

Women in Tech

by Pan

Chapter 3

“I want to come to one of these mixers,” I told Gabby firmly. She looked at me strangely.

“What?”

“The Women in Tech mixers you disappear to several times a week. I want to come.”

“Sir,” she said slowly. “...you’re not a woman.”

“Come on,” I replied, trying not to sound like I was whining. I kind of sounded like I was whining. “There must be a, like, bring your boyfriend night or something.”

“Again, sir,” she said slipping one arm into mine. “I feel like you’re not getting the general idea of these meetings.”

“Work out which event you can take me to, Gaby,” I said, staring my girlfriend straight in her big brown eyes. “That’s an order.”

She shivered.

“Yes, sir,” she replied. Oh, yes, I don’t think I told you about that. Women in Tech love to obey. Gaby had explained that to me after she’d been forced to pause a blowjob to answer her phone. I’d asked if she could ignore it, but she’d told me that her boss had ordered her to be available to call.

It made sense, of course. You have to be a team player to get ahead in the IT world, and the sad reality is that women are more likely to be employees than bosses. The climate is shifting, but slowly. Someday, women in tech will be giving orders with the best of them, but until then... they have to obey.

And if you’re going to spend your career taking orders, you might as well learn to love it.

So for the past few weeks, I’d enjoyed giving Gaby orders, and watching her tremble with pleasure as she obeyed.

Going to the mixer was a fishing trip. Not, uh, literally.

I’d spent the better part of a month digging around online, trying to find *anything* incriminating on Vision, on Women in Tech, on Flynn Parson.

Nothing. I’d even visited the local library to see if they had any hard copies of articles that weren’t online any more.

Diddly. Squat.

So I was starting to get desperate.

I don't really know what I was looking for, to be honest. A pamphlet, describing their sinister plot, or a building full of squirting, sensitive-breasted women in skirts. That second option sounded pretty good, actually.

But when Gaby invited me to a Women in Tech social night the next week, it was...well, kind of boring.

I'll start with the building. It was, like a lot of Silicon Valley architecture, bland and functional. The lobby was a large space with high ceilings, dark wood, and a big, wooden reception desk.

The mixer was after-hours, of course, but the receptionist was still there. She was a woman with dark hair, her face framed by glasses. Not as busty as Gaby (it would've been notable if she was), but not completely flat-chested either. Nor was she dressed to show anything off.

It was a drab office with a drab woman at the front desk. She gestured us into the elevator, and I smiled down at my girlfriend, who was practically humming with energy.

To my surprise, Gaby hadn't particularly dressed up for the event either. She was wearing a knee-length skirt — it flattered her legs, while still looking professional — and one of her old tops which did nothing to show off her chest. I've no idea why; there was no use in hiding her tits. Everyone knows they're there.

We were alone in the elevator, and I couldn't resist reaching out and honking my girlfriend's breast. She didn't shudder in need or groan, she just shot me a "seriously?" look, and wrapped one arm around my waist.

For a moment, it was like I had my old girlfriend back. I smiled down at her, and tried to ignore the tinge of sadness that my crude gesture hadn't practically brought her to orgasm.

The mixer was small, and sure enough, I was the only man there. I couldn't help but feel a little uncomfortable; no wonder Gaby had never brought me before. Even at their social night, this was clearly a women's space.

I tried to swallow my awkwardness and take advantage of this peek into a Women in Tech event.

The other women there were attractive, though not suspiciously so. I don't know exactly what 'suspiciously attractive' looked like — a room full of Gaby clones, I guess, or a preponderance of cleavage and makeup.

Actually, as I looked around the room, I noticed that practically none of them were wearing makeup. It was a little disappointing, to be honest. Women in Tech need to look their best. They should use every asset they have available to them.

For a moment, I was even *glad* that the organization existed, if only to teach women the basics of

how the industry works.

After a few minutes of floating (like I said, I was feeling pretty weird, being the only dude there) I finally settled into a conversation. Her name was Angela, I learned, and she'd just moved to town and was having trouble getting work.

I wasn't surprised, to be honest. She wasn't unattractive, but she clearly wasn't using every asset she had available. After a few minutes of conversation, I politely told her that, and out of nowhere she called me a name and stormed off.

Thank god she'd found this group. Women in Tech should be respectful. Without giving respect, how do they expect to be respected in return?

The next group conversation I floated into was with some girls who had been in the program for about as long as Gaby. The four of us clicked immediately, especially when I told them the experience I'd just had with Angela.

"Women in Tech should be respectful," I said, and the three women agreed.

"Women in Tech should be respectful," one of them offered.

