**The Resort Ambassador**

by ReaderMan

**Chapter 1 - Emi in Seattle**

**– Thursday —**

“Excuse me, may I have this table?”

Emi looked up from her laptop and saw a young teen girl. She had a Nintendo Switch in one hand and a frappuccino in the other. The girl stared at Emi expectantly.

They were the only two customers in the place but the girl apparently wanted her table. It was a little bizarre, but maybe she had a good reason, Emi thought.

Emi grabbed her latte and computer and moved to the next table.

The young girl plopped down in Emi’s old seat and waved to the barista in an exaggerated manner. The barista weakly waved back with a slightly pained expression.

Emi’s phone chirped. ‘Happy 24th! sorry for being a week late,’ the text read.

‘Thanks, busy now,’ she replied.

Trying to refocus on what she was working on, Emi looked at her computer screen while sipping on her latte just as Evan walked in. He nodded at her and walked up to order his drink.

Strange, that was probably the first time since high school that Evan had ever greeted her without a smile.

Thinking about that, she closed her laptop and watched him as he waited for his drink to be made. No doubt it would be a half-sweet extra-hot pumpkin spice latte.

He took off his stylish artist tuque and sat down. His drink looked like a plain latte and his brown hair was comically messy. He looked up at her with raw tired eyes.

“She left me Emi.”

Emi gasped and awkwardly grabbed her best friend’s hand in support. She really felt bad for him but she wasn’t much of a hugger. She wished there was something that she could do to help.

“I am so sorry Evan.” She couldn’t understand why this would happen. Evan and his girlfriend had been living together for almost two years.

“She left me because of three stupid online stories that I bookmarked,” he said bitterly.

“Eh?” Emi raised her eyebrows.

“Yeah,” he broke eye contact. “They were a bit erotic in nature, but really low key. Nothing hardcore.”

“Oh,” Emi said cautiously.

“I guess she felt that they were offensive and were a peek into how I feel about women in general. Or maybe she was just jittery about us and looking for an excuse to leave,” he sighed heavily.

“Why would she take them so seriously Emi? Does reading three stories really mean I’m a bad person?”

“No, of course not,” Emi said firmly.

“She packed all her stuff and left. She left a short note saying that I can go and cry on Emi’s shoulder and fantasize about making HER naked.”

He tried to compose himself. “They were just stories Emi! Can you help me?”

“Er, what?” Still stunned about what the note said, Emi tried to catch up.

A moment later, she responded, “Evan, you know that I don’t know anything about mature relationships. I’m still living at home with my father and two brothers. I haven’t had a relationship since University. Even that was a brief joke. I’m just your typical sheltered Japanese girl.”

“Yeah, right. You are an elite track athlete and the lead developer at work.”

“Yeah, a dorky nerd who spends too much time running. You have just made my point.”

“You’re not like that at all Emi. You pay attention to people and are decent to everyone. I especially like the cool tomboy vibe that you have going on due to no makeup and not acting girly. Not to mention, your fit body is sexy as hell.”

Emi looked down at the floor. That was the first time that Evan had ever really said anything about what he thought of her as a girl. Since she was fourteen she had always just been just one of the guys. The comments felt awkward, but not totally unpleasant.

“Will you help me or not?”

“What can I do?” she asked looking back up into his eyes.

“Read the stories,” he said seriously. “Tell me if I am a bad person and deserve to be dumped because of a few stupid fictional stories.”

“Guh… you want me to read your wank-off material?”

“They are not… I mean, I had a girlfriend, remember? They are somewhat spicy but also fun to read. Everyone has their fantasies.” He shifted uncomfortably and broke eye contact.

She continued to look at him with a neutral expression, trying to hide her annoyance with the request that she knew that she would have to fulfill. He was always there for her when she had family troubles and had helped her learn UX and graphic design. The bonus skills helped make her a better software developer. Plus she really did want to help, although she wished it was anything but this.

“I just want your opinion,” he pleaded.

Emi sighed.

“I’ll read what I can in my spare time over the next few days. Don’t ask me about it at work. I’ll let you know when I’m ready.”

“Thank you,” he said.

“Uh huh…”

“Tomorrow is Friday, a holiday, talk about perfect timing for a long weekend. Can I take the rest of today off as well? I’m not really in any condition to work today.”

“Eh? You are going to leave me hanging with the Karpinski Project?”

“All the graphic assets are done. Here.” He tossed her a memory stick.

“Uh, ok. I’ll see you Monday then. You do know that I’m just a lead, right? If you want to take a day off, you have to ask Beth.”

“I did, she said that she is a project manager, not a people manager.”

“Welcome to life at a startup. I think our CEO is too cheap to hire an HR person. He’s always asking me what I think about this or that resume.”

“Thanks, umm…” he paused. “The three stories are also in there as well,” he mumbled sheepishly as he started to leave.

“Wonderful.” She held the tainted stick up and away from herself with two fingers. She made a comical face that made him laugh, but that was just to make him feel better.

An hour or so after Evan left, Emi had finished updating the graphics on the app they were working on. Finally, Emi decided to go back into the office in case the guys needed anything from her.

Back in the office, Doug was dancing in a circle with this muscular arms raised triumphantly. Mathew towering over him with his arms folded, had an annoyed look on his young face.

“Let me give you a hand Mathew,” said Emi as she approached the two at the foosball table.

