

Friendly Strangers

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By Sunday, Debra has returned to her real life. Her weekend with me had only been a brief game. I stand alone in my kitchen, drinking coffee and watching the city through my window. The wet Virginia heat is auditioning for a lead role in hell today. Perhaps it's time visit the north. I could go to New York and see about the will and visit my brother and his family while I'm at it. I mull over the details of my trip while I finish my coffee and have a bowl of Lucky Charms. I pay my pull-up bar a lengthy work-out in preparation for being gone a week before showering and then head off to the studio to collect the photos Mariska took and pack them in my bag. By noon, I'm early for a train to New York out of Union Station. Once I have my bags stowed, I make for the smoking car in search of a much needed cigarette. The car is at the back of the train like a punishment for the wicked traveler. A pile of smoke hovers just above the door, determined not to go anywhere. I've always been told that cigarettes will kill me, but nothing quite gets the point across that you're just a quietly boiling cancer stew than the dank, awful air of the Smoking Lounge. A small gaggle of well-to-do's dominates the nearest corner. I pass through their toxic air, catching nasty looks from the babblers, and find a seat across from an anxious brunette. The brunette has the young, hungry look of a brand new adult lapping up freedom and desperate for anything that will end her boredom. Her hair is in a ponytail with long, straight strands framing her face. She has enormous hazel eyes and thin, delicate features. Her skirt is made of denim and short, paired with a low-cut white blouse showing off her cleavage and black high heels – possibly ovulating. She watches me sit before her eagerly. I ask her for a light despite the fresh pack of matches in my pocket. “I hate that, don't you?” I ask her. “When a stranger asks you for a light?” I point my cigarette at the group near the doorway. “When an obnoxious group of people makes you feel like you're interrupting their public space.” “Bastards, they are.” I raise a brow at her. “You old enough to be smoking?” “I'm old enough to be drinking.” She leans forward in her seat, and then back, and then forward. The only explanation I can come to for this is that she's using the rough cushion on the chair to masturbate publicly. I'm okay with this. Very okay. “How old are you ?” she says. “22.” “I'm older than you.” “God. Do I look as stupidly young to other people?” “Stupidly?” “I mean....” “Well, you're looking pretty stupid right now. And I was starting to like you.” “Goddamnit.” “Are you a virgin?” “A what?” “You know.... someone who hasn't-” “No, I know what... never mind. But, no. What kind of question is that?” “Just curious.” “Are you ?” With that, she checks her phone and places it between her thighs. Clearly in heat. “So,” I say. “Are you going back home, or away?” “Back. You?” “Away.” “Business or pleasure?” “Business, I guess.” “You guess?” “It's a long story.”

“ Aw. And I'm almost done with my cigarette.” “ Woe is me. So, what brought you to DC?” “ It's a long story.” “ Touché, little miss. Well now I've run out of things to talk about.” “ That was fast.” “ I swear this never happens.” “ Well,” she says, dabbing her smoke out in the ashtray. “ Maybe every once in a while, it's okay if it does.” “ I've never heard anyone say that, ever.” “ Just in certain cases...” She winks at me and walks away. I throw my half-smoked cigarette in the tray and rush after her. She's already out the door by the time I get up, and wiggling past other passengers in the thin aisle of the next car. She casts a look over her shoulder – they always expect us to follow . I dodge a small family with unreasonably-sized suitcases and run to catch up. And, of course we do. She stops in the doorway of a handicap bathroom just long enough for me to catch up, then slips in. I sneak a peak in, without entering – just in case. She watches me in the mirror as she reapplies her lipstick and fixes her bra. “ I promise to bite you if you come in,” she says. “ I'm not sure if that's an invitation or a threat.” “ Depends on if you want to be bit.” “ The question is where.” She scowls. “ I would never damage anything so valuable.” I join her inside and lock the door. Luckily, I'm the kind of guy who always carries a spare condom in his pocket. She smiles. “ This bathroom is now officially occupied. Now, if only I could join the club...” I pull her to me and kiss her hard. “ You sound way too horny for your own good.” “ It's sure to get me into lots of trouble.” “ Only if you're naughty.” “ Very naughty.” I pull her skirt up in the back and smack her ass. She gives a short yelp in surprise. “ I've been much naughtier than that.” I spank her again, harder. She gasps and clings to my shoulders. I grab her jaw tight and whisper in her ear. “ You need a good fucking.” “ You have no idea.” She stares up at me with big, deceptively innocent eyes. I feel under her skirt and massage her pussy through her thong. I can tell she's already soaking wet. She tilts her head back and moans. She puts her hand over mine and presses my fingers into her folds. I kiss her neck and work my way down to her breasts with my tongue. I push them together and lick the crack between them. She puts more pressure on my hand, urging me to delve into her slit through the thin fabric. She pulls me tighter, leaning against the sink, eyes closed, taking in the sensation. My fingering makes wet lapping sounds that fill the small space. I rub my hard cock against her skirt up and down, mimicking what's to ensue. She reaches into my pants and strokes me. Her fingers are soft and cool on my skin. She whispers to me as she undoes the button on my jeans, “ Do you want to use me? Fuck me and then leave without a backward glance?” “ Do you want to be used?” She bites my neck hard. My nerves are conflicted by the simultaneous pain and pleasure, but something inside my more sexually deviant side screams for more. “ I want you to fuck me,” she says. I drag her panties down to her ankles and prop her up on the counter. She kicks them off onto the floor and wraps her legs around me. I fish the condom out of my back pocket before unzipping and pulling my pants down. I kiss her as I tear open the wrapper and she plays with my naked dick. I lean against the counter for a minute, letting her caress me. When I've had my fill of her hand, I put the condom on and push her thighs further apart. She rubs her clit as I find her opening and penetrate her. I hold her close and stuff it in easily. She digs her nails into my back as I fuck her hard. I pull her hair and whisper in her ear. “ Is this what you needed? A nice big dick in your cunt?” “ Yes. God, yes.” “ You little slut. Fucking a complete stranger in the bathroom of a train.” “ I am. I'm a little slut,” she breathes. I'm intoxicated by our little game and

