

Winners

For weeks things went on in that fashion. It soon became habit to stop by the YMCA to change on the way into something far more daring, her ear ever to the ground for news of what did and did not pass muster for behavior and dress. She wasn't quite at the vanguard of baring her body or behaving like a complete skank; there was still the occasional expulsion, sometimes over incidents that even before the Lottery might have merited merely a rebuke. None of the teachers or administrators lost any sleep over it. These girls were only losers. They didn't have any need of an education, so humoring their presence was a nod to a bygone institution, easily discarded.

Still, much was tolerated, and it was soon apparent that for Chanda in particular, the line was even farther away. Less so with her female teachers, for whom the mere presence of the losers seemed to grate. A reminder of the bullet they'd dodged? A new trend they could look down upon? It varied. Still, the men were much readier to watch her toe the line. So long as they got to see the occasional flash of underwear, partake in the abundant display of jiggling, or eavesdrop on murmured conversations that really ought to have been whispered if indeed they were to be uttered at all... She came to realize what PowerBall really represented.

For instance, one afternoon two weeks after the return from spring break, Jocelyn Kesy took her bra off during Spanish. She managed it without removing any other clothes, without even showing much skin really, but it had brought the cold hammer of expulsion down on her. Jocelyn was a pretty enough girl, and like the rest was working harder at her prettiness since Drawing Day, but Mr. Jimenez simply shook his head, pointed at the door, and wished her a nice life. That was it.

Jocelyn was in a different period, but the story spread, boys snickering over another loser's random misfortune, losers stiffening in fear that they could be stripped from their winners for hours a day for so thin a pretext. A few days later, however, Chanda made sure she was overheard grumbling to a classmate about her own choice of bra. "It makes my boobs look weird. Stop laughing! Look, they get all smushed to the sides, and they're trying to crawl out my neck and fall in my lap. It's awful. I wish I could take this stupid thing off and burn it."

Mr. Jimenez took the bait. "No burning anything in school, señorita. You need to ditch that thing, we got a nice big trash can for you right up here."

She looked up hesitantly, as if she were bashful about being overheard. "Oh. Um, no, I don't wanna get in trouble. I'll just take it off between periods."

"Suit yourself, chica. Trash can's not going anywhere if you change your mind."

Not one soul in class doubted for an instant that his invitation was sincere. No, she was as sure as she'd ever been about any lesson he'd ever taught her that she was

welcome to take her bra off and unsmush her boobs – so long as he got a front row seat to the show.

The whole class watching to see what she'd do, and to a far, far lesser degree how he would react, Chanda rose to her feet. Rather than casually work it out through a sleeve, however, she walked to the back of the room and lifted her shirt. The bra was strapless, selected for that precise reason, for her precise action in that moment. She unclasped it, caught it in one hand as it fell to the floor, and spun to face the front of the room still in the midst of pulling her shirt back down. She'd rehearsed the gesture in the mirror ad nauseam until she could time it exactly so that the underside of her tits were observable for a tantalizing fraction of a second before the curtain fell.

Calmly, she made her way to the front of the room, her eyes locked on Mr. Jimenez' the whole way. There was hunger in his eyes. Manly hunger. And the reflection of the pure gratitude she radiated from her own. She dropped the bra in his trash can.

“Gracias, señor Jimenez. Mis tetas están mucho más cómodos ahora.”

For a moment, she thought he actually might give them a squeeze. She was close enough. She'd stopped right next to him as if to invite it. “De nada,” he said hoarsely.

That was that.

Third quarter grades came out. Her parents offered to take her out to dinner to celebrate another term on the honor roll, but she negotiated it into a shopping trip instead. Her mother commented only mildly on her shift in apparent taste, though she also didn't realize the clothes she saw Chanda try on were in most cases a size or two bigger than what she brought to the counter. Beyond that, she borrowed outfits from other losers. Their winners were usually only too eager to oblige, any opportunity to have *the* Chanda Brighton in their homes, if only fleetingly.

