Summary

A counter-offer from Adrian Veidt leads to a series of uncomfortable events for Laurie. OR ... Laurie has sex with everyone.

Notes

Thanks to Sandoz_Iscariot for all of your beta help. :)}
“What if I said I’d only help you if you slept with me?”

Adrian Veidt delivered the question in such an even-tempered tone, free from seduction or innuendo, that it took Laurie Juspeczyk a few seconds to process it and a few more to get mad.

“I … Is this some sort of joke?” Laurie asked, her voice taking on a higher pitch than she wanted. “Because it’s not fucking funny.”

“It’s not a joke, Laurel.” Adrian leaned forward onto his desk and folded his hands together. “I want you to consider my question seriously.”

“Seriously?” Laurie repeated. She sat back on the guest chair, feeling at a loss for what to say. “Fuck this. She didn’t have to say anything. Laurie stood up, “I should go.”

Adrian shrugged. “That’s interesting.”

A twitch ran up Laurie’s arms. She wanted to walk to the door, but … “What’s interesting?” she asked.

“Well,” Adrian said. “You told me when you came in this was of the highest importance. You absolutely needed me to help. But apparently it’s not important enough for you to sleep with me.”

“What a big load of bullshit!” Laurie dug two fists into her hips and glared at Adrian. “You think you can treat me like a piece of meat? I thought you had more respect for me than that. I thought you had more respect for Jon than that.”

“Oh, I consider Jon a friend,” Adrian said, his voice still calm. “And I consider you a friend, as well. I’m not suggesting this because I want to cause strife between the two of you. If you were to consent, I would want this to be a mutual agreement between friends. I want you to show me that this problem is so important to you that you would do even this to solve it.”

Laurie rolled her eyes. “Right. It’s all a big test and you’d do the same thing if it was Rorschach asked you for help.”

Adrian smile was starting to disturb Laurie. “I can’t imagine Rorschach asking me for help. Would he have been here if you hadn’t come?”

“Well, he wouldn’t have come,” Laurie said. “Nite Owl told me Rorschach is still mad at you for quitting.”

“So you discussed it with both of them,” Adrian said. “Who else? Jon, of course. And Blake? I assume he knows about this impending strike.”

Laurie wondered why they’d gone from discussing the prospect of sex with each other to this. “Why does this matter to you?”

“I’m curious,” Adrian said.

Laurie raised her right thumb to her teeth, tried not to chew on it. She wanted to pull out a cigarette
but he’d already asked her earlier not to smoke in the office. “We had a meeting yesterday. Nite Owl’s idea. The D.C. cops said they might join the strike out of solidarity, so he called us and asked us to come to New York. Try to figure out the problem together.”

“Oh, yes. That’s very much like him,” Adrian said. “He told me once he was always disappointed the Crimebusters didn’t work out. Doesn’t seem like much of a group without Captain Metropolis, though. And they decided you should go?”

Laurie crossed her arms and sighed. She looked out the wide windows of Veidt’s office to the skyscrapers of New York City, eager to concentrate on anything else but this conversation.

She shook her head. “It wasn’t that organized.”

~*~*~

Actually, how it happened had been downright shitty. She didn’t even want to go, and neither did Jon, but she vaguely knew Daniel Dreiberg through “Uncle” Hollis and felt like she owed him the favor. Plus, she’d been listening to her mother’s worries about the implications of this police strike for weeks now.

They met with Nite Owl, Rorschach and The Comedian in Central Park, and she was already pissed when they arrived because she hadn’t known that Blake was coming.

“We can leave if you wish,” Jon whispered to her when they arrived.

“I’m fine,” she whispered back.

She was still angry as the two of them shook hands. Of course they fought in Vietnam, but it still infuriated her how everyone – and she – was just expected make allowances for him.

Laurie wasn’t eager to spend time with Rorschach, either. He was quiet throughout the meeting, only saying a few words when he spoke. It freaked her out, and she’d found him creepy enough when she’d first met him back in 1966.

Dan owed her, she thought. He owed her big time.

“Our first priority now should be the people, of course,” Dan said to all of them. “They’re going to need us more than ever during the strike, so … well, patrols are crucial. I’m not sure how we’re going to do this with five people.”

“How about we each take one of the five boroughs?” Laurie asked.

Blake laughed. “You’ve spent too long in D.C., kid. When the riots break out we’re not going to be issuing parking tickets to J.A.P.s and their fatass mothers out in Queens.”

Laurie bristled but she was trying too hard to keep her anger under control to speak.

Instead, Dan did. “It’s not a bad idea, Silk Spectre. But we do still need to sleep once in awhile.”

“I don’t require sleep,” Jon said, raising his hand. “If it’s only surveillance needed, I could patrol in multiple places. Or I could teleport any you to areas that needed help, if you wished.”

Dan nodded. “I guess that could work. Does everyone like that plan?”

“Like it? I fucking love it,” Blake said as he lit his cigar. “The people of New York are scared shitless of us, so we’ll let the guy who can explode them from the inside out go on 24/7
surveillance. That’ll re-assure them.”

Jon’s brows furrowed. “I won’t be killing civilians.”

“Right. So it’ll be the criminals who’ll be throwing bottles at our heads when the police strike and the people start to riot? Please. You’re only going to be killing civilians in this one, Doc.”

“Jon won’t be killing anyone,” Laurie spat back, putting emphasis on the last word.

“Oh, really?” Blake asked. “What did you think he was doing in ‘Nam, kid? Giving the gooks a spanking and then sending them on their way?”

“That’s different!” Laurie looked at Jon, hoping he would respond. He just stared at Blake.

“Look,” Dan interrupted. “The news tends to blow this stuff a bit out of proportion. We don’t even know if there are going to be any extensive protests yet, much less riots.”

“Ah, stupidity-masquerading-as-optimism.” Blake took a drag on his cigar. “You’ve learned much from your mentor, Owl Jr.”

Rorschach made an odd sort of grunting noise that Laurie realized was an approximation of a laugh. Dan gave him an angry look, then crossed his arms and turned back to The Comedian.

“I’m sorry if you think this is stupid, but I want us to do something. If you have any better suggestions …”

“Oh, I ain’t got shit,” Blake said. “I’m just happy to be doing something after ‘Nam. The boredom was killing me.”

Dan shook his head. “Well, what does everyone think we need then? I mean, is it just how people are going to react that we should be worried about? Maybe if Dr. Manhattan and Silk Spectre talk in D.C. about this?”

“Oh, we’re too fucked for that at this point,” Blake said. “People are freaking out all over the fucking country. Remember when the Minutemen used to go out on retainer to other cities? The Chicago police are worried about shit like that now.”

Dan sighed. “Rorschach, you’ve been quiet. Do you have any ideas?”

Rorschach made a low noise in the back of his throat that sent ripples of black flowing across his mask. “Not here to placate. Police have abandoned the people. Up to us to maintain order.”

Laurie was quickly getting sick of this. “We’re trying to find ways to maintain order,” she said. “And I know things haven’t been going well here, but I think people trust Dr. Manhattan.”

“Oh sure, what with the blowing people up and all,” Blake said, expelling another mouthful of smoke. “The only reason they trust Doc is because he scares the shit out of the Russians. And you’re in the class with the rest of us, kid. They don’t like you.”

Laurie bristled. Jon put a hand on her shoulder.

“Why not Veidt?” Jon asked. “Surely the people trust him.”

Laurie looked at Jon in surprise. She then glanced at the others and found they were doing so, too.

“But he’s retired,” Dan said.
“I wouldn’t ask him to come out of retirement,” Jon said. “But if he could vouchsafe for us, that would surely only be beneficial.”

Dan looked at Rorschach. “What do you think?”


“I want to have your opinion on this,” Dan said.

Rorschach didn’t answer. Dan sighed.

“Ah, don’t be so heartbroken. He’s right. It won’t do shit,” Blake said. “But if you want to knock yourself out, Doc, go ahead.”

“I am not talking to him,” Jon said. He turned and the bright white light of his eyes met Laurie’s.

Laurie frowned. “What are you saying?”

“You will be the one to go.”

“What? Why me?”

“Do you not wish to go?”

“No,” Laurie said, although a feeling of unease washed over her. She hated when Jon acted like this, and it seemed like as time went on he did this to her more and more often. “It’s just … Well, Adrian’s closer to you than he is to me. So I don’t know why you’re insisting I go.”

“I can come with you if you want,” Dan said. “Maybe if I gave him an idea of what we wanted to do he’d be more willing to help us.”

Laurie groaned. “It’s not about that,” she said, her frustration growing. She wanted to chew Jon out for this. Why did he always seem to play this bullshit predestination game with something this small? Would it have mattered that much if he had went? And why did he have to remind her of what he supposedly knew? Sometimes she wondered if he liked doing it to have some sort of control over her.

Immediately after she thought that, she felt horrible. They’d been fighting more than usual these days, but she knew Jon loved her, knew Jon would never hurt her. And despite her mother’s cynical warnings that he would stray in Vietnam given what happened between him and Janey, he’d been loyal to her all that time. She knew she could trust him.

“Nevermind,” she said. “I’ll go. Adrian’s my friend, too. I don’t mind going.”

Blake laughed. “So that’s how it works between you two?” He shook his head. “Doc, do you ever get her to do something you want just by telling her that she will?”

Laurie glared at Blake, but Jon’s response was perfectly calm.

“You misunderstand,” Jon said. “I see the future, I don’t control it. But if I tell her she’ll do something, then she will. After all, why would I tell her something would happen when it wouldn’t?”

~*~*~

Laurie had felt cold when Jon said those words, and she felt cold now. Why had Jon sent her here?
Did he know about this? Although she tried, she really didn’t understand how Jon saw the world, didn’t understand why or how he would set events in motion by suggesting she do something that she never would have done if he hadn’t suggested it. She hated even thinking that way, thinking of her life as being some intractable line from point A to point B she couldn’t affect.

And yet when she came across a choice like this, she couldn’t help but wish that line had been laid out for her.

Adrian stood up and walked over to her. She gripped the arms of the chair as he laid a hand on her shoulder.

“I’m not sure if I would have asked Rorschach, true. But it’s not because you’re a woman, or because I think poorly of you or Jon in any way,” Adrian said. “Your mother is a public figure. Your lover is a public figure. You have to understand my position at least a little bit. There’s a lot at risk for me, especially if the government gets involved. I built my life, my reputation, up from nothing, and if the government chooses to investigate me for that I’m at considerable risk.”

Laurie looked back at him. She pushed his hand off her shoulder and said, “And what about the rest of us if we get investigated?”

“Oh, come now,” Adrian said. “You have to know that you’ll be safe no matter what. Jon is too important to the government for you to be much of a liability.”

“Well, maybe not me …” an image of Dan Dreiber flashed in her mind for a moment, and she wondered why she specifically thought of him. “But it’s the principle of the thing, isn’t it?”

“You believe your career is important enough to disrupt the lives of thousands when the police strike?” he asked. “You think vigilantism is so needed in this world that it’s worth risking people’s lives? What’s an hour with me in comparison to that?”

Laurie had no answer. She thought back to the first Crimebusters meeting, remembered The Comedian burning that map and calling everyone a joke. Before she knew what a scumbag he was she thought that was cool, liked that this bullshit game she’d been pushed into could be called out for what it was. Yet now she was here, defending it. Then again, Blake might have defended it, too. He never seemed to stop. Maybe she couldn’t either.

Laurie hugged herself, her arms crushing her breasts against her chest.

“You can walk away,” Adrian said. “I want to know if you think this is worth it.”

Laurie was quiet. She was sure Adrian thought she was thinking about his words. And she was … kind of. But she was thinking more about Jon now, and how her mother had warned her that he would stray. She wondered again if this was some kind of test until she reminded herself of what Jon had said to Blake yesterday. There was no test. He wouldn’t say something would happen unless it would.

Yet he had sent her into this choice. Sent her into this choice to make it.

She tried not to be mad at him for that. It wasn’t working.

Laurie got up from the chair and looked Adrian in the eye. “If you do help, and it works,” she said, “then maybe nobody will have to get hurt. Maybe we can work everything out before the strike starts.”

“It’s possible,” Adrian said.
“All right. Let’s do this.” Laurie unhooked her belt and pulled her yellow silk blouse over her head. She reached for the shoulders of her black bodysuit, ready to peel it off her body, when she saw Adrian just staring at her, smiling.

“What?” she asked. “Why aren’t you getting undressed?”

Adrian shook his head. “That’s not the way it works.” He walked over to the windows and looked out at the city.

“Adrian, I already agreed to this. Let’s just fuck and get it over with.”

“I won’t if you agree on those terms,” Adrian said. “If this is your choice, I want you to prove to me that you want to make that choice.”

“And taking my clothes off shows I don’t want to do that how?” she asked.

“At this point, you’re having sex with me because I suggested it,” he said. “If that’s the only reason you’re doing this – not because you think the ends are worthwhile, then you’ll only resent me later if something goes wrong. I want you to show me, really show me, that this is what you want.”

Laurie couldn’t believe what she was hearing. “You’re saying you want me to seduce you?”

Adrian turned back in her direction with a graceful swoop, something that reminded Laurie of how her mother would act whenever a paparazzo came to take her picture. He ran his fingers through his hair and smiled at her. “Is that such a horrible prospect?”

Laurie felt her face warm. Adrian was very attractive. Not that it mattered before. She’d been with Jon for most of the time she’d known Adrian. Plus, she had always suspected Adrian was gay. But he was very, very good looking …

“But really, I want a clear conscience on your part. And, I’d like us both to enjoy this. That’s not so much to ask, is it?”

It actually sounded really, perfectly reasonable. And that scared her.

Adrian turned back to the window. Her mind went back to another night, when she sat on the rooftops and didn’t think twice as she’d wrapped her arms around someone who was less a man than a force of nature, someone she’d barely known, someone who was with another person. When Jon had kissed her all she could think about was how much she wanted him and how awed she was that he had wanted her, too. She stared at Adrian, and something like that old anticipation she’d felt the first time with Jon crawled across her half-naked body. She wondered if this was how Jon had felt back then, if he’d been feeling guilty about Janey when he kissed her. Or maybe he didn’t feel anything at all.

Laurie pulled the straps of her suit from her shoulders, then peeled the suit off her body and pushed it down her legs. She strained to keep her balance as she stepped out of the suit, making sure it didn’t catch on her heels. The tapping of her shoes echoed across the enormous office as she walked over to Adrian. She took a deep breath.

She ran her hands across Adrian’s shoulders first, then down his back. A soft chuckle escaped Adrian’s throat. Laurie pulled close to him, pressing her breasts into his back. She let her hands explore his chest before reaching down to fumble with the buttons on his jacket. Laurie hesitated for a moment, then pressed her lips against his neck and slowly ran her tongue across the spot she kissed. The scent of his cologne hit her, gave his flesh a musky, stinging undertaste. She exhaled,
letting her breath cool the spot where she had licked. Adrian made a hum in his throat that sounded like approval.

“Better?” Laurie asked.

“Yes.”

Her eyes glanced over Adrian’s shoulder, out into the city.

“Can they see us?”

“Nobody would see you this far up here.”

“I mean is this one-way glass?”

Adrian lifted her left hand to his lips and kissed it. The kiss went straight to her groin. Laurie pressed her chest harder into Adrian’s back.

“You can do whatever you like,” Adrian said. “I promise no one will know.”

Laurie realized he didn’t answer her question, but a part of her didn’t care. She unbuttoned his suit jacket and yanked it off his shoulders and to the floor. Adrian turned around to meet her, and she attacked his shirt next. As soon as it was unbuttoned she ran her hands across his chest, her fingers exploring every contour of his muscles.

He looked astounding, Laurie thought, almost perfect. Jon, of course, was really perfect – a model of the ideal man in atomic form. Up this close, used to making love to a being of blue, solid light, Adrian’s imperfections: his occasional birthmarks, a whisper of a scar on the side of his stomach, were a shock to her. And yet he came so close. Laurie was young, fit and powerful, but even on her best days she didn’t think she could approach what Adrian had achieved with his body.

And it was so warm and supple, she thought as she bent down to lick Adrian’s chest, reached behind his back to fondle his ass. Jon was warm, too, but there was harshness to his light, something that always felt like it should scorch her when they made love, like she was standing too close to a star. Adrian felt … normal. Felt like a person. She’d had boyfriends before Jon, but she had been a virgin when they fell in love. Laurie knew she was lucky, knew how many women in America would have loved to have what she did, but sometimes she would wonder …

A sick feeling grew in her stomach as she reached for his belt. Maybe this was the wrong choice. Maybe she’d allowed her curiosity to overtake her judgment. Maybe she should stop.

Laurie pulled down his pants and wrapped her hand around his cock, which was already a bit stiff. She felt along the head, marveling at how soft the skin felt despite how hard it was becoming. Adrian threw his head back and moaned, and Laurie didn’t want to stop.

Laurie dropped to her knees. She stroked Adrian’s cock with her left hand, and then gripped his hip with her right as she wrapped her mouth around it. Laurie suckled his dick slowly, dragging her tongue across it. She started first on the underside, then swirled her tongue around the head before moving the cock to either side of her mouth.

Adrian’s hands gripped Laurie’s shoulders as she continued to suck. The fingers of his right hand moved up her neck. They tangled in her hair, holding it tight. Laurie stopped and knocked his hand away.

Laurie glared up at Adrian. “Don’t hold me like that. I know what I’m doing.”
“My apologies,” Adrian said, his breathing labored. “But can you go faster?”

Laurie stood up, her hand still wrapped around Adrian’s penis. She stroked it, mixing her spit with his pre-come. Lust radiated a low hum throughout her body, making her bold.

“You said I could do whatever I liked,” Laurie gripped his cock tighter, making Adrian wince. “Right?”

Adrian exhaled sharply. “Right.”

Laurie leaned forward and licked a line down his cheek. Adrian wrapped his arms around her and moaned as she stroked him.

“You have condoms?”

Adrian nodded. “In the desk.”

“I want you on the desk.”

“Okay.”

“I want to be on top.”

Adrian smiled. “Fair enough.”

