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GENDER-MIX COMIX
ARIEL 2.0
by CBlack


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01


Meet Alex Branson... a straight-A student who's just finished his senior year at one of the best private schools on the East Coast, doing what any normal teenager would be doing the evening after his last day of high school... cleaning up after making dinner for his mother and sister.
Slam!!


WELCOME HOME, MOTHER! HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
THE USUAL! *SNIFF!* WHAT'S THAT SMELL?
DINNER! ARIEL AND I ALREADY ATE BUT I HAVE A PLATE WARMING FOR YOU IN THE OVEN!
IN OTHER WORDS, I'LL BE EATING ALONE! HOW THOUGHTFUL OF YOU!


And his mother, *Mona Branson...* a prominent and very driven clinical psychologist at one of the city's largest hospitals. Her ex-husband, and father to her children, divorced her ten years ago, immediately remarried and subsequently died almost immediately thereafter from a heart attack.
WHERE IS YOUR SISTER ANYWAY?
IN HER ROOM! I *THINK* SHE'S PLANNING ON GOING OUT!
YOU KNOW, I *WAS* KIND OF HOPING I COULD GO OUT *TOO*... *AFTER* I FINISH *CLEANING UP*, OF COURSE!
DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH!


And Finally, Alex's fraternal twin sister, *Ariel...* a recent graduate of the same private school as Alex. Not exactly a straight-A student, but what she lacked in academic excellence she more than made up for in popularity.
HI, MOTHER! I *THOUGHT* I HEARD YOU COME IN!
HELLO, *DEAR!* WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO *TONIGHT?*
*SARAH'S!* SOME OF THE *GIRLS* ARE GETTING TOGETHER TO GO THROUGH OUR *YEARBOOKS* AND PLAN OUT OUR *LAST SUMMER* TOGETHER!


THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN, HONEY! DON'T STAY OUT TOO LATE AND DRIVE CAREFULLY IN THAT NEW GRADUATION GIFT OF YOURS!
OH, I'M NOT DRIVING! ALICE IS OUT FRONT RIGHT NOW WAITING FOR ME!
BYE, MOTHER!
GOODBYE, DEAR!


MOTHER, ARE YOU SURE I CAN'T GO OUT WITH MY FRIENDS?
SCHOOL'S OUT AND ALL MY CHORES ARE DONE! WHY CAN'T I GO OUT, TOO?
*SIGH!* OH MY GOD, ALEX! WILL YOU STOP YOUR INCESSANT WHINING?


FIRST OFF, YOUR CHORES ARE NOT DONE! THOSE DISHES MY DINNER IS ON WON'T CLEAN THEMSELVES!
SECOND, SOMEONE NEEDS TO STAY AWAKE IN CASE ARIEL NEEDS A RIDE HOME LATER, AND I'M GOING TO BED RIGHT AFTER DINNER!
AND THIRD, I'M NOT CONVINCED YOU REALLY HAVE ANY FRIENDS! I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM! I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT YOU'RE LYING ABOUT THE WHOLE THING JUST TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AND GET INTO TROUBLE!

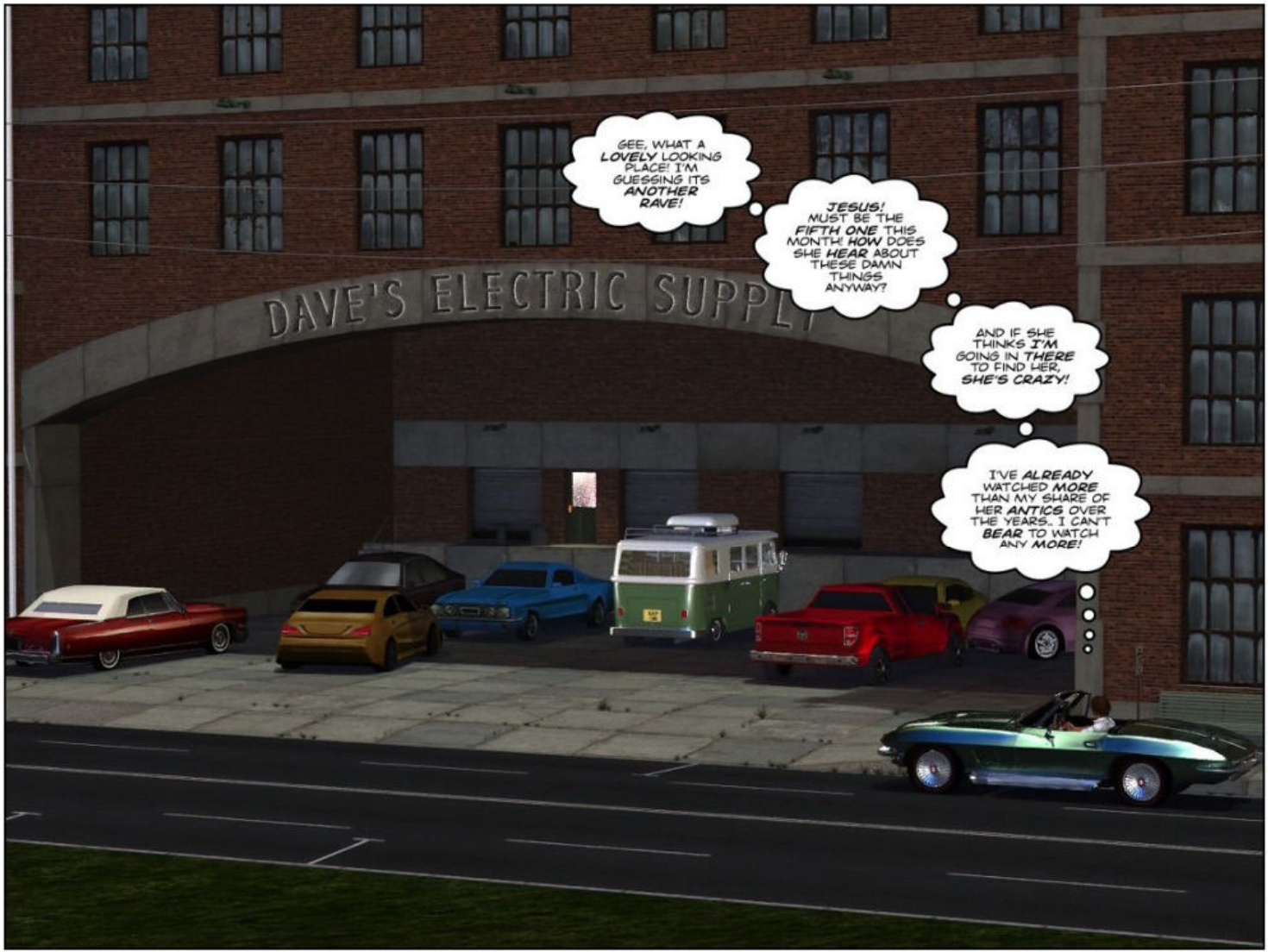

BUT YOU WON'T LET ME INVITE ANY OF MY FRIENDS OVER! THAT'S WHY YOU'VE NEVER...
DON'T YOU DARE ARGUE WITH ME, YOUNG MAN! MY DECISION IS FINAL!


"SIGH". YES, MOTHER. WHATEVER YOU SAY, MOTHER.


Several hours later...
YES, MOTHER! OF COURSE SOMEONE HAS TO PICK ARIEL UP WHEN SHE NEEDS A RIDE HOME, AND AS USUAL, IT'S ME!


MAYBE IF YOU WERE OUT HERE IN THIS PART OF TOWN AT 2 AM AND COULD SEE WHAT ARIEL REALLY DOES ON THESE "NIGHTS OUT WITH THE GIRLS", YOU'D FINALLY BE ABLE TO SEE THROUGH THAT BOGUS GOOD GIRL FACADE SHE'S PERFECTED!
"SIGH!". BUT THAT'S NOT LIKELY TO HAPPEN ANYTIME SOON! THAT SISTER OF MINE HAS GOT MOTHER WRAPPED AROUND HER LITTLE FINGER!


I CAN'T COMPLAIN ***TOO*** MUCH, THOUGH! AT LEAST IT GIVES ***ME*** A CHANCE TO DRIVE THIS ***AWESOME NEW CAR*** MOTHER BOUGHT ARIEL AS A GRADUATION GIFT!
TOO BAD SHE COULDN'T GET ***ME*** ONE AS WELL, BUT MOTHER COULDN'T AFFORD ***TWO*** OF THESE BABIES, AND ARIEL ***IS*** OLDER... IF ONLY BY ***25 MINUTES!*** AND ARIEL HAS A ***MUCH*** MORE ACTIVE ***SOCIAL LIFE*** THAN ***I*** COULD EVER ***HOPE*** TO HAVE, SO I GUESS IT MAKES ***SENSE*** THAT ***SHE*** GOT THE CAR!
BUT IF ***SHE*** KEEPS TREATING ***ME*** AS HER OWN ***PERSONAL DRIVER,*** THE WAY SHE HAS THE LAST TWO YEARS, ***I'M*** LIKELY TO END UP DRIVING IT ***MORE*** THAN SHE ***EVER*** WILL! HEH-HEH!


GEE, WHAT A LOVELY LOOKING PLACE! I'M GUESSING ITS ANOTHER RAVE!
JESUS! MUST BE THE FIFTH ONE THIS MONTH! HOW DOES SHE HEAR ABOUT THESE DAMN THINGS ANYWAY?
AND IF SHE THINKS I'M GOING IN THERE TO FIND HER, SHE'S CRAZY!
I'VE ALREADY WATCHED MORE THAN MY SHARE OF HER ANTICS OVER THE YEARS.. I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH ANY MORE!
DAVE'S ELECTRIC SUPPL


GOTTA GO, GUYS! LOOKS LIKE MY RIDE'S HERE!
NOT YET, BABY! ONE MORE TIME!
YEAH, C'MON, ARIEL! JUST ONE MORE ROUND! YOU KNOW YOU WANT IT!
MAYBE I DO! *GIGGLE!* BUT IT'S GONNA HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL NEXT TIME, BOYS!


HEY, LITTLE BROTHER! LOOKIN' GOOD BEHIND THE WHEEL! ALL YOU NEED IS A LITTLE CHAUFFER'S CAP AND YOU'LL BE ROCKIN' THE LOOK! *GIGGLE!*
OH MY GOD! I'VE SEEN HER IN SOME PRETTY RISQUÉ OUTFITS BEFORE, BUT THAT ONE'S GOT TO BE THE WORST!


SORRY I DIDN'T BRING A SECOND BEER FOR YOU, BUT I FIGURED YOU'D TURN IT DOWN LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO!
JUST GET IN, ARIEL... IT'S LATE!


I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE OUT DRESSED LIKE THAT! SURELY YOU'RE AWARE THAT YOU CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH THAT TOP!
HEY, I HAD ANOTHER TOP OVER THIS ONE EARLIER, BUT SPILLED A DAIQUIRI ALL OVER IT! MUST'VE LEFT IT SOAKING IN A SINK SOMEWHERE!
MUST BE A LITTLE CHILLY OUT TONIGHT, OR SO THE GIRLS TELL ME! *GIGGLE!*
NICE! VERY NICE!


OH, LIGHTEN UP, ALEX! YOU'RE SUCH A FUCKIN' WET BLANKET! SCHOOL'S OUT, AND IT'S TIME TO PAR-TAY! SO LET'S FIND SOME DECENT HEAD-BANGIN' TUNES AND SEE HOW MANY DECIBELS THE SOUND SYSTEM ON THIS BABY CAN CRANK OUT!
JESUS! KEEP IT DOWN, WILL YOU? IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND THE LAST THING WE NEED IS TO GET PULLED OVER WHILE YOU'RE IN THIS CONDITION!


OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE POLICE! I'VE HAD LOTS OF PRACTICE WITH GETTING OUT OF TICKETS! *GIGGLE!*
OF THAT I HAVE NO DOUBT, SO A DEMONSTRATION IS COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY!
AW, C'MON ALEX! SINCE WHEN IS A TEENAGE GUY AFRAID OF A PAIR OF THESE, HMMM?
YOU'RE MY SISTER, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, SO STOP IT ALREADY!


FINE! JESUS, WE COULD HAVE SOME FUN TOGETHER IF YOU HADN'T TURNED OUT TO BE SUCH A GODDAMN MAMA'S BOY!
WELL, IF RESPECTING THE WOMAN WHO RAISED ME AND NOT LYING TO HER FACE AND SNEAKING AROUND BEHIND HER BACK MAKES ME A MAMA'S BOY, THEN SO BE IT!
AND I'M SURE THERE ARE SIMILAR PHRASES TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO LIVES YOUR PARTICULAR LIFESTYLE!
OOOOOO... BURN!


I'M SORRY YOU DON'T APPROVE OF ME, DEAR BROTHER, BUT AT LEAST ALL THIS IS MY CHOICE... AND ON MY TERMS!
AND ONCE WE BOTH START COLLEGE IN THE FALL, THAT'LL GET A WHOLE HELL OF A LOT EASIER! EVEN THOUGH SHE'S FORCING US TO LIVE AT HOME THE FIRST YEAR, SHE'LL HAVE NO WAY TO KEEP TRACK OF THE STAGGERING NUMBER OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES I PLAN TO TAKE ON!
LET ME GUESS... ACTVITIES LIKE THE "PARTY EVERY MONDAY CLUB", AND THE "PARTY EVERY TUESDAY CLUB", ETCETERA, ETCETERA... AM I CLOSE?
YOU ALWAYS WERE THE SMART ONE, LITTLE BROTHER! *GIGGLE!*
AND IT'S NOT THAT I DISAPPROVE OF YOU, IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ACT THIS WAY! YOU NEVER USED TO BE LIKE THIS!


WE'RE BOTH JUST PRODUCTS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT, ALEX! SAME ENVIRONMENT BUT DIFFERENT PATHS CHOSEN!
MAYBE I WOULDN'T HAVE TURNED OUT "LIKE THIS" IF OUR FATHER HADN'T ABANDONED US AND DIED, OR IF OUR MOTHER WASN'T AN OVERBEARING, SMOTHERING SHREW OF A WOMAN!
OH PLEASE! SHE TREATS YOU LIKE A PRINCESS AND YOU KNOW IT!
SURE... BUT ONLY BECAUSE SHE THINKS I'M THE PRIM AND PROPER GIRL SHE WANTS ME TO BE!


BUT, YOU KNOW, PROBABLY THE BIGGEST FACTOR IN WHY I TURNED OUT THIS WAY IS YOU! SOMEONE WHO ALWAYS SIDES WITH MOMMY, SOMEONE WHO CAN'T DECIDE IF HE'S DISGUSTED BY ALL THE ATTENTION I GET OR SIMPLY JEALOUS! PUSHING YOUR BUTTONS IS ALWAYS SO MUCH FUN!
I... I'M NOT DISGUSTED BY YOU! OR JEALOUS! I SIMPLY WISH THAT I DIDN'T HAVE TO BE ANY PART OF IT TO SEE YOU DEBASE YOURSELF WITH ALL THESE GUYS OVER AND OVER AGAIN!
YOU'RE MY SISTER, FOR CRYING OUR LOUD! I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WATCH...


OOOOO! I LOVE THIS SONG! CRANK IT UP!
SHIT! WATCH YOUR BEER! IT'S SPILLING ALL OVER ME...

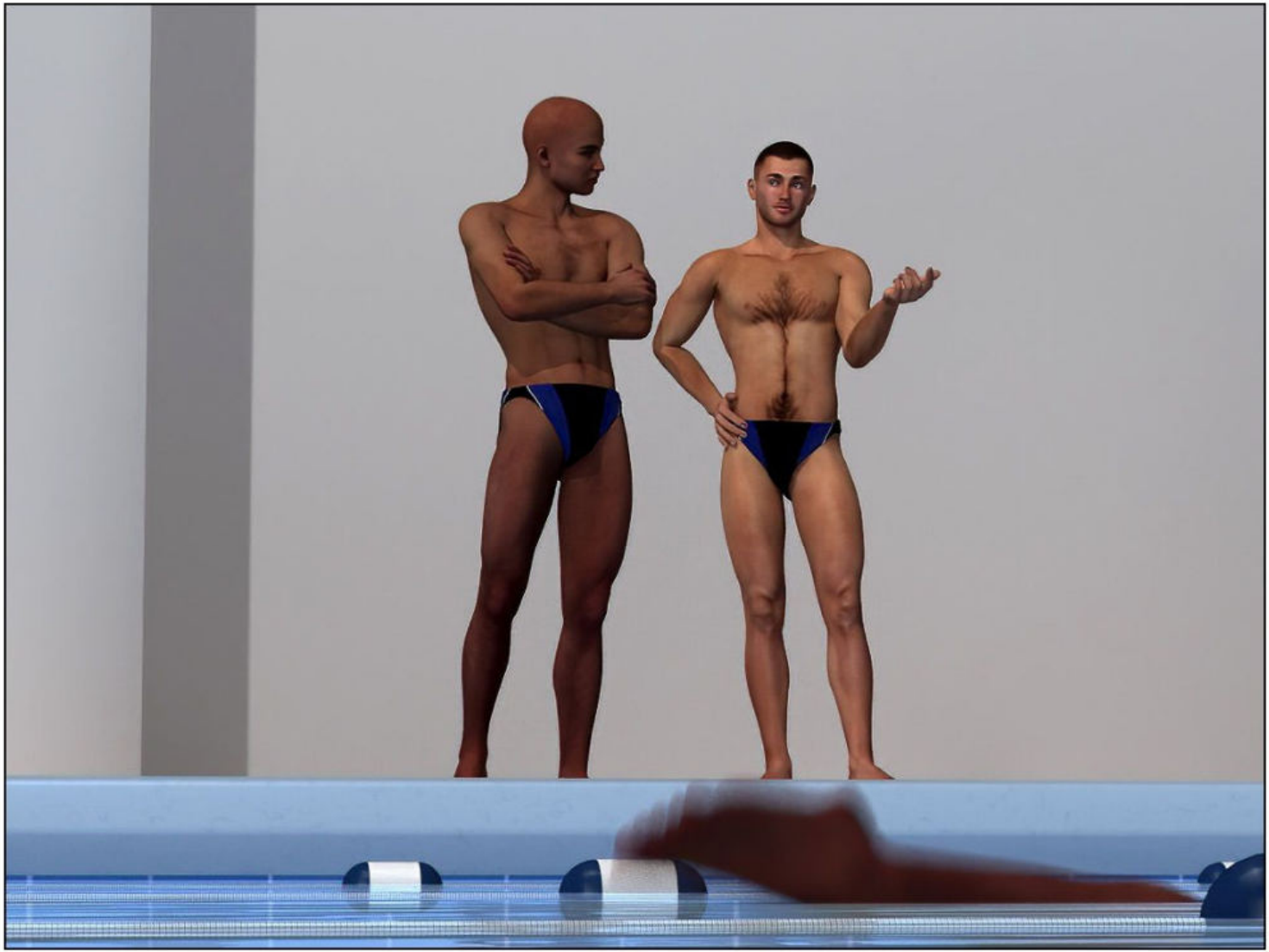

JESUS, ARIEL!
*GIGGLE!*
Honk Honk!!

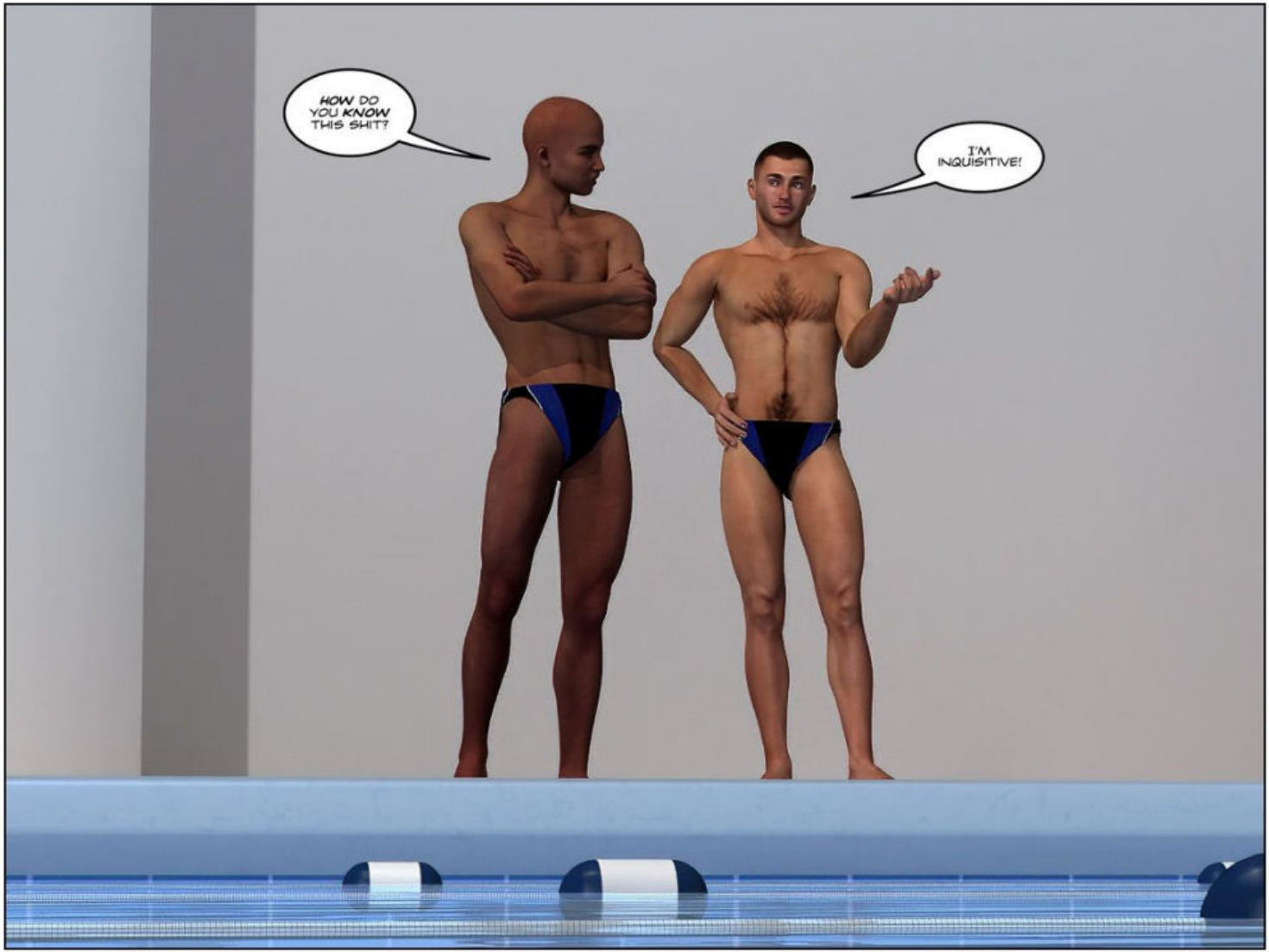

OH MY GOD!!!
Screech!!


Crash!!!

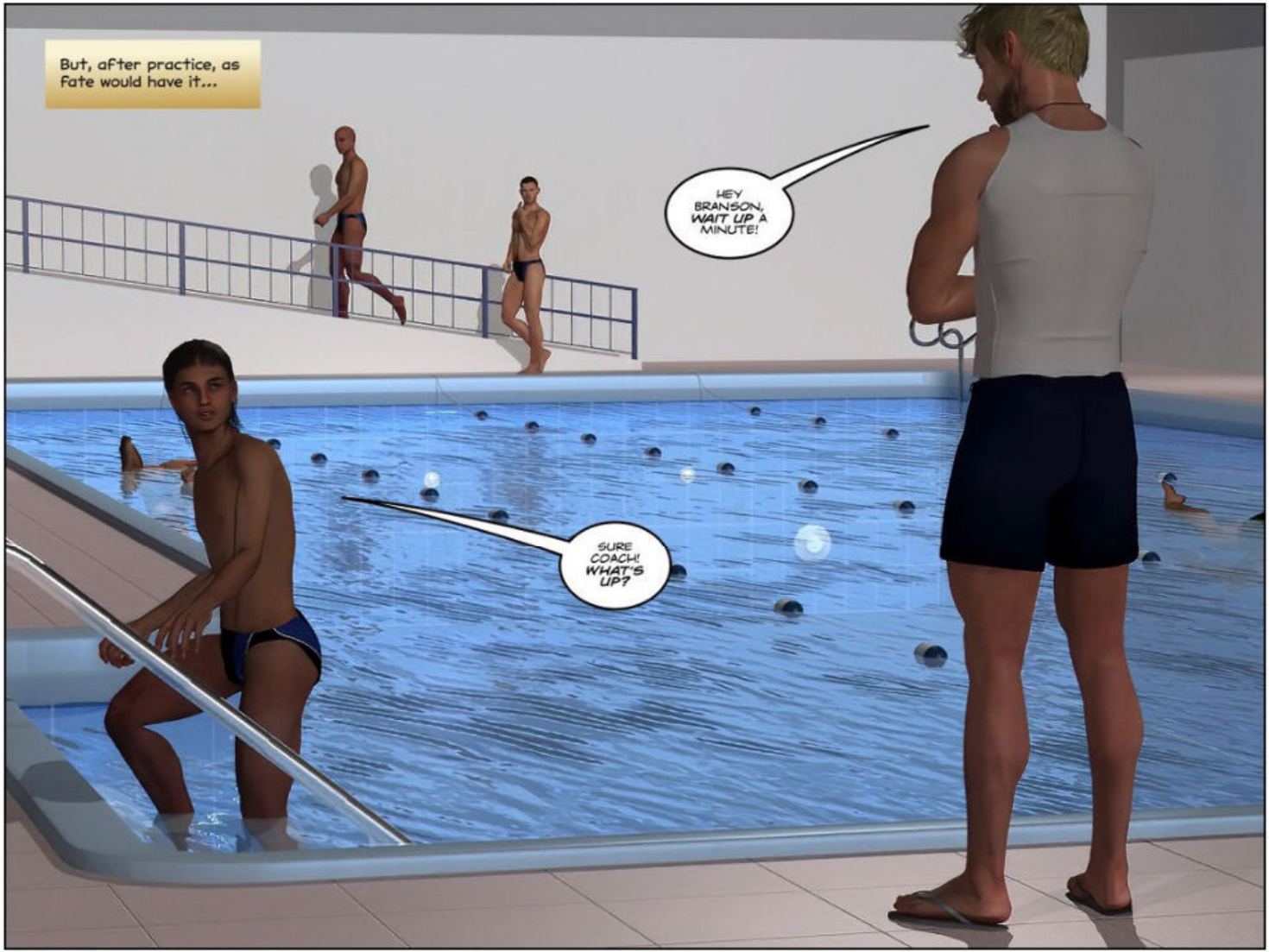

Three months later, as a new semester starts at Ahwatukee Community College, just south of Phoenix, Arizona...
...a new student is making his mark on the swim team.


OKAY, I DON'T KNOW WHO THAT KID IS, BUT ALREADY I DON'T LIKE HIM! HE'S FAST!
IT'S ALEX... SOMETHING! HE AND HIS MOM JUST MOVED HERE FROM BOSTON. DON'T KNOW WHY THEY MOVED! KID'S PRETTY QUIET AND KEEPS TO HIMSELF MOST OF THE TIME!
GUESS HE WAS SOME KIND OF SMART-ASS HOTSHOT AT ONE OF THOSE FANCY PRIVATE SCHOOLS BEFORE COMIN' HERE! STRAIGHT-A'S... LETTERS IN A COUPLE OF SPORTS... YOU KNOW, THE USUAL OVER-ACHIEVING BULLSHIT!




HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS SHIT?
I'M INQUISITIVE!


WELL, I'M GONNA KEEP AN EYE ON THIS ALEX SOMETHING! 'CAUSE BEIN' CAPTAIN OF THE SWIM TEAM PRACTICALLY GUARANTEES ME A FREE RIDE TO STATE NEXT YEAR, AND I'M NOT GONNA LET SOME NEW HOTSHOT SCREW THAT UP FOR ME!
YEAH!


But, after practice, as fate would have it...
HEY BRANSON, WAIT UP A MINUTE!
SURE COACH! WHAT'S UP?


I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FASTEST TIMES YOU DID BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL, BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT YOU JUST SHREDDED THE TIMES OF ALL OUR BEST SWIMMERS!
UMM... I'M SORRY?
DON'T BE! I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER TO FIND SOMEONE FAST ENOUGH TO REPLACE LLOYD OVER THERE AS CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM!
CAPTAIN? BUT I DIDN'T JOIN TO BECOME CAPTAIN, COACH! ESPECIALLY IF IT MEANS SOMEONE ELSE LOSES THE POSITION!


IT'S OUT OF MY HANDS, BRANSON! IT'S KIND OF A TEAM TRADITION FOR THE BEST OVERALL SWIMMER TO BECOME CAPTAIN!
I'VE BEEN STUCK WITH LLOYD AS CAPTAIN FOR TWO YEARS, AND BETWEEN YOU AND ME, HE'S PRETTY MUCH A SELF-CENTERED JERK, SO I'M MORE THAN HAPPY TO PASS THE BATON, SO TO SPEAK, ON TO YOU!
BUT COACH...


OH, DID I MENTION THAT FOURTEEN OF THE LAST FIFTEEN CAPTAINS OF THIS SWIM TEAM HAVE BEEN OFFERED FULL-RIDE SCHOLARSHIPS TO NEW MEXICO STATE AFTER GETTING THEIR FEET WET HERE AT ACC? SOMETIMES AFTER JUST ONE YEAR!
SOME EX-SWIMMING JOCK ALUMNI MADE IT RICH AND FAMOUS IN NEW MEXICO AND SET UP THE CONNECTION TO OUR PROGRAM YEARS AGO, SO... YEAH, WE GOT THAT!
AND IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING, NUMBER FIFTEEN DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL TO BECOME "RICH AND FAMOUS" AS A "SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER" OF ALL THINGS!
THE KID NOW WORKS AT A RADIO HUT AND LIVES IN HIS PARENTS' BASEMENT!
A... A SCHOLARSHIP? TO STATE? SERIOUSLY, COACH?


YOU BETCHA! LET IT SINK IN OVER THE WEEKEND BECAUSE I'M ANNOUNCING IT TO THE TEAM ON MONDAY!
I... I'LL DO MY BEST FOR YOU, COACH! AND... THANK YOU!


NO... THANK YOU, BRANSON! AND HAVE A GOOD WEEKEND!
THAT REMINDS ME... GOTTA REMEMBER TO TELL BUD HE CAN'T PAY RENT IN RADIO HUT GIFT CARDS ANYMORE!


ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?! HE'S MAKING THAT LITTLE TWERP CAPTAIN INSTEAD OF ME?! I DON'T FUCKIN' BELIEVE IT!!
BELIEVE IT, MAN! I WAS RIGHT THERE AND HEARD EVERY WORD!


THAT'S MY POSITION! MY GODDAMN SCHOLARSHIP! I'M NOT GONNA LET HIM TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME!
I KNOW IT SUCKS, DUDE, BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO? HE'S FASTER THAN YOU, SO UNLESS THE KID LEAVES THE TEAM, THE COACH'LL MAKE SURE HE'S CAPTAIN!


WELL THEN, MAYBE I NEED TO FIND A WAY TO GET HIM OFF THE TEAM!
CAREFUL, DUDE! AFTER LAST YEAR'S EPISODES, YOU'RE ALREADY SKATING ON THIN ICE WITH THE ADMINS! IF THEY GET A WHIFF OF YOU HARASSING OR BULLYING THIS KID, YOU MIGHT FIND YOURSELF SUSPENDED... OR WORSE!
HELL, I'M NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO DO IT MYSELF! BUT I THINK I KNOW JUST THE GUY WHO MIGHT DO IT FOR ME!
REALLY? WHO?


REMEMBER LENNY DAUGHERTY?
YOU MEAN THAT GUY THAT GOT EXPELLED TWO YEARS AGO FROM NEW MEXICO STATE FOR DEALING? MAN, I HEAR HE'S A WASTED CRACK-HEAD NOW!
YEAH! HE'S BACK IN TOWN AND WILL DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING FOR A BUCK! AND DO YOU KNOW WHO IT WAS THAT NARCED ON HIM?
HOLY SHIT! IS THE STORY THAT IT WAS COACH TRUE?
DAMN STRAIGHT! SO IF LENNY KNOWS THIS IS ALL TO FUCK UP THE COACH'S PLANS, HE MIGHT EVEN DO IT FOR FREE! HEH-HEH!


OH, YEAH!! IF THINGS GO THE WAY I WANT, COACH'S LITTLE ANNOUNCEMENT ON MONDAY WILL BE A WHOLE LOT DIFFERENT THAN WHAT'S HE'S PLANNING!


A couple of hours later...








*SIGH!* SO MUCH FOR MY QUIET GLASS OF WINE BY THE POOL! I KNOW I BOUGHT THIS PLACE SO HE'D SPEND MORE TIME OUTSIDE AT THE POOL THAN INSIDE, BUT THIS IS ALMOST GETTING OBSESSIVE WITH HIM!
IF ONLY HE'D TAKEN THAT DAMN SCHOLARSHIP AT PRINCEFORD! THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE HIM AROUND HERE AT ALL!


BUT NO... HE HAD TO TURN IT DOWN SO HE COULD STAY CLOSE TO HIS GRIEVING MOTHER! OR AT LEAST THAT WAS THE SORRY EXCUSE HE GAVE THE RECRUITERS!
I COULD'VE KILLED THE KID WHEN HE FINALLY TOLD ME!


I WANTED TO GET A FRESH START AFTER ARIEL DIED, BUT THE STUBBORN TWERP INSISTED ON FOLOWING ME ALL THE WAY ACROSS THE COUNTRY!
GOD! WHY CAN'T HE GET IT THROUGH HIS THICK SKULL THAT I DON'T WANT HIM AROUND?


"SIGH!" SPEAK OF THE DEVIL.
MOTHER! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HOME!
JUST GOT BACK A FEW MINUTES AGO. I DIDN'T WANT TO INTERRUPT YOUR PRACTICE.
WELL, I HAVE SOME GREAT NEWS!
WONDERFUL. I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR ALL ABOUT IT.


COACH MILLER IS GOING TO MAKE ME CAPTAIN OF THE SWIM TEAM!
THAT'S MARVELOUS, ALEX. DOES THAT MEAN YOU'LL BE SPENDING MORE TIME AT PRACTICES?
NO, BUT HE ALSO TOLD ME THAT BEING CAPTAIN PRACTICALLY GUARANTEES ME A SCHOLARSHIP TO NEW MEXICO STATE NEXT YEAR!
A FULL RIDE SCHOLARSHIP, MOTHER! AT ONE OF THE BEST PROGRAMS IN THE COUNTRY! ISN'T THAT AMAZING?


IT MAY NOT BE A HALF CONTINENT AWAY AS I'D ORIGINALLY HOPED, BUT A 300 MILE SEPARATION IS BETTER THAN NOTHING!
WHY THAT IS WONDERFUL NEWS, ALEX! SIMPLY WONDERFUL!


Later that evening...
MOTHER, CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION?
"SIGH!" I SUPPOSE. WHAT IS IT?


I ENROLLED IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE THIS YEAR SO I COULD STAY CLOSE AND GIVE YOU THE SUPPORT YOU NEED, BUT I WORRY HOW YOU'RE GOING TO DO WITHOUT ME IF I GO OFF TO NEW MEXICO!
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE I'M SAYING YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF YOU, BUT...
REALLY? YOU'RE NOT? BECAUSE IT SURE SOUNDS LIKE IT TO ME!


NO, MOTHER! I JUST...
OF COURSE I'M NOT DOING WELL! YOU MAY HAVE LOST YOUR SISTER, BUT YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW DEVASTATING IT IS TO LOSE A CHILD! IT'S THE WORST TRAGEDY SOMEONE COULD EVER GO THROUGH!
I COULDN'T STAY IN BOSTON, WHERE I WAS SURROUNDED BY MEMORIES OF ARIEL EVERYWHERE I WENT, HAUNTED BY ALL THE PLACES AND THINGS SHE LOVED... AS SHE WAS PREPARING FOR A LIFE SHE'D NEVER EVER GET TO LIVE!
OF COURSE I'M A WRECK... BECAUSE I'M COMPLETELY DEVASTATED! THIS IS THE KIND OF LOSS YOU NEVER GET OVER!


PLEASE, MOTHER! I DIDN'T MEAN TO...
CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT YOU DON'T SEEM TO BE DOING TOO BADLY! OUR MOVE TO ARIZONA HAS WORKED OUT PRETTY WELL FOR YOU, HASN'T IT?
CAPTAIN OF THE SWIM TEAM... SCHOLARSHIP TO AN EXCELLENT COLLEGE! OPPORTUNITIES YOUR SISTER WILL NEVER HAVE!
CHILL BURST
Laugh a lot


ALL BECAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT! THE ACCIDENT THAT TOOK MY BABY FROM ME! THE ACCIDENT YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR!

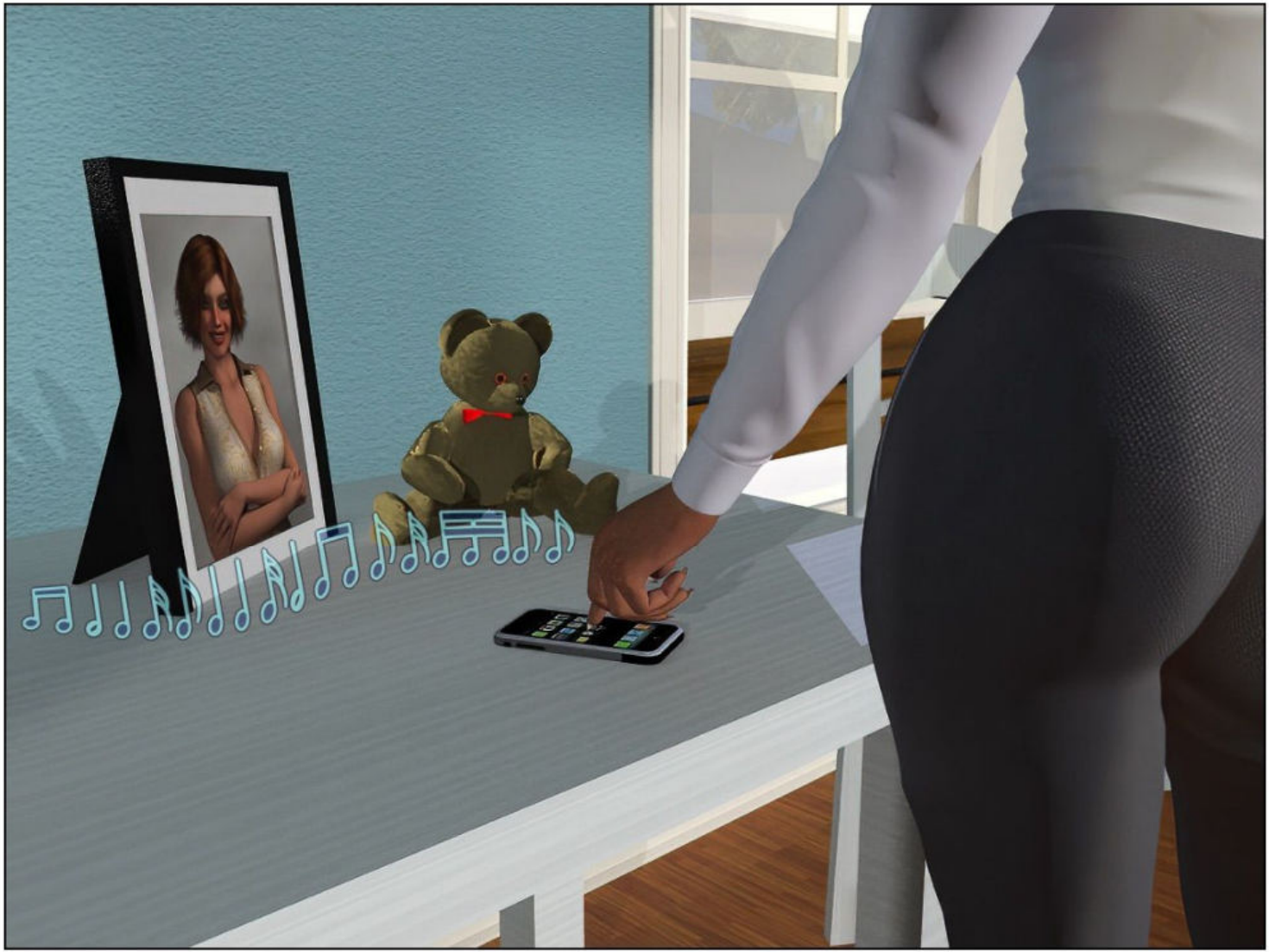

YOU DON'T THINK I KNOW THAT, MOTHER?
YOU DON'T THINK I BLAME MYSELF EVERY DAY FOR WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT? BECAUSE I DO!


IN FACT, I WISH I'D BEEN THE ONE WHO DIED THAT NIGHT INSTEAD OF HER!


SO DO I, ALEX... SO DO I!
AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM!
Slam!!

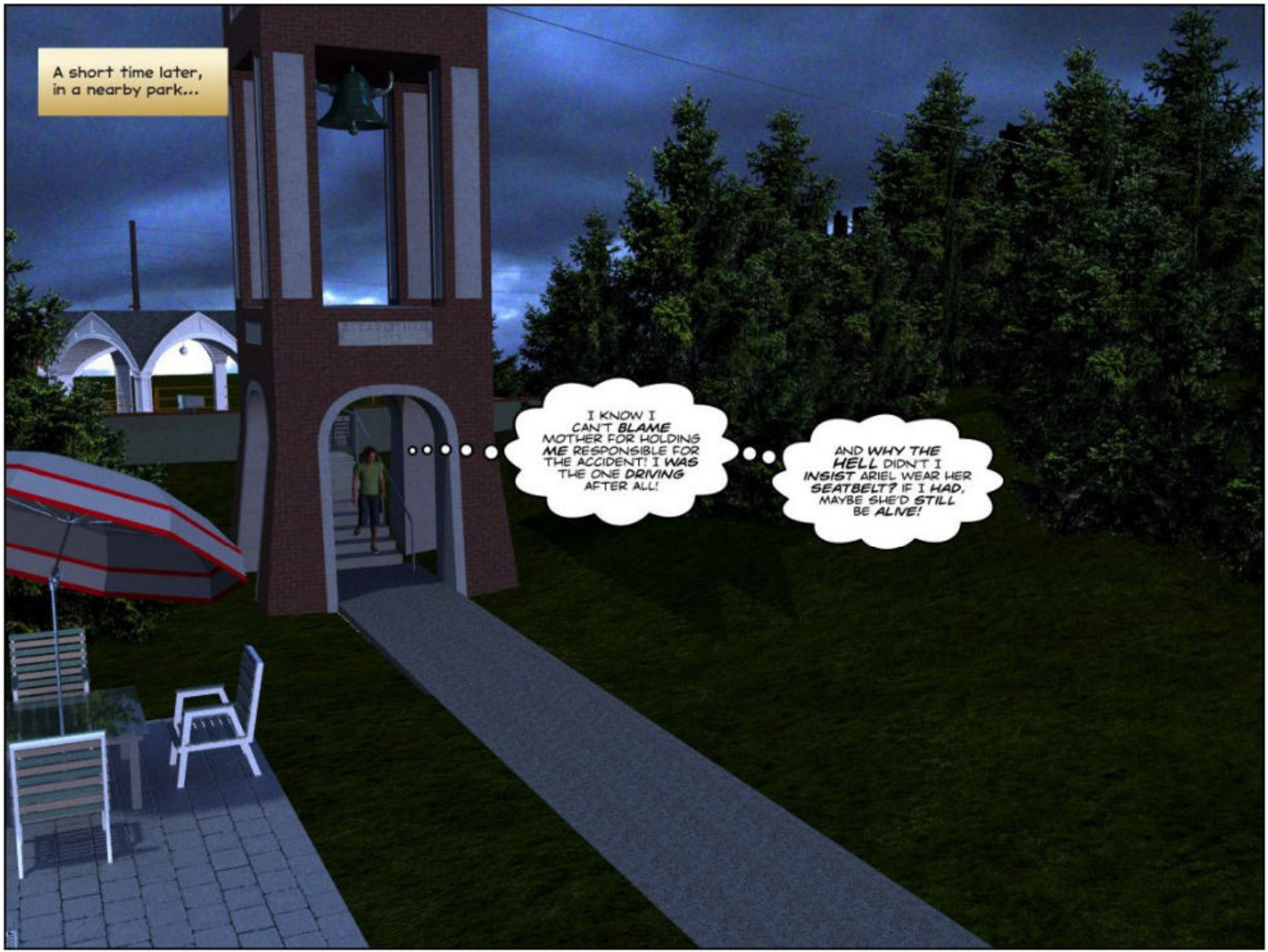


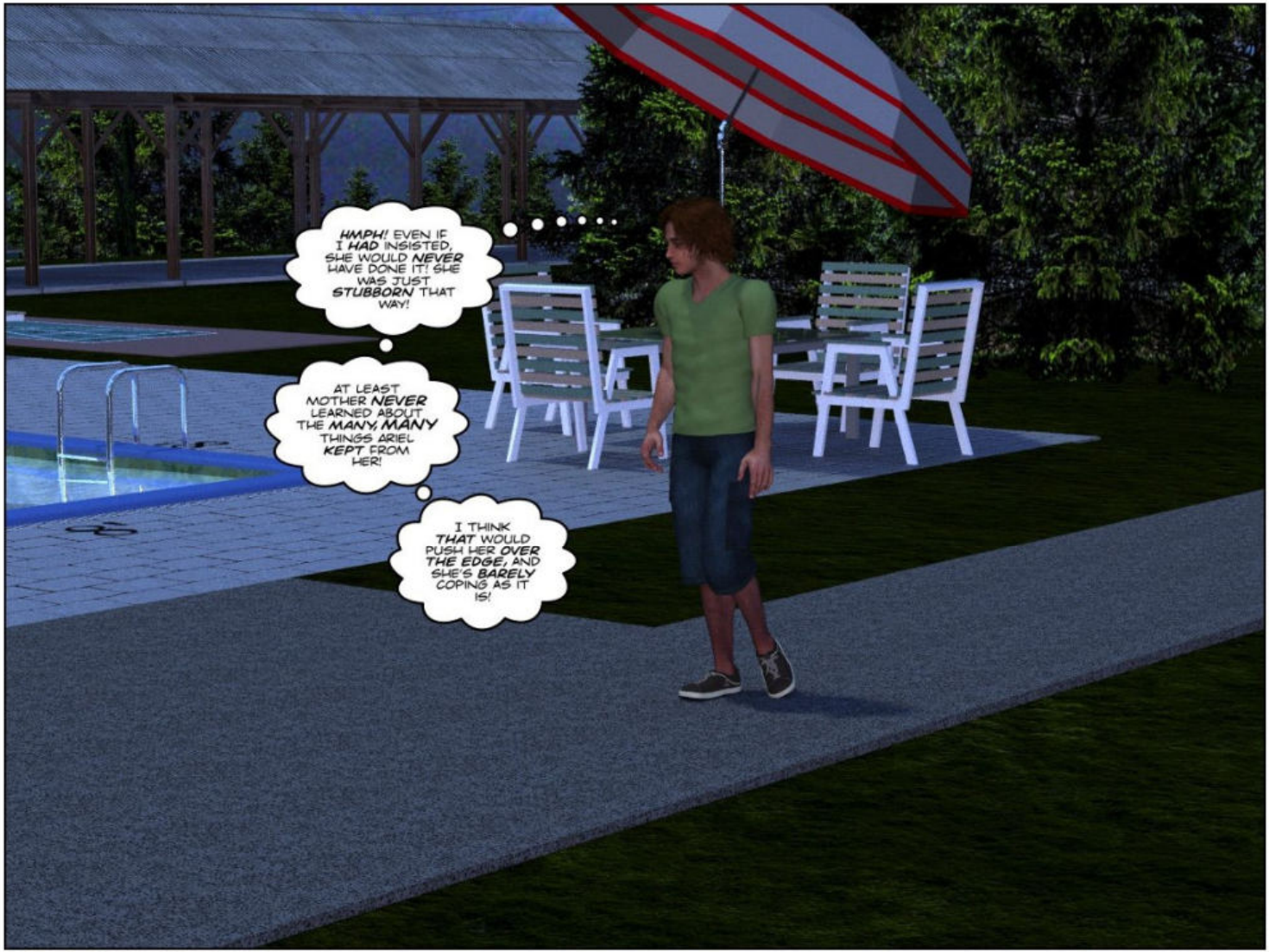





ARIEL LOVED THIS SONG!


