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I can't help but lie on my stomach on the carpet.

I dig my chin into the floor in a way that makes my jaw hurt. Rolling to the side, trying a different position to rest the muscle that is getting sore—none of it helps. It is too late, and any way I lie, stomach down as I must, the weight of my head rests on some part of my mandible, and makes my teeth burn.

The carpet smells of chemicals. I wonder if the chemicals make the carpet more flammable or less flammable. I wonder if the small particles of chemicals evaporating from the carpet and entering my nostrils—which they must be doing, because after all this is of what the sense of smell consists—are bad for me in some way, or if they are not. Perhaps if I was standing in the room, smelling the scent of the carpet's chemicals mixed in with the rest of the odors—the smell of soap, industrial laundry detergent fragrance, odors of the linens themselves, aromas of the substance they use to cover the fact that somebody has been smoking in this non-smoking room, of the smelly drapes with their chemical taste similar to the carpet and yet different, the olfactory saturation of the cleanser in the bathroom, and the smell of the shower curtain, because it is treated with a coating to prevent the growth of mildew as indicated on the tag hanging from the seam just above the evenly-spaced grommets which the suspending rings pass through—perhaps as part of that melange the fragments of the chemical are not bad for me. But here, lying on the floor, taking more parts per million than the chemists have safely allotted me into my thin nasal membranes as I deliberately inhale this smell, perhaps the chemicals are entering me, and will have some negative effect. The carpet is brown with purple flowers, but shades are barely different enough to tell.

I sit up, and brush off my jacket, taking it off while still sitting, and throw it over the back of the wooden chair at the desk. There are two chairs in the room, and this is one of them. The other chair is a large arm chair, in the only suitable place in the room, which is in the corner between the bed and the wall with the window. The chair looks comfortable enough, and I might have sat in it, except for the fact that the bed is in the way of passage to the chair, and in the attempt to go around it I would run into the short glass and bronze cube-shaped table. There is, technically, enough room to walk, but one must do it sideways, sliding one foot awkwardly before the other, as if one was sneaking through the room. Because of this table, one might as well lie on the bed rather than even worry about the chair. You can leave your shoes on when you lie on the bed, because the bedspread is what it is. I had chosen to lie on the floor.

I stand up now and take off my shoes, but leave on my socks. My feet feel dry and cramped, and I desperately wanted to wash them, but I do not take off my socks, because I know from experience that the carpet would make my feet even drier. Perhaps it is the chemicals, or maybe it is simply the lack of humidity. All these motels are air-conditioned to hell and back, and even in the summer months like these the only moisture around such a place is running in rivulets down the parking lot as it drips in liquid condensation from each window unit, burring away with their dented fan blades. I also loosen the knot of my tie, pulling it down my chest until the loose end comes whipping through the knot, and then through my collar, and onto the floor. I do not mean to drop it, and so I pick it back up, untie the remains of the knot, and put the tie on the desk. There is nothing on the desk that would make it a desk. There is a single serving coffee pot, looking shrunken and stained. There is a cable TV channel menu, with twenty-seven channels listed. There is a ball-point pen, but it is of course a promotional item from the

motel, and is not the sort of pen anyone would ever keep on a desk. Perhaps in a pocket, a drawer, or on the floor of a car, but not on a desk.

I look through the desk, hoping to find a plastic binder listing the addresses of local chain restaurants, but there is not one. There is a drawer on the night-stand next to the bed, and I look through it, but there is only the bible. I take it out and put it on top of the clock radio, for no reason really, except to make one surface in the room look as if it is different than every other motel room I have ever stayed in over the course of my life. I think about unpacking my single suitcase, which is standing up in front of the small closet, across from the alcove of the bathroom. There is a mirror on the door of the closet, and it is reflecting back my suitcase's reflection, making it appear as if there are two cases. But only one of them actually has dimensions, because it is protruding into the space of the room, while the other only exists within the mirror, appearing to take up space but actually part of the decoration, like the picture frame above the bed that is embedded into the wall, so it cannot be removed. I feel that this is similar to the bible in the drawer, and for this reason I am glad I had removed it, looking at it now on top of the clock radio, as if someone had placed it there just for a moment, in the act of getting up to do something but with every intention of returning. But I put it there, and there is only me.