What began as a tantrum against an enemy Chanda couldn't herself have named gradually coalesced into a more cohesive, though no less petulant, vendetta against Aaron and his position in the Lottery system specifically. It didn't matter that it was unfair. What did fairness have to do with anything? All she knew was that he hated the way she dressed, the way she put herself out there for attention. That was enough to keep her going strong through all those times where she saw herself from the outside, how depraved and pathetic it all was.

As to Aaron's efforts to correct their lie (or “lie”) about him winning her, she pushed back by implying to a few people that it was simply his kink. That was how he'd remade her, desperate for him, horny for him, and the longer he denied her, the more desperate and horny she got. Ignoring her, rebuffing her, acting like he didn't even know her, it was all part of it. He got off watching his PowerBall loser helplessly turn herself into a shameless slut even more than he got off from actually using her. So she told people. She honestly didn't know how hard he pushed back; amidst all the bizarre and perverse things people put their losers through, it was easily as believable as many, and

anyone who cared to listen to his version weighed it against hers. One of them had to be lying, and hers was the lie boys enjoyed believing, and the lie the scant survivor population found most plausible.

If he had any thoughts on how to one-up her, he didn't act on him. Chanda found herself glaring at the back of his head sometimes in class while Mr. Corley droned on. Even in the face of open rebellion, he had to find a way to try to be *nice*.

Once in a while she paused to reflect how easy it was. Normally, a simple haircut would be change enough that she'd have to pass the gauntlet of friend approval. Now, Tiffany, Kelsey and Mimi were off serving in their respective harems; Brandy glowered with disapproval at basically everything, Chanda's antics being no exception. (Not that she didn't occasionally murmur a reminder that Ezekiel would be happy to have her over and try to convert her, whenever Aaron liked.)

By the time spring was readying itself for summer, she sometimes went days at a time without reflecting on how little old her would have approved of the new her. Old her, though, had been a creature of the system. She was afraid, and lonely, and hopeless. New her... well, she was still lonely, but as college applications went out before Lottery-adjusted deadlines, she had some hope. No idea what she wanted to do with her life, but she wasn't afraid of it. She would be leered at and groped and propositioned, but that was what life was. New her was learning that she could close her eyes, grit her teeth, and endure far more than she'd ever thought she could.

Then, one day in late April, she was asked to endure more.

"Aaron, can you come with me to my office? Just need to clear up a couple things. Also Chanda." Her name came as a mere afterthought attached to Aaron's. She'd gotten used to that. Just about anything anyone but her parents asked her for was framed as a request for her presumed winner. By then there was a whole phantom Aaron who existed solely in her head by now, pulling her strings whenever she needed to consult him over something. She knew the phantom better than the real one.

Mr. Corley nodded for them to go ahead. "Sure, Mr. Bowers," Aaron said, rising to his feet. He spared a dark glance at Chanda. It was the first time he'd looked at her in days, since Eddie had elbowed him and pointed during an expression of gratitude for the several inches of ass creeping out of the top of her skinny jeans. She'd given him a wink over her shoulder and and kissed him from across the room.

Chanda followed close behind. Somebody pinched her ass on her way by. Jeff, probably. He seemed to prefer pinches to the more common slaps or gropes. Maria's audible chastisement confirmed it. "Stop touching her like that. Just because she's a loser doesn't mean you won her, Jeff. She and Aaron have the right to decide who gets to..." The rest of it was lost as the two entered the hallway. She thought she could hear Mr. Corley giving a tired-sounding rebuke to Maria to quiet down.

Mr. Bowers was one of the school's guidance counselors. Students were assigned to counselors alphabetically, so she supposed it made sense Eichhorn and Brighton would be together. Chanda had always liked Mr. Bowers. A lot of Clark staff, men and women alike, made only token effort with the girls. Mr. Bowers, however, had always at least acted like she had a future. He had a reassuring smile, and he'd never been sparing with praise for her achievements.

That phase of their relationship seemed to be over. Ahead of her, the two men made small talk about how the baseball team was doing. Apparently Aaron used to be on the team? She wasn't getting much from context. It didn't matter anyway.

In his office, Mr. Bowers gestured for the two to sit down. Chanda selected the middle of the three chairs so Aaron wouldn't be able to distance himself. If he tried to touch her, though, she might just punch him, witnesses be damned. Instead, however, he scooted his chair a few inches away from hers as if he were afraid of the same.