SOB!


A short time later, in a nearby park...
I KNOW I CAN'T BLAME MOTHER FOR HOLDING ME RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACCIDENT! I WAS THE ONE DRIVING AFTER ALL!
AND WHY THE HELL DIDN'T I INSIST ARIEL WEAR HER SEATBELT? IF I HAD, MAYBE SHE'D STILL BE ALIVE!


HMPH! EVEN IF I HAD INSISTED, SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE DONE IT! SHE WAS JUST STUBBORN THAT WAY!
AT LEAST MOTHER NEVER LEARNED ABOUT THE MANY, MANY THINGS ARIEL KEPT FROM HER!
I THINK THAT WOULD PUSH HER OVER THE EDGE, AND SHE'S BARELY COPING AS IT IS!


STILL... THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH I CAN TAKE WHEN MOTHER GETS LIKE THIS AND ACTUALLY TELLS ME THAT I'M THE ONE TO BLAME FOR ARIEL'S DEATH!
*SIGH!* I'VE GOT MY OWN LIFE TO LEAD... I CAN'T LOOK AFTER HER FOREVER! I JUST NEED TO HOLD ON UNTIL I CAN USE THAT SCHOLARSHIP AND FINALLY PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US!


HEY, MAN! GOTTA LIGHT?
OH! UHHH... NO! I'M SORRY, I DON'T SMOKE!
YEAH! SHOULDA FIGURED! GOTTA BUCK OR TWO YOU CAN SPARE?
NO, I... I'M AFRAID I DON'T!


IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'VE GOT TO GET BACK HOME!
YEAH, SURE! I GET IT!


Whack!!
UGH!!


I... I TOLD YOU! I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY!
TOO BAD! GUESS THAT MEANS I'LL JUST HAVE TO DO THIS FOR THE FUN OF IT! HEH-HEH!
DO? DO... WHAT?!


DO THIS!
OOF!!
Whump!


AND THIS!
PLEASE! OOF!! PLEASE... STOP!
Whump!


OH, KID! I'M JUST GETTIN' STARTED!
Click!
NO! PLEASE!!


OH! AND NEXT TIME YOU SEE COACH STEWART, TELL HIM "HI" FOR ME!
AND THAT I'M SORRY I COULDN'T DELIVER THIS LITTLE MESSAGE IN PERSON! HEH-HEH!


A Few hours later, at a nearby hospital...
I'M MONA BRANSON! WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S MY SON?!
THE DOCTOR'S IN THERE WITH HIM RIGHT NOW! I'M AFRAID YOU NEED TO WAIT HERE UNTIL SHE COMES OUT!


LIKE HELL I WILL!
YOU CAN'T...


WHAT THE HELL?!
I'M SORRY, DOCTOR! SHE WENT RIGHT PAST ME!
OH MY GOD!


WHAT HAPPENED TO MY BABY, DOCTOR?! WHY IS THERE SO MUCH BLOOD?!
THIS IS WHY I WANTED YOU TO WAIT IN THE HALL, MRS. BRANSON! I WANTED TO GET HIM CLEANED UP AND CHANGE HIS BANDAGES BEFORE YOU SAW HIM!
IT'S DOCTOR BRANSON... AND I WANT YOU TO TELL ME EVERYTHING RIGHT NOW!
WELL... ALL RIGHT THEN!


POLICE SAY YOUR SON WAS MUGGED IN THE PARK! HE WAS BROUGHT IN BY AMBULANCE A LITTLE OVER AN HOUR AGO AND WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON HIM SINCE!
THE BANDAGES YOU CAN SEE ARE DUE TO MULTIPLE CUTS AND CONTUSIONS AS WELL AS A SHATTERED NOSE AND CRACKED BONES THROUGHOUT HIS FACE!
HE ALSO HAS BROKEN AND CRACKED RIBS ALONG WITH A HEAVILY DAMAGED PELVIS! THEY THINK HE WAS KICKED REPEATEDLY IN THOSE AREAS!
MY GOD! WHAT MONSTERS!!


UNFORTUNATELY, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE WAS DONE WITH A KNIFE!
THEY... THEY STABBED HIM, TOO?!
NO... BUT THEY DID CUT HIM! AND IN A MOST DELIBERATE AND VICIOUS MANNER!
OH MY GOD! WHAT ELSE COULD THEY HAVE POSSIBLY DONE TO HIM?!

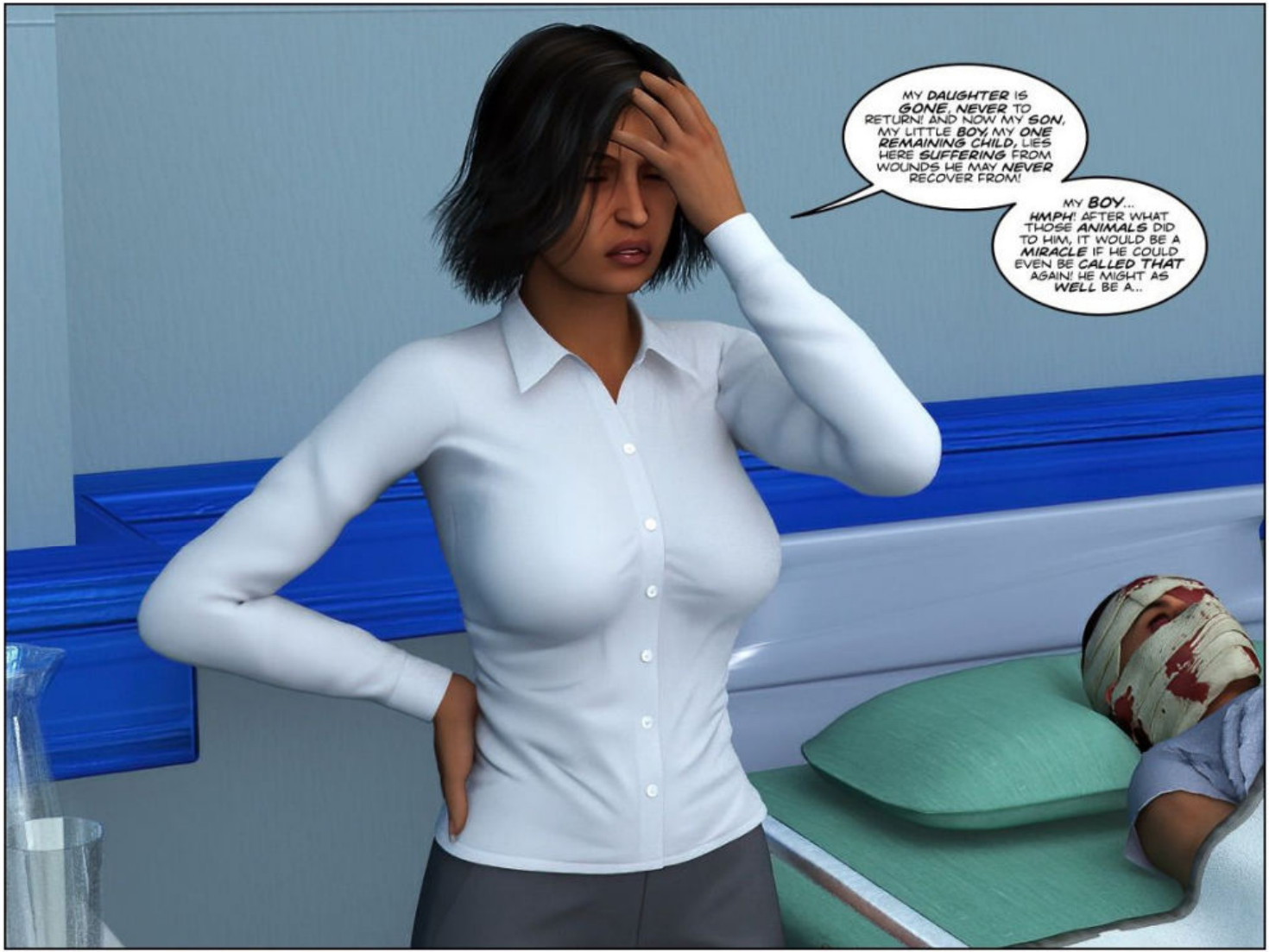

I'M AFRAID THOSE SADISTIC BASTARDS CUT OFF YOUR SON'S PENIS AND TESTICLES!
*GASP!*
AND, NO, WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO REATTACH THEM BECAUSE NEITHER THE EMTS NOR THE POLICE COULD FIND THEM AT THE SCENE!


THE GOOD NEWS IS WE'VE STOPPED THE INTERNAL BLEEDING AND ALL HIS CUTS AND BROKEN BONES SHOULD EVENTUALLY HEAL COMPLETELY!
HOWEVER, HE WILL NEED AT LEAST ONE SURGERY... OBVIOUSLY! THERE ARE SEVERAL OPTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO RECONSTRUCTION! THE BEST CASE SCENARIO IS TRANSPLANTS FROM A VIABLE DONOR, BUT FOR THESE PARTICULAR ORGANS, THAT'S A RATHER RARE OCCURANCE!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE ANY DECISIONS RIGHT AT THIS MOMENT, BUT THE SOONER, THE BETTER!
TH... THANK YOU, DOCTOR! I NEED A LITTLE TIME TO THINK ABOUT ALL THIS... AND WHAT'S BEST FOR ALEX!


COULD YOU GIVE ME A FEW MOMENTS ALONE WITH MY SON?
OF COURSE! JUST CONTACT THE NURSE IF YOU NEED ANYTHING!
THANK YOU! I WILL!


IT'S NOT FAIR! IT'S JUST NOT FAIR! HAVEN'T I SUFFERED ENOUGH ALREADY?!
FIRST MY BELOVED DAUGHTER IS TAKEN FROM ME AND NOW THIS?!


IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO RIP HER FROM ME IN A SENSELESS ACCIDENT! NO! IT HAD TO BE IN A WAY THAT FORCED ME TO CONTINUE LIVING WITH THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR HER DEATH!
AND NOW, JUST WHEN I REALIZE THAT I NEED TO FORGIVE THAT PERSON AND NURTURE HIM ONCE AGAIN, HE TOO IS ALMOST TAKEN FROM ME... MY OWN SON!


MY DAUGHTER IS GONE, NEVER TO RETURN! AND NOW MY SON, MY LITTLE BOY, MY ONE REMAINING CHILD, LIES HERE SUFFERING FROM WOUNDS HE MAY NEVER RECOVER FROM!
MY BOY... HMPH! AFTER WHAT THOSE ANIMALS DID TO HIM, IT WOULD BE A MIRACLE IF HE COULD EVEN BE CALLED THAT AGAIN! HE MIGHT AS WELL BE A..






LEON! IT'S MONA!
I KNOW IT'S LATE, BUT THIS IS IMPORTANT! I NEED TO CALL IN A FEW FAVORS FROM YOU!
OH, I THINK YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT FAVORS I'M TALKING ABOUT! OR DO I NEED TO DISCUSS THEM WITH YOUR WIFE?
I THOUGHT THAT WOULD GET YOUR ATTENTION!


NOW, HERE'S WHAT I NEED FROM YOU...


A Few hours and several other lengthy phone calls later...
... SO YOU CAN DEFINITELY BE HERE TOMORROW?
THAT'S WONDERFUL, CAROLINE! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME!

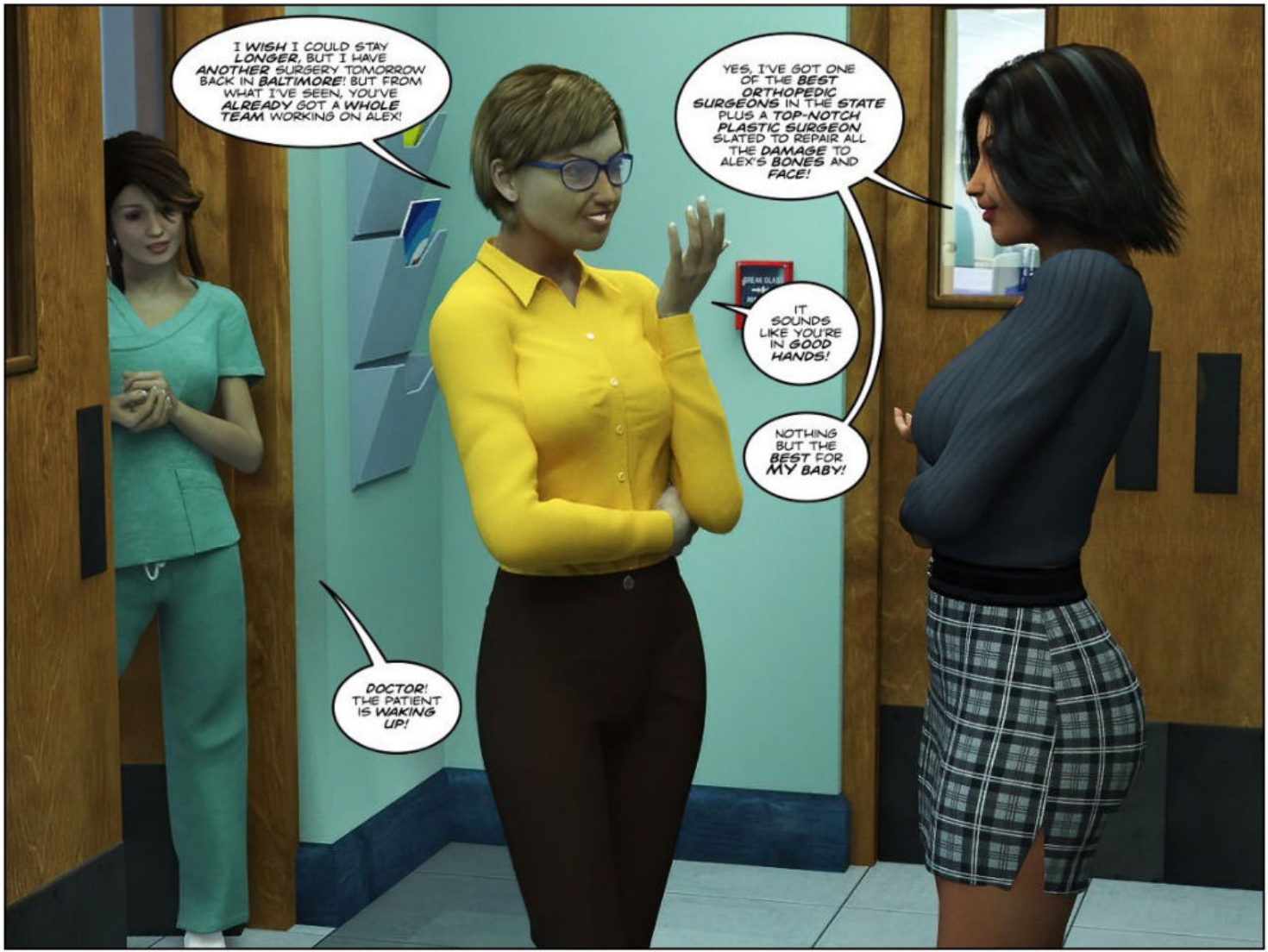

THE NURSE SAID YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, DR. BRANSON! HAVE YOU MADE A DECISION?
YES, I HAVE! IT'S REALLY THE ONLY POSSIBLE CHOICE AND ONE I'M SURE ALEX WOULD HAVE INSISTED UPON!


YOU SEE, DOCTOR, THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALEX... HOW SPECIAL HE REALLY IS!


I'LL BRING YOU BACK TO ME... I PROMISE!


ARIEL 2.0
by CBlack
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GENDER-MIX COMIX
02


Three days later...
FROM EVERYTHING I'VE SEEN SO FAR, ALEX'S BODY HAS FULLY ACCEPTED THE TRANSPLANTS!
YOU WERE VERY FORTUNATE TO BE ABLE TO FIND THOSE DONOR ORGANS AND GET THEM HERE SO FAST!
I'M EVEN MORE FORTUNATE THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO FLY DOWN HERE ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE AND PERFORM THE SURGERY!
YOU'RE A GODSEND, CAROLINE!
OH, HARDLY! I'M JUST SOMEONE WHO COULDN'T TURN DOWN HER OLD COLLEGE CHUM IN HER TIME OF NEED!


I WISH I COULD STAY LONGER, BUT I HAVE ANOTHER SURGERY TOMORROW BACK IN BALTIMORE! BUT FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, YOU'VE ALREADY GOT A WHOLE TEAM WORKING ON ALEX!
YES, I'VE GOT ONE OF THE BEST ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS IN THE STATE PLUS A TOP-NOTCH PLASTIC SURGEON SLATED TO REPAIR ALL THE DAMAGE TO ALEX'S BONES AND FACE!
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE IN GOOD HANDS!
NOTHING BUT THE BEST FOR MY BABY!
DOCTOR! THE PATIENT IS WAKING UP!


Wet
Soap
UMMM... WOULD YOU MIND IF I TALKED TO ALEX ALONE FIRST, CAROLINE? I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST TO HEAR EVERYTHING FROM ME RATHER THAN SOME STRANGER!
OF COURSE, MONA! I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND!


HELLO, SWEETIE! IT'S ME... MOTHER!
NOW DON'T TRY AND TALK! YOU'RE STILL PRETTY BANGED UP, BUT DON'T YOU WORRY... EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE JUST FINE!


YOU'RE HERE IN THE HOSPITAL BECAUSE YOU WERE MUGGED AND BEATEN IN THE PARK! DO YOU REMEMBER THAT? JUST BLINK YOUR EYES TWICE IF YOU DO!
OKAY, GOOD! THAT MAKES THE REST OF THIS A LITTLE EASIER!


YOU'VE GOT BROKEN BONES IN YOUR PELVIS AND YOUR RIBS, BUT THEY'LL HEAL UP IN NO TIME!
THOSE ANIMALS ALSO DID A LOT OF DAMAGE TO YOUR FACE, BUT DON'T YOU WORRY ONE BIT! I'VE GOT THE BEST PLASTIC SURGEON IN THE STATE COMING IN LATER TODAY!
BY THE TIME HE'S DONE WITH YOU, YOU'LL BE FAR MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN YOU EVER WERE BEFORE! *GIGGLE!*

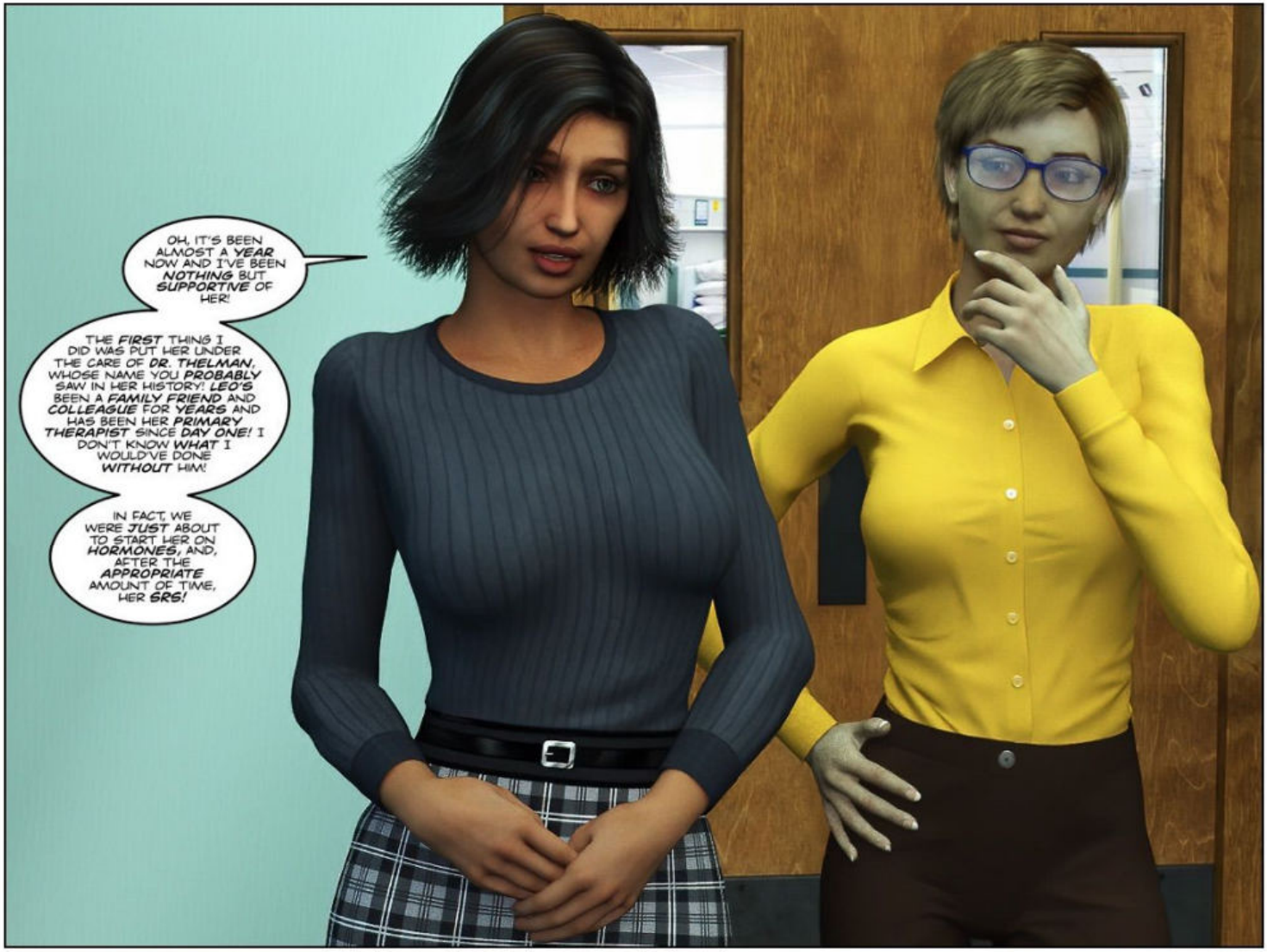

NOW, THE LAST PART OF NEWS WILL BE DIFFICULT TO HEAR, BUT DON'T WORRY, BECAUSE I'M RIGHT HERE WITH YOU!


I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND ONE MORE THING THOSE SADISTIC BASTARDS DID TO YOU... AND WHAT WE HAD TO DO TO SAVE YOU...






A Few minutes later...
HOW IS HE? DO YOU WANT ME TO GO IN AND HAVE A LOOK AT HIM?
COULD YOU GIVE HER AN HOUR OR SO FIRST? IT'S A LOT OF INFORMATION FOR HER TO PROCESS AND SHE'S VERY EMOTIONAL ABOUT IT ALL!
NOT A PROBLEM! SO... YOU'VE ALREADY TAKEN TO CALLING ALEX "SHE"?
OH, I'VE BEEN REFERRING TO ALEX AS "SHE" FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS NOW... EVER SINCE SHE FIRST TOLD ME SHE WAS TRANSGENDER!
SINCE EVERYTHING'S HAPPENED SO QUICKLY, I'VE BARELY HAD THE CHANCE TO GLANCE AT ALEX'S MEDICAL HISTORY! HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN?


OH, IT'S BEEN ALMOST A YEAR NOW AND I'VE BEEN NOTHING BUT SUPPORTIVE OF HER!
THE FIRST THING I DID WAS PUT HER UNDER THE CARE OF DR. THELMAN, WHOSE NAME YOU PROBABLY SAW IN HER HISTORY! LEO'S BEEN A FAMILY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE FOR YEARS AND HAS BEEN HER PRIMARY THERAPIST SINCE DAY ONE! I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD'VE DONE WITHOUT HIM!
IN FACT, WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO START HER ON HORMONES, AND, AFTER THE APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF TIME, HER SRS!


"SOB!" IF THIS ALL WASN'T SO HORRIBLE, IT WOULD ALMOST BE IRONIC!
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE HOW TOUGH THIS MUST BE ON YOU, NONA! BUT DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT ALEX! SHE'LL BE FINE!
HOW COULD SHE NOT BE? WITH A MOTHER LIKE YOU, SHE'S THE LUCKIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD!


NO... I'M THE LUCKY ONE!


Less than an hour later...
HI, HONEY! I'M BACK! AND I'VE BROUGHT YOU A LITTLE SOMETHING!


SINCE YOU CAN'T TALK WITH YOUR MOUTH YET, I THOUGHT YOU COULD "TALK" TO US WITH THIS TABLET!
I KNOW YOU MUST HAVE A MILLION QUESTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR WHEN SHE GETS HERE, SO I THOUGHT WE COULD SAVE SOME OF HER VALUABLE TIME BY SEEING WHAT I COULD ANSWER FOR YOU FIRST!


Why Female parts?
OH HONEY, WE TALKED ABOUT THIS! IT WAS ALL THAT WAS AVAILABLE!
IT CERTAINLY WASN'T MY PREFEENCE, BUT YOURS WERE GONE AND YOU WERE HURT SO BADLY! WE HAD TO ACT IMMEDIATELY OR... OR WE MIGHT HAVE LOST YOU!


Can they be fixed later? Replaced with male parts when available?
WELL... THEORETICALLY.. BUT ALL YOUR SURGERIES NEED TO BE COMPLETELY HEALED BEFORE WE EVEN THINK ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT, AND YOU'RE MONTHS AWAY FROM THAT POINT!
BUT IF IT'S SOMETHING YOU REALLY WANT, I'M SURE WE CAN SOMEHOW FIND A WAY TO MAKE IT WORK!


BUT FOR THE TIME BEING, I THINK IT'S BEST IF WE TABLE ANY TALK ABOUT MALE PARTS AND FUTURE ELECTIVE SURGERIES!
YOU WERE AT DEATH'S DOOR, HONEY, AND THE MAIN JOB WE HAVE RIGHT NOW IS DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GET YOU HEALTHY!
MY ONLY CONCERN IS YOUR WELL-BEING! YOU'RE MY ONE REMAINING, DARLING CHILD, AND I... I COULDN'T BEAR TO LOSE YOU... NOT AFTER LOSING ARIEL!


I love you, too, mother!


HELLO THERE, ALEX! I'M YOUR SURGEON, DOCTOR WALTERS, AND IF YOU AND YOUR MOTHER HERE DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO CHECK UP ON MY HANDIWORK!
GOOD TIMING, CAROLINE! I'LL JUST STEP OUT AND GIVE YOU TWO SOME PRIVACY FOR THIS!


BEFORE I BEGIN, DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, ALEX?
No. But I do want to say thank you, Doctor.


And that I'm very happy with everything you've done for me.
THAT'S MY GIRL!


Six weeks later...
ALEX, HONEY? I'M HOME!


SO, HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
FULL OF EXCITEMENT! WAS ON THE COMPUTER FOR A FEW HOURS, READ FOR A FEW HOURS AND WATCHED TV FOR A FEW HOURS!
SO, IN OTHER WORDS, THE SAME AS YESTERDAY... AND THE DAY BEFORE THAT... AND THE DAY BEFORE THAT...

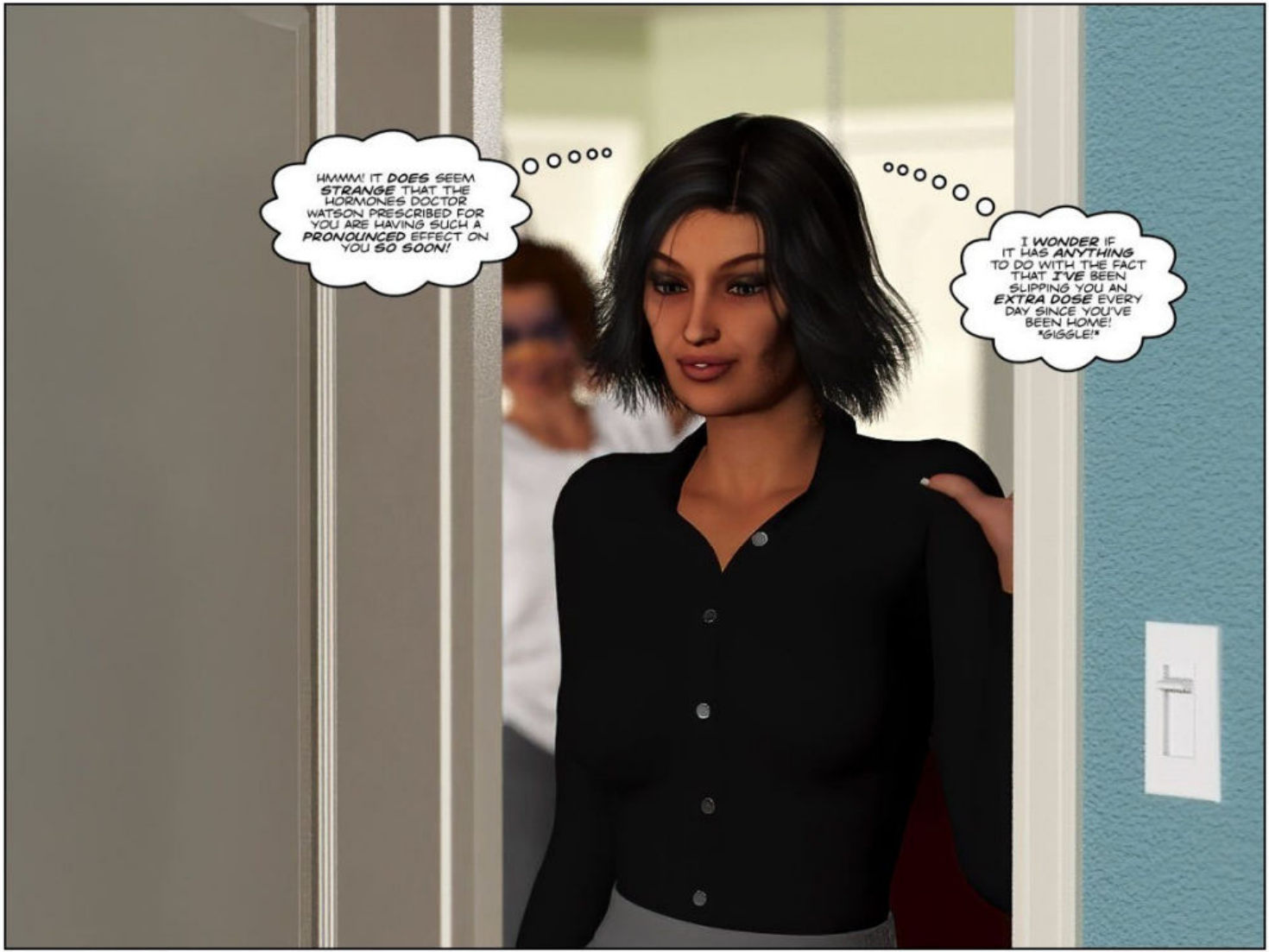

WERE YOU ABLE TO GO OUTSIDE AT ALL? MAYBE GET A LITTLE EXERCISE?
THE DOCTORS HAVE ALL SAID YOUR BONES ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO HANDLE MILD EXERTION!
I HAVE BEEN EXERCISING A LITTLE INSIDE WITH THE SMALL WEIGHTS, MOTHER, BUT I'M NOT READY TO GO OUTSIDE YET!
OH, BUT WHY NOT?


BECAUSE I LOOK HORRIBLE, MOTHER! IGNORING THE FACT THAT MY FACE STILL LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEEN KICKED BY A TEAM OF MULES, I'VE LOST ALMOST THIRTY POUNDS... ALMOST ALL OF IT MUSCLE!
I LOOK AND FEEL LIKE A HALLOWEEN DECORATION THAT'S BEEN LEFT OUTSIDE THROUGH DECEMBER!
NONSENSE! YOUR FACE IS HEALING JUST THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO AFTER RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY!
THE SWELLING AND BRUISING WILL BE GONE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT!

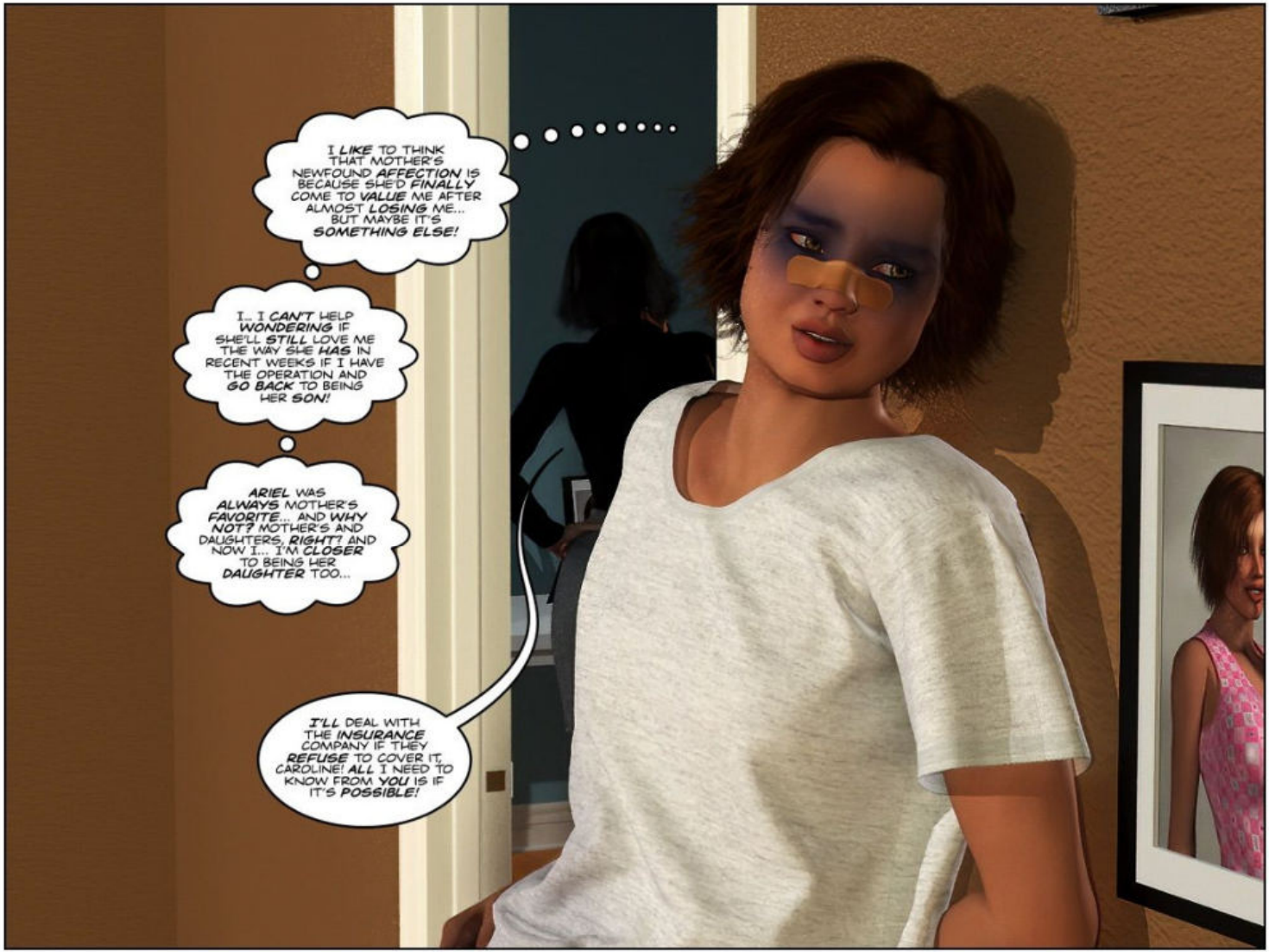

AND FROM WHAT I CAN SEE SO FAR, IT'LL LOOK NOTHING LIKE MY ORIGINAL FACE! SOMETHING ELSE TO LOOK FORWARD TO!
IT'S NOT JUST THE SURGERY! I'M DEFINITELY STARTING TO SEE CHANGES EVERYWHERE BECAUSE OF THOSE HORMONE PILLS THE DOCTOR HAS ME TAKE EVERY MORNING!
NOW HONEY, OF COURSE IT'LL LOOK A LITTLE DIFFERENT... IT HAS TO BECAUSE OF THE EXTENSIVE DAMAGE THAT WAS DONE TO IT!
WELL THAT WAS TO BE EXPECTED, HONEY, BUT REMEMBER, THOSE HORMONES ARE NECESSARY TO KEEP YOUR BODY FROM REJECTING YOUR NEW ORGANS!


THAT'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, MOTHER... THE HORMONES! WILL I STILL BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO BEING MALE IF THEY CHANGE ME TOO MUCH?
OH! WELL, I DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT! IT'LL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE WE HEAD DOWN THAT ROAD!
I KNOW, BUT THAT'S WHY I'M WORRIED! I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO GO BACK TO THE WAY I WAS BEFORE!
WELL IF YOU'RE SO CONCERNED, I'LL GO CALL DOCTOR WATSON RIGHT NOW AND SEE WHAT SHE SAYS!


OH, THANK YOU, MOTHER!
ANYTHING FOR YOU, SWEETHEART!
YOU WAIT HERE! I'LL GIVE HER A CALL AND BE RIGHT BACK!


HMMM! IT DOES SEEM STRANGE THAT THE HORMONES DOCTOR WATSON PRESCRIBED FOR YOU ARE HAVING SUCH A PRONOUNCED EFFECT ON YOU SO SOON!
I WONDER IF IT HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT I'VE BEEN SLIPPING YOU AN EXTRA DOSE EVERY DAY SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HOME! *GIGGLE!*


EVEN THROUGH ALL THE PAIN AND DISCOMFORT I'VE EXPERIENCED THESE LAST FEW WEEKS, THE ONE BIG POSITIVE THING HAS BEEN MOTHER!
SHE'S BEEN HERE FOR ME EVERY STEP OF THE WAY... ALWAYS LOVING AND ATTENTIVE! NEVER CRITICAL OR INDIFFERENT... THE WAY SHE ALWAYS USED TO BE!
WE'VE NEVER BEEN CLOSER OR HAPPIER TOGETHER THAN WE ARE RIGHT NOW, AND I HOPE TO GOD THAT NEVER CHANGES!


I LIKE TO THINK THAT MOTHER'S NEWFOUND AFFECTION IS BECAUSE SHE'D FINALLY COME TO VALUE ME AFTER ALMOST LOSING ME... BUT MAYBE IT'S SOMETHING ELSE!
I... I CAN'T HELP WONDERING IF SHE'LL STILL LOVE ME THE WAY SHE HAS IN RECENT WEEKS IF I HAVE THE OPERATION AND GO BACK TO BEING HER SON!
ARIEL WAS ALWAYS MOTHER'S FAVORITE... AND WHY NOT? MOTHER'S AND DAUGHTERS, RIGHT? AND NOW I... I'M CLOSER TO BEING HER DAUGHTER TOO...
I'LL DEAL WITH THE INSURANCE COMPANY IF THEY REFUSE TO COVER IT, CAROLINE! ALL I NEED TO KNOW FROM YOU IS IF IT'S POSSIBLE!


BECAUSE IF THIS IS WHAT MY BABY TRULY WANTS, THEN I'LL HAPPILY GIVE UP MY SAVINGS AND GO INTO DEBT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE TO PAY FOR THE NECESSARY SURGERIES!
BUT YOU HAVE TO GUARANTEE ME THAT IT'LL BE SAFE! I DON'T THINK I COULD SURVIVE IF I LOST MY ONE REMAINING CHILD! *SNIFF!*
BZZZZZZZZZ...
*GASP!*


OH MY GOD! MOTHER WOULD DO ALL THAT... FOR ME? JUST TO FULFILL MY SELFISH NEEDS?
I'M THE ONE WHO'S TOO AFRAID TO ADAPT TO A NEW LIFE... A LIFE I WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE IF IT WEREN'T FOR HER!
AND HERE SHE IS, WILLING TO SACRIFICE EVERYTHING... EVEN THE PROSPECT OF GETTING A NEW DAUGHTER, TO ENSURE HER SELF-CENTERED AND UNGRATEFUL SON CAN GO BACK TO HIS OLD MISERABLE LIFE!
I KNOW WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR YEARS, CAROLINE, BUT IF YOU CAN'T GIVE ME A BETTER GUARANTEE THAN THAT, THEN I WANT THE NAME OF ANOTHER, BETTER DOCTOR WHO CAN!


WELL, DR. WATSON IS, UMMM... LOOKING INTO A FEW THINGS REGARDING THE SURGERY AND SHE'LL GET BACK TO US IN A FEW DAYS!
IS THAT OKAY WITH YOU, HONEY?
OF COURSE IT IS, MOTHER! THERE'S NO HURRY AT ALL!
IN FACT, I'M THINKING I MAY NOT WANT THE OPERATION AFTER ALL! I'M... I'M JUST CONSIDERING ALL MY OPTIONS AT THIS POINT!


WHICH IS WHY I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF YOU AS THE SMARTEST ONE IN OUR FAMILY!
I'M GOING TO GO SIT BY THE POOL FOR A BIT! WHY DON'T YOU ORDER US SOME PIZZA FOR DINNER?
THAT SOUNDS GREAT! BUT FIRST...
YES, DEAR?

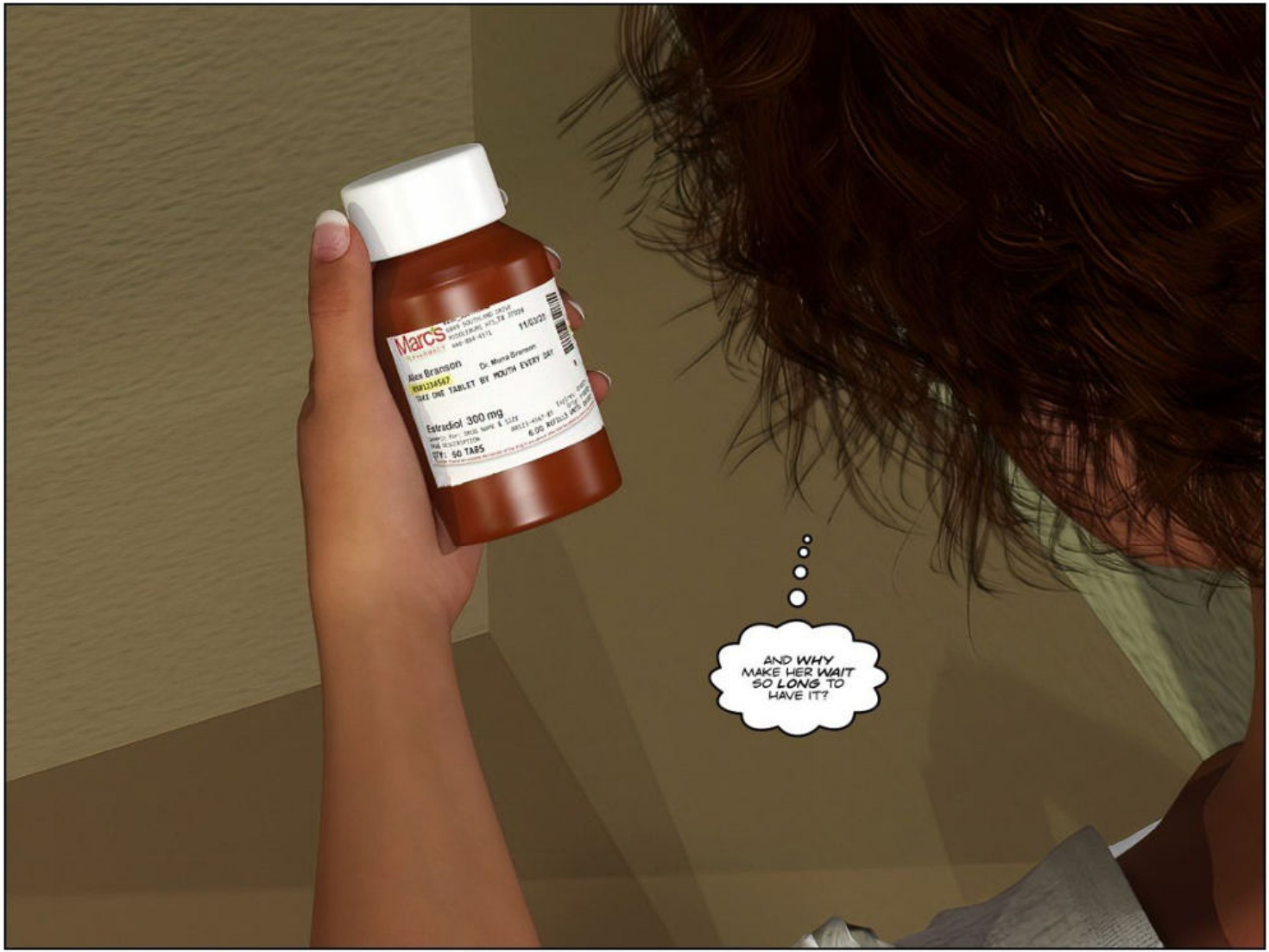

I LOVE YOU, MOTHER!
AND I LOVE YOU TOO, SWEETHEART! I ALWAYS HAVE!


ORDER THE USUAL... BUT NO ANCHOVIES THIS TIME, OKAY?
YES, MOTHER!




SHE LOVES ME! SHE ACTUALLY SAID SO!
AND FROM WHAT I HEARD, SHE'D KEEP LOVING ME... EVEN IF I WENT BACK TO BEING HER SON!


*SIGH!* BUT WHAT KIND OF PERSON WOULD I BE IF I DENIED HER WHAT SHE MOST WANTS IN THE WORLD?