I walk with small steps, to make the trip take more time, into the bathroom, where I flick on the florescent light with a loud smack of the plastic switch, and look into the mirror on the right. There are several packages of soap on the edge of the sink, and four towels hanging on a metal rack between the mirror and the shower, which is on my left. I turn on the water, and bend my head to basin, and splash water on my face, and take a small sip. It tastes flat and full of minerals, like it came right out of the river. I can't remember the name of the river. For a minute I can't remember what state I am in, but then suddenly I remember, and I feel foolish for letting something like this happen.

Walking back into the room, I bring a towel with me. There are three more towels, so I imagine one might as well be in this room. Putting it on the desk, I sit down on the edge of the bed. I am having trouble deciding what to do now. I stand up again, and pull the bed spread back, letting it fall to the floor at the foot of the bed. I always take these off the bed in motels, because they do not wash the bedspread. I don't bother to wonder about the smell of the bed spread, because I don't care to think about what might be held within the fibers. I lay back on the bed, making a mound of the four pillows. I put my hands behind my head, and try to imagine myself going out to eat somewhere soon, or finding a bar. I think about turning on the TV, but I do not know where the remote is, and before I can think about finding it, I am asleep.

When I wake up the room is almost entirely dark, except for orange light coming in through the curtains from the parking lot. I look at the clock, but the bible had fallen over the numbers. I pushed it aside, and the time says that all the restaurants in the town are no doubt closed. I get up, and I feel lightheaded, as if I just slept in an uncomfortable position, even though I was lying down flat. I cross over to the window, and pull the heavy curtains closed to block the orange light, but now it is completely dark, and I stumble to the bathroom, accidentally kicking my suitcase, before I snap on the light and blind myself. I turn on the water, and drink some of the strange taste to wash the dried saliva out of my mouth. Opening one of the soaps, I wash my face and hands, and then using a lot of water to rinse, I dry myself on another one of the towels, which I leave sprawled on the edge of the sink. Entering back into the room I turn on the overhead light. Everything is the same. I put on my shoes so that I can leave the room.

The room card I put into the pocket of the jacket, which I wear over my shirt without putting the tie back on. It is probably still humid and warm outside, but it is cold in the motel. I don't know exactly where I am going. The key to the car is in the coat pocket, but I don't feel like driving. First I will walk around the motel, and then I will go to the car.

The hallway has the same carpet as the rooms, and the smell is a bit stronger here, because the space is narrow. I do not remember if the direction I am heading is towards the end of the motel on which my car is parked. I believe the hallways form a loop, down one side of the L-shaped building, downstairs, and back again, so if I am heading the wrong way and end up in the lobby, it will be no matter to turn around and head back.

Indeed, I discover I am heading the wrong way, but decide to descend to the lobby to see what it looks like at night. When I checked in it was empty, except for the girl working at the desk. She had said she would be there all night if I needed anything, but I was not sure what exactly they could provide that was not in the room already, considering the numerous soaps, and four towels, and four pillows. There was a continental breakfast in the morning, but other than that, it was nothing more than a motel. I walk into the lobby, and hear the television by the couch, still on the same news channel it was tuned to before. The girl behind the counter is not there. I look at the tourist material by the desk to see if anything mentioned any restaurants, but it did not. I turn to head back down the wing towards the car, when I hear the voice.

"Oh hey!"

There is a woman lying on the couch, who had raised her head to look at me over the back. Her feet are up on the opposite arm. Her accent is from somewhere without a coast.

"Hello."

"Say, you don't happen to have any orange juice, do you?"

"Orange juice?"

She holds up a small bottle of vodka. The bottle is plastic. She smiles.

"Normally I try and drink something more fancy, but tonight the conditions are what they are."