"Can I ask what's going on, Mr. Bowers?" Aaron started anxiously.

"Aaron's not in trouble, is he?" she added. Guidance counselors didn't do trouble. Still, it established character.

"Trouble?" Mr. Bowers laughed. "No, Aaron's doing fine. Relax, Ms. Brighton. But we are starting to come down to the wire, so I wanted to touch base with you two."

She let relief flood her voice. "Sure, Mr. B. What's up?" There it was, that high-octave chirp her voice was when talking with male authority figures. She'd found reducing their name to an initial could be endearing, too, a trick she'd stolen from *Surviving*. There was an intimacy to it.

Mr. Bowers steepled his fingers. "It's about your grades actually."

Aaron frowned. "Mine? I know I was slipping a little bit, but I already got accepted to two schools, so I was kinda—"

Mr. Bowers held up a hand, keeping that smile she'd always liked plastered on his face. "Relax, big guy. You're doing fine. Yeah, it's not your best semester, but as long as you keep going like you are you're going to be fine. Don't panic."

"Oh. So then... what's up?"

"It's about Chanda's, actually."

"Mine? Did I do bad on something?" She frowned, though even caught off guard as she was, she remembered to water down her word choices. She'd been keeping up with her work, and studied even more than ever now that she had no social life to occupy her. It wasn't the impression she'd been giving people, but as far as her teachers were concerned, Aaron had demanded she maintain her GPA. His phantom kept her hard at work.

Mr. Bowers, however, ignored the question and continued to address Aaron. "Aaron, buddy, I'm going to level with you. I'm sure you can appreciate that the Lottery creates some weird stresses on the system in these final months. Energy is a precious

resource around here, and frankly, I need to make sure it's being spent where it's going to do some good."

"I don't know what she's doing in her classes, and to be honest, I don't care," Aaron said tersely. "Whatever's going on with her grades is between her and her teachers."

Mr. Bowers nodded, his eyes still not even glancing to Chanda. Aaron's did. What he saw there, she couldn't say. They hadn't spoken in so long that it was more upsetting than she'd have thought. The Aaron in her head, the phantom one she controlled, the one who controlled her, he was much more invested. The real Aaron's apathy stung.

"Sure, that's the letter of the law all right, but still, I wanted to consult with you. To cut to the chase, right now, she's on track to flunk the final quarter. Hard. Hard enough it's gonna hurt when she hits bottom no matter how well-padded her butt may be."

Aaron wrinkled his nose at the crude insinuation, but let the man go on. "Some of the classes she's fallen behind in are required to graduate. Now I know she's got some brains in there somewhere. With some elbow grease, I'm hoping I can still drag her across the finish line for you."

Chanda straightened in her seat. "What? Mr. Bowers, I don't know if some assignments haven't been entered or what, but I've been doing everything right on time! I was—"

He held up a hand though, and long weeks of training herself to humor bossy jerks kicked in. "My question to you, Aaron, is whether or not you care if she graduates. Look, I know how it is, wanting to keep your loser with you through the day. I was two years out of high school when the first Lottery took place, but I can imagine."

Chanda knew her mouth was open, but she couldn't find the words. Were her teachers flunking her out of spite? Had they stopped bothering to grade the losers?

"Still, we're not here for fun and games, right? I have to know whether she's here for your sake, or for hers. I can reach out to her teachers, and maybe even arrange some tutoring. Resources are stretched thin, however, so I'm not going to bend over backwards to secure a diploma for your..."

Jizz rag. Fuck toy. Whore. Those were the words his pause implied. They hit her straight in her half-exposed chest.

"Loser." he finished.

"Mr. Bowers, really, she's not..." He glanced to Chanda. His eyes rested on her for a long moment, studying her. "Look, I don't care, but if she says she wants to graduate, then fine."

Chanda was remembering herself, though. She didn't need Aaron or Mr. Bowers to do favors for her. "Can you tell me which class is a problem? I thought I'd been keeping up, but I save all my work so I can make sure that—"

The guidance counselor clucked his tongue at her. "It's not only one class, Ms. Brighton, and I think you know that."

