

DECEIVING APPEARANCES

Written by

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On the way to a concert, but stuck in traffic, Olivia probes her friend Deidre on her recent expensive purchases- and gets more than she bargained for with the explanation.

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTERSTATE I-5, DAY, PRESENT

We see a river of cars heading towards downtown LA, as if we are looking out and down from a bridge overhead- their roofs- and the city- shining in the golden-hour light of early evening.

Traffic is at a standstill. Engines idle. Distant, mixed radio music can be heard coming from different rolled-down windows.

We focus in on the roof of a sleek, black, almost certainly new BMW sedan.

CUT TO-

INT. DEIDRE'S CAR, SAME TIME

A local radio station plays softly inside the car interior.

We see OLIVIA (25 y/o, female). She wears a strappy dress, hoop earrings, and is dolled up to go somewhere.

In the mirror of the passenger side sun visor, we watch as she does a pass of shimmery lip gloss over her slightly-open mouth.

Finished, she puckers them, smacking before returning to a smile. She quickly examines her eye makeup before flipping the visor back up into resting position.

OLIVIA

Thanks again for doing this, Dee.

DEIDRE (O.S.)

No prob! This is gonna be great.
You got the QR code I sent you?

Olivia turns to her left, and we see DEIDRE (Same age, female) looking her way inquisitively.

She wears a stylish silver crop top, and visible flare jeans. A pair of oversized designer sunglasses rests on top of her head, and a pearly Vivienne Westwood choker adorns her neck. Devil-red acrylic nails, fresh and glossy, are visible as she rests her hands on the steering wheel.

OLIVIA

Yep. Saved it to my camera roll.

Olivia turns back to start scrolling through her phone. Deidre nods with satisfaction.

DEIDRE

Good, good. Oh! And don't worry if something happens- I got em' in my Ticketmaster, AND I brought a power bank if you run out of juice.

C.U. on a similarly fiery-red Valentino bag that rests on the cupholder spot in the center console, between both girls.

Deidre gives it a loving pat, as if to emphasize the contents inside.

Cut to Olivia's face- she's looked up from her phone slightly to glance at the bag. Beat.

From OLIVIA'S P.O.V., we see her turn from looking at the bag to up at the BMW emblem emblazoned on the steering wheel.

An oblivious Deidre stares out at the traffic as we follow Olivia's hand, running her fingers over the classy leather upholstery on the seat and her surroundings.

Deidre glances over.

DEIDRE (CONT'D)

You alright?

Olivia is taken aback, and looks slightly embarrassed- as if she was caught in the act.

OLIVIA

Oh! Um... Nah, I'm good.

Olivia glances away, suddenly keenly interested in the view out her side window.

Beat. For a minute, all we hear is the rumbling of the idling car's engine, and the indistinct radio chatter.

Olivia breaks the awkward silence.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

So- new car, yeah?

DEIDRE

(beaming) Yeah! Figured it was finally time for a trade in. Isn't she NICE? This is Nappa Leather we're sitting on right now. I made you feel it earlier, right? It's baby smooth.

We watch Olivia chewing her lip, seemingly holding back a comment. She gathers herself.

OLIVIA
(awkwardly) Uh... so... Deidre?

Deidre chuckles hesitantly.

DEIDRE
Wuh-oh. Full name's getting pulled
out. That's never good.

Olivia nervously toys with her earring. She flittingly makes direct eye contact with Deidre before looking away again.

OLIVIA
Can I ask you something?

DEIDRE
(nervously)...shoot.

Olivia shuts her eyes and inhales deeply before turning to look directly at Deidre.

OLIVIA
Where... Where did you get the
money for this?

Deidre looks taken aback.

DEIDRE
Excuse me?

OLIVIA
The concert, this car- the bag!

She gestures with a wild hand at the Valentino bag.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I mean- I'm not saying you COULDN'T
afford this, I'm not trying to be
rude- but this is just a BIG
departure from the paycheck-to-
paycheck thing that up until VERY
recently I thought you were still
doing.

Deidre's face sobers into something serious. She turns away from Olivia to look back out the windshield.

DEIDRE
I don't know what you're trying to
imply, but-

OLIVIA
(interrupting) I'm NERVOUS, Dee!
This is making me nervous!
(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

You can't just suddenly show up with all this money and expect me NOT to start asking questions!

DEIDRE

Look, it's- I've just started doing some stuff on the side, okay? And it pays well.

OLIVIA

What KIND of stuff, Deidre!? That's what I'm worried about here; what KIND of things are you getting into that make THIS MUCH?

Deidre shoots her a narrow-eyed glare, picking up on what Olivia is implying.

DEIDRE

It's nothing ILLEGAL, if that's what you're so worked up about; OK? I promise you nothing is happening that's breaking the law, so drop it.

Olivia gestures with wild exasperation at this comment.

OLIVIA

That's not answering my question! That's not making me feel any better! The fact that you're still being so cagey about it is making it worse!

DEIDRE

I said, DROP IT.

Olivia scowls. She's steamed.