She sat up and smiled. She is wearing a brown pant-suit, which looks as if she has owned it for several years. The jacket is off, and the blouse wasn't much more than a woman's fitted dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up. As she sits up, she rolls over a bit, and awkwardly almost slips off the couch. She does not appear to be the most agile sort, grinning embarrassed through large teeth. She brushes her short, thin hair out of her eyes.

"I'm Lauren. Hi there!"

"Jeffrey."

"Normally I'm more of a light beer or a white wine girl, but the grocery store was closed, and the liquor store was just about to, and it was all I could do to convince the man to sell me this."

"So now you need orange juice."

"I can't do much with vodka without orange juice."

She smiled again, standing up and somewhat brushing herself off with one hand.

"I think there's juice in the vending machine upstairs at the other end of the wing. I saw it when I came in."

"Really? Oh thank goodness! I needed a drink but I wasn't going to be able to drink this otherwise! Mind showing me where it is?"

I nod, and start heading out. She comes over, the bottle and jacket in one hand, her purse and a pair of heels in her other hand.

"Hey, she put out the danishes for breakfast tomorrow already. Want one?"

Lauren runs over to the table against the wall, and points at the plastic-wrapped pastries lined up there. She looks over them, pulling out a couple of packages. I walk over too, out of politeness. She puts three in her purse.

"You aren't gonna take one?"

I smile, and pick up a package with a red fruit on the front, and put it in my pocket.

"These are so gross, but it's a motel, so what are you going to do, right?"

We walk down the hallway next to each other. To my surprise, Lauren doesn't say anything. She might be looking at me, but I don't look towards her to find out. I keep smelling the smell of the carpet. It is strange, the silence.

We reach the stairs at the end of the wing, and start climbing the stairs. Lauren is in front of me. She is wider than most, and I can't help watching her. She is not quite overweight; I would not say that. She has a wide waist, leading into thick legs. Her attire covers it well, giving her a professional appearance, though perhaps nothing can help the act of going up stairs. The air is audible, coming out of her mouth by the time we reach the top.

"Whew!" she says, as if completing a hike.

A few paces into the hall, we come to the whirring machine. Lauren is biting her lip in concentration while she digs in her purse for change. She sets the shoes on the ground while she does so. Underneath the legs of her suit, she's wearing stockings. On the seam of the toe, a ball of lint is stuck. It matches the color of the carpet.

"You wouldn't have fifteen cents, would you? I'm just short of buying two."

I give her the change, and she slips the handful of coins into the glowing red machine, and presses the button so the bottles chug out of the bottom. She bends over to look inside as she retrieves them, and hands them to me one by one, and then bends to pick up her shoes.

"Thank god! If they had been out, I don't know what I would have done!"

I stand holding the bottles, a bit unsure of what will happen next.

"So, where's your room at?"

"Oh, just down the hall."

"Mine's at the other end. Want to share a drink? The least I can offer you for helping find the juice."

A drink does sound appealing, despite the circumstances. I'm not sure where I will find any dinner. And this way, it isn't necessary to figure out how to hand her the juice.

We walk down the hallway, Lauren humming some unrecognizable tune. I put both bottles in one hand as I reach for my key. Sliding it down into the lock takes two tries before it works correctly. I push the door inward, and Lauren follows me. I have left on the lights, so the room is bright when we enter from the muted light of the hall.

"Looks just like mine! Oh, you weren't sleeping, were you?" She points at the rumbled bed coverings. I reassure her. She puts her purse on the bed, her shoes on the floor, and her jacket on the desk. Between all the things now on the desk, the surface is almost full.

I get the two glasses from the bathroom, of which there are only and always two, even though there are four towels. Lauren sits on the edge of the bed, with her feet on the bed spread, on the floor. Putting the glasses on the small table, first she pours a small amount of liquor into each, and then opening a bottle of orange juice, tops them off. She reaches forward none too flexibly, and sets the bottles on the edge of the desk, a long arm's reach away. She hands one drink to me and sips the other.

