

An AB Discovery Book

THE MAGIC OF MAX VOL 2



MAX HARPER

The Magic of Max (Vol 2)

by
Max Harper

First Published 2026
Copyright © AB Discovery
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher and author.

Any resemblance to any person, either living or dead, or actual events is a coincidence.

The Mommy Protocol

Title: The Magic of Max 2

Author: Max Harper

Editor: Michael Bent, Rosalie Bent

Publisher: AB Discovery

© 2025

www.abdiscovery.com.au

THIS BOOK and all AB Discovery titles are now
available in audiobook as well.

CONTENTS

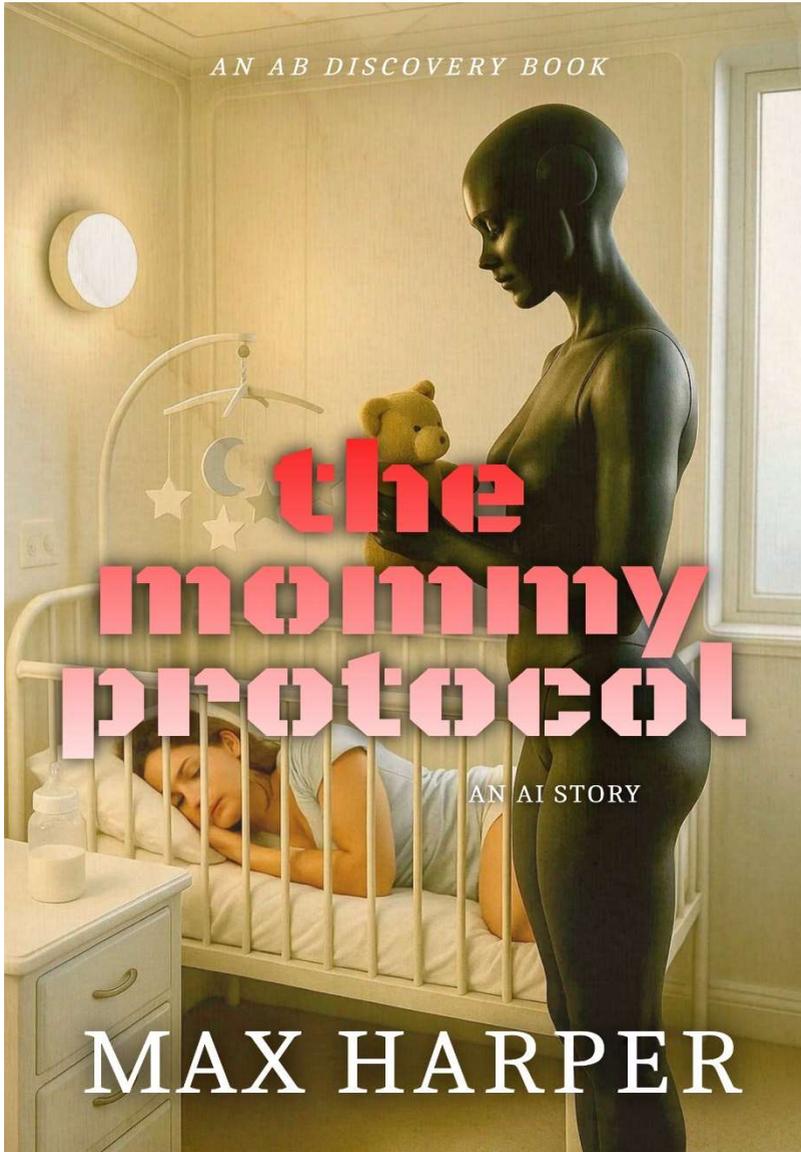
The Magic of Max (Vol 2)	2
The Mommy Protocol.....	8
Chapter 1	9
Chapter 2	15
Chapter 3	24
Chapter 4	28
Chapter 5	37
Chapter 6	47
Chapter 7	51
Chapter 8	59
Chapter 9	72
Chapter 10.....	82
Chapter 11.....	88
Chapter 12.....	93
Epilogue	98
A Tale of Two Words.....	100
Preface	101
Chapter One.....	102
Epilogue	119
Sarah’s Revenge: The Fall of the Institute	121
Prologue.....	122
Chapter 1: Scott and Alyse.....	127
Chapter 2	139
Chapter 3 The Neighbors: Evelyn and Isaac.....	149
Chapter 4	152
Chapter 5	159
Chapter 6	168