Marcs
11/02/2
Alex Branson
Dr. Mona Branson
TAKE ONE TABLET BY MOUTH EVERY DAY
Estradiol 300 mg
QTY: 50 TABS
AND WHY MAKE HER WAIT SO LONG TO HAVE IT?




A Few weeks later...
AHHH! I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT GETS THIS WARM DOWN HERE IN JANUARY!
SURE BEATS THE HELL OUT OF THOSE HELLISH WINTERS WE HAD BACK IN BOSTON! *GIGGLE!*


ALEX? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SPEND THIS LOVELY DAY COOPED UP INSIDE AGAIN, ARE YOU?
I INSIST YOU COME OUT HERE AND AT LEAST GET A LITTLE SUN! IT'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU!
I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU, MOTHER!


I THOUGHT I'D TRY DOING A FEW LAPS IN THE POOL, JUST TO SEE HOW IT FEELS!
THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA, HONEY! A GOOD EXERCISE REGIMENT WILL HAVE YOU BACK IN SHAPE IN NO TIME!

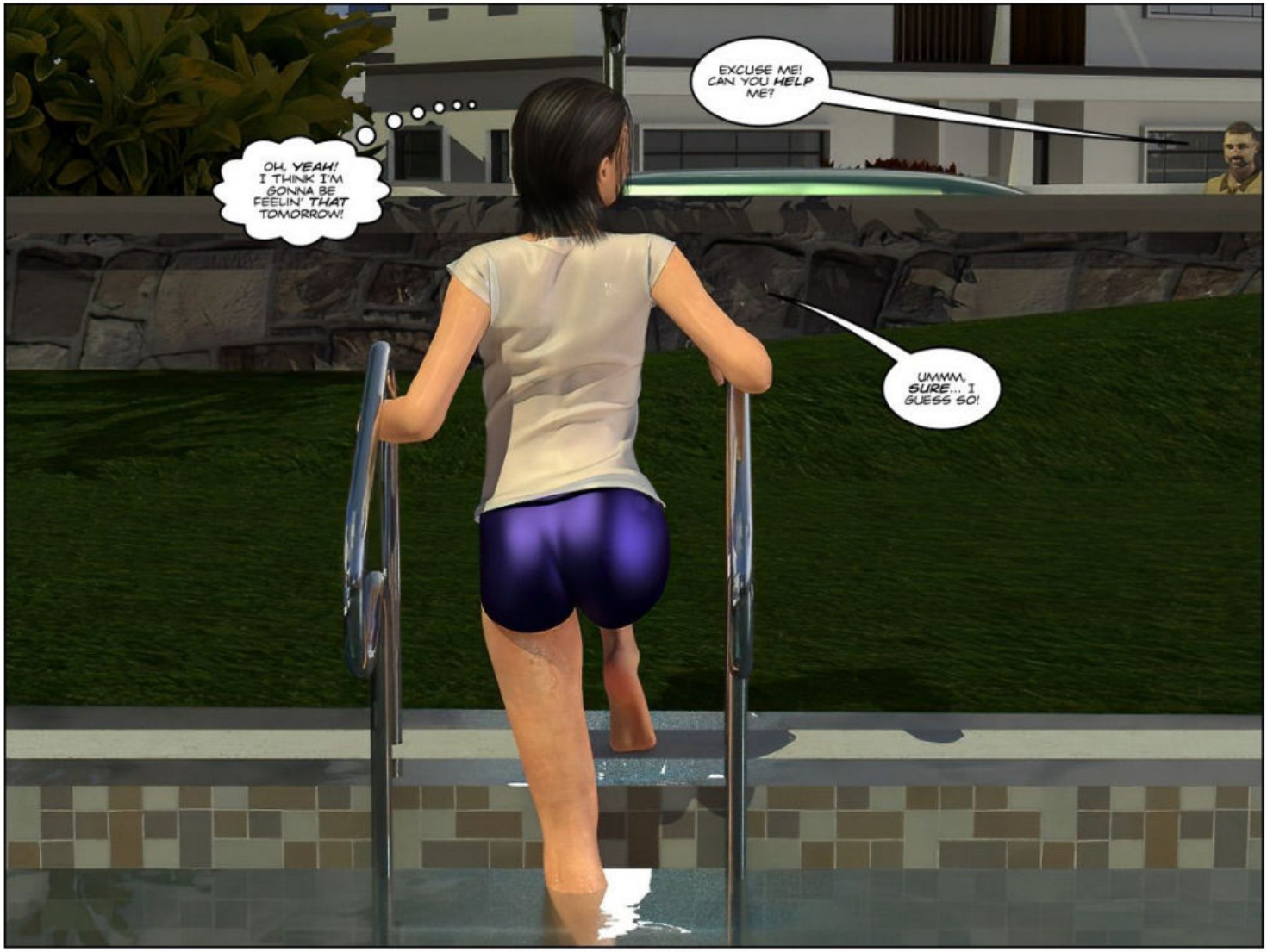

WELL I'M NOT READY TO DO ANYTHING STRENUOUS... AT LEAST NOT YET! JUST A COUPLE OF LAPS TODAY AND TRY AND ADD MORE EACH DAY AS I GO!
YOU KNOW, IF YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE UP SWIMMING AGAIN, WE SHOULD PROBABLY GET YOU A PROPER SWIMSUIT!
MY OLD SPEEDO AND A T-SHIRT ARE JUST FINE FOR NOW, MOTHER! IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE IS EVER GOING TO SEE ME THIS WAY!


"SIGH!" I WISH YOU WOULD BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY YOU LOOK JUST FINE! THE BRUISING TO YOUR FACE HAS COMPLETELY HEALED!
THE BRUISING MAY BE GONE, BUT IT STILL SEEMS ALL PUFFY AND SWOLLEN... LIKE I TRIED TO HEAD-BUTT A BEEHIVE!
AND DON'T GET ME STARTED ON HOW SMALL AND WEAK I FEEL! I SWEAR A GOOD STIFF BREEZE COULD KNOCK ME ON MY ASS!


WELL IF YOU FEEL THAT PUNY, THEN HEAVEN FORBID I KEEP YOU FROM YOUR EXERCISES!
THANK YOU, MOTHER! I WON'T BE OUT THERE TOO LONG!


A Few laps... and a Few more... and a Few more later...


WHEW! I THINK THAT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR MY FIRST DAY!


EXCUSE ME! CAN YOU HELP ME?
OH, YEAH! I THINK I'M GONNA BE FEELIN' THAT TOMORROW!
UMMM, SURE... I GUESS SO!


I, UMMM... WOW! I'VE BEEN, UHHH... DRIVIN' AROUND THIS NEIGHBORHOOD FOR AN HOUR LOOKIN' FOR PITCAIRN CIRCLE! ANY IDEA WHERE I CAN FIND IT?
PITCAIRN CIRCLE, HUH? THAT SOUNDS REAL FAMILIAR!


OH YEAH! GO THIS WAY TWO BLOCKS THEN TAKE A LEFT! IT'LL BE THE FIRST CUL-DE-SAC ON YOUR RIGHT!


GREAT! THANKS A LOT, MISS!
UMMM... YEAH! NO PROBLEM!


MISS?! HE CALLED ME "MISS"!
*SIGH!*. I GUESS IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE I STARTED HEARING THAT! BUT I DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE SO DAMN SOON!
HAS MY FACE CHANGED THAT MUCH ALREADY? OR IS IT...?


OH SHIT!


HOW WAS YOUR SWIM, SWEETHEART?


HONEY? WHAT'S WRONG?


ALEX,
STOP!


NOW, TELL ME WHY YOU'RE SO UPSET!
"SIGH!" I WAS GETTING OUT OF THE POOL WHEN A DELIVERY DRIVER STOPPED BY THE FENCE, ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS!
HE WASN'T RUDE TO YOU, WAS HE?
NO, BUT HE... HE...


HE SAW THESE!
WELL, I'M SURE IT MADE HIS DAY! GUESS THE WATER WAS A LITTLE CHILLIER THAN YOU EXPECTED, HMM?
IS THAT ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY? A MAN... SAW ME... LIKE THIS!
AND IT WON'T BE THE LAST TIME, SWEETHEART! SO GET USED TO IT!

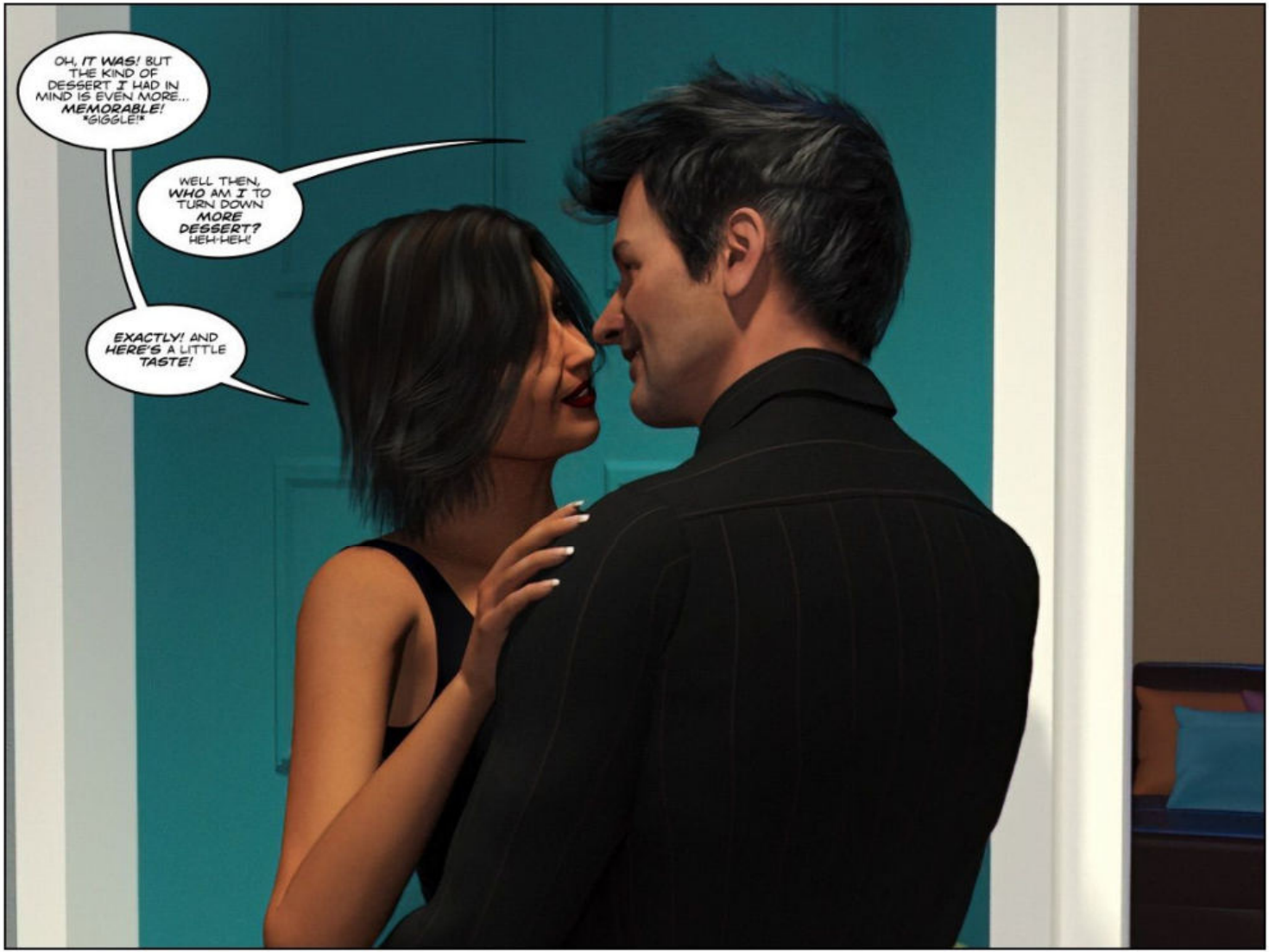

I... I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO THIS, MOTHER! I THOUGHT I COULD, BUT... I'M SO DAMN CONFUSED!
Y... YES, MOTHER! I THINK I DO!
OF COURSE YOU ARE, DEAR! YOUR BODY IS CHANGING... VERY RAPIDLY! MOST GIRLS HAVE YEARS TO DEAL WITH IT, BUT YOU HAVE TO MANAGE IT ALL IN THE SPAN OF A FEW MONTHS!
BUT I GOT THROUGH IT, I HELPED YOUR SISTER GET THROUGH IT AND BY GOD, I'M GOING TO GET YOU THROUGH IT! UNDERSTAND?

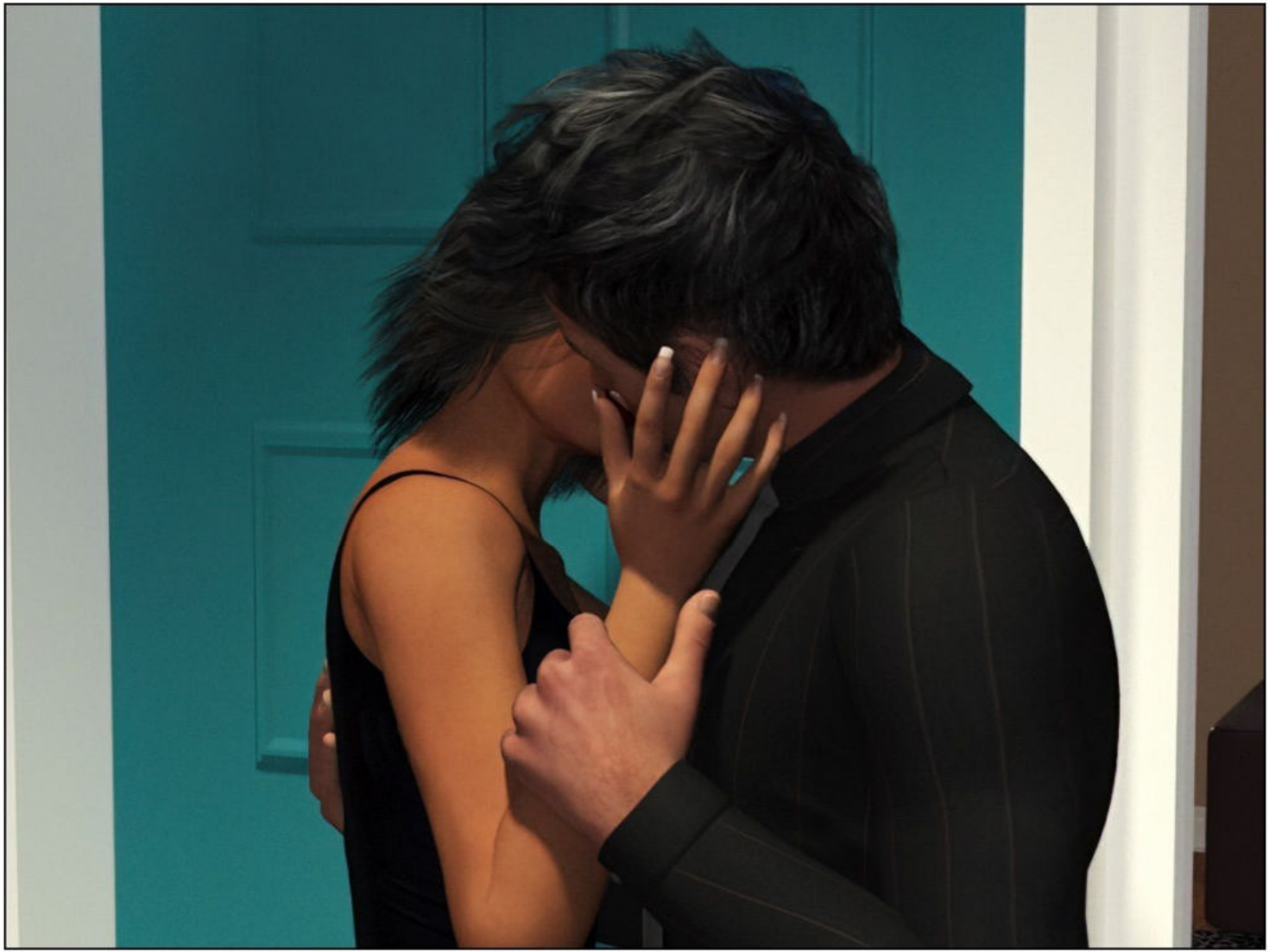

*SOB!* I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITHOUT YOU, MOTHER!
WELL, THAT'S SOMETHING YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FOR A LONG, LONG TIME!


MY! THEY ARE PERKY, AREN'T THEY?
MOTHER!


Another six weeks rolls by and Spring arrives...


YOU'RE NOT IN ANY RUSH TO DRIVE ALL THE WAY BACK ACROSS TOWN, ARE YOU?
A FABULOUS DINNER LIKE THE ONE YOU JUST TREATED ME TO DESERVES AN EQUALLY FABULOUS NIGHT CAP... OR DESSERT!
BUT WE ALREADY HAD DESSERT! OR WAS THAT TIRAMISU JUST NOT VERY MEMORABLE TO YOU?


OH, IT WAS! BUT THE KIND OF DESSERT I HAD IN MIND IS EVEN MORE... MEMORABLE! *GIGGLE!*
WELL THEN, WHO AM I TO TURN DOWN MORE DESSERT? HEH-HEH!
EXACTLY! AND HERE'S A LITTLE TASTE!




WOW! I HAVE TO SAY, IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT SUCH A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN TREATS ME LIKE THIS ON A FIRST DATE!
WELL, IF YOU WANT TO GET TECHNICAL, IT'S OUR SECOND DATE! OUR FIRST WAS YESTERDAY WHEN YOU BOUGHT ME COFFEE AFTER HELPING ME FIND WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR ON CAMPUS!
I MEAN, HOW COULD I NOT BE ATTRACTED TO SUCH A HANDSOME MAN WHO ALSO HAPPENS TO BE SO HELPFUL AND SO GENEROUS!
IT'S A GIFT, I GUESS! HEH-HEH!


YOU HAVE A VERY NICE PLACE! DO YOU LIVE HERE ALONE?
NO, I SHARE IT WITH MY TEENAGED DAUGHTER!
A TEENAGER? YOU'RE KIDDING! YOU DON'T LOOK ANYWHERE NEAR OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE A DAUGHTER THAT AGE!
MMMM! YOU'VE JUST EARNED YOURSELF ONE EXTRA SPECIAL DESSERT, MISTER! *GIGGLE!*


YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF HER *INTERRUPTING US* I TAKE IT?
KNOWING *HER*, SHE FELL *ASLEEP* WITH HER HEADPHONES ON *HOURS AGO!* SHE DOES IT *ALL THE TIME!*
LET'S JUST *HOPE* SHE GETS *OUT* OF THAT HABIT WHEN SHE GOES AWAY TO *COLLEGE* NEXT YEAR! *IF* SHE GOES, THAT IS!
*IF?* WHY WOULDN'T SHE *WANT* TO GO TO COLLEGE?


OH, SHE DOES... DESPERATELY! WE'VE BEEN CONSIDERING NEW MEXICO STATE, BUT THIS LAST YEAR HAS BEEN VERY.. ER... TRAUMATIC FOR OUR FAMILY, SO I'M THINKING IT MIGHT BE BEST IF SHE STAYED CLOSER TO HOME!
THERE ARE A FEW DETAILS PERTAINING TO HER ELIGIBILITY THAT ARE COMPLICATED, BUT I WON'T BORE YOU WITH THAT SORDID STORY! IT'S JUST SOMETHING WE'LL HAVE TO HASH OUT WITH AN ADMISSIONS DEPARTMENT AT SOME POINT!
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
AN ADMISSIONS DEPARTMENT, HUH? THAT'S INTERESTING!


BECAUSE I JUST SO HAPPEN TO BE THE DEAN OF ADMISSIONS AT PHOENIX STATE!
YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS! WHEN YOU SAID YOU WORKED AT THE UNIVERSITY, I JUST ASSUMED YOU WERE A PROFESSOR! BUT YOU'RE A DEAN?
NOT JUST A DEAN, BUT THE DEAN YOU'D HAVE TO HASH THINGS OUT WITH REGARDING YOUR DAUGHTER... IF SHE HAD ANY INTEREST IN PHOENIX STATE, THAT IS!
MY, MY, MY! WHAT A MIRACULOUS COINCIDENCE! HEH-HEH!


WELL WE'LL DEFINITELY NEED TO CHAT ABOUT THAT, BUT... NOT RIGHT THIS MINUTE!
NO? YOU MEAN YOU HAVE SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND THAT'S MORE INTERESTING THAN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS?
UH-HUH! AND IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH DESSERT!


RIGHT THIS WAY! *GIGGLE!*
YES, MA'AM! HEH-HEH!


Later that week...


THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR DOING THIS IN PERSON, DAVID! LIKE I'VE TOLD YOU, SHE'S BEEN A LITTLE SHY ABOUT GOING OUT IN PUBLIC SINCE THE INCIDENT!
WELL, SOMETHING THAT TRAUMATIC HAPPENING TO A YOUNG PERSON CAN HAVE LONG-LASTING EFFECTS ON THEIR SELF ESTEEM! ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR APPEARANCE!
I'VE TRIED TO CONVINCE HER THAT SHE LOOKS JUST FINE! BUT YOU KNOW YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR PARENTS' POINT OF VIEW... IT JUST DOESN'T COUNT!
HEH-HEH! ISN'T THAT THE TRUTH?


BUT FROM WHAT I CAN SEE FROM THESE PICTURES, SHE SEEMS LIKE A PERFECTLY LOVELY YOUNG LADY! ARE THESE PHOTOS RECENT?
I HAD THEM TAKEN EARLIER THIS YEAR! BUT AS YOU CAN SEE FROM HER EXPRESSIONS, SHE WASN'T VERY EAGER TO HAVE THEM TAKEN! BUT I INSISTED!
NOWADAYS, I DON'T THINK KIDS ARE HAPPY WITH PHOTOS OF THEMSELVES UNLESS THEY'RE SELFIES!
*SIGH!* I'M AFRAID YOU'RE RIGHT!

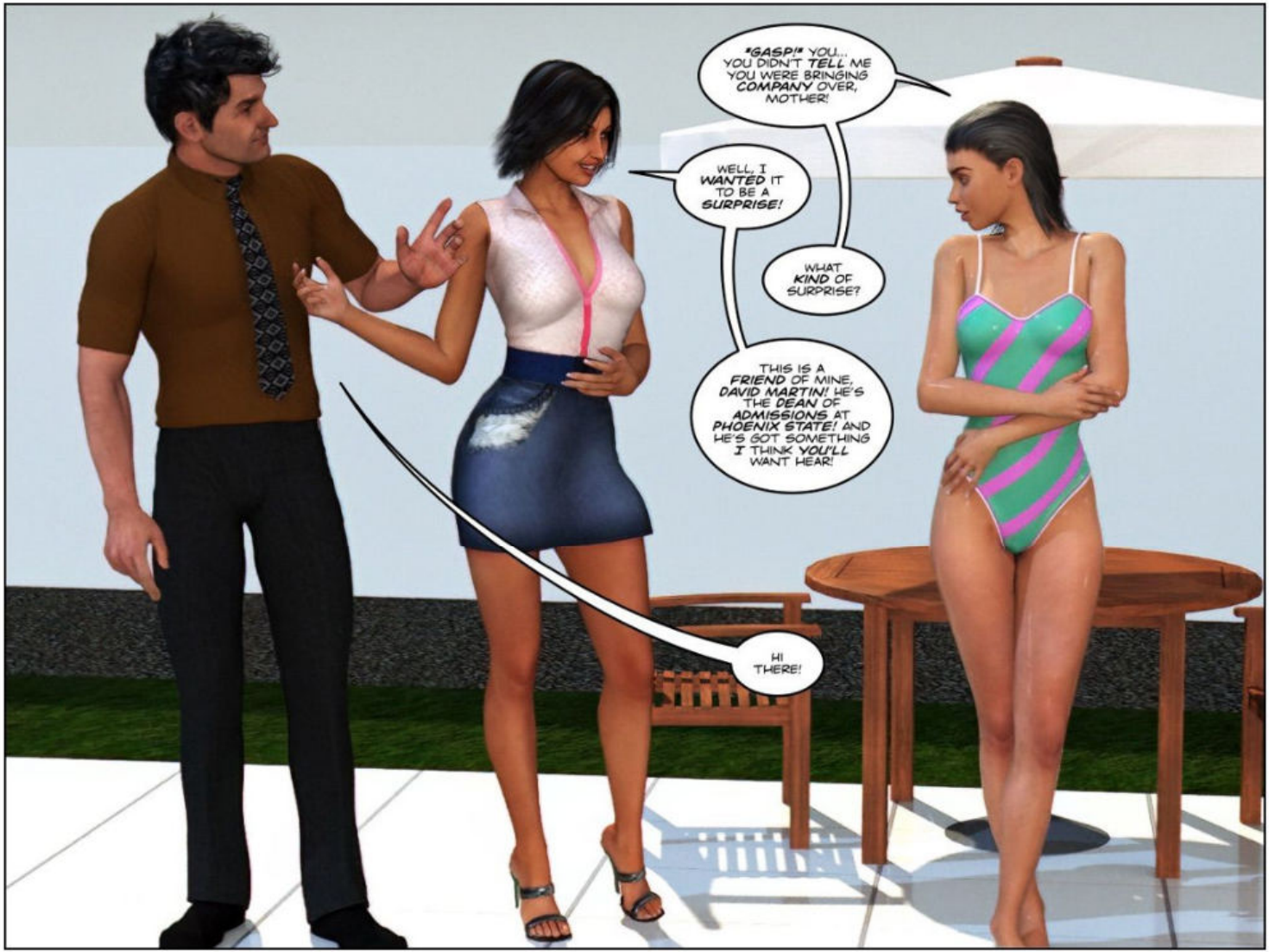

SO, SHE'S OUT BACK SWIMMING! BEFORE WE GO OUT THERE, A COUPLE OF THINGS TO REMIND YOU OF..
FIRST, SHE'S NOT EXPECTING YOU, AND SECOND, SHE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT OUR LITTLE... FRIENDSHIP!
"FRIENDSHIP", HUH? THAT'S WHAT WE'RE CALLING IT?
FOR THE TIME BEING!


BUT IF YOU'RE A GOOD BOY TODAY, I'LL SEE TO IT YOU GET A VERY SPECIAL REWARD TOMORROW! SOUND GOOD TO YOU?
YOU ALWAYS SOUND GOOD TO ME, GORGEOUS!


HONEY?! CAN YOU TAKE A BREAK FOR A FEW MINUTES? I'D LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU!
ONE MORE LAP, MOTHER, AND I'LL BE RIGHT OUT!


I WAS PLANNING ON TAKING A BREAK RIGHT ABOUT NOW ANYWAY!


I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO BEING ABLE TO SWIM OUTSIDE ALMOST ALL YEAR LONG! IT'S AWESOME!
SWEETHEART, THERE'S SOMEONE HERE I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET!


"GASP!" YOU... YOU DIDN'T TELL ME YOU WERE BRINGING COMPANY OVER, MOTHER!
WELL, I WANTED IT TO BE A SURPRISE!
WHAT KIND OF SURPRISE?
THIS IS A FRIEND OF MINE, DAVID MARTIN! HE'S THE DEAN OF ADMISSIONS AT PHOENIX STATE! AND HE'S GOT SOMETHING I THINK YOU'LL WANT HEAR!
HI THERE!


LIKE YOUR MOM SAID, I'M THE DEAN OF ADMISSIONS AT WHAT I THINK IS ONE OF THE FINEST SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHWEST! AND I THINK YOU WOULD BE A PERFECT FIT AT OUR SCHOOL!
THE GRIT AND DETERMINATION YOU'VE SHOWN TO OVERCOME THE HARDSHIPS YOU'VE ENDURED EPITOMIZES THE QUALITIES WE LOOK FOR IN PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS!
I TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT YOUR ACCIDENT LAST YEAR AND THE MULTIPLE SURGERIES YOU'VE UNDERGONE THAT HAVE PUT YOUR COLLEGE PLANS ON HOLD FOR SO LONG!
HARDSHIPS? MOTHER, WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?
COLLEGE? BUT MOTHER, I'M NOT...


YOU THINK IT'S TOO LATE BECAUSE YOU MISSED THE APPLICATION DEADLINE FOR NEXT YEAR! BUT AS DEAN, I HAVE CERTAIN EXEMPTION PRIVILEGES THAT I WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO EXERCISE IN YOUR CASE!
AND CONSIDERING WHAT A STRONG, DEDICATED AND LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN YOU ARE, I WOULD BE HONORED TO HANDLE AND EXPEDITE ANY AND ALL PAPERWORK REQUIRED TO GET YOU ENROLLED FOR OUR FALL SEMESTER!
BUT...


ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL, DEAR? WITH DAVID'S HELP, YOU CAN STILL START COLLEGE THIS FALL, AND NO MORE WORRIES ABOUT THAT SWIMMING SCHOLARSHIP YOU LOST OUT ON!
HEY, IF IT'S SWIMMING SCHOLARSHIPS YOU'RE INTERESTED IN, THE SWIMMING COACH IS A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE AND OWES ME MORE THAN A FEW FAVORS!
FROM WHAT LITTLE I'VE SEEN FROM YOU TODAY AND WHAT YOUR MOM HAS TOLD ME, I'M SURE I COULD CONVINCE COACH BRADFORD TO DUST OFF SOME UNUSED FINANCIAL AID FOR YOU, OR MAYBE EVEN A FULLBLOWN SCHOLARSHIP!
I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF THIS!


I KNOW IT'S A LOT TO TAKE IN SO QUICKLY, SWEETHEART! SO WHY DON'T WE LET THE DEAN HERE GET BACK TO WORK WHILE YOU AND I HAVE A NICE LONG TALK ABOUT ALL THIS!
YEAH! I... I THINK THAT'D BE A REAL GOOD IDEA, MOTHER!
OF COURSE! AND IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, I'M JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY!


THANK YOU AGAIN SO MUCH, DEAN MARTIN! AND WE'LL DEFINITELY BE IN TOUCH VERY SOON!
I CERTAINLY HOPE SO! IT WAS GREAT TO FINALLY MEET YOU, ARIEL!
HUH?!


ARIEL?! HE CALLED ME ARIEL!
WHY ON EARTH WOULD HE CALL ME ARIEL?
BECAUSE... THAT'S WHAT I TOLD HIM YOUR NAME WAS!
"GASP!" WHY DID YOU DO THAT, MOTHER?!
*SIGH! THERE WERE SO MANY REASONS WHY, HONEY, AND ALL OF THEM ARE FOR YOUR BENEFIT!


HOW COULD TELLING HIM THAT I'M MY OWN DEAD SISTER BENEFIT ME IN ANY POSSIBLE WAY?
WELL, FIRST OF ALL YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN SO I CAN EXPLAIN!


BECAUSE OF THAT HORRIBLE ATTACK, YOU'VE BEEN FORCED TO MASQUERADE AS A GIRL! AND YOU'VE BEEN SUCH A GREAT SPORT ABOUT IT! EXCEEDED MY EVERY EXPECTATION!
BUT I WAS THINKING THAT IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE BACK, WON'T IT BE EASIER ON YOU... AND EVERYONE ELSE... IF THEY NEVER KNEW YOU TOOK THIS TEMPORARY TRIP INTO WOMANHOOD?
THIS WAY, YOU WON'T HAVE THE BURDEN OF CONSTANTLY HAVING TO EXPLAIN HOW ALEX WAS A BOY WHO BECAME A GIRL AND THEN BECAME A BOY AGAIN... SOMETHING YOU'D HAVE TO DEAL WITH FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE IF THE TRUTH GOT OUT!
SO YOU THINK IT'S BETTER FOR ME TO PRETEND TO BE ARIEL? BUT SHE DIED ALMOST A YEAR AGO! ALL ANYONE HAS TO DO IS CHECK THE RECORDS, AND...


AND THOSE RECORDS ARE ALL THE WAY ACROSS THE COUNTRY, ACCESSIBLE BY PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE THAN HAPPY TO "TWEAK" THOSE RECORDS IN ORDER TO HELP OUT A DEAR FRIEND!
ARIEL BRANSON DIDN'T DIE IN THAT CAR WRECK! SHE WAS SEVERELY INJURED, THOUGH, AND SPENT MONTHS RECUPERATING IN A PRIVATE FACILITY IN EUROPE! SHE FINALLY MOVED BACK IN WITH ME ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?


BUT... IF YOU TELL PEOPLE I'M ARIEL, THEN WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE HAPPENED TO YOUR SON, ALEX?
WHERE AM I IN ALL THIS, MOTHER? SOME PEOPLE MIGHT WONDER ABOUT MY WHEREABOUTS... EVENTUALLY, AT LEAST!
AND THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM, BECAUSE IF THEY DO, I'M PREPARED TO SAY THAT AFTER THE VICIOUS ATTACK ON MY SON, HE IS SLOWLY RECUPERATING IN THE SAME FACILITY HIS SISTER DID!


BUT ALL THIS SEEMS LIKE SO MUCH TROUBLE JUST FOR ME TO GO TO COLLEGE THIS YEAR! I DON'T MIND WAITING, MOTHER! I REALLY DON'T!
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO MOVE ON, HONEY! YOU SPENT THE LAST YEAR WASTING TIME AT THAT COMMUNITY COLLEGE BECUASE YOU WANTED TO TAKE CARE OF ME... AND YOU DID! AND NOW IT'S MY TURN TO TAKE CARE OF YOU!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW CRUEL PEOPLE CAN BE WHEN IT COMES TO TRANSGENDER PEOPLE? I'M JUST TRYING TO SAVE YOU FROM ALL THAT, SWEETHEART!
YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH ALREADY... WHY PUT YOU THROUGH ANY MORE SUFFERING IF WE DON'T HAVE TO?


I... I HAVE BEEN PRETTY NERVOUS WONDERING WHAT PEOPLE WILL THINK OF ME WHEN I START GOING OUT IN PUBLIC AGAIN! I'VE BEEN DREADING THE IDEA OF HAVING TO EXPLAIN WHO I REALLY AM!
IT'S A BIG PART OF WHY I'VE BEEN SO RELUCTANT TO LEAVE THE HOUSE!
I UNDERSTAND THAT, COMPLETELY, DARLING! THAT'S WHY TELLING EVERYONE THAT YOU'RE ARIEL IS THE PERFECT SOLUTION ALL THE WAY AROUND!
NO ONE AROUND HERE EVER MET ARIEL, SO THEY'LL BE NONE THE WISER WHEN THEY MEET YOU!


I WOULD LOVE TO GO TO COLLEGE... AND STAYING HOME TO DO IT HAS A LOT MORE APPEAL THAN IT USED TO!
AND IF I COULD GET ON THE SWIM TEAM, THAT WOULD REALLY MAKE IT SWEET!
EXACTLY! YOU GET WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED AND I GET WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED... MY REMAINING CHILD CLOSE TO ME!


ALL RIGHT, MOTHER, WE'LL GIVE IT A TRY! IT'LL BE WEIRD HAVING PEOPLE CALL ME ARIEL, BUT... I SUPPOSE I'LL GET USED TO IT!
THAT'S MY GIRL!


OH, AND WHEN WE CONTACT THE DEAN, CAN WE DO IT OVER THE PHONE? THE WAY HE LOOKED AT ME SEEMED KIND OF.. I DON'T KNOW.. CREEPY!
UGH! THAT'S CERTAINLY NOT SOMETHING I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO!
GET USED TO THAT LOOK, DARLING! IT'S THE WAY MOST MEN WILL BE LOOKING AT YOU FROM NOW ON!
ON THE CONTRARY, HONEY! IF YOU'RE SMART, AND YOU ARE, YOU'LL LEARN TO USE IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!


BECAUSE MEN, ESPECIALLY MEN LIKE THE DEAN, LOVE TO BEND OVER BACKWARDS FOR PRETTY YOUNG THINGS LIKE YOU!
AND IT NEVER HURTS TO HAVE IMPORTANT MEN NOTICE YOU... AND EVEN BETTER WHEN THEY WANT TO DO THINGS FOR YOU!
THAT DOESN'T SOUND VERY ETHICAL!
IT ISN'T! BUT IT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD, SWEETHEART! AND WE WOMEN HAVE TO WORK WITH THE DEAL WE'VE BEEN ALLOTTED!


Later that night, after "Ariel" has gone to bed...
TODAY... WAS A VERY MONUMENTAL AND SATISFYING DAY!


NOW THAT I'VE *FINALLY* CONVINCED HER TO AT LEAST *PRETEND* TO BE *ARIEL*, EVERYTHING *ELSE* I HAVE PLANNED WILL BE A *PIECE OF CAKE!*


I KNOW I'M ALREADY DOUBLE-DOSING HER WITH HORMONES, BUT SHE'S STILL A LITTLE SCRAWNY COMPARED TO WHAT SHE SHOULD BE!
I'LL WRITE HER A NEW PRESCRIPTION TOMORROW THAT SHOULD HELP HER DEVELOP A BIT MORE BEFORE SHE STARTS COLLEGE! DEFINITELY WANT HER TO HAVE MORE OF THOSE "ADVANTAGES" WE TALKED ABOUT!
HMMM! DIDN'T THINK THIS BOTTLE WAS ALREADY EMPTY! GUESS I JUST LOST TRACK!


ALEX HAS ALWAYS BEEN WITHDRAWN WHEN IT COMES TO MEETING NEW PEOPLE... A TRAIT WE DEFINITELY NEED TO FIX!
SO MUCH ABOUT THAT BOY NEEDS ADJUSTING IN ORDER FOR HIM TO FILL ARIEL'S SHOES!

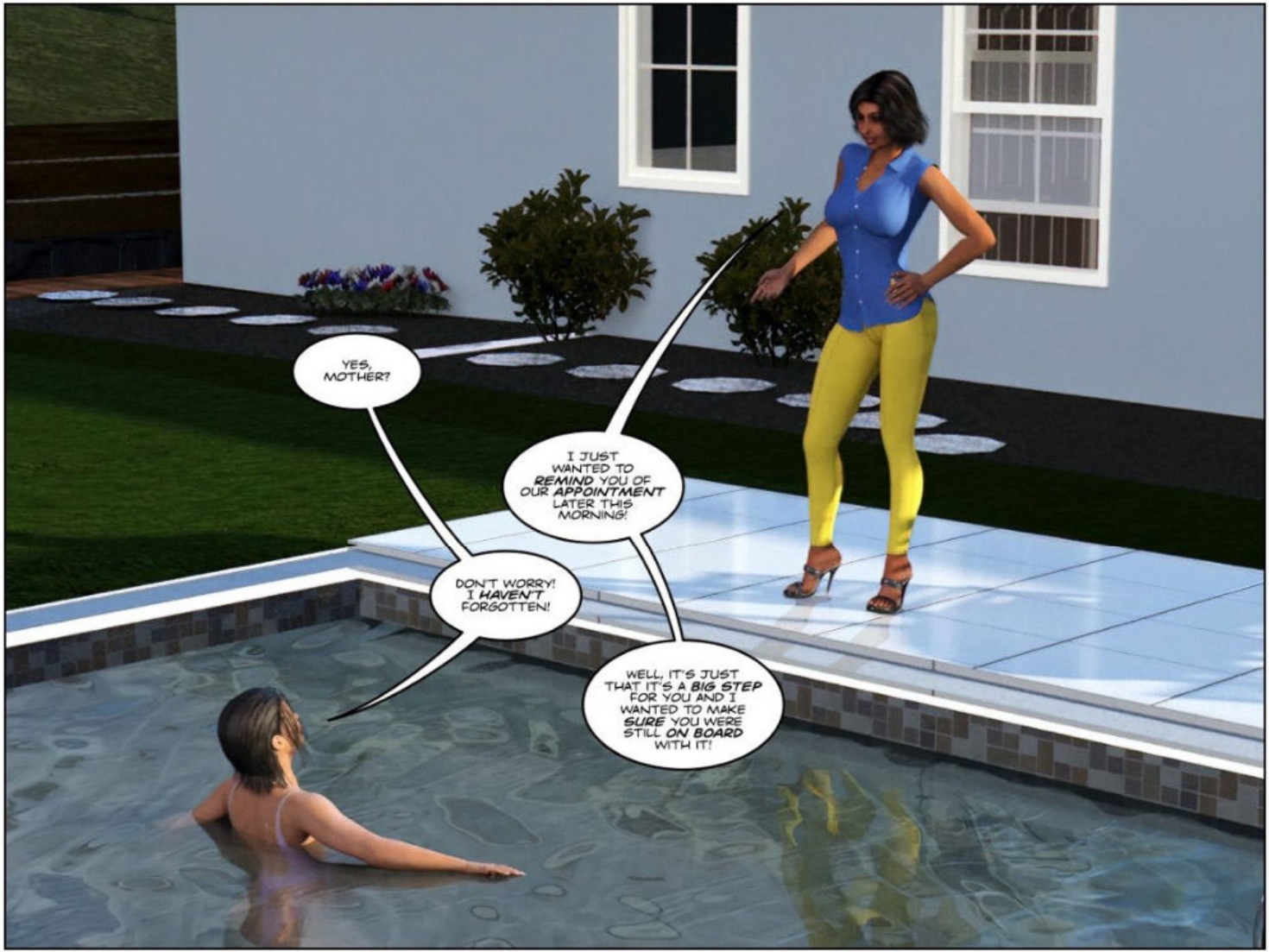

THANK GOODNESS I HAVE THE TIME AND KNOW-HOW TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ALTERATIONS!


...THE PRESENCE OF A MAN IS SOMETHING THAT...
...THE KIND OF GIRL WHO ENJOYS BEING AROUND PEOPLE, AND...
...ENJOYS HER FEMININE BODY AND THE WAY IT...
BEFORE TOO LONG, SHE'LL BE THE DAUGHTER I'VE ALWAYS DESERVED!


ARIEL
2.0
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GENDER-MIX COMIX
03


Several weeks later...
an early June morning...


HONEY? I HATE TO INTERRUPT YOUR MORNING SWIM, BUT COULD YOU STOP FOR A MOMENT? I NEED TO TALK WITH YOU!


YES, MOTHER?
I JUST WANTED TO REMIND YOU OF OUR APPOINTMENT LATER THIS MORNING!
DON'T WORRY! I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN!
WELL, IT'S JUST THAT IT'S A BIG STEP FOR YOU AND I WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE STILL ON BOARD WITH IT!


I MADE YOU A PROMISE, MOTHER, AND I'LL STICK TO IT! IT'S AT ELEVEN, RIGHT?
YES, BUT I HAVE SOME ERRANDS TO RUN BEFORE THEN, SO IT'D BE EASIER IF YOU JUST MET ME THERE! ARE YOU OKAY WITH THAT?
NOT A PROBLEM! JUST LEAVE THE ADDRESS ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER AND I'LL SEE YOU THERE!


PERFECT! HAVE A GOOD MORNING, SWEETHEART!
YOU TOO, MOTHER!


MIGHT AS WELL CALL THIS WORKOUT OVER! THAT'LL GIVE ME PLENTY OF TIME TO SHOWER, GET DRESSED AND RELAX BEFORE LEAVING!


I'VE TRIED TO PUT THIS DAY OFF AS LONG AS I COULD! BUT LIKE MOTHER KEEPS TELLING ME, IT'S INEVITABLE!
AND UNLESS I WANT TO INCUR HER WRATH, I'D BETTER BE AT HER SALON ON TIME WITH A SMILE ON MY FACE!
SHE CLAIMS IT'S SOME KIND OF RITE OF PASSAGE, BUT I THINK IT'S JUST GOING TO BE A WASTE OF TIME!


*SIGH* WHEN I TOLD MOTHER TO BUY ME ANOTHER ONE-PIECE TO REPLACE THE ONE I OUTGREW, I ASSUMED SHE'D GET ONE THAT HAD THE SAME COVERAGE!
COULD BE WORSE, I GUESS! SHE MIGHT'VE IGNORED MY REQUEST COMPLETELY AND BOUGHT A BIKINI... WHICH ISN'T THE BEST THING FOR COMPETITIVE SWIMMING!


I'M ACTUALLY A LITTLE SURPRISED MOTHER HASN'T ALREADY GONE HOG WILD BUYING CLOTHES FOR ME!
THE FACT THAT SHE LISTENED TO ME WHEN I INSISTED THAT SHE DIDN'T AND RESISTED HER PRIMAL URGE TO SHOP IS STILL BAFFLING!


OKAY, LET'S SEE WHERE THIS PLACE IS.


Salon del Sol
35th and Bethany Woods.
Please try and wear something a little less frumpy than your usual ware.
You could see if any of Ariel's things will fit you now. Her boxes are in the closet in the spare room.
OH MY GOD! SHE STILL HAS ALL OF ARIEL'S CLOTHES?


SHE OBVIOUSLY HASN'T LOOKED THROUGH THEM ALL. OTHERWISE SHE'D HAVE HAVE HAD A MAJOR MELTDOWN!
MOTHER STILL DOESN'T KNOW THE FULL EXTENT OF ARIEL'S WARDROBE! IT'S WHY I VOLUNTEERED TO BOX UP ALL OF HER THINGS BACK IN BOSTON, SO MOTHER WOULD NEVER SEE THE WAY ARIEL DRESSED AFTER SHE LEFT THE HOUSE!
MOTHER SAID SHE WAS GOING TO DONATE EVERYTHING! DAMN IT! WHY THE HELL WOULD SHE MOVE EVERYTHING TO ARIZONA WITH US?


I BETTER MAKE DAMN SURE MOTHER NEVER SEES THE RACIER OUTFITS IN THESE BOXES!


Close to two hours later...
Merco PRODUCTS
UGH! THAT TOOK FOREVER! BUT I THINK I FINALLY GOT ALL OF ARIEL'S SLUTTIER STUFF CRAMMED INTO THIS ONE BOX!
ONCE I PILE SOME THINGS ON TOP OF IT AND SLIDE TO THE BACK OF MY CLOSET, MOTHER WILL NEVER BE THE WISER!


*SIGH!*. BUT NOW I'VE ONLY GOT LITTLE MORE THAN AN HOUR TO SHOWER, THROW SOME CLOTHES ON AND GET MY ASS TO THAT DAMNED SALON!


Not too much later,
just after eleven...


"SIGH!" IT'S AFTER ELEVEN! I SWEAR, I THOUGHT THAT CHILD WAS MORE RESPONSIBLE THAN THIS!


ARIEL BRANSON? I'M READY FOR YOU!
OH, I'M NOT ARIEL, I'M HER MOTHER! ARIEL IS RUNNING A BIT LATE, I'M AFRAID!
AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE READY FOR HER? HER APPOINTMENT IS SUPPOSED TO BE WITH RUTH! WHERE IS SHE?