"What? No! I'm doing my work! Here, let me..." Her fingers were racing at her phone, bringing up her cloud. She was a stickler for organization, folders within folders for every class, quarter, and project. "Wait, hang on... It says my login isn't... But..."

"Thank you, Aaron. You can head back to class while she and I sort this out. Poor thing hasn't logged in for so long she's forgotten how."

Aaron sat up straighter. "She's a good student. If she says she did her work, then she must have,"

Mr. Bowers shook his head ruefully. "Oh, Aaron. I know, you write your ticket and seed their pot and think they're in your hand, but you'd be amazed what can slip through the cracks. Now if you're changing your mind, or if it's some... I dunno, some game between you two, then say the word and you two can be on your way and I'll still cheer for you at graduation. But if you really want her to pull this off, I'm not looking to sprout gray hairs early for no reason."

"I'm *not* lying, Mr. Bowers. I did the work."

He answered Aaron, though. "You're a good student, Aaron, and you have a lot of good things ahead of you in life. So you tell me what you want for her, and I'll help you make it happen. Your call."

Aaron's reply came slowly. "She says she was keeping up..."

"Yeah, in my experience they'll say the darnedest things to appease their winners. Even the Lottery isn't always a cure for plain old laziness and dishonesty."

Chanda stood up. "I am *not*—"

Again, the hand. Again, her silence. She even sat back down. Chanda looked to Aaron pleadingly. What was even happening? She didn't know, but it was obvious that once again, she wasn't in the driver's seat of her life. It was really only surprising that she wasn't used to it by now.

"I..." Aaron frowned. Some of it, she could tell, was still for her. For how she'd hurt him, how she'd sullied his good name for sport. Some of it, however, wasn't. "She wants to graduate, I think. Right, Chanda?"

Chanda nodded vigorously.

"So then, yes. If you can, you know, help her catch up, or maybe help her log in and get at her files... Then yeah. I want her to graduate."

Mr. Bowers's smile broadened. "Good on you. Nice to see a young man who values education. All right. So it looks like she and I have work to do, so why don't you head on back to class and let the two of us get this passing party started."

Aaron hesitated. "I don't mind, you know, sticking around and helping..."

Their counselor's head cocked to the side. "Whoa now, I'll pretend like I didn't hear that. Winner or no, it'll be her name on the diploma, which means it needs to be

her work. Maybe next time you win the PowerBall, you won't dumb 'em down so much, eh?" He laughed and offered Aaron a hand up, clapping him affectionately on the shoulder to propel him toward the office door.

Chanda finally realized what was about to happen, a few seconds before the door closed behind Aaron. He turned, peering through the narrowing crack at her. She regarded him imploringly. It was the Grand River, the limo ride, all over again.

Aaron shook his head slowly, sadly, and turned away. The door shut tightly behind him.

Mr. Bowers returned, a bit of a swagger in his step this time. Chanda was already throwing up obstacles. "Mr. C, I swear to you, I swear to god – to Aaron! – that I have been doing my work. I *swear*."

"But you don't seem to have any proof," he answered, settling down on the side of his desk closer to her. He was tall. "You appreciate that I can't assign grades based on promises, don't you?"

"OK. So I can redo it. I'll work really hard–"

"Chanda, please. You've already missed all these deadlines. Even if you redid it all from scratch, you can't reverse time, can you? Even a face as pretty as yours has *some* limits."

"Can I get partial credit, at least? If I could get partial credit, and do everything else on time from now on..." It was clearer by the moment where this was going, of course. But if she acknowledged it, *then* would be here *now*, and for the moment it was still *then*. A looming, darkening then, but not a now.

"Sweetie, even if I broke all precedent and allowed it – which, believe me, would be very unethical of me to make an exception – how could we know you wouldn't 'lose' the files again? After all, you're pretty much a professional loser, aren't you?"

He was the only one to chuckle at his joke. "So... what am I... what do you want me to... do? You said, um, tutors?"

"Look, sweetie, you know I want you to graduate. And more importantly, you just heard Aaron say he wants you to graduate. So if you couldn't do the work the way you were supposed to..." He made a face, the face of someone scolding a toddler who'd lost their toy.

