**A Very Merry Mailgirls XMas Ch. 01**

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Erin O'Neill stepped into another world, and left the real one behind.  
  
The lobby of US Financial's Park Place facility was large, open, and well lit. Little clusters of sofas and chairs stood guard to either side, along with the same sorts of potted plants and topiaries that graced corporate offices worldwide. Garland had been hung for the season, and an oversized Christmas tree had been tastefully decorated and placed by the door. Even the security desk had been done up, wrapped with a thick red ribbon and sporting an oversized bow.  
  
It was a quarter to three on Christmas Eve, but the lobby was still busy. Most people were nodding to the two security guards and wishing them a Merry Christmas on their way out. Out to their cars, off to the ferry, or on to the commuter rail. Out into the lightly falling snow. Home to their families and loved ones, home for the holiday. There were a handful of little congregations of people, though, still milling about and conversing in loud, joyful voices. Most did their best to at least pretend to ignore the goings-on at the security desk, or the line-up to the left, or the show at the center of the lobby. But there was a mixed group - men and women both - whistling, cheering, and clapping; one of the women even had her phone out and was snapping pictures.  
  
The exposed pussy that greeted Erin and Catherine as they entered the lobby, though, stole focus.  
  
Two pillories had been placed halfway between the front entrance and the security desk. One was unoccupied. In the other, and facing away from them, was a girl without a stitch of clothes, bent at the midsection and fitted with a spreader bar at her ankles. Her neck and wrists had been secured into the pillory. And, as Erin and her stepmother rounded the display, they saw that the pillory itself wasn't the end of her suffering. Dangling beneath her, and held in place with nipple clamps, was a pair of red-and-green Christmas ornaments. These, plus the Santa hat, were apparently a nod to the holiday. The O-ring gag inserted into her mouth and secured behind her head, though, didn't appear to have anything to do with the season.  
  
Catherine Ryan breathed an audible sigh of relief as they passed. Erin understood why - the naked girl was a redhead. Catherine's daughters, both blondes, weren't the victims of this particular exhibition. At least, not here and now. Not today.  
  
To this side of the security desk, another girl stood trembling in just her bra and panties, with her back to the little party cheering and applauding her less than twenty feet away. She paid them no attention, but it was clear that their presence was affecting her. A pair of boots was on the floor beside her, and a crumpled-up pile of clothes had been placed on the desk. She looked to the African-American woman on the far side, as if expecting her to say something - to either scare the audience away, or to offer her a few words of support. The security guard did neither. Finding the courage to press forward anyway, the girl slid one bra strap off her shoulder, and then the other. She tugged the cups down at the same time, exposing her naked breasts, and twisted the bra three-quarters of the way around her body to unfasten the snap. Her admirers roared with laughter.  
  
"Underwear, too," Erin heard the second security guard tell her. "Come on."  
  
The girl nodded nervously, and wriggled out of her panties. Another cheer erupted from the audience.  
  
The second security guard, a Hispanic man in his forties, accepted the girl's underthings with a smile, and took the girl in, in her entirety. Dark hair, done up a bun. Moderately-sized breasts. Good-looking, though not stunningly so - not nearly as attractive the redhead in the stocks behind her. There was a small patch of pubic hair between her legs that caught the guard's attention, and he called it out. "That's got to go when you get downstairs."  
  
"Even just as a visitor?" the girl asked meekly. Her accent was hard to place. French?  
  
"Yup," he answered. "It's in the agreement you signed. The girls will show you where to get a razor when you get down there."  
  
As Catherine and Erin approached the security desk, the female guard peeled away and looked up in their direction. She recognized Catherine right away. She grinned. "One and Two."  
  
Catherine smiled politely. "One and Two," she affirmed. "I left an impression?"  
  
"I never forget a face," the security guard beamed. Her nametag identified her as "Andrews."  
  
Gesturing towards the now-naked brunette to her left, Catherine pointed out, "We didn't have to do this here last time."  
  
Andrews shook her head and apologized. "Downstairs, right? Outside the locker room?"  
  
"Yes."  
  
"New rule. Just in time for the holiday." She shrugged, indicating that she didn't have anything to do with the decision. She was just here to enforce it.  
  
Catherine looked nervously over her shoulder at crowd. "Anything else new? Anything else we need to know?"  
  
"Well, they moved the...er...equipment," she answered, searching for the right word. She meant the pillories behind them.  
  
"A little too cold in the courtyard this time of year?"  
  
Andrews nodded. "All over the building now. Benches, cages, racks, suspension devices..." Shaking her head, but with a little chuckle, she added, "Can't escape 'em. They're all over the place. That and the ladies' underwear."  
  
"Those were up when I was here last time," Catherine said. "A bold design choice."  
  
"It's definitely different than when I started here a couple of years ago."  
  
"A different world," Erin added. Andrews glanced in Erin's direction, and looked her up and down. "Hi," Erin cheeped, and offered a nervous wave.  
  
Andrews offered a polite "hello" in response, but came back to Catherine. "Another daughter?"  
  
"Stepdaughter," Catherine said. "Couldn't talk her out of it."  
  
Andrews offered a grunt, and a disapproving look at Erin. To Erin, she asked, "Is that right?"  
  
"It is," she answered. "I can do this for a couple of days."  
  
To Catherine, Andrews warned, "You be careful with her. She's a looker. You don't want another one."  
  
Catherine stared at Erin, as if to say, "See!" To Andrews, she responded, "I know, I know. Her father would disown me. If that happens, I might have to stay, myself."  
  
Andrews laughed. "I'll put in a good word, if that happens," she said. Gesturing to the older woman's figure, despite being hidden beneath a coat, she offered, "Though, you be careful, yourself. These assholes? These little experiments they run here? You might be end up being a whole family of mailgirls."  
  
Catherine waved off the concern. A little too casually, Erin felt. "Mail-Woman," the forty-nine-year-old corrected the security guard. "In my case."  
  
"Mail-Woman, then," Andrews laughed. "Though, damn, if I looked as good as you..."  
  
The security guard trailed off, and looked away. Andrews wasn't mailgirls material. She was more than a little heavy-set, and not exactly the sort of beauty USF had a reputation for targeting.  
  
Catherine Ryan, on the other hand? If she'd been ten years younger, there'd have been no doubt the company would be pursuing her to turn its "sisters act" into a "mother-and-daughters show." Five-foot-three or maybe five-foot-four, with a figure that would have been the envy of women half her age, Catherine was nearly every bit the goddess that her daughters were. Maybe even more so, given that she had aged so gracefully that magic or witchcraft had to have been involved. It had been a decade since Erin's father had first introduced Catherine to her, and Catherine still looked like she could have passed for thirty-nine. Blonde hair, a chest to die for, and hips that no one would have believed had birthed two children; there was no question from whom Sarah and Sophie Scott had gotten their looks.  
  
Not that Erin O'Neill was hard on the eyes. She'd grown into her height, after more than a few awkward teenage years towering over the boys her age. She'd been rail-thin, back then. Though she'd sprouted up early, her boobs had come in late. And, of course, there'd been the acne. But it had all come together in the end, and - aside from those times she was standing next to Catherine or beside the Scott girls - she was capable of turning heads in her own right. As she'd flipped through pictures of mailgirls online, she had convinced herself more and more that she wouldn't be embarrassing herself by inserting herself in among them. She'd be embarrassing herself, sure. Of that, there was no question - it was raison d'etre for a mailgirls program, overall. But she was tall and slender, and in reasonably good shape. She was thirty, but only just; her sorority days at Arizona State weren't that far removed. She might not have been the sort of high-end lingerie model that USF had a history of enlisting into their mailgirl ranks, but she was pretty, in a girl-next-door brunette sort of way.  
  
"Alright, so..." Andrews began, as she handed a pair of clipboards to Erin and her stepmother, "I know you two signed these already, when you set this visit up. But, because of what you're volunteering yourself for, the lawyers like to make sure you're scrawling your signature here, there, and everywhere a few dozen times. Thumbprint, too. Just to make absolutely, one hundred percent sure you know what you're getting yourself into and what you're giving the company permission to do."  
  
The document was eleven pages long, single-spaced, and in ten-point font. Erin knew it backwards and forwards. She'd spent hours poring over it at home, going line by line, paragraph by paragraph, clause by clause. It laid out the conditions of her visit, in detail - everything from the surrender of her clothes to the surrender of her very name. For the next forty-some hours, Erin O'Neill would be, for intents and purposes, a mailgirl.  
  
She flipped through it, counting the pages and glancing it over to make sure that USF hadn't slipped something else into the agreement since its last iteration. Nothing appeared to be any different from the document she'd signed, scanned, and emailed back to Human Capital - but in a perfect world, she'd have gone through it again, in detail, to make absolutely sure. Being tricked into signing her life away was practically a rite of passage for a mailgirl.  
  
Erin cringed, bit her lip, and signed her name on the last page. She was here for the "mailgirls experience," after all.  
  
Catherine gave the contract no such scrutiny. She'd done this before, and come out the other side. Not for this long, and not overnight. But she was here to see her daughters, and likely would have signed anything USF shoved in front of her to see them again.  
  
"Alright, girls," Andrews said to them both in a friendly tone, after they'd run their thumbs over an electronic reader. "It's time."  
  
The moment of truth. After all her research, all her preparation and planning, the moment had arrived. Erin was going to strip down in USF's lobby and join her stepsisters in the nude.  
  
She glanced nervously at Catherine, and Catherine offered a reassuring look. To Andrews, the older woman asked, "Can we put our things in our suitcases?"  
  
Andrews answered in the affirmative. "That works," she said.  
  
"Now or never," Catherine sighed, and shrugged off her coat.  
  
"Now or never," Erin answered timidly, and did the same.  
  
The girl who'd been at the desk when Erin and Catherine had arrived was a few feet away, and was being tended to by the male security guard. "Ramirez," his nametag read. The girl, on the other hand, was to be known as "VC." So said the black ink Ramirez had just applied to her right hip. "Visitor C," Erin surmised. She and Catherine were to be "Visitor D" and "Visitor E."  
  
She hoped she wouldn't be the one forced to sport "VD" scrawled upon her naked body for the couple of days.  
  
She knew she would be.  
  
"Mistress Rei may need to re-do this," Ramirez was telling the girl. "After a shower and a shave."  
  
"Uh...okay," was the response. What else was she going to say?  
  
Erin folded her coat neatly, got into a crouch, and opened her suitcase. She risked a glance in the direction of the group laughing and cheering only twenty feet away, but chose to look through them and pretend they weren't there.  
  
The redhead in the pillory was watching, too; beneath her, the Christmas ornaments hanging from her nipples bounced comically with each breath.  
  
Against the far wall, on their knees, were two naked girls - "VA" and "VB," presumably. Both were in the standard mailgirls "resting" position, called simply "Knees" here at USF. Knees apart, left wrist clutched in the right hand behind the back. They were facing the wall, with their bare behinds exposed to open lobby, but - piling insult on top of insult - they'd been fitted with black leather blindfolds. Neither had yet received collars, but Erin knew they were coming in the near future.  
  
Erin placed her coat on top of her other clothes in the suitcase. What they'd wear to Park Place that afternoon had been a hand-wringing exercise in and of itself. Given that they had fully expected to strip soon after arriving, and would remain naked until the day after Christmas, choosing an outfit for the trip from their hotel to the building might have seemed unimportant. Had she had her way, Erin would have arrived in a pair of sweatpants and a tee-shirt. Hell, there was something to be said for the cheap-looking shifts the Fabrikam girls wore to-and-from work back in LA. Simple. Easy. Straightforward. On-and-off. No fuss.  
  
Catherine, though, had insisted they dress up, and Erin had given in. When Sarah had been in-town, at USF Plaza, she'd come to and from work dressed as if she held a normal job on Wall Street. Despite the presence of the mailgirls, USF still maintained a formal dress code, one that seemed like a throwback to yesteryear. Women wore skirts and dresses, stockings and hose, pumps and heels. When Erin and Sarah had chatted that Sunday, Sarah had backed Catherine and suggested Erin might come in a skirt and a blouse. She could be forgiven the pantyhose, but she should dress in something nice. Whether it was outside the mailgirls locker room - as Erin, Catherine, and Sarah had expected - or here in the lobby, Erin was going to have to get naked in front of an audience. She didn't want to get things started off looking like a slob, did she?  
  
Erin stood, and kicked off her high-heeled boots. She'd given in to her stepmother's insistence, and wore a simple, tight-fitting, button-down white blouse, tucked neatly into a flouncy black A-line skirt entirely inappropriate for the weather outside. Beside her, Catherine wore a muted, black-and-white leopard-print faux wrap dress that tied at the waist and hung to her knees. Both of them could have passed for secretaries, or accountants, or lawyers, or any other variety of the office drones who populated Park Place. For the moment, at least.  
  
Erin's hands trembled as she undid the first button of her shirt. And then the next. And then the next. And then the next. As she did so, she revealed a white, guipure lace bra, with sheer cups through which her nipples would be plainly visible. The bra, as well as the matching white lace tanga, had been a recent purchase, and - outside of trying them on - today was the first time she'd worn either. She'd spent more on the set than she'd originally intended to; Catherine had warned her that USF had kept her underwear when she'd come out in September. But Erin had felt sexier and more confident in her body when she'd picked them out, a feeling that seemed important when undressing in public.  
  
