

# Therapy Really Does Work

by Ty

Dr. Grant Larson examined his list of recent patient applicants. As a romantic counselor, it was prudent of him to get a head start on observing potential client cases before deciding to take them on, if at least to get rid of the couples and individuals that didn't really need his help. He could tell when their issues were basically legal disputes veiled as emotional discourse. He wasn't hungry for clients, so he let these cases slide. With only two free spots open on his schedule, he wanted to be selective and reserve those slots for worthwhile applicants.

He flipped over a pamphlet about a man who couldn't get over a recent breakup when a new face caught his eye. A young woman with a lovely, soft expression looking for solo counseling. He was struck by her simple beauty, admittedly, though he tried to look past such things when dealing with potential prospects for the office. Still, he was curious now, and decided to read over her brief description of her case.

"...Twenty-three, college grad... dating a tiny, and-" his vocal summation of the words on the page stopped when he finished the first paragraph, "... is afraid of eating him."

The notion chilled him, though he couldn't say he hadn't seen it before. Since tinies and humans had started integrating in the larger cities, the clashing of the two groups under romantic circumstances was a surprising inevitability. Still, old prejudices and tropes still emerged here and there, and old habits held by the humans, though frowned upon now, were genetically difficult to break away from.

Dr. Larson supposed that's where he came in. He'd dealt with individuals struggling with diminished-peer-consumption before, or DPC. And reading the rest of her bio, she appeared to be in great distress to cure herself of the obsession for the sake of her partner. She wanted to change; and he could help her.

He reached over to his schedule and marked down her name on his open Wednesday slot, then reaching over to the intercom switch on his office phone.

"Ria!" He called to his secretary, "taking a new client, can you reach out to Rachel Fenny for Wednesday at 6?"

"Sure thing Dr. G~" a pleasant, feminine voice responded from beyond the door, followed by a loud series of footsteps reverberating in the hall as she likely passed by.

Grant huffed, hitting the switch again, "I'd really prefer you use the intercom, Ms. Glassman."

A few seconds passed without a response before a crackly filtered voice spoke from his desk speaker, ***"Of course, Doctor. My bad."***

He smirked. Ria was invaluable to his practice, and great with the patients. Her lithe, elegant features and pragmatic disposition made her a unique delight to work with as a semi-partner, though she was still under him by all technicalities. Even so, her work ethic and attention to detail while running through case files and the bureaucratic minutia with him made her indispensable. He wouldn't be surprised to see her move on to start her own practice once she completed her own doctorate. As much as he appreciated her, and to an extent found himself drawn to her as a person, he kept their partnership strictly professional. The logistical issues their pairing would present wasn't worth the stress, of course hinging on whether Ria even felt the say way about him.

Dr. Larson sighed, just about ready to head home for the night. His sessions completed for the day, all he needed to worry about now was grabbing some coffee and staying up with his latest psych books. Being in his position, he always needed to be delicate, precise, effective with his sessions, and staying up to date and current psychological research was pivotal to achieve this. The human mind was a fragile instrument of the body, one he knew must be navigated with care. He was good, but that only meant he needed to make sure he was good. All of the latest medical journals, articles on unique cases, everything. All he could get his hands on to better help souls like this Rachel Fenny.

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The girl in question now sat in the waiting room to the private psychiatric practice less than a week later, arriving promptly at 5:50 to give her ample time to decompress before her appointment. She was fresh off her shift as a tour guide at the Monterey Aquarium, and had changed into a simple grey blouse with tight jeans in place of her work uniform. These were the only clothes she had available, and their dull pallet made her anxious if making a good first impression with her therapist was important or not. She'd at least taken a moment to brush her air out from the tangled frazzle it had become while worn up in her job required ponytail, her hazelnut hair falling around the open neckline of her shirt, revealing a tasteful amount of her lovingly tanned skin, as well as a modest black choker necklace that loosely hung around her mid-neck.

Her deep, brown eyes glanced down to the smart phone held against her thigh, tapping her foot beneath it waiting for some kind of message from Andrew. She hoped he'd get a response to her before her session. The clock hit 5:57, and still no text. Rachel checked to be sure, seeing just a blank lock screen. Frustrated, she opened her phone and went on instagram, checking her feed for the first time since getting off work.

The first post she saw was of her friends at the beach earlier in the week. She'd missed this trip due to work, but held fond memories of her past outings with them. Perhaps it was for the best though, upon seeing what her friends were doing. In their various glasses of wine and liquor they'd brought to the beach, at least three tinies were visible floating in the dark liquids or hanging on the rims, her friend Chelsea even making a kissy face right against a laughing tiny.

This was a familiar past time of theirs. And this account being private, just for friends, none of them got in trouble for the unethical mistreatment of diminished citizens.

But Rachel knew what happened next for those tinies. Even if they were invited along and joined her friends of their own free will, or they were just swiped and boozed up before they could think too much about being handled by pretty beach girls, they likely weren't still alive to share their beach day stories.

Rachel shivered, closing her phone to shun the image, repressing a familiar quiver rustling from her gut. Sitting up straight, she closed her eyes and breathed slowly, pushing the dark thoughts from her mind that the image had elicited. She kept this up for close to a minute before a buzz vibrated the surface of her left thigh. Eyes opened immediately, she flipped her phone up and looked at the message:

*["I'll be able to stop by after we're done in studio. I got a little extra so we can order in if you like?"]*

She smiled, quickly responding, her pearl painted nails fluttering around the virtual keyboard, *["That honestly sounds perfect <3 I'll try and save my appetite for ya ;3"]*

Rachel smiled to herself, picturing her little Andrew receiving her text right away and making his little half smile. He'd get back to recording with his composing partner, and they'd be at it in the recording session until much, much later. She tried thinking of his little hands handling his minuscule phone, putting it into his tiny pants pocket and

picking up his incredibly functioning stratocaster guitar custom made for his three inch height.

