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Mornings after sucked. Walks of shame were a necessary evil, but that didn't mean I enjoyed shimmying back into the same trollop togs twice. I picked glitter out of my hair, then straightened my sequined top. I was officially decommissioning it. Multiple washings never quite managed to remove the lingering aura of bad decisions I made while wearing party clothes. My philosophy? Cross my fingers and hope for the most bang for the bucks spent later on new outfits.

The surly cabbie evil-eyed me to hurry up.

I complied, rooting around in my clutch for some crumpled bills before handing them over and stumbling out of the taxi onto the sidewalk.

Fresh air was a godsend after the stale bitter coffee smell I'd been trapped with during the ride. I pressed a finger to my temple, a persistent dull throb stabbing me behind my eyeballs. My residual feel good haze clashed big-time with the glaring sun screaming at me to wake up, and the buzz of a neighbor's lawnmower cutting through the Sunday morning quiet didn't help matters. Best get inside.

Smoothing out my mini skirt, I readied myself for my tame-my-happy-slut-self-to-boring-PG-rating body check when a wave of dizziness crashed through me. Whoa. I brought my gaze back to horizon level, swallowing hard. That sea-sickness technique was doing dick-all so I rummaged in my bag for my ginger chews.

No puking in the bushes, I chided myself, letting the spicy smooth and sweet candy fight my nausea. My mother would toss my bubble ass out if I defiled her precious rhodos.

Again.

The rise and fall of my chest as I took a few deep breaths spotlighted a slight problem. My spangly blouse was missing two buttons. And I was missing a bra. Hook-up Dude had been worth the loss of a pair of socks, maybe a bargain bin thong. But the latest in purple push-up technology? No. I allowed myself a second to mourn. It had been a good and loyal bra.

The sex, on the other hand? Total crap. The girls, who were normally perky C cups, seemed a bit subdued. I couldn't blame them. What's-his-name had started out with all the promise of a wild stallion gallop, but he'd ended up more of a gentle trot. I didn't know if the fault lay with the jockey or the ride, but it had been a long time since I'd seen a finish line.

Since I couldn't keep examining my tits on the front walk with Mrs. Jepson side-eyeing me from behind her living room curtains, I thrust my chin up and clacked a staccato rhythm toward my front door on those mini torture chambers that had seemed *such* a good idea yesterday.

Every step made our precisely manicured lawn undulate. I clamped my lips shut, willing the ginger chews to kick in while fumbling my key into the lock. Dad had screwed up the measurements on our striking cedar and stained glass front door and, being a touch too big for the frame, it needed to be shouldered open.

I crashed into the door like a linebacker. Once I'd extricated myself and my keys from the lock, I brushed myself off, and stepped inside. Our house itself was comfortably upper middle class but not huge, since my parents preferred to spend money on trips and books instead of the overpriced real estate found in here in Vancouver. A quick glance to my left showed that the TV room was empty. I crossed my fingers that Mom and Dad were out at their squash game, my main reason for picking this specific time to sneak back in.

Really, a twenty-year-old shouldn't have had to sneak. But then again, a twenty-year-old probably should have kept her last menial job for longer than two weeks, so I wasn't in a position to argue rights.

I kicked off my shoes, sighing in delight at the feel of cool tile under my bare feet as I padded through the house to our homey kitchen. No one was in there either. Someone, probably Mom, had tacked the envelope with my final—and only—pay stub from the call center that I'd left lying around onto our small “miscellaneous” cork board. The gleaming quartz counters were now free of their usual clutter of papers, books, and latest gourmet food find. That meant company. Come to think of it, I did hear someone in the living room.

A study in tasteful shades of white, the large formal room was off-limits unless we had special guests. Mom had set that rule when my twin brother Ari and I were little tornados running around the place and while there was no longer a baby gate barring our way, conditioning and several memorable scoldings kept us out.

Hmmm. Could Ari be entertaining an actual human boy? Le gasp.

I beelined for the back of the house, past the row of identically framed family photos hanging in a neat grid, my head cocked. Listening for more voices, but all was quiet. Maybe I'd been wrong? I hoped not. Both finding my brother with a crush—blackmail dirt—and helping myself to the liquor cabinet were positive prospects. What better way to lose that hangover headache than get drunk again? Oh, the joys of being Canadian with socialized health care and legal drinking age of nineteen. After a year (officially) honing that skill, I imbibed at an Olympic level.

The red wine on the modular coffee table gleamed in a shaft of sunlight like its position had been ordained by the gods. I snatched up the crystal decanter, sloshing the liquid into the glass conveniently placed next to it. Once in a while, a girl could actually catch a break.

I fanned myself with one hand. The myriad of lit candles seemed a bit much for Ari's romantic encounter, but wine drinking trumped curiosity so I chugged the booze back. My entire body cheered as the cloyingly-sweet alcohol hit my system, though I hoped it wasn't Manischewitz because hangovers on that were a bitch. I'd slugged back half the contents when I saw my

mom on the far side of the room clutch her throat, eyes wide with horror. Not her usual, “you need an intervention” horror. No, her expression indicated I’d reached a whole new level of fuck-up.

“Nava Liron Katz,” she gasped in full name outrage.

My cheeks still bulging with wine, I properly scoped out the room. Mom? Check. Dad? Check. Ari? Check? Rabbi Abrams, here to perform the ceremony to induct my brother as the latest member in the Brotherhood of David, the chosen demon hunters?

Check.

I spit the wine back into what I now realized was a silver chalice and handed it to the elderly bearded rabbi. “Carry on,” I told him. Then I threw up on his shoes.