The younger girl was still untucking her blouse when a roar went up behind her. Catherine, determined and focused, had simply found the hemline of her dress and pulled it up over her head. The group watching cheered.  
  
Erin had seen her stepmother in a two-piece bikini on more than one occasion, but she found herself marveling at the other woman's body now all the same. Despite being forty-nine, and despite having been pregnant twice, Catherine was a beauty, and set unrealistic expectations for Erin about what to expect from the aging process. Today, she wore a black, full-coverage satin bra, and a matching black thong. She was still in her heels.  
  
Erin followed Catherine's lead, and took off her shirt. She slid her thumbs into the waistline of her skirt, and wriggled free. Both items were deposited in a heap into her suitcase. She wanted to get this over with. She wasn't going to stand here in her underwear, folding her clothes, and stalling. Wasting no time, she unhooked her bra behind her back, slipped it off, and then went for her panties. Erin O'Neill was now naked in the lobby of US Financial, naked in public, naked in front of her stepmother and a good number of total strangers.  
  
Her tattoo caught the attention of the little group openly watching and applauding, as Erin had expected it to; tattoos weren't allowed among the actual roster of USF mailgirls. Just above her bikini line were six blue stylized little fish swimming one way, and a single little red one swimming the other. When she'd gotten it in Tempe, eight or nine years earlier, she'd liked the idea that she was the single red fish, swimming in her own direction. The fact that she had willingly and knowingly agreed to be a de facto mailgirl for the next day and a half, and that she'd just gotten naked while being watched, perhaps underlined that sentiment.  
  
She crouched back down, overly cautious about exposing her sex to the room. Her back to Andrews, she snuck her tanga into one of the pockets of the jeans she'd brought with her, and then buried the jeans themselves beneath her coat, her skirt, and her blouse. Human Capital, or the Scott girls' mistress, or maybe even Andrews and Ramirez themselves, would likely be rifling through her things and pilfering the panties at some point that very afternoon. Erin doubted her little hiding spot would keep them safe, but she felt the need to try all the same.  
  
For that same reason, Erin had left her engagement ring and wedding band at home. It had hurt her husband Ben, she knew, but he hadn't said so out loud. Given what she was already doing to him with this little trip, it had pained her to hurt him again like that. Catherine had worn her rings, and was at that very moment tucking her jewelry into her toiletries bag. But then, Catherine hadn't come clean to Erin's father Patrick about what trips to USF required of female visitors, as Erin had to Ben. Erin could deal with the company snatching her underwear; she couldn't bear the thought of losing her rings.  
  
Still, though, Erin did have on a few other pieces. Her earrings, her necklace, her bracelet, and a simple sterling silver ring were all slipped into her clutch, and placed carefully in her suitcase. Mailgirls, and therefore the mailgirls' visitors, were not allowed jewelry of any kind - save that which was given to them by the company. There was an ugly black collar waiting for Erin in the near future.  
  
Both her suitcase and Catherine's were placed up on the security desk, and Andrews smiled as she took possession of them. Ramirez, meanwhile, had finished with Visitor C for the moment, though the girl stood waiting, awkwardly, for her next set of instructions. "Wow," he offered, as he took in Catherine. "Wow, wow, wow," he said to Erin.  
  
Erin blushed instinctively.  
  
Ramirez fixated on Erin's crotch. He pointed at it, and called Visitor C's attention to it. "Hey, 'Hairy Cunt'! That's how it's done."  
  
Erin had gotten waxed that weekend. She and Catherine had both dutifully complied with their agreements' restrictions on hair below the neckline.  
  
"Emilio!" Andrews scolded him. "What have I said about the fucking nicknames?"

Ramirez waved her off, and stepped towards Erin and her stepmother. Without warning, or asking for permission, he grabbed Erin roughly by the hip, and marked her with a "VD." Catherine received similar treatment, and was graced with a "VE."  
  
"Visitor D," he announced. "And Visitor E." With mischief in his eyes, he then looked to Andrews, and offered, "Or, how about 'Dyke Food'? And 'Loose Pussy'?"  
  
Erin shared a look of horror with Catherine. Which one of them was "Dyke Food"? Was it Erin?  
  
"For fuck's sake!" Andrews answered back, shaking her head. She looked like she was about to apologize for her partner's behavior, but seemed to think better of it. Instead, she let out an exhausted sigh, and told them, "Start getting used to this sort of shit. It's only going to get worse."  
  
To a point, Erin hoped. For a little while, at least. They'd been told that the building would empty out that afternoon, and that it would really just be Security, the mailroom staff, and their visitors here at Park Place until the morning of the 26th. If they could make it through this, and out of the lobby, it'd really only be the actual mailgirls they'd have to contend with.  
  
And their mistress.  
  
Erin cast another timid look in the pillory's direction.  
  
As she did so, another woman approached. She had to have been in her fifties, at least. Early sixties, even? But, like Catherine, she'd aged gracefully, and reminded Erin of the actress from the Pierce Brosnan "Thomas Crown Affair" and the "Lethal Weapon" movies. Rene Russo, right? Erin was pretty confident it was Rene Russo.  
  
"Jesus!" she shouted in Catherine's direction. "You can't be one of their mothers!"  
  
"Mailgirls One and Two," Catherine replied.  
  
The other woman whistled, and looked Erin's stepmother up-and-down. To Andrews, she commented, "I can't compete with that. That's just unfair." She undid her coat, and placed it on the counter above the security desk. Again, to Andrews, she asked, "Tell me I'm not the oldest here today."  
  
"Just by a little," the security guard said with a smile. "It's mostly girls in their 20's and 30's."  
  
Rene Russo sized Erin up, and then went on to do the same to Visitor C. "Unfair. Completely unfair!" She turned her back to Ramirez, and instructed him, "Mr. Ramirez. Zipper, please."  
  
The male security guard gleefully obliged, and unzipped the back of her dress. This wasn't her first visit to Park Place. This wasn't the first time Ramirez had done this for her. She oozed confidence and sexuality. As her dress came off, she revealed that she was sporting nothing underneath. Even being half this woman's age, Erin worried about her body being judged against such a head-turner  
  
"Mailgirl Fourteen," the woman, still in her heels, said to Catherine. Her daughter was Mailgirl Fourteen, she meant. She held out a hand and introduced herself. "Angela Giannini. Though, I guess I'm 'Visitor F' today."  
  
"Catherine Ryan."  
  
Andrews coughed uncomfortably. "Visitor E," she corrected Catherine. "That's your one warning. Visitor C. Visitor D. Visitor E. Visitor F. No names once you've checked in."  
  
Angela Giannini - Visitor F - rolled her eyes. In the mocking tone, she answered back, "'Ma'am, per Human Capital, I am to be called by my mail room visitor's designation.' I suppose this is where I point out that I haven't checked in yet?"  
  
"She has," Andrews replied. "And I don't want Mistress Rei calling me out for not slapping her around."  
  
"Fine, fine," Angela relented. She lifted her left leg, and removed one of her heels. She placed it on the desk, and then removed the other. "So, check me in, already!"  
  
It was now Andrews's turn to roll her eyes. "You check her in," she told Ramirez. "I'll bring these three over." She reached beneath the desk, and pulled out one, two, three blindfolds. "Alright girls. Come with me."  
  
"I have to sign this every time?" Angela complained in a joking tone, when Ramirez handed her the clipboard.  
  
Erin, now to be known simply as "Visitor D," followed behind Andrews, Visitor C, and Visitor E. As she left her clothes behind, and her name along with it, this fantasy of hers became very, very real. She was pushed to her knees against the wall, blindfolded, and left to wait for Mistress Rei. She'd imagined this moment countless of times since that September. She'd prepared for it. She'd researched it. She'd talked it over with Catherine. She'd talked it over with Ben.  
  
And, still, she was terrified about what awaited her, and fought the urge to renege and back out. It wasn't too late. Her things were still at the security desk. Catherine would understand. Sarah and Sophie would understand. She didn't have to do this. She didn't have to spend her Christmas this way. Naked. Imprisoned. Humiliated. Treated like an animal.  
  
She stayed put. Something had called her here. And something would keep her here. Visitor D was perhaps more afraid of what that something was, inside of her, than anything USF could have inflicted upon her.  
  
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Erin had left the real world behind the moment she stepped into the lobby at Park Place.  
  
But that wasn't really the truth of it, was it?  
  
The real world - the world that Erin had grown up in, the world in which it would have been unthinkable to treat women this way, the world before mailgirls - was long gone.  
  
Some years earlier, a single Japanese company had launched the very first mailgirls program on a lark, after an executive suggested it as a joke. They responded to early legal challenges and weathered a storm of bad publicity, but also began to notice the effects the program was having on the company's bottom line. Turnover - at least after an initial spike - plummeted. So too did usage of vacation time, sick time, and other leaves-of-absence. And productivity, stacked against just about any measure, skyrocketed exponentially.  
  
Copycat programs sprouted up throughout Tokyo. Then the rest of Japan. Southeast Asia. Eastern and Central Europe. The Pacific Northwest was the beachhead in the United States, but San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Phoenix followed suit. US Financial had been among the first on the East Coast, but it was far from the last. The phenomenon was still in its infancy here in the Americas, but it was gaining traction fast. There'd been no shortage of protests and suits. When Congress reconvened in DC in January, the "Mailgirl Hearings" would be appointment TV for the so-called "Whitestocking" groups fighting against the trend. But there'd been no shortage of volunteers, either, and there were now dozens of "Blackstocking" groups organized in defense of the programs, and in defense of the "individual life, individual choice" rallying call of the girls who'd agreed to subject themselves to this lifestyle.  
  
Erin O'Neill, for her part, had never paid the controversy much attention. She didn't think much of the companies who had decided to roll out mailgirl programs on the West Coast. But that distaste for how they were treating their employees had never boiled over into a frothing rage. She'd managed to skate through without affixing her signature to a petition or participating in a boycott. If she'd really taken the time to think about mailgirls, at all, she'd likely have ended up in the neo-libertarian camp that whatever agreement these companies had entered into with these girls didn't really have anything to do with her. She was a high school English teacher; it wasn't as if her school district would be launching a program of its own any time in the near future.  
  
But then, in September, Catherine had informed her that both of her stepsisters had chosen the mailgirl path. Sarah had put her studies on hold. Sophie had dropped out of dental school and called off her wedding. Both had sold themselves into servitude to US Financial, and were now scurrying interoffice envelopes back-and-forth at the company's back office location in Jersey City - completely butt-ass naked. It was so out-of-character for them both that Erin had initially assumed that something had snapped inside of each of them, and that this was some sort of mental breakdown. But then something had snapped inside of Erin, too, and suddenly she couldn't get enough on what their life was like. She couldn't stop thinking about them. She couldn't stop wondering what it was like to be a mailgirl. She couldn't stop speculating on what had driven them to this, on what had driven hundreds of girls to this.  
  
She wasn't alone. The Internet was abuzz with the madness of it all. The Red Pill folks cackled and crowed over the rise of the Mailgirl. A right-wing radio host gave rise to what he referred to as his "Bridle Theory;" that, deep down, all women craved to be subservient and controlled, and that this had been the natural order of things through most of human history. Conservatives blamed liberals for the permissiveness of modern society and the breakdown of religious mores. Liberals blamed conservatives for blatant misogyny and rampant sexism among male-controlled board rooms. Support groups began popping up for mailgirls themselves. For the families of girls who'd entered into this life. Discussion groups. Porn sites.  
  
At one point or another that Fall, Erin had visited them all.  
  
There was an acronym now being bandied about on the forums - on Mailgirls Exposed, on Mailgirl Submissions, on the Heteroclite, on the Post Office - that Erin began to reluctantly self-identify with: "MGFG." "Mailgirl Fangirl." She saw it on the Post Office more than the others, but it was a contributor on Mailgirls Exposed, "JcockMGFG," whom Erin had begun following religiously, that had begun to normalize the term and made Erin realize what she'd become. There were pictures and stories about the goings-on at DDE and Mizutomo in Seattle, at Sloane Guaranty & Trust in Maryland, and countless others across the country. But JcockMGFG was apparently an employee at USF, and provided insight into what the daily routines were like for USF's roster of mailgirls. She waxed philosophically about the lives of these girls, and openly fantasized about what it would be like to be one of them. Erin found herself doing the same.  
  
Among the Scott sisters' friends and families, it was like a bomb had gone off. The girls' father, who'd been in and out of their life since the divorce, had cut off all contact with them, accusing Sarah of doing this out of spite for him. Erin's father Patrick - the girls' stepfather - still jumped on the phone with them when they called, but avoided any discussion about their jobs or their lives, and changed the topic any time Erin dared to bring it up. Sophie's fiancée, John, wanted nothing to do with his former bride-to-be, and was more than happy to box up all of Sophie's things for USF to stick in storage somewhere, to be rid of her and the humiliation of it all. Catherine had been out-of-her-mind with grief at first, and returned to California after her first visit seemingly shell-shocked by what Sarah and Sophie were being forced to endure.  
  