She wished he was there with her right now. Helping her stay strong and rubbing the back of her hand, letting her pet him while he stared up at her from below. Able to swing him up to her lips for a sweet kiss that would tell him she was fine, that she wouldn't be afraid.

He couldn't know she was here, though. As far as this last message went, she thought that'd be the end of it before having to silence her phone, nothing left to say between the two. However, with one minute left on the clock, another buzz pulled her attention.

*["Trust me, you'll need it, lol"]*  
*["have fun with Maddie and company luv"]*

In the quiet room, Rachel suffered a brief chuckle at his odd response, then softly pouted at his sweet final comment. He didn't know she wasn't hanging out with her friends like usual. If he knew she was going in for therapy, he would've asked questions. Questions she didn't know if she could safely answer. While she was slowly spiraling into her own troubles, the door to the office opened up.

In the doorway, a tall, thin woman with long black hair tied in a ponytail wearing a black and white plaid shirt and a dark pencil skirt stood holding a manila envelope under her left arm between her elbow and torso.

"Miss Fenny?"

"Yes!" Rachel stood up, replacing her phone into her left pocket, "Hi! I'm Rachel."

She extended her right hand out in greeting, which the woman smiled and returned with her own hand to shake back, "Afternoon! I'm Ria. Dr. Larson will see you now?" She asked it like a question, as if this were the last step that required Rachel's consent to proceed.

"Uh, yeah! Yeah," she nodded, pulling her hand back, "That's uh, why I'm here." She meant it to sound like a joke, but came off as a bad impression at best. Luckily, Ria was more than able to handle nervous clients.

“Hehe, he’ll be right down the hall. Might take minute to join you,” she gestured Rachel to follow her inside the office proper, leading them into the dimly lit hallway. It wasn’t like they were missing some bulbs. Rather, what lighting there was was warm, and soft, creating a calming atmosphere along with a gentle fountain hanging from a nearby wall.

“Is this your first time?” Ria asked behind her, her long nose peaking around her shoulder without turning her eyes from straight ahead. “I hope it’s not rude to ask, you just seem a bit green is all.”

Rachel was just slightly set aside by this remark, not expecting to hear something like that from the secretary. Though she responded honestly, nodding her head and rubbing her arm, “Yes, actually. Besides some family sessions as a kid, this is my first one on one.”

“Oh great! Well, you picked well applying here. Dr. Larson is uniquely suited to cases like yours.”

This comment had her more concerned. It was her understanding that the details of her bio were kept confidential, “Um, cases like mine?”

As Ria turned next to a shut door with a large letter ‘A’ on it, she realized her misstep and raised her hands in apology, “Oh, forgive me! I just meant, he’s good with young people. All I know is your name, and what time you’re stepping in.”

Rachel felt a small relief from Ria’s assurance, though she still felt the general nerves of this experience nipping at her gut. Ria didn’t speak further on the matter, reaching for the dark brown door knob and opening the way into the room, “Have a nice session, Miss Fenny!”

The young girl followed the secretary’s hand into another dimly lit room, though this one was stuffed with more books than the others. Several file cabinets lined the walls around a large desk cluttered with small papers and post it notes. Not very organized on the small scale, but the room overall was well put together and tidy. A comfortable looking, dark green couch sat against the wall, and on an adjacent chest filled with magazines and open space for patient belongings or drinks was a tv monitor hanging on an extendable arm that was screwed onto the wall.

“The Doctor will be with you in a moment,” Ria commented, shutting the door softly behind her. Rachel supposed the implication would be that she take a seat. Doing so, she found the couch to be extremely giving, the kind of sofa she’d have killed to crash on back in her college days. She was almost tempted to lie down, then wondered if she was supposed to like she’d seem patients do on tv.

Then the door opened. Rachel turned to meet her doctor, about to stand up to shake his hand. Instead, she was surprised to see Ria come back in with a smile, pushing the door with one hand and holding the other up at about chest level. She walked in, heading for the large desk across from the couch. The young girl thought whether to risk a question for Ria’s return, until Ria dropped her hand to the desk, and a small figure leaped down from her palm onto the chocolate brown wood.

On the desk was a tiny man wearing a tweed jacket, tan khaki’s, and the rest that Rachel couldn’t make out in the dim light. Ria moved past her, blocking her view of the man as she approached the monitor, turning it on and extending it out, closer to Rachel’s neutral field of vision. Once the screen was lit up to a default startup window, Ria turned and smiled at her patient again before heading for the door. As she was leaving, she turned back to Rachel with a complicit smile, “Would you like some water?”

Rachel was still processing this turn of events, simply nodding to answer the easy question. Ria nodded back, and quietly shut the door.

Now she was alone with the tiny, and her nerves were at an all time high. Was this a joke? Some kind of preliminary test before the doctor came in? She didn’t know how to proceed, but dared to attempt some kind of response.

“Ummm, hi. Is this, uh-“

“Hold on Miss Fenny.” the man spoke, barely audible from across the room to the dark haired girl. She remained confused until the screen flickered to life, revealing a perfect, closer framed image of the far wall from her. While she was figuring out what this was, a man suddenly came into frame. The tiny man. She looked over, and saw that he’d moved to a little desk with a monitor and camera on top. Looking closer, she now saw another camera above the flat screen. On the screen itself, the man had finished settling down, and looked directly into the camera, and by extension at Rachel, with a warm, wise smile.

“Hi there, Rachel,” a voice projected from a nearby speaker called to her, “ I’m Dr. Larson.”

She was stunned, figuring out that the tv projection was most certainly talking to her after a few seconds had passed. Leaning closer to the tv, she inched her mouth closer to where she thought there'd be a mic to respond with, "Uh, hello?"