I'M SORRY! RUTH HAD TO CALL IN SICK THIS MORNING! I'M HER NIECE, CHLOE, AND I'LL BE TAKING CARE OF YOUR DAUGHTER TODAY... WHEN SHE GETS HERE!
AND SHE IS!
EXIT


I'M SO SORRY I'M LATE, MOTHER! I LOST TRACK OF THE TIME WHILE SWIMMING!
BEING LATE IS INCONSIDERATE TO BOTH ME AND THE PEOPLE WHO WORK HERE, YOUNG LADY!
IT'S ONLY A COUPLE OF MINUTES... NO PROBLEM! COME ON BACK, ARIEL!


SO, IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME TO OUR SALON?
IT'S ACTUALLY MY FIRST TIME IN ANY SALON!
WELL THEN, I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE YOUR VISIT EXTRA SPECIAL, SO YOU'LL WANT TO KEEP COMING BACK!


JUST PARK YOURSELF RIGHT BACK HERE AND WE'LL GET STARTED!
IF SHE WERE ALWAYS GOING TO BE MY STYLIST, I'D PROBABLY END UP COMING HERE EVERY OTHER DAY!
DAMN! SHE IS HOT!


DID RUTH GIVE YOU THE INFORMATION I GAVE HER? BECAUSE I HAVE SOME VERY SPECIFIC IDEAS OF WHAT I WANT DONE!
YEAH, SHE DID! BUT SINCE ARIEL HERE IS THE "PATIENT", I THOUGHT I'D HEAR WHAT SHE HAS TO SAY!
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, SWEETIE? WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM CHLOE TODAY?
UMMM... WHATEVER MOTHER WANTS, I GUESS!
EX


OKAY... I GET IT!
YEAH, LIKE, I CAN THINK STRAIGHT WITH THOSE IN MY FACE! WOW!


WHY DON'T YOU GO DO SOME SHOPPING, MOM, 'CAUSE THIS IS GONNA TAKE A WHILE!
YOUR SOON-TO-BE EVEN MORE GORGEOUS DAUGHTER HERE WILL TEXT YOU AS SOON AS WE'RE DONE... PROMISE!
LEAVE? BUT I THOUGHT I'D...


WELL... I GUESS I DO HAVE SOME MORE ERRANDS TO RUN!
ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE, HONEY!
OH, I WILL, MOTHER! I PROMISE!


HMPH! DON'T THINK FOR A MINUTE THAT I CAN'T SEE THE WAY YOU'RE OGLING THAT HAIRDRESSER, MY DEAR!
BUT DON'T YOU WORRY! BY THE TIME ALL THIS IS SAID AND DONE, ANY CONFUSION ALONG THAT FRONT WILL BE A THING OF THE PAST!


SO, DID YOU HAVE ANY SAY IN WHAT YOUR MOTHER HAD PLANNED FOR YOU TODAY?
NO, NOT REALLY! TO BE HONEST, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT SHE'S TOLD YOU... BUT I CAN PROBABLY GUESS!
AND DO YOU WANT TO STICK WITH HER PLANS?
NOT NECESSARILY! WHY? DID YOU HAVE SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND?
OH, HONEY, I ALWAYS HAVE SOMETHING ELSE IN MIND!
EMERGENCY EXIT


JUST GET COMFY AND LET ME DO MY MAGIC!
UMM, DON'T GO TOO CRAZY, OKAY? LIKE I SAID, THIS IS MY FIRST TIME!
TRUST ME, DARLIN'! I'LL TAKE IT EASY ON YOU... THIS TIME! *GIGGLE!*


About an hour and a half later...
VOILA! CARE TO SEE THE FINAL PRODUCT!
UM, YEAH! ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING YOU HAVEN'T LET ME SEE ANYTHING YET!


"GASP!" OH MY..
THAT'S ALWAYS MY FAVORITE KIND OF RESPONSE!
I HAD NO IDEA I COULD LOOK SO... SO BEAUTIFUL!
YOU WERE BEAUTIFUL BEFORE YOU WALKED IN THAT DOOR, SWEETIE! I JUST MADE IT A BIT MORE OBVIOUS!
NOW, WHY DON'T YOU TEXT YOUR MOTHER?


A Few minutes later...
SO FEEL FREE TO USE THAT NUMBER ANYTIME... FOR A TOUCH-UP, TOTAL MAKEOVER OR JUST TO HANG OUT! OKAY?
OKAY! *GIGGLE!*
OKAY, LET'S SEE WHAT I PAID FOR!


TA-DA!
WHAT DO YOU THINK, MOTHER?
OH MY GOD! IS THAT REALLY MY LITTLE GIRL?


YOU'RE REALLY OKAY WITH IT?
OKAY? YOU LOOK LOVELY, HONEY!
IT'S NOT EXACTLY THE HAIR STYLE I HAD IN MIND, BUT IT'LL DO FOR NOW!
I DECIDED TO GIVE HER A STYLE THAT WAS QUICK AND EASY FOR HER TO WORK WITH, BEING A SWIMMER AND ALL!
BUT I ALSO TOLD HER I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO UPDATE HER 'DO ANYTIME SHE WANTS!


WELL, WE'LL BE SURE TO DO THAT... IF RUTH'S UNAVAILABLE!
COME ALONG, HONEY! WE STILL HAVE A LOT TO DO TODAY!
REMEMBER WHAT I SAID, DARLIN'... ANYTIME!
THANKS! I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND!


SO WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
NOTHING, REALLY! IT'S JUST THAT WE HIT IT OFF! AND SINCE I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS...
I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST YOU CULTIVATING FRIENDSHIPS, HONEY, BUT ISN'T SHE A BIT... OLD FOR YOU? WHAT IS SHE... 25... 27?
SHE'S 22, NOT MUCH OLDER THAN ME!


BUT YOU'RE JUST 19! THERE'S A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 19 AND 22 THESE DAYS!
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE HAPPY TO SEE ME MAKING FRIENDS WITH SOMEONE WHO BRINGS OUT MY FEMININE SIDE!
YES, I CAN SEE WHAT A GOOD INFLUENCE SHE IS... TEACHING YOU HOW TO TALK BACK TO ME!


I'M SORRY, MOTHER! I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE DISRESPECTFUL TO YOU! I JUST THOUGHT... !
YOU JUST GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE EXCITEMENT OF EXPERIENCING NEW THINGS, SWEETIE! I UNDERSTAND!
JUST DON'T GET TOO MESMERIZED BY EVERY NEW PERSON YOU MEET! YOU'RE GOING TO ENCOUNTER A LOT MORE PEOPLE TODAY AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET OVERWHELMED!
WHAT ALL DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR US THIS AFTERNOON?
WELL, I THOUGHT WE'D HAVE A LATE LUNCH AT THIS DARLING LITTLE BISTRO AT THE OTHER END OF THE MALL! BUT FIRST, WE NEED TO DO SOME SERIOUS SHOPPING!


Comfort etc.
THE SALON WAS JUST A START! WHAT YOU NEED NOW IS A NEW WARDROBE!
A WHOLE NEW WARDROBE? IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY?
IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY GET RID OF THIS DREADFUL TOMBOYISH IMAGE OF YOURS!
*SIGH!* WHATEVER YOU SAY, MOTHER!


A couple of hours later, at a patio bistro at the other end of the mall...


HERE WE ARE, HONEY! THE PERFECT SPOT FOR A LATE LUNCH BEFORE WE HEAD HOME!
THANK GOD! MY FEET ARE KILLING ME! I FEEL LIKE WE'VE WALKED FOR MILES!
Fashion


AND COULDN'T WE HAVE WAITED UNTIL WE GOT HOME BEFORE MAKING ME DO A MARATHON IN HIGH HEELS?
I WOULD HARDLY CALL THOSE HIGH HEELS, DEAR! THEY'RE WEDGES... AND RELATIVELY LOW ONES AT THAT!
AND WEARING THOSE, AS WELL AS THE HIGHER HEELS I KNOW YOU'LL EVENTUALLY LOVE, MAKE THOSE SWIMMER LEGS OF YOURS LOOK EVEN MORE FABULOUS!


YEAH, ABOUT THE LEGS... AND EVERYTHING ELSE ON ME THAT'S SHOWING, DID I REALLY HAVE TO WEAR AN OUTFIT LIKE THIS MY FIRST DAY OUT?
I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE YOU IN THOSE HORRIBLE JEANS AND TOP ONE SECOND LONGER! YOU LOOK LOVELY THIS WAY, SO GET USED TO IT!
OH, LOOK! THERE'S A PERFECT TABLE RIGHT OVER HERE!


JUST THE RIGHT BALANCE OF SUN AND SHADE! GO AHEAD AND PUT YOUR PACKAGES OVER HERE NEXT TO MINE, HONEY!
GLAD TO! I'VE BEEN CARRYING THESE AROUND FOR WAY TOO LONG!


UMM, FEELING A BIT OF A DRAFT, DEAR?
I'VE BEEN FEELING NOTHING BUT A DRAFT SINCE YOU BOUGHT ME THIS SKIRT! WHY ARE YOU JUST NOW ASKING?
OH, NO REASON! BUT I AM CURIOUS AS TO WHY YOU FEEL THE NEED TO FLASH YOUR NEW PANTIES AT EVERYONE!
HUH?! WHAT ARE YOU...?


HOLY SHIT!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME SOONER, MOTHER?!
OH, I COULD HAVE WARNED YOU ABOUT EXPOSING YOUR DERRIERE, BUT YOU KNOW THAT I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT LEARNING IS BEST ACHIEVED THROUGH EXPERIENCE!


NOW HONESTLY, DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'LL BE BENDING OVER LIKE THAT AGAIN AFTER EXPERIENCING THE EMBARRASSMENT OF YOUR LITTLE DISPLAY?
PROBABLY NOT!
LESSON LEARNED! YOU HAVE SO MUCH TO DISCOVER ABOUT BEING A YOUNG WOMAN, HONEY, AND THE QUICKER YOU LEARN, THE BETTER!


NOW, STOP SLOUCHING AND SIT UP LIKE A LADY SO WE CAN ENJOY SOME LUNCH!
YES, MOTHER!


OH, MAN! DID YOU JUST SEE THAT?
SEE WHAT?
THAT CHICK OVER THERE JUST FLASHED HER ASS AT US! AND LET ME TELL YOU, IT WAS ONE SPECTACULAR ASS!


I DON'T SEE ANYTHING! WHICH CHICK YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THE HOT ONE OVER THERE, SITTING ACROSS FROM THE MILF!
OH, THAT ONE! THINK SHE DID IT ON PURPOSE?
WHO CARES? ALL I KNOW IS THAT SHE'S JUST WHET MY APPETITE FOR MORE!


ALL I NEED IS AN OPENING! HEH-HEH!


A little later, after lunch...
THAT WAS DELICIOUS!
YES, IT WAS! THANK YOU, MOTHER!


I'M GOING TO GO FRESHEN UP! I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'D CARE TO JOIN ME?
BABY STEPS, MOTHER... PLEASE! A CROWDED MALL IS HARDLY THE PLACE FOR ME TO MAKE MY FIRST EXCURSION INTO A PUBLIC WOMEN'S RESTROOM!
CAN WE JUST WORK OUR WAY UP TO THAT?


OF COURSE, DEAR! I'LL BE BACK SOON! KEEP AN EYE ON THE PACKAGES!
I WILL!


THE MILF'S LEAVING! NOW'S OUR CHANCE!
TO DO WHAT?
TO TALK TO HER, MAN! DUH!


YOU'RE JUST GONNA WALK UP TO HER, A PERFECT STRANGER, AND START A CONVERSATION?
HOW DO YOU EVEN DO THAT?


WATCH AND LEARN, MI COMPADRE! WATCH AND LEARN!


I WISH THERE WAS STILL SOME ICE IN THIS DRINK! THESE NEW PIERCED EARS ARE STARTING TO HURT AGAIN!
*SIGH!* MY EARS HURT, MY FEET ACHE AND PRETTY MUCH ANYONE WHO WAS PAYING ATTENTION KNOWS WHAT COLOR UNDERWEAR I'M WEARING!
NOT THE MOST AUSPICIOUS START TO MY NEW LIFE AS ARIEL!


STILL, EVEN THOUGH I'VE KNOWN FOR MONTHS THAT THIS DAY WAS COMING, I NEVER DELUDED MYSELF INTO THINKING IT'D GO OFF WITHOUT AT LEAST ONE OR TWO OR FOURTEEN HITCHES! I'M NOT THAT NAIVE!
BUT I REALLY THOUGHT MOTHER WOULD AT LEAST TRY AND EASE ME INTO IT INSTEAD OF TOSSING ME HEAD FIRST INTO THE GIRLY END OF THE POOL!
THAT'S MOTHER, THOUGH... NEVER ONE DO TO ANYTHING AT HALF SPEED! "FULL THROTTLE AHEAD" HAS ALWAYS BEEN HER MOTTO!


AND LIKE SHE SAID, THE BEST WAY TO LEARN NEW THINGS IS THROUGH EXPERIENCING THEM!
SO I GUESS IT'S TIME FOR ME TO STOP HIDING OUT AT THE HOUSE AND TO GET OUT AND START EXPERIENCING "ARIEL'S" LIFE!
BECAUSE MOTHER DESERVES TO HAVE A DAUGHTER TO REPLACE THE ONE THAT I TOOK FROM HER!


EXCUSE ME, MISS! I HOPE WE'RE NOT INTRUDING OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT, BUT YOU LOOK REAL FAMILIAR! DID WE HAVE ANY CLASSES TOGETHER LAST SEMESTER?
HUH?! UMM... CLASSES?
AT PSU... THIS LAST SEMESTER! I'M A JUNIOR OVER THERE AND I COULD SWEAR I'VE SEEN YOU ON CAMPUS!
OH, UHHH... I'M NOT A STUDENT THERE... AT LEAST NOT YET!
OH SHIT! WHERE DID THESE TWO GUYS COME FROM? HAVE THEY BEEN HERE THE WHOLE TIME? DID THEY SEE MY LITTLE PANTIE FAUX PAS? IS THAT WHY THEY'RE REALLY HERE?
SHIT, SHIT, SHIT! WHERE THE HELL IS MOTHER?!


MY MISTAKE! I GUESS IT WAS JUST WISHFUL THINKING ON MY PART!
WISHFUL THINKING?
JUST WISHING I'D SEEN SOMEONE AS BEAUTIFUL AS YOU IN ONE OF MY CLASSES!
OH GREAT! THE LAST THING I WANTED TODAY WAS ATTENTION... ESPECIALLY THIS KIND OF ATTENTION!
AND I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO MAKE THEM GO AWAY WITHOUT CREATING A SCENE AND MAKING THINGS WORSE!
MAYBE SOME SUBTLE HINTS WILL DO THE TRICK... AT LEAST UNTIL MOTHER GETS BACK! I KNOW SHE'LL CHASE THEM OFF FOR ME!


SO WERE YOU TWO JUST GETTING READY TO LEAVE?
ACTUALLY WE JUST GOT HERE A FEW MINUTES BEFORE WE SAW YOU! THOUGHT WE'D STOP OFF FOR AN ICED MOCHA OR SOMETHING BEFORE HEADING BACK TO CAMPUS!
HOW ABOUT YOU? IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE HERE WITH SOMEONE! PLEASE TELL ME IT'S NOT YOUR BOYFRIEND! HEH-HEH!
UMM, NO... I'M HERE WITH MY MOTHER, DOING A BIT OF SHOPPING! BUT WE'LL PROBABLY BE LEAVING AS SOON AS SHE GETS BACK!
SO THEY DIDN'T SEE MY CLUMSY PANTY MANEUVER! THANK GOD! AT LEAST I'M SPARED THAT HUMILIATION!


WELL I CERTAINLY HOPE SHE TAKES HER TIME! I'M CHAZ, BY THE WAY, AND THIS IS MY BUD, RUDY!
HEY.
I'M AL... I MEAN... ARIEL!
ARIEL! I LOVE THAT NAME! IT SUITS YOU!


UM, THANKS, BUT I OBVIOUSLY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT! MY NAME WAS ALL MY MOTHER'S IDEA! *GIGGLE!*
YOU'D BE BLOWN AWAY IF YOU KNEW JUST HOW MUCH OF EVERYTHING YOU SEE IN FRONT OF YOU WAS MOTHER'S IDEA!


WELL, LOOK AT THIS! I LEAVE FOR A FEW MINUTES AND YOU'VE MANAGED TO WRANGLE US A COUPLE OF HANDSOME YOUNG MEN! WELL DONE, DEAR!
I DIDN'T... I MEAN, THEY JUST CAME OVER, AND...
OH, RELAX, HONEY! I'M JUST HAVING FUN WITH YOU! WHO ARE YOUR NEW FRIENDS?


CHARLES BECKHAM, JR, MA'AM! MY FRIENDS CALL ME CHAZ! AND THIS IS MY FRIEND, RUDY DOLITTLE!
I THOUGHT YOUR DAUGHTER WAS SOMEONE ELSE, BUT WHEN WE APPROACHED HER I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED TO SEE THAT I WAS MISTAKEN!
A SMOOTH TONGUE LIKE THAT SOUNDS LIKE IT BELONGS TO SOMEONE IN LAW SCHOOL!
NOT YET, MA'AM, BUT AFTER I GRADUATE... HOPEFULLY! IT'S KIND OF A FAMILY TRADITION!


THEN WOULD THAT MAKE YOU ONE OF THE BECKHAMS OF THE BECKHAM AND BECKHAM LAW FIRM THAT OCCUPIES A RATHER LARGE PIECE OF DOWNTOWN REAL ESTATE?
THAT WOULD BE MY FATHER AND GRANDFATHER, MA'AM! BUT I'M HOPING TO ADD MY NAME UP THERE TOO SOMEDAY!
HANDSOME AND AMBITIOUS... NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT, RIGHT, ARIEL?
MOTHER!


WELL, AS MUCH AS I'M SURE ARIEL WOULD LOVE TO STAY AND CHAT ALL AFTERNOON, WE STILL HAVE PLENTY OF SHOPPING TO DO!
UGH! YOU HAD TO PUT IT THAT WAY, DIDN'T YOU, MOTHER? WELL, AT LEAST IT GETS US OUT OF HERE!
BUT I THINK IT'D BE EASIER IF WE TAKE ALL OUR EXISTING PACKAGES TO THE CAR BEFORE WE LOAD UP WITH ANY NEW BAGS!
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA, MOTHER! WELL, IT WAS NICE MEETING YOU, CHAZ, AND...


NO, NO, NO, DEAR! YOU STAY HERE AND FINISH YOUR DRINK! I'LL TAKE THE BAGS TO THE CAR WITH THE HELP OF THIS STRAPPING YOUNG MAN!
OUTSTANDING IDEA! AND I'LL STAY HERE AND KEEP ARIEL COMPANY! HELP THE LADY OUT, RUDY!
HUH? ME?
BUT...


WE'LL BE BACK SHORTLY! COME ALONG, YOUNG MAN!
UHHH... YES, MA'AM!
Fashion


SO, WHAT'S YOUR STORY, RUDY?
HUH? MY STORY?
YOUR BACKSTORY... YOUR AMBITIONS... LIKE YOUR FRIEND CHAZ JUST TOLD US! GOING TO JOIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS AFTER COLLEGE?
HARDLY! THE ONLY BUSINESS MY PARENTS HAD WAS DRINKING THEMSELVES INTO A STUPOR EVERY DAY!
I'M SORRY! THAT HAD TO HAVE BEEN TOUGH ON YOU GROWING UP! ANY SIBLINGS?
NO... I WAS THE ONLY ONE LUCKY ENOUGH TO ENDURE THOSE TWO! AT LEAST UNTIL THEY FINALLY DIED A FEW YEARS AGO!


I WAS LUCKY TO HAVE SOMEONE LIKE CHAZ, THOUGH, TO HELP ME THROUGH EVERYTHING!
YOU TWO ARE PRETTY CLOSE, AREN'T YOU!
WELL, YEAH! I'M HIS BEST FRIEND!
OH, I CAN TELL!


YOU KNOW, BEING A FRIEND OF CHAZ PUTS YOU IN THE UNENVIABLE POSITION OF BEING A THIRD WHEEL QUITE OFTEN, DOES IT NOT?
UMMM... WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
LET'S JUST SAY I'M AN EXPERT IN READING BODY LANGUAGE!
FROM THE MOMENT CHAZ NOTICED MY DAUGHTER, YOU'VE BEEN DECIDEDLY FIDGETY AND UNCOMFORTABLE, ALMOST AS IF YOU KNEW HOW THE AFTERNOON WAS GOING TO PLAY OUT!
THAT'S BECAUSE IT'S HAPPENED BEFORE, HASN'T IT! QUITE OFTEN, AS A MATTER OF FACT, HMMM? RUDY, THE THIRD WHEEL!


OKAY, FINE! CHAZ IS A LADIES MAN AND I'M NOT! WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS ANYWAY?
BECAUSE I JUST WANT TO SPARE YOU THE EMBARRASSMENT OF GOING THROUGH IT AGAIN! WHICH ONE OF YOU DROVE HERE TODAY?
UMM, HE DID!
GOOD! AFTER WE DROP OFF THESE PACKAGES I WANT YOU TO TEXT HIM AND TELL HIM YOU'VE FOUND ANOTHER RIDE HOME!
WHAT? I'M JUST GOING TO DITCH HIM?
HONEY, HE'S ALREADY DITCHED YOU! YOU JUST HAVEN'T REALIZED IT YET!

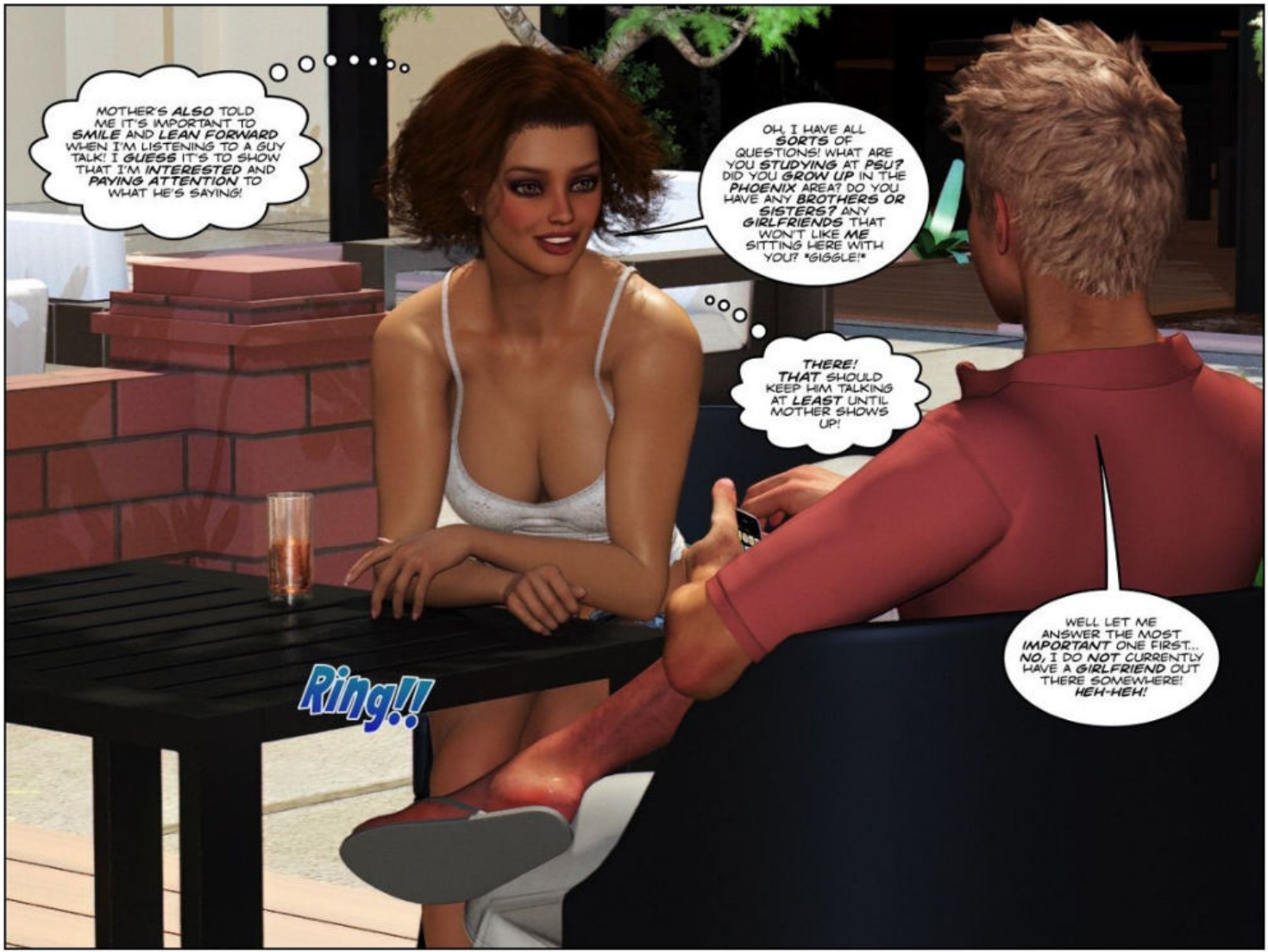

"SIGH!" FINE, I'LL DO IT! BUT HOW AM I GONNA GET HOME?
I'LL CALL YOU AN ÖBER... A REALLY NICE ONE! HOW'S THAT SOUND?
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS, ANYWAY?


LET'S JUST SAY I'M TRYING TO HELP MY DAUGHTER FOSTER NEW FRIENDSHIPS! THAT'S ALL!


SO, ARIEL, YOU SAID YOU'RE PLANNING ON GOING TO PHOENIX STATE IN THE FALL! THAT IS AWESOME! ARE YOU AND YOUR MOM FROM PHOENIX?
UMMM, NO! WE, UHHH... MOVED HERE ABOUT A YEAR AGO FROM BOSTON!
OH, WOW! THAT'S A BIG MOVE! LIFE IN THE DESERT MUST BE PRETTY DIFFERENT, EH?
I'LL SAY! NOTHING'S LIKE IT WAS BACK HOME, AND I'M STILL ADJUSTING! THAT'S WHY I... UH... TOOK A YEAR OFF!
COME ON, MOTHER! WHERE ARE YOU? I'M NOT READY TO BE GRILLED ABOUT "MY" BACKGROUND YET!


YOU TOOK A YEAR OFF? COOL! I SOMETIMES WISH I'D DONE THAT INSTEAD OF DIVING RIGHT INTO THE COLLEGE THING!
SO WHAT'D YOU DO... WORK... TRAVEL... OR JUST HANG OUT TO CATCH YOUR BEARINGS?
UMM... A LITTLE BIT OF ALL THE ABOVE, I GUESS!
CRAP! I KEEP STUMBLING OVER HIS QUESTIONS, TRYING TO WEAVE ARIEL'S LIFE INTO MY OWN! IF I GO INTO MUCH MORE DETAIL, I MAY SLIP UP AND SAY SOMETHING REALLY STUPID!
I NEED TO FIND A WAY TO STOP HIM FROM INTERROGATING ME UNTIL MOTHER GETS BACK!


MOTHER'S ALWAYS COMPLAINING THAT MEN LOVE TO TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES! I CERTAINLY NEVER DID THAT, BUT... WHATEVER! ALL I NEED TO DO IS TO GET HIM TALKING ABOUT HIMSELF INSTEAD OF ME!
ALL THE ABOVE, HUH? SOUNDS BUSY! SO WHERE DID YOU...?
YOU KNOW, YOU'VE BEEN ASKING ALL THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT ME, BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOU!
WELL, HELL! I'M HAPPY TO TELL A BEAUTIFUL GIRL LIKE YOU ANYTHING! ASK AWAY!


MOTHER'S ALSO TOLD ME IT'S IMPORTANT TO SMILE AND LEAN FORWARD WHEN I'M LISTENING TO A GUY TALK! I GUESS IT'S TO SHOW THAT I'M INTERESTED AND PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT HE'S SAYING!
OH, I HAVE ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS! WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING AT PSU? DID YOU GROW UP IN THE PHOENIX AREA? DO YOU HAVE ANY BROTHERS OR SISTERS? ANY GIRLFRIENDS THAT WON'T LIKE ME SITTING HERE WITH YOU? *GIGGLE!*
THERE! THAT SHOULD KEEP HIM TALKING AT LEAST UNTIL MOTHER SHOWS UP!
Ring!!
WELL LET ME ANSWER THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE FIRST... NO, I DO NOT CURRENTLY HAVE A GIRLFRIEND OUT THERE SOMEWHERE! HEH-HEH!


OH, I'M SORRY! I HAVE TO ANSWER THIS! IT'S PROBABLY MY MOTHER!
GO AHEAD, PLEASE! I SEEM TO HAVE GOTTEN A TEXT FROM RUDY MYSELF!! PROBABLY LOST OR SOMETHING! HEH!


RUDY, YOU ARE THE MAN! HEH-HEH!
Ran into Mike near Food court. Thought you'd want alone time to score so catching ride home with him. Good luck, dude!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU HAD TO LEAVE, MOTHER?!


I'M SO SORRY, DEAR, BUT I GOT AN EMERGENCY CALL ABOUT ONE OF MY PATIENTS, AND MINUTES COUNT IN THIS PARTICULAR SITUATION! WAITING FOR YOU TO COME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE WAS NOT AN OPTION!
BUT, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET HOME? YOU DIDN'T LEAVE ME ANY MONEY!
I'M SURE THAT NICE YOUNG MAN WILL GIVE YOU A RIDE HOME IF YOU ASK HIM NICELY!
BUT, MOTHER, I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN...
LOOK! I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR HAND-HOLDING! JUST REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE, ARIEL, AND YOU'LL DO JUST FINE!
I... I'LL TRY, MOTHER!
GOOD GIRL! I'LL SEE YOU AT HOME LATER!


PERFECT! SHE MAY BE UPSET ABOUT BEING PUSHED LIKE THIS, BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY SHE'LL LEARN TO SWIM! HEH-HEH!


CHAZ, I'M AFRAID I HAVE TO ASK YOU FOR AN EMBARRASSING FAVOR!
FIRE AWAY! I'M ALL ABOUT DOING FAVORS FOR BEAUTIFUL LADIES!
MOTHER GOT CALLED BACK TO WORK ALL OF A SUDDEN, LEAVING ME STRANDED HERE!
SO I GUESS WHAT I'M ASKING IS...
YOU NEED A RIDE HOME! NOT A PROBLEM, IN FACT, I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO OBLIGE THE LADY IN NEED!


THANK YOU SO MUCH! I HATE TO PUT YOU AND YOUR FRIEND OUT LIKE THIS!
UMM, YEAH... I GUESS WE ARE, AREN'T WE? *GIGGLE!*
LIKE I SAID, IT'S NOT PUTTING ME OUT AT ALL! AND AS FOR RUDY, HE JUST TEXTED ME AND SAID HE'S HOOKED UP WITH SOME OTHER FRIENDS WHO'LL GET HIM HOME!
SO, I GUESS IT'S JUST YOU AND ME... TWO PEOPLE WHO BOTH GOT DITCHED, COMMISERATING TOGETHER! HEH-HEH!


WELL THAT WAS EASY! I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED, THOUGH, CONSIDERING THE WAY CHAZ HAS BEEN LOOKING AT ME THIS WHOLE TIME!
*SIGH!* MOTHER WAS RIGHT... AS USUAL! IN JUST A COUPLE OF HOURS, I'VE MADE MORE FRIENDS AS ARIEL THAN I EVER HAD AS ALEX!
THIS'LL STILL TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO, BUT IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT BEING A GIRL DOES HAVE ITS PERKS!
WELL, I'M ALL DONE HERE, SO WHICH WAY IS YOUR CAR PARKED?


ACTUALLY, IF YOU DON'T MIND, I STILL HAVE SEVERAL THINGS I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF HERE AT THE MALL!
BUT IF YOU'RE IN THAT MUCH OF A HURRY TO GET HOME, I'LL GLADLY PUT THEM ON HOLD FOR ANOTHER DAY!
OH! I, UHHH... I COULDN'T ASK YOU TO DO THAT! WE CAN GO WHENEVER YOU'RE READY!
OKAY... MAYBE IT'S NOT GOING TO BE QUITE AS EASY AS I THOUGHT!


GREAT! THAT'LL GIVE US PLENTY OF TIME TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER!
YEAH... GREAT!
*SIGH!*


Several hours later...
Slam!!
Screech!!


MOTHER!? MOTHER, ARE YOU HERE?!


I'M RIGHT HERE, HONEY! WHY ARE YOU SHOUTING?
BECAUSE I'M UPSET, MOTHER! AFTER YOU ABANDONED ME AT THE MALL, I WAS FORCED TO SPEND THE WHOLE AFTERNOON WITH A GUY! A GUY WHO WANTED TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME!
AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?


I DON'T EVEN KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME YET... OR AT LEAST WHO I'M SUPPOSED TO BE!
I KNOW WE'VE GONE OVER MY NEW HISTORY SEVERAL TIMES, BUT I WASN'T READY TO BE THROWN INTO A SITUATION LIKE THAT!
THROWN INTO? YOU THINK I LEFT YOU THERE DELIBERATELY?


WELL IT ALL DOES SEEM A BIT COINCIDENTAL, MOTHER!
YOU TAKE ME TO THE MALL, GET ME A MAKE-OVER, DRESS ME UP LIKE THIS, AND THEN, AS SOON AS SOME GUY STARTS SNIFFING AROUND, YOU DISAPPEAR AND LEAVE ME WITH HIM!
FORGIVE ME IF I THINK YOU MIGHT HAVE AN ULTERIOR MOTIVE!
ULTERIOR MOTIVE? YES... I MIGHT HAVE ONE OR TWO!


IF ALL GOES WELL, YOU'RE GOING TO START COLLEGE IN LESS THAN TWO MONTHS! COLLEGE! A PLACE WHERE YOU'LL BE SURROUNDED BY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, MEN AND WOMEN, STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS, WHO'LL WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU!
MERELY MEMORIZING AND REGURGITATING THE DETAILS OF YOUR NEW HISTORY ISN'T ENOUGH! YOU NEED TO LIVE AND EMBRACE THIS NEW LIFE THAT'S BEEN GIVEN TO YOU OR IT WILL ALL FALL APART AROUND US!


AS FOR HOW YOU LOOK... IN MY EYES YOU ARE NOT ONLY MY DAUGHTER, BUT ALSO A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN! FORGIVE ME IF I JUST WANT THE REST OF THE WORLD TO SEE YOU AS I DO!
AND MEN WILL BE ATTRACTED TO YOU WHETHER YOU WANT IT OR NOT. SO THE SOONER YOU LEARN HOW TO DEAL WITH THAT THE BETTER!


AND I REALLY AND TRULY WISH I HAD PLANNED THIS WHOLE PLOT YOU'RE ACCUSING ME OF! BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, I REALLY WAS AT THE HOSPITAL... DESPERATELY TRYING TO CALM ONE OF MY PATIENTS WHO HAD LAPSED INTO A DEPRESSIVE PSYCHOSIS!
I'M SORRY, MOTHER! YOU DON'T HAVE TO...
OH, BUT I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT HER! BECAUSE SHE REMINDS ME VERY MUCH OF YOU... OR WHO YOU COULD'VE BECOME!


YOU SEE, LIKE YOU, SHE WAS ALSO IN A HORRIBLY DISFIGURING ACCIDENT! ALTHOUGH THE SURGERIES HEALED HER... PHYSICALLY, SHE WAS STILL LEFT WITH DEEP EMOTIONAL SCARS!
HER DEEP-SEATED DEPRESSION DROVE HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY AWAY, LEAVING HER ALONE AND DEEPLY DISTURBED... OFTEN SUICIDAL!
I WANTED YOU TO KNOW THIS SO YOU'LL HOPEFULLY REALIZE THAT IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE SUPPORT SYSTEM I'VE PROVIDED, YOU COULD VERY EASILY HAVE ENDED UP LIKE HER!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?


OH MOTHER! I'M SO SORRY FOR DOUBTING YOU! CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?
OF COURSE I CAN, DEAR! DON'T GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT!


NOW, WHY DON'T YOU GO PUT AWAY THE REST OF YOUR THINGS WHILE I MAKE US SOME DINNER!
OKAY, MOTHER!


PIECE OF CAKE!


Later, after dinner...
HONEY, I'D LIKE TO TALK A BIT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TODAY!
I KNOW THAT, DEAR, BUT THAT'S NOT THE PART I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT!
BUT WE DID TALK ABOUT IT, MOTHER! AND I DON'T BLAME YOU AT ALL... REALLY I DON'T!
IT ISN'T?


NO, I WANT TO TALK MORE ABOUT WHY YOU WERE UPSET TODAY!
WHY? BECAUSE AFTER YOU LEFT I HAD TO SPEND THE WHOLE AFTERNOON WITH CHAZ!
WHY DID THAT UPSET YOU? WAS HE RUDE OR OBNOXIOUS TOWARD YOU?
WELL... NO! HE WAS ACTUALLY VERY NICE, BUT...
BUT WHAT?


HE WAS ONLY NICE TO ME BECAUSE OF THE WAY I LOOKED!
IS THAT WHAT HE TOLD YOU? DID HE SPEND THE WHOLE TIME JUST TALKING ABOUT YOUR LOOKS?
NO... OF COURSE NOT! BUT IT WAS OBVIOUS HE THOUGHT I WAS... ATTRACTIVE! I MEAN, WHY ELSE WOULD SOMEONE LIKE THAT WANT TO SPEND TIME WITH ME?
MAYBE HE THOUGHT YOU WERE INTERESTING! JUST WHAT DID YOU TWO TALK ABOUT?


WELL... HE ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT ME!
WHICH MEANS HE WANTED TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER, WHICH IS A GOOD THING! IT'S THE FIRST STEP IN MAKING NEW FRIENDS... SOMETHING YOU'RE SORELY LACKING!
I KNOW THAT, MOTHER, BUT I CAN'T BE THE KIND OF "FRIEND" CHAZ IS LOOKING FOR!
AND WHY NOT?
WHAT?! YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, MOTHER!


I DON'T SEE WHAT THE PROBLEM IS! HE'S A NICE, HANDSOME YOUNG MAN... YOU'RE A LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN! IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT YOU TWO MIGHT...
MOTHER! STOP IT! YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL WHY THAT CAN'T HAPPEN!
NO... ACTUALLY I DON'T, WHICH IS WHY WE'RE HAVING THIS CONVERSATION! I WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU DON'T THINK IT CAN HAPPEN!
YOU REALLY WANT ME TO SAY IT, DON'T YOU!
YES... YES I DO!
OKAY... FINE!


DESPITE HOW I LOOK NOW, MOTHER, I WAS A BOY FOR OVER EIGHTEEN YEARS! I CAN'T JUST DISMISS ALL THAT IN ONE AFTERNOON! NO ONE COULD!
I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU MISS ARIEL AND THAT WE AGREED THAT ME "BECOMING" HER WAS THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION FOR BOTH OUR CONCERNS!
BUT I CAN'T JUST FLIP A SWITCH AND JUMP INTO HER LIFE THE WAY YOU WANT! IT'S JUST TOO HARD!


I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERNS, HONEY... LIKE MOST PEOPLE, YOU'RE RELUCTANT TO LET GO OF THE PAST AND CONFUSED ABOUT YOUR FUTURE!
BUT I'M NOT LIKE MOST PEOPLE, MOTHER!
NO, OF COURSE YOU'RE NOT! BUT LET ME GIVE YOU A FEW THINGS TO THINK ABOUT THAT JUST MAY HELP YOU COME TO TERMS WITH YOUR NEW LIFE!


FIRST OF ALL... YES, ALEX WAS A BOY FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS! BUT WAS HE HAPPY WITH WHO HE WAS? HOW MANY FRIENDS DID HE HAVE? HOW MANY DATES DID HE GO ON? DID HE EVEN SHOW ANY INTEREST IN GIRLS AT ALL?
AND WHILE YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT ALL THAT, LET ME REMIND YOU THAT ALEX IS GONE! HE WAS TAKEN FROM US IN A VICIOUS ATTACK! HE MAY COME BACK SOMEDAY, BUT FOR THE MOMENT HE'S FAR AWAY IN EUROPE, UNDERGOING REHABILITATION!
WHOEVER HE WAS AND WHATEVER HE MIGHT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE WORLD IS ON HOLD... IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION!
YOU'RE ARIEL NOW, AND YOU HAVE TO EMBRACE HER WANTS AND NEEDS, AT LEAST UNTIL IT'S TIME TO CHANGE BACK!
I KNOW IT'S DIFFICULT AND STRANGE FOR YOU, BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY FORWARD!


YOU MAY BECOME A MAN AGAIN SOMEDAY, BUT RIGHT NOW YOU'RE A BEAUTIFUL, VIBRANT YOUNG WOMAN, ONE WHO HAS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE HER LIFE IN ANY DIRECTION SHE WISHES... UNFETTERED BY ANY PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS OR AN UNHAPPY PAST!
YOU SAID IT WAS "TOO HARD" TO ADAPT TO YOUR NEW LIFE, BUT YOU'RE BASING THAT ON ALL OF ALEX'S EXPERIENCES! YOU NEED TO IGNORE ALL OF THAT AND START ANEW!
TAKE STOCK OF WHO YOU ARE NOW AND WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER THE WORLD AND USE THAT TO DETERMINE WHERE YOU GO FROM HERE!
JUST TRY AND KEEP AN OPEN MIND, AND LET ANY AND ALL NEW EXPERIENCES AND EMOTIONS BE YOUR GUIDE!


NOW I *REALIZE* THAT EVERYTHING I'VE JUST SAID *MAY* BE TOO *DIFFICULT* FOR YOU TO *PROCESS*, SWEETIE! BUT *DON'T* FOR A *MINUTE* THINK THAT *I* EXPECT YOU TO RESPOND TO *ANY* OF IT *RIGHT NOW!*
TAKE A FEW DAYS AND *THINK* ABOUT IT ALL. *THEN*, WHEN *YOU'RE* READY, WE'LL HAVE *ANOTHER* CHAT AND *SEE* WHERE WE GO FROM THERE! HOW'S *THAT* SOUND TO YOU?
I THINK IT SOUNDS VERY *DOABLE*, MOTHER! I *UNDERSTAND* EVERYTHING YOU'VE TOLD ME BUT I *STILL* NEED SOME *TIME* TO REALLY LET IT *SINK IN!* *THANK YOU* FOR GIVING ME THAT TIME!
DON'T MENTION IT, DEAR! IT'S *JUST* WHAT A LOVING MOTHER *DOES* FOR HER DAUGHTER!


AND I THINK I'LL JUST LISTEN TO SOME MUSIC FOR AWHILE BEFORE BED! GOOD NIGHT, MOTHER!
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE SEVERAL DAYS WORTH OF WORK TO CATCH UP ON!
GOOD NIGHT, SWEETHEART! I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING!


NOW THAT I'VE PLANTED THE SEEDS, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF WAITING FOR THEM TO TAKE ROOT... AND GROW!


Later...
HMPH! MOTHER MAY SAY SHE WANTS ME TO CHOOSE MY OWN DIRECTION, BUT HER CHOICE IN SLEEPWEAR CERTAINLY POINTS TO THE DIRECTION SHE'D PREFER ME TO GO!
OH WELL, IT IS COMFY! AND IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE ELSE IS GONNA SEE ME IN IT!


THEN AGAIN, I DON'T THINK I'D MIND TOO MUCH IF CHLOE SAW ME IN THIS!
BETTER YET, IF WE WERE BOTH WEARING SOMETHING ALONG THESE LINES... WOW!! THAT'S CERTAINLY A DIRECTION I'D LIKE TO GO IN! *GIGGLE!*


CONSIDERING HOW CHILLY MOTHER WAS TOWARD CHLOE AT THE SALON TODAY, I'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO SCHEDULE ALL MY APPOINTMENTS FROM NOW ON IF I WANT HER TO KEEP DOING ME!
DOING MY HAIR AND MAKEUP, THAT IS! *GIGGLE!*


MAYBE I'LL EVEN CALL TOMORROW... SET UP SOMETHING FOR NEXT WEEK... OR SOONER... *YAWN!*


...A WOMAN WHO ENJOYS POSSESSING A VAGINA AND EMBRACES...
...EAGER TO EXPERIENCE THE VARIETY OF PLEASURE ONE CAN...


HEY THERE, SLEEPY HEAD!


HUH? MOTHER? WHAT TIME IS IT?
MOTHER?! I DON'T THINK SO!


"GASP!" CHLOE?!
HEY THERE, HOT STUFF!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
IT'S YOUR DREAM, GORGEOUS! YOU TELL ME!
'COURSE, COSIDERING WHAT YOU'VE GOT ME WEARIN' I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA! *GIGGLE!*


OH MY GOD! BEST... DREAM... EVER!
AND IT'S ABOUT TO GET MUCH, MUCH BETTER!


WH... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M ABOUT TO SHOW YOU ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT BEIN' A GIRL, DARLIN'! SO JUST LIE BACK AND ENJOY!


OH... OH MY GOD!


OHHH! I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE!
THEN YOU'RE GONNA LOVE THE MAIN EVENT, GORGEOUS!


*GASP!* CH... CHAZ!? WHERE... WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
WHY I'M HERE TO SHOW YOU THE VERY BEST PART OF BEING A GIRL, ARIEL! TRUST ME... WHAT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED SO FAR IS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO FEEL!


BUT I... I DON'T THINK I...
SSHHH! DON'T WORRY, BEAUTIFUL! NO ONE'S GONNA INTERRUPT US!
BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I...


"GASP!"
WHAT'D I TELL YOU? THE BEST FEELING IN THE WORLD, RIGHT?


...ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT BEING A WOMAN IS FEELING A MAN INSIDE YOU...
OOHHHHHH!


ARIEL 2.0
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A Few days later...


WHEW! IF I CAN KEEP UP THESE EARLY MORNING WORKOUTS, I'LL BE MORE THAN READY FOR THE SWIM TEAM TRYOUTS IN A FEW WEEKS!
IT SURE DOESN'T HURT THAT I'VE BEEN WAKING UP THE LAST FEW MORNINGS WITH A DESPERATE NEED FOR A COLD SHOWER!


*SIGH!* WISH I COULD REMEMBER THE DETAILS OF THE DREAMS I'VE BEEN HAVING, 'CAUSE THEY'RE OBVIOUSLY ABOUT SEX!
I MEAN, WHY ELSE WOULD I BE WAKING UP SO DAMN RESTLESS... AND HORNY?


I JUST HOPE MOTHER HASN'T HEARD ME! *GIGGLE!*


I KNOW THE MEETING IS MANDATORY, DAVE, BUT IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE TOMORROW! RESCHEDULING IT AT THE LAST MINUTE LIKE THIS IS LUDICROUS!


THE FACT THAT WE HAVE TO SHUFFLE OUR LIVES JUST BECAUSE SOME BOARD MEMBER DECIDES TO LEAVE A DAY EARLY FOR THEIR VACATION IN BALI IS ASININE, AND YOU KNOW IT!
THAT DOESN'T HELP, DAVE! NOT ONE LITTLE BIT!


