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*“A rising YouTube star meets his number one fan.”*

“Hey guys, it’s me, your Glamazon Kween, Annie Draws, back with another hot beauty tip.” Andrew traced along the masking tape stuck from the corner of his lid across his temple with velvety, black, liquid eyeliner. While the world slept another restless night in quarantine, Andrew had transformed his insomnia into an online enterprise as a make-up influencer. Online school was work as you go, and with so many people stuck at home and bored, his views had never been higher. After his roommates retreated to their respective podunk towns, Andrew had the top half of his duplex all to himself. Terri, his middle-aged downstairs neighbor, barely complained about noise anymore. With no one to scream at for making noise at 2 a.m., she had even found herself a boring-looking boyfriend, Steve. Indeed, the remaining residents of 2312 26th Ave. were thriving in the time of Covid.

More than that, he was finding admirers for the first time in his life. Granted, it was from faceless avatars online, but it felt good to be seen, to be appreciated. His DM’s were packed with girls asking clarifying questions about beauty blenders vs. oval brushes and dudes trying to get into his pants.

The nagging “*vmm vmm*” from his pocket announced a new message on Instagram from *GlamourGlutton*: “Love the cat eye vid... Can I send you a gift?”

The account had been following him for a while now. Assumedly it was a guy, and he felt older. His icon was a nail polish bottle with viscous, hot pink polish erupting over the side. It was weirdly sexual, true, but he minded his manners. Every video resulted in aggrandizing comments from *GlamourGlutton*, followed by money via Venmo or Cash App.

“Tips are always appreciated! Thank you!”

His phone buzzed again, “What’s your address?” Andrew’s blinked at the screen in disbelief. His lips pursed themselves to the right of his face, their thinking spot. He didn’t want to lose his most consistent tipper, but sure as hell was not going to send a stranger his address.

“Sorry, babes, that’s private.”

The “Read” icon appeared. Whoever they were, they were looking at the message. A minute passed, his phone screen darkened from inactivity. *Well, that takes care of that.* A hot buzz emanated from his hand as his phone glowed back to life. “No worries. I’ll figure something out ;)” Andrew tapped the side of his phone. *What do you say to that?* His teeth found a nub of dry skin on his bottom lip and ripped at it. He tasted blood.

“Well, thank you very much for watching!” Andrew turned his phone off.

He couldn’t sleep. Normally at night, he made his videos to occupy his mind, but he wasn’t feeling it after the weird message. Instead, he paced back and forth in the living room. Finally, around 3 a.m., he had squeaked the floorboards so much that Terri downstairs banged against the floor with her broom handle. He retreated to his bed. Just because he couldn’t sleep didn’t mean Terri should suffer. The house settled even as his mind refused to. Crickets chirped between the rotating fan blades *whomp* above him. Downstairs, Terri and Steve fought, then had sex, and finally quieted. “You go, girl,” Andrew whispered and resumed his staring contest with the ceiling. “*No worries. I’ll figure something out ;)*” scrolled around the walls of his room.

“I look like SHIT.” Inspired by the pick-up-and-move-your-family-cross-country-to-start-a-new-life-sized bags under his eyes, Andrew decided his next topic would be a concealer video. He shot the “High Glam Eye Blam”

video and sent out notifications across all of his platforms: *“Check out the new vid, while I go finally eat dinner! OMG, so hungry. Would die for a pizza, but #BrokeCollegeKid??? LOL #ProbsPB&J #Lazy #LateNightMunchies #StarvingArtist #WeLoveTips”*

Andrew posted a picture of himself pouting his lips, staring longingly at the camera along with the caption to all his social media platforms, and showered after it uploaded to YouTube.

The doorbell rang.

Andrew grabbed a robe and bounded down the stairs to the front door. He peaked around the landing’s corner. It was a pizza guy masked holding a box. Andrew spoke to him through the door.

“Hello?”

“Pizza delivery.”

“Um, I didn’t order that.”

“Says here it’s for an Annie? Annie Draws?”

Andrew’s blood ran cold.

“Um..” Andrew’s mouth was so dry, the words scraped their way out of his throat, “I’m Annie Draws.”

The pizza boy raised his eyebrows, “...K, I’ll just set this here.” The pizza boy put the box on the porch and hurried off into the night.

Andrew carefully opened the door. He scanned the front yard, the street, and side of the house before stepping out to pick up the warm box. Andrew stepped to the edge of the porch. It seemed like the whole world was asleep.

The pizza sat naked in the center of the kitchen table. Andrew stared into its cheesy center. *What do I do with this?* Eating it was out of the question. *Do I call the police? No.* The receipt's only clue was the ordering phone number on it. Andrew knew better than to call from his cell phone. *I could find a payphone and call from there.* When was the last time he had seen a payphone in the wild?

Andrew's phone buzzed. He nearly jumped out of his skin—a message on Instagram.

“How's the ‘za?”

It was him. The confirmation of his identity made the answer to “What to do with a problem like marinara” suddenly clear.

“Are you sure you want to block this user?” *Fuck yes.* Andrew meticulously went through every corner of the internet that he occupied and blocked GlammourGlutton. At least they were disconnected online, but now this fucker knew where he lived.

Andrew's phone rang.

Blood went surging to his ears. His heartbeat thrummed in the side of his neck. He grabbed for the greasy receipt. The numbers matched. *Fuck.*

Andrew answered.

“Hello, Annie. It's your number one fan, but you can call me Mr. G from now on. That was pretty rude what you just did; shutting me out. If you didn't want the pizza, you shouldn't have asked for it.”

