

Chapter 24

The chapter follows the protagonist and Jordi as they attend a gallery opening in North Hollywood, hoping to see artist Lore Estes, who doesn't show up. Instead, they encounter Kris, Lore's ex-girlfriend and muse, whose artwork resembles Lore's. A subtle, unspoken tension develops between the protagonist and Kris, marked by fleeting eye contact and mutual curiosity. Jordi encourages the protagonist to seize the moment, leading her to message Kris and ask her out. The bold move pays off when Kris responds affirmatively, sparking excitement and anticipation.

In preparation for the date, the protagonist meticulously plans every detail, from selecting the right cannabis strains to enhance intimacy to practicing seductive gestures like slowly unsnapping a skirt. She approaches the encounter with the same intensity as past significant life events, reflecting her desire to make a strong impression. Despite her thorough preparations, she feels an eerie calm just before Kris arrives, as if all her nerves have dissipated, leaving her emotionally detached.

The date begins awkwardly, with stilted conversation and uncertainty about mutual attraction. For hours, neither makes a move, leaving the protagonist questioning whether Kris sees this as a romantic encounter. Just as she resigns herself to disappointment, Kris admits her nervousness and breaks the tension by inviting physical closeness. This moment marks a turning point, as the protagonist shifts from performative seduction to genuine, exploratory intimacy.

As they finally connect physically, Kris declares her intention to "serve" the protagonist, creating a dynamic where the protagonist feels empowered to simply exist without pressure. She abandons her usual reliance on fantasy and performance, instead focusing on the raw sensation of touch and the novelty of their kisses. The experience feels revelatory, prompting her to reflect on her own past relationships and the universality of desire. The chapter captures the vulnerability and exhilaration of a

first encounter that defies expectations.

