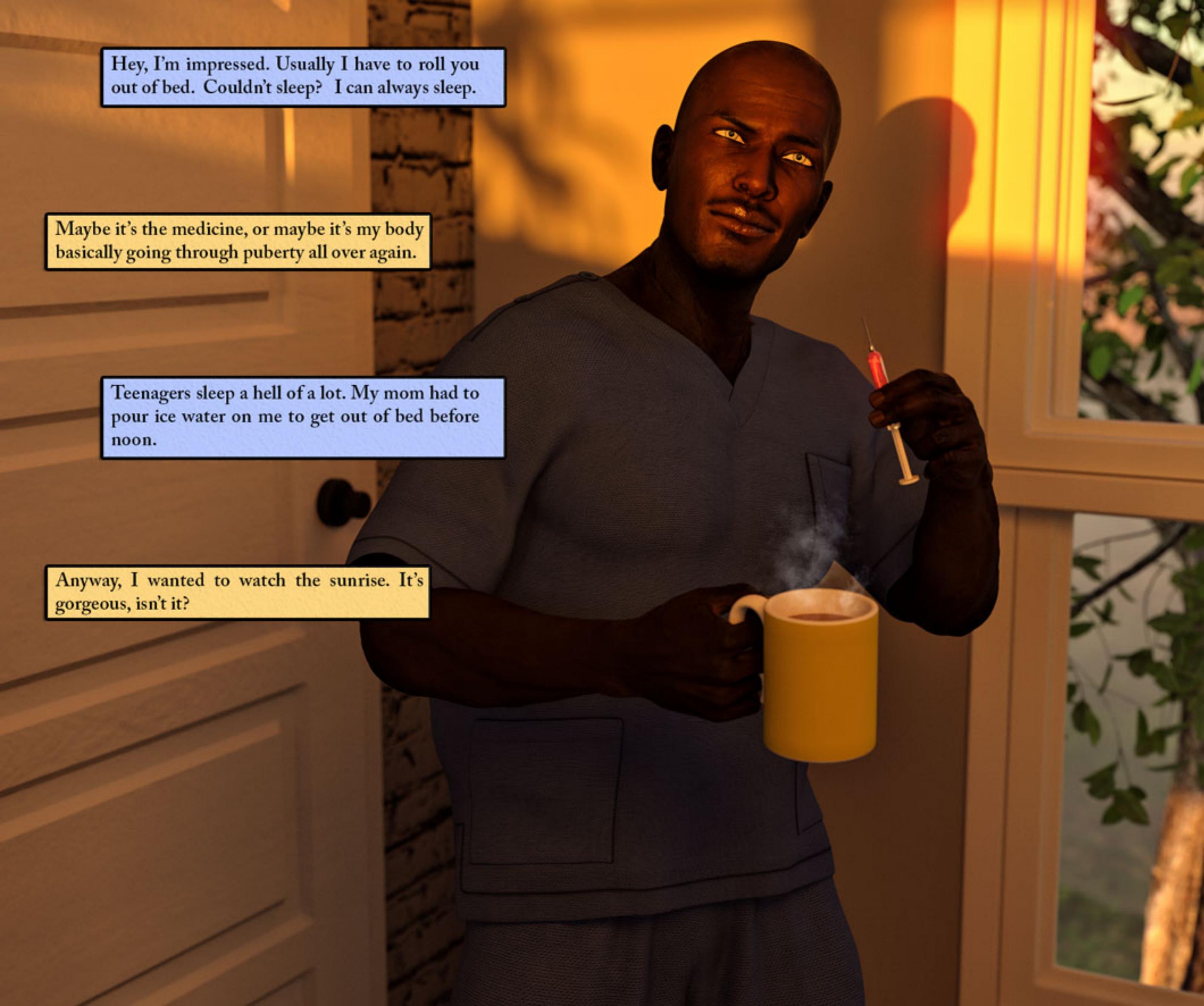


Morning, Jack. I got coffee and your medicine.
It's a beautiful day! And I'm not even being
sarcastic this time.

I'm awake, Mason. I've been awake for hours.



Hey, I'm impressed. Usually I have to roll you out of bed. Couldn't sleep? I can always sleep.

Maybe it's the medicine, or maybe it's my body basically going through puberty all over again.

Teenagers sleep a hell of a lot. My mom had to pour ice water on me to get out of bed before noon.

Anyway, I wanted to watch the sunrise. It's gorgeous, isn't it?



Yeah, it's... it's absolutely beautiful.

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a dark top, stands in a room with warm, orange lighting. She is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. In the background, there is a window showing a view of a building with a grid pattern. The overall atmosphere is intimate and slightly somber.

Sometimes it's hard to remember the world's still out there. I've been completely cut off from everything for over a year. The only person I ever see is you. Always you, Mason.

What about Holly and that asshole Davis?

One time, sure. Months ago now. Is that right? Time is weird. I used to count the days, but I gave up. What's the point?



Hey, you okay? You don't usually talk this way.

Sure, I'm fine. And I'll be better than fine when I get my coffee.

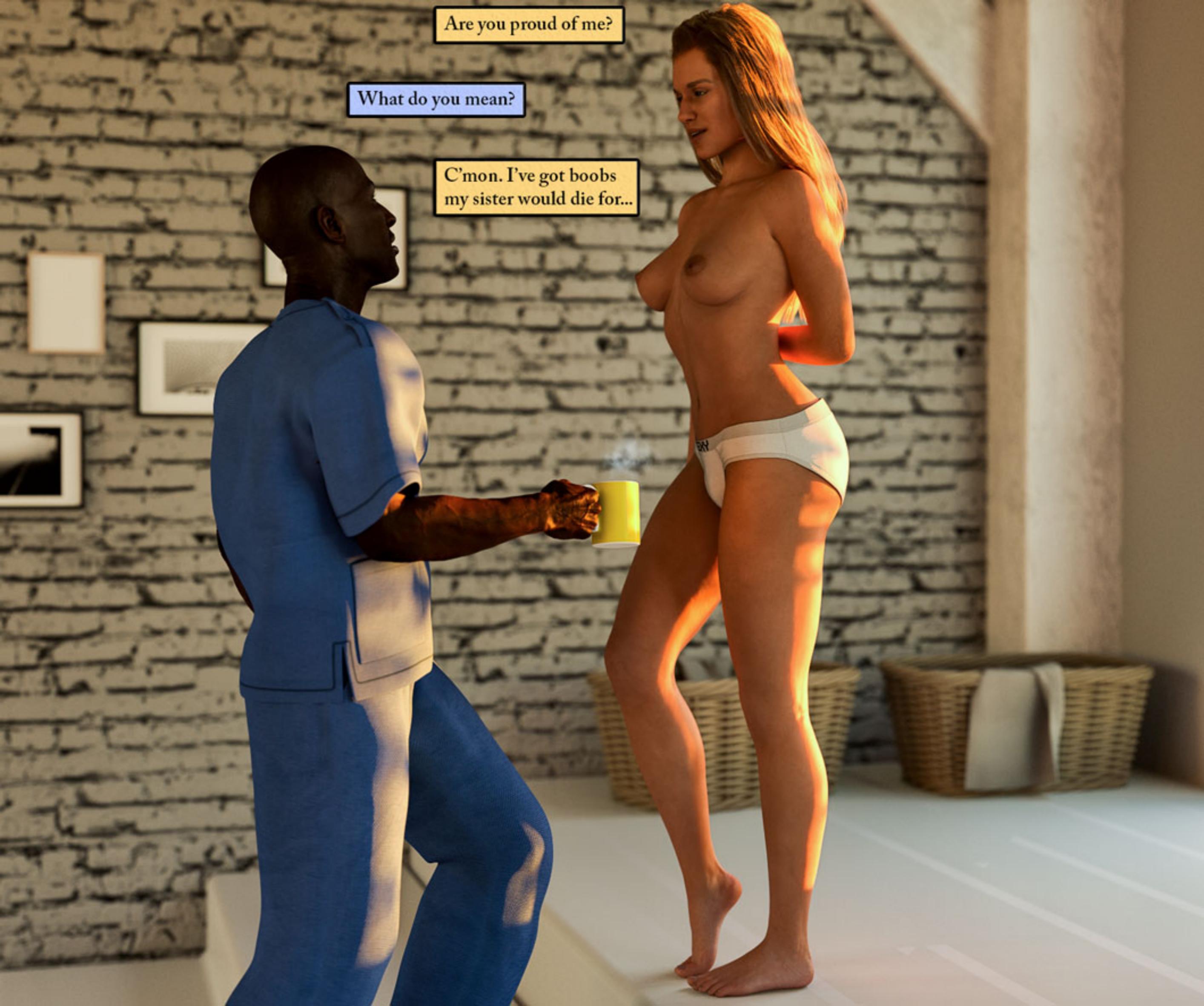
Medicine first. You know the drill.



