HALF SISTERS

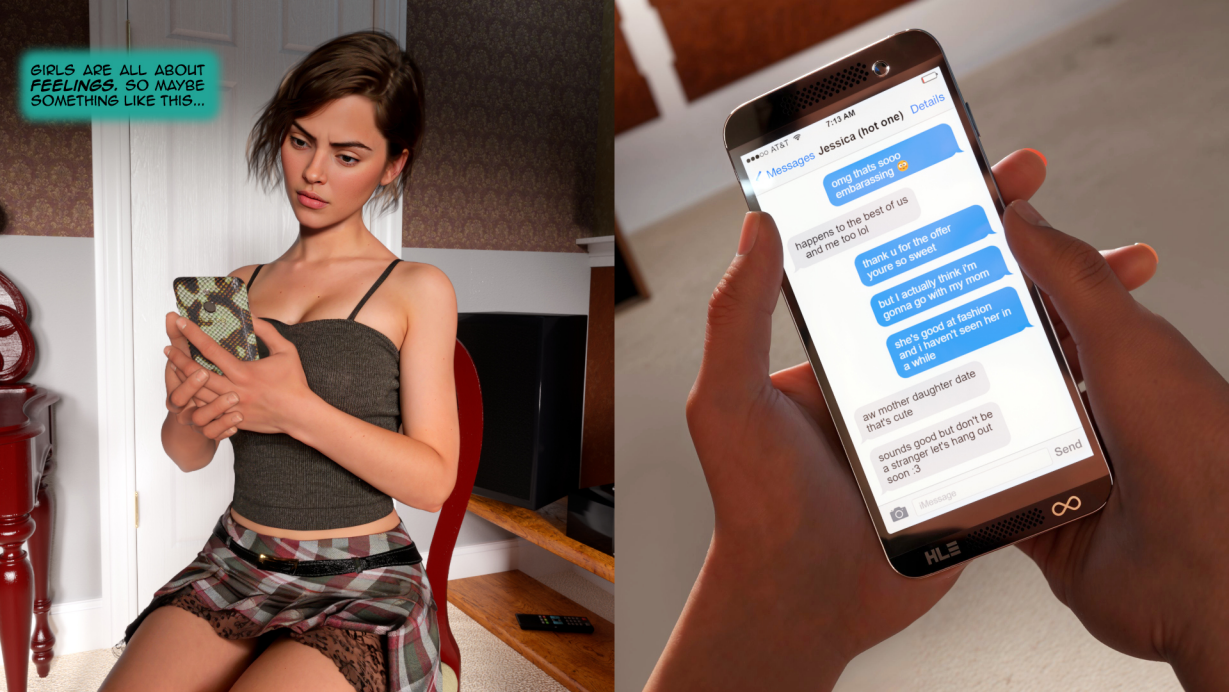
by Emory Ahlberg

Episode #7

Shopping with Mom and the Girls


THAT'S A NICE OFFER FROM JESSICA. BUT SHOULD I GO WITH HER? HM. I FUCKING HATE THAT I EVEN NEED TO GO DRESS SHOPPING - AND THAT I'LL NEED TO WEAR ONE FOR MY, UGH, "DATE" WITH ZACH - AND IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT GIRL CLOTHES. ALL THESE SKIRTS AND SHIRTS WERE EITHER SENT OVER BY HUTCHINSON OR PICKED OUT BY MOM. LEFT TO MY OWN DEVICES, I'LL END UP LOOKING LIKE A CLOWN, AND THAT'LL DRAW EVEN MORE ATTENTION. MOM WAS RIGHT WHEN SHE SAID THE BEST DISGUISE IS JUST TO LOOK LIKE ANY NORMAL, BORING GIRL.


JESSICA IS HOT AND SCOTT SAID SHE'S FUN – BUT SHE'S ALREADY SUSPICIOUS OF ME. SHE'S A LESBIAN SO SHE MUST HAVE, LIKE, ANTI-GUY RADAR. BESIDES, IF I GO WITH HER, I'LL HAVE TO MAKE UP MORE STORIES ABOUT "TOMBOY CAMP." UGH.
BUT MAYBE...MAYBE I COULD ASK MOM TO COME WITH ME. IT'S NOT LIKE THINGS CAN GET ANY WEIRDER BETWEEN US, RIGHT? AND IT WAS NICE TO TALK TO HER LAST NIGHT ABOUT...EVERYTHING. AND SHE ALWAYS HAD AN EYE FOR FASHION BACK WHEN SHE WAS STILL MODELING AND STUFF. DAD USED TO SAY SHE COULD MAKE A BURLAP SACK LOOK CHIC.
Um. hey. I think you sent this to the wrong person.
But Nikki if you need help shopping. I'm pretty good at fashion and new(ly back) in town, too.
Message
YEAH, I'LL... I'LL ASK MOM.
BUT NOW I HAVE TO LET JESSICA DOWN GENTLY. NO PROBLEM. RIGHT? I MEAN, I USED TO BE GREAT AT TURNING GIRLS DOWN FOR DATES AND SEX BACK WHEN I WAS A STAR QB AND DEFINITELY GOING PRO. BACK THEN, I COULD JUST BE BLUNT! BUT I DON'T WANT TO MAKE JESSICA MORE SUSPICIOUS. SO HOW WOULD A GIRL DO THIS?
IF...IF I WERE REALLY "NIKKI," WHAT WOULD I SAY?


GIRLS ARE ALL ABOUT FEELINGS. SO MAYBE SOMETHING LIKE THIS...
AT&T
7:13 AM
Messages
Jessica (hot one)
Details
omg thats sooo embarassing
happens to the best of us and me too lol
thank u for the offer youre so sweet
but I actually think i'm gonna go with my mom
she's good at fashion and I haven't seen her in a while
aw mother daughter date that's cute
sounds good but don't be a stranger let's hang out soon :3
Send
Message


NAILED IT! YOU STILL GOT THE CHARM, NICK – EVEN WITH LADIES WHO LIKE LADIES, NICE.
NOW I NEED TO CALL AND ASK MOM TO COME WITH ME. BUT WHY DO I SUDDENLY FEEL ANXIOUS?


OKAY, HERE GOES NOTHING...
HEY, MOM. Y-YEAH, GOOD MORNING. I KNOW IT'S EARLY FOR ME, BUT, UH, I HAD A BAD DREAM - ER, I MEAN... ANYWAY.
THANKS AGAIN FOR THE CHAT LAST NIGHT. NO, YEAH. I'M...I'M DOING OKAY. THINGS WITH DAD ARE GREAT, MOSTLY.
SO, UM, I WAS WONDERING... THERE'S THIS THING COMING UP AND I NEED TO... GET A DRESS. BUT, UM, I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU COULD HELP ME PICK SOMETHING OUT?
NO, NO ONE ELSE IS GOING WITH ME. I JUST THOUGHT THAT SINCE YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD GOOD TASTE... AND WE HAVE SIMILAR COLORING.
THAT'S A THING, RIGHT? COLORING.


REALLY!? YOU'D DO THAT? TODAY?
COUGH
I MEAN, YEAH, COOL. I'LL MEET YOU AT THE MALL IN A BIT.


AWESOME. NOW TO GET SUITED UP. DEFINITELY NEED MY COMPRESSION TOP. *IT'S BINDIN' TIME!*
SURE, I MIGHT BE SHOPPING FOR A STUPID DRESS, BUT THE FIRST THING I WANT MOM TO NOTICE IS HOW MANLY I AM STAYING WITH DAD, EATING ALL THAT MEAT...
SOOO MUCH MEAT.


OKAY, I KNOW I HAVE SOME OLD T-SHIRTS IN HERE SOMEWHERE.
HEY, JACKPOT!


PRETTY SURE I LAST WORE THESE IN, LIKE, JUNIOR HIGH. BUT, HEY, AT LEAST THEY'RE BOY CLOTHES.
NOW, JUST NEED MY WALLET, KEYS, AND-


HOLY SHIT! I REACHED FOR THE LIPSTICK, LIKE, AUTOMATICALLY.
I'M BEING INFECTED BY THE *GIRL MIND VIRUS!* LIKE SCOTT WAS!
NO, NO. CALM DOWN, NICK. IT WAS JUST A SLIP. THESE LAST FEW DAYS HAVE BEEN SO WEIRD... IT'S FINE.
YOU'RE FINE.


HEY, DAD.
OH, GOOD MORNING, NICK. ACTUALLY, TO HELL WITH THIS MORNING. MY HEAD IS KILLING ME.
SORRY TO HEAR THAT. I NEED TO BORROW THE TRUCK.
HUH? WHY?
I HAVE TO GO DRESS SHOPPING, REMEMBER? FOR MY DATE WITH ZACH.
OH, GODDAMMIT. RIGHT. SURE, SURE. WHATEVER YOU NEED. HEY, UM... SON, DID WE HAVE A FIGHT LAST NIGHT?
MORE LIKE YOU HAD A FIGHT WITH ME.
PALMER
DRILLING CO.
RelievaMaxx


WHAT, UH – WHAT'D WE ARGUE ABOUT?
I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T REMEMBER. I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW.
C'MON. WE'RE *MEN.* WE HASH THINGS OUT. WE FIGHT. IT'S NATURAL. DON'T BE...LIKE *THAT.*
LIKE *WHAT?*
LIKE A... NEVERMIND.
SIGH LOOK, I'M SORRY. OKAY? MY BUSINESS MEETING WITH *HUTCHINSON* WENT WORSE THAN I EXPECTED. HE HAS ME BY THE BALLS WITH THESE LAND DEALS.
GEE, HAVING SOMETHING CONSTRICTING YOUR BALLS SOUNDS *UNCOMFORTABLE.*


HEY, LET'S NOT PRETEND THIS IS ENTIRELY MY FAULT. YOU WENT WITH THAT PERVERT! AND I DIDN'T KNOW IF HE FORCED YOU TO GO HOME WITH HIM OR... OR WHAT SO I GOT WORRIED ABOUT YOU AND I KEPT DRINKING.
AND, YEAH, I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT, BUT –


ZACH ISN'T A PERVERT! HE'S JUST GAY. IT'S NOT HIS FAULT HE LIKED ME. DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW I LOOKED!? AND I... I WAS AND ASSHOLE TO HIM. BUT NOW...HE'S MY FRIEND.
BESIDES, I DOUBT IT WAS ME YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT. IT WAS YOUR REPUTATION.
NICK, I SAID I WAS SORRY. DON'T BE SO HYSTERICAL. YOU'RE STARTING TO SOUND SCREECHY, LIKE YOUR MOM.
HYSTERICAL!? HOW CAN YOU –
YOU KNOW WHAT? FUCK THIS. YOU'RE JUST BAITING ME. WE CAN TALK ABOUT THIS WHEN YOU AREN'T HUNGOVER AND I'M NOT LEAVING TO BUY A DRESS FOR A DATE WITH A BOY BECAUSE YOU FUCKED UP AND BECAUSE I... I LOVE YOU AND – DAMMIT – I DON'T WANT YOU TO END UP IN PRISON!


Y-YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M SORRY, SON. I PROMISE, THE DRINKING WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN. IT WAS A ONE-TIME THING. I'VE CONQUERED THAT DEMON. LET'S TALK TONIGHT. I...I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU, TOO, DAD. I'LL SEE YOU LATER. AND I'LL TELL MOM YOU SAID HELLO.



OH, I LOVE THIS ONE!

♪♪ SHE DON'T GIVE A DAMN 'BOUT YOUR PRIDE OR THE LIES THAT YOU'RE HIDING BEHIND

SHE JUST WANT TO FEEL THAT YOU'RE REAL

THAT SHE'S NEAR TO THE MAN THAT'S INSIDE

SHE DON'T NEED TO HEAR SHE'S A QUEEN ON A THRONE

THAT SHE'S MORE THAN AMAZING

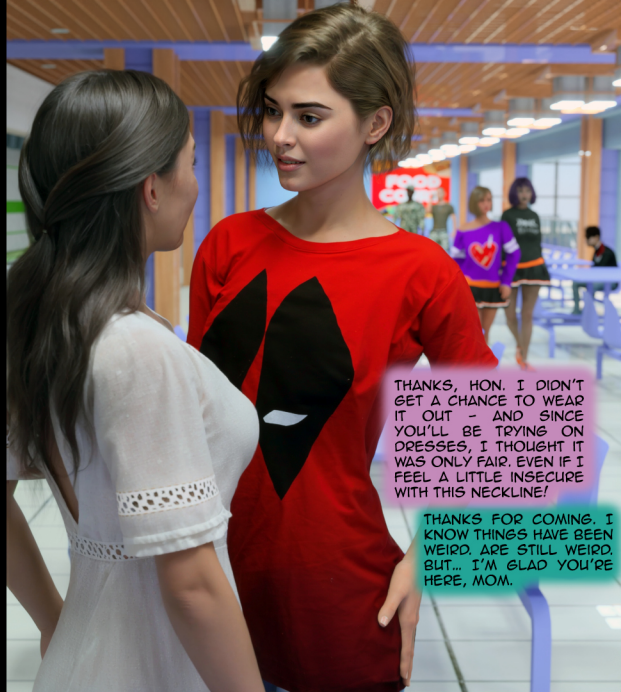
SHE JUST WANTS YOU TO SAY WHAT YOU MEAN AND TO MEAN EVERYTHING THAT YOU'RE SAYING ♪♪


SHERIFF


FOOD
COURT
OKAY – I'M OUT IN PUBLIC. BIG TIME OUT IN PUBLIC. WHO CARES? I'M JUST ANOTHER SKINNY DUDE THAT NOBODY WILL PAY ATTENTION TO...


STEAKS
& RIB
OH, THERE'S MOM. SHE'S WEARING *THAT DRESS* FROM WHEN WE WERE GONNA GO TO DINNER WITH DAD, MRS. FERRIS, AND SCOTT. GOD, THAT SEEMS LIKE *YEARS* AGO NOW BUT IT WAS ONLY A COUPLE MONTHS.
SHE LOOKS PRETTY. AND...SAD.


HEY, MOM.
NICK, SWEETIE!
YOU LOOK NICE.