OLIVIA

NO! I'm not going to drop it until I KNOW that you're being SAFE! I'm your friend, Deidre!

DEIDRE

(warningly) You don't want to go down this road, Liv.

OLIVIA

Don't tell me what I want! What I WANT is a friend who COMMUNICATES with me!

Tension has reached a boiling point in the car. Deidre's face warps into various expressions of close-eyed tension as her grip tightens on the wheel- before, as soon as Olivia finishes her comment- she spits out the truth with a sudden, full-body release-

DEIDRE
I DRAW ROBOT PORN!

Deidre's eyes shoot up in shock. She claps both hands over her mouth like she's said too much, whipping around to face Olivia- who begins to go on a speechless face journey.

The car becomes silent again. Beat.

OLIVIA
...What!?

Deidre goes from shame and horror to confusion in almost an instant.

DEIDRE
What do you MEAN what?

OLIVIA
What KIND of robot porn!?

With exasperation, Deidre now begins gesturing wildly.

DEIDRE
Wh- What KIND- why is THAT your first question?

OLIVIA
WHAT KIND OF ROBOTS!?

DEIDRE
THE KIND THAT TRANSFORM!

Huffy, Deidre turns back around to stare out at the traffic, crossing her arms. We visibly see the gears turning in Olivia's head as she puts the implications of that comment together- from confused, to disbelief, to confusion again. She looks to Deidre.

OLIVIA
(disbelievingly) No. You don't mean-

DEIDRE
Mhmm.

OLIVIA
Wh-... How...!?

Deidre glances at Olivia out of the corner of her eye.

DEIDRE
(seriously) There are ways.

Olivia turns around and stares at her feet, mouth agape, kneading her temples.

DEIDRE (CONT'D)
And see, THIS is why I didn't want to tell you- THIS right here-

She gestures a hand at Olivia's position.

DEIDRE (CONT'D)
Because I KNEW you'd flip out, and I KNEW you'd think I'm a freak. And it's not like I'm INTO it, I just started taking commissions on Twitter and once I did one, then the whole community found out about me, and the pay was too good to pass up, and I got in this big zine- Okay!? That's the story. And I know that must be hard for you to believe, that I'd "stoop that low" or whatever you think, but job hunting has been SO hard since I got laid off and I just don't have the pride anymore to be p-

Olivia throws her hands up and looks back at Deidre.

OLIVIA
SHUT UP!

Deidre looks back at Olivia now with shock.

DEIDRE
What?

OLIVIA
YOU'RE PUTTING WORDS IN MY MOUTH, DEE! Can you just SLOW DOWN for a minute!? ...I never SAID I thought you were a freak, alright? WHO CARES! I DON'T CARE! If ANYTHING, I'm just- SO happy you're not slinging KETAMINE or some shit! This is a RELIEF to me! A RELIEF, Deidre!

Cut to Deidre's face. She looks unsure of how to feel.

OLIVIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Look, I don't CARE about some
 artistic integrity pedestal. I've
 been there. All I needed to know
 was that you were thriving like
 this while being SAFE. We're
 friends, I just want to see you
 happy and healthy and SAFE.

Beat. Olivia takes one of Deidre's hands and clasps it close
 in both of hers. The two girls look at each other.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
 Deidre. Look at me. As long as
 you're doing your best, I do not
 care what kind of freaky shit you
 make the robots do.

The two girls serious expressions begin to slowly melt as
 they crack up, before both break into laughter.

DEIDRE
 Oh my God- Oh my God there's SO
 much you can make them do. They've
 got both parts, Liv. They're like
 snails. It's a world of endless
 combinations. It's a world of
 endless combinations and I haven't
 even drawn HALF of them.

Olivia snorts.

OLIVIA
 See, fool that I was, I didn't
 think they could have sex.

DEIDRE
 (like she's been holding it in)
 PEOPLE WANT THESE ROBOTS TO HAVE
 SEX SO BAD, OLIVIA. You don't even-
 There's a whole glossary of
 terminology I have to break down
 here before we even scratch the
 surface-

OLIVIA
 (inquisitively) Oh?

We cut back to the traffic- still unchanged in position- and
 pull out, as we hear the offscreen ramblings of Deidre and
 laughter of Olivia fade into the distance.

DEIDRE (O.S.)

Okay, so first of all- they're all bisexual. That's part of it, right? And the terms- the terms in the community are "valves" and "plugs" for... you know, the bits. Now, the porn- written, drawn, whatever- is grouped into one of two subcategories- sticky and non-sticky. Because, like, they don't technically HAVE to produce fluids, but some people want them too, so it's like, a preferential thing.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

And what kind do YOU specialize in?

DEIDRE (O.S.)

Pssh. Oh, easy- sticky is where the big bucks are. Can't tell you how many times I get a revision request back to make things gooier. These people are insatiable, Liv. They're like starving street dogs in my DMs.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Mmhmm, mmhmm.

DEIDRE (O.S.)

Now the kicker here is that they can't CANONICALLY get pregnant, BUT-

The conversation fades into inaudibility.

THE END