Erin, though, had gone elbow-deep into the online community. Not a day had gone by that she hadn't visited Mailgirls Exposed or the Post Office, or thought about Sarah and Sophie, or wondered about the what and the why of it all. She'd read Sarah's paper, about what "life among the mailgirls" had been like the previous summer; dry and academic as it might have been, there were still snippets that hinted at sexual self-discovery and the "freedom" of submissiveness. JcockMGFG filled in some of the blanks - the collars and the leashes, the inspections, the abuse and degradations that got worse with each passing day, and the rampant masturbation. Erin had even found pictures posted of Sarah Scott, inked with a number "13" on one hip and half-in/half-out of a Pepperdine cheerleader's outfit with a lollipop in her pussy. She'd saved and deleted those pictures on her laptop half a dozen times, hidden away in a secret folder that Ben wouldn't find.  
  
It had been hard to reconcile those images of Sarah with the Sarah Scott whom Erin had known over the last ten years. Erin had been in college when her father had introduced her to Catherine, and Sarah herself was already at Pepperdine by the time to two wed. Sarah was gorgeous, to be sure, but she'd been a bookworm and an egghead. Buttoned-up and closed off. This was a girl who'd been a band-geek, who'd never had much of a love life, and who'd always been singularly focused on her academics. But that Sarah Scott had somehow morphed into USF's Mailgirl Number Thirteen, a naked slut who touched herself in public, who allowed herself to be spanked in front of an audience, and who - to hear JcockMGFG tell it - regularly went down on other mailgirls in a game of sexual quid pro quo.  
  
This transformation, though, was common among mailgirls - at least as Erin understood it. It was one of the reasons that so many former mailgirls in Asia and Europe supported the further expansion of mailgirl programs worldwide: they wanted other girls to have the opportunity for this "awakening" themselves. This transformation, though, was why so many of the Whitestocking groups discounted the advocacy of those very same former mailgirls; to hear them tell it, these girls were suffering from Stockholm syndrome, and their confessions and feelings couldn't be trusted.  
  
Erin hadn't protested against the mailgirl concept when it first landed in the States. Nor, however, had she suddenly risen to its defense in the wake of her stepsisters' decision. She was now firmly in the "individual life, individual choice" camp, but she wasn't yet willing to proclaim so publicly. The scorn from her friends and coworkers would have been withering. She wasn't going to show up with a resume-in-hand at Capstone Partners, or Fabrikam, or Okajima Heavy Industries, or one of other LA-based mailgirl programs. But she understood the appeal. She felt its pull.  
  
She loved Ben O'Neill with all her heart; he was the love of her life. Their sex life wasn't bad, per se. Or disappointing. Or anything like that. It was fine. Perfectly fine. Serviceable. Vanilla. It was the sex enjoyed by a couple who'd been together for almost a decade at that point. The mailgirls on the message boards she frequented, though, talked in terms of "awakening" and "discovery" and "exploration," and tapping into theretofore unknown kinks and turn-ons. Even from the outside, Erin had begun to feel the same way, as if she were missing something. As if there was an itch Ben wasn't quite scratching, a psychological g-spot she hadn't even known was there before that Fall. She thought back to the one-night-stands she'd had early in college, and how they'd made her feel. Dirty. Naughty. Whore-ish. Like a piece of meat. And, part of her missed that feeling; that feeling of being sexually objectified and sexually devoured. Of being, at some base level, nothing more than one-time fuck.  
  
Ben didn't understand it. Ben couldn't understand it. Erin wasn't sure that she understood it, herself. But the Internet did. The forums. The mailgirls. The MGFGs. Confessions poured out on Mailgirls Exposed and Mailgirl Submissions. A mailgirl in Phoenix tracked and documented her descent into sexual deviancy on the Heteroclite. The Post Office had pictures of girls eating out of dog bowls, peeing in litter boxes, and fitted with any number of leashes, collars, gags, hoods, and blindfolds. For those girls who craved an IRL fix, but who weren't quite mailgirl material, or who weren't yet willing to sign away two years of their life or publicly proclaim such dark and deep-seated desires, there was even a company in Oakland promising the "mailgirl experience" a weekend at a time.  
  
Erin didn't need a trip to the Bay Area to get the "mailgirl experience." US Financial had rolled out a 24/7 model in Jersey City, an experiment they'd seeded with Sarah and Sophie Scott. The girls would be kept on-campus, at Park Place, for the full duration of their contracts - beginning to end. Whereas Sarah had previously been allowed to go home at night, when she was working in Manhattan, there'd be no daily escape from the mailgirls life. Visitors would be permitted, but with a caveat: all female visitors would be expected to strip and subject themselves to same strict rules and regulations expected of the actual mailgirls.  
  
Catherine had indeed seemed shell-shocked upon her return to California, after visiting her daughters for the first time. But she hadn't shared any of the specifics with Patrick - which suited Patrick just fine - including the fact that Catherine had had to surrender her own clothes to see Sarah and Sophie in New Jersey. And it wasn't until Erin began pressing her for details over Thanksgiving that Catherine even admitted as much to her. By that point, Erin knew more about the program at Park Place, through the Internet, than Catherine divulged. By that point, USF had announced guidelines for Holiday visitors. By that point, Erin had already decided she'd go and visit her stepsisters herself.  
  
Erin had shared her interest with Catherine before she'd opened up to Ben, and before she'd spoken to either of the Scott sisters about whether or not they even wanted her there. Catherine did her best to talk her out it, to dissuade her from even thinking about it. She'd already lost two daughters to US Financial; she wasn't ready to lose a third. There was shame and embarrassment in it all; humiliation was part and parcel with the daily routine of a mailgirl, and Catherine didn't want to expose Sarah and Sophie to the gawking of Erin O'Neill if she didn't have to. But as Erin got the older woman talking, she suspected there was something more, something that Erin had found buried deep inside her own psyche the more she learned about mailgirls. The idea of returning to New Jersey, and surrendering herself to however many days of mailgirl rules, was something that excited Catherine at a base level.  
  
Sarah, too, tried to talk Erin out of coming a week later, when Erin had first broached the topic with her stepsister. The girls had some limited opportunities for phone calls, though Erin was sure their conversation was being monitored ("God, what's wrong with me?" Erin had thought to herself. "Why was that violation of privacy a turn-on?"). Sarah - who couldn't be referred to as "Sarah," but only as "Mailgirl Number Two" now - had warned her about the humiliation and cruelty Erin could expect to suffer. The nudity, of course. But also, the leashes, the spankings, the verbal abuse. The mailgirls had no beds to sleep on; they slept on the hard, tiled floor of the locker room. The mailgirls had no toilets to offer; they were forced to use Japanese-style squat toilets that amounted to little more than drains in the floor. Erin hadn't blinked, though; she knew all this already. And, sensing that some of Sarah's objections were rooted less in concern for Erin's well-being, Erin assured the girl that she could step away, and grant Sarah some illusion of privacy, if Sarah needed to take care of more carnal needs.  
  
Sophie had been more supportive, and Sarah eventually gave in. So, too, did Catherine. Ben had been a harder sell, but Erin hadn't been comfortable making the trip if she hadn't cleared it with her husband first. Outside of maybe her doctors, no one but Ben had seen her naked since they'd begun dating oh-so-long-ago, and objecting to the idea of his wife becoming a borderline sex slave for a few days was well within his rights. There'd been tears, and shouting, and apologies up the wazoo. Erin abandoned the defense that this was about supporting Sarah, Sophie, and Catherine pretty early on. This was about Erin. This was about one last wild adventure. This was about self-discovery and self-exploration. This what about a need that Erin couldn't properly explain.

Sophie's fiancée, John, had thrown his hands up and expunged any trace of Sophie from his life. When Ben and Erin had helped pack up her stepsister's things that September, John had ranted angrily about how she could have done this to him, and about the whore she'd become. As they'd gotten into the car afterwards, and began the drive home from University Park, Ben had reflected on Sophie's choice.  
  
"I don't get it," he said, looking out the window. "But maybe this is just something she needed to do."  
  
"I don't get it," he repeated to Erin that December. "But if this something you need to do..."  
  
Erin had cried. Ben had gotten drunk. But the next morning, lying beside her in bed, he'd told her he'd support her. "If this is something you need to do, do it. If it's something you need to get out of your system, do it. If it's just this, and it's two nights, and it's there and back, then go do it. And if turns into something else..." He hesitated. "...if it turns in something you else, and you need to stay...I'll wait for you."  
  
The world they'd known didn't exist any longer. This was a world in which mailgirls were very much a reality. And this trip, this there-and-back over Christmas, was more than just a fantasy or something Erin simply wanted to do. It was a need. She needed to see it up close for herself. She needed to experience it. She needed to be a mailgirl.  
  
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Or did she?  
  
She didn't, technically, need to be here in the mailgirls locker room in Jersey City, naked and on her knees as a diminutive Japanese woman paced back and forth in front of her. Erin O'Neill had been so sure of herself for the past few weeks, and so confident that she could go through with this. Visitor D, on the other hand, felt none of that confidence - only self-doubt and fear of what was coming. Why had she wanted to do this? Why had she needed to do this? Why had she done this to Ben?  
  
She shook the thought of her husband from her head, and focused blankly on an invisible spot on the floor a few feet in front of her. Thinking about him, and questioning the decisions that had brought her to this point, didn't help. She'd be better served to simply submit, and to roll with whatever came her way today. Erin O'Neill was a continent away, a happily married schoolteacher who'd built a life for herself in Southern California. It was Visitor D on her knees before Mistress Rei. It was Visitor D whose nipples stood straight-out and almost painfully erect. It was Visitor D who was already getting wet from all of this.  
  
The decision had been made. The hand had been raised. The clothes had been surrendered.  
  
She was a mailgirl now.  
  
The visitors, nine in all, had been told to arrive at Park Place before three o'clock that afternoon. But, after being stripped and blindfolded, they'd been left in lobby until well after four. They were a Christmas gift, in a way, to USF employees emptying out of the building for the holiday break. Erin had been blindfolded. But that had only served to make her sense of hearing keener, and she'd heard every comment offered in the direction of the naked line-up of mailgirl visitors - every snide remark, every cruel assessment of their naked bodies, every teasing "Merry Christmas!"  
  
The collars were snapped into place before the blindfolds were removed. Erin wondered if she'd been fitted incorrectly, and fought the urge to speak up and complain that hers might be a little too tight.  
  
When the blindfolds did finally come off, the naked line of visitors found that they'd been shackled to one another; each collar was linked to the next by a few short feet of industrial-looking chain. Visitor J, the last girl to arrive, was tugged to her feet by her hair, and pulled in the direction of the stairs in that fashion, without Mistress Rei bothering to release her grip. The others followed behind, shuffling behind one another. The length of chain from one girl's collar to the next wasn't long enough for them to take normal steps. Erin was careful not to step on Catherine's heels. And, she could feel Visitor C's warm breath on her own naked back.  
  
The stairs to the basement had been decorated with picture frame after picture frame filled with women's underwear. These were the trophies that USF so proudly displayed, the underthings of the kennel of naked slaves the company now kept just off the employee cafeteria. Whereas the mailgirls at the Plaza had been forced to surrender only that pair of panties they'd happened to be wearing the day they signed their contract with Human Capital, the girls of Park Place had surrendered and been forced display the entire contents of their lingerie drawers. USF took ownership of everything that belonged to the Park Place girls - their wardrobe, their furniture, their keepsakes and other worldly possessions - and stashed most of at another facility somewhere along the New York/New Jersey border. They'd sent a crew to fetch Sarah Scott's things from New Haven. They'd sent another to LA to retrieve Sophie's. And now, every pair of briefs, every thong, and every g-string were all hung like hides on the wall of a hunting lodge.  
  
Erin wondered how the décor had been received by USF's non-mailgirl population. After all, this was still a place that did mutual funds and brokerage accounts. Whatever was being done to the roster of junior execs roped into the mailgirls program, the company as a whole hadn't transformed into a sex dungeon or a human-trafficking auction house.  
  
They were led through an empty cafeteria, and Erin got her first look at the so-called mailgirls locker room on the far side of large, floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows. Though it served as both locker room and dormitory for Park Place's mailgirls, it was devoid of lockers or bedding; Erin doubted she was the first to note the irony. Through a heavy metal door and down an empty service corridor, they were led into the locker room itself and got an up-close and personal look.  
  
The windows facing in from the cafeteria were one-way only. On this side, they were mirrors. The locker room's occupants were treated only to their own reflections, but Erin doubted the girls rarely forgot about the viewing room on the other side. Six showerheads had been installed against this wall, emerging from the mirror as if floating freely in the center of a much larger room. To either side were counters with three sinks each, and only a single row of drawers stretching laterally beneath them provided any coverage or shielding to the cafeteria beyond.  
  
Opposite the showers, on the far wall, were the infamous washikis that Erin understood USF had installed as an experiment here at Park Place. There was entire subsection on the forum at the Post Office devoted to pictures of girls peeing in these sorts of things, and using the "squirting bidet" feature afterwards. Most came courtesy of a particularly industrious amateur photojournalist at Finder-Spyder in San Francisco; each and every member of that dot.com's roster had a few dozen pissing pictures now floating around on the Web. There'd been a handful of the USF girls, though, too. Not of Sarah. But Sophie was featured in a few. Erin had clicked out of the forum as quickly as she could after that discovery, and erased her browser history as an added precaution. She might not have been able to fully explain why she wanted to visit to Ben, but she absolutely, absolutely didn't want to have to explain why she'd needed to see pictures of her stepsister emptying her bladder. It was a fetish for some, to be sure, but not one that Erin needed to explore. She'd already ventured further down into the basement of her own psyche than she'd ever thought she would.  
  