tighten my grip on her hair. Her pussy contracts around me in response. "Are you about to come?" I ask. "Almost." "Beg me to fuck you harder so you can orgasm." "Please," she says, her voice hoarse and ragged. "Harder. Much harder." I pound her relentlessly with sick, sadistic zeal until her insides spasm and close all around me. "Oh god," she cries, loud enough for anyone passing by in the hall to hear. She drags her nails across my back and bucks her hips in time with her orgasm. "Fuck yeah." I don't let up, even as she comes. I bite her neck and continue to work her pussy. I stare at our reflection, at her shaking body as I rock in and out of her. I lift her up off the counter so I can watch as my dick penetrates her again and again. Her juices slick my penis and glint in the light. When her contractions die down, I nibble on her ear. "Now you're just a little fuck toy," I say. "Mine to use until I'm finished. She kisses me, letting her tongue wander into my mouth. "Just a little instrument for your own pleasure," she says. I pull her off the counter and spin her around. I bend her over the sink and pull her shirt down, letting her breasts spill out. I study them carefully in the mirror like they'll be on an exam tomorrow. I rub each of her nipples roughly, inspiring them to rise into hard knobs. I put my feet between her and spread her legs. I push her skirt up around her waist, exposing her bare ass to the air. I aim my dick carefully at her slit. I get a good grip on her shoulders, holding her tight then slam into her as hard as I can. She screams, her eyes wide and shocked in the reflection. "Like that?" I ask. She nods wordlessly, her mouth still agape. I thrust inside of her again and again, each blow fast and powerful. She moans and lays flat against the counter. "Oh god, yes," she whispers. Her breath comes in short, high-pitched gasps each time I enter her. I pull her hair back, forcing her head off the counter. "Look at yourself," I say. "Look at yourself get fucked from behind." She does as I command, her eyes drifting down to the reflection of where our hips meet. She bites her lip as she watches. I stand up straight and let one hand rest by my side while the other clutches a fistful of her hair. I ride her hard, shaking her whole body and causing her forehead to bump into the mirror every once in a while. Outside, I can hear the train's engines warming up. The car begins to rumble, adding a strange sensation to the friction already happening. The ground lurches as the train starts forward – which is incidentally backwards for us. "See," she says. "That's why I said sometimes it's good to be fast." I lean into her, supporting myself with a hand on either side of her body. "Nah. I like it." I pull out to my head and let the train's motion ease me back in. I rest all my weight on her back and relax as we're rocked back and forth. It's not the same thrilling sensation, but it's pleasant and warm. She arches her back and presses her ass against me. "Oh right." I give her a few slow, languid strokes before surprising her with a solid pounding. She gasps, closing her eyes. She getting tighter and I think she's getting close to orgasming a second time. I grab her hips and hammer her. Her pussy makes slopping sounds as my dick penetrates her faster and faster. I pull her hair again and thrust in and out harder. "Are you ready for me to come in you, little toy?" "Yes!" "Has your pussy had enough?" "Yes, it has. Please." I yank her hair to the side and kiss her lips. "Are you sure I shouldn't pound it a few more times? Make sure it's good and sore so that every time you sit down, you'll remember what a slut you are?" "Whatever you want." I grip her shoulders and watch her expressions in the mirror as I ram her again and again. I bite her neck and punish her pussy until I'm coming. I close my eyes and rest my forehead on her back, letting the waves of thrill