Laurie let go of Adrian. As he moved over to the desk and retrieved the condoms she pulled off her heels. Within a few moments he had the desk cleared and lay across it. Laurie moved over to him and he handed her the condom.

“Do you mind?” he asked.

Laurie shook her head and ripped the package open. She hadn’t used one of these in awhile. She’d wanted it the first few times with Jon, not believing him when he told her that he was sterile and a bit afraid of the results if he’d turned out to be wrong, but after awhile they did away with them. Laurie rolled the condom over Adrian’s penis, then pulled herself up onto the desk.

She straddled him across his chest. Anticipation and the feel of Adrian’s body had made Laurie wet, but she wanted more before she let him penetrate her. She grabbed his wrists and pressed his palms against her breasts. When he didn’t do anything at first, she wondered if her suspicion about his sexuality had been right.

Adrian squeezed her breasts roughly but not harsh enough to hurt. Laurie began to moan softly as she rutted against the area above his cock, pushing against both his groin and his hands. As he continued to touch her, Laurie realized how precise his touches became, like she was some puzzle he was trying to solve. His fingers pressed against and fondled her nipples, and she could feel herself getting wetter as they hardened. He pinched them, and when one of his touches made her cry out, he did the same thing again.

Laurie was ready now. She stood up on the desk, then crouched down onto his shaft. Laurie stifled a groan as she felt her body adjust to the feeling of him inside her. Adrian’s ran his hands along her hips and she looked down at him.

He seemed … Laurie couldn’t even tell. His breathing was labored. He looked … well, he didn’t look uninterested, but she kept searching for something in his face: lust, triumph, anything. He smiled at her when he caught her staring at him, but even then she saw little emotion in his smile.
“Are you all right?” he asked, even though he didn’t look concerned. “You seemed to be enjoying yourself.”

“Well,” Laurie said, her lust cooling a bit after that comment, but not enough to make her stop, “it feels good.”

Adrian chuckled.

“I just needed a moment,” Laurie groaned. “Hold on …”

Laurie pushed herself up on Adrian’s cock, then back down again. She moaned as her sex tightened and loosened against his groin. It took her a few minutes to find her rhythm but she was soon bouncing up and down.

Adrian’s eyes closed and he began to thrust into her. Laurie cried out and pressed against him, delighting in the feel of Adrian pushing inside her.

It was getting hard to sit up. She leaned forward, resting her arms on either side of Adrian’s head. He lifted his hips and continued to fuck her.

The light outside shifted, and Laurie could feel the glass window reflecting the moonlight in her eyes. She wondered what it would look like to anyone else. Her naked and on top of Adrian Veidt, the both of them surrounded by nothing but the eyes of his dead Egyptian gods and the light of the city. She wondered what it would be like if Jon came in and saw her, and wondered if a part of him could see this happening now. Or maybe not happening now, but happening in his mind’s eye if she ever told him this in the future.

Adrian gripped her hips and held her in place as he thrust into her hard, making her yell. It hurt, and she loved it. She pushed back against him, moving her hips back onto his cock as he thrust inside her pussy. She was so close. She ran a hand across his chest, desperate to touch him in some way, wishing she could do much more. Yet Laurie felt ashamed of her wants even as she felt them consume her. She wanted to be telling herself she was only doing it for those people out there in the city, only doing it because this was the right thing to do and the people deserved what she and the others could give them so much that it was worth this.

But the truth was this was all surprisingly easy.

Adrian thrust faster and came, his face twisting in what seemed to Laurie like the only honest face he’d given her that night. She kept pushing back onto his cock. Adrian reached up and grabbed her breasts hard, twisting her nipples as he pinched them. She threw her head back and, with a loud cry, came.

Laurie was still trying to catch her breath as she pulled herself off of Adrian. She sat on the edge of his desk. Adrian got up a few minutes later. Laurie looked back to see him pull off and tie up the condom. He looked disappointed.

She called his name but he didn’t answer. He walked over to his suit and began to put it back on.

“So …” she said as he zipped up his pants. “When are you doing the press conference?”

Adrian sighed, and then looked up at her, the serene smile back on his face.

“Laurie,” Adrian said. “I never actually promised you anything.”

For the second time this night, Adrian left her so shocked she wasn’t able to think straight. Then
she wasn’t sure if she wanted to cry or scream. Oh no, she thought. Oh fuck no.

“But you said ... you said if I slept with you that you’d help us.”

“’What if I said I’d only help you if you slept with me?’ Those were my exact words. It was a rhetorical question. It wasn’t a promise.”

Laurie grabbed Adrian’s nameplate off his desk and chucked it at his head. He almost dodged, cried out as it clipped him.

“Rhetorical question?” she shrieked. She got off the desk and stomped her way over to him until she was an inch from his face. “That wasn’t rhetorical fucking we just did on your desk.”

She’d hoped her words would get Adrian’s attention. Instead he just kept rubbing the spot where the nameplate had hit him.

“I should have tried to catch,” he whispered to himself.

“Adrian!”

He gave her that fucking smile again. “Well, I’m not willingly going to help you. So what are you going to do about that?”

“You ... I ...” she blubbered, “Look, you made me think we had an agreement with this.”

“We didn’t.”

“Because you tricked me.”

“I apologize.”

“Bullshit!” Laurie screamed in his face. “You’re not sorry.”

“I’m sorry you’re upset.”

“Did you think I wouldn’t be?”

“Possibly, but you made the choice.”

Laurie wanted to hit him. “I made the choice based on what you told me would happen if I did. Because I thought you were a man of your word and not a lying sack of shit.”

“I didn’t lie to you. But nevertheless, you still made the choice, risks and all,” Adrian sat back at his desk. “Anyway, I still have some work to do today.”

Laurie felt like slamming his stupid head against that desk, but the horror and hurt she felt from what just happened was quickly draining her. Her body and mind numb, she collected her clothes from off the floor and dressed.

“I thought you were a better man than this, Adrian,” she said as she tied her trench coat over her Silk Spectre costume. “I really did.”

She walked toward the office’s exit.

“Laurie,” Adrian called.
A million obscenities sprang to her mind. She looked behind her instead. “What?”

Adrian sighed. He laid his hands on his desk and folded them across each other. “I don’t know if you’ll want to talk to me again after what happened tonight. It doesn’t matter to me either way, although if you choose not to tell Jon, I hope we can still be civil.”

He waited, as if anticipating an answer. Laurie didn’t give him one. He started talking again.

“I just want you to know, and I don’t expect you to believe me, that I didn’t do this because I had some secret plan to coerce you into bed. I have no designs on you whatsoever.”

Laurie grunted in disgust. “I’m not sure that makes me feel better.”

“Well, even if you still believe I’m a liar that’s the truth. I didn’t do this to humiliate you. You did something you normally wouldn’t, something you found repulsive, for what you thought was right, and I have the utmost respect for that.”

“But not enough respect to do it yourself,” Laurie spat.

Adrian looked down at his desk, and Laurie was sure she must have shamed him a bit by what she said because he looked genuinely hurt. Good, she thought.

“Laurie, I … I hope you’ll understand one day.”

With those words, she’d officially had enough. She slammed the door behind her as she walked out.

End Part One.
Rorschach

Laurie didn’t tell Jon.

When she got back to their empty hotel room, she took the most thorough shower of her life, scrubbing everywhere from the inside of her sex to underneath her fingernails. The hotel soap was disgusting – it smelled like licorice and made her skin dry and rubbery – but she wanted to be certain he wouldn’t know. Laurie still wasn’t sure how Jon’s powers worked. Hell, sometimes she thought he wasn’t very sure. The closest approximation she ever came was a short documentary she’d seen earlier that year. It filmed a man and a woman lying on a blanket in increments from billions of light years away to the molecules in the man’s skin. If Jon could see to that extent … Laurie didn’t want to know what he could find on her.

Laurie sat in one of the stiff upholstered chairs, a lit cigarette in hand, as she waited for Jon to return. She tried to read a magazine but she couldn’t concentrate on any of the articles. Her mind interrupted itself with thoughts of Adrian. Anger tore through her one minute and arousal the next, both undercut with shame at how stupid she’d been.

She’d just lit her fourth cigarette when Jon returned in a flash of light. She put it out and leaped up to meet him.

“Laurie?” he asked, his wispy, otherworldly voice vibrating throughout her body. “Is something wrong?”

She wanted to say no, but couldn’t bear to do so. She kissed him instead, pushing inside to meet his tongue, which vibrated with energy and never failed to make every hair of her body stand on end.

They were soon on the bed, Laurie’s clothes dissolved off her before she hit the covers. Jon wrapped his arms around her, and Laurie felt like she was 16 again.

It occurred to Laurie later, as Jon’s mouth kissed a trail along her thigh, that she still had a good case to be mad at him if he set her up. She hissed as Jon’s tongue pushed against her clitoris. On the other hand, she remembered Jon’s surprise at her reaction when he came in, and Laurie liked to believe there were some things Jon still didn’t know, that there were some things Jon never knew, and above all, that he was ruled by genuine passion like everyone else, and not just following some unseen script.

Despite the shame she felt, despite how when she closed her eyes she sometimes saw Adrian and flinched, it didn’t take long for her to be ready. She climbed on top of Jon and let her hands roam over him. As they made love, she basked in the harsh light of his body and felt cleansed, like she could wipe away that hour and be innocent again.

Jon came first, his moans sending soft vibrations throughout the room, his skin glowing a shade brighter as he reached climax. The sight of it was often enough to make her come immediately after. This time, it only took a few more hard thrusts against him and she was finished.

They lay together, their limbs intertwined, for what Laurie knew would be their last time together in a warm bed for quite awhile. Jon bent over and kissed her forehead.

“What happened with Adrian?” he asked.
Her heart skipped a beat, and Laurie tried not to show any surprise as she wondered if Jon could hear that. She coughed to clear her throat.

“Nothing,” she said. “He said it would be a risk to his reputation.”

It wasn’t a lie, she thought. Not really.

“I see,” Jon said after a pause. “That’s unfortunate.”

A moment later he closed his eyes. He wasn’t asleep – just silently waiting for her to fall asleep and wake up in the morning. Laurie was stunned. Jon didn’t know. She got away with it. He couldn’t know, could he? Otherwise he wouldn’t have asked her. Otherwise he would have just told her what she would say. Unless this was all part of his script … unless he really knew … yet didn’t know … unless he would soon find out.

Laurie closed her eyes. She tried her best to sleep, wrapped safe in the arms of the most powerful man in the world, feeling like a whore.

~*~*~

At first, the situation wasn’t so bad.

The group – it felt wrong to call them the “Crimebusters” – met the next day at Captain Metropolis’ old place. It was empty now. Nelson Gardner had created a trust to turn his home into a museum for masked adventurers, but legal problems with his estate, Hollis and her mother’s preoccupation with other projects and the lack of cooperation from some of the former Minutemen’s relatives (Silhouette’s sister in particular refused to release anything from Ursula’s crimefighting days) meant the plan and the building itself had fallen into decay.

Dan smiled when she and Jon walked in the doors, fresh from teleporting (and Laurie throwing up) just outside. Blake was already there, smoking his cigar with his back against the wall. Rorschach sat on a dusty table, a hard hunk of bread cupped in his hands. He raised his head to look up at them briefly, and then turned back to the bread, tearing it in half.

“Didn’t work, huh?” Blake asked.

Laurie flinched as all the eyes in the room turned to her. Jon put a hand on her shoulder, and for the first time ever, it didn’t bring her any comfort.

“No,” she said. “He … He said he’s not willing to come out of retirement and risk his reputation if things go badly.”

Only Dan’s mouth curled downward in disappointment. He said something sympathetic, but Laurie’s eyes couldn’t help but stray to the other two. Blake looked at her with suspicion at first, but after their eyes met, he shrugged and turned away. Rorschach continued to stare – she could feel it even through his unsettling mask. His face was still turned to her as he reached into his trenchcoat, pulled out a pat of butter and spread it on the bread. She finally turned her own eyes away, shuddering in disgust, as he pulled up his mask and began to chew with loud smacking noises.

Dan coughed, “Well, um … I’ve been watching the news and, unfortunately, we’re going to be on our own when the strike officially starts in three hours. I don’t know if you guys have been following, but Abe Beame sent a request to the state police for back-up and, well, they said no.”

Laurie groaned, “Serve and protect, indeed. Don’t tell me they’re striking, too.”
“They ain’t, but only because their contracts ain’t being renewed at the same time,” Blake said. “I saw the department head on TV, he says not helping is a symbol of solidarity, as if we were going to go up to the Catskills and arrest some pot-smoking hippies.”

“What does the mayor think of all this?” Jon asked.

“Beame?” Dan shook his head. “He’s staying neutral. He wants the police to return to work, but he won’t condemn us, either.”

Rorschach gulped and said, “Of course he won’t. Jewish. Zionist bankers profit from destruction caused by rioting. Funnels money back to Soviet allies in Israel.”

Laurie couldn’t believe her ears, “What?”

Dan groaned and turned away from Rorschach, “Some anti-Semitic New Frontiersman bullshit. Just ignore him.”

“Blinded by own affiliations, Daniel,” Rorschach insisted, some crumbs spitting out of his mouth. “Serial killer you caught earlier this year was one of them, caused similar panic during the blackout.”

Blake took his cigar out of his mouth and laughed. “Yeah, you’d like to believe the world is that simple, wouldn’t you, Inky?”

“Hurm.” Rorschach stuffed the last bit of bread into his mouth and pulled his mask down over his chin. “Know much of the chaos of this world.”

Laurie wanted to say something, didn’t like how everyone was leaving what he said as if it was okay for him to hold those opinions, but Dan seemed to have already moved on.

“We’re wasting time with this,” Dan said. “I think the idea for Dr. Manhattan to do surveillance on the city is a good one. Actually, we might need it early. There’ve been traffic problems near the Lincoln Tunnel from a lot of residents leaving the city. I think I’m going to take the Owlship around there, make sure everything goes smoothly.”

“What about the rest of us?” Laurie asked. “Have there been any reports of riots?”

“Not yet, but it is still too early,” Dan said. “They say some picket lines are going to be going up after the sun rises. Until then, I think Dr. Manhattan should do general patrol and maybe everybody else can take some of the rougher neighborhoods. Rorschach, can you take care of the Lower East Side?”

Rorschach made a noise that Laurie guessed was assent.

“I’ll take Harlem,” Blake said.

“What about me?” Laurie asked.

“Why don’t you see what’s going on in Hell’s Kitchen?” Dan asked.

“Okay,” she said. She was confident, but thought perhaps that confidence was misplaced. She’d been patrolling D.C. for years and now she was being thrown into a neighborhood she knew nothing about in a time of chaos. This probably was not an optimal plan.

“We’ll start patrols in about an hour. I know we’ve got some time, but I’d like for it to overlap,
make sure nothing bad happens in the transition.” Dan pulled a device out of one of his pockets that Laurie assumed controlled the Owlship. “I’d suggest you guys go rest and get food or whatever if you haven’t already. I’m going to start off toward the river.”

Laurie could never eat before patrol, although she did step outside for a cigarette. She could have been like Blake and just smoked inside, but she wanted to be alone for a bit. Jon seemed to understand, nodded as she reached for her coat and pointed to a pocket within them. She walked outside.

It was nighttime. Soon the omnipresent street lamps of the city would make it so there would seem to be no difference between night and day, but aside from the dim lights from the windows and the burning tip of her cigarette, the grounds of Nelson’s estate had no light. She could slip away here, she thought, be a true spectre and hide her secrets among the once cultivated but now-overgrown trees. She shook her head. What had gotten into her? One fuck-up wasn’t going to turn her coward. She had lots more to give, didn’t she?

The door behind her opened and she groaned. “Blake, I –” She turned around to see Rorschach standing in back of her. “Oh … hi.”

“Hurm,” he responded. “You mind?”

Yes, she thought. “No,” she said. She held out her cigarette. “Want one?”

Rorschach shook his head. He stood next to her, saying nothing, his breaths coming out in quiet hums. Laurie shuddered and took a drag on her cigarette, hoping she could mentally will him to go away.

“You’re hiding something,” he said suddenly.

Laurie started, and then frowned when she saw that shifting mask turned to her. She thought the blots looked like a woman on top of a sprawled-out man, but she attributed that to a trick of the darkness.


Laurie tried to keep her body from tensing, her face from scowling, at his words. “Adrian said ‘no.’ I’m not lying about that.”

“Never said you were lying,” Rorschach said. “Said you were hiding.”

His bullshit reminded her of Adrian’s stupid rhetorical question and she couldn’t keep the scowl off her face. “Look just … Just fuck off, okay? We’ve met twice before. You don’t exactly know me.”

“Know when people are hiding,” Rorschach insisted. He turned away. “And you don’t hide much. Will be watching you.”

Laurie was about to spit something out at that insult when a bright light shone down upon them. The two of them looked up to see the Owlship flying overhead.

Rorschach made a disgusted noise, and then went back inside the building. Laurie took another drag and tried not to be nervous.

~*~*~
The job was taking some time to get used to. New York City was taller, dirtier and louder than D.C. This made some things difficult. She never used much equipment, although this wasn’t by choice. Her mother said weapons didn’t work for the Silk Spectre’s image despite Laurie’s requests to learn how to shoot guns. Tired of walking around in heels, Laurie had once tried driving a motorcycle, but after a couple of parking tickets (apparently you couldn’t abandon it on the streets of the Mall to foot-chase after a purse-snatcher) and a nasty crash that broke her ribs and gave her a minor concussion, she gave up on that. Mostly, Laurie stuck to multiple bits of rope that she tied around her shoulders and used to tie up bad guys for the police, but she couldn’t exactly use those that night.

So she kept to the alleys, an old trick of hers. The element of surprise usually gave her the time to disarm any criminal, whether he had a baseball bat or a glock. She knew this couldn’t last forever. She’d followed the stories of the looting during the blackout this summer – both she and her mother had wanted to know if “Uncle” Hollis was doing all right during it after all – and expected something like the utter chaos of that time. Laurie knew at one point she was going to have to jump into one of those frays, especially if the protests got out of hand.