The Doctor chuckled, "Heh, I can hear you fine from where I am." He hoped a little light humor would do to defuse the tension in the room, which paid off when he saw a small chuckle from his patient, "I hope you understand the necessity of these devices for us to effectively communicate."

"Oh, of course! I- I just didn't know I'd be seeing... all this."

"All of...?" he asked, leaning forward as if he were directly addressing her, his body language and mannerisms clearly suited and adapted to this strange form of communication.

Rachel swallowed her nerves, realizing that the session was now starting, "Th-the screen, and the speaker and the... I'm sorry, but you," she admitted, drooping her shoulders as if ashamed of the comment, "I wasn't expecting a tin- uh, diminished therapist."

This information was intriguing. Part of Grant had thought she'd applied to his practice because of his unique status, "You hadn't? That's fine. Kind of a relief, actually." He sat back, resting his clasped hands on his abdomen while leaning back in his large, custom sized office chair, "Usually, I'm either dealing with exclusively tiny patients or those that hope to ease some guilt by purposefully choosing me. So I'm glad you're coming in blind," he spoke with a knowing smile that waned as he leaned forward, the kind understanding ever present in his blue eyes, "Of course, if you're uncomfortable with this arrangement, I'm happy to recommend you to other colleagues of mine-"

"No!" she hastily answered, quickly retreating to the couch as she realized she cut him off, "Sorry. I-I know you're qualified, I just need to get used to it and..." she trailed off, feeling the tension she was perpetuating between them, "...concerning the nature of my problem, aren't you...?" her face was cringing, embarrassed by having to address the elephant in the room, "...worried?"

"Worried? Certainly. But not for myself," he sat forward, resting his elbows on his desk and clasping his hands together, "My job is to help you. No bias, no presumptions. You want counsel; I'm your counselor. And don't worry. We don't have to get into anything uncomfortable right away. This is a safe space, and first things first, I'd like to get to know you a bit."

She swallowed, her eyes glancing in her periphery to see the vague outline of the small Doctor at his desk across the room, then focusing back on the screen, "I... uh..." she swallowed her nerves again, shifting her shoulders and steeling herself. Grant noted that this could either be her prepping to open up, or more defensives. "Uh, okay."

"Swell!" he marked, "I guess we can start with general stuff. What do you do for work, hobbies? What are you into? What's your family like? Again, no pressure, just whatever you feel like sharing."

"Well, uh..." she looked up behind her, finding a small digital clock hanging above the couch noting that three minutes had passed, "This is only a half hour, right?"

"Yup."

"Shouldn't we talk about my-?"

Dr. Larson cut her off with a soft, but firm hand, surprising her with the effectiveness of this tiny man's body language, "Whatever you like, but let's get acquainted. Just to start."

His reassurance was a comfort, the pressure of addressing her worries abated for the time. He seemed genuinely kind, and quite intelligent with how he addressed her unspoken nerves. "Well, I work as a tour guide, at the Aquarium."

"Lovely! Lots of guests this season?" he leaned backward, a notepad now held in his left hand with a pen in the other to start his analysis.

"Y-yeah. Always busy in the summer. I'm glad I'm not the only one, but the schedule stacks up quick."

"And why the aquarium? Do you want to pursue something in marine biology?"

She leaned forward, brushing a loose hair behind her ear then crossing her hands over her knees, "No, a friend helped me get hired at the gift shop out of school. Then I did well with the guests, and they promoted me to guide."

"And what did you go to school for?" by now, he was scribbling every second either was speaking.



Watching his small pen move on the screen resurrected a fear of being observed, but she swallowed that down too, “I majored in English. I do some freelance writing on the side. I’d like to write books when I have more time.”

“Wonderful! What kind?”

“Fantasy. Uh, or sci fi. I just have ideas, really.”

“And is this something you’ve pursued for long? Since childhood perhaps?”

Rachel scoffed for a second, “We’re goin back that far already?”

“Well... yes. Therapy, right?” he chuckled, deflecting her light skepticism with humor.

“Ummm... I don’t think. I didn’t want to write, I mean. I just had fantasies,” she leaned back into the couch, reclining against the tall back rest while keeping her attention on the dimly lit screen.

Getting to the ‘fantasy’ word was a good point for the Doctor to latch to, as he sat up to better record her responses ahead, “And these fantasies of yours, do they effect your life as it stands now? Beyond writing?”

At that moment, the door opened, and the secretary returned with a small paper cup of cool water, placing it on the end table closest to Rachel’s left and turning to leave without disturbing the session.

“Thank you, Ria!” Grant called out, his head turned to the side on the tv to face the real woman at the door.

“You’re welcome, Doctor,” she returned, gently closing the door behind her.

“A special woman, that one. I’d be no where without her help... sorry. So your fantasies?”

The girl turned back, needing a second to find her train of thought again, “Do they effect me now?... Maybe?... um, my family encouraged me a lot.”

Not the answer he wanted, but something to work with, “And how is your family? Two parents? Siblings?”

“Just me. And, uh, they weren’t together too long,” a slight shift in her brow denoted the sore spot he’d found.

“And how are they now? Do they get along?”

Rachel perked up, caught dwelling on her thoughts, “Oh, yeah. They’re fine. It was more that it didn’t work, but it wasn’t serious. We still get dinner twice a month altogether.”

Grant smiled, hoping to give his patient some validation of the her own positive spin on the matter, “That’s great! And what about your partner?” This would be another chance to get down to the matter at hand.

“Yes!” her eyes lit up at the slightest mention, which she paused to correct herself before speaking on, “His name’s Andrew, and he’s just... amazing! It really feels like we click, and... I don’t know.”

“That’s lovely! How’d you two meet?”