Erin couldn't see them from here, but she knew from her research that there was a pair of regular toilets tucked around the corner. They weren't shielded from each other - there was no partition between them - but they were out of the line-of-sight of the cafeteria and any audience that might have been gathered there. Despite the fact that just about everything else seemed to be on the table when it came to humiliating the mailgirls, coprophilia was apparently a kink too far for the corporate masters at USF.  
  
The locker room was divided in two by a line of large, round eye-hooks that stretched from one wall the other. They were thick, black, and metal, made from the same thick, black metal that now adorned Erin's neck. There were twelve in total, and most had two stretches of chain - identical to one another, and identical to the chain that linked Erin to Catherine, and Catherine to Angela Giannini in front of her - coiled neatly and tightly beside it. Leashes. At the Plaza, Sarah had been leashed to her locker when not on duty. Here at Park Place, the girls were leashed to the floor.  
  
Or, apparently, the ceiling. Erin swallowed hard when she saw another row of eye-hooks installed in the ceiling above, mirroring the twelve below. She hadn't read about these before. Their very presence was menacing.  
  
The girls had been led into the locker room from the service corridor on one end, and Erin saw that there was another door on the far end, as well. To one side of both doors was an eight-foot metal trough, the preferred mailgirls feeding dish here in Jersey City. Dog collars and dog leashes were accompanied by dog bowls at USF Plaza; at Park Place, the girls were fed like sows.  
  
Or, gerbils? Above the troughs, spaced evenly and affixed to the walls, were four large water bottles, not unlike those found in gerbil or hamster or guinea pig cages the world over. With the spout placed at approximately waist-height, the suggestive nature of the drinking apparatuses was readily apparent. A mailgirl couldn't even get a drink of water without dropping to her knees and performing near-fellatio on the sipping tube. These, as Erin had read online, had been installed only a few weeks earlier, but had replaced the dog bowls throughout the building. A mailgirl from the Bay Area, whose company had rolled out the same thing there, sang their praise; it may have looked like she was giving head, but she could now take a drink of water without sticking her ass in the air. That, and it also stopped the apparently all-too-common occurrence on non-mailgirls spitting in the mailgirls' water supply.  
  
And that was it. This was the entirety of Park Place's mailgirls locker room. The girls were on-duty twelve hours a day, Erin supposed. But that still meant they were off-duty twelve hours a day, and spent those off-hours here in this sparse and spartan dungeon. She knew they got some time off at the end of each week to "blow off steam" in one of the employee lounges, and she knew that that Sarah - alone among the mailgirls - had been granted a block of time on Sundays for her "research" up in HR. But any breaks, any time after hours, and really any time they weren't asleep, were spent here in this prison.  
  
Was it any wonder they'd turned to masturbation and cunnilingus to pass the time? Simply, forgetting everything else, to fend off boredom?  
  
A shiver went up Erin's spine.  
  
She was on her knees on the far side of the row of eye-hooks, hands behind her back, and facing the wall of mirror glass, in the standard mailgirls "Resting" position. The girl staring back at her, in her reflection, was hardly recognizable. It was Erin O'Neill - Erin Ryan O'Neill - of course. Brown hair, slender frame, school-of-fish tattoo. But this Erin O'Neill, Visitor D, was from a mirror universe. A porn star. A slave girl. An animal. Only yesterday, Erin had dismissed her last English-11 class for Christmas break, and had somehow been replaced by this naked mailgirl, trembling with anticipation as her new mistress paced back and forth in front of her.  
  
"We took our last break a little early today," Mistress Rei was explaining, "so the girls won't be back here until seven." She spoke with an accent that clearly identified her as Japanese, but with a confidence and forcefulness that dismissed the idea she was any sort of submissive and docile geisha girl. She wore a long, form-hugging black dress with a plunging V-neckline that exposed more of her chest than it hid, and which sported a dangerous, thigh-high split up one leg. And she wore an improbable-looking pair of black, five-inch stiletto heels that gave her even more height on the line of naked girls kneeling before her. The ensemble, in its entirety, seemed out-of-place in this setting; she very well could have been heading off to or coming back from a black-tie holiday party somewhere in Manhattan.  
  
"That," she purred, "gives us a little time to get to know each other." She paused in front of the first girl in the line, Visitor A, and cupped her chin. As they locked eyes, she went on. "Some of you are regulars, and have gone through this more than once. And some of you have been here once or twice before. But most of you are virgins to my locker room. And none of you have belonged to me this long. Or for a holiday. Or for any amount of time that my girls have gotten this much freedom from their regular responsibilities.  
  
"The mailgirls will be off duty from seven tonight until seven in the morning on the 26th. There is no formal Evening Shift tonight, but I'm asking everyone - including you all - to make sure this locker room is spotless after the girls clean themselves up following their shifts this afternoon. Mopping. Scrubbing. Washing the toilets. I want everything so clean you could eat off the floor. Because," she added with a smile, "you might just have to."  
  
She continued down the line, gently petting each girl as she went. Erin braced for the woman's caress.  
  
"The mailgirls will be off duty, but there will still be check-ins expected of them, and they will still be expected to follow their standard code of conduct and keep their 'uniforms' up to the minimum standards. As their guests, you will all be expected to be present at these check-ins, and you will follow all of these same rules and restrictions.  
  
"You will not be issued smartphones or sleeves. But the girls themselves will be wearing them for the duration of your visit, when out of the locker room. Each one of you has been set up in the app, the same as any regular mailgirl, and linked to the profiles of your specific 'host.' Any demerits a girl is awarded will be awarded to you, as well. Any demerits you earn for your behavior will be awarded to your mailgirl. Any corrective actions suffered by your mailgirl, you will suffer along with them."  
  
Mistress Rei glanced down at the tablet she carried in one hand. Flipping through it, she called out, "Visitors H and I? You both will be joining our Mailgirl Number 11 for just such a correction this evening."  
  
Erin heard a whimper from one of the girls down the line.  
  
"Visitor F?" Mistress Rei smirked, and found Angela. "Welcome back. You, too."  
  
"Yes, Mistress," Angela responded. There was no trepidation in her voice. She was to be spanked - or paddled, or whipped, or otherwise punished - for demerits her daughter had earned before she'd even arrived.  
  
"The rest of you? It looks like you will all be little more than spectators at this point. But there is still - " she checked the clock on the tablet, "- more than two hours left for your mailgirls to accumulate demerits while on active duty. And bear in mind that they, and you, can still earn demerits even while off duty."  
  
Erin breathed a sigh of relief. No spankings for her. At least, none scheduled. Not yet. She thought back to the redhead in the stocks in the lobby, though. Perhaps there were worse punishments than a few spanks to her backside.  
  
"You will also be required to provide data for our Human Capital team. You will find this to be embarrassing. You will want to withhold this data. You will, however, comply. Heights, weights, measurements. You provided these as part of visitor applications. We will need to verify. Any sessions of self-pleasure are to be logged. Sessions with a partner. Oral. Vaginal. Anal. Length of each session. Intensity, on scale from one to five. Orgasms - count them."  
  
Erin blushed all over. Masturbating in the company of her stepmother and stepsisters was unthinkable. And yet every piece of literature she'd come across in her mailgirl research assured her that it was a foregone conclusion. Self-control was not a strong suit among the girls who'd volunteered to become mailgirls. Sexual excitement was, after all, one of the primary reasons they were all here. The money helped. Promises of career advancement were regularly part of standard mailgirl contracts. But mailgirls were mailgirls because they got off on being mailgirls. It was what had brought Erin here to USF, wasn't it?  
  
In a twisted way, the sexual self-discovery and self-exploration mailgirl advocates often spoke of happened in a "safe" environment. There were programs, of course, in which each and every hole a mailgirl had was put into good use. Some companies had even dropped the ruse of having them deliver the mail altogether, and turned their volunteers into nothing more than sex slaves chained up in basement for "employee use." "Providing relief" was a term tossed around so much that it had entered the corporate lexicon. But, most of the mainstream programs abided by a "look-but-don't-touch" policy when it came to their mailgirls, and punishments were often swift and severe when it came to violations of that policy. USF, for all the awful things the company inflicted upon its girls, was reportedly safely on the right side of that policy. Erin hadn't had to worry about being bent over someone's desk and gang-banged by an entire department, and neither had she been forced to tell Ben she'd be "providing relief" as part of her trip to New Jersey.  
  
With those policies firmly in place, and strictly enforced, mailgirls were allowed be sexually objectified, and to sexually objectify themselves, without becoming full-blown fuck-toys. Masturbation was so common that it was practically synonymous with the mailgirl concept at that point - it was behavior expected of the exhibitionist mail-sluts in the quote-unquote "privacy" of their locker rooms. Out-and-out lesbian sex among the mailgirls themselves, at least publicly at work, was frowned upon, but understood to be rampant among the girls while off-duty. USF had reconsidered this position for their Park Place girls, given their 24/7 status, and chosen to "look the other way," so long as this last particular indulgence took place after hours.  
  
Erin had promised Sarah she'd make herself as scarce as possible, should Sarah feel the need strike her to touch herself. Catherine had warned her to do the same, if and when Sarah or Sophie needed to "address the issue." Erin wasn't sure she was ready to see either of her stepsisters tongue-deep between the legs of another girl, but the possibility of it occurring wasn't off the table.  
  
Erin had told Ben she herself would "be good." She'd try, at least. She had self-control enough that she'd be able to make it through forty-some hours without touching herself. Park Place would be largely deserted over the holiday, but it wasn't impossible to think a photo of her might wind up somewhere out on the Internet; she'd seen more than a few of other girls over the last few months. She didn't need to pile the additional humiliation of getting caught with her hands between her legs on top. But, less than two hours in, she'd already begun to wonder if she was capable of staying resolute in the face of her growing arousal.  
  
She'd gone three days without masturbating before, of course. Not recently. Not since she'd been sucked in the world of mailgirls online that Fall. And certainly not since Thanksgiving, when she'd made up mind to come visit her stepsisters here in New Jersey. She'd put Ben to good use over that same stretch, and she was sure that his reluctant acceptance of her fantasy had something to with realizing how much she was getting off on it.

But she didn't think she was so lost that she couldn't "be good" until she got home.  
  
Sophie, apparently, hadn't been able to make it through the two hours Catherine had visited in September. While warning her stepdaughter that she was going to see "behavior" in Sarah and Sophie that Erin might find startling, Catherine confessed that she and Sarah had caught up in the cafeteria while Sophie "took care of business" on the other side of the mirror glass before joining them. Catherine had waved it off as uncomfortable, but understandable; after all, the girls had just gotten off one of their shifts when Catherine arrived for her visit. "It's natural," Catherine had admitted, resignation in her voice.  
  
Catherine herself had lingered in the shower that afternoon back in their hotel room, longer than Erin felt necessary to soap up her body and shampoo her hair. "Taking care of business," Erin assumed. She regretted having showered first, and having not thought of doing the same.  
  
Mistress Rei continued her pacing, continued her speechifying, and continued to ever-so-gently run her hands through the girls' hair, to touch their cheeks, to teasingly caress their naked shoulders and backs. The "look-but-don't-touch" policy didn't, apparently, extend to the mailgirls' mistress, and the Japanese woman got bolder and bolder as time went on. She casually reached for, tweaked, and played with one of Erin's nipples. She inserted her index finger into Angela's mouth, and the older woman playfully wrapped her lips around it - lightly and subtly fellating, as she seemed to be expected to do.  
  
Erin drifted in and out. Nothing Mistress Rei was saying wasn't in the packet Human Capital had sent over as part of the agreement. Nothing was new, from what Erin had read online. And so, in addition to the wanton slave girl sporting "VD" on her hip, Erin began to take in her fellow visitors.  
  
Angela, Visitor F, was the oldest, by a pretty healthy margin. Catherine was probably next, but she was in much better shape than Visitor G, who was a little pudgy around the midsection and whose sagging breasts had seen better days. The rest of the girls were in their late twenties or early thirties, Erin guessed - right around her own age, and right around the ages of most of the actual mailgirls. She supposed that made sense - Catherine, Angela, and Visitor G were the mothers, while the other six girls were likely friends, sisters, or cousins. Sophie Scott, at twenty-three, was a bit of an outlier among the mailgirls here at USF, as the company typically targeted young professionals, but not straight-out-of-college volunteers like some companies did. Visitor B, a stunning but nervous-looking blonde, looked to be about that age.  
  
Erin pegged Visitor A as a lesbian, given her short brown hair and the way her eyes roamed the reflections of the other girls. That was probably an unfair assumption, seeing as how Erin was doing the exact same thing, but she'd always had good "gay-dar." The lines would likely be blurred, however, when it came to the mailgirls, among whom the "letter-carrying lesbian" thing was a real and recognized phenomenon, and among whom sexuality was known to be much more fluid.  
  