"Whew!" It sounds just like it did when she was climbing the stairs. "Did I need that!"

It is odd to be standing while she is sitting, so I pull out the desk chair and turn it around to face her, and sit, even though we are now only about two feet apart from each other. She looks into my face and smiles. Now I can smell her. Lauren smells like a very strong and floral perfume, which was most certainly applied recently enough to still have a scent, though certain diminished. I can also smell dryer sheets, of a standard fragrance. The shirt she is wearing looks quite white, and perhaps it is fresh from the laundry. The harsh light of the room penetrates the cloth, revealing her large white bra, the straps covering near half of her shoulders. Lauren looks as if she prefers comfort over looks, though her clothes are respectable enough. She takes another sip of her drink, leaving a slight glint of liquid on her upper lip, which she wipes with a finger.

"Were you reading the bible?" she asks. In looking around the room, she is noticing the things I have seen already many times since first entering this motel room. She puts her drink on the floor and flops back on the bed, reaching up above her to the night stand and picking up the book. Then she sits back up, holding it, closed.

"No."

"I've never seen one of these outside of the drawer before. They're always there though!" She laughed, tipping her head back as she does, only a bit, to let her mouth open slightly. Her eyes grin at me, and then she put the book to the side of her, and picked up her drink again.

"I've seen a far amount of motel rooms, too! It's my job, you know."

I guess, out loud. "What sort of salesperson are you?"

Lauren takes a bit sip of her drink, and smiles again, tipping her extended finger at me with her glass hand. "Oh now, it's not so obvious that I'm in sales, is it? Oh now, I don't want to look like a salesperson!"

She makes an exaggerated pouting face, pushing her lips together over her laughing teeth, and putting both hands on her wide hips, still holding the glass. Then, with a half-gesture of brushing away, something invisible, she leans forward for the bottles on the desk to make herself another drink. Her head passes next to my lap as she reaches, and I can smell her even stronger. I sense a bit of sweat, underneath the perfume. As she leans back, and begins swapping the bottles and glasses back and forth from her hands to the floor, I can smell the synthetic odor of the carpet again.

"So funny that you could tell," she continues. "I feel so at home in motels, now—though maybe that's what you noticed." She hands me a refilled drink, which she had not asked if I wanted.

"I actually sell to motels, which is the funny thing. I'm in the hospitality industry, myself. I stay in the motel chains I'm selling to. I think this gives me a better idea of their needs, and I can pitch the sale better. I can sample their current choices, and plus, I'm part of their need for product!"

She crossed her hands in front of her, as if waiting to see what I thought.

"So you sell things to motels?"

"Pretty much everything!" she says quickly, as if pleased that I'd asked. "From the art on the walls, to the laundry soap."

"All the linens, the furniture, and even the food?"

"Well, if there is a restaurant attached to the location, they normally order their own stuff, just like any other restaurant. And the facilities maintenance is another story, of course. We provide everything that forms the guest's experience—the decor, the flavors, and the service items. We sell hospitality items, but we are really the core of the hospitality itself."

I had never met anyone in this industry before. It's not really interesting to me exactly, but it's something new.

"So what did you sell in this room?"

She takes a quick drink, and then looks around the room, business-like, as if making check lists and reviewing product lines in her head, the attitude moving to her head and shoulders, gaining a more formal uprightness.

"Well, let me see: yes, these linens are the Egyptian Economy line, that's ours. And these glasses go with the bathroom fixtures, which are Super American. We do the soaps, and the window draperies. The continental breakfast is our standard provision, they're a new customer for that. I've been trying to sell them on new in-room coffee services and irons, which, as I'm sure you can see, need to be replaced. They could use some new furniture too, but between you and me," she leaned closer and raised one hand next to her mouth, "I think they are doing another round of cutbacks."

"How about the bibles?"

She smiles, and takes a sip of her drink. "No, silly! We don't do the bibles! That's the Gideons. Religion isn't part of the hospitality. Saving souls is a whole different industry."

She laughed with the head tipping motion again.