wash over my nerves again and again. I kiss her shoulder and look up at her. She looks back and we both laugh for no damn reason in particular. I pull out and throw the condom in the toilet. She fixes her skirt and bra, then pulls out a slip of paper and writes her number on it. She hands it to me with a smile. "Just in case you need any friends in New York." I take it and kiss her hand. One can never have too many friends. She stoops to pick up her thong and step back into it. She's almost out the door when I call to her. "Hey. What's your name?" "April," she says, and then is gone. - - - When I get off the train in New York, I head straight for the office of Mariska's lawyer. He left me a message about the will while I was in transit and is waiting for me. I don't know how I feel about this city. Everything is too busy, too tedious. There's no room to breath. The buildings are crammed right on top of each other and block out the sun. Everywhere I look, there's cold steel and pitted cement slabs – like we're all in some cosmic cage. When I get to the lawyer's office, he's busy with another client and says he'll be right out. I step outside for a smoke and sit on his steps. A single monstrous black ant crawls at my feet. I stomp on him without a thought and light up. When I look down, the ant is still alive – writhing and twisting on the ground, missing half his legs. I stomp on him again, but it seems to do no good. The broken ant flails and drags itself around in ragged circles. As I go to step on him again, he makes a desperate move to crawl out of my shadow. I feel like I've walked into a demented Pixar film: It's a Bug's Life – Guantanamo Bay version. It baffles me how people can kill other people. I feel guilty smashing ants. The door opens and a large, disagreeable-looking man haves past me. I look up and the lawyer is standing on the top step in a gray suit. He extends a hand to me as I get up. "Michael, right?" "Yes." I return the handshake, holding my smoking cigarette away from his air. "Nathan," he says. "Come on in." I toss my cigarette into the endless trail of butts at the street's edge and follow him through dark oak chambers to his extravagant office. "I have your papers out already," he says. "Coffee?" "No thanks. That was kind of you." "Well," he says, taking a seat behind his desk. "The po-po were here earlier. They were asking about you." "Me, specifically?" "You, the will, Mariska... They wanted to know how involved you were." "I wasn't involved at all." "That's what I told them. Well, I told them that I didn't know of you having been involved." "Thanks. I think." He shrugs and slides the papers across the table to me. When I move to look, he pins them to the desk with a hand. "I don't like this." "Is it me?" "No. Well, yes. But not in the way you think." "So..." "How old are you?" "22." "A baby," he says. "Someone with their whole life ahead of them..." "Is there something wrong with the business, or are you afraid I'll ruin it?" "Look, I'm no detective, I just write up documents and read legal jargon, but here's something to think about: Mariska was dedicated - thoroughly dedicated - to her work. She didn't have a life outside of her business. The police just gave me her wallet to return to the family, so she wasn't mugged. No boyfriends in years. Very few friends and no siblings. This business was her life, and I'm wondering by how much coincidence it is that someone killed her." I nod, uncertain of what to say, or to think. "Thanks," I say dryly. I really would have liked to finish that cigarette now. "Do you think she knew? Or at least had a feeling? What with her changing the will and all..." "In hindsight – yes. She seemed very pre-occupied that day. I asked her if she was sick, but she said that she wasn't. I asked her if she was having any sort of trouble and she said that she wasn't." "She wasn't? Did she say who was?" "I didn't ask. It's not my place to

push things she doesn't want to talk about and I certainly didn't expect that she was in that big of trouble. I didn't know that she, or anyone else for that matter, was going to die. It seemed like stress at the time. Nerves. Sleep-deprivation. Too much caffeine..." " And you don't have any sort of idea who she could've been talking about?" " None whatsoever." I open my bag and pull out one of the dozens of pictures of the mysterious girl. "Do you recognize this girl?" He puts his spectacles on and takes the picture to look at it. "No. Why?" " It came from Mariska's last batch of film she left at the studio. Thursday." " Doesn't seem like her brand of photography." " It isn't." " Odd." " That's what I thought." He takes a second look at the picture. "Huh. No. I don't recognize her. I will tell you, though, Mariska did have quite a deal of extra cash in her wallet. Going through her accounts, there's no reason for her to have had that much money. Especially on her. You wouldn't happen to know where it came from, would you?" " No. And I can't imagine her doing anything that would lead to a lot of unaccounted for cash." He shakes his head and heaves a deep sigh. He leafs through the papers before pushing the to me. "Well then. Just a few things for you to sign." " Just like that?" " More or less. Oh. And Michael..." " Yes?" " The funeral will be on Tuesday." I nod, forgetting for the billionth time that Mariska is actually dead. Gone and never coming back. I still haven't adjusted to the notion that this Thursday, when we normally start our condensed work week, I'll be alone. I stare out the window at an ugly, pigeon-stained statue. "Thanks," I say.