Visitors H and I were together. Mistress Zero had more-or-less confirmed this assumption when informing them of their impending spanking. They were both young and good-looking, attractive enough that either one of them could have been actual mailgirls in USF's actual program, even with the company's reputation for selecting only the best-of-the-best. Visitor B was in a category all her own, but Erin might have lumped herself in with H and I as close runners-up. Might have, if it weren't for the tattoo, of which she was suddenly self-conscious.  
  
Rounding them out was Visitor C, the girl who'd arrived just before Catherine and Erin, and the only of them to have arrived with a patch of pubic hair still in place. Quebecois, Erin guessed now, placing the accent. French-Canadian. Or American, with French roots?  
  
All of them, even Visitor G, were beauties. Catherine and Angela were on the older end of the spectrum, to be sure, but they both wore their age gracefully and easily would have turned the heads of much younger men. Erin supposed this, too, made sense; given the reputation of USF's mailgirls ranks, it stood to reason that USF's mailgirls came from similarly attractive stock. Even Visitor G looked to have been pretty in her day. She was still pretty, in fact. She only suffered in comparison.  
  
"...from twelve to four," Mistress Zero was explaining, and Erin snapped back to attention. What had she said?  
  
"Male visitors will be allowed only in the lobby and the cafeteria," she carried on. "These are not conjugal visits. There is to be no inappropriate contact. Not from the mailgirls. Not from you. Punishment will be severe. And communal."  
  
Male visitors? Male visitors?!! Erin wasn't prepared for this. Though the duration of her visit would be long, from Christmas Eve through Boxing Day, part of the appeal had been the idea that Park Place would be more-or-less deserted for the holiday. Mailgirls, visitors, and security personnel only. She'd used that argument as a selling point to Ben. She'd used that argument as a selling point to herself. There'd be a limited audience here or there - like when she'd undressed when she first got here, or when she'd have to get dressed again on the morning of the 26th. But it wasn't as if USF would be fully staffed over Christmas, and it wasn't as if she'd be running deliveries through crowded cubicles with Sarah and Sophie.  
  
She hadn't factored in male visitors. Catherine's first husband wanted nothing to do with Sarah and Sophie. Patrick, certainly, had no interest in visiting. Somehow, this had been a blank spot for Erin, so focused as she'd been on the hoops female visitors would be expected to jump through that she hadn't even stopped to consider that the mailgirls might have male visitors stopping by for Christmas, too.  
  
Erin grimaced. There wasn't anything she could do about it now. She could only hope that the other girls' male family members were as squeamish about all this as her own father and Tom Scott were.  
  
She took a deep breath and steeled herself. She was being ridiculous. She'd just stripped naked in front of who-knew-how-many men in the lobby, and fully expected to be similarly fucked-with and embarrassed on the morning of the 26th, when she and Catherine would be allowed to finally get dressed again. Ramirez, and any other other male security guards, were sure to get a peek over the next couple of days. And Erin knew full-well that there were cameras everywhere. Besides which, wasn't being seen part of the pull? Exhibitionist fantasies weren't truly exhibitionist without a proper audience.  
  
Mistress Rei continued on, and Erin lost herself once more in her own reflection. The mailgirls' mistress - Erin's mistress - ran through the do's and don'ts, the rules and restrictions, the punishments and the consequences. She got them all up on their feet, up on their toes, back down to their knees, and then all the way down and on all fours. And then up again. And down again. And up again. And down again. "Knees," "Feet," and "Toes," were the positions they'd be assuming the most. But Mistress Rei made them grab their ankles. She made them sit Indian-style on the floor. She got them into squats. It was like a yoga class, only with the instructor screaming and screeching at her students and letting her hands wander into all sorts of intimate places. Erin couldn't say she'd ever had someone use their finger to trace little circles around her naked asshole before.  
  
When it came time for their first bathroom break, Erin got her courage up and went for it without hesitating. She squatted, with Visitor A on one side and Visitor B on the other, while Catherine and Angela engaged in whispered conversation and looked away. There was no toilet paper, however, and it took Erin some fumbling to figure out the washiki's bidet feature. Nor were there paper towels when she went to wash her hands afterwards, and Erin was forced to follow the lead of Visitor A and dry her hands off on the outside of her bare thighs.  
  
"I can't believe I'm doing this," Erin said in the other girl's direction, after a glance over her shoulder at Mistress Rei. She wasn't sure if she was allowed to speak.  
  
"This is your first time?" Visitor A asked.  
  
"It is. You've done this before?"  
  
"I'm here every weekend," the girl replied. "Ever since my girlfriend buckled and came crawling back."  
  
Girlfriend. Erin nodded. Score another one for her gay-dar.  
  
"The first time is definitely the hardest," Visitor A went on. "And it's not the 'being naked' part. You'll be over that in an hour or two, once you get used to it."  
  
"I don't know..."  
  
"You'll be fine. It's the rest of it. The sub-human part of it. Being a plaything for the assholes in Human Capital. It's hard on the visitors. The other girls know their place by now."  
  
"...'know their place'...?"  
  
"Lowest of the low," Visitor A responded. She tilted her head towards Mistress Rei. "Whatever it is, just do it. It's easier. And it's easier on whomever you're visiting."  
  
"One and Two."  
  
"One and Two. If you fight it, or if you call 'mercy' and walk out, One and Two are going to get the brunt of it."  
  
"So...why do you keep coming back?"  
  
Visitor A gave it a moment's thought, and then shrugged. "For Sixteen. I don't want her to go through this on her own."  
  
Erin nodded. She followed the other girl back towards the center of the room, to they eye-hooks.  
  
Visitor A reconsidered her answer, though. "No, that's not it. Not anymore." She got a distant look in her eye. "I'm not sure I can explain it. Despite everything, it's better in here. Easier. Clearer. And...fuck...I don't know. It's better. The sex is better. And hotter."  
  
Erin cocked an eyebrow. "But you're not a mailgirl, yourself?"  
  
Visitor A chuckled. "No. I've got a boring office job, 9-to-5. Product manager for a biotech company. No mailgirls there. Yet."  
  
"But your girlfriend...?"  
  
"Was in Trade Ops here. Before. Before the company came after her, and made her life a living fucking hell when she turned them down the first time."  
  
"But she came back?"  
  
"She came back. She surrendered."  
  
"She volunteered?"  
  
"Quote, unquote. They're all 'volunteers.' Quote, unquote." There was bitterness in the way Visitor A explained it, but it was bitterness that sounded worn down.  
  
"But she agreed to it, right? And you keep coming back."  
  
The other girl sighed. "She agreed to it. And I keep coming back. Be careful. This shit lays it all out there. It's not just your tits and ass that get exposed. It gets its claws into you, and you can't not do it. You can't not think about it. If you're here, and you're doing this now - voluntarily, like for-real volunteering - you probably already know."  
  
"I do. I think I do."  
  
"The Blackstockings would call it being 'sexually realized.' Personally, I think it's just owning up to how damaged we all are."  
  
Damaged. That wasn't how Erin saw herself, was it?  
  
Was it?  
  
There was truth there, though. Why else had Erin wanted to come so badly?  
  
"Like I said," the lesbian repeated, "be careful. You start getting your rocks off this way, and it's hard to go back. The only thing keeping half the girls in here from sucking off all comers or becoming full-on prostitutes are the rules Human Capital threw up."  
  
Erin was soon back on her knees for Mistress Rei, and the corporate dominatrix continued on with her orientation and indoctrination. Because it was Christmas Eve, the girls were being granted an extra-special night out of the locker room, and would be allowed drinks and revelry-of-sorts up in an employee lounge on the second floor. They'd have the run of Human Resources, but Mistress Rei warned them that most of the rules still applied - no going into offices, no going through people's desks, no sitting on the furniture. If they made a mess, of any sort, they were clean it up. And when it came time to bed down for the night, they were to return here, and lock themselves up with one of the leashes.  
  
"Use the potty first," Mistress Rei warned them. "I'm not coming back for you until six tomorrow morning."  
  
Training, such as it was, was complete when the first of the actual mailgirls began trickling in through one of the side entrances. The girl, marked as Number Ten, was a big-chested dirty blonde, wearing the standard mailgirl attire of a collar and a black armband. But, just as the redhead in the lobby had been decorated for the holiday with a Santa's hat, Mailgirl Number Ten sported a set of reindeer antlers sprouting from some sort of hairband. Erin wondered about the practicalities of keeping such a hairpiece in place when sprinting through the building.  
  
Mailgirl Number Four was next through the door - another gorgeous specimen, this one a brunette, this one sporting reindeer antlers of her own. Neither Ten nor Four appeared to have any visitors present, however. As Mistress Rei told the visitors they could rise and "make themselves comfortable," she pulled Ten aside, handed her a set of keys, and put her in charge of unlocking Visitors A through I. She herself departed with another set, announcing to the room that she was going to go fetch Mailgirl Number Six from the lobby. There was still trepidation on the part of the newcomers, but every one them seemed to breathe a sigh of relief when the Japanese woman was gone.  
  
Visitors H and I belonged to Mailgirl Number Eleven, who squealed in delight and shouted, "Shut up!" at the top of her lungs. "No fucking way!" She bounded towards them and embraced them both, showing no sense of shame over the naked hug. Her visitors were more stiff, and awkward, not prepared for the skin-on-skin contract. There was no family resemblance, Erin thought to herself. Friends, she assumed.  
  
Angela's daughter, Mailgirl Number Fourteen, was next. Greetings were largely one-sided, however, as the girl - dark hair and Mediterranean features - had a ball gag in her mouth. Angela couldn't help but laugh at her daughter's plight, cackling at the sight and taking hold of her in long, warm, maternal hug. Fourteen was a few inches shorter than her mother, but she had the same build, the same high cheekbones, the same nose, and even the same hips; looking at her was like looking at Angela herself - just a younger, tighter model.  
  
"Can you even breathe with that thing on?" Angela laughed.  
  
Fourteen's response was muffled. But she nodded, made a show of breathing through her nose, and then shrugged. She was practiced, she seemed to be telling her mother.  
  
"Can I take it off?" Angela asked, and began to fiddle with the latch at the back.  
  
Fourteen shook her head. "Ih-uh Ay." Mistress Rei. Only Mistress Rei could take it off.  
  
"I wish I had my camera," Angela joked. "This would be a hell of a Christmas card!"  
  
Fourteen wasn't the only mailgirl to have been fitted with extra "equipment." All the girls had on headgear, whether red Santa's hats, green elf hats, or brown reindeer antlers. Mailgirl Number Seventeen wore a red garter belt and a pair of stockings decorated with candy-canes. Sarah, the first of the Scott girls through the door, wore a similar pair of ornaments as Erin had seen on the redhead in the lobby - green and red, covered in glitter, and dangling from her nipples. They bounced as she walked over to where Catherine and Erin were waiting with anticipation.  
  
"Sorry," she apologized as she hugged her mother. The ornaments were in the way. Catherine paid them no mind, and only squeezed her daughter tighter. "Mom...you're going to break them."  
  
Catherine pulled back, and slapped Sarah's cheek. It was light and playful, and didn't make a sound. "Per Human Capital," she announced mockingly, "I am to be called by my mail room visitor's designation."  
  
Sarah smirked, and looked to her mother's hip. "Visitor E, then?"  
  
"It's what it says."  
  
Sarah found Erin's next. "And Visitor D?"  
  
Erin was nervous. Sophie had been enthusiastic in her support of Erin's visit. Sarah? Maybe not so much. Erin had felt judged for even bringing it up, and Sarah had done her best to talk her stepsister out of it. But the smile, and the hug that accompanied it, were sincere. The baubles hanging from Sarah's chest were, indeed, in the way, and they felt scratchy against Erin's skin. A spark of electricity shot through her as her nipples - still erect - brushed against her Sarah's body.  
  
She pulled back, sheepishly. A look from Sarah spoke volumes. She knew.  
  
"I can't believe you're here," Sarah said, shaking her head.  
  
"I wanted to be," Erin answered honestly.  
  
"I can't believe Ben let you come. After you told him?!!"  
  
"I didn't give him a lot of choice."  
  
Sarah sized her up, and met Erin's eyes. "We'll talk about this later," Mailgirl Number Two seemed to be telling her. Along with something else. Was that...lust? Libido? Erin's gay-dar was going off.  
  
"Well, you looking amazing," Sarah complimented her. She absently reached for her nipples, and gently massaged her areolae around the clamps. "I can't wait to get these idiot things off." She slowed for a moment, as if realizing what she was doing. But she didn't stop.  
  
"He's in Santa Barbara?" Sarah asked, continuing on with the conversation, as if she weren't playing with herself.  
  
"Stop that," her mother chided her. "It's weird."  
  
Sarah stuck out her tongue. "It's weird," she admitted. "Tip of the iceberg."  
  
Erin jumped in, uncomfortably. "He's in Santa Barbara. He was driving up this afternoon. His sister's in town with her husband and their kids. Staying at his mom's house. So, big O'Neill Family Christmas."  
  
"And Patrick?" she asked her mother. "Fishing? Did you come clean this time?"  
  
Catherine shook her head. "Fishing? Yes. He's with Phil and Jack. Did I come clean? No."  
  
"He's going to find out..."  
  
