

Temptation 06 – Profit

By Dragonien

Sandra

We finally went to sleep at close to one in the morning. My poor goat had been so worn out by the end that he had passed out the moment I let him. For all the bluster Chase tried to put on my for my benefit he was a total sweetheart and didn't have a mean or assertive bone in his body. So, when I had shoved him down on the bed and crawled my way atop him to make my intentions for him absolutely clear it didn't matter that he was a foot taller than me and weighed twice as much as me. Through sheer force of personality I may as well have had his arms and legs handcuffed to the bedposts. I pretty much had Chase wrapped around my little finger. Though as we lay there in bed and I looked over at him, I couldn't help but see all the wear and fatigue built up on him from more than just me having my way with him all evening. Chase busted his ass every day working a grueling, labor-intensive warehouse job to support the both of us and the wear that it put on him showed. Sometimes it could be really annoying that the one place he was adamant and domineering was simultaneously the sweetest and most stressful way he could have done so.

Chase was overly supportive, in a strangely aggressive way. A few months ago, I had been a fairly successful columnist for a local paper. It wasn't anything I was going to get famous for, but it was rewarding and paid a decent amount. Unfortunately, after a while one of the editors started getting a thing for me and, well, let's just say he wasn't very good at handling rejection. At first, he'd just taken my refusals as playing hard to get so I'd had to shut him down pretty hard and in front of a few of our coworkers. Worse still, he had been the vindictive type. A few weeks later I had been fired after the bastard had framed me for leaking a list of anonymous sources to the public that I hadn't even had access too. Suffice to say they had blacklisted me and now no paper or news source of any kind would hire me. Chase had, after I'd calmed him down to keep him from running in and ripping the bastard's arms off, insisted that I keep trying for what it is that I wanted to do. Even if that meant I wanted to change my whole career path and go back to school, or try to salvage my reputation and get back into journalism he was there to support me. And he absolutely, without question, refused to let me take any job he thought was beneath me just because I thought I had to help out.

I had done my best not to let it show, especially in front of Chase but the whole situation had really rocked my confidence. I didn't feel like I really had many other marketable skills. Hell, the only unique thing I had going for me these days was that weird little device someone had sent me in the mail. The only special thing about me wasn't even something directly about it; it was just something I'd been sent in the mail that could grow and shrink stuff. Not like I

could start an apple farm and start selling the world's largest apples or anything silly like that. Sleep began to claw at me as I let those silly ideas flutter through my head. Just as my eyes were drifting closed, a stroke of genius flashed through my mind. My head rolled to the side on the pillow and I glanced across the dark room at the little wooden jewelry box sitting on our dresser. My last conscious thought was a silly mental image of my eyes turning in to dollar signs.

As soon as Chase had left for his job the next morning I got to work. It had taken me a few minutes of brief, panicked searching for the device before I remembered what I had done with it. I'd had to lay flat on the floor and strain my arm to reach all the way back behind the couch until I was just barely able to get my fingers around the device where it had been kicked by me last night. Once I had retrieved it, I spent a moment just hugging it against my chest and whispering sweet nothings to it about it being my 'baby' and apologizing for kicking it last night. I might have been feeling a bit manic and overly-excited about this whole scenario. Once I had finished making a crazy person out of myself and talking to an inanimate object, I quickly scampered my way over to our bedroom. The little jewelry box was like a treasure chest to me now, eyes practically glowing with greed as I pushed it open. I had gone through a bit of a jewelry phase back when I, you know, had a job and everything. My friends and Chase especially had made fun of me for being a dragon in a wolf suit. I absolutely HATED wearing jewelry of any kind. It always felt weird and uncomfortable having extra pieces hanging off of my fingers or ears and weighing me down in unusual places. But I LOVED collecting it. I loved admiring the craftsmanship and beauty of gold and jewels. Granted even when I was fully employed and making good money it wasn't like I was rolling in enough dough I could just buy every diamond ring and platinum necklace I came across but through thrifty spending and deal hunting at pawn shops I'd gathered quite a decent little collection. It almost hurt to think about what I was about to do, but my desire to help out both myself and Chase easily overpowered my inherent aversion to giving up any of my collection.

