

READBEAST

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Alicia had known the question would come up at some point in the conversation, but somehow there was just no way to fully prepare for the innocent brutality of Beth's utter lack of social grace or subtlety.

Raising her coffee to her chin with both hands, Beth inhaled the scent deeply, sighed as she exhaled, and blundered into the thorniest subject plaguing her friend at the moment: "So, seeing anyone new, yet?"

Alicia did her best to disguise the grimace that pulled at her face, raising her own mug to her mouth, closing her eyes, and taking a long, steadying breath through her nose. She breathed deeply of the steadying, rich aroma of the cappuccino for a moment. She savoured the sensation of the steam playing across her face, letting the cacophony of conversation, clinking cutlery, dropped cups, coffee being freshly ground, and the hiss of the espresso machine roll over as she stalled for time. All too soon she would be obliged to say something, lest the silence grow awkward. She hated having this conversation, even with a friend as good as Beth.

"No. No one. To be honest, I really haven't even been looking."

Beth scoffed, gently. "Oh, come on Allie! I know things were really rough with Mark, there at the end, and that getting over it's been hard, but, really - it's been eight months, now! Y'know you can't keep yourself on the shelf forever - get back in the saddle and ride, ride again!"

Alicia indulged herself by rolling her eyes in disgust, though she managed to resist the temptation to make a snide remark about her friend's metaphor-mixing.

"Look, Beth, it's just not that simple, okay? It's not just that things were bad with Mark - there was Greg, Rob, Matthew . . . pretty much my ENTIRE dating life has been one string of disasters after another . . . I'm TIRED of it okay - in fact, I'm just about burned-out on men, right now. And don't look at me like that either! There's nothing wrong with wanting to take a break from dating, okay? It's good to be independent," she insisted with conviction. The look of disbelieving pity and concern on Beth's face started to get to her. "Okay . . . I'll admit it . . . the nights have been getting a little lonely lately - but I honestly have no interest in filling them with a man, right now. Actually, I've been toying with the idea of getting a dog."

At this admission, Beth's face lit with surprised pleasure and she began chattering excitedly. "REALLY?! Well, I'm still not convinced about this single-and-proud nonsense you're putting on, but that's great news! What breed would you go for? Male or bitch? Are you thinking about names, yet already?? When did you start wanting a dog? I mean, I always thought you were a total cat-person."

Allie took a second to recover from the onslaught, taking a slow mouthful of the warm, creamy cappuccino.

"Beth, just because I love cats that doesn't mean I can't like dogs too, y'know? I mean, I've always had a cat, but I used to think sometimes about getting a dog - I'd just get worried about how the cats would react to the intrusion. But now . . . well, it was devastating for me when Chester died - I'd had Ches for the better part of 15 years! I loved the little guy - and the fact that Mark was such a dick about ignoring my feelings after I had to PUT CHESS DOWN because HE'D hit him with the car, that poisoned our whole relationship . . . it just made losing Ches so much harder . . . I think it's going to be awhile before I can have another cat. But . . .like I said, the nights have been hard, lately, okay, and it'd be nice to have a companion whose motives and loyalties I don't have to constantly question and suspect, all the time."

Now it was Beth's turn to roll her eyes. "Wow, that wasn't SUPER CYNICAL, or anything, Allie. Geeze, why don't you just DATE a dog, the way you're talking - that way you'll never have to worry about being hurt again."

Startled, Allie recoiled, stung by her friend's barb. Beth softened and tried switching to a new tack, sorry for being so harsh with Allie even if was for her own good, "Still, though, I think getting a dog is a great idea - it couldn't hurt for you to lap-up a little unconditional doggy love, for awhile. Maybe the right dog could get you to stop being so uptight and you'd be able to open up to another guy, again."

"Beth, that's not what this is about, I mean . . .".

"Yeah, yeah - I get it," Beth interrupted. "Anyway, back to the basic questions: have you thought about what breed you'd want?"

"Well . . . I'm not really sure. I mean, I know I'd want something on the large side - I've always preferred bigger dogs - but I don't really know which I'd prefer; some kind of retriever, a pointer, a spaniel, a German Sheppard, a Newfoundland . . . I just don't know how to decide!"