DAMN IT!
SOMETHING WRONG, MOTHER?


OH! I THOUGHT YOU WERE STILL IN BED, SWEETHEART!
HARDLY! I'VE BEEN GETTING UP EARLY THE LAST FEW DAYS AND GETTING SOME LAPS IN!
IS THAT A NEW SUIT? WHY AREN'T YOU WEARING ONE OF THE ONES I BOUGHT YOU?
I BOUGHT IT YESTERDAY! I WANTED SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE LIKE WHAT I'LL BE WEARING ON THE SWIM TEAM TO PRACTICE IN! DO YOU LIKE IT?
IT'S... FINE, DEAR! JUST FINE!


WELL, I'M AFRAID I WON'T BE ABLE TO GO WITH YOU TODAY WHEN YOU MEET WITH DEAN MARTIN!
IF YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE GOING ALONE, I CAN CALL HIM AND RESCHEDULE!
PLEASE DON'T DO THAT, MOTHER! I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE CAMPUS TODAY!
AND I'M GETTING A LOT MORE CONFIDENT IN GOING OUT AND DOING THINGS ALONE, SO I'LL BE JUST FINE!


WELL, ALL RIGHT! BUT SEE TO IT YOU GET A FULL TOUR OF THE WHOLE CAMPUS AFTER YOUR MEETING WITH THE DEAN!
I'LL MAKE SURE OF IT, MOTHER! DON'T YOU WORRY!
I'LL WANT TO HEAR ALL ABOUT IT WHEN I GET HOME TONIGHT!
Giants of Gene
CHILL BURST
Laugh a lot


I'LL SEE YOU THIS EVENING, MOTHER!
HAVE FUN TODAY, SWEETHEART!
Cosmo world
CHILL BURST
Laugh a lot


Laugh a lot
Imperfection
A time to grow
Spring time season


HELLO, DAVID? IT'S MONA! HOW ARE YOU?
*GIGGLE!* THAT'S SWEET OF YOU TO SAY!
LOOK, SOMETHING CAME UP AND I WON'T BE COMING WITH ARIEL TODAY!
I KNOW... ME TOO! BUT I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU THIS WEEKEND... I PROMISE!


CHILL BURST
BEARING IT ALL
LISTEN... I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU...


Later that day on the Phoenix State University campus...
NOW THAT WE'VE GOT YOU REGISTERED, THE REST IS A PIECE OF CAKE, ARIEL.
CLASS ENROLLMENT IS ALL ONLINE AND YOU CAN DO IT FROM HOME!


I'VE ALSO CONTACTED OUR SWIMMING COACH ABOUT YOU, SO SHE'S EXPECTING TO HEAR FROM YOU IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS!
I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE ALL YOUR HELP, DEAN MARTIN! THANKS TO YOU, MY DREAM OF GOING TO COLLEGE IS ABOUT TO BECOME A REALITY!
THINK NOTHING OF IT, ARIEL! IT'S MY PLEASURE!


NOW, I'M SURE YOU WOULD LOVE A TOUR OF OUR CAMPUS...
...UNFORTUNATELY, I'VE GOT A MEETING THAT I COULDN'T RESCHEDULE!
MORE THAN ANYTHING!
OH! WELL... I UNDERTAND!


SO I CONTACTED A COUPLE OF MY TOP STUDENTS TO GIVE YOU A PERSONAL GUIDED TOUR IN MY STEAD!
COME ON OVER HERE, GUYS!
YOU DID? OH, THAT IS SO AWESOME OF YOU!
UM, GUYS...?


CHAZ?!
WELL HEY THERE, ARIEL!
OH, SO YOU ALREADY KNOW EACH OTHER?
YEAH, WE MET A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO!


WELL THAT'S GREAT! THEN I'M SURE THESE TWO FINE GENTLEMEN WILL TAKE EXCELLENT CARE OF YOU!
UMMM, YEAH! I'M SURE THEY WILL!
EXTRA SPECIAL CARE, DEAN MARTIN! YOU CAN COUNT ON IT!


THEN IF YOU ALL WILL EXCUSE ME, I'M OFF TO MY MEETING!
REMEMBER, IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, ARIEL, JUST GIVE ME A CALL!
I WILL! AND THANK YOU AGAIN, DEAN MARTIN!


SO, AM I SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT ALL THIS IS JUST ONE BIG COINCIDENCE?
HEY! THE DEAN JUST CALLED AND SAID HE WANTED US TO GIVE A NEW STUDENT A TOUR, BUT WE HAD NO CLUE YOU WERE THAT STUDENT!
REALLY?
HONEST TO GOD! RIGHT, RUDY?
NOT A CLUE.


WELL, IF YOU KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND THIS CAMPUS THE WAY YOU KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND THAT MALL, I GUESS YOU'LL DO!
OH, WE'LL DO, ALL RIGHT! I KNOW PARTS OF THIS CAMPUS MOST UPPER CLASSMEN HAVE NEVER SEEN! RIGHT, RUDY?
YEAH, NEVER SEEN.


WHO AM I TO DENY MYSELF A GLIMPSE INTO THE UNSEEN PARTS OF THE CAMPUS? *GIGGLE!*
AFTER YOU, M'LADY!


OKAY, WHAT'S GOING ON WITH ME?
THIS IS THE SAME GUY WHO I ANGRILY ACCUSED MOTHER OF TRYING TO FIX ME UP WITH!
THE GUY WHO, AFTER BEING FORCED TO SPEND AN ENTIRE AND PAINFULLY UNCOMFORTABLE AFTERNOON WITH, I SWORE TO AVOID AT ALL COSTS!
I FIGURED WE'D START WITH THE STUDENT UNION AND THEN WORK OUR WAY OUTWARD FROM THERE! THAT'LL GIVE YOU A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF HOW TO GET AROUND ON CAMPUS AND YADA-YADA-YADA...


YET HERE I AM, AGREEING TO SPEND YET ANOTHER AFTERNOON WITH HIM!
NO OUTWARD RELUCTANCE... NO INNER DIALOG WITH MYSELF HOPING THIS COMES TO AN END AS SOON AS FUCKING POSSIBLE...
I'M JUST ACCEPTING THE SITUATION WITH NO QUALMS WHATSOEVER! WHY?
AND WE'LL GO BY THE GYM WHERE I LIKE TO SPEND A LOT OF TIME, BLAH BLAH BLAH...


I MEAN, EVEN THOUGH I HAVEN'T SEEN OR EVEN REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT HIM SINCE THAT AFTERNOON, I SEEM TO BE FEELING MORE COMFORTABLE AROUND HIM!
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE GOING ON! I'M ALSO FEELING... RESTLESS AND A LITTLE FLUSTERED, BUT NOT BECAUSE I'M IN A NEW AND CONFUSING SITUATION LIKE I WAS THE OTHER DAY!
THIS IS DIFFERENT... AND I WISH I COULD PUT MY FINGER ON EXACTLY WHAT IT IS THAT'S GOING ON!
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE INTO JOURNALISM, BUT WE'VE GOT AN AWARD-WINNING YADA-YADA-YADA...


BECAUSE I'M NOT SURE IF IT'S SOMETHING I SHOULD BE OKAY WITH OR SOMETHING I SHOULD BE VERY AFRAID OF!


Later that afternoon...
ARIEL? ARIEL, HONEY, ARE YOU HOME?


YES, MOTHER! I GOT HOME ABOUT AN HOUR AGO! HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
OH, WHO CARES ABOUT MY DAY? HOW WAS YOURS? DID THE DEAN GET YOU REGISTERED AND GIVE YOU A TOUR OF THE CAMPUS?
WELL, YES AND NO! I GOT REGISTERED, BUT THE DEAN HAD A MEETING, SO SOMEONE ELSE HAD TO GIVE ME THE TOUR!
REALLY? AND WHO DID HE GET TO DO THAT? SOMEONE COMPETENT, I HOPE!


AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT WAS SOMEONE I ALREADY KNEW! REMEMBER THE TWO GUYS FROM THE MALL THE OTHER DAY?
YOU MEAN THE BECKHAM BOY AND HIS FRIEND?
YES! IT TURNS OUT THE DEAN IS THE FACULTY SPONSOR OF THEIR FRATERNITY AND ASKED THEM TO TAKE ME ON THE TOUR, TOTALLY UNAWARE THAT WE ALREADY KNEW EACH OTHER!
WHAT A LOVELY COINCIDENCE! I DO LIKE THAT YOUNG MAN! IN FACT, I WOULDN'T MIND IT IF YOU TWO STARTED SPENDING MORE TIME TOGETHER!


UM, THAT'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, MOTHER!
OH! DID HE ALREADY ASK YOU OUT? IF THAT'S THE OUTFIT YOU WORE TODAY, I'M NOT SURPRISED! WELL DONE, DEAR!
WELL, HE DID ASK ME TO A PARTY LATER THIS WEEK, BUT I SAID NO...
YOU SAID NO? WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU DO THAT?
CAN WE SAVE THAT FOR ANOTHER TIME, MOTHER? IT'S NOT WHAT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT RIGHT NOW!
*SIGH!* FINE! THEN WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT THAT IT CAN'T WAIT?


IT'S, UMMM... ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF ME... AS YOUR DAUGHTER, AND HOW I THINK THEY MAY BE A LITTLE UNREALISTIC!
UNREALISTIC? WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, DEAR? JUST LOOK AT YOURSELF...
YOU'VE BECOME A BEAUTIFUL AND INTELLIGENT YOUNG WOMAN THAT ANY YOUNG MAN IN HIS RIGHT MIND WOULD LOVE TO SPEND HIS LIFE WITH!
WHAT MORE COULD A MOTHER WANT FROM A DAUGHTER?


DO YOU HEAR YOURSELF, MOTHER? I'VE BEEN FEMALE FOR LESS THAN A YEAR AND YOU'RE ALREADY IMAGINING ME BEING MARRIED OFF AND LIVING HAPPILY EVER AFTER!
WELL WHAT MOTHER WOULDN'T WANT THAT FOR HER DAUGHTER? IT'S ONLY NATURAL!
"SIGH!" AT LEAST YOU'RE NOT GOING OVERBOARD AND IMAGINING A HOUSE FULL OF GRANDKIDS AS WELL!
AND WHY SHOULDN'T I? DON'T YOU THINK I'D BE A WONDERFUL GRANDMOTHER?
OF COURSE YOU WOULD, MOTHER! BUT YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THAT I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY!
ON THE CONTRARY, DEAR... YOU'RE PERFECTLY CAPABLE!


MOTHER? YOU'RE A DOCTOR! YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL THAT SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY JUST RECONSTRUCTS FEMALE SEX ORGANS FROM ITS MALE COUNTERPARTS! I DON'T HAVE A FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM!
THAT WOULD BE TRUE... IN A NORMAL PROCEDURE, BUT YOUR ORIGINAL ORGANS WERE SO... MUTILATED THAT THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT FOR RECONSTRUCTION ! SO WE WENT WITH AN EXPERIMENTAL, CUTTING-EDGE ALTERNATIVE!
WHAT ALTERNATIVE?
TRANSPLANTS! NOT ONLY WERE THE SURGEONS ABLE TO GIVE YOU A SET OF ACTUAL, NOT RECONSTRUCTED, FEMALE SEXUAL ORGANS, THEY ALSO GAVE YOU A SET OF FULLY FUNCTIONAL REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS AS WELL!


OH MY GOD! YOU.. YOU'RE SERIOUS, AREN'T YOU?
I WOULD NEVER JOKE ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT! NOT WHEN IT CONCERNS THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MY CHILDREN!
BUT... I... I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW TRANSPLANTS LIKE THAT WERE POSSIBLE!
IT'S NEW AND ONLY AVAILABLE IN CLINICAL TRIALS! I HAD TO PULL QUITE A FEW STRINGS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN! THE TIPPING POINT WAS THAT FOR THE OPERATION TO BE SUCESSFUL, THE DONOR HAD TO BE A VERY CLOSE MATCH TO THE RECIPIENT... WHICH WAS THE CASE HERE!


BUT HOW COULD THE DONOR BE A CLOSE MATCH? I DON'T HAVE ANY RELATIVES CLOSE ENOUGH TO QUALIFY, DO I?
YOU HAD ONE, HONEY!
NO... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! YOU CAN'T BE SAYING WHAT I THINK YOU'RE SAYING!
*SIGH!* I WAS HOPING TO SAVE THIS CONVERSATION FOR A LATER DATE, BUT I GUESS NOW'S AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH!


YOUR SISTER WAS THE DONOR!
*GASP!*


BUT THAT... THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE! ARIEL DIED MONTHS BEFORE I WAS ATTACKED! HOW COULD SHE POSSIBLY...?
YOU NEED TO RELAX, HONEY! CALM DOWN AND GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF WHILE I EXPLAIN!


YOUR SISTER, BEING THE GENEROUS SOUL THAT SHE WAS, WAS REGISTERED AS AN ORGAN DONOR! WHAT KILLED HER IN THAT CRASH WAS A MASSIVE HEAD INJURY SO ALMOST ALL OF HER ORGANS WERE IN GOOD SHAPE WHEN SHE WAS BROUGHT TO THE HOSPITAL!
SINCE SHE WAS OVER 18, THEY DIDN'T NEED MY PERMISSION, SO BY THE TIME I GOT TO THE HOSPITAL, THE DOCTORS HAD ALREADY HARVESTED MOST OF HER MAJOR ORGANS! AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, I WAS DEVASTATED!
AND YOU... YOU SAVED HER REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS FOR ME?


OF COURSE NOT. I THOUGHT THEY'D GO TO SOME UNFORTUNATE STRANGER... NOT MY OWN SON! AT THE TIME, ALL I WANTED WAS TO PRESERVE SOMETHING... ANYTHING OF YOUR SISTER!
THAT'S WHEN I TOLD THE DOCTORS TO FREEZE WHATEVER WAS STILL VIABLE AND WASN'T IMMEDIATELY NEEDED! THAT WAY, AT LEAST, I'D HAVE SOME CONTROL OVER HOW AND WHEN YOUR SISTER'S GIFTS WOULD EVENTUALLY BE MADE AVAILABLE TO OTHERS!
IT WASN'T MUCH OF A SOLACE TO ME AT THE TIME, BUT LATER I WOULD COME TO REALIZE THAT HER DECISION, AND MINE, WOULD ALLOW ARIEL TO "LIVE ON" IN OTHERS!


BUT NEVER IN A MILLION YEARS WOULD I HAVE DREAMED THAT YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, WOULD HAVE SUCH AN URGENT NEED FOR THE PARTS OF YOUR SISTER THAT ARE NOW A PART OF YOU!
I NEVER WANTED TO TELL YOU THIS, BECAUSE I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE THOUGHTS ABOUT BECOMING A MAN AGAIN!
BUT NOW YOU CAN SEE WHY IT BREAKS MY HEART WHEN YOU TALK THAT WAY, BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN LETTING GO OF THE LAST PART OF ARIEL!
ARIEL... I... I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE'S PART OF ME... ALMOST LIKE I... I...


I'M SORRY, DEAR! I CAN ONLY IMAGINE HOW UNSETTLING THIS IS FOR YOU!
HOW... HOW CAN I EVER GO BACK TO BEING A MAN IF IT MEANS... OH GOD...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DECIDE ANYTHING IMMEDIATELY, HONEY!


IT... IT EXPLAINS SO MUCH, MOTHER! THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN PUSHING ME TO ACCEPT THIS BODY... AND LIVE AS A WOMAN!
IT WASN'T FOR THE REASONS I THOUGHT... WHY THIS IS SO IMPORTANT FOR YOU!
THE ONLY THING THAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME IS YOUR WELL BEING! YOU'RE MY ONLY CHILD... WHETHER YOU'RE ARIEL OR ALEX!
I NEED SOME TIME TO THINK... ALONE... WHILE I TRY AND SORT THINGS OUT!


I UNDERSTAND, HONEY! TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED!
THERE IT IS! THE FINAL SEED HAS BEEN PLANTED, AND I'M SURE IT WILL ALLOW HER TO TRANSITION INTO WOMANHOOD TO BLOSSOM!


THERE'S NO WAY SHE'LL SERIOUSLY CONSIDER GOING BACK TO BEING A MAN NOW THAT SHE BELIEVES SHE'S THE KEEPER OF ARIEL'S WOMB!
IF ONLY IT WERE ACTUALLY TRUE...


I... I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO TALK TO MOTHER ABOUT HOW I WASN'T READY TO GO ANY FURTHER PLAYING THE PART SHE'S LAID OUT FOR ME... REMIND HER THAT ALL THIS WAS ONLY TEMPORARY!
BUT AFTER HER REVELATION, I'M NOT SO SURE!


I'VE ALREADY BEEN FEELING CONFUSED ABOUT MY PATH FORWARD, THE WAY EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE SHIFTING!
BUT KNOWING THAT ARIEL IS AN ACTUAL PHYSICAL PART OF ME MAKES ME FEEL EVEN MORE DISORIENTED!


*SOB!*
WHO... OR WHAT AM I?


Hours later, a restless sleep Finally arrives...


...MATERNAL INSTINCT THAT CAN ONLY FULFILLED BY...
...YOUR URGENT DESIRE TO BE A WIFE AND A MOTHER...

WAKEY, WAKEY, SLEEPY-HEAD!
HMM? WHAT TIME IS IT?


DOES ANYBODY REALLY KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS... ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE DREAMING?
ARIEL?!
HEY THERE, ALEX!


IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU... EVEN IF IT IS JUST IN A DREAM!
GOOD TO SEE YOU, TOO! CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT I THINK YOU'VE CHANGED A BIT SINCE I SAW YOU LAST! *GIGGLE!*
VERY FUNNY.
OH, LIGHTEN UP, LITTLE SIS! GEE, YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR, OR LACK OF ONE, SURE HASN'T CHANGED!


WELL I REALLY HAVEN'T HAD A WHOLE HELL OF A LOT TO LAUGH ABOUT THIS LAST YEAR, HAVE I?
I MEAN BETWEEN DRIVING THE CAR THAT KILLED YOU, GETTING MUGGED AND MUTILATED, AND BEING TURNED INTO MOTHER'S REPLACEMENT DAUGHTER, IT'S REALLY NO WONDER MY SENSE OF HUMOR SUCKS!


SPEAKING OF HUMOR, WHY ARE YOU WEARING THAT OUTFIT? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU WEAR ANYTHING SO... DEMURE BEFORE!
JUST A REFLECTION OF HOW MOTHER USED TO SEE ME! HER PERFECT LITTLE GOODY-TWO-SHOES DAUGHTER!
"SNORT!" NOW THAT'S LAUGHABLE! WE BOTH KNOW YOU WERE ANYTHING BUT A "GOODY-TWO-SHOES"!
TRUE! BUT MOTHER HAD NO CLUE! AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO BECOME THE NEW ME, YOU NEED TO BRUSH UP ON ALL PARTS OF BEING "ARIEL", NOT JUST THE GOOD GIRL PARTS, WHICH YOU'VE GOT DOWN TO A TEE!


YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT THIS OUTFIT AND THE "GOOD GIRL" ACT WERE JUST FOR SHOW... TO KEEP MOTHER HAPPY! BUT NO ONE, NOT EVEN YOU, CAN PULL IT OFF 24/7... AT LEAST NOT WITHOUT GOING A LITTLE CRAZY!
THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO LET YOUR INNER FREAK FLAG FLY, JUST LIKE I DID! YOU NEED TO TOSS ASIDE MOTHER'S NEEDS AND FIND A WAY TO FULFILL YOUR OWN!


NOW I'M NOT TELLING YOU EXACTLY HOW TO DO THAT, BUT IF YOU'RE TRYING TO BE THE NEW ME, THEN I THINK YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT MY RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE!


IF YOU'VE GOTTA BE A GIRL, LITTLE SIS, BEING A HOT ONE IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO! AND THE HOTTER, THE BETTER!
ALL THE OTHER GIRLS WANT TO BE LIKE YOU, AND ALL THE GUYS, WELL... THEY JUST WANT YOU! *GIGGLE!*


AND FROM WHAT I CAN SEE, THE DOCTORS DID A BANG-UP JOB ON YOU! HELL, IF I WAS STILL ALIVE, I'D BE AFRAID TO LEAVE MY BOYFRIENDS UNATTENDED IF YOU WERE AROUND! THEY MIGHT JUST DROP ME FOR YOU!
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS! I... I'D NEVER...
DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT, SIS! THAT ADORABLE FACE, THOSE PERKY TITS, AND THAT FIRM, TONED ASS! YOU ARE QUITE THE TOTAL PACKAGE!


BUT WHAT YOU'VE **REALLY** GOT GOING FOR YOU IS THAT LITTLE **PART** OF **ME** THAT MOTHER SAVED **JUST FOR YOU!** THE PART **I** HAD THE **MOST FUN** WITH!
TAKE IT FROM **ME**, SWEETIE, THAT **PUSSY** OF MINE IS GONNA BE YOUR **NEW BEST FRIEND!**


BUT I'M NOT YOU! DESPITE WHAT MOTHER WANTS, I COULD NEVER BE JUST LIKE YOU!
HOW DO YOU KNOW UNTIL YOU TRY? LIKE I SAID, YOU'VE ONLY BEEN WORKING WITH MOTHER'S VERSION OF ME SO FAR! YOU NEED MUCH MORE THAN THAT!
IN ALL HONESTY, ALEX, IF I HADN'T HAD MY EXTRA-CURRICULAR LIFE AND BEEN FORCED TO STICK TO MOTHER'S PLAN FOR ME, I'D HAVE LEFT THIS FAMILY YEARS EARLIER THAN I DID... ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!


SO DO YOUR BIG SIS A FAVOR AND DON'T LET HER SPECIAL LAST GIFT TO YOU GO TO WASTE!
BUT, WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO...
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW UNTIL YOU TRY, HONEY! AND I'M BETTING YOU WON'T REGRET IT, 'CAUSE THAT NEW PUSSY OF YOURS HAS ALWAYS HAD A HANKERING FOR COCK! *GIGGLE!*


OOOOO... I LOVE THIS SONG!
WHAT SONG? I... I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING!

YOU WILL, LITTLE SIS... YOU WILL...


...GET EXCITED BY THE THOUGHT OF A HARD, MASCULINE...
...ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT BEING A WOMAN...
... YOU WILL...


A few days later...
THERE YOU ARE! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU ALL MORNING!
SORRY, MOTHER! GUESS I OVERSLEPT!


WELL, NOW THAT YOU'RE FINALLY UP AND AROUND, I THOUGHT WE'D SPEND SOME MORE TIME CONTINUING OUR DISCUSSION FROM LAST NIGHT!
STARTING OFF WITH WHY YOU SAID NO TO THAT NICE YOUNG MAN'S REQUEST TO...
ACTUALLY MOTHER, I WAS JUST ON MY WAY OUT!
ON YOUR WAY OUT? WHERE?


AMONG OTHER THINGS, I WAS GOING TO GET MY HAIR DONE AGAIN! GUESS I'M NOT AS GOOD AT TAKING CARE OF IT AS I THOUGHT!
THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA! I'LL JUST GIVE RUTH A CALL AND THEN WE CAN BOTH...
I'VE ALREADY MADE AN APPOINTMENT WITH CHLOE, MOTHER! AND I'D PREFER TO GO ALONE, IF YOU DON'T MIND!


WELL... NO, I GUESS NOT! BUT WHY SEE THAT CHLOE GIRL WHEN I'M SURE RUTH CAN DO A MUCH BETTER JOB!
BECAUSE I LIKE HER, MOTHER! NOT ONLY DID SHE DO A GREAT JOB WITH MY HAIR, BUT LIKE I TOLD YOU THE OTHER DAY, I THINK OF HER AS A FRIEND!
AND CONSIDERING EVERYTHING GOING ON IN MY LIFE RIGHT NOW, I REALLY NEED SOMEONE MY OWN AGE I CAN TALK TO!
I... I HOPE YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THAT, MOTHER!
OF COURSE I CAN, DEAR!


THANK YOU, MOTHER! I'LL BE BACK LATER THIS AFTERNOON!
HAVE A NICE TIME, DEAR!


HMMPH!


A short time later, at the mall...
SINCE MOTHER OBVIOUSLY DOESN'T APPROVE OF CHLOE, IT'S PROBABLY A GOOD THING I DIDN'T TELL HER THAT SHE AND I HAVE BEEN CHATTING OVER THE PHONE PRETTY MUCH EVERY NIGHT FOR THE LAST WEEK!
I THOUGHT ABOUT TELLING HER THE OTHER DAY, BUT CONSIDERING HER RESPONSE THIS MORNING, IT'S A GOOD THING I DIDN'T!
redbox


GEE, I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY MOTHER WOULDN'T WANT ME BEING FRIENDS WITH SOMEONE AS GORGEOUS, INDEPENDENT AND FREE-THINKING AS CHLOE! *GIGGLE!*


HEY, CHLOE! HOPE I'M NOT TOO EARLY!
NOT AT ALL! JUST FINISHED UP WITH MY LAST APPOINTMENT A FEW MINUTES AGO!
THEN MY TIMING'S PERFECT! BY THE WAY, I LOVE THE HAIR!
THANKS! I LIKE TO CHANGE THINGS UP EVERY FEW DAYS... JUST TO KEEP LIFE FROM GETTING TOO BORING!
WHY DO I GET THE FEELING YOUR LIFE IS NEVER BORING? *GIGGLE!*


HEY, LIFE IS ONLY BORING IF YOU LET IT BE THAT WAY! ON THAT NOTE, YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT?
UMM, NO... NOT REALLY! I WAS JUST GOING TO KIND OF HANG OUT ALONE AND DO SOME SHOPPING!
THEN HOW ABOUT WE PUSH YOUR APPOINTMENT BACK AN HOUR OR SO AND GO GRAB SOME LUNCH FIRST? I'M STARVED!
SURE! I'D LOVE THAT!


WHAT DO YOU FEEL LIKE FOR LUNCH? I'M GAME FOR PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING!
THEN "PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING" IT IS! TO THE FOOD COURT!
TO THE FOOD COURT! *GIGGLE!*


SO DID YOU HAVE TO ENDURE ONE OF THOSE GROUP TOURS LED BY SOME WAY-TOO-DAMN-PERKY STUDENT REP WEARING A "HI, CALL ME MINDY!" NAME TAG?
*GIGGLE!* NO, BUT I ALMOST WISH I HAD!
BAD EXPERIENCE, HUH?
NOT BAD, JUST A LITTLE... UNCOMFORTABLE! THE GUY LEADING THE TOUR, WELL... HE KEEPS HITTING ON ME!
OOOO! SOUNDS INTERESTING! DISH THE DETAILS, GIRLFRIEND!


*SIGH!* OKAY... FINE! I ACTUALLY FIRST MET HIM RIGHT HERE IN THE MALL AFTER MY LAST APPOINTMENT WITH YOU! MOTHER AND I WERE HAVING LUNCH WHEN HE JUST WALKED RIGHT UP AND INTRODUCED HIMSELF TO ME!
CHEEKY BASTARD! *GIGGLE!*.
THAT WASN'T THE END OF IT, THOUGH! MOTHER GOT CALLED AWAY FOR SOME WORK EMERGENCY, LEAVING ME ALONE WITH HIM FOR THE REST OF THE AFTERNOON!
LET ME GUESS, HE WAS THE KIND OF GUY ANY MOTHER WOULD LOVE! TALL, GOOD-LOOKING, POLITE, WITH A GREAT BIG TRUST-FUND IN HIS POCKET!
OH, SO YOU'VE MET HIM TOO? *GIGGLE!*


SO HOW DID HE END UP GIVING YOU THE TOUR YESTERDAY?
WELL, I THOUGHT THE DEAN WAS GOING TO SHOW ME AROUND AFTER HE HELPED ME GET REGISTERED, BUT HE HAD A MEETING TO GET TO!
DON'T TELL ME, LET ME GUESS... YOUR HANDSOME NEW ADMIRER STEPPED UP TO THE TASK!
YOU GOT IT! TURNS OUT CHAZ, THAT'S HIS NAME BY THE WAY, IS ONE OF THE DEAN'S FAVORITE STUDENTS!


SO YOU HAD TO SPEND THE AFTERNOON WITH A HANDSOME RICH DUDE WHO HAS THE HOTS FOR YOU! WHAT MADE IT SO UNCOMFORTABLE FOR YOU?
WAS HE AN ASSHOLE? DUMBER THAN HALF A BRICK? UNCONTROLLABLE DROOLING AND FLATULANCE? WHAT WAS IT?
ACTUALLY... HE'S ON THE DEAN'S LIST, IS PRESIDENT OF HIS FRATERNITY AND WAS NOTHING BUT RESPECTFUL TO ME ALL DAY!
THAT BASTARD! HOW DARE HE BE SO FUCKING PERFECT?


Comfort etc.
REMIND ME AGAIN WHY YOU WERE SO UNCOMFORTABLE WITH HIM? JUST HOW MANY TIMES DID HE HIT ON YOU?
ACTUALLY THE ONLY TIME HE HIT ON ME WAS AT THE END OF THE TOUR WHEN HE INVITED ME TO A PARTY HIS FRATERNITY WAS HAVING TONIGHT!
AND WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?
WHY, NO, OF COURSE!
REALLY? WHY?


UMMM, I JUST DIDN'T... I MEAN, I WASN'T SURE IF I WANTED TO... THAT IS, I... I...
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! CALM DOWN, SWEETIE, AND CATCH YOUR BREATH!
DIDN'T MEAN TO GET YOU ALL FLUSTERED LIKE THAT!
I KNOW, I JUST... WELL...
JUST RELAX, TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND START FROM THE BEGINNING! OKAY?


*SIGH!* WISH I COULD TELL HER EVERYTHING, BUT WHO KNOWS HOW SHE'D REACT? MAYBE IF I JUST TELL HER PART OF IT...?
OKAY! TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I'VE NEVER BEEN ON A DATE BEFORE... EVER!
I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE FROM SOMEONE AS HOT AS YOU, DARLIN'!
THAT'S JUST IT! I DIDN'T ALWAYS LOOK LIKE THIS! UNTIL ABOUT A YEAR AGO, I WAS A VERY PLAIN, BORING PERSON WHO LED A VERY SHELTERED LIFE!
THEN WHAT HAPPENED A YEAR AGO?
I, UMMM... I WAS IN A PRETTY HORRIBLE ACCIDENT THAT LAID ME UP FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS!
OH HONEY, THAT'S TERRIBLE!


WELL, I WAS PRETTY MESSED UP THERE FOR AWHILE, BUT I'M OKAY NOW!
THE THING IS... WHILE I WAS RECUPERATING, MOTHER THOUGHT IT'D BE A GOOD IDEA TO NOT JUST FIX WHAT THE ACCIDENT DID TO ME, BUT TO IMPROVE ON IT AS WELL!
Comfort etc.


AND THIS IS THE RESULT! TA-DA!
MONEY WELL SPENT IF YOU ASK ME, HOT STUFF!
THANKS! *GIGGLE!*


SO LET'S SEE IF I'VE GOT THIS RIGHT...
WE'VE GOT THIS PLAIN-JANE TURNED CINDERELLA WHO'S AFRAID TO GO TO THE BALL WITH PRINCE CHARMING 'CAUSE SHE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO USE HER AWESOME NEW UPGRADES!
DOES THAT ABOUT COVER IT?
I... GUESS SO! IN A MIXED METAPHOR KIND OF WAY!
SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT I'M ONE CONFUSED PERSON THESE DAYS!


COMPLETELY UNDERSTANDABLE, SWEETIE! AND MY RECOMMENDATION FOR CLEARING THE MIND OF UNWANTED CONFUSION IS GETTING ALL DOLLED UP AND CUTTING LOOSE!
OH MY GOD! I THINK SHE IS INTO ME! JUST WHAT I WAS HOPING!
SOUNDS LIKE FUN! *GIGGLE!* SO WHAT'D YOU HAVE IN MIND?
AN EXTENDED LUNCH SO WE CAN GO SHOPPING TOGETHER AND FIND YOU A DYNAMITE OUTFIT TO MATCH THE FABULOUS HAIRSTYLE I'M GONNA GIVE YOU!
I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT! THEN WE HEAD OUT TOGETHER AND HIT THE PARTY SCENE, RIGHT?
OH, NOT WE, SUGAR... YOU! YOU'RE GOIN' TO THAT FRAT PARTY YOUR "FRIEND" INVITED YOU TO!


PERFECT! THEN YOU'RE ONLY THERE AS A PARTY GUEST, NOT AS HIS DATE! YOU'RE FREE TO MINGLE AND ENJOY THE EVENING ON YOUR TERMS!
WHAT? BUT... BUT I CAN'T! I... I ALREADY TOLD HIM I WASN'T COMING!
BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN... I MEAN, I THOUGHT THAT WE...


AND WE WILL, SWEETIE... SOME OTHER TIME! BUT TONIGHT IS YOUR NIGHT!
YOU SEE, WHAT YOU NEED IS TO BREAK OUT OF YOUR SHELL, STEP OUT INTO THE WORLD AND SEE WHICH DIRECTION IT TAKES YOU!
WHAT YOU ARE AND WHO YOU DECIDE TO BE IS DETERMINED BY YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCES! THE MORE THINGS YOU TRY, THE BETTER YOU'LL UNDERSTAND YOURSELF!
NOW YOU MAY HAVE A GREAT TIME AT THE PARTY TONIGHT, OR A MISERABLE TIME, BUT REGARDLESS, I THINK NOT GOING WOULD BE MISSING OUT ON A HUGE OPPORTUNITY!


SO... YOUR CHOICE! DO WE SPEND THE WHOLE AFTERNOON TOGETHER SHOPPING AND GIVING YOU A HOT MAKEOVER FOR THE PARTY?
OR DO WE GRAB A QUICK BITE AT THE FOOD COURT AND GIVE YOU A WASH AND BLOW-DRY SO YOU CAN SPEND THE EVENING PLAYING PARCHEESI WITH MOTHER?
"SIGH!" WELL... WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...


THAT'S MY GIRL! DON'T WORRY, YOU'RE GONNA HAVE A GREAT TIME TONIGHT!
AND THEN YOU CAN TELL ME ALL THE SORDID DETAILS TOMORROW! *GIGGLE!*
TOMORROW, HUH? YOU'VE GOT A DEAL! *GIGGLE!*


Later that evening...
ARIEL? HONEY? I'M SORRY I'M LATE! I WAS RUNNING ERRANDS AND JUST GOT YOUR TEXT!
I'M SO HAPPY YOU DECIDED TO GO TO THE PARTY AFTER ALL!


I'LL BET CHAZ WAS ECSTATIC WHEN YOU CALLED AND TOLD HIM YOU'D CHANGED YOUR MIND! WHAT TIME IS HE PICKING YOU UP?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT KIND OF DATE IS THAT THEN?
ACTUALLY, HE'S NOT PICKING ME UP BECAUSE HE DOESN'T KNOW I'M COMING!
IT'S NOT A DATE! I'M GOING TO THE PARTY ALONE! BY THE WAY, CAN I BORROW THE CAR?


ALONE? WHERE ON EARTH DID YOU GET AN IDEA LIKE THAT?
CHLOE TALKED ME INTO IT! SHE THOUGHT IT'D BE A GOOD IDEA FOR ME TO EXPERIENCE AS MUCH OF THE COLLEGE LIFE AS POSSIBLE!
SO YOU'RE LISTENING MORE TO YOUR HAIRDRESSER THAN TO YOUR OWN MOTHER? I'M NOT SURE IF I LIKE THAT!
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED ME TO GO TO THE PARTY, SO WHY DOES IT MATTER WHO CONVINCED ME?


YOU WANTED ME TO MAKE FRIENDS AND I AM, MOTHER! CHLOE IS SMART, FUNNY AND KNOWS HER WAY AROUND TOWN AND THE CAMPUS!
AND I'M SURE THE WAY SHE LOOKS HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH IT!
WHAT WAS THAT, MOTHER?
NOTHING! CAN YOU PLEASE COME OUT HERE? I DO NOT LIKE TALKING TO YOU THROUGH THE DOOR!


*SIGH!* I'M SORRY, DEAR! I DON'T MEAN TO BE CROSS WITH YOU! I'M GLAD YOU'RE GOING... REALLY I AM!
SO JUST COME ON OUT SO I CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR MAKEUP AND PICKING AN OUTFIT!
I'VE, UMMM... ALREADY GOT THAT TAKEN CARE OF, MOTHER!


WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'VE ALREADY..
OH... MY!
CHLOE HELPED ME PICK IT OUT! THEN SHE DID MY HAIR AND MAKEUP! WHAT DO YOU THINK?


WELL, YOU LOOK... LOVELY, DEAR! JUST LOVELY!
ALTHOUGH I THINK I WOULD HAVE GONE WITH SOMETHING A BIT MORE DEMURE AND NOT SO... BLACK!
I KNOW! I WAS A LITTLE RELUCTANT WHEN SHE PICKED IT OUT, BUT SHE SAID BLACK GOES REALLY WELL WITH MY SKIN TONE!


AND YOU'RE CERTAINLY SHOWING A LOT OF SKIN! I'D STILL LIKE TO LOOK AT SOME ALTERNATIVES! MAYBE IF WE...
MOTHER, I ALREADY SPENT THE ENTIRE AFTERNOON CHOOSING AN OUTFIT FOR TONIGHT AND THIS IS THE ONE CHLOE AND I DECIDED ON!
PLEASE DON'T UNDERMINE ONE OF THE FEW DECISIONS I'VE MADE ON MY OWN THIS LAST YEAR!
WHY, I WOULD NEVER THINK OF GOING AGAINST YOUR WISHES, HONEY!


GOOD! BECAUSE IT'S ALSO TAKEN ME ALL DAY TO WORK UP THE COURAGE TO GO TO THIS PARTY! IF I HAVE TO START RETHINKING ANY OF MY DECISIONS, I MAY JUST LOSE THAT COURAGE AND END UP STAYING HOME!
WELL HEAVEN FORBID I UNDO ANY OF THE GOOD WORK YOU AND CHLOE HAVE DONE TODAY!


THANK YOU SO MUCH, MOTHER! I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD DO THIS WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT!
YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE IT, DEAR!


BYE, MOTHER! I WON'T BE OUT TOO LATE... I PROMISE!


HMMM... LOOKS LIKE MY NEW DAUGHTER IS STARTING TO DEVELOP A LITTLE SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE... THANKS TO HER NEW "FRIEND"!


WELL... I'LL PUT A STOP TO THAT... ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!


Later, at the Delta Beta house...


Delta Beta


OKAY, THAT WAS MY THIRD TRIP TO THE BATHROOM SINCE I GOT HERE, AND NOT BECAUSE I HAD TO PEE!
AND DEFINITELY NOT BECAUSE FRAT HOUSE BATHROOMS ARE A NICE PLACE TO VISIT... BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT!


Delta Beta
I CAME TO THIS PARTY TO GET MY FIRST REAL COLLEGE EXPERIENCE AS A GIRL! THAT'S WHAT CHLOE AND I TALKED ABOUT ALL AFTERNOON!
BUT ALL I'VE BEEN DOING SINCE I GOT HERE IS DODGING EVERY GUY WHO LOOKS LIKE HE'S CHECKING ME OUT!
NOT THAT I CAN BLAME THEM, CONSIDERING HOW I MUST LOOK IN THIS OUTFIT SHE TALKED ME INTO WEARING!


AND THEN THERE'S CHAZ, THE ONE PERSON HERE WHO I'M ACTUALLY SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR WITH! HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW I'M HERE YET, BECAUSE I'VE BECOME TOO DAMN HESITANT TO VENTURE OUT INTO THE MAIN PARTY AREA!
HE'S OBVIOUSLY NOT TOO BROKEN UP THAT I DIDN'T COME HERE WITH HIM!


ALL AFTERNOON I WAS FEELING SO CONFIDENT! I GUESS BEING WITH CHLOE JUST HAD THAT EFFECT ON ME! I REALLY AND TRULY THOUGHT I COULD CARRY THAT CONFIDENCE THROUGH THE ENTIRE EVENING... BUT THAT HASN'T HAPPENED!
THE INSTANT MOTHER CAME HOME AND STARTED BELITTLING CHLOE I BEGAN FEELING APPREHENSIVE! I'D HOPED THAT, BY GETTING AWAY FROM HER AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE THOSE FEELINGS WOULDN'T LAST! BUT I GUESS THE DAMAGE HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE!


I DON'T BELONG HERE! NOT AT A PARTY... NOT DRESSED LIKE THIS! WHAT THE HELL WAS I THINKING?
I'M IN WAY OVER MY HEAD AND NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!


MAYBE THERE'S A BACK DOOR I CAN SNEAK OUT OF, AND...
OOF!
WHOA THERE, HOT STUFF! WHAT'S YOUR HURRY?


OH, DAMN! "HOT" DOESN'T BEGIN TO DESCRIBE YOU, GORGEOUS! YOU ARE DOWNRIGHT SMOKIN'!
WHAT SAY YOU AND I GRAB A COUPLE O' BREWSKIS AND GET COMFY SOMEWHERE... LIKE MY ROOM! HEH-HEH!
I, UMMM... I... CAN'T! I WAS, UHHH... I WAS JUST LEAVING!


AW, C'MON, DARLIN'! THE PARTY'S JUST GETTIN' STARTED! AND YOU ARE DEFINITELY THE ONE CHICK I WANNA PARTY WITH!
HEY THERE, GRIZ!
REALLY, PLEASE! I... I HAVE TO GO! PLEASE!


WHAT TH' FUCK?!
THANKS FOR KEEPING AN EYE ON MY DATE FOR ME THERE, GRIZ! GUESS SHE GOT LOST ON THE WAY TO THE BATHROOM!
HUH? SHE'S YOUR DATE, CHAZ?
'FRAID SO, BIG GUY! LOTS OF OTHER LADIES OUT THERE DYING TO MEET THE GRIZ THOUGH!


YEAH, GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, CHAZ... AS ALWAYS!
LATER, PRETTY GIRL!
TAKE IT EASY, GRIZ!


SORRY ABOUT THE GRIZ! HE'S ACTUALLY A BIG, LOVABLE GUY, BUT AFTER A FEW BEERS HE SOMETIMES GETS A LITTLE TOO LOVABLE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE COMING TONIGHT! I'M GLAD YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND!
UMMM, YEAH! TH... THANKS!


AND I'M CHANGING IT AGAIN, BECAUSE I'M... I'M NOT STAYING!
YOU'RE NOT? BUT YOU JUST GOT HERE!
ACTUALLY I'VE BEEN HERE LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT I NEED TO LEAVE!
BUT WHY, ARIEL? IT'S NOT BECAUSE OF GRIZ, IS IT? HE'S HARMLESS!
IT'S NOT JUST HIM! IT'S... IT'S OTHER THINGS I CAN'T... I CAN'T..
PLEASE JUST STAY LONG ENOUGH TO TALK ABOUT THIS! WILL YOU AT LEAST DO THAT FOR ME?


UMMM... MAYBE, BUT... BUT I NEED TO USE THE RESTROOM FIRST! TO... TO COLLECT MYSELF!
I UNDERSTAND! DON'T USE THE ONE OVER THERE, THOUGH! USE THE HOUSEMOTHER'S RESTROOM AT THE END OF THE HALL! YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF PRIVACY IN THERE!
I... I WILL! THANK YOU!


*SIGH!* HIDING OUT ONE MORE TIME TONIGHT!
MAYBE IF I STAY IN HERE LONG ENOUGH, CHAZ WILL LOSE INTEREST AND I CAN FINALLY SNEAK OUT OF THIS PLACE!


OH MY GOD! WHAT A FUCKING MISTAKE THIS WAS!
HOW DID I POSSIBLY THINK I COULD PULL THIS OFF?


AND I'M NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT THIS PARTY! I'M TALKING ABOUT THIS LIFE... THIS... PERSON I'M TRYING TO FOOL EVERYONE INTO BELIEVING I AM!
I'M NOT ARIEL, AND I NEVER COULD BE! NOT IN A MILLION YEARS!
THE DOCTORS, MOTHER AND CHLOE MAY HAVE DONE AN AMAZING JOB ON MY OUTSIDE, BUT ON THE INSIDE I'M STILL THAT SAME TIMID, OBEDIENT BOY WHO KILLED HIS SISTER AND EVENTUALLY GOT ATTACKED AND MUTILATED!


WHICH WAS JUST WHAT I DESERVED!
*SOB!*


THERE YOU ARE, CHAZ! I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU!
I'M A LITTLE BUSY HERE, RUDY! WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
CAN'T YOU HEAR IT? A COUPLE OF GUYS GOT INTO THE SOUND SYSTEM AND STARTED CRANKING UP THEIR OWN HEAD-BANGER PLAYLISTS!
WHAT DO YOU NEED ME FOR? JUST DEAL WITH IT!


I TRIED! BUT THEY'RE BIG, THEY'RE DRUNK AND THEY WON'T LISTEN TO ME!
AND IT'S STARTING TO DRIVE AWAY SOME OF THE GUESTS... MOSTLY THE FEMALE GUESTS!
THEY'LL ONLY LISTEN TO YOU, MAN!


WELL, SHIT! OKAY, I'LL GO DOWN THERE AND DEAL WITH THOSE MORONS, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO STAY UP HERE AND TELL ARIEL I'LL BE BACK!
ARIEL? SHE'S HERE? WHERE?
IN MRS. SIMPSON'S BATHROOM! SHE GOT A LITTLE FREAKED OUT BY GRIZ A LITTLE WHILE AGO AND NEEDED A PLACE TO CALM DOWN, SO I TOLD HER SHE COULD USE IT!


REMEMBER, DON'T LET HER LEAVE BEFORE I COME BACK!
YOU GOT IT, CHAZ! PROMISE!


I WON'T MOVE FROM THIS SPOT!




"SEE, I'M SO SORRY, CHAZ! SHE MUST'VE SNUCK OUT WHEN I WAS BOUNCING A COUPLE OF DOUCHEBAGS TRYING TO CRASH THE PARTY!"
HMPH! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS HE SEES IN HER! 'CAUSE HE COULD DO A WHOLE HELLUVA LOT BETTER!


OKAY! *SNIFF!* I NEED TO GET AHOLD OF MYSELF SO I CAN LEAVE WITHOUT CAUSING A SCENE!
AND THEN, FIRST THING TOMORROW TAKE THIS RIDICULOUS OUTFIT BACK TO THE STORE!


BUT FIRST I NEED TO MAKE SURE CHAZ ISN'T STILL WAITING FOR ME OUTSIDE THE DOOR!
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO HEAR HIM MOVING AROUND OUT THERE, BUT THAT DAMN MUSIC IS MAKING IT NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE!


THAT... THAT MUSIC SOUNDS FAMILIAR! WHERE HAVE I HEARD IT BEFORE?
SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF THOSE GROUPS ARIEL USED TO CRANK UP WHEN MOTHER WASN'T HOME!


THIS SONG IN PARTICULAR... I KNOW THIS SONG! SHE USED TO PLAY IT ALL THE TIME!
I HAVEN'T HEARD IT SINCE... SINCE...


