Precocity

by JoshuaWoode

Summary

"Precocity" is based in the world of Neil Gaiman's "American Gods," and on the premise therein that we create our own gods through our belief in them, and that their power is relative to the breadth and depth of that belief. In these tales, a goddess of chaos emerges from a primal undercurrent of human nature and thrives in today's intensely connected world.
Precocity - Part One

I don't remember when I met Precocity. She was just there one day in my class. When the teacher called her name for attendance, it was like she'd been there all the time. Nobody else said anything about a new girl. I thought her name was weird, but in a cool way.

It's hard to describe her. I asked her how old she was and she said, "How old are you?" I said I was nine, and she said, "That's perfect, I'm nine too." Sometimes her hair looks light when it's in the sun but if a cloud goes over it looks almost black and if she's in the woods it's this neat shade of brown and one time at the beach it was almost red. I asked her if her mom let her color it. She just laughed. "That's so funny, Emma. I'm much too little for that." I never met her mom or her dad. She said they were always busy.

She was mostly normal but sometimes she freaked me out. She knew words that I didn't know. She liked grownups and talked to them like she was one. They were always impressed by her. It made me jealous sometimes. "You seem so grown up, princess," they'd say. She'd just smile and say, "I feel grown up inside sometimes, but I'm just a little girl."

My Dad was one of the grownups that liked her. He looked at her a lot when she was over at our house. One time she just sat down at our old piano. I didn't even know she played. The thing was kinda broken and hadn't been tuned in a long time but when she played it sounded amazing. Dad came in and watched her. He didn't say anything until the end. His eyes were big. "Prelude number seven," he said when she was done, "the Andentino." She giggled. "It's nice, isn't it? I thought it was his best when he wrote it." That was strange. Dad looked at her, and at the piano. Then he shook his head and went back into his office.

She and I used to sneak into his office sometimes. She said she liked the smell of it, the leather chair and the books. She'd read from them sometimes. Once she wrote a note and tucked it inside one of the books. I asked what it was and she said it was just something funny for my Dad. For some reason I didn't think about it after that.

My mom and my Dad were fighting then. I guess my Dad didn't have a job and we were scared that maybe we might have to move or something. If she was over and we heard them shouting she'd take me into my room and tell me stories and it made me feel better. She knew all kinds of stories from a long time ago and she made them all sound so real. It reminded me of A Little Princess, where Sara would tell stories to the other girls in the school, even when she was sad about her Papa. Then my parents would get quiet again. Precocity curled up with me in bed and hugged me and she'd whisper in my ear.

"They're making up now, I think. It's so nice when they make up after an argument. They do love each other, you know. She's showing him how sorry she is. She's doing the things he likes best, to make him happy, to make him know that she loves him. Things that she doesn't really like to do, but your Daddy needs. He needs these things so badly, Emma."

It sounded so romantic, what she was saying. It made me feel warm and safe. "What's she doing?" I
asked. "I mean... what do you imagine?" It's not like she could really know.

She put her lips to my ear and she told me. I couldn't believe it and it made me blush and laugh and feel all strange in my tummy. "Everything off?" I asked. "Every stitch," she said. "And then..." And I said, "With her mouth? That's so..." She nodded. "Oh yes. Your Daddy needs that most of all. With her mouth. You should see his face, Emma. How he loves her when she does that. It's the most beautiful thing."

I don't remember when I met Precocity. She's in Emma's class at school, and one day she came home with Em and they announced that she was spending the weekend. Apparently her parents traveled a lot. Odd how they named their child. Perhaps her mother is named Pretentiousness.

"You arranged this with your mother?" I asked.

Emma rolled her eyes. "Yes Daddy. Last week. We told you. Don't you remember?"

I didn't remember, but things have been difficult lately. Stressful. It's easy to forget things.

It's hard to describe Precocity. Emma said that she's her same age, and at times she seems a perfect nine, still linear in form except perhaps in profile, her rump nascently rounded. At other times, when I've seen her alone, without my daughter beside her, she's seemed different. Still small, but her shape not so boyish. Extended, the curves more evident, the hips more flared, the chest not entirely planar.

"It's so kind of you to let me stay, Mister Ross. You and Missus Ross, of course."

Was there an accent? A touch of British, perhaps. Or more continental. French maybe. At times when speaking with her I felt like I was watching a film based on Jane Austen. But then she'd whisper to Emma and they'd collapse in a pile of giggles, more like seven than even nine.

I poked my head in that evening. They were huddled around Emma's iPad at her desk, rapt in something.

"Whatcha watching?" I didn't unduly restrict Emma's internet, but passwords weren't allowed and she knew better than to try to hide her browsing history.

"Dance videos, Daddy." She didn't lift her eyes. I peered over their shoulders. It was Sia's *Elastic Heart*. Maddie Ziegler in a steel cage match with Shia LeBeouf. I knew it because I'd been forced against my will to sit through multiple episodes of *Dance Moms*. Emma aspired to dance and we supported it, but wanted no part of the competition scene. I watched for longer than I should have. As I stood behind them, Precocity leaned her head back and rested it... just there. She can't have meant it. I realized that I was hard. I stepped back. Neither girl looked up as I left the room.

"Don't stay up too late," I added. I doubt that they heard me.

Later that night I must have fallen asleep on the couch. I felt a small hand where it shouldn't be. My eyes open a slit, and there is Precocity, kneeling between my legs, exploring the fly of my boxers. Her chin lifts and she meets my startled gaze. "I know what you need, Mister Ross. Not to worry." Her slender fingers grip me and my body spasms and my eyes open for real and I am alone. And hard. And exposed.

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"You've never kissed a boy? Not ever?" Precocity was incredulous.

"No. I never knew any boy that wasn't like... disgusting."

She sighed, next to me in bed. Her breath was warm and smelled like the peppermint candy we sneaked from the kitchen.

"Too true. The older ones are better."

"Older ones? You mean you..."

She just smiled and took my cheeks in her hands. "It's time, Emma. So soon you'll need to know this. This and other things. So soon now."

I guess she meant that I'd probably have a boyfriend soon. So she kissed me and I let her and I did it back and it was nice and she showed me the tongues and she was against me and then before I knew it her hand was... there. Between my legs. I pulled away a little.

"Oh please. Let's not pretend, shall we? You do it yourself, Emma. In bed at night. And I know what you think about. You think about Daddy and Mommy and how they make up."

I shook my head. She kissed me again. "It's just fine," she said. "It's proper. And soon enough..."

I didn't really hear what she said after that because all I could think about was her hand and her fingers and her skin and her smell and her hair and her eyes and her lips.

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Reading at the breakfast table, absorbed in my work, I smiled when I felt a small bottom lean against my leg.

I didn't look up, wanting to finish my paragraph. "Good morning, Em," I said. "I hope you weren't up all night."

A breath at my ear. "Vous êtes l'homme les plus gentil."

I couldn't move. It wasn't my daughter. The breath continued. "Vous méritez tout ce que vous désirez."

How did she even know that I spoke French? "Personne ne mérite ça," I mouthed.

Her lips at my earlobe, warm, suckling gently. I forced myself to stand. Emma was at the doorway, staring. Precocity was at the side of the table, inscrutable.

"What's going on?" said Emma. She sounded confused and hurt.

"I gave your lovely father a kiss on the cheek. To thank him. That's all."

Precocity turned to Emma and saw her eyes. "Oh. Oh my. I'm so sorry. It's... just... where I come from, this is something we do. It's just a custom." She took my daughter's hands. "See... you'll like it. Kiss your Papa to say good morning."

Emma bit her lip but her brow smoothed. She held Precocity's hand and leaned in, brushing my cheek with her lips. My arm slid around Emma's waist. Warm. A thin t-shirt. Not long. I couldn't tell if she had anything on underneath. Odd that I wanted to know. My daughter's soft smile. "Ya. It's nice," she said. The girls sat and made for the cereal boxes on the table.
I recovered my voice, the last few minutes an odd blur. "Where are you from, Precocity? I mean, where are your people from, if you don't mind my asking?"

"I'm from the places where people know me," she said.

"I don't understand."

"No," she said. "Not yet."

I blinked. A strange feeling, as though someone pressed a 'rewind' button on the world.

"Where are you from, Precocity? I mean, where are your people from, if you don't mind my asking?" I heard myself ask.