As I carefully picked through my jewelry I started making three separate piles: The risky pile, the worthless pile, and the definitely-going pile. The worthless pile consisted of things that were pretty but weren't actually really that valuable. Ones with fake gemstones or that were just gold plated so while technically being gold, had so little it wasn't worth the effort. The risky pile were the ones that would be hard to explain away; rings with actual diamonds or gems set in them. The last pile was the one I was going for. I started with two plain golden rings. They were molded in an interesting design; each like two vines interwoven around each other to form a solid band. They had no glamorous detail beyond that and nothing set in them. Just a pair of simple gold bands each holding roughly 2 grams worth of gold. By gold weight alone they'd both be worth just a bit under a hundred dollars. When I was done with them, though, they'd be worth a good deal more.

Pulling the device from where I had stowed it in my pocket, I carefully adjusted the settings to what I was pretty sure was a 4-times magnification. After carefully moving the rings a foot away from each other atop the dresser I took careful aim and shot each ring in turn. To my glee the device seemed to work just as well on gold as it had on everything else yesterday. The rings rapidly ballooned in size, spreading out across the dresser while engulfed in that faint glowing aura of green light. When the effect faded I no longer had two little gold rings. Instead, I had two vine-shaped bracelets made of almost solid gold. Giggling in utter joy I quickly dropped the device onto the dresser and scooped up my new bracelets. I was a bit surprised at their weight considering how light they had been as rings. Then I thought about how light I had been yesterday when I'd just cut my size in half and figured that it probably wasn't that unusual after all.

Of course, I had to spend a few minutes admiring my new makeshift jewelry. I twirled and posed for several minutes in front of the mirror, admiring the way the heavy bracelets hung around my wrists. Their thickness made them more like bangles than simple bracelets and they added a not-inconsiderable amount of weight to my arms when I swung them around. Once I was done showing off for myself, silently reprimanding myself for being such a girly dork in private, it was time to get going. While I didn't ultimately like wearing them beyond the occasional admiration of them like just now, they were still some of my treasures. I knew the longer I waited the less likely I was to actually go through with this. So, I quickly slipped them in my pocket and turned for the door. I had gotten halfway through turning the knob before I cursed under my breath, remembering I had left the device out in the open. It only took me a minute to snatch it up and put it back in its hiding place in the air vent, but the last thing I wanted to do was have Chase come home and find that. Or worse: some maintenance guy. It was my toy, after all. I didn't like sharing my toys.

The walk to the pawn shop had been uneventful. The cool autumn air was just windy enough I'd had to pull on a jacket though I still silently rebelled against the cooling temperatures by wearing shorts. I'd lived most of my life out in the country or suburbs so I'd come to enjoy living in the heart of a city where everything I could want was within easy walking distance. The shop itself was nothing of particular note. Just some corner strip mall store with a catchier name than the mediocre shop probably deserved. I had to admit though, that the crudely drawn picture of a tiger with part of their facial fur and skin missing to reveal cybernetics underneath along with such a painfully forced name like "The Pawninator" was amusing enough to draw attention and business all on its own.

My feelings of trepidation were already building by the time the little bell tinkled when I opened the door. I had to consciously tell myself not to flatten my ears lest I look too guilty. Which I wasn't. I don't know why I was reacting like this; I wasn't actually doing anything

wrong. I had legit gold to sell! I just may have... enhanced it a bit. Call me Sandra the Alchemist! Master of making gold from... less gold.

The man behind the counter looked up from the newspaper he was reading. He was a gruff bear with brown fur that was already going white in several places that I could see. His eyes were a bit glazed and his face seemed to sag slightly under years and years of age. Between his expression, the way he carefully folded the newspaper to put it aside, and the visible lack of anything more advanced than a telephone on the countertop it was no effort at all to imagine his voice as a thick southern drawl as he explained to me that 'he don't computer'.