"Please, I... I can..."

"Deep breaths, Chanda. You look like you're about to faint." He fanned her with his hand, which only brought him closer, which only made it worse. "Look, I'm not trying to suggest anything... inappropriate. After all, I've heard Aaron's policy is not to loan you out for favors. Is that right?"

She nodded. The Aaron in her head agreed. He owned her. She was his, his alone, no one else's. It was practically his – her – first commandment. "Right. Yes. I'm never allowed to do things with other boys." Oh thank god. He couldn't expect her to do

anything if he knew Aaron had told her not to. The real Aaron hated the slutty way she'd been behaving, but he wasn't about to pimp her out any more than phantom Aaron was.

"Of course, of course. Now, I won't pry into your personal business. I'm sure you know what he said you can and cannot do. But like I said, it's not fair to expect me to help you for nothing, is it? So call it a brainstorm. What can you think that he didn't explicitly say was off limits?"

"I can't—"

He leaned down and put a hand on her shoulder. How could she have ever liked that smile? "After all, we know how girls like you tend to lose things, right? First your homework, then your login." His eyes narrowed meaningfully. "Heck, loser like you, I'm worried you'll get ahold of Aaron's work and lose it, too."

Her chin trembled as his meaning slammed home. No. No, she couldn't. It was abhorrent, the mere idea that she might do what he was suggesting to save Aaron's grades! She was *not* a loser! Playing the part was a game, a statement, her way of pushing back on the system that had ruined her world. She was not about to let this creep... Not to save Aaron.

For herself? Maybe. Could he really change her grades? She could go to her teachers, but what if he could overrule them? Or change them in the eleventh hour after finals but before graduation? Hell, if Mr. Jimenez got wind that she could be manipulated in such a way, he might just hop on board, too.

So there it was. Muddle through life with no high school diploma, or submit to a little extortion. Not really a choice.

For a moment, she toyed with the idea of telling him to flunk Aaron and save her. Just to be sure, so she would never look back on this and wonder if it had been fear of hurting Aaron that broke her. There was no way, though, and it was too shitty even for the person she was pretending to be.

Mr. Bowers was snapping his fingers in her face. "How's that brainstorm coming, Chanda?"

She looked up, heart pounding. Her counselor loomed over her. Smiling. "I... I could show you my boobs, I think. He'd be OK with that."

"That's our girl! Not sure how much that's worth to your GPA, but I'll bet they're worth more than zero." She was still steeling herself to make good on her offer when he went on. "What else?"

Somehow, it wasn't the lies, the manipulation, the disgusting creepery that sparked her anger. No, it was that greedy twinkle in his eye when he implied that her tits weren't worth an A all by themselves.

Chanda rose to her feet. "Why don't you let me do one assignment and grade me on that before we move on to the next?"

Suddenly, she was channeling new Chanda. New Chanda was sexy, radiant as the sun and wanted the whole world to know it. This son of a bitch thought her breasts were some kind of teaser? Well fuck him. If not for the Lottery, flashing these babies to this jerk ought to be a 4.0 by itself.

Chanda turned away from him and crossed her arms, grasping her blouse at the bottom. She calmly pulled it off over her head, letting a river of jet black hair cascaded down across bare shoulders in its wake. His eyes were wide as dinner plates as she turned to face him, fixed on the curtains obstructing his view like he might see through it if he stared hard enough.

Why make him wait? She'd committed. Make this mother fucker choke on his bullshit suggestion that she wasn't enough. She swept her hair over her shoulders and planted her hands on her hips. Elbows back, tits forward.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph..." he murmured. The man stared for some time before deciding to inspect them from other angles, sides and even from the back. "They're so..."

"Perfect," she finished for him.

He only nodded. She was surprised he hadn't tried to touch her, but evidently Mr. Bowers liked to savor. Weirdly, the longer it went on, the more relaxed she became. She felt strangely powerful, transfixing her extortionist with so little effort. The bell rang, ending the school day, but for all Mr. Bowers reacted, they may as well have been alone in the building.