But if the chaos was coming, it was early, yet. Most people were smart enough not to make themselves victims. Many businesses and apartment buildings were closed with the windows shuttered. She saw one man pounding on the door of his apartment building, begging to be let in, saying that he didn’t know about their curfew. He was out there for fifteen minutes before someone came.

That’s not to say the streets were empty, but those who walked them had guilty or wary faces. Once, while Laurie was coming out of an alleyway, she accidentally kicked a garbage can and a woman on the street whirled in her direction, brandishing a can of mace even though the woman probably couldn’t see Laurie.

Others saw the strike as an opportunistic venture. During her patrol down 8th Avenue, some of the prostitutes reminded passersby of the strike, told them they could do it now without fear of getting caught. Laurie had no love for prostitution, saw it as degrading and those who practiced it as victims, but she decided not to stop them. There were more important things to fix.

Not that she didn’t have work to do on 8th Avenue. The Westies were big in the entire area, and while she had to deal with the occasional thief, most of the night was spent keeping them from assaulting any of the people with whom they did “business.” She caught a mobster attacking a prostitute, demanding the pay her pimp wouldn’t give him. Laurie broke the mobster’s arm, then his leg. She hated doing it, but with nobody to take him to a jail cell she didn’t have much of a choice. Still, she decided to call the paramedics the next time she found a phone. If the police won’t come, maybe they would. It was more than the bastard deserved, but she had principles.

When she turned to leave, the prostitute, who she then noticed had long, brown hair, ran up to her. The woman’s grasped onto her arm, her dirty hands and long, red fingernails digging into the fabric of Laurie’s blouse.

“Are you … are you her?” the woman asked. “Are you the real one?”

“Um … yeah.”

“Oh, wow!” she said. “Wow. I’ve got to thank you.”

Laurie gave her the standard smile she gave to everyone she saved. “It’s no trouble. Just be more careful next time.”
“Yeah, but … damn. I mean, I play you all the time,” the woman said.

Laurie blinked. “What?

“I look kind of like you, see? And my customers … they want me to dress up in that costume,” the woman reached down to pet the material above her thigh, an expression of amazement on her face. “Then they usually want me to get tied up while they pretend to be supervillains and stuff. They say some nasty things sometimes … and sometimes they like to hit me. But … girl, it makes me a lot of money.”

Laurie muttered a “thank you” and walked away, feeling disturbed. Yet as she continued on her way, the image of her on top of Adrian Veidt appeared in her head, and Laurie wondered if she had any right to feel that way.

~*~*~

She’d been on the streets for six hours without any rest. That was how she excused what happened later.

It wasn’t the Westies this time. Just three large thugs picking on an old man. She’d thought she’d taken down the first one when she’d burst out of the darkness, bringing her fists down on his head. It gave her time to fight off the next one. She kicked him in the face with enough force to knock him against the nearby alley wall before the last man attacked. She was ready, but so was the first man. He was up, had got her by an arm before she realized it. Before she could turn to attack him back the last man had her other arm.

They knocked her head against the brick as she was pushed against the wall. The old man was already running away, and Laurie couldn’t blame him. She hadn’t hurt the second man as well as she thought, either, because he got up. He rubbed his face, his mouth turned up in a leer.

“Silk Spectre.” His voice sent a jolt of fear down Laurie’s spine. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a switchblade. The way he looked at her told Laurie he wasn’t going to use it to cut her throat.

The image of her mother pressed to the floor under the Comedian’s body flashed through Laurie’s mind, followed by an image of that woman tied up and wearing her clothes. Wait, she ordered herself. Don’t panic. Whatever you do, Laurie, don’t panic.

“I wonder what a superheroine’s cunt tastes like,” he sneered, his compatriots laughing as he did so.

Laurie glared back at him, which only made him laugh more. He got very close, close enough that she could smell the chewing tobacco on his breath. He looked down to unbuckle his belt.

Laurie struck. She knocked her head hard against his, sending him tumbling back and causing him to release his knife. Then she twisted her arms out of the other two’s holds. This time, she didn’t make any mistakes. She grabbed one of them and brought his head down upon her knee so hard she could feel his nose break. She kicked the next one in the groin, poked him in the eyes and gave him a scratch across the face. The one with the knife she punched repeatedly in the face and chest. He put up a fight, and once his hands even clasped onto the yellow silk of her outfit for a moment, but eventually until he went down. After his head hit the concrete, she ground her heel into his groin.

For the first few minutes after the fight, Laurie couldn’t hear or feel anything but her own labored
breathing. When she walked away she realized one of her heels had come loose in the fray, and her yellow shirt had a large rip down the center. She snapped the skullbone chocker off her neck in an attempt to breathe easier.

“You’re okay,” she whispered to herself. “You’re okay. No big deal.”

Laurie walked down into an alley and felt the beginnings of tears sting her eyes. No. No, this was stupid. She handled it. She wasn’t in danger. She’d been in far worse situations than that.

But that wasn’t really what she was upset about, was it?

Laurie leaned against the alleyway and slid down until she was sitting on the concrete. She rubbed her eyes as she cried, her choker still clutched in her hand. Fuck, she thought to herself, repeated the word in her head like a mantra. Fucking Veidt. Sure, he didn’t want to humiliate her. Sure, he hoped she could understand. Fucker. She snorted back a gob of snot, wiped whatever was left on her wrist.

She felt the world go dark, like it was folding in on itself, then come into light again. She stumbled off the dusty table and vomited on the floor before she realized she was back in Gardner’s old home, before she looked up and saw inkblots staring down at her.

Laurie couldn’t read any expression on Rorschach’s shifting face, but he walked backward in shock, making a noise that sounds like disgust, and that told her enough. She stumbled to her feet, intending to slug him, but Dan ran to her side.

“Laurie, what happened?” he asked.

“Nothing,” she spat. She could feel Dan’s presence beside her, but her eyes were locked on Rorschach. She snapped the choker back around her sweaty neck, and the clasp tangled in her hair once before she got it right. She tried to pull the rip in her shirt together as if it would save some her dignity. “I had a bad fight. It happens to everyone.”

“Well, you look shaken up. Do you need …?”

“No. She looked around the room and saw Jon standing behind her. He just looked back at her, his expression impossible to read. “Jon, why are we here?”

“Little is going on that needs immediate attention,” Jon said. In another flash of light Blake appeared. “I thought it was a good time to reconvene. Do you require me to fix your clothes?”

The question was like flipping a switch. Her response came out in a scream: “Fix my clothes?” She stomped over to him on shaky heels. “Do you know what happened to me? Do you know what I’ve been through?”

“Laurie, please calm down,” Jon said, his voice still maddeningly calm.

“Yeah,” Dan said. “I’m sure whatever’s bothering you we can fix.”

Laurie ignored him. “What do you know?” she screeched in Jon’s face. “Tell me what you know. Do you know what I just went through? Do you know what happened the other night? Tell me!”

“Did I come in at a bad time?” Blake asked.

“No,” Jon said. “I brought you here precisely when you were supposed to come.”
“What does that even mean?” Laurie asked. “I mean what the fuck? You’ve determined that the universe has some grand plan to have him here?” She pointed to Blake.

“Laurie, can we talk about this in private?”

“Well, I don’t know, Jon. Do we talk about this in private?” Laurie asked.

“Okay, look,” Dan said. “We’ve all had a rough night. Maybe if we all just took a break and …”

Blake laughed, interrupting Dan. “Jesus, we’re the only ones keeping New York from chaos and our fearless leader suggests a time out.”

At this point, she was too angry to speak. She wanted to be out of the room. She wanted to be back in D.C. She wanted to go back in time and erase what she did and every stupid thing Jon said.

“Hurm.” Rorschach walked out from the corner where he was sulking and over to Laurie. “Confirms suspicions. Silk Spectre is hiding something about conversation with Veidt.”

“Rorschach, leave her alone.”

Rorschach snarled at Dan. “She must have secrets, Nite Owl. Hysterical reactions indicative of guilty conscience.”

She reacted before she thought about what she was doing. Rorschach fell back onto a nearby chair as her fist slammed into his face.

Blake exploded in laughter as Rorschach got up. Laurie could hear Jon calling her name. Rorschach lunged at her and bounced back against a shield Jon put up before he could reach her, falling onto the floor. Blake laughed even harder.

“I suggest you not do that again,” Jon said to Rorschach. Only the barest hint of anger could be heard in his voice, but Laurie was glad he seemed to care about something for once.

Blake sighed as he let out his last laugh. “That was great, kid. Really great. Doesn’t help your case at all, but that was hilarious to watch.”

Dan helped Rorschach off the floor, and Rorschach repaid him by yanking his arm away as soon as he was up. He turned his face to Laurie and she thought she saw the brief outline of a devil’s head before it turned back into indecipherable black blobs.

“Going out,” Rorschach spat and turned toward the door. “Someone needs to watch this city.”

“Hey, wait!” Dan tried to grab his arm again, but Rorschach just walked faster. “Rorschach, don’t leave like this. If you need to talk, I …”

Rorschach growled and spun around to look at Dan. “Don’t want to talk. Told you many times before, Daniel. Stop asking.”

The door slammed behind him. Now who’s being hysterical? Laurie thought.

Blake sighed and got up, lighting a new cigar as he did so. “Well, that was a nice little break. Thanks for the entertainment, kid, but you might want to pick better times to fight with your boyfriend.”

“I –” Laurie started to say, but Blake was out the door before she could finish. Her righteous anger faded away into a sort of tiredness.
Dan didn’t seem to know what to say or do, either. He stood staring at the doorway, and then scratched the back of his cowl.

“Nite Owl,” Jon said. “Can we have a few minutes alone?”

“Huh?” Dan said in a way that sounded to Laurie like he was coming out of a trance. “Yeah, sure, I just …” he sighed. “I know he’ll be back, but … I don’t know. I don’t understand it.”

Seeing Dan like this, Laurie felt guilty. She hated the creepy little bastard, but she hadn’t wanted him to leave, especially at a time like this.

“Maybe … maybe I should try to follow him and apologize,” she said. “I … I might have overreacted.”

Dan sighed. “I’m not sure if he would listen by this point.”

“I’d advise against it,” Jon said, reappearing at her side and making her flinch. “You seem shaken up.”

“I’m fine,” Laurie lied. “I’m sorry I snapped at you. Can you just fix my outfit? I’ll try to be as fast as possible.”

“It … Whatever you’re doing will take awhile,” Jon held out his hand and she could feel the loose heel reattach itself to her shoe, could feel the pieces of her silk blouse move as the fibers joined together again. This time she could feel the sadness of his voice and wanted to forgive him everything, wanted to stay and confess and work toward rebuilding their relationship.

But Jon said she would leave, and so she did.

~*~*~

Rorschach was far easier to find than she expected.

Whoever stole from the electronics store was sloppy. He had smashed in the storefront window, and Laurie followed the shattered glass and blood to find Rorschach behind the building, stuffing a screaming, crying man into a metal garbage can.

“My hands!” he cried out. “You broke my hands, you fucking psycho!”

Rorschach pushed the lid down on the garbage can and kicked hard against the metal, which made the man scream again.

“Jesus Christ!” Laurie said.

Rorschach looked up at her, and she could see his body go tense. He turned the garbage can on its side and gave it a hard kick, sending it rolling away from them. The man inside screamed again as it hit the side of the nearest building. He scrambled out soon after, running away from both of them.

Laurie wanted to yell at him for what he’d done, but she remembered the Westie whose limbs she’d broken and decided she really couldn’t hold the moral high ground with this one. What sort of new world were they living in, anyway?

“Silk Spectre,” Rorschach muttered. “See you’ve cleaned up a bit.”

Laurie glared. That slimy son of a … “You know, I came to apologize, but you’re making me
wonder why I bothered.”

Oh good, that was getting things off on the right foot.

“Needn’t have.” Rorschach adjusted his gloves. “Would have preferred information to useless social niceties.”

Laurie gave an exasperated sigh. “You’re still going on about that? Look Rorschach, nothing happened with Adrian that has any bearing on the police strike or Zionist conspiracy plot or whatever other weird bullshit you’ve got in your brain. Okay? So why don’t we just put in a new start and get back to work together?”

“Hurm. Yes,” Rorschach said. “Assessment of my political views surely conducive to new start of trust and understanding.”

Laurie decided she liked Rorschach better when he was terrorizing petty thieves than when he decided to make jokes. “Look who’s talking. You don’t even have expressions and I can feel you glaring at me whenever I enter a room.”

Rorschach made a low growl in the back of his throat. “Anyone would glare given your behavior lately.”

“That’s not what this is about, though, is it?” Laurie stepped close to him, so close her face was just an inch away. She realized, with surprise, that she was taller than him. Something about his manner usually made him seem bigger.

“If you just mistrusted me you wouldn’t make all those comments about the way I dress.”

Rorschach looked away from her. “Merely think costume choice is … inappropriate.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Inappropriate. You know, I think it’s more than that. I know about that rag you read … what was it? The New Frontiersman? I know what they say about women. I know what they think about women like me.” A flicker of excitement ran through her, as she spoke, something that exulted at the idea of making him understand. The feeling was strong and seemed to tap into something … No, no, not that. She tried to put the thought out of her head … and yet.

Rorschach’s voice was low. “Don’t know me, either, Silk Spectre.”

“Oh really? I don’t think you’re that hard to figure out. I think I know what scares you.”

Rorschach and she faced each other, and the thought of what she wanted to do burned itself into her brain. It was wrong. It was gross. But Laurie thought of that woman she’d saved earlier that night, tied up and dressed in her clothes. She thought about the glinting edge of the thug’s switchblade knife. High with feelings of rage, shame and a sick sort of lust she didn’t quite understand, Laurie gripped Rorschach’s wrists and pressed his hands to her breasts.

A horrified cry muffled its way through Rorschach’s mask. He pushed Laurie away and she fell backward onto the ground.

Rorschach stared down at her, no longer looking small as he glowered over her. “Disgusting.”

Laurie groaned and stood up, her body shaking with anger yet tense with something she didn’t like to admit. God, why the hell did she make him touch her? What the hell was she thinking? She thought again about Adrian, about how he made her so hot and eager and damn it, though, that was only once. She shouldn’t want this …
Laurie lunged for Rorschach. He raised his hands to meet her, but the two of them still toppled back to the ground. She moved her legs so she was straddling him as she lay on top of him. The smell of him hit her nostrils and, oh God, he reeked like a fucking sewer. Yet she thought of the way he looked at her back at their headquarters, how he reeled back in disgust because her outfit was ripped and damn it, he had no right to do that.

Rorschach squirmed against her, and even though he was covered in layers of clothing, Laurie delighted in the feel of his body. “Get off me!”

“Oh no,” Laurie said, her voice coming out huskier than she expected. She couldn’t deny her own arousal, now. She reached for Rorschach’s scarf, began pulling it loose. “No, I think you need to be taught a lesson.”

Rorschach growled and grabbed onto her wrists, squeezing them hard enough to hurt. A sick fear grew in Laurie’s stomach as she realized how strong his grip was, as she realized it wouldn’t take much for him to just snap them.

“Don’t want you. Don’t want your filthy …” he choked on his last word.


Rorschach made a disgusted noise and threw her hands away, turned his face from her. “Filthy mouth, too.”

Laurie smirked and yanked off the rest of his scarf, “That’s not what I want from you, anyway.”

Rorschach looked back at her. “What?”

An idea had implanted itself into her head, something that she knew she would find repulsive if her nipples weren’t already so hard she knew Rorschach could see them through her flimsy costume. She had a suspicion that what he had done to her wrists was less an effort to get her to stop than a show of strength. Small as he was, she already knew a myriad of ways she could throw someone off her if she was in Rorschach’s position. Laurie wanted to test her theory.

She leaned down to meet Rorschach’s face, whispered in his right ear. “I want you on your stomach. I want to see what you feel like inside.”

Rorschach pushed her away so she was sitting back up on him, although it didn’t escape Laurie’s attention how his fingers still gripped onto her shoulders.

“Disgusting,” he growled. “Unnatural, feminist-inspired perversion.”

Laurie shifted against him. She could barely feel anything, but Rorschach moaned in such a way she could tell how he really felt.

“You seem to want it,” she said. She stood up, no longer holding onto Rorschach but not moving from where he lay between her legs. “You really want to know what I did with Adrian? Turn around and maybe I’ll tell you.”

Rorschach propped himself up on his elbows, his hat knocked onto the ground. “I … You … No. You’re wrong. Don’t want it. Past it. No longer … no longer him. Died. Died in the flames and yet …” He turned so he was on all fours, made like he was going to crawl away, but looked back instead. “Temptress! Whore!”

With those words Laurie threw herself on top of him, straddling him near his buttocks. She
grabbed onto his wrists, and then held them in one hand as she tied them together with his scarf. Laurie pressed her body against him, then remembered something that had happened earlier that day. She rummaged through the pockets of his trenchcoat.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“Seeing if you have any leftovers … ah, here we go.” Her fingers wrapped around a pat of butter. “I didn’t want to use just spit if I could help it.” She ripped off the paper and rubbed it along the middle and ring fingers of her left hand.

“What?” Rorschach’s body tensed as Laurie reached with her right hand underneath him, her body still pressed against him as she pushed him up so he was crouching on his knees, his shoulders against the ground. She loosened his belt. “Harlot. Slut.”

“Oh yeah?” Laurie pulled his pants down, pushed the flaps of his trenchcoat up near his waist, exposing his ass. It wasn’t much to look at, pale with several curly, light hairs along the crack. She pushed her right hand against the back of his neck as she rubbed her left hand along it. Slowly, almost gingerly, she pushed her middle finger inside, making him cry out. “You want to say that again?”

Rorschach squirmed underneath her right hand, letting out small noises of humiliated hurt as she pushed her finger further inside. He keened as she pulled it out, then pushed in again. As she did it again, his cries turned angry. “Urrgh. Yes. Slut. Filthy whore.”

Laurie pushed it in harder, started moving it back and forth until she was outright fucking him. He was incredibly tight. It was sometimes hard to push her fingers back in after she pulled them out.

“Relax,” Laurie whispered to him. “If you relax a bit, it won’t hurt so much.”

