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BEGGING FOR MERCY

Gary is still asleep, Sunday morning, when Elaine comes across the places on his computer. They are bookmarked in his web browser, with innocent names like "Post1" and "Post2," but when she opens one with a dim early-morning curiosity, the room becomes small around her, as though the lamp, the bookcase, the plants on the windowsill, the walls themselves are crowding around her to look over her shoulders for themselves. Even before she sees it, she knows she is going to see something.

Then, on the screen is an image of a man in an undershirt and boxers. He is bound, bent over, a red ball stuffed into his mouth. Over him is a woman in shining black leather, her sharp heel hard against his back. Elaine's own mouth hangs open. Strapped to the groin of the woman is an enormous, arching dildo, also black.

Elaine giggles involuntarily, like a reflex, and then that's washed away. A kind of terror takes over, hums in her. She looks around the room, at the old photograph of her and Gary pulling a canoe out of a lake, at the high school graduation picture of their son, at the racquetball racquet leaning against the wall, at the mini-stereo, at the shelf of exercise and fitness books above the shelf of old medical reference books above twenty-five years of collected issues of *JAMA*. Everything is the same as it was. When she looks back at the screen, that, too, should be what it was, should be just a spreadsheet or the *New York Times* online, the e-mail she'd been checking before getting bored and poking around, but instead it's the image of the man, and of the woman over him. Elaine reaches out and touches the image, for some reason, and then pulls her hand away.

Scrolling down, she sees there are links to "femdom pictures," "male submissive bondage pictures," "pain videos," and even stories—"cuckold humiliation," "tranny domination," "rape." All the length of the page there are flashing thumbnailed images of men being beaten and wounded and pushed to the ground. Women using those dildos on them. She leans forward

