

## *Doggy*

An enormous black doberman shoves its snout through the cracked open door of a dim hotel room. The dog slinks into the room, head hanging low as it scans the area. Thick gobs of saliva pummel the plush, royal purple carpet.

A collar clings tight to the dog's neck. A brass medallion, which reads "ALWAYS", dangles from the crimson strap.

Sunlight pours across the room through a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows.

Always pokes its head under the single king size bed.

The gold comforter draped over one side nudges down and cascades across Always' back. Startled, Always lunges sideways, turning its deep, black eyes towards the mass of fabric.

The comforter crumples to the floor.

Always barks. A deep, resonant, cracking bark which pings off of the white plaster walls.

Down a short hallway, the bathroom door creaks open. Steam seeps through the crack.

Marla peeks her head through, up to the bridge of her nose. Her oil black hair dripping with steaming water into the cold room. She nudges forward, wrapping a hand around the door frame to steady herself.

Always turns to face her. He gurgles. Gravel churning in his throat. He plants his narrow paws, pointing towards Marla. He points his body, angling downwards, aiming himself.

"Honey," says Marla, "There's a big fucking dog in the room."

"What?" Derrick asks from the shower.

"A dog. Like, a big, mean dog."

Marla backs into the bathroom and locks the door.

The steam churns around her.

She turns towards the mirror, pausing for a moment. She wipes fog from the glass and studies her body. Stippled with rolling streams of water. Tiny rivers cascade across her shoulders, down towards her heart where they pool in the small indent just at the base of her sternum. She pokes at her pale cheeks, pushing back to tighten the small wrinkles that have formed at the corners of her mouth.

Derrick emerges from the shower. He squints through the fog, water dripping rapid fire onto the pink ceramic tile floor. He holds his hand out to Marla, motioning with his fingers.

Marla passes him a towel.

Derrick mashes the towel into his hair, working down to his shoulders, across his chest. He continues his descent, drying patches of pale skin along the way. He reaches his cock and bulks the towel up around it. He smirks at Marla.

Marla stares into the mirror.

The door jostles.

Marla jerks back from the mirror.

“You were being serious,” says Derrick.

“It’s enormous. How’d it get into the hotel?”

Derrick wraps the towel around his waist. He approaches the door, reaching for the knob.

“No,” says Marla.

Derrick freezes. He shakes his head at Marla.

“We can’t just stay in here forever,” says Derrick.

“I can.”

Always barks another shotgun blast at the door.

Derrick backs away from the door. He clings to the towel at his waist.

Always sniffs at the bottom of the door and begins pawing at the carpet.

Derrick slams a fist on the door.

“Hey,” he says, “Get the fuck out of here!”

Always barks back. He continues tearing at the carpet. Fragments of purple material flake off, some skittering under the door into the bathroom. The door throttles with each thrust of Always’ paws. His claws, pointed onyx darts, dig indents into the door. Bits of the wood are beginning to flake off and scatter across the bathroom floor.

Derrick sits on the closed toilet. He pushes his hands through his thin, blonde hair. His bare chest is red and warm as his heart beat pulses in his throat.

Marla, still naked, yanks another towel from the rack. She lunges forward and stuffs the cloth under the door.

A barrier between them and Always.

Always’ claws catch the towel through the small gap he’s dug out of the door. He yanks at it, snapping it into his frothing jaws, and pulls it all the way through in one solid thrust. He lunges back at the door, shoving his snout into the jagged gap at the bottom of the door. His

huge, gnarled teeth snap together. He tastes the air, pausing to sniff around before snapping his jaws in three staccato, arrhythmic bites.

“Fuck,” says Marla.

Derrick steps in front of Marla, nudging her back. His palm sinks into her pale belly, settling into her now nearly dry skin. He keeps his hand pressed against her.

Marla wraps her fingers around Derrick’s hand.

Derrick snaps the towel rod off the wall. He steadies it in his free hand.

Marla squeezes the hand she holds. She turns away, clinging to Derrick.

Their reflection is clear through the mirror. Derrick backs up against Marla. Their hands remain woven together. She presses her cheek against his shoulder and closes her eyes.

“This is insane,” says Marla.

Derrick chuckles through his nose. “When isn’t it?”

Always cracks into the door, tearing away a large enough space to push his head through. He stares at the couple. His black eyes steady. His jaws quiver, exposing his mottled gums and long, pointed teeth. His saliva has frothed up into fat gobs of slime and foam. He sniffs around the air, shallow and rapid.

The last traces of steam swim through the gap in the door.

Derrick raises the towel rod.

Always snarls, lurches back and lunges at the couple.

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