Rorschach moaned, muttered another curse under his breath, but as Laurie continued she could feel him get looser. She could barely believe what she was doing. Rorschach was a smelly little worm, but seeing him crouched under her, seeing him tied up and hearing him moan unwillingly as she finger-fucked him … oh God, she could feel how wet she was getting. Jon was up for a lot of things, had let her do this to him a few times, but doing it like this … sticking it to a man who held her in contempt, showing him his place …

What right had he to call her a whore? What right had any of them to judge her, to think they could tie her up and fuck her, to think they could take her by force, to use her and lie to her for their own selfish ends? They did it to her mother, but they wouldn’t do it to her.

Laurie didn’t want Rorschach to fuck her, didn’t want this racist little man’s cock inside her, but her sex was calling out for some sort of friction. Rorschach was loose enough now that she was able to push a second finger inside him, a slow process that set off another stream of curses. He cried again as she started to move faster.

“Hate you,” Rorschach whispered. “Disgusting, filthy woman.”

His words made Laurie shudder. She’d show him. She moved her right hand away from his neck and pushed his pants further down his legs. “Move your right leg back,” she commanded.

“No.”

“Do it.”

Rorschach growled but then obeyed, moving his leg so it was at an incline. She positioned herself
so that her sex – now wet through her spandex outfit – could rut against it as she finger-fucked him. It wasn’t optimal, but the barest amount of friction was enough for her rather desperate needs.


Laurie moaned as she rutted against him, so hot and slick, pushing against him in time with the movement her fingers. She pulled her fingers out, making Rorschach whimper. She leaned forward so that she was crouching over him, then reached underneath him to find his cock.

Rorschach chest heaved. “No. I … I can’t.”

“Is that really what you want?” Laurie asked as she delicately stroked his cock, circling the head, running her fingers through the hairs at the base. “Tell me ‘no’ again.”

Rorschach tried to speak, but whatever he said seemed to get choked. He squirmed underneath her, rubbing his cock against her palm. She almost wanted him to tell her he wanted it, to make him beg, but she didn’t think she could push that far. There was a reason why she never tried to take off his mask.

She gripped his cock and began to stroke. He was already slick both with precome and the last remnants of the butter she’d used. Although she guessed this felt better for him than what she had done to his ass, he whimpered and cried even more as she jacked him off. Sometimes he muttered to himself. Once she even thought he said the word, “mother.”

God, he was fucked up. Then again, Laurie thought as she thrust her pussy against his leg, she wasn’t exactly feeling all right herself, lately.

Rorschach’s moans became suddenly louder and he came, crying out something that Laurie thought sounded vaguely like her name. Laurie came almost immediately after, quickly and quietly and more from the excitement than any physical pleasure. She could have come again, knew if she’d pushed him on his back and demanded he fuck her she wouldn’t have lasted long, but she knew how far she could get with this, and, despite everything, still found him revolting.

She almost didn’t want to untie him, was briefly afraid of what he would do if she set him free, but as he lay on the ground, exhausted and disheveled, she figured he wasn’t in much of a position to do anything.

Laurie’s suspicion was right. After she untied him, Rorschach just lay there. She lay next to him, both of them listening to the sound of the other’s breathing. It took a few minutes before Rorschach stood up and fixed his clothing. She sat up and looked at him, and as he wrapped the scarf around his neck she wished she could see his real face.

Rorschach seemed to catch her staring at him. Her body tensed as he looked back at her.

“Tell anyone about this … try this again …”

Rorschach’s voice wavered so much Laurie couldn’t tell if he meant it as a warning or a plea. “Not happening,” she said.

Rorschach made a noise that sounded like agreement. He put his hat back on his head and turned to leave.

Laurie pushed herself up onto her feet. “Hey …”
Rorschach looked back. Laurie almost wanted to apologize, but she knew she couldn’t say “sorry” for something like this.

So instead she said, “You said you wanted to know, so … Adrian said he would help us if I had sex with him. I did. And … yeah. You can see how well that worked.”

Laurie expected Rorschach to yell at her, to call her a whore again, and a part of her didn’t even mind.

When he did respond, his voice was only barely above a whisper. “Prostitution never a profitable profession, especially on the exchange of promises. Would suggest alternate methods in the future.”

As Rorschach walked away, Laurie thought maybe she did mind.

End Part Two.
Things were not going well, Laurie thought as she slapped her palm against the side of the portable TV in another futile attempt to keep signal through the thick walls of the Owlship. It was midmorning and they were riding to monitor a protest at City Hall. While most of the protest was situated on the park grounds, some groups had spilled over to the streets, and with the lack of officers to contain the protest and keep the traffic clear, things had the potential to get violent.

Or so the news reports said. Laurie, whom Dan had asked to monitor the TV, tried to reach another channel. It had been nearly half a day since her “talk” with Rorschach and now, cramped in a small space with him, plus Jon, plus – ugh – Blake, she decided to deal with the situation by ignoring everyone as much as possible.

Not that anybody else seemed at ease. Rorschach paced the length of the ship, his face turned away from her as he passed. Blake leaned against the opposing wall, smoking a cigar and occasionally making a sarcastic comment at the others’ expense. Meanwhile Jon talked exclusively with Dan, asking him question after question about the size of the protests, what he would be expected to do, what the plan was if other problems occurred elsewhere.

This atmosphere was killing her. The only person in their entourage she felt comfortable looking in the eye at this point was Dan, and he was busy with Jon and piloting the ship. A beautiful ship, she thought. She glanced around the interior, trying not to look at anybody inside, wondering how it worked.

The TV signal came back. A white man with graying brown hair and glasses appeared clearly on the screen.

“In our top story, brutal assaults in the wake of the police strike. Albert Friendly, a man from Manhattan, reported Laurel Jane –” The screen showed a picture of the Westie from last night, his face bloody and bruised, then went fuzzy again. Laurie hit the television once more, bringing the picture back. “– daughter of former vigilante Sally Jupiter, assaulted him last night. This alleged attack resulted in multiple injuries …”

“Oh, you’ve got to be kidding me!” Laurie yelled at the screen. Rorschach stopped pacing at her outburst. She looked down suddenly. “The guy was beating up a woman,” she muttered.

“This attack has led many to question the methods of these vigilantes and once again opened the debate on women in combat,” the journalist said. “We go to feminist author Susan Brownmiller for comment.”

Laurie heard Blake groan from behind her. A woman with short, feathered brown hair appeared on the screen.

“Tim,” Brownmiller said, “As you know, I and other feminists have always been critical of masked adventurers. Of course, this relic from the 1940s may have begun with noble intentions in some individual cases, and while they have had a modicum of success in capturing rapists and other violent criminals –”

“Far more than feminists’ useless tours of strip clubs and sex shops,” Rorschach said.

“Hush,” Laurie said.
“– the actions of some heroes have proven this is not always the case,” Brownmiller continued. “I’ve always admired the late Silhouette and both Silk Spectres for their work, but we have to remember that Larry Schexnayder wasn’t that much better than Hugh Hefner. It was he who created the image of the Silk Spectre, cemented the link between female costumed adventurers and pornography that formerly only existed in the pages of early superheroine strips like ‘Wonder Woman,’ which incorporated bondage imagery into the supposedly ‘harmless’ stories of a woman fighting bad guys.”

“Seriously?” Blake called to Laurie, “Kid, can you turn that shit off?”

Laurie frowned and turned up the volume.

“Honestly, the very fact that you’ve asked me about this proves the effectiveness of Schexnayder’s methods. I’m against any crime of brutality committed by these vigilantes, but the idea that the second Silk Spectre isn’t capable of it shows how much we expect female masked adventurers to be like the passive rape victims of Irving Klaw’s sadistic Bettie Page pornography.”

“Is that what you really believe, Ms. Brownmiller?” asked the reporter, “That society sees these costumed adventurers as victims?”

“Well, look at the statistics, Tim. One murdered for being a lesbian and the other nearly raped? And her rapist, I might add, is inexplicably considered some kind of war hero. Really, why do you think no other women have become costumed adventurers besides Sally Jupiter’s daughter in the past 20 years? Any potential female costumed adventurers … they were sent a message.”

“Oh, fuck that garbage.” Blake yanked the television out of Laurie’s hands before she realized he was near her.

“Hey, give me that!” Laurie reached for the television but Blake knocked her hands away.

“We’re in a war, kid,” Blake said as he flipped through the dials. “If you’re going to do this, you should be looking for actual information, not wasting our time listening to some whining harpy.”

“Blake,” she said, trying to keep her voice level. “Dan said this is my job. Give me back the TV.”

Blake turned the dial, causing another man’s voice to drone out of the TV set. “No.”

Laurie pushed Blake hard, aiming to pin him to the wall. He dropped the TV, but caught his footing quickly and grabbed her wrists.

“Oh? You want to go down that road again?” he asked.

“What road, you son of a bitch?”

“Laurie!” Jon reappeared at her side, pulled her away by her shoulder. She could hear Dan getting up from his chair, too. Jon whispered in her ear. “You said you wouldn’t do this.”

“Oh, stay out of this,” Laurie snapped, immediately regretting it. She’d done so much to him, and now she was yelling at him.

Jon’s face reminded Laurie of a dog that had just been hit. “I can understand why he upsets you, but …”

“You don’t have to whisper, Doc,” Blake interrupted. “Even if I couldn’t hear you, I’d know what you’re talking about. It’s only what she’s always thinking about whenever she’s near me.”
“Can you blame her?” Jon asked.

Blake let out a chuckle and grinned, crossing his arms. “You know, after what I told you in Vietnam, it’s really cute how you still pretend to care.”

Laurie could feel the blood rush from her face. Her unease grew when Jon said nothing. “What is he talking about?”

“Oh, so you haven’t told her?” Blake laughed. “Interesting.”

Jon frowned. “You don’t exactly come off looking good in that instance.”

“You don’t exactly come off looking good in that instance.”

“Yeah, but it’s not like she thinks I’m a great person. I make a dumb mistake when I’m sixteen and I’m Hitler, but you can blow a little kid to bits and she’ll still think you’re an angel.” Blake looked at Laurie. “Interesting how your perspective on a guy changes when you’ve got his dick in your mouth.”

“You son of a –” Laurie raised her hand to slap him, but Blake caught her arm before she could even swing. “Ack, Jon!”

“Anyone ever tell you how predictable you are?” Blake asked.

“Let her go,” Jon commanded.

Blake snorted and turned to him. “Oh, like you couldn’t make me if you wanted to.”

“Anyone ever tell you how predictable you are?” Blake asked.

“Let her go,” Jon commanded.

Blake snorted and turned to him. “Oh, like you couldn’t make me if you wanted to.”

“All right, that’s enough!”

Everyone in the ship stared at Dan as he stomped over to them.

“I don’t know what the hell is going on, but I’m going on two hours of sleep right now and I don’t care. This is my ship. I don’t want anybody fighting on it. I don’t want anyone making nasty comments, either,” he said, glaring at Blake. “Now, we’re going to be approaching City Hall in two minutes, okay? Can we spend those two minutes at least pretending we’re a team?”

Blake let her go. Laurie stared at Dan, noticing how tired he looked. She felt like shit. Dan really did have this job because nobody else was willing to do it. When Jon had suggested Adrian lead, Dan probably thought he was getting out of it … and she had let him down with that, plus started a fight with everyone twice. Between her problems and whatever was going on between him and Rorschach … it’s amazing he was doing so well.

“I’m sorry,” Laurie said.

Dan nodded. “It’s all right.”

He returned to the pilot’s seat. Blake stayed at his spot against the wall, not looking at anyone as he lit a new cigar. Laurie stood on the opposite side, Jon next to her. Rorschach looked at the others for a moment, made a “hurm” noise, and then joined Dan at the front of the ship.

~*~*~

The crowd was a lot different from she’d expected. Laurie looked out at from her hiding spot behind a tree in City Hall Park. Some among the more than 1,000-person crowd were older, most likely the family members of the striking officers. However, most were young: hippies and Black Panthers and guys who looked like Hell’s Angels. They carried signs reading “Badges, Not Masks”
“Let me ask you something,” he said. “If you’re in trouble – who do you want to help you? A police officer – someone subject to the law and the courts and the representatives we elect – or do you want some freak in a mask?”

The crowd responded in jeers.

“There are people who call these guys heroes,” the man paused as the crowd booed. “But I know a group who went around in masks and dispensed their own brand of justice. The Minutemen?” He paused again for another round of boos. “That’s just another word for the Klan.”

The crowd cheered this time. After a few moments, the man waved his arms to stop it.


Some – the blacks and the hippies and other young people – cheered for this, but others kept silent.

“But when an officer does something wrong, we can fight it. We can go to the courts. We can go to Congress. Meanwhile, these fascists, these freaks get to operate outside of the law. Free to kill, free to rape, free to do whatever the fuck they want. Well, I say ‘no.’”

The entire crowd cheered now. One broke into a chant of “No No No” that quickly spread.

Laurie sighed. What the hell were they going to do here? Explain to them that their group with the rapist and the nutjob and the slu – well, anyway, yeah. No telling them they were a great group of people.

The loud, repeated honk of a car horn broke Laurie out of her thoughts. She slipped out of her hiding spot, moved out of the park and in the direction of the sound. The honking ceased as she reached the street but she soon came upon the scene. Five men and one woman surrounded a Chevrolet while another man wearing a suit and tie, presumably the owner, glowered at the rest of them.

“Get back in the car, square!” yelled the woman.

“Is this your idea of supporting law and order?” the owner responded. “Blocking traffic and harassing people who just want to get to work? You’re worse than the vigilantes, you fucking punks!”

One of the men pushed the owner against his car. That was enough.

Laurie stepped out of her hiding spot. “Let him go!”

All of them were looking at her now, their faces twisted into surprise and rage.

“What the fuck are you doing here, bitch?” sneered one of them – a light-skinned black man in a leather jacket.
Laurie was wondering that herself. It was best to play the concerned officer for now, though. “Look, you can say whatever the hell you want in this protest of yours, but I’m not letting you bully anyone.”

“Fuck off, slut,” the woman said. She walked toward Laurie, her hands on her hips. “My sister’s a cop. She worked her ass off to get where she is. You just got it walking around in heels and underwear, like you think men won’t hit you if they get a boner. You’re a joke.”

Laurie rolled her eyes. “Yeah, good thing I’ve got a fine, upstanding member of the Sisterhood like you to keep me straight, huh?”

The woman raised her hand to punch her. Laurie dodged, and then caught her arm, turning it behind the woman’s back. Laurie pulled the woman to her chest. The woman screamed and thrashed in Laurie’s arms. Laurie punched her in the stomach, causing the woman to keel over. Laurie let her fall to the ground, and took a little pleasure as she dug her heel into the woman’s back. One of the other men, a white man with long, blond hair, rushed to her aid. Laurie punched him in the nose before he could get too close. The man cried and fell to his knees, blood dripping through his fingers.

“Anyone else think I’m just waiting for you to get a boner?” Laurie asked the rest of the crowd. “Now get the hell home and –”

The clang of a canister hitting the pavement interrupted Laurie. She cursed and ran away, pulling her blouse up over her mouth and nose in an attempt to protect her face from the white gas that issued from the canister. It was just smoke, thank God. And while it didn’t hurt anyone, it did cause all of them to run away, even the two that she had hurt. As it started to clear she turned and saw Blake stepping out of the smoke, his leather mask now covering his face.

Laurie glared at him. “You know,” she coughed, “I had that handled.”

“What? With the pleading they go home?” Blake shook his head. “Right. I liked the boner thing, though. That was cute.”

“Yeah, well I’m sure their impression of us will be a whole lot better now that they’ll go the press and say you’ve assaulted them. Ugh!” Laurie turned away. She was going to go back and see if there were any other problems in the crowd.

Blake grabbed her by the arm. “You’re kidding, right?”

Laurie looked back at him, her face twisted into a frown. “What?”

“Kid, wake up. You . . .” Blake’s mask, with its crude rectangles for the eyes and mouth, usually made him look like his face was twisted into a demonic grin no matter what his expression, but this time Laurie could see the shock in his eyes. “… You really think this is just going to end? That you’re just going to go back to D.C. when this is all over and everything will be all hunky-dory?”

Laurie pulled her arm away, feeling flustered. “Well, it might if you didn’t . . .”

“Nobody actually gives a shit if you broke some Westie’s arm, all right? The guy was a mobster. If you hadn’t broken his arm the press would have whined that one of us punched someone in the face, or scratched someone’s car. They want us to fuck up, and you know what – there’s fucking five of us protecting a city of thousands – one of us would have eventually. You just happened to fuck up first.

“I swear, you’re like the fucking bird. He was actually surprised when people started throwing
stuff at him when he was playing traffic duty. I know that douchebag Schexnayder probably instilled all that ‘good image’ bullshit into your head but forget it. That shit’s over. Even if the Keene bill doesn’t pass, these people are never going to think of you, or the bird, maybe not even the Doc when they think of vigilantes. They’re going to be thinking of me.”

Laurie shuddered. She wanted to just dismiss everything Blake said, but he was right that one of them would have screwed up. They’d known the odds were against them from the beginning, but that people had anticipated their failure was something she hadn’t considered.

Still, it would be a cold day in hell before she’d admit he was right, so she just asked, “What do you mean by the Keene bill?”

Before Blake could answer, Laurie heard a loud whirring noise overhead. She looked up to see a helicopter flying toward City Hall.

“Should that be here?” Laurie asked.

“It’s not military. C’mon, let’s get a better view.”

Blake rushed back into the park. A group of protesters stood near the edges. Blake removed the shotgun from his back and fired into the air. The protesters shrieked and rushed forward. “One side, suckers!”

Laurie’s mouth gaped open. “You moron! What if that is the military? They’ll arrest us if the crowd doesn’t tear us apart!”

“I’d like to see them try.” As if to prove his point, another protester approached them, screaming profanities. Blake cocked his gun and the protester ran away. “See?”

Laurie just sighed. This was insane.

Blake pulled out a pair of binoculars from his belt. He took a glance through them, a smile curling his lips through the rectangular cut over his mouth. “You asked me what the Keene bill is. This should explain it.”

He handed the binoculars to her. Laurie recoiled at first, then reached out to take them, holding onto them with just the tips of her fingers.

