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# 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Story by KK • Art by Fraylim



**CROSSED**

TV/CD

**FICTION**

**K . K .**

# ***12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS***

**Story by KK**

**Art by Fraylim**

**Cover by Fraylim and Joe Six-Pack**

**A Crossed Fiction story**



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# THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



It was Friday, and five o'clock — if not here in New York City, then *somewhere*, certainly — so Paul Hartridge had decided to call it a day. He closed his computer, poured himself a Scotch, then kicked back in his leather chair to survey the view from his brand new corner office. It would be an understatement to say that this past year had been very, very good year for him.

As an *enfant terrible* with a head for numbers, and quite the way with people, Paul had rapidly climbed the ranks at Midas Accounting. Despite a downturn for the company as a whole, he'd done particularly well for himself the past few quarters. His restructuring of the company's health plan had been one of the only things that had kept them in the black, and for that he had been well rewarded.

A new job title, new office, and a very old bottle of Scotch: three early Christmas presents Paul was very much enjoying. As he looked out over the snowy city, all lit up for the holiday season, he couldn't help but feel that he was looking out over his own personal kingdom. Yes, Paul Hartridge was on his way up. He could feel it in the air.

"Mr. Hartridge?" called a soft soprano voice. "I have a package for you, sir."

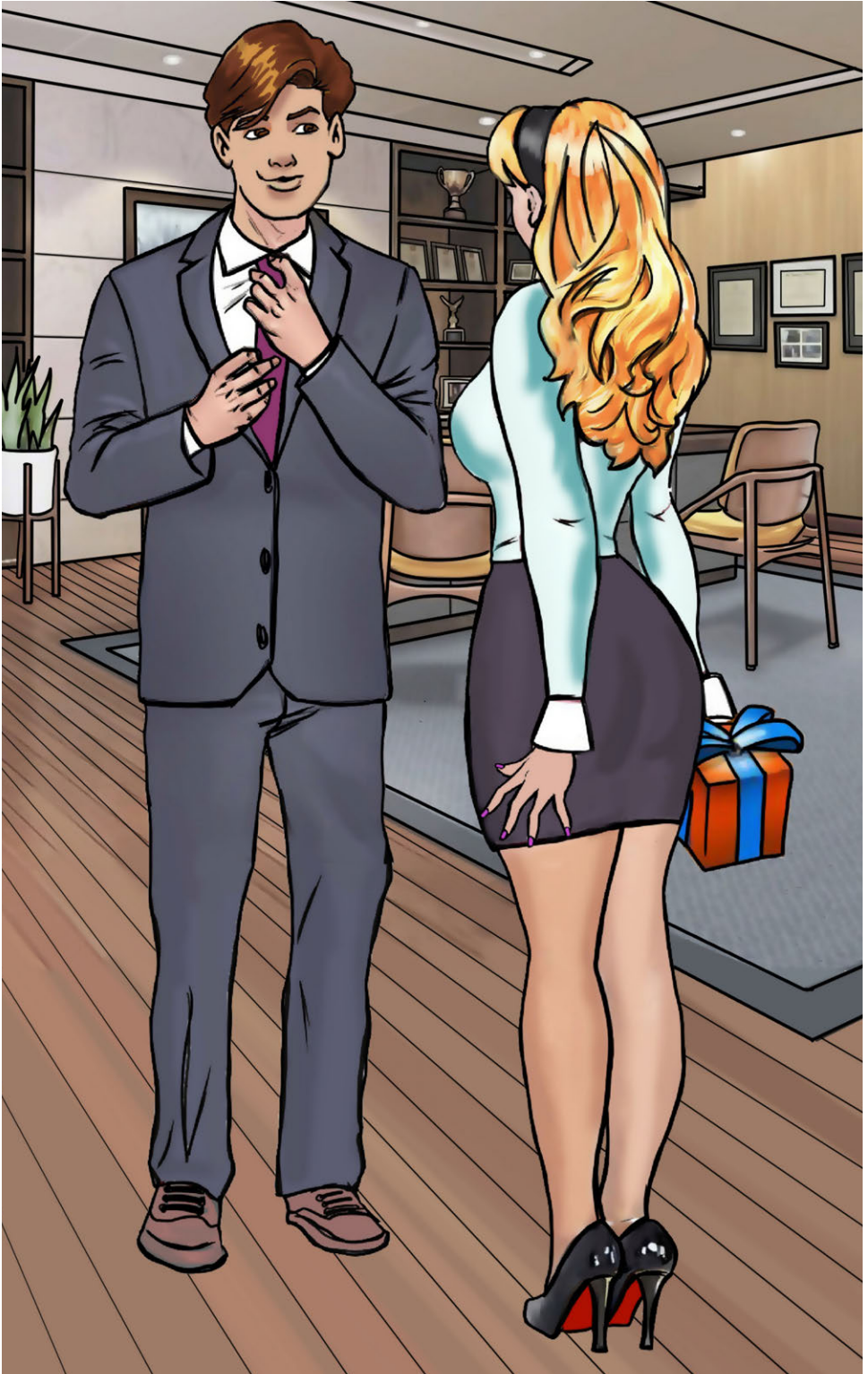
"And I've got one for you," Paul muttered to himself. "In my *pants*." He grinned at his own wit, then spoke more loudly. "Come on in!"