Beth's face lit up and she stretched across the lightly-finished wood table to deliver a barrage of irritating, excited jabs. "I know! I've got an idea! Why don't you try volunteering to do a little dogsitting!"

Allie scrunched up her face, skeptically. "Take in a stranger's dog? Isn't that, I don't know, risky? What if you wind up with someone dumping a problem-dog on you? So they can get them out of their hair for awhile?"

"Oh, don't be so dense. You don't have to take in a dog totally sight-unseen - you can arrange an interview with the owners and the dogs before they actually leave them with you. Besides . . . all dogs are wonderful." Beth smiled triumphantly. When it came to dogs, Beth had a hard time believing anything bad.

"Well . . . I guess . . . Still, I - I'll think on it for a bit, okay?" Allie said to Beth's persistent and encouraging look. Suddenly, Alicia felt the need to get out of the clamorous coffee shop and away from the good natured, but hard-to-swallow commentary and advice of her friend. She had things to think about. "Shit! Look at the time!" she exclaimed, lamely, looking down at her watch. "I really have to get back to office or Janice is going to have my hide. I'll think about the dog-sitting thing, okay?"

"Okay. Just don't waste time agonizing over every minute detail, like you always do, huh? Act on impulse once-in-awhile! Live a little! You even get ME worrying, sometimes, Allie." Beth shot at her before the women exchanged parting pecks on the cheek.

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Switching off the light, Alicia flopped into bed with a grateful sigh as her head sank into her fluffy pillows and the contours of her body were supported by the divine cushioning of her waterbed. Stretching and yawning, she pulled the downy comforter over her naked body, snuggling it around her shoulders. It had been a typically-stressful day at work and she was just happy for the chance to stop, relax - and think.

She gnawed her full bottom lip compulsively as she chewed over the present dilemma.

Annoying as Beth could be sometimes, she was a really great friend - blunt to the point of insensitivity sometimes, maybe, but there were times when that brutal honesty was just what Allie needed, no denying it. Plus, she couldn't want a more loyal and supportive friend. So it was making Allie squirm with guilt that she hadn't been able to share everything on her mind with Beth when they'd spoken at coffee.

There were some secrets about herself that were so shameful Allie just couldn't share them with anyone, even her best friend.

She couldn't tell her friend how the frustration of not having sex was burning her. How she ached at night. Not for a man - she'd meant what she'd said about needing to take a break from guys - but for a different kind of partner; a male, but of a different species. When she'd said she wanted a dog for a companion, she was committing a lie of omission - she wanted more than a simple companion, what she really wanted was a new lover.

Allie bit her lip with guilt at the thought of her basest sexual desires - an unnatural longing to be mastered by a male dog.

That was the real reason she wasn't sure about Beth's dog-sitting advice. She wasn't sure it was such a good idea to borrow someone else's dog, to see if their breed would be a good fit for her, so to speak, without telling the owner what she had planned. It seemed so wrong.

Unfortunately, given Alicia's attraction to the perverse, the added taboo served only to make the idea that much harder to resist.

She couldn't help it. Scenarios began playing across her aberrant imagination, unbidden. Spending a wild weekend being screwed by a pit-bull, then returning him to his owners moments after the last coupling, smiling and giving them praising reports of their pet's impeccable behaviour, her panties secretly sopping with dog cum. Being a beautiful, broad-chested boxer's obedient bitch one day, and then returning him to his owner's - friskier and more playful than they'd seen him in years. Having a huge, brindled Great Dane master her and coat her in buckets of cum . . . which she could secretly feed back to his owners, when she had them in for piña cucladas after their tough return flight . . . .

It was all too much.

It was so wrong, so abnormal, so deviant - but so hot. The more she thought about it, the more turned-on Allie became. The depravity was so hard to resist, and what was more, she didn't want to.

What if she didn't have to?

Maybe it was her libido doing the thinking for her, but Allie's breathing quickened and she licked her lips as a delicious thought occurred to her. Who said it was the owner's BUSINESS what she and the dogs did in their time together, after all? If they were mature dogs, didn't they have some say in the matter? If both Allie and the dogs were fine with their relations, then wasn't that what mattered?