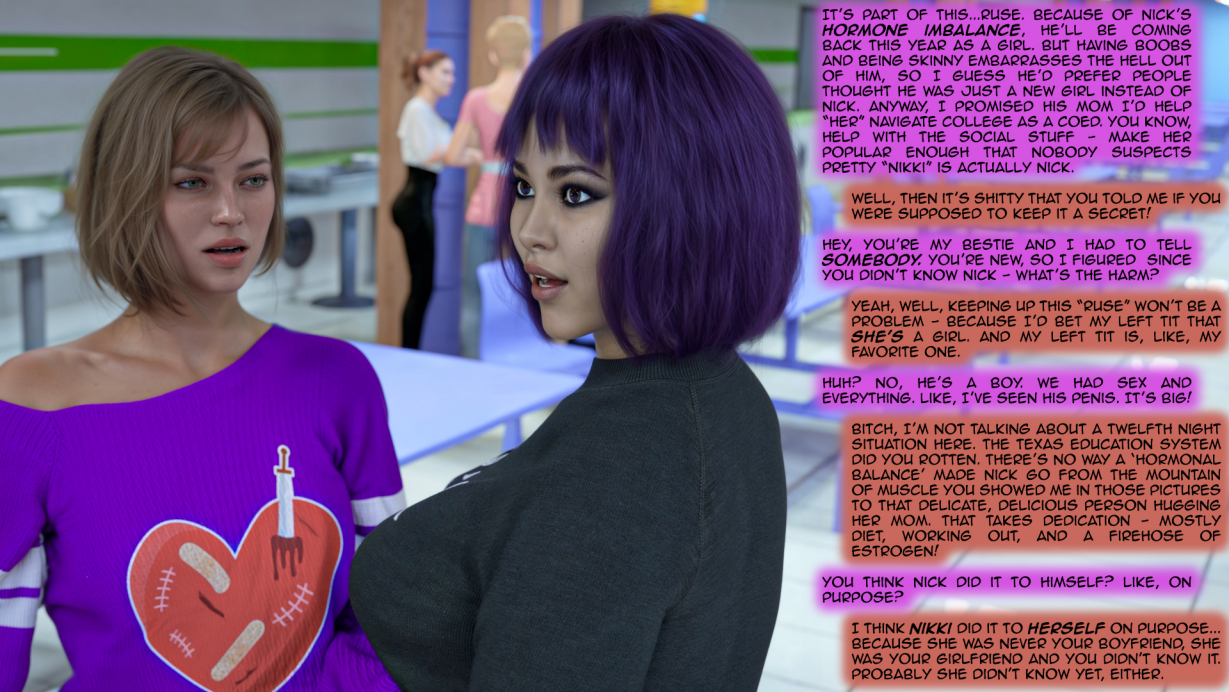

THANKS, HON. I DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO WEAR IT OUT - AND SINCE YOU'LL BE TRYING ON DRESSES, I THOUGHT IT WAS ONLY FAIR. EVEN IF I FEEL A LITTLE INSECURE WITH THIS NECKLINE!
THANKS FOR COMING. I KNOW THINGS HAVE BEEN WEIRD. ARE STILL WEIRD. BUT... I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE, MOM.

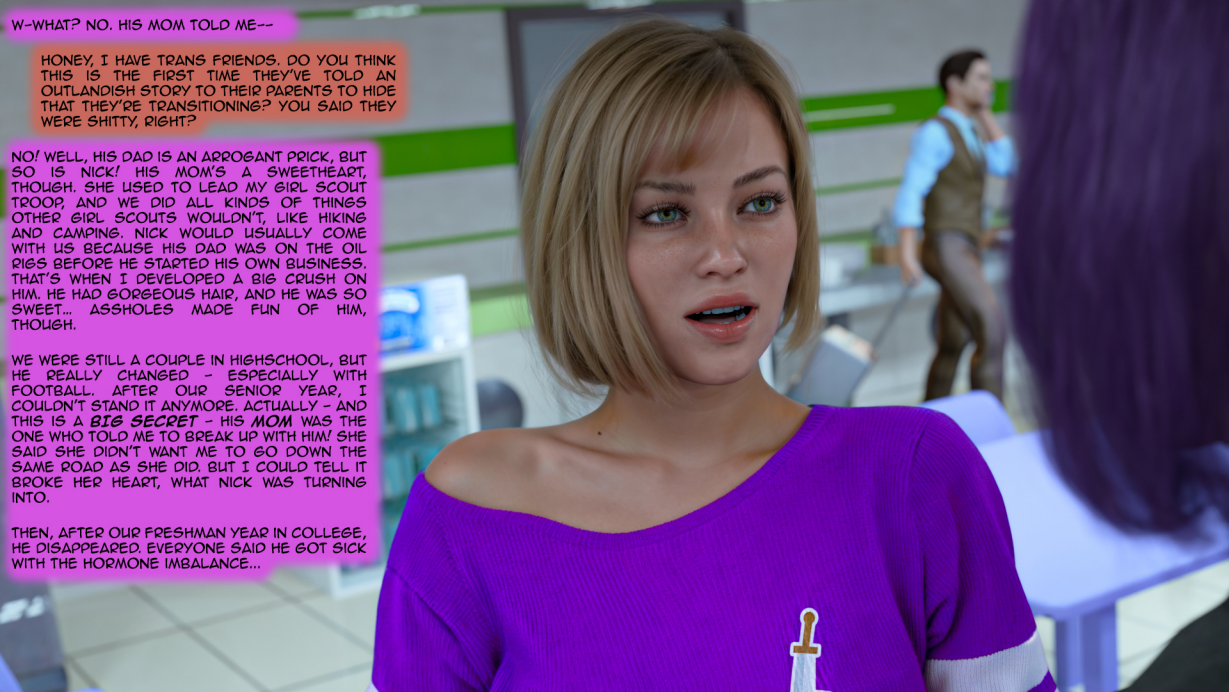

IF YOU, LIKE, NEED A HUG OR SOMETHING, THAT'S COOL. I KNOW HOW YOU ARE. I... WON'T LIKE PULL AWAY OR ANYTHING
OH, IS THAT RIGHT, MISTER? WELL...


I MISSED YOU.
I MISSED YOU, TOO, MOM.


OHMIGOD! EVIE, THAT'S HIM!
WHO?
THE EX-BOYFRIEND I TOLD YOU ABOUT. NICK PALMER! THE ONE WHO GREW BOOBS.
MEH, I DON'T SEE ANY BOOBS. HE JUST LOOKS LIKE A TWINK. KINDA CUTE, THOUGH.
HE'S PROBABLY STRAPPING THEM DOWN. BUT, TRUST ME, HIS BOOBS ARE ALMOST BIGGER THAN MINE.
THAT'S A LOW BAR, BITCH.
HEY! I'M AN ATHLETE. BUT DON'T GET ANY IDEAS - NICK IS AN ASSHOLE. AND AN IDIOT.
A DUMB CUTIE I COULD LITERALLY BEND OVER MY KNEE? IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MAKE HIM LESS TEMPTING? HIS BUTT IS DAMN PLUMP, TOO. HOW FLEXIBLE IS HE? DO YOU THINK HE'D LIKE IT IF I-
EVIE! LISTEN, HE'S OFF-LIMITS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. HE USED TO BE A PRETTY GOOD GUY, YEARS AGO, BUT HIS EGO WENT TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL. LIKE, THIS ONE TIME...
it's just a phase


...AND, SO, THAT'S HOW I FOUND OUT NICK PALMER WAS CHEATING ON ME. AND, OF COURSE, THE WHOLE SCHOOL KNEW THE NEXT DAY. I WAS SO EMBARRASSED, EVIE. A LITTLE HEARTBROKEN, TOO. WE'D KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE WE WERE KIDS, AND I HAD THIS STUPID IDEA THAT WE WERE MEANT TO BE TOGETHER FOREVER. YOU KNOW, CHILDHOOD SWEETHEARTS TURNED HUSBAND AND WIFE.
OH, GOD. THAT'S SO SAD.
THANKS, IT WAS TOUGH.
NO, I MEAN THAT LAST PART. CAN YOU IMAGINE ANYTHING MORE CLICHÉ?
OH, YOU'RE SOO EDGY AND CYNICAL. LISTEN, I'VE READ YOUR WEIRD BAT-BOY DEMON PORN NOVELS. YOU'RE ONE TO TALK ABOUT CLICHÉ.
FIRST OF ALL, THEY'RE NOT PORN. THEY'RE LITERATURE WITH COMPLEX CHARACTERS WHO JUST HAPPEN TO HAVE A LOT OF SEX. AND SECOND, THEY'RE NOT DEMONS – THEY'RE DARK FAE.
UH HUH. HEY, WHEN WE GO SAY HELLO, YOU HAVE TO PRETEND HE'S A GIRL.
UM – THAT'S FUCKING WEIRD. WHY WOULD I MISGENDER HIM?

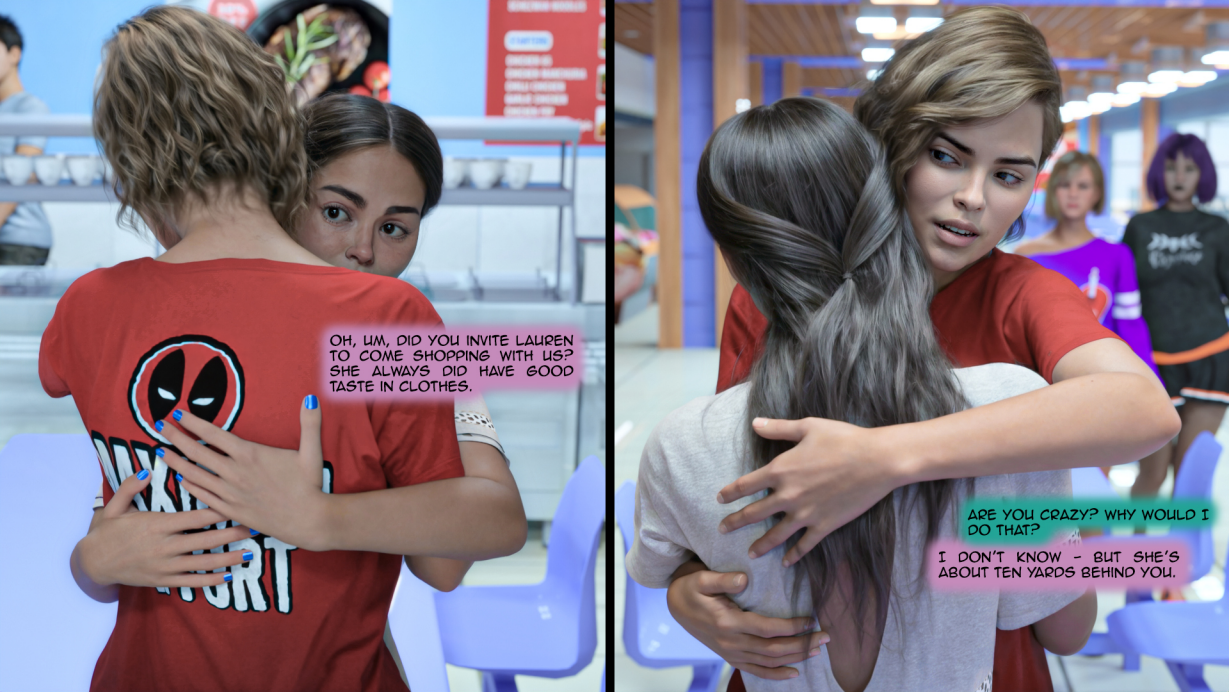

IT'S PART OF THIS...RUSE. BECAUSE OF NICK'S ***HORMONE IMBALANCE***, HE'LL BE COMING BACK THIS YEAR AS A GIRL. BUT HAVING BOOBS AND BEING SKINNY EMBARRASSES THE HELL OUT OF HIM, SO I GUESS HE'D PREFER PEOPLE THOUGHT HE WAS JUST A NEW GIRL INSTEAD OF NICK. ANYWAY, I PROMISED HIS MOM I'D HELP "HER" NAVIGATE COLLEGE AS A COED. YOU KNOW, HELP WITH THE SOCIAL STUFF - MAKE HER POPULAR ENOUGH THAT NOBODY SUSPECTS PRETTY "NIKKI" IS ACTUALLY NICK.
WELL, THEN IT'S SHITTY THAT YOU TOLD ME IF YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO KEEP IT A SECRET!
HEY, YOU'RE MY BESTIE AND I HAD TO TELL ***SOMEBODY.*** YOU'RE NEW, SO I FIGURED SINCE YOU DIDN'T KNOW NICK - WHAT'S THE HARM?
YEAH, WELL, KEEPING UP THIS "RUSE" WON'T BE A PROBLEM - BECAUSE I'D BET MY LEFT TIT THAT ***SHE'S*** A GIRL. AND MY LEFT TIT IS, LIKE, MY FAVORITE ONE.
HUH? NO, HE'S A BOY. WE HAD SEX AND EVERYTHING. LIKE, I'VE SEEN HIS PENIS. IT'S BIG!
BITCH, I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT A TWELFTH NIGHT SITUATION HERE. THE TEXAS EDUCATION SYSTEM DID YOU ROTTEN. THERE'S NO WAY A 'HORMONAL BALANCE' MADE NICK GO FROM THE MOUNTAIN OF MUSCLE YOU SHOWED ME IN THOSE PICTURES TO THAT DELICATE, DELICIOUS PERSON HUGGING HER MOM. THAT TAKES DEDICATION - MOSTLY DIET, WORKING OUT, AND A FIREHOSE OF ESTROGEN!
YOU THINK NICK DID IT TO HIMSELF? LIKE, ON PURPOSE?
I THINK ***NIKKI*** DID IT TO ***HERSELF*** ON PURPOSE... BECAUSE SHE WAS NEVER YOUR BOYFRIEND, SHE WAS YOUR GIRLFRIEND AND YOU DIDN'T KNOW IT. PROBABLY SHE DIDN'T KNOW YET, EITHER.


W-WHAT? NO. HIS MOM TOLD ME--
HONEY, I HAVE TRANS FRIENDS. DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THEY'VE TOLD AN OUTLANDISH STORY TO THEIR PARENTS TO HIDE THAT THEY'RE TRANSITIONING? YOU SAID THEY WERE SHITTY, RIGHT?
NO! WELL, HIS DAD IS AN ARROGANT PRICK, BUT SO IS NICK! HIS MOM'S A SWEETHEART, THOUGH. SHE USED TO LEAD MY GIRL SCOUT TROOP, AND WE DID ALL KINDS OF THINGS OTHER GIRL SCOUTS WOULDN'T, LIKE HIKING AND CAMPING. NICK WOULD USUALLY COME WITH US BECAUSE HIS DAD WAS ON THE OIL RIGS BEFORE HE STARTED HIS OWN BUSINESS. THAT'S WHEN I DEVELOPED A BIG CRUSH ON HIM. HE HAD GORGEOUS HAIR, AND HE WAS SO SWEET... ASSHOLES MADE FUN OF HIM, THOUGH.
WE WERE STILL A COUPLE IN HIGHSCHOOL, BUT HE REALLY CHANGED - ESPECIALLY WITH FOOTBALL. AFTER OUR SENIOR YEAR, I COULDN'T STAND IT ANYMORE. ACTUALLY - AND THIS IS A BIG SECRET - HIS MOM WAS THE ONE WHO TOLD ME TO BREAK UP WITH HIM! SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T WANT ME TO GO DOWN THE SAME ROAD AS SHE DID. BUT I COULD TELL IT BROKE HER HEART, WHAT NICK WAS TURNING INTO.
THEN, AFTER OUR FRESHMAN YEAR IN COLLEGE, HE DISAPPEARED. EVERYONE SAID HE GOT SICK WITH THE HORMONE IMBALANCE...


JUICE ME
Anne's
SMOOTHIES
KAPTO
DO YOU HEAR YOURSELF? A 'BOY' WHO FITS IN WITH THE GIRLS WHEN HE'S YOUNG. A DAD WHO'S A GIANT PRICK WHO PUTS A LOT OF PRESSURE ON HIS KID TO BE MANLY. THE KID DOES, BUT IT STARTS TO POISON THEM SLOWLY. THEY TURN SAD. TURN BITTER. TURN ANGRY. THEN THEY DISAPPEAR AND COME BACK LOOKING LIKE A GIRL? HELLO!?
YEAH, BUT--
I CAN'T HANDLE THIS, IT'S JUST TOO DAMN TRAGIC AND ADORABLE...

