

Indentured Servitude

by Jennifer Donnell

The sound of my cell phone jingling woke me. I took a moment to relish in the deliciousness of feeling wanted. Rays of morning sun shone through the blinds and onto my bare legs. I stretched my arms up and back, to rival any cat. I was his tigress, after-all. Maybe I wasn't waking up to him, but I was waking up to him thinking of me. Besides, we were cute together. At least that's what the coffee shop girl had told me, conspiratorially, when he was in the bathroom on our last lunch date.

I looked at the small white clock by my half open bedroom door. It read eight o'clock. He was probably already at work, drinking green tea sweetened with honey. How sweet he'd be to kiss, like that, I thought- forgetting that green tea is rather bitter. Reaching for my blackberry, I read the morning message. Just as I suspected, it was Cameron saying a simple, "good morning", in all lowercase letters. *Oh, well*, I didn't like him for his grammar skills any more than he liked me for my frequent typos. Our love affair, being relatively new, still had its packaging on and I craved the caramel at its center.

That is, *if* there *was* any caramel at its center. You know what I mean by caramel? The sticky sweet stuff, the moment you know you're in love and can't help but hear fictional birds sing. I wanted the damn musical birds, but only heard a crow outside my window. *Caw-Caw*, the noise came every morning and woke me when his messages didn't. As if in league with the crows, my roommate unlocked the front door and walked past my bedroom. We hardly ever spoke, so I didn't call out in greeting. I hoped he'd leave again, soon. True to this, I heard him clear his throat and spit into his bathroom sink, without washing it afterwards. He then exited the same door through which he'd come. Since he quit smoking, he was in a terrible mood and an even worse than normal roommate. He

drank green tea too, but I shuddered at the thought of his gravely beard and, likely, sour kiss.

My phone jingled, again. *What was I doing later, was I free,* Cameron's message asked. I felt my stomach drop to my feet and do a jig. I glanced down and reminded myself to paint my toenails. It was part of my plan to be perfect. I shrugged off my loosely arranged plans with a high school friend, Autumn, deciding it paled in importance to seeing Cameron. *Yes, I'm free,* I typed back and then added a 'wink'. It was a form of flirting I'd grown accustomed to. We were a modern day digital romance. Still, the old fashion part of me was relieved he'd asked. Too often, I was the one to initiate outings. Whenever he suggested meeting up, I felt my female ancestors flutter in my belly, as if saying: *It means he likes you, he really likes you.* I wanted to dance around my living room but restrained myself to a few high kicks, as I proceeded down the hallway. I had a feeling I was closer to the gooey stuff than I realized. I hoped he was closer too.

Besides, why wouldn't he love me? I smoothed my blonde bangs away from my forehead and surveyed myself, honestly, in the bathroom mirror. Sure, I had a blemish on my chin, the kind that always appeared right before my period, but nothing that makeup couldn't fix. I sucked in my cheeks, like a fish or a plastic surgery patient gone wrong. It was not a good look. I experimented puckering and pouting my lips. *That was better.* If he liked kissing me, he'd have to like my lips, right? I heard my phone ring again. It was Cameron, of course, wanting to know what I was wearing. I glanced down at my fuzzy pajama shorts and my pink tank top, then typed, *I'm wearing a white sundress with little strings tied at the shoulders, sheer white panties, and a lace push up bra.*

It sounded good, sexy, likable. The kind of outfit a girl he'd fall in love with would wear- if he was prone to love, that is. *Sounds super sexy,* he wrote back, and I all but kicked myself. Unfortunately, that outfit was at the bottom in a pile of laundry. It was going to be a

long morning and I wouldn't have time for the essay I was supposed to write. Worst of all, that particular dress was tight, almost too small. I walked into the kitchen and didn't even glance at the bag of relatively fresh bagels on the counter. I opted for almonds and coffee, black. He wrote again and talked about what he wanted to *do to me*, later. This time the tingle went straight up my spine and down both of my arms. Who wouldn't want to be in love? It felt amazing.