A wave of excitement thrilled through her body. Maybe she could take Beth's advice. Perhaps with help she could find someone who'd let her take their dog into her house. It just might be possible for Allie to finally satisfy one of her strongest, darkest, most tempting sexual fantasies.

Image-after-image of wild, uninhibited dog-sex racing through her mind, she ran her hands over herself eagerly. Her left hand rose to massage and pinch her nipples, her right slid down to her blushing pussy-lips. Her dark, downy pubes already dripping from her lust.

Stroking her throbbing clit insistently, Alicia came twice to thoughts of doggy's slippery tongue patiently licking her to explosive orgasm. She imagined the smell and feel of a canine lover as he humped her from behind — as hard and as deep as she'd ever gotten it in her life — and wriggled ecstatically. She probed her own depths with her fingers, eagerly.

More excited than she'd been in months, at the thought of finally satisfying her urge to be mated-with by a dog, she eventually came-herself to sleep, late into the night.

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It'd been nearly a week since Piper came to stay with Alicia and the pair were spending a slow, quiet afternoon curled up together on the waterbed. A good book in hand, Allie lay on her side, propped up on a pillow, completely absorbed. After days spent on long walks, filled with enthusiastic playing, and whiled-away with long stretches of loving petting and scratching, the affectionate chocolate, English-bred Labrador (a handsome, un-neutered show dog) had grown comfortable with his new friend. His head lay across Allie's hips, one paw resting between her thighs.

Though eager — all-but desperate, truthfully - to get beyond the platonic phase with Piper and get to know him (in the Biblical sense, that is); Allie didn't want to rush into anything with the dog. She wanted everything about their special time together to be perfect - and that meant she wasn't about to risk frightening him by jumping into things too quickly. After all, Piper's family - Jennifer and husband Ted plus their two children - were far away, traveling across Europe for an extended, three week vacation; they still had plenty of time.

Still, it was just about killing her, having the gorgeous animal so close, and having such a good time with him, but also having to resist the temptation to just say damn it all and jump his doggy bones. Allie had cum herself to sleep every night since saying goodbye to Jennifer after she dropped-off the dog and left for the airport. Her door was always propped open, in welcome to Piper in the hope that he might take an interest in her activities, as she masturbated

She'd have to be patient for awhile longer.

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On the twelfth day of Piper and Allie's time together, she decided that she and her thus-far titular lover had spent enough time getting to know each other.

She'd been tenderly brushing down Piper's coat, after coming home from a good long jog, when she felt the temptation to become more-than-friends with her canine companion begin to overwhelm her. The Lab's intelligent hazel eyes were bright from the spirited exercise and his new friend's welcome-ministrations; his tongue lolled up and down as he panted happily, his ears flopping at different angles. He had to be just about the cutest thing Allie had ever seen. Allie licked her lips with anticipation as she took in the sight of her friend's well-built, muscle-bound flanks. A few lines of sweat trailed across the rich-brown short-haired coat. Allie noticed that the dog's sheath and nuts were bouncing rhythmically, in time with his heavy breathing and the wags of his tapered tail.

She had to have this beautiful beast!

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Rummaging in the closet of her guest-room/home-office, Alicia finally found the box she'd been looking for. It'd been a long time since she'd put it in there, intending never to look on its contents again. It meant too much to her to be able to throw away, but it'd become associated with such hurts

that she'd thought she could never bear to look at it again. Now seemed an appropriate time to go back on that and prove herself wrong.

Taking a deep breath, she lifted off the lid, reached in, and raised up what was inside, cradling it in her hands with no small amount of apprehension.

It was a dog collar. Black, leather, with a wide band and big buckle, lined with thick-set, half-inch long, shiny metal spikes; it'd been a gift from Mark. Seeing the thing again filled her with a flood of mixed emotions: memories of shock, the thrill of excitement, lust, memories of depraved acts, secretly, shamefully, enjoyed. Physical pain and pleasure mingled, but to be ended in torturous emotional pain.

She took a deep breath.