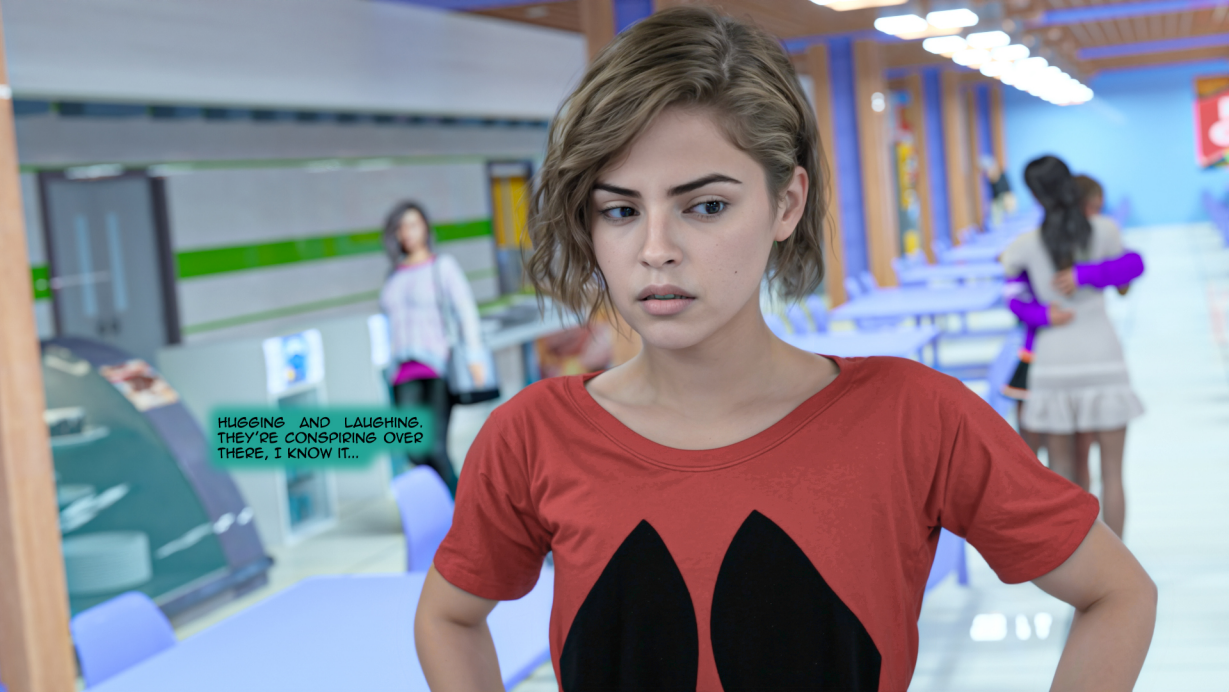

Anne's
...I WANT TO EAT HER ALIVE.


AND I BET SHE'S BACK IN BOYMODE BECAUSE YOU HUMILIATED HER WHEN SHE FINALLY GOT UP THE COURAGE TO GO SHOPPING FOR A BRA. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW YOU'D FEEL GOING FOR YOUR FIRST BRA AND HAVING THE SALESLADY LAUGH AT YOUR LITTLE BOOBS?
THEY AREN'T LITTLE!
YOURS OR NIKKI'S?
EVIE, STOP! DON'T RUIN THIS FOR ME. NICK IS JUST A STUPID, MEAN BOY GETTING WHAT HE DESERVES. YOU'RE A WITCH, DON'T YOU BELIEVE IN KARMA?
YEAH, AND IF YOU DON'T WISE UP, SHE'S GONNA BITCH SLAP YOU.
UGH, C'MON, LET'S GO SAY HELLO!
it's just a phase


OH, UM, DID YOU INVITE LAUREN TO COME SHOPPING WITH US? SHE ALWAYS DID HAVE GOOD TASTE IN CLOTHES.
ARE YOU CRAZY? WHY WOULD I DO THAT?
I DON'T KNOW - BUT SHE'S ABOUT TEN YARDS BEHIND YOU.


STEAKS & RIBS
NO! DOES SHE JUST, LIKE, RESPAWN IN A NEW MALL ONCE YOU DEFEAT HER AT THE OLD ONE? I CAN'T DEAL WITH THIS TODAY.
HELLO, LAUREN, DEAR!

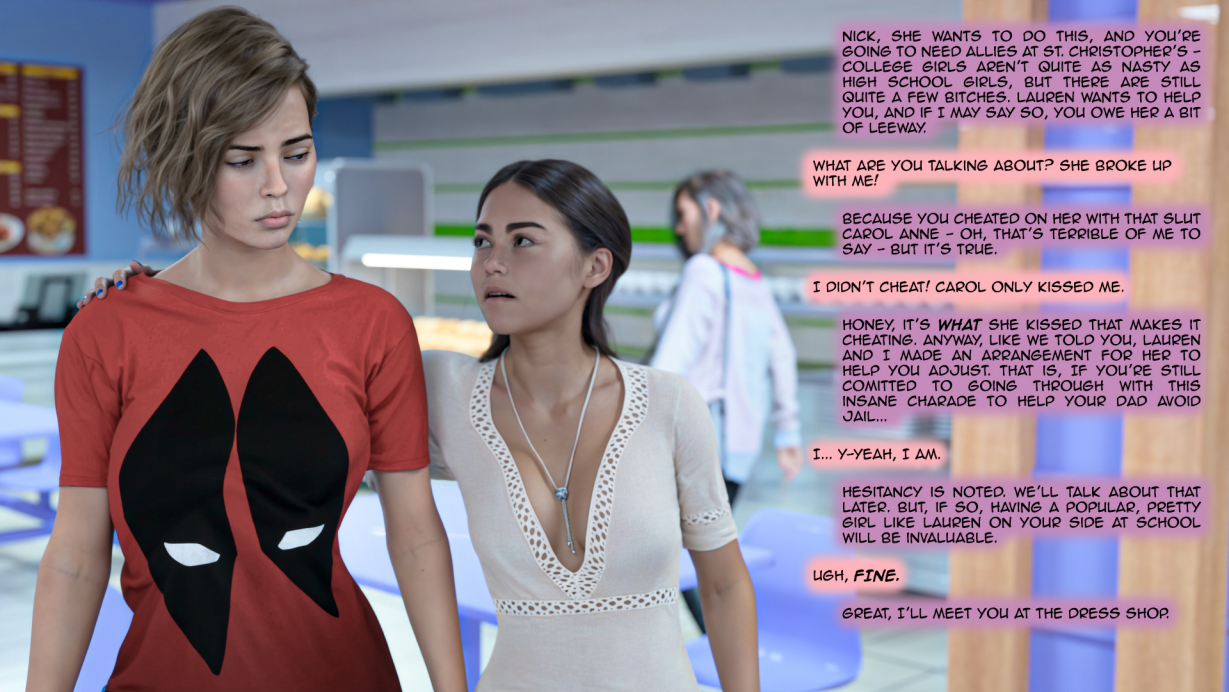

I'M GOING TO GO SAY HELLO.
DON'T. SHE'S A CHEERLEADER. SHE'LL SUCK YOU INTO HER EVIL VORTEX OF GOSSIP AND DRAMA. JUST ACT LIKE WE'RE IN A HURRY.
NONSENSE. YOU KNOW, I WAS A CHEERLEADER TOO, ONCE.
WHAT!? YOU WERE?
YES, AND IT WASN'T ALL GOSSIP AND DRAMA. WE SUPPORTED EACH OTHER, JUST LIKE I KNOW YOU TWO CAN.
OR LAUREN WILL MAKE IT ALL ABOUT HER. YOU KNOW HOW SHE IS!


HUGGING AND LAUGHING. THEY'RE CONSPIRING OVER THERE, I KNOW IT...


HI! I'M EVIE.
OH, SHIT! UH, N-NIKKI.
EASILY STARTLED, HUH? I LOVE THAT.
W-WHAT?

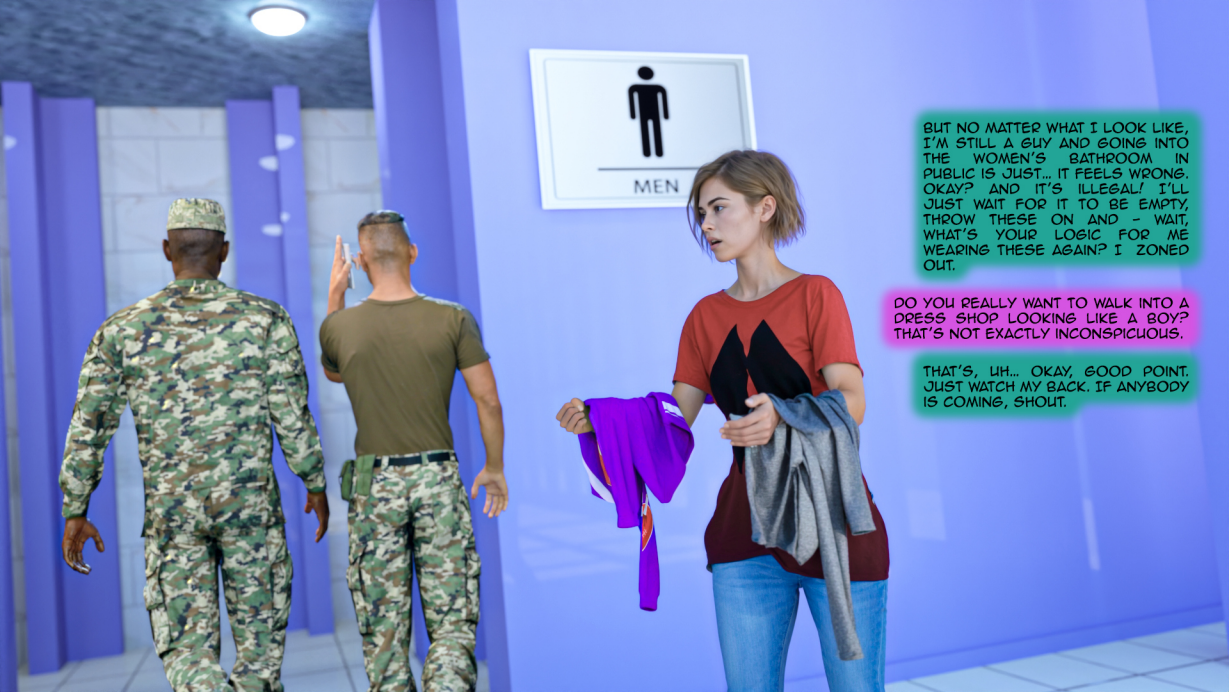

NIKKI, LAUREN HAS VOLUNTEERED TO HELP YOU SHOP FOR SHOES WHILE I SCOUT OUT THE DRESS STORES HERE IN THE MALL. YOU'RE A VERY TALL YOUNG...LADY, AND IT CAN BE HARD TO FIND THE RIGHT SIZES.
I'M EXCITED! SHOES ARE MY SPECIALTY. I'M SURE WE'LL FIND SOME SUPER CUTE HEELS THAT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL AMAZING. DON'T WORRY, NIKKI, I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU.
FOOD COURT


WHAT? NO, I DON'T WANT LAUREN TO HELP ME. I DON'T EVEN WANT HER NEAR ME. MOM, I CALLED YOU SO YOU COULD HELP ME, NOT MY EX.
STEAKS & RIBS


NICK, SHE WANTS TO DO THIS, AND YOU'RE GOING TO NEED ALLIES AT ST. CHRISTOPHER'S - COLLEGE GIRLS AREN'T QUITE AS NASTY AS HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS, BUT THERE ARE STILL QUITE A FEW BITCHES. LAUREN WANTS TO HELP YOU, AND IF I MAY SAY SO, YOU OWE HER A BIT OF LEEWAY.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? SHE BROKE UP WITH ME!
BECAUSE YOU CHEATED ON HER WITH THAT SLUT CAROL ANNE - OH, THAT'S TERRIBLE OF ME TO SAY - BUT IT'S TRUE.
I DIDN'T CHEAT! CAROL ONLY KISSED ME.
HONEY, IT'S *WHAT* SHE KISSED THAT MAKES IT CHEATING. ANYWAY, LIKE WE TOLD YOU, LAUREN AND I MADE AN ARRANGEMENT FOR HER TO HELP YOU ADJUST. THAT IS, IF YOU'RE STILL COMITTED TO GOING THROUGH WITH THIS INSANE CHARADE TO HELP YOUR DAD AVOID JAIL...
I... Y-YEAH, I AM.
HESITANCY IS NOTED. WE'LL TALK ABOUT THAT LATER. BUT, IF SO, HAVING A POPULAR, PRETTY GIRL LIKE LAUREN ON YOUR SIDE AT SCHOOL WILL BE INVALUABLE.
UGH, *FINE.*
GREAT, I'LL MEET YOU AT THE DRESS SHOP.


OKAY, SO YOU DEFINITELY CAN'T SHOP FOR A DRESS IN THOSE CLOTHES. YOU CAN BORROW MY TOP. AND I HAVE SPARE LEGGINGS IN MY CAR. I'LL GRAB THEM REAL QUICK AND YOU CAN GET CHANGED.
MEANWHILE, I'LL HEAD TO THE SHOE STORE AND START LOOKING. PERSONALLY, I'M A FAN OF COMBAT BOOTS. THEY HAVE THAT PERFECT MIX OF EDGY AND PRACTICAL. PLUS, THEY CAN MAKE ANY OUTFIT LOOK EFFORTLESSLY COOL. BUT I'M NOT EXPECTING MUCH IN THE WAY OF SELECTION HERE IN SUBURBIA...


REDDER'S STEAKS
WOMEN
MEN
LAUREN, NO! I'M NOT CHANGING IN THE LADY'S ROOM.
WHY NOT? I'M IMPRESSED BY YOUR 'GIRL VOICE,' BY THE WAY - VERY CONVINCING. WHY'D YOU SWITCH BACK?
BECAUSE YOUR WEIRD FRIEND ISN'T AROUND, AND LATELY, IT'S BEEN HARD...TO SWITCH BACK. I'M TRYING TO BE ABLE TO DO IT QUICKLY AND NATURALLY.