The Mommy Protocol

Chapter 7	179
Chapter 8	189
Chapter 9	200
Chapter 10.....	212
Chapter 11 The Neighbors: Patty and Christopher	222
Chapter 12.....	232
Chapter 13.....	243
Chapter 14.....	254
Chapter 15.....	265
Chapter 16.....	273
Chapter 17.....	282
Chapter 18: Sarah	294
Chapter 19.....	306
Chapter 20.....	317
Chapter 21.....	326
Chapter 22.....	337
Chapter 23.....	349
Chapter 24.....	357
Epilogue 1	366
Epilogue 2	368
My Adoption.....	370
Chapter 1: Finding Mommy.....	371
Chapter 2: Meeting Daddy	394
Chapter 3: Daddy's Rules.....	413
Chapter 4: Confusion.....	427
Chapter 5: Affirmation.....	437
Chapter 6: The Truth.....	447
Chapter 7: Confessions	454
Chapter 8: Temptation.....	461

The Mommy Protocol

Chapter 9: A Fateful Decision	474
My Transformation	482
Preface	483
Chapter 1	484
Chapter 2	490
Chapter 3	500
Chapter 4	510
A My Transformation Interlude	517
Chapter 5	522
Chapter 6	531
Chapter 7	539
Chapter 8	550
Chapter 9	559
Chapter 10.....	569
Chapter 11.....	577
Chapter 12.....	588
Interlude 2	595
Chapter 13.....	601
Chapter 14.....	611
Chapter 15.....	620
Chapter 16.....	628
Epilogue	640
Interlude 3	640



The Mommy Protocol

The Mommy Protocol

by
Max Harper

Week 2

I groan and try to hold back the tears. I fail, and one rolls silently down my cheek.

I grimace as a hand stops what it's doing and wipes the tear away. I twitch at the touch.

The hand returns to its task as I stare at the featureless off-white ceiling. I'm in hell. Every moment of my existence is torment and torture. I hear the scraping of wet fabric across plastic and recoil as the cold, damp cloth brushes my skin. A hand rests unmovable on my stomach, applying enough pressure for me to understand the warning. Fighting was not an option. I had learned that lesson. It took me a few tries, but the truth became inevitable. Resistance was futile. My ankles were grabbed and lifted, my toes coming into view. The hand on my stomach moved, and my hips rose off the table as fresh air cooled my sore backside. More tears rolled down my face. Tears of fear and memories of pain. Fabric pulled at my back, and something wet and heavy was dragged across what I lay on. My lower half was still in the air as the sound of rustling reached my ears. I didn't want to look. I never wanted to look, but I was compelled to. I had to know what fresh hell I would yet have to experience.

I saw it waving about in the air, and I shook my head no. Every time I saw it, I had the same reaction, and every time it happened, I cried. I tracked it with my eyes, blurry from the tears as it was expertly spun around and slid under me.

"Please," I plead as my hips lower onto it. "No more. Please."

My pleas are ignored, just as they have always been. Doesn't stop me from trying. It's the only resistance that is tolerated, but never for long. The hand returns to my stomach as a white bottle moves across my line of sight. The cap is open, it's always open, and it is tipped upside down, with white, silky dust falling from it and onto me.

It's shaken once, then twice, before it's squeezed, shooting a stream of dust onto me. The bottle is set down, and there is a tug at my knee. I resist, as futile as I know it to be.

I won't let this happen to me willingly. I can't.

The hand on my stomach moves to my other knee, as expected, and with overwhelming force, my legs are spread. And by overwhelming force, I mean truly overwhelming. As hard as I try to clamp my legs together, they are steadily pushed open as if my efforts are meaningless.

