

# The Two Paris Problem

by Mana Ray

(Fm+/Fm+, humiliation, bdsm, foot fetish, subjugation, mind control, slavery, social sadism)

*Synopsis: After the outbreak of a virus, Paris and her fiancé move in to a wealthy woman's guest house. Step by step, she reduces them into an obedient domestic couple who make her money in the most disdainful ways.*

Rashmi had been kind to allow Paris and her fiancé to crash in her guest house when the young couple ran out of money, but their relationship was quickly becoming strained. Part of it was the cabin fever from living in quarantine, part of it was the long stint of unemployment and spending it in a 1 bedroom guest house. With nothing to do but watch television and browse social media, they were falling into a rut along with more serious issues like jealousy and video game addictions that Paris didn't like to think about.

At first, Rashmi's offer had been like a stroke of luck but now it was feeling more like a trap.

Except for Tristan's job, neither of them had been outside the guest house very much over the past year. Paris wept when she remembered the endless summer beaches and felt how badly she wanted to invite her friends to another barbecue rager, another bottomless mimosa brunch – any sort of contact at all, that wasn't through a screen. But Rashmi wouldn't allow them to do social visits like that because they could catch something and bring it into her home.

Rashmi never held herself to the same standard though: the dynamic, mature Indian woman was still going to her Beverly Hills office, still hosting friends and clients for brunch as normal – with only the waitstaff needing to wear masks. But part of their tenancy agreement was to confine themselves to the property as much as possible, wearing smart watches that logged when they left.

Paris was wearing hers right now even though she technically didn't have to. She resented the expensive gadget, and the way it acted as a constant point of contact between them and Rashmi. The watches had microphones built in, which made it so that Paris was afraid of speaking ill of anything even in the privacy of her own home. Almost without exception, whenever she was starting to get intimate with Tristan, his smartwatch would start beeping, taking him away on an urgent food delivery job. It could be 11pm or 2 in the morning and the delivery could be as simple as one box of vanilla almond ice cream but he had to immediately accept it and start each job right away to keep a good rating. It caused her no small amount of embarrassment that her fiancé could only find work as a delivery boy.

Not that Paris was doing any better. The pale brunette California girl had lost her event planning business because of the outbreak. At first, it was because no one was having weddings or birthday parties anymore. But as time went on and the restrictions relaxed, she tried to pick up new clients only to learn that her business, specifically, was ordered to remain closed. What a situation to be in! To be forbidden from working, while still being held responsible for their rent, their car payments, both of their student loans, food, gas, medical insurance – everything!

It was a painful journey that even brought them to this guest house. Paris wept when she thought of their old Gaol Park apartment with the wood floors and the pain of losing it because they couldn't pay the rent anymore. Her self-esteem had suffered badly since the outbreak: once winsome and charismatic, Paris was now prone to doubting herself and to retreating inwardly. She felt helpless that her debts kept on increasing, with no relief in sight. The news broadcasts were only doom and horror: chyrons like "Bread Lines From Sea to Shining Sea."

She spent hours a day playing video games on her smartphone: in particular, a Candy Crush knockoff where all she did was pop bubbles, slide stuff around, and earn high scores to get to the next level. Even though she thought it was stupid, it still took up hours of her time each day and left her feeling drained and guilty. Trashy TV shows, marijuana, and social media filled up the rest of her time adding to the guilt and shame she lived with. The marijuana was a gift from Rashmi otherwise Paris could never have afforded it.

Why were things so bad? Rashmi gave them food and drugs and a place to live, why couldn't they just keep their heads down and figure a way out?

For starters, Rashmi was an overbearing woman who didn't respect boundaries whatsoever. For example: when they first moved in, they were annoyed to discover that the streaming services all had advertisements enabled. And Rashmi wouldn't allow them to log in to their own accounts for home security reasons. She said something about how the screens were super advanced technology, even though they looked and behaved exactly like any other smart TV Paris had ever used. When Tristan pressed her on it, she just replied "Well you shouldn't be here long enough for that to be an issue. Besides, too much television is bad for you. We can revisit this next month."

The ads were so long and frequent that Paris found it difficult to enjoy her shows – in addition to being a stressor that led to her playing more video games. It might not seem like a big deal, but combined with the fact they got slow WiFi and dodgy cell phone service out there, it really limited their entertainment options to expensive movies on demand, the magazines Rashmi had delivered, and the books she placed out mostly for decoration. This was just one of many examples where Rashmi made their lives more difficult because of some punctillious rule.

Instead of getting groceries delivered, Rashmi had it so they did meal delivery instead. Not from nearby restaurants, but from some off-brand app where the quality of food (while nutritious) was never much better than Paris had found in her old college dining hall. Sometimes it was stuff like soy chicken nuggets, spaghetti and steamed vegetables from a can. They couldn't do their own laundry, even. They had to send their dirty clothes to some washing service that kept on losing her things and returning others a size down.