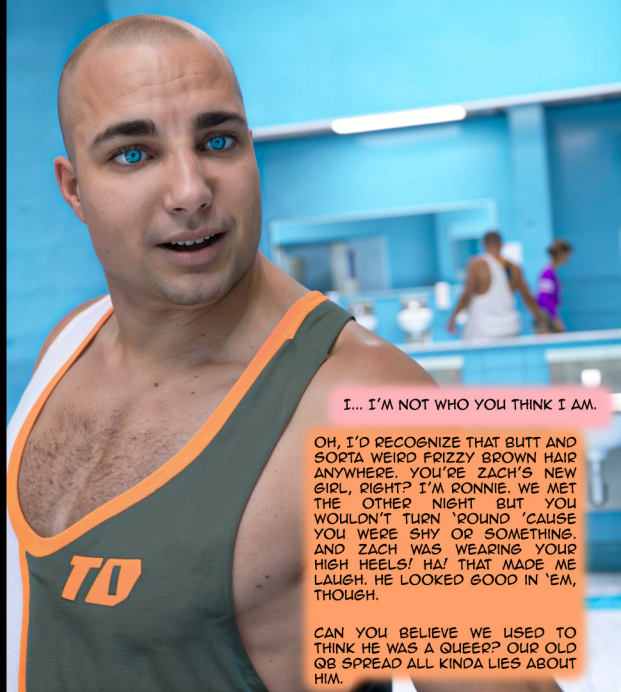

MEN
BUT NO MATTER WHAT I LOOK LIKE, I'M STILL A GUY AND GOING INTO THE WOMEN'S BATHROOM IN PUBLIC IS JUST... IT FEELS WRONG. OKAY? AND IT'S ILLEGAL! I'LL JUST WAIT FOR IT TO BE EMPTY, THROW THESE ON AND - WAIT, WHAT'S YOUR LOGIC FOR ME WEARING THESE AGAIN? I ZONED OUT.
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO WALK INTO A DRESS SHOP LOOKING LIKE A BOY? THAT'S NOT EXACTLY INCONSPICUOUS.
THAT'S, UH... OKAY, GOOD POINT. JUST WATCH MY BACK. IF ANYBODY IS COMING, SHOUT.

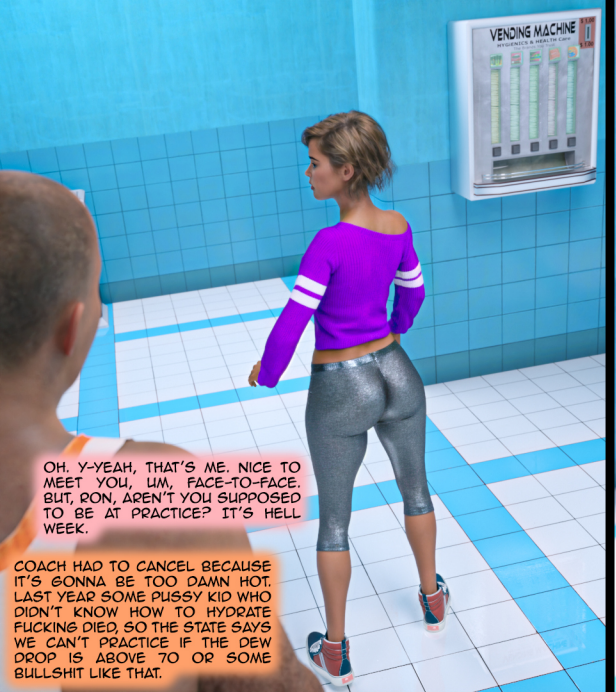

MAXIMUM EFFORT
CRAP, THIS SHIRT IS WAY TOO TIGHT AND THE PANTS ARE TOO SMALL!

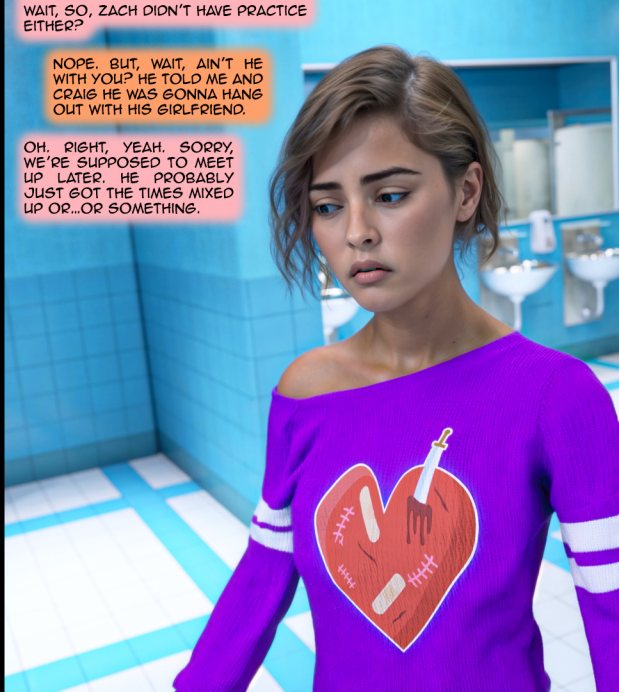

DAMMIT. LAUREN IS SO TINY, I SHOULD'VE KNOWN I'D LOOK LIKE A CLOWN.


VENDING MACHINE
OH, SHIT!
OOPS! DID I WANDER INTO THE WRONG BATHROOM AGAIN?
N-NO, IT WAS ME. SORRY. I'LL JUST...


WAIT A MINUTE... HEY! HOLD ON!


I... I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM.
OH, I'D RECOGNIZE THAT BUTT AND SORTA WEIRD FRIZZY BROWN HAIR ANYWHERE. YOU'RE ZACH'S NEW GIRL, RIGHT? I'M RONNIE. WE MET THE OTHER NIGHT BUT YOU WOULDN'T TURN 'ROUND 'CAUSE YOU WERE SHY OR SOMETHING. AND ZACH WAS WEARING YOUR HIGH HEELS! HA! THAT MADE ME LAUGH. HE LOOKED GOOD IN 'EM, THOUGH.
CAN YOU BELIEVE WE USED TO THINK HE WAS A QUEER? OUR OLD QB SPREAD ALL KINDA LIES ABOUT HIM.


VENDING MACHINE
HYGIENICS & HEALTH CARE
OH. Y-YEAH, THAT'S ME. NICE TO MEET YOU, UM, FACE-TO-FACE. BUT, RON, AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE AT PRACTICE? IT'S HELL WEEK.
COACH HAD TO CANCEL BECAUSE IT'S GONNA BE TOO DAMN HOT. LAST YEAR SOME PUSSY KID WHO DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO HYDRATE FUCKING DIED, SO THE STATE SAYS WE CAN'T PRACTICE IF THE DEW DROP IS ABOVE 70 OR SOME BULLSHIT LIKE THAT.


WAIT, SO, ZACH DIDN'T HAVE PRACTICE EITHER?
NOPE. BUT, WAIT, AIN'T HE WITH YOU? HE TOLD ME AND CRAIG HE WAS GONNA HANG OUT WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND.
OH. RIGHT, YEAH. SORRY, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET UP LATER. HE PROBABLY JUST GOT THE TIMES MIXED UP OR...OR SOMETHING.


HEY, NO OFFENSE – I'M JUST A CURIOUS FELLOW, AS MY GRANDMA IS FOND OF SAYING – BUT ARE YOU WEARING A JOCK STRAP? CAUSE IT KINDA LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE.
OH! IT'S A...UH...JANE STRAP. IT'S A THING NOW, YOU KNOW, FOR GIRLS WHO PLAY SPORTS. GETTING HIT IN THE LADY PARTS CAN HURT JUST AS MUCH. AND IT CAN SCRAMBLE YOUR EGGS, MAKING IT HARD TO HAVE KIDS LATER. SO, IT'S FOR PROTECTION, REALLY. ZACH GOT IT FOR ME.
I GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE. SAFETY FIRST AND EVERYTHING. BUT IF ZACH IS PROTECTING YOUR FERTILITY, YOU TWO ARE SERIOUS. AIN'T MANY GUYS THINK THAT FAR AHEAD.
THAT'S WHY HE'S THE QUARTERBACK.
TRUE, TRUE. HEY, WAIT, THIS YOUR SHIRT AND JEANS? YOU'RE FORGETTING THEM.
N-NO. THOSE ARE BOY CLOTHES. WHY WOULD I NEED THOSE? SEE YOU AROUND, RONNIE.
SEE YOU! OH, WAIT! WHAT'S YOUR NAME AGAIN?
BYE!


MEN
OH, DON'T YOU LOOK CUTE IN THAT LITTLE TOP AND LEGGINGS!
FUCK YOU, LAUREN.
HEY! THERE'S NO NEED TO BE NASTY.
ISN'T THERE? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO WATCH MY BACK. RON CAME INTO THE BATHROOM! MY OLD DEFENSIVE LINEMAN! IT'S A MIRACLE HE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ME.
AND WHY IS EVERYONE AND THEIR MOTHER AT THE MALL TODAY!?


WOMEN
I...I GUESS BECAUSE IT'S SO HOT OUT. THAT'S WHY CHEER PRACTICE WAS CANCELED. OH, NICK. I'M REALLY SORRY! EVIE WAS TEXTING ME SHOE PICS, AND I WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION.
LOOK, I KNOW THIS IS HILARIOUS FOR YOU – BUT IT'S FUCKING ***DANGEROUS*** FOR ME. THAT'S WHY MY MOM 'ENLISTED' YOU! IF RON FOUND OUT WHO I WAS, ***WHAT*** I WAS, HE MIGHT MISUNDERSTAND. HE MIGHT THINK... ANYWAY, HE'D PROBABLY KICK THE SHIT OUT OF ME. HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THAT?
NICK, I'M GENUINELY SORRY.
IT'S ***NIKKI*** FOR RIGHT NOW.
MY LITTLE TEASING IS JUST FOR FUN. I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET HURT. GOD, THAT'S THE LAST THING I'D WANT!
I CAN'T WAIT FOR THIS TO ALL BE OVER. THAT WAY, ***EVERYBODY*** CAN STOP PRETENDING TO BE MY FRIEND OR, WORSE, PRETENDING TO CARE. AND WHEN YOU FIND OUT THE WHOLE STORY, YOU'RE GOING TO FEEL LIKE A REAL CUNT.


GOD, THE WAY HE'S TALKING... COULD EVIE BE RIGHT!?
NO. THERE'S NO WAY. GIRLFRIENDS KNOW. THEY ALWAYS KNOW.
WAIT UP, NIKKI!


OHMAIGAWD. NICK'S ASS LOOKS BETTER IN THOSE LEGGINGS THAN MINE DOES!
WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ME? GONNA SAY SOMETHING ELSE BITCHY?
Y-YOUR BACKSIDE IS BIGGER THAN THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU. THE... IMBALANCE ISN'T CURED?
HA! NO, IT'S SORT OF.. ONGOING. CAN WE NOT TALK ABOUT THIS OUT HERE? OR, LIKE, AT ALL? LET'S GO FIND YOUR FRIEND, DISCOUNT WEDNESDAY ADAMS. SHE SEEMS NICE - EVEN IF SHE'S WEIRD AS HECK. I JUST WANT TO GET THIS OVER WITH AND GO HOME TO MY DAD'S HOUSE.
AT LEAST HE DOESN'T PRETEND I'M NOT A FREAK.


HEY! WHAT TOOK YOU TWO SO LONG? I *HATE* BEING ALONE IN CROWDS. ANYWAY, I SCOUTED AROUND AND FOUND A STORE THAT HAS YOUR SHOE SIZE, NIKKI. AND--


WOW. I MEAN... YEAH, WOW!
DO YOU NEED TO MAKE FUN OF ME, TOO? WE JUST MET! I KNOW I LOOK LIKE A CLOWN.


YEAH, IF CLOWNS WERE FASHION ICONS! LIKE, *DAMN BITCH*, YOU LOOK GOOD. AND BY 'GOOD' I MEAN *HOT*. LAUREN'S CLOTHES LOOK BETTER ON YOU THAN THEY DO ON HER - NO OFFENSE BABE.


MONCLER
BOUTIQUE
HELLO SUGAR!
STOP BEING SARCASTIC. IT'S ALL TOO TIGHT, AND I FEEL RIDICULOUS.
OKAY, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAY THIS WITHOUT SOUNDING PERVY AS HELL, BUT 'TIGHT' IS WORKING FOR YOU. BECAUSE YOUR BODY IS BANGING.
LAUREN, IS YOUR FRIEND ALWAYS THIS BLUNT?
PRETTY MUCH. BUT SHE'S HONEST. IF EVIE SAYS YOU LOOK GOOD, BELIEVE IT. SHE DOESN'T SUGARCOAT.



BELIEVE ME OR DON'T, BUT I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. DESPITE MY CURRENT 'SWEATSHIRT CHIC' VIBE, I'VE GOT A PRETTY KEEN EYE FOR FASHION. THAT'S ACTUALLY HOW LAUREN AND I MET. I GAVE HER A BRUTALLY HONEST CRITIQUE OF HER OUTFIT AT A PARTY. WE'VE BEEN INSEPARABLE SINCE.

THAT'S TRUE. I WAS WEARING THIS AWFUL, FRILLY THING. LOOKED LIKE A CURTAIN FROM A HAUNTED HOUSE.

SO IF YOU DIDN'T LOOK LIKE A ***SNACK*** IN THAT OUTFIT, I'D TELL YOU STRAIGHT UP.

A...SNACK?

SORRY, I CAN SEE NOW YOU'RE A LITTLE DENSE. THAT'S ***ADORABLE***. WHAT I MEAN IS, YOU LOOK ATTRACTIVE. REALLY ATTRACTIVE. LIKE, I WANT TO TAKE YOU OUT AND SHOW YOU OFF KIND OF ATTRACTIVE. OR TAKE YOU HOME AND ***KEEP YOU FOR MYSELF*** KIND OF ATTRACTIVE. NOT THAT I'M SUGGESTING ANYTHING! JUST TRYING TO MAKE A POINT. ANYWAY, LET'S HEAD TO THAT STORE I MENTIONED. SHOES, SHOES, SHOES! I MEAN, THEY HAVE DRESSES AND SKIRTS TOO, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THEIR SHOE COLLECTION. I'M A FAN.


SO, THEY HAVE ALL KINDS OF STYLES, FROM COMBAT BOOTS (WINK, WINK) TO STILETTOS. WHATEVER VIBE YOU'RE GOING FOR, THEY'VE GOT IT. PLUS, THEIR SIZES ARE ACTUALLY REALISTIC. NONE OF THAT 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL' NONSENSE. OBVIOUSLY, YOU'RE BUILT LIKE AN ***AMAZON PRINCESS***, SO FINDING THE PERFECT FIT CAN BE A CHALLENGE ELSEWHERE. BUT HERE? I THINK WE'LL STRIKE GOLD.


YAY, NIKKI! WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL, AMAZING, SOMETIMES OVERWHELMING WORLD OF SHOE SHOPPING! I PROMISE, IT'S GOING TO BE FUN. AND YOU'LL PROBABLY LEAVE WITH MORE PAIRS THAN YOU INTENDED. HAPPENS TO THE BEST OF US. C'MON, EVIE, STRIKE UP A POSE WITH ME! LET'S SHOW NIKKI HOW IT'S DONE.
HOW ABOUT I JUST KEEP MY FEET ON THE GROUND AND LET YOU TAKE THE SPOTLIGHT? BE CAREFUL, NIKKI, THIS IS HOW SHE RECRUITED ME INTO THE SQUAD – ACTING ALL... BENDABLE. BUT SHE'S NOT NEARLY AS FLEXIBLE AS SHE PRETENDS TO BE.


