



YourEssence

Chapter 8 - The Struggle Continues

David sat there patiently as he felt his body shifting. Occasionally, he would readjust his seated position as his hips continued their expansion, and his legs became uncomfortable trying to remain in their prior positions. For David, the height loss really troubled him, however. Diana was six inches shorter than he was. He tried to continue listening as his eyeline up to Diana changed. Now, hearing his wife detail her work environment in 'his' voice instead of hers, he tried to summarize what he had been told.

"Janet is sensitive to changes, so don't surprise her with anything new. I have to ensure I gradually introduce new ideas to her and give her lots of time to come to terms with them. *(I will not make any significant changes during my time as Diana.)*

"Frank is a chauvinist but takes good care of his students. So I can leave him be, but watch out for any male ego displays as they can be a mess to fall into."

"Carie is your closest work friend. She is also a huge gossip. So if I need to know something going on, I should ask her 'what's up with...!' and she will give me the latest."

"You gave me your student rosters for your classes, and I'll spend some time familiarizing myself with the names so I'm not surprised by meeting everyone. I'll watch out for Reagan and Toby, the resident 'It' couple who like to use class time to show off. Stephen is your teacher's assistant (TA) and can be counted on for any tasks I need help with."

Anything I miss?"

"I think that pretty much sums it up," Diana said to David before quickly jumping back in. "Oh, don't forget about Robert. He's the department head. He makes random stops by to observe lectures, so make sure you stick to my schedule and planner. He's a stickler for keeping the students on track, and you don't want to get pulled into his office at the end of the day. He tends to be very condescending

in his feedback. He's a sweetheart if you stay on schedule, though."

"All right, watch out for Robert and ensure I stay on schedule. You have it so meticulously planned that I think I should be in good shape."

The couple wrapped up their work preparation conversation and headed to their bedroom. As David started to get into bed, Diana scolded him. "Nope, back up to the bathroom, mister, well misses. It would be best if you kept up with my evening rituals so you look good in the morning. So, get back in there. You need to apply my face cream and get changed into a nightie. I don't want to sleep next to your scratchy clothes."

"Do I have to? The YourEssence keeps you looking like this, doesn't it?"

"Sure, but I don't want to wake up with bags under my eyes. It's just different for women. You must take better proactive care of yourself, even with YourEssence in our lives."

"Ugh, fine. I'll put the lotion on, but can I please wear something else to bed? Your nighties are so... 'revealing.'"

"Yes, you have to wear my nightie. You'll like it; they are comfortable, and it's not like you haven't seen the full package anyway. You've seen it from yours and my perspective."

"There's no winning with you, is there? Fine, I'll do everything you asked."

David was the first to return home from work the next day. He hung his head low as he entered the apartment. He was glad when he saw that he was the first one home. He wasn't ready to deal with how Diana would take the news that he had done such a poor job with her students. As she had warned, Robert stopped by David's morning lecture, and unfortunately, he struggled to keep on track. They were halfway through the lecture's content by that point, and David was working hard to follow Diana's notes and distill them into a coherent message to deliver to the students. Robert's presence exacerbated this problem as David started to split his attention between Diana's notes and Robert's expressions of disapproval. As expected, David was called to Robert's office in the department building at the end of the day. Robert delivered the full dressing down that Diana had warned him of. David was glad that he had been warned about this. His emotions had been a mess these few days living as Diana, and the shock of being disciplined by another adult so forcefully would have sent David over the edge.

Diana walked into the apartment a half hour after David had returned home. Diana was jubilant upon her return. "Brian owes you big time, David. I saved his bacon today. Twice! You should have seen the VPs; they were eating up everything I said, and when Brian almost blew it, I swooped in with the data to back us up. I was on fire!"

"That's great, Diana. I'm glad at least one of our days went well," David said, hanging his head.

"Oh no! Babe, what happened?" Diana asked. David noticed that she had used 'his' pet name for Diana in the question. *Probably just a slip of the tongue*, he assumed before responding to Diana.

"Well, you warned me about staying on schedule..."

"Oh gosh, Robert got to you? On your first day? I'm so sorry, David. I can't believe our dumb luck."

"Yeah, he was so mean about it too!" David burst out in response as tears started to flow. He was overwhelmed by the whole experience, and his unfamiliar hormones were amplifying the way he was experiencing this grief. *Dammit, this is what I was trying not to do*. David chided himself in his thoughts.

"There, there, David. It's all going to be all right. It's happened to me before, and I'm sure it will happen again. Robert is a pig; don't lend his words any credence," Diana moved over to console and comfort David. She took him into her arms in a full-on hug from behind. David stopped what he was doing to let himself be held. It felt fitting to be wrapped in Diana's arms, especially with how he felt after the day's events.

"Babe, why don't you stop prepping dinner? We will get takeout from downstairs instead. It was a big day for us both, and we shouldn't throw extra responsibility on top of the already busy day."

There, she repeated that pet name. Why is she calling me 'babe' when she refers to me?

"Now that I've thought about it, I've decided. I'll run down and get our usuals. You can go throw on a pair of sweats and relax. Take your bra off; it will feel much better not to wear one anymore."

David agreed to take Diana's advice. He worried that she would insist if he disagreed with any of it. Diana released David from her embrace, turned him

around, and quickly planted a quick kiss on his lips. It would have been cute, but David was the one who usually would take the initiative on little displays of affection like that. It was weird for David to be on the receiving end of it. Compounding the weirdness was that David appreciated the gesture and had gotten a little spark of joy from it.