"Yes," another agreed. "Women in Tech should be team players. It's important to keep the people you work with happy."

We all nodded at that.

"Women in tech should save their energy for serious issues," I replied. "Real problems. Stuff that really matters."

"Exactly," said the last woman. "Women in Tech need discipline."

That last comment took us all by surprise. In response to our blank looks, she repeated it.

"Women in Tech need discipline," she said again. "How do we learn without being punished?"

As we processed what she'd said, all four of us began to nod.

"Yes," I said firmly. "Women in Tech need discipline."

"Women in Tech need discipline," another of the women replied.

"Women in Tech need discipline," the last of us agreed.

We smiled at each other. Me and these smart, respectful, team-playing women in tech.

"Well said, sugar tits," I said, wanting to make sure it was clear that we were all on the same team.

All three of the women shuddered in pleasure at my words.

“What did you think, sir?” Gaby asked as we walked through the front door of our apartment. As soon as we’d left the event, she’d returned to normal.

Well, *new* normal. Her new breathy, compliant, obedient normal. I’d even experimentally pawed at her breast in the car, and been rewarded with a shuddering “Sir!” in response.

“I had a good time,” I admitted. Despite my best efforts, I hadn’t been able to find anything suspicious about the event. Except Angela...but that wasn’t her fault. Poor girl was new.

She’d soon learn what it meant to be a woman in tech.

“I saw you chatting to some of the other people,” Gaby admitted, and I shot her a look.

“Jealous?”

She smiled, and shook her head, leaning in until her mouth was at my ear.

“Competitive,” she whispered, reaching down to grasp my hardening cock. I grinned in response.

Good.

“Women in Tech should be competitive,” I confirmed, and Gaby nodded.

“Women in Tech should be competitive.”

“Women in Tech should be team players,” I added.

“Women in Tech should be team players,” she repeated, moving her mouth to hers. As Gaby’s tongue slipped between my lips, I imagined the three women we’d been chatting to there with us in the living room, each of them naked, each of them looking their best.

Each of them competing for my attention.

“Women in Tech need to look their best,” I said, and Gaby’s eyes glanced down at her own outfit.

“Mm-hmm” she agreed. “I’ll be right back, sir.”

When my girlfriend returned, she was dressed in an outfit I’d seen her wear to work a few times: a tight red skirt, and a top with thin straps that connected across the front...and no bra underneath. It was right on the cusp between slutty and professional, but I’d never objected. Women in Tech needed to look their best.

I’d already been hard when she left the room, but at the sight of her outfit, my cock threatened to explode.

“Hey toots,” I purred, my hand running down my erection. That was all it took to get Gaby in the mood...not, of course, that she was ever *out* of the mood. Within moments, she was bent over the couch. I was standing behind her, my hands reaching under her skirt to pull her thong underwear to one side.

“Oh, yes, please sir,” Gaby groaned, her ass pushing against my erection. “Oh, fuck, you’re so good. I love your big, strong hands. Oh, I want you inside me. Fuck me, sir. Please, I want it in my mouth. I want it in my pussy. I need it...”

The skirt was tight enough that it took me several moments to remove it. When I did, her ass came into view, and my hand twitched.

“Women in Tech need to be disciplined,” I informed my girlfriend. Her eyes went wide at my words, and her jaw dropped.

“W-women in Tech...”

“Women in Tech need to be disciplined,” I said again, more forcefully. “How do we learn without being punished?”

My hands ran across my girlfriend’s firm ass. She shivered in pleasure, before nodding.

“Women in Tech need to be disciplined,” she finally said, her voice cool and dispassionate.

I’d already accepted the advice as a fundamental truth, but hearing her confirmed it. It was a fact of the human condition; we screw up, we’re punished, we learn. Nothing unusual about that at all..

I ran my tongue across my lips.

“Are you ready to be punished?” I asked, my mouth dry.

“Yes, sir,” Gaby said, looking back at me, her brown eyes wide. “I need to be disciplined. I deserve to be punished. I need it.”

Now, for the life of me, I couldn’t think of anything that Gaby had done wrong. Not just that week, but ever.

But with a smile, I realized: I didn’t need a reason.

Women in Tech needed to be disciplined. My girlfriend needed to be disciplined.

Did I even require an excuse?

“Bend over,” I said, my voice husky. Gaby and I had experimented with spanking before, but my girlfriend didn’t like pain, so it had been light-handed taps on the ass. Firm but not painful.

Now, I saw no reason to hold back. Women in Tech needed to be disciplined.

How would she learn without a little pain?