"What was her name?"

Mr. Bowers looked up, surprised to hear words. He didn't look up long, though. "Whose name?"

"You said you wished you could have played the Lottery. There must be a reason. Who was she?"

Slowly, a fond smile stole onto his lightly bearded face. He really wasn't bad-looking, in a scholarly sort of way. Well-groomed, with thin round glasses on a narrow face. "Michelle Walsh."

"Was she pretty?"

"Brown hair," he said. "Legs for miles. Tits, too." For a moment, he glanced up like he might get in trouble for naughty language from the loser stripped to the waist in his office. Only for a moment, though.

A thin smile, proud but not quite smug, crept onto her lips. "Was she as pretty as me?"

Unblinking, he let out a long sigh so heavy she could feel the warm air on her chest. "Chanda, girl, I'm not sure anybody's as pretty as you."

She laughed, breasts bouncing enchantingly. Seeing the awe he had for her was strangely heady. "Mr. Bowers, I didn't know you were such a sweet talker."

“Aaron... God damn that kid’s a lucky fuck. You have to be the hottest piece of ass I’ve ever seen.” He did her the courtesy of making eye contact, if momentarily. “I was worried, a little, that if I got to see you naked, it’d disappoint. Like it’d turn out it was padding, or they were lopsided, or those funky flap-jacky titties, you know?”

“I’m not funky?” she asked dryly.

“You are not.” He shook his head in apparent disbelief. “Fucking perfect. And I’ll be damned, are they perking up for me?”

She wanted to tell him it was cold in there, but truth was, she wasn’t cold. It wasn’t anything in particular about Mr. Bowers, either, but it wasn’t the temperature. She adjusted her arms, wrapping them underneath her breasts like a little shelf. He groaned audibly, though she wasn’t even sure why it seemed to be such an improvement.

Then, after a long moment of pure admiration, he was reaching for them. In a flash, she reached out and slapped his hand by reflex.

Mr. Bowers winced, but soon gave a self-conscious chuckle. “Guess Aaron’s little PowerBall is looky no touchy, huh. That figures.”

Phantom Aaron had just instructed her to give that very excuse. “Sorry, Mr. B. No pics, either. But you can keep looking. Look all you want.”

Her offer was accepted. Rather than help molding her for life after high school, he told her how he wanted her to pose and watched her do it. Curiously, he never even asked about her shorts. She played along, bending over one of the chairs and letting her tits hang free. Hands behind her head, hair fanned out broadly. Crouching near his feet, tits overflowing her hands. He even dragged the monitor off his desk and had her lie down on her side.

Had she known he was going to take down his pants and start to stroke it right in front of her, she might have asked Phantom Aaron to throw up a few more barriers. Still, she decided, it wasn’t a bad cock. She didn’t know why she’d assumed an older guy would have weird gear, but it looked about like the ones in the fantasies that were basically always on the backs of her eyelids these days. Being so focused on her own sexuality made her horny almost all the time. With male to female ratio in her classes now easily two to one, it was probably only natural they’d gravitated towards the winsome sex of late. Her dildo had been put through its paces of late. Even if her vibrator was objectively more pleasurable, her fantasies demanded penetration.

Not that she could say that to Mr. Bowers. She was so horny right then that she would have let him... Actually, she wasn’t even sure how far she might have let him go. But when she looked over her shoulder and saw him lick his palm and go right back to stroking his rock hard shaft, she let herself smile.

And then, she slipped a hand through the elastic waistband of her shorts and joined him.

“Is this OK, Mr. Bowers?” she asked, batting eyelashes she’d refreshed at lunch. A sophomore girl whose name she didn’t know had shaken her head and told her that it made her eyes look so big, she was practically an anime character. Chanda didn’t know what to make of that, but from the way her guidance counselor’s pace accelerated, it had to mean something good.

“I don’t want to make a mess on your nice desk,” she added breathily when he didn’t verbally respond. It was wild how much easier it was to pull off that slutty voice with a couple fingers rubbing at her clit through her panties.

He took a step closer, face red, almost angry-looking, but in a male way that she found somewhat appealing. At least in that moment. “Make a mess. Make all the mess you want, girl.”