Trust me, routine makes it easier.

The drill is *all* I know.

I do trust you. That's why I'm going to ask you something.



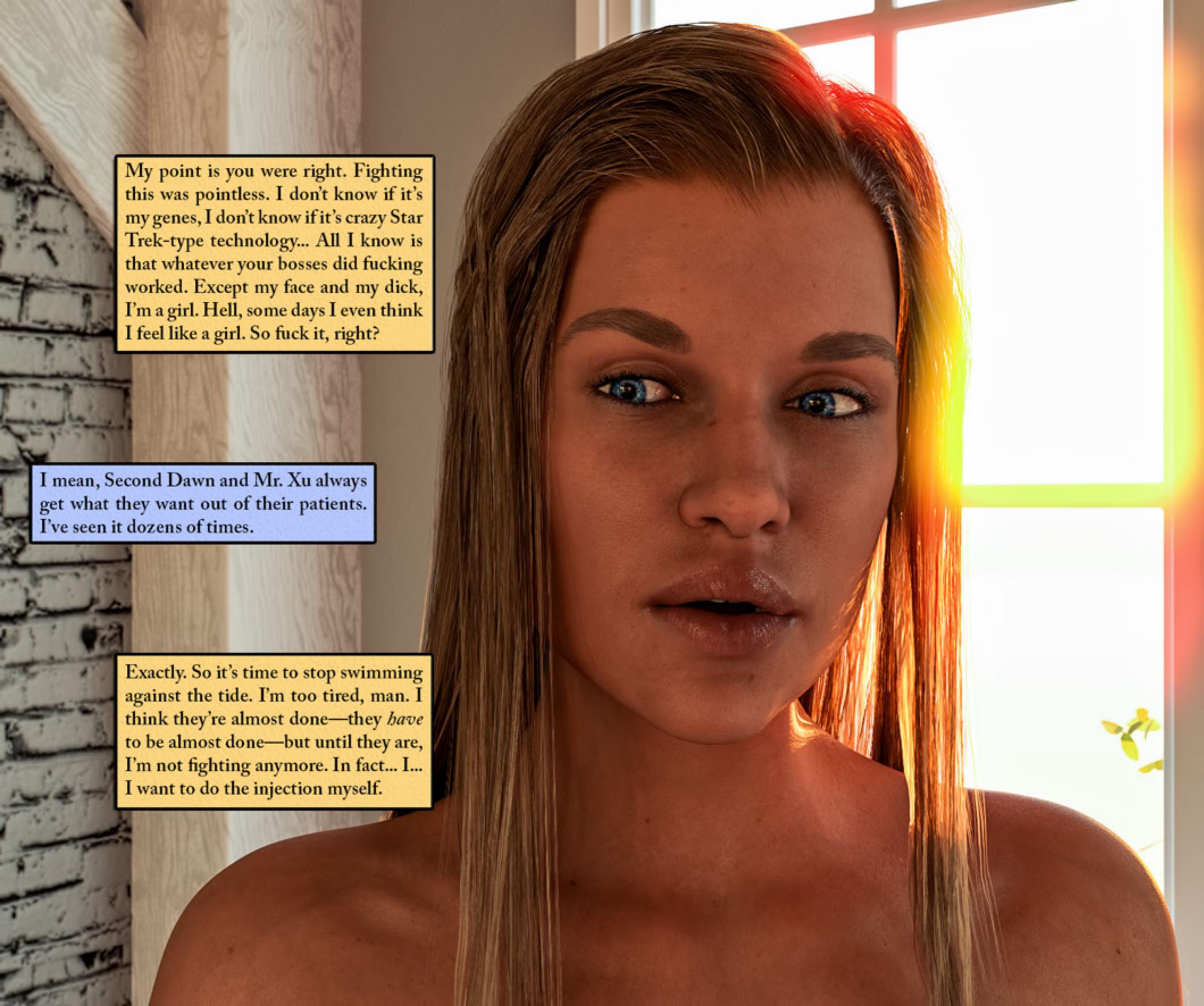
Are you proud of me?

What do you mean?

C'mon. I've got boobs
my sister would die for...

...and an ass she'd kill for.

Um... Okay, but what's...
uh... what's your point?



My point is you were right. Fighting this was pointless. I don't know if it's my genes, I don't know if it's crazy Star Trek-type technology... All I know is that whatever your bosses did fucking worked. Except my face and my dick, I'm a girl. Hell, some days I even think I feel like a girl. So fuck it, right?

I mean, Second Dawn and Mr. Xu always get what they want out of their patients. I've seen it dozens of times.

Exactly. So it's time to stop swimming against the tide. I'm too tired, man. I think they're almost done—they *have* to be almost done—but until they are, I'm not fighting anymore. In fact... I... I want to do the injection myself.



You... want to do your own hormone shot?

Yes. For a year things have just *happened* to me, Mason. I need a little control. Even if it's just where the needle goes in, or how hard.

I try not to hurt you...



This isn't about you, okay? It's about what I have to do to stay sane here. You always say you're my friend. Is that true?

Yeah, Jack. But what you're asking...

It's against the rules.

Very against the rules.

Then it's your call. But I need this, Mason. Please.



Okay. But don't write this in your journal. I'll catch hell if the higher-ups find out. You know they read that thing, right?

Fuck yes. I mean, it's sure not for my mental health. Hell, I bet they email it to the perverts sponsoring this sideshow.

You're... not wrong. Except it's all hand-delivered.

Harder to trace.



You got it. Although, Xu has so many bigwigs in his pocket I don't think the secrecy is really necessary. It's just marketing. The people who are doing this to you... Deep down they want to believe they might get caught. Fear is part of the thrill.

That's why everything I write in that stupid pink diary is fiction. I like to fuck with them, like they're fucking with me. And I'm starting to figure something else out, too.

What's that?

I'm not dumb. At least, not as dumb as I used to pretend I was, back before they brought me here. I like reading, I like learning. I just... I lived in Emily's shadow, even though she was my baby sister. Dad always loved her more, and even I could see why. She reminded him of Mom, but she had his drive. Emily's the whole package. And I'm... Well, I'm just not.



Sounds like you're learning a lot about yourself.