I went back to my reading.

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Last night's fight was the worst ever. "I see how you look at her," she said. I heard Mommy throw something. It broke against the wall. She said he had to go. She must have meant Daddy. I cried so hard. Thank God Precocity was there. She made me think it could still all be okay. They'd make up. Or something else. It would be okay.

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I hate it when we fight. She slept on the couch that night. I got up with the girls and found her car already gone. No note.

Emma asked where her mother was. I had to say I didn't know.

Precocity said, "It doesn't really matter. Does it?" She met my eyes calmly as she dug a bit of dirt from under a fingernail. I didn't respond. I stood and stared out the window at the empty driveway. There was something there, actually. A dark stain. New, since yesterday. I went outside, Sunday morning robe and slippers. The fluid was brown and slippery. There was a lot of it.

In a panic I dialed her cell phone. No answer.

The call came an hour later. Not her voice. Another voice, tired and sad. So sorry, it said. She didn't stop. The train that hit her car left little more than scraps of metal and bone.

I thought I should cry. I couldn't until Emma saw my face, and knew.

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"Daddy will be mad," I said.

"Oh. Oh no. Perhaps. But not for long. Mad will not be what he stays," said Precocity.

I laughed and watched what she was doing with the scissors. Her hands were so quick, like clickity-click. My favorite shorts, already pretty short. Now they were way, way short. I held them up when she was done.

"My underpants will show if I wear these," I said.
"Well. That's easily fixed, isn't it?"

Somehow I knew what she meant. It felt so naughty.

"Let's see them," she said.

I lifted my dress and pushed down my undies. It's weird, but I wasn't shy around her anymore. I guess since we did those things... in bed. I pulled the shorts up. They were so tight... right there... and my butt... you could see the bottom of it.

"There's no way I can wear these," I said. "Not anyplace."

She scoffed. "They're perfect. You don't look like a baby anymore."

I wore other shorts over them on the way to the mall. Once Daddy dropped us off and we were inside, she got me to take the others off. Precocity stuffed them into her shoulder bag.

The boys looked. That was the point, I guess. It felt creepy at first. Then there was this one boy. He must have been 16. He watched me across the food court. Precocity smiled at him and he came over. I wanted to hide.

His eyes were mostly on her, thank God. I could tell he wanted her. She looked older somehow when she was talking to him.

"Sisters?" he said.

I shook my head, but Precocity answered. "Yes. This is my little sister. She's 13."

The boy looked surprised. He stared at me for a minute... at my chest... then he shrugged. "Cool," he said.

"Do you have a car?" said Precocity.

The boy looked confused. "Ya," he answered. "Why?"

"Because my sister has never given a blowjob and she wants me to teach her."

I covered my face and tried to crawl under the table. I couldn't even believe it.

The boy swallowed, his ears red. Adorable, sort of.

She said, "You're a nice boy, aren't you? A kind boy? I can tell. You deserve this. You treat girls well."

"I... I guess so..." he said.

"Then you'll be nice with her, won't you? No nasty grabbing the hair. No pushing it all the way in. You'll let her take it just as slowly as she wants. And you'll let me finish, won't you? You won't make her do that. But I'll finish things properly. No worries about that."

"Okay," he said. His voice was quiet.

Next I knew we were in the back of a car and he was... it was... out of his pants and she was doing it with her mouth and the boy was staring at me and then she said... it's your turn. And it was in my mouth and it was like sucking my thumb except it leaked and Precocity held my hand and combed my hair with her fingers and I could hear her humming a little song and somehow it was okay. He
made a noise and she pushed my forehead back and she took him and he made more noise and then he got quiet and then Precocity kissed me for a long time and I knew what she'd done and what it was in her mouth that I tasted and then the boy was gone and Daddy picked us up.

She didn't give me back the other shorts. Daddy looked at me funny. I thought he was going to say something, but he didn't. Those were my favorite shorts again after that.

I realized that we couldn't keep the house. Glared angrily at the pile of bills but it didn't get any smaller. I was going to have to tell Emma that we'd have to move. I didn't know where. The prospect of living in our car became more real by the day.

I plodded off to bed. Emma's door was ajar. I expected to hear giggles, but only heard breathing. They were asleep. I was so glad for Emma's friend. It almost seemed that she lived here with us, she spent the night so often. I peeked in to watch them sleep, a joy that I treasured.

The light was dim. I squinted. There was movement... subtle. Pale skin, rising and falling. Whispers so soft I had to strain.

"That's the way. So nice. So warm inside. He needs you, Emma. He looks at you. Your mother was never what he really wanted. She wasn't kind to him. Not like you can be."


The girls were asleep in a pile, arms tangled, eyes closed, gentle breaths. I shook my head. Came closer.

Precocity opened her eyes. Blinked and stretched, smiling, apparently unsurprised by my presence.

"She's a very sound sleeper, Mister Ross," she said. "She wouldn't wake now if there was an earthquake."

"I thought I heard..." I wasn't sure what I'd heard anymore.

The girl didn't say anything for a time. Then a small grin.

"Your penis is fully erect, Mister Ross. I can understand. So long without your wife. Not that she took care of you properly though."

"Please..." I said. A strange plaintive tone in my voice. "You're only n-nine... you're... her age..."

"Am I? And more to the point, does it really matter?"

The girl sat up, delicate fingers reaching, tugging, busy, nimble. I closed my eyes.

"I see how you look at her. Just imagine. Her lips." The voice was that of an ancient child.

I woke with a crusty mess in my boxers and a massive headache, the evening a blur.

"Daddy's scared. He said we might have to move. I'm scared too."

Precocity touched my cheek. "I hate to see you scared. It's too sad. Too sad by far."
I fell into her arms. Somehow it would be okay.

I didn't recall leaving the book on my desk, but there it was. When I picked it up, it fell open to a page that had a slip of paper tucked in. A poem I'd read in college but not since. Snippets leapt from the page at me.

*You, once a belle in Shreveport,*
*with henna-colored hair, skin like a peachbud,*
*still have your dresses copied from that time,*
*and play a Chopin prelude*
*called by Cortot: "Delicious recollections*
*float like perfume through the memory..."

"You all die at fifteen," said Diderot,
*and turn part legend, part convention..."

*This luxury of the precocious child,*
*Time's precious chronic invalid.--*
*would we, darlings, resign it if we could?*
*Our blight has been our sinecure:*
*mere talent was enough for us--*
*glitter in fragments and rough drafts."

*Sigh no more, ladies."

*Time is male*
*and in his cups drinks to the fair."

*Bemused by gallantry, we hear*
*our mediocrities over-praised,*
*indolence read as abnegation,*
*slattern thought styled intuition,*
*every lapse forgiven, our crime*
*only to cast too bold a shadow*
*or smash the mold straight off."

On the slip of paper, a long string of numbers, and nothing else.

"It's the most amazing thing ever," I said. "I can't even believe it."

"I'm so happy for you, Emma. And for your Papa. You're safe now. No more being scared." She kissed me.

"He never even ever bought a ticket before. It's weird. He said it was a hunch. Some hunch."

Precocity smiled in an odd way. "Sometimes the old tricks work best. Even if they're hackneyed. So painfully, awfully trite."

"Huh?" I had no idea what she was talking about.
"Nevermind. Now you can have anything you want, Emma. Anything. So tell me... what do you want, most of all?"

I didn't have to think. "I want Daddy to be happy."

She kissed me again. I closed my eyes.

And she was leading me by the hand down the hall.

And we were under the covers, one on each side of him.

And Daddy was warm and I breathed him in and he smelled like his leather chair and his books and most of all like himself.

And I touched his chest and he moved and Precocity's hand was there with mine and she pushed mine lower and lower and Daddy opened his eyes and he said "Emma?" and I said "Yes, Daddy, it's me" and he said, "What are you doing?" and I said, "I know what you need, Daddy. Precocity told me. And taught me. And I know and I'm here."

And he said, "Who? Who told you? Who taught you?"

"Her. You know. Her."

"I don't know, Emma."

"Her... She's right th..." I stopped. I blinked.

I was in bed with Daddy. Me and him.

"What were you saying, princess?" he asked.

"I forget, Daddy. It doesn't matter. Does it?"

Should the story continue? I'd love to hear your feedback. You can contact me at joshua.woode@hushmail.com
Chapter Summary

Precocity finds a new and willing audience.