“A... dating app,” she said it, obviously ashamed of this detail.

Grant lowered the pad and raised a hand reassuringly, “It’s fine. Hundreds of young couples have found each other online, and probably even more than that. It’s just a new way for us to connect. No shame in it, and remember; judgment free space.”

Her dark hair bounced as she nodded in agreement, falling over her right shoulder where she raised her hand to play with it, “You’re right. Just friends, and all. Makes us an easy target for jokes... among other things.” She looked away, letting the last part of her statement linger like the apex of football pass.

And Grant was there for the receive, “But that’s not the only thing you’re worried about.”

Rachel didn’t look back, just running her hand through her hair and letting the Doctor continue, “Yeah. I found out when we met up. He didn’t say anything when we were messaging, and I was freaked out as hell when I found out, but...”

“Andrew’s a tiny,” Larson shared bluntly. Rachel nodded, shame in her eyes for how she treated the information like a taboo while speaking to another tiny, “It’s fine. Not exactly news when it’s in your bio. And relationship’s between our kind can be pretty controversial.”

She nodded in agreement, biting her lip momentarily.

He caught on fast, "Maybe that's why you like it?"

"W-what?! I-I I-"

"My apologies, just trying to find threads," his soothing low voice helped ease her again, and she even looked over to him, getting a small, genuine nod from the man himself before he returned to the screen, "Luckily, this is California. Likely you won't find any opposition here."

"I guess. People have been pretty nice on the whole. It's more my friends and... well," looking back up to the screen, her eyes wore pleading shimmer, "Me."

"What about you?"

"Do I have to say it?"

Dr. Larson turned his chair to the said, meeting her stare in a relaxed recline, "You can say anything you want here. Remember; safe space."

"And as a doctor, you're not allowed to share anything I say?"

"Doctor-Patient confidentiality. I'm legally forbid to divulge any information you share in this room, unless you give your permission or pose a tangible threat to your own life or someone else's."

The last detail caused her to shrink back, which Grant noted to address right away, "And of course, due to the nature of your case, I can promise to exercise personal discretion on any morally questionable deeds you may be thinking, wish to do, or even have done."

Rachel looked back up hearing the last words, "... What I've done?"

"If it's relevant, then yes. All under oath," he raised his hand like a boy scout, "I promise."

She smiled at the gesture, amused and comforted by his warm impression. Looking down at her hands, her fingers flexed and clenched over her denim-clad knees, physically levying the internal stress to speak.

"I've... hurt tinies. My friends and I," she looked up to see his shock, only finding his calm, patient expression. She wet her lips and went on, "We started in High School. Just messing with them on campus or at parties. It... it was just fun. And when we knew they'd tell on us, we..." The lump in her throat caught up with her, cutting her off mid-speech.

Luckily, Dr. Larson had the pieces to finish her thought, "You ate them."

She shot up like a deer in headlights, "I'm so sorry! I-I didn't want you to-"

"Hey, hey!" he spoke firmly, but patiently, cutting off her guilty stammering, "This isn't a sensitive issue here. The phenomenon was new when you were young, you didn't know better." He wrote down more of her reaction in his notes as he continued, "My job isn't to judge; I'm here to understand, and to help... go on please." He asked, leaning back into his chair.

She brushed her hair back over her shoulders, leaning to the side over the arm rest on the couch, "Well... it wasn't just when I was young."

Interesting, he thought. He scribbled down this detail as she elaborated, "We've actually been doing this until recently."

He felt a thread connecting, "'Recently' as in when you and Andrew got together?"

She took a moment before nodding.

"So now you're in this relationship with a member of a minority group that you once... you feel you've personally antagonized."

"That's the gist of it, Doctor Larson," she spoke plainly, not betraying her emotions from sharing these feelings.

"Please, call me Grant," she was opening up to him. Getting on a first name basis would help solidify his status with her.

She smiled weakly at his own display of trust with her, then clasped her hands over her gut and leaned back again, "I suppose that's not all, though. Andrew, he's amazing. I see a future with him, really!" the way her eyes sparkled when mentioning her partner confirmed her feelings enough for the Doctor.

“But... whenever I see him just sitting around, we can be staying at home, at a restaurant, on a drive, wherever, I always look at him and have the itch to do... something.”

“Could you elaborate?” Grant asked, taking vigorous notes now that they’d reached the pinnacle issue.

“Just.. to play with him. And I do! He’ll let me pick him up whenever, play with his clothes, his hair. Cuddle him however, and, uh, the rest that we do.”

Grant didn’t change his expression, though he absentmindedly put a gold star in his notes.

“But... I always get this little voice saying to... go further. To do more, and when we’re done, to just... just...”

“Eat him.”

The words hung over the room like a static shock that finally built up enough charge to strike. “Y-yes. It was my favorite part. And I admit that I... get off on it.”

This news was the first to set Grant aside. He’d heard of people eating tinies as a joke, a drunken accident, or simply being unaware. Never that they found sexual gratification in the act. The need to adjust his shirt collar came up while she went on.

“I love him. We’ve both said it to each other. I’m going to take care of him just as much as he’ll take care of me. But I’m scared... I don’t want to hurt him, but it keeps getting harder to resist. He even asked to play in my- my mouth last week. I almost ended it there!” By now, tears were starting to build in her eyes, the fear and self-loathing reaching a peak in her finally being able to share all of her struggle out loud.

Grant was left speechless for several moments, watching this young girl cry over her homicidal habits effecting her love life. A deeper part of Grant told him she was psychotic. This girl’s killed people, how many no one but her would know, and even that was a stretch if she didn’t keep track. He was bound by oath to make a call when individuals demonstrated the possibility of doing harm onto others, but doing harm on this long-spanning of a scale was unheard of!

He wrote a note to look into psychiatric internment, this case having the potential to be his first that required preventive action.

