

THERAPIST

Written by

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INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Conservative, minimal, but not cheap.

DR. GREG GARRISON, late 30s, black curly hair, blue eyes, square jaw, fit and trim, wears a navy-blue suit, white dress shirt, and a solid red tie.

Dr. Garrison sits in his dark leather chair, legs crossed, looks at his patient.

AMANDA ADLER (28), blonde shoulder-length hair, light brown eyes, slender with curves, brown tortoise-shell roundish glasses, wears an outdated cream-colored silky blouse, bulky white bra underneath, charcoal grey skirt to the knees, appears awkward, a bit shy.

Amanda sits on the seafoam-green sofa, looks to the floor.

DR. GARRISON
How was your week, Amanda?

AMANDA
Good.

Amanda nods more than once. But then her face shifts, searching for something more to say.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
(blurts)
I went to the grocery store twice.
(beat)
I don't even cook that much.
(beat)
Oh, and it rained on Tuesday.

Dr. Garrison just waits.

Amanda shrinks a little, realizing the emptiness of her words.

She surrenders.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
It was good.

DR. GARRISON
Yeah?... What was so good?

Amanda thinks twice.

AMANDA
Oh. I don't know... Nothing tragic happened. That's a plus.

Dr. Garrison's turn to nod.

DR. GARRISON

Hmm... Ok.

(beat)

Your searching for a reply...

(speaks with his hands)

that whole thing... leans a bit on the submissive side.

AMANDA

Yes. I am a sub.

Dr. Garrison tweaks his head.

DR. GARRISON

A sub?

(beat)

Submissive?

(beat)

By choice.

AMANDA

Yes.

DR. GARRISON

Is this a sexual choice or an everyday choice?

AMANDA

Everyday choice.

A moment passes.

DR. GARRISON

You know, Amanda, we've been seeing each other once a week for...

(looks at hi notes)

yeah... going on a year now.

AMANDA

That long.

DR. GARRISON

And for a therapist... sometimes I want to just shake my patient and say "Come on."... You know?

Amanda finds that amusing.

AMANDA

Yes. Some people can be so... oblivious. Right?

Dr. Garrison takes a moment.

DR. GARRISON
Yes. Some patients. You're right.
But you see... I can't do that.

Amanda nods.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Because that.. would rob you of the
the "value" of the learning moment.

AMANDA
What. Am I... one of those people?

Dr. Garrison waits. Deep breath. Lightly frustrated.

DR. GARRISON
You know what? I think there may
"value" for you in staging a...
"cut to the chase" moment.

AMANDA
Cut to the chase?

DR. GARRISON
Yeah. You know. Let's cut the
bullshit...

Amanda looks found out.

Dr. Garrison is done pussy-footing around.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Let's practice being *adults* and lay
everything out on the table.

Amanda looks unsure.

AMANDA
Um... ok.

DR. GARRISON
Here's what I'd like to do...
I'd like to do a little role
playing. You up for that?

AMANDA
Easy enough. Sure.

Her mouth says yes, but her body language is not sure.

SFX: A LOW OMINOUS HUM

DR. GARRISON
There's one rule, Amanda. One rule.
And one rule only.

She waits.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
You can say "no" at any time.

Amanda nods like she dog-paddling upstream.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Look at me. I want to make sure you
hear this.

She stops paddling a moment and looks.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
You can say no. Or stop. Or I don't
agree. Or whatever you want. At any
point.

AMANDA
That seems... fair.

DR. GARRISON
Ok. So, if I ask you to do
something you don't want to?

AMANDA
I just say 'Stop', right?

DR. GARRISON
Yes.

She nods again.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Ok. Ready?

AMANDA
Yes.

The hum in the room.

SFX: HEARTBEAT

DR. GARRISON
Amanda, take off your shirt.

Amanda is triggered. She starts to zone out.

A moment passes.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)

Amanda.

Amanda looks up, thinks.

AMANDA

Uh, I am unsure... about that.

DR. GARRISON

Ok... and why, may I ask.

(beat)

AMANDA

I know. I know. I am a sub.

(beat)

I get that. But I don't know how taking off my shirt...

DR. GARRISON

Amanda, let me make one thing clear... We are both here, for you. For your well-being.

Amanda looks unsure in her eyes.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)

You told me that you see yourself as a sub... a submissive. And all I am suggesting... is that we explore that, out in the open.

She looks up again.

AMANDA

Why?

DR. GARRISON

You tell me. What value are you hoping to get out of our sessions?

AMANDA

Simple. I want to feel better about myself. About my choices.

DR. GARRISON

Perfect. Let's start with your choice... to claim the persona of a submissive.

Amanda looks confused.

AMANDA

Okay.

Dr. Garrison sits back.

DR. GARRISON
 Ok. Then let's explore that choice.
 (beat)
 Take off your shirt.

Amanda thinks again. And surprisingly (or not)...

AMANDA
 Ok.

Amanda performs these actions with a zoned-out, zombie like stare.

She reaches for her top button, and starts in.

Soon, the bottom button is undone, but Amanda holds her body in such a way that nothing has changed.

Dr. Garrison raises both eyebrows.

Amanda stalls.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 I just don't see... how this
 (beat)
 How doing this is going to make me
 feel better about myself... I
 already feel worse.