Precocity - Part Two

"There's a large and growing market for this product. Our testing confirms this."

The men in the room appeared skeptical. The woman presenting was enigmatic. Her short dark hair and flawless complexion suggested a mixed heritage. Asian, and African, and... other things. Her age was indeterminate as well, her petite form and slender profile both concealed and revealed by the swirling patterns of a paisley dress that toyed with being just too short for such a sober business setting.

One man cleared his throat. "It's a line of thong underpants."

"Yes. And other things. Bathing suits. Sleepwear."

"Yes. But... thongs. For ten-year-old girls."

The woman's face was placid. "The smallest sizes are designed to fit seven-year-olds, actually."

The man chuckled. "Miss..." He realized that he didn't know the woman's name, but it didn't seem important at the moment. "Are you aware that Abercombie tried to sell a similar line in 2002 and was practically put out of business by the public reaction?"

"Of course. I'm fully aware. They were foolish in their positioning and go-to-market, and so missed a huge revenue opportunity."

"Foolish?"

"Yes. Putting that product on the shelves in American stores was a ridiculous mistake. The retail market in the United States isn't ready for this yet."

The man was both appalled and oddly intrigued. "So... what should they have done?"

"They should have marketed in Asia, especially in Japan, and sold online internationally through Alibaba. Girls want this product, Mister Koh. Preteens want to be like the older girls. They beg their mothers, even save their allowance and buy them on the sly. Our research is definitive. The TAM is over one hundred million US dollars."

The men looked at each other. There was a long pause. As is the practice in Singapore, they waited for the most senior executive in the room to speak.
The greyest hair finally broke the silence. "What do call you this clothing line?"

"We call ourselves Precocity, Mister Lee. Our brand recognition in Japan is at 42% in the target demographic."

"You'll provide your research and we'll consider your proposal."

The woman smiled, her facing seeming to bloom. "I'm honored, gentlemen. I look forward to mutual success." She executed a perfect, understated bow and swept out of the room.

"What was her name?" ask the greyest.

His associates shrugged. He examined the business card she'd left. It said simply "www.Precocity.com."

"Where's your mother, sweetheart?"

The woman was genuinely concerned. The girl looked no more than eight years old, and she seemed to be alone in the backstage dressing room. The child smiled demurely when she answered.

"She went to the ladies. And maybe..." her voice dropped a little... "maybe outside to smoke, I guess."

The woman shared a knowing nod. "Okay honey. Are you all right? Do you need any help with your costume?"

"No thank you ma'am. I've worn this one in a lot of competitions before."

"I see. We've been on the circuit for a while. I don't think I've seen you before. My daughter Chastity was second overall at Miss Texas Junior Preteen last year." She grinned a vicarious grin.

"Oh. That's so awesome. I hope I can do that well here."

"Aren't you just the sweetest thing." The woman felt compelled to reach down and touch the girl's face. "You skin is so perfect... you could be from anywhere. How old are you, honey?"

"How old is Chastity, ma'am?"

"She's just turned nine."

"No way! I just had my ninth birthday too."

The screech from across the room was piercing. "Mommmmmmmmmmmmm... My eyelashes won't stay onnnnnnnn..."

"Coming, baby girl." The woman scurried, her face anxious.

Precocity saw Chastity and her mother in the audience when she stepped onstage. She gave them a little wave. The mother waved back with a thumbs-up. The daughter looked at her mother, confused. The judges' eyes were locked on Precocity.

Her dress was an elegant shade of bone that highlighted her rich complexion. It was translucent,
flowing to the floor but split to her narrow waist, revealing a slender thigh as she walked. Thin straps at her bare shoulders. The lights behind her cast a faint silhouette of her lithe frame. She hit her mark and met the judges' gaze with steady confidence.

"Music and dance are different, but they're also the same," she said. "They both let us show who we are inside, and who we want to be. Today I want to share some of myself with you through both of these art forms."

Her words flowed as though spoken from the heart, not read from a script, her smile subtle as she sat at the piano. "This is Prelude number seven by Frederic Chopin, the Andentino. It was written in 1838 in Mallorca, in a little room atop a Moorish spire. It was cold that day, but the beauty of the place inspired him."

As her fingers brushed the keys her aspect changed to that of a practiced virtuoso, her wrists at just that angle, caressing the instrument with the utter grace this piece demands. The delicate chords seemed to swell as they filled the hall, reverberated over the utterly silent audience. Even the fidgety six-year-olds stopped their chatter, their ears straining at the pianissimo. Barely a minute passed, the listeners transported to an ancient Mediterranean island bathed in golden sunlight.

There was no applause as the last note faded. Precocity stood, carefully stowing the piano bench. A soft rustle in the crowd as she took center stage again. She held them there with her eyes, felt that she controlled their very breath. Her childish body seemed to stretch, older by a year or even two, feeding on their attention.

Precocity let the airless moment linger until her music started. With a subtle shrug of her shoulders the long dress was pooled at her tiny feet and she was en pointe, arms above her head, a diminutive pillar of aesthetic and athletic poise.

Some saw only the dance, precise yet compelling, sharp angles and perfect arcs. There was depth in her movements, timeless depth, exposing in motion an emptiness, an overpowering need to be seen and filled with adoration and desire.

Others saw her form. Was there a bodysuit? Eyes strained to deny the evidence that she was naked. Every outline was visible, every muscle, every curve, every cleft. Classical positions permitted perspective.

Chastity's mother shook her head as if awakening from a dream. She looked at her daughter, noted her rapt focus. Turned to her husband, saw his wide stare, saw him swallow, saw him sweat. Cast her gaze to the judges. The men and the women at the table appeared equally frozen, the image from the stage reflected in their unblinking eyes.

"That little hussy bitch," a hiss, under her breath. A moment's hesitation, then a yank at her daughter's arm. The girl startled. "What is it, Mommy?"

A hoarse whisper. "Come on. We're not going to lose to... that... that slut."

"W-what's a slut, Mommy?" The tone in her mother's voice made Chastity certain that she'd done something terribly wrong as she was unceremoniously dragged to the dressing room. The husband watched helplessly as they went, entirely too accustomed to this sort of drama.

There were already two other mother-daughter pairs backstage. The adults exchanged embarrassed, knowing looks. "Did you ever?" they said. "I can't even believe it," they tittered. "I need to borrow your scissors... can I, do you think?" they asked. The children sat silent, speechless at the snipping of shears and the clucking of tongues.
"You'll wear it, and like it," Chastity's mother said, in the voice that brooked no argument.

"There's like... nothing left of it." The girl held the tiny scraps of cloth as though they were alive.

"There's enough. Do you want to win, or not?"

"Y-yes, Mommy. Course I want to win."

Her mother watched Chastity's performance with anxious pride. She didn't notice her husband. His wide stare, his swallow, his sweat.

At the awards ceremony there was an odd feeling. Something missing. No one could say what it was. On the edge of memory, the echo of a chord in A major, the sight of tiny slippers, vertical. The thoughts remained just out of reach.

Chastity triumphed as Grand Overall Princess. She beamed in the car on the way home, the rhinestones from her tiara sending tiny rainbows all around the interior. It was dark when they arrived. In utter bliss, the girl fell into bed still wearing her slip of a costume, her trophy clutched to her chest.

She didn't know how much later it was that she felt her bed move. With sleepy eyes in the dim she saw a familiar shape and smiled. "H-hi Daddy... I guess I fell asleep."

"You did, princess. You were exhausted. You did so well today. I'm very proud of you."

He ever so gently took the trophy from her arms and set it on the floor next to the bed. "This will still be here in the morning, pumpkin."

"What time is it, Daddy?"

"It's late, sweetheart." He gently pulled back the covers. "You fell asleep in your costume."

"Oh." She giggled softly.

There was an odd look on her Daddy's face. His forehead was shiny, even without the light. She saw him swallow.

"Let's have it off then, kitten."

He didn't wait for her to answer before his hands began to move.

Should the story continue? I'd love to hear your feedback. You can contact me at joshua.woode@hushmail.com
Precocity - Part Three

Chapter Summary

Precocity and Media find common interest in reshaping the life of a young girl.

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to any existing people or events is coincidental. If a story involving sexual contact with minors bothers you or is illegal where you live, stop reading now.