And yet... the tears in her eyes were real. The desire to repent, to get better was real. She clearly loved her boyfriend, and was demonstrating the need to change her ways and do better just by being here. Her crimes wouldn't go unpunished, but he'd try to help her get the rehabilitation she needed, personally.

First, he needed to build his case, "So, how many diminished individuals do you believe you've directly had a hand in terminating?" He hoped guising his wording in blatant, clinical terms would make him appear less critical of her.

She sniffled, raising her head from her arms after being given plenty of time to cry, "Umm- *sniff*- I don't know. Lost count years ago..."

"No worries. You're a reasonable person. Likely it wasn't attractive to keep track. And concerning your consumption. How did you do it?"

"S...swallowing them..." she looked up at him, the tears starting to run dry in her eyes, "it felt better.

She was becoming more open with it. This was good, he'd be able to get comprehensive notes on her head space, "Whole. That's good. Sometimes, you can bring them back up. Did you ever try this?"

"No."

To the point, he marked that too, "Alrighty then, how about we talk about your frie-

"None of that matters," she whipped, sitting upright with her hands on the edge of the couch cushions, "What I've done isn't the problem. It's how I stop myself from doing it again."

"Right, exactly. Just being thorough," he hadn't anticipated her interjection, but swiftly spun it back into his favor, "Most would say it's just a matter of will power, and I for one would agree. But sometimes, it can be a matter of cultivating new habits to at least temporarily replace those unfavorable habits we wish to break."

Her soft features followed his words, finally receiving some actual advice from the therapist, watching him aptly with her lovely chocolate eyes, "So... if I try something like smoking, something that'll get me fixed, it'll take my mind off of it?"

“Well, I’d hope you wouldn’t default to something harmful to your health. Rather, I’d look into yourself and ask why you have this fascination in the first place. Take that fixation and replace it with something similar. Like chewing gum, or cooking, or even exploring more options with your partner in the bedroom. Really, it’s about taking positive steps forward to better the parts of your life you wish to see improve.”

“Okay... I think I get it.” she wiped her face with her forearm, clearing the residue from her tears, “Thanks Grant. I- I think I’ll try that.”

Dr. Larson’s face bloomed at her positive upwind, “Excellent! Now, I’m going to recommend you visit some websites and read up on some practices that might interest you. Here,” he flipped his notepad to tear off the next page, writing down a note on it, “You’ll give this to my secretary, and she’ll provide you with these links by email. It’s an editorial concerning a reverse-pavlov experiment, which might help you-“

“And you’re not gonna tell anyone about today, right?”

He flinched, the sound of her voice now much closer, and above him. Looking up from his sheet, he saw the girl standing directly in front of his desk. He hadn’t even heard her get up from the couch, and now she towered over him, barely able to make out her face with the dim lights behind her. “Uh, pardon?”

“You said everything in here is confidential, right?” from what he could see of her eyes, there was a trace of worry in them. Despite her looming stature, she likely was still processing having shared her story. Come to think of it, she likely stood up to receive the note he was writing her. He exhaled, finishing his referral and holding it up to her, “Of course! Everything’s between you and me.”

“Even that I’ve killed people?”

There was a quaver in her tone now, and the fear he felt on her approach renewed in his chest looking up along her modest frame, “Y...yes. Even the homicide.”

“Uh huh.”

There was a silence between the two, one that left a bead of sweat running down the back of Grant’s neck. He coughed to break the tension, gathering some papers with her information and profile, “Alright, well, I think we’re nearing the half hour. If you’d like to clarify your insurance information, we can get settled and see you get another appointme-“

Huge, padded digits struck and constricted around the tiny Doctor, hoisting him up into the air away from his desk. The files he was holding fluttered down back to the table, leaving him flailing with his arms, chest, and back caught between the admittedly soft but powerful fingers lifting him. The world rushed by in a blur on his ascent, and by the time he stopped, his head was rattling around in his skull too much for him to find focus.

It was a fight to get his vision back, and what he found was the pained face of his patient. When she spoke, the warm air from her lungs blasted through “I’m sorry Grant. But thank you.”

The gratitude was disconcerting, since her actions in the moment didn’t feel like gratefulness at all. Maybe since she was accustomed with her boyfriend, she thought that handling diminished persons like this was acceptable in personal moments. That had to be it, so he patted the side of her thumb tip, trying to wear a smile through his nerves. A disrespect of personal space was definitely a sign of some psychopathy.

“O-of course, Miss Fenny. Now if we could just get you se-“

Her lips parted too fast for him to fully realize what was happening before he already felt his waist pressed between two immensely hot, tensed pink pillows of flesh. His eyes shot wide open in the dark, and his face bonked against a hard, ridged surface like the edge of a slab. The wetness eventually got to him as a fierce suction pulled him further in, his waist slipping through the tight, vacuuming orifice. With each pull, he felt his bones practically pop out of their sockets, his skin threatening to pull away from his body with every agonizing tug, until with a slight splash, his feet were sucked completely in. He lost his hands balance on the wet stone, and he fell forward onto a writhing, slimy carpet. Trying to push himself up only resulted in running his hands through the gooeey mess covering the ground with no hope of traction to pick himself up.

All and all, this process took five seconds, and it was only after that he realized that he was now in Rachel’s mouth.

His whole body now present, the ground that was her tongue surged up into him, slithering the individual tendrils of taste buds over his already drenched, slime soaked body. The first attack slathered his mouth with the offensive saliva that smelled of salad dressing and old cheese, forcing his head to the side to avoid suffocating by tongue. His struggle was far from relieved though, as his back was forcefully bent and arced in a number of painful ways to conform to her hard palette. The slurps and pops surrounding him were blotted out by the aggressive brushing of flesh past his ears, the tongue conforming high enough to deafen him physically.