“Come on,” Blake said. “I’m know you’ve touched much worse in your time.”

Laurie huffed and looked through them. The hippie protester was now sharing the steps with ten armed guards. In the center of the guards stood Mayor Beame and another man who was wearing a suit and tie. He was tall and while he wasn’t handsome, his thick nose and square face made him look distinguished. He looked especially commanding next to Beame, whose short stature, black eyebrows, gray hair and wide smile made him look like the sidekick instead of the head of the city.

“New York Senator John Keene,” Blake said, anticipating her question. He took his binoculars back. “He’ll be the one to put a stop to this.”

Laurie looked at Blake skeptically. “And you know about this?”

Blake shrugged. “I’ve got my connections. Why are you surprised, though? Doesn’t that boyfriend of yours know everything that’s going to happen already?”

Beame had the microphone now. He was introducing John Keene, talking about his credentials, his
years in the Senate, his dedication to law enforcement. Although some still yelled at Beame for allowing vigilantes in their city, the crowd was calmer overall.

“You may not have seen me, but I assure you that I am still here for you. I’m still listening to you,” Beame said. “You want back your police. You deserve your police. Well this man, Sen. John Keene: my close, personal friend … he’s going to give you exactly what you deserve …”

“To be honest,” Laurie said, “I don’t know whether I like knowing what’s going to happen.”

“Well, not when he pulled that shit on you about going to see Ozzy, I’d bet,” Blake said.

The crowd applauded and whooped as Keene began to speak. He thanked Beame and then talked about how he grew up in West Chester and now lived in Albany. Yet his parents originally came to New York City, and for many people’s parents New York City was their first taste of America – the very face of America – and now America’s great city was undergoing its worst time of darkness. Laurie listened to him, thought of how her own grandparents had arrived in America and met with crippling poverty and anti-Polish jeers, and she remembered that she really, really hated politicians.

Laurie frowned and crossed her arms. “I don’t need sympathy from you, of all people.”

“I’m not offering sympathy. And I agree: that’s definitely not what you need.”

Laurie dug her fingernails into her arms. “What do you mean by that?”

Blake didn’t answer. Laurie looked ahead, tried to listen to Keene.

“You’ve been through a lot, New York,” Keene said. “You’ve been through the worst economic crisis this city has seen, the riots earlier this summer, and now these vigilantes have taken over your streets, have threatened your lives. You’ve had enough, New York, and so have I!”

As the crowd roared, Laurie finally broke down and turned in Blake’s direction. He was staring at her, and when he saw her staring back, he smiled.

“Nothing,” Blake finally said. “Anyway, we ain’t going to get to do anything else here with these geeks around. I’m going to see what the bird’s doing.”

Blake ran off, leaving Laurie by herself. She looked over the cheering crowd. When her mother was a superheroine – even a kind of a goofy, self-promoting superheroine who staged her first fights – the police had loved her, had posed for pictures of her and said to the press what a wonderful job she was doing. Not just the police had loved her mother, either. Women had come up to her and told her what an inspiration she was, how she was an example of women’s progress. When had the world changed so much?

There really was nothing left to do here, even though they had done barely anything at all. She walked away from the park, wandered down the streets of Manhattan unsure if she was looking for a crime to stop or just trying to clear her head. By the time Jon found her an hour later she had done neither. They said nothing to each other as he teleported her back to the Owlship.

~*~*~

While Jon was as stoic and no-nonsense as ever, and Blake was as laissez-faire and tactless as ever, the mood had changed among the rest of them. As the day went on, the five of them spent their time dispersing protests, usually via a well-thrown gas-bomb from The Comedian or a surprise appearance from Dr. Manhattan. As Laurie looked through the glass of the ship to see another
group of 20-somethings fearfully running away, she was feeling increasingly unheroic, as well as useless.

“Can’t we just let the two of them do this and we can go and stop crimes or something?” Laurie asked Dan.

“Agreed,” Rorschach said. “Bored.”

Dan shook his head. “The radio reporters say the rioters are doing more damage than any looters. This is where we need to be.”

Rorschach made an irritated growl, but Laurie could hear from Dan’s voice that he hated what they were doing as much as she did … and that he sounded really exhausted.

Late that night, when a crowd responded to Blake and Jon’s attacks with violence instead of retreat, the three of them descended from the Owlship to help. As Laurie fought off protester after protester, screaming at each one to go home, she wondered if Jon could have just sent them all home or … well, worse. Maybe this how it worked in Vietnam. Maybe he was used to only using his most impressive powers when absolutely necessary. Laurie admired him for that, but when she pondered all the implications, she felt more lost than ever. She realized Jon and Blake were used to playing a different type of game. They were soldiers. She was just a cop in a fancy outfit – barely that, even.

As another man fell under her fists, she looked over the melee. She saw Jon pushing a group of people against the wall with a force shield, Blake pulling a man by his hair out of the crowd, Rorschach in a fist fight … and …

“Nite Owl?” She looked around, fear gnawing at her heart. Did he go back to the ship and not tell anyone? That didn’t seem like him. She raised her voice. “Nite Owl? Nite Owl!”

Rorschach raised his head at her cries, and then looked around rapidly. He began to push through the crowd, shoving anyone who got in his way. Laurie started pushing through the crowd too, crying Nite Owl’s name.

Rorschach found him first. She glanced over the crowd to see him picking up an unconscious Dan in a fireman’s carry. Laurie guessed Jon saw it too, because he immediately lost patience with the crowd, knocked all of the protesters at once with a force shield blast. Those who weren’t already unconscious were so impressed by his power that they began to run away.

Laurie saw Rorschach lay Dan down on the now-empty sidewalk. She ran over to them as Rorschach slapped Dan’s face a few times. Dan groaned and pushed himself up off the ground.

“What’s doing that for?” Dan complained.

“Knocked out,” Rorschach said. “Silk Spectre noticed. Dr. Manhattan got rid of assailants.”

“Oh …” Dan said.

Laurie reached them. At first she reached her arms out to Dan, planning to hug him, but then recoiled. Why had she wanted to do that? She offered her hand instead. Dan took it and she pulled him to his feet.


Blake had appeared next to them. “You saying you just conked out mid-battle, Birdie?”
“Is that possible?” Laurie asked.

“Of course,” Jon responded. “Not very probable, considering the external stimuli, but if one has had a considerable lack of sleep …”

Dan raised his hand. “Look, I don’t remember. Just … I’ll just get back to the ship and have some coffee. I should be okay after that, really.” Dan stepped forward and stumbled off the curb.

Blake laughed, “Oh, good one.”

Rorschach sighed and pulled Dan’s arm over his shoulder. They made a funny image, the larger Dan slumped over the much smaller Rorschach as the latter led him back to the ship, which was hovering not too far away. After Dan pulled out a remote to bring down the ship, Rorschach stood behind him, guiding Dan as he slowly climbed up into the entrance in the floor.

Blake sighed. “Sorry pair of shits they are. ‘Course I can’t say much more for the rest of us.”

Jon shrugged. “What do you suggest we do now?”

“I don’t give a shit what you do, but I need a fucking drink. Later.” He walked down the street, past the unconscious bodies, smashed cars and other debris, whistling as he went.

“Is anybody going to serve him when he’s dressed like that?” she asked Jon when he was out of earshot. “Everything’s probably closed with these riots.”

“Many bars are open,” Jon said.

“What? How do you know?”

“I’ve seen them on patrols.”

Laurie raised an eyebrow. “You’re serious? This place is like a war zone.”

“Bars were open in Vietnam, often during battles,” Jon responded.

Laurie sighed and rubbed her eyes. “Right … of course.” She sat down on the pavement.

Jon sat next to her. “Is something wrong?”

“Oh …” Laurie moaned, and couldn’t continue. What’s wrong? Where would she start? Maybe with what sort of bitch was she that she could cheat on Jon twice in the past week. “I’m … I’m just hungry. And I want to smoke. Maybe I should have found one of those bars.”

“I see,” Jon said. He waved his hand and a satchel appeared at Laurie’s side, making her flinch. “I’m returning to patrol. When I see you again, we will go back to D.C.”

“Really?” Laurie couldn’t help but smile. “That’s great. It’ll be nice to refresh in our own apartment for a bit.”

Jon frowned. “I … I’m afraid we’ll have work to do first. I must be going.”

He disappeared, leaving Laurie alone. She looked in the satchel. A pack of her favorite cigarette brand lay in it, as well as a book of matches, a bottle of water, an apple and a sandwich wrapped in paper. She shook her head and took out the sandwich, pulled off the paper and saw it was tuna fish. Her favorite.
“Not only the most powerful man on Earth and a sex god, he’s also a vending machine.” Laurie took a bite out of the sandwich. It tasted far better than any sandwich made out of thin air should have. She sighed. She really was the most ungrateful bitch on the planet.

The street wasn’t much of a place to picnic, though. Laurie put the rest of the sandwich back in the satchel and took out the matches and cigarettes. She lit one up and breathed the tobacco in deeply. Oh God, she needed that.

Laurie walked back to the Owlship. She wasn’t eager to spend any time alone with Rorschach, but it was preferable to eating out on the streets. She needed a break from everything. She was about to knock on the side door of the ship, then looked beneath the ship and saw that the bottom entrance was open. She crouched under the ship, ready to climb up through the hatch, but paused when she heard the two of them arguing.

“I said ‘I might.’ Maybe. A maybe isn’t a ‘yes.’”

“Know what you really mean.”

Laurie peered out over the edge of the hatch, saw the two of them sitting across from each other on the floor, paper cups of coffee in hand.

Dan had pushed his goggles up on his forehead and rubbed his eyes with his right hand. “It’s not that I want to quit …”

“Then don’t,” Rorschach said. He had his mask rolled up over his nose. He took a sip of his coffee.

“It’s not that simple. Stuff like tonight … this isn’t what I got into the business for,” Dan sighed and laid his right hand on his knee. “I hated being regulated to the sidelines as much as you did. And I hate fighting civilians. I hate working against law enforcement. Hollis was a cop and I … I don’t think this is what he and Hooded Justice envisioned when they started all this.”

“So roll over when it gets too tough? I see.”

“No! That’s not it at all,” Dan said. “I want to do what’s best for people. This set up we have where we’re pulling Laurie out of D.C., where we’re getting Jon and The Comedian to scare people out of protesting. And why are we punishing them? Because they want a regular street patrol? Because they want to feel a measure of security when they walk on the streets at night? I mean, really … they have a right to do that. They have a right to expect that.”

“Says who?” Rorschach asked. “People not entitled to the police’s protection. Have grown complacent. The union leaders know it. Have cut off the blood supply for the bloated ticks. Only reason they’re upset. Care nothing for the safety of their fellow man. Proven that time and again.”

Dan’s face twisted into an expression of surprise and horror that echoed Laurie’s own feelings. “Look, I know you had some kind of … I don’t know what to call it … revelation lately. I don’t understand it but I can’t believe you really think this mess we’re in is deserved. And it’s certainly not preferable to the way things were before vigilantes.”

Rorschach growled. “Not our fault, Daniel. None of this is our fault. Their fault. Lazy. Greedy. Think police cares about people? Care so much they abandon them … and want us to reward them for it?” Rorschach’s voice grew louder. He crushed the cup in his fist. “Would do that, Daniel? Would placate your principles of justice to reward them for doing nothing?”

Laurie’s felt sick at Rorschach’s words. This wasn’t what she thought of when she wanted a break from all this. She was about to leave when she heard Dan sigh. Laurie looked back and saw him
cover his face with his hands.

“I don’t like it either, man,” Dan said. “But if it comes down to a choice between that and this …
this anarchy? Then yeah, I guess I would reward them for doing nothing.”

Neither of them said anything. Rorschach made a low, humming sound, something that said loud
and clear he was sorry to be right.

“Better than this, Daniel. Caught Big Figure. Caught Underboss. Caught Berkowitz.” Rorschach
reached out toward Dan, hesitated, and then grasped the edges of Dan’s cape. Seeing him act like
this made Laurie’s stomach flip. “What did they do?”

Dan looked like he was frozen. He put his hands on Rorschach’s forearms. “You helped with the
first two. But, come on, if they were convinced by that we wouldn’t be –”

Rorschach pressed his lips against Dan’s. Laurie froze. Shit, she thought, it wasn’t her name he
was calling.

Dan grabbed Rorschach’s shoulders and pushed him away. “Oh God, man … don’t … don’t do
this now. Not for this. I … fuck.” Dan pulled Rorschach to him. As Dan kissed Rorschach he
grasped the fabric of his coat, held onto him like he didn’t want to let go.

Laurie watched and felt like she couldn’t breathe. Dan pushed Rorschach back against the floor of
the ship, their lips still locked together. He reached for Rorschach’s belt. Rorschach caught his
wrist.

“No,” Rorschach said.

“I’m sorry,” Dan breathed. “It’s okay. I don’t care. I just want to touch you.”

“You want …?” Rorschach’s voice echoed an amazement Laurie felt in her own heart. She realized
it had been a long time since Jon had said anything like that to her.

“No. Not right.” Rorschach pushed Dan onto his back, and then climbed on top of Dan. He bit
Dan’s shoulder.

Dan cried out and arched his back, rubbing against Rorschach. “Oh God. Yes. Please.”

Rorschach grasped for Dan’s belt, fumbled with the crescent moon latch for a few moments. He
took off one of his gloves. Laurie’s eyes widened as Rorschach reached into his pockets. No way,
she thought to herself. When he didn’t find anything he spit onto his fingers.

“Let me,” Dan said. He took Rorschach’s hand and sucked on the two middle fingers. Rorschach
moaned. Laurie felt the familiar ache of desire between her legs.

Rorschach reached underneath Dan, pushed his fingers inside. Dan bucked suddenly and Laurie
could feel herself blush as she got a glimpse of his penis.

She needed to go, she thought as Dan’s moans became more urgent. Laurie looked down at the
ground, trying to push out the visions in her head of her getting behind Rorschach, or climbing on
top of Dan’s mouth. She realized she had dropped her cigarette long ago. She looked on the ground
but couldn’t find it. She wished she had it back. She wished … oh God …

Laurie crawled away as fast as she could, almost hitting her head as she got out from under the
ship. She walked away quickly, realized as she did so she wasn’t that far away from Gardner’s
mansion. She could walk there. Clear her head. Feel better. She nearly ran through the streets, the
summer heat causing her flimsy blouse to stick to her body.

~*~*~

It didn’t work.

Laurie sat in one of the chairs in the trophy room, smoking a cigarette, the remainder of her food
forgotten. She’d taken off her belt and blouse, and while she felt cooler it hadn’t abated her
arousal.

She took a sip of her water. Then she rested her head on her palm, running her fingers through her
hair. What the hell was wrong with her? That thing with Rorschach was … Christ, she didn’t
know. She thought it was just some crazy, one-off thing. She didn’t even find him sexy … not
really. He certainly wasn’t as sexy as Jon … or Adrian. They were perfect and he was so gross.
And Dan? What was that about? He was certainly cute, even if his nose was a little funny-looking,
but she wouldn’t have thought of having sex with him.

Then again … it had really scared her when she thought he was in trouble. Maybe … No, she had
to stop jumping the gun on this. Anyone would feel bad if they saw one of their teammates go
down like that. Plus, Dan had been so nice to everyone. It made sense. Why shouldn’t she care
about him?

Of course, that didn’t explain why she felt so jealous when she saw the two of them together.

Laurie sighed. She thought of that woman on television, that woman she’d fought. She wasn’t
really doing much to dispel her mother and her … well, her quasi-father’s image of the Silk Spectre
as some superheroine hooker. Laurie thought she couldn’t sink any lower.

And then the door behind her opened.

“I thought I’d find you here, kid.”

Laurie flinched. She took a drag on her cigarette, snuffed out the rest on the remains of her food,
then stood up and turned around.

“Blake,” Laurie said. “Go the fuck away or I will make you go away.”

Blake smiled and closed the door behind him. He’d replaced the full face mask with his domino
mask, but if that had been a tactic to make her feel more at ease it wasn’t working. “Relax. I just
want to talk.”

“Well, I don’t.”

Blake walked closer to her. Laurie crouched into a fighting stance. Blake looked her over.

“Looks like I interrupted some alone time, eh?”

Laurie gaped when she realized what she was talking about and covered her chest. Fuck, she
thought. Fuck!

Blake laughed and stepped closer to her. “Can I guess what you were thinking about?”

Laurie stepped backward. “Fuck you.”

He stepped forward again. “One little guess?”
She stepped back, realized if she took another step backward her back would be against the wall. “Beat it. I’m warning you. Don’t back me into a corner.”

“How about ‘Not your boyfriend’?”

Laurie was stunned. She frowned at him. “You’re a bastard, Blake.”

“I’ll take that as a ‘yes.’ So was it doing Rorschach in the ass or fucking Ozzy for information?”

Laurie stepped back, hit the wall. Blake laughed and rested his hands against the wall, on either side of her head. “I …,” Laurie blubbered. “I don’t know …”

“… what you’re talking about?” Blake asked. “Don’t waste my time, kid. I was passing through and saw the whole thing last night. I gotta admit, the little guy makes me gag but you were pretty hot.”

“You …” Laurie’s fear melted away, humiliation fueling a burning rage, “You watched that? You … You sick bastard! What is wrong with you?”

Blake let out his loudest laugh yet. “What’s wrong with me? Are you kidding? You know, it’s a real laugh that you think I’m the bad guy. What was it you said at one point? Ah, ‘Is that what you really want? Tell me “no” again?’ I think it walks and talks like a duck, don’t you?”

“No!” Laurie grabbed the straps on Blake’s outfit and yanked them hard. She spun Blake around pinned him against the wall. “I am not like you. I am nothing like you.”

“Maybe not,” Blake said, a smile on his face. “Maybe you’re worse. I never did get to do it with your mother that night. You, on the other hand …”


“Oh?” Blake reached up and grabbed her forearms so hard she let go of him. He yanked her arms up and pulled her against him. “So raping men makes you a feminist, now?”

“I didn’t rape him.” Laurie’s voice sounded desperate to her, and she realized she was trying to convince herself as much as Blake. “I … I gave him plenty of chances to escape. He … You’ve seen him in battle. He could have stopped me at any time.”