Just my luck to figure out who Jack is supposed to be right before I'm not him anymore.

You'll always be you, no matter what they change. Okay, be careful with the needle. You have to stick it in your butt or thigh, where you won't hit a muscle.

I used to have muscle there. Now I'm just... soft.



I'm soft everywhere. God, never in my craziest dreams did I think I'd know what it's like to have boobs. It's not sexy! They flop around when I sleep. I always hit them when I reach for something. That hurts, by the way! They jiggle when I walk, and my nipples are so damn sensitive to the cold and... to the touch. It's crazy what this little pink vial has done.

The hormones are specially formulated based on your genetic profile. Highly effective. Or at least that's what they tell me.

God, can you imagine if I put on a tank top and jeans and went for a stroll?

Guys would fall over themselves trying to get your number.

Yeah, they would! Sure, I'm a butterface, but it's nothing makeup can't fix. Too bad I still sound like the old me.



And it's all thanks to you, Mason.



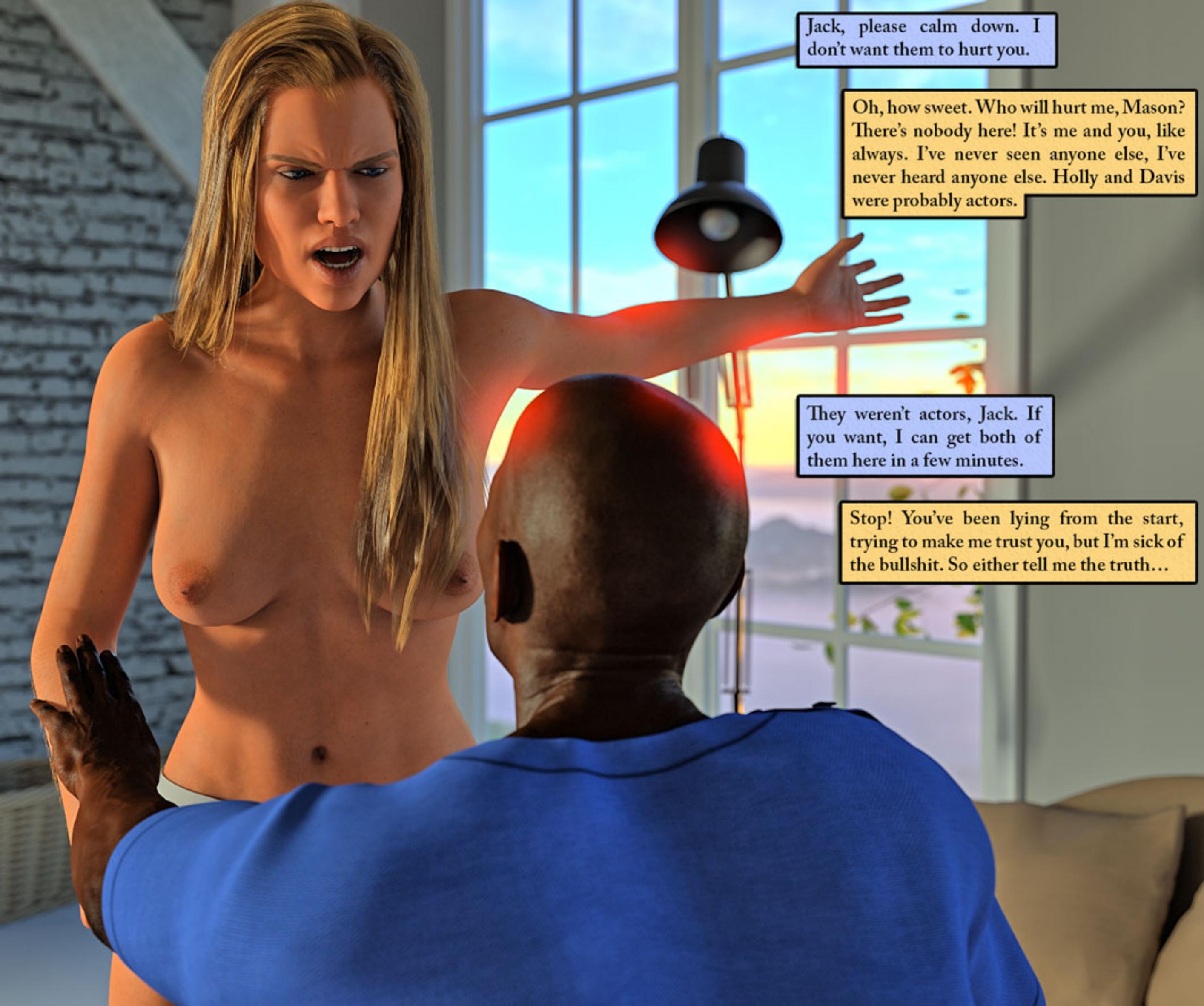
Because it's always been you,
hasn't it? You and only you.

Hold on, Jack—

There's no Mr. Xu, is there? No conspiracy,
no international organization, no rich
perverted assholes funding this whole
thing. It's just you and your sick fantasy.

Wait, think about that for a sec.
Your theory doesn't make sense.

Shut up! I don't want
to hear more bullshit.



Jack, please calm down. I don't want them to hurt you.

Oh, how sweet. Who will hurt me, Mason? There's nobody here! It's me and you, like always. I've never seen anyone else, I've never heard anyone else. Holly and Davis were probably actors.

They weren't actors, Jack. If you want, I can get both of them here in a few minutes.

Stop! You've been lying from the start, trying to make me trust you, but I'm sick of the bullshit. So either tell me the truth...



...or I'll stick this needle in your jugular
and send an air bubble into your brain.

You really want to kill me, Jack?

I want the truth.

The truth... Okay, the truth is you're right.
I've been lying to you for over a year.

Son of a bitch!

I'm not done. I told you they were paying me—that this is just my job. That's half true. They are paying me, but it's not a job. I'm trapped, just like you.

What the fuck are you talking about?