"He'd prefer not to know," Catherine replied, nipping that line of questioning in the bud.  
  
Sarah glanced around the room. "She's not back yet?" Meaning, Sophie.  
  
"Not yet," Catherine said.  
  
"I haven't seen her much since lunch. We passed each other on the stairs earlier this afternoon, but other than that..."  
  
Sarah's ministrations upon her breasts came to stop, and she took one of Erin's hands in hers. "Seriously, I can't believe you came. I can't believe you're doing this."  
  
"I just..."  
  
"I know. I know. I'm sorry if I was a bitch about it."  
  
Erin hadn't known her stepsister to swear. But then, given everything that had transpired in Sarah's life since the two had last seen each other, Erin supposed she hadn't really known who her stepsister was.  
  
"No, no," she brushed the apology off. "Not at all. You were just looking out for me."  
  
"I was. I mean, I was. Mostly. Part of it, though? You're not really going to see me at my best."  
  
It was now Erin's turn to drink in her stepsister's naked body. Sarah had always been attractive, but she'd Clark Kent-ed her way through life without really-and-truly tipping her hand at what lay beneath her clothes. She had long blonde hair, flowing behind her and tied up in a ponytail. Spotless skin, with a healthy-looking tan that was likely courtesy of some sort of tanning booth here in building. A gorgeous, mischievous smile. The brightest of blue eyes. Her breasts were not much smaller than Erin's own, but were absolutely perfect - Christmas ornaments notwithstanding. And she looked as if she'd lost weight; she was firm, tight, and positively sculpted around her hips and her ass. Running errands at USF in her birthday suit had taken a girl with a model's looks and somehow ratcheted the whole presentation up to another level.

"If this isn't your best..." Erin began. "You look amazing, yourself."  
  
Sarah gave her an aww-shucks look, and released her hand. "Not really what I meant," she said. "Though, thank you. I meant more...um...behavior-wise."  
  
"It's not you," Erin assured her. "It's the job."  
  
It was the wrong thing to say, and Erin knew it the moment she said it. She was trying to be polite, and excuse the inevitable lewd acts that Sarah would need to engage in over the next few days, those same acts that she and Sarah had danced around over the phone. Because the truth of it was that it wasn't the job; the job had only provided an opportunity for the true Sarah Scott to show herself.  
  
Sarah looked away, briefly. "Maybe," was all she allowed, the response pregnant with deeper emotions.  
  
"It's fine," Erin told her. "Really. No judgment. No judgment here. I'm here now, too."  
  
"I'm glad you're here," Sarah said, genuinely. "I do appreciate it. It's a little escape. Makes me feel almost human again."  
  
"I wish we could have brought presents," Catherine interrupted.  
  
"A vibrator would have been nice," the mailgirl joked impishly. "Am I allowed to say that sort of thing in front of my mother?"  
  
"I could have brought mine?" Catherine returned.  
  
"Ew, ew, ew!" Sarah laughed. "Gross. Okay, there are lines."  
  
Catherine kissed her daughter on the cheek. "I've been here before, remember? I get it. No need to self-censor. I'm not just another tool to embarrass you or make you feel bad about this."  
  
That, of course, was the very purpose of the visitor's program. Just when a girl couldn't humiliate herself anymore in front of former peers and coworkers, Human Capital opened the doors to friends and family.  
  
"Yeah, well, we'll see," Sarah replied. "I could use a shower, actually. I'm still a little salty from earlier this afternoon."  
  
Was "shower" code for masturbation? Erin wasn't sure.  
  
"Have you been busy today?" the brunette asked.  
  
Sarah shook her head. "No. This morning, yes. They had us delivering candy canes and handing out presents." She cringed. "And singing Christmas carols."  
  
"With your voice?" Catherine laughed. "Now, that's embarrassing!"  
  
"I know, right? Just when I thought I couldn't humiliate myself any further. But, no, it slowed down after lunch, and it's been dead since three or four or so. I've been up the 6th Floor, just waiting and waiting and waiting. In fact - I'm sorry - I need to pee."  
  
Any sense of shame had gone out of the naked blonde. Even as she squatted down over one of the washikis, she continued the conversation. "Oof, my knees," she complained.  
  
Erin glanced nervously at her stepmother.  
  
"Your knees?" Catherine answered, as casually as if she and Sarah were catching up over coffee. "I'm the one who's fifty years old."  
  
"Not yet, you're not," the squatting girl called back.  
  
"You've got to all have calluses on your kneecaps by now. Up, down, up, down."  
  
Sarah finished, used the bidet, and stood. She washed her hands, and then rubbed them dry on her buttocks. "You do get used to it. Comfortable even. It's like powering down, mentally." Sarah meant this as a selling point. "When I was in-town, and going home every night, I even started doing it there, in my own apartment. Like, at this point, I don't know if I've sat in an honest-to-goodness chair since this summer."  
  
"Well, you're not allowed to," Erin interjected.  
  
"We're not allowed to," Sarah corrected her. "You, too. But, yeah, still. It's just that it's rare that I'm stuck in one place for that long, like I was this afternoon. It was so, so nice to finally be able to stand and walk around."  
  
Erin heard a squeal behind her, and turned to see Sophie come skipping into the room. No nipple clamps for her, but she did have on a Santa's hat, and the same garter and candy cane stockings as Mailgirl Number Seventeen. Her feet, however, were poking through any number of rips and holes, and the stockings themselves would undoubtedly need to be retired after today.  
  
Sarah and Sophie weren't so similar in appearance that they'd be mistaken for twins, but there was no question they were sisters. The same blonde hair. The same lips and eyes and flawless skin. Sophie was a bit taller than Sarah, and her chest not quite as big. But she was every bit the looker, and Erin once again felt self-conscious about being measured against two such exquisite specimens as the Scott sisters.  
  
"Oh my god! I forgot about the tattoo!" Sophie laughed as she came in for a hug. It had been a year or two since Sophie and Erin had gotten together at the beach. They'd last seen each other in the Spring, for Sophie's bridal shower, but it hadn't exactly been bathing suit weather - even in California.  
  
Erin blushed. "It's going to get me a lot of attention?"  
  
"No, it's empty out there. I didn't pass a single person on my way up from downstairs. And besides - it looks good on you." She turned to her mother. She greeted her with mock formality. "Visitor E."  
  
"Mailgirl Number One," Catherine replied. She leaned in and hugged her youngest daughter. The hug lingered.  
  
Sarah and Sophie - Mailgirls Two and One, respectively - greeted each other next. "Where were you?" Sarah asked.  
  
"B2," Sophie answered, sticking out her tongue. "Eight and I got tasked with the panty hunt." To Erin, she teased, "Found yours, by the way."  
  
Erin groaned. It hadn't been Security, then, tasked with rifling through her luggage to steal her underwear. Nor Mistress Rei. Instead, it had been the mailgirls themselves. "Seriously?" Erin laughed. "You couldn't just have 'missed' them?"  
  
"Nuh-uh," Sophie grinned. "I'm not spending Christmas in the stocks in case someone goes back to check my work."  
  
Erin sighed with resignation. "All of them?"  
  
Her stepsister nodded. "All of them," she confirmed, apologetically. "Even the ones you hid in your jeans."  
  
"There's a Victoria's Secret in Newport Centre," Sarah offered. "For the trip home."  
  
"Me too?" Catherine asked.  
  
"You, too," Sophie said. "While I can't say I relished picking through my mother's underwear, I figured better me than Eight."  
  
"What do they even do with them? Do they get hung up somewhere? I had four pairs."  
  
"I don't know," Sophie shrugged.  
  
"Gifts," Sarah jumped in. "Prizes. Into some junior executive's jizz rag collection."  
  
Catherine gagged.  
  
"By the way," Sophie began, in her mother's direction, "what was with the-"  
  
"Shh," Catherine hushed her cryptically.  
  
Erin looked about the room. From end to end, it was awash with naked flesh. Some of the mailgirls - Five, Seven, Twelve, Fourteen - were greeting their guests, the same as Sarah and Sophie. There was some awkwardness, though more from the visitors than the mailgirls, as those visitors adjusted to hugging their loved ones in the nude. Visitor C was on the receiving end of some teasing, apparently, from Mailgirls Seven and Eight; the patch of hair between her legs stood out even more than Erin's tattoo. Now that she had more of an opportunity to look around, though, Erin saw she wasn't the only visitor with a little ink - one of Eleven's friends, Visitor H, was sporting a tribal-looking lower back tattoo of her own.  
  
But the showers were now going, too, and a few of those mailgirls who weren't playing host to the newcomers took the opportunity to wash and get clean before the showerheads were overrun. Mailgirl Number Nine had her back to the room, and was leaning with one hand up against her own reflection beneath the water. She didn't waste her time with soap or shampoo, though, just yet. Instead, she used her free hand to find her pussy, and began rubbing furiously and frantically.  
  
Erin knew she should look away, but couldn't help herself. She knew that this was part of the mailgirls experience, and that masturbation was both common and expected. She'd done her research; even companies that had initially tried to restrict the girls from doing so eventually caved and allowed it, as there didn't seem to be a punishment severe enough to keep their naughty little sluts from touching themselves. But understanding it and expecting it didn't mean that Erin was ready for the sight of another girl masturbating so brazenly and openly just a few feet away.  
  
There was no foreplay, no easing into it. Nine was fully primed the moment she stepped under the water, and the dark-haired girl barely even registered it when Mailgirl Number Nineteen stepped under the showerhead beside her.  
  
"Don't stare," Sarah told Erin. Erin blushed, and returned her attention to Catherine, Sarah, and Sophie.  
  
"Sorry," Erin mewed apologetically.  
  
"Or, stare, if you want to," Sophie jumped in, smiling. "She doesn't care. Some of us like the audience."  
  
"Stop it!" Catherine scolded her daughter gently, and pushed her playfully.  
  
Erin glanced back over her shoulder. Nine hadn't slowed, and Nineteen had now begun her own session of self-abuse.  
  
Sarah held up her hands, giving up. "All that, and more," she promised her visitors.  
  
There was a roar, and a smattering of applause, when Mistress Rei returned to the locker room with the redhead from the lobby. Mailgirl Number Six had been freed from her bondage, and looked worse for the wear. The gag, the ornaments, and the Santa's hat were all gone, but her red hair was a mess and she was noticeably tired. She still offered her fans a weak smile, however, and even a little curtsy.  
  
"What did she do?" Erin asked. "To get punished like that?"  
  
"She's a little gossip," Sarah chuckled. The name-calling wasn't catty at all. Sarah seemed to think it was funny. "We're having a few more visitors tonight - some of the girls from the Plaza - and Human Capital had wanted to keep it a surprise."  
  
"Do we know who?" Sophie asked her sister. "Did we find out?"  
  
"No," Sarah answered. "But I guarantee at least one of them is Plaza Seven. So probably Plaza Ten, too. And maybe Plaza Nineteen." She turned to her stepsister and her mother to explain. "The girls from the Plaza come visit every now and then. They usually get shipped over in a truck."  
  
"'Shipped'?" Catherine asked.  
  
"Same as the two of us," Sarah went on. "Like cargo."  
  
"Against their will?"  
  
"No. Well, the shipping part - yes, I guess, against their will. But I know a few of them weren't looking forward to going home for Christmas. So even being locked in here is better than being alone. Better company."  
  
"And the redhead - Six? - spoiled the surprise?" Erin asked.  
  
"She's still got friends in HR. Though, fewer." Sarah pointed out Mailgirl Number Eleven. "Eleven was a recruiter. And Eighteen was in Payroll. But somehow Six still finds out about this stuff before the rest of us."  
  
Sarah caught the eye of the only woman in the room in actual clothes. "Mistress Rei? May this mailgirl-"  
  
The Japanese woman cut her short with a hand wave. "Yes, go ahead." To Sophie, she said, "And the stockings, too, if you want. But I do have one last pick-up for the two of you."  
  
Sarah unhooked the ornaments from her chest, and handed them to her mistress. Sophie unsnapped the garter belt, rolled down her stockings, and gave them to Mistress Rei, as well. As Sarah massaged her sore nipples, Mistress Rei pointed at Erin and Catherine.  
  
"Take your visitors, too. I want you at the loading dock in..." She paused to punch something into her smartphone, and handed Sarah a bracelet with a set of keys. "...six minutes. Go, go, go!"  
  
Neither of the Scott girls said a word their guests. Only a look was needed to convey that Catherine and Erin were to follow behind. And were to haul ass. In a flash, all four were out the door, and were sprinting up the service corridor outside the mailgirls locker room.  
  
"It's eight minutes," Sophie complained. "At best."  
  
Sarah agreed with her. "I'm at twenty-two demerits. This is for them." Meaning, Catherine and Erin. Meaning, twenty-five was inevitable. Meaning, Catherine and Erin were going to end up over Mistress Rei's knee.  
  
Erin was a jogger - she had that going for her, at least. But running in spandex and trainers and a sports bra was far different than streaking naked and barefoot down a concrete hallway in the basement of a corporate office building. Each footfall landed heavily, and her breasts bounced wildly out of control. She wondered if she should have stretched. She wondered if Catherine was going to be able to keep up.  
  
Visitor E, though, kept pace with the rest of them.  
  
"The Plaza girls?" Sophie asked.  
  