Chanda rolled onto her back, thighs spread wide. As ever, the sheer weight of her tits was extremely inconvenient for masturbating – another perk of her little egg vibrator, hands-free – but he didn’t seem to mind the way they flattened, spread, jiggled in time with her jilling.

Suddenly, weirdly, she noticed a spitball sticking to the ceiling above her, and couldn’t help but giggle. *Holy shit. I’m masturbating in my counselor’s office.* It only made her giggle harder though.

Mr. Bowers came, rope after sticky rope arcing across her chest and arms. Her laughter didn’t abate as she came, too. A gush of warm wetness surged into her panties, coating her fingers right through the thin cotton fabric. She laughed right through her orgasm, and moments later, into another, getting higher and gaspier the longer she rode it.

When her eyes opened, a dizzy grin still smeared across her face, it was to the sight of a similarly grinning Mr. Bowers standing over her, admiring his handiwork. “Sorry if I got carried away, Mr. B.”

“Forgiven, Ms. Brighton. Sorry I came on those magnificent tits of yours. Thought I still had some time, but when you...” He shook his head.

“It’s OK. Not exactly the first time a guy came on my tits,” she lied in a conspiratorial murmur. Chanda winked. She extended her arm, then accepted his help sitting up. “Say, you mind helping me clean up?”

“Um, I thought I wasn’t allowed to, ah...” He arched an eyebrow.

She gestured to the box of tissues he’d swept to the floor to make space for her. “Then be careful not to touch me.”

The man couldn’t help but have his jaw hang down in open lust as he sponged his seed off of her. When he missed a spot, Chanda pointed it out to him helpfully. Selfishly, even. Being with Mimi and Jessie had been incredible, but it had almost been a dream, a hedonistic blur of power fantasies and orgasms. Perversely, masturbating with her guidance counselor had felt more *normal* somehow, and she was surprised to find how

good it felt to simply be *touched*, even through the barrier of tissue paper. If his thumb occasionally “slipped” and brushed her bare skin – oh *fuck* and that one time right across her nipple – she winked and promised him she wouldn’t tell on him.

Phantom Aaron wouldn’t let her offer him more, though, the bastard. As Mr. Bowers saw to making sure his shirt looking properly tucked, she put hers back on and made for the door, giving him a little wave behind her.

“Oh and Chanda?” he said as she opened it.

“Yes, Mr. B?”

“Don’t worry about those grades. I’ll... look into it.”

She’d forgotten all about her grades. God. In the reassuring smile he gave her, she knew she didn’t need to lift a finger from now on. Not if she didn’t feel like it.

But maybe if she tanked her portfolio, Mr. Corley would give her a chance to earn some extra credit, too.

“So how was school today, sweetie?”

“Fine, Mom.”

Her mother rolled her eyes, but with a patient smile. “Right, because we’re acting like middle school again. Let me try again. What happened in school today, sweetie?”

Chanda shoved a pile of noodles to the other side of her plate. “Nothing much. Had a group project in econ. Writing a business plan.”

Her dad looked impressed. “Really? Man, when I was in school, we just did mock investments with newspapers and monopoly money.”

Chanda didn’t bother pointing out that when he was in school, half his classmates hadn’t expected to be parceled out as sex toys before they graduated. “Things are different now.” She shrugged.

“So you’re the CEO, I assume? I mean, who else?” Her dad smiled, desperate to penetrate her gloom.

“They told me they didn’t want me to do anything.”

Her mother set down her glass of wine, frowned. “What? Usually you complain you have to do three people’s jobs.”

“Maybe she was grouped with the rare over-achieving idiot, who works hard without realizing the inferior quality of their product,” her dad suggested sagely.

“They said they don’t want a loser to fuck up their grade.”

“Watch your language at the table, dear,” her mother admonished curtly. They’d mostly given up policing her tongue, foul as it had gotten of late, but apparently the dinner table was sacrosanct.

Her father, however, focused on the message rather than the delivery. “What? But you’re not... What were they thinking? You’re one of the smartest girls in school, Chanda.”