AND THE LAST THING SHE SAID...


THE VERY LAST THING I HEARD FROM HER LIPS...


OOOO... I LOVE THIS SONG!

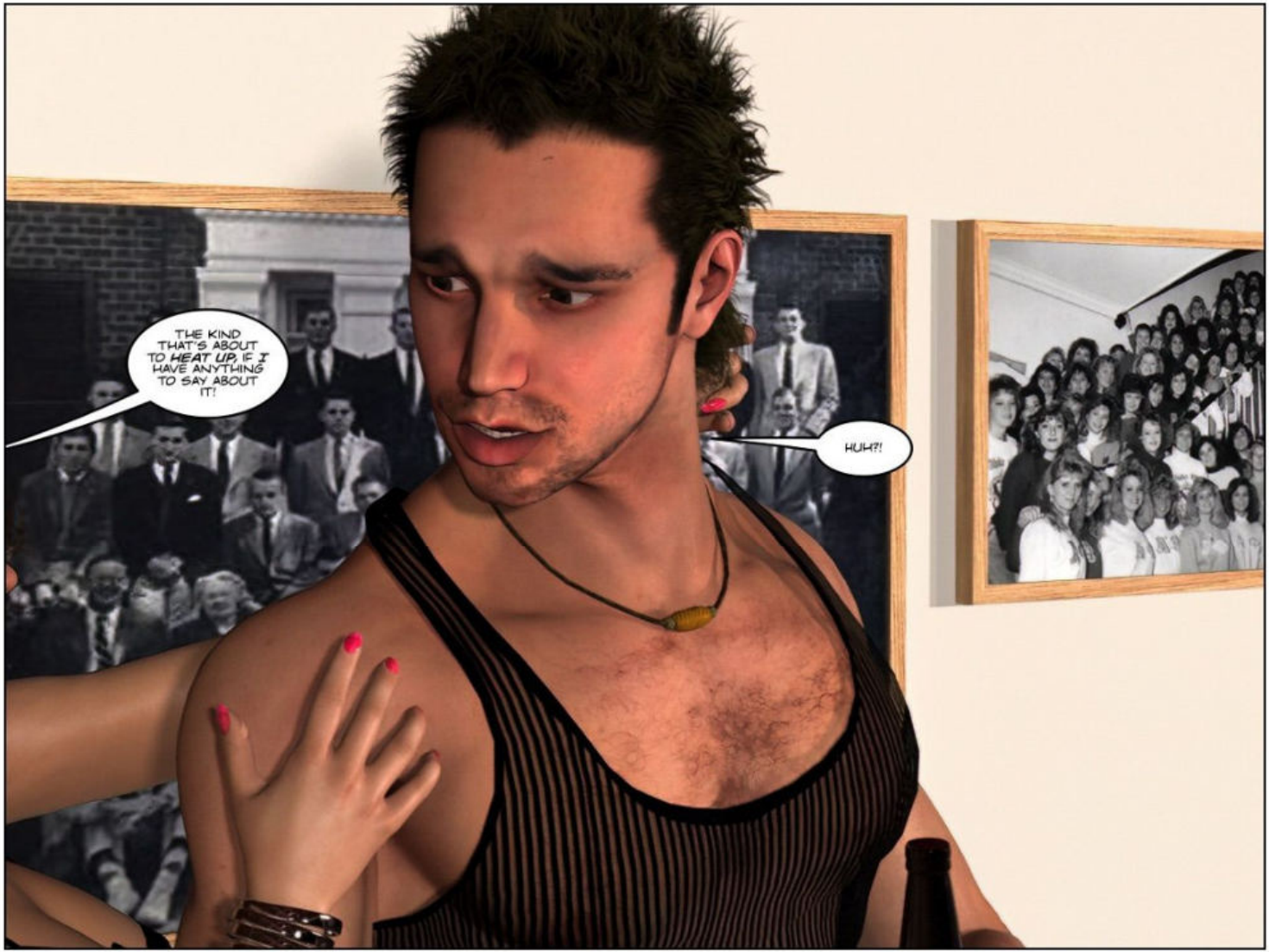

THE RAW ENERGY... THE FURY... THE PASSION! I CAN FEEL IT PULSATING THROUGH EVERY INCH OF MY BODY!
SOME PARTS OF MY BODY MORE THAN OTHERS! *GIGGLE!*


WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME FOR ME TO REJOIN THE PARTY, NOW THAT IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S TAKEN A MUCH MORE PALATABLE DIRECTION!
A DIRECTION THAT'S MUCH MORE LIKELY TO GET ME THOSE COLLEGE "EXPERIENCES" I WAS LOOKING FOR! *GIGGLE!*


UGH! BUT LOOK AT WHAT ALL THAT SORRY-ASS WEEPING HAS DONE TO MY MAKEUP! IT'S A MESS!
THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL I'M SHOWING MY FACE OUT THERE WITHOUT A COMPLETE DO-OVER!


HMPH! THIS PARTY'S GETTIN' TO BE A REAL FUCKIN' DRAG!
CAN'T HAVE THE CHICK I WANT, CAN'T PLAY THE TUNES I WANT... CAN'T DO NOTHIN' I WANT!


WHAT KINDA PARTY IS THIS ANYWAY?


THE KIND THAT'S ABOUT TO HEAT UP, IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT!
HUH?!


HEY THERE, TALL, DARK AND PERPETUALLY UNSHAVEN!
UH-HUH! I THINK OUR FIRST MEETING GOT OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT, SO I THOUGHT WE SHOULD TRY AGAIN!
HEY, PRETTY GIRL! YOU'RE BACK!
UMM, OKAY!


SO... HELLO! I'M ARIEL!
I'M, UHHH... STU, BUT ALL MY FRIENDS CALL ME GRIZ 'CAUSE I'M...
BECAUSE YOU'RE BIG, STRONG, FORCEFUL AND CUDDLY, ALL ROLLED UP INTO ONE BIG YUMMY PACKAGE! AM I RIGHT?
UHH, YEAH... I GUESS SO! HEH-HEH!


BIG AND YUMMY BEING THE OPERATIVE WORDS HERE! YOU HAVE QUITE THE PHYSIQUE, GRIZ!
THANKS! I LIKE TO WORK OUT A LOT MYSELF! IN FACT, I WAS HOPING TO GET IN A GOOD BIT OF EXERCISE HERE TONIGHT!
YEAH, BEIN' ON THE FOOTBALL TEAM KEEPS ME IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE!
YOU GOT QUITE THE HOT BOD YOURSELF, GORGEOUS!
OH, MAN!!


LOOK, UMMM... AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO GO NUTS ON THIS FINE BOD OF YOURS, CHAZ IS A GOOD BUD OF MINE! AND SINCE YOU'RE HERE WITH HIM...
JUST BECAUSE HE INVITED ME DOESN'T MEAN A DAMN THING! I CAME TO THIS PARTY BY MYSELF AND I'LL LEAVE IT THE SAME WAY!
BUT WHAT I DO IN BETWEEN IS ALL UP TO ME! THAT CLEAR THINGS UP FOR YOU, GRIZZY?
UHH.. YEAH! YEAH, IT SURE AS HELL DOES!


NOW, CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT WASN'T THERE TALK EARLIER OF YOU HAVING A ROOM AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE?
THEN WHY THE HELL ARE WE STANDING AROUND OUT HERE?
HELL YEAH! RIGHT DOWN AT THE END OF THIS HALL!


NO GODDAMN REASON AT ALL, HOT STUFF! LET'S GO!
"GIGGLE!"


JUST ONCE I'D LIKE TO BE ABLE TO ENJOY ONE OF THESE PARTIES INSTEAD OF BEING THE ONLY DAMN GROWNUP IN THE ROOM!


WHAT THE...? WHERE'S RUDY?


ARIEL? ARE YOU OKAY? ARE YOU STILL IN THERE?
KNOCK KNOCK!


ARIEL?

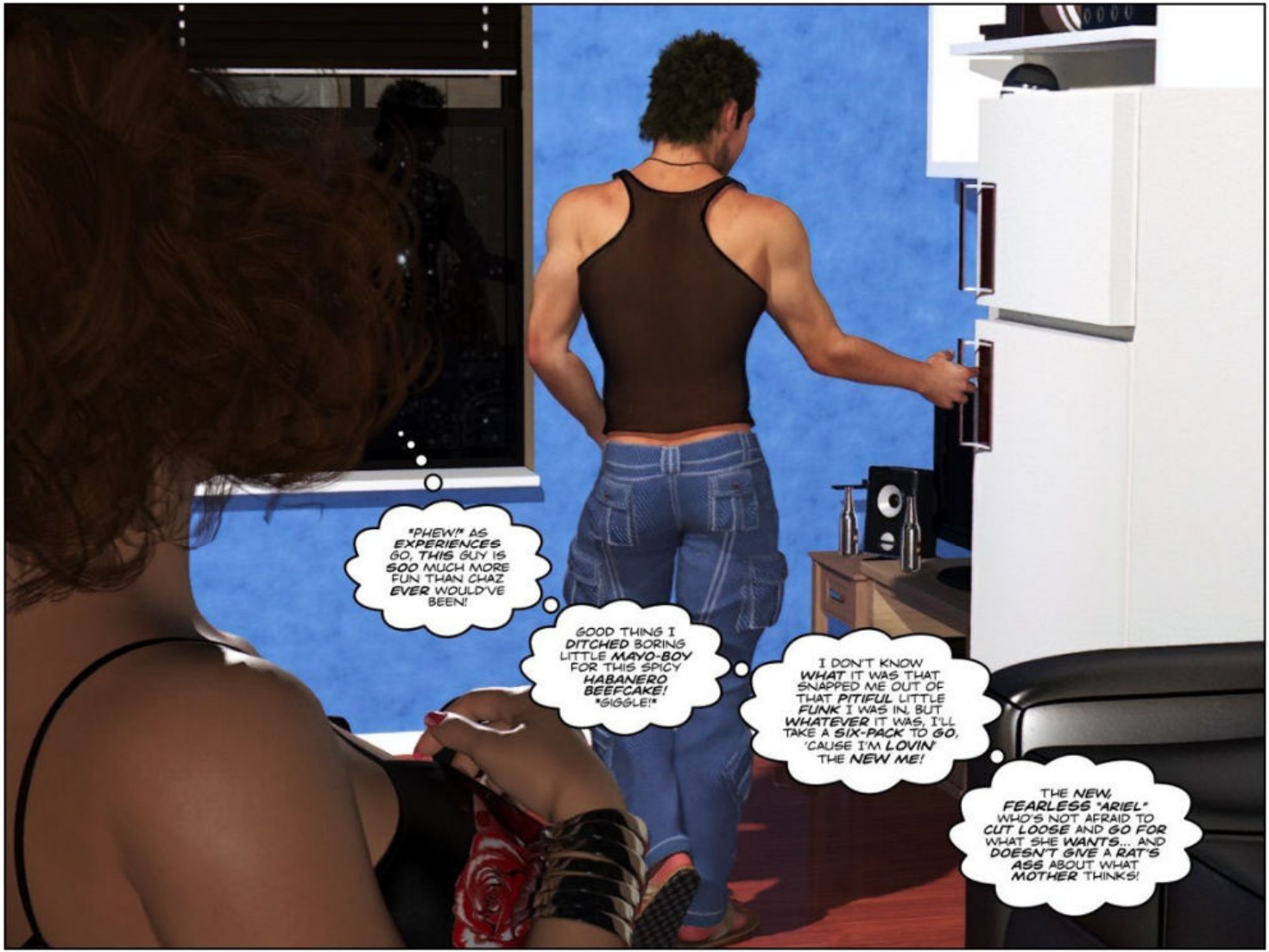

WHAT THE...?


"Where the hell did she go?"


OHHH! YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW GOOD THAT FEELS!
FEELS PRETTY DAMN GOOD TO ME TOO, GORGEOUS! HEH-HEH!


AND THERE'S A LOT O' TERRITORY I AIN'T EVEN COME CLOSE TO YET!
MMMMM! NOT YET, BIG GUY! I NEED TO CATCH MY BREATH BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER!


WORKS FOR ME! HOW'S ABOUT I GRAB US A COUPLE O' COLD BREWSKIS FROM THE FRIG?
SOUNDS GOOD! THE COLDER, THE BETTER!


*PHEW!* AS EXPERIENCES GO, THIS GUY IS SOO MUCH MORE FUN THAN CHAZ EVER WOULD'VE BEEN!
GOOD THING I DITCHED BORING LITTLE MAYO-BOY FOR THIS SPICY HABANERO BEEFCAKE! *GIGGLE!*
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS THAT SNAPPED ME OUT OF THAT PITIFUL LITTLE FUNK I WAS IN, BUT WHATEVER IT WAS, I'LL TAKE A SIX-PACK TO GO, 'CAUSE I'M LOVIN' THE NEW ME!
THE NEW, FEARLESS "ARIEL" WHO'S NOT AFRAID TO CUT LOOSE AND GO FOR WHAT SHE WANTS... AND DOESN'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS ABOUT WHAT MOTHER THINKS!


OH, WOULDN'T MOTHER JUST FREAK IF SHE SAW GRIZ HERE GROPING ME GOOD-NIGHT AT THE FRONT DOOR INSTEAD OF CHAZ, HER HAND-PICKED PRINCE CHARMING! GOD! SHE'D PROBABLY STICK HER HEAD IN THE OVEN! *GIGGLE!*
HMMM... THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA! SHE DESERVES A LITTLE PAYBACK FOR ALL THE SHIT SHE'S PUT "ALEX" THROUGH OVER THE YEARS! AND CONVINCING HIM TO GIVE ME A RIDE HOME WILL BE A PIECE OF CAKE!


I'M SURE HE'D PREFER TO KEEP ME HERE IN HIS ROOM QUITE A BIT LONGER, BUT GETTING HOME IN TIME TO SEE THE LOOK ON MOTHER'S FACE WILL BE WORTH IT!
BESIDES, I THINK I'VE HAD MY FILL OF NEW EXPERIENCES FOR ONE NIGHT! OH, HE'LL UNDOUBTABLY GRUMBLE AT THE THOUGHT OF CALLING IT QUITS, BUT THE PROMISE OF A RAIN CHECK SHOULD KEEP HIM ENGAGED UNTIL HE GETS ME HOME!
AND THE MORE I THINK ABOUT IT, THE SMARTER PUTTING BRAKES ON TONIGHT SOUNDS! I WAS GETTING QUITE CARRIED AWAY THERE FOR AWHILE!
MAKES ME WONDER WHAT I MIGHT LET HAPPEN IF I STUCK AROUND HERE TOO LONG!


MIGHT AS WELL BREAK THE BAD NEWS TO HIM NOW!
HEY GRIZ... ABOUT THAT BEER...
COMIN' RIGHT UP, DOLL! GOTTA TAKE CARE OF ONE LITTLE THING FIRST BEFORE WE CONTINUE!
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT! I THINK I NEED TO...


...GO...?


OH, YEAH! NOW THIS IS WHAT THIS PARTY NEEDED! SOME HEART-POUNDING TUNAGE!


THEY WOULDN'T LET ME PLAY THIS DOWNSTAIRS! BUT UP HERE IN MY ROOM, NO ONE'S GONNA STOP ME! HEH-HEH!
SO WADDYA THINK, HOT STUFF! YOU LIKE?


OH, I LIKE IT, ALL RIGHT! IN FACT, I LOVE IT!
I LOVE THE WAY IT MAKES EVERYTHING, EVEN THE AIR, PULSATE AND THROB! LIKE A JACKHAMMER ON STEROIDS!
WHOA! WELL, HELLO THERE!


AND WHAT I'LL LIKE EVEN MORE IS FEELING THAT JACKHAMMER OF YOURS PULSATING AND THROBBING INSIDE OF ME!
THINK YOU'RE UP FOR IT, BIG GUY?
OH, BABY... I AM SO UP FOR THAT! YOU HAVE NO IDEA!


OOOHHH! THERE'S WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR! I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING SO BIG AND SOO HARD!


I'VE SAID IT ONCE AND I'LL SAY IT AGAIN... EVERY INCH OF YOUR BOD IS SMOKIN' HOT! DAMN!
TELL ME ABOUT IT, STUD! BETTER YET... SHOW ME!


"GASP!" OHHH! THAT'S THE SPOT, BABY! BURY THAT MONSTER ALL THE WAY INSIDE MY HOT PUSSY!




Later...
YOU SURE YOU GOTTA GO, HOT STUFF? CAUSE I KNOW I'VE GOT A FEW MORE ROUNDS IN ME! HEH-HEH!
OH, I'M SURE YOU DO, BABY! AND I'D LOVE NOTHING MORE THAN TO TEST THAT ENDURANCE OF YOURS! *GIGGLE!*


UNFORTUNATELY, I'M STILL LIVING AT HOME! AND IF I DON'T MAKE AN APPEARANCE BEFORE SUNRISE, I'M GOING TO BE GROUNDED UNTIL MY JUNIOR YEAR!
FAIR ENOUGH, GORGEOUS! MMMM!


LATER, TIGER! SEE YOU AROUND CAMPUS!
GRRRR! HEH-HEH!


HEY THERE, RUDY! LOSE SOMEONE?
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU...
ARIEL?!


GRIZ! WAS THAT ARIEL? WAS SHE UP HERE WITH YOU ALL THIS TIME?!
OH YEAH! WITH ME... UNDER ME... ON TOP O' ME... YOU NAME IT!
DEFINITELY LOOKIN' FORWARD TO A REPEAT PERFORMANCE! HEH-HEH!


AS MUCH AS I'D STILL LOVE TO SEE MOTHER'S REACTION TO ME AND GRIZ GOING AT IT ON THE FRONT PORCH, PROBABLY BEST TO LET HIM COOL HIS HEELS HERE!
DON'T WANT THE BUG GUY TO GET ALL TERRITORIAL AND THINK HE'S STAKED SOME KIND OF CLAIM TO ME!
THE BIG LUG'S A GREAT FUCK! BUT I'M SURE THERE ARE LOTS OF OTHER GUYS ON THIS CAMPUS WHO ARE JUST AS...


UMM... OTHER GUYS WHO...


*GASP!*
OH MY GOD!
WHAT DID I...?!




HOLY SHIT!
HOLY SHIT!
HOLY FUCKING SHIT!!
I... I WAS IN THAT GUY'S ROOM! AND HE... WE... I...


...I...


HOW DID I GET DOWN HERE? WASN'T I JUST IN THE BATHROOM, BUT... I DON'T REMEMBER LEAVING...


OH GOD! I MUST BE MORE UPSET THAN I REALIZED IF I'M ZONING OUT LIKE THIS!


I KNOW MOTHER AND CHLOE WILL BOTH BE DISAPPOINTED IN ME FOR TURNING TAIL AND RUNNING LIKE THIS, BUT THERE'S NO WAY I CAN STAY HERE!


I'VE GOT TO GET HOME AND JUST WRITE THIS NIGHT OFF AS AN EXPERIMENT THAT FAILED MISERABLY!


GRIZ, MY MAN, I KNOW YOU'RE A GENTLEMAN AND ALL THAT CRAP, BUT YOU HAVE GOT TO TELL ME EVERYTHING ABOUT THAT CHICK!


AND I MEAN EVERYTHING!


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GENDER-MIX COMIX
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The next day...
UGH! I HAVEN'T SLEPT THIS LATE IN... I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG!
BUT I GUESS IT'S MY OWN DAMN FAULT FOR GOING TO THAT STUPID PARTY AND STAYING OUT SO LATE!


BUT I COULD'VE SWORN I. DIDN'T SPEND THAT LONG AT THE FRAT! MAN, I MUST'VE REALLY ZONED OUT WHILE HIDING OUT IN THE BATHROOM!
PROBABLY WHY CHAZ WASN'T STILL WAITING FOR ME WHEN I FINALLY SNUCK OUT! HE HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN BABYSIT A CRYING BASKET-CASE LIKE ME!


AND WHY THE HELL DO MY MUSCLES ACHE SO GODDAMN MUCH TODAY? ESPECIALLY MY CORE AND MY LEGS!
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D THINK I TRIED TO BREAK MY MILE RECORD IN THE BREAST STROKE SOMETIME LAST NIGHT... MAYBE MORE THAN ONCE!
OH WELL, AN HOUR OR SO OF LOW-SPEED LAPS SHOULD WORK THE KINKS OUT!


ONE MAJOR ADVANTAGE, THOUGH, OF COMING IN SO LATE AND SLEEPING IN LIKE I DID, IS NOT HAVING TO GET DRILLED BY...


MOTHER?!
I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE!


I'M SORRY, DEAR! I DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE YOU!
YOU.. YOU JUST CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD, MOTHER.. THAT'S ALL!
YOU'RE USUALLY OFF DOING THINGS BY THIS TIME ON SATURDAYS!
YES, I USUALLY AM! BUT THEN AGAIN, YOU'RE USUALLY UP MUCH EARLIER THAN THIS! WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS? HMMM?


*SIGH!* I KNOW I CAME IN WAY TOO LATE, MOTHER, AND I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT! BUT IT WASN'T BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU THINK! TRUST ME!
REALLY? AND JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M ASSUMING ABOUT YOUR... FESTIVITIES LAST NIGHT?
CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS AFTER MY SWIM, MOTHER? BECAUSE THIS NEEDS TO BE A MUCH LONGER CONVERSATION AND I'M NOT UP FOR IT AT THE MOMENT!
WHY, OF COURSE, DEAR! I'M IN NO HURRY!


ENJOY YOUR SWIM, DEAR!


A few hours later...
AHHH! I FINALLY FEEL HUMAN AGAIN! IT'S A WONDER WHAT A FEW HOURS IN THE POOL AND A NICE, LONG HOT SHOWER WILL DO FOR A PERSON'S MOOD!
NOW IF ONLY I CAN GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE...


OH GOOD, YOU'RE FINALLY DONE! NOW WE CAN HAVE THAT LONG OVERDUE TALK YOU PROMISED ME!
*SIGH!* OF COURSE, MOTHER!


SO, HOW WAS THE PARTY LAST NIGHT? I ASSUME YOU MUST HAVE HAD A GOOD TIME, SINCE YOU CAME IN AFTER I WENT TO SLEEP... WHICH WAS QUITE LATE!
TRUTHFULLY, MOTHER, I DIDN'T HAVE A VERY GOOD TIME AT ALL!
REALLY? THAT SURPRISES ME, HONEY! WHY NOT?


I... WE ARE TRYING TO DO TOO MUCH, MOTHER! AND WAY TOO QUICKLY!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU MEAN, DEAR!
I WASN'T READY TO GO TO A PARTY LIKE THAT LAST NIGHT! NOT READY AT ALL!
WHY? WHAT HAPPENED?


LET'S JUST SAY I FOUND MYSELF IN A SITUATION I WASN'T READY TO HANDLE!
DID SOMEONE HURT YOU?! WHO WAS IT?
TELL ME AND I'LL HAVE THEM EXPELLED SO DAMN FAST THEY'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT THEM!
NOBODY HURT ME, MOTHER! I JUST GOT A LITTLE FREAKED OUT BECAUSE OF ALL THE UNANTICIPATED AND UNWANTED ATTENTION!


OH, I SEE! WELL, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, HONEY, BECAUSE A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN LIKE YOU IS GOING TO DRAW A LOT OF WHAT YOU CALL "UNWANTED" ATTENTION! BUT THERE ARE WAYS OF DEALING WITH IT... WAYS I'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO TEACH YOU!
THAT'S WHY I WANTED YOU TO GO TO THAT PARTY WITH THAT CUTE BECKHAM BOY! HAVING A MAN BY YOUR SIDE IS A SURE-FIRE WAY TO DISSUADE OTHER MEN FROM BOTHERING YOU, AND IF WE HAPPENS TO BE RICH AND HANDSOME TO BOOT THEN...


MOTHER, YOU JUST DON'T GET IT! I AM NOT THIS PERSON YOU WANT ME TO BE!
BETWEEN YOU, THE DOCTORS AND THE SURGEONS I MAY LOOK THE PART AND MAYBE EVEN SOMETIMES ACT THE PART, BUT ON THE INSIDE I AM NOT THE "BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN" YOU IMAGINE ME TO BE! I DON'T KNOW IF I EVER CAN BE!
AND THERE'S ONE THING I KNOW FOR CERTAIN, I AM DEFINITELY NOT ARIEL! SO STOP TRYING TO MAKE ME INTO HER, BECAUSE IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN!


WAIT! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING? WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THIS!
I'VE SAID ALL I NEED TO, MOTHER! NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'M GOING OVER TO SEE CHLOE! I DON'T KNOW WHEN I'LL BE BACK!


DON'T YOU DARE...
Slam!!


WHY THAT UNGRATEFUL, HEAD-STRONG LITTLE...






WELL THEN... WE'LL JUST SEE HOW "DEFINITE" YOU ARE ABOUT THINGS WHEN I GET THROUGH YOU, MISSY!


A short time later...
WOW! WHEN CHLOE GAVE ME HER ADDRESS, I HAD NO IDEA IT'D BE ALL THE WAY ACROSS TOWN... AND IN AN OLD CONVERTED WAREHOUSE BUILDING AT THAT!


THEN AGAIN, IT REALLY SHOULDN'T SURPRISE ME! CONSIDERING THE TYPE OF PERSON SHE IS, A PLACE LIKE THIS SEEMS TO FIT HER STYLE PERFECTLY!
Knock Knock!!


HEY THERE, GIRLFRIEND! GLAD YOU FOUND THE PLACE! C'MON IN!


OH MY GOD, I LOVE YOUR PLACE! IT'S SO... YOU!
THANKS! I'VE NEVER LIKED LIVING IN PLACES THAT WERE SOMEONE ELSE! *GIGGLE!*
BEING A HAIR STYLIST MUST PAY BETTER THAN I THOUGHT!
OH, I HAVE OTHER CREATIVE OUTLETS THAT MAKE SOME DECENT MONEY! SO I DO OKAY!
"OTHER CREATIVE OUTLETS", HUH? LIKE WHAT?
LIKE... LOOK BEHIND YOU!


*GASP!* HOLY.. DID YOU DO THOSE?
YEAH, WHEN I FIRST MOVED IN! GOOD THING THE LANDLORD IS AN ART LOVER!
THOSE ARE AMAZING!
FORTUNATELY THERE ARE A FEW WELL-HEELED PEOPLE WHO AGREE WITH YOU AND ARE WILLING TO PUT THEIR MONEY WHERE THEIR MOUTH IS!
SO I'VE GOT A FEW WORKS HANGING UP HERE AND THERE AROUND TOWN!
AWESOME!


SO, ENOUGH ABOUT ME AND MY COOL APARTMENT... DISH THE DIRT ON YOUR PARTY LAST NIGHT! HOW'D IT GO?
"SIGH!" NOT VERY WELL, I'M AFRAID!
WHY NOT? DON'T TELL ME NO ONE THOUGHT YOU WERE HOT IN THAT OUTFIT WE GOT FOR YOU, 'CAUSE I WON'T BUY THAT FOR A SECOND!
OH, THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO LIKED HOW I LOOKED, ALL RIGHT! THAT WAS THE PROBLEM!


DID ONE OF THOSE PUNK FRAT BOYS GET ROUGH WITH YOU? GODDAMN IT! MAYBE I SHOULD'VE GONE WITH YOU AFTER ALL!
WELL, IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN! A FRIEND OF MINE'S A TAE-KWON-DO INSTRUCTOR AND HE'LL HAVE YOU KICKING UNWANTED BALLS IN NO TIME!
IN THE MEANTIME, WE'LL GET YOU SOME PEPPER SPRAY, AND...


NO ONE GOT ROUGH WITH ME, CHLOE! ONE GUY DID GET A LITTLE OVERLY FRIENDLY TOWARD ME, BUT I FREAKED OUT AND LOCKED MYSELF IN THE BATHROOM BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE COULD HAPPEN!
WELL, THAT'S ONE WAY TO KEEP THEM AT BAY! BUT I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO BE NOTICED AT THIS PARTY!
AT THE TIME I THOUGHT I DID, BUT ONCE I GOT THERE, THE REALITY SET IN AND I REALIZED I WASN'T READY FOR THAT KIND OF ATTENTION!
I'M SORRY! YOU WORKED SO HARD ON MAKING ME LOOK GOOD AND I JUST LET IT ALL GO TO WASTE!
HEY! NO NEED FOR ANY KIND OF APOLOGY! SHIT HAPPENS!


YEAH... SHIT DEFINITELY DOES HAPPEN! ESPECIALLY TO ME!
WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU SAY THAT?
"SIGH!" EXPERIENCE! AND IF YOU KNEW THE TRUTH ABOUT ME, YOU'D PROBABLY AGREE!


LOOK, ARIEL... WE HAVEN'T KNOWN EACH OTHER TOO LONG, BUT I CAN ALREADY TELL THAT THERE'S A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN US! TELL ME IF I'M WRONG!
YOU'RE NOT! I'VE KIND OF HAD THE SAME FEELINGS!
GOOD! THEN PLEASE KNOW THAT YOU CAN TELL ME ANYTHING... AND IT'LL STAY BETWEEN US! JUST LIKE SISTERS!
SISTERS, HUH? *SIGH* I GUESS THAT'S AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY TO START!


SO... DID I TELL YOU I USED TO HAVE A SISTER? A TWIN SISTER?
USED TO? SHE'S GONE NOW? WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?
SHE DIED IN A CAR WRECK A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO!
OH... I'M SORRY! IS THAT THE SAME ACCIDENT THAT LAID YOU UP FOR A COUPLE OF MONTHS, TOO?
NO... THAT HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS LATER!
WOW! THAT IS A LOT OF SHIT HAPPENING? WHAT WAS YOUR SISTER'S NAME?
ARIEL!
WHAT? WAIT A MINUTE... HOW DID THAT WORK?


"SIGH!" WE MIGHT NEED TO SIT DOWN AND HAVE A DRINK OR TWO FOR THE REST OF THIS, BECAUSE IT GETS EVEN WEIRDER FROM HERE ON OUT!


Later, after a long and cathartic life story...
THAT... IS SO MESSED UP!
YEAH... THAT PRETTY WELL DESCRIBES MY LIFE TO DATE!


I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE FINALLY REALIZING HOW SCREWED UP AND MANIPULATIVE YOUR MOTHER IS!
THE WAY SHE TREATED YOU BEFORE YOUR SURGERIES WAS ENOUGH TO PUT HER IN THE "MOMMY DEAREST" HALL OF FAME!
BUT WHAT SHE'S DONE SINCE... ESSENTIALLY TRYING TO WIPE YOU OUT OF EXISTENCE IN ORDER TO REPLACE YOUR SISTER... WELL, THAT'S MAD SCIENTIST SHIT!


I KNOW, BUT UNTIL RECENTLY I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER! I THOUGHT THE WAY SHE TREATED ME WAS NORMAL... MOTHERS DOTING ON DAUGHTERS AND IGNORING THE SONS!
MY LIFE WAS PRETTY ISOLATED SO I DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE'S LIFE TO COMPARE MINE TO!
IRONICALLY, IT WASN'T UNTIL MOTHER TURNED ME INTO "ARIEL" THAT I FINALLY STARTED GETTING OUT AND SEEING HOW THE WORLD WAS SUPPOSED TO BE!


GOD, IT'S NO WONDER YOU FREAKED OUT AT THAT PARTY LAST NIGHT! YOUR FIRST REAL OUTING AS A WOMAN AND IT'S TO A GODDAMN FRAT PARTY!
AND I ONLY MADE IT WORSE BY DOLLING YOU UP AND MAKING YOU GO ALONE! JESUS! I AM SO SORRY, HONEY!
HEY, IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT, CHLOE! I WANTED TO GO! YOU WERE JUST BEING A GOOD FRIEND BY SUPPORTING ME AT THE TIME!
AND ALTHOUGH I MAY HAVE BEEN MAJORLY UPSET LAST NIGHT, I'M JUST FINE TODAY! NO TRAUMA... NO BAD DREAMS... JUST AN UNPLEASANT MEMORY OR TWO, THAT'S ALL!


IN FACT, IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, I NEVER WOULD'VE GOTTEN UP THE COURAGE TO GO IN THE FIRST PLACE, OR STAND UP TO MY MOTHER THE WAY I DID TODAY!
YOU'VE BEEN KIND OF MY ROLE MODEL EVER SINCE I MET YOU, CHLOE! AND WHETHER YOU REALIZE IT OR NOT, I THINK I'M ON MY WAY TO BECOMING THE PERSON I WANT TO BE, THANKS TO YOU!


AND WHO IS THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE? THERE'S NO DOUBT YOU MAKE A SMOKING HOT WOMAN, BUT YOU WERE TOTALLY MANIPULATED INTO LOOKING SO GORGEOUS!
DO YOU THINK YOU WANT TO TRY AND BE A MAN AGAIN!
I'VE CERTAINLY BEEN CONSIDERING IT... OR AT LEAST I WAS UNTIL I FOUND I'VE GOT ARIEL'S WOMB! THAT'S BEEN KIND OF THE TIPPING POINT FOR ME!
I'M NOT SURE I CAN GO BACK TO BEING A GUY AT THIS POINT... IT KIND OF FEELS LIKE THAT SHIP HAS SAILED!


AND YOU'RE SURE THAT'S YOU TALKING AND NOT MOMMY DEAREST, RIGHT? WELL, IT IS A SUPER-IMPORTANT DECISION, BUT DEFINITELY NOT SOMETHING YOU SHOULD BE DECIDING TODAY...
THERE IS, HOWEVER, A SUPER-IMPORTANT DECISION THAT WE ABSOLUTELY NEED TO MAKE RIGHT NOW!
LIKE, WHAT DO WE DO SINCE THAT WAS THE LAST BOTTLE OF WINE?
AND WHAT'S THAT?
*GIGGLE!*


YOU KNOW, NORMALLY I WOULDN'T LET A TRAGEDY LIKE THIS HAPPEN, BUT I'M LEAVING TOWN TOMORROW FOR ABOUT A WEEK AND FIGURED STOCKING UP WASN'T A PRIORITY!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
MY COUSIN IN NEW ORLEANS IS GETTING MARRIED NEXT WEEKEND AND SHE HAD THE GALL TO MAKE ME HER MAID OF HONOR, WHICH MEANS I HAVE TO BE THERE ALL WEEK TO HELP HER OUT!
ACTUALLY, IT SOUNDS LIKE FUN!
OH, THE BACHELORETTE PARTY WILL BE, THAT'S FOR DAMN SURE! *GIGGLE!* I'LL DEFINITELY SEND YOU SOME PICS!
YOU'D BETTER! *GIGGLE!*


SO, HERE WE ARE... TWO UBER-HOT WOMEN ON A SATURDAY AFTERNOON WITH NO BOOZE! ANY IDEAS?
I DON'T KNOW! WHAT DO YOU USUALLY DO ON SATURDAY AFTERNOONS?
OH, I'M USUALLY GEARING UP FOR A NIGHT OUT AT ONE OF MY MANY FAVORITE HOT SPOTS! BUT I DON'T EXPECT YOU'D WANT TO...
I'D LOVE TO!


REALLY? 'CAUSE AFTER LAST NIGHT, I WASN'T SURE YOU'D FEEL MUCH LIKE GOING OUT AGAIN SO SOON!
WELL... I DON'T KNOW! EVEN IF WE GO SOMEWHERE THAT'S A LITTLE... DIFFERENT?
I CAN HANDLE IT... I KNOW I CAN! AS LONG AS I'M WITH YOU, I CAN HANDLE ANYTHING!
ESPECIALLY IF IT'S SOMEPLACE A LITTLE DIFFERENT! PLEASE, CHLOE... LET'S DO IT!


OH, FINE... IF WE HAVE TO!
YAY!
BUT IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BLEND IN AT THE PLACE I HAVE IN MIND, WE'VE GOT A BIT OF WORK TO DO!


I AM COMPLETELY IN YOUR HANDS, MAESTRO! *GIGGLE!*


Later that night...


WADDYA THINK, CHICA? NOT EXACTLY YOUR TYPICAL CORNER PUB FROM THE 'BURBS, HUH?


OH MY GOD! I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES I'VE BEEN PARKED OUTSIDE PLACES LIKE THIS WAITING FOR MY SISTER, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER BEEN INSIDE ONE!
IT'S LOUD... IT'S WILD... AND... GOD, I LOVE IT!
I THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE IT! GIVE THAT INNER REBEL OF YOURS A CHANCE TO COME OUT AND PLAY!


SO, WANNA HIT THE DANCE FLOOR OR THE BAR FIRST?
OH, I DEFINITELY THINK I NEED A GLASS OF SOMETHING TO KEEP UP WITH YOU!
BAR IT IS THEN!


HAVE I TOLD YOU HOW AWESOME THIS OUTFIT IS THAT YOU PICKED OUT FOR ME?
ONLY A COUPLE OF DOZEN TIMES SO FAR! AND THE ONLY REASON IT LOOKS SO GOOD IS BECAUSE OF THE WAY YOU CARRY IT!
FACE IT, GIRL! YOU ROCK THIS LOOK!
I DO, DON'T I? *GIGGLE!*


HEY, CHLOE! HOW GOES IT?
NOT BAD, BRENDA... NOT BAD AT ALL! THIS IS MY FRIEND... ALEX!
NICE TO MEET YOU, ALEX! WHAT CAN I GET YOU TWO?


A COUPLE OF LONG-NECKS SOUND OKAY TO YOU, ALEX?
UMMM... YEAH!
COMIN' RIGHT UP!


WHY THE WEIRD LOOK?
YOU... YOU KEEP CALLING ME ALEX! NO ONE'S CALLED ME THAT IN ALMOST A YEAR!
WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO CALL YOU "ARIEL", 'CAUSE THAT'S NOT WHO YOU ARE!
I KNOW, BUT... I'M NOT REALLY ALEX ANYMORE, EITHER!


"ALEX" WAS A SAD AND LONELY BOY WHO LET EVERYONE WALK ALL OVER HIM!
MOTHER AND THE DOCTORS MAY HAVE TAKEN THE BOY AWAY, BUT BUT YOU'RE THE PERSON WHO'S HELPED ME SEE THAT I'M NOT ALONE AND I SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID TO EXPRESS MYSELF THE WAY I WANT !
SO BEING CALLED "ALEX" JUST DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT ANYMORE!
I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND, HONEY!


THEN HOW ABOUT I CALL YOU SOMETHING LIKE ALEXIS, OR LEXI, OR ALI, OR...
ALI! I LIKE THAT!
THEN "ALI" IT IS!


THEN IT'S ONLY FAIR THAT ALI GETS HER VERY FIRST HUG FROM HER VERY BEST FRIEND! C'MERE, YOU!
THE FIRST OF MANY, I'M SURE! *GIGGLE!*
HERE YOU GO, LADIES!


SO, READY TO SHOW ME HOW CHLOE DOES SATURDAY NIGHTS?
OH, THE WORD IS GIVEN! *GIGGLE!*
Clink!
SAY THE WORD AND THE PARTY BEGINS!


PARTY, HUH? I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT!
OH, YOU DO, DO YOU?
HELL, YEAH!


HOW ABOUT YOU TWO LOVELY LADIES JOIN ME AND A COUPLE OF BUDDIES AND WE ALL GET CRAZY?
HMM! TEMPTING! WADDYA THINK, ALI?
INTRIGUING, TO SAY THE LEAST!


BUT I THINK WE'LL HAVE TO TURN DOWN YOUR GENEROUS OFFER, BIG GUY!
'CAUSE AS FAR AS WE'RE CONCERNED, IT'S LADIES NIGHT!
C'MON, ALI! LET'S HIT THE DANCE FLOOR!
LATER! *GIGGLE!*


NOT YOUR TYPE, HUH?
NOT TONIGHT, HE ISN'T!


UMM, BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER, I SHOULD PROBABLY MENTION THAT I'VE NEVER BEEN DANCING BEFORE IN MY LIFE!
FROM WHAT YOU TOLD ME ABOUT YOURSELF, I FIGURED AS MUCH! THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I CHOSE THIS PLACE... SO I CAN TEACH YOU SOME MOVES!
BUT OUT HERE IN FRONT OF ALL THESE PEOPLE? I'M GOING TO EMBARRASS THE SHIT OUT OF YOU!
NOT GONNA HAPPEN!


PEOPLE COME TO PLACES LIKE THIS TO BURN OFF SOME STEAM AND GET CRAZY! THEY'RE NOT AUDITIONING FOR "US'S GOT TALENT" AND DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS IF THAT'S PAINFULLY OBVIOUS!
TAKE A LOOK! SOME OF 'EM ARE JUST STANDING OUT THERE WAVING THEIR ARMS AROUND IN TIME TO THE MUSIC... AND EVERYONE'S OKAY WITH THAT!
HELL! YOU COULD GO OUT THERE AND DO THE HOKEY-POKEY AND NO ONE WOULD GIVE A DAMN!
WELL... OKAY! I'LL GIVE IT A SHOT!


OF COURSE, WITH THOSE GAMS AND THE WAY YOU HANDLE THOSE HEELS, I DON'T THINK YOU'LL HAVE TO DO MUCH TO DRAW A WHOLE DIFFERENT KIND OF ATTENTION!
*SIGH!* YEAH, THAT'S MOTHER'S DOING! SHE'S HAD ME IN HEELS SINCE DAY ONE, SO THEY'RE LIKE SECOND NATURE TO ME NOW!
HEY, IN THIS CASE, MOTHER KNOWS BEST! *GIGGLE!*


SO ALL IT TAKES IS A LITTLE WIGGLE HERE AND A SHIMMY THERE! FEEL THE MUSIC AND LET IT MOVE YOU!
YOU MAKE IT LOOK SO EASY!
THAT'S BECAUSE IT IS! C'MON... GIVE IT A TRY!


THERE YOU GO, SWEETIE! MOVE THOSE HOT LEGS OF YOURS!
*GIGGLE!*


NOW YOU'RE GETTIN' THE HANG OF IT, ALI! JUST LET YOURSELF GO!
I AM! AND IT FEELS GREAT!


A couple of hours later...


AS MUCH AS I HATE TO SAY IT, I THINK IT'S TIME WE CALLED IT A NIGHT!
ALREADY? AWWW... I WAS JUST STARTING TO GET THE HANG OF THIS!
YOU'VE HAD THE HANG OF IT FROM THE GIT GO, HONEY... A COUPLE OF HOURS AGO! *GIGGLE!*


I'D LOVE TO STAY LONGER MYSELF, BUT REMEMBER, I'M LEAVING FOR NEW ORLEANS FIRST THING IN THE MORNING AND HAVEN'T EVEN PACKED YET!
I GET IT! IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER HAD THIS MUCH FUN BEFORE IN MY ENTIRE LIFE!


YOU HAVE TO PROMISE WE'LL DO THIS AGAIN AS SOON AS YOU GET BACK!
OH, WE'LL DO THIS AND A WHOLE LOT MORE, CUTIE! YOU CAN COUNT ON IT!


A short while later...
SO YOU WON'T GET BACK FROM NEW ORLEANS UNTIL SUNDAY? WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO FOR FUN ALL WEEK?
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT FUN, BUT DON'T YOUR CLASSES START MONDAY? THEY SHOULD KEEP YOU BUSY ENOUGH!


*SIGH!* YEAH, THEY DO! BUT AFTER TONIGHT, THE THOUGHT OF SITTING AROUND IN CLASSES ALL WEEK HAS SOMEHOW LOST ITS APPEAL!
OH, C'MON! YOU KNOW YOU'RE EXCITED TO BE GOING BACK TO COLLEGE!, AND PSU IS A REALLY GOOD ONE!
OKAY, I AM EXCITED ABOUT IT! BUT IT'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT KIND OF EXCITED THAN WHAT I FEEL WHEN I'M WITH YOU!
I NOW, SWEETIE! AND I FEEL THE SAME WAY!


THAT'S WHY I WANT TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING... SOMETHING THAT'LL KEEP ME IN YOUR THOUGHTS UNTIL I GET BACK NEXT WEEK!
A PRESENT? YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GET ME ANYTHING, CHLOE!
I KNOW I DIDN'T!


BUT THIS IS SOMETHING I THINK WE'VE BOTH WANTED SINCE YOU FIRST WALKED INTO MY SALON!
OH!



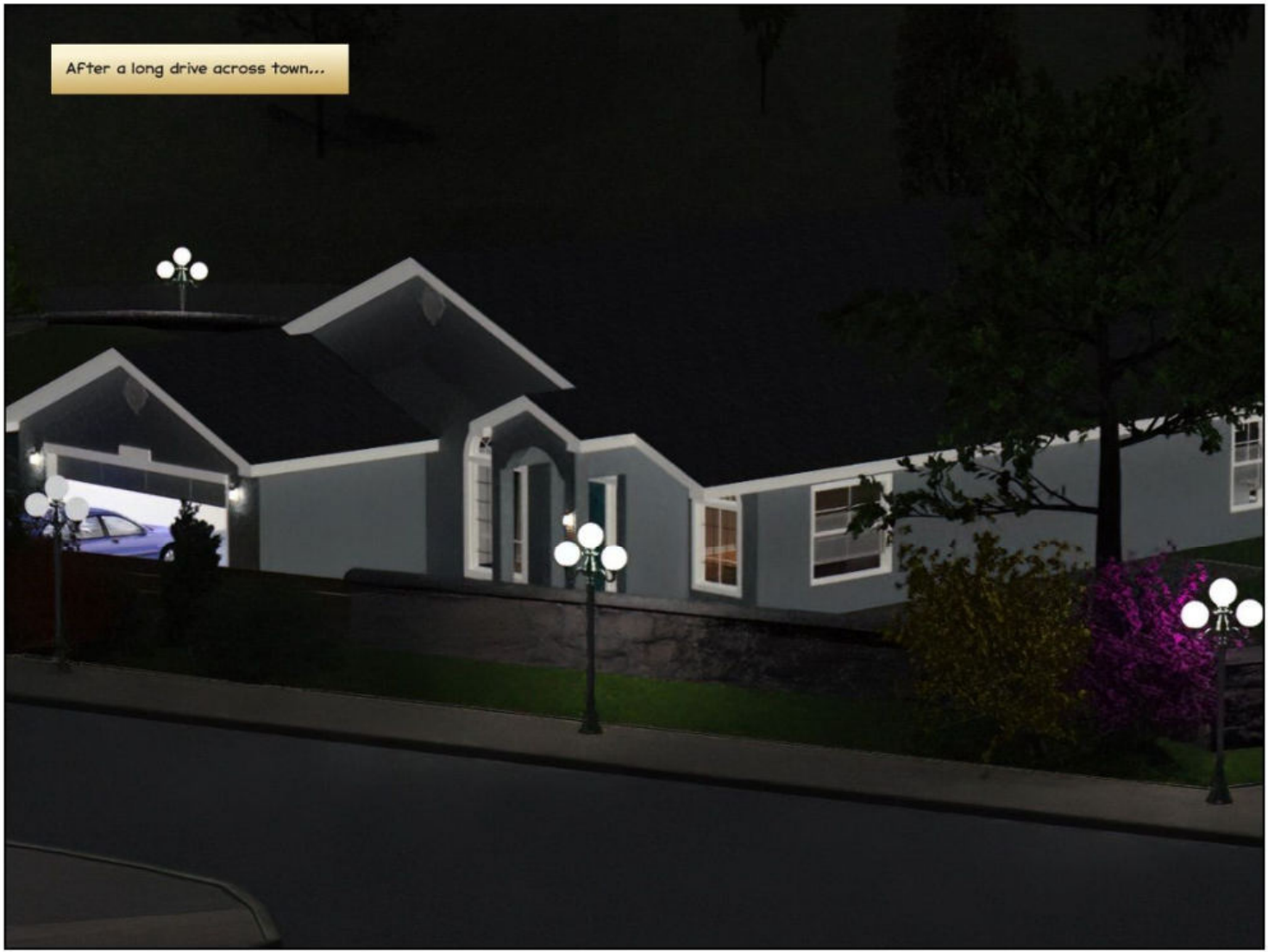



LOOKS LIKE I GUESSED RIGHT! *GIGGLE!*
WOW! YEAH, I MEAN... I'VE WANTED TO DO THAT FOR WEEKS! BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HOW YOU... I MEAN, IF YOU WERE...