"Has to be," Sarah panted.  
  
"She heard us?" Erin asked.  
  
"She hears everything."  
  
The interior of Park Place flew by the group at a blur, and Erin barely had time to take in her surroundings as she screamed past the picture frame after picture frame of women's underwear that adorned the walls. They were still in one of the service corridors - nothing but the cement floors and cinder block walls, broken up only by the questionable "artwork" and the occasional door. Even if it weren't Christmas Eve, Erin doubted that they'd have bumped into anyone but custodial staff or other mailgirls.  
  
The corridor stretched on forever, and only after the smartphones on two mailgirls' arms had begun blinking a furious shade of red did Sarah and Sophie take a turn and began to dash up a set of stairs.  
  
"Park Place is only six floors," Sophie explained, playing the tour guide. "Eight, including the basement levels. But it's fucking enormous."  
  
"No elevators for us," Sarah jumped in. She came to a stop at a heavy metal door marked with a large number one, announcing their arrival on the first floor. She took hold of the handle, waited a beat for the light on the security pad to the left of the door to go from red to green, and swung the door open. "It's - what? - twenty-some minutes from the corner of the 6th to far side of B2?"  
  
"Twenty-five," Sophie replied. "On a good day. Assuming no one's in the way and these locks cooperate."  
  
"The phones open the locks," Sarah explained. "They're supposed to, at least."  
  
"They do," Sophie agreed. "Unless Human Capital decides they want to screw with us."  
  
Elevators, as a general rule, were off-limits to mailgirls everywhere, worldwide. However, Erin understood that exceptions had had to be made when USF rolled out its program at the forty-eight-story Plaza downtown, and that those mailgirls were allowed the privilege of riding the service elevators if the floor count between deliveries got above a reasonable number. Here at Park Place, however, those exceptions apparently didn't apply.  
  
The foursome stepped out into another long hallway, and continued the sprint in the direction of the loading docks. This particular section of the trip felt more like a real office building, albeit slightly run-down. There was linoleum beneath Erin's feet now, and drywall to either side of her. They still passed the occasional set of panties hung on the wall, but these were interspersed with more traditional artwork - the same sort of banal, unobjectionable paintings that one would expect to be hung in more traditional places of work.  
  
Erin heard a vibration from the phone on Sarah's arm, and she knew they'd missed their deadline. Six minutes were up, and they weren't yet at their destination.  
  
Her eyes were wide with fear and anticipation. Around every corner, she expected to bump into someone wearing a suit and tie, or otherwise dressed for work. But her stepsister had been right - the building was dead. There was no one here at Park Place on Christmas Eve but the mailgirls themselves. Erin didn't know whether she felt relieved or disappointed.  
  
By the time the party pushed through the final door, and found themselves at the loading docks, Sarah's demerit count was safely on the far side of twenty-five. The display on her smartphone - a timer ticking first downwards towards zero, and then back up to show how late they were - was frozen in place. Erin put her hands on her head to catch her breath. Catherine bent at the midsection, as if preparing to collapse. The two Scott girls barely looked winded.  
  
The loading dock was a loading dock, nothing more. The girls stood inside a large, cavernous room flanked by metal shelves and unopened boxes. A forklift was slumbering behind them. Four large garage doors were closed tight; as they were poorly insulated, though, the room was chillier than rest of Park Place. If Erin's nipples hadn't already been hard, the temperature surely would have caused them to stiffen.  
  
At the center of the room were three pet carriers, stacked neatly and tightly in a pyramid - two on the floor, with a third on top. No different than Erin would have expected for a golden retriever or a Labrador going on a cross-country flight - only that these were human beings inside. Or, mailgirls, at least. The difference between mailgirls and canine occupants, however, was that no pet owner would have been so inhumane as to try to cram two dogs into a single carrier. As Erin approached the stack with her stepsisters and stepmother, she gasped in horror when she saw that two of them were doubly occupied, with two mailgirls each.  
  
Sarah bent and unlocked the crates, and a flood of naked limbs and naked torsos came tumbling out onto the loading dock's floor. Two girls emerged from the bottom crate on the left. Two emerged from the one on top. And a single occupant crawled from the last.  
  
Erin was shocked to see none other than Lindsey Czarniak untangle herself from a naked brunette, and rise to her feet before her. It wasn't the ESPN anchor, of course, but an uncanny doppelganger - one that Erin recognized instantly from the hours of SportsCenter she'd been forced to consume, thanks to Ben. Same short blonde hair. Same prominent nose. Same big, toothy smile unbroken by her recent captivity. She was, as any good mailgirl was, naked from head-to-toe, save for the same metal collar the girls here at Park Place all sported, and a bit of black ink that denoted her as "PL 7." The "PL" - signifying her as one of the "Plaza" girls, Erin surmised - was a little smudged, but looked like fresh ink. The "7," on the other hand, looked as if it had been traced and re-traced upon her hip a good half dozen times.  
  
Sarah greeted "PL 7" with a long and lingering hug.  
  
There were no more celebrity look-alikes among the other four girls who crawled from the pet carrier. Or, at least, none as evident as the sportscaster, or Angela Giannini's Rene Russo, or even maybe Mailgirl Number Eleven's Olivia Munn. The Plaza's number Seven was accompanied by, as Sarah had predicted, a girl marked as Number Ten. Numbers Seventeen and Eighteen crawled down from the carrier on top. Mailgirl Number Twenty-One was the one who'd ridden over in relative luxury, having an entire crate to herself.  
  
Jessica Chastain, Erin caught herself, and added that to her list. Mailgirl Number Six, here at Park Place, was Jessica Chastain. Or, close enough that it would have been Jessica Chastain playing her in the movie version - legs spread, sex exposed, and Christmas ornaments dangling from her breasts in the lobby.  
  
Sarah's hug with Plaza Seven eventually came to end, and Erin watched as her stepsister greeted the others. These were the girls with whom Sarah had spent the previous summer, members of the mailgirl sisterhood still serving at the pleasure of US Financial at the Plaza. It was only to Plaza Seventeen that Park Place Two needed an introduction; Plaza Seventeen, apparently, had joined the team after Sarah had been relocated out to Jersey City, and she was every bit the virgin to Park Place as Erin herself was. There was a warmth and a camaraderie present among them all. These girls were allowed to leave the Plaza and go home every night, while Sarah and Sophie served their 24/7 sentence at Park Place. And yet, they'd given up that opportunity in order to be locked in with their friends over Christmas.

Introductions were made, though not a single girl was introduced to Erin O'Neill or Catherine Ryan. Rather, they were referred to only by their visitors' designations - Visitor D and Visitor E - just as the Plaza girls were introduced as Plaza Seven, Plaza Ten, Plaza Seventeen, and so on. Just as Sarah and Sophie introduced themselves to Plaza Seventeen as "Park Place Two" and "Park Place One."  
  
Plaza Seven, apparently, felt guilty about intruding upon Sarah's visit from her mother.  
  
"If I'd known, I wouldn't have..." There was something more there. Something unspoken.  
  
Sarah brushed the apology off. "I warned them both. They're not going to see me on my best behavior."  
  
"I know. I just..." Plaza Seven trailed off, but then started again. "Mistress Zero warned us not to say anything. She wanted to surprise you all. I wanted to surprise you, too, I guess."  
  
"It's fine. It's fine. Really," Sarah assured her friend. "They know. My mom knows. And they promised to make themselves scarce." Turning to Catherine, Sarah asked pointedly, "Right?"  
  
Oh! So it was that kind of a friend. Erin found her image of Sarah challenged once more.  
  
"We knew about the surprise," Sophie offered. "Not who, exactly. But that some of you all were coming."  
  
"The redhead? The girl from Talent?" Plaza Eighteen asked. "Six?"  
  
Sophie nodded. "Though, she spent the afternoon chained up in the lobby for spoiling it."  
  
Plaza Seven locked eyes with Park Place Two once more. "Alright, well, I'm sorry. I wouldn't have wanted to intrude. I didn't know your mom was coming. Or your stepsister. I just volunteered a couple of us to come over here for the holiday."  
  
"Thank you," Sarah answered. "Really, thank you. I'm not sure I'd have been able to do the same."  
  
"What are we going to do, go home? How the hell was I going to sit through Christmas dinner with my father?"  
  
Sarah laughed. "What's everyone else doing?"  
  
"There's a bunch spending tomorrow out at Two's mom's house. Fourteen's playing host to some others. But there are a whole bunch who really are going home. Five. Twelve. Twenty."  
  
"That could be awkward," Sarah responded.  
  
"Hello?" Sophie butted in, and gestured to Catherine and Erin. "More awkward than this?"  
  
"Fair point," Sarah laughed, and squeezed her mother's hand.  
  
"But there are some of us for whom a trip home is a flight and back," Plaza Eighteen added. "And we don't really have the time."  
  
"And so you came here?" Sarah asked.  
  
Plaza Eighteen shrugged. "Fuck it," she said. "I'm a mailgirl. Why not celebrate like a mailgirl?"  
  
"Too many drinks and a one-night stand?" Sophie teased.  
  
"We're here two nights, right?" Plaza Eighteen replied, and gave the young Scott sister an exaggerated wink.  
  
Erin risked a look in one of the crates. To Plaza Twenty-One, who was stretching, she asked, "How long were you in there?" To Plaza Ten, who was standing beside her and rubbing a kink out of her shoulder, Erin asked, "And there were two of you in there?"  
  
"Since three," Plaza Ten answered.  
  
"We got off a little early," Plaza Seven explained. "And we've been here for about an hour."  
  
"Which reminds me..." Plaza Ten again. "...I need to use the bathroom."  
  
"Same here," Plaza Eighteen joined in. She elbowed the tall, lanky girl with the "PL 17" on her hip. "This one's been sitting on my bladder."  
  
"The locker room," Sarah told them, apologetically. "There's no one left here to play chaperone."  
  
Plaza Eighteen groaned. The mailgirls were technically allowed to use the ladies' room (or men's room) elsewhere in the building. But to do so required the permission and monitoring of a non-mailgirl. Scarce, given the holiday.  
  
"Okay, we can go," Sophie said, and began to turn towards the door.  
  
"Hold on. One, honey?" Sarah asked. It was odd to hear Sarah call her sister by her mailgirl number. "Do we have a return time?"  
  
Sophie glanced down at her smartphone, and shook her head. "Nope," she said with a knowing smile.  
  
Sarah interlocked her fingers with those of Lindsey Czarniak. "I think we're going to hang back, then. And catch up." Of her mother, Sarah asked, "Is that okay with you?"  
  
Catherine knew full-well what Sarah was asking of her. They all knew. But the older woman, to her credit, didn't let on. "That's fine."  
  
"We'll be quick," Plaza Seven promised.  
  
As the rest of the group started for the door, Plaza Ten lingered behind. "Do you mind if I stay, too?"  
  
Erin couldn't believe the grin on Sarah's face. "Of course not," she heard her stepsister say.  
  
Once on the far side of the door, Erin followed behind Sophie, Catherine, and the mailgirls from the Plaza. To Plaza Eighteen, she whispered, "Are they going to get in trouble?"  
  
Plaza Eighteen wasn't sure, however. "It's after seven. And...'it' is allowed after hours here in Jersey City. But I'm pretty sure it's frowned upon outside of the locker room."  
  
Erin already had one punishment coming her way, thanks to Sarah's recently-acquired demerits. She wasn't eager to add another, because her stepsister was getting off with a friend - no, friends - on the loading docks.  
  
And, if she were going to get punished for it, shouldn't she have at the very least have been invited to participate on the front end? Was that a pang of jealousy she felt?  
  
Her stomach turned. No, she didn't want to have sex with Sarah. Not even if there was another girl there, between them. "Damaged," was how Sixteen's girlfriend had described them all. Maybe Erin was damaged enough to have volunteered for all of this in the first place. But she wasn't so far gone that incest - even quasi-incest, with a step-sibling - was on the table.  
  
They walked back to the locker room. Catherine, whose daughter had just more-or-less announced she'd catch up after a quick lesbian three-way, didn't seem to be shaken by Sarah's casual attitude towards sex. "Eh," she offered with a shrug, when Erin caught up with her, and asked about it without coming right out and asking about it. "This is what it is. You and I? We're not here to judge. We're not in position to judge."  
  
The irony, though, was that while they'd let Sarah, Plaza Seven, and Plaza Ten hang behind for a bit of privacy, the locker room they returned to was like something straight out of Internet pornography. Erin heard the moans before she stepped back into the room - not even the laughter and rowdy conversations could drown them out. And the sights. Again, Erin had prepared herself for this trip, but she was nowhere near prepared enough.  
  
Of the twenty-some naked girls in the locker room, not everyone was engaged in some sort of sexual gratification. Nine and Nineteen, for example, had apparently gotten the worst excesses of it out of their system, and were simply chatting with a couple of the other girls. Seven, Three, Visitor C, and Fifteen were all now in the showers, and only Three was paying her sex any mind. Mailgirl Eleven was seated, cross-legged on the floor, with Visitors H and I there with her; the little group of friends was catching up.  
  
But Mailgirl Five was masturbating by the door. Mailgirl Eight was doing the same, a few feet away. Mailgirl Sixteen had her face buried deep in Visitor A's pussy at the sinks. And Mailgirls Four and Thirteen were similarly intertwined against the back wall.  
  