Mathew wasn’t a bad player, but Doug could probably play professionally. Emi and Mathew teamed up on one side, with Doug on the other side. They were almost evenly matched even though it was two on one.

Emi liked to distract with comments when playing since she had learned that guys suck at doing more than one thing at a time.

“Where are we with the Karpinski stuff?” said Emi as she dropped in a ball.

After a frantic back and forth, BOOM – Doug scored. He thoughtfully rubbed his goatee and smugly snapped his score counter up one.

“The changes to the server are pretty much complete. All the hard stuff at least, the rest should be done today,” said Doug as Mathew passed another ball to Emi.

Emi looked at up at Doug with a frozen open mouth, as if she suddenly remembered something, then she dropped the ball.

“What?” said Doug, some concern in his voice.

Boom Emi scored and she high fived with Mathew. You have to cheat a little if you want to beat Doug, even two on one.

“My part is done. Tell her about the poster,” said Mathew as the ball banged around furiously.

“Oh man, not another bikini poster,” said Emi. “We finally took down that old one!”

“Doug came back from that Anime event with a large poster of a cosplayer hottie doing Princess Leia the slave. It’s a bit explicit,” said Mathew.

“I’ll buy you a latte if you let me put it up on the wall,” said Doug.

“And I’ll add your favorite brownie,” said Mathew hopefully.

They both looked at Emi with exaggerated puppy-dog eyes.

“I really don’t like that sexist crap on the walls guys, you know that. But since there was mention of a deluxe latte and large brownie for the next three days in a row…”

“Three days?” stuttered Mathew. Doug gestured for him to shut up.

“If Doug wins, you can put up the poster. I can’t believe this place has no HR.” sighed Emi.

Doug and Mathew high fived.

“However, if we win then no poster and I still get my three days of reward,” proposed Emi.

Boom – Doug scored. Doug and Mathew smacked a high five.

Emi looked at her goalie with squinty eyes.

“What? He’s good!” Mathew made a gesture of innocence.

After an intense battle where Emi had to do most of the work, Doug had won. Emi almost instantly regretted it. The large poster featured an Asian Princess Leia cosplayer who was on a leash and completely topless.

“No way Beth is going to go for this,” said Emi.

“Meh, she has smaller tits than me – so I’ll allow it,” said Beth, the plus-size project manager surprised them all with her sudden appearance.

“They are bigger than mine,” mumbled Emi, not happy with Beth’s reasoning.

The boys were still standing in front of the new poster, grinning like idiots.

“Haha.. it reminds me of those leash stories that you gave Evan,” Mathew chirped happily.

Emi looked at the guys. So that’s where Evan got those stories from. It was Doug. They wouldn’t be so happy if they knew what happened to Evan.

The rest of the day was uneventful. Well, other than the topless asian princess on a leash that seemed to follow Emi around with her eyes.

Ready to go home for the long weekend, Emi went to the shower room to change into her running clothes. Just before pulling on her shirt, she walked over to the sink mirrors and pulled off her sports bra.

Emi smiled to herself as she posed this way and that. She could totally give that princess a run for her money.

“Emi?” a voice echoed in the room as the door opened.

“Ahh!” Emi grunted, dropping her bra and spinning her back to the door. Hands grasped desperately over her breasts.

“Don’t forget that we are bringing in Derrick on Monday. You have to get him up to speed,” said Beth.

“Oh right. Thanks for reminding me Beth,” said Emi, trying hard to sound normal.

“Don’t worry, you totally beat that princess,” Beth said without looking back as she left the room. Emi could hear her chuckling as she walked away.

Emi laughed away the embarrassment as she got dressed and laced up her running shoes. Her run home felt refreshing.

**– The long weekend –**

Emi woke up and looked around the living room and kitchen. The place was a terrible mess as usual. Her two adult brothers were lazy slobs. Nobody asked Emi to clean up but she couldn’t help it. Ever since Mom died Emi felt a need to fill in some of that void. Motherly instinct or not, Emi was starting to get fed up.

This morning, her brothers complained about her delaying breakfast and her father asked why the place was a mess. Clearly, he was asking why she didn’t clean up as usual.

Emi just gave the three a dark look and then went to her room and closed the door. She could hardly wait to get her own place. Why was she still here? She made more money than anyone in the house.

In a huff, she sat down and something poked her butt. It was the flash drive on her bed. Oh great another thing to annoy her. Might as well get this additional chore out of the way. Although to be honest she was curious about what might be in the stories. What would make Evan’s girlfriend flip out? Perhaps she was about to find out something disturbing about her old friend. Actually, it was Dug who started this whole mess.

After transferring the three stories to her kindle, Emi took a look at the first story. “Everybody is sleeping” by Jessica Tang Vonharper. It was written by an asian female.

The story category was “Exhibitionist & Voyeur”. It also won the “Nude Day story contest.” So nudity must be his kink.

The story was well written. A girl was overwhelmed by a good-looking, overly bold, seemingly polite fellow who took advantage of her strong attraction to him. She also may have felt that she might never see him again and so was somewhat overly casual with her nudity. Then he breaks out the dog leash and brings her for a midnight walk and things escalate from there. The girl seemed consensual the whole time.

The next story had a similar premise. A girl unwittingly gets in over her head and ends up having to work nude in the office. “Confessions of a Mailgirl” by Seahawk. This story was also well written but too long for Emi to quickly read so she just read for a couple of hours until she got the gist of what it was about and then moved on to the final story.