He made sure to swirl his drink in an extra suave and sophisticated way as Tabitha Potts, the company's secretary and requisite eye-candy, clicked her way inside. She was a bit of a ditz, but also a total fox, with bottle blonde hair and amazing legs that she was always showing off in short skirts and stilettos, and Paul had been trying to score with her ever since the day Midas Accounting hired him.

She'd rebuffed his early advances, but ever since his promotion she'd been changing her tune. Case in point, every morning she insisted on making him a special health smoothie and damn if they weren't delicious — and a great hangover cure — and now she was strutting in here in a tight, cleavage-baring sweater and tiny black skirt that he knew was specifically chosen to turn him on. The little minx. He took a moment to admire the view before his gaze found the small gift box clutched in her manicured hand.

"Someone left this at the front desk," Tabitha said, holding it up. "It's only got your name on it, so no idea who it's from."

Paul raised his eyebrows. Maybe management was letting him know, once again, how valuable he was to the company. Or maybe, more enticingly, it was a



gift from Tabitha herself, and she was simply playing coy about it. In which case, best to play it cool, and pretend he got anonymous gifts from admiring women all the time.

“Just leave it on my desk,” he said, taking a casual sip of Scotch. “Say, how are things going with the party planning?”

Tabitha gave a pained smile. “Oh, terrific!”

Paul, sensing his chance at an in, gave her a skeptical look. “Really? Even with old Mrs. Wilson breathing down your neck?”

Tabitha shot a glance over her shoulder, then bit her lip. “Oh my God, she’s trying to hire a twelve-man drum corps. And who on Earth cares what color the garlands are?” she pouted. “Everyone’s going to get black-out drunk anyways!”

“My thoughts exactly,” Paul said. “They should just put a big box of booze in the middle of an empty room and be done with it.”

Tabitha gave a giggle, pressing her long fingernails against her pouty lips, and Paul decided it was time to make his move.

“Who are you bringing for a date?” he asked, looking her square in the eye.

Tabitha blinked, and then, to Paul’s delight, began to blush. “Probably nobody,” she admitted. “I mean, it’s a work thing, so...”

“Keep it that way,” Paul said, doing his best Don Draper impression. “And if you show up wearing something sexy, I think I might just let you get me drunk.”

Tabitha’s pretty pink lips parted in surprise, then she smiled slyly. “I’ll check my closet,” she said. “For now, I’d better get back to reception.”

She clicked her way out of the office, hips swaying seductively from side to side, and Paul felt a rush of triumph. So much for her only dating men over six feet. Beautiful women were all the same — as soon as you had an Armani suit and your own office, height, weight, and pretty much everything else stopped mattering. Immensely pleased with himself, Paul snatched the gift off his desk and leaned back in his chair to open it.