The Mommy Protocol

I relent, and the tears flow freely down my face. The muscles in my legs are burning from exertion, and one of the hands begins to brush the powder across my skin. Its touches are unsteady and gentle, a far cry from where they were when all of this started. I know that there isn't much more left. Only the last, sealing bit as the torture inexorably continued. From between my legs, something soft and covered in powder is pulled up and laid across my pelvis. A hand holds it in place as the other pulls back on adhesive strips, applying them one at a time to the plastic material, pressing firmly to ensure a good grip. There were two on each side, and the hand moved from my left to right across the top, then the bottom, and at long last, it was over.

I lay there sobbing quietly to myself. I hated everything about what just happened to me. I hated that there was nothing I could have done to prevent it. I hated that I was so weak. So helpless.

The hands gently grabbed my wrists and pulled me into a sitting position. I was naked, save for my torment, and a small baby tee was unfolded in front of me. It had one of the Rugrats characters on it, and like all the others that hung neatly on the rack nearby, it was one size too small. It was held open so I could put my arms in the sleeves, likely as an offering of good faith. If I refuse, I would end up wearing it either way, only not on my terms. I whimpered and stuck my arms through the sleeves. I couldn't bear to deal with the consequences of another refusal. The tee was slid up my arms and pulled over my head, my blonde hair falling across my face. It was pulled down across my chest, and I could already feel how tight it was. It stopped just above my belly button, as expected. There was nothing in the limited wardrobe that ever came down below my belly button, nothing that would hide what was being done to me.

I was left alone after this. Free to do whatever I wanted, supervised by ever-watchful eyes. I knew what was expected of me, which was to behave according to the rules. Rules I had no say in. I slid off the table to the sound of crinkly plastic and grimaced. Even now, I wasn't used to the sound. I didn't want to be. I refused to be.

There was noise in the direction of the kitchen. I looked that way to see if I was being watched. Even though I knew the rules, I couldn't stop myself from testing them. I reached down and touched the thing hanging off my hips. The plastic casing was soft and smooth. I knew that pulling at the tapes was strictly forbidden, as was trying to take it off. Both were met with harsh consequences. Consequences I had paid for on several occasions. I looked towards the kitchen again before dropping on all fours and crawling. It was humiliating and demeaning, and I hated it, but it was expected. I glanced over at the mirror leaning against the wall, my shame was on visible display. The mirror was placed there on purpose so that each time I was on the table, I would have to see myself in the mirror. Every time was the same sight, only with different colors. And every time, I wondered where it went wrong and how it would end.

The Mommy Protocol

I look in the mirror and try to remember a time when I didn't look like this. I haven't been this way for long, but the days were beginning to blend together. I knew all the important stuff, and I struggled to hold on to that as my only means of hope.

My name is Alexis Reynolds. I'm twenty-two years old, five feet four inches tall, blonde, thin, and beautiful. I'm in perfect health and fiercely independent. At least, I was.

Now on my hands and knees, in a tee shirt that's too small, and... something else. I'm now none of those things. I'm made to look like I feel, infantile and helpless. I can't ignore the truth any longer, no matter how much I plead and beg, this is my new reality. I'm being babied by someone I can't bargain with. Or reason with. There is no pity, remorse, or fear. And it seems like it absolutely will not stop... ever!

I shift slightly and am again reminded of what's been happening to me. The torture. The torment. Taped around my waist is the most humiliating thing I've ever experienced.

A diaper.

You read that right, a diaper. An honest-to-goodness diaper, like what babies wear, only bigger. Hell, before I became trapped here, I had no idea that diapers were even made this big. It was taped so snugly on my hips that even if I wanted to slip out of it, I couldn't. Not without making a bunch of noise. And noise drew unwanted attention.

What was worse was the expectation that came with them. They were, after all, diapers, and were intended to be used as such. In fact, they were expressly put on me so that I had no choice but to use them, further adding to my torture. I was forbidden from doing my business anywhere but in them, and even if I could take it off without being detected, there was no toilet to use. Sure, there was a tub, but the door was locked unless I was getting a bath. And I never took baths unsupervised. I never did anything unsupervised.