A short story “The Reluctant Pony” by Rilawild. This one followed the similar pattern that Evan seemed to like. A girl unwittingly gets in over her head and ends up naked in public. However, this one goes much further and she gets groped and worse and becomes a tied up sex slave that acts like a pony. It progressively got darker and more explicit. The poor girl was a virgin too. Emi decided that this is probably the one that had set off Evan’s girlfriend.

Emi had read enough.

**— Monday —**

Emi jogged to work in the heavy rain. She texted Evan and said that she was ready to talk about the stories if he came in an hour before work.

At work, she quickly peeled off her clothes and jumped into the shower and thought about the stories and what she would say to Evan. However, after that, her mind began to wander, thinking about the stories themselves.

Here she was at work and naked. All of her clothes were sitting on a bench. Anyone could casually walk in and take them. Likely it would never happen, but the risk was there.

She quickly finished and dried off and was relieved to see that her clothes were untouched. She put on her plain white panties, bra, stretchy pants, and a t-shirt. Then she took her bag containing her wet stuff in it and went into the office and sat down at her desk. Evan was at his desk too, right beside her. She put her bag into the bottom of her drawer and checked the middle drawer for her spare clothes. She knew they were there, but for some reason, she felt relief again when she saw they were in fact still there.

“Hi Evan,” she said finally.

He was just watching her with a friendly smile.

Emi got up and put her leg on the table like she did every day, stretching.

“Don’t you ever take a day off from running?” he asked.

“Rain doesn’t hurt Evan. It’s actually refreshing,” said Emi, bending sideways and grabbing her foot.

“How’s it going with your girlfriend?” she grunted.

“She came back.”

“Oh?” Emi released some tension and looked at him.

“To pick up the rest of her stuff.”

“Oh, I see.” She went on to her next stretch.

“So you read the stories?” he asked.

“Yup,” she said without looking at him.

“What did you think?”

“I don’t know. I don’t have experience with erotic stories. I guess I was kind of glad that it wasn’t all hardcore sex. I only read a bit of the mailgirls one. The stories were actually kind of entertaining to read, well except the last one. That last one is pretty wild and disturbing, especially the end.”

“You mean the ponygirl one?” he asked.

“Yeah”

“I usually just enjoy the first half of that particular story. Rarely do I read the full thing,” he explained

“Usually? How many times have you read it?” She smirked.

“So did you imagine yourself in her place?” he countered with his own smirk.

Emi nodded and looked around, signaling Evan to come closer so that she could speak quietly.

Intensely interested he came right up to her.

She bonked him hard on the head. “No, I did not, you dumb-ass. I thought that you wanted to talk about your girlfriend.”

“No point now. She’s gone.” he sighed.

“You don’t seem that broken up about it today. Did you want to talk about it?” said Emi as she switched legs and pointed her butt at him.

“No, I don’t want to talk about her. Our breakup really hurt at first, but you know what, we were gradually getting tired of each other. I say good riddance.” he said bitterly.

“Maybe she is just trying to scare you,” Emi offered over her shoulder.

“No, that ship has sailed. Yeah, I don’t really want to talk about her right now.”

“Alright,” she relented.

“So those stories were pretty wild, eh? Have you ever fantasized about anything like that?” he asked.

“No.”

“Oh come on, all girls like to play around with exhibitionism at least once in their lives. Accidental panty shot or shirt too open. Girls love to speed up the heartbeat of a guy. Admit it Emi. You girls have the ultimate power.”

“I… I’m not really a sexual person Evan. I think that you already know that.”

“What about that guy in university?”

Emi sat down and started loosening her shoelaces.

“He was a selfish jerk. He usually just called me over for sex and that was it,” she said without looking at him. “He would just undress me and demand a blowjob. I always refused and then we would do it and then a minute later he told me to go home and come back tomorrow.”

“Ah… that’s too much info Emi.”

“Are you my best friend or not?”

“I am, you are right. You can tell me anything.” Evan smiled nervously.

“I was too naive. I kept thinking that maybe this was normal in the beginning, but as time passed I noticed that he just wasn’t the romantic type. I didn’t really hate him, but I think I just lost interest in the idea of relationships after that.”

“You can’t let one bad experience ruin you for life, Emi.”

“I know, but I became focused on work and just lost interest over time I guess. Then I read your stories and I don’t think that helped, to be honest. Is this really what guys fantasize about? Keeping girls as nude pets?”

“Yeaaaaah,” Evan smiled with a mock dreamy face. “Ouch! Stop bonking my head, Emi! Cmon, you would totally love to get naked and run around and show off your charms. Admit it!”

Emi grabbed him by the shirt and pulled him close to her like a bully.

“First, nudity terrifies me. It doesn’t excite me in the least.”

“Second, I would rather be lit on fire and die a screaming death.”

“Lastly, I wouldn’t go nude if I were the last person on earth.”

“Do you understand, Evan? Is this getting through to you, my best friend? Is our communication okay or do I need to find a new best friend?”

“Hey, I was just messing around.”

“I hope so, let’s just forget the stories for now, ok? You seem to be more interested in my reaction to them than if they actually caused your girlfriend to leave.”

“Fine. Sorry to put you through all that. I didn’t…” Evan stopped suddenly. He was staring at a giant poster on the wall. “Is that supposed to be…”

“Yeah, Princess Leia. The porny Asian cosplay version.”