What he found inside was a bit of a letdown. It was nothing but a cheap snow-globe, the kind for sale at any kiosk, and a Christmas card. Although inside the globe was a tiny sexy Mrs. Claus, dressed like a pin up girl, with a sack of presents slung over her shapely shoulder, winking as she arched her back seductively. Paul turned it over in his hand and wondered who would have sent it. One of his old fraternity bros maybe? A late congratulations on his promotion? He couldn’t help but think a bottle of scotch would have been better.

Deciding it would be best to find out the identity of the gift-giver, and give them some advice on how to give better gifts, he opened the accompanying card. The message printed on the page made his blood run instantly cold.



PAUL: I KNOW WHAT YOU DID AT LAST YEAR'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, AND I HAVE PICTURES TO PROVE IT. THIS YEAR, YOU'RE ON MY NAUGHTY LIST.

“God *damn* it!” Paul hissed.

He leapt from his chair, strode across the room, and locked his office door. Then he rushed back to his desk and opened his computer. Right below the anonymous message, the card bore a URL. He typed it into the web address bar with unsteady fingers, then tapped the Enter key.

A severely outdated web-page loaded, decorated with tacky Christmas trees. But in the middle of the page, loading centimeter by painful centimeter, were the very pictures Paul had feared. Sweat began to bead on his forehead as he read the text at the top of the site.

THIS IS A PRIVATE URL, FOR NOW. IF YOU  
PLAY ALONG, IT STAYS THAT WAY.

Paul stared at the screen, then drained his Scotch, coughed, and poured himself another. This was bad for him. This was very, very bad for him. But it was going to be even worse for whoever thought they could blackmail Paul Hartridge, wunderkind. He was going to get to the bottom of this, and there would be hell to pay for whoever he found down there.

“Okay, holiday blackmailer,” he muttered, inspecting the card for clues as to its sender’s identity. “Let’s go, go, go.”



## THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Paul woke up the next morning to the sound of his doorbell. He struggled upright, blinking the sleep from his eyes, and realized he'd passed out on the couch. He'd been up most of the night investigating the mysterious Christmas gift and racking his brains for who might have sent it, and had had a few too many drinks as well.

Not for the first time in the last few weeks, as he sat up, he noticed a tenderness in his chest and reminded himself to find out if the laundry service had switched to a new detergent. But as he stared blearily at his coffee table, where the card, snow globe, and his laptop were sitting, any thought of tender nipples flew from his head. The screen of the laptop was still displaying the company's employee files, where he'd been deciding on prime suspects. He shut it for now, then staggered off to get the door.

He opened it to a familiar sight: a FedEx delivery man, holding up a cardboard box. "Package for you," he announced. "Sign here."

Paul performed the motion without a second thought, mostly via muscle memory, and took the box.

"Happy Holidays," the delivery man added.

Paul grunted, shut the door, and retreated back into his well-furnished living room. It was only when he was halfway to the kitchen to make himself an espresso that he recalled how the blackmailer had originally contacted him the day before. With a sneaking suspicion in his mind, Paul looked down at the plain cardboard box, then tore it open.

Sure enough, another Christmas card — but that wasn't all. The blackmailer had also sent him, inexplicably, a pair of frilly red women's panties. Paul held them up and raised an eyebrow as he inspected them. Was this some sort of clue as to his blackmailer's identity? Could it be a jilted ex-lover who was out to get him?

Grimacing, Paul opened the card, which was decorated with a jolly, red-cheeked Santa Claus.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE  
LOVE GAVE TO ME...HARTRIDGE IN A PAIR OF  
PANTIES. SHAVE YOUR LEGS, PUT THEM ON,  
AND UPLOAD PHOTOGRAPHIC PROOF TO  
YESTERDAY'S URL.

Paul snapped the card shut. "Like hell I will!" he shouted, directing his anger at the happy Santa on the front, who now seemed to be laughing at him, specifically. "Screw you, you old pervert!"

He tossed the card away, breathing heavily, then gritted his teeth. He'd expected a demand for hush money, not *this*. What was with blackmailers these days? And where did they get off trying to make him wear women's underwear?

