

Pack Up Your Bags, It's Never Too Late!

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Pack Up Your Bags, It's Never Too Late!

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Summary

Goes a/u sometime after "Booze Cruise". There's really no excuse for this.

Notes

or, And That's How the Kids Got Married!

Ryan-the-camera-guy (as opposed to Ryan-the-temp) corners Jim in the break room after Jan's phone call, as expected. Jim's almost gotten used to narrating his life into a camera lens for the consumption of strangers. Like having a blog, but more embarrassing.

"Jan nominated me to speak at this sales conference," Jim explains. "It's in San Francisco, all-expenses paid. For me *and* a domestic partner, so, you know, good to have that angle taken care of. It's this big honor, really great for my career. As, um, a paper salesman." Sometimes his life makes him sad. He hears the camera zoom in on his face, so, you know, awesome.

**

When he tells Pam about it, she smiles really genuinely, and he's glad they're friends. "That's amazing, Jim," she says. "You really deserve it." He can feel himself start to get pink and he hopes the camera is still watching Ryan and Kelly having lunch. "Wow, San Francisco."

"Yeah, pretty cool," he says. "Too bad I'll be stuck in a conference room most of the time I'm there. If I had a domestic partner, he or she could spend their time seeing the city, but, you know."

She grins. "Domestic partner?"

"All-expenses paid," he says.

"You going to ask Kevin to go?" she teases, and he laughs.

"Most definitely."

They smile goofily at each other for a second too long, but then Pam turns wistful. "I've never seen the Pacific," she says. "Take a picture for me, I guess."

"Marry me!" he says, which is an *Arrested Development* joke, which he knows she knows, but even so, her laugh is nervous. When he goes back to his desk, he leaves her twisting her engagement ring absently.

**

4:10 is the worst part of the workday -- just too far from 5 to be manageable, just too late to actually get anything done. He wanders over to reception to read Dwight's phone messages.

"Plain M&Ms again, Pam?" he says. "Everyone knows that peanut is far superior."

She laughs.

"I know, but--" The phone rings and she rolls her eyes at him. "Dunder Mifflin, this is Pam." Dwight has two messages from clients and one from his dojo. 'From: Sensei,' it says at the top in Pam's handwriting.

"Jim Halpert?" Pam says into the phone and he looks up. "I'm sorry, he's not at his desk right now, but I could have him call you back." She's giving him a strange look and he raises an eyebrow questioningly. "Oh, yes, he actually wanted me to ask you about that. Is there any, um, paperwork he needs to give you documenting the domestic partnership?"

She pauses, listening, still looking up at him and he doesn't get it and then he does.

"Oh, really?" she says and widens her eyes at him. "Just the name? Oh, then he, um, wanted me to tell you it's Pam." He raises his eyebrows at her and she mirrors him, challenging. The edge of the desk is digging into the pads of his thumbs. "That's right," she says. "Great. Yes, I'll tell him you called."

She hangs up and presses her lips together, trying not to smile.

"I'm sorry," he says, shaking his head and having a hard time not laughing. "Did you just commit fraud, Beesly?"

"It's not fraud if you don't get caught," she says, and he shakes his head. "Want a traveling companion?"

"I, uh -- yeah!" he says. "Of course! I've gotta warn you, though, even national mid-sized office supply company sales conferences might not live up to the exciting lifestyle you're used to." He feels like he's smiling hugely, stupidly.

"I think I'll take the chance," she says, straight-faced. "I like to live on the edge."

"Okay then," he says.

"It's next weekend, right?" she says, and he nods.

"Yup."

"Okay then," she says back, and he shakes his head and goes back to his desk because he's not really sure what just happened.

"Hey," she says, as he's sitting down, and he looks back over. She looks serious now. "You really don't mind?"

"No!" he says. "No way."

She breaks into a grin.

"Cool."

He really *really* doesn't get any work done for the rest of the day.

**

The camera caught it on tape, of course. In an interview, Jim says to Ryan-the-camera-guy, "Uh, yeah, so, you know, Pam hasn't ever been to the west coast, and, well. I guess we're

getting married. Fictionally. I mean, what can I say? Ladies fictionally love me."

The production company had already arranged for one camera to go with Jim to the conference anyway, so it's not like he and Pam are traveling just the two of them. When Jim gets to the airport at 5 on Friday morning to catch their 6:30 flight, Chris-the-sound-guy and Ben-the-camera-guy are already there, yawning.

Ben's a professional, though, and the earliness doesn't mean he's not up for interviewing. Chris tiredly puts his earphones on and they're off. "I bought the plane tickets, so they're under our actual names," Jim says. "Since the airlines require..." It's too early. He blanks on the word for a long second. "Photo IDs," he finally remembers. "Wow, I'm sorry, it's really early. Uh, anyway, the conference is reimbursing me."

Out the windows, he sees Pam getting out of a cab, wearing glasses and a grey hoodie, looking groggy. For a second, it reminds him of girls in college, at 8 am classes, when it was too early for contacts and nobody could bring themselves to get up more than ten minutes before class started. Ben turns the camera to follow Jim's look, finds Pam, then swivels back to look at Jim, who suddenly finds the ticket counter really interesting.

Ben keeps the camera going as they line up to check in, because talk about your scintillating television. Pam has a backpack as a carry-on, and for a second Jim can imagine that they're younger than they are, that they'd met when they were fifteen, that he'd been the one who hung out by her locker before sixth period, trying to get up the nerve to ask her out. That she'd been his first kiss, behind the bleachers after school, waiting for their moms to pick them up.

"So, uh, Roy didn't drive you to the airport?" Jim asks.

"What?" Pam says. "Oh. No. Um, he's not really a morning person." She yawns hugely, her eyes scrunching up, and blinks like she's trying to wake herself up.

Jim hopes Roy isn't pissed off about the whole thing - he doesn't know if.... Well. The etiquette for pretending to be married to someone's fiancée kind of escapes Jim, but it's not exactly an un-awkward situation. "Uh, he doesn't mind that you're taking this trip, right?" Jim asks

Pam gets a funny look on her face, suddenly kind of reserved, guarded. "No," she says after a second, and glances sidelong at the camera. "He doesn't mind."

"Well, good," Jim says. "Because I really didn't want him to kick my ass for fake-marrying his fiancée."

"I wouldn't worry about it," Pam says, and she still has that weird look. Then it shifts, and she smiles a little bit. "Oh! I almost forgot." She pulls her backpack around so she can get at the front pocket, and rummages around for a second before she pulls out a Ziploc baggie with two gold-colored rings inside. "If we have to be married," she says, and he starts laughing.