SALE
50% OFF
WELCOME, LADIES! I SEE WE HAVE SOME ENTHUSIASTIC SHOPPERS TODAY. HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
HELLO! I'M EVIE. THIS IS LAUREN, AND THIS IS NIKKI! WE'RE LOOKING FOR A PAIR OF SHOES THAT SCREAMS 'NIKKI IS HERE AND SHE MEANS BUSINESS'. BUT ALSO, 'NIKKI IS NOT TO BE MESSED WITH IN A DARK ALLEY'. GOT ANYTHING LIKE THAT?


I THINK WE CAN FIND SOMETHING THAT FITS BOTH THOSE DESCRIPTIONS. LET'S START WITH OUR NEW ARRIVALS SECTION. THESE HAVE A MODEST HEEL, DESIGNED FOR COMFORT MORE THAN ANYTHING, BUT THEY DON'T SKIMP ON STYLE.


AND THEN, FOR WHEN YOU WANT TO MAKE A PRACTICAL STATEMENT, THESE ARE PERFECT. THEY'RE BOLD, THEY'RE FIERCE. PLUS, THEY COME IN YOUR SIZE.
THOSE LOOK LIKE I COULD BREAK AN ANKLE IN THEM.
OR SOMEONE'S HEART.


NOW, ***THESE*** ARE THE ULTIMATE POWER MOVE. SLEEK, SHARP, AND ABSOLUTELY STUNNING. THEY'RE NOT JUST SHOES, THEY'RE A STATEMENT. YOU PUT THESE ON, AND YOU OWN ANY ROOM YOU WALK INTO. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WE'LL TRY THEM. BOTH OF US.
WHAT!?


OH, C'MON. FASHION AND PAIN GO HAND IN HAND. I MEAN, I'VE NEVER WORN HEELS THIS HIGH BEFORE EXCEPT IN PAGEANTS, BUT HOW BAD CAN IT BE?
I DUNNO. THOSE SHOES LOOK LETHAL.
DON'T LET HER TALK YOU INTO ANYTHING, NIKKI. LAUREN'S A HIGH-HEEL PUSHER!
it's just a phase


YOU WERE ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT HOW YOUR ***AMAZING BALANCE,*** RIGHT? THIS IS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE IT. LET'S MAKE IT INTERESTING. I'LL BET YOU THE COST OF THE SHOES THAT YOU CAN'T WALK TEN FEET WITHOUT FALLING OR GRABBING ONTO SOMETHING FOR SUPPORT. AND I'LL DO THE SAME. IF I LOSE, I'LL BUY YOUR SHOES. DEAL?
FINE. ***YOU'RE ON.*** BUT DON'T THINK I'M GOING EASY ON YOU JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE IN THAT CHEER OUTFIT.


50% OFF
SELECTED ITEMS
it's just a phase
OR WE COULD JUST START YOU OFF WITH THESE. NO RISK OF BROKEN ANKLES AND THEY'LL STILL LOOK KICKASS WITH THE RIGHT OUTFIT.
NO? STILL GONNA DO THE HEEL CHALLENGE? ALRIGHT, BUT DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU.


WELL, YOU STOOD UP. THAT'S BETTER THAN I THOUGHT YOU'D DO, TO BE HONEST.


OH, I'M NOT DONE. I JUST NEED TO CONCENTRATE...
TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED. DON'T LET LAUREN RUSH YOU. I'LL BE FINE BACK HERE.


ZACH SAID, UM...
UH...


UH... HEEL TO TOE. OR... TOE TO HEEL?


SALE
50% OFF
YEAH. YEAH, HEEL TO TOE! LIKE YOU'RE WALKING ON A LINE. HEAD HIGH, CHEST OUT...
SALE
50% OFF
WOW, UH, YOU'RE ACTUALLY DOING... GREAT!
OF COURSE I AM. I'M GREAT AT EVERYTHING I TRY.

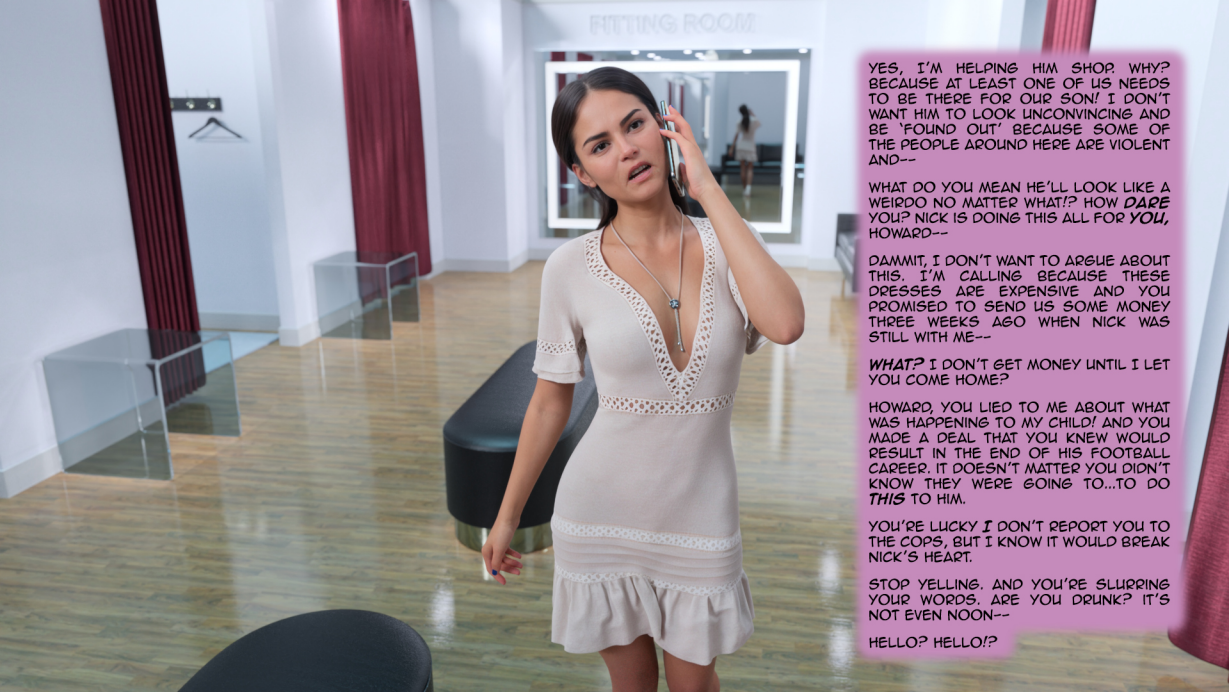

THAT'S PRETTY INCREDIBLE. WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, LAUREN? LOOK AT THAT WALK! IT'S ALMOST LIKE SHE HAS BEEN *PRACTICING?* A LOT.
WELL, UM, NO... I THINK THESE HEELS ARE JUST PARTICULARLY WELL-MADE AND COMFORTABLE. I MEAN, SURE, THEY'RE HIGH, BUT WATCH, I CAN WALK JUST AS EASILY--
it's just a phase


WOAH!
IT'S OKAY, I GOT YA.
GUESS THE SHOES ARE ON YOU, LAUREN. YOU COULDN'T EVEN MAKE IT TWO FEET, LET ALONE TEN. I WIN AGAIN.
EXCUSE ME, MISS. NO OFFENSE, BUT ALTHOUGH YOU LOOK STUNNING IN THOSE HEELS, MAY I SUGGEST SOMETHING... LOWER. YOU'RE ALREADY A VERY TALL YOUNG LADY, AND GENTLEMEN OFTEN PREFER THEIR DATES TO BE SHORTER THAN THEM. TO WEAR THESE AND NOT EMASCULATE YOUR DATE, YOU'D HAVE TO FIND A TRUE GIANT --


LADY, WHO SAYS SHE'S DATING MEN, HUH?
WELL, I...I ASSUMED A GIRL AS PRETTY AS HER WOULD NEVER BE A, UH...
A WHAT? I'M ACTUALLY INTERESTED IN SEEING IF YOU CAN BRING YOURSELF TO SAY THE WORD.
it's just a phase


I SAW THESE FROM ACROSS THE ROOM. I... WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
YOU... YOU ACTUALLY LIKE THEM, DON'T YOU? I MEAN, GENUINELY?
YEAH! IS THAT WEIRD? I DUNNO, THEY'RE COOL. I COULD SEE MYSELF WEARING THEM.
OKAY. OKAY! WELL, THEN THEY'RE YOURS. GOOD THING I JUST GOT A PAYCHECK, BUT A BET IS A BET. NOW, LET'S BUY THEM BEFORE EVIE GETS US ALL KICKED OUT AND BANNED FOR LIFE. AGAIN.


I'M PROUD OF YOU, NIKKI. THESE ARE ***BASICALLY*** COMBAT BOOTS, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED. OR, AT LEAST, AS CLOSE AS YOU'LL GET IN TEXAS. GOOD CHOICE!
THANKS. THEY HAVE A SKULL. THAT'S BADASS. RIGHT?
TOTALLY BADASS.
COOL. THANKS, EVIE. YOU'RE WEIRD BUT THE ***GOOD*** KIND OF WEIRD. LIKE PINEAPPLE ON PIZZA. YOU DON'T ***WANT*** TO LIKE IT, BUT YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELF. ANYWAY, MY MOM TEXTED ME AND SAID SHE'S IN THE BIG DEPARTMENT STORE ON THE FIRST LEVEL. LET'S GO MEET HER.


FITTING ROOM
YES, I'M HELPING HIM SHOP. WHY? BECAUSE AT LEAST ONE OF US NEEDS TO BE THERE FOR OUR SON! I DON'T WANT HIM TO LOOK UNCONVINCING AND BE 'FOUND OUT' BECAUSE SOME OF THE PEOPLE AROUND HERE ARE VIOLENT AND--
WHAT DO YOU MEAN HE'LL LOOK LIKE A WEIRDO NO MATTER WHAT!? HOW *DARE* YOU? NICK IS DOING THIS ALL FOR *YOU,* HOWARD--
DAMMIT, I DON'T WANT TO ARGUE ABOUT THIS. I'M CALLING BECAUSE THESE DRESSES ARE EXPENSIVE AND YOU PROMISED TO SEND US SOME MONEY THREE WEEKS AGO WHEN NICK WAS STILL WITH ME--
WHAT? I DON'T GET MONEY UNTIL I LET YOU COME HOME?
HOWARD, YOU LIED TO ME ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO MY CHILD! AND YOU MADE A DEAL THAT YOU KNEW WOULD RESULT IN THE END OF HIS FOOTBALL CAREER. IT DOESN'T MATTER YOU DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE GOING TO...TO DO *THIS* TO HIM.
YOU'RE LUCKY *I* DON'T REPORT YOU TO THE COPS, BUT I KNOW IT WOULD BREAK NICK'S HEART.
STOP YELLING. AND YOU'RE SLURRING YOUR WORDS. ARE YOU DRUNK? IT'S NOT EVEN NOON--
HELLO? HELLO!?


GODDAMMIT.
HEY, MOM. EVERYTHING OKAY?


HELLO! YES, EVERYTHING IS GREAT. AND I HAVE A FUN IDEA. OR, AT LEAST, I THINK IT'LL BE FUN – BUT I KNOW I'M JUST A LAME OLD MOM.
YOU'RE NOT OLD, MOM. LOTS OF ACTRESSES WAY OLDER THAN YOU ARE ONLY, LIKE, HALF AS PRETTY. BUT I KNOW LOTS OF GUYS WHO'D STILL DO THEM.
UH, THANKS, HONEY.
WHAT'S YOUR IDEA?


WELL, I BROWSED AROUND AND PICKED OUT AN OUTFIT... BUT THEY HAVE A PRETTY GREAT SELECTION FOR TALL... PEOPLE... SO I THOUGHT IT'D BE FUN IF YOU THREE EACH PICK ONE OUT AND WE HAVE A LITTLE FASHION SHOW AND VOTE.
THAT WAY, WE'LL BE SURE TO NAIL THE BEST LOOK. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
it's just a phase


OKAY, GIRLS. THANK YOU FOR HELPING. I'M OKAY AT DRESSING MYSELF -- BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT'S IN FASHION THESE DAYS.
DON'T WORRY, MRS. PALMER. WE'VE GOT THIS COVERED.
THANK YOU, LAUREN. YOU'RE SO SWEET. ALL RIGHT, THIS OUTFIT WAS MY CHOICE. HONEY, ARE YOU READY TO SHOW US?
I... I GUESS.


I WAS GOING FOR SOMETHING CLASSIC AND CUTE, LIKE A GARDEN PARTY LOOK. WHAT DO YOU GIRLS THINK?
OH, IT'S DEFINITELY CUTE!
BUT?

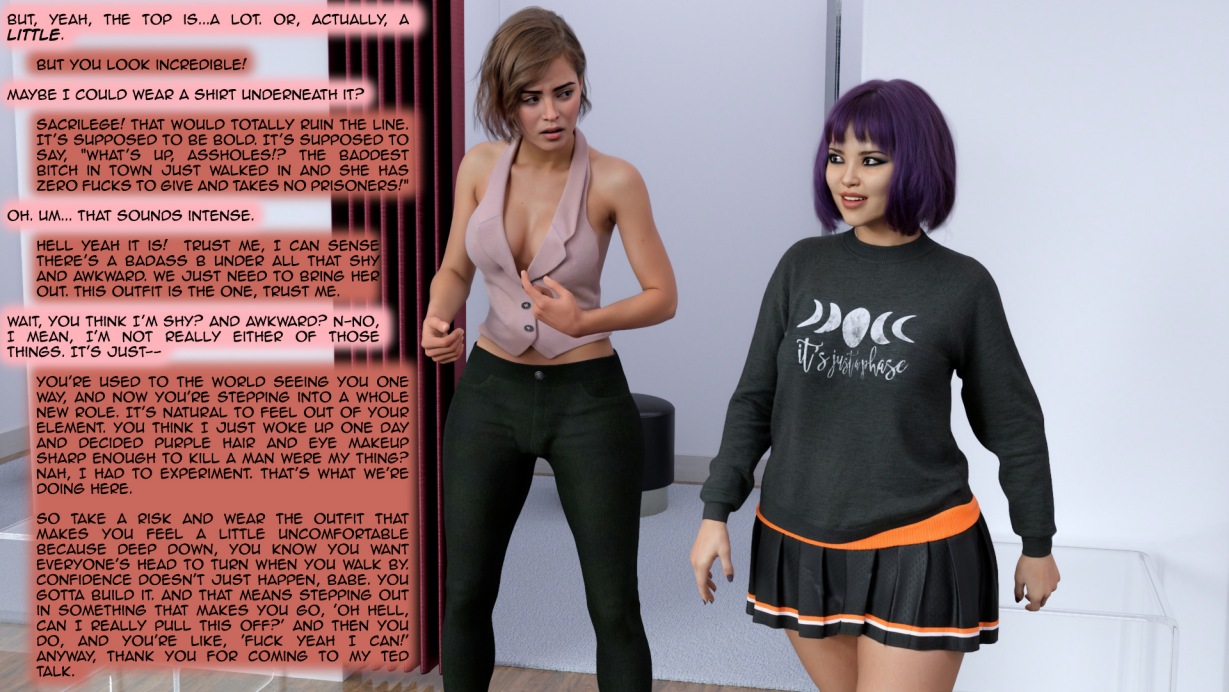

IT'S JUST... IT KIND OF SWALLOWS HER UP.
LAUREN'S RIGHT. IT DOESN'T DO JUSTICE TO HER AMAZING FIGURE. I MEAN, I'M CRAZY JEALOUS OF THAT WAIST-TO-HIP RATIO. LIKE, HOLY SHIT.
OH, THIS IS SO FUN! IT'S LIKE A FASHION SHOW IN THE MOVIES.