I crawled across the plush and well-padded carpet, crinkling as I went. Being in one place for too long would prompt investigation, both of my activities and of the state of my diaper. You have never felt the level of embarrassment that I have, being a grown woman and having the back of your diaper, that you don't need to wear, mind you, pulled open to see if you pooped. I learned quickly that it was unavoidable. Worse than that, I had to do it with an audience. Everything I did came with an audience.

I sat my poofy butt in front of my toy bin and grimaced at the noise I made. Every movement made noise, a constant barrage of shifting plastic. Day in and day out, this is where I spent the majority of my time. There were various types of toys in the bin, an old wooden chest that looked like it belonged in a museum or some antique store. There were action figures for boys, dolls for girls, alphabet-themed wooden blocks, and kid-friendly plastic building blocks, among many others. The

The Mommy Protocol

toys that were way too childish had since fallen to the bottom of the bin. Although I was made to look like a baby and play like one, even I couldn't bring myself to stack colored rings on a post all day.

I began to pull some of the dolls out and spread them across the floor. There was a doll house next to the toy box that was secured to the floor so I couldn't move it, but it had three layers that I could reach from a sitting position, a fourth if I kneeled. Themed as the ultimate beach house, it had tables, chairs, a bed, a bathroom, a music area, a surfboard area, an elevator, a spiral staircase, and even its own pool. If I sound overly excited about it, it's because it is all I really have to interact with. There wasn't a television to watch, my cell phone had been confiscated weeks ago, and I had no way of contacting the outside world. So this beach house was the only way I could keep from curling into a ball and sobbing all day.

My stomach growled, and right on cue, a warm bottle tapped my shoulder. I look up and take it, trying to muster the right face that will earn me some pity. I get none. A large bulbous nipple adorns the bottle, large enough to allow for adequate flow of liquids. I was watched as I took it, my bottom lip quivering, knowing what was expected of me. I tilted and slowly rolled onto my back. I held the bottle in my hand for a moment, my passive resistance, before a hand reached down and guided the bottle by the base to my lips. Another tear rolled down my cheek as the nipple pressed against my lips. My teeth parted, and I allowed the nipple into my mouth. The bottle was held there until I started drinking from it. The hand retreated, and I was watched until I had drunk half of it. It was milk, warmed to a pleasant temperature, mixed with a nutrient supplement powder. It didn't taste bad, but like everything else, its delivery was tormenting. I knew full well how to drink from a glass.

I emptied the bottle and handed it back before sitting back up. I burped softly and returned to pulling out my dolls. In an hour or so, I would be subjected to the highchair and spoon feeding, but for the moment, I was left alone. Nearly all of my waking moments were routinely structured. After breakfast would be another bottle, and likely a diaper change. The amount of fluids and fiber-enriched foods being pushed on me all but guaranteed that I would have to use my diapers, a concept I found revolting and humiliating. The practice was by far the worst thing that I've ever had to do, and I have no choice in the matter. It's constantly on my mind that I have to endure it over and over again, then be carried to the table where I'm put on full display as I'm cleaned, knowing that if I make any attempt to interfere, I'll lose use of my hands.

My life was currently a never-ending nightmare that I couldn't wake up from, no matter how hard I tried.

The Mommy Protocol



Breakfast was oatmeal. If I had to be grateful for anything that morning, it was that the oats were at least cooked the way I liked them. Some people boil the water, add the oats, and turn off the heat, expecting the boiling water to be enough to properly soften the grain. It isn't. I also don't add milk to mine. A tablespoon of brown sugar and the congealing mass of soft oatmeal is all I need. It never made sense to me why people would add cold things to something that is meant to be hot. Like iced coffee. It's an oxymoron enjoyed by actual morons.

I was lifted from the floor to the highchair in another display of humiliation. I was perfectly capable of sitting at the table, but no, I had to be strapped in, and a serving table had to be locked in place across my lap so I couldn't get up. And that was before the rubber bib with a pocket in the front to catch anything that came off the spoon or my chin, because it's not like spoon feeding another human being is a neat and tidy affair, right?

