

This is an excerpt from *Imaginary Year*, a work of serial fiction by Jeremy P. Bushnell. Visit the *Imaginary Year* website (<http://www.ImaginaryYear.com>) on Mondays and Fridays for new updates.

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It is Monday morning, and Paul wants the details. He is in Clark's office; she sits in her chair, coolly regarding him.

—So, Paul says.

—Yes, Clark says.

—So you slept with the new girl.

Clark smiles broadly, and then, suddenly embarrassed by this display, she claps her hands over her face. Slowly, she tilts her head back, until she's looking up at the ceiling lights and her hands are pressed to both sides of her throat. She is still smiling.

This sequence of actions is about the most girlish thing she's done in forever.

—You did! Paul says. —Details. You promised me the details.

—I never agreed to that, Clark says.

—C'mon, Paul says. —*I'm* not getting any, so I'm *relying* on you guys to have an interesting sex life, so I can at *least* participate voyeuristically. So, come on, make with the hot tales of girl-on-girl action.

Clark pulls a fresh Post-It Note out of the dispenser and begins to wad it up. —You don't even *like* girls, she says.

—I like you guys.

—That's not what I mean.

—Let's not split hairs, not when there are *sexy details* waiting to be disclosed.

—What do you want to know? she asks.

—Everything, he says.

She flicks the wadded Post-It Note at him: it hits his chest and bounces down towards his lap.

—OK, he says. —Let's start with the broad outline here. Did you guys go out on Friday after work?

—Yes, Clark says, drawing out her answer. She idly stretches a rubber band around the fingers of her left hand.

—And, ah, how shall we say, when did this date end?

—Uh, Clark says. She pulls on the band. She screws her face up as though she is counting. —Sunday afternoon.

—Sweet Jesus! Paul says.

—Yeah, Clark says. —It was pretty, um, intense.

—Tell me more, Paul says.

She forms a launcher with the rubber band and loads a paper clip into it. —I can't, she says. —Monday meeting is in five minutes.

—But you'll tell me more later? Paul says.

Clark fires the paper clip, and Paul performs an effective block with the back of his hand. —Maybe, she says.

—Maybe? Paul whines.

There is more that she could tell him. There are kisses that could be described, caresses. She could describe the way they disrobed, and the tentative discoveries, the actions and reactions that accompanied each step in that sequence. She could try to describe the sensation of being touched by Janine, the sheer electricity of it, the way her nervous system pulsed and yearned in response.

And she could tell him that she feels like something *unlocked* within her this weekend, that, for the first time in as long as she can remember, she doesn't feel angry, she doesn't feel as though the world might need to be destroyed before it can be redeemed.

But instead she shrugs and says: —There's not really that much more to tell.

—Liar, Paul says. He picks the Post-It wad out of his lap and flicks it back at her.