IT'S... NICE, I GUESS. COMFORTABLE. BUT, YEAH, JUST FEELS A BIT BIG. I MEAN, NOT THAT I WANT SOMETHING TOO TIGHT OR ANYTHING.
THAT'S WHY I CHOSE IT. I KNOW YOU'RE...NOT USED TO WEARING THIS SORT OF THING. OKAY, NEXT ONE THEN. LAUREN, YOU'RE UP.
OHMIGAWD, YAY! NIKKI, C'MERE.


TA-DA!
NOW THAT'S MORE LIKE IT! IT ACTUALLY SHOWS YOU HAVE A BODY UNDER THERE. AND THAT COLOR IS JUST AWESOME WITH YOUR COMPLEXION.
RIGHT? I KNEW IT WOULD LOOK AMAZING ON HER. WHAT DO YOU THINK, NIKKI?

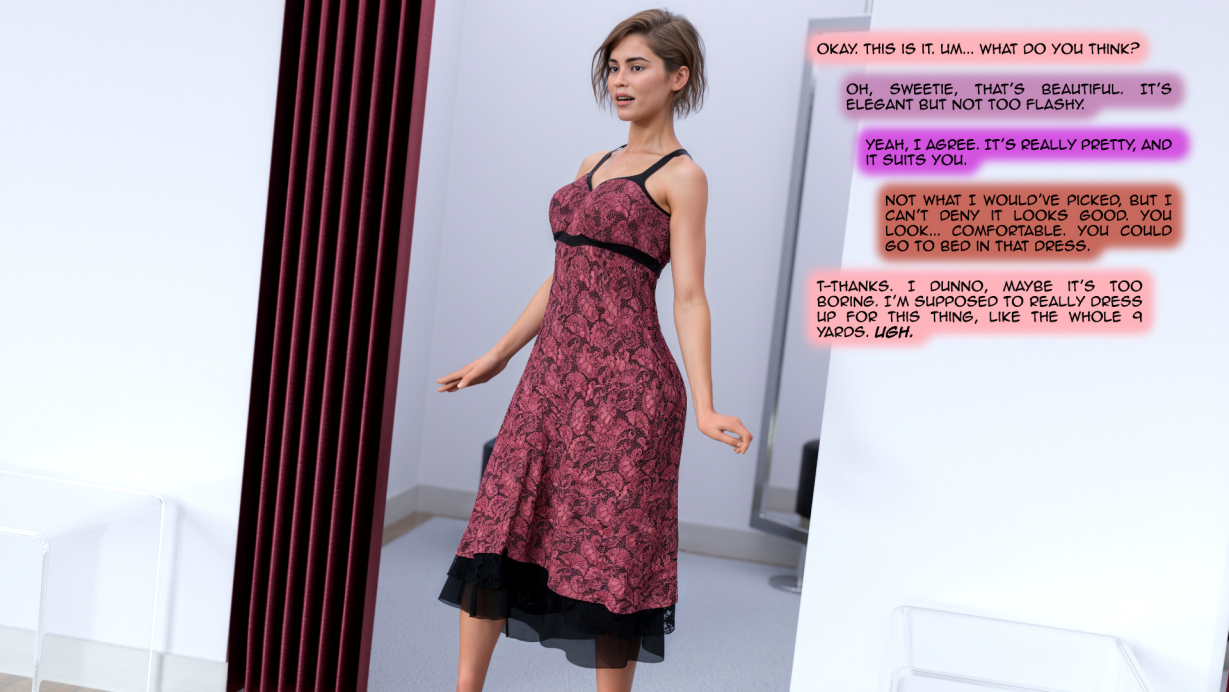

I DON'T LIKE HOW IT SHOWS OFF HOW SKINNY MY ARMS HAVE GOTTEN. I MEAN, I USED TO HAVE MUSCLES.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU DON'T HAVE MUSCLES? THEN WHAT AM I FEELING?
WELL, THEY USED TO BE A LOT BIGGER.
NOBODY WILL BE LOOKING AT YOUR ARMS IF YOU'RE WEARING A DRESS LIKE THAT.
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, LAUREN. OKAY, OKAY! MY TURN!


THAT TOP IS VERY... TRENDY, EVIE.
THANKS, MRS. PALMER! PLUS, THESE JEANS MAKE HER BUTT LOOK EPIC. I MEAN, LOOK AT THAT SHAPE. IT'D BE A CRIME AGAINST NATURE, AGAINST ALL THINGS HOLY, TO HIDE THAT IN A LOOSE DRESS. I WILL DIE ON THIS HILL. ACTUALLY, ON THESE TWO HILLS.
NIKKI, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THE JEANS ARE... FINE. I LIKE THAT THEY'RE PANTS. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I COULD PICK PANTS!
it's just a phase


BUT, YEAH, THE TOP IS...A LOT. OR, ACTUALLY, A *LITTLE*.
BUT YOU LOOK INCREDIBLE!
MAYBE I COULD WEAR A SHIRT UNDERNEATH IT?
SACRILEGE! THAT WOULD TOTALLY RUIN THE LINE. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE BOLD. IT'S SUPPOSED TO SAY, "WHAT'S UP, ASSHOLES!? THE BADDEST BITCH IN TOWN JUST WALKED IN AND SHE HAS ZERO FUCKS TO GIVE AND TAKES NO PRISONERS!"
OH. UM... THAT SOUNDS INTENSE.
HELL YEAH IT IS! TRUST ME, I CAN SENSE THERE'S A BADASS B UNDER ALL THAT SHY AND AWKWARD. WE JUST NEED TO BRING HER OUT. THIS OUTFIT IS THE ONE, TRUST ME.
WAIT, YOU THINK I'M SHY? AND AWKWARD? N-NO, I MEAN, I'M NOT REALLY EITHER OF THOSE THINGS. IT'S JUST--
YOU'RE USED TO THE WORLD SEEING YOU ONE WAY, AND NOW YOU'RE STEPPING INTO A WHOLE NEW ROLE. IT'S NATURAL TO FEEL OUT OF YOUR ELEMENT. YOU THINK I JUST WOKE UP ONE DAY AND DECIDED PURPLE HAIR AND EYE MAKEUP SHARP ENOUGH TO KILL A MAN WERE MY THING? NAH, I HAD TO EXPERIMENT. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE.
SO TAKE A RISK AND WEAR THE OUTFIT THAT MAKES YOU FEEL A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE BECAUSE DEEP DOWN, YOU KNOW YOU WANT EVERYONE'S HEAD TO TURN WHEN YOU WALK BY. CONFIDENCE DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN, BABE. YOU GOTTA BUILD IT. AND THAT MEANS STEPPING OUT IN SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU GO, 'OH HELL, CAN I REALLY PULL THIS OFF?' AND THEN YOU DO, AND YOU'RE LIKE, 'FUCK YEAH I CAN!' ANYWAY, THANK YOU FOR COMING TO MY TED TALK.
it's just a phase


MOM, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WELL, IT'D CERTAINLY BE TOO RISQUÉ FOR ME! BUT YOU'RE YOUNG. ANYWAY, WHAT I THINK DOESN'T MATTER AS MUCH AS HOW YOU FEEL. IF YOU'RE NOT COMFORTABLE, THAT'S OKAY. WE CAN KEEP LOOKING UNTIL WE FIND SOMETHING THAT FEELS RIGHT FOR YOU.
I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL EVER FEEL TOTALLY COMFORTABLE IN ANY OF THIS STUFF. BUT... I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE EVIE'S RIGHT. TRYING TO HIDE IN SOMETHING LOOSE, TO KEEP EVERYTHING COVERED UP... IT'S NOT REALLY WORKING. I DON'T FEEL LIKE MYSELF EITHER WAY.
HONEY, AS A WOMAN OF A CERTAIN AGE, I CAN TELL YOU THAT BODIES ARE ALWAYS CHANGING. YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE ME, BUT IN MY MIND I'M STILL 19-YEAR-OLD MISS TEXAS, EVEN IF THE MIRROR TELLS A DIFFERENT STORY. MY BODY ISN'T THE SAME AS IT WAS BACK THEN, AND I'VE HAD TO LEARN TO DRESS FOR THE PERSON I AM NOW, NOT THE PERSON I WAS.


YOU'RE STILL SUPER PRETTY.
THANK YOU, HONEY.
BUT THAT'S JUST IT, MOM. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO I AM RIGHT NOW. I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN TURNED INTO CLAY, ALL...MOLDABLE.
AND THAT'S OKAY. IT'S OKAY TO BE FIGURING THINGS OUT. WE ALL ARE, TO SOME EXTENT. BUT HIDING WON'T HELP YOU FIND THE ANSWERS. ANYWAY, I'M VERY EAGER TO SEE *YOUR* SELECTION NOW.
O-OKAY. NOBODY LAUGH!
YOU'RE GONNA LOOK AMAZING IN ANYTHING. WELL, EVERYTHING BUT THAT LAME DEADPOOL SHIRT YOU CAME HERE IN.
THANKS, EVIE. DID WE REALLY JUST MEET? I FEEL LIKE YOU'VE BEEN TORTURING ME FOR YEARS.
I HAVE THAT EFFECT ON PEOPLE. NOW GO PUT ON YOUR DRESS, SUPERSTAR.


OKAY. THIS IS IT. UM... WHAT DO YOU THINK?
OH, SWEETIE, THAT'S BEAUTIFUL. IT'S ELEGANT BUT NOT TOO FLASHY.
YEAH, I AGREE. IT'S REALLY PRETTY, AND IT SUITS YOU.
NOT WHAT I WOULD'VE PICKED, BUT I CAN'T DENY IT LOOKS GOOD. YOU LOOK... COMFORTABLE. YOU COULD GO TO BED IN THAT DRESS.
T-THANKS. I DUNNO, MAYBE IT'S TOO BORING. I'M SUPPOSED TO REALLY DRESS UP FOR THIS THING, LIKE THE WHOLE 9 YARDS. UGH.


SHUT THE FRONT DOOR! THIS IS FOR A SPECIFIC THING? LIKE AN EVENT? WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?
I JUST... DIDN'T THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT.
DIDN'T THINK -- NO! THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING! WE NEED TO KNOW THE VIBE OF THE EVENT! WHO'S GOING TO BE THERE, THE LOCATION, IS IT INDOOR OR OUTDOOR?? DETAILS!
I DON'T HAVE THE DETAILS YET.
WELL, YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT IT, DON'T YOU?


IT'S JUST DINNER. AT A NICE PLACE, I GUESS. JUST ME AND... SOMEONE ELSE.
WAIT, WAIT, WAIT. LIKE A DATE?
YEAH, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
OH. MY. F-ING. GOD. WITH WHO!?
I... I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT RIGHT NOW, LAUREN. OKAY?
OH. YEAH, OKAY, SURE.


HONEY, ARE YOU OKAY? YOU LOOKED LIKE YOU WERE ABOUT TO PASS OUT.
I'M... I'M FINE, MOM. JUST A LITTLE OVERWHELMED, THAT'S ALL.
YEAH, LAUREN HAS *THAT* EFFECT ON PEOPLE!
HEY! I'M JUST A CURIOUS GIRL.
NOT CURIOUS ENOUGH.



HEY, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHY YOU PICKED THIS DRESS?

I DUNNO. IT'S JUST A DRESS.

SURE, BUT THERE'S A HUNDRED DRESSES HERE, AND YOU CHOSE THIS ONE. THERE MUST BE A REASON.

OH. IT'S... IT'S GOING TO SOUND STUPID AND MAYBE A LITTLE GAY OR -- SHIT! SORRY, I'M TRYING TO BE BETTER ABOUT THAT. BUT, UH, HONESTLY... MOM, IT REMINDED ME OF THE DRESS YOU WORE IN YOUR LAST PAGEANT.

OH MY! THERE'S NO WAY YOU REMEMBER THAT. YOU WERE ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD.

I DO, THOUGH! DAD WAS FIGHTING IN THE WAR AND SO I WENT WITH YOU. EVERYONE WAS SO NICE TO ME, EVEN IN THE DRESSING ROOM.

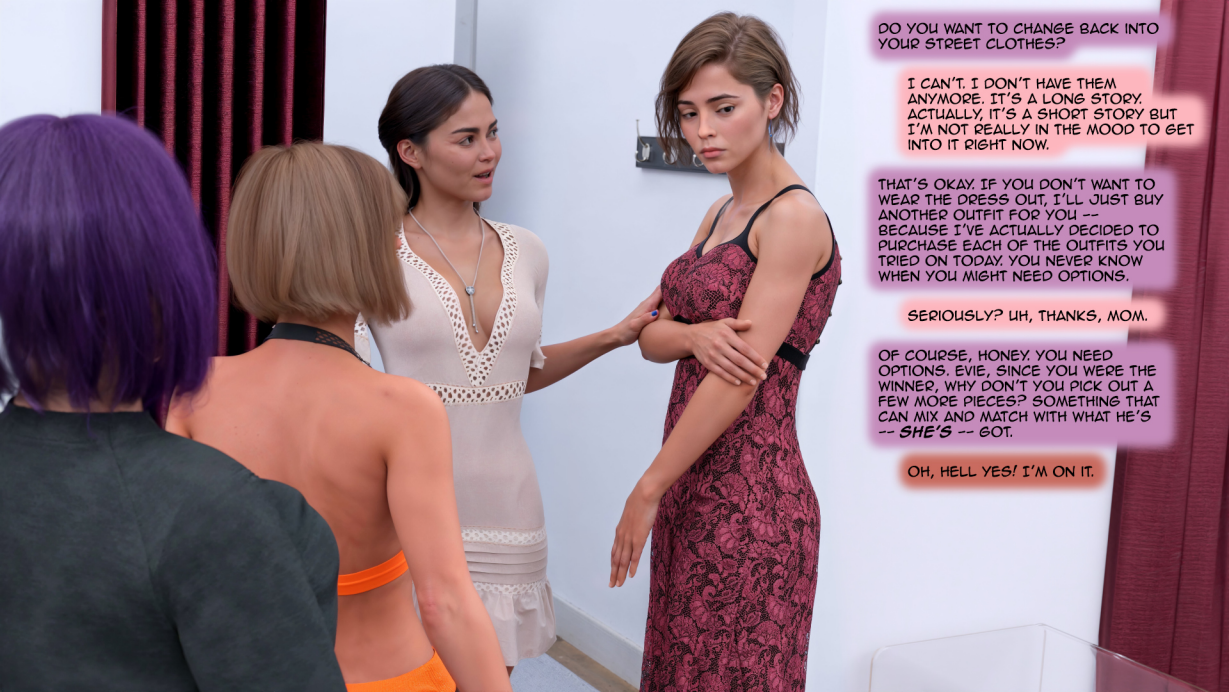
YES, WELL, WITH YOUR HAIR AND THOSE BIG BROWN EYES, YOU WERE QUITE THE CHARMER. THEY ALL THOUGHT YOU WERE THE CUTEST THING.