The truculent, full-figured Indian woman insisted that they keep the guest house clean enough to satisfy her standards, going so far as to require Paris to spend one day a week detail-cleaning it from top to bottom for a full 8 hour day. Rashmi would often barge into their home after two quick knocks on the door to do a surprise inspection or to share some tedious gossip from her personal life. The guest house was a 1 bedroom 1 bath with high ceilings and an open floor plan: as soon as Rashmi crossed the threshold she could see most of the place. She always behaved as if this was her home, too – sometimes sitting right on the sofa and complaining that there were some dishes left out before requesting that Paris make her a cup of Chai tea.

It had started with brunette Paris learning to make Chai tea to her hostess's high expectations. Then Rashmi decided that she wanted massages like she had received from her servants growing up. So she had Paris watch videos on how to perform an Ayurvedic scalp massage so the girl could offer them to her, to demonstrate her gratitude. The hair serum that Paris would massage into Rashmi's scalp and all through her thick, slightly curly black hair -- its scent would remain on her hands for the whole day: lilac, ylang ylang, rose. After mastering the scalp massage, Paris had learned how to do a shoulder massage, an arm and hand massage, and soon Rashmi wanted her doing her feet as well, now that she was going out more often in high heels. The longer Paris went unemployed, the more she lost faith in herself and the assertiveness to tell this woman off.

That's what she needed to do, right? Refuse to do what Rashmi said! But the woman was undeniable. And she made it clear from the get-go that this was her home and they were to obey her rules, which included the unwritten rule of them acting happy to see her all the time and pleasantly agreeing with all her suggestions. She delighted in the fact that she could pop in whenever she wanted, and be attended to by Paris and Tristan when he was around.

Tristan, by comparison, seemed happy with how things were going. To his credit, he had been saving nearly all the money he made as a delivery boy so they could afford their own place. But due to skyrocketing rents, it turned out to be difficult to find an apartment -- even a shared apartment -- on a single income. In the meantime, he was cordial to Rashmi. More than cordial, in fact. He was eating out of the palm of her hand and Paris was constantly humiliated that Rashmi would do things like call Tristan in to pour her a glass of wine and listen to her complain about

her day. Meanwhile Paris was left alone, stuck in the back house despondently looking at more job or apartment listings, or more likely watching TV / playing on her iPhone.

Every time his watch beeped, Tristan couldn't change into his delivery uniform quickly enough. One night, Paris was the middle of deepthroating him after a rare, pleasant evening together but Tristan's watch beeped and he just apologized and got out of bed so abruptly it shamed her. He got dressed to leave and she could see the outline of his cock tenting against his uniform shorts. It left her feeling miserable, unwanted, and angry that his job would reach into their private lives like that and pull them apart.

She never knew how long he'd be gone for: 30 minutes? Five hours? The rest of the day? The fact that her fiancée was so agreeable to living beneath Rashmi's thumb resulted in Paris feeling more confused and isolated. They hadn't had sex in quite some time – his stupid watch would beep at the worst possible time and he would have to run to the store on some taskrabbit assignment. And Rashmi was there the entire time, oversharing about her life and acting super high maintenance.

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It was hot outside. More than 104 and not even noon, not even summer. The air conditioning kept the guest house exceptionally cold however, to Rashmi's liking. Paris shivered slightly as she looked out the floor-to-ceiling windows at the swimming pool and realized that in all her time living here, she had never once gone swimming in it. Rashmi then came out into the back yard, taking brisk strides towards Paris's home while chatting pleasantly with a woman behind her : a half Black woman with straightened hair, dressed like a successful lawyer or C-level employee.

"Shit!" Paris whispered to herself.

Although it was 11:30 on a Tuesday, she was still in her pyjamas. She hadn't even taken a shower yet. She quickly grabbed a change of clothes and went for the bathroom when she heard a knock at the door. They had probably seen her through the windows this entire time, scurrying away. The blinds were up because Rashmi didn't like them down past 8 AM.

"PARIS! It's too hot for us to wait out here, we need to see you honey."

With that, Rashmi whipped the door open and barged into the apartment.

"Let me just put something on! Excuse me," Paris said as she went into the bathroom, embarrassed at the first impression she was making on this new person. She silently cursed Rashmi for not warning her that they would have company – she

was always doing stuff like this. But she cursed her own indolence at the same time. She used to be the type who was up at 6AM so she could hit the gym before class. Moving quickly, she threw on a t-shirt and yoga pants then went barefoot to meet her guests before Rashmi could notice too many things to complain about later.

They made introductions and sat down together. This was Nicole Ashburne, a recruiter for Yas Models.

"I'm just going to be honest," Nicole said, "I love your whole look. Are you 5'10"? I could see you making a lot of money in direct-to-consumer marketing. You appeal to all of the main demographics."