Gaby obeyed with a shiver, once more exposing her ass to me. I raised a hand, bringing it down on my girlfriend's rear with a mighty THWACK.

The sound echoed through the apartment, and Gaby gasped as my hand struck her.

"You naughty girl," I growled, my hand moving again. To her credit, she didn't move, didn't resist. She stood there, breathing heavily, and took the spanking like the good, obedient woman in tech that she was.

THWACK. THWACK. THWACK.

For the next several minutes my hand was a blur, smacking her ass over and over, her body trembling in response. Before long, my palm was numb with pain, and I could only imagine how Gaby felt.

"That's it," I grunted, slapping her ass hard, then harder. "Take it. You deserve it."

Gaby didn't respond, just stood there as I rained blows upon her butt, shivering at the intensity of each one.

"Say it," I ordered.

"I deserve it, sir," Gaby replied, her voice a low groan. "Please, sir. I deserve every smack, and more."

"Yes you do," I said, my voice a low, menacing rumble. My hand was aching from all the punishment, but I kept going anyway. I wanted to see what she could take. Besides, I knew that I wouldn't be the only one to discipline my girlfriend like this.

Women in Tech need to be disciplined. It was so obvious, I couldn't be the only one to work this out.

Before long, I would've bet my bottom dollar that someone at Gaby's work would be bending her over and spanking her ass.

It wasn't until I saw a tear drip from my girlfriend's face onto the desk, I stopped. My dick was rock-hard, and my balls ached.

"I'm going to fuck you, pet," I groaned, and Gaby's hips involuntarily thrust forward at the nickname. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, sir," she breathed. "Please, sir, fuck your naughty little girl. Please."

Gaby trembled as I removed her soaking wet panties and pressed my cock against her pussy.

“Oh, god, sir,” my girlfriend moaned, her voice breaking. “Fuck me, please. Fuck your slut. Use her. I want you to use my cunt, sir. I need it. Please.”

Without saying a word I pushed inside her, my hands gripping her waist as I began to pump into her. I wasn't gentle, and Gaby cried out, her head thrown back.

“Sir!” she gasped, her eyes rolling. “That's so good. I want more. Oh, sir, it's so big. I've never felt anything so huge. I don't know if I'll be able to take it. I need more. I need more, sir. Please, sir, give me more.”

Gaby has always been somewhat vocal during sex, but recently she'd taken it up to eleven. I hadn't questioned it; figuring it was like the squirting, the breast sensitivity, the skirts.

Strange. Scary, on some level. But — at least in the short term — not unwelcome.

And like everything my girlfriend did, she was damn good at it; the words just rolled off her tongue like they belonged there.

I continued fucking my girlfriend hard and deep while she begged me not to stop, flattering every part of the experience— my body, my talent, my “enormous cock” (honestly? I'm right in the middle of the bell curve. Yes, I measured. What guy hasn't?)

Gaby gasped as I grabbed her by the hair, pulling her ear to my mouth.

“Beg for it,” I growled. “Beg me to fill you with cum.”

“I love you, sir. Please. I need to feel you coming in me. I need to be filled with your seed, sir. I need it. I need it. I need it. I need it. I need it. I need it. I need it. I need it. I need it. I need it...”

Sometimes Gaby would get stuck in a loop. It was like her brain just switched off, her mouth mindlessly repeating the last few words of whatever she was saying.

A firm slap on the ass broke her out of it.

“Cum in me, sir,” she gasped, her voice trembling. “Fill me with your hot, sticky cum. Fill my body, my soul, my very being. I am yours. I belong to you. I crave you. I worship you. I live to serve you. I'm yours, sir. Please...”

My girlfriend's dirty words – and the intense experience we'd just shared – was enough to tip me over the edge. I came hard, filling her with my thick cream.

“Oh, god,” I groaned, slumping on top of her. Her legs trembled but didn't buckle. “I love you, Gaby.”

“I love you too, sir,” she replied, reaching behind herself to comfortingly stroke my arm. “Thank

you, sir.”

After a moment, I pulled out of her. Both of us let out a gasp at the sensation, but Gaby didn't say a word, just turned to look at my softening cock lustfully.

It occurred to me that she hadn't cum, but the thought didn't bother me. After all, Women in Tech should give more than they receive.

When Gaby left for work the next day, I sat down at my desk to get to work.

No, not to continue my never-ending hunt for a job. I had something more on my mind:

I had to figure this out.

Something was going on with my girlfriend, and I needed to wrap my head around it. Once upon a time, my girlfriend had been so modest. So confident. She'd been a card-carrying feminist.