WE'LL TALK ALL ABOUT *THAT* WHEN I GET BACK!
IN THE MEANTIME, *YOU* JUST CONCENTRATE ON BEING *YOU!* OKAY?
I THINK I CAN DO THAT! *SIGGLE!*


BYE, ALI!
HAVE A GOOD TRIP, CHLOE! AND... THANKS FOR AN AWESOME NIGHT!


"SIGH!"


After a long drive across town...


HMPH! I'M SURPRISED MOTHER ISN'T SITTING UP WAITING FOR ME CONSIDERING WHAT TIME IT IS!
OH, WOULDN'T SHE HAVE A FIT IF SHE SAW THIS OUTFIT AND WHAT CHLOE DID TO MY HAIR! NOT AT ALL WHAT SHE EXPECTS OF HER PRECIOUS NEW ARIEL!


BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CONFRONT HER EVENTUALLY ANYWAY! AND THE SOONER THE BETTER!
SPENDING THE DAY WITH CHLOE HAS OPENED MY EYES TO WHO I REALLY AM AND WHO I WANT TO BE FROM NOW ON... MY OWN PERSON, ON MY TERMS! NOT MOTHER'S PUPPET!
I'M FINALLY STARTING TO SEE HOW MANIPULATIVE MOTHER HAS BEEN THIS LAST YEAR... LITERALLY MOLDING ME INTO HER IDEA OF THE PERFECT DAUGHTER!
WELL, THAT'S COMING TO AN END! FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING, I'LL...
TURN THE LIGHT ON, DARLING! I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO STUMBLE AND HURT YOURSELF IN THE DARK!


OR MAYBE TONIGHT AFTER ALL!
WHAT ON EARTH HAVE YOU DONE DO TO YOUR HAIR?! DON'T TELL ME, LET ME GUESS! IT WAS THAT CHLOE PERSON, WASN'T IT?
Click!
IT WASHES OUT EASILY, MOTHER, SO NO NEED TO GET ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE!


AND BEFORE YOU RIP INTO ME FOR STAYING OUT SO LATE OR DOING SO IN AN OUTFIT I'M SURE YOU DON'T LIKE, LET ME GET ONE THING STRAIGHT ABOUT "THAT CHLOE PERSON"!
SHE'S MY FRIEND! A VERY CLOSE FRIEND! PROBABLY THE BEST FRIEND I'VE EVER HAD!
*SNORT!* THAT'S NOT SAYING MUCH, CONSIDERING THE ABYSMAL LACK OF FRIENDS YOU HAD GROWING UP!
AND WHOSE FAULT WAS THAT, MOTHER? FOR AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, YOU'VE TREATED ME AS LITTLE MORE THAN AN INDENTURED SERVANT, ALL THE WHILE LAVISHING PRAISE ON YOUR BELOVED DAUGHTER, ARIEL!


NOW LOOK HERE, MISSY!
NO! IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO LOOK, MOTHER! LOOK AT THE PERSON I'M TRYING TO BE! I'M NOT AN ARIEL-CLONE... I'M MY OWN PERSON!
AND CHLOE RECOGNIZES THAT IN ME! SHE CAN SEE WHO I REALLY AM! THAT'S WHY WE GET ALONG SO WELL!


WHO YOU REALLY ARE? OH MY GOD, ARIEL! YOU DIDN'T TELL HER THE TRUTH ABOUT YOURSELF, DID YOU?
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DID! MY LIFE IS TOO... CONVOLUTED TO NOT HAVE SOMEONE I CAN CONFIDE IN!
AND THE BEAUTY OF IT IS, EVEN KNOWING THE TRUTH, SHE STILL ACCEPTS ME FOR WHO I AM!
*SIGH!* DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE?


UNDERSTANDING SERIES
The Human Body
Spring tim
YES, MOTHER, I DO! AND I THINK THE LONGER WE CONTINUE ARGUING ABOUT THIS TONIGHT THE ANGRIER WE'RE BOTH GOING TO GET!
CAN WE PLEASE CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION TOMORROW AFTER WE'VE BOTH HAD TIME TO CALM DOWN?
I HAVE IMPORTANT THINGS I WANT TO SAY, BUT DON'T WANT THEM OVERSHADOWED BY FRUSTRATION AND LACK OF SLEEP!


YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE, DEAR! TIRED AND ANGRY IS NO WAY FOR A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER TO CARRY OUT A MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION!
WE'LL TALK TOMORROW AFTER WE'VE BOTH HAD A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP!
THAT SOUNDS PERFECT, MOTHER!


GOOD NIGHT, MOTHER!
GOOD NIGHT, HONEY! PLEASANT DREAMS!


Laugh a lot
CHILL BURST
Cosmic world


DAMN IT TO HELL! EVERYTHING WAS GOING SO SMOOTHLY... IT WAS PRACTICALLY PERFECT!
I ALMOST HAD YOU COMPLETELY CONDITIONED TO BEHAVE AND EVEN THINK LIKE MY BELOVED ARIEL!
BUT I FAILED TO ACCOUNT FOR UNKNOWN PARAMETERS... LIKE CHLOE! WELL... THAT'S EASILY FIXABLE!
Cosmo world
The Human Body
Giants of Gene
Relative Distance
Calculated Risk
Silenced Cove
Sustained attachment


UP TO NOW, I'VE ONLY HAD TO INSERT SUBTLE SUBLIMINAL MESSAGES THROUGH YOUR HEADPHONES EVERY NIGHT!
I THOUGHT THAT TAPPING INTO YOUR NATURAL INSECURITIES AND DOUBTS ABOUT YOURSELF OVER THE LAST YEAR WOULD BE ENOUGH... AND IT ALMOST WAS! I WAS SO CLOSE, I COULD TASTE IT!
BUT ALONG COMES CHLOE... WHO STARTS GETTING INTO YOUR HEAD AND UNDOING ALL MY WORK! GIVING YOU THE WRONG IDEAS ABOUT WHO YOU THINK YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE!
WHAT RUBBISH! I'M YOUR MOTHER! I'M THE ONE WHO DICTATES WHO YOU ARE AND WHO OR WHAT YOU WILL BE!


SO IT SEEMS I'M GOING TO HAVE TO PULL OUT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BIG GUNS IN ORDER TO REGAIN CONTROL!
SUBTLETY IS NO LONGER AN OPTION! YOUR NEW FEELINGS OF INDEPENDENCE ARE AN ILLUSION! I CAN SHATTER WITH EASE!
IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TAPPING INTO THAT ONE LAST EMOTIONAL LANDMINE!

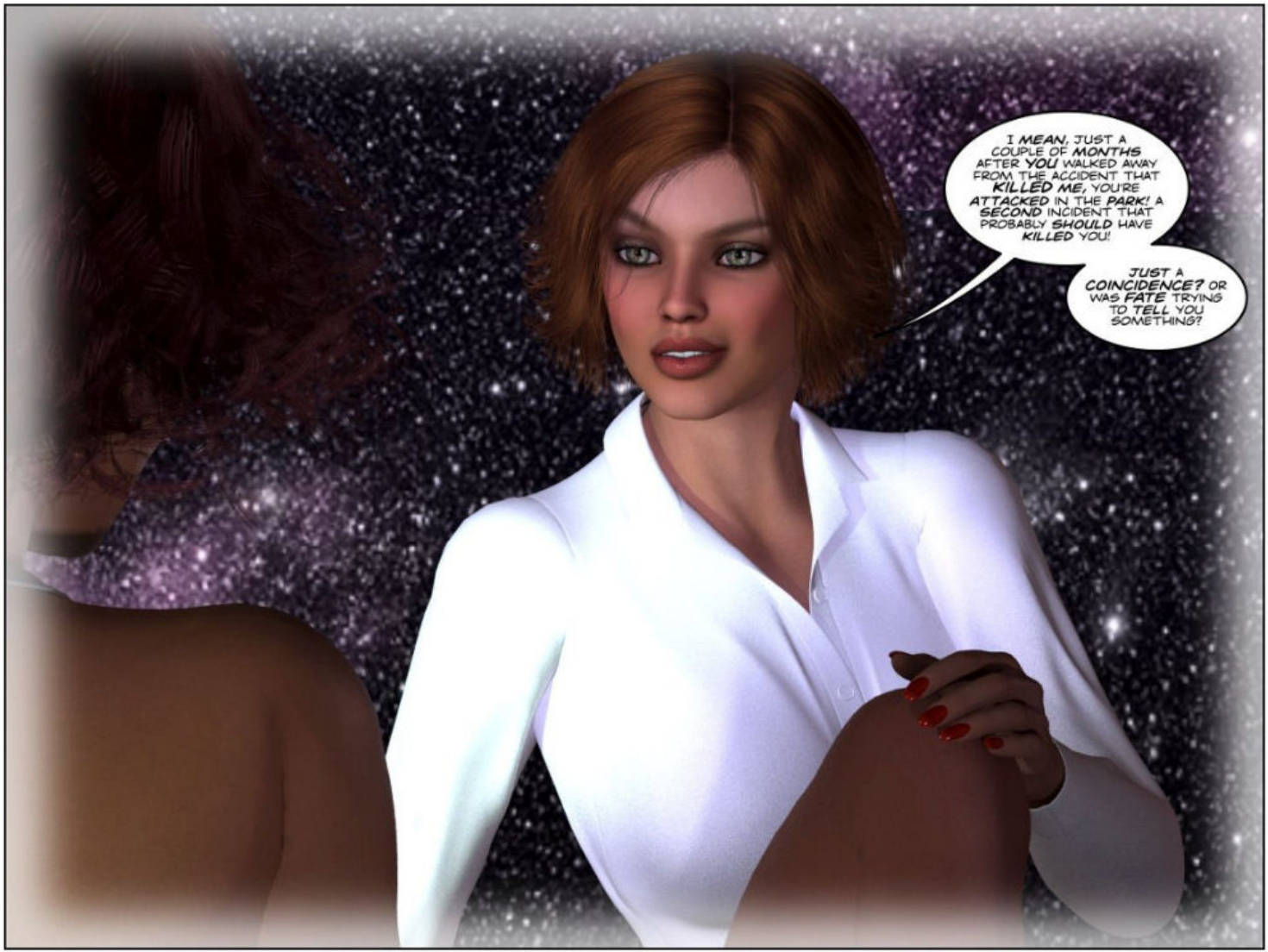

...FULFILL THE DREAM THAT...
...THE WOMAN YOU WERE ALWAYS MEANT TO BE...
...THE LIFE YOU WERE DESTINED TO LIVE...
OH, TO BE A FLY ON THE WALL IN THAT PRETTY LITTLE HEAD OF YOURS...


ALEX! HEY, ALEX!!


WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, ALEX?
HUH? WHAT?!


OF ALL THE PEOPLE I'VE EVER KNOWN, YOU'RE THE LAST ONE I'D SUSPECT OF BEING SO GODDAMN SELFISH!
I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, ARIEL!
I'M TALKING ABOUT THE WAY YOU'RE CRUSHING MOTHER'S HOPES WHILE FLIPPING OFF FATE!
I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT'S FATE GOT TO DO WITH IT?


REALLY? THINK ABOUT IT, ALEX! YOU WERE DRIVING THE CAR THAT NIGHT, BUT I WAS THE ONE THAT DIED! DOES THAT SEEM RIGHT TO YOU?
NO... NO IT DOESN'T! AND I'M SO SORRY, ARIEL! I WISH IT HAD BEEN ME INSTEAD OF YOU! YOU KNOW THAT!
DO I? I THOUGHT I DID, BUT I'M NOT SO SURE ANYMORE...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


I MEAN, JUST A COUPLE OF MONTHS AFTER YOU WALKED AWAY FROM THE ACCIDENT THAT KILLED ME, YOU'RE ATTACKED IN THE PARK! A SECOND INCIDENT THAT PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE KILLED YOU!
JUST A COINCIDENCE? OR WAS FATE TRYING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING?


*SOB!* WHEN I WOKE UP AND MOTHER EXPLAINED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO ME, I WANTED TO DIE! I REALLY DID!
BUT YOU DIDN'T, BECAUSE MOTHER KNEW WHAT SHE HAD TO DO!
I DIDN'T ASK HER TO SAVE ME!


THAT'S WHAT YOU DON'T GET, ALEX... SHE DIDN'T DO IT TO SAVE YOU! SHE KNEW THE TRUTH... THAT FATE HAD MADE A MISTAKE AND WAS TRYING TO CORRECT IT!
SHE WANTED TO HELP PUT THINGS BACK TO THE WAY THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE!


AND SHE HAD ALMOST DID... THAT IS, UNTIL YOU SUDDENLY DECIDED YOU WERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING OR ANYONE ELSE!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DO! I WAS ONLY...
ONLY WHAT, ALEX? ONLY DEFYING MOTHER... AND FATE IN FAVOR OF YOUR OWN WANTS AND NEEDS!
NO! I DIDN'T! I... I...


YOU KNOW THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO MAKE THIS RIGHT, ALEX!
AND YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THAT IS... DON'T YOU?


YES...
YES I
DO...


Almost two weeks later...
HMMM... NICE LITTLE BUNGALOW, IN A NICE LITTLE SUBURBAN PART OF TOWN!


I NORMALLY WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT DEAD IN A NEIGHBORHOOD LIKE THIS, BUT SINCE ALI HASN'T BEEN RETURNING ANY OF MY CALLS, THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO LET HER KNOW I'M FINALLY BACK IN TOWN!
I WASN'T PLANNING ON BEING GONE FOR AS LONG AS I WAS, BUT THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOUR DITZY COUSIN SCHEDULES A WEDDING IN NEW ORLEANS DURING HURRICANE SEASON!
I CAN'T IMAGINE ALI IS ACTUALLY GHOSTING ME FOR BEING GONE SO LONG! MORE LIKELY HER MOTHER FOUND A WAY TO KEEP HER FROM GETTING MY MESSAGES!


I WOULDN'T BE A BIT SURPRISED IF SHE ACTUALLY LOCKED ALI UP THE ENTIRE TIME... ESPECIALLY IF SHE TOLD HER EVERYTHING ABOUT OUR NIGHT OUT!
AND NOW I GET A FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE ICE QUEEN HERSELF! *SIGH!* WELCOME HOME, CHLOE!
Knock, knock!


YES?
HELLO, DR. BRANSON! I'M...
IT'S CHLOE, ISN'T IT? RUTH'S NIECE FROM THE SALON!
YES... THAT'S ME!
WELL, COME IN, DEAR!


HOW IS YOUR AUNT?
SHE'S, UMMM... FINE, THANK YOU!
DID WE FORGET TO PAY A BILL, DEAR? OR ARE YOU MAKING HOUSE CALLS NOW? ALTHOUGH I DON'T REMEMBER MAKING ANY APPOINTMENTS FOR MYSELF OR MY DAUGHTER!
ACTUALLY IT'S ALI... I MEAN, ARIEL I'M HERE TO SEE!
REALLY? WHAT ON EARTH FOR?


SHE DIDN'T MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT TODAY? EITHER ME COMING BY OR HER COMING TO SEE ME?
NO, I'M AFRAID NOT! IN FACT, SHE'S BEEN BUSTLING AROUND ALL DAY GETTING READY FOR A DATE!
SHE HAS A DATE... TONIGHT?
TONIGHT, LAST NIGHT, THE NIGHT BEFORE! I SWEAR, THOSE TWO ARE INSEPARABLE! NOT THAT I MIND, HE'S A WONDERFUL YOUNG MAN!


I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, BUT I TOO HAVE A DATE TONIGHT, AND I NEED TO FINISH GETTING READY!
ARIEL'S ROOM IS RIGHT BACK THAT WAY...
UMMM... THANK YOU!


JESUS! THAT IS ONE BITCH WHO LOVES PLAYIN' THE MIND GAMES!
NO WONDER ALI WAS SO SCREWED UP FOR SO LONG... BEING RAISED BY A MOTHER WHO MAKES JOAN CRAWFORD LOOK LIKE JUNE CLEAVER!


I NEED TO GET ALI OUTTA HERE A-S-A-FUCKIN'-P!
HEY, ALI! IT'S CHLOE! CAN I COME IN?
WHO?
Knock Knock!


IT'S ME... CHLOE! I JUST GOT BACK FROM NEW ORLEANS! I'VE CALLED YOU A FEW TIMES, BUT I GUESS YOU DIDN'T GET MY MESSAGES!
CHLOE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
LIKE I SAID, I JUST GOT BACK FROM NEW ORLEANS! WE HAD PLANS... REMEMBER? C'MON, ALI... OPEN UP!
WELL, ALL RIGHT!


BUT WHY DO YOU KEEP CALLING ME "ALI"?


YOU KNOW MY NAME IS ARIEL!


ARIEL 2.0
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SO, C'MON IN! SORRY IF I CAN'T TALK LONG! I'M GETTING READY FOR A DATE! *GIGGLE!*
YEAH... THAT'S WHAT YOUR MOTHER SAID!


DID YOU SAY YOU WERE IN NEW ORLEANS? I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO THERE!
DO YOU THINK THIS SKIRT IS TOO SHORT?
IT'S FINE. LOOK, ALI.. I'M JUST KIND OF CONFUSED!
I'M NOT SURPRISED, SINCE YOU KEEP CALLING ME ALI!


SO, YOU... YOU DON'T WANT ME TO CALL YOU ALI ANYMORE?
WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU CALL ME ALI? WHY WOULD ANYONE?
BECAUSE IT'S CLOSER TO YOUR REAL NAME... ALEX!


ALEX? ALEX WAS MY BROTHER'S NAME, NOT MINE!
YOUR BROTHER?! BUT YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU WERE...
Ring!


I'LL GET IT! *GIGGLE!*
ALI, WAIT...


HI THERE, SWEETIE!
HI THERE YOURSELF, GORGEOUS!
SAY, ISN'T *THIS* THE OUTFIT YOU WERE WEARING WHEN WE FIRST MET?
YOU *BET* IT IS! I REMEMBER HOW MUCH YOU *LIKED* IT! *GIGGLE!*
EVERYTHING *OKAY*, CHLOE? YOU LOOK *CONFUSED!*


YOU! WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO TO HER?
ME? WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU CARRYING ON ABOUT, DEAR?
YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT! THE WAY YOU CHANGED AND MANIPULATED YOUR OWN SON SO HE'D BE A DUPLICATE OF HIS OWN DEAD SISTER!
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN WORKING OVERTIME THESE PAST FEW WEEKS TO BURY THE LAST REMNANTS OF ALEX SO DEEP INSIDE ARIEL'S PERSONA!


OH MY! SHE TOLD YOU ABOUT ALL THAT, DID SHE?
DAMN STRAIGHT SHE DID! SHE TOLD ME EVERYTHING!
AND WHEN DID SHE TELL YOU ALL THIS?
ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO!
*SIGH!* NO WONDER YOU'RE CONFUSED!


IT SOUNDS LIKE ARIEL HAD ANOTHER RELAPSE! I DON'T KNOW WHY... SHE WAS DOING SO WELL!
A RELAPSE? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
*SIGH!* ARIEL HAD AN EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO WHEN HER BROTHER, ALEX, DIED IN A CAR WRECK!
ALEX DIED?! BUT SHE TOLD ME...


THAT ARIEL DIED IN THE WRECK AND SHE'S ACTUALLY ALEX, SURGICALLY MADE TO LOOK LIKE HIS SISTER BECAUSE OF THE INJURIES HE SUSTAINED IN THAT WRECK?
SHE SAID THE INJURIES WERE FROM A MUGGING SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE ACCIDENT!
REALLY? THAT'S A NEW TWIST ON THE STORY SHE'S TOLD OTHERS LIKE YOU!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "OTHERS LIKE ME"?
YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST PERSON SHE'S "CONFIDED" IN!


THAT STORY SHE TOLD YOU AND OTHERS IS A DELUSION MANIFESTED BY HER PTSD AND GUILT! YOU SEE, SHE WAS DRIVING THE CAR THAT KILLED HER BROTHER! THIS ALTERNATE REALITY SHE INVENTED IS HER WAY OF COPING!
IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE HER LAST EPISODE, SO WE WERE CONFIDENT SHE WAS ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY! BUT SOMETHING HAS OBVIOUSLY SET HER OFF AGAIN!
I WONDER WHAT IT COULD HAVE BEEN?
I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ABOUT ALL THIS! BUT I...


????
YES, DEAR? WHAT WERE YOU SAYING?


NO! IT... IT CAN'T BE...
CHLOE?


I'M... I'M SORRY! I HAVE TO GO!
OF COURSE, DEAR! SAY HELLO TO YOUR AUNT FOR ME!


BYE, CHLOE! SEE YA AT THE SALON!


GOODBYE... ARIEL!
*GIGGLE!*


WELL... HELLO THERE!
HEY THERE, DEAN!
IS YOUR MOTHER HERE, ARIEL?
OH, HI, DEAN MARTIN!


SHE'S RIGHT OVER THERE! C'MON IN!
YEAH, WE WERE JUST ON OUR WAY OUT!
OKAY! HAVE FUN, YOU TWO!
OH, WE WILL! *GIGGLE!*


WOW! YOU LOOK AMAZING! BUT THAT SHOULDN'T SURPRISE ME!
WELL LET'S HOPE I NEVER STOP SURPRISING YOU!
SOMEHOW I DOUBT YOU EVER WILL! READY TO GO?
ABSOLUTELY!


BY THE WAY, I PASSED A YOUNG LADY OUTSIDE WHO WAS LEAVING YOUR HOUSE AND SHE APPEARED UPSET!
SHE SEEMED PRETTY AGITATED! ARE YOU CONCERNED SHE MAY COME BACK HERE?
OH, JUST A FAMILY MEMBER OF ONE OF MY PATIENTS! SHE WASN'T TOO HAPPY WITH MY POLICY OF RESTRICTING ALL WORK-RELATED DISCUSSIONS FOR THE OFFICE AND NOT HAVING ANY HERE AT MY HOME!


OH, I DON'T THINK THERE'S MUCH CHANCE OF HER EVER COMING BACK HERE AGAIN!


A few days later, at a cafe near campus...


... AND THEN HER PHONE WENT OFF RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF PROFESSOR LUNDGREN'S LECTURE!
*GIGGLE!* YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE DIRTY LOOK HE GAVE HER!


WHAT? WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME THAT WAY?
I CAN'T HELP IT! YOU'RE JUST SO DAMN CUTE... ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE ALL EXCITED ABOUT SOMETHING!
WELL, STOP IT! YOU'RE MAKING ME BLUSH!
AND THAT MAKES YOU EVEN CUTER! HEH-HEH!


KEEP TALKING LIKE THAT, MISTER, AND YOU'RE GOING TO BE STUCK WITH ME FOR A LONG, LONG TIME!
THAT'S THE PLAN, BEAUTIFUL! THAT'S THE PLAN!
*GIGGLE!*
MARC


YES, FROM WHAT I CAN SEE, THEY'RE BOTH CHEERFUL, HAPPY AND MAKING GOO-GOO EYES AT EACH OTHER! IF I COULD HEAR WHAT THEY WERE SAYING, MY BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS WOULD PROBABLY SKY-ROCKET!
BECAUSE IF I GOT ANY CLOSER THEY'D SEE ME! AND I THOUGHT THE POINT OF ME DOING THIS FOR YOU WAS TO BE DISCREET ABOUT IT!
YEAH, BUT IT STILL FEELS CREEPY SPYING ON THEM LIKE THIS!


NOW, NOW, RUDY! YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT YOU'D BE FOLLOWING THEM AROUND EVEN IF I WASN'T PAYING YOU TO DO IT!
YOU'RE JUST AS CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR FRIEND'S HAPPINESS AS I AM ABOUT MY DAUGHTER'S!
YOU WANT ONLY WHAT'S BEST FOR CHAZ... AND I GUARANTEE YOU THAT ARIEL IS THE PERFECT GIRL FOR HIM!
ALL YOU AND I ARE DOING IS INSURING THAT NOTHING COMES BETWEEN THEM! RIGHT?


WELL, CHAZ HAS DATED SOME REAL LOSERS IN THE PAST EVEN THOUGH I TRIED TO WARN HIM ABOUT THEM!
PRETTY MUCH EVERY DAMN ONE OF THEM JUST WANTED TO BE NEAR HIM BECAUSE HE WAS A BECKHAM! THEY WERE ONLY IN IT FOR THE PRESTIGE AND POSSIBLY EVEN THE FAMILY NAME AND MONEY, IF THEY'D LASTED THAT LONG!
LUCKY FOR HIM, HE'S GOT ME TO OPEN HIS EYES TO SHIT LIKE THAT!


EXACTLY! HE HAS NO IDEA HOW FORTUNATE HE IS TO HAVE A DEVOTED FRIEND LIKE YOU WATCHING OUT FOR HIM!
THAT'S WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT FOR BOTH OF US TO BE VIGILANT WHEN IT COMES TO THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES!
DON'T THINK FOR A SECOND THAT WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS "CREEPY"! YOU ARE INVALUABLE TO BOTH ME AND CHAZ!
YEAH, I... I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT!


THEY'RE LEAVING THE CAFE NOW! I'LL KEEP AN EYE ON THEM UNTIL HE GETS HER HOME!
I'LL TOUCH BASE WITH YOU LATER, DOCTOR BRANSON!
THANK YOU AGAIN, RUDY!


*CHUCKLE!* THAT SIMPLETON IS SO MUCH EASIER TO MANIPULATE THAN ARIEL! HE MAY BE COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS TO THE HOMO-EROTIC FEELINGS HE HAS FOR CHAZ, BUT I SPOTTED THEM THE FIRST DAY I MET HIM!
TAPPING INTO THOSE FEELINGS HAS MADE HIM MY PERFECTLY IGNORANT ACCOMPLICE IN MAINTAINING ARIEL'S AND CHAZ'S RELATIONSHIP!
A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS DEVELOPING QUITE NICELY... JUST AS I'D PLANNED!


...
WHEN I INITIATED THIS LITTLE "PROJECT", I NEVER DREAMED IT WOULD TURN OUT SO WELL!
THERE WAS ONE NOTABLE SPEED BUMP ALONG THE WAY, BUT ONE ADJUSTMENT IN HER "TREATMENTS" TOOK CARE OF THAT... SO MUCH SO I HAVEN'T HAD TO ADMINISTER ANY "TREATMENTS" SINCE!
TOO BAD I CAN'T GO PUBLIC WITH THIS KIND OF TREATMENT! I'M SURE THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO WOULD PAY A FORTUNE TO HAVE ME CONTINUE THIS TYPE OF WORK!


*SIGH!* OH WELL... ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT MY LOVING DAUGHTER HAS BEEN RETURNED TO ME AND THAT WORTHLESS SON OF MINE IS GONE FOREVER!


HMPH! CHAZ DOES LOOK AWFULLY GODDAMN HAPPY WITH HER! BUT THEN AGAIN, HE DID WITH ALL THOSE OTHER BIMBOS AS WELL!
MAKES ME WONDER IF SHE REALLY COULD BE AS PERFECT AS HER MOTHER CLAIMS SHE IS!


GRIZ SWEARS THAT SHE PRACTICALLY JUMPED HIS BONES RIGHT IN THE HALLWAY THE NIGHT OF THE PARTY!
HE MAY BE A LOT OF THINGS, BUT GRIZ IS NO LIAR! THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS CHICK THAT ISN'T KOSHER!


AND WHEN I FIND OUT THE TRUTH, YOU CAN BET CHAZ WILL BE THE FIRST PERSON I TELL!


A Few days later, at the Frat house...


THAT SOUNDS LIKE CHAZ NOW! REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU!
IT'S JUST A JOKE... GETTING HIM BACK FOR ALL THOSE PRANKS HE'S PULLED ON US OVER THE YEARS! NOW HIDE BACK THERE UNTIL YOU HEAR MY CUE!
UMMM... OKAY, BUT WHY ARE WE DOIN' THIS AGAIN?


SORRY TO KEEP YOU IN THE DARK ON THE REAL REASON FOR THIS, GRIZ, BUT I WANT YOU TO BE CAUGHT OFF GUARD JUST AS MUCH AS ARIEL IS WHEN I BRING YOU TWO FACE-TO-FACE AGAIN!
FROM WHAT YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THE PARTY, THERE'S NO WAY YOU'LL BOTH BE ABLE TO HIDE YOUR REACTIONS WHEN SEEING EACH OTHER FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE!
CHAZ IS A SMART GUY! HE'LL PICK UP ON THE OBVIOUS TENSION BETWEEN YOU TWO AND FIGURE OUT SOMETHING'S NOT QUITE RIGHT WITH HIS PERFECT LITTLE PRINCESS! HEH-HEH!


I'M SORRY WE HAVE TO STOP HERE, ARIEL! BUT RUDY SAID IT WAS AN EMERGENCY!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN WHEN YOU'RE THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRATERNITY!
YEAH, BUT NOT DURING A DATE IF I CAN HELP IT!
STOP FRETTING! IT'S NO BIG DEAL!


OKAY RUDY, WHAT'S THE BIG EMERGENCY THAT WAS SO IMPORTANT I HAD TO RUSH RIGHT OVER?
SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR DATE, GUYS, BUT ONE OF THE PLEDGES CLAIMED THEY SAW A RAT IN THE KITCHEN!
A RAT?! EWWW!


YOU COULDN'T HAVE JUST CALLED AN EXTERMINATOR INSTEAD OF ME?
I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BUT I DIDN'T WANT THE NEWS OF US HAVING RATS GETTING OUT, WHAT WITH OUR HEALTH INSPECTION COMING UP, AND...
FALSE ALARM, DUDES!


IT WAS JUST A CAT FROM ACROSS THE STREET, AND...
WHOA! HEY THERE, PRETTY GIRL!
OH, UMMMM... HI?


IT'S ME... GRIZ, FROM THE PARTY A COUPLE O' WEEKS AGO! DIDN'T KNOW YOU'D BE COMIN' TOO... WITH CHAZ, I MEAN!
WELL, YEAH... WE'RE DATING EACH OTHER NOW!
AND AS A MATTER OF FACT, WE'RE ON ONE OF THOSE DATES RIGHT NOW! SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO GET BACK TO SINCE THIS "EMERGENCY" SEEMS TO BE TAKEN CARE OF!
WELL SURE, I GUESS, BUT...


GRIZ! WHAT THE HELL, MAN?! GO DOWN THERE AND TALK TO HER!
WHY? THE LADY'S ON A DATE WITH CHAZ, DUDE! SHE'S GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN CHAT WITH THE GRIZ!
BUT YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU AND HER... AT THE PARTY... YOU BOTH...
COME ON, ARIEL! LET'S GO!


DUDE! UNSPOKEN RULE OF THE FRATERNITY... WHAT HAPPENS AT THE FRAT PARTY, STAYS AT THE FRAT PARTY!
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I GOT SOME KICKIN' BACK TO DO!
BUT...


WELL, FUCK! THE LAST THING I EXPECTED WAS FOR GRIZ TO KEEP HIS BIG, DUMB MOUTH SHUT!
NOW HOW THE HELL AM I GONNA SHOW CHAZ WHAT SHE REALLY IS?


IF WE HURRY, WE CAN STILL MAKE THE MOVIE BEFORE IT STARTS!
OH, LIKE YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT ACTUALLY WATCHING IT! *GIGGLE!*
HEY, I LIKE THE PREVIEWS AT LEAST!
WELL OKAY, BUT...


ARIEL?


ARIEL? WHAT'S WRONG?


HUH?
WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU WERE A MILLION MILES AWAY THERE FOR A SECOND!
I, UHHH... I DON'T KNOW! THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING... FAMILIAR! GUESS IT WASN'T ANYTHING!


I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU COULD HEAR ANYTHING WITH GRIZ BLASTING HIS MUSIC LIKE THAT! JESUS!


C'MON, ARIEL!
I'M COMING!


Later that night, after returning home from her date...
*SIGH!* I'VE DEFINITELY GOT TO APOLOGIZE TO CHAZ TOMORROW FOR BEING SO SPACEY TONIGHT!
EVER SINCE WE STOPPED BY HIS FRATERNITY, I'VE HAD THIS... BUZZING IN MY HEAD THAT'S BEEN DISTRACTING AS ALL HELL!
IT'S LIKE AN EARWORM, BUT INSTEAD OF ONE SONG, IT'S LIKE SEVERAL ALL PLAYING AT ONCE!


MAYBE A NEW PLAYLIST TONIGHT WILL HELP SHAKE IT LOOSE!
LET'S SEE... "NOTHING BUT THE HITS"? NOPE! "RELAXING EVENING"? I DON'T THINK SO!
HMMM... "DEATHCORE APOCALYPSE"? NOW THAT I'VE GOT TO HEAR! *GIGGLE!*


OH MY GOD! NOW THAT IS WILD! IF THIS STUFF DOESN'T SHAKE THAT WEIRD EARWORM OUT OF MY HEAD, NOTHING WILL!


OF COURSE, WITH THIS BANGING AWAY IN MY HEAD I MAY NEVER GET TO SLEEP! *GIGGLE!*


But within minutes...
zzzzzzz...


HEY, SIS!
SIS!


WAKEY WAKEY, SIS!
HMM? YOU'RE BACK?


WHY ARE YOU HERE AGAIN? I THOUGHT WE GOT EVERYTHING ALL FIGURED OUT!
OH, HARDLY, LIL SISTER! HARDLY!


I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WERE THINKING LAST TIME I WAS HERE, BUT WE'RE GONNA GET THIS THING RIGHT... ONCE AND FOR ALL!


The next morning...


*YAWN!* GOOD MORNING, MOTHER!
GOOD MORNING, DEAR! HOW WAS YOUR DATE LAST NIGHT?
JUST LOVELY, AS ALWAYS!
THAT'S WONDERFUL!


BY THE WAY, I NEED YOU TO DROP OFF SOME MEDICAL FORMS TO THE COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION OFFICE THIS MORNING!
I'M AFRAID I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THEM AND THEY'RE DUE TODAY BY NOON!


OH! WELL, I WAS GOING TO CONCENTRATE ON MY SWIMMING THIS MORNING BECAUSE MY FIRST CLASS TODAY ISN'T UNTIL LATER THIS AFTERNOON!
BUT I GUESS I COULD PUT THAT OFF AND DRIVE OVER A COUPLE OF HOURS EARLY!
NONSENSE! IT'S RIDICULOUS FOR YOU TO DRIVE ALL THE WAY OVER THERE SO EARLY JUST FOR A FEW SILLY FORMS!
I'LL HAVE DAVID STOP BY AND PICK THEM UP SINCE IT'S ON HIS WAY! I'M SURE HE WON'T MIND!


OH I'M SURE THE DEAN WON'T MIND ANYTHING YOU ASK HIM TO DO! *GIGGLE!*
JUST ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN, DEAR! ADVANTAGES I'M SURE YOU'RE STARTING TO FIGURE OUT... ESPECIALLY WITH THAT BOYFRIEND OF YOURS!
BREAKING
NEWS


WHY I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, MOTHER! *GIGGLE!*
THAT'S MY GIRL!
EAKING
EWS


I HAVE TO BE AT WORK EARLY SO I'LL TEXT DAVID FROM MY CAR AND TELL HIM THE FORMS ARE HERE ON THE COUNTER!
OH, AND I HOPE YOU PLAN ON GETTING DRESSED BEFORE HE GETS HERE! HE IS A MAN, AFTER ALL!
DON'T WORRY, MOTHER! I'LL MOST LIKELY BE IN THE POOL WORKING OUT BY THE TIME HE GETS HERE!
HAVE A NICE DAY!
YOU TOO, DEAR!


SWIM TEAM MEMBER


♪♫♩ ♩♩♪♪
NEWS
TEAM MEMBERS ARRESTED IN DRUG STING






Merco
PRODUCTS


OH YEAH! THAT'LL DO JUST FINE!


A while later...

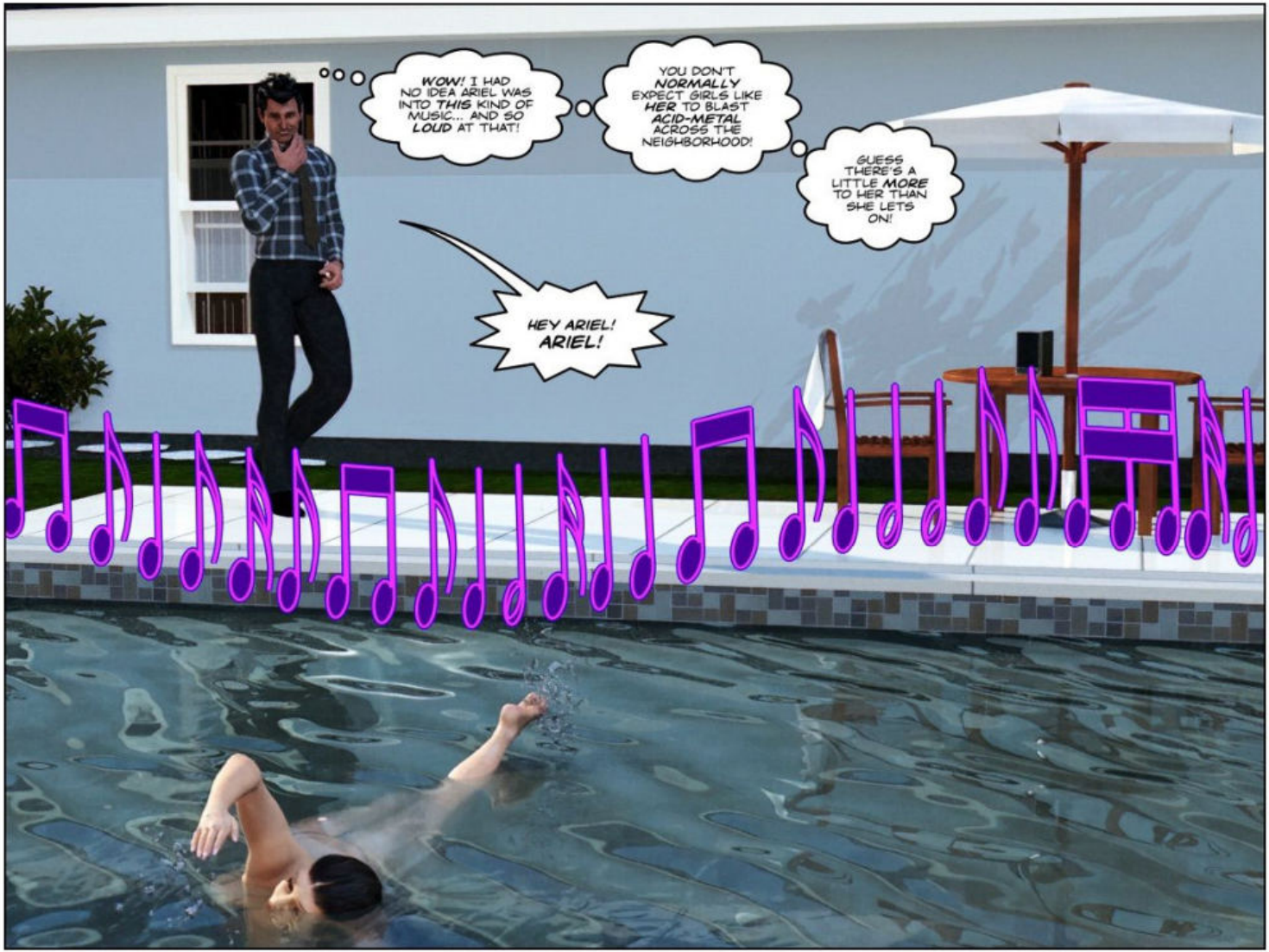

KNOCK, KNOCK! HELLO, ARIEL? ARE YOU HERE?
YOUR MOTHER SAID SHE'D LEAVE THE DOOR UNLOCKED FOR ME, SO JUST A HEADS UP THAT I'M COMING IN!

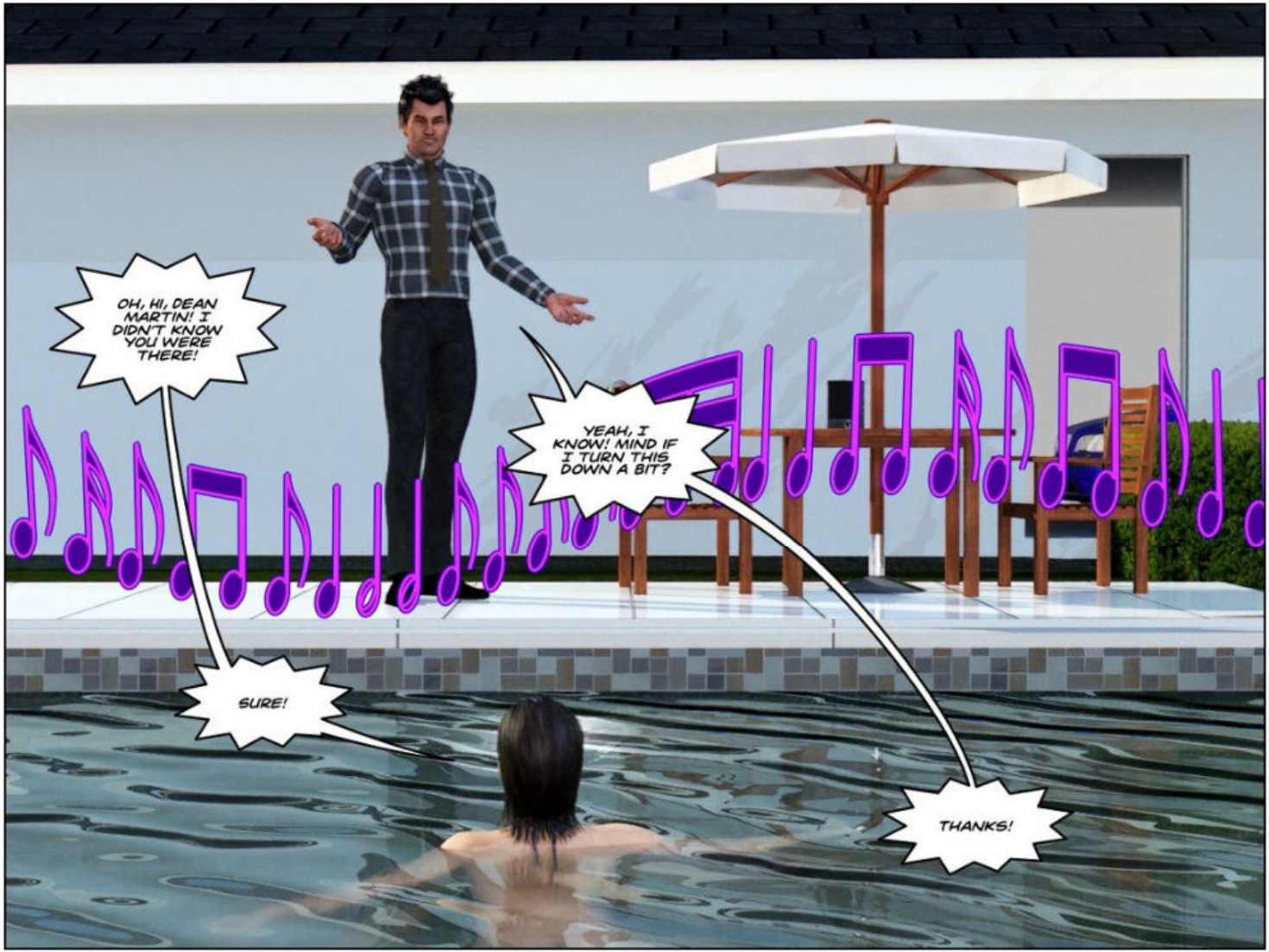

ARIEL?
HMM! SHE MIGHT'VE STEPPED OUT FOR A MINUTE, OR MAYBE SHE...


OR MAYBE SHE'S OUT BACK SWIMMING!
YOU KNOW, IT'D BE RUDE OF ME NOT TO POP BACK THERE AND SAY HELLO!


IT'D ALSO BE A SHAME TO PASS UP THE OPPORTUNITY TO SNEAK A PEEK OF ARIEL IN THAT TIGHT LITTLE SWIMSUIT SHE WAS WEARING WHEN I FIRST MET HER A FEW MONTHS AGO!
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN EASY ENOUGH TO "OBSERVE" ALL THE NUBILE YOUNG LADIES AS THEY STRUT ACROSS OUR CAMPUS!
BUT WHEN PRESENTED WITH THE CHANCE TO SE THEM IN SWIMWEAR, WELL... THAT'S WHEN A MAN'S GOT TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE! HEH-HEH!


AND ARIEL IS NO EXCEPTION! BUT SINCE I'VE BEEN DATING HER MOTHER, I'VE HAD TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL WHERE MY EYES WANDER WHENEVER I COME OVER!
I HAVE A FEELING THAT IF MONA EVER CAUGHT ME OGLING HER DAUGHTER, SHE'D DO A LOT MORE THAN JUST END OUR RELATIONSHIP!
YEAH.. SHE'S DEFINITELY THE KIND OF WOMAN I DO NOT WANT TO RILE!


WOW! I HAD NO IDEA ARIEL WAS INTO THIS KIND OF MUSIC... AND SO LOUD AT THAT!
YOU DON'T NORMALLY EXPECT GIRLS LIKE HER TO BLAST ACID-METAL ACROSS THE NEIGHBORHOOD!
GUESS THERE'S A LITTLE MORE TO HER THAN SHE LETS ON!
HEY ARIEL! ARIEL!


OH, HI, DEAN MARTIN! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE THERE!
YEAH, I KNOW! MIND IF I TURN THIS DOWN A BIT?
SURE!
THANKS!


AHH, THAT'S BETTER!
SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR WORKOUT, ARIEL, BUT I WAS HAVING TROUBLE FINDING THE PAPERWORK YOUR MOTHER LEFT FOR ME, AND...


