

TAIL BETWEEN HIS LEGS

by

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Characters

KRISTIN, mid-to-late 20s, urban professional

BARRY, mid-to-late 20s, urban semi-professional

Time

Present.

Setting

Living, dining, kitchen areas in a modest, moderately cluttered Millennial apartment. Doors to bedroom, extra room used for exercising, and outside.

TAIL BETWEEN HIS LEGS

BARRY sits on a couch CS in his underwear, idly working a dumbbell in one hand while reading from an e-tablet on his lap. He ignores the sudden high-pitching yapping OS.

KRISTIN (O.S.)

Hush, Princess!

OS yapping continues, despite KRISTIN's affectionate admonishments.

KRISTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Princess Baby, Mommy's in a hurry and can't play. Oh, Baby-Snookie-Wookie, I wuv oo so much. But Mommy's gotta get ready for her big day. Yes, she do.

(Shouting brusquely.)

Barry, can you come take the dog?

BARRY

(To himself.)

Fucking dog.

(To KRISTIN.)

Just push it out and close the bedroom door.

KRISTIN appears at the bedroom door, half-dressed, her hair wet and tangled.

KRISTIN

Barry, I have to get ready and I have to eat something. She just needs a little attention.

KRISTIN exits to bedroom.

BARRY

(Still staring at the screen.)

Here, Princess.

(Whistles half-heartedly.)

Come, Princess. Come here to the loving arms of the Queen Consort.

KRISTIN (O.S.)

Barry!

With great reluctance, BARRY sets the tablet aside and pushes himself out of the couch. Still working the dumbbell, he exits to the bedroom.

BARRY (O.S.)

Where's that mischievous little Princess? Where's that Royal Painie-Wainie?

The yapping becomes frenzied, as if the dog were being chased.

KRISTIN (O.S.)

Ooo, don't be upset, Snookums. Mummy's right here.

BARRY (O.S.)

Gotcha!

KRISTIN (O.S.)

Barry, be gentle. She's agitated. Hold her like I showed you.

BARRY enters from the bedroom with what appears to be a fluffy lapdog under his arm. It growls feebly. BARRY crosses to the extra room and deposits the dog inside, not too gently.

BARRY

Shut the fuck up, now, you yappy little bitch. And don't go near that weight rack, you hear?

BARRY shuts the door and returns to the couch.

KRISTIN (O.S.)

See if Princess has to go outside.

BARRY

Yeah, babe.

After a moment, KRISTIN enters from the bedroom, still half-dressed, still harried, her hair still wet. She goes to the kitchen area and begins to rustle up coffee and a bagel throughout the following...

KRISTIN

Barry, you could get off your ass and help me here. You know I got that big meeting at nine. I don't have time for a decent breakfast.

BARRY

(Without looking up.)

With your diet and all, wasn't sure what you could and couldn't eat.

KRISTIN

All you had to do was ask.

BARRY

What you want for breakfast, babe?

BARRY fakes an attempt to get up.

KRISTIN

Too late. Forget it. Just stay out of the way.

BARRY settles back on the couch.

BARRY

You got it.

KRISTIN

And keep Princess occupied.

BARRY

Sure thing.

KRISTIN

Did you let her out?

BARRY

In a minute.

KRISTIN

Barry, you know she needs to go first thing in the morning.

BARRY

I know.

KRISTIN

She has an accident, it's your fault.

BARRY

Yeah.

KRISTIN

You'll have to clean it up. I don't want to come home to a mess that could've been avoided.

BARRY

Kris, I said I'd take care of it.

KRISTIN

You know, Barry, sometimes I think I'm pulling the weight for both of us around here.

BARRY

What--you think I'm not working enough? I got three jobs.

KRISTIN

Those jobs are gigs. Next week you could have none.

BARRY

Life of a musician, babe.

KRISTIN

Well, I know we agreed you could try it for a year and if the band didn't work out, you'd take my dad up on his offer.

BARRY

Still got three months.

KRISTIN turns with coffee cup in one hand and the bagel on a small plate in the other. She looks at the back of BARRY's head for a few seconds, then...

KRISTIN

I know.

(Beat.)

Just let Princess out, will you?

BARRY

Yep.

KRISTIN crosses to the bedroom door and exits after one last look at BARRY. The bedroom door closes. After a few seconds a hair dryer starts running. Suddenly there's a loud crash OS. BARRY looks to the extra room. A fearful idea hits him and he bolts to the door, flinging it open. He enters...

BARRY (O.S.)(CONT'D)

Oh, no!...Oh, fuck!...Oh, God!...