I REMEMBER FEELING REALLY PROUD. YOU LOOKED SO BEAUTIFUL, LIKE A QUEEN OR SOMETHING. SO, I FIGURED IF I HAVE TO WEAR A DRESS, I'LL WEAR ONE THAT THE BEST MOM IN THE WORLD WORE. OR AT LEAST, SOMETHING LIKE IT.


THAT'S THE SWEETEST THING I'VE EVER HEARD. YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE ME CRY.
HOLY CRAP, Y-YOU HAVE FEELINGS.
DON'T BE AN ASS, LAUREN.


WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE FOUND OUR WINNER.
ACTUALLY, UH, I... I THINK I'M CHOOSING EVIE'S OUTFIT. MAYBE IT'S TIME I STOP TRYING TO HIDE. I DON'T KNOW. I'LL AT LEAST TRY IT. IF I'M GOING TO DO THIS, I MIGHT AS WELL GO ALL OUT, RIGHT?
PLUS, SHE'S RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING -- I NEED TO FIND MY CONFIDENCE AGAIN. FEELING MEEK AND SCARED MAKES ME FEEL EVEN LESS LIKE MYSELF THAN ALL THE OTHER STUFF. SO, YEAH. LET'S DO IT. THE VEST AND JEANS.


MY SPEECH WORKED? MY SPEECHES NEVER WORK! THIS IS THE BEST DAY EVER!
EVIE, YOU ARE FERAL.
THAT'S THE NICEST THING ANYONE'S EVER SAID TO ME.

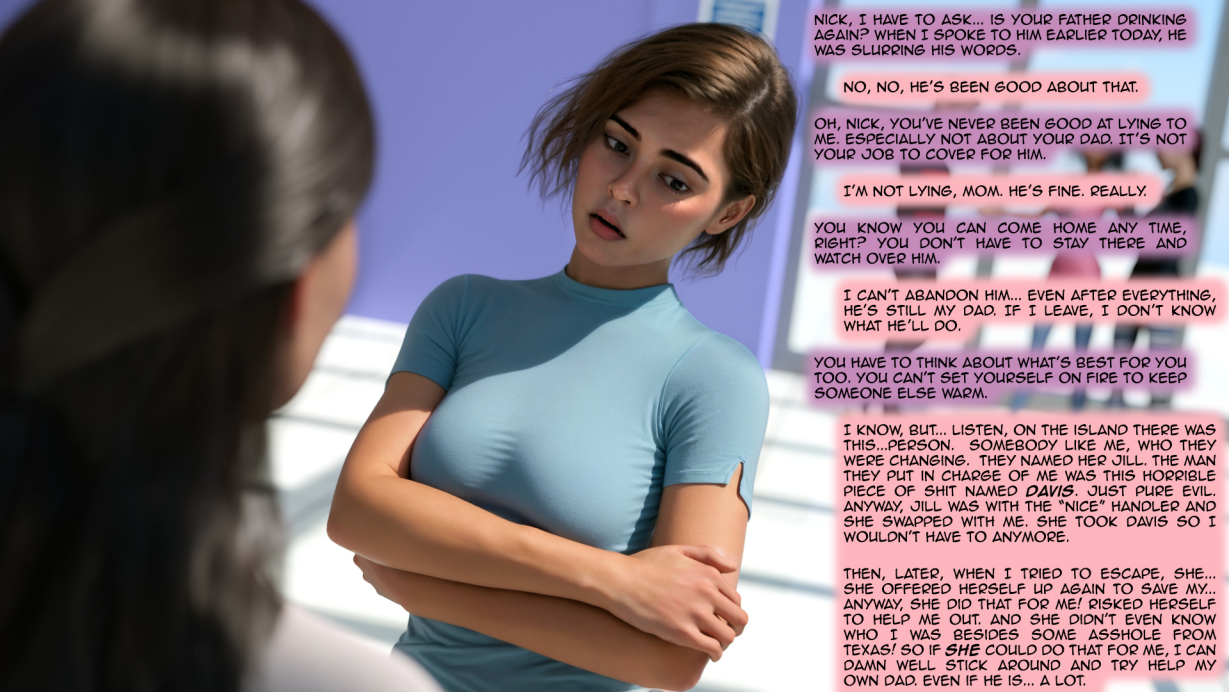

DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE BACK INTO YOUR STREET CLOTHES?
I CAN'T. I DON'T HAVE THEM ANYMORE. IT'S A LONG STORY. ACTUALLY, IT'S A SHORT STORY BUT I'M NOT REALLY IN THE MOOD TO GET INTO IT RIGHT NOW.
THAT'S OKAY. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO WEAR THE DRESS OUT, I'LL JUST BUY ANOTHER OUTFIT FOR YOU -- BECAUSE I'VE ACTUALLY DECIDED TO PURCHASE EACH OF THE OUTFITS YOU TRIED ON TODAY. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU MIGHT NEED OPTIONS.
SERIOUSLY? UH, THANKS, MOM.
OF COURSE, HONEY. YOU NEED OPTIONS. EVIE, SINCE YOU WERE THE WINNER, WHY DON'T YOU PICK OUT A FEW MORE PIECES? SOMETHING THAT CAN MIX AND MATCH WITH WHAT HE'S -- SHE'S -- GOT.
OH, HELL YES! I'M ON IT.


LOOK, NICK, I NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING IMPORTANT. UM, THE STORY YOUR MOM TOLD ME ABOUT THE HORMONE IMBALANCE CAUSING YOU TO GROW...
TITS?
YEAH. WAS THAT REAL? OR IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE GOING ON? WAS THIS ALL JUST A WEIRD ACCIDENT?
I... NO, IT'S NOT AN ACCIDENT. BUT I CAN'T REALLY TALK ABOUT IT YET. IT'S COMPLICATED AND THERE ARE THINGS YOU DON'T KNOW.


HORNETS
THINGS I DON'T KNOW? NICK, WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE WE WERE KIDS. YOU CAN TELL ME ANYTHING.
IT'S JUST... IT'S NOT SAFE TO TALK ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW. NOT HERE.
NOT SAFE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
PLEASE, JUST DROP IT FOR NOW, OKAY? I'LL EXPLAIN WHEN I CAN, I PROMISE.
OKAY, I'LL LET IT GO. BUT I'M HERE FOR YOU, ALRIGHT? I KNOW OUR BREAKUP WAS BAD, BUT I HOPE WE CAN MOVE PAST THAT. AND WHEN WE GET BACK TO ST. CHRISTOPHER'S IN A COUPLE WEEKS, I REALLY WILL DO LIKE I TOLD YOUR MOM AND MAKE SURE YOU MEET THE RIGHT, COOL PEOPLE. YOU'LL HAVE AN ENTIRE SQUAD OF CHEERLEADERS LOOKING OUT FOR YOU.
THANK YOU. FOR REAL. I'LL NEED ALL THE HELP I CAN GET.


GIRLS, I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR TODAY. YOU WERE SUCH A HUGE HELP!
IT WAS FUN! CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU AROUND SCHOOL, NIKKI. MAYBE I'LL SEDUCE YOU ONTO THE CHEER SQUAD LIKE LAUREN DID TO ME. WE COULD DEFINITELY USE SOMEONE WITH YOUR... ASSETS. BUT UNLIKE WITH LITTLE MISS BI-UNCURIOUS HERE, I'LL ACTUALLY MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE.
WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT I WANT TO --
EVIE!
OKAY, BYE!


NICK, THIS "DATE," IS IT WITH ZACH HUTCHINSON?
Y-YEAH. HIS FATHER IS MAKING ME GET ALL GIRLIFIED. ZACH IS SUPPOSED TO PICK A PLACE, PICK ME UP, ALL THAT STUFF. IT'S STUPID, BUT...
HONEY, THIS IS ***NOT OKAY***. YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU? YOU'RE NOT SOME...PAWN TO BE MOVED AROUND BY THESE MEN. YOU HAVE A SAY IN YOUR LIFE, EVEN IF IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE IT RIGHT NOW.
I KNOW, MOM. BUT RIGHT NOW, IT FEELS LIKE I DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE. ANYWAY, ZACH WON'T DO ANYTHING TO ME. HE'S TOO GAY! UM, I MEAN THAT ***LITERALLY***, NOT, LIKE, AS AN INSULT. HE'S JUST AS TRAPPED AS I AM, ACTUALLY.
ALL RIGHT, BUT WE CAN STILL GO TO THE POLICE! FOR GOD'S SAKE, THEY KIDNAPPED YOU, FORCED YOU INTO ALL OF THIS. WE CAN GET HELP. I CAN'T ***EVER*** FORGIVE YOUR FATHER FOR WHAT HE'S ALLOWED TO HAPPEN, BUT I CAN MAKE SURE YOU'RE SAFE. WE CAN FIGHT THIS.
MOM, IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. HUTCHINSON HAS A LOT OF POWER. THE...PLACE...THEY TOOK ME TO, IT'S NOT SOMETHING THE LOCAL POLICE CAN HANDLE. THERE ARE LITERAL BILLIONAIRES INVOLVED IN THIS CRAZY GLOBAL CONSPIRACY. GOING TO THE POLICE MIGHT JUST MAKE THINGS WORSE, FOR ALL OF US. I NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO DEAL WITH THIS THAT DOESN'T GET US ALL HURT OR KILLED.
AND DAD... HE'S IN DEEP WITH HUTCHINSON. IF WE DON'T PLAY ALONG, I'M NOT EVEN SURE HE'D END UP IN PRISON. THEY COULD TAKE HIM OUT, OR KIDNAP HIM LIKE THEY DID ME. I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN TO HIM, NO MATTER HOW ANGRY I AM. AND, TRUST ME, I'M ***VERY*** ANGRY.

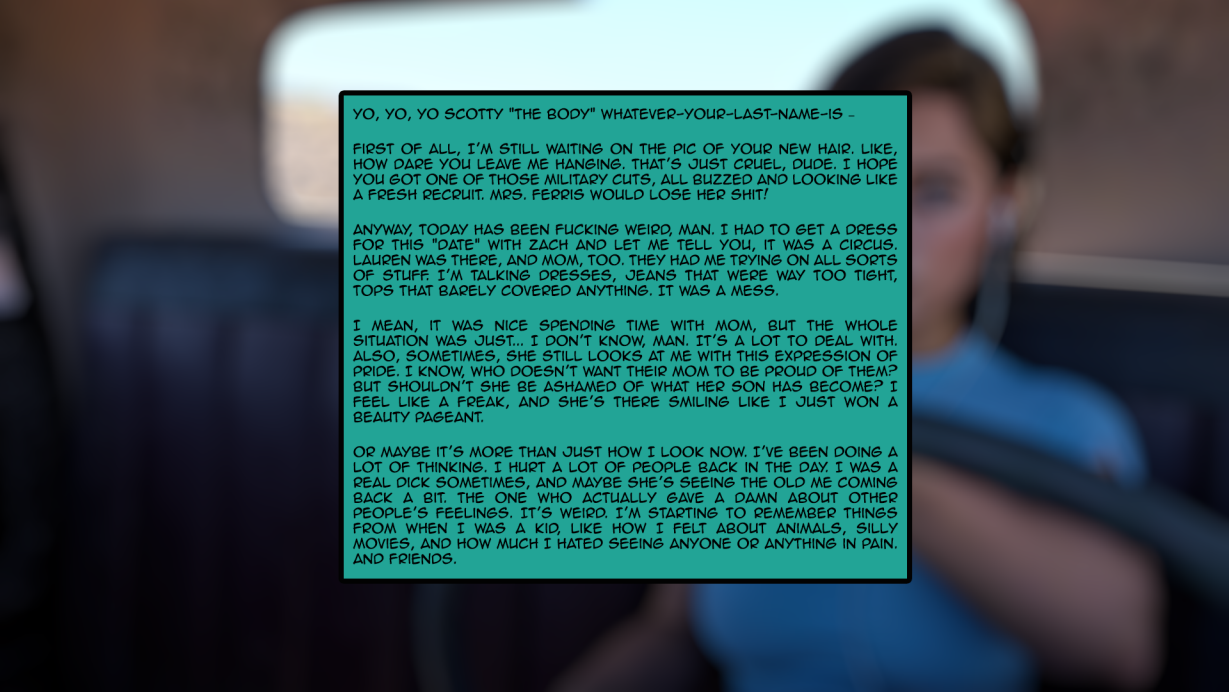

NICK, I HAVE TO ASK... IS YOUR FATHER DRINKING AGAIN? WHEN I SPOKE TO HIM EARLIER TODAY, HE WAS SLURRING HIS WORDS.
NO, NO, HE'S BEEN GOOD ABOUT THAT.
OH, NICK, YOU'VE NEVER BEEN GOOD AT LYING TO ME. ESPECIALLY NOT ABOUT YOUR DAD. IT'S NOT YOUR JOB TO COVER FOR HIM.
I'M NOT LYING, MOM. HE'S FINE. REALLY.
YOU KNOW YOU CAN COME HOME ANY TIME, RIGHT? YOU DON'T HAVE TO STAY THERE AND WATCH OVER HIM.
I CAN'T ABANDON HIM... EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING, HE'S STILL MY DAD. IF I LEAVE, I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'LL DO.
YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU TOO. YOU CAN'T SET YOURSELF ON FIRE TO KEEP SOMEONE ELSE WARM.
I KNOW, BUT... LISTEN, ON THE ISLAND THERE WAS THIS...PERSON. SOMEBODY LIKE ME, WHO THEY WERE CHANGING. THEY NAMED HER JILL. THE MAN THEY PUT IN CHARGE OF ME WAS THIS HORRIBLE PIECE OF SHIT NAMED DAVIS. JUST PURE EVIL. ANYWAY, JILL WAS WITH THE "NICE" HANDLER AND SHE SWAPPED WITH ME. SHE TOOK DAVIS SO I WOULDN'T HAVE TO ANYMORE.
THEN, LATER, WHEN I TRIED TO ESCAPE, SHE... SHE OFFERED HERSELF UP AGAIN TO SAVE MY.. ANYWAY, SHE DID THAT FOR ME! RISKED HERSELF TO HELP ME OUT. AND SHE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHO I WAS BESIDES SOME ASSHOLE FROM TEXAS! SO IF SHE COULD DO THAT FOR ME, I CAN DAMN WELL STICK AROUND AND TRY HELP MY OWN DAD. EVEN IF HE IS... A LOT.