Andrew's mouth trembled, “Hey, listen, just leave me alone.”

“You didn't say thank you.”

Tears bubbled beneath Andrew's lids, “Look, please, just stop. Okay? You made your point. It's over, so just stop it.”

“You think so, huh? We’ll see...” the line clicked dead.

Andrew blocked the number.

After the call, his body shimmied and shook so bad that he dug through their communal medicine cabinet until he found a sedative one of his roommates had left behind. The intention was to calm himself, but he ended up putting himself just shy of a coma. When he finally awoke, Andrew felt as though he died and been born again. The baseball bat he had found for protection lay under the coffee table. He hadn’t heard it fall when he dropped it. Ambien is good shit. Except for the cottonmouth. He shuffled from the couch to the kitchen for some OJ. As he reached for the handle, his hand froze in mid-air. There, taped on the fridge, was a polaroid of him asleep on the couch gripping the bat. Jaw slacked. Face blank. Completely helpless. Under the photo, in small, neat script, a message: “Batter up. -Mr. G”

*This. This is when you fucking call 911.*

The police were of no help. In a major metropolitan area like Minneapolis, “internet stalking” was low on anyone’s priority list, “Okay, well, I see no signs of forced entry. The house is clear, and your neighbors haven’t noticed anything strange. It looks like whoever did this did it and high-tailed it out of here. It will take some time to trace the number. We have to get a warrant.”

“Like, how long?”

The cop shrugged.

“Great. Thanks,” Andrew tried desperately not to let his frustration mutate into tears.

The cop lingered on the sidewalk observing the fear and paranoia radiating off of Andrew.

“Look, do you have anywhere else to go?”

“I could go back home to Chicago.” For the briefest of moments, the misery of being forced to return to the overprotective watch of Randal and Judy Tompkins was almost enough to convince him to take his chances with a crazy stalker as long as he could continue living life unburdened and unmonitored. But then he thought of the photo. *Batter up.*

“Yeah, no, I think I’ll do that. I could pack a bag and head home for a while.”

“Good. I suggest you do that. It’ll make you feel better to know you’re safe.”

Andrew turned back to the house, but as he neared the mouth of the porch, panic drove him back to the officer. “Will you wait for me?”

“What?” The cop sounded agitated. Like Andrew was some little kid making excuses for not wanting to go to bed.

“Could you please wait for me to pack up and leave? I’ll be quick. I promise.”

The cop sighed, “Look, Andrew, I’m sorry, man, we are swamped right now. I have another call I have to get to. Just grab what you need and hit the road,” the cop turned and headed to his car off towards some greater, more worthy emergency. Andrew eyed the porch cautiously. He craned his neck around the side of the house. Nothing. *It’ll be like a game*, he told himself. *Let’s see how fast I can go.*

A starter’s pistol fired in his mind, and Andrew flew up the stairs. The most important thing was his computer and phone; clothes, toiletries, even his make-up could be replaced and replenished once he had Wisconsin between him and whoever the fuck this stalker was.

Once his duffel was full of what seemed like the essentials to his frantic mind, Andrew took the stairs back down to the street two at a time. He slammed the door behind him, locked it, then pointed his fob to the rusty, trusty LaSabre and signaled the trunk open.

He was already past the gate when Steve emerged from Terri's apartment, "Andrew? You okay? The police really scared us. And I heard the door slam."

Andrew threw his response over his shoulder, "Yeah, Steve, I gotta go." He was now running to the LaSabre's trunk. As he hefted the bag into the trunk, he felt a hand tighten against the back of his neck.

"Hiya, Annie." Steve rammed Andrew's head into the edge of the open trunk. Immediately, Andrew's knees buckled, and Steve pushed him into the trunk. Blood oozed from Andrew's forehead. His mind flashed the nail polish bottle overflowing.

"Steve? Mr. G?"

Steve winked at him.

Andrew was dizzy. He wanted to close his eyes.

"Why? Why are you doing this?"

"Why do people catch butterflies and tack them to paper? Because they're beautiful. Because they want to keep them like that. For themselves."

Steve reached up to close the trunk. Andrew shot his foot into his crotch as hard as he could. The shot dropped Steve to his knees, but he brought the trunk down with him onto Andrew's shin. Andrew howled in pain. He sat up, head aching, and shoved the trunk up off his leg. A vicious red gash ran along his leg where the trunk's edge imprinted. Steve had already righted himself. He cocked his arm back and struck Andrew squarely on the jaw. Andrew slumped back into the trunk and looked up at Steve outlined by moonlight.

"Look what you made me do to your beautiful face."

Andrew whimpered, "Please," and the trunk slammed.

As Andrew's grip on consciousness loosened, he heard shouting, then a banging. The trunk opened again. Steve's silhouette had changed. Someone was calling his name. Arms were reaching for him, then blackness. It was that cop. He came back after all.

In the aftermath, if he had wanted to, Andrew could have gone viral. And, to be honest, he almost went for it. But it felt cheap. He decided he'd rather earn whatever came his way. Steve got what was coming to him 30 years for aggravated kidnapping and assault resulting in an obliterated tibia. His mother and father were on the first plane out, were in high form. *And the Emmy for hysterical mother goes to...* The cast on his leg was ungainly but got cuter once it was autographed by all the lovely nurses from his floor and one very cute orthopedic doc. The cop who saved him, Officer Grosso, even stopped by to add his scrawl in clumsy blue marker to the white plaster. Once he was safely back in Chicago, his mother begged him to stop with the tutorials, but Andrew refused. That would mean Mr. G had won somehow.

"No, ma. It's for me. No one else."