Paul returned to his laptop and typed in the URL again, to see if anything had changed while he was asleep. The incriminating photos were still there waiting for him, but the blackmailer had also added a cartoony countdown clock at the top of the web page, showing three hours. Paul squinted at the text that accompanied it.

WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES ZERO, YOUR ASS  
IS GRASS. WHEN YOU UPLOAD THE PHOTO,  
YOU GET A FREE PASS.

He glared at the terrible rhyme, realizing what it meant. If he let the clock run all the way down, the incriminating Christmas party photos would go public. If he played along with the blackmailer's dumb plot to embarrass him, this could all go away. As he glanced at the countdown again, his eyes widened. Instead of three hours, it now showed thirty minutes.

"Typical Geocities bullshit," Paul muttered. "Can't even get a countdown right."

Torn with indecision as his pride warred with his survival instinct, Paul scrolled downward through the photos again.

The first one was innocuous enough, showing him grinning for the camera in the Santa suit he'd donned as a bit of a joke, but the next one, a candid shot, taken from a low angle, showed him sneaking inside his boss's office. The photo that fol-



lowed was even worse.

He'd barely begun to narrow down his list of suspects. For now, he needed to play for time. He glared at the Santa card again. The blackmailer had not specified that the underwear photo show his face, and if he kept things strictly below-the-waist...

Paul glanced at the clock. It now showed *fifteen* minutes.

"Jesus Christ!" he yelled. "Fine! Fine!"

He sprinted to his luxurious bathroom, grabbed a fresh razor and some shaving cream from his cabinet above the sink, and practically dove into the bath tub. He managed to get the job done with only a few nicks around his knees, but the sting of the cuts was nothing compared to the sting of embarrassment as he watched his leg hair swirl down the drain. Paul had never been big or muscular, so the markers of manhood he did have were important to him. His body hair was one of them, and now he was voluntarily divesting himself of it.

But there was no time to mourn. He yanked the frilly red panties up his now baby-smooth legs, grimacing at the slippery sensation, and grabbed his phone.

Ensuring there were no incriminating clues in the background of the photo that would make the bathroom recognizable as his own, he snapped a picture, then navigated onto the website. There were only seconds left on the timer!

Cursing between his teeth, Paul uploaded the photo, fingers shaking with nerves as the clock approached zero. It froze with exactly one second left, and he let out a sigh of relief. His photo had been added to the album, showing his panty-clad form from the waist down. To his embarrassment, his smooth-shaven legs actually looked pretty good.

A tinkly bell sounded from the website, and new text appeared at the top:

NICE LEGS, POLLY. BUT NEXT TIME, TUCK.

Paul frowned at the cryptic direction, and at the implication that there would be a "next time." He hunted for some kind of chat box on the web page, some way of communicating with this would-be blackmailer, but found nothing. Angry, he shucked off the panties and stuffed them back into the gift box, then returned to his usual designer boxers. He'd avoided disaster for now, at the cost of his pride, but he needed to get to the bottom of this ASAP.

He was about to get back to work on that when his phone buzzed. He pulled it out and saw a text message from Ron Parsons, one of the other young bucks at Midas Accounting. *Still on for squash tomorrow, mate?*

Paul grimaced. He and Ron were definitely not "mates." In fact, they'd been gunning for the same promotion before Paul beat him out for it. Was it coincidence that Ron had texted him about squash, a sport that involved wearing shorts, directly after Paul had been forced to shave his legs?



But Paul couldn't cancel the game, not when they were going to be joined by a couple older executives. The chance for hobnobbing was too much to pass up. He would just have to wear athletic pants, and keep an eye on Ron for any suspicious behavior.

## THE SECOND DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Paul was already up and about when the doorbell rang the next morning. Hoping against hope that it was just some early carolers trying their luck, he threw on his expensive house coat and went to answer it. The same FedEx delivery man as yesterday greeted him, holding up a slightly larger box than the last.

“Last minute Christmas shopping, huh?” he asked, as Paul signed.

“Not exactly,” Paul said stonily. “Say, how would I go about finding out who sent me this?”

The delivery man blinked. “You don’t know who sent it to you?”