"Wow," Jim says. "You are really, really thorough."

"I went to the dollar store," Pam says, getting them out of the baggie. "I think they're going to turn our fingers green."

"Excellent," Jim says, and reaches out to take the bigger one.

"That's not how it goes," Pam says, and teases, "Have you never been to a wedding?" She catches hold of his left palm, her fingers warm and dry, and holds it steady while she puts the ring on his wedding finger. Her thumb is resting against his pulse, and he holds very still. "Hey, it fits," she says, when the cheap ring slides over his knuckle and fits at the base of his finger, and he wonders how she knew what size ring to get, if she'd been looking at his hands.

"Perfect," he says as she lets go, and when he glances at her, she's carefully not looking at him. Then it's their turn at the electronic check in, and when Jim goes to the machine, Ben's standing right beside it, camera whirring. The ring feels cool around Jim's finger, and it takes him three tries to get his credit card into the slot in the machine.

**

There's no filming on the plane, of course, but as soon as they're in the airport the camera's on again. Pam almost doesn't notice it in the office anymore, but out in public everyone turns and stares as they go by, trying to figure out who they are and what's going on. Pam ducks her head and shifts her backpack strap and tries to ignore it.

She's concentrating on following Jim's back through the crowd when he slows down to walk beside her.

"You okay?" he says, and she smiles.

"Yeah," she says. "Just tired." She'd meant to sleep during the flight, but the plane had been showing *Eight Below*, which clearly called for her and Jim to mock it mercilessly. At least until the woman in the next row over shushed them with a death glare that reminded her way too much of Angela.

At the end of the walkway is the normal crowd of people squealing and rushing up to hug passengers as they come out of the doorways. Jim pauses and scans the crowd.

"Hang on," he says. "I think the conference people are supposed to meet us here-- oh."

There's a perky-looking blonde girl over to the right holding a sign that says HALPERT in magic marker. Jim aims toward her and Pam follows, dodging the crowd.

"Jim Halpert," he's saying, shaking the girl's hand, when Pam comes up beside him.

"Laurie Sykes," she says. "We're so glad you could make it all this way."

"Not a problem," he says. "It's a great opportunity."

It's weird, for someone who works ten feet away from her every day, Pam sometimes forgets that Jim has, like, a *job*, where he acts like this totally professional person. On the plane, after

they'd given up on the movie, she leaned over to look at what he was doing, which turned out to be working on his speech.

"Nice index cards," she'd said. "Very eighth-grade book report."

"Look," he'd said, twitching them away when she tried to read them. "We can't all turn to Mussolini in our hour of need."

But he's not the only one who has to be on. Laurie turns to Pam, smiling, and holds out her hand.

"And you must be Mrs. Halpert."

Pam's stomach does something funny and undefinable, and she hopes like hell her voice is even as she smiles back.

"Pam," she says, shaking her hand. Out of the corner of her eye, she can tell Jim is looking at her, but she doesn't look over.

"Well, we're very glad you could make it too," Laurie says. "We really think it lends something to the conference, when spouses can come. Everyone's just that much happier and more productive."

Pam makes a pleasant, noncommittal noise as Laurie turns back to Jim, but inside she feels kind of sick. What is she doing here? It had sounded like fun, just doing something different, playing a game and getting a free trip, but pretending to be married? To Jim? If she's in over her head this is a stupid time to realize it.

On her left she sees the camera guy, Ben, take a step closer and she does her best to smooth out her face. She realizes she's been fidgeting with the stupid fake ring without really noticing it, and she shoves her hands in her pockets and looks over at the abundance of paperwork and folders Laurie's unleashed on Jim.

"... and this is a map to the hotel shuttle pick-up spot," she's saying. "If you just head out the door and to your left after you go through baggage claim you should see it right away. Sorry I can't show you the way to the hotel myself." She holds up a handful of signs with other last names on them and makes a face. "I'm on airport duty all afternoon."

"Thanks, Laurie," says Jim, stepping backwards and she waves them away.

"Have fun, you two!"

"Phew," says Jim under his breath as they walk away. "Welcome to California."

**

The conference doesn't really start until the kick-off dinner Friday night, so Jim and Pam have the day free to see San Francisco. They get a rental car for the day and Jim drives, so Pam can look at the scenery. He takes her to see the Pacific Ocean first, like he remembered

her saying that about never having seen it. San Francisco's different than she's used to, the steep hills in the city, the cable cars, and then they come over a hill and there's the ocean spreading out in front of her, the Golden Gate Bridge in the distance. It looks pretty much like the Atlantic, but still, now she's seen it. The same water touches Japan, and China, and Australia. Jim glances over at her, smiling.

**

Jim pulls the car up to the hotel late in the afternoon, and helps Pam get the shopping bags out of the trunk. Her cheeks are rosy from the wind and the fog, and she's teasing Chris-the-sound-guy about getting motion-sick on the trolley car earlier in the day. Pam had had a really good time – well, they both had, but Jim was watching her to make sure, and she'd had an especially good time. They saw Alcatraz, and the Yerba Buena Garden, and the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Museum of Modern Art. The last one he'd researched online ahead of time -- he thought she'd like that, the art museum.

He checks them in at the hotel, but when they get up to the room, there's only one bed. Well, obviously. They're married. "Oh, uh," Jim says, when he sees it. He's really aware that Ben's right behind them with the camera - don't Ben and Chris have their own room to check into? "The conference reserved the room for us, they must've... Um. We can call down and try to get a room with two beds, I'm sure it's not a problem."

"Oh," Pam says, and he sees her glance at the camera awkwardly. "Um. But wouldn't that blow our cover?"

He raises his eyebrows. "Wow, blow our cover. When did you get so committed to your life of crime?"

"Shut up," Pam says, and slings her backpack down onto the bed.

"Besides," Jim says. "Maybe we just don't sleep in the same bed. Maybe the romance is gone." Pam rolls her eyes at him. "Maybe," Jim says, "you kick. Maybe you have the jimmy legs." He picks up the phone and starts dialing down to the front desk.

"The jimmy legs?" Pam says. "How come I have the jimmy legs? Maybe you hog the covers. Maybe I couldn't take one more night of you turning yourself into a human burrito."

The front desk picks up. "Yes, hi," Jim says. "This is Jim Halpert in room 505? My wife and I were mistakenly put in a room with only one bed, and she has the jimmy legs."

Pam makes a noise of outrage.

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir," the front desk says. "But unfortunately we're completely booked this weekend for a national sales conference."