DR. GARRISON
 I hear you. I get that. But you and
 I are not here, just to make you
 "feel good". Right?
 (beat)
 We're here to... what, Amanda?

AMANDA
 Do the work.

DR. GARRISON
 Yes. Do the work.

Amanda thinks twice, one last time.

She pulls the blouse over her shoulders, exposing the bulky bra below.

SFX: HEARTBEAT

She lays it on the sofa next to her.

A moment passes.

She curls one shoulder and then twitches her whole upper body.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
How do you feel?

AMANDA
Humiliated.

DR. GARRISON
Then why did you do it?

AMANDA
Because I am here to do the work.

Dr. Garrison waits.

DR. GARRISON
Amanda, I want to surface a few former characters in your life. Ok?

Dr. Garrison takes his notepad.

AMANDA
Ok.

Amanda nods.

DR. GARRISON
Your dad...

Amanda freezes.

A flicker of anger. Then shame.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Your high school gym teacher...

Amanda shifts, arms crossing tight over her chest.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Your former boss...

Amanda exhales through her nose, like a release valve.

Garrison flips the page.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Your former husband...

Her eyes flash — quick, sharp, like a match striking in the dark.

But she doesn't speak.

Dr. Garrison looks at his notes.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Uh... Edward... yes.

The name lands.

Amanda winces – it's physical, like a body blow.

Her hands grip the sofa cushions.

Dr. Garrison lets it sink in.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
Do you see a pattern with these
men?

Amanda's line of site fades to the floor again.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
No. No.
(SNAPS!)
Up here... What's the pattern,
Amanda?

AMANDA
They all... took advantage of me.

DR. GARRISON
Took advantage... And how did that
happen?

Amanda really thinks about it, maybe for the first time.

AMANDA
I don't know.

Now it's Dr. Garrison's turn to swallow and let his gaze hit
the floor, one shake of the head.

DR. GARRISON
Ok. Next step.

He looks at her bra and points.

AMANDA
What.

DR. GARRISON
Your bra... Take it off.

SFX: HEARTBEAT

AMANDA

Why?

DR. GARRISON

Because that's the next step.

AMANDA

But---

DR. GARRISON

Oh, come on!

(beat)

Are you really going to just sit
there and listen to this fuckin'
bullshit?

AMANDA

Ok. Ok. I'm going. I'm going. Fine.

She panics, reaches around back and with one flick of her
wrist, the bra comes loose, and within seconds comes off and
goes to the pile next to her.

Amanda sits on the sofa in her therapy session... topless.

Everyone takes a break.

Dr. Garrison lowers his head and coaches himself.

DR. GARRISON

(to himself)

Commit. Commit.

AMANDA

I'm sorry---

DR. GARRISON

Stand up.

AMANDA

Uh---

DR. GARRISON

Stand up and look at me.

She stands.

He stands.

A moment passes.

SFX: HEARTBEAT

He looks at her bare breasts.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Oh, my God.

And then he leans in and looks into her eyes.

DR. GARRISON (CONT'D)
(gentle)
Amanda... what the hell are you
doing?

AMANDA
What. I thought---

DR. GARRISON
What did your dad tell you to do?

AMANDA
He told me to take off my shirt.

DR. GARRISON
And what did your boss say?

Amanda, not so quick to answer.

AMANDA
Take off my shirt.

Dr. Garrison nods.

DR. GARRISON
Yes. And each time... what did you
do?

AMANDA
I took off my shirt.

DR. GARRISON
And did you want to take off your
shirt?

AMANDA
No.

A moment passes.

DR. GARRISON
And did you want to today?

Silence.

Amanda's lips part, but no sound comes.

Her shoulders rise and fall – shallow breaths, like she's drowning.

She shakes her head once. Then stops.

She begins to speak and then stops herself.

She looks at him – desperate for an answer, for permission. None comes.

She tries again.

AMANDA

Uh...

She looks down at her body, notices her own bare breasts, as if suddenly realizing them, like waking from a bad dream.

She reaches down, one hand, one breast. Not erotic, but eye-opening.

Tears well, but she fights them back.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(voice breaking)

Oh God...

The last bit of fight drains out of her. She looks up.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(through her emotion)

Oh my God.

Her eyes are suddenly brighter, wide with a terrible clarity.

There is a sense of calm and peace that comes over Amanda.

She looks back down, notices her hand still grabbing onto her breast.

She lets go.

Peace.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(soft now)

Oh my God... I get it.

Dr. Garrison just nods.

Amanda reaches for her blouse, pushes the bra to the side.

Still standing, one arm in, then another. She starts in on the buttons.

Dr. Garrison sits down, back in his dark leather chair.

DR. GARRISON

I know. I know. That was a lot. And
you will probably curse my name
from here---

AMANDA

No.

Everything stops.

They stare.

DR. GARRISON

It's understandable if you---

AMANDA

No... It's the most genuine, caring
thing, anyone has ever done for me.

She's all buttoned up.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Dr. Garrison

He waits for the execution.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Let's meet again... next Thursday.
(beat)
Same time.

Dr. Garrison nods.

Amanda nods one time and leaves.

Silence.

FADE OUT.

THE END