Something about Nicole's vibe was wrong – she was being too pie-in-the-sky for this to be a legit business offer. She was wearing a slate grey pantsuit that went well with her complexion, and had a very 'corporate board room' manner of speech. Nicole kept her straightened hair pulled back into a ponytail with an eye-catching gold clasp holding it up. She basically just wanted Paris to become an influencer / 'content creator' for Yas Models. She'd be taking selfies with coconut water and recording 15 second targeted micro ads with the vague promise of paid international travel if she could attract the right partnerships. It didn't appeal to her; even if it had, she would just do it on her own rather than signing right away with some company.

"Again: It's up to you, how much content to create," Nicole explained, "You might be most comfortable doing makeup tutorials, or modeling clothes, or doing ASMR roleplays."

Paris just stared at the pompous woman as she continued her speech going on about how some women had paid off their student loan debts by selling their worn socks and panties on the Internet of Things. 'Just listen and say you're interested, then never follow up' was Paris's strategy – the difficult part was hearing out Nicole's ideas without letting on how she really felt about it.

"Are you married?" Nicole asked.

"That's... You can't ask someone that during an interview," Paris replied. She didn't like how this was going – there was a lasciviousness in the way Nicole asked the question.

"You should get married. Soon." Nicole replied, not much interested in Paris's attitude. "It helps with taxes and married content creators do exceptionally well. You could be getting \$2000 a video just to receive massages and review on makeup. Give it some serious thought! This is an offer that a lot of people would kill for."

*"I'm not getting paid \$2,000 just to receive a massage, though. I'm getting paid to do it on camera and add my likeness towards the Internet's inexhaustible appetite*

*for content."*

Paris didn't say this out loud. She just thanked Nicole for the offer and said she would talk about it with her fiancé.

"Just so we're absolutely clear, what's going on here," Nicole said, "I'm offering you a job in the marketing field. Do you accept it?"

Now she was getting mean! For a moment, Paris was afraid that she had offended this powerful woman. But then she realized: what does she expect me to do? Kiss her feet because she offered to help me become an e-girl and give her the majority of my earnings from my own bikini pics?

"It's a generous offer," Paris replied carefully, "I'm thankful -- I will just need to talk to my fiancé before I make any decisions. Thank you again for your time, and for coming to see me."

"Of course," was Nicole's icy reply.

This meeting marked a turning point in Paris's life: a downturn, more specifically. Nicole took the rejection very badly, and Rashmi was acting personally offended that Paris had spiked the deal she set up. Packages started arriving at the guest house they hadn't ordered – day after day the maids would drop more of them off at the front door. They contained things such as ring lights, mountable security cameras, high-definition streaming cameras, and a voice-activated smarhome assistant device.

It gave Paris an uncomfortable feeling, looking at all these things. Rashmi wasn't responding to her messages about them. Tristan didn't think much of the packages, saying that it must be a misunderstanding and they should simply ignore it.

"How much money do we have saved?" Paris asked her fiance, several days after the bad interview.

"\$2800."

No matter what number he had said, it wouldn't have changed what she said next:

"We should probably leave."

It made her heart beat faster and her palms became sweaty, to finally say this out loud. She self-consciously wiped her hands on her yoga pants. Anxiety gripped her, but also the thrill of making a bold decision for herself. Tristan looked at her strangely.

"Why would we go? \* Where \* would we go?" he asked.

"I don't want this influencer job," Paris explained – they had this conversation (argument) before, several times. "And I don't want to live here if she puts all these weird gadgets up. We can go to a motel – or a youth hostel, even. I've seen prices like \$20/ night for each of us."

"Rashmi will de-prioritize me if we move out... Or I will have to quit altogether."

"Yes, you would probably have to quit," Paris replied, and she was putting it gently.

Truthfully, she was disappointed that her fiance's first instinct was being afraid that Rashmi's gig handouts would end. As she looked into his blue eyes, she felt a pang of sadness that they were on such different wavelengths about this whole arrangement. It had been very difficult on their relationship, living together but not being able to go out and have new experiences. If he wouldn't come with her, did that mean they were breaking up? What would Rashmi think of that? She only liked Tristan because it pissed her off--

"I think you're overreacting. I think we should put up with these cameras for a little while, then move out when we get closer to five thousand like we had originally planned."

"Tristan, you know she's going to keep pressuring me to take the job! I bet she will leverage this house against us, pretty soon. She's already picking out my makeup, in one of these boxes. I don't want us to become a domestic couple for her. I bet you that Rashmi will make it so you get less work, too – so we will never get to five thousand."

"You're being paranoid," was Tristan's reply.

Paris glared at her fiance, determined not to cry. His lack of support made her feel extremely alone. It was to the point where she didn't see the point in this relationship anymore – not right now, at least.

"I'll find my own place, then." Paris said. Her voice was shaky and quiet. "There's a hostel in Mid City. Let me know when you're ready to join me."