"Oh, really?" Jim says. "We couldn't, uh, switch with someone who hasn't checked in yet?"

"That's against policy, sir," the front desk says politely. "I'm afraid you're going to have to risk the, er, jimmy legs. But could we send you up some complimentary shampoo, or extra

towels?"

"No," Jim says, sighing. "That's okay, thanks." He hangs up the phone. "They're completely booked," he says to Pam. "Switching is apparently against policy."

"Even with the brilliant excuse of 'jimmy legs'?" Pam asks sarcastically.

"Hey, it's a real thing," Jim says. "You're just bitter I don't want to sleep with you any more." He didn't mean it to come out like that. Pam is turning red, and he stands there wishing the floor would open up and swallow him. Ben's still standing in the doorway, filming, and Chris has his headphones on, checking the sound.

Pam checks her watch, cheeks flaming. "Dinner's in like a half hour," she says. "I guess we should go ahead and get changed." She looks pointedly at Ben and Chris until Ben reluctantly takes the camera off his shoulder and Jim shuts the door behind them.

**

Pam comes out of the bathroom wearing a blue dress, her feet bare. It's... well. It's a nice dress. For a second, Jim can't remember how to button up a dress shirt, and he has to look down to concentrate.

"Hey, do you think I should wear my hair up or down?" Pam asks, looking in the mirror critically.

"Um...", he says. "I don't know. I like it down."

She glances at him and he sees her half smile to herself before she turns away. "Okay," she says, and heads back into the bathroom. "I'm going to plug in the curling iron."

"So Alcatraz was really cool today, huh?" she calls, leaving the door open. He wanders after her, doing up his shirt cuffs, his tie hanging loose around his neck.

"Yeah, it was pretty amazing," he says, leaning against the doorframe. "Dwight would've loved that place."

"Oh God," Pam says. "He would've. Thanks, Jim. Thanks for that."

"No problem," he says, grinning at her in the mirror. She's doing something to her hair with bobby pins, and he starts to tie his tie, and the fake gold shine of her fake wedding ring catches the light. She's not wearing Roy's engagement ring. For a second he can't help it, he can see exactly how their lives could be, getting ready to go out, her teasing him and doing her hair. Him calling the babysitter, her complaining that he needs to clean out the gutters, maybe. While he's thinking about it, he does something weird to his tie and gets it all twisted so he has to start over.

When he finally gets it more or less tied, Pam's turned around and leaning against the sink, watching him and suppressing a smile. "Here," she says, and steps toward him until she's standing really close - he can smell her shampoo. She reaches up for the knot of his tie and straightens it carefully. Her fingers brush his neck. "Your tie was crooked," she says.

"Oh," he says, and he's pretty sure he may have stopped breathing altogether. His voice sounds kind of shaky. "Um. Thanks."

She nods, a funny quiet look on her face, and he has to go into the other room to collect himself and put his shoes on. By the time she comes back out, he's standing in his suit with his hands in his pockets, waiting. She grabs her purse, and checks her lipstick in the bedroom mirror.

"Ready?" he says, and she smiles.

**

The dinner actually isn't that bad at all. Pam's way too used to the horror of Dunder Mifflin events; it's amazing how much nicer things are when Michael isn't jumping around singing anything. And it's fun to have an excuse to dress up. Jim looks good in his jacket and he pulls out her chair for her.

They're at a round table with two other couples and a guy whose haircut is edging suspiciously close to mullet territory.

The conference people take turns speaking at a podium at one end of the dining room and Pam tunes them out and sits back in her chair, toying with her wine glass. She scans the room and spots the camera in the far corner, half behind a plant. Fine, whatever.

Halfway through the meal, Jim's talking to the woman next to him about marketing trends or ... something and her husband smiles over at Pam.

"Dragged along for the ride, too?"

"Oh, yeah, um, I don't know," she says. "I've never been to San Francisco. It's nice."

The woman on Pam's right leans in.

"How long have you two been married?"

Jim stops talking abruptly and Pam glances over at him. His eyebrows are raised ever so slightly and she squares her shoulders before smiling at the woman.

"Two months," she says and puts her hand on top of Jim's, where it's resting on the table, for good measure.

"Oh, how *sweet*," says the woman and mullet-guy across from Jim chuckles.

"Two months? I remember two months from my first marriage. And my second. Two months is when the you-know-what is still good." He winks. "I'm surprised you two made it out of your room and down here for this."

Pam feels herself turning red and pulls her hand off of Jim's. Jim grabs his water and takes a big gulp and half the table laughs.

"Oh stop," says the woman next to Pam. "They're shy."

**

By the end of the meal, Pam's feeling relaxed and full and happy. Maybe it's the wine, or the great dessert, or the story Jim's telling the table about this time he and his roommate got a flat tire halfway to Philadelphia.

"Now I don't know if you guys know this about the exotic back roads of Pennsylvania," he's saying when the microphone up front makes a noise and everyone stops talking. The guy who spoke at the beginning is going on now about letting everyone go for the night, how they'll be at peak productivity tomorrow. Pam kicks the leg of Jim's chair with the side of her foot, bored.

"And one last thing," he says, "I hear we have a birthday today. Harold Sherman? Could you stand up?" An older man across the room stands halfway up and waves while the rest of the tables clap politely. "Anyone else?" asks the speaker. "Any other birthdays this weekend?"

The woman beside Pam nudges her husband and nods toward her and Jim.

"Bob, the newlyweds!"

"What?" Bob says. "Oh yeah. Hey!" He raises his voice and waves his napkin toward the podium. "We've got some newlyweds over here."

"Newlyweds!" says the speaker, and across the room someone clinks a knife against a glass. In three seconds flat the whole room is doing it.

Pam knows she's red again and when she glances over at Jim he looks frozen. He's looking at her really strangely and not doing anything and the noise isn't stopping, the whole room is watching them. Pam's heart is pounding and she doesn't know what else to do so she reaches for Jim's lapels to make him turn toward her and bend down a little. He moves along with her and before she can let herself think about it she leans in and kisses him.

Jim's lips are warm and a little dry and Pam slides her hands up to rest her fingertips on the side of his face to keep him steady. But her hands are shaking a little bit, so.

It only takes a moment or two before the room starts whistling and clapping and Pam pulls back. Jim's hand is resting on her knee, warm and heavy -- she doesn't even know when it got there -- and he seems to notice at the same time she does and jerks it back.