Precocity - Part Three

"I want to be just like you," whispered Precocity.

"When you grow up?" said Media. They were coiled together, these girls, entwined so deeply that it was hard to say where one ended and the other began. One was small, the other larger. One was younger, more a child, but the age of either was hard to place exactly. Both were smooth and rich of skin, dark of hair and deep of eyes. One was nascent, a little shy... the other moved with confidence, at times seeming to surround and engulf.

They giggled in unison. "I always want to grow up," said Precocity. "But I want to be everywhere. In everything. In everybody. Like you."

"I'll never let you," said Media. "Grow up, that is. But I want you in everything. You feed me. You make them hunger. You make them seek and search and yearn."

"They don't want me to grow up either."

"No. They want you young and pristine and perfect. Unblemished. Unsullied. Smooth. It compels them to want you, to soak in your youth, to have it reflect on them, recall and recapture and reinvent what they wish their youth had been. They want to be you. But they can't. So they want to have you. Need to have you."

"But it's me that needs. I need them."

"Yes. To define you. To make you into something amid the noise, in the enormity, in the terrifying void of the future. To be defined beyond your nascent self. To be accepted. A part of something. Wanted. Liked."

"Likes. Likes and likes and likes. Give me allllll the likes. They feed me. I'll do anything for them. Anything at all. I'll strip myself naked before them. Literally show all. Even if it's not there yet, just the promise of a breast for them to savor. Pose even as I blush. All for the likes." A sharp feral hunger flared in Precocity's eyes.

"We've done it, you know. You've fed me. I've fed you. The vast majority of child pornography is now created by children. Seeking. Feeding themselves. Accepted. Wanted. Liked. You're everywhere, like me, with me, through me."
"In the dark corners. The hidden places. Yes."

"Oh, not just there. All places. Facebook. Facebook Live, even better. A ten-year-old is naked there
now, bared herself in her bathroom, begging for Likes. Spreading herself. The audience is twenty people... now twenty-four... YouTube... nothing goes away... the Fan Dance from Dance Moms... they tried to hide it but they can't... three thousand two-hundred eighty-four
watching now... four point six million views... the Omegle Game... Jackie Evancho... Grace
Vanderwaal... Suri Cruise... but even younger... Bratz... Nothing comes between me and my
Calvins..."

A deep murmur, as though welling up from the earth. "Want me. Like me. Feed me."

Precocity sunk her soft lips deep into Media's yawning quim, her elegant thin tongue burrowing the
vastness. Media consumed the utter softness of the child's sex, their need a recursive feedback
loop, building intensity, lithe bodies merging, a squirming mass of hunger.

********************************

"She's only ten. She doesn't need a phone." The Mom. Divorced.

"She says she'll die without it. All her friends..." The Dad. Also divorced. Goes without saying.

"Don't give into her on this, Robert. I won't be the bad guy, yet again."

"Then be the good guy. I think it's okay. We can know where she is."

"We shouldn't need a tracking device to know where our daughter is. Where are you letting her go,
exactly?"

"Don't start with me, Sylvia. I'm not the one who leaves the door open."

"Fuck you, Bob. It was an accident. I didn't mean for her to see..."

"Quite an eyeful, she got. I never knew you liked sucking cock so much. You certainly never
seemed to want to suck mine."

"Christ. Talking to you is pointless."

"Fair enough. Bye then."

The Dad picked her up after school. His weekend. Drove her to the mall.

"What are we doing here, Daddy?"

"You'll see."

As they approached the phone store, the girl began to bounce, eyes wider with each step.

"Daddy. Daddy. No way. She said yes?"

"She didn't say no."

"Noooo. Wayyyyyyyyy." A delighted squeal. Her face was red, her breath short.

The Dad tried to hide his satisfaction. Donned a parental voice that didn't quite fit, like an out-of-
fashion hat. "There will be rules."
"I know. I knowwwwwww. But... thank you thank you thankyouthankyouthankyouuuuuu..." She hugged his leg as he tried to walk, still short enough. The Dad smiled and combed her fine soft hair with his fingers.

****************************

hey its me
me who
cedula
no way. they said yes?
dad did. moms mad but so what
  haha you got him
facetime me. show me how
  just answer when it rings
ok

Precocity's small round face appeared, beaming. "Clara. Welcome to the world."

"I knowwwww. I'm not lame anymore."

"You never were. Parents are stupid."

"Ya."

"But your Dad. He's cool."

"I guess so. I mean, he got me a phone."

"I bet you can get him to do pretty much anything."

"Huh?"

"He wants you to like him more than you like your Mom."

"Oh. I already do." Giggles. Clara's hand covers her mouth. "I can't believe I said that."

"It's okay. Just... you know... be nice to him."

"I am. I mean... I get mad sometimes. But. You know."

"Poor Clara. It's hard, I know."

"How would you know? Your life is perfect. You have everything."

"Maybe it looks that way. But mostly I want more."

"More?"


"They'll like you too, Clara. If you help them."

****************************
In the hall at school. Others bustled around them but they didn't see or hear, locked in their tiny clique.

"They set up this stupid ScreenTime thing. I can't do anything mostly. And nothing at all after eight o'clock. Eight. Like, that's not even my bed time. They think I'm a baby. Nazis."

Precocity clucked empathetically. "Poor Clara. Let me see your phone."

"Umm... Okay?" Clara handed her the device. Precocity studied it intently for a moment. Then a few pokes... a swipe... brief typing... a satisfied final poke.

"There. No more ScreenTime."

"Really?"

"Yes really."

"How did you..." Clara's voice trailed off. She stared at her now unrestricted phone. Somehow it didn't seem important to know how.

Precocity touched her friend's cheek with a slow grin. "You're not a baby, Clara. Not anymore."

Clara's glow reflected in the infinite well of Precocity's inky pupils.

**************************

"I'll send first. To show you how it works."

Precocity's Snapped face, tongue extended, eyes crossed. Ten seconds later, it was gone.

"Wait. I wanted to save it, goofball."

"You can't. That's the point, silly. It goes away."

"Like, forever?"

"Yes, forever."

"So..." Clara extrapolated. "That's how come people send..."


Clara blushed. Both girls giggled. Clara ventured. "Did you ever..."

Precocity feigned shock. "Moi? How could you suggest such a thing?"

Precocity's next Snap was a fuzzy view clearly taken up her shirt. The plane of her tummy, the hint of a swell, the tan nipples at attention.

"How do you have no tan lines?" asked Clara, hiding her blush through peals of laughter.

"My skin is just naturally dark I guess."

Quiet gathered as the girls caught their breath. Clara felt Precocity waiting. Odd prickles on her neck.

Not a baby. She pushed the button.
"Naughty girl, Clara," said Precocity. Her voice was an accolade.

"Moi?" came the answer. The picture of Clara's underpants up the leg of her shorts... just there, taut against her cleft... vanished after ten seconds. Clara told herself that this must be true, the vanishing. She felt heat radiate from her face. A knot in her stomach slowly tumbled, an odd tangle of feelings.

"It's strange, isn't it? To be seen. To feel someone looking at you. Really looking, their eyes stuck. Like you own them somehow, in that moment. It makes me warm. You know. There."

"I don't think anybody ever looked at me like that."

"But they do, Clara. I see it. Your Daddy for one."

"That's different. He's my Dad."

"You just don't notice. The other one is Thomas."

"Mom's boyfriend? That's... no way."

"You told me how he looked at you."

"That was just weird. It wasn't like that."

"I think it was like that. He didn't look away, did he?"

Clara swallowed. "He... looked at me. I couldn't... move..."

"He watched you until it was over. Until your Mom was finished, with her mouth. He wasn't looking at her. That's what you said."

"He was just... surprised."

"Surprised for sure. But not just. Never just. What do you suppose he was thinking?"

"I can't even."

"He's looked at you since then, hasn't he? That way. Staring right through your clothes."

Clara was quiet. "I got to go."

"Is your hand down there, Clara? Mine is."

"I got to go." She swallowed. "I love you." The last an awkward girlish blurt.

"I love you too, Clara. You are perfect."

"Am not." She pushed the red button with her free finger. Other fingers were busy busy urgently busy, the images flashing on her closed eyelids, the things she could never unsee.

Walking home from school, the girls' heads tilted close, the pose of whispers.

"Oh god. You're right. About Thomas."