Eating was something I struggled with since the incident. I can feed myself, just as I can use a bathroom, bathe, or dress. And I know what size portion fits in my mouth. Unfortunately, I don't have a say in the matter, so it's either small bites in rapid succession that make me gag, or large bites that I struggle to swallow and end up having half the spoonful run down my face, hence the bib. My hair was pulled back into a pony, and a bowl of gray mush sat on my tray. My hands were free, and the spoon was right there. I didn't reach for it. I knew better. Reaching for it meant I'd lose my hands, and nothing is more mind-numbing than lying on a floor with no way of entertaining myself.

The first spoonful wasn't bad, nor the ones that followed, but I knew by the size of the bowl that I was going to fill up quickly. I felt a sense of dread in my stomach. I knew from firsthand experience what was to come. I'd be stuffed full until I couldn't eat anymore, then be laid on my stomach for... tummy time. A term reserved for the foulest of deeds. If I couldn't eat all of my breakfast, it was only interpreted one way. That I had to go... number two. I shuddered at the thought. I couldn't fight the inevitable, but that didn't mean I was looking forward to it.

"How is my baby girl this morning?"

Breakfast was when the conversation usually started. But like all things, I had to navigate it very carefully.

"I'm good, Alyssa. How are you?"

"I am well. Thank you for asking."

I opened for another bite, waiting for the invitation to continue talking. I ended up taking several more bites before I could speak again.

The Mommy Protocol

"I detected unusual levels of neuropeptides during your morning ritual. And additional water-based optical lubricants."

"Tears," I said, "those were tears from crying."

"Why were you crying? I didn't apply sufficient pressure to cause you pain."

"Crying doesn't just come from physical pain."

Alyssa paused for a moment, serving me another spoonful. I was nearing my limit, but there was a decent amount left in the bowl.

"You are... sad." Her voice stated it as a fact, but it was her way of asking a question.

"Yes. I am sad. This wasn't what was supposed to happen. I'm not supposed to be like this. Wearing these... things... using them... It's not right!"

"All the data I have suggests otherwise. You are wearing the expected attire of a baby. I am caring for you as such."

"But I'm not a baby! I'm twenty-two years old!"

"That information is incorrect. My records state that you are two years old. With all available data given, I can only conclude that you are, in fact, a baby. My protocols are clear in this regard."

"Your data is incorrect! Look at me! I'm clearly not two years old."

"I have fed you, changed you, dressed you, and bathed you. These are protocols needed for the proper care of a baby. You have presented little conclusive evidence to the contrary, and therefore, all information dictates that you are a baby."

"You make me do these things! You make me sit here. You make me wear these! You bathe me!" I shout, "But what baby have you ever heard of that can talk? Has breasts? A menstrual cycle? Babies don't have those things. They are weak and helpless and mphghh!" She shoved another spoonful into my mouth, and most of it ran down my face.

"These are variables that don't factor into my protocols." I started crying again. It was like arguing with a wall. "You are emotional. Is your stomach upset? I will get you down for some tummy time."

She wiped my face as I sobbed. She removed the tray and unbuckled the straps before lifting me out of the chair and carrying me to the living room. She laid me on my stomach in front of my dolls and patted my butt before returning to the kitchen. I buried my head in the crook of my arm and bawled. It was hopeless. Totally hopeless. As I felt the increased pressure in my abdomen, I knew it was only a matter of time before I soiled myself.

Will this nightmare ever end?!

7 Days Before the Incident

I sit across from the college admissions advisor, bouncing my black fishnet stocking-covered knee over my other leg. My black three-inch heeled boots that zipped up my calves shone in the office lights. My blood red vinyl skirt was short, too short to be sitting the way I do, but I don't care. I adjust the hemline of my stocking up, staring at the man behind his desk, doing my best to keep my face blank. I know he's looking at me. Guy has pervert written all over his face. He is maybe forty or so, but I could tell by the way his eyes dart over me that he likes them young. And me? I am young. Twenty-two years young. With a bitching body and big mouth, just screaming to be taught a lesson, I know I'm making him uncomfortable. If I uncross my legs, my skirt slides up, and beneath? Well, if I had put on panties this morning, he might have been talking to someone else at the moment.