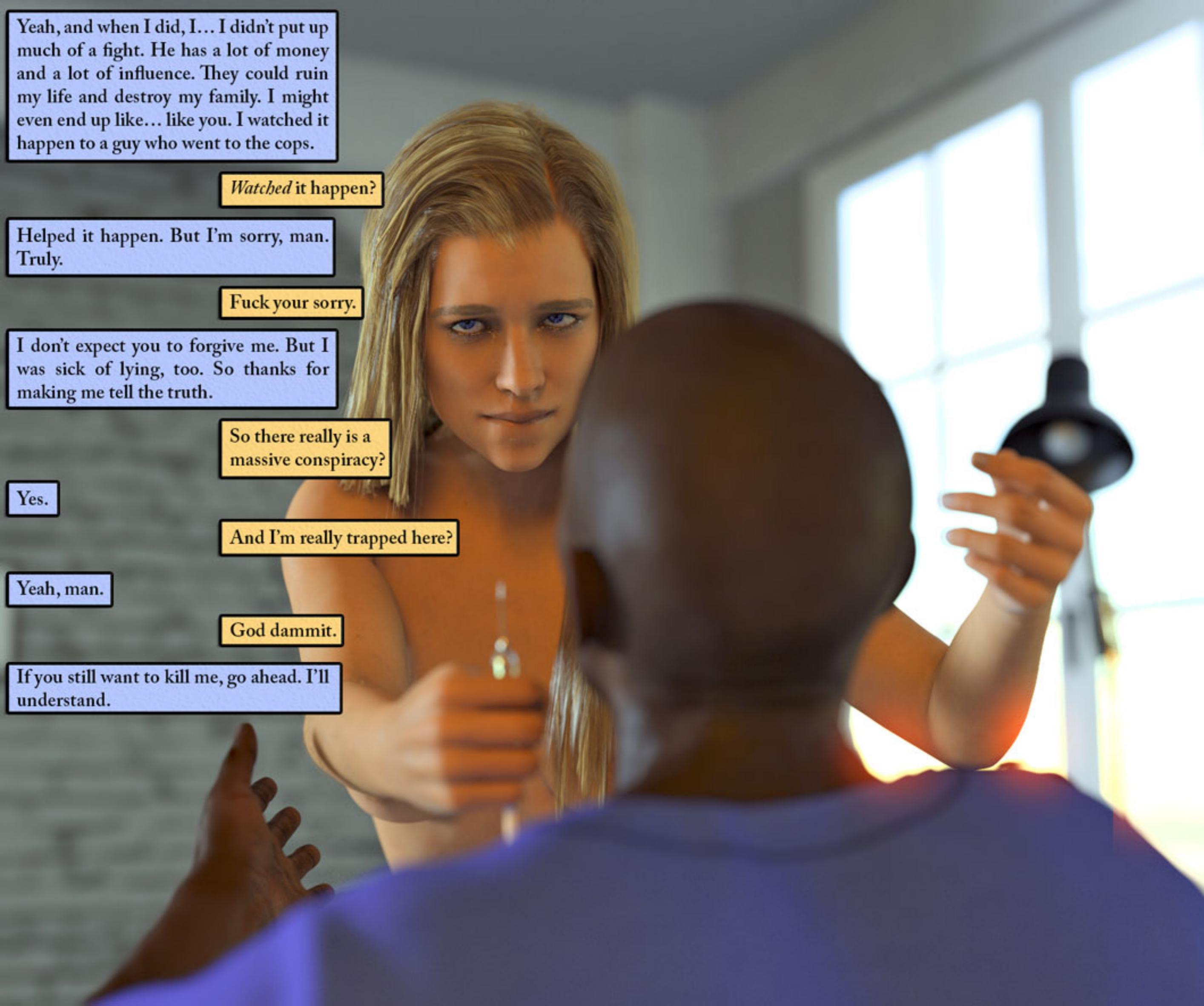
Mr. Xu found me working for peanuts at the University of Chicago. He'd read a research paper I authored about a revolutionary hormone treatment for transgender people. See, I had a friend who transitioned and the hormones screwed up his—her—liver pretty badly. I knew there had to be a safer way, and after a few years, I found one. Hormones tailor-made based on the patient's genetics, targeting specific genes for breast growth, fat redistribution, and so on. Better yet? They accomplished in a year what typical hormones did in two or three.

So you're the reason my body could give a dead man a hard-on.

Yes, I'm the reason. Mr. Xu offered me an absurd amount of money for a five-year contract. I didn't ask a lot of questions. I assumed his foundation was to help transgender people. But in my heart, I knew it was too good to be true. There isn't a non-profit on Earth that pays what he was offering. But I swear to God, I didn't know they did this to unwilling guys.

But you found out soon enough.





Yeah, and when I did, I... I didn't put up much of a fight. He has a lot of money and a lot of influence. They could ruin my life and destroy my family. I might even end up like... like you. I watched it happen to a guy who went to the cops.

Watched it happen?

Helped it happen. But I'm sorry, man. Truly.

Fuck your sorry.

I don't expect you to forgive me. But I was sick of lying, too. So thanks for making me tell the truth.

So there really is a massive conspiracy?

Yes.

And I'm really trapped here?

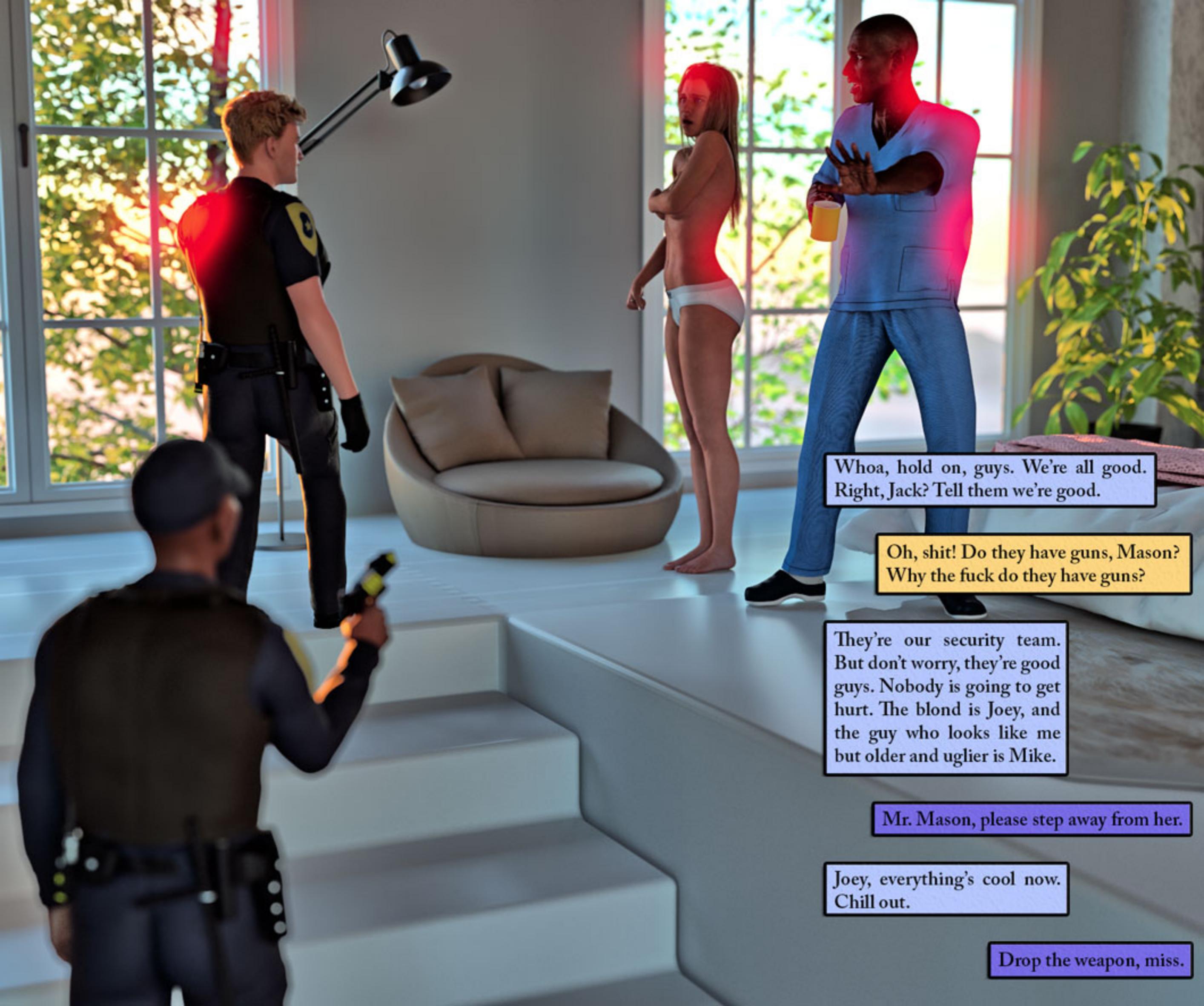
Yeah, man.

God dammit.

If you still want to kill me, go ahead. I'll understand.



Mr. Mason, stay calm!