"Yes. Of course. You should listen to me." Precocity's smile was kind, indulgent, much older than
her apparent age.

"I know. He does. He looks at me, that way."

"And?"

"It's weird. Creepy."

"Just creepy?"

"I... guess not. I mean, today he was over and he was looking at me and Mom wasn't in the room
and he... you know..."

"What?"

"I don't even know how to say it. He like... adjusted himself."

Precocity laughed, joy and derision in equal parts. "In his pants. You made him hard."

"But I didn't. I didn't do anything."

"You don't know boys. You don't have to do anything. They imagine. That makes anything you do
all the more fascinating. What were you wearing?"

"Just a tshirt and shorts."

"How long was the shirt?"

"I dunno. Long. One of Dad's."

"It covered your shorts."

"Ya."

"He was imagining that you didn't have the shorts on. That you didn't have anything on
underneath."

"No way."

Precocity shrugged.

"How do you know so much?" asked Clara, an edge in her voice. Fear, or anger, or jealousy? Yes.

Precocity reached up to touch Clara's face, ever so gently. "We all have our Thomases, Clara. It's
the way of things for girls. Frightening, yes. But it's also powerful. How they want you. How it
makes you feel, to be wanted. What you can make them do."

"You scare me sometimes."

"You're not a baby. Time to leave little girl things behind. You need a boyfriend."

"I don't want a boyfriend. Ewww."

"Not an infant like the boys in our class, Clara. A proper boyfriend."

"You mean like Thomas?" Clara wasn't sure that Precocity would know this was a joke.
"No. Not like him. You're not ready for him. Thomas we will use in other ways."

"Scaring me now."

Precocity stopped walking. Clara stopped in turn. "What else are you feeling?"

Clara's eyes fell to the pavement, then slowly raised, tracing Precocity's body. In an instant she leaned... and kissed... a brush of lips to lips... and fled, skirt billowing behind, bookbag clutched to her chest.

**************************

"Daddy. You're not listening."

"Sorry honey. I'm listening." His gaze remained fixed on the computer screen, which was filled with tiny numbers.

Clara chewed her lip. Took another step closer. Leaned against her father's arm. She smelled him, cozy and familiar. He felt her breath on his cheek and finally turned, their noses almost bumping. With a smile he put his arm around her narrow waist, his hand on her hip.

"Okay. Really listening now. Is that one of my shirts?"

"Ya. I stole it. I like it. It... smells like you. Is that okay?" Her face sheepish.

"Course it is. It looks better on you than on my Dad bod."

"So can she?"

"Can who do what, sweetpea?"

"See. You weren't listening."

"Busted. Sorry." He turned his chair to face her, she between his knees, both his hands at her hips. An odd thought impinged that he didn't fully process. "You have my undivided attention."

"Can Precocity stay over tonight?"

"Oh. Sure. It's okay with her parents? Should I call them?"

"It's fine. She asked them already. I told you."

"Then it's fine." He bent and kissed her forehead. "Just don't stay up all night."

"Thanks Daddy. You're the best." She glowed and scampered. He watched her lithe form recede for a long moment.

As he turned back to his work, the thought tried to surface again. Under his hands, on her hips. The smooth cotton of his old shirt, worn thin over the years. His hands didn't recall anything else there. Nothing underneath. He shook his head to clear it. Unconsciously, reached into his lap and adjusted.

**************************

Under a tent of covers, the dim glow of two phones.
"How old is he?" asked Clara.

"Fourteen I think. Perhaps older."

"He'll never like me. I don't even have... anything."

"Boys imagine. Tell him you're thirteen."

"He won't believe me. I look more like nine."

"That doesn't matter. He doesn't really care. Only about what he'll tell his friends."

"He'll tell his friends?"

Precocity rolled her eyes. "And you'll tell yours. Won't you?"

"I'll... tell you. Just you."

The boy's Snap faded. "God he's cute." Clara, as though to herself. "He goes to a different school?"

"Yes. You won't meet him in the hall, I promise. Tell him."

"Tell him what?"

"What you just said."

Clara's fingers were trembling as she typed.

```
ur cute
    thx u2
really?
    ya really how old
13 u
15
cool
```

An awkward pause. Clara's face anxious. "Now what?"

"Now we wait. Boys can't stop themselves."

Another minute, then a message.

```
u ever hook up
```

Clara started to type. Precocity's hand on hers. "You can tell him what he wants to hear."

"He'll think I'm... you know..."

"He'll think that you're not a baby."

Clara swallowed... flushed red... typed...

```
not with just anybody
```

"Oh. Well done," said Precocity.

```
ya me2 not with just anybody
```
A picture of his bare chest followed. A teenager, smooth and defined. It faded after ten seconds. Clara waited, eyes wide.

more?

Precocity nudged her. She typed.

ok

The next came almost instantly. "Oh god." His penis. A teenager, rampant. Clara covered her mouth. The picture faded. She put her phone down.

"Not as impressive as Thomas, I expect."

"Shut. Up. I can't even believe he did that."

Clara's phone pinged.

??

"It's cruel not to answer, Clara. After he's shown you. He'll think you disrespectful."

"I didn't ask to see his..."

"You did, actually. What did you think he meant by 'more'?"

"Crap."

Another ping.

u never saw 1 before did u. ru really 13

Clara's mouth twisted, annoyed.

did so. bigger than u

Precocity snorted. "You're good at this. That's the sort of cruelty that works."

The answer came after a moment.

haha

"Now we wait," said Precocity. It didn't take long.

u gonna help me?

Clara was confused. "What does that mean?"

"What do you suppose he's doing right now?"

"Oh. Crap. No way." Clara's face scrunches.

"It's pretty much all boys do."

"I'm not gonna send him..."

Ping. A single word.
"Oh. Polite. I would have expected just 'nudes.' They get demanding when they're anxious."

Clara shook her head. Precocity sighed.

"Then send him me."

"Huh?"

Precocity pulled her shirt over her head, her dark hair in a tussle. Stretched naked. Clara's cheeks felt hot.

"We can't leave him all wound up, Clara. It's not nice. Go ahead. Just not the face, please."

Clara swallowed. Aimed. Snapped. The flash filled the room even through the blankets. She tried to hide the extra button push when she saved the picture to her Story.

It wasn't lost on Precocity. "You can look all you like, Clara. I like to be seen."

It was as though the flash lingered in Precocity's dark skin, shining as it recast the light. "You're so... perfect. You look older now, somehow... you've got..." Clara's vision lingered at the subtle curve of the exposed chest.

"It feeds me, being seen. You know the feeling now, don't you? You want to kiss me."

Clara turned her face away.

"You do. I want you to." A tender prompt.

A tear fell as Clara raised her eyes and fell into Precocity's waiting arms. Clara's gasp muffled through entwined lips as a small hand touched her... and touched... and touched and was relentless and needy and demanding and it soon got what it sought in a shiver and a shudder and deep quick clenching so far inside.

Ping.

\textit{fuck ur so hot i came all over}

The picture that followed provided ample evidence.

"You'll see how it works, Clara. I'll show you. It's so simple."

After school, at her mother's house. The girls still in their uniforms, skirts and white blouses perched on barstools at the counter. Thomas enters the kitchen.

Faux friendly, his grin. "Well hello there."

Clara's gaze fell. She still found it hard to meet his eyes. "Hi Thomas," she said to the floor.

Precocity matched his affectation. "Well hello to you too."

Thomas seemed to notice the satire.

"Who are you again?" he asked.
"Just a friend. It doesn't matter."

The man shrugged, his expression confused.

As he opened the refrigerator, Precocity went on, her tone casual. "Clara needs an allowance. Twenty dollars a week should be good to start."

"Oh?" said the man. "That's nice. She should talk to her Dad about that."

"No. You'll speak to her mother about it. And convince her."

"I will?"

"Yes. She wants this."

"Well, you can't always get what you want."

Precocity chuckled, not a little girl's laugh at all. "Quoting 1960s rock lyrics at me won't help you, Thomas. You are old, aren't you?"

"Who exactly the fuck are you?" he said, his voice rising.

"I'm a person who knows that you let Clara watch her mother blow you. Mommy thinks it was just a glance, that you hadn't noticed. But we know better, don't we? You saw Clara at the door. You saw her and never said a word. How long was it? Five minutes? Ten? You were staring at Clara when you filled her mother's mouth with cum."