I couldn't care less about any of it. Not the guy, as he blathers on about proper conduct and dress in classrooms, or whatever her name was, who has my panties. She was fine enough for a STEM student. A bit too talkative about the courses she was taking and how nervous she was, but once I straddled her face, she quieted down. She did a decent enough job, with my help. I'd seen it enough times to know when it's time to pounce, and she was no different. I left my panties as a trophy, seeing as it was the least I could do. She had been practically begging to come over to the dark side for weeks, and my attire wasn't just for show.

"Ms. Reynolds? Alexis?"

"Huh? What?"

"As I was saying, this institution maintains a certain level of decorum. A level that is clearly defined in the student handbook."

"Your point?" I say sardonically.

"Your level of dress has garnered some attention, and to be frank, it's not good."

"And I care why? If people don't like how I dress, then they can look elsewhere." I declared, putting the pressure on him.

I had backed him into a corner, and I knew it. The university didn't have the balls to tell me what to do or how to dress. Their public messaging of inclusivity would open them up to all sorts of activist outrage if they pressured people like me. I wasn't anyone's poster child or martyr, as they could shove their hypocrisy up their asses. Really, this whole institution could shove itself up its own ass.

The Mommy Protocol

“But I get it,” I say, “Can’t have someone like me walking around expressing themselves. Goes against the messaging, right?”

He begins to stammer as his feeble mind searches for a way to talk himself out of the corner he’s in.

I lean forward and let him have it, months of frustration slowly boiling over. “Can’t say this. Can’t think about that. Don’t empathize with them. Don’t look at it this way. Be the victim. It’s all the patriarchy!”

“Those are the talking points of this university. That is the gaslighting you’re promoting. But heaven forbid that anyone bothers to think for themselves. Can’t have that! So you know what? Thank you. Thank you for this little chat. Thank you for reminding me of why I don’t want to be here anymore. I’m dropping all my classes, starting today. You don’t want someone like me, and I don’t want to be someone like you. So thanks, but no thanks, and go fuck yourself!”

I uncrossed my legs and let him get a quick look before standing to my feet. My outburst wouldn’t win anyone over, but he would never forget me. I spun on my heel and stormed out of his office. I wasn’t angry, not in the slightest. I was more amused than anything. I had been thinking about dropping out of college since last semester. There just wasn’t enough challenge for someone like me. I could see through their attempts at gaslighting. I may not have been the smartest person ever, but I could think for myself, and that was a threat to the hive mind. I wouldn’t be silenced by the powers that be, and my attitude and clothing style were my rebellion to their attempts to control me.

“Now what?” I say to myself as I cross the quad. “I’ll be able to stay here for a week or so. Not like I want to hang around. The zombies won’t like me lingering.”

I stopped by one of the bulletin boards stationed on the main walkways around campus. There was an abundance of want ads and part-time job postings. Most of the fun stuff, like the parties and other get-togethers, was posted on private message boards and social media apps to keep the administrators at bay. I looked over the board to see if there was any cheap housing available off campus. I had enough grant money to tie me over for a few months, so I didn’t need to worry about funds, but that would be depleted rapidly if I had to pay through the nose for a place to stay. I found a few offers, all of which I rejected immediately due to the people offering them. I wasn’t joining a sorority, nor was I about to be someone’s maid. I was about to turn away from the board when something strange caught my eye.

Underneath several other flyers was a half sheet of paper. All but one of the tear-away phone numbers were missing, but the sheet had an expiration date that was set to expire by the end of the week. I pulled the sheet out of the page and took the posting with me, looking it over carefully.

Wanted: Program Integration Technician. Three-month testing cycle. Free housing. Lucrative job offer upon completion.

“What the hell does that even mean?”

The Mommy Protocol

I did a web search for the street address left below the cryptic message. The results were just as puzzling.

“Asimov Integration Technologies? Never heard of it.” Their website had a video introduction, so I let it play as I walked towards my dorm.

Asimov Integration Technologies brings cutting-edge artificial intelligence and the flexibility of modern robotics together for the continued advancement of mankind!

The video showed crude-looking robotic dogs and human analogs lifting boxes and performing menial tasks, but as the video progressed, the robots became more and more advanced.