Now, she was a giggling, breathy, scantily-clad woman who begged me to spank her.

And it all made sense.

It's hard to explain. All the individual parts of my girlfriend's behavior made complete sense, but I knew — I *knew* — that something was wrong overall.

Imagine you're an inspector. Like, a house inspector or a food inspector or something. Every day, you go to a new site and check everything off your list. You make sure the foundation is solid, or the knives are clean. Whatever it is that you've got written down to look at, you inspect, and everything is perfectly up to code.

But then you start to notice some odd patterns. Like, all the homes you're inspecting are individually fine, but you realize the furniture in each one is exactly identical, down to the positioning of the mess. Or every kitchen you check has just way too many knives. Each knife passes inspection; there's just way too many of them.

On paper it's all correct, technically, but as a whole...it's just off. You start to notice patterns, and you can't get rid of a feeling in your gut that something is wrong.

And that's not to mention the stuff that I hadn't asked Gaby about. The sudden breast sensitivity. The skirts. The squirting.

Something told me that if I asked, she'd explain it to me...and each of those odd elements would also make sense.

Not gonna lie; part of me was tempted to give into that urge. I'd started losing sleep about the whole situation, and the prospect of easy answers held an undeniable appeal.



But I resisted.

Maybe it was unfair to my girlfriend, but as long as she didn't tell me, I could keep on feeling uncomfortable about it. That feeling of discomfort, paradoxically, felt *right*. It was almost like it was the stuff I was okay with that worried me.

Like I said...it's hard to explain.

So you can imagine my reaction when Gaby told me Women in Tech were holding a weekend retreat.

"Seriously?" I asked, not even trying to mask my panic. Gaby looked at me strangely...which, yeah, fair enough.

Women in Tech had helped her so much. They'd helped her acclimatize to the culture at work, they'd taught her so much about working in the industry...hell, I'd even gone to an event and had a great time.

Despite my best efforts, I hadn't been able to find anything suspicious about them. And believe me, I'd tried.

So why did every bone in my body want to fight back against my girlfriend going away for a weekend?

"Babe," I said cautiously, ignoring my girlfriend's shudder of pleasure at the affectionate term. Women in Tech love pet names. "I...I don't want you to go."

"Women in Tech should use every asset they have available," Gaby reminded me, and my shoulders slumped. She was right, of course.

My girlfriend had learned so much from the mixers. I could only imagine how much she'd learn from a dedicated weekend retreat.

I shuddered at the idea of how much she'd learn from a dedicated weekend retreat. Would I even recognize the woman who came back to me?

"Are partners allowed?" I asked hopefully.

"No, sir," she smiled. "You seem to forget the focus of *Women in Tech*."

Everyone has moments of regret. I think all of us wish we'd invested our life savings into bitcoin when they were only a few cents each. Obviously I wish I hadn't accepted the promotion back in Texas, or had at least talked to Gaby about it first, or...y'know, broken the news in a less thick-headed way.

But I don't think anything will ever match the regret I feel for letting Gaby go on that retreat.

It's always so obvious in hindsight. From the outside, I bet it's blatantly obvious that I should

have forced my girlfriend to quit her job, whisked her back to Texas, taken her as far away from Women in Tech and Vision as I possibly could.

But at the time, it just made so much sense.

Women in Tech needed to use every asset they had available. They had to be competitive. Be team players.

My girlfriend's happiness – and I hope I've made this clear – is the most important thing in the world to me. After almost a decade of working in shitty jobs with shitty people, she was finally enjoying her work, all thanks to Women in Tech. And not just her work: the people she was working with too. Women in Tech have to be competitive, and she was frequently winning at strip poker, or the wet t-shirt competitions they held. Women in tech need to be disciplined, and the marks Gaby came home with on her ass told me that her bosses (and possibly co-workers as well) weren't shy about spanking her when she needed it.

Women in Tech love pet names; it makes them feel like part of the team. Where else was Gaby going to find a workplace so willing to give her affectionate nicknames?

And at first we'd thought that her nudes being leaked would be a show-stopper if anyone found out, but as Gaby had pointed out when I'd found them on reddit (with her name attached): Women in Tech need all the promotion they can get.

My girlfriend was happy, I was happy that she was happy, and all I had to resist it was this vague sense of unease, and discomfort with her wearing skirts to work and being able to cum just from having her nipples sucked.

Like, those weren't red flags. Those were things I'd all but wished for!

If I'd tried to stop her, I would've sounded crazy. Irrational. Like an overly-possessive boyfriend gone mad.

But if I'd known then what I know now, I would have done it without hesitation.