Pam turns so she's facing forward in her seat and tries to breathe. There's no reason to feel like this -- it's just because it's been so long since she's kissed anyone. The speaker is saying something again, dismissing them, but she can't really hear it. If she just sits here for another minute maybe she'll be able to laugh it all off with Jim as a big joke. Right now she can't look at him at all.

**

In the hall on the way back to their room a group of college-age girls waiting by the elevator in halter tops and high heels all slide their eyes over to look at Jim as they walk by. Pam feels a rush of annoyance and slides her hand into Jim's, because hello, she's not invisible. She can feel him looking at her, surprised, but she doesn't meet his eye and after a second he looks away and squeezes her hand.

**

Jim has to let go of her hand at the door of the room to maneuver the key - the flicker of the green light, the quiet click of the lock. It's late, the room's dark, and when the door closes behind her he wants to press her up against it, ask her what she's doing. Wants to kiss her again, like he means it this time, not for an audience, wants to touch the bare skin of her shoulders.

He tosses the key onto the table by the TV, and sits on the bed with his elbows on his knees, looking at her. She hovers by the door, standing that way people do when they're dressed up and not quite comfortable, looking at him like maybe she wants to say something. He watches her carefully and keeps quiet, gives her space to say whatever it is. They're both thinking about Roy, maybe, and the dark hotel room, the bed. She rubs her arm.

"Well," she says, in the awkward, apologetic voice she has sometimes when the camera's on her. "I'm really tired."

"Yeah," Jim says. "No, yeah, me too."

"Okay," she says. "I'm gonna..." She points vaguely at her luggage, then rummages through for her pajamas, disappears into the bathroom.

So all right. It's just a weird situation. It doesn't mean anything, her holding his hand. It can't.

He drags his thoughts away from whatever this is and reluctantly focuses on his speech for the next day. The conclusion still needs work, and he flips through his index cards until he finds the part he's worried about. He undresses piece by piece as he looks it over - his jacket, his tie, his shoes and socks. By the time Pam comes back out, he's just in his white undershirt and black pants, his feet bare, legs stretched out, engrossed in the wording of the last paragraph.

She sleeps in a Marywood University t-shirt and shorts, and she's got her glasses back on. Her face is shiny and scrubbed, and her hair's out of the bobby pins and kind of messy, and he loves her.

"Working on the speech?" she says.

"Yeah," he says after a second, looking back at the cards and making a face. "I don't want to bore everybody, but I *am* talking about selling office supplies, so it's a little inevitable."

Pam smiles. "It's going to go great," she says. "Everybody likes you."

He... well. That's a nice thing to say.

"I am incredibly charming and charismatic, it's true," he says, joking it off.

She laughs and flips back the covers on the far side of the bed, starts to get in.

"Oh, is the light going to bother you?" Jim says. He's over in the corner, and he's pointed the lamp away from the bed, but still.

"No," she says. "It's fine." She curls up on her side, facing away from him so he can just see her back, the curve of her hip. "Night," she says. "Don't stay up too late."

"Night," he says, and it's a long time before he can think about his speech again.

He thinks about sleeping in the chair, but he can't get comfortable, and he finally crawls into the bed a lot later than he meant to, because it took him awhile to get up the courage. Pam's sleeping tidily, arms and legs curled in, her face quiet and still, and he lies on the very far side of the bed, almost falling off the edge, so he doesn't accidentally touch her. It's bad enough being right there and listening to her breathe, slow and even, the bed warm from her body. He lies awake and wishes, wishes.

**

Pam wakes up to sunlight on the wall; she can tell it's very early and for a moment she can't remember where she is. Then it all comes sliding back: the plane ride, the ocean, the dinner. Jim.

Jim whose arm is flung across her waist, apparently. Pam shifts carefully, just a little, so she's on her back and she can look over at him. He's sound asleep, face half-buried in his pillow, and his breathing is heavy and regular and just-this-side of a snore. There's space between them, but his knee is bumping against her leg and she's still half asleep but she knows this should feel weird or awkward. Instead it just feels ... nice. Right. A whole crowd of things she's pretty good at not thinking about seize the moment and make themselves known and she frowns and pushes them away. She needs to pee.

"Hey," she says, really softly so she doesn't startle him. He stirs but doesn't wake up so she brings a hand up to touch his shoulder. "Jim."

The phone ringing makes her jump half out of her skin and Jim sits straight up, blinking, then stretches over away from her to answer it when it rings again.

"Hello?" he says, and his voice is a little scratchy. "Yeah." He turns to look at her. "Okay. Thanks."

She fumbles for her glasses on the bed table and slips out her side of the bed as he hangs up.

"Wake-up call," he says, then yawns and scrubs at his face with his hands. His hair is sticking up and he looks about twelve years old. Pam presses her lips together and tries to keep a straight face as she rummages through her bag for jeans.

"What's the matter, Halpert?" she says. "Anyone would think you're not a morning person."

"Oh my God," he says. "Don't tell me you're going to be perky before coffee. I could not handle that."

She smirks at him and lets him have the shower first, after she pees. "You're a boy, you'll be faster," she says. While he's in there, she flips through her San Francisco guidebook and starts up the coffee pot that came with the room. By the time the shower shuts off, she's engrossed in reading about Chinatown, holding the book open with her elbow while she puts non-dairy creamer into her coffee.

The bathroom door opens way sooner than she's expecting, and when she looks up, Jim's just wearing a towel, drops of water still clinging to his shoulders, his hair wet and sticking to his forehead. "Uh, sorry," he says. "I just forgot..." He goes for his suitcase, which is right by her chair, and she shifts, trying hard not to look at him. She hopes she's not blushing like she's pretty sure she is. The towel's really white against his skin.

He straightens up with some clothes scrunched in his hand - underwear, probably, but she's not looking - and looks at her cup. "Is that coffee?" he says.

"Uh huh," she says, pretending like the tour book is really fascinating, far more fascinating than Jim's chest.

"Nice," he says, and when she looks up he's taking a sip from her mug really casually, like they do this all the time. But when he sets it down, he glances at her like a challenge, just for a second, fast enough that she's not sure if she really saw it.

When he's back in the bathroom she closes her eyes and rests her forehead in her hands, wonders what the hell she's doing.

**

"Have fun, you know, selling paper," Pam says on the elevator ride down. "Oh, sorry, I meant talking about selling paper. I'll think of you when I'm walking on the beach."

"Yeah, thanks for that, Pam," he says. "I really appreciate it. Means a lot."

They get out at the lobby and pretty much all he wants to do is blow the whole thing off and play hooky with her all day, but the camera's right there, taping everything, and he's not ready to get fired quite yet. Plus he already has his tie on anyway.