“Secret admirer situation,” Paul said through gritted teeth. “I’m quite curious to find out who it is.”

The delivery man shrugged. “I just deliver the parcels, sir. Maybe you could call our package center. Secret admirer, though! That sounds fun. I’ve never had a...”

Paul took the box and shut the door in the man’s face. He made his way back to the living room, tearing it open on the way. When he dumped the contents out on the couch, his eyes widened. Unless he was very much mistaken, he was staring at a pair of enormous tits attached to some sort of flesh-tone vest.

There was collar that looked a little like a satin choker up around the neck, probably to hide the seam where the faux skin met real skin. Paul tentatively reached a hand out to touch one of the breasts and recoiled at how realistic they seemed to feel as well as look. He removed it from the box and held it out in front of himself for a moment. He found himself surprised at how heavy it was and how the false breasts jiggled realistically.

Throwing the breast-vest aside, Paul snatched up the accompanying Christmas card with a sinking sensation in his stomach, and read the message.

ON THE SECOND DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY  
TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...TWO DOUBLE D’S!  
SHAVE YOUR CHEST AND PITS FIRST, THEN  
IT’S PHOTO TIME. YOU KNOW THE DRILL.

“What in the hell is wrong with you?” Paul barked. “Christ!”

He pulled up the website URL, and sure enough, the countdown clock was ticking merrily away. Paul glanced at his titanium wristwatch. He had an hour still before his squash game, which was more than enough time to take a humiliating selfie, but every male instinct in his body rebelled at the idea of wearing fake boobs. Envisioning Ron Parsons’ laughing face made him feel practically



apoplectic with rage. If he was the one behind this, he was getting a squash ball to the nuts this morning.

Swearing furiously, Paul grabbed the jiggling contraption and hurried to the bathroom again. As he dispensed with his chest hair with a few quick swipes, carefully avoiding any irritation to his inflamed nipples, he then started on his

armpits, and racked his brains once more for who might have seen him sneaking around, and then followed him, at last year's Christmas party. Ron had certainly been there, but he'd been too drunk to hold a camera. Was Ron in cahoots with someone else at the company?

Paul was still considering it as he dried himself off. He grimaced down at his latest present, but, knowing there was no time to waste, put his arms through the holes and put it on. As soon as he did so, he felt his cheeks turn bright red. The boobs were incredibly realistic, which meant they were heavy...and very, very jiggy. When he turned and saw himself in the mirror, he felt like vomiting. The fit was extremely snug, the flesh tone matched his perfectly, and the seam at the neck, disguised as it was by the satin choker was barely noticeable. He looked, for all the world, like he had grown a pair of very nice tits.

Vowing revenge on his blackmailer, or blackmailers, plural, Paul snapped a photo (extremely carefully to keep his face out of the frame) and uploaded it to the hated website. The clock still showed ten minutes, so he'd made good time. He scowled as he watched the photo slowly load into place. With his skinny frame, hairless body, and head out of the picture, there was nothing to indicate the subject was a man wearing fake tits. In fact, the photo looked an awful lot like a sext from some sexy young thing with a silicone-enhanced rack.

The same tinkly bell as yesterday sounded from the website, and a new message appeared:

WHERE ARE THE PANTIES?

"You've got to be fucking kidding me!" Paul growled.

But the timer was still ticking away, so he shucked off his boxers, retrieved the frilly red panties he'd received the day before, and hurried back to the bathroom for a second photo, this time a full body shot, minus the head. Remembering the blackmailer's instruction from yesterday, and finally realizing what it meant, he blushingly tucked his manhood back between his thighs in preparation. Wearing skimpy panties with his member packed away out of sight, cold air raising goose bumps on his smooth-shaven skin, he felt strangely vulnerable, and almost by instinct he covered his fake nipples with one arm as he took the photo.

When he uploaded the second photo, with only two minutes left on the clock, he was relieved to hear the tinkly bell sound immediately.

WHAT A TEASE! MUCH BETTER, POLLY. THE  
ADHESIVE SHOULD WEAR OFF IN A FEW  
DAYS.

Paul's jaw dropped. "Adhesive?" he whimpered. "Adhesive?"