In the end, she's her own woman (as much as she loves to obey, and give more than she receives) – it was important for her job that she go, and I decided it wasn't my place to stand in her way.

Bad fucking move, I'll tell you what.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I offered to drop her to the retreat. Well, no. Not offered – insisted.

And then, after I saw what she was packing for the two days away, ordered.

I've mentioned before, Gaby wasn't shy, exactly, about her body back in Texas. Like, she didn't cover herself from head to toe and shriek like a cartoon character if anyone ever saw her exposed

skin.

But a lifetime of male attention directed at her chest meant that she didn't wear anything top-heavy if she could avoid it. In all the years we'd been together, I'd never seen her in a bikini.

For the weekend retreat – which she'd assured me was strictly business – Gaby had packed a bikini.

Again: if I knew then what I know now...

It made sense, really. Women in Tech had to look good. Women in tech had to show off their bodies. Women in tech should use every asset they have available.

But, again, there was something about it that just made me uncomfortable. Something I couldn't place.

And it wasn't like she was wearing it as I dropped her off. The retreat was at a resort in the mountains; I'd questioned why Gaby needed a swimsuit at all, but she'd been told that dips in the hot tub were a key aspect of the experience.

Despite the cold weather, my girlfriend had still managed to find a way to show off her cleavage. She was wearing a jacket, open at the front to reveal her tight white tank-top.

She looked great. There was no use in hiding her tits. Everyone knows they're there. And besides – as Gaby had reminded me every time I tried to score an invite, the event was for *Women in Tech*. It wasn't like she was going to spend the weekend being lusted after by men.

So why did it feel so wrong?

The feeling of unease never left me as I made the long drive home alone. The scenery was beautiful, but I barely even noticed it. My mind was spinning, trying to reconcile the contradictions it contained.

I loved my girlfriend, that I knew. I wanted her to succeed. I always had. And in order to succeed, Women in Tech have to be competitive. They need to look good.

Gaby *needed* to show off her body. For her career.

The retreat would be really good for her. And yet, despite all of that, I was worried. About her.

About us.

I texted her as soon as I got home, but it was hours before I heard back from her.

“havin a great time,” she replied, adding the kissy-heart emoji. I smiled at the sight of it, but my gut still told me something was wrong.

“selfie?” I asked, and sighed as she obliged immediately.

She was in the bikini. Don’t get me wrong - she looked amazing. It was like the outfit had been designed specifically to show off her body; her breasts jutted proudly out of the thin material, and her nipples were rock-hard.

I don’t think I’ve ever seen her in anything so skimpy before.

And she was smiling, her eyes bright and her lips parted as she looked into the camera. It was a look I was extremely familiar with; my girlfriend was aroused.

I was a hundred miles away, and my girlfriend was turned on.

With a sigh, I closed the photo and opened the Vision app. I normally set myself as unavailable over the weekend, but with Gaby away, I wanted something to distract myself.

I spent the next two days walking the dogs of tech millionaires, and I didn’t see a single woman in a bikini.

I tried to call Gaby whenever I was between gigs, but she didn’t pick up until Sunday night.

“Hi, honey,” I said, my cock tingling at the breathy sigh she gave me in response.

“Hey babe,” she replied.

“How’s the retreat going?”

“Oh my god,” she gushed. “It’s *amazing*. I’m so, so glad that I came to this. I can’t wait to tell you about it.”

I smiled. She sounded excited.

“You can tell me now,” I offered.

“Can’t,” she said with a sigh. “We’re about to go into another training exercise. But seriously, love, this has been incredible. I’m learning so, so much. I’m going to come back to you a brand new woman, I swear.”

“I like the current woman,” I reminded my girlfriend, and she just laughed in response.

“I gotta go, babe,” she said. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” I replied, but the call had already ended.

Gaby came back on Monday afternoon (Women in Tech bussed everyone back, so I couldn’t go pick her up) and I was surprised to find her wearing jeans and a v-neck sweater. I’d half expected her to come back looking like a Victoria’s Secret model, but instead she was dressed like normal.

Well, her neckline was low, and her shirt showed off her ample cleavage. She was wearing

makeup, and I don't know what she'd done to her hair but it somehow looked, like, a foot longer.

So not Texas normal. California normal.

As she cooked dinner, I was eager to find out what she'd learned. But whenever I tried to ask, she seemed to dodge the subject.

"So how was the retreat?" I asked.

She was distracted, her hands moving quickly as she stirred the pot.

"The food was great," she replied. "Oh, and the hot tub was amaaaazing."

"What sort of thing did the training cover?"