"That's... not true..." he started.

Clara's voice was quiet but unmistakable. "Yes it is."

His face began to show panic. "Y-you watched. You little prick tease. You stood there and watched the whole thing. You wanted to see. You were staring at my cock just as much as I was..." He stopped, realizing what he'd just admitted.

"I'm ten," said Clara. "I'll tell her."

"Fuck." Thomas sat down.

"The allowance," said Precocity.

He squirmed in his seat. "Okay."

"Perfect. Now Thomas, let's be clear. You can look, but you can't touch. Never touching. Just looking. Maybe Clara will even let you look, a little. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

Precocity's hand touched the hem of Clara's skirt where it lay on her thigh. Clara watched the hand intently but didn't move.

"Jesus. What's happening here?"

"She's had a hard time of it, you know. Ping-ponging between her parents, listening to them bicker, seeing her mother submit to some strange man who's violating her mouth with the bedroom door open. Just be nice. Control yourself."

Precocity's fingers lifted the hem just a bit, the cleft of Clara's bone-white underpants now exposed.
The man tried to pull his gaze away from where it shouldn't be but found himself unable.

"Bye Thomas," said Precocity. She led a silent Clara from the room by the hand.

"W-what just happened?" Now in Clara's room, bottoms perched on the edge of her bed.

"We got you an allowance."

"But..."

"Shhh. How do you feel?"

Clara swallowed, watched herself move as though outside her body. Her hand at Precocity's thigh, then higher, finding her infinitely soft heat, the gusset wet, fingers pulling it aside and pushing in, seared by the molten slickness.

"Do it to me too." Clara's voice a fervent plea.

Precocity smiled softly. "Not the fingers this time. Fingers are for babies. And nothing on. All the way naked, so I can see you. You want me to see you?"

"Y-yes."

Precocity glanced over her shoulder. The door was open, just a crack. An eye there, open wide, met for an instant. It made to withdraw but then was back again, ensnared.

"He keeps texting me."

"He wants more of you. They always want more."

"But he thinks you're me. You know, the picture."

"Ah. But he only partly remembers. You'll be fine. You're perfect."

"Not like you."

"He won't notice, I promise."

"You mean I should..."

"If you want. But you should get more from him."

"More?"

"He should let you watch."

Clara blinked. "No. Way."

Precocity laced her fingers with Clara's. Held her eyes. "This will sound strange. It's like... worship. They give you their pride, their adoration, when a boy does that for you. Hiding nothing, showing how they need you. You might like it."
More whispers. Facetime under the blankets.

"I thought he was gonna yank it right off his body. Seriously."

"I'm proud of you, Clara. How did you feel?"

"Kinda like you said. Wanted, I guess. He... made noises."

"They do. I like the noises. Animal passion. Lizard need. And you?"

"Me what?"

"What noises did you make?"

"I didn't..."

"No?"

"Shut up. I didn't... let him hear me."

A peal of giggles, then quiet and sleep.

**************************

"What's that, Clara?" The Dad, being Dad, peeking into her room.

"It's a webcam."

"Where did you get it?" An overtone of concern.

"I bought it. It's cool."

"Where did you get the money?"

"Oh. Mom's giving me an allowance."

"She is? How much?"

"Ya. Twenty dollars a week."

The Dad was surprised. "Doesn't seem like her."

Clara shrugged. Dad was thoughtful. "I can get you things you need. Or want."

"I know, Dad. It's not a contest." A tiny smile, not to be confused with a smirk.

She was wearing the long tshirt. His eyes traveled down her legs to her bare feet. There in a tiny puddle of cloth, her underpants. When she saw him looking, her cheeks flushed. He felt his own color rise. Finding no words, he shut the door behind him.

**************************

"I let him watch."

"Tell me. Tellmetellmetellme. Everything."

"Just... the bottom. I didn't let him see my face."
Precocity glowed. "Smart girl. Clever girl. How did you feel?"
"God. So horny."
Eyebrows raised. "That's a new word for you."
"He says it all the time."
"I might be jealous." An ironic sniff.
"Noooo. It's not like that. He's not... like you."
"He has a penis."
"That's not what I mean. He doesn't love me. Even if he says it."
"And I do love you. But I don't have a penis."
"So?"
"So. You're curious. Interested. It's natural."
"We'll work on that."
"You're gonna grow one? It almost wouldn't surprise me."
"Ha. No. Not for me. For you, we find a safe one."
"Safe?"
"Yes. We'll see."

*********************************

Her hair was wet around her shoulders. The towel wrapped carefully, just above the nipples, just below the parting of her legs, tucked in a bow where there would be cleavage soon. On her tummy, on her bed.

The door opened. "Clara, we're going to be late. Geez, you're not even dressed. What are you doing?"
"Skiing lessons, Daddy. I so totally need skiing lessons. See?" She pointed to the spray of deep powder portrayed on her phone. "It's the coolest. Literally."
"Get. Dressed. We'll talk about that later."

Clara pouted. Oddly, her father didn't move from the doorway. A twist in her tummy, somehow familiar.

Then she was standing, facing her Daddy, the towel at her feet and she felt his eyes and she stood still and didn't move and he didn't move and she bent to pick it up but she didn't cover herself.

"It's okay, Daddy. I don't mind." She chewed her lip. "Am I pretty, Daddy?"
"Y-you are."

"As pretty as Mom?" Clara seemed outside herself again, some other voice flowing through her.

"Oh. Yes. Sweetheart. So lovely. You are." She could hear his heart pounding in her ears from across the room. Or was it her own?

"She didn't make you happy."

The Dad shook his head as if waking up. "Clara. Get dressed. Please, princess." He closed the door slowly behind him. Clara stared at the towel in her hand for a long time before she moved again.

"You wanted him to see you." Precocity stated this categorically.

"I did not."

"Are you getting skiing lessons?"

Clara punched Precocity's shoulder. "Shut up."

"So that's a yes."

"It's not like that. He's my Dad."

"He's a boy. Like the other boys. But a safe one."

"You're awful."

"I'm needed. You'll miss me when I'm not needed anymore."

"What's that mean? Are you going someplace?"

"Not yet. Show me your Dad's office."

"How come?"

"I want to see it."

Clara pointed down the hall. Once in the dark-paneled room, Precocity took a deep breath. "I smell him. It's nice, isn't it?"

"Ya. Cozy."

"Safe."

"Stop it."

"Is that his computer?"

"Ya."

Precocity studied the black box on the desk for a time. Lightly brushed her fingers over the keyboard. "Okay," she said.

"Okay?"
"Yes. All done here."

Clara blinked in confusion.

---

i shouldn't be talking to you
how come
i'm a lot older
i dont mind. how did you find me anyways
facebook
im not on facebook. im not allowed
oh. i guess i'm not sure then
thats weird
is it ok?
i guess so
you're thirteen?
ya
i've never chatted with someone your age before
i dont mind but why are u
i have these thoughts
ummm ya?
about girls
ok?
young girls
ok
i never did anything, just...
my bf is 16
really?
ya
do you
??
sorry i shouldn't ask that
its ok. we only do stuff online
you mean like...
we watch each other. is that weird?
wow

A long pause. Clara swallowed, her fingers aching to be busy. Twisty tummy. She broke the silence.

don't want to show me?
show you?
ya
you mean
ya its snap it goes away so its ok

Another moment. She worked her underpants down to her ankles.

yes
yes what
i want to show you
so show me
Adults are different. Thomas, in her mother's mouth. But not the same, this one. Almost alive, the skin taut, the dark patch below. Clara spread her legs and touched the button.

     oh god i'm going to hell
haha me2. am i pretty
     god yes you're so perfect

Clara's fingers got busy. The pictures flowed, his and hers, his finally messy.

     did you...
ya :)
     what a mess
haha i like that
     you do?
ya it means u like me

Quiet for a time.

     i want to see your face
i never did that
     it's snap, you said. it goes away. i need to see you

It goes away, she thought. She could feel his need. Faint light under the covers. The flash was off. Click.

Silence. Nothing.

Now he knows I'm ugly, she thought. Or that I'm a baby.

Then footsteps in the hall. Heavy. There, then gone. Then back. Then the door.

"Daddy?"