Erin had told herself she'd be good. But, in that moment, she doubted she'd stay true. She worried that, by not participating, she'd end up ostracizing herself. She was naked and aroused in the middle of a lesbian swingers party. The peer pressure would get to her, if the pull of her own pussy didn't.  
  
Dinner, such as it was, soon helped quell any appetite - in her stomach and between her legs, both. There was nothing sexy about eating what amounted to dog food out of a communal trough. The ferocity of the mailgirl chow's smell was matched only by the mailgirl chow's taste, and Erin fought the urge to vomit between every bite. As she'd lost herself to the fantasy that Fall, Erin had almost ordered herself a can of the nutrient-rich paste online - just out of curiosity. She'd thought better of it then, and she certainly wasn't going to be ordering any anytime soon upon her return to LA. That she'd be expected to choke this same meal down four more times before he release on the 26th wasn't something she was looking forward to.  
  
The use of her hands wasn't allowed, of course, and so Erin had had to drop to all fours and bury her face in the trough to have her dinner. The trough was to be licked clean, but the actual mailgirls gracefully took on that particular responsibility for the visitors. So, too, did Sophie take ownership over cleaning the excess bits of food from Erin's face; Erin was licked clean like a lion cub.  
  
At some point, Sarah and the two remaining USF Plaza mailgirls arrived in the locker room. If Mistress Rei knew what they'd been up to, or why they'd been late back from the loading docks, she didn't call them on it. Erin, then, was spared any punishment for that particular sin. As it turned out, she was spared the riding crop, too, when it ultimately emerged.  
  
Catherine was not so lucky.  
  
Catherine and Erin were here to visit Mailgirls One and Two, and were synched to the profiles of the Scott sisters on the mailgirls app. By luck of the draw, Visitor D had been assigned to Mailgirl Number One, while Visitor E had been synched to Mailgirl Number Two. Sophie had picked up just as many demerits for being late to the loading dock as her sister had, but Sophie's tally at that point was still on the right side of twenty-five; both Sophie and Erin, therefore, were in the clear.  
  
Sarah, on the other hand, was over the limit. And, in addition to Sarah's mother joining in her in a round of corporal punishment, the five Plaza mailgirls had all been registered to Mailgirl Number Two. Because Sarah had missed her deadline, and because Sarah's count had gotten too high, a sum total of six girls and one grown-ass woman were bent over the sink and taken to task by Mistress Rei. And, if Mistress Rei had grown tired from the attention she'd given Mailgirls Eleven and Fourteen, or Visitors H, I, and F, she didn't show it. Erin winced each time the crop landed. The uncontrollable yips escaping from her stepmother's mouth hadn't helped, either.  
  
Erin had tried to take her place. She didn't particularly want to be spanked; that wasn't a big feature in her specific mailgirl fantasy. But Catherine had hissed at her for even suggesting it. Mistress Rei had volunteered to spank them both. In the end, Catherine had taken the licks while Sophie squeezed Erin's hand and reassured her that Mistress Rei knew what she was doing; it wasn't nearly as bad as it sounded, her stepsister told her. From experience.  
  
The yelps and the sore behinds couldn't dampen the mood, however. Family was here. Friends from home. Representatives from the sisterhood across the Hudson. When the Japanese woman finally departed, the room got positively raucous. To be fair, it had been pretty boisterous and full of life even when she'd been there in the locker room among them. The girls respected Mistress Rei, and respected the power she had over them. But they weren't quite afraid of her - that much was clear.  
  
"She wants to be one of us," Sarah explained at the sink, a short while later. "She'd rather be on this end than on that one."  
  
Angela and Catherine were comparing their battle scars by the door, and the Plaza girls were intermingling with their Park Place counterparts. Sarah, Sophie, and Erin were at the counter to one side of the showers; all three had just taken a quick rinse, and were now doing their hair and putting on make-up. There was communal lipstick, communal rouge, and communal eye shadow, just as there was communal underarm deodorant and communal toothbrushes in the drawers beneath the sinks. The communal perfume was floral and sickly sweet. The smell of the communal nail polish and communal lacquer hung in the air. None of the scents were strong enough to entirely mask the ever-present smell of pussy, however - the smell of sex, the smell of lust, the smell of womanhood.  
  
They were dolling themselves up for one another - no one else. Sarah had referred to these nights out on the town with the Plaza girls as "Bitch Sessions," nights of hard drinking and experimentation at the Imperial Hotel downtown. Human Capital had allowed the girls at Park Place to replicate that opportunity to blow off steam by granting them one night a week of relative freedom in an employee lounge up on the 2nd Floor, in the Human Resources department. They'd remain "in uniform," of course. But otherwise, the night was theirs. They were now being granted an extra such night, in celebration of the holiday. And for most of them, tomorrow would be their first day "off duty" in weeks or months.  
  
Erin was still shivering from the shower as she brushed her hair. If the dog food she'd choked down for dinner hadn't tamped down her libido, the frigid temperature of the shower certainly would have. The rough-and-scratchy hand towels provided to dry her body off hadn't helped her get warm. Hopefully, the forthcoming free-flowing alcohol up on the 2nd Floor would.  
  
Sarah seemed more relaxed and at-ease with Erin and Catherine than she had before the trip to the loading docks. Post-coital bliss could do that to a girl, Erin supposed. But even before she'd gotten laid, courtesy of some combination of the two Plaza mailgirls, Sarah had seemed like a different person than the tightly-wound academic Erin had always known. Erin chuckled to herself. Maybe there was something to be said for "spanking therapy," after all?  
  
"What was it like at the Plaza?" Erin asked. "With your last 'mistress'?" The word was still awkward to say.  
  
"Different," Sarah answered. She reflexively reached for and massaged her sore behind. "Mistress Rei can be just as intense. Maybe rougher, even. And definitely more free with her hands. But Mistress Zero was...I don't know...how do it put this? Mistress Zero was more 'Management' than Mistress Rei."  
  
"What does that mean?"  
  
"She's in on the show," Sophie butted in. Sophie had been under the Plaza's mistress's thumb for less than a day, as Erin understood it. But she spoke with authority, all the same.  
  
"She's in on the show," Sarah agreed. "She's one of us."  
  
"...and what does that mean?"  
  
"You wouldn't understand it," Sarah replied. She then shook her head. "That's unfair. Maybe you would. I mean, you're here with us. For what I assume are a lot of the same reasons. There's a pull and an appeal to this that a lot of outsiders, non-mailgirls, just don't get. The Whitestockings. How do you derive pleasure from pain? How does getting humiliated and embarrassed turn into a turn-on?  
  
"Every girl in here - excluding Sophie, and maybe Fourteen - will tell you about being blackmailed and threatened and coerced into this life. Getting tricked and duped, and having your contract re-written without your consent. But the door's always there. We're volunteers. We can walk away at any time. We're here because we want to be. Because we're getting something out of it. Because, paradoxically, it feels good, and free, and honest."  
  
"We're damaged in a very specific way," Erin opined, parroting Visitor A's viewpoint.  
  
She was met with a frown from her stepsister. "That's not it. It's not that. Really. I think we all have that fear, and go through that phase, and that line of thinking. But you come out on the other side - at least most girls do, most of the time. Being a mailgirl, having this experience, living this life - it's deeper than that. I totally get why girls re-up at the end of their contracts - there's nothing like the clarity and the control, of letting the rest of the world fuck off and fade away, and finding the focus of what you're doing."  
  
"It sounds zen."  
  
Sarah laughed. "But with more orgasms." She puckered her lips, and applied a cartoonish shade of red lipstick. "So it's probably just my pussy talking. I'm constantly drowning my brain in post-orgasmic dopamine hits."  
  
"Mind control," Sophie giggled. "Every time you cum, you're in that much deeper."  
  
Sarah shrugged. "Really and truly. Maybe that's the best way to understand why so many mailgirls stay and suffer the abuse. Addiction. We get addicted to it."  
  
Erin bit her lip, and met her stepsister's eyes in the mirror. "...which is a bad thing. Addiction is a bad thing."  
  
Sarah just smiled, and shook her head. "Okay, so maybe it's a bad metaphor. But after that first time you undress, you kind of crave that thrill and excitement and exposure of it again. And then that first time you actually act on it in public, not giving a shit about who's watching you masturbate? You crave that again, too."  
  
"But at that point, you're already in deep," Sophie added. "You already did it once. So, you do it again. And again. It gets easier. But, then, you're craving something else, some new level of pushing yourself and feeling that same initial excitement and embarrassment and turn-on and depravity, just all mixed up and complicated to shit."  
  
"Still sounds like addiction," Erin observed.  
  
Sighing, Sarah conceded, "Okay, so maybe it's a good metaphor, after all." She looked to Sophie, and then back to Erin. "It's self-centered and self-serving, and self-defeating too. And there are plenty of girls who are just absolutely miserable from the moment they sign their contracts and they never get free of it. They keep looking for outs. They keep pitying themselves. They keep hating the company for doing this to them, and keep hating the world for letting it happen. But, most? And, moreso here in Jersey than back at the Plaza? They break free of it. They accept. They submit. And once you can do that, once you can allow yourself to accept that where you are and what you're doing is on you? I don't know. It's freeing."  
  
Erin shot her stepsister a skeptical look.  
  
"I'm failing," Sarah said, helplessly, to Sophie.  
  
Before Sophie could jump in once more, however, Erin came to their rescue. "I sound judgy. And I'm not. Really, I'm not. It's more...I'm just trying to understand how any of this could be real. How any of this could happen in the real world. I'm trying to understand it, for myself, and why I feel this pull, this need, to be here with you. And trying to figure out just how fucked up I am that I do."  
  
Sarah met her stepsister's eyes once more, and assured her, "You're not fucked up. There's something deeper at work here. Bondage and discipline. Sadomasochism. Christian Grey and rape fantasies and submission and domination and exhibitionism. There's an undercurrent of it everywhere. I bet if you lined up a hundred of the most successful women out there - CEO's and doctors and professors and lawyers and whatnot - I bet more than half of them, maybe even most of them, would confess that, in their heart of hearts, buried somewhere deep down, that they felt some psychosexual urge to be dominated by a partner.  
  
"Maybe men are the same. Maybe they'd confess to the same thing. I'm not sure. I don't think it's the same. I don't know. I'm not a psychologist. I'm barely even an anthropologist anymore. But, for the first time in, like, forever, there's a real-world outlet for all of this dark and hidden and denied shit that's been lurking just below the surface. For women, at least. I think that's why the mailgirl thing caught on the way that it did. It's why it exploded everywhere, and exploded overnight."  
  
"So what's the flipside of it?" Erin asked. "If that's the pull to be mailgirl, and that's the reason girls keep signing up or keep from leaving, what's the other side of it? Why is it that these companies, and the people who work at these companies, buy in so hard on other end? That they join in, and treat these girls - who up until two minutes ago had been coworkers and colleagues and friends - like sluts and whores and something less than human?"

Sarah shook her head, and Sophie answered. "Maybe people are just shitholes? And they need an outlet for it. And it's just that it's only now that they've got that outlet - in us."  
  
All three girls fell quiet for a moment, the topic getting a little too deep and little too intense and philosophical for Christmas Eve. Sarah continued with her make-up. Sophie brushed her hair. Erin looked absently at the counter. Behind them, the roar and revelry of the mailgirls locker room carried on, indifferent to the introspection and interrogation at the sink.  
  
"Mistress Rei," Sarah said finally, returning to the original topic, "was a mailgirl back in Japan. And, from what I understand from our little redheaded gossip girl, went kicking and screaming into the role of a mistress. Some sort of contract between USF and her old company. And so she's here, she's our mistress, and she's in charge of keeping us in line. But, for whatever the pull is for mailgirls here, there, or anywhere, it's clear that she still feels it."  
  
"I guarantee," Sophie added, "she'll be in some sort of get-up tomorrow. Some sort of lace-and-leather, dominatrix-type number that'll be insane. She pulls that sort of shit every once in a while, on a Sunday or on a Saturday night. Back on Thanksgiving, even."  
  
"She gets what we're feeling and what we're going through," Sarah went on. "Because she's gone through it, too. Mistress Zero was also a former mailgirl, but it was different somehow. Maybe she was just on a tighter leash, given that the Human Capital people were there in the building, and she herself was performing for them, specifically. With Mistress Rei, it's more like she's helping us perform for the audience. And it's maybe a little bit less about Will Barrow and Human Capital, and a little bit more about the girls themselves."  
  
Erin frowned. She felt unsatisfied with the Scott girls' explanations. But maybe it was unfair of her to expect them to have all the answers, to truly get at that magic elixir of psychology and neuroscience that had led her to this place on Christmas Eve, naked and collared, and a continent away from husband who loved her and who was understanding enough to let her come here and try to find these answers on her own. She was here. She was sexually aroused by her own exhibition and humiliation. Maybe there didn't need to be anything deeper than that. Whether she was broken or damaged, or whether she was just engaging in some mostly harmless self-discovery and self-exploration, it didn't change how charged up she felt, how aroused she was, or how wet her pussy was.  
  
She knew, before the night was through, she'd be breaking her promise to "be good."