"I met some of the most amazing women. I've never worked so hard in my life. I feel like I've got the whole world at my feet."

"Watch out, planet Earth," I laughed. "But seriously, what did they teach you?"

"Lots and lots. And it was all things I could use to get ahead in the business. You should have seen me; I was a natural. They were so impressed."

"A natural at what?" I pressed, but Gaby's attention was drawn to the pasta.

After we finished eating, I sat beside her on the couch. She shot me a saucy smile; I guess after three days away, she assumed I'd have only one thing on my mind.

And, well, she was right. But it wasn't what she'd expected.

"Gaby," I said firmly, using her name so she wouldn't get distracted. "Tell me what you learned on the retreat."

"Oh my god, so much," she smiled, but I held up a hand to silence her.

"Specifically," I instructed. "I want to know exactly what they taught you."

Gaby hesitated, and I took her hand in mine.

"That's an order," I said softly, and she nodded.

"Well, sir," she replied, her voice suddenly very calm. "I learned that Women in Tech need to do anything they can to climb the ladder. Women in Tech need to learn how to serve. Women in Tech need to satisfy their clients.

"Women in Tech must submit."

I blinked twice. My head felt very light, all of a sudden. The list of maxims all made sense, of course. They were all completely, undeniably true. But hearing them all at once, spoken with

such conviction, it was... a lot.

“Any more questions, sir?” my girlfriend asked, and I shook my still-spinning head.

Over the next week, I couldn't stop thinking about what my girlfriend had learned from the retreat. The words ran through my head constantly; no wonder she'd come back so hyped. The information was so...valuable, I guess.

You know that moment where you learn something, and it just makes everything click? Maybe it's a programmer thing; you'll be slaving away at a piece of code, and then you'll see an article or a tweet from someone and it'll just make the whole thing come together. You'll add a class or switch out a module, and it all just *works*. It's like flipping a switch.

Everything my girlfriend had shared with me was like that. Except...not.

I mean, it all made sense. It all clicked. But at the same time, it didn't. At all.

It was like trying to do maths in base eight: it's all *correct*, but no matter how I tried, I couldn't get it to sit right in my head.

Of course Women in Tech need to do anything they can to climb the ladder. That's just how corporate America works: if you're not moving up, you're moving down.

Obviously Women in Tech need how to learn how to serve. In every job, you're serving a million different needs at once. The bosses, the clients': there are demands coming at you from all angles, and you have to manage all of them at once.

Women in Tech need to satisfy their clients; if they didn't, they'll soon find themselves out of work.

And it goes without saying that Women in Tech have to submit. If you're disobedient or insolent to any boss, you'll soon find yourself out of a job.

Plus, we're coders. We submit stuff all the time.

You see what I mean? Every part of it made sense. Complete, perfect, logical sense But as the words ran through my mind again and again...god, I dunno. They just didn't add up.

I was putting 5 and 5 together and getting 12. I could understand the logic, but I didn't fundamentally grok it.

To make it worse, I had a *lot* of time to reflect on Gaby's newfound wisdom. See, after she came back from the retreat, her work started keeping her late. For the first few days I figured it was because she had to make up for the day she'd missed, but after a week of late nights (and even going in on Saturday), I realized that this was just the new normal.

I'd asked her what she was up to that suddenly required her at all hours, and she got weirdly

vague about it. “Meetings”, she told me.

For the life of me, I couldn’t work out why she suddenly needed to spend so much time at meetings...but, of course, Women in Tech need to do anything they can to climb the ladder. If late-night meetings were the way to move forward, I guess that was where Gaby had to be.

I just wished that I was making any kind of progress in my own career. I was still applying for jobs as they came up, but my only reliable source of income with Vision’s app. I’d taken a little online course that Vision offered, and expanded my services from dog-walking to grooming. I wasn’t about to open up a pet salon or anything like that, but when someone needed an emergency wash or nail-trimming, I was perfectly adequate.

I was considering adding cleaning as well; Gaby’s late nights meant that she was no longer able to take care of dinner, and since we couldn’t afford nightly takeout, I was cooking for both of us and taking care of the housework too. She asked if she could handle it (I think she’d started getting off on being so domestic for me) but she was always so wiped when she got home, I couldn’t bring myself to take her up on the offer.

And worst of all, her new schedule also meant that – for the second time in our relationship – our sex life had hit a low point.

No, look. That’s not fair. It would be easy to blame it on her late nights (and how tired she was when she got home), but if I’m being honest...she was still up for anything. Anything, literally anytime. She’d purringly made the offer that I could wake her up with my dick inside her if I got in the mood while she was asleep.