Reaching up with both hands, Allie buckled on the collar. It was time to create new memories for her favourite accessory. She admired her naked form in the extra dressing-mirror shoved in the corner of the room. She'd always thought she looked pretty darn good in the collar, before it'd taken on unwanted meaning for her. Twisting this way and that to get a good look at her, 5'7" frame, she fondled her C-cup breasts and tried to wiggle around to get a good look at her ass and pussy. She tossed her glossy, rich, chestnut brown curls over her shoulder with attitude, noticing how she looked as she spun and shook. She reflected that the time spent moping over the break-up had taken it's toll in the way of some extra pounds, observable in appreciably larger love-handles, an expanded ass, and a visibly bigger belly. She'd begun to fret when suddenly she burst out in barks of laughter - Piper wasn't going to tell her she was too fat.

Shaking her head, Allie walked to the open door, whistled and called Piper's name up the basement stairs. She slapped her rump as she whistled for him a second time, standing inside the room, beside the door. The room was a somewhat-drab and undeniably-spartan space (the only pieces of furniture were the futon, her desk with the computer, printer and fax on it, and the long-neglected mirror). In contrast to her own cozy bedroom, upstairs, this room lacked a window and was washed a simple, bland winter green as opposed to the warm earth tones of her own bedroom. However, she had thought it might be good to set up a unique space and conditions for their time together, so that Piper would not come to associate their sex play with everyday circumstances. She wanted him to understand as well as she did, just how special what they did would be. The futon mattress was protected by a rubber drop-sheet, zipped-up inside an old, long-unused slip-cover. The bedclothes had been stripped from the mattress and pillows. Along with Allie's unabashed nakedness, and the unusual necklace, she hoped she'd done a good job of establishing that what was to come would be nothing ordinary.

The scene was set. The only thing missing was her lover-to-be.

Piper bounded down the stairs and rocketed into the love-space, wagging his tail and giving her an expectant look when he came to rest. Allie closed the door and gave the dog an ear-to-ear grin. "Wanna have some special fun, Pipee?" she said, the dog cocking his head curiously at the unfamiliar note in his new friend's voice.

She walked to the trustworthy old futon she'd opened up and pulled into the centre of the room, taking a seat on the edge and patting the space beside her, indicating to the dog that she wanted him to join her.

As soon as Piper jumped up, the two began to play, spiritedly. Wrestling with her playmate, Allie managed to knock him over onto his side and then roll him onto his back, nuzzling her face in his

furry chest. Straddling his abdomen, she rubbed her hands over his chest next. Leaning forward, she rubbed her face against his muzzle, slowly and wantonly, planting a kiss on the tip of his snout. As he licked her lips and face, for once she didn't struggle, trying to turn aside his licks - instead she responded by sticking out her tongue, letting him lick its length as well.

Confused by her response, he began to struggle between her thighs and Alicia hopped off him quickly as he leapt to his four feet. Again, his head was cocked to the side and his bright, intelligent eyes filled with confusion.

Was he beginning to see her in a new way?

More roughhouse play and Allie again had Piper on his back, where she wanted him. She rested her head on the Lab's chest as it rose and fell from the exertion of their play. She let her hand roam across his belly and Piper wiggled happily underneath her; she slowly let her hand creep lower.

Gently, carefully, her hand strayed over Piper's sheath. He stopped wiggling. She halted too. After a few still moments, Allie took her head off Piper's chest, propping herself up on her right arm, the left hand still resting lightly on Piper's package. She met the searching hazel gaze before resuming her tender explorations of the dog's groin. He emitted a long, slow, whine, but didn't try to turn away from her hand.

Encouraged, she continued.

Feeling the dog's genitals more intently, Allie began to massage his tool with light strokes. When she heard him begin to pant and noticed how still he lay, rather than wriggling away, she began to carefully retract the furry sheath — exposing his moist member. She watched with awe and excitement as Piper's erection began to form. As it became engorged, she managed to get her thumb and fingers grasped firmly around the base of the shaft as he began hunching his hips and his knot swelled. Having filled her right hand with a bit of lube, she began jerking his swelling thing. The look on Piper's face was no longer one of confusion, but of unmitigated joy. (Being a champion show dog, Piper's services as a stud dog were in high demand, but his family never let him mate directly with the bitches his sperm was to impregnate, fearing for his health. As such, Piper was familiar with being jacked-off, whenever someone arranged to purchase some of his puppy-juice.)

