, but only for a little while. I got used to it.

So, time passed, and I went to school while learning to be a better slave for Rebecca, which was always an ongoing process. Rebecca could have taught me anything I needed to know about hairdressing and cosmetology, and she did teach me a lot, but by going to school I got a license and everything. She was so proud of me.

I really wanted to work at the same salon she did, but she didn't think that was a very good idea. She said if we worked together we might both get so distracted that we might accidentally end up making some other poor lady bald, or snip off an ear, or something. That was probably an exaggeration, but I guessed I could see her point. It was cool working in a salon that had a lot of, well, alternative kinda people. They figured out my head was shaved pretty quickly, since they could spot a wig easily, and *especially* since I went to work with completely different hair day after day. But they were cool, and didn't

bother me about it except for some friendly teasing now and then. Since we were hardly hurting for money, I got work part-time. The rest of my time was devoted to Rebecca and to taking care of the house.

Oh yeah, she finally did get me a car. Well, I guess it was more her car, since it replaced the old one and she did most of the driving, but I got to pick it out and it was in my name. So I felt pretty good about that. And, I would like to add, it doesn't leak oil in the garage.

I'm skipping over a year or two here after the night I truly became hers. Although they were wonderful years, nothing drastic happened like before. During that time Rebecca finally decided to let me have hair again, but not much. She allowed me to grow bangs, right at the front of my hairline, and later on, she let me start growing a ponytail up high in the back. The combination was kinda punky, but it was cute. I finally had hair I could be proud of again, just not *too* proud. I tried not to get too attached to it, since I knew that that hair belonged to Rebecca, not to me, and she could take it away any time she desired. It was hair on loan. So it was like a gift to me, letting me have it to take care of.

Then came one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make, though it didn't take me very long to decide it. Rebecca disliked—well, *loathed*—stubble, and even though creams and stuff made my hair grow in slower, it still wasn't good enough for her in the long run. She asked me if I would get electrolysis for her. All the hair on my head, and crotch, except for the bangs and ponytail I was allowed to have, would be permanently removed. Removed was an understatement... it would be killed off. She made it clear that this was entirely my decision, since, unlike being shaved, this would change my body for the rest of my life.

I probably would have felt better if it had just been a direct order; I was not comfortable with major responsibilities like that. I had to imagine if I could be hairless and happy decades from then. I had gotten used to being bald, but I had consider what it would be like knowing that I would never, ever be able to have a full head of hair again in my life. I would always be marked as the slave that my Rebecca had turned me into. In the end, I made the only decision that made sense, and I chose to do what would make Rebecca the happiest. That was what would make me happy.

I had laser electrolysis first, and that seemed to get a whole lot out of the way, but there was still a ton left that had to be removed the old-fashioned way—with needles. It was all very painful, and it took a great many sessions. I cried a lot, the first few times, because of the pain and also because it was very emotional for me. Rebecca was always there, though, and she gave me the strength to get through it. Once again I was suffering and sacrificing to prove my love for her. Once again she accepted my sacrifice.

The process isn't finished yet, I still have many sessions to go to get rid of it all, but it's getting so that I no longer need to be shaved frequently. Most of the time now I'm baby smooth all over, with hardly a hint of hair or shadow. Sometimes I do miss my hair, and yes, sometimes when I get moody, I mourn for it. But I don't regret my decision. What is the loss of hair compared to what I get in return? It's nothing. You might think, *well, jeez, that's stupid... she might kick you out at any time, and you'd be stuck without any hair.* And, well, you'd be right; she could do that, and I would be stuck being hairless. Being bald would be a permanent reminder of her. But what Rebecca has helped me to become is a part of who I am now. Even if I no longer had her, how I could possibly want to forget how happy she made me, who she made me, and how, together, we shined? How could I ever want to forget that?

Rebecca has been thinking about maybe opening her own salon. She wants to make one with a retro theme. Can you guess? Of course, a 50's theme. It started as a whim, but she's been talking about it more and more. I think she should do it. I think it'd make her happy, but that's just my opinion.

I no longer feel weird at all about that fact that she's my step-mom, or that my dad was once her husband and submissive. I think he'd be very happy that we both found love after he was gone. And I don't think he'd be ashamed that I'm a slave, now. It may not have been what he imagined for his little girl when she was growing up, but I'm pretty sure he would understand and be proud of me.