The real problem was that *I* wasn’t in the mood.

It was a combination of things. Resentment, more than anything. Not only was Gaby working (while I was washing dogs), but she was clearly getting all these great opportunities – I couldn’t believe some of the names she was dropping; these late-night meetings were putting her in contact with some of the biggest names in Silicon Valley.

And it felt like she was cutting me out.

I know that isn’t really what was happening. It was part of her work; she wasn’t, like, given two tickets and told to bring anyone she wanted. But as she came home night after night, sleepily gushing about getting to meet some of the most powerful people in the industry, I couldn’t help feeling left behind.

My girlfriend’s career was skyrocketing, while mine was at a dead end.

I mean, yeah, I guess I’d gotten to meet some pretty cool people in the context of walking their dogs. Face-time is face-time, as they say. But so far no one had said “Wow, you did such a great job walking Rowdy – how’d you like to come join my new startup?”

So I was frustrated. And hurt, frankly. For the first time, I really *got* how Gaby had felt when I’d

taken that promotion on top of her.

And this wasn't even as bad as what I'd done. Fragile male ego, I guess.

The end result? Even when Gaby came home glowing, even when she sunk to her knees in front of me and practically begged to suck my cock...I pushed her away. I told her to go to bed. I ordered her to, resenting the shiver of pleasure that passed through her body when she obeyed.

I knew it was petty. I knew it was immature. And I'm a little embarrassed at how easily I was able to justify it to myself. If you're not in the mood, you're not in the mood, right? Having sex with my girlfriend when I wasn't truly into it, I told myself, wouldn't be fair to either of us.

And so, yeah. The sex dried up. I had a gorgeous, constantly-horny, obedient, ambitious, intelligent woman in my bed each night, eager for me to use her for my pleasure...and I didn't.

I believe Shakespeare said it best: "What a fuckin' moron."

Gaby, to her credit, tried to talk to me about it, but I just shut her down. I told her that I was sorry, but I just wasn't in the mood, or I was too tired. And after a few weeks of grumbling excuses...she stopped asking.

I could tell that she was frustrated, but it was clear that work was taking up all of her time and energy, and she didn't have the capacity to deal with her boyfriend's low libido.

Maybe that should've made me realize how dumb I was being. But instead, and I realize this makes no sense, it too just made me mad.

All the while, I was still worried about her. About Vision, and Women in Tech. So when she casually mentioned another social event, I jumped on the opportunity.

It was on a weeknight, one of the few that Gaby had off. And again, Gaby surprised me by dressing down. Her makeup was impeccable, at least, but her clothes were...I don't want to say dowdy, but she definitely didn't look her best. Women in Tech should use every asset they have available.

Women in Tech should show off their bodies. They need all the promotion they can get.

She was wearing one of the outfits we'd bought her when she'd first started at Vision, back when she'd put an unnecessary amount of effort into trying to hide her body from her co-workers. Women in Tech should save their energy for serious issues, stuff that really matters. The outfit (a lumpy sweater and a pair of white jeans) wasn't just unflattering, it was actively trying to be unattractive.

And just like last time, as we approached the building, she lost her new girly mannerisms: her giggle, her breathy voice. She didn't even call me sir.

The whole visit promised to be a repeat of the last.



But as soon as I entered the room, I realized something was different:

I wasn't the only man in the room. Standing in the corner, chatting to the young women I'd met last time — Angela — was the founder of Women in Tech himself.

Flynn Parson.

He was taller than I'd expected, and — just like his photo — it felt like wherever I moved in the room, his dark eyes were following me. Did everyone feel like they had his full attention at all times, or was it just me?

I froze, my face flushed under his gaze. I felt like he was able to read me like a book, flip through my thoughts as easily as one skims through pages.

In that moment, I would have sworn he knew exactly why I was there. Everything I suspected. Everything I'd discovered in my research.

I tried to shake the irrational feeling off, but before I could, he was gone.

I blinked twice.

"Where'd, uh...where'd he go?"

"Who?" Gaby replied, squeezing my hand.

"Flynn Parson," I said, gesturing to the stunned-looking Angela. Unlike the previous social, she was wearing makeup.

"He never comes to these," Gaby replied airily. "I've only met him in passing a few times. Now come on, I want you to talk to Sylvia."

I was still stunned as Gaby pulled me along to the blonde woman I recognized from the Women in Tech website. Sylvia, the woman who Gaby had been meeting with. The woman who had run the retreat.

The woman who had shared so much wisdom with my girlfriend. With both of us, indirectly.