The thing about Jim's job -- well, the thing about Jim's job is that he tries really hard never to think about his job and what exactly it is he does, like ... ever, at all. Even while he's there. That's made more difficult by being here and having to talk about nothing else, all the time. At least it's something different, he guesses.

His speech is at four and he's up on the stage trying not to jiggle his leg too noticeably when he sees her slip in the back, easing the door shut behind her. She smiles when she sees him and gives a little wave as she ducks into an open seat in the back row. He has to look down at the notes in his hand so he can stop smiling like a moron.

And he ends up not sucking that bad -- he thinks, anyway. Afterward lots of people come up and shake his hand and want to talk about proven customer retention techniques and exchange business cards and he has to make it through all of them before he can get to Pam. She's standing off to the side as the room empties out, toying with her necklace, and when he gets over to her she breaks into a grin.

"That was great!" she says, and hugs him, and he picks her up and spins her just a little without thinking. Because that's what you'd do to your fake-wife, right? She takes a step back when he puts her down and touches her hair, her necklace, and settles on tucking her hands in the back pockets of her jeans.

"Really?" he says. "I didn't have you asleep and drooling back there?"

"There was minimal drool, I promise," she says, and then someone else comes up to shake Jim's hand and make him promise to keep his supplier in mind if Dunder Mifflin ever wants to start selling fax machines. Pam's pretending not to laugh and he feels bold, puts a hand on her back.

"Pam, I'd like you to meet-- Alex, is it? Alex, this is," he barely pauses, "Pam."

Alex shakes her hand and nods toward Jim.

"Don't let this guy get away. He's a good one."

"I know," says Pam and Jim suddenly feels hot all over.

"Um, hey," he says after Alex walks away. "Do you wanna get out of here? There's this conference thing downtown tonight but I'm kind of wiped. I was thinking of doing the Jim Halpert Saturday night special."

"The Saturday night special?" she says.

"Yeah, you know, takeout, bad TV, and making fun of *America's Funniest Home Videos*?"

Her smile does that thing he loves, lighting up her whole face.

**

They get Thai and Pam kicks off her shoes and sits Indian-style on the bed and leans into him when she laughs and he has to tell himself it's nothing, it doesn't mean anything. And it's fun anyway. He's just tired of things not meaning anything.

**

Jim wakes up suddenly when the TV does something loud and blinks over at it. Saturday Night Live's in the middle of Weekend Update and Jim can't move his arm because Pam's asleep on it. Her head is on his chest and her hand is on his stomach, loose with sleep, and he doesn't know how much more of this he can take.

This year, this year -- he tried to make it work with Katy and he couldn't, and he tried to back off completely after the wedding date was set and he couldn't, and he should have said no when she wanted to come out here with him and of course he couldn't.

The TV audience erupts into laughter and Jim gropes for the remote with his free hand and clicks it off. The room is really dark and he blinks up at the ceiling, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the streetlight glow coming in through the blinds. He can feel Pam breathing, warm against his side.

"Hey," he says after a long time. Her breathing stops and then starts up again as she stirs. "Time to wake up and, uh, go to bed," he says.

She pulls back a little so he can see her face in the dim light.

"Oh, sorry," she says, her smile embarrassed.

"Well, I'm very put out," he says and she laughs but doesn't move. Just stays there and looks at him and their faces are really close and his heart starts pounding again. Her smile fades and her eyes flick down to his mouth. Jim lies very still so he knows she's the one who leans in first.

They're kissing and it's everything, everything -- he brings a hand up to her hair and she shifts so she's lying half on top of him and he can't-- he doesn't want to stop ever in his life. She pulls back for a minute but it's only to breathe and when she moves in again he rolls them over -- he can see her hair spreading out on the bedspread -- and kisses her again, exactly how he's always wanted to. He's holding himself off her, careful, but she bends her leg a little so the inside of her knee is against his hip and all of a sudden it's too much.

He stops.

"Pam," he says, and his voice sounds shaky so he tries again. "What-- we can't..." She's gone really still underneath him and it's all he can manage to make himself sit up and move away. "What about Roy?"

She doesn't say anything for long enough for him to feel like the biggest idiot in the world.

"Roy's not an issue," she says finally, to the ceiling, and her voice is shut down.

Jim fumbles for the light and winces at the brightness when it turns on.

"What?" he says.

Pam sits up, blinking at the light.

"We broke up," she says, her face defensive.

Jim feels dizzy and he stands up without thinking and takes a step back so he's against the wall, staring at her. She follows him with her eyes.

"When?" he says.

"Um," she says. "A while ago. In February."

His face feels hot and his voice comes out low and tight.

"So you were gonna tell me when?"

"Look," she says apologetically. "We just decided not to tell work people."

He stares at her for a long minute and her expression shifts, something dawning.

"Yeah," he says. "Wouldn't want them to know."

"Jim--" she says and he turns around and walks into the bathroom and slams the door.

**

Pam sits on the edge of the bed and waits, but Jim doesn't come out of the bathroom. She can't hear him at all, just the hum of the fan, the faint sounds of a television in the next room. She keeps thinking about his face when she had said that about work people, and feels like the worst human being on the planet.

But then she thinks about it more, and so she and Roy didn't want their break-up broadcast across America on the documentary, so they didn't want Michael to know. How is that any of Jim's business? And yeah, he's her friend, but.... Well. Telling him was just a lot of pressure, all right? He could think about how it is for her, how it is to end a ten year relationship.

Whatever. She wants a candy bar from the machine and to get away, so she grabs a dollar bill and goes out into the hallway to buy a Snickers. She doesn't realize she forgot to bring the key with her until she gets back to their room.

Fantastic. She thinks about knocking, but can't bring herself to, and she's not wearing any shoes so she can't even go anywhere, and this is just the way things have been going, lately, isn't it? She slumps against the wall and slides until she's sitting on the floor, her knees bent up, and opens her candy bar carefully. Her face feels a little raw from Jim's stubble, and she chews carefully and feels like crying. When she's done she crumples the wrapper in her palm and puts her head on her arms and sits there, thinking about putting Roy's engagement ring on in the parking lot every morning, and taking it off every night, so no one would know, thinking about the day Roy moved out.

The elevator dings and when she looks up, it's Ben and Chris, looking sort of naked without their camera gear. Chris is carrying a pizza box, and when they see her they both stop short.

"Hey," Ben says.

Pam tries to smile. "Hey, guys."