“But…” Evan stuttered.

“I thought it would liven up the place,” Emi said casually.

Evan’s mouth dropped open and slowly formed a smile.

“Yeah right, it was Doug, wasn’t it?” Evan couldn’t stop looking at it. “How… why did you agree to this?”

“I dunno, maybe I have a thing for hard nipples and dog leashes. Let’s talk about work now.”

Emi sighed. She wondered how much productivity would be lost because of that poster.

“Alright, let’s focus on work now. Although, sometimes I wish just once that you could let your hair down and live a little,” said Evan seriously.

“Are you kidding me?” she asked suddenly serious as well.

“I don’t mean get naked, of course, but you know I don’t think I’ve ever even seen you in a bathing suit. What’s up with that?” he said softly.

Emi didn’t know what to say. She was getting uncomfortable.

“Look, I’m sorry… let’s just focus on work then,” he relented, patting her on the back.

Emi put her headphones on and started browsing through source code, looking for a bug. Doug’s stories and his poster were gradually starting to embolden Evan, she thought. Emi looked back at the poster when he wasn’t looking. The topless girl looked remarkably like herself, she noticed.

Later, around 10 am, the rest of the crew rolled in as usual. After the standup, Beth introduced everyone to Derrick, the new front end developer who also had some experience with server-side. Hopefully, he could assist Mathew and Doug when they got overrun with too much to do.

Derrick was tall and had some muscle, kind of like he was Doug and Mathew morphed together. He also had a huge french looking nose and a serious expression. Emi wondered if he ever smiled.

Emi told Derrick his work email and emailed him some info so that he could get his work machine setup with source code control, a chat program (Slack), and issue/task tracking software.

‘We have a Jukebox plugin in Slack called Bong’ she messaged him with the chat program.

‘Just type ‘bong: your\_song\_name’ and it will queue your song up on the ghetto blaster with the iPod in it. It automatically finds the first song on YouTube and plays it,’ she slacked.

‘Or you can type ‘bong: your\_song\_url’, if you want to be more specific,’ she slacked.

‘If you don’t like a song you can type ‘bong: bong’ to vote to remove it. If three of us bong down the song then it skips it and goes on to the next one.’

‘What if I just want silence?’ he slacked.

‘Then you can go next door and sit with the uncool web devs or go hang out in a coffee shop nearby. Don’t worry, it’s quiet in the mornings. In the morning if you want music you have to use headphones,’ she slacked.

‘You know I’m sitting right beside you. Can’t we just talk normally?’ he slacked.

‘Talk normally??’ Mathew slacked.

‘Who talks normally? Not me!’ Doug slacked and he posted a meme of Bill Murray moving his lips in a funny manner.

Everyone supported the funny mime with various thumbs up and approval like emojis.

Emi swiveled in her chair and looked at Derrick.

“In the morning we like to be quiet and concentrate on work,” she said verbally. “It is just too distracting if too many people are chatting out loud all the time,” she smiled.

He didn’t smile back.

Emi sighed, “Today just browse the source code for the Karpinski app and try to get to know it better. We use agile here, with two-week sprints. Next Monday we will start a new Sprint and you can start working on new features if you feel ready. The rest of this week you can help with bugs,” Emi suggested.

Derrick nodded and then turned away and began typing on his computer.

Emi looked at him for a moment longer then turned back to her own computer. Her mouse button was becoming unresponsive so she picked up her phone and called Jeffery from IT. The room next door had a dozen web developers and a young IT guy they hired last month. He was a cute looking intern. He talked so quietly and stuttered a bit as he gave Emi her new mouse.

“Hey Jeffery, we are all going out to lunch with the new guy. Wanna come?”

Derrick seemed to stiffen.

“Uh yeah, sure,” Jeffery managed to say without stuttering.

Later, they all went out to Sushi. Emi sat down first and waved a credit card.

“Lunch is on the company everyone,” she said happily. “The CEO gave me a ‘food only’ credit card just for when new devs join or we have something big to celebrate,” said Emi as she put away the card.

Derrick and Jeffery seemed to perk up to that news.

“So Derrick,” started Doug. “We are a small team that’s been working together now for over two years and Emi, if you haven’t guessed, she is the lead. I do server-side, Mathew is an Android app developer and Emi does iOS and helps both of us as well. Mathew and I thought we were pretty good but Emi can code circles around both of us, plus she can do a little graphic design and UX as well.”

“Actually, she can design a proper UI and create the assets in Photoshop faster than I can,” added Evan.

“I cannot,” blushed Emi.

“She can, and does. She seems to have a better sense of design than I do, although I can do one cool thing that she can’t. I’m also an illustrator. I can draw.” Evan said with exaggerated mock pride.

“Yeah, my drawing sucks!” exclaimed Emi. “I can’t draw for the life of me.”, she held her head down in mock shame.

“You have a lot of experience?” Derrick asked Emi doubtfully.

“I’ll say!” piped in Mathew. “Plus her brothers are both senior software developers, server-side and Android, just like Doug and I.”

“WE are her REAL brothers,” said Doug seriously.

“And get this! Her father is a computer science professor at the university,” Mathew chuckled.

“I guess that really helped,” said Derrick.

“Not really,” said Evan. “They always just tell her to google stuff when she asks anything, and her father hardly ever talks to her.”

“You guys…” interrupted Emi, “Enough about me, ok?”