“Interesting.” Blake gripped her wrists in one of his hands, ran one of his fingers of his other hand along her chin. “How do you know I didn’t give your mother plenty of chances to escape? How do you know your mother didn’t want it?”

Laurie shook her head violently, ripped her arms out of his grasp. “Bullshit. And you didn’t give her a chance to escape. I know you didn’t. You’re just saying this to fuck with my head and it’s not going to work.” She walked to the door, not caring she left half of her outfit behind. She wanted to get away from him.

Blake reached it first, spread his arms across it. “Kid, I don’t need to fuck with your head. By the time you’re screwing someone like Rorschach, you’re already pretty fucked.”

Laurie blustered. This cat-and-mouse game was frustrating her. She felt exposed, furious and uncomfortably aroused. “Then … then leave me alone. I want this to stop.”

“Oh no, you don’t. I can hear it in your voice.”
Laurie’s hands balled into fists. “I … I won’t let you hurt me. I’d kill you before you hurt me.”

“You always assume the worst of me. Kiddo, I …” Blake sighed. “I meant it when I said you don’t need sympathy but fuck, look at yourself. You’re a fucking mess.”

Laurie lowered her fists. What was he doing?

Blake removed himself from the door, stepped closer to her. “Like this Rorschach thing. I mean, whether he wanted it or not … why? Did you honestly think that guy could teach you anything?”

“I …” Laurie stepped to the side.

“Stop running!”

Blake stepped forward and grabbed onto her hips, digging his fingers into them. Laurie gasped as she could feel herself getting wet. She felt humiliated. Not him, she whispered to herself. I won’t. I won’t. Not with him. Not ever.

“Listen to me,” Blake said. “I’ve been in war. I’ve been on the docks. And while Rorschach is a hell of a lot smarter than most of them, I know a psycho when I see ‘im. I’ve also seen the women batty enough to want to fuck these guys. Most of them fall into two categories. Either they’re like the bird and they’re stupid enough to think they can save these guys, or they want to punish themselves for something.”

Laurie’s mind went back to that night, remembered all those things Rorschach said to her. Whore. Slut. Temptress. Every word had made her want him more. “So,” she said, her face red, “I guess I’m in category two, huh?”

“No,” Blake said. “Your problem is you think you are.”

Laurie looked up at Blake. “I … I don’t understand.”

“I was like Rorschach,” Blake said. “I knew you weren’t telling the whole story with that ‘Adrian said “no”’ bullshit. You had the defensive guilt thing going on. It shows in everything you do: the way you move, the way you talk. And whenever I ribbed you about what happened last night I saw you flinch. I get why, too. You think of yourself as a good person. You need to think of yourself as a good person. Otherwise you’d have to really face all the shit you’ve done.”

“What are you talking about?” Laurie pushed Blake’s hands off her. “You said you can see I feel guilty. How is that not facing the bad things I’ve done?”

“Oh, you’ll admit them. And I’m sure if the Doc ever finds out you’ll be repentant and you’ll cry and you’ll swear it was all a mistake, that you’ll never do it again. Part of you will even mean it. But I want to tell you something.”

Blake grabbed Laurie about the waist again, and this time pulled her close. Laurie could feel the bulge of his cock against her. Blake thrust against her, and she moaned before she could think about it.

“A part of you ain’t really sorry,” Blake purred. “A part of you loved every single fucking minute. I saw your face when you were fucking Rorschach and you know what? You were gleeful. You felt justified.”

Laurie shuddered. Blake ran his hands along her waist, making her squirm.
“A lot of the reason why you feel guilty is because you think you should be. You know what you really regret, kid? You regret that Adrian didn’t do what you asked after you fucked him. You’re not a masochistic victim.”

Laurie tried to wrench out of Blake’s grasp. Blake grabbed onto her chin, forced her to look at him.

“You’re a predator. Just … like … me.”

Laurie screamed and pushed him to the floor. She punched him in the face. Blake growled and shoved her back. She toppled off him. Blake was already on his feet when Laurie tried to pull herself up. He grabbed her by the hair and pulled her along the floor. Laurie tried to reach up and untangle herself, tried to knock him away, but he was too strong.

Blake pulled her to Moloch’s solar mirror weapon, still in its spot after all these years. She looked a mess. Her hair tangled in Blake’s hand, her body nearly nude. She wanted to look away so badly, but he held her head tight.

“Look at yourself,” Blake said. “Is that what you want to be? Is that how you see yourself?”

“Fuck you!”

“Don’t want to answer that question? Fine. Try this one. Why the Doc? The man has two modes: stoic and slightly annoyed. Don’t tell me you like him for his personality.”

“You … You don’t understand.”

“I think I do. How old were you? Sixteen? I remember sixteen. How did it feel for you back then? How did it feel to have the most powerful man in the world’s dick between your legs?”

Laurie felt frozen. “No,” she said. “No that’s … fuck … that’s …” A sob escaped Laurie’s mouth.

“Stop it!” Blake pulled her up to her knees, by her hair, making her cry. “Stop fucking crying and tell me the truth. You fucked him because it stroked your ego. And now you’re fucking other guys because you like it. You don’t give a shit about he feels. Did you give a shit about how Janey felt? Did you?”

“Let go of me!” Laurie screamed.

“Answer the questions and I will. Did you love fucking Adrian?”

“I …” Laurie sniffled.

“Don’t cry!”

Laurie took a deep breath, hardened her face. “Yes.”

“Do you feel bad about fucking Rorschach?”

“No,” she said, her voice firmer.

“Did you fuck the Doc that first time because it made you feel like hot shit?”

Laurie sighed. “I had other reasons, too, but … yes.”

“Have you ever really, really felt sorry about stealing him from Janey?”
“I …” Laurie gulped. “No, I … I wanted to. I told myself I should, but … but … No. No, I … I didn’t care.”

Blake made a noise of satisfaction. He let go of her hair. She felt a cold determination in her stomach as he did so.

Laurie heard Blake walk over to the table. She stared at her reflection. She sat with her legs tucked beneath her, her hands on her lap. She wished she could turn into stone, she wished that this ache inside her would go away, this ache that seemed to prove she was as horrible a monster as Blake said she was.

“I’m glad you admitted all that,” Blake said. She didn’t look at him, but she could hear him undo the straps on his costume, hear him take off his weapons belt and lay it on the table. “I think one day you might be glad, too.”

Laurie exhaled sharply. I won’t look at him, she said. I’m not going to give in.

“But,” he said. “I wouldn’t expect you to let me get away with what I did.”

His words felt like a trap. She wasn’t regretful, she wasn’t apologetic, but she couldn’t give up her old habits so easily.

Mom, she thought, please never find out. Please forgive me.

Laurie pounced on Blake, cried out as she slammed him against the table. He grinned at her, and she slapped his face.

“Don’t smile at me,” she slapped him again. “You’re a slimy piece of shit.”

“You’re right,” Blake said, a smile still on his face. “Feels good, doesn’t it?”

Laurie growled and climbed on top of him. She knew she was wet, but she didn’t realize how wet until she rubbed her pussy against one of his legs. “You planned this. You wanted this to happen, you sick fuck!”

Blake moaned. “Guilty.”

Laurie pulled at the straps of her bodysuit, exposing her firm breasts, erect nipples. Blake reached for them. She grabbed his wrists and pushed them so they were above his head. Her breasts dangled over his face. “No. You can’t touch them.”

“No?” he tensed as Laurie thrust against him. “Urgh … Funny, I don’t think they’d complain.”

“You do what I say, you fucking rapist,” Laurie breathed out the words, exhilarated. She knew in reality she was playing into Blake’s game rather than controlling him. She was only allowed this because he was letting her. But it felt so good she didn’t care. Some of the most vile, wrong feelings she’d ever had were bubbling to the surface and she didn’t have to restrain them anymore.

Laurie pressed herself against Blake, ran her body and her tongue over the leather material of his shirt, and then reached down to undo his pants.

“I hate you,” she moaned between licks. “I hate you more than anyone else in the world. If you died tomorrow I wouldn’t give a shit.” She grabbed onto his cock … oh God, it felt so thick … and squeezed.
“Urgh!” Blake cried out, and then laughed as he maintained his composure. “But you’re still going to fuck me. I bet part of you has always wanted to.”

Laurie moved up and grasped onto Blake’s hair, forcing his head against the table. “Yeah,” she said, unsure why the hell she was telling him this. “I thought you were hot when I met you. But then I heard what you did, you shit.”

“Bet it didn’t go away.”

Laurie frowned. “Well, you don’t exactly have the moral high ground right now. Wanting to fuck your victim’s daughter? You’re as sick as ever.”

“Never claimed to be a good person, kid.”

Laurie pressed her breasts against his face. “Suck me.”

Blake did. He took her left breast in his mouth. Laurie moaned. Everything that had happened: seeing Rorschach and Dan earlier, this fight with Blake, had driven her crazy. Her sex was pulsating with desire and she could only stand a few seconds of this before she wanted to fuck him.

She pulled herself away. “Get ready, I won’t be long.”

Laurie got off the table. Blake stroked his cock as she pushed off her bodysuit off. As soon as she was on top of him again she thrust herself down onto his cock. He was so thick, so hard, but she was so wet that she slid on like it was nothing.

“Oh God, kid,” Blake moaned. “Fuck, if you knew … if you knew the half of what I am.”

“I know what you are,” Laurie said. She pushed herself up and down on his cock, so wet they made loud, smacking noises as she thrust back against him. God, she had no idea how much she had wanted this. She knew it was wrong. She knew it was sick. But damn it, she couldn’t stop, would have screamed like she had been shot if someone had made her.

Blake reached out for her breasts, and then pulled back. “No, no you don’t. You could have been …” his fingers stroked his scar. Laurie shifted and he cried out. “Oh God,” he moaned. “I’m not sure I know anymore.”

Laurie was in too deep to think any longer. She impaled herself on him again and again until she was exhausted. When she lapsed, Blake gripped her hips and thrust into her hard. On the fourth thrust she could feel herself coming, let out little gasps of pleasure as she felt her orgasm build. When she was reaching the peak, Blake began to come as well. Her pleasure, her gasps, increased as she felt him pumping his come inside of her.

“Oh God!” she moaned. “Oh God, this is sick, I … Oh!” She shrieked as she came at last.

When she was done, she pulled herself off him and collapsed next to him, exhausted.

“Spent?” Blake asked.

Before she could answer Blake had rolled over. He pushed one arm under her head and pulled her close, and then with his free hand pushed his first two fingers, still gloved, inside her pussy, wet with her fluids and his come. His touch was deft, gentle, and she was moaning in pleasure before she could protest.

In a small matter of time she was coming again. Blake pushed his lips against hers. The gesture
shocked her, made her body tense and her skin crawl. But as he pushed his tongue inside, something about the situation felt so desperate. He held her so close, and his touch, despite everything, was so gentle that she began to kiss him back, moaned into his mouth as she came for the last time.

The afterglow didn’t last long. Laurie lay stiff in Blake’s arms, turned her head away. Part of her wanted to fight him – just on principle – but everything Blake said kept her rooted to the spot. She thought again about her first night with Jon, and every bit of romance she’d remembered – his gentle touches, her soft kisses, her virginal amazement of his body – felt like a hollow lie in the face of this new vision of herself.

Laurie wasn’t the type to think about the big picture very much. She hated politics, avoided talking about war, and often felt Jon could just think about all that for her. She’d had enough hardship in life to not be an optimist yet she’d always thought of life’s misfortunes as invasions into the good existence that everyone deserved. While she never liked being pushed into the career, Laurie had nevertheless believed, as a costumed adventurer, that she was one of those agents for good. Even what she’d done with Adrian, done with Rorschach, hadn’t shattered that illusion. Adrian had felt like a good-intentioned mistake. Rorschach had felt like a message to a world that had tried to hurt her. Wrapped in the arms of her mother’s rapist, she couldn’t lie about herself anymore.

Blake let her go. Laurie still couldn’t look at him as he got up. As he started to fix himself she got up and retrieved her clothes. Blake waited while she dressed. Bodysuit. Blouse. Belt. Heels.

“You should leave him,” Blake said suddenly.

Laurie looked at Blake and laughed. “Why? So I can date you?”

“Heh … no, you don’t want to do that.” Blake reached into a pocket of his belt and pulled out a cigar. He patted different compartments, seemingly looking for a light. Laurie reached into the sack and got out the book of matches. He held his cigar straight as Laurie lit it.

Blake exhaled the smoke as Laurie lit a cigarette for herself. “Still hate me, huh?”

Laurie removed her cigarette from her mouth and smirked. “I don’t feel like ripping your head off right now, but I’m finding sex doesn’t change how I feel about a person.”

“Yeah, I …” Blake’s voice was quiet. “I found that out the hard way once.” He strapped his shotgun to his back. “Good-bye, Laurel.”

As Laurie watched him leave, she thought about his confession, wondered what sort of situation could ever get him to say that, and then realized she didn’t want to know.

Laurie looked at the objects in the room – that ape head, that spear – preserved and labeled and covered in dust. She approached Moloch’s mirror again, hoping to find some kind of peace, but all she could think was her hair was still a mess.

She closed her eyes, and when she opened them again, Jon’s reflection joined hers in the glass.

“Hello Laurie,” he said as she turned around. “It’s time to go.”

“Now?” Laurie asked. “Really?”

“I said we would. Right now there is a protest in Washington in support of Sen. John Keene’s new bill,” Jon explained. “You need to be there with me. You will stop the ringleaders.”
“Right. Superheroing. Sounds good,” Laurie said.

Jon held out his hand. Laurie began to reach for it, but then stopped.

“Jon?” she said. “Why did we come here?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, why did we come to New York? Is there anything bad that would have happened if we didn’t come?”

Jon blinked. “Laurie, I’ve told you many times. I don’t predict the future to…”

“…‘to me it’s already happening,’” Laurie finished. “I just … Fuck, I don’t understand.”

“I apologize,” Jon said. “When I was in your position …”

Laurie laughed. “No, this … you weren’t in my position.” She took Jon’s hand. “Let’s just go.”

End Part Three.
“You misunderstand me. It was not a request.”

Jon’s words were followed by a sudden silence that had the effect of a thunderclap. The ringleader of the mob, the man Laurie had been beating to the ground, disappeared in her hands. The stiflingly crowded Pennsylvania Avenue was now empty, the throng of people gone, leaving only their placards.

Laurie stood up and scanned the street. She knew Jon was capable of something like this, but seeing it all at once …

“Jesus.”

Jon slowly floated back to the ground. Laurie looked at him. Although the street was eerily silent, she could feel the blood rushing through her veins, preparing her body to return to battle at any moment.

“Where did you send them?” she asked.

“To their homes, as I had warned them. If I hadn’t done so, many would have died.”

Jon stood stiffly as Laurie walked toward him. He had a near-incomprehensible body language, and yet Laurie thought she could hear a twinge of regret in his voice.

“So that means they’re safe, right?” Laurie asked.

The edges of Jon’s lips, the corners of his brow, turned down. “No. No, they’re not all safe.”

Laurie mouthed the word “but” and didn’t get any further. She lifted a trembling hand to her mouth, tried again. “But you said you wouldn’t be killing civilians. You said …”

“Two of them died, yes,” Jon said, without remorse, without defensiveness, as if he were explaining something about physics. “Their hearts stopped from the shock after I teleported them. I did not kill them. Killing requires intent.”

A wave of nausea hit Laurie. “Intent? What does intent matter when two people are dead, Jon? And you knew this was going to happen, didn’t you? You …” Laurie turned away, her hands balled into fists.

She was still shaking when Jon walked up behind her and laid a hand on her shoulder. Laurie prepared to take it off, but didn’t. Her eyes were locked on the White House as she spoke again.

“They’re not going to forgive this,” Laurie said. “They’re going to use this as an excuse to pass that bill, aren’t they?”

Jon rubbed her shoulder, and she knew the answer before he said it.

Laurie turned around and hugged him. She buried her face against his chest. His light created a blue afterglow on the inside of her eyelids.
The next few weeks passed quickly.

Although the bill had two months before it formally went into effect, the NYPD returned to work immediately after the announcement. The New York Gazette’s ecstatic “Our Boys in Blue are Back!” captured the mood of the people. News feeds from New York featured interviews from a plethora of happy, mostly-white Manhattanites. Only Hollis Mason expressed any on-air regrets. As Laurie watched Uncle Hollis on TV, she could hear the indignation underneath his politeness, could see him being torn between his loyalty to the cops and to the masks.

The other thing that happened immediately after the announcement was the government started visiting them at their apartment. Of course, “visit them” really meant “visit Jon.” Employees of cabinet members, members of the U.S. Army and the CIA, and other assorted government types came to visit every weekday. They talked with Jon about how the U.S. government, despite the unfortunate incidents in New York and D.C., were not blind to the service masked vigilantes had offered the years. They were prepared to make offers: a large salary, facilities for Jon to conduct experiments, anything he could need.

“Basically what the government had offered me during the war,” Jon said.

“Well, um,” said the young man – who looked three years younger than Laurie’s twenty-six. He sat on the couch in their living room while Jon sat on a chair in front of him, Laurie standing behind. “Secretary of Defense James Schlessinger said he’s prepared to offer more. For example, the salary I just named – it’s how much The Comedian will receive in his new position with the CIA, but considering your unique talents we could definitely go higher.”

“The government offered him work?” Laurie asked, emphasizing the “him” in the sentence.

The man coughed and wiped his brow. “Well, um, like I said, the U.S. is prepared to offer salaried career opportunities to any former vigilantes willing to cooperate. And The Comedian was an invaluable soldier in the Vietnam conflict.”

If there is a God, let him help us, Laurie thought. “Why haven’t I been offered anything?”

“I … I don’t have that information.”

She kept the man’s business card after he left.

Jon looked up at her. “I didn’t know you wanted to work for the government.”

Laurie absently ran her finger along the side of the card. “I don’t know … Maybe I do.”

“You haven’t discussed any future plans with me.”