Their hotel room is right across from Jim and Pam's, and Ben unlocks the door while Chris stands in front of Pam with the pizza. "You want some? It's sausage and mushroom," Chris says.

"Oh," she says. "Thanks, but I'm not really hungry."

Chris looks concerned - he's one of her favorite documentary guys. "Are you okay?" he asks, like he actually cares. But then Ben comes back out of their room with the camera and Pam feels sick again.

"What happened?" Ben asks, pointing the camera at her, and she sighs.

"Um, it's really no big deal," she says. "I just locked myself out."

"Where's Jim?" Ben interviews.

"Jim?" Pam says. "Um. He - went out for a little bit. I'm just waiting for him to get back."

At that moment, the fire alarm goes off right above their heads, so loud they all jump about a foot. "The sound stuff," Chris mutters, and shoves the pizza into Ben's free arm. Ben's still got the camera trained on Pam, because that's his job, whether they perish in the flames or not. Pam pushes herself up from the ground as people start coming out of their rooms, and just then Jim opens their door.

The camera swivels to him, then back to Pam. Busted. Ben's pretty good at moving that thing around, even with a pizza in his other hand - give that man a promotion. Jim's mouth tightens when he sees her, then he heads for the stairs without looking back. Fine, then. She waits until Chris comes out with the boom and the rest of his equipment, and goes down with him and Ben.

Down in the parking lot, Jim's off away from the building, standing with his hands shoved into his pockets, tension in every line of his body. Pam ignores him, but there Ben is with questions.

"Fine," Pam says to the camera, the lights of the building behind her. Her bare feet are cold on the asphalt, and she didn't bring her jacket so she's got goose bumps everywhere. "Jim and I had a fight, because I didn't tell him that Roy and I broke up."

"When did you break up?" Ben asks.

Pam sighs. "Six weeks ago," she says. "We didn't want anyone to know." She smiles sarcastically at the camera. Across the parking lot, Jim is pacing.

When she looks back at the camera it's watching her watch him. She turns around so she can't see Jim and forces a smile. The building is still emptying out into the parking lot and three fire trucks have pulled up across the street and it looks like they're in for the long haul.

"Hey, so, how about that pizza, guys?" she says way more brightly than she feels. Chris looks at Ben and shrugs.

"It's gonna get cold," he says, and Pam raises her eyebrows at the lens of the camera until the light goes out and Ben lifts it off his shoulder.

"Fine," he says, then fake glares at her. "Don't do anything interesting." She forgets that he's just a guy doing his job. Pam gives them a real grin as she sits down on the curb and takes a slice from the box when they hold it open.

Hotel management comes out eventually and makes an announcement and then a correction to the announcement and the whole thing drags on and on -- there is a fire, or there isn't a fire, or someone burned some popcorn but half the sprinklers on the third floor went on and the fire department can't get them turned off. Chris is in the middle of telling Pam about the drunk guys they ran into on the way back from the pizza place when she looks up and sees Jim watching them. He's leaning on the trunk of a car across the parking lot, arms folded and face stony, and he looks away quickly when she catches his eye.

"Hey, um, is there any more of that pizza left?" she asks, reaching over to look inside the box for herself. There's one slice and she bites her lip, then grabs the box and stands up, backing away. "I'm appropriating this, okay? I'll pay you guys back later."

She turns around before they can say anything and picks her way carefully across the cold asphalt, keeping her eyes on the ground until she's almost to where Jim is. He's looking at her, hands in his pockets and she holds out the box a little.

"So, um, I'm told this is the best pizza in San Francisco, but I've gotta say if that's true, the city loses more than a few points."

Jim's face falls a little and he looks down, then back up at her and shakes his head a little.

"I don't ..."

"I'm sorry," she says, all in a rush. "I'm-- I should have told you. I'm sorry."

"Yeah," he says so softly she almost can't hear him, and she takes a step closer.

"And you're not just-- I mean, stuff's just been really sucky lately, you know?" The wind picks up and she shivers and shifts so she can put one bare foot on top of the other for warmth. Jim shrugs and then reaches over to take the pizza box out of her hands and set it on the trunk of the car.

"C'mere," he says. "You're freezing." Pam feels something let go in her chest, the sudden wash of relief. She lets him reach out and swing her in to lean against him, and his arm is really warm settled around her shoulders.

"Honestly, didn't anyone ever mention that you should put on shoes before you go outside?" he asks, and she can feel his voice in his chest, where her head is leaning. "Public schools these days."

**

It's nearly two by the time they're cleared to go back in the hotel, and Pam's almost asleep against Jim's chest. He'd wrapped his coat around both of them so she'd warm up, and as everybody moves to go back inside, Pam sees the woman she'd sat next to at dinner giving

them an indulgent smile. That makes it easier to keep Jim's arm around her as they walk, that pretending they're newlyweds. Sometimes it amazes her how the documentary has made her so used to playing to an audience.

She doesn't see Chris or Ben on their way back up to the room, so when she and Jim are inside she automatically goes to the window to close the blinds.

"Do you know what that building is across from us?" she asks Jim, looking out. The room's still pretty much dark, so she can see without having to put her hands against the glass - the only lamp that's on is the one in the corner, dim and yellow, leaving most of the room in shadow.

He's sitting on the bed, slowly taking off his shoes. "Hmm? No, why?"

Pam looks suspiciously at the dark windows across the street. "I don't know. Ben's just really good at his job."

Jim looks at her for a long second as she closes the blinds, then says, "You want me to check the room for hidden mics?"

Pam's eyes widen and she stops halfway between the window and her luggage. "Oh my God."

Jim laughs. "I was joking, Beesly. What exactly are you planning on doing that you don't want them to see?"

Her stomach drops and there's a beat while he's still smiling at her, teasing, until suddenly he must see something in her expression, because his face changes and his eyes go dark. "Pam," he says, and she hasn't ever seen anything like the look on his face.

Once Roy had convinced her to go bungee jumping. She had stood on the edge of the bridge looking down for a long time, the bungee cord attached to her ankle, thinking about jumping. That's what this moment in their hotel room feels like, standing on that bridge, wind blowing her hair in her mouth, looking down, trying to make up her mind. She never had jumped - she'd gone back to the truck and watched while Roy and his brother did, whooping.

But that was a long time ago, she thinks, and then she's got her hand on the back of Jim's neck, threading through his hair, and she's kissing him, and it's like it was before, familiar, natural, like kissing Jim's something she's been doing since they met.