"So what do you think of my motel-room screwdriver? Not bad for what's at hand, eh?" She laughs again. I politely take a sip, not opposed to the beverage, which is very sweet from the vending machine juice, which combined oddly with the bitterness of the cheap vodka. I'm not particularly fond of vodka.

"So, tell me: if you could change one thing about this motel room, what would it be? I'm speaking from a professional interest, of course."

"Oh, nothing I guess. Except I guess the carpet has a certain smell to it."

"A smell? Like somebody spilled something on it?"

"No, like a chemical smell. Like maybe something from its manufacture, or from what they clean it with, or something."

"Really? I can't smell anything."

"Well, I only smelled it when I was close to it. Down on the ground. With my luggage, I mean. Down on the ground I could smell it."

She takes a drink, and reaches forward to set her drink on the desk. She gets down on the floor, awkwardly on her knees, and bends close to the carpet on her hands, smelling. Her large rear end sticks up the air, as if she's oblivious to how it looks.

"I don't smell anything. Just, carpet I guess."

She keeps investigating.

"Wait, is it like a sweet smell? But I only smell it right here. Come down here and tell me if this is it."

I don't want to smell the carpet again, but she is not looking at me, making it difficult to resist her request with the look on my face. I stand, slide the chair back under the desk, and leaving my drink on the desk as well, kneel down to the floor, facing Lauren.

I can't smell what she is talking about, but I can smell the chemicals again. They make my throat dry, mixing with the taste of the vodka.

"Come down here and tell me where you can smell it."

I stretch my legs out behind me, tangling them under the small glass table. I'm now lying on my stomach in the small space, in front of the strangely bent and inverted Lauren. The industrial texture of the odor rises in me. I lift my head and look at her. With a serious expression on her face she is burying her nose in the rug.

"Are you sure it is the rug? I think I can smell this bed spread. Is this it?"

She reaches out in the cramped space between the bed, the desk, and myself and pulls up a corner of the cloth on the floor, holding it in front of her face.

"This does smell funny. Is this it?" She thrusts it towards me.

I recoil away from it. "No, that's not it."

"What's wrong with the bed spread? Why won't you smell it?"

"It was the rug, not that."

"Smell the bed spread."

"I don't want to."

"Oh come on, do it!" she crawls forward on her knees towards me, laughing at my discomfort. I try to stand, but in the small distance she manages to make it to me first, pushing the thick cloth into my face. I try not to inhale, as she covers my head with it, but I am unable to prevent it, and I smell it now, of dust and spilled food of uncertain origin dropped from unknown mouths over an inestimable period of time, and I cough into it reflexively, feeling the moisture of my vodka-tinged breath coming back to hit me in my closed eyelids, and I reach up to remove the darkened hood but Lauren is batting at my hands and laughing, not hitting them hard but confusing me with the quick slaps of her palms against the back of my hands. Should I panic? Is the right thing to do to get rid of this uncomfortably disgusting chemical blanket covering me? Or could this be all a joke, because she knows the hospitality industry, and she would not put such an unwashed thing over a man she does not know? Maybe it is all rumor about them not washing the bed spreads, and of course she would know all the legends about the industry and the true from the false, even though I don't know. Perhaps none of it exists. The smell of this dusty blanket, the chemicals in the carpet, in the bottoms of the glasses, leaching up out of the drain in the tub, coming into me, making me feel the way that I do.

I try to stand, to get some more room to move, to get away from her hands and remove the bed spread, but my feet tangle in the cloth and instead of standing up I fall sideways onto my back, onto the carpet, with the bed spread covering me. She is still laughing, but she is pulling the blanket back and is standing over me, looking at me upside down and laughing.

"I'm sorry! You just had such a funny face I couldn't resist!" She is still laughing, putting a hand on her hip and tilting back her head. I am not sure what my face looks like, but I stay lying on my back, smiling, perhaps, because she is laughing, and this is what seems best. Thankfully, the bed spread is no longer on me.