“What, she still lives at home?” asked Derrick.

“I’m right here guys… hey, how about that hot new poster eh?”

“I love that poster,” Evan offered, coming to Emi’s rescue.

“Where did you get it, Doug?”, asked Emi.

As they ate the guys shared the story about how the poster came to be, Emi got all lively reminding them that her first deluxe latte and extra-large brownie installment had better be paid in the afternoon. Everyone laughed.

Back in the office, the rest of the day was rocking with all kinds of music, with the exception of a few bongs of some bad songs that everyone laughed about. Derrick put on his Bose headphones and listened to his own music.

After everyone had left, Emi was still there doing administrative tasks. Cutting a release candidate for the app for the QA testers, and moving some priority bugs up from the backlog and into the sprint in case Derrick was eager to get started tomorrow. Somehow, she suspected he would be.

Emi was the last one in the office, and ready to leave for the day when Jeffery came into the room walking stiffly. He sat down next to her looking quite upset.

“Emi…” he looked at her and blushed and then looked back at the table that his hands were on. He was shaking.

“I… I need to show you something.”, he stuttered.

Emi started to worry. He was being very dramatic and serious. “What is it?” she asked.

“I… it’s… umm… the CEO’s computer.”

“You broke the CEO’s computer?” she asked.

His sweaty face was stiff. He got up and moved towards the door. He looked back once to see if she was following.

Curious, and suddenly concerned, Emi got up and followed. Not knowing what to expect, she decided to grab a couple of sharp-looking pens for self-defense and followed him out into the hall with one pen in each fist.

He went straight to the CEO’s office and around the desk and pushed the chair out of the way so they could both stand there.

“What is it? A virus?”, asked Emi, her voice almost whispering.

“Yes… er, no…” Jeffery answered confusedly.

“Mr. Woo asked me to upgrade his anti-virus and scan his machine for malware. I did and there was none, but he left a folder window open but minimized in the sidebar. I was in the process of closing all the browsers and apps in case the machine had to reset when I noticed a security folder that he had open.” Jeffery said gravely.

“A security folder?” Emi asked, hoping he would hurry up and tell her.

Jefferey opened the folder and double-clicked on a file. A picture of Emi posing topless in front of a mirror appeared.

“Ahhh…!” Emi gasped pushing Jeffery out of the way and grabbing the mouse. She closed the image and clicked on the next one, where she was full-frontal nude coming out of the shower.

Jeffries’ eyes got really big looking at the picture.

“Don’t look! Don’t look!” Emi spun the desktop monitor out of his view and then hit the power button on it to make doubly sure the image was out of sight. Then she grabbed him and lead him to the seat on the other side of the table. Then she turned the monitor back to face her and sat down in the CEO’s chair. The monitor was still off.

“What… is this? Why?” Emi stuttered, her mouth and eyes both open in shock. She covered her mouth with her hands.

Jeffery kept looking down.

“I am not sure, but I think it looks like Mr. Woo has been spying on you using hidden security cameras in the women, shower room,” he said to his left foot.

“Why… why would he do that, it’s deeply illegal,” Emi reasoned. Something was dripping on her hands, it was her tears she noticed finally.

She suppressed a sob and grabbed a tissue and dried her eyes and blew her nose. She grabbed one more and cleaned up her face some more and blew her nose again. She started squeezing the wet tissues in her hand until she had a really tight fist. Suddenly, with rage, she slammed her fist down on the tissue box partially crumpling it.

Startled, Jeffery looked up suddenly. He looked scared.

“Give me your screwdriver,” she demanded in a voice that Jeffery had never heard before.

He grabbed it off his mini-utility belt that he always carried, and quickly handed it to her.

Emi grabbed Mr. Woo’s PC sitting under the desk and slammed it forcefully on top of the expensive mahogany table. The side panel actually popped off from the force of the hit and she then dropped it unceremoniously on its side knocking his Rolodex onto the floor. She began unscrewing the hard drive.

She wiped her nose with the back of her hand while she fumbled with the screws.

In the back of her mind, she knew that this hard drive was likely important to the CEO, and she knew that she should examine the hard drive in detail. But right now she couldn’t stop her overwhelming feeling to destroy the hard drive.

Finally, it was unscrewed but wouldn’t quite slide out all the way. She wrenched on it but it only moved a bit so she picked up the computer and aimed the top corner of the side of the computer to the desk and slammed it down with all her might.

The hard drive slid out upon impact and landed heavily on her foot.

“Ouch!” Emi yelled as she picked up the hard drive and hugged it desperately to her chest. She sobbed again but then stopped suddenly. Quickly she opened the drawer and hunted around. There! A memory stick. She grabbed that too.

Emi looked at Jeffery and noticed that the young man looked quite shaken.

“Jeffery…” Emi went to him and broke her no-hugging rule.

“We have to call the police, Emi.”, he reached for his cell phone.

“No… NO!, I need to talk with him first.” Emi insisted.

“If he has more pictures on his laptop then that will be part of the investigation. He might hide or keep those. I want to be here in the morning when he comes to work. I will grab his laptop and check that too, FIRST. Before we call the police.” Emi said as she grabbed another tissue from the crumpled up box.

“Promise me that you won’t call the police”, Emi demanded.

“Let ME do that please, Ok.” Emi requested again.

“Ok…”, he said quietly.

“Promise me!”

“Ok, I promise,” he said.