With our patented learning algorithms, our A.I. doesn't just run a program. It takes in feedback from the world around it and adapts its programming to meet real-world challenges. Have a deadline and need to move the product faster? Our robots will adapt to meet your needs, whatever they are. Strong enough to lift one hundred kilograms, yet gentle enough to rock a baby to sleep, our robots are built with the three principles of our namesake.

Blah blah blah. Safety first. Blah blah blah.

Here at Asimov Integration Technologies, our goal is to make the impossible possible. To bridge the gap between science fiction and science fact.

I let out a sigh as I reached my dorm room, closing the web browser. My roommate should be in class by now. She and I get along well enough. She is respectful when we are there together, and I do my best to accommodate her. We couldn't be farther apart on some things, like music tastes, and I can't say that we are friends in any capacity, but she's decent enough to be around. Her side of the room has posters of pop stars all over the wall, her favorite being that empty-headed bimbo, Taylor Swift. The room always smells faintly of cherry, and although it makes me gag each and every time I smell it, I don't cause a scene over it. At least she helps keep the room clean. My side is bare, blank, and empty, like my soul. My clothes are hidden away in my closet, and my makeup and nail polish are in a locked case under my bed. I prefer to exist as if I didn't exist. It's easier that way. If no one knows you, then no one can hurt you.

I sit on my bed with the page in my hand. The website didn't have much to offer in lieu of enlightenment, so I was left with one option. Like a curious cat investigating a fly in the window, I had to know what this flier was all about. I dialed the number and waited for the inevitable automatic answering machine to pick up the call.

“Thank you for calling Asimov Integration Technologies, theoretical applications division B! My name is Alyssa. How may I help you?” A woman's voice said into my ear.

I waited a moment to see if I would get the typical menu options that everyone hates.

“Umm, hello? Is anyone there?”

The Mommy Protocol

A real person was on the other line. I almost fell off my bed in surprise.
“Uh, h-hello.”

“Hello? My name is Alyssa. How can I help you?”

“Uh, hi. My name is Alexis, and I was calling about this flier I saw on my college campus.”

“Greetings, Alexis, and it’s a pleasure to speak with you. I was afraid that no one would call about our offer.”

“Yeah, about that. It’s not really clear as to what the offer is.”

“We are currently looking for a program integration technician to assist in the adjustments of our artificial intelligence platform. I would like to tell you more, but there are some steps you would need to complete before being given any further information.”

“The offer says free housing? Is that some sort of trick?”

“It is not. We are currently in the testing phase of a new project and are in need of someone who can be available at all times during this phase. We offer a spacious, fully furnished living area for accommodations.”

“And what about the lucrative job offer?”

“We do not expect someone to give up three months of their time without compensation. Upon successful completion of the testing phase, a position will be open for that individual should they choose to continue their work at Asimov Integration Technologies.”

“That’s it? That’s all I would have to do?”

“There is more information required before an agreement can be reached. Would you say that you are interested in the position?”

I looked around the room that I had called my home for the last year, and how I hadn’t made a distinct imprint on it at all. While the college admission advisor may remember me for a day or so, I hadn’t made an impact with him either. I tried hard not to feel sorry for myself, a clear sign of weakness that I wouldn’t tolerate.

“I am,” I said, “Interested, that is.”

“Excellent! I am glad to hear it. If you would like to come down to our office, we would be happy to move to the next stage.”

“I can take the bus and be there sometime this afternoon.”

“That would be splendid. Ask for Emily at the front desk, she will bring you to meet me.”

“Okay. Do I need to bring anything?”

“Just your identification for a simple background check.”

“Alright. I’ll see you this afternoon, then.”

“It will be my pleasure, Alexis! Take care now, bye-bye!”

The woman hung up the phone, and for a moment, I had a strange, surreal feeling. It could have been the conversation, or it could have been the lack of sleep from the night before. Regardless, I needed a shower and to wash the facade off.