In an instant, the tongue relented, leaving him stuck to the roof of her mouth for a few moments in which he attempted to speak, "RACHEL! SPIT ME OUT! WE CAN TALK ABOUT THI-" the adhesion on his clothes to the roof of her mouth gave out, letting him fall back to the tongue which budged him backwards. Every millimeter he moved forward required him to suffer a roiling suck from the ever present monster, drawing the salt of his skin out through his dusty, once washed outfit. His sweat and tears likely contributed to that end immensely.

Deeper in her oral cavity, the roof of her mouth was more giving, and allowed him space to push back against the muscle. By now, his body was soaked in enough saliva that it actually allowed him purchase to push and sit up, relatively.

"I CAN HELP YOU! YOU'RE VERY SICK RACHEL! I CAN HELP YOU AND ANDREW, YOU CAN BE HAPPY! PLEASE DON'T-" the way her tongue rushed to silence him seemed reactive, as if she was actively trying to ignore him. Likely though, she couldn't hear him at all, and her protest was more or less the instinctive contortions of a muscle designed to work a mouthful of food.

The farther back he slid, the louder her breath rushed around him, blowing out his ears right when his head popped through the end of where her tongue lodged him against her palette. Just ahead, he could hear the open shaft of her throat, air rushing up to her nose and back while her mouth hole was occupied. Deep, deep below, more powerful noises rang up even to the mouth, a profound, beating heart, the hint of her voice carried away from her vocal chords as she simply breathed, and then a deeper groaning that alluded to her digestive depths which everything surrounding him was designed to send food to.

"RACHEL!" he cried out, his chest now pushed out over the abyss, his head brushing past her uvula, "RIA WILL NOTICE I'M GONE! I HAVE OTHER APPOINTMENTS! YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!!!"

In an instant, the flesh stopped. As much as it could, at least, small pulses still pushing and jostling the squishy interior of the girl's throat. A moment of hope presented itself. She did hear him, and now she was considering her options. There was no way his disappearance would go unnoticed. Her session was close to over, and others were expecting him today. She wouldn't dare make this attempt. It wasn't the smart move, nor the right one.

And still, he sat in darkness, the respite only allowing his night vision to develop, giving him a stronger view of her internal anatomy up close, distracting him from the rough pain

pulsing all over his battered body. Her epiglottis was open, showing the trachea tunnel that led to her lungs. As long as it was open, he was safe. Any second now, she'd-

The tongue heaved into his lower body, squeezing him the rest of the way out until gravity took its hold, dragging him over the edge of her pudgy tongue. Below, the hatch of her epiglottis closed up, providing a straight shot for the final-

***GLLLURRRNK***

The weight of thousands of buildings collapsing crashed around Grant, propelling him down until being stopped by the tightness entrapping him. The heart shattering swallow still rang in his ears as the peristaltic muscles released and squeezed him in sequence to ease him deeper and deeper into her. Partway down, the walls pounded in a hasty pattern that battered and berated his aching person, the accelerated heartbeat beyond the throat no doubt. Beyond that, the rise and fall of her diaphragm pushed and released the bulk of her organs around her lungs, churning the oppressive funnel like a not so gentle ocean wave. The groans and gurgles snuck into the cacophony of bodily noises the lower he got, and in seconds his face was rammed into a stiff, unyielding ground.

What little hope he had sprouted up with something solid to touch, his body bunching up against the firm surface for all he was worth. The valve opened at the pressure he applied, and he deftly pushed his hands to the edges of the seal as it widened, hoping to prevent his final drop into the hell below! As it fully opened, the first scent of what was inside wafted up to him, making him gag on the sour, toxic gas.

Miraculously, the valve started sealing, his hands returning to press closer to the center, though not entirely as to avoid triggering its mechanism again. He'd somehow stopped himself from being fully ingested, if just by an inch.

He needed to take advantage of this. He heard all of the stories. His patients that were tinies often came to him with personal traumas or anxieties related to the disappearance and brutal abuse of their kind. And to know that you were small enough to be swallowed by not just animals, but other people? It brought a new wave of existential dread to the total population. Grant had always sought to break down the cause, to comfort his clients with statistics that painted the unlikely possibility of being devoured. They were people, no matter what size, color, gender, or class they were. No one should have to fear this.

Ironic that he now found himself inches away from a young woman's gut. Though he wouldn't give up so easily. He pushed at the walls, the muscles apparently content that they'd

finished their job conducting him to his grave proved incredibly pliant to his meager strength. First, he wanted to get upright, forcing his torso to bend up with that push back the esophagus walls provided. He bent forward, cursing his lack of exercise focusing on flexibility as he felt part of his back pop. The pain was nothing compared to what could be, however, so he pushed on, sliding his legs down his front and extending below, placing his feet on the stomach valve below and extending his head upright. Another crack in his back told him he was doing more damage than good, but he didn't care. He now had a better standing to climb out, and that's what he needed.

Carefully, he pushed his arms and feet into the walls to his side and front, forcing his back against the throat wall behind him. With enough pressure, he was able to start slowly inching up the inside of her alimentary canal, making his way back up to the mouth. He didn't necessarily know what he'd do when he was up there, but there had to be a way to get her to reconsider. If anything, his tenacity should convince her. It had to.

The walls violently bucked, and he could hear the muffled sound of coughing from above, followed by a blunt pounding against what must've been her chest to the upper right of him. The quaking did no favors to his grip, making him lose some ground. Still, he held on, and continued climbing up when the storm ceased. He was feeling hopeful, angry, and somehow, sad for the girl. How twisted did someone have to be to get to a place like this, to so casually take the lives of others? A scared girl that didn't want people to leave? One that wanted to keep her childhood fantasies alive into her adult life and struggling to do so? Or maybe someone that was so terrified of losing someone special that they'd burn the whole forest to save the cottage?