He yanked at the contraption on his chest, and suddenly realized why the fit was so perfectly snug. The damn thing was stuck to him! In a sudden panic,



Paul grabbed each of the boobs in turn, tugging frantically at them. He could feel the skin of his chest moving with them and the uncomfortable pain as his sensitive nipples were agitated. He glanced at his wristwatch again, and swore a blue streak. He had squash in half an hour! He dashed into the kitchen to get a knife, and was just about to start hacking the fake boobs off when he heard the bell again.

He trooped back to the living room with a sense of deep foreboding, and read the message.

IF YOU TRY TO TAKE THEM OFF BEFORE  
THEN, YOUR ASS IS GRASS.

“Shit!” Paul hissed. The blackmailer had read his mind. However, Paul Hartridge was nothing if not resourceful: he ran to his closet, grabbed his baggiest sweater and some sports tape, and set to work flattening the boobs as best he could. He couldn’t miss squash. Or rather, he couldn’t miss the opportunity to ingratiate himself with the execs. Pulling the sweater over his head, he observed the result in the mirror and gave a satisfied nod. He could do this. They were practically undetectable.

Then he turned sideways, and blanched. In profile, even with the sports tape keeping them down, the boobs were unmissable. When he tried to adjust his sweater to hide them better, he heard the tearing sound of sports tape coming free — and a moment later, the double-D’s sprang to full prominence. Paul stared at his reflection, imagining himself trying to play squash, running around with these things jiggling and bouncing at every move. He gritted his teeth, and got out his phone.

*Came down with a chest cold*, he texted to the group. *No squash for me this morning*. He hesitated, then added another line. *Might have to miss a few days of work, too*.

He sent the text, then threw his phone down angrily on his bed. Ron Parsons was going to be sucking up to the execs and showing off his serve, while he was stuck here in his house with a pair of gigantic boobs stuck to his chest.

That settled it. Ron was now prime suspect number one.

## THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Monday morning rolled around, and Paul was absolutely not going to head in to work. When he heard the dreaded doorbell, he opened the door only a crack, in order to keep yesterday's "gift" out of sight. The delivery man didn't seem to notice, cheery as ever, and Paul let him babble about the weather while he signed for the parcel. In order to actually retrieve the box, though, Paul was forced to open the door a little more.

The FedEx delivery man's eyes went straight for his chest. Paul had done his best to conceal the boobs with a baggy sweater, but it clearly wasn't working.



He was way too skinny to have floppy pecs, so the fake tits stood out like sore thumbs. Paul met the man's gaze for a moment, cheeks flushed, then slammed the door shut.

The boobs bounced and jiggled all the way back to the living room. He was still nowhere near used to the sensation, or the way they seemed to constantly get in the way of everyday activities. One of them had nearly knocked over his coffee cup when he leaned over the counter this morning, bleary from a terrible night's sleep...for which, once again, he had the boobs to thank. They felt like big fleshy pillows strapped to his chest, and made it impossible for him to sleep in his normal position.

Paul slumped down onto the couch. His laptop was open on the coffee table, still displaying his three top suspects. He'd copied and pasted their photos from the company website. Number one was Ron, obviously, but beneath him Paul had added Mrs. Wilson, HR and party planner, who was always snooping into other people's business. Beneath her, he'd put Timothy White, a long-time accountant who never laughed at Paul's jokes and had an interest in photography.

Ron was the most likely, but it could be any of them, or even a combination. Paul just didn't know how he was going to prove it, and then turn the tables on them. He wasn't in the best frame of mind for planning, what with the enormous boobs and the psychological toll of being blackmailed. Case in point, he could barely bring himself to open the latest package. After yesterday, he was absolutely dreading what might be contained within the unwrapped cardboard box — so it was a relief when he opened it and found only a card.

Maybe the blackmailer had run out of stupid Christmas puns and humiliating ideas, and had instead finally decided to get to brass tacks and demand the hush money. Paul opened the card, which was in the shape of a Christmas tree, and read the message inside.