Laurie looked into Jon’s eyes and thought about Blake, about what Blake said to her about Jon. She coughed and pocketed the card. “Well, it’s early, isn’t it?”

They didn’t have sex that night.

Laurie called the young man – the card said his name was “Joshua Pierson” – many times during the following weeks. Every time he told her to be a little more patient, that someone was figuring out her options.

After Nixon announced former vigilantes would be offered jobs, she started getting calls. Most of the calls came from D.C. reporters who somehow got Jon and her unlisted number through government contacts. She told them all she had no comment.
The rest came from her mother. The first time her mother called Laurie pulled the cord out of the wall, hoped her mother would think the two of them got disconnected.

Laurie let Jon answer the phone after that.

“She’s going to continue to call,” Jon said one time as he hung up the phone.

“I didn’t need your powers to tell me that,” Laurie spat. She turned a page of the Nova Express she had in her hand. Adrian was telling a reporter his thoughts on the Keene Act. Laurie hoped the article had some information on Dan.

“I didn’t mean it that way,” Jon said, and Laurie could tell she had insulted him. She continued to read the article as Jon went off to their bedroom.

They didn’t have sex that night, either.

Two weeks after the announcement she got a package with no return address. She opened it to find a wilted, half-dead rose and a piece of paper with ugly, scrawled handwriting.

“Don’t quit,” the paper read. A symbol that looked like two upside down Ls with dots inside was drawn in the corner.

Hours later she threw both the rose and paper away in a public trash can, far from where Jon could see, along with a negative pregnancy test.

They didn’t have sex that night. They hadn’t had sex since the announcement and they didn’t have sex in the weeks that followed. It occurred to Laurie that Jon never tried.

~*~*~

Four weeks after the announcement, Mr. Pierson called her.

He came the next day in a car with tinted windows to drive her to the Pentagon. Laurie dressed for the occasion in a sensible gray skirt and white turtleneck, something that she hoped made her look professional. As always, Laurie found Mr. Pierson very polite and bereft of information.

“You’ll be talking to Mr. Stephen Jones,” Mr. Pierson said. “He’ll tell you everything.”

Mr. Jones was a short, fat white man of about fifty with large jowls and a balding head. He didn’t smile as she walked into the meeting room – a blank slate with no decorations but three chairs and a desk with no clutter – an office that belonged to nobody. Mr. Pierson held out Laurie’s chair for her, and later she would wonder if that was an apology for everything that followed.

“I’m pleased to meet with you,” said Mr. Jones with no especial warmth. “I’ve heard reports from other departments that some of your colleagues have been … difficult. Mr. Pierson says you’ve been very eager to work with us.”

Laurie forced herself to smile. “Depends on what you’ve got for me, I guess.”

Mr. Jones made a small, affirmative noise that shook his jowls – something close to a nod, but not quite. He bent forward and folded his hands together, and despite how different he looked, it brought to mind when Adrian had done the same thing more than a month ago.

“Unfortunately, while we’ve done our best, your options for future employment are rather … limited.”
Laurie frowned. “Limited how?”

Mr. Jones sighed. “I’m afraid there are few places for a woman of your specific talents and experience. According to our records you didn’t go to college or participate in any sort of law enforcement training.”

“And … The Comedian did? I can’t imagine that.”

“Well,” Mr. Jones raised a fist to his mouth as he coughed, “He has had previous military experience with us. And many think putting you in a military position would not be … appropriate.”

Laurie crossed her arms and legs, leaned back against the chair. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Mr. Pierson slink down in his seat.

“Something about the way you say that makes me guess you’re not willing to train me,” Laurie said.

Mr. Jones stared back at her, his eyes unwavering and – to Laurie’s chagrin – unembarrassed. “I think given your history you should be aware of the … troubles inherent in integrating women into a traditionally male environment. And having a,” he coughed again, “celebrity such as yourself would be a distraction.”

“Oh, really?” Laurie said, not caring anymore about the nastiness that dripped out of her voice. “I think if any of our soldiers are so easily distracted by the thought of me in my costume, then we should question their ability to serve.”

Mr. Pierson sprang from his chair. “Miss Juspeczyk, we didn’t make this …”

“Sit down, Mr. Pierson,” said Mr. Jones. He looked again at Laurie as Mr. Pierson sat. “Miss Juspeczyk, this has been very difficult and I assure you I’m not unsympathetic to your position.”

Laurie looked over at Mr. Pierson but he stared at his shoes, couldn’t meet her eyes. She looked back at Mr. Jones, and then reached into her purse for a cigarette. “I see,” she said as she lit it. “So what have you found for me while you’ve been knocking down my door asking Jon for help?”

“As I said,” Mr. Jones continued, “we’d thought it would be best to set you up in a law enforcement position. You would have had to go through academy training, but that only lasts a few months. Unfortunately, we’ve already talked with the head officers in the District and due to recent events none of them are willing to hire you.”

Laurie let her hand drop away from her lips, her cigarette still in hand. “None of them?”

“I’m sorry.”

“But Captain Dolan and I always had a really good working relationship. I gave him some tips a few times, and …”

Laurie stopped talking as Mr. Jones shook his head. “I spoke with the captain personally. He had a lot of good things to say about you, but the internal politics of his – and most – law enforcement agencies is toxic to costumed vigilantes right now. Surely you can see it wouldn’t be a good environment for you.”

Laurie thought about the woman who screamed at her in New York – the woman whose sister was a cop. She sighed and took another puff of her cigarette. “Fine. What else?”
“I’m afraid …” Mr. Jones stood up. “I’m afraid I can only suggest you go back home. Your partner has accepted a substantial sum of money. Our records indicate you have your own trust fund. Despite our lack of positions in the government at this time, I imagine you will be quite comfortable.”

Laurie snuffed out her cigarette. “So … you basically dragged me out here to tell me you have nothing for me?”

“If you still want to go into law enforcement, I’d suggest waiting a few years. But I don’t believe that would be a wise decision. As I said, so long as you stay with Dr. Osterman, you will be extremely comfortable.”

“But –”

“Or are you suggesting that you’re not comfortable?” Mr. Jones said. “It would, of course, be of great interest to us if there were any strife between you and Dr. Manhattan.”

Laurie could feel the muscles in her face harden. “I assure you, Mr. Jones. We are very happy.”

Mr. Jones sat back down, his jowls moving once again as he assented. “I am glad to hear it.”

Laurie stood up, letting the chair screech behind her. Mr. Pierson led her back out.

~*~*~

Laurie sat on the steps in front of her apartment as she watched the black car drive away. Pierson had been a good guy, Laurie thought. He was exceedingly polite to her, and apologized about a million times on the way home. Annoying, but a good guy.

Laurie lit a cigarette. Of all of the smoking people she knew … well, of all the smoking people she had previously engaged in casual conversation – it wasn’t as if she had friends or anything like that … Laurie was one of the few who weren’t turned outside by their spouse or children whenever they lit up. Yet today she wanted a few minutes alone.

She shouldn’t have been so mean to Mr. Pierson, Laurie thought. She wished she had someone to talk to – someone who wasn’t Jon. But who did she know, really? She had to dig up strangers when she tried to remember someone who complained to her about smoking outside.

Maybe she could complain to Blake, Laurie thought, remembering the smoke they shared after they fucked. Laurie mouthed the last word: her last significant act as a superheroine. It seemed appropriate now, Laurie thought. At this point even the feds were of the opinion that her pussy was more important than her judo skills.

Oh, but why should she complain? She had a great service to provide. And hadn’t she knocked the previous employee aside for the all-important, all-American job of having the world’s most powerful man’s dick between her legs? Too bad they would never know even that talent would be wasted. After all, she’d added many more skills to her resume since then.

Laurie looked down their street. It was like many of the residential neighborhoods in the District. The brick apartment buildings had facades like a box of crayons, circular fronts which alternated between red, yellow, blue and white. Black iron gates enclosed the yards for each, and trees that occasionally broke the sidewalk grew around them. In the six years Laurie and Jon had lived here she rarely went outside, had always felt she’d seen enough of the city in her patrols to do it for fun. She’d hoped being among her city would bring some sort of peace, compared it to the ugly harshness she’d seen in New York, but it didn’t make her feel any better. All that work, all those
wasted hours and cracked ribs and ripped clothes and this is where it ended? This was all there was?

Laurie’s eye twitched. She bit her lip and snuffed the cigarette out underneath her heel as she walked up the steps and into her apartment building. Fuck them, she thought. She reached for the knob and found the door unlocked.

“Jon?” she called out as she opened the door, her anger forgotten. She looked down the hallway and, when she found no one there, walked into the living room. The smell of perfume and hairspray hit her nostrils, and a sick feeling grew in her stomach.

“What are you doing here?” Laurie asked.

Sally Jupiter looked up at Laurie from her seat on the couch, a smile painted on her made-up lips that didn’t match her eyes. “Four weeks and that’s all you’ve got to say to me? What happened to, ‘So nice to see you; I’m sorry I haven’t called’?”

Laurie reached for another cigarette even though she didn’t need it. She hid her face behind her hands as she lit up. “Yeah, well, it’s not like you didn’t teach me to be a bit suspicious if someone breaks into your house or anything.”

“Where is he now?”

“Dunno,” Sally said, her fingers fondling the pearls around her neck. “He said you would leave us alone to talk and he’d come back after you took me out to dinner.”

“Oh God,” Laurie said, her words turning into a groan. She sat on the upholstered chair next to the couch. She didn’t need this now. “I’m going to kill him.”

“Well that’s good news for the Russians, at least.”

Laurie didn’t respond. She sat back in her chair and smoked, but decided she didn’t want to play the part of the wayward teenager caught coming home by her mother that much. She sat up again, although she didn’t look Sally in the eye.

“Look, Mom. I … I am sorry. Things have just been –”

“I know how things have been,” Sally said. “Why did you think I wanted to talk to you so much? I’m your mother and I want to know what the hell is going on.”

“Nothing is going on.”

“Oh, nothing is going on, now?” Sally sighed. “And cripes, it’s enough that I can smell it on everything you own. Do you have to kill yourself in front of me?”

“It’s my apartment,” Laurie insisted, but she didn’t really need the cigarette, so she put it out. “And for your information, I actually mean it when I say nothing is going on.”

Laurie told her mother about the meeting, as well as what had been going on the last few weeks, although she left out her problems with Jon, including the last bit of business she talked about with Mr. Jones. When she was done, her mother shook her head.
Those bastards,” she said. “Especially that bastard captain. I still remember all of your clips from The Washington Ledger where he talked about what great friends you were. The way he went on I almost thought there was something going on there –”

“Mother, he’s old enough to be my father,” Laurie said.

“Whatever. He seemed like he really liked you, and then he just lets you hang. Typical men bullshit. Always sucking you dry and giving you nothing.”

Laurie huffed and rolled her eyes. “Yeah, well. Somehow these days I can understand why the police would want to hire an actual officer instead over someone who fistfights in lingerie. Thanks, by the way.”

Her mother didn’t respond. And when Laurie looked at her mother again she realized her painted lips were no longer pretending to smile.

“So,” Sally said. “That’s how it is.”

The side of Laurie’s mouth twitched. Her fingers groped for her cigarette case, but she realized what she was doing and let it go. “Well, um …”

“Is that why you haven’t answered your phone? Too busy stewing at me for ruining your life?”

“No! It’s not just that,” Laurie’s eyes widened when she realized exactly what she said. “I mean, it’s not that! … Look, things are complicated right now.”

It was her mother’s turn to roll her eyes. “First it’s nothing, and then it’s complicated. Spare me, honey. I can put up with a lot from you, but you’re not going to make me feel sorry for giving you a life many women would kill to have, even if some bastards had to come along and ruin it.”

“Those bastards are police officers,” Laurie said.

“Right. Police officers who never had a problem with you before and who you were bitching about just a few minutes ago.” Sally groaned. “You know, when most people get as indignant as you are now, they tend to say what they really think. You, I don’t know. I’ve never seen anyone who acted so wronged yet defended the people who wronged her so much.”

Laurie didn’t care anymore. She rested her cheek on her hand in what she knew was an obvious sulk. “Then what do you want me to say, mother?”

“How about what you really feel?” Her mother leaned back on the couch and crossed her legs. “No matter how mad you were at me in the past, you’ve never blown me off like that. I was worried about you. I don’t like you pushing me away.”

Laurie uncurled herself from her position and her eyes darted away from Sally. “I just needed my space, that’s all. Things … happened. I don’t need to tell you everything.”

“Hmm.” Sally’s fingers returned to her pearls again. “I don’t know if I like the sound of that.”

Laurie turned her head away, didn’t say anything.

“I don’t know if I liked what you said to me earlier, either.” Her mother let go of the pearls and sat up on the couch. “None of this is my fault. I’m as upset as you are.”

“Why?” Laurie looked back at her mother. “Why are you upset? I don’t need any money and now I
have less chance of being killed.”

“And you don’t have to dress up in lingerie, right?” her mother asked. “Don’t forget that. That’s the most important part.”

Laurie stood up and waved her arms in disgust. “Well, what if it is? Do you know the kinds of things people were saying to me during those riots? Do you know the kind of respect that stupid costume you chose earned me? You’re so upset about the police not taking me seriously, well maybe that’s the reason why.”

Her mother exhaled sharply before getting to her feet. She ground her fists against her hips as she spoke, “If you hadn’t noticed, you weren’t the only one who got canned. And you’ve been wearing far more than your blue man, lately.”

Laurie scoffed. “That’s different. Jon isn’t prostituting his body to fight crime.”

Sally laughed bitterly. “If anyone in the world was …”

“I don’t want to talk about this anymore!” Laurie turned away. “If you’re going to insult Jon, you can just go home.”

“Oh, turn around and stop your nonsense. I flew here from California and I don’t have a hotel room. I’m not going home. Besides, what would you do if I left? Ignore him the same way you’ve been ignoring me?”

Laurie turned back around. Her mother’s scowl had melted into something close to pleading.

“You know, if it’s just the costume you want to talk about … I heard some lady on television … I forget her name, but she was saying it was all Larry’s fault. That he gave me some sort of stripper image. But I picked that costume out. I was a dancer. Compared to what they made me wear on stage my costume was practically a nun’s habit. He suggested stuff, sure. He talked me into some shitty choices, but I was still the Silk Spectre. I still fought all the crimes. I did that. I don’t know why you want to make me feel bad about it.”

Laurie groaned. “Mom, I’m not upset about you being Silk Spectre. But didn’t it ever occur to you that I might not want to be? That I might have one day needed to be something else?”

“Well then,” Sally crossed her arms. “Looks like you have a long time to decide what to be instead, don’t you?”

“I …” Laurie reached for her cigarette case again. “I didn’t need you to tell me that.”

“Hmmm.” Laurie was about to light up when her mother took the cigarette out of her hand. “I know by the way you can’t look me in the eye that something is still bothering you. And you’re right; you don’t have to tell me everything. But I know the toll a big secret can have on a person, and if you can’t tell me I’m wondering if you can tell anyone at all. Because I don’t think Jon is going to cut it.”

Laurie took her cigarette back. “I can talk to Jon just fine. Despite what you might think, he’s a good guy.”

“He’s not a good guy. He’s just not mean.” Sally sat back on the couch and opened her purse. “Anyway, I’m starving. Go put on something prettier so we can go eat.”

Laurie looked down at her outfit – still clean, still feminine – then glared at her mother. “What I’m
wearing is fine."

Her mother opened her compact and took out a brush. “Did I say it wasn’t fine? I said put on something prettier. Come on. The sooner you do it the sooner we go outside and the sooner you can smoke.”

Laurie looked at her mother primping on the couch. Her ego was still smarting, and the only regret she felt as she left to change her clothes was that while she might one day need to tell someone, it was going to be so easy to lie to her mother for the rest of her life.

~*~*~

A week later, sometime after Laurie typed up her official letter to the government promising not to get involved in any vigilante activities again, the television reported the news she’d wanted to hear for weeks.

Earlier that morning, said the anchor, the Pentagon announced the second Nite Owl, who still refused to reveal his identity, would comply with the government’s wishes and retire. Headshots of the five masks were posted behind the announcer, red “X”s through Rorschach’s face and hers. As the announcer finished his sentence, Nite Owl’s face was crossed out, too.

“That’s weird,” Laurie said.

“What is?” Jon asked.

“I didn’t think Rorschach would be retiring.”

Jon tilted his head slightly. “I didn’t think you cared about Rorschach.”

“I don’t,” Laurie bristled and reached for a cigarette. “I just didn’t think he’d be the type to retire.”

“They’ll explain in a minute.”

God, Laurie hated when Jon did that. She continued to watch. The announcer explained how Rorschach could not be reached, refused to comply with the law in any way, either by retiring or working with the government. Laurie flinched as they showed the footage of the found body, and she wasn’t sure if what made her flinch more was the rapist’s mangled limbs or how she recognized the scrawl.

Laurie lost interest in the program when they started interviewing Adrian. She could still hear the television as she cleaned up in the kitchen.

“Of course, I think the clash between costumed adventurers and traditional law enforcement was inevitable,” Adrian said. “Even when I was active, I knew we were allowed to exist more on good faith than any legal precedent. Yet I can’t help but fear that this law has prevented the wrong people from costume adventuring. I’m not naming any names, but somehow I think that Nite Owl and Silk Spectre weren’t the ones the police and citizens of New York were worried about.”

“No thanks to you, jerk,” Laurie muttered as she reached for a dirty plate. She turned on the water, happy that the sound of it drowned Adrian out. After she finished her task, Jon called for her.

“Phone call.”

“What?”
The telephone rang. Oh, for Christ’s sake, Laurie thought. “Jon!” Laurie stomped out of the kitchen. “Stop that!”

Jon’s eyes were wide in surprise laced with hurt. “I only wanted to tell you. I didn’t cause the phone to ring.”

“Whatever.” Laurie picked up the phone. “Hello?”

“Um, hey Laurie.”

When Laurie realized who it was, she wondered why she felt so excited. “Dan! Oh, I just saw on the television.”

“Yeah, I heard about you there, too.”

“Is that why you called?”

“Um … sort of.” Laurie heard him cough. “I kind of came to D.C. to smooth out this mess and I wondered if you and Jon wanted a visit before I left. If you can’t, that’s okay. But I figured since I’m in the neighborhood, I could stop by … maybe see the sights.”