Emi felt that she could trust him, but he was so traumatized that she was worried that someone would be concerned and coerce the info out of him.

“Let’s go get coffee. We need to calm down and talk about this,” she said, trying to make a friendly face.

Before leaving, she picked up the Rolodex and put the computer back underneath the desk, trying to make the desk look normal again. She covered the damage that she did to the table with a newspaper that was on a side desk.

It was dark, cold and raining lightly as Emi and Jeffery left the building. She had the hard drive and memory stick in her backpack. Jeffery was still hunched over and Emi was limping a bit.

They went to a donut shop and talked for a couple of hours. They speculated on what would happen next. Mr. Woo could very likely be arrested tomorrow and likely the company might shut down since he is the sole owner. Everyone could lose their jobs. Emi might even end up being a famous workplace violation example.

Emi really disliked many of the various possible outcomes.

She also worried about Evan, he was out of work over a year before this gig. Work doesn’t seem to come to him so easily. He has a tendency to screw up interviews somehow.

“Jeffery, I’m a lead software developer. Do you know how rare that is for a young woman? I’m only 24 and I have an excellent career ahead of me. I don’t want all this crap. I don’t want to pay more of a price for this than Mr. Woo. Also, I don’t want anyone else to have to pay a price for this. I want only Mr. Woo to pay. I’ve got to think of something,” she said as she bit into another overly sweet donut.

“I’ll fix this ok!” she said, trying to convince herself along with Jeffery.

After making sure that Jefferey wouldn’t tell anyone, ever, ever, for the 6th time she finally seemed satisfied that he would keep the secret.

“Don’t worry, I will make sure that you, Evan, Doug, Beth, Mathew, and everyone in the other rooms all don’t lose their jobs, ok?”

“I’ll figure out something in the morning. I’ll meet with him and handle this privately.”

“I’ll make him, and ONLY him.. pay for what he has done to me.”

Jeffery nodded.

“Go home, and just go to sleep. Don’t talk to anyone ok? People will ask you what’s wrong if you interact with them.” Emi said.

They parted shortly after leaving the donut shop.

Emi tried running, but her foot hurt, so she walked all the way home in the rain.

When she got home, she walked directly into her neighbor’s tool shed and grabbed a hammer. She looked long and hard at the drive. She wanted to destroy it so badly, but knew that she shouldn’t destroy the evidence. At least not until Mr. Woo agreed to everything. So reluctantly, she put back the hammer.

She went inside with the hard drive and noticed her brothers and father watching her carefully. It seemed like they were watching a movie before she came home. The place was a mess. She went to her room, put the hard drive under her bed near a bunch of other old hard drives that were there and laid face down on her bed. She took a deep breath and pressed her head into her pillow. She screamed as loud as she could until her throat hurt. Eventually, she fell asleep.

– Furious Tuesday –

Emi woke up and got dressed. She took a peek at the hard drive under her bed and then left to go to the bathroom. She sat there and thought that it’s going to be a hard morning, she will need nourishment for her brain. She decided to get an apple from the kitchen. Amazingly, there were no dishes in the sink and the kitchen was spotless. It even sparkled. Was she still dreaming, was this the twilight zone? She looked around and even the living room looked better than it had ever looked before.

Despite her dark mood she couldn’t help but smile briefly. Those morons thought she was upset last night about the messy house and so they cleaned up for the first time in years. Suddenly she couldn’t stop laughing. She must have looked so miserable last night that it scared everyone.

That felt good. To laugh again.

Emi put on a hoodie and ran to work two hours early. She stopped and grabbed a latte and a brownie. If she had to wait a couple of hours then she wanted something to eat.

She was the first one in the office, and almost went to the shower room by force of habit. She felt disgusted at the thought.

She went to the CEO’s office and moved a chair to where he wouldn’t see her when he entered the room. She sat there quietly in the dark, slowly sipping her latte. Once in awhile taking a bite out of her brownie. She didn’t touch the apple.

With the hoodie, she felt like an assassin from Assassin’s Creed, the video game. She wished she WAS an assassin, with hidden sleeve blades that pop out. A stab into the back of the neck and into the brain, in one elegant move. A split second and lights out forever. She smiled at the dark thought, and then she stopped smiling as she thought about what this was doing to her.

She decided that she was going to scare the shit out of him for a while, and then have him agree to pay her two years wages and then she was going to quit. He was also going to have to remove the shower rooms completely. No more shower rooms. He was going to give Jeffery a big raise. Jeffrey was getting peanuts as a co-op IT, but he was doing everything a normal IT would have had to do. Woo was taking advantage of him. Plus Evan needed a raise as well, she mused. A big one. He would need it since she wouldn’t be there anymore to help him and the job would be more stressful for him.

An hour later, Mr. Woo walked in with his briefcase and his laptop, right on time. He took off his hat and his silver hair was illuminated briefly as the sunrise shined weakly between the blinds. He sat down and noticed his monitor was moved and he moved it back to where it should be. Then he pressed the power button on it. He tapped his mouse and keyboard trying to get it to wake up. Nothing.

Emi was surprised that he hadn’t noticed her yet.

He moved the newspaper and noticed the damage to the table and looked at his computer under the desk and gasped. Then he looked around and saw her. The old man literally bounced in his seat he was so startled. It was almost comical.

“Good morning,” said Emi in a surprisingly normal voice.