"I feel bad! Sorry, Jeffery! I didn't mean to make you fall over. Here—I'll tell you what I'll do. I have all these free samples from our line of products. Not just the economy stuff they stock here, but some good stuff. Here, look."

She bents over to the floor and picks up her purse. She climbs onto the bed, sitting on her knees, and digging through the bag.

"Come on up here."

I don't want to be on the floor anymore, so I sit on the edge of the bed.

"Let me make it up to you with a gift. Here's a good one. It's a body massage lotion."

"Thanks."

"Come up here and take off your shirt."

I look at her, but wish I hadn't, because she is looking back at me.

"I said, take off your shirt."

I undo the buttons, and pull it out from my waist band. My arms pull out of the sleeves.

"That one too. Then lie on your stomach."

I take off the undershirt as well, and lie down on the side of the bed. She rips off the bit of clear plastic encircling the lid of a small bottle, and unscrews the cap, putting it on the night stand. Turning toward me on her knees, she squeezes the bottle into her hand, with a small liquid plop sound. I am smelling the sheets against my face, but I can also smell a new fragrance entering the air, mixing with her perfume. It smells like lavender, or some other sort of herb or plant. I can hear the lotion on the palms of her hands, but I cannot see it, because now she is holding them over my back. She touches me and it is very cold for an instant, but then quickly grows warmer. She presses hard, rubbing the cream into my skin, first back and forth across my back, and then up to my shoulders, and then down towards my backside. After a minute, the lotion is absorbed, so I hear her squeeze more from the bottle onto her hand. It is not so cold this time, because her hands have warmed. She presses her fingertips into me, moving in circles all around my back. I can feel her fingernails, uniformly longer than her fingers, tracing small lines and furrows in the lotion, but never scratching, always followed by the soft pads of her fingers. She rubs, and squeezes, and presses, and after she does this for fifteen minutes I almost forget where I am.

She pulls her hands back, and clasps them together on her knees. I look up at her, and she smiles a wide smile.

"Jeffrey, I'm going to tell you to do something. You're going to do it and not ask questions about it, now or afterward. Okay, honey?"

I do not say anything.

"Take off all your clothes and get in the bed, with the sheet over you."

I sit up, and undo my belt buckle, and slide my pants down to the end of the bed. While I'm doing this, she brings the bottle of vodka and the orange juice over to the night stand from the desk. I lie back down and pull the sheet over my body. The sheet is warm because I've been lying on it, but it still feels cool in the air conditioning, its starchy whiteness against my skin. I feel tingles in my body, and in my penis, as it rubs against the sheet. Lauren goes to the bathroom and comes back with one of the four white towels. She drops it, and stands next to the bed, putting her purse on the bed next to me, still smiling.

"If fact honey, it's probably best if you don't say anything at all from now on. If you don't mind. But I don't think you will."

She unbuttons her shirt, and tosses it to the floor. She takes off her bra, and her large breasts fall free, onto her belly. She undoes her pants, and slides them down, and then the panty hose as well. Stepping out of these, she is wearing a small pair of cheap white cotton underwear. Climbing up on the bed, she brings the vodka bottle in her hand. She climbs onto me, with one thigh on either side, and sits on my legs, on top of the sheet. Taking a quick drink of vodka, she winces, and smiles, and caps the bottle, laying it next to her leg.

Now she looks in her purse, and brings out another bottle of lotion, but of a large size, not like one would find in a motel. She unscrews the cap, and turns the bottle upside down, over my chest. As she squeezes, a thick stream of white cream pours out, onto the sheet. This lotion smells like mint, strongly like mint, overpowering every other smell in the room. It gathers in a pile, almost like a coil of rope, before slowly spreading outward. After a few seconds, I can feel it seeping into the fabric, and reaching the skin of my stomach.