He reaches for her waist and his hands are big, spreading out along her ribs, his thumbs grazing the bottom of her breasts. She tugs at his bottom lip and opens her mouth, and her hands are on his face, and she hasn't been happy like this in a long time. He pulls her gently forward until she puts a knee on the bedspread next to his hip, and one hand goes around to her back, sliding up under her sweater, tracing the ridge of her spine. She can't stop smiling.

"What?" he says, pulling back, and he's smiling too, and she shakes her head at him.

"Nothing," she says. "I'm happy."

He kisses her again, harder, and scoots up the bed, leaning back and keeping his hand on her back so she follows him, until they're both lying down, her on his chest, kissing until she can't catch her breath. He touches her hair, her shoulder, then rolls them over and spreads his hand over her stomach, possessive, kisses her neck. She moves to pull her sweater over her head, and she hears his breath catch.

"Pam," he says, in a voice so hoarse she closes her eyes. "I... Okay." He half laughs. "I kind of feel like I'm dreaming. Um."

"What?" she says, and rests her hand on his chest and watches his eyelids flutter closed.

"It's just that," he says. "This isn't casual." He licks his bottom lip, nervously. "I mean, for me."

He opens his eyes and looks at her, and it's so vulnerable she can't even handle it.

"No, I know," she says. She's on the bridge again, looking down, down, down, toes hanging over the edge, Roy behind her, nothing in front of her but open space. "Not for me either," she says finally, and hears him breathe out in relief.

When she finishes pulling her sweater off, he traces her collarbone with one finger, wonderingly, like the most ordinary parts of her are astonishing, and it's too much, she has to close her eyes to keep from looking at it.

**

Afterwards, when they're naked and tangled up together, one of her legs between his, her head on his chest, he says, with a note in his voice like he's telling her he loves her, "Your feet are freezing."

She's already half asleep, and automatically says, "Your mom's feet are freezing." When he laughs it moves her up and down, his bare skin warm under her cheek, and he pulls the covers up over her shoulders, kisses the side of her head closest to him. She smooths her hand along his shoulder sleepily, and he reaches up to hold onto it, wrapping his hand around hers like they're dancing. She falls asleep thinking about how his neck smells, and how he had blushed all over when she had undone his belt, and how the whole time he was inside her, he hadn't closed his eyes once. How he just kept watching her face.

**

The wake up call he'd ordered the night before comes way too early, and Pam stirs on his chest as he reaches over for it. She starts to push herself up, but he wraps his arm around her back and holds her against him so she can't move. She makes a little noise in the back of her throat.

When he hangs up the phone, she's watching him, her thumb moving gently back and forth against his chest. "Hi," she says.

"Hey," he says.

She closes her eyes, smiling, and he tilts her head so he can kiss her, runs his hand down to hold onto her hip. It's Pam, him and Pam, he can't believe it. She sighs and kisses his ear, and he's pulling her down onto him, and he can't catch his breath.

They're a half hour late to the first morning session.

**

When they're alone in the elevator, she holds his hand, the whole way down, but lets go just before the doors ding open at the lobby. Good thing, too, because Ben and Chris are standing there, looking bored, and Ben immediately trains the camera on them. Jim and Pam carefully don't touch as they slip into the back of the conference room, though it's all he can do not to put his hand on the small of her back. As they find seats in the back row, the mullet-guy from the dinner the other night turns around and catches Jim's eye. He smirks and nods, *Nice*, and Jim turns bright red.

The seats are set close together, so his side is touching Pam's, and she leans into him, a pleasant warm weight the camera can't see. He's pretty sure he doesn't hear a word of the talk, and from the way Pam's breathing, he's willing to bet she doesn't either. This is the best conference he's ever been to.

**

The last talk runs right up until they have to leave to catch their flight and they end up sharing a cab to the airport with two other conference goers, harried looking businessmen who ignore them. Ben and Chris are in the taxi ahead of them and after awhile Pam sighs a little and rests her head on his shoulder. The sun is setting over the city.

After they get through security, Pam puts out a hand to steady herself on his elbow while she puts her shoes back on. Jim feels like people have to be able to tell, must be able to tell just by looking at them, but Chris's face doesn't shift when he glances over.

"I can't believe we have to go to work tomorrow," Pam says when they're sitting slumped in the chairs by their gate.

"Oh, don't give up on your optimism, Pam," he says. "The whole building could have burned down over the weekend."

He's feeling weird, like maybe they'll get back to Scranton and all of this will disappear, like any minute she'll open her mouth and tell him this was all a mistake and she's really sorry but can't they just be friends? He frowns down at his hands, the fake wedding ring which is indeed starting to turn his finger green.

"Oh, uh," he says, spinning it. "Do you want this back?" He starts to take it off and she shakes her head.

"Yeah, sorry, I don't think the dollar store takes returns on stuff that has your cooties on it. You'll just have to keep it as a souvenir."

She's smiling at him with just her eyes and he sits up straighter and coughs. Across from them Ben is playing with his phone and Chris is watching people walk by. Pam stands up and Jim looks up at her.

"Hey guys," she says loudly. "I think I'm going to get a magazine to read on the plane. Do you want anything?"

"Nah," says Chris and Ben shakes his head without looking up. Pam looks over at Jim and raises an eyebrow.

"Yeah, uh, maybe I'll come see what they have," Jim says, and follows her as casually as he can.

They pass all the stores and Pam turns down a side hallway, past a sign about a maintenance closet. Jim's ditched his suit jacket but he's still wearing his tie and before he knows what's going on Pam's grabbing it and pulling him down, kissing him hard.

He's dizzy, a bright rush up his spine, and Pam pushes him till he's up against the wall. He brings his hands up to her back, the curve of her shoulders, and she's kissing him, and she's so little against him.

He makes a noise, he can't help it, and she pulls back. She's laughing and he tries to glare but he can't.

"What?" he says and she shakes her head, smiling. She's tugging on the side of his shirt and he doesn't realize what she's doing until she has it half untucked, slipping her hands underneath to touch his stomach, his side.

"Geez, Pam," he says, trying to keep his voice light, trying to sound like they're still the same people. They are and they aren't.

She bites her lip like she knows what he's thinking and when she kisses him again he has to put his hands on her hips to steady himself.

**

By the time they sneak back to the gate the flight is doing pre-boarding. Jim wipes his palms on his pants as casually as he can as he sits down next to Pam, but Ben picks that moment to turn the camera on them for a last minute interview. He wants to know what their favorite part of the conference was, whether they'd ever come back to San Francisco, whether they think the whole thing was worth it. Jim shrugs and glances over at Pam, trying to keep his voice casual.

"Yeah," he says. "I can't complain."