An odd slurping sound broke through her bodies natural chorus, standing out as strange until followed by a generous gulp from above... then another. And another. Before Grant realized what it was, the deluge of ice water blasted into him, sweeping away the pressure between his body and the wall as it forced him downwards. Truly, he hadn't made that much progress upon reaching the valve in less than a second. Though now with the flood of water washing him downward, the esophagus had no trouble squirting him out and into the rancid pit below, sealing before the next rush of water reached its destination as well.

Grant splashed into a shallow swamp of steaming muck that was immediately flash blasted by the cool drink flushing in. The second and third gulps of water painfully crashed over his back, splaying him over the wrinkled walls he landed on. When the rush ended, and the water settled deeper inside the belly, Grant finally had time to get his bearings. That is, he would if the floor he pushed himself up on didn't immediately hitch over and turn into a slope that made him tumble deeper. He cried out until once again submerging himself in slime and film only just

diluted by the recently arrived water. As long as he knew which way was up, he swam for it, the slightly thicker liquid only just inhibiting his strokes back to the surface.

When he broke through, the stinging air shocked his system. The sights, the sounds, the physical sensations, they were nothing compared to the deathly scent of the noxious mire. He coughed at the intake while treading water, and against his better nature, wound up puking, barely contributing to the mass he floated in. The force of his vomiting took focus away from his floating, leading him to sink through his own bile into the deeper pool again. His retching continued under the surface, unfortunately leading to the foreign juices flooding into his heaving mouth. He had to force his mouth shut to prevent this, but his involuntary ejection process forced it back open. At the least, he needed to find land. Forcing himself to paddle forward, he ran into a steep wall, but a solid wall nonetheless, he pushed himself up, the pulses responding to his touch actually helping him up, and broke above the bile once again with a gasp.

He held to the wall, the slime and mucous accumulating on his entire being doing enough to adhere him to the stomach lining. It was in this moment of deescalation that he was finally able to appreciate the horrible truth. This was a human stomach. He was going to die in here. He'd have to tread acids and chyme until the corrosive processes worked his body enough to reach under his skin and start causing him real pain, the soft fizzing he could now identify all around him showing the early signs of digestion. The wall pushed him away with a strong flex, and he forced himself back through the wavering pool. He tried grabbing the pliable walls and pulling himself out, but the shifting structure pushed him back every time. He was forced to endure, to suffer. To pay for the crime of just trying to help a confused, if deranged, young woman.

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Rachel swallowed thickly, feeling the wriggling lump descend into her experienced throat and out of sight. When she first swallowed a boy from her calculus class, it took her four tries to get him down. Now, her body was accustomed to the deed, easily conveying the doctor along. She sighed, glad to have it over with. Ultimately, the guilt on her face spoke to her reluctance to do this. But she was convinced he was going to tell on her. Just from the way he reacted to her admission.

Though his words now started to ring true to her after the fact. He likely had more appointments after this, immediately after her, actually. Just a few minutes before someone outside this room would expect to see Dr. Grant Larson. And seeing her leave without him, and then no sign of him after, would directly paint a target on her head. Could she get away with

lying, saying he went to the restroom? Would people believe he fell down a toilet? No, there had to be tiny restrooms. Shit! Shit! What would she do!?

At the same time, a strange pain was starting up at the mid point of her spine, a turning, alien feeling like something was pushing around in her throat.

“Fuck,” she exclaimed quietly. Maybe she wasn’t as good at this as she thought. Thinking quickly, she grabbed her water cup from the side table next to the couch and chugged the remainder of it in three large gulps.

As she finished the cup, the door knob turned, causing her to choke a bit on the last swallow before getting it down. In came the tall, slender secretary with her well manicured nails wrapped around the door frame, smiling as she greeted the new client.

“Hi there sweetie! You just about wrapped up here? Sorry to rush you doc, but your next clients are wai-“ She looked around for the tiny psychiatrist, but blanked when she saw an empty desk, then looking to the screen to find it barren. Curious, she walked in and inspected the desk more closely, leaving the door wide open for Rachel to bail. Even with her escape immediately apparent, she couldn’t move, like a deer frozen in headlights that weren’t even on her yet.

“You don’t think he got down to the floor do you?” Ria asked before looking up at Rachel and finally registering the discomfort on her face. Her inquisitive green eyes widened, and she raised a hand to her mouth.

“Holy shit! You didn’t...”

“N-no! He went to the bathroom. I-I just wanted to say bye, but I’ll leave if he’s needed.” she shook her head, feigning her way through a half committed lie that Ria didn’t buy for a second.

“I can’t believe it. I told him to hit the emergency button if this ever... christ!” she exclaimed, bringing her fingers to her brow in shocked indignation.

Rachel was mortified, she couldn’t exactly get rid of a whole person, even if she had the tools on hand. She was well and thoroughly caught, “I-I’m sorry! He was so nice, but I told him everything, and I knew he was gonna tell, and-!”

“Shhh sh sh sh, it’s okay, here,” Ria held her shoulder, pulling her away from the door and swinging it closed behind her, leading her to sit on the couch. Once seated, she wrapped her arms around the crying girl, comforting her as her shoulders heaved with fearful guilt.

“It’s okay sweetie. Tell me what happened.” Ria brought her back upright, looking her right in the eyes, her porcelain skin cooling the immense wave of overbearing heat Rachel was fighting.

“I don’t know,” she choked out, trying to collect herself, “It was going well, and I opened up about eating people to him. He didn’t like it, I knew he was gonna tell on me. I just want to get better so I don’t kill Andrew!” she whimpered, her retelling focusing mostly on her emotional turmoil over the objective chronology of events. Ria sighed, rubbing her back again to sooth her.