“Emi…?”, said Mr. Woo as he put on his glasses to get a better look at the intruder.

She pulled down her hood and looked at him accusingly.

“What happened to my… the… comp…”, he stuttered.

Emi just kept looking at him with dark angry eyes.

Wr Woo was a smart man. He suddenly looked really worried. He froze.

“Jefferey found some naked pictures of me on your computer last night. We figured it all out, Mr. Woo. You are in a great deal of trouble,” she said in a still surprisingly normal voice.

Mr. Woo’s hand shook quite as he took off his glasses.

Emi walked up to him. “Hand me your phone,” she demanded.

Afraid and deflated, he reached for his phone.

“Unlock it, and then log in to your laptop, I want to look at that as well,” said Emi, she was surprised how well she was holding it together.

He did, she grabbed both devices and sat down on the other side of his desk and started scanning his photo library and looking for a remote camera app on his phone. He did indeed have a remote camera app on his phone, but no photos of her in the photos area. Nothing in recently sent or deleted emails either.

He started to get up.

“SIT DOWN Mr. Woo!” she said slowly and firmly through her clenched teeth. Her eyes never left the phone.

He slumped back down in his chair.

The phone was clean, but the camera app had a remote history kept on a server that wasn’t responding now. Likely it was trying to load from the removed hard drive under her bed.

She spent a half-hour carefully checking his laptop, it seemed to be clean. She liked that he was terrified, but a small part of her, a part that she didn’t like right now, felt sorry for the old man.

“You know that you’re going to jail for this right?” her grim face magnified the comment.

He looked at her, with a weird painful-looking grimace.

“That’s right, you will lose the company and you are going to jail. Your life is over Mr. Woo.” Emi said with a wavering voice due to all her pent-up emotion.

He started to get up but his wobbly legs gave out and he went down on his knees. He fumbled for something in his jacket and dropped a small container. It hit the floor and little white pills rolled everywhere.

“My heart… pills, water…” he gasped.

Startled and forgetting her anger suddenly, Emi quickly jumped up and carefully helped him to a chair. He looked like he was having trouble breathing. He looked like he was going to die.

Forgetting all dignity, almost in a panic Emi crawled around grabbing pills from the floor and awkwardly reached for a few under his desk.

She quickly filled a little cup of water from the water cooler by his desk and handed it to him along with the pills. With shaking hands he managed to eat them and drink the water.

While he slowly recovered Emi went back to scanning the laptop and found some emails that indicated that the security cameras were installed two weeks ago.

After he finally recovered, Emi told him that she had a deal that could save him and all the jobs of her friends and co-workers, but it would cost him a great deal.

At first, he balked at some of her suggestions, especially the two years’ pay and he pushed back on keeping Jeffery after his betrayal of confidence.

“Betrayal of confidence?” Emi asked incredulously? “BETRAYAL OF CONFIDENCE?” she repeated her eyes couldn’t grow any wider.

Mr. Woo realized his mistake and stuttered a bit before finally agreeing to everything, unreservedly.

She also added that Jefferey was to audit one of his devices once a month, randomly, and that there would be consequences if any more illegal nude images were found. Starting with an immediate audit of all his devices and computers at home. He reluctantly agreed to everything. The three of them did the devices audit soon after they left the office. The flash drive ended up not having anything on it except important client info.

Emi was finally satisfied. She wasn’t happy with the idea of leaving, or what he did, but she was glad to find out that she didn’t really have a killers heart. Plus she was glad that he didn’t die. That would have been much worse on many levels.

After the audits, Emi took Jeffery out for a donut and told him what happened and also about his big pay raise. Once again she forced him to swear to secrecy and he agreed.

“Umm… oh yeah,” Jeffery said, acting as if he just remembered something. “I took a picture of the evidence in case you did not agree to follow me to Mr. Woo’s office. Erm… maybe you want to delete it… I guess,” he said awkwardly.

Emi looked at him, she was distracted and just starting to realize what he was saying as he opened his phone and placed a full-frontal nude image of her, face-up, on the table.

“Ahhhh!” Emi grabbed the phone quickly and looked around, and behind herself. She quickly deleted it and then flushed and looked at him exasperatedly.

Jeffery smiled nervously.

Emi calmed down and returned his phone after checking it a bit more. She held her head in embarrassment for a minute then finally started to laugh about it.

It was a busy day. She was out of the office all day taking care of all the details and making sure she got her payout and that the other two got their raises. She made sure that contractors were coming to tear apart the shower rooms and turn them into storerooms instead. She also made Woo show her where all the cameras were located, and she removed each and every one of them herself.

Later she slacked everyone, telling them something came up and that she would be out of the office all day. It wasn’t unusual for a dev to sometimes work at home in the morning, so nobody questioned her absence.

That night at home she practiced what she was going to say to the crew about why she was leaving. She started to get angry again, why did this have to happen? She loved her job and her co-workers, the distance was perfect for running, but she just couldn’t work for Mr. Woo anymore, not after what happened. She didn’t want to ever lay eyes on him again.

For some unknown reason, she was surprised that Jeffrey seeing her naked didn’t bother her as much as she had thought it should. Still, it was embarrassing, his big eyes viewing her just coming out of the shower. It made her cheeks heat just thinking about it. The traumatic experience made them somehow closer. He felt like a brother to her now. He could be trusted with her secret, she knew that. She was glad that he came to her with this news.