"Uh. Hello. I, uh. Had some gold I'd like to sell. you buy gold, right?" I asked as I tentatively as I stepped up to the counter.

"Yup."

His simple, single word response only made me more nervous, though the heavy southern drawl to the word helped a bit as I internally smiled at my correct assumption. When he made no signs that he was intending to say anything further, I decided to try and keep things short and sweet; All business and whatnot. Fishing the two rings-turned-bracelets from my pocket, I carefully set them down on the countertop in front of him. For a long moment he didn't move. His eyes traced over the items, then glanced up at me as if searching for something. Only after He'd made me stand there squirming for a good thirty seconds did he finally pick the two bracelets up and haul himself off of his chair and too his feet with a grunt of effort.

"Be right back." He grunted in that same southern drawl.

As his towering bulk disappeared into the back I let out an audible sigh of relief. He'd looked big sitting down but when he'd stood up, he had been utterly massive! He would've made Chase look short by comparison! As I stood there waiting, I mulled over that thought. Mostly, I mulled over the thoughts that pushed into my head of Chase BEING that big. By the time I realized I'd let a dreamy smile spread across my face, I could hear the lumbering steps of the elderly bear making his way from the back room once more.

"Yup. It's gold, alright."

The revelation made me blink a bit in confusion. Then, I realized he had probably been testing it in back to make sure it was real. A momentary flash of indignation at the implied accusation of falsehood quickly faded when I realized not only how much people probably tried to rip off cash-for-gold places, but also just how often people probably brought in jewelry they THOUGHT was gold that turned out to be just gold plated or fake all around. When I leaned forward expectantly towards the bear he continued slowly.

"Golds goin for 'round 46 bucks a gram right now. We can do 80% of market. So we can offer ya five thousand."

I stared at the bear with a dumbstruck look on my face, my eyes wide. If I were a cartoon my jaw would be resting on the floor right now.

"F-Five thousand?! they're worth five thousand dollars?!"

"Each." He added with a huff. "Stuff's solid gold."

I felt like I was going to faint. The rings had only been worth maybe a hundred bucks and change at most together from their gold content. When I'd grown them, I'd only expected to triple that at best. Then it dawned on me: The weight. It was that square cube thingy that had made me so light when I'd shrunk myself. And gold was valued by its weight! So where I'd expected to just multiply its weight by 3-4, id actually done it by dozens of times more!

"I. Uh. yea. that's... That's good. I'll take it." I replied in a daze.

The bear huffed again then began filling out a carbon-paper form he pulled from under the desk. He wrote down a brief description of the items, asked for my name and ID, added in their weight and the agreed upon amount. He explained to me that for security they don't keep that much cash in the store. So, after he was done filling out the paperwork, he wrote me up a promissory note that he told me to take down to the local bank branch a couple of blocks down the street and they'd exchange that note for the cash. I'd just robotically followed along, head still spinning at the idea that I was suddenly ten thousand dollars richer than I'd been an hour ago. When he was finally done, he shooed me out of the store and had immediately gone back to reading his newspaper.

Just two rings had transformed into a third of Chase's yearly income in less than an hour. And I had DOZENS of other bits of jewelry that were made of all or mostly gold or silver. I started giggling with just the slightest manic edge to it at the thought of growing one of my thin gold necklaces until the thing was as thick as a steel chain and trying to pawn that. Then again, I could just wear it around and look like some kind of overly-rich gangster pimp. I didn't even realize I was laughing aloud until I noticed people staring at me and quickly shut myself up.

Calm down, Sandra. It's just money. Just money... money with 5 digits but still just money

I had to keep telling myself that as I made my way into the bank. Once I'd cashed the note, it was all I could do to not start skipping in joy as I made my way back home. Boy did I have a surprise for Chase tonight.