ON THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE  
LOVE GAVE TO ME...FREE FRENCH MANI-  
CURES! BELLA'S BEAUTY SALON, TEN AM  
SHARP. SHOW UP, OR ELSE.

Paul narrowed his eyes. So much for his hopes of no more puns, yet maybe this was the meet-up he'd been waiting for. From television he knew such meetings usually took place in deserted parking lots, not beauty salons, but it made sense for his particular blackmailer to pick somewhere public, seeing as they were an amateur and not a hardened criminal.

Alternatively, they really were just setting him up to get a manicure, as yet another attempt to humiliate him. But honestly, that didn't sound too terrible. He knew some of the execs went to a Vietnamese spa to get their hands and feet pampered, so it wasn't out of the question for a man to show up to a salon these days.

The only issue was that he would have to show up to the salon with boobs. He'd tried everything in his closet, but nothing seemed to be baggy enough to conceal them, and there was no way he was going out in public looking like some kind of freak with twin peaks...

*Peaks!* A light-bulb went off in his head, and Paul hurried to his storage room, boobs swaying distractingly. He'd vowed to climb Everest before the age of twenty-five, and in a fit of inspiration had purchased all the mountaineering gear he would possibly need. For the moment he was more than happy climbing the corporate ladder instead, so all the cold-weather clothing and equipment had been stuffed into storage.

"You brilliant bastard, Paul," he muttered to himself. "You've done it again."



Paul's enormous bright orange parka drew some stares as he walked through the mall to Bella's Beauty Salon, especially since he was sweltering in the heated interior of the building, but it was much, much better than the alternative. When he walked through the sliding doors and approached the front desk, the girl at the front gave him a puzzled look.

"I might have an appointment for ten o'clock," Paul said brusquely. He lowered his voice, glancing around. "And I might be meeting someone here."

The girl stared at him in confusion. "You might have an appointment?" she echoed. "Er, okay. Let me just..." She tapped away at her keyboard, then looked up, eyebrows raised higher than ever. "You're...Polly?" she asked hesitantly.

Paul flushed, remembering the stupid nickname the blackmailer had saddled him with in their messages. But it was probably for the best that they didn't have his real name on file. "Yeah," he grunted. "Can you just remind me who booked the appointment for me? I'm not sure if it was my secretary, or my assistant, or..."

The girl frowned. "Um, I remember it was a really weird call," she said. "Their voice sounded like they were using one of those filter things, so I thought it was a prank at first, to be honest. They didn't give their name."

Paul bit his lip. "Did they tell you anything besides the appointment time?" he demanded. "Anything at all?"

"They did," the girl admitted. "They said we're supposed to give you a clue afterwards." She blinked innocently. "Are you two doing some kind of role-playing mystery game, or something?"

"Sure," Paul grimaced. "You could call it that. So what's the clue?"

The girl wagged her finger. “Ah-ah-ah. They said I can only tell you *after* you get the works.”

Paul sighed. He should have known the blackmailer wouldn’t let him get out of this salon unscathed, but a manicure wasn’t the end of the world. “Fine,” he said. “But let’s make it quick.”

The girl beamed. “Right this way!” she chirped, then stood up and led the way to the back of the salon, where a trio of beauticians was waiting for him. They all looked slightly surprised to see their mysterious ten o’clock customer was a man in a parka, but quickly donned professional smiles as they directed him to the chair.

“I’m not taking my coat off!” Paul barked, as one of the women reached for it. She pulled her hand back hastily.

“Right,” she said. “No problem.”

His bulky parka made it difficult to fit into the salon chair, and by the time he was seated he was sweating more than ever, both from the exertion and from the embarrassment of being in this stupid situation in the first place.

“First time doing this?” one of the beauticians asked. “You seem a little nervous.”

“Stressful week,” Paul muttered. “Just get on with it, will you?”

“We do some minor cosmetic procedures here,” the beautician said. “So we’re licensed to offer you a Valium for relaxation purposes, if you’d...”

“God, yes!” Paul exclaimed.

The beauticians giggled, and a moment later one of them presented him a pill and a glass of water. Paul had always preferred booze, but he figured this would be as good as a stiff drink to calm his nerves. He swallowed the pill and leaned back.