She has emptied more than half of the bottle before she stops. She reaches forward, and begins kneading the substance into my body, through the sheet. The cloth quickly becomes saturated, and I feel it oozing through, first to my body and then the bottom sheet below me, as she spreads the lotion all around. She rubs it all the way up to my neck, out past my arms, and downward to my waist. I cannot tell if she is trying to rub it on me, or on the bed. She rubs it down, around my penis, gripping it through the cloth. I am getting hard in the oily bed. She stops and

squeezes out more lotion, the rest of the bottle, onto my belly, and rubs this in as well. The sheets are an oily, minty, transparent mess. She pauses, and wipes her hands off on my hair.

Again she digs into her purse, and pulls out the three danishes she took from the breakfast bar downstairs. The plastic wrap crinkles and pops, in her greasy fingers. She puts two of them down on either side of my penis, and tucks the corner of the third into the elastic of her underwear.

"These are the worst breakfast amenities we sell. They're pretty much all jelly and butter, you know. I don't like them, but I have to eat them for every breakfast I'm staying with a customer. For appearances. Part of being a salesperson, I guess. But it sure makes it hard keep off those extra pounds!"

She laughs, and gives her stomach a pat, hanging over the pastry in her waistband. She reaches forward, and picks up one of the danishes. The wrapping has a picture of a blueberry on it. She tears open the covering, and throws it behind her on the bed. Lauren is breathing faster now, her shoulders moving up and down slightly. She puts the food in her hand, with the jelly side up, and places it against her nipple. Slowly, she rubs it around, crumbs falling onto the sheet and me. After a minute it is smashed into crust and smeared jelly, on her hand and her body. She reaches for the second, a strawberry, and opens it, throwing the wrapper, and smearing it on the other half of her body. I can smell fruit and sugar amongst the mint.

Now she leans backward, pulling her legs up so that her feet are flat on either side of me, breathing and grunting quietly with the effort. She bends to the side, and picks up the towel from the floor, squishing the danish remnants on her breasts and belly between the folds of her flesh that develop when she moves. Now she pulls down the sheet, and wipes off the lotion that has seeped through onto my penis. The towel feels large, rough, and dry against my oily skin. Sitting back between my legs, feet forward, she pulls the last pastry out of her underwear, which has somehow managed to remain there while she moves. She unwraps it. The plastic has an image of a plum.

With two jelly covered fingers, she pulls her underwear to the side, staining the cloth with the color. Using her thumb to hold the thin cloth, she spreads her vagina. I can smell her. I smell Lauren, and the jelly, and the mint, and the carpet.

Folding the pastry in half with one hand, she pushes it halfway into herself, closing her eyes. She lets go of the danish, and it stays just where she's placed it. With eyes still closed she reaches forward and grasps my penis with her jellied fingers, and using the tip of it, pushes the rest of the pastry inside her, with me following it. She leans forward, settling herself onto me, and pushes both of her stained hands into my mouth. I lick them.

"Honey, you're going to eat all three of these danishes before the night is over."

She reaches forward and grabs the orange juice off of the night stand, and pours it down her body, soaking us both, and she begins to move.

I wake up the next morning, and smell jelly and orange, and butter and soap, and vodka and linens, and towels, and water, and mint, and more smells of other fragrances I can't name, and I smell Lauren, all over my face and chest and hands, and the pillow I am clutching to my face. I try to move and I can't, wrapped in oily, twisted, knotted sheets, stained yellow and red, purple and cream. I free my legs, and stickily get my feet to the floor. The carpet feels like soggy bread beneath my feet, and it is freezing in the room.

Blankets are all over the floor, as are pools of water, and all the towels. My tie is on the desk in a pool of dark liquid, and I try to find something to dry it off with, but everything is sodden and stained. My suitcase is still closed by the closet door, but I am covered with the mess of the room, and don't want to open it.

Lauren, and her clothes and purse, are gone. I look at the clock, and try to figure out what time it is, but it is also gone. Where it stood on the night stand, the bible is sitting, open to a page in the middle. Light streams around the shut curtains. I feel the weight of dried, sticky liquid in the hair of my body, dragging it down, pulling slightly on all my pores.

Suddenly, I jump in the air in surprise, as there is a knocking at the door.

"Housekeeping!" a woman's voice says.