She had hoped that Tristan would come around when he saw her packing her bags. He couldn't seriously believe that Rashmi would let him stay there alone – the woman's friends would find it scandalous. But instead of seeing her point of view, Tristan treated it like this was still a fight that he could win.

Paris felt a tremendous sense of relief as she removed the smartwatch and left it on the table on her way out. She couldn't think about how this was probably the end of her relationship; she just needed to make it to the hostel. She was met by a sunny and hot day and as soon as she set foot out the door she regretted wearing her Keds – the heat from the pavement practically scorched her feet through their thin rubber soles on her walk out to the curb. She was so unaccustomed to being in the sun that she needed to wear dark sunglasses to keep her eyes from hurting.

She called a rideshare and waited out front for it to arrive. In the winding hills, it would take a driver quite some time to get to Rashmi's house. If she had been wearing makeup, it would have been ruined by how much she was sweating, just from the walk to the street with her duffel bag in hand.

Paris didn't want to tell her mom about this. Instead, she texted her friend Victoria explaining the situation, then opened the candy crush game mostly out of habit / muscle memory. Victoria couldn't offer her a place to stay because she herself just rented a coffin-sized room from a successful young couple who didn't allow her to have guests. But she sent her love and said that she was proud of Paris for making this decision and she could help with a little money, if she needed.

Even beneath the shade of a large tree in Rashmi's plant-rich neighborhood, it was rather hot to the point where her iPhone stopped working and said it needed to cool down.

'Fuck, I shouldn't have been playing that game,' Paris thought to herself.

With nothing else to do, she took in the beauty of the neighborhood and enjoyed the feeling of being outside. An uplifting thought occurred to her: now she could finally hang out with people!! As soon as her phone cooled down, she wanted to reach out to Eunice and Jacqueline. Being outside raised her spirits and made her feel like she was re-discovering something she had forgotten over the past year. Even the brutal heat of the day, she enjoyed, because it was so different than the constant 65 degrees of that damned guest house.

Soon a car approached: a white SUV belonging to a private security company. Out stepped a kid who looked like he was barely out of high school and a motherly Latina woman. Their uniforms made them look more like tour guides than security guards: plaid vests over white collared shirts and a skirt for the woman, slacks for the guy. The woman had very thick legs and calves, and made the baffling decision of wearing high heels for this job.

The heavy-set Latina woman did all the talking, while the kid mostly glared at Paris in an unfriendly way.



"Hi honey! We got a complaint of a break-in around here... Would you mind telling me what you're doing in this neighborhood?"

"I'm waiting for my rideshare," Paris replied with a smile, "They should be here any minute."

"Would you mind showing me on your phone when they'll get here? Sorry, I know this is inconvenient. But with the new anti-vagrancy laws and the crime wave, we can't be too careful."

"My phone isn't working. It's too hot. But like, they're right at the bottom of the hill."

Paris was trying to act as disarming as possible. On the news, they talked about a crime wave so bad it was dangerous to be outside. The fact that she hadn't gone five minutes without being accosted by someone outdoors freaked her out – when she had just been enjoying her first time leaving the apartment in such a long while.

The middle-aged Latina woman frowned at this answer, and exchanged a look with her partner.

"Well, sweetie, what are you doing out here? What's your name? Where's your home?"

"My name is Paris Darrow. I'm out here because I'm in the process of moving to a hostel. But I used to live in the guest house back there on Rashmi Uzair's property," Paris answered, gesturing to the mansion behind them. "I'm sure that you can call her and she will vouch for me!"

"You're moving in to a hostel?" the guy asked, a sarcastic sneer on his face. "Talk about a downgrade!"

"Easy, Jason," the Latina woman rebuked her partner,

"Listen, I feel bad for saying this, but we can't let you stay here. It's dangerous and against the law. Why don't you come with us, down to the community center, and you can wait for your car there? It has air conditioning and wifi."

What could Paris say? It was obvious they wouldn't allow her to stay there, so she climbed into the SUV and went with them down the winding roads to the community center at the bottom of the hill. Except it didn't turn out to be a 'community center'. It was a branch office for the private security company. The woman introduced herself as Rhonda and gabbed nonstop on the drive down to the hills – Jason was the driver.

"Oh yeah, every day we hear about another break in," Rhonda said, "The thieves are targetting high-resale items like jewelry and watches. Sometimes they use a lookout. We've had to double patrols in the last week."

Paris strongly suspected this to be a lie – some lurking threat to justify more money to the security company. She didn't give much of a reply, out of fear that they would somehow try to wrap her up in it.

"I see," was all she said.

"Miss Uzair is one of the most upstanding members of the community. You're lucky she's letting you stay with her! How long have you been there?"

"A year, just about."

"I live in Downton, myself. It's about two hours away. Sometimes I sleep at the office but it's hard on my kids..."