His knot at full, tennis ball-size, the Lab's throbbing cock began erupting streams of cum into the air, only to fall back down his shaft and dribble down over Allie's hands. Alarmed to be letting the precious juices go to waste, Allie lapped them up off her hand and his shaft, sucking up the new jets like she was at a drinking fountain.

The taste was everything she'd dreamed it would be - delicious.

Lapping at the tip and orifice of his impossibly-red, swollen, pulsing cannon, she wrapped her lips around the end and sucked it ever-deeper into her mouth. Working up a good, slick of saliva and pre-cum, she was soon bobbing her head up and down his shaft eagerly and she began to feel it, and his knot, swelling even larger than they already were. She felt him renew his attempts to hump and thought she knew what was coming next- her suspicions were confirmed when Piper's orgasm started and he filled her throat with the first stream of piping-hot dog cum.

She sucked, slurped, and lapped it all up with gusto, trying not to waste a single drop, until finally she seemed to have drained him momentarily dry. Piper struggled onto his feet and out of Allie's mouth and hands.

Well-pleased with the progress they'd so far made, Allie crawled over to Piper on all-fours, stopped,

took his face in both hands and planted a kiss across his muzzle. "Good boy, Piper! Very, very good boy! Who's a goodboyden? You're a goodboyden! That's who! You've been a very good boy for Auntie Allie," she said to him in her most encouraging tone. She rubbed her hands over his rippling-shoulders and gave him a big hug, before scrambling around behind him.

She stopped for a moment, appreciating the view of his ropey-glistening haunches, and the still-hard cock throbbing under them. She was in awe at the sight - Mark had always been a disappointment in this department. He had tended towards a one-pop then-flop pattern. She reached out to her new lover's stiffy, bending it backwards between his legs. She put a few pillows under her shoulder blades for comfort, then raised herself onto her feet, her weight balanced on her shoulders and her pussy lifted into the air to meet his cock.

Allie let Piper's tip poke between her pussy lips and started to move it up-and-down their length a few times before positioning it in line with the opening of her vulva, and beginning to pull him gently towards her.

The blowjob had been a welcome new experience for the dog, beyond the same-old, same-old of his usual sessions with the dog fertility and mating technician, but this newest move was going outside his comfort zone. Piper had never been allowed to copulate with one of his own kind before, let alone one of his master's. He pulled his pole out of Allie's hand and scampered to a far corner of the futon. By the time Allie caught up with him, his cock had receded back into its protective sheath and he looked worried.

"Awww, that's okay sweetie," Allie cooed. "I understand. We have time to take this slow for you. Besides," her tone turned back into the sugary approval-voice and she reached over his shoulder to hug him again, "you've been such a good boy already! Yes you have! Piper's been a very good boy for Auntie Allie!"

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It was day 14 of Piper and Alicia's time together, and after having repeated the scene of two night's ago twice, yesterday, and being in the middle of another glorious blow-job now, the dog seemed to be relaxing more into he and his friend's newest game. Allie decided she wanted to see if he was comfortable enough to take their play to a new level.

She took out the package of sturdy, long, men's grey woolen socks and slipped four of them onto Piper: one pair for each set of legs, and taped them firmly - but not too tight - into place on his legs with a little duct tape.

Next, she hopped onto all fours in front of Piper, stretching out her arms, arching her back, and leaning backwards so that her pussy would be at a convenient angle and height for her intended mate. Balanced on her right arm, she reached back with her left and smacked her ass a few times, making encouraging kiss-kiss noises she said, "Come on boy, time to hump Auntie Allie!"

As she uttered the words, she was shocked at herself. She'd been so timid and worried about doing just what she was about to do, for so long - but at this moment the fear had melted away. She was burning with her lust. It'd been so long since she'd had someone inside her. She NEEDED someone inside her. She wanted it now. She wanted it to be Piper; and she wanted it to be him NOW.