“Oh, sure! Of course. Where are you staying?”

“Well, uh, nowhere. I’m going back tonight.”

“Oh, okay. Hold on,” Laurie placed her hand over the receiver. “Jon, Dan’s in town. He wants a tour of D.C.”

“I won’t be going,” Jon replied, his eyes still on the television.

Laurie blinked. “What?”

“I have a meeting at the Pentagon tonight,” Jon said. “I can’t go.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about that?”

Jon still wouldn’t look her in the eye. “Given the circumstances, I thought reminding you of my work would upset you.”

Something about the way he said that made Laurie wonder if Jon was hiding something. She removed her hand.

“Actually, it’ll just be me,” Laurie said. “So, have you ever been to The National Mall?”

“Not in years.”

“Great. It’s two o’clock now. Why don’t we meet at three? Can you find the Lincoln Memorial by yourself?”

Dan chuckled. “I’ll try to manage. See you then.”

“Bye,” Laurie said, and hung up the phone.

Laurie stepped toward Jon and he finally looked away from the television. From his movements, Laurie wondered if she had surprised him or some internal clock of his had told him to talk to her.
“I apologize,” he said. “If it could be any different …”

He trailed off. The way he spoke made all of this seem like more than just a badly timed meeting.

“Jon, is something wrong? If you want to go, you can change the meeting, can’t you? I mean, I’m sure you’d like to see Dan but it’s not a big deal, is it?”

“No,” Jon said. “No, I suppose it’s not a big deal. Of course, everything is insignificant in the end, isn’t it?”

Laurie groaned. Sheesh, why did he have to turn everything into a philosophical speech? “I’m going to go change.”

“Laurie …,” Jon said before she could leave.

Laurie blinked. “Yeah.”

“You …” He stood up and walked toward her. Laurie realized he was wearing nothing but his thong, and thought about what her mother said. She remembered there had been a time when she was the only one to see him like this, when just seeing him like this was enough to excite her. When had this become so normal? Why did it seem so normal? Jon laid his hands on her shoulders. “You know I still love you, right?”

Laurie hoped he couldn’t hear her heart rate increasing. “Of course, why would you ask that?”

“I … I just wanted to make sure you knew,” he said.

“I love you, too,” Laurie blurted, realizing she hadn’t said it yet.

Jon smiled, bent down to kiss her cheek. She did still love Jon, didn’t she? At least, she didn’t love anybody else.

~*~*~

It was Laurie who first noticed Dan, and when she did she thought how strange it was to see him out of costume. He was crouched, hidden in his brown overcoat and glasses, in the far corner of one of the large marble steps in front of the reflecting pool. It was a nice day: the October breeze was chill enough that she needed to wear a lightweight jacket but not so cold as to drive the many tourists away. As they passed him by, Dan looked up and smiled, a greeting and an apology for his presence.

That smile turned onto her as she called his name. Dan stood up to embrace her when they met, and as Laurie hugged him back she told herself everything was fine.

Really, she thought, why wouldn’t it feel weird to see Dan again? The last time she saw him he was half-naked. She needed to try not to think about that.

“It’s great to see you!” Laurie said a little too loudly as they broke their hug. “Enjoying D.C.?”

“Eh.” Dan scratched the back of his head. “I wish I was here under better circumstances. It’s kind of why I wanted to see you. And Jon, too, of course. I’m sorry he couldn’t come.”

“Yeah.” Laurie looked around. Even though she suggested this trip, she suddenly felt at a loss. “So, uh, want to go see Lincoln?”

“Actually, I got here a little early, so I already went in. I figured you’ve seen him a million times
before …”

“Well, I wouldn’t have minded. It’s still great. Just walk with me, then.”

Laurie descended the marble steps, Dan following close behind. Laurie pointed on a bare patch of ground as they walked to the left side of the reflecting pool. “You know, they’re going to build a memorial to the Vietnam conflict over there. One of the designs submitted actually involved Jon. This shitty triumphal thing of him standing among these really tiny multicultural American soldiers. We both thought it was so ugly.”

“Wow,” Dan shook his head. “Did any involve The Comedian, too?”

“I don’t know. I hope not.” Laurie coughed. “But you probably don’t want to talk mask stuff now, right? Come on, let’s walk a bit.”

“I’m actually all right with it,” Dan insisted. “I just met with this guy while in costume and told him I wasn’t going to do anything. It wasn’t that painful.”

“Mmm.”

“What was the experience like for you?”

Laurie whirled around. “Hey! Why don’t we go see the Air and Space Museum? That seems like your thing.”

“Really?” Dan’s voice was suddenly excited, and Laurie was relieved at the change of subject. “I heard they were making a museum but I didn’t know it was open.”

“Oh yeah, it opened last year. It’s not too far away. Come on.”

~*~*~

“He was a Nazi, you know.”

“Yeah, I know,” Dan said, although the awe in his voice that had been there since they entered the museum hadn’t abated. They were on the second floor, near one of the open spaces where planes hung from the ceiling. Dan leaned over the railing, elbows resting on the edge, as he looked up at the replica of the Spirit of St. Louis.

“And it doesn’t bother you?” Laurie asked. She’d gotten tired of looking at the planes and was leaning back against the edge.

Dan shrugged, his eyes still locked on the plane. “It was still a great thing he did. Hollis says he remembers the day the flight was announced. He showed me the clip from the Gazette and everything: ‘Lucky Lindy Crosses the Atlantic.’ It was great.”

“Still, that’s kind of an ugly thing to do.”

“Well, I don’t like it, but … well, I don’t know. It was mostly just opinions; at least he didn’t hurt anybody. It’s how I reconciled all those things Hooded Justice said, anyway.”

Laurie flinched. Jesus, she’d been kind of callous. Especially considering that man was likely to be her father and … “I guess you’re right,” she said.

Dan laughed and pushed himself up off the railing, his palms now resting on it. “You know, there was a time that Rorschach thought Neil Armstrong was the Lindbergh Baby?”
Laurie laughed so hard she bucked forward, hand covering her mouth. “What?” she asked as Dan laughed with her. “Why?”

“I don’t know. He dropped that idea when the newest kidnapping suspect popped up. I forget who it was. He …” The smile on Dan’s face disappeared. “He had some crazy ideas.”

Laurie pet the pocket where her cigarettes were, then took her hand away. She really had the urge to smoke a lot more these days, she thought, trying to ignore the image of the two of them together and how they embraced so tightly and …

Laurie still couldn’t help but be curious.

“How’d he take the news?” she asked.

Dan turned his head toward her, a rapid and smooth movement that reminded Laurie of his namesake. “You know he’s not retiring?”

“It was on TV. He announced it with the body of a dead rapist. Something classy like that.”

“What?” Dan leaned toward Laurie and whispered. “He really did that?”

“Yeah.”

Dan sighed. He returned to his spot on the railing. “I’d hoped what he did to that one guy was just a one-off and …” Dan reached beneath his glasses and rubbed his eyes. “I knew he was mad about me taking Berkowitz in, but I didn’t think …”

“He was pretty brutal back in New York,” Laurie said.

Dan was quiet. His eyes were directed back toward the planes again, but Laurie had a feeling he wasn’t really seeing them.

“Not always,” Dan whispered so softly Laurie wasn’t sure if she was meant to hear it or not. Laurie could feel a flush crawling up her cheeks.

“It’s weird,” Dan said. “You think you know a person and then you just don’t anymore. And sometimes you wonder if you ever did but there are these moments that make you think everything could be the same again. Maybe even better. But it probably … Well, I knew he was gone, but ….”

He was quiet again. Even though the museum was far from silent, was filled with a low hum of children’s expositions of joy and their parents’ chiding, Laurie felt like she could still hear her own heart beating. She moved closer to Dan, laid a hand on his shoulder.

I’m only comforting him, a small voice within her said. I don’t feel the least bit relieved. I feel sorry seeing him like this. And that would be wrong, anyway.

Dan looked up at her and smiled. He took her hand off his shoulder as he stood up, gave it a little squeeze before he let go.

“Thanks for seeing me,” Dan said. He pressed his glasses up further on his nose. “Is there anywhere else to go?”

“I don’t feel much like walking,” Laurie said. “There’s a bus route nearby. Want to go somewhere?”

“Well …” Dan chuckled. “This is a bit ten years old, but ….”
Laurie raised an eyebrow. “We are in a museum full of giant model planes and spaceships.”

“Okay, good point. So, uh, can we go to the zoo? I prefer watching in the wild, but if they have birds . . .”

Laurie laughed.

“I mean, if that’s too . . .”

“No, no! It’s less than 15 minutes away. It’s fine.”

Laurie thought she saw Dan blush. “Well, all right. Great.”

They didn’t have long to wait before the bus came by. The seats were tightly packed, and as it drove away, Laurie let her leg rest against Dan’s. She thought he saw him tense as she did that, but Dan smiled at her and didn’t move it until the bus came to their stop.

~*~*~

After the zoo, Laurie suggested they stop at Moveable Feast, a small but expensive French restaurant – the type that had candles on the table and folded cloth napkins and a $400 bottle of wine for those who wanted it, but was kitschy enough to play up its name’s literary origins. Their waitress sat them at a table beneath a caricature of Dorothy Parker – she was just one of many who lined the walls, and Laurie ordered a dry martini named after Alexander Woollcott.

“What does their dessert list look like?” Dan asked as he looked through the menu. “Do they have Toklas brownies?”

Laurie laughed and set down her martini. “I never took you for a pothead.”

“No, no. Just a joke.”

“It’s not a bad one. Although I bet the waitress gets it a lot.”

“Mmm,” Dan looked down at his bottle of beer he’d ordered, twirled it back and forth with his fingers. “I guess so . . .”

“What are you thinking about?”

Dan shrugged. “What it’s going to be like to be normal, I guess. I know we need to be, but . . .”

“Yeah . . .” Laurie said. “Actually, I’m starting to think it might be better. Those last days were really . . .”

“Dispiriting?”

“That’s a good word.”

Dan coughed, took a sip of his drink. “Do you have anything planned? They offered me a job but I just couldn’t take it.”

“Really?” Laurie said. He turned it down? And after she thought she had wanted one so badly? “Why?”

“Well, they had some great offers, but to be honest I don’t need the money,” Dan said. “They didn’t really want me to do much, anyway. Some engineers for the military requested I work on
integrating tech from the Owlship into some weapons of war but … I don’t know. I don’t really want to see my ideas used for that, you know?”

“I guess,” Laurie stared into her martini glass, ran her finger along the lip.

“You know,” Dan said. “I really have to apologize to you.”

Laurie blinked. “Apologize? For what?”

“For asking you to come to New York. I keep wondering if that just made it worse. The Nova Express had some article about how you and Jon abandoning D.C. sent a message that other costumed adventurers were more important than the people you protect. And then there was that nonsense over the mobster you stopped.”

Laurie took a large gulp of her martini, made a noise as it burned down her throat. “I don’t know. It was a crazy week.”

“I’m glad you were there, though.” Dan reached his hand out, seemed to pause for a second before taking a piece of bread. “You’re a good fighter.”

“Eh, don’t,” Laurie said. She was about to take another sip of her martini when she realized she’d finished it. She frowned and reached for her cigarettes. “I was useless. The Comedian and Jon were doing everything after awhile. I just …” Laurie was about to raise a cigarette to her mouth, put it down and rubbed her forehead instead. She’d done so well at not getting mad about earlier and now …

“What is it?” Dan asked.

“Nothing,” Laurie said, harsher than she wanted. “The whole thing just sucked, you know? Sucked the whole way through and I don’t know what the hell I was supposed to learn from this. Or learn from my life. You know, it was my mother who wanted me to take this stupid career anyway and now I … I ….”

Laurie could feel the beginning of tears sting her eyes. She grasped a napkin, trying not to cry but just in case. “It’s … it just affects everything I see and hear, now. Like the way I talk to Jon. And my mother can’t understand why it bothers me. And I feel like I can’t do anything else and yet it’s all I know and I don’t …” Oh God, she thought. What was she doing – she barely knew what she was talking about, whether it was the fighting or the fucking and it didn’t even matter. She sobbed.

“Laurie?”

She buried her face in her hands, and in an instant they were wet with her tears. “I just don’t want to do this anymore! I just don’t want to do anything anymore!”

Dan was at her side. He pulled her up as she continued to cry, mumbled some apologies and shoved a wad of bills into to the hostess’ hand as they walked out. Laurie felt humiliated – she knew people were staring at her, thought she heard one person mutter “break-up” to another – but she couldn’t stop, couldn’t even stop when they were out of the restaurant and Dan pulled her to his chest and held her.

“It’s all right,” he whispered. “It’s all right.”

He stroked her hair and Laurie’s heart began to pound. Oh God, the things she could do. She looked up at him through her tear-blurred eyes. His mouth was slack, but his eyes were full of longing and he looked like such a dork with his glasses and his messed up hair but he was so nice,
so willing to connect after everything that had happened, maybe so willing to …

It would be so simple, Laurie thought, horrified even as her breath came out staggered with desire. She could press him against this wall and he would yield so fast, so completely, underneath her kiss. He’d kiss back, he’d hold her so tight and they’d go into the alley and it would be disgusting and rotten but beautiful because it would be in defiance of every disappointment. And oh God, he would do it. He would do it for her. The predator bird become the prey and ....

Oh God, no. No.

Why did everything have to be like this? Have to be some sick little chess game of manipulation and pride and whoring to which nobody seemed immune no matter how much they rejected or embraced it? She wanted to love, just once, for the joy of being loved and being alive: the way people are always told they’re supposed to love. But how could she ever do that? And did she even deserve it?

She broke their grasp, tried to ignore the disappointed look on Dan’s face. “I’m sorry,” she whispered, not looking at him. “I ruined dinner for you.”

“It’s all right,” he repeated. “And I don’t think you were useless. You saved me, didn’t you?”

Laurie pulled her jacket more closely around her shoulders. “Rorschach saved you. I just pointed you out.”

“He might not have if not for –”

“You should be getting back, right?” she said, her eyes cast down the street, in the direction of her apartment with Jon.

It was a few minutes before Dan spoke again. “Right,” he whispered.

They stopped a cab for Dan, and Laurie told the driver to take him to Union Station.

Dan held open the door, looked back at Laurie. “Will you visit me? In New York?”

“I might,” she said.

“So maybe,” Dan said.

He closed the door, and Laurie walked in the opposite direction as the car drove away.

~*~*~

The lights in the apartment were dim when Laurie returned. She wondered if Jon’s meeting had run late, but then heard the soft music playing in the bedroom.

She walked cautiously, like when she’d try to sneak back into the house after her mother was asleep. She didn’t know why – Jon didn’t sleep. He knew Laurie was here, and when she opened the door to the bedroom he was sitting up in bed, waiting. Little bursts of blue light decorated the room – Jon’s doing, a strange and wonderful substitute for candles. He’d done the same thing their first time together.

“You’re home,” Jon said. “I’m glad.”

Laurie smirked. “Didn’t you know I’d be back?”
“I did,” he said, and yet somehow insecurity lingered in his voice, his face. He pulled off the sheets of the bed, and he was already nude.

Laurie removed her clothes bit by bit: shoes, jacket, sweater, slacks, underclothes. She slid into the bed – her bed, their bed. Her arms wrapped around his neck, her lips pressed against his.

Jon ran his hands against the curves of her body, let them rest on her buttocks for a moment before traveling up again. Laurie let her movements mirror his, and thought about how familiar his scorching warmth felt, and how she had felt making love without it.

She reached down in between their stomachs, found his hard cock and ran her palm against it. Jon let out small, soft moans, and then bent forward to kiss her neck, her cheeks, her mouth.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

“Not quite yet …,” Laurie breathed. “I could suck you, make that easier.”

“I’m fine,” Jon gently grasped her buttocks and pushed her up so she was kneeling over him. “Let me help you.”

He took her left nipple in his mouth and the heat of his mouth, the slight vibrations of his tongue moving one of the most sensitive parts of her body, brought the first strong wave of arousal. She started to moan.

Jon moved to her right nipple, let one of his hands reach below her, now. He ran his finger against her clitoris, making her shriek, then moved it down to plunge inside her.

He’d only thrust a few times when Laurie cried out, “Okay … okay …” Jon removed his finger and Laurie pushed herself down onto his cock. She adjusted her legs so they were tucked underneath her, wrapped her arms around his neck. They kissed and Laurie began to move, slowly bouncing up and down.

Jon always felt so wonderful, Laurie thought. Anything she wanted, he could provide. He was beautiful and awe-inspiring and perfect. Nobody felt like him. Nobody ever would. Couldn’t that be enough? Wasn’t it horribly selfish to want anything more?

Jon whispered her name, and she moaned even as a part of her thought of the possessiveness of her lust, how sex always involved seeing a reflection of herself in another. Then he held her hips down and thrust inside her, and she didn’t care as much.

Laurie’s eyes closed as Jon pushed her back onto the bed, hitched up her legs and continued to push inside her. He called her name again. She cried out in response, her eyes shut tight.

“Laurie,” Jon ran his palm along her cheek. “Look at me. Please look at me.”

She opened her eyes, saw his face above her. Jon’s eyes – so white and blank, yet still so full of emotion and meaning – looked into hers, were looking at her as if to drink her up, to keep her in this moment forever.

And Laurie knew from the way Jon looked at her that she would never be.

Whether he already knew what she had done or never would, it didn’t really matter. They were breaking, would one day be broken. Laurie loved Jon, but even at their happiest she had wondered if her mother was right and one day she’d be tossed aside like Janey. As Laurie looked into Jon’s eyes, she knew that wouldn’t be what happened. One day, she would leave him, and Jon knew that.
Yet the look on his face only made her want to deny it.

Jon’s thrusts came harder, and Laurie let herself get lost in them. She curled a hand around his head, cried out as she felt her orgasm overtake her. He was still thrusting as she moved her head up to kiss him. Laurie’s eyes were wet with the beginnings of tears, and as she took him into herself, felt him orgasm inside her, nothing about it felt calculated at all.

The End.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!