She was impeccably dressed. About ten years older than Gaby and I (our birthdays are only a few months apart) with her blonde hair in a bun, her lime-green jacket somehow not clashing with it at all.

"Hello," she said with a smile, reaching her hand out to take mine. "You must be Gaby's boyfriend. I've heard so much about you."

"Hopefully not about my cooking," I joke, and was met with a thin-lipped smile in response. "Uh, t-thank you for helping Gaby out at work."

"Of course," Sylvia replied coolly, her light eyes burning into mine. I was left with the same

feeling of exposure as when Flynn Parson's gaze had locked onto me, but without the intensity. "Thank you for coming to the event."

"He insisted," Gaby said apologetically, and I did nothing to deny it.

Just like last time, it was a pure mixer. I talked to some of the women I'd met with last time — Angela, I was happy to see, was being much more respectful. A real team player. I told her that Women in Tech were here to please, and she nodded, repeating the words thoughtfully.

Women in Tech are here to please.

Just as I was approaching the group of ladies I'd spent most of the last event with, Sylvia cut me off.

"Excuse me," she said, her smile not reaching her eyes. "Mr. Parson would like to meet with you."

My eyebrows shot up. I'd come here specifically to investigate him, and he was just...inviting me to meet?

Maybe I was better at this detective stuff than I'd thought. Or much, much worse.

"I'll get Gaby," I replied immediately, but Sylvia shook her head firmly.

"Just you," she said.

I swallowed.

"Lead the way," I said as the blonde woman's eyes bore into mine.

Flynn Parson's office was unlike any I'd seen before. The walls were lined with books, and a large desk sat to the side of the room. It was spotless, and — strangest of all — I couldn't see a computer anywhere.

He sat behind his desk, and gestured at the empty chair opposite it. Sylvia led me in, bowed to Flynn, and let us be.

"Uh, hello," I began awkwardly. I didn't know why I was here. How worried I should be. I didn't even know if my girlfriend knew I'd gone.

But this man, I was convinced, held the answers to all my questions. And so I put my fear aside, and decided to make as much out of this meeting as I could.

"You wanted to see me?"

"You seem troubled," he said, flashing a dark smile as I sat down.

I hesitated. He was right, of course, but...

“Tell me what’s wrong,” he insisted, and before I knew what was happening, words were spilling out of my mouth.

Not about Gaby. Well, not about her job.

About our sex life.

“I want to be supportive,” I finished, after confessing more to the total stranger than I’d told anyone else in my life. “I love her, I really do. I feel guilty, but I can’t help it. I just can’t...get in the mood.”

“Nonsense,” the older man said. All the time I’d been speaking, his face had held a smile full of secrets. “It’s not about the mood.”

“Sir?”

“It’s about self-worth. Self-respect. So your wife is doing well at work, boo hoo.”

“Girlfriend,” I corrected, but he ignored me.

“The real problem is that you don’t feel like a man. Like a breadwinner. It’s not natural, for women to provide for their partners.”

I frowned at his words. Not exactly what I’d expected to hear from the man behind such a feminist organization.

But as he spoke, I couldn’t deny that he was right. I didn’t feel like a man. And it wasn’t about being in the mood, not really. That was just the excuse I’d been telling myself – and Gaby – to try to dissuade my guilt.

The last part...I didn’t necessarily agree with how he’d phrased it, but I couldn’t deny that he was right. Historically, men have been the hunter-gatherers. Women in that role...it wasn’t natural.

Parson’s smile broadened, and he leaned forward.

“You want to feel better? Work. Throw yourself into work, boy. Get more shifts on Vision. It’ll distract you. Give you something to do.”

I nodded. I didn’t even remember telling him what I did for work, but it must have slipped out while I was speaking.

I could see why he got so much consultancy work. Not only was he insightful, but whenever he spoke, it felt like his advice resonated through my entire body.

I’d come there to uncover his secrets, but I knew that as soon as I got home, I’d be following his suggestion.

“Thank you,” I said, standing up. Part of me knew that I should dig, ask questions, investigate. It was a real What Would Batman Do situation.

But at the same time...I was strangely drained. At the smallest of prompts, I'd told this near-stranger my deepest secrets. My insecurities.

I'd bared my soul, and I didn't have the energy for subterfuge.

“I...I appreciate it,” I concluded honestly.

“Not at all,” he said, waving me away. I turned to leave, but he called me back.

“Oh, and by the way...”

I turned to see him smiling at me, a calculating look in his eye. His eyebrow raised, and for a moment his gaze intensified.

“Don't take it personally.”

With that, he returned to whatever he was writing – with a pen – and I left Flynn Parson's office, my head spinning.