Unfortunately, Piper did not respond as quickly as her desire; years of being trained not to jump up were tussling with his desire to fulfill Alicia's command and his strange, newfound feelings for the woman. The dog was filled with a flood of confusion



“Awwwwww, poor puppy!” Allie exclaimed, picking up on his plight. “Let me help?”

She scooped around until she was up on her knees, beside Piper. She reached over and gripped his socked front legs, one in each hand, and lifted him onto his hind legs, pulling him backwards carefully — trying not to alarm him — she managed to get him behind herself. Adjusting things so that she again had one hand wrapped around each front leg, but tucked between her arms and torso on either side, Allie leaned forward, back onto all fours, only now with her hands clasping his forelegs and his groin in contact with her rump.

Instinct took over. Piper began humping against Allie’s rear.

Suddenly, Alicia’s confidence wavered. Piper was humping in the right area, but wildly and without coordination. His member was stabbing into her butt randomly. Panic blossomed in her abdomen, washing cold over the former heat. If she didn’t do something quick, the only thing she was going to get out of this was a sore and bruised backside.

Releasing her grip on his forelegs, Allie balanced herself on her left arm while reaching behind herself with her right. She managed to get a hold of Piper’s cock by the base of the shaft, behind his increasingly-swelling knot.

She arched her spine and leaned back a bit more, and then managed to align the tip of his dick with the sweet spot. Before she knew what-was-what, he’d plunged the shaft deep inside her, slamming his groin against Allie’s exposed pussy. Suddenly, he was humping her harder, faster, and deeper than she’d ever had it from a human male! The panic in her belly was replaced with a sudden flood of pain, and she tried to pull forward and away from him — but after she’d released his forelegs Piper had moved to grip her tightly around the waist and he wasn’t letting her go anytime soon.

Alicia began to emit short, barking, high, full-throated moans, panting as the pain numbed, subsided, and was washed away under a new sensation – an intense stimulation of her g-spot by Piper’s slick, pointed shaft. She fell forward, her weight now resting on her boobs and one cheek, and the dog kept in step, wailing at her pussy in the slightly adjusted position.

Allie was starting to lose herself in the flood of mingled sensations – the dog’s breath and lolling tongue, falling on her back; the friction between their bodies as Piper humped as close against her as he could get, slamming hard and deep inside his mate’s pussy; the bristling hairs on his tail rubbing her labia and clitty as his tail jacked between her legs in his efforts to get even deeper into his new bitch. Deeper?

He couldn’t, could he?

Again, Piper soon provided the answer to her silent question. Adjusting his grip on her waist and shifting his position behind her, Piper situated himself so that none of the force of his thrusts would be wasted. His tail slid between her legs and rubbed against her snatch again as he braced himself to bring to bare every ounce of force he could muster, forcing himself hard against the opening of her pussy.

Allie’s moans became short, sharp grunts – he was trying so hard to get fully into her, it was starting to hurt a bit again, but she didn’t dare try to stop him. Even if she’d been inclined to try, there probably was no getting him to give up on his goal now, and besides — this was the moment she’d really been waiting for. She hadn’t dared to hope, before this moment, that she would experience it on her first night of dog-penetration!

He thumped against her hard, again, but this time he made some progress, and Allie emitted a long,

deep-throated screech as her pussy opening stretched just a little, encouraging Piper to withdraw just enough to make one more, pointed thrust with everything he had. Alicia's cry dialed up into a higher pitch, modulated with intense pain, as the hard knot was forced inside her and the Lab's already tumid sausage swelled incredibly within her, effectively locking the lovers together.

As Piper came deep inside Allie, she could feel the spurts of moist heat spray against her cervix periodically, flooding the end of her vagina. The pain washing away, under the irresistible stimulation of the increased friction against her g-spot, Allie could feel the waves of pleasure mounting inside her. Her brain fried with passion, thought slipped away in a whirlwind of pain, pleasure, heat, moisture, and friction. As Piper's tail jack-knifed against Alicia's clit again, it all became too much for her. She was completely lost in the surge of what had to be the most intense orgasm of her life.