Pam's pressing her lips together and trying to look serious as she nods, wide-eyed, looking up at him, then back toward Ben.

"Yeah," she says. "I had fun. It was... good." She glances back at him.

"Yep," he says. "Good trip."

He bites the inside of his cheek and counts to twelve before the camera light turns off and he can look down and cough to pretend he's not laughing. Beside him Pam makes a tiny, strangled sound.

"Hey," Chris says, as they're standing in line to board. "What magazine did you get?"

"Oh!" says Pam. "Um. Nothing. They all looked boring." She's suddenly very engrossed in the fine print on the back of her ticket and Jim carefully looks at nothing at all.

**

On the plane, Jim tries to take the middle seat, but Pam makes him take the aisle. "You've got longer legs," she says, and he laughs. They've both been laughing a lot for no reason, or on the flimsiest reasons - they can't seem to help it. She's sure she's smiling like a goon and the camera can see it, but Ben's finally put the camera away, is wearily putting his bag in the overhead compartment like it's been a long weekend. She hopes he and Chris are getting overtime.

Jim gets a blanket down for each of them, and she spreads hers out over her legs, tries to get comfortable. The armrest between them isn't down, and Jim arranges his blanket so the edges overlap with hers, and then after a second Jim's hand slips over to her under the blankets. He threads their fingers together while looking down at his book nonchalantly like nothing's going on, and she smiles and smiles.

When he gets out his iPod, she reaches out her free hand. "Obviously," he says, and hands her one earphone. When she puts it in her ear the cord of the earphones stretches between them so they have to lean in towards each other to keep it slack. Jim's listening to Wolf Parade. *You know our hearts beat time out very slowly. You know our hearts beat time.* Their clasped hands rest on her thigh. She closes her eyes to listen better, but all she's aware of is Jim, the tilt of his body, the feel of his knuckles against her thigh, his foot pressed up against hers. When she opens her eyes, he's watching her. The song keeps playing.

**

Epilogue:

Dwight is suspicious. It's been two days since Jim got back from California and he still can't figure out what the whole thing was about. It only makes sense that Dwight should have been sent, as number one salesman not only for the Scranton branch but the entire region. Why would they send a number-niner like Jim if not to undermine Dwight somehow?

"Dunder Mifflin is committed to giving all of its salesmen and women opportunities suited to their particular strengths," Jan had said on the phone before she told her assistant not to put his calls through anymore. Dwight narrows his eyes and glares over at reception, where Jim is not even pretending to work, just leaning over the desk and laughing about something with Pam.

Pam. Pam went too. Maybe she's in on the whole thing. Dwight watches Jim walk back to his desk, smiling at the floor.

"What's so funny?" he asks as Jim scoots his chair in.

Jim looks over at him blankly then shrugs and shakes his head.

"Not a thing, Dwight."

"Unlikely," says Dwight. "What were you talking to Pam about?" He leans in. "Why did she go with you to that conference? If that's what it was."

Jim's eyes flick over toward the camera and back and he leans back in his chair and folds his arms.

"Well, if you really want to know, Pam came along to take notes on all the new sales policies we're planning on implementing around here."

"I knew it!" says Dwight. This is why he always trusts his instincts. "What sales policies?"

Jim shakes his head.

"I'm sorry, I can't tell you that. It's still confidential. NTKBO."

"NTKBO?"

"Need To Know Basis Only," Jim says. "Look it up."

He won't answer any more of Dwight's questions, just stares at his computer screen and shakes his head every time Dwight asks him something.

Fine. If that's how he wants to play it, Dwight can smoke him out. He sits up in his chair and googles the conference but the agenda doesn't tell him anything. Worthless internet.

At 11:13 exactly Jim gets up and saunters over to the front door and outside. Dwight watches him go with his carefully honed peripheral vision, then casually leans back in his chair and glances around the office. Michael is in his office with the door shut, Phyllis and Stanley are both on the phone, accounting is accounted for (he makes himself look away), Meredith is staring into space, Pam--

Dwight sits bolt upright. Pam is not at her desk. When did she leave? He was too busy strategizing, he didn't notice.

But if Pam's gone, and Jim's gone ... there's no way he's going to let Jim get the upper hand this quarter, and if there are going to be changes he has to be on top of things. Ahead of things, even. Dwight stands up and stretches like he just wants to take a walk, then walks quickly to the front of the office. He pauses at the door and glances back. No one's looked up. Good.

Dwight rounds the corner quickly, by the bold Dunder Mifflin logo. This will call on his training as both a volunteer sheriff and sempai. He pauses in the hall, near the elevator -- would they have gone down? Up?

Someone's laughing softly nearby, a woman. Dwight freezes and listens -- the stairwell. The laughing stops and he sneaks up extra quietly. He can't help grinning as he flings open the door and sees -- Jim's back, way too close to the wall, and he's bending over a little because he's --

"What are you doing?!" he says loudly and Pam's face appears around Jim's shoulder.

"Dwight!" she squeaks and Jim jumps back and away, spinning around to face Dwight. His hands go to his hair and back down and into his pockets. Signs of weakness. Dwight looks back and forth from him to Pam who's nervously tugging down her shirt.

"This is not appropriate workplace behavior," he says sternly and Jim wipes his mouth.

"Look, Dwight," he says, but Dwight's starting to smile again.

"Not appropriate at all. In fact, I think Michael needs to know about this. Since anything that happens on company property is under his jurisdiction." This will definitely be going in Jim's permanent file in New York, if Dwight has anything to say about it.

"Okay, um, wow," says Jim but Pam interrupts.

"How's Angela, Dwight?" she says loudly.

Dwight freezes and thinks quickly. "She's here at work today so I assume she's fine," he says carefully.

"Oh really?" says Pam. "That's good. That she's fine. Tell her hello for me, will you?"

She can't know, there's no way she can know, but she's looking at him really pointedly, and she folds her arms in front of her and refuses to break eye contact. He knows what that means.

"Fine," he spits, turning to fix Jim with his steeliest glare. Jim's frowning and looking between him and Pam. "I suppose that perhaps I'll be too busy to mention anything today."

"You're pretty busy all the time lately, aren't you, Dwight?" says Pam and he clenches his teeth and nods shortly.

"I take it we have an understanding?"

Pam nods and Dwight turns on his heel and pushes back out through the door. How could she have seen through all the subterfuge? As the door swings closed he hears Jim start to laugh.

"What was that?"

Jim doesn't come back to his desk for another fifteen minutes, and when he does, he's whistling. That's disgusting.

**

END

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