His phone in his hand. His messy hand.
Precocity - Part Four

Chapter Summary

Precocity is worshiped throughout history, indelibly etching the longing for exceptional youth into the lives of those she touches.

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to any existing people or events is coincidental. If a story involving sexual contact with minors bothers you or is illegal where you live, stop reading now. "Precocity" is based in the world of Neil Gaiman's "American Gods," and on the premise therein that we create our own gods through our belief in them, and that their power is relative to the breadth and depth of that belief.

Precocity - Part Four

There was silence in the hall as the last note echoed and faded. All eyes in the room turned to the Grand Duke, awaiting his verdict. Constantine Pavlovich cleared his throat. He spoke in Russian, an unmistakable signal of his authority over the assembled nobility of Warsaw.

"It is, I think, the finest thing I have ever heard."

The crowd immediately voiced their most enthusiastic agreement, their gaze now falling on the incongruously small form at the piano. Frederic was just eleven, already an accomplished composer and virtuoso performer. Still, his angular face was flushed as the adults approached, cooing and fawning. He looked desperate to escape the room.

Ludwika was his salvation. Three years older, she knew his moods, his intense need for privacy. She came to him at the bench, sat at his side, touched his hand. Her dark-skinned friend stood behind. The men's eyes turned to this enigmatic girl, deep of complexion and eye. Ludwika used the distraction.

"Father wants to see you, Frederic. We must go."

The Ladies protested. "Once more through the Allegro, Master Chopin? Won't you please? It stole my very breath..."

Ludwika tugged the boy's arm. He gave a helpless look to his fans and let his sister affect his rescue.

Once in their rooms, the young pianist lay on the bed and shut his eyes.

"You were brilliant, Frederic. As always," said his sister, posed delicately on a nearby chair.

"It's too much. The Duke. I would have been put before a firing squad if he didn't like it."

"Nonsense. And how could he not like it?"

"The others only liked it because he said he did."

"More nonsense. They just needed his permission to say what they were all feeling. I could see it in
their faces. You had them, heart and body and soul." She paused. "Especially the Ladies."

Frederic snorted, opened his eyes. "That's ridiculous."

"It's not. You have a handsome aspect. And when you play, your passion... it fills us who listen. I feel it too. You speak to us from some deep place. It compels us, my brother."

"Compels you to do what?"

"To... to love you."

"You're my sister. Of course you do. I hope."

"Of course. But it's not sisterly love that the Ladies feel."

The boy seemed mildly amused by this. Perhaps a bit intrigued.

"You should rest before dinner," said the girl. She stood to leave. As she reached the door, the boy smiled gently.

"Ludwika."

"Yes, Frederic?"

"Thank you."

She gave a slightly ironic curtsey. "You are most welcome, Maestro."

**************************

He didn't know how long he'd slept. A gentle shake of the bed, the boy blinking with a broad yawn.

"Is it time for dinner?"

A slender finger over his lips. A thin sweet scent. A vision of rich skin and dark eyes.

"Quiet now. Not time yet. Time enough for other things."

Ludwika's friend. Her nimble fingers began to work at the elaborate buttons of his pants. He thought to push them away, but this notion passed as the flat of her palm pressed his evident hardness against his thigh through the thick wool.

"I'll have you, Master Frederic. You can't deny me. Not after that."

"After that?"

"Your seduction. Your demand. Your absolute possession of me, through your music."

The boy was now exposed, visibly eager, taut with hints of approaching adulthood. An astonishing thing when she bent and took him into the warmth of her mouth, a thing he'd never conceived. He allowed it.

A noise at the door. The girl sat up. Frederic made a desperate attempt to cover himself.

Ludwika's friend was oddly calm. "Lady Elsner. You've... caught us unaware. Your Grace... your indulgence, I beg you."
The woman's face was bemused, but her courtly demeanor remained. "Who are you, little one?"

"No one, Your Grace. A friend of the family."

"A good friend, I see. A good friend to young Frederic, at least."

Precocity lowered her gaze demurely, incongruent with the placement of her hand on the boy's now timid penis.

Softness overtook the woman's face like a veil. "I have no issue here. Quite the contrary. I'm just pleased to see that I'm not too late."

"Too late?" managed Frederic.

"Yes, Master Chopin. I feared I was too late to properly thank you. You moved me, young maestro. I felt the need to... express this."

Frederic swallowed. The woman approached the bed. Precocity stood and started for the door.

"No," said the lady, clearly used to being heard. "Stay. I wouldn't deny your... friendship. Have you served a Lady, little one?"

"In some ways, Your Grace," said Precocity.

The woman's face was puzzled, but she didn't press the question. "Then assist me, please." She turned her back.

Precocity attended to the gown's silken clasps with alacrity. Her Grace returned the favor. Frederic's vigor returned, a silent witness to the revelation of the female forms. Naked, the girl and the woman spoke as though Frederic wasn't there.

"It's elegant, isn't it? The straining need of a boy. The skin so taut it seems translucent," said the older, her hand afondle at the pale spike. "I confess to a weakness for it. And this one is most promising."

"It is?" said Frederic. He wasn't heard.

"There's no shame in this, My Lady," said Precocity. "It is one of the world's most lovely sights."

"So true. You were... engaged with it, when I entered. I'd very much like to see that again, young friend of the family." Precocity obliged, the working of her mouth quickened when the woman's hand found its way to the girl's smooth quim. More discoveries followed for both the boy and the woman, Precocity's tongue shameless at the crux of their coupling.

When questioned about the empty seat at the dinner table, Ludwika asked forgiveness for her brother's fatigue. Performance was very demanding of him, she said. Understanding the nature of this demand, the Ladies smiled with gracious disappointment.

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"It's a happy piece, Eleanor. The Polonaise brillante. It's a dance. He wrote it for a father and his daughter. She the piano, he the cello." Even quiet voices reverberated in the practice room, dominated by the mass of the black Steinway.

"I know... I guess I just don't feel it today," said the young cellist. "And please call me El. Eleanor was an old lady married to some President."
"El. Your name reduced to a letter. I won't have it. It's not proper," said Precocity. The younger girl let a grin escape her otherwise dour, frustrated lips. The cello, as large as herself, rested aslant against her bare thigh. Even in a skirt she seemed unconcerned at the unladylike posture her instrument required.

"Just for you, then," she relented.

"What's made you unhappy, Eleanor? What has the deep song of your bow so bottled up?"

Something in the older girl's warm face brought forth hidden words with a catch of breath. "I... I can't stay... and I c-can't leave."

"But you're here."

"For now. Only because the Headmaster... gave me a break. Some time to get better."

"You're brilliant. You just get in your own way. Maybe you need some time away to know yourself."

"That's the can't leave part. Papa would die. First he'd kill me, then he'd die, if I fail here."

Precocity stood from the bench, came to the back of Eleanor's chair. Touched her hair, tentatively at first. The girl's eyes closed and Precocity knew it as permission. She cupped a soft cheek. "He'd do no such things. You're not even eleven."

"He was a soloist when he was my age."

"That's him. You have his voice inside. It just has to find its way out."

"I don't have time. My scholarship is up at the end of the semester unless the school renews it."

Precocity's hands slid down the girl's shoulders to rest where womanly form had yet to emerge.

"You have things inside you besides music, Eleanor. I can feel it. You're older than your age, in some ways."

The girl sniffled, a single tear escaping the corner of her eye.

"Please d-don't. I don't want to t-talk about it."

Precocity bent, her cheek to Eleanor's. Turned to kiss it, her lips at the child's ear.

"The Headmaster knows your father, doesn't he?"

"Of course he does. He took a master class from Papa."

"So he knows how demanding your Papa can be."

Eleanor snorted at the obviousness of this.

"He has you at a disadvantage. If he threatens your scholarship..."

The girl shivered.

Precocity went on, her susurris a honeytrap. "He's taken liberties." It was a statement, not a question.
Eleanor's words finally insisted on escape. "H-how did he know? He said he knew I was... I wasn't..."

"Not just the Headmaster, then. Papa too." A pause, a deep shudder under her hands. "Yes. I see. I understand. How long, precious Eleanor?"

"F-forever. He... holds me in his lap, when I play..."

"Oh child. My poor child. You love him so, don't you? You can't ever disappoint him, not in anything."

"He says he hears it in my playing. My love for him."

"Of course he does. It's your core, your essence. But it's not fair, this double jeopardy. We'll not let it stand. You deserve much better."