“I’m fortieth in my class, Dad.” Or she was, before she’d diddled herself on Mr. Bowers’ desk to save her grades. And Aaron’s grades. Maybe that would propel her into the thirties.

“Out of seven hundred!”

“Four hundred seventy-two, presently,” she corrected, though she didn’t bother pointing out that her rank didn’t take that into account. Heck, now she probably was in the thirties. Girls were less represented at the higher tiers, though. Too many of them gave up on themselves, knowing they’d likely not graduate anyway.

“Still, it’s not right. Maybe we should call your teacher.”

“Maybe try my guidance counselor,” she grumbled as she skewered her noodles, rolling up what she could.

“Mr. Bower?”

“Bowers. Never mind.”

Her father pushed in his own half-finished plate. “That’s it. I hate seeing you like this, sweetheart. It’s not right, them treating you like... like you’re...”

“You can say it, Dad. The Lottery Bureau won’t appear and sluttify me if you say the word three times.”

“Like you’re a loser.” The word took effort for him to say. It always had. Her apparent survival hadn’t changed anything about that.

“Well maybe I am a loser. Huh? Maybe they’re right. Maybe I’m just some hot horny moron who can’t keep her legs closed—”

“Chanda!” her mother gasped.

“— and I’ll only screw everything up if they let me participate.”

“You are not a loser, honey!” her father exclaimed.

She shoved her chair back and rose to her feet, palms on the table, glowering. “Well I’m sure as shit not a winner!”

Her parents sputtered in her wake as she left the table, thundering up the stairs, into her room. Her bed springs creaked as she threw herself down, sobbing. Not long after, there was a soft knock at her door. Her dad’s knock.

“Sweetie?”

“What do you want, Dad?” she blubbered.

Of all moments, her phone chose that one to buzz in her pocket. As her dad tried to talk his way into the room, she fished it out. Aaron E. E, because when she’d entered his number, she hadn’t even remembered how to spell his last name.

Sniffing, she swiped to answer the call. “Hey, Chanda, it’s—”

“*WHY WON’T YOU LEAVE ME ALONE?!*” she howled. She threw the phone across the room. It clattered against her bookshelf and to the floor. Something had definitely broken.

“All right, honey. But if you change your mind, I’ll be downstairs. If it’s 3 AM and you wanna talk, wake me up. I love you.” There was a hesitation, no doubt hoping she’d reciprocate, but then his footsteps thumped down the stairs. The muffled sounds of her parents’ voices were faintly audible through the floor. Then, she heard another sound.

“Chanda, please. Talk to me. *Please*. Are you there?”

Her phone evidently still worked. Numbly, she walked over and picked it up. The screen was cracked in two places, rendering its contents scarcely legible. No repair plan on it, either; there hadn’t seemed to be any logic in insuring her winner’s phone when her parents had last replaced her phone.

She sat back on her bed. He still hadn’t hung up.

“I can hear you breathing,” said Aaron’s voice.

She didn’t answer.

“Well, if you’re listening, I guess I can talk. About earlier today... I hope nothing happened with Mr. Bowers. I believed you. If you’ll let me help, I want to. What he was trying to do was not OK.”

He waited. Still silence.

“I wish you’d talk to me. I know you’re scared, and you’re hurting. I don’t understand why you’ve been acting the way you have been but I guess you’re processing everything, and that’s fine. I hate that you lost everyone. It doesn’t have to stay that way, though. Maybe you don’t trust me, but god, just give me a chance, Chanda. Give me time to earn it. You don’t have to be alone.”

Aaron sighed into the phone. “It’s a standing offer. And whatever happens, even if you decide to... to keep being like you’ve been since we came back from break, I’ll keep your secret. I know it’s not much, but maybe one less thing to be afraid of. God, I’m probably talking to your dog right now or something. Be nice to Chanda, little guy. I wish I remembered your name.”

The line went dead.

Chanda didn’t leave her room that night, and left the house before her parents came down for breakfast. She arrived early to seventh period and asked Mr. Corley if he could get someone to cover class. Without even asking more, he made a call, told some lies, and followed her to the parking lot.

She fucked Mr. Corley in the back seat of his car and went home early. Bumper was waiting for her in her bed.