“It’s okay honey, please don’t cry. Or do, you’ll need to look like you had a good session on the way out.”

Rachel looked up at her, confused by her comment. Ria exhaled and continued, “You’re going to walk out of here in a second, and you reached a breakthrough today. Those can be a doozy, but you’re gonna walk away smiling, like you learned something big about yourself.”

“What! Like I’m a monster?”

“Absolutely not,” she placed her cool hands on both shoulders, looking Rachel squarely in the face, “You’re a beautiful, intelligent young woman that wants to be better. That’s all we can ask of ourselves sometimes, but that’s all you need.”

Rachel was no doubt confused, expecting to be reprimanded or immediately placed under arrest on being caught. Not this sweet assurance from the admittedly striking secretary. She lifted her arms to her face, wiping the tears and snot away. “Th-thank you.”

“Of course honey.... what did he tell you?” Ria asked with genuine curiosity, a hint of cunning peaking through the compassion on her face.

Rachel thought about the question briefly, “That... if I don’t want to eat Andrew, then I need a substitute to replace that need.”

“Well,” Ria started, raising her thumb to wipe more of the tears from the girl’s face, “I think you’ve found yourself a substitute. Hmm?” The comment was out of no where, like what

one of her friends would say, “And there’s plenty more where that came from.” She winked, leaving Rachel stunned by the final reveal of their mutual understanding.

“Oh!... Wow, o-okay.” She looked toward the floor, puzzling with the implications of this exchange.

“Don’t worry too much about it. Right now, I have some clients waiting on me, but I’ll get your information, and we can set up an appointment for next week. That sound good?” The girl’s quizzical stare informed that Ria explain herself, “I have my Masters at least, so I can fill in for the practice. And I can figure things out from there. Now then,”

She stood up, opening her arms for a hug, “See you next Wednesday?”

Rachel gently smiled, standing and embracing the strange secretary, now turned psychiatrist, her belly softly gurgling between their hug. They parted, and Ria opened the door for her, letting her out into the hall. It was as she instructed, she looked the part of someone that had had a heavy session, but came out smiling. As she turned the corner back into the waiting room, a small movement caught her eye.

On one of the waiting tables, next to a stack of magazines on a miniature bench was a tiny couple, an adorable older man and woman holding hands, turning to the newcomers and offering a friendly wave. Ria walked around from behind her, immediately addressing the pair as if Rachel was already gone, “Hello Bennetts! Glad to see you this week. I forgot to inform you, Dr. Larson is off sick today.” She bent forward to their level in order to hear their response.

“I don’t understand,” the wife said first, “He didn’t send any message? Did you check the email, Harvey?” Her husband only offered a shrug.

“Unfortunately, he’s come down very suddenly with a stomach bug, so I’ll be filling in for him today if that’s acceptable,” she quickly gauged the skepticism on their faces, “Don’t you worry. I’m more than qualified to handle your session, if you’ll permit me.” Her smile was infectious, inspiring the couple to accept the situation openly.

“Well... works for me. Right honey?” Harvey asked his wife.

“Yes, yes, that’s fine with us.” she responded, holding his hand happily.

“Excellent, I’ll just go ahead and bring you in!” Ria offered her laid out hand, and the couple took a minute to carefully climb aboard the well toned palm of their temp therapist. She

stood up slowly, professionally, and turned to take them in when she found Rachel still in the room.

“Oh! Do you need something Miss Larson?” she asked, her face perfectly exemplifying a false innocence masked by sincere concern.

Rachel didn't answer, she just stared down at the older couple held in Ria's thin palm, taking in the details of their tiny impressions they made in the alabaster skin. She didn't realize how long she was staring until Ria brought her back to Earth,

“Is everything okay Miss Larson?”

“Are you alright, sweetheart?” the older woman added from below.

Rachel shook herself out of it, wetting her lips to hide the small bit of drool that leaked out from her mouth she hoped they didn't see, “I'm fine. Sorry, learned a lot about my relationship today, and you two look so cute together~.”

She was able to mask her lie with the truth, if only part of it. Still, it was enough to satisfy the older tinies, “Heh, well it ain't a walk in the park, sweetie.” Harvey chided.

“Oh you!” his wife nudged him in his side, issuing laughter from both of them.

Ria responded with their laughter, returning her eyes to Rachel, “I'll see you next week hun.”

“Yeah. Six o'clock?”

“Better be there,” she winked, turning to carry the two tinies along. “Now, what are we gonna gab about this week, Alice...?”

Rachel turned and left, feeling surprisingly good about herself. Bringing a hand to her abdomen as she walked to her Hyndai, she tried to feel closely for the familiar flutter. It was faint, but still there. Now she had to deal with the butterflies in her stomach while she waited for Andrew to get off work. She was definitely gonna show him a good time tonight...

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The slurry obscured his grasp of where he ended and the chyme began. His senses by this point had fried, and the grasp that kept him to the wall while the giant girl walked around



was more the locking of his joints around the spongy wall than actual strength of will. He long gave up the need to see when his eyes started melting in on themselves.

What air he had left was cruel and stale, churning his insides in time with the acids on the outside, not to mention the pints of bile he no doubt swallowed by now. His feet had long since reduced to featureless nubs floating aimlessly below the surface while his body hair and extremities softened and smoothed out.

As the chamber shifted once more, suspending him now above the pool, his bleached body struggled to remain adhered to the wall, the churning gut failing to properly squeeze him off. Suddenly, a rolling wave surged through the gut, shooting the air inside up and out, rolling up the throat and causing a distant, trembling burp. With this final tremor, his fingers simply snapped off, falling into the pool with his limp body, sinking into the frothy soup that would break him down completely into nutrients. A fate soon to befall many more people of his kind for the sake of preserving just one.