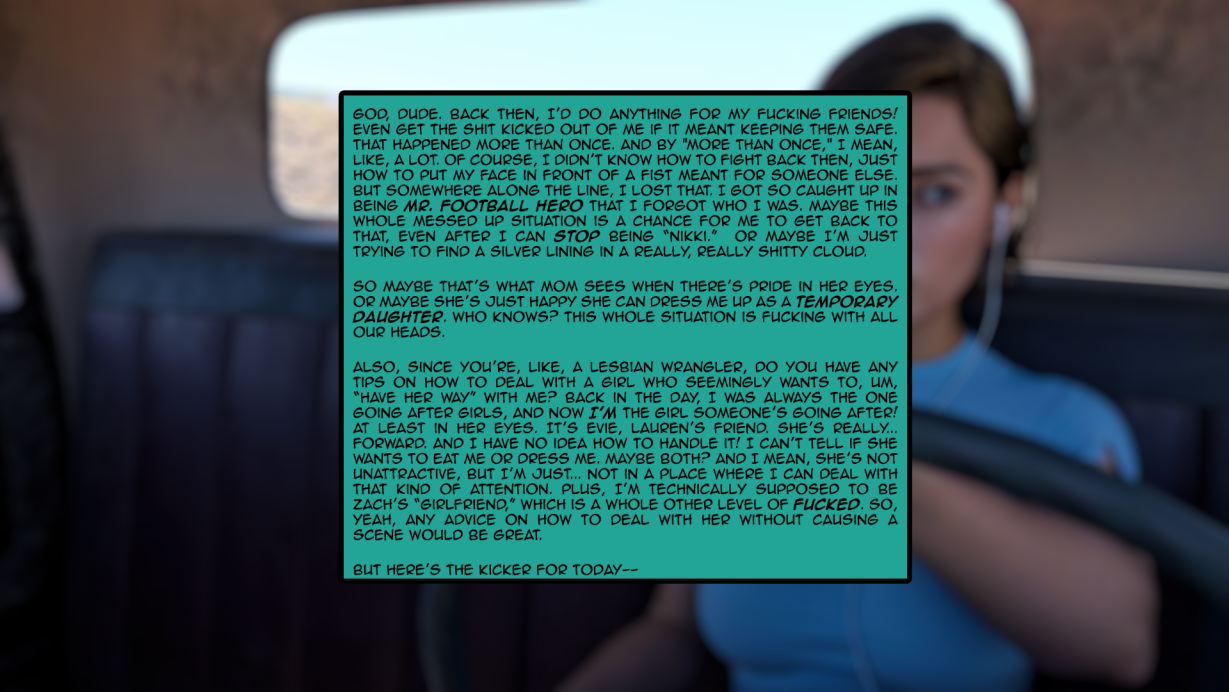

BUT I, UH, I WOULDN'T MIND DINNER BACK AT HOME A COUPLE OF NIGHTS A WEEK, AT LEAST UNTIL SCHOOL STARTS UP AGAIN. DAD HAS ME ON THIS ALL-MEAT DIET TO TRY AND GET MY TESTOSTERONE LEVELS UP, AND IT'S WRECKING MY STOMACH. LIKE, YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE MY POOPS, THEY'RE ACTUALLY --
OKAY, THAT'S MORE INFORMATION THAN I NEEDED. THAT'S NOT HEALTHY. YOU NEED A BALANCED DIET.
TELL THAT TO HIM! HE'S CONVINCED IT'S GOING TO 'FIX' EVERYTHING. SERIOUSLY, IF I HAVE TO EAT ONE MORE STEAK, I MIGHT TURN INTO A COW.
I'D ABSOLUTEY LOVE TO COOK FOR YOU. SEND ME A TEXT ANY NIGHT.
THANKS, MOM. YOU'RE THE FUCKING BEST. FOR REAL.


HEY, I LOVE YOU.
LOVE YOU, TOO. CALL ME IF YOU NEED ANYTHING. YOU'RE SO DAMN STRONG.
WE'LL FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS, NICK. I SWEAR TO GOD.


23 MILES AND 80 MPH LATER...
♫ FOR ONE OF THEM GIRLS
WHO LIKES TO ACT ALL QUIET
SEXY, NOT EVEN TRYIN'
YEAH, YOU KNOW I AIN'T LYIN', DAMN RIGHT
YOU ONE OF THEM GIRLS ♫
TEXAS
CH9-L960


OH, SHIT. NO, NO!
WOOP-WOOP!


YO, YO, YO SCOTTY "THE BODY" WHATEVER-YOUR-LAST-NAME-IS -
FIRST OF ALL, I'M STILL WAITING ON THE PIC OF YOUR NEW HAIR. LIKE, HOW DARE YOU LEAVE ME HANGING. THAT'S JUST CRUEL, DUDE. I HOPE YOU GOT ONE OF THOSE MILITARY CUTS, ALL BUZZED AND LOOKING LIKE A FRESH RECRUIT. MRS. FERRIS WOULD LOSE HER SHIT!
ANYWAY, TODAY HAS BEEN FUCKING WEIRD, MAN. I HAD TO GET A DRESS FOR THIS "DATE" WITH ZACH AND LET ME TELL YOU, IT WAS A CIRCUS. LAUREN WAS THERE, AND MOM, TOO. THEY HAD ME TRYING ON ALL SORTS OF STUFF. I'M TALKING DRESSES, JEANS THAT WERE WAY TOO TIGHT, TOPS THAT BARELY COVERED ANYTHING. IT WAS A MESS.
I MEAN, IT WAS NICE SPENDING TIME WITH MOM, BUT THE WHOLE SITUATION WAS JUST... I DON'T KNOW, MAN. IT'S A LOT TO DEAL WITH. ALSO, SOMETIMES, SHE STILL LOOKS AT ME WITH THIS EXPRESSION OF PRIDE. I KNOW, WHO DOESN'T WANT THEIR MOM TO BE PROUD OF THEM? BUT SHOULDN'T SHE BE ASHAMED OF WHAT HER SON HAS BECOME? I FEEL LIKE A FREAK, AND SHE'S THERE SMILING LIKE I JUST WON A BEAUTY PAGEANT.
OR MAYBE IT'S MORE THAN JUST HOW I LOOK NOW. I'VE BEEN DOING A LOT OF THINKING. I HURT A LOT OF PEOPLE BACK IN THE DAY. I WAS A REAL DICK SOMETIMES, AND MAYBE SHE'S SEEING THE OLD ME COMING BACK A BIT. THE ONE WHO ACTUALLY GAVE A DAMN ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S FEELINGS. IT'S WEIRD. I'M STARTING TO REMEMBER THINGS FROM WHEN I WAS A KID, LIKE HOW I FELT ABOUT ANIMALS, SILLY MOVIES, AND HOW MUCH I HATED SEEING ANYONE OR ANYTHING IN PAIN. AND FRIENDS.


GOD, DUDE. BACK THEN, I'D DO ANYTHING FOR MY FUCKING FRIENDS! EVEN GET THE SHIT KICKED OUT OF ME IF IT MEANT KEEPING THEM SAFE. THAT HAPPENED MORE THAN ONCE. AND BY "MORE THAN ONCE," I MEAN, LIKE, A LOT. OF COURSE, I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO FIGHT BACK THEN, JUST HOW TO PUT MY FACE IN FRONT OF A FIST MEANT FOR SOMEONE ELSE. BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, I LOST THAT. I GOT SO CAUGHT UP IN BEING MR. FOOTBALL HERO THAT I FORGOT WHO I WAS. MAYBE THIS WHOLE MESSED UP SITUATION IS A CHANCE FOR ME TO GET BACK TO THAT, EVEN AFTER I CAN STOP BEING "NIKKI." OR MAYBE I'M JUST TRYING TO FIND A SILVER LINING IN A REALLY, REALLY SHITTY CLOUD.
SO MAYBE THAT'S WHAT MOM SEES WHEN THERE'S PRIDE IN HER EYES. OR MAYBE SHE'S JUST HAPPY SHE CAN DRESS ME UP AS A TEMPORARY DAUGHTER. WHO KNOWS? THIS WHOLE SITUATION IS FUCKING WITH ALL OUR HEADS.
ALSO, SINCE YOU'RE, LIKE, A LESBIAN WRANGLER, DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH A GIRL WHO SEEMINGLY WANTS TO, UM, "HAVE HER WAY" WITH ME? BACK IN THE DAY, I WAS ALWAYS THE ONE GOING AFTER GIRLS, AND NOW I'M THE GIRL SOMEONE'S GOING AFTER! AT LEAST IN HER EYES. IT'S EVIE, LAUREN'S FRIEND. SHE'S REALLY.. FORWARD. AND I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO HANDLE IT! I CAN'T TELL IF SHE WANTS TO EAT ME OR DRESS ME. MAYBE BOTH? AND I MEAN, SHE'S NOT UNATTRACTIVE, BUT I'M JUST... NOT IN A PLACE WHERE I CAN DEAL WITH THAT KIND OF ATTENTION. PLUS, I'M TECHNICALLY SUPPOSED TO BE ZACH'S "GIRLFRIEND," WHICH IS A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL OF FUCKED. SO, YEAH, ANY ADVICE ON HOW TO DEAL WITH HER WITHOUT CAUSING A SCENE WOULD BE GREAT.
BUT HERE'S THE KICKER FOR TODAY--


I GOT PULLED OVER BY A SHERIFF ON THE WAY HOME! JUST MY LUCK, RIGHT? I WASN'T EVEN DOING ANYTHING WRONG! WELL, OKAY, I WAS SPEEDING A BIT, BUT NOTHING CRAZY. HE JUST CAME UP BEHIND ME WITH THE LIGHTS AND SIREN AND EVERYTHING. MY HEART WAS RACING.


NOW, BACK WHEN I WAS PLAYING FOOTBALL, I GOT PULLED OVER MORE THAN A FEW TIMES, AND IT WAS ALWAYS "OH, YOU'RE NICK PALMER! THE GREATEST QB IN THE GREATEST STATE OF TEXAS! GO ON, JUST SLOW IT DOWN, SON."
NOW IT'D BE, "WAIT, ***YOU'RE*** NICK PALMER? WHY IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU WEARING A DRESS? AND WHY IN GOD'S NAME DO YOU HAVE TITS? AND WHY IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU PRETTIER THAN MY DAUGHTER, WHO IS – FOR THE OFFICIAL COURT RECORD – ***VERY*** PRETTY?"



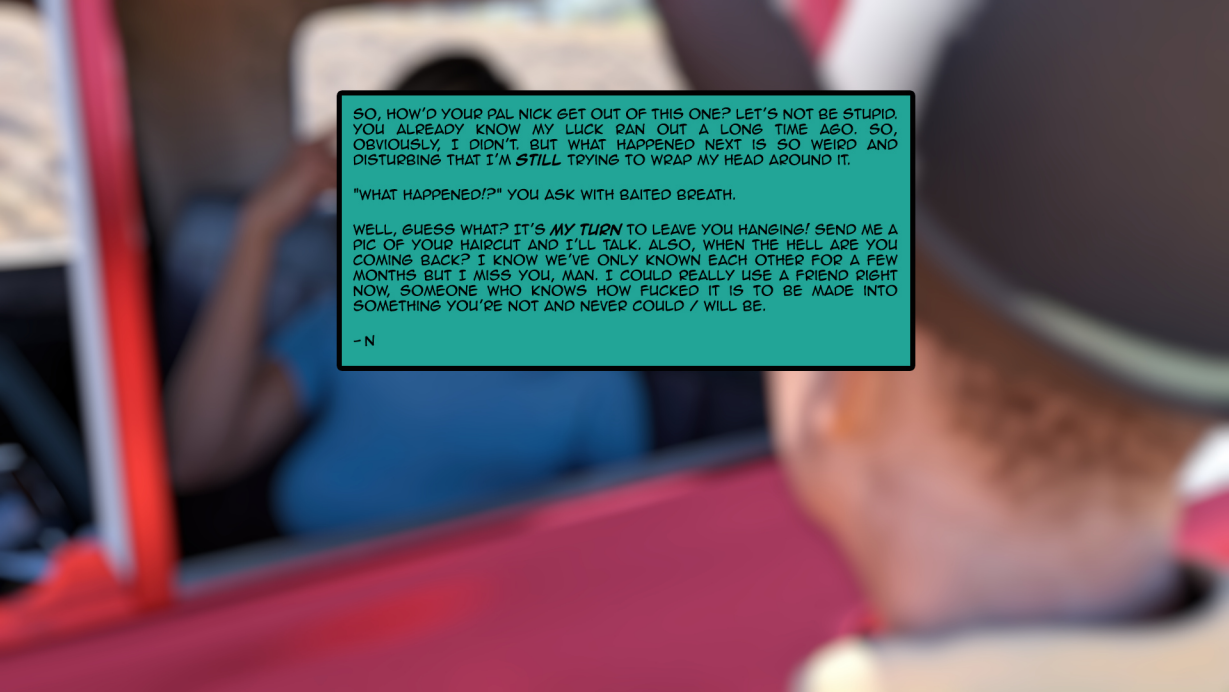
LIKE, AS SOON AS A SHERIFF KNEW WHO I WAS, IT'D BE ALL OVER TOWN BEFORE I COULD EVEN GET HOME. I SWEAR, MY LIFE FLASHED BEFORE MY EYES, MAN. AND NOT JUST MY OLD LIFE, BUT ALL THIS NEW CRAP TOO. IT WAS LIKE A HIGHLIGHT REEL OF MY PERSONAL NIGHTMARE.

IT'S FUNNY -- TELL ME IF YOU FEEL THIS WAY -- PEOPLE SEEING ME AS A GIRL IN PUBLIC IS ONLY HALF AS FUCKING MORTIFYING AS SOMEONE FROM MY OLD LIFE RECOGNIZING ME.

IT'S ONE THING TO ***BE*** A GIRL. I MEAN, AIN'T NOTHING WRONG WITH BEING A GIRL, OBVIOUSLY. IT'S JUST NOT WHAT I SIGNED UP FOR. BUT IT'S A WHOLE OTHER THING TO BE SEEN AS THIS... FREAK SHOW BY PEOPLE WHO KNEW ME BEFORE. THAT'S THE SHIT THAT KEEPS ME UP AT NIGHT.


GOOD AFTERNOON, MISS. I NEED TO SEE YOUR LICENSE AND REGISTRATION, IF YOU PLEASE.


OH, UM, RIGHT. OF COURSE, OFFICER.
DEPUTY.
HUH?
I'M A DEPUTY, NOT AN OFFICER. JUST A SMALL DIFFERENCE, BUT IT MATTERS TO US IN THE FORCE.
OH, UH, WELL SORRY ABOUT THAT, DEPUTY. SO, HERE'S THE THING...


SO, HOW'D YOUR PAL NICK GET OUT OF THIS ONE? LET'S NOT BE STUPID. YOU ALREADY KNOW MY LUCK RAN OUT A LONG TIME AGO. SO, OBVIOUSLY, I DIDN'T. BUT WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS SO WEIRD AND DISTURBING THAT I'M STILL TRYING TO WRAP MY HEAD AROUND IT.
"WHAT HAPPENED!?" YOU ASK WITH BAITED BREATH.
WELL, GUESS WHAT? IT'S MY TURN TO LEAVE YOU HANGING! SEND ME A PIC OF YOUR HAIRCUT AND I'LL TALK. ALSO, WHEN THE HELL ARE YOU COMING BACK? I KNOW WE'VE ONLY KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A FEW MONTHS BUT I MISS YOU, MAN. I COULD REALLY USE A FRIEND RIGHT NOW, SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HOW FUCKED IT IS TO BE MADE INTO SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT AND NEVER COULD / WILL BE.
– N