Guys, you know Mr. Xu has a special interest in this one—

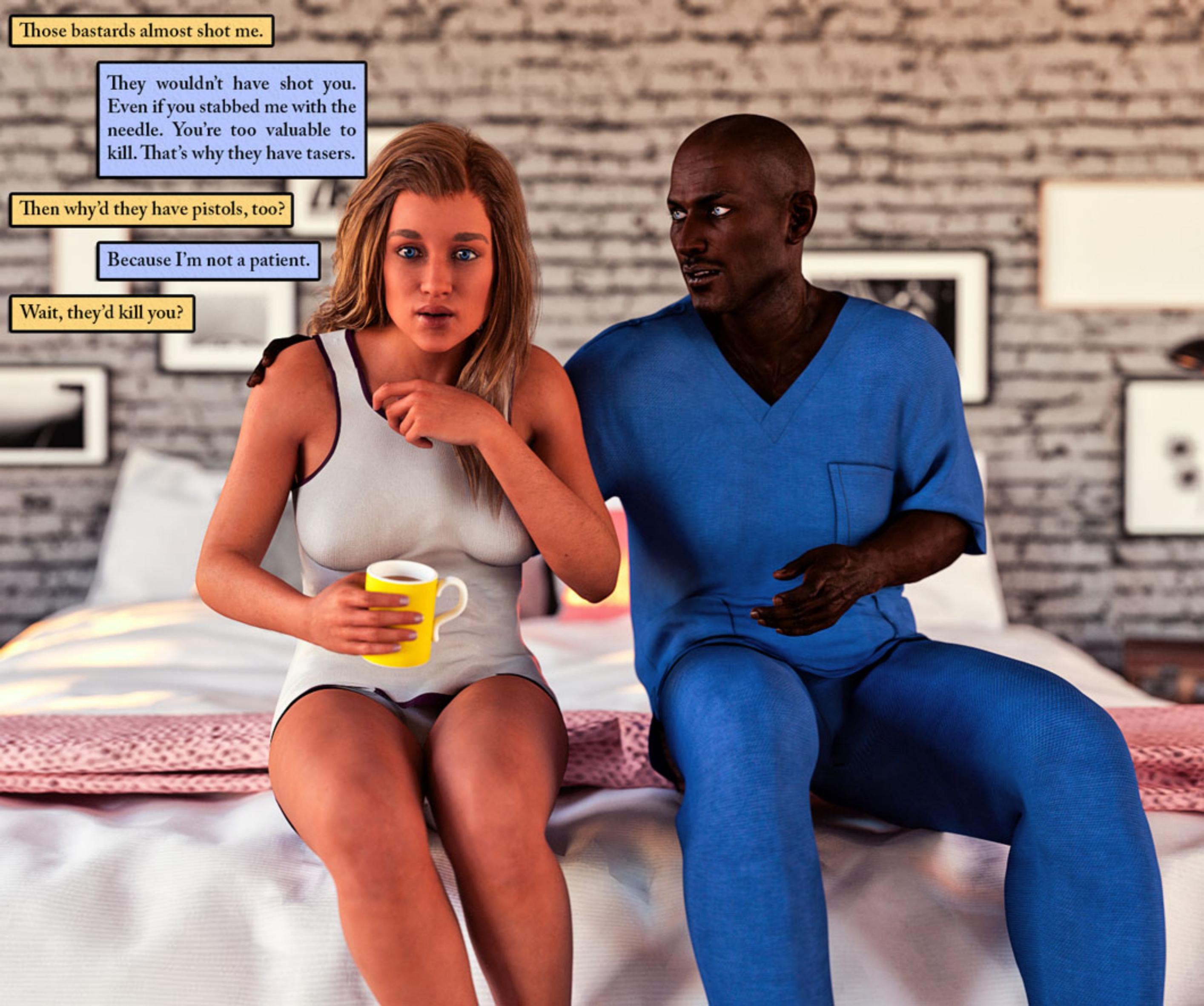
Drop the fucking weapon or I will shock you.

What weapon? I don't—

Now, dammit!

The syringe, Jack.





Those bastards almost shot me.

They wouldn't have shot you. Even if you stabbed me with the needle. You're too valuable to kill. That's why they have tasers.

Then why'd they have pistols, too?

Because I'm not a patient.

Wait, they'd kill you?



If I tried to leave before my contract was up? Maybe. I've proven my worth to Mr. Xu, but I've never disrespected him. Holly's father did that, and he's dead now and she's... well, she's Holly now.

So what happens to me now?

Hopefully nothing. Things will go on like before.

Except... No more lies, man. Please. You're the only friend I have anymore. Hell, you might be my first real friend I've ever had.



No more lies. Listen, I have to go check in. File a report about what happened. I'll talk to Mr. Xu and try to get him to okay an outing.

There's no way they'll let me leave my room after all that drama.

You've been cooped up inside too long. That's why you snapped.

I mean... I guess that's partly why.

Sit tight. I'll be back in a couple hours.





Wow.

Man, I can't tell you how good it feels just to see a hoop.

I'm glad. Usually the gym's reserved for the staff, but I got special permission.

How long can we play?

Long enough for me to kick your ass.

In your fucking dreams. I don't care what kind of crazy sci-fi hormones you pump into my body. I'm still a baller.





Usually the guys who call themselves
ballers can't even dribble.

I can dribble circles around
you. Even in these tiny
fucking shorts. I hate them.



Why? They really show off your legs.

Oh, okay, I see how it's gonna be. We're trash talking. Fine. Let's play, dickhead.





That's two!



I'm impressed. You're fast. But
you're forgetting something.

Yeah? What?





Speed is no match for power!

Denied.





Shit. I gotta weigh like thirty pounds less than I did a year ago, and I still can't jump as high as I could before.



And when I do jump, my boobs bounce around like crazy. It's really distracting! And they hurt, too. No wonder girls wear sports bras.

A basketball player in a blue jersey with the number 1 is on the left, facing right. A woman in an orange jersey with the letter A is on the right, holding a basketball. They are on an indoor basketball court.

What about you, Mason?

Huh?

Well, if they're distracting me, it must be even worse for you.

Uh, well... Uh... We could
get you a sports bra—



Hey!



I'm not even mad.

Hey, I'm just playing the hand you dealt me.

I still win.

But did you really?

All right, let's head to the locker room. We gotta get back.

Can we get a rematch soon? Or are you too afraid now that I've found your weakness?

No way. But next time I'm going to insist on that sports bra.

Yeah, maybe I'll actually fucking wear one. I wasn't kidding about my boobs hurting.





Dammit. I need to shave my legs again. You know, I hate to say it, but I actually kinda like the way they feel all smooth.

Nothing wrong with that. Cyclists and swimmers shave their legs.



I'm gonna hit the shower.

Me too in a sec. I'm a sweaty mess.

Cool.

Hey, Mason?

Yeah?

Thanks again, man. Not for helping change my body—you're still an asshole for that—but for helping me keep my sanity, feel a little normal in the middle of this crazy place.

Hey, that's what friends are for, right? To make us feel normal—especially when we're not.