As their tie showed no sign of ending anytime soon, Allie collapsed, rubbing at herself with abandon and bringing herself to climax twice more, with the help of the sights (his paws stretched on either side of her head, his enormously-pleased face resting on her back - if she twisted), sounds (like the moist squishy sounds of his cum dribbling out of her, or the happy panting in her ears), and smells (like that of his musky male body against her, or of his seed already soaking the slipcover beneath them) of their copulation.

When finally Piper began to struggle against their bond — wiggling his cock around in Allie until it came free of her one, sudden, violent, popping motion - it was to the sound of her screaming; once again in a sound of surprise, pain, and pleasure, but now also of disappointment. Disappointment that the experience was over. Even so, she collapsed forward on the futon with exhaustion. Panting with her face in the mattress as her roughly-used pussy pulsed, dripping and pouring forth the streams of cum Piper had deposited in her. Eventually, she was able to muster the energy to roll onto her back and her lover strode over to lick her face enthusiastically.

"Good boy, Piper. Good, good, boy. You screwed Auntie Allie real, real good. Thank-you for being SUCH a good boy." She managed to pant out in gratitude and encouragement. Pleased, Piper started licking again and was gratified to find that Alicia would offer no resistance as he happily slipped his tongue into her slack mouth, licking deeply inside; Allie couldn't help but kiss back enthusiastically.

Well pleased with how things had gone, the pair fell asleep cuddling each other on the futon, lying in their sticky love-puddle. The coming week should be fun indeed.

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All-too-quickly, 21 days were up and the hard part had come - time to say goodbye to her new friend and return him to his family.

That afternoon, shortly after their last time together, Allie picked up the phone to hear Jennifer telling her she was on the way to pick up Piper. She scrambled to get ready for the arrival, hastily pulling on some clothes and assembling Piper's things. Ten minutes after she had judged everything ready and herself more-or-less presentable, the doorbell rang and Piper began to bark excitedly. "Hiya boy!" Jennifer exclaimed upon stepping through the door. "Didja miss me, Piper? Mommy sure missed you, fella!"

He greeted his "mommy" with enthusiastic tail wags and eager kisses in return of her pats and hugs. She knew she had no right to, and she had to be careful not to let on to it to Jennifer, but Allie couldn't help the sudden wash of jealousy that came over her at seeing Piper giving another woman this attention. Maybe it was best that this ended now, after all, before she got too attached. She'd

discovered a disadvantage to the dogsitting thing, but she supposed it was one she could deal with if it meant getting more experience with the kind of activities she and Piper had engaged in over the past week - often several times a day.

"Did he give you any trouble?" Jennifer asked her.

"No," Allie said, swallowing the sensation in her throat, "he was no problem at all - a real pleasure, as a matter of fact. We got along GREAT. He's a wonderful dog."

Jennifer smiled. "Yeah, he really is, isn't he. So have you decided what your next step is regarding getting a dog of your own?"

"Well, not really. I suppose it's a decision that I shouldn't make too quickly, so I thought I'd try doing some more dogsitting first, y'know, for other dogs and other breeds, until I find one I really click with." Alicia supplied quickly.

Jennifer smiled approvingly again. "Good idea," she said. "You're right, dog ownership isn't something to jump into lightly. Too many people do, and sometimes with disastrous consequences for the dog. Take your time and find yourself a breed that's a good fit for you and your needs before you go searching for one of your own!"

"Thanks," Allie managed. "I'll do just that . . . oh, and thanks so much for letting me dogsit for you."

"Hey! No thanks necessary, you were doing us and Piper a real service! We hate leaving him in a kennel when we go away! But I'm afraid we really have to be going, now - say "buh-bye-ee" Piper!" She chirped, prompting some last, spirited barking from Piper.

"Bye-bye, Piper!" I replied. "I meant it when I said he was a real pleasure to have around, Jennifer - don't hesitate to call should you ever need a dogsitter in future! And tell your friends that I'm available if they need someone to take care of their dogs!"

"Will do!" she beamed, as she and Piper headed for the car.

Waving as they pulled away, Allie went inside, closed the front door, and flopped against its solid oak surface. "I wonder if she could smell his spunk on me," she thought with an amused-smirk as she walked back through the house and to the phone and computer so that she could find her next dogsitting situation.