So that's the strange story of how my highly inappropriate childhood crush turned into true love. The story of how a drunken kiss and a spanking turned into my total and abject slavery and devotion to Rebecca. I was born to be what I am, I know that now, but fate let the two of us come together. Even though neither of us saw it for a long time while I was growing up, we turned out to be just what each other needed.

Just recently, like *very* recently, yet another life-changing, pivotal moment came for me. We had just finished dinner and were watching tv on the sofa. Rebecca was sitting and I was lying down with my head on her lap. I was in girdles, of course, although I didn't have to wear them all the time anymore. I'm not really comfortable without them, now. Naked feels weird. I was wearing a light-weight version of the restraints I used to have to wear, made of thin chains. They were more symbolic and decorative than functional. I heard her pop her gum one last time, then she took it from her mouth and held it to my lips. Without looking away from the screen, I plucked it off her finger with my teeth and began to chew the last of the flavor out of it. She was twirling my ponytail around her fingers. "I wonder if it's time to clean under the stove again," she

said.

I almost swallowed her gum. I quickly twisted around to stare up at her. "W-what?"

She looked down at me and smirked. "Just kidding. Just keeping you on your toes."

I exhaled and settled back down, rolling my eyes. "Play me like a fiddle," I grumbled.

After a moment, she commented, "I have been thinking I might color it lavender, though. Hmm. A light shade of lavender."

"That might be pretty," I said.

"Yes." She continued playing with my hair. "I've also been thinking that we might move."

"Move?" I asked, looking back up at her.

She was gazing ahead, appearing to be deep in thought. "Yes. Somewhere far away. Another state, where no one knows who we are."

I thought about that a moment. I would be strange and kinda sad to move away from the only house I'd known. It might also be exciting, though. Building a whole new life together, and all. "But why?"

"Well, sweetie, I've been thinking. It would be legal for us to get married in some other states, soon. We could move to one of those."

I did swallow her gum that time, and choked on it a little, for good measure. I sat up to gape at her. "Married? M-married, like, *marriage* married?" I stuttered, getting slowly to my feet.

I was stunned. I suddenly remembered how when I was little I harbored jealous/envious feelings towards my new step-mother. Back then I had foolish, childish fantasies of growing up to marry a woman just like Rebecca. But of course that could never happen, not for real. And now... this? What was I to think? Marry my own step-mother, for real? What would be people think? "No way. I don't think so."

Rebecca looked devastated. Her jaw moved but nothing came out.

"You call that a proposal? I may be just a slave, but I can still be romantic, ya know! This is something that has to be done just right and everything. We want it to be something to remember, right?" I was watching her expression change, turning from bleak to joyfully relieved, and a little bit pissed.

"Why, you little..." she started, getting to her feet. "You about scared the shit out of me."

"There has to be candles, and dinner, and—" I went on, provoking that dangerous look in her green eyes, the look that spelled trouble for me. She was breathing through her teeth. She reached for me, but I dodged away, my little chains jingling. "And a ring! Or at least a collar, or something."

“You want a ring, huh? I can think of all kinds of places to put rings on you, girl.” She caught me by the ponytail and forced me back down onto the sofa.

“Ow! Ooow! It just has to be done right, that’s all, it’s tradition! Ow!” I cried, screaming and giggling.

“If you think for one second I’m getting down on one knee to *you*, my pet, you’ve got another thing coming,” she hissed, holding me down and climbing on top of me.

“Ow, my hair! Oh, and the wedding! I want a fancy wedding, with tons of flowers, and *mmm-*” She silenced me with her lips, kissing me deeply. I tasted bubblegum and smoke and, god, I loved it. I was pinned beneath her soft body and her fingernails were clutching my mostly-hairless head. I was so happy. I was *deliriously* happy. She owned my flesh, my heart, and my soul. She *deserved* my worship. With her I was whole. She had stripped me down to nothing so the real me could come out. I felt more free than ever as her slave. I had come so far, given so much, just to see her smile at me. There was nothing I wouldn’t sacrifice, nothing I wouldn’t endure, to make her happy. I belonged to her. How could I want anything more than to serve and obey her for the rest of my life?

“I love you I love you I need you,” I breathed.

“You’d better,” she purred and kissed me again.