After a few seconds, BARRY appears at the door to the extra room, holding the lifeless dog in his arms. The fluffy form is smeared with red. [NOTE: Going forward, boldface indicates BARRY's thoughts in voiceover.] BARRY paces...

BARRY (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Jesus, what am I going to do...I told you to stay away from the weights, you little shit...I told you. But you wouldn't listen...Oh, fuck. Oh, fucking Jesus...What am I gonna tell Kristin?...She'll freak...Oh, Jesus fucking God, I'm screwed...Wait!

BARRY drops to his knees, laying the dog's body on the floor. He bends over it, hesitates, leans in further, recoils...

BARRY (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Kee-rist, what a smell!

Steeling himself, BARRY begins mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, grimacing between breaths. After 15 seconds of this, he stops, wiping his mouth on his shoulder before placing his hands on the dog's body and attempting heart compressions. His reaction after one push shows that this is counterproductive.

BARRY (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Oh, fuck, that ain't gonna work--she's a fuckin' pancake...Oh, God, Princess, what am I gonna do with you?...

The hair dryer stops. From his knees BARRY looks at the closed bedroom door.

BARRY (V.O.)(CONT'D)

I'm so sorry...Please! I didn't mean for anything like this to happen. Oh, God, will she ever forgive me?...

BARRY looks down at the dog.

BARRY (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Fuck, fuck, fuck, no. Kristin's gonna kill me...She'll fucking tear my head off...What am I gonna do?...It's all over...

BARRY looks about the room desperately, as if a solution might be in plain sight.

BARRY (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Goddam dog. Goddam stupid dog...Why'd you have to ruin my life?...What'd I ever do to you?...No!...No, it can't end like this, it can't...I have to make sure it doesn't end like this...

Quickly Barry gathers the dead dog in his arms and stands. He moves to the outside door, pausing only to look to see that the bedroom door is still closed. BARRY exits outside. A few seconds later, BARRY re-enters empty-handed. Glancing at the bedroom, he strips off his bloody shirt and tosses it in the extra room, then hurries back to the couch and his tablet.

The bedroom door opens and KRISTIN enters. She's dressed in a nice business suit, her hair simply but nicely done. She carries her cup and plate to the kitchen and places the plate in the sink.

She turns to BARRY as she finishes the last of her coffee and sets the cup down...

KRISTIN

Barry, I'm sorry I snapped at you. You're right. We agreed to the full year. And I believe you're talented and you're trying.

BARRY puts the tablet down and goes to her.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

It's going to be all right, I know it.

They embrace and kiss. KRISTIN leans back to appraise him, caressing his bare shoulders.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Umm, I like the look. You should go shirtless all the time.

BARRY

Hey, hurry back.

KRISTIN

(Suggestively.)

You bet I will.

Another kiss, deeper. Then KRISTIN breaks the embrace. She grabs her briefcase and her car keys.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Did you let Princess out?

BARRY

Like you said.

KRISTIN

I thought I heard a noise.

BARRY

Door slammed. The wind.

KRISTIN

Hey, can you take care of the electrical? I set the bill by the TV.

BARRY

You bet. I'll straighten up the place, too.

KRISTIN

You're the greatest.

A final quick goodbye kiss, then KRISTIN exits to the outside. BARRY faces the audience, his arms at his side. He seems to brace himself as if expecting a punch in the gut. A car door slams OS. BARRY closes his eyes. The car's engine starts, runs for a few moments, then stops. The car door opens...then there is a sudden terrible scream OS...The door to the outside flies open and KRISTIN enters, wild-eyed and utterly distraught. Her hands clutch at her open mouth.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

Oh my God! Oh my God! Princess! I killed her!

BARRY hurries to take KRISTIN in his arms.

KRISTIN (CONT'D)

The car...I backed up! I didn't see her behind me, I swear.

KRISTIN is overcome. Her legs fail her and she wails. BARRY helps her to the couch, where she collapses.

BARRY

That's horrible! I'm so sorry!

KRISTIN

My Princess! I killed her! I drove over her and I killed her!

BARRY

Shush, shush, it was an accident.

KRISTIN buries her face against BARRY's shoulder, devastated and sobbing. BARRY cradles her like a baby, looking out over her head at the audience as compassion, relief, and guilt washes back and forth over his face.

BARRY (CONT'D)

You didn't mean to. You were in a hurry. An accident. It could've happened to anyone...Shhh, love! It was an accident. Nobody's fault. Oh, babe, let me help...I love you so much...

Fade to black as BARRY holds KRISTIN tightly, trying to rock away her agony.

THE END