Her cell phone finally cooled down enough to operate again. The rideshare app said her car was still a few minutes away and she texted the driver the new address to pick her up.

"You can just drop me off in front," Paris said, and she became alarmed when Jason just kept driving, past the wrought iron gate, into the secured parking lot.

"Oh! We only have to do a little paperwork and document that we had contact with you. It's part of the new laws – and trust me, it's for your safety." Rhonda said, "It creates accountability, so you don't have random organizations out there harassing people."

Alarm bells were going off in her mind. She texted Tristan and Victoria what was going on and requested that they check in on her:

'This private security company is taking me to some community center even though I said I didn't want to go there. I think they're going to arrest me.'

Paris felt a wave of panic rising within her: she felt like she was being kidnapped. What was she supposed to do here? Forcefully demand they let her free, this instant? What did the law say? They were always changing it because of the outbreak. Maybe it was illegal for her to be outside, even. In any case, she was too intimidated to demand anything from her captors. Instead, she went along with Rhonda's directions even though everything inside of her was saying that this situation was wrong.

"Paris honey, is it okay if we check your bags for weapons? Actually, we are

required to do a search before you enter the office; we had an incident last month."

Paris wasn't carrying her bag – Jason was. The meathead had insisted on doing so. He had thrown it in the trunk for the ride down and retrieved it from there after they had parked.

"Yeah, that's fine."

Jason placed the duffel bag on a folding wooden table and Rhonda opened it up and started pawing through her possessions. She soon discovered a jewelry box that Paris had never seen before.

"I'll need to search in here, too. You could fit a folding knife in there, or a little sawblade."

"What?! That's not mine, I don't recognize—"

"Woooooow!"

Inside the jewelry box was a graduated diamond eternity necklace.

"If you own something this expensive, why not just sell it and get your own place?" Rhonda asked, admiring the brilliant-cut round diamonds too numerous to count and 18k white gold that reflected sunlight beautifully.

"You put that there. It's not mine."

"Does it belong to Miss Uzair?" Rhonda asked.

"I want to leave." Paris said, and she became dreadfully aware of the high concrete wall keeping her in this blazing hot parking lot.

"You can leave once you've done the paperwork. What's the deal with this expensive necklace? Is this yours?"

"Let me do the paperwork and leave," Paris replied.

It was an unbearably hot, ugly place, here. She was afraid the asphalt would melt the soles of her Keds, and sweat was pouring from her body as they stood here badgering her. She couldn't think of any way to get out of it and just shifted her weight and shook her head.

"We need to inform the police about this. Please come with us."

What followed was a complete farce. Paris could not believe this was all

happening and it shocked her into a sort of mute compliance, on the reasoning that she could fight these things later – hire a lawyer and sue them for false imprisonment or something. For the time being, she went along with Rhonda and Jason: Rhonda walking in front of her and Jason walking behind as they entered the air conditioned building and moved through its long hallways. It became like an out of body experience for Paris – like this was all happening to someone else and not her, or it wasn't real somehow.

Maybe it was her way of coping with all of the anxiety and dread that this situation provoked within her. Tristan didn't pick up his phone or respond to her multiple calls, and neither did Victoria. And even in these circumstances, she wouldn't call her mother. Paris wanted nothing from the woman who was probably too inebriated to pick up the phone, assuming it wasn't disconnected, and could not be depended on for help.

"We'll just have you take a seat in the waiting room for a couple minutes. I'll get your paperwork together and prepare my report," Rhonda said during the walk. "Thank you for cooperating with us; that will reflect nicely on you. I'll make a note that you were very cooperative."

The waiting room was just an interrogation room with nicer folding chairs. It even had a partially-mirrored wall, which hammered in the fact that Paris was a suspect to them. She took the seat that was offered to her and started searching for lawyers on her phone. The Internet loaded so slowly and was so bloated with unrelated ads and CAPTCHAs that it made it nearly impossible to use.

Rashmi was the first to get there. She burst into the room and started laying into Paris right away, not even giving her a chance to deny the accusation. She must have come from the nail salon, since she was wearing disposable foam pedicure sandals which belied how serious this all was.

"I cannot *believe* you! I took you into my home, and you steal from me?"

"Rashmi, it's not what it looks like. I would never steal from you--"

"Is this why you didn't want cameras around the apartment!? What else have you stolen?" Rashmi shouted at her.

"Nothing!" Paris shouted, but she was so frustrated and out-of-sorts that her voice cracked a little bit. Her timbre sounded uncertain and Rashmi glowered down at her, almost frightening in her anger. Paris acutely felt the difference in their physiques: although shorter, Rashmi was significantly larger than her, with meaty arms and legs compared to Paris's own slender build. The Indian woman balled her fists and rested them against them against her attractively-shaped waist in outrage.

"This is a forty thousand dollar necklace," Rashmi berated her, looming over Paris and watching her squirm and just shake her head in response. The security guards Rhonda and Jason were there all along in the background, scrutinizing her. Making her feel outnumbered. Refuting her claims that they had planted the necklace on her.