“Better already, I bet,” the beautician said. “Now, just relax and let us work our magic. You’ve got really nice cheekbones, you know...”

Paul didn’t see what that had to do with anything, but he appreciated the compliment. He’d always managed to do alright with women, despite his small stature, and a big part of it was his boyish good looks. He grunted affirmative, then shut his eyes. The Valium was making him extremely drowsy, and he’d had such a miserable night... Maybe he could take a little nap while they gave him his manicure. No harm in that.



“Wake up, Sleeping Beauty!” chirped a voice in Paul’s ear. “It’s time to see the new you!”

Paul startled awake, and was immediately struck by several strange sensations. He knew he couldn't have been asleep for very long, but his eyelids felt oddly heavy and sticky. Even stranger, his lips were uncomfortably tingly, and his whole face seemed to be covered in some kind of gunk. As he opened his eyes, he could feel stiff, fan-like things fluttering up and down in front of them.

He was still in the salon chair, but they must have moved it while he was drifting in and out, because instead of a mirror he was looking at a television screen, which was clearly playing some kind of ad for the salon, depicting an extremely attractive, done-up woman in a pink smock, surrounded by smiling beauticians.

Still addled by the Valium pill, Paul took a moment to admire the model: she had dark, dramatic eye-makeup with long fluttery lashes, carefully contoured cheekbones, and a terrific pair of pouty dick-sucking lips painted a seductive red. Long brunette hair cascaded gracefully around her made-up face and onto her shoulders, and it looked like she had quite the rack underneath that smock of hers, too.

"So?" one of the beauticians demanded. "What do you think?"

Paul blinked, feeling his oddly long, stiff eyelashes flutter. The woman on the screen blinked, making her lashes do the same. As he finally put two and two together, his mouth fell open in utter shock. He was still in front of a mirror, and that mean the woman he'd been ogling was none other than...

"We took your parka off while you were asleep," another of the girls admitted. "It was getting in the way. Those boobs are amazing! Why were you covering them up?"

"You and your girlfriend must be into some seriously kinky stuff," the first beautician beamed. "I wish I could get my guy to experiment like that!"

Paul was in no state to set the record straight. He was hyperventilating, staring at his reflection in utter panic. He'd gone to sleep expecting a manicure, and woken up looking like some kind of pin-up! How on Earth had they made him look not just like a woman, but a stone cold fox? As he tried to formulate a sentence, he realized, to his horror, that his lips were every bit as puffy as they looked in the mirror.

"My wips?" he demanded, in a faint voice.

"Collagen fillers, hon!" the beautician smiled. "Aren't they hot?"

This was a nightmare. An absolute nightmare. Paul was about to start ranting and raving, yank the ridiculous wig off his head and demand that they get all this gunk off his face, when he remembered the promised clue.

"What was the clue?" he croaked. "The bastard who set this up left you a clue, you said! So what was it?"

"So this is you and your boyfriend's little game, huh?" The beautician blinked. "You totally had me fooled. You can play straight any day!"



“I *am* straight!” Paul hollered. “Now what was the clue?”

The beauticians looked at each other, then smiled. “Um, they said if you needed more convincing to get you in the chair, we should pretend they left a clue for you.”

Paul felt his eye begin to twitch.



After twenty minutes of ranting and raving, Paul finally calmed down enough to demand, coherently, that they undo their stupid “makeover.” The cowed beauticians divested him of his wig and removed the makeup, but claimed his eyelash extensions would have to just fall out on their own over the course of the next couple weeks — and that the collagen plumping his lips would get re-absorbed in about the same time frame.

Paul left the salon with his parka hood pulled up to cover his face, but even so, it felt like every passer by could see his big pouty lips and fluttery eyelashes. Still utterly furious with his blackmailer’s trickery, and feeling shaken by the experience of seeing himself as not just a woman, but a very attractive one, Paul ran two red lights on the way home and made a beeline directly for his liquor cabinet upon arrival.

He was intending to just have a few drinks to steady his nerves, but drowning his frustrations led to getting absolutely black-out drunk, so instead...