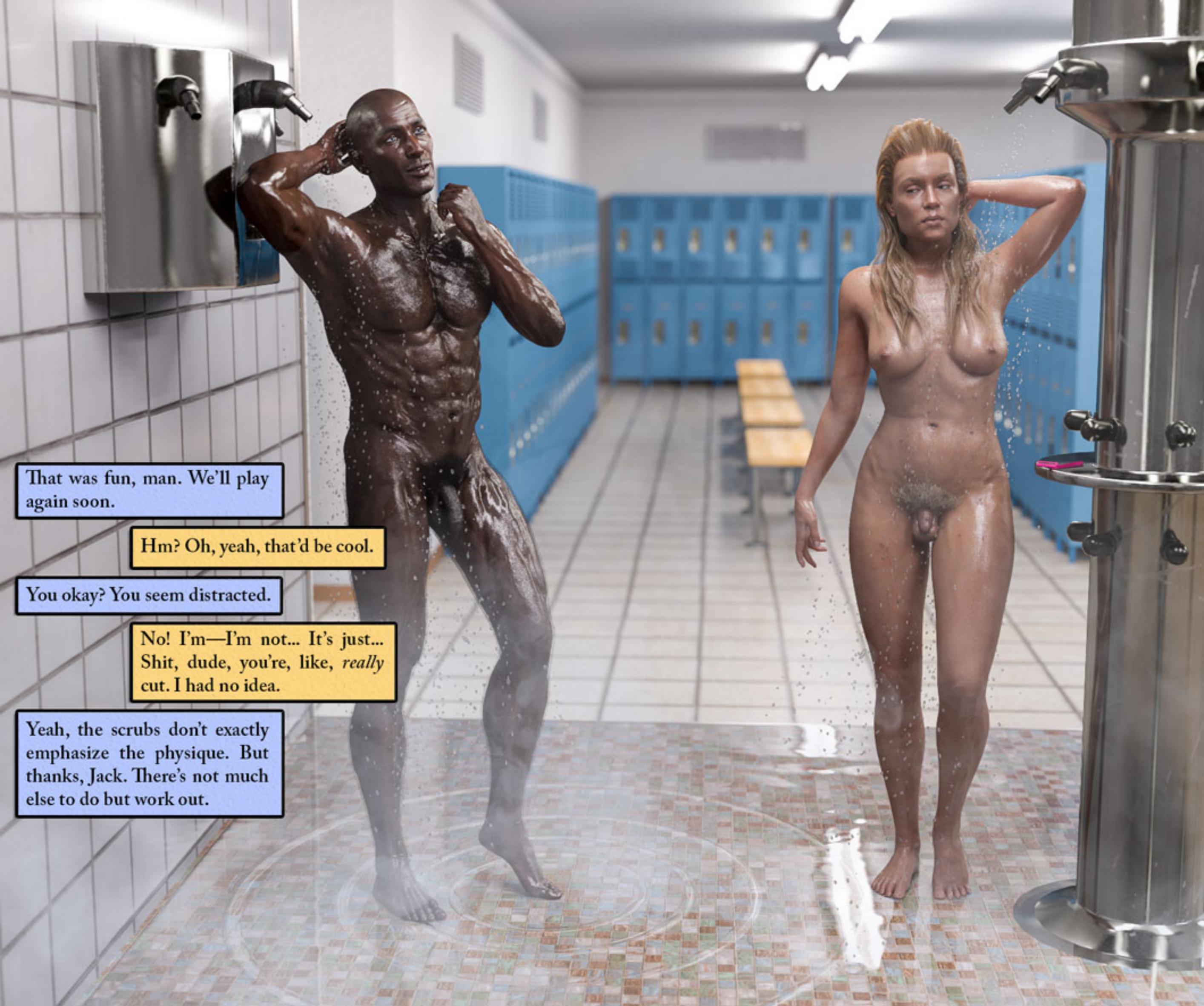




You getting in the shower, or what? We don't have forever.

Y-Yeah. Sorry. Just a minute.



A 3D rendered scene in a locker room. A muscular Black man is on the left, shirtless, standing under a shower head. He is looking towards the right. A woman with long blonde hair is on the right, also shirtless, standing under a shower head. She is looking towards the left. They are standing on a tiled floor. In the background, there are blue lockers and a swimming pool. The lighting is bright, typical of an indoor sports facility.

That was fun, man. We'll play again soon.

Hm? Oh, yeah, that'd be cool.

You okay? You seem distracted.

No! I'm—I'm not... It's just... Shit, dude, you're, like, *really* cut. I had no idea.

Yeah, the scrubs don't exactly emphasize the physique. But thanks, Jack. There's not much else to do but work out.



You'll have to give
me some pointers.

I'm not sure how much
they'd help, honestly.

Oh, right. Yeah. Okay... Um...
Damn, I'm starving. I'll wash
up quick, give me a second.

Don't forget to shave.

Yeah, yeah, I know.



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I'm way, way too
good at this now.

Just another minute. God, I
love showers, don't you?





Not as much as you
seem to, honestly.

Sorry. The water feels
incredible. I never used to
enjoy showers this way.



I bet. Estrogen changes the skin dramatically. Makes it thinner, softer, and way more sensitive.

I used to take five minute showers. Can you believe that? Now I know why women luxuriate.



That's all right. Take all the time
you want. No need to rush.

You sure?



Yeah. You're right. We should enjoy this while we can.

A close-up photograph of a person's face, focusing on the nose, mouth, and chin. The person has dark skin and is wearing shiny, reddish-pink lips. A speech bubble is positioned in the lower right area of the frame, containing the text "Cool. I promise I won't be—Hey!"

Cool. I promise I won't be—Hey!



What the fuck!? *Dude!* Why the hell do you have a giant goddamn erection right now?



Jesus, I'm sorry, Jack. I just—

Oh—Oh my god! Looking at
me is turning you on! That's...
That's so... Fuck you, man!

It's not you! I mean, it *is* you but...
Shit, I'm sorry. I messed up.

Where the hell are you going?

Stay here, Jack. Get dressed.



I can't believe he ran away. And he
looked terrified. Is Mason gay?



Don't be an idiot, Jack. A gay man
wouldn't be turned on by this body.
Also, don't talk to yourself.



Goddammit! I hate these! I want to rip them the fuck off. Ow! Fuck!



I won't be a girl! Not ever! You hear me, motherfuckers? You already lost!



You... you already lost...



Do we have eyes on Dr. Mason?

Yes, sir. He's on the trail back to the main building.

Detain him.

CAMERA S-22

Sir?

That wasn't part of the script.
He's been compromised.

Oh, shit.

You got that right. Notify Mr. Xu.
I'll retrieve the patient. Joey,
you're with me.





Hm. You know, you actually
look kinda pretty when
you're confused.

But hey, I'm a sucker for dumb blondes.