Paris had dealt with the police a little bit in high school and throughout college, but had never experienced this degree of hostility. She genuinely had no idea what to do – she knew she was supposed to get a lawyer but they kept ignoring or denying her requests to contact one. She knew that Rashmi was almost certainly in cahoots with these people. She desperately tried to think of some way to prove her innocence, or to prove the plot against her. Nothing occurred to her panicked mind.

"She probably would have gotten four hundred dollars for this necklace. If that," Rashmi continued, addressing the security team now. "I wonder if she would have been foolish enough to sell it to a local pawn shop. She hasn't worked in a year, you know. I pay for her food as well."

Paris wanted to say something in her own defense, but held her tongue. It was supremely humiliating to hear Rashmi describe everything she had provided for her because it made her sound like a charity case: pitiable. And while Rashmi had used a contemptuous tone towards her all this time, now she softened her way of speaking and said:

"Paris, if you had wanted to wear this necklace, I would have given it to you. That is the thing that hurts me. And if you needed money, you could have asked me for some. Why didn't you think to ask me for money to go along your way?"

The question caught Paris off guard. She hadn't asked because she didn't trust Rashmi anymore – but should she have? NO – that wasn't the issue. Rashmi was no friend to her; she hadn't even responded to numerous text messages about the new cameras. The issue was that they were trying to frame her, and she couldn't see any way out of it. Paris quietly upbraided herself for letting go of her suitcase, but it was such a tiny mistake to be punished this badly for. How could she have known?

The fact that this was all so unjust only served to hurt her more deeply – she didn't think things like this could happen in her own legal system.

"Rashmi, please believe me. I did not steal that," Paris said, looking into the woman's almond-shaped eyes as earnestly as she could. There was no pity in them – no warmth at all, in this moment.

"I wish I could believe you. But if you can't be honest with me, I will no longer allow you in my house. And I have no respect for thieves."

Paris felt more scared and alone than she had ever been in her life. She was afraid that they would send her to prison for this – unless... But no.

"The police will arrive here shortly. I can confirm that this necklace is my own. Not only will you have a criminal case for trespassing and grand theft, but I will also have my legal team file civil suits against you. You will need to pay me back rent for all the months you have stayed with me, plus other costs, and I will see that you are required to notify all potential employers that you are a thieving bitch – when you get out of jail, that is."

Paris felt each word smash against her heart, driving her courage away and reducing her to a whimpering mess at the mention of the word 'jail'.

"I will speak with the District Attorney – she's a personal friend of mine -- and see that she pushes for a stiff sentencing," Rashmi concluded her threatening speech, "How many years could we expect in this case, Rhonda?"

"A couple years, if she was acting alone," Rhonda answered. "If she was doing it as part of an organized crime ring, that's an additional ten years."

Paris felt her stomach turn as the panic attack fully gripped her, forcing her to imagine the horrors of prison and a thousand other bad outcomes. Her phone no longer got a signal in this room. There was nothing she could say that she hadn't said already. She crossed her arms in front of herself and shook her head, lowering her eyes down to the table between them. As much as she wanted to get up and leave, she was too timid to try it.

This put her in a bad place because she knew she should try and escape, but fear kept her glued to the spot. And she blamed herself for not having the courage to storm out of here and instead staying and giving them this placating energy. These were her enemies trying to frame her and Paris just politely tried to exonerate herself before them.

"Paris, I saw so many great things in you," Rashmi said, "That's why I let you and Tristan stay in my house: I wanted to help you. I was SO disappointed to see you turn into a pot-smoking layabout who plays mobile games for more than twenty hours a week."

Paris flared her nostrils, took a sharp breath and gave a hard look to Rashmi. It was very painful to have someone call out her behavior like this. But what else was she supposed to do?! Rashmi didn't let her leave the house!!

"I think your life needs a certain structure, if you are going to excel in this world," Rashmi continued, "And being a Yas model will give you that structure. Once you're part of their network, that will help our relationship too."

Paris sighed – she suspected that this is where it was going, all along. She would plead guilty then be back at Rashmi's place as the woman's prisoner. Spend her days pretending to be that girl on camera; doing makeup tutorials and ASMR whisper roleplays to make money for her new boss. Except now, Rashmi would have something dangling over Paris's head all the time: the punishment of prison.

Her world was falling out from under her.

"But Paris, I need you to kiss my feet and ask for an apology, if you want to avoid prison and come back in to my home."

Paris screwed up her face and just squinted at Rashmi, she was so weirded out by this turn. The woman had on a cheetah print jumpsuit tied about her voluptuous waist by a black ribbon. Her long dark hair had a loosely curled texture, and some of it fell loose but most of it was up in a bun. She was as poised and confident as ever. Meanwhile Paris was a slouched, shivering mess with dried sweat on every part of her body.