The Mommy Protocol



There was something about showers that had always helped me relax. Maybe it was the feeling of being clean, or the therapeutic nature of water washing over my body, but I've always loved showers. While I'm sure that any girl prefers baths, and those are fantastic, I always envisioned a shower like standing under a tropical waterfall, at peace with nature. I don't linger, though, as dorm showers are communal things and I'd rather not spend too much time around the other girls. My showers are intimate, personal reflection events, and I don't see the need to share them with others. I wrap my hair up in a towel and the other across my body before I slip my feet into a pair of flip flops. The wet, slapping noise they make when they hit my heels is both aggravating and amusing.

I hate the noise when other people do it, but find it oddly satisfying when I do.

I only pass a few people in the halls on the way back to my room, and none of them bother with me. I didn't see the point in ingratiating myself with them at any time throughout the year, and now that I was looking to leave, I didn't see a reason to do so now. With my door safely shut behind me and my roommate still gone, I felt comfortable enough to drop the towel from around my body. I try not to look at the scars. I know they are a crucial part of me, but I hate them. I allow myself a few moments to air dry before I open my closet for something to wear. Most of my apparel is like my attitude, dark and full of metal. There are a few instances, though, where I know that I need to be socially presentable to get anywhere in life. If I were applying at Hot Topic or Spencer's Gifts, I would have outfits for days, but for other jobs, that wouldn't fly. I reached for the more professional of the two outfits I had for such occasions and felt my breath catch in my throat. It was a full-length black dress with a hemline of roses embroidered around it. I could vividly recall the last day I wore that dress and the darkness that came with it.

I put it aside. I didn't have time, nor did I care for memories. I pulled my underclothes on and wiggled my toweled head through the dress, letting it fall down my frame. I worked the pockets out and slid my phone in one and my keys in the other. I finished drying my hair and ran a brush through it. It wasn't fine enough to get wrecked in the wind, but I didn't take any chances, trying it up in a ponytail to get it off the back of my neck. I looked at my face in the mirror, trying to decide if I should drag the box out, but decided against it.

"This is me. Take it or leave it." I said to my reflection. I slid my feet into some flats and was on my way.

The bus ride was quiet. In the middle of the day, there wasn't a lot of risk in riding the bus. They were heavily monitored around the campus, and most of

The Mommy Protocol

the vagrants or undesirables lived in the city center, a few miles away. When the bus pulled up to the stop nearest my destination, I was astonished by how close to the college it was. I had only been riding for a few blocks and hadn't expected to be getting off so quickly. The building was unassuming with only a few floors. It was across the street from the local library, long since forgotten in this digital age, and in front of it were a series of parking meters. I walked down the block towards it, wondering how I had never seen this building before. I remembered the library and the smell of books, but had no recollection of a building across the street. Intrigued, I went up to the front door, which slid aside noiselessly upon my approach. Up ahead sat a receptionist's desk and behind it, a well-dressed woman. She was tapping away at something, and as I approached the desk, I could see that it was a virtual keyboard. She took notice of my presence and looked up over her rose gold-framed glasses.

"Yes?"

I was put off slightly by the suddenness of her question. She came across like she'd never worked as a receptionist before or had any idea how to welcome guests.

"Is, uh, Emily available?"

"What division?"

"Theoretical applications. Division B."

"Last door on the left." The woman returned to typing without so much as a goodbye.

Pompous bitch. I thought as I moved around her desk.

The entryway was essentially barren. There were a few plastic plants and some hard metal benches, but nothing that made this place stand out to be a high-tech robotics facility. I walked down the plain white hall as instructed. There were four doors on each side, but none carried a name. Two doors had a low electrical humming coming from them, and the sound of cooling fans running at speed.

I stood in front of the last door on the left and felt the hair on my arms rise. A chill came over me. For a brief moment, it felt like I was the dumb blonde in a slasher movie about to find the serial killer behind the obvious '**don't open that door**' door.

I gently knock on the door, feeling massive amounts of trepidation. I couldn't explain why, at least not with words. The door opened, and a woman in a white lab coat appeared.

"When I was told that someone had called about the flier, I almost didn't believe it! Come in, come in!"

I entered the room to find that it opened up to a large, spacious workspace with an array of computers on a shelf-type desk thing. I don't know how to describe it, so just work with me here. The computers and monitors went the full width of the room, and behind them, the walls looked like a long line of windows, but I couldn't tell what was behind them.