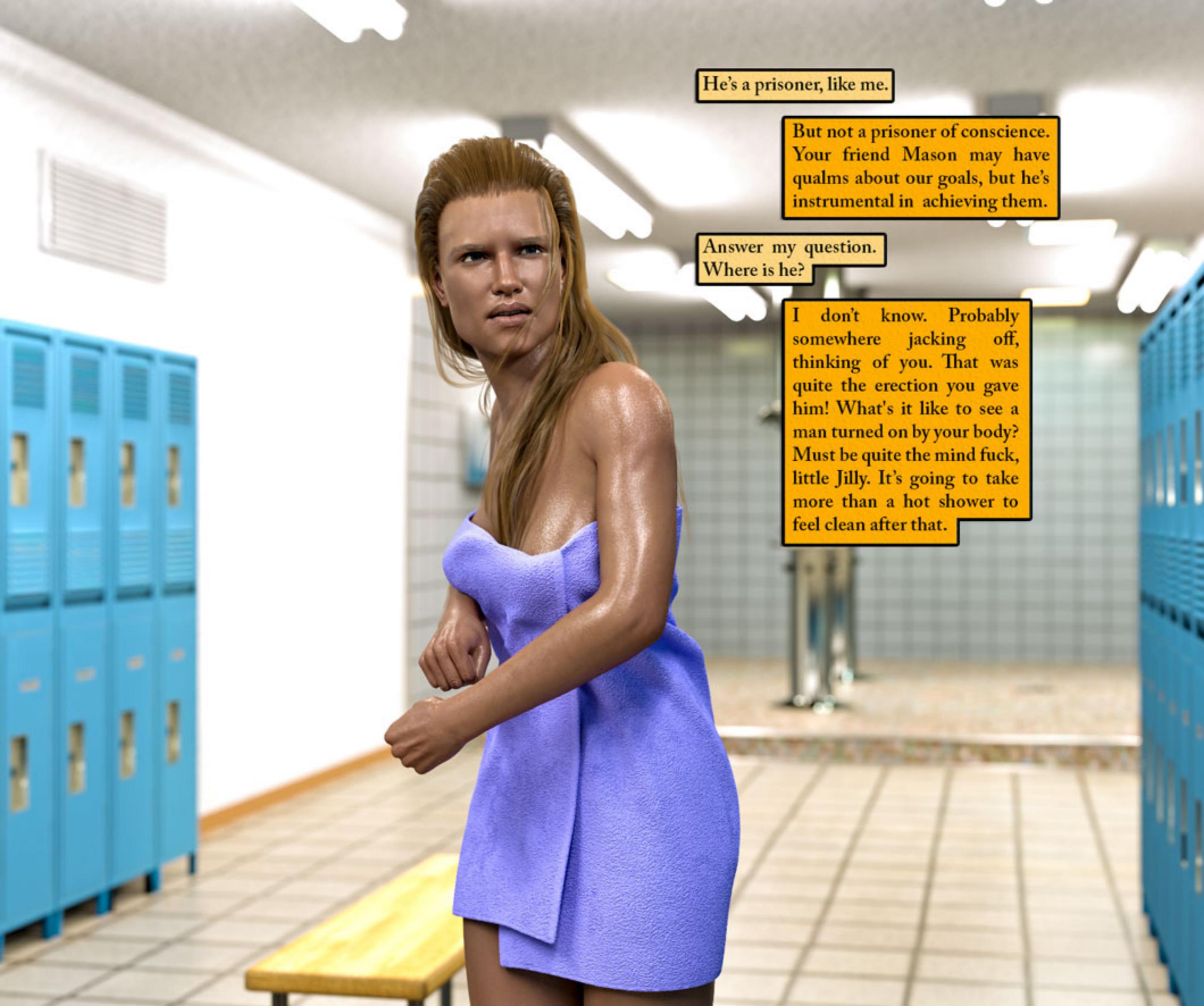
Davis. What the hell do you want?

You remembered my name. I'm flattered.

Don't be. It's hard to forget being felt up by a fat, sweaty bastard like you. Where's Mason?

Why are you concerned for the man responsible for reshaping your body into a teenager's wet dream? You should hate him even more than you hate me.



A 3D rendered image of a woman with long, straight, light brown hair. She is wearing a purple, textured, wrap-style towel. She is standing in a locker room with blue lockers on the left and right. The floor is made of light-colored tiles. In the background, there are white lockers and a yellow bench. She is looking towards the right of the frame with a serious expression. A yellow speech bubble is positioned to her right.

He's a prisoner, like me.

But not a prisoner of conscience. Your friend Mason may have qualms about our goals, but he's instrumental in achieving them.

Answer my question.
Where is he?

I don't know. Probably somewhere jacking off, thinking of you. That was quite the erection you gave him! What's it like to see a man turned on by your body? Must be quite the mind fuck, little Jilly. It's going to take more than a hot shower to feel clean after that.



Screw you. And what's with the suit?
If you're trying to impress someone
you should've gotten one that fits.

Actually, I got a promotion.

To what? Head Asshole?

No. But the Head Asshole
wants to meet you.



Mr. Xu?

Look at that, Joey. A killer body *and* brains. She'll be beating the boys away with a stick.





So this is Xu's house?

This is one of Mr. Xu's houses, yes.

Kind of tacky if you ask me.

It's a French villa. And I don't mean it's in the same style. This is an *actual* French villa.

But we're not in France. Are we?

Don't be stupid. No, Mr. Xu transported the entire house across the ocean brick by brick, then had it reassembled here. He spared no expense.



Mr. Xu likes to take things apart and put them back together again. Like you, I guess.



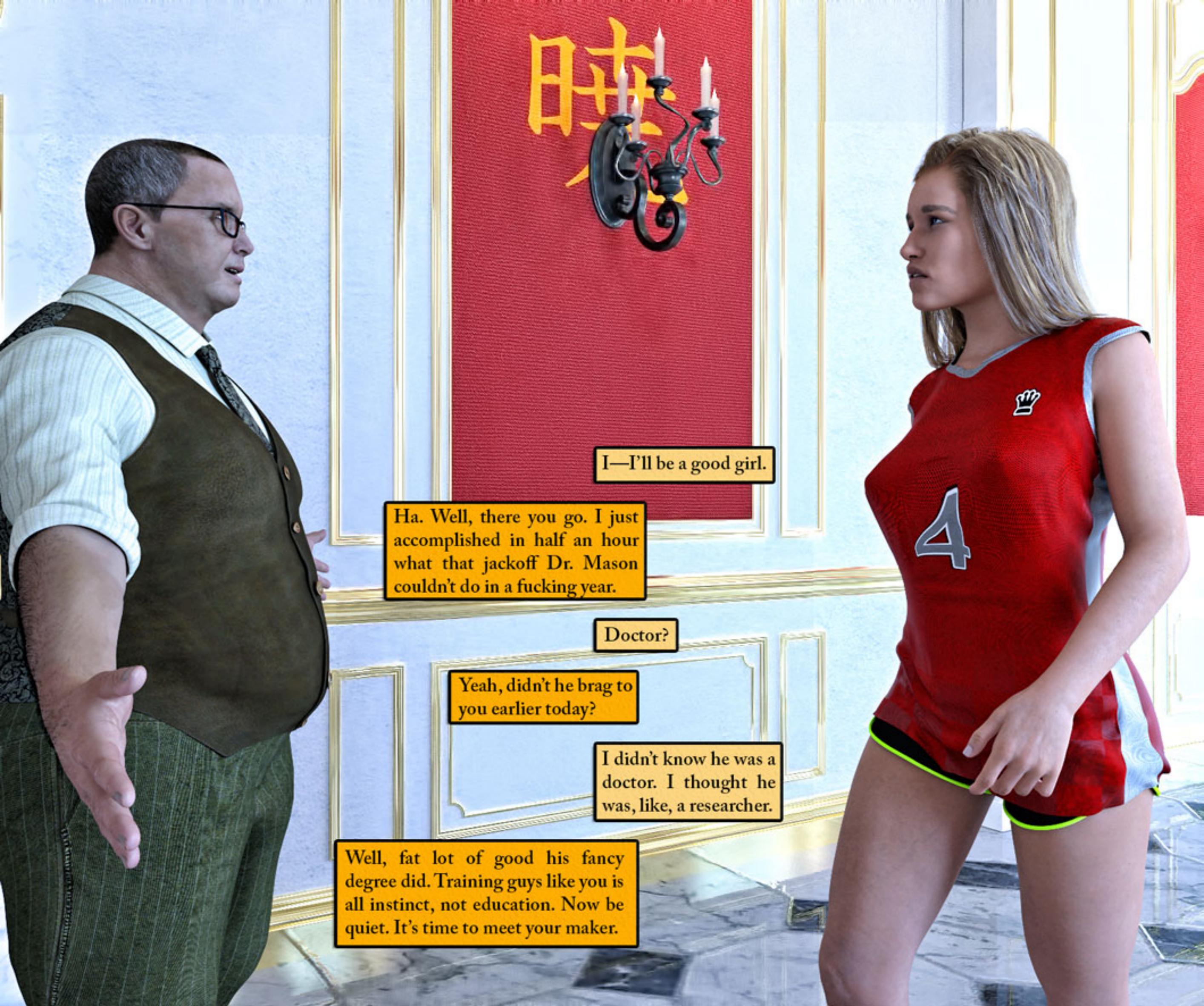
This is his office. He's eager to meet you, and you're gonna be a good girl for him. Understand?