"This is what our servants would do when they really messed up... I came to enjoy it very much. It gives me such a sense of power – but maybe you're not familiar with how that feels. Anyway, I just got a pedicure, so they are very clean."

Rashmi placed her feet up on the table, but didn't remove her neon green foam pedicure sandals. Her meaty feet glistened with massage oil, it went all the way up to her calves which were on display since her jumpsuit was cullotte-cut. She gave Paris a pointed look as if to say, "well?"

"You can't be serious," Paris finally managed.

"YOU can't be serious," Rashmi spat back at her, "Because this is the best offer you're going to get. You should have kissed my feet when I allowed you to move in, and every month I let you stay in my guest house, watching trashy television and smoking marijuana... Where has your pride gotten you? Right here, it seems, about to kiss my feet and beg for my forgiveness like some misbehaving servant."

And although it wounded her pride terribly, Paris found herself getting up to approach this terrible woman's feet to kiss them to avoid jail time. She reasoned that Rashmi would keep her word and let her avoid jail, and it was better to do almost anything to avoid going in to the prison system, even for a day. A day in prison could easily become a year due to how backlogged it was; they said so on the news. If anything, maybe she could use this as evidence in her own case about cruel and unusual punishment--

Those were the thoughts that went through Paris's mind as she moved her sad,

beautiful face towards Rashmi's feet. Up close, she could smell the mango butter beeswax, which would rub off on her lips and make her cringe. Blushing furiously, Paris craned her head down and gave them two quick pecks: one on each pampered foot. She resisted the urge to wipe her mouth and only clenched her jaw in frustration. Rashmi had chosen a lilac-white lacquer for her toes, which contrasted beautifully with her cool cinnamon complexion.

"I didn't take your necklace," Paris repeated herself.

"What?!" was Rashmi's incredulous reply, "Then why on Earth did you kiss my feet?"

"I didn't want you to send me to jail. But we can't have any sort of discussion until I have a deal, in writing, to avoid jail. And it must say that I wasn't part of any organized crime ring."

Rashmi found this uproariously funny. She let out a great laugh then rested both of her hands behind her head and looked at Paris up and down with new appreciation.

"Of course you'll get it in writing! That's the whole idea! Oh, Paris..."

Rashmi looked at her for a little while, feet up on the table with confident body language like she was taking pride in a victory. She giggled when she noticed that the butter that her pedicurist had just massaged into her feet was now glistening upon Paris's frowning, conquered lips. Paris could feel their relationship had changed significantly with that act; and pretty soon Jason came back into the room with a tablet computer, containing the paperwork for Paris to sign. He handed it to Rashmi who had taken control of the situation.

From being angry when she stormed in, the plutocratic woman was jubilant now. Paris found her way back to her seat, slouching with a miserable expression on her face. She didn't like how Rashmi kept her feet on the table so the soles of her sandals were practically thrust in her face.

"That was lovely, Paris!" exclaimed Rashmi, "I am proud that you could humble yourself like that. To show that there are no hard feelings between us, I will even let you keep the necklace – it was insured against theft, anyway. Sit up straight, and I can help you put it on... Although it doesn't go with that outfit."

Rashmi snapped her fingers at the security officers and Rhonda hurried to get the jewelry box and bring it to her. Every part of Paris revolted at the thought wearing the necklace, beautiful as it was. So it was with great disappointment in herself that Paris gathered her thick brown hair and held it in one hand as Rashmi got up to stand behind her. The wealthy woman brought the necklace down in front of Paris's face in such a way she could examine briefly it before she put it on. Then she skillfully



clasped the thing around Paris's swanlike neck: the jewelry was cold and heavy, and it made the little hairs on the back of her neck stand up.

"What do you say?" Rashmi asked, resting one hand on Paris's shoulder from behind.

"Thank you," Paris muttered. She suppressed a shudder as Rashmi gave her an affectionate squeeze, then went to sit back down.

"You're welcome. Now then, why don't I explain what will be expected from you going forward? Does that sound nice?"

Paris nodded – and keenly felt the weight of the diamond necklace against her.

"You will become a Yas Model. You will be an independent contractor doing piece-rate work, similar to what Tristan does. But while he mainly delivers groceries, Yas Models will have a lot more work for you. They want directorial control over your wardrobe and your online image, and they expect you to put cameras up inside your house... MY house, really. Will all of that be alright with you?"

Paris was at a lack of words for how disdainful she found all of this. It sounded as if they wanted absolute control over her life – while making sure there was nowhere she could go to escape their influence. If this 'offer' weren't up against the threat of years in prison, there was no way in hell she would have accepted it. But as things were, in these awful circumstances, what choice did she have? Call their bluff, go to jail, and fight it from there? It was untenable.

It broke her heart, the unfairness of it all. But the events of the previous year had worn her down. She had accepted so many other disappointments that this terrible arrangement made sense by comparison. Paris would have considered it a sick joke before the outbreak.