"H-how?" Disbelieving. Hopeless.

"That's to be seen. For now, just play for me. Play for me like you do for your Papa, with all of you."

Precocity knelt behind the chair, ran both small hands down to the splayed thighs, then back up and under the thick woolen skirt.

"Please. Please... don't."

"Just for me, Eleanor. Pretty Eleanor. Let it sing." The voice a lullaby.

As if asleep, she played. Largo, the fingers and the bow, wet and warm and deep. "Yes," whispered Precocity. "The third Sonata. Only the Largo in a major key. The song of his heart. Of your heart."

Tears landed where arms touched, pale and dark.

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Media's face in Precocity's phone. Media was cinnamon today, South Asian.

"A high school? It won't be hard."

"It would be a blessing, Media. There's injustice here."

"Oh my. How horrid."

"Do stop. I mean it."

"Is there also a deep hungering need, Precocity? A void to be filled? So to speak."

"Things converge sometimes. It can be both."

Media sighed. "I suppose so. Let's just have clear signals so our message has impact. A moment."

The screen flickered. Media's face morphed. The face now ebony, the accent British, the background a vast server farm, green and red LEDs rampant. "There's a camera," she said.

"Ah. He uses it, with her?"

"I'm not sure. It overlooks his desk. He's been careful, up to now. He knows the dark places."
"What do you mean?"

Media rolled her eyes. "You're usually the one with the spooky metaphors. He uses a VPN."

"Whatever. Can you?"

"Of course. Wherever he's sending it, it will come to me too."

"Just once more, Eleanor. I promise," whispered Precocity.

"What are you going to do? It'll ruin everything if people find out. Papa... he says it's only for him. He'll hate me."

"No one will know. The Headmaster has too much to lose."

The cellist chewed her lip. "It got worse. The last few times."

"Then it's a choice between once and more than once. Isn't it?"

The video left no room for doubt.

The man behind his dark wooden desk. The girl standing before it, eyes downcast.

"You're late, El. I expected you ten minutes ago."

"I'm sorry, Headmaster. Mr. Harwell kept me after class."

"You're no end of trouble. I don't suppose you're whoring for him too?"

"N-no sir."

"Just as well. We need to avoid scandal. Strip naked and suck me until I'm hard, then bend over the desk. I don't expect to tell you twice."

The girl did as she was told, slowly, with unsteady hands, his consuming leer, her clothes draped over the arm of a chair. He motioned her to his side and she knelt... extracted him... hesitated only slightly before taking him into her mouth.

His tone was nonchalant as he watched her head move in his lap. "I knew you'd had experience, child. I could see it in your eyes. And in your dear Papa's eyes, how he looked at you when you played. Not all fatherly love there. Your talent is compelling, when you let yourself go. You're pretty good with the cello too." He chuckled at his own perversity.

Soft wet sticky sounds. His thick fingers in her fine straight hair. "There. Stop."

She stood, still staring at the floor. Put her hands on the desk. He pushed her down, her bare chest against his papers, the pivot of her hips leaving her short legs to dangle, toes searching for the ground.

"God, your ass is perfect. He's never been in it, has he? He's happy with your little musical lap dances. Makes him feel like he's not really molesting you. Just some nice closeness..."
A quiet whimper. "J-just do it. Please."

"Please what? Now you have to ask, since you interrupted me. Use your big girl words."

The child tried to bury her face in the desk. "Please f-fuck me."

"Where?" His grin was relentless.

"My a-ass. Please fuck my ass." Hoarse, the words catching in her sobs.

"If you insist, Eleanor. Anything for you."

A bottle from a drawer. Slickness drizzled like pancake syrup on her back, running down, two adult fingers dug in. Then himself, buried in one long stroke. A choking gasp. Two more thrusts and an animal grunt, hips grinding against her, her slender fingers clutching.

"Get dressed. Come back tomorrow. Be on time."

Nose wiped on narrow wrist. "Y-yes sir."

"Turn it off. I don't want to watch it."

"I understand," said Precocity.

"So what happens now?" There was an odd edge to Eleanor's voice.

"He finds out. There's nothing he can do. He behaves himself."

A tiny nod. A long silence. Eleanor straightened her shoulders, some weight lifted. In the moment she seemed older somehow. She regarded Precocity as though from a distance, her brow gathering furrows. Finally, "You're not normal," said the girl.

Precocity blinked. "How do you mean?"

"The things you do. And you don't exist. What kind of name is 'Precocity,' anyway?"

"I seem to exist. I seem to be here."

"I looked in the school database. There's no you. You don't exist. And I don't even remember you before last week. But it seemed like I knew you forever. So who are you? Why did I let you put your hands in my underpants?"

"In that moment, you needed me to put my hands into your underpants."

"Maybe."

Precocity reached out to touch the child's face. Eleanor slapped it away. Precocity smiled.

"I was perhaps expecting gratitude. Careful, child."

"I don't know who you are, and you're freaking me out. And you're not much older than me. Are you? How old are you?"

Precocity hesitated, sought the girl's eyes and found them. "Let me touch your forehead," she said, delicately.
Eleanor swallowed. "Okay."

A single elegant finger, just at the bridge of the nose. A silence, the girl's gaze distant, then sharp.

"Fuck."

Almost a whisper. "You've known me since you first touched your instrument when you were five, Eleanor. You couldn't even hold it, but you knew the fingering. From watching your Papa. He saw you finger the Chopin on the neck, exactly, precisely. He cried. That's when I knew you."

"I can't believe that."

Precocity shrugged. "You feel my power. You share it. It allowed you to see me. Most people can't. You fed me. I will feed you, if you choose."

"Feed me?"

"Take what you deserve."

"I don't know what that means."

"Yes, you do. You of all people. You know."

A text from Media. Precocity felt the need to respond immediately.

oooo this vid's going viral
don't. you. dare.
awwwwww. you are no fun
you'll ruin mine
she has potential?
fuck yes she does. so just don't
*sigh* very well. just for you

"You're behind this, somehow," the Headmaster said, his finger tapping rubato on his desk.

"No. But it doesn't matter. If you mess with me in any way, you'll be ruined." Eleanor's words were a steady flow of ice. "Thank you for renewing my scholarship."

"I've done no such..."

"Like I said. Thank you."

Taptaptap. Taptap. "I'll find a way to make this go away." He didn't sound as confident as his words implied.

Eleanor laughed. "Trust me. You won't. You have no idea."

He swallowed. "Are we done here then?" Taptaptap.

"Not hardly."

"Sorry?"
"You're not sorry yet. Take off your clothes."

"There's no fucking way I'm taking off my clothes."

"Then don't. You made this mess." Eleanor sat on the desk, then swung her legs up and stood, looked down at the befuddled man. Lifted her skirt. No underpants. Hips pushed forward as she urinated, warm stream splashing, straw pools on dark desk, amber stains on black-dotted paper, spray rebounding onto stark white shirt. The man stood, his chair toppling backward. As the last drops fell, "Do you understand now?"

"You're insane," said the Headmaster, stunned to immobility.

"Probably. You have no idea. Now lick me."

"Who the fuck are you?"

"I'm not really sure anymore. But I know who you are. You're my fucktoy."

I'm so so proud of you, kitten.

"Thank you, Papa. I feel like... I earned it." Her head on his chest, listening to his breathing. Her hand on the comforting roundness of his tummy.

"I hear it in your music, El. Your confidence. Your heart. It's... amazing. You're growing up." A hint of sadness with the pride.

"Not too fast, I hope."

"Me too, little one. Not too fast." His voice softest. His face tenderest. "Will you play for me, precious?"

Eleanor returned the gentle smile. "Yes Papa. But I don't want to hide anymore. I don't want to pretend."

"What do you mean, El?" He swallowed, suddenly anxious.

"I love you, Papa. More than anything. You are my heart and my soul. You gave me your gift. I don't want us to pretend we're not..."

"Eleanor. I never... I'm sorry... I couldn't help myself..." His words fell like tears.


The Polonaise brillante flowed from her bow with irresistible joy, the father-daughter dance, her diminutive naked body impaled in her Papa's lap, impossibly full. When she closed her eyes at the last note, Precocity was there in the darkness. We are well fed, came the words of the goddess.

For now, thought Eleanor. For now.
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