Yes, I understand.

Well, shit. I'm disappointed. I expected at least a hearty "fuck you."

I'm not in the mood.

That's too bad. All right, then say it out loud. Say you'll be a good girl.



I—I'll be a good girl.

Ha. Well, there you go. I just accomplished in half an hour what that jackoff Dr. Mason couldn't do in a fucking year.

Doctor?

Yeah, didn't he brag to you earlier today?

I didn't know he was a doctor. I thought he was, like, a researcher.

Well, fat lot of good his fancy degree did. Training guys like you is all instinct, not education. Now be quiet. It's time to meet your maker.





Ah, excellent. I was beginning to worry.

Sorry for the delay, sir.

Nonsense. My anxiety sometimes gets the better of me. I start dreaming up all manner of unlikely scenarios. Anyway, I'm just happy you've arrived. Both of you!



Sir, I'm happy to present
Jack for your inspection.

Thank you, Mr. Davis.
Hello, Jack. It's a pleasure
to make your acquaintance.
I understand if the feeling
isn't mutual. This is a
confusing time for you.

I'm not confused,
I'm pissed off... sir.

I see. Would you please step
closer? I don't like to shout.

Do it. Now.



Thank you. Now, of course I know why you're angry. You're undergoing a medical transition into a woman. That'd be distressing for any man.

It's fucking worse than distressing.

Please don't cuss. Anger is a useless emotion. Curiosity, however, is not. Our meeting today will be disappointingly short, but if you have any questions, I'm an open book.

Why—

Why am I doing this? And why did we choose you? That's always the first question, or some version of it.



The truth is we didn't choose you. The patrons did. I had my eye on someone else. A redhead. Luckily, another patron also saw his potential and commissioned his transformation. He's undergoing treatment at another facility.

Are you talking about that skinny nerd I met at the fake audition? Liam?

I'm surprised you remember his name.

It's a weird name. But he was a nice dude.

Yet you made fun of him. And you were even worse to Vincent because he was obese.

I—Yeah, I was kind of an asshole. But I thought it was a competition.

It was. Just not for what you thought.



Frankly, you were an ideal candidate due to your genetics, but I never believed you deserved this.

Damn right I don't—
Don't touch me!

Lower that hand *right now*
unless you want me to break it!

It's all right, Mr. Davis.
Jack isn't accustomed to male attention. Not yet.



You misunderstand me. The reason you don't deserve this is because you are not a good man. The Second Dawn program isn't a punishment, it's a gift.

Well, I'd like to return it, please.

Cheeky. Second Dawn is exactly what the name implies. A new chance at life. A reset button. We're striving to make you a better person.

I was fine before you people kidnapped me.

Stop lying to yourself. It's unbecoming, and it's weak. That's not who you have to be anymore.

So the rich crazies who finance this—they're just good samaritans? Give me a break.

There's no such thing, in my experience. No, they are *enjoying* your transformation. But they're a means to an end.

What end?



Ultimately? For you leave transformed in body, heart, and mind.

Leave? I'll be let go?

If you complete the program to my satisfaction. Consider the young woman you met last month.

Holly.

Yes. She's in Portugal for the next two weeks, much to my chagrin. Mr. Davis, who approved that, anyway?

You did, sir.

Hmph. See, not all the decisions I make are good.

You don't think I'd run straight to the FBI?

We have contingencies for something like that. But by the time you're released, you'll know I was right.



You called for me, Jian?

Yes, Dr. Hatcher. Thank you for coming. How did the surgery go?



He's still sedated, but it went without a hitch. But guess what? I discovered he had testicular cancer. The castration probably saved his life. Is this Jack?

In the flesh.

Cool. I've been itchin' to meet you, honey. I'm, like, *in love* with your bone structure. You have a good, strong foundation for what'll become a gorgeous face. Are you excited? I bet you're excited.

What the f— I mean, what are you talking about?

You didn't tell her?

I didn't want to spoil the surprise.

I'm a plastic surgeon, sweetie. I'm going to make you beautiful. Not that you aren't already! But I mean, like, agonizingly beautiful.



No way! I'm not— You can't do that!
I'll never... I won't be able to...

Go back to how you were?
Who you were? That's the
point entirely.



This is fucking insanity!

I asked you not to curse. I won't ask again.

Shut up! Where's Mason?
I want to talk to him.

Dr. Mason can't help you.
He never could.



Dr. Mason is not your friend, Jack. He has *never* been your friend. Everything you've experienced has been orchestrated according to my design. Dr. Mason has merely been playing the part I assigned to him.

That's... That's not true.

I suppose you're right. We didn't predict your outburst this morning. He told you the truth, for the most part. I should've realized right then something was deeply wrong. I blame myself.

Where is he?

He's been reassigned. He's a good employee, and he's done an amazing job with your physical transformation. However, your progress lags behind in other areas. For instance, your psychological profile remains largely unchanged. Also, and most importantly, Dr. Mason is no longer able to hide his growing sexual attraction to you. This hasn't been a problem with other patients. Frankly, I don't see the appeal, but it's not for me to judge.

What will happen to him now?



That depends largely on you. If you continue to make trouble, his failure to control you will have ended up costing me a great deal of time, money, and, worst of all, reputation. An example will have to be made.

So if I don't go along with your plans, you'll kill him?

Perhaps. Although I'm usually more creative than that.

Mason is part of why I look like I belong in Playboy. What makes you think I care what you do to him?

Let's not kid each other, Jack. You just do.



The surgery will happen no matter what. Your choice to be compliant will only determine whether you wake up in your bed or in the basement. And, of course, what happens to the eminent Dr. Mason.

So what? I'm supposed to go with this jackass and let Miss Purple Hair carve up my body?

Only your face, babe. Let's not get ahead of ourselves.



I don't think you'd really hurt him. He's too valuable. But I can't take that risk. I'll be good.

I'm happy to hear that, Jack. You made the smart choice. However, we'll still need to handcuff you for the walk to the surgery wing.





Let me teach you!

Hey!





Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit...



Catch her, Joey! Or he'll take your balls next.





On your knees!

Please, man!

Last warning!

No! Don't let them—





Ah! Oooooh fuuuuuck!



This is unfortunate.
And it was avoidable.

I should've been able
to stop her at the
door, sir. I'm sorry.

I mean the entire
incident. Once Jack
recovers from surgery
he'll require a great
deal of guidance
before he's ready for
the next phase.

I can do it, sir.

No, you can't. He hates you
too much. But I think I
know someone who can.

If you say so, sir.

Dr. Hatcher, I believe
you had some ideas
for Jack's new face?

Yes! Should I email them to you?

Actually, send them out to
the Platinum Star members.
I imagine they'd love to have
a say in the face Jill will see in
the mirror when the
bandages come off.