"Okay," Paris consented.

"Lovely, Paris!" Rashmi said. "Now, it's difficult to say precisely what you will be doing, since it depends on audience behavior. But what's most important is you complete assignments exactly as they are asked. If they tell you to be a frowning, snarky emo brat, that's what you do. If they tell you to be a smiling, cheerful Disney Princess, that's what you do. Does that make sense?"

"Yes," Paris answered. It was significantly more demanding than the offer than Nicole Ashburn had given her.

"Also be aware: To capitalize on the ongoing labor shortage, Yas Models sometimes contracts its workers out to local businesses. So don't be surprised if you

find yourself scooping ice cream or wiping down exercise equipment at the gym – housekeeping, gigs like that."

'At least it would get me out of the house,' Paris thought to herself.

She might have even applied to jobs of that nature, if Rashmi hadn't been so insistent on her finding a work from home position to avoid spreading the virus. Apparently, that concern was gone now.

"That's the essence of it," Rashmi concluded. She passed the tablet over to Paris, and she started looking at the long legal document. "And it might interest you that the owner of Yas Models is someone you know. His name is Wesley Nourd – he graduated from the same high school as you."

Paris vaguely remembered a blond kid by that name: fat and dweeby. She didn't have much of an opinion of him, except for a vague sense of discomfort because sometimes the dweeby guys grew up to be mean and vindictive -- incel types. But it wasn't enough to discourage her from signing the plea agreement. Having been forcefully separated from all her friends and loved ones, Paris readied herself to surrender her life to this wicked woman. She began looking over the documents, but was interrupted.

"There's just one more thing for us to settle, before you sign that plea agreement," Rashmi said.

"What's that?"

"Well, you have made amends for stealing my necklace – or rather, you're starting to. But you haven't made amends for the fact that you left the house without my permission. You could have made the current wave of the outbreak even worse, by acting so irresponsibly. I need you to admit what you did was wrong, and promise never to do it again."

With that, Rashmi gave a smug grin, kicked off her foam pedicure sandals and placed both of her feet on the table once again.

"You already know how to ask for my forgiveness," she explained, her wrinkly soles glistening with massage oil. "But this time, I'd like for you to kiss the bottoms of my feet, right beneath the toes."

It was enough to drive Paris mad! For one, to be treated like a criminal for the mere act of going outside without her landlady's permission. And then, to have to kiss her damn feet to make up for it?! But Rashmi sat there with perfect confidence in this mad state of affairs, and Paris surrendered once more. Kissing the bottoms of Rashmi's feet was somehow more humiliating than kissing the tops – and more

intimate as well. But the brunette woman only whispered, "Okay," and got up to perform this demeaning task once again.

Rashmi was positively glowing with happiness as Paris got near her to her slightly wrinkled soles, which were about a size 6, and placed two kisses on the area slightly beneath the toes. Despite the recent pedicure, Rashmi still had a lot of callus on her outsteps and there were specks of dirt, and even hair, stuck against her peds.

"I'm sorry for leaving without your permission," Paris said, "I promise I won't do that again."

This satisfied Rashmi – in fact, she chuckled to herself like she couldn't believe someone would behave that way. Then she allowed Paris to look through the tablet containing her plea agreement. The legal documents had been re-worked in such a way that Paris just had to slide boxes and press checkmarks; it was similar to those EULA's companies put before people install an app on their phones that nobody reads.

Paris was in despair as she glanced over the agreement. She would avoid jail, but that was about the only good thing it contained. She fought back tears as she confessed to stealing the necklace. Then with the press of another button, she agreed to eat and dress and behave the way Yas Models / Rashmi wanted her to. The old world of friendship and activity and independence was just a painful memory now. And what did the future hold? Rashmi's feet against her lips, a camera pointed at her body, and confinement to a guest house where she was just a miserable serf.

Paris told herself that this was all planned in advance; that there was nothing she could have done to avoid it. But nothing could shake the feeling that she was stuck in a bad dream and that this wasn't really her agreeing to all this. It was nonsensical, and probably another way of denying reality or blaming herself for everything that happened. But who else could she blame? The outbreak meant that they had to find a new way of living – the way that Rashmi dictated.

'At least I'm not spreading the virus,' Paris consoled herself.

"We really ought to get a photo of this, so you can get used to being on camera," Rashmi said. Rhonda was happy to help, but she was such a lousy photographer that Paris had to kiss the woman's soles again and again and again because the Indian woman wasn't satisfied with how the photos turned out. The first time it was too blurry. Then the lighting wasn't good enough to see Paris's face. Then Rashmi decided she wanted it from the reverse angle. Then she wanted an extreme close-up from her perspective, so that her toes were covering the bottom half of the girl's face.

Then she wanted Paris to smile as she did it. Then she wanted a video. Then...