Although, now that she thought about it, she wondered how many pictures there were of her and how long Jeffrey looked at them. Perhaps he zoomed in and took a longer look to make sure it was her. She flushed at the thought.

She tried to shake the image of him carefully looking at many naked pictures of her. Regardless, he was like a hero brother. Thinking about all this she decided that she was, so deeply glad, that she had returned the favor by getting him a proper salary.

**— Sad Wednesday —**

Emi didn’t want to leave her bed. She was warm in her pajamas and had no desire to face her last day at work. It would be hard to leave her clients hanging and her co-workers with extra pressure. No doubt they would have to extend some due dates for particular releases. The hardest part though would be saying goodbye to everyone. They were friends of hers, and Evan, in particular, would be difficult to say goodbye to. It was precious that she got to work professionally with her best friend. That was likely a once in a lifetime experience she imagined, and right now was not a great time for Evan to lose her in his day to day life. Again, Emi felt a well up of sorrow and anger about this whole thing. She pulled the blanket back up over her head.

Later that morning she messaged Evan privately via mobile. ‘Meet me at Starbucks at 9 am,’ she slacked.

‘Roger that, boss!’ he slacked back.

Erg, this was going to be harder than she thought, as she looked at his message. She felt terrible.

Emi left her house and jogged slowly to work, stopping sometimes to walk because she didn’t want to sweat too much. No more showers at work.

Up ahead was Evan. She could see him through the window from outside. He was looking at his phone. Soon they would be parting ways. This was a precious last moment. She decided to delay it for a while and enjoy a drink with him first.

“Hey Evan,” Emi said as she sat down with a coffee.

“Oh I didn’t see you come in,” he smiled.

“You look good today,” Emi said.

“Huh, what… wait, is my shirt inside out?”, he looked at his shirt.

“No, I’m just seeing you in a new light today,” she said carefully.

“It’s the stories right! You have finally come to admit that they are not that bad,” he smirked.

Feeling generous, she decided to humor him for a moment. “They actually were not terrible I guess,” she said reluctantly.

“I knew it!” He slammed his hand down on the table. People nearby turned and looked.

“I said they were not terrible,” she regretted falsely leading him on, but it was nice to see him happy for a moment, even though it was deeply annoying at the same time.

“Which story did you like the most?” he grinned.

The moron ruined the moment she thought. “Look, Evan, I called you here today to let you know that today is my last day,” she said.

“Huh? why… what are you saying Emi?” He sat up and put his drink down.

“Something personal came up and I have to quit my job today,” she said watching him closely.

“Was it the stories? The poster?” He looked confused.

“No, no not at all. It has nothing to do with our awesome team,” she explained.

“That sucks Emi! Are you just going to leave? What about the clients?” he asked unhappily.

“Derrick should be able to help fill some of the gaps, I hope. Look, Evan, I thought you would be more supportive. This isn’t easy for me you know. I didn’t want this to happen,” she explained with a serious voice.

“Will you still be living with your family?” he asked.

“Yeah, I don’t know yet. It’s complicated Evan… at least there is a silver lining here. I talked Woo into giving you a 30% raise.” she said.

“Oh really?” he said, perking up at that news.

“Yes, that should help right?”

“Honestly Emi, I would rather you stayed,” he said looking at his cup.

“I will miss you. It was precious that we got to work professionally together for the last couple of years,” she said.

“What? We are still friends right?” he asked suddenly.

“Yes, of course, best friends! You can text me anytime,” She smiled warmly.

The rest of the day went by in a blur. Nobody was happy about the news, but she treated them all to lunch, her goodbye lunch. She made linked-in connections with everyone she knew and wrote a decent goodbye email to everyone. She said she will stay connected remotely for up to two weeks to help with any technical issues. However, for the most part, she is to be considered gone.

That night she plopped down on her bed. Too tired to brush her teeth, she just put on her pajamas, laid down. After a minute she pulled the covers up over her head.

The rest of the week ended up very light and she only had to do a few hours work remotely with the technical transition. Derrick was indeed pretty good. She was glad about that.

She didn’t tell her family. She didn’t need the extra drama right now, or perhaps she would never tell them exactly why she left. They didn’t even know that she had quit her job yet.

Feeling up for a change, a big change, she started looking for work across the country on various job boards, starting with Monster.

One posting particularly caught her attention. “Looking for a full-stack female mobile developer who can handle some server-side as well. Must have a good eye for design and UI as we do high-end apps.”

As Emi read more about the posting she found out that the small dev team was all female and that they frequently traveled to exotic resort locations and created jazzy apps for clients all around the world.

An all-girls dev team seemed kind of weird, and ultra-rare in the tech world but the job and location seemed too good to be true so she researched further.

After doing some research she noticed that they certainly seemed like the real thing, and the apps that they had in the app store were amazing. Emi thought it might be exciting to work at various vacation resorts for a living. Also, she was curious about what it might be like to work with an all-girl team (especially after Woo), but mainly it was the idea of being part of a truly elite team that cares about making beautiful apps that are easy to use that attracted her. Also, she knew that once they could see what she could do they would likely love her.

Emi carefully wrote a letter of application and sent it to them along with her resume.

A few days later Emi got a phone call. After a great phone interview and follow up email, Emi decided to take the freely offered plane ticket to Hawaii. It was just an interview, but she loved the idea of a free trip to Hawaii. This couldn’t be better timing, she thought optimistically.