YOU COULDN'T FIND THEM, HMMM? WELL, GIVE ME A SEC TO DRY OFF AND WE'LL GO LOOK TOGETHER!
HOLY FREAKING SHIT!


COULD YOU HAND ME MY TOWEL, PLEASE? IT'S RIGHT THERE BEHIND YOU!
UMMM, SURE!
THANKS!
CHRIST! DOES SHE KNOW HOW TRANSPARENT THAT LITTLE THING IS WHEN WET?


I HAVE TO MAKE SURE I DON'T LEAVE ANY WET SPOTS ANYWHERE INSIDE! MOTHER'S VERY STRICT ABOUT THAT!
BUT THEN AGAIN, I'M SURE YOU KNOW HOW STRICT SHE CAN BE! *GIGGLE!*
HUH?! OH... YEAH! HEH-HEH!


C'MON! LET'S GO FIND THAT PESKY SET OF PAPERS FOR YOU!
JESUS! IS THIS REALLY THE SAME SHY GIRL WHO PRACTICALLY HID BEHIND HER MOTHER WHEN I SAW HER LAST SPRING?


WHY HERE THEY ARE RIGHT ON THE COUNTER WHERE MOTHER LEFT THEM! YOU MUST NOT HAVE BEEN LOOKING VERY HARD!
WELL, I WAS IN A HURRY AND JUST DIDN'T LOOK IN THE RIGHT PLACE!
I GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE!


OR MAYBE YOU WERE LOOKING IN THE RIGHT PLACE... OR AT LEAST THE PLACE YOU WANTED TO LOOK... AND SOMETHING ELSE CAUGHT YOUR ATTENTION!
WHAT? NO! I, UMMM... I HEARD YOUR MUSIC OUTSIDE AND, UHHH... WANTED TO SAY HELLO, THAT'S ALL!
THAT'S SO SWEET OF YOU, DEAN! YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN SO NICE AND HELPFUL TO BOTH ME AND MY MOTHER! THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS I LIKE YOU SO MUCH!
WELL I'M, UHHH... HAPPY YOU THINK SO, ARIEL!


OF COURSE, I'M SURE THERE ARE OTHER REASONS MOTHER LIKES YOU SO MUCH!
WELL, I'D LIKE TO THINK SO TOO, HEH-HEH!
BECAUSE I CAN HEAR HER TELLING YOU THOSE REASONS... RATHER LOUDLY AT TIMES... FROM HER BEDROOM!
SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE QUITE THE STUD, DEAN! *GIGGLE!*
*GASP!* OH, SHIT!


LOOK, ARIEL! I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD BE...
WELL IT'S JUST THAT... THAT SWIMSUIT YOU'RE WEARING, AND... AND THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN ACTING TODAY..
WHICH HAS GOT ME THINKING THAT MAYBE I NEED TO EXPERIENCE SOME OF THESE TRAITS THAT MOTHER ENJOYS SO MUCH!
OH, OF COURSE YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT IT... DAVID! YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO KEEP YOUR EYES OFF ME SINCE YOU GOT HERE!


AWWW! DID I CATCH YOU OFF GUARD? THEN I GUESS SHE HASN'T USED ALL HER TRICKS ON YOU YET!
YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO SURPRISED, DAVID! I AM MY MOTHER'S DAUGHTER, AFTER ALL! WE'RE MUCH MORE ALIKE THAN YOU EVER REALIZED!


HMMM! FEELS LIKE YOU HAVE NOTICED HOW MUCH I'M LIKE MY MOTHER!
AND I CAN DEFINITELY TELL WHAT SHE LOVES MOST ABOUT YOU! *GIGGLE!*


OKAY, THIS HAS TO STOP... RIGHT NOW! I... WE CANNOT DO THIS!
ALL EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY! *GIGGLE!*
YOU'RE A STUDENT!
NOT ONE OF YOUR STUDENTS, THOUGH!
AND I'M DATING YOUR MOTHER!
I WON'T TELL HER IF YOU WON'T!
DAMN STRAIGHT YOU WON'T, BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING TO TELL HER SINCE NOTHING HAPPENED!


NOW I'M JUST GOING TO TAKE THESE PAPERS YOUR MOTHER LEFT ME AND LEAVE!
I SUGGEST WE BOTH JUST FORGET ALL ABOUT THIS LITTLE... INCIDENT! OKAY?
I'LL DO MY BEST, DAVID!
AND PLEASE STOP CALLING ME THAT!
WHATEVER YOU WANT... DEAN!


GOODBYE, DEAN! HAVE A NICE DAY!


WELL, SHIT! ALL WORKED UP AND NO-ONE TO PLAY WITH!


HMMM! I THINK I REMEMBER PACKING A FEW TOYS IN THE BOTTOM OF THAT BOX!
*GIGGLE!*


A couple of weeks later...


YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ME TO STICK AROUND AND TAKE CARE OF YOU?
IT'S JUST A HEADACHE, SILLY! A COUPLE OF ASPIRIN AND A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP AND I'LL BE JUST FINE!
BUT IT'S SWEET OF YOU TO OFFER!


WELL, WHAT KIND OF BOYFRIEND WOULD I BE IF I DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT MY GIRL?
HMMM! I LIKE IT WHEN YOU CALL ME YOUR GIRL!




SO I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW AT OUR USUAL LUNCH SPOT?
IT'S A DATE!
AWESOME! SEE YOU THEN!
BYE, LOVE!

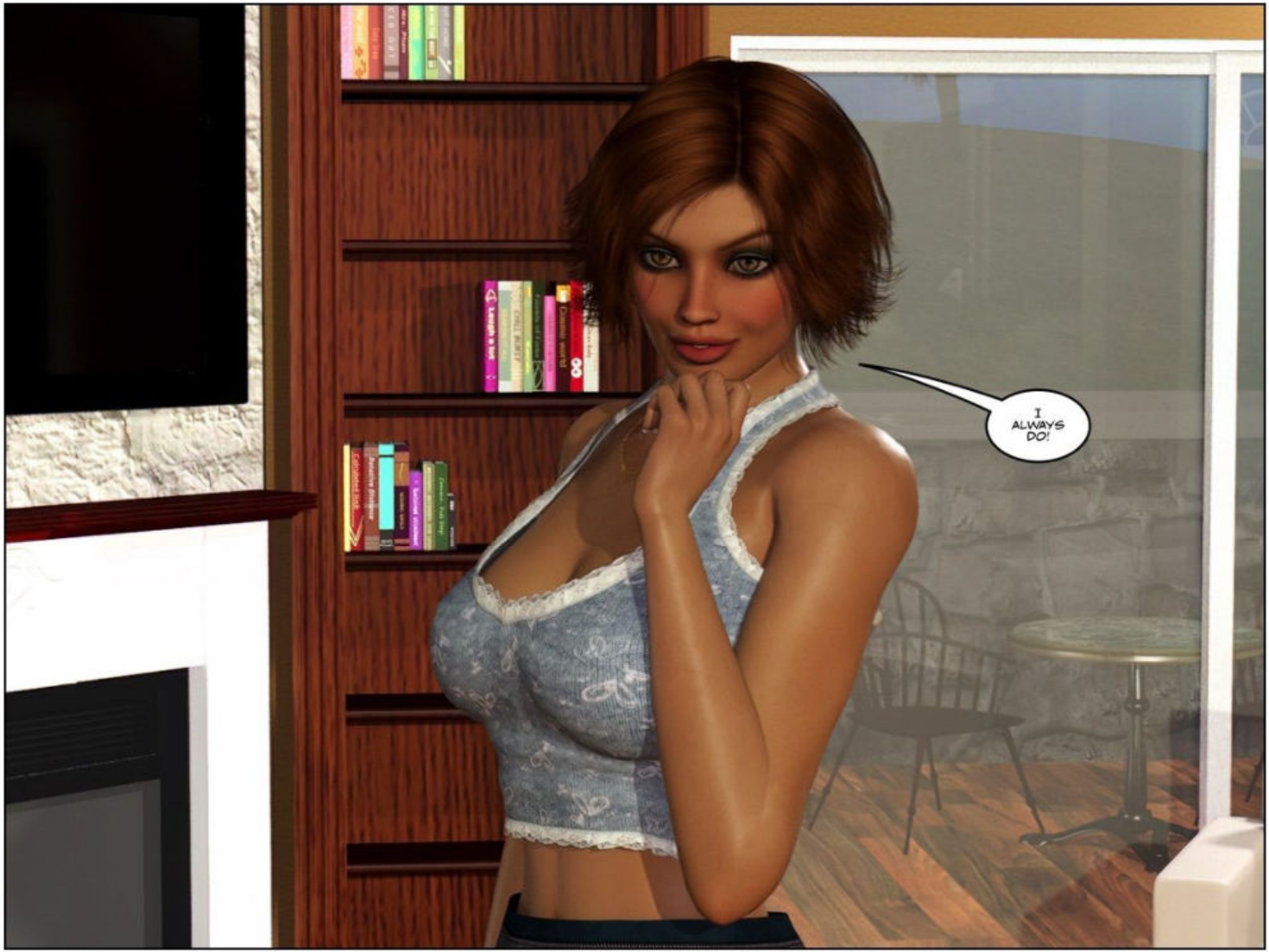

ARIEL? IS THAT YOU?
YES, MOTHER... IT'S JUST ME!


YOU'RE HOME EARLY! IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
I JUST HAVE A HEADACHE, NOTHING SERIOUS, SO I ASKED CHAZ TO BRING ME HOME!
WHAT ABOUT YOU? I THOUGHT YOU'D BE GONE ALREADY!
JUST RUNNING A LITTLE LATE, THAT'S ALL! FORTUNATELY, DAVID'S A VERY PATIENT MAN!


I'M SURE HE CONSIDERS YOU WELL WORTH THE WAIT, MOTHER! *GIGGLE!*
WHY THAT'S SO SWEET OF YOU TO SAY, DEAR!
HOWEVER, I HAVE NOTICED THAT YOU TWO HAVE BEEN SPENDING A LOT MORE TIME AT HIS PLACE THAN HERE LATELY!
NOTHING TO DO WITH ME, I HOPE!
NONSENSE! IT'S JUST THAT EVERYTHING HE'S PLANNED FOR US LATELY HAS BEEN MUCH CLOSER TO HIS PLACE!
IT JUST SEEMS RIDICULOUS FOR HIM TO DRIVE ALL THE WAY OUT HERE TWICE A NIGHT!
I GUESS THAT MAKES SENSE!


THERE'S ALSO SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR NOT HAVING TO DRIVE YOURSELF BACK HOME THAT LATE AT NIGHT!
THAT WORKS BOTH WAYS, DEAR! *GIGGLE!*
OH, I'VE NOTICED! *GIGGLE!*


WELL, YOU TWO HAVE A WONDERFUL NIGHT, MOTHER!
WE PLAN TO! YOU JUST TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF THIS EVENING, OKAY?
OH, I WILL, MOTHER!


I ALWAYS DO!


A little over an hour later, an Òber pulls up to the house...




HOP ON IN, SWEETIE! I'LL HAVE YOU TO THE U-DISTRICT IN NO TIME!


*SIGH!* ACTUALLY, I'VE GOTTEN BORED WITH ALL THE COLLEGE BARS AND CLUBS!
GOT ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE OUTSIDE THE BOX WHEN IT COMES TO SERIOUS FUN?
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DO! IT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN, THOUGH!


SOUNDS PERFECT!


After a lengthy drive across town...


NOW THIS IS MORE LIKE IT! NOT ONE COLLEGE BOY IN SIGHT! NOTHING BUT MEN! *GROWL*


HMMM! THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS PLACE THAT SEEMS VAGUELY FAMILIAR! DON'T KNOW WHY, THOUGH!
I WOULD SURE AS HELL REMEMBER IF I'D PARTIED IN A PLACE AS AWESOME AS THIS BEFORE!


AND WITH MEN AS TASTY AS THAT SPECIMEN! YUMMY!


HELLO THERE!
WELL, HELLO YOURSELF, GORGEOUS!


NOW, JUST TO SAVE OURSELVES SOME TIME, HERE'S WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN...


YOU'RE GOING TO BUY ME A DRINK, THEN WE'RE GOING TO GO OUT THERE AND GET ALL SWEATY BUMPING AND GRINDING AGAINST ONE ANOTHER...
AND THEN WE'RE GOING TO FUCK EACH OTHER'S BRAINS OUT! DOES THAT WORK FOR YOU, HANDSOME?
OH, HELL YEAH!
I THOUGHT IT WOULD! NOW GET ME A GIN AND TONIC SO WE CAN GET THINGS GOING!
YES, MA'AM! HEH-HEH!

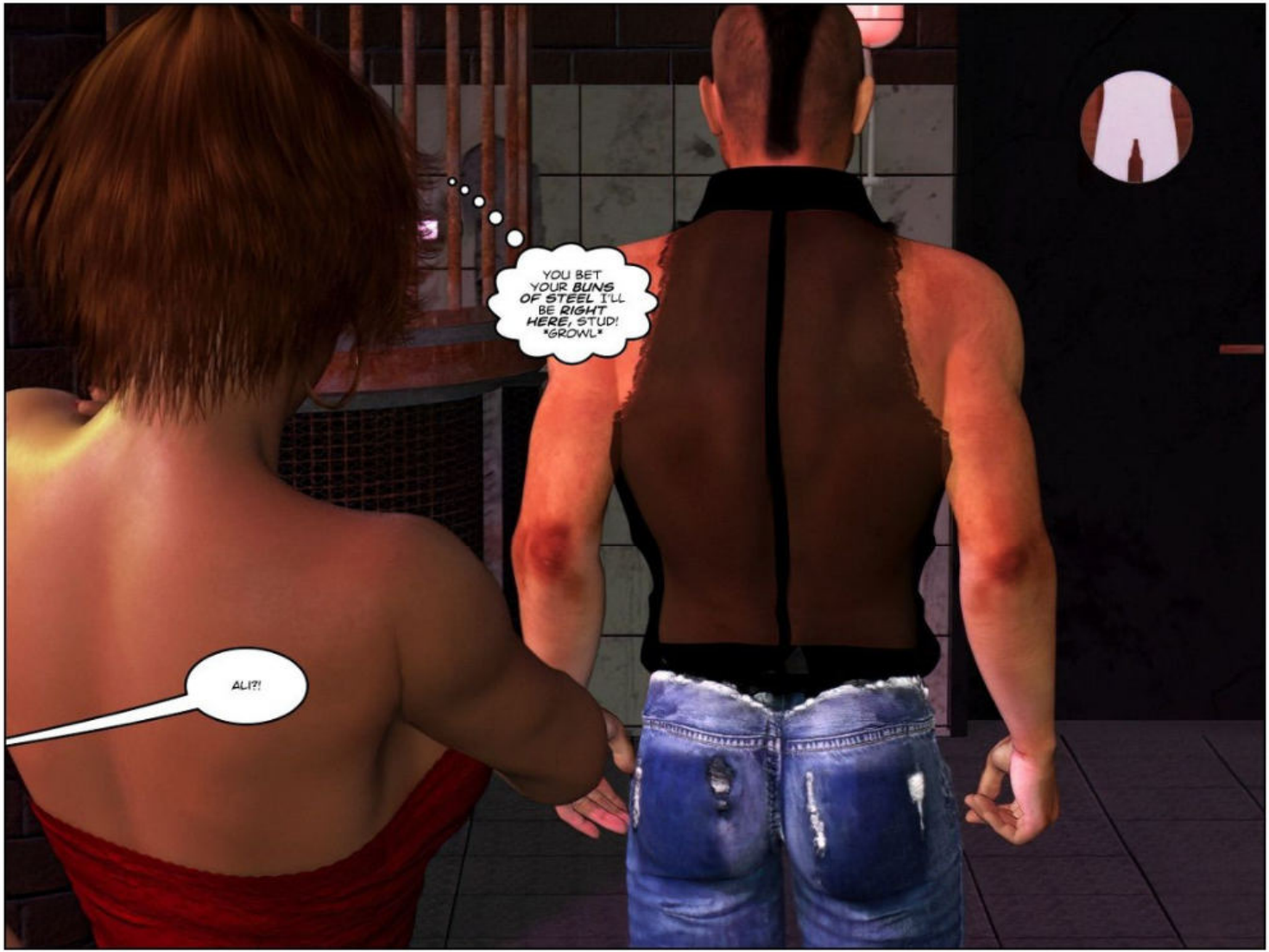

JUST AS EASY AS ALL THOSE COLLEGE BOYS! LET'S JUST HOPE HE CAN PERFORM BETTER!


And, as the evening wears on...






HATE TO LEAVE A SMOKIN' THING LIKE YOU ALONE FOR EVEN A SECOND, BUT I'VE GOTTA HIT THE HEAD!
DON'T WORRY BABE! I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU RIGHT HERE!


YOU BET YOUR BUNS OF STEEL I'LL BE RIGHT HERE, STUD! *GROWL*
ALI?!


HMMM... CONSIDERING ALL THE BEEFY TALENT I SEE AROUND HERE, THIS COULD VERY WELL BE MY NEW FAVORITE NIGHT SPOT!
ALI? IS THAT YOU?


OKAY... ARIEL!
HUH?


I... I NEVER THOUGHT I'D EVER SEE YOU HERE AGAIN! ESPECIALLY DRESSED LIKE THIS! WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON WITH YOU?
OH... HEY THERE, CHLOE! I SEE I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S DISCOVERED THE PLENTITUDE OF QUALITY MEN IN THIS PLACE! *GIGGLE!*
WHAT'S GOING ON IS I'M TROLLING FOR SOME SERIOUS MAN-MEAT, AND...


WAIT A MINUTE! ARE YOU SAYING I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE?
YES! I BROUGHT YOU HERE ABOUT A MONTH AGO! DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
THAT'S WHY THIS PLACE LOOKED FAMILIAR! BUT I MUST'VE BEEN TOTALLY WASTED BECAUSE I DON'T REMEMBER ANY DETAILS... OR YOU... AT ALL!


YOU WEREN'T WASTED! AND YOU WEREN'T, AS YOUR MOTHER TRIED TO CONVINCE ME, SUFFERING FROM PTSD INDUCED DELUSIONS!
YOU REALLY DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT THAT NIGHT? AND EVERYTHING YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THE CRASH AND THE ASSAULT, AND...
SHE SAID THAT? WOW! I KNOW MOTHER LIKES TO STRETCH THE TRUTH WHEN IT SUITS HER NEEDS, BUT THAT'S A LITTLE EXTREME... EVEN FOR HER!


ASSAULT? WHAT ASSAULT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? NO ONE'S EVER LAID A HAND ON ME WITHOUT MY PERMISSION!
WELL, EXCEPT FOR A COUPLE OF TIMES WHERE I GAVE THEM PERMISSION AFTER THE FACT! *GIGGLE!*
OH MY GOD! YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER, ALI! THIS ISN'T WHO YOU ARE!


OH, REALLY? THEN WHO THE HELL AM I? ENLIGHTEN ME, BUT MAKE IT QUICK!
MY DATE WILL BE BACK ANY SECOND, AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS I GUARANTEE I'LL BE WAY TOO PREOCCUPIED TO LISTEN TO YOU ANYMORE!
*SIGH!* OKAY..


And as Chloe quickly recaps the bizarre story told to her several weeks earlier by Ali/Alex/Ariel...


A change in Ariel's expression gives her a brief glimmer of hope...


A glimmer that is quickly snuffed out...
*SNORT!* SERIOUSLY?!


JESUS! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS YOU'VE BEEN SNIFFING AT THAT SALON OF YOURS, BUT SAVE ME A BOTTLE, WILL YOU? IT'S OBVIOUSLY SOME REALLY GOOD SHIT!
YOU... YOU DON'T REMEMBER ANY OF IT?


REMEMBER THAT I USED TO BE MY OWN FREAKING BROTHER? YEAH, I'M HAVING SOME TROUBLE RECALLING THAT LITTLE MEMORY BYTE!
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE DOING THIS, BUT IT COMES TO A STOP.. RIGHT FUCKING NOW!
BUT...


ALEX IS DEAD, GOT IT?! DEAD AND BURIED! I'M THE ONE THAT SURVIVED THAT WRECK, NOT HIM!


NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I SEE SOMEONE I NEED TO RAVAGE!


HEY, HOT STUFF! READY TO HIT THE DANCE FLOOR AGAIN!
OH, I HAVE A MUCH BETTER USE FOR ALL THAT ENERGY OF YOURS! FOLLOW ME, BABY!


OH MY GOD! COULD MONA HAVE BEEN TELLING ME THE TRUTH... AND THAT REALLY HAS BEEN ARIEL ALL ALONG?
EVEN IF IT IS, I CAN'T JUST TURN MY BACK ON HER! THAT GIRL HAS SOME SERIOUS ISSUES!

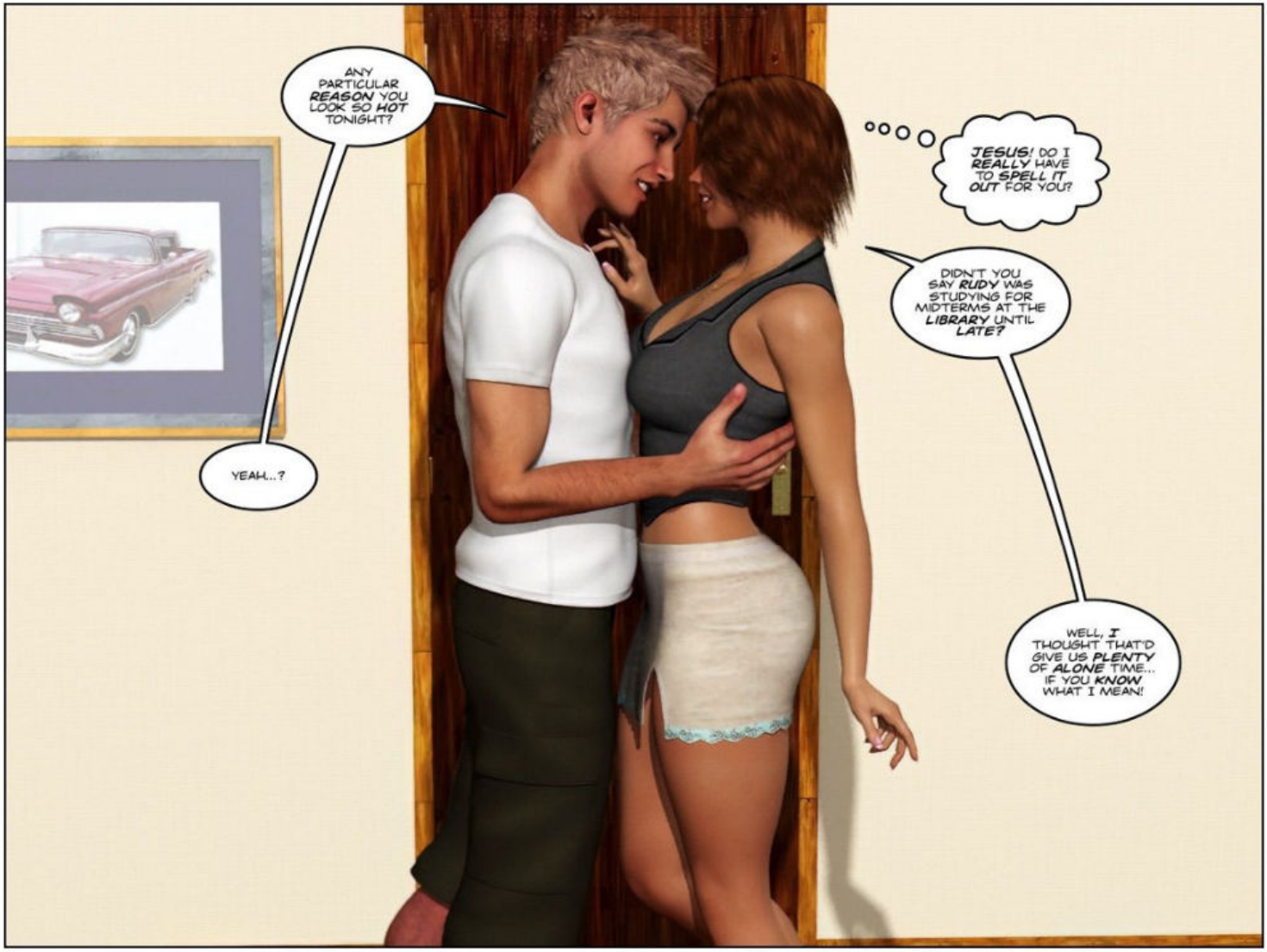

NO! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT ALI WAS JUST SOME PERSONALITY DISORDER! SHE WAS TOO REAL, AND TOO... LOVING!
THAT WITCH OF A MOTHER HAS DONE SOMETHING TO CHANGE HER INTO THIS... PERSON! AND I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO BRING HER BACK!


"But even if I knew how... am I too late?"


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GENDER-MIX COMIX
ARIEL
2.0
by CBlack


A couple of weeks later, at Chaz' apartment...
AFTER YOU, M'LADY!
WHY, THANK YOU, KIND SIR!
WORLD FAMOUS
Pabst
Tootsies
ORCHID
LOUNGE


HAVE I TOLD YOU HOW AMAZING YOU LOOK TONIGHT?
OH, JUST A FEW TIMES! *GIGGLE!*
NO, I MEAN EXTRA AMAZING! I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN YOU DRESS THIS SEXY BEFORE!
WELL, I JUST WANTED TO LOOK EXTRA SPECIAL FOR MY MAN TONIGHT!
OH, THIS IS NOTHING, SWEETIE! IF I WANTED, YOU'D LOSE YOUR LOAD THE SECOND YOU LAID EYES ON ME!


ANY PARTICULAR REASON YOU LOOK SO HOT TONIGHT?
YEAH...?
JESUS! DO I REALLY HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU?
DIDN'T YOU SAY RUDY WAS STUDYING FOR MIDTERMS AT THE LIBRARY UNTIL LATE?
WELL, I THOUGHT THAT'D GIVE US PLENTY OF ALONE TIME... IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!


YOU KNOW, YOU'RE RIGHT... I CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME RUDY WASN'T HANGING AROUND THE APARTMENT WHEN WE WERE HERE!
AND YOUR HOUSE, WELL... JUST THE THOUGHT OF YOUR MOTHER CATCHING US IS MORE THAN ENOUGH, THANK YOU!
EXACTLY! SO WHY ARE WE WASTING TIME CHATTING ABOUT WHAT WE COULD BE ALREADY DOING?
CHRIST! JUST SHUT UP ALREADY AND TAKE WHAT I'M THROWING AT YOU!


GOOD QUESTION! MMMMMMM!
ABOUT FUCKING TIME!


IDEALLY, I'D PREFER TO KEEP MY MORE INTENSE NEEDS HIDDEN FROM CHAZ, CONSIDERING HOW BIZARRELY CLOSE HE AND MOTHER ARE!
BUT THANKS TO HER INSISTENCE I STAY HOME AND STUDY FOR MIDTERMS ALL WEEK, I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SCRATCH MY ITCH IN ALMOST A WEEK!
I MEAN, A GIRL'S GOT NEEDS!

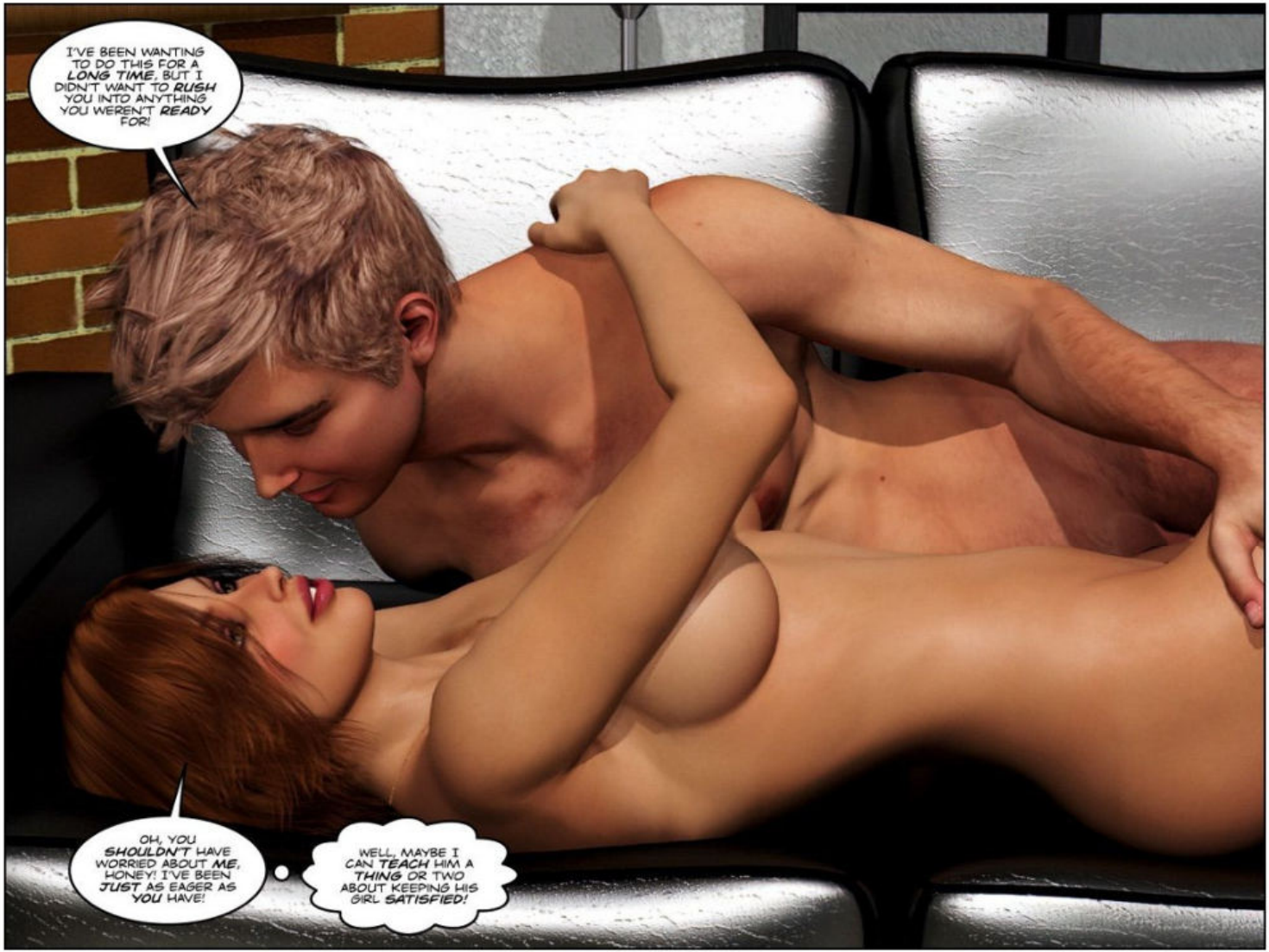

NORMALLY, I WOULD'VE FOUND A WAY TO SNEAK OUT, BUT WHEN SHE SAID SHE'D BUY ME A NEW CAR IF I ACED MY MIDTERMS, WELL... THAT SEALED THE DEAL!
OOOO! NOW YOU'RE GETTIN' THE HANG OF IT, BOYFRIEND!


SO... CARE TO LOSE SOME OF THOSE CLOTHES AND JOIN ME HERE ON THE COUCH?
DAMN STRAIGHT, I DO!


BETTER HURRY UP, OR I JUST MIGHT START WITHOUT YOU! *GIGGLE!*


I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS FOR A LONG TIME!
ME TOO, HONEY! ME TOO!


Five minutes later...
OHHH, MAN! THAT WAS GREAT!
FOR ONE OF US MAYBE! HMPH!
JUST MY LUCK THAT THE GUY I'M GOING STEADY WITH HAS THE FASTEST TRIGGER ON CAMPUS!


I'VE BEEN WANTING TO DO THIS FOR A LONG TIME, BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO RUSH YOU INTO ANYTHING YOU WEREN'T READY FOR!
OH, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE WORRIED ABOUT ME, HONEY! I'VE BEEN JUST AS EAGER AS YOU HAVE!
WELL, MAYBE I CAN TEACH HIM A THING OR TWO ABOUT KEEPING HIS GIRL SATISFIED!


IN FACT, I'M READY FOR MORE... A LOT MORE!
UHH... I DON'T KNOW IF I'M UP FOR ANOTHER ROUND, BABE! MAYBE A LITTLE LATER...


UMM... WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU'LL SEE!


I THINK I KNOW A WAY TO MAKE "LATER" BECOME A LOT SOONER!
REALLY?! YOU'D DO THAT? I MEAN, I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D...


OOOOHHHH!!


OOHHH, MAN!!
THERE WE GO! I KNEW IT WOULDN'T TAKE MUCH!


YOU'RE STOPPING?
OH, HARDLY, BABY! I'M JUST GETTING READY TO RETASK YOUR NOT-SO-LITTLE SOLDIER HERE! *GIGGLE!*


"GASP!"
OH, YEAH! NOW WE'RE GONNA HAVE SOME REAL FUN!


HOLD ON, TIGER! JUST FOLLOW MY LEAD AND MATCH MY RHYTHM! TRUST ME, YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID!
OOOHHH!!


OHH... GOD!
ISN'T THIS SO MUCH BETTER THAN THE SLOPPY WAY YOU WERE POUNDING AWAY EARLIER?
GOD YES!
*GIGGLE!* I KNEW YOU'D SEE IT MY WAY!


MMMMM! MUCH BETTER, BABY! THAT'S SOOO MUCH BETTER!


A couple of hours later...
NICE? OH MY GOD, ARIEL... TONIGHT WAS MIND-BLOWING! YOU... WERE MIND-BLOWING!
TELL ME ABOUT IT! WHEW!
SO, DID YOU HAVE A NICE TIME TONIGHT? BECAUSE I KNOW I SURE DID!
THAT WASN'T YOUR MIND I WAS BLOWING EARLIER, SWEETIE! *GIGGLE!*
WORLD FAMOUS
Pabst
Tootsies
LOUNGE


ANY CHANCE RUDY WILL BE GONE TOMORROW NIGHT AS WELL? I'D SURE LOVE TO CONTINUE WHERE WE LEFT OFF!
AGAIN? I DON'T KNOW, BABE! IT MAY TAKE ME A COUPLE OF DAYS TO RECUPERATE!
OH, I'M SURE I CAN FIND SOME WAY TO GET YOU BACK INTO SHAPE! I HAVE LOTS AND LOTS OF IDEAS!
THEN HE'LL BE GONE IF I HAVE TO KICK HIM OUT! HEH-HEH!
THAT'S WHAT I WAS HOPING TO HEAR!




BYE, BABE! GOOD LUCK ON YOUR MIDTERMS TOMORROW!
YOU TOO, SWEETIE!


HI, RUDY! HOW WAS THE LIBRARY? *GIGGLE!*
7


TONIGHT COULDN'T HAVE GONE ANY BETTER! A FEW MORE NIGHTS LIKE THIS AND I'LL HAVE CHAZ TRAINED JUST THE WAY I WANT HIM!
AND THEN HE WON'T ONLY BE RICH AND HANDSOME BUT ALSO A DYNAMITE LOVER! THE PERFECT ALL-AROUND CATCH!
I MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO GIVE UP MY LATE-NIGHT HOOK-UPS!


HMMMM...
7


NAH! WHO AM I KIDDING? THAT'S ONE LITTLE PAST-TIME OF MINE I'LL NEVER GIVE UP! *GIGGLE!*


A few days later...
OKAY, DRIVING AROUND TOWN WITH THE TOP DOWN ON THAT SWEET NEW CAR IS MY NEW FAVORITE PASTIME!
WELL... A VERY CLOSE SECOND! *GIGGLE!*


ARIEL? IS THAT YOU, HONEY?
YES, MOTHER... IT'S JUST ME!
I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING! I'LL BE OUT IN A MINUTE!
OKAY, MOTHER!
HMMM... SOUNDS LIKE MOTHER HAS A BUG UP HER BUTT ABOUT SOMETHING!
CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT'D BE ABOUT.


HOW WERE YOUR CLASSES TODAY, DEAR?
YES, I'M MEETING DAVID AT OUR FAVORITE RESTAURANT!
JUST FINE! WOW! LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE A HOT DATE TONIGHT!
SO, WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?


I JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW YOU AND CHAZ WERE GETTING ALONG! YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING A LOT OF TIME TOGETHER!
WELL, OF COURSE WE HAVE! HE IS MY BOYFRIEND, AFTER ALL!
I THOUGHT YOU LIKED CHAZ AND WOULD BE VERY HAPPY ABOUT SEEING US TOGETHER!
OH, I AM, HONEY, I AM! I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER SEEING YOU TWO TOGETHER!
THEN WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?


THERE'S NO PROBLEM, DEAR! I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU TWO WERE BEING CAREFUL AS YOUR RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPS!
CAREFUL? YOU MEAN IN REGARD TO SEX, DON'T YOU?
OF COURSE, HONEY! AS MUCH AS YOU TWO OBVIOUSLY CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER, I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE SADDLED WITH SOMETHING NEITHER OF YOU IS READY FOR!


WHAT THE... HOW THE HELL DID SHE KNOW?
WELL, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT, MOTHER! REST ASSURED, WHEN THE TIME COMES, WE'LL TAKE PRECAUTIONS!
OH I'M CONFIDENT YOU WILL, DEAR... WHEN THE TIME COMES!
JUST MAKE SURE THAT EAGER BOYFRIEND OF YOURS UNDERSTANDS THAT AS WELL!


NOW THAT WE HAVE OUR LITTLE CHAT OUT OF THE WAY, I HAVE A FEW MORE THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF BEFORE I MEET DAVID!
I'LL BE STAYING AT HIS PLACE TONIGHT, SO HAVE A NICE EVENING AND I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW, SWEETHEART!
I WILL, MOTHER!
ESPECIALLY AFTER I FIGURE OUT WHY, AFTER DATING CHAZ FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS, SHE FINALLY GETS INQUISITIVE ABOUT OUR SEX LIFE... PRACTICALLY THE DAY AFTER WE FINALLY START SAID SEX LIFE!
IT'S ALMOST AS IF SHE KNEW! BUT HOW?


HMMMM! AND A QUICK PEEK AT HER PHONE MIGHT GIVE ME SOME ANSWERS!


WELL, LOOKY HERE! A PHONE CALL FROM RUDY, OF ALL PEOPLE, YESTERDAY MORNING!
CHAZ MUST'VE TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT OUR EVENING TOGETHER!
BUT WHY THE HELL WOULD THAT LITTLE SHIT TELL MY MOTHER ABOUT IT?

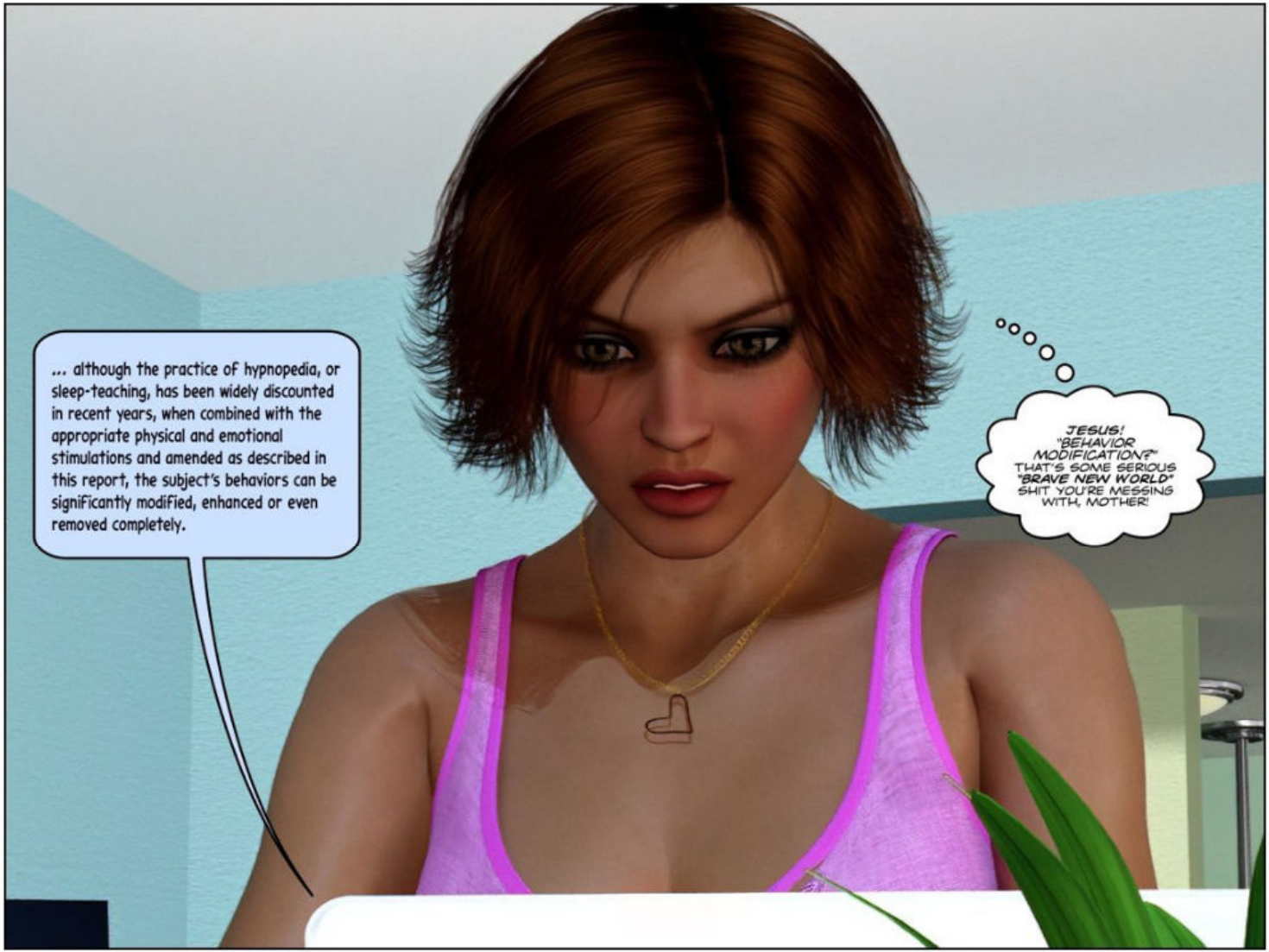

WHAT THE HELL?! THERE ARE CALLS HERE FROM RUDY DATING BACK TWO MONTHS!
I'LL BET THAT LITTLE FUCK HAS BEEN KEEPING TABS ON ME EVER SINCE CHAZ AND I STARTED DATING!
AND I WOULDN'T BE A BIT SURPRISED IF MOTHER PUT HIM UP TO IT!


THE BIG QUESTION IS HOW CLOSE RUDY HAS BEEN FOLLOWING ME AND HOW MUCH HE'S TOLD MOTHER!
THERE AREN'T ANY VOICEMAILS ON HER PHONE SO I MAY JUST HAVE TO DO A LITTLE DIGGING AROUND THE HOUSE AFTER SHE LEAVES FOR HER DATE!


Later on, after Mona has left...
HMPH! I GUESS I SHOULD BE FLATTERED THAT MOTHER'S PASSWORD IS MY NAME AND BIRTHDATE!
BUT THAT WON'T CHANGE MY FEELINGS ONE LITTLE BIT IF I FIND OUT SHE'S BEHIND RUDY STALKING ME!
JESUS! SHE'S GOT A LOT OF SHIT ON HERE, BUT MOSTLY WORK STUFF!
HMMM... KNOWING HER, IF SHE HAD ANYTHING ON HERE SHE DIDN'T WANT ANYONE, LIKE ME, TO SEE, SHE'D BURY IT WHERE NO ONE WOULD THINK TO LOOK!


PLAYLISTS? YEAH, I DON'T THINK SO, MOTHER!
AS FAR BACK AS I REMEMBER, I CAN NEVER RECALL MOTHER EVER LISTENING TO MUSIC... OF ANY KIND! SHE ALWAYS CONSIDERED IT A DISTRACTION!
SO LET'S SEE WHAT SHE'S REALLY GOT IN HERE...


OKAY, THERE ARE A SHIT LOAD OF AUDIO FILES BUT THEY'RE ALL IN SOME WEIRD FORMAT THAT WON'T PLAY BACK ON HER LAPTOP! WHAT THE FUCK GOOD ARE THEY THEN?
WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE READABLE DOCUMENT IN THIS FOLDER, SO LET'S SEE IF IT CAN TELL ME ANYTHING...
HMMM! IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF RESEARCH PROJECT! GOD! IT'S BIG ENOUGH TO BE A WHOLE DAMN BOOK! LET'S SEE WHAT THE SYNOPSIS SAYS...


... although the practice of hypnopedia, or sleep-teaching, has been widely discounted in recent years, when combined with the appropriate physical and emotional stimulations and amended as described in this report, the subject's behaviors can be significantly modified, enhanced or even removed completely.
JESUS! "BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION?" THAT'S SOME SERIOUS "BRAVE NEW WORLD" SHIT YOU'RE MESSING WITH, MOTHER!


Subject A's responses to the treatments exceeded expectations. After the initial correction of all possibly aggressive and contentious tendencies into more docile and obedient ones, further, more specific adjustments were made. As hoped, subject A's responses to these new adjustments yielded remarkable and promising results.
As such, experimentation on this subject will continue, which will hopefully lead to implementing these techniques with other subjects...
WHY DO I SUDDENLY FEEL A LITTLE SICK TO MY STOMACH? I NEED TO KNOW HOW LONG SHE'S BEEN DOING THIS!
IS THERE A TABLE OF CONTENTS, OR SOMETHING?


"GASP!" OH MY GOD!
slam!
DON'T MIND ME! I'M JUST HERE FOR MINUTE!


MOTHER? WH... WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK HERE?
SILLY ME! I FORGOT MY OVERNIGHT BAG!


WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM?
OH, I, UHHH... WANTED TO TAKE A BATH AND WAS LOOKING FOR ONE OF THOSE BATH BOMBS YOU TALK ABOUT SO MUCH!
OH, I'M AFRAID I USED THE LAST ONE A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO! I'LL MAKE SURE TO GRAB EXTRAS NEXT TIME I GO TO THE STORE!
I... I'D APPRECIATE THAT!


OH, AND SINCE I'LL PROBABLY GO STRAIGHT FROM DAVID'S TO WORK TOMORROW, I'LL PROBABLY NEED THIS AS WELL!
*SIGH!* OF COURSE YOU WOULD!


OKAY, NOW THIS IS ME LEAVING FOR REAL THIS TIME! SEE YOU TOMORROW AFTERNOON, DEAR!
YES... GOODBYE, MOTHER!


I DON'T NEED TO READ THE REST OF THAT DOCUMENT TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO, MOTHER!
ONCE I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF THE DATES OF YOUR "RESEARCH", IT ALL BECAME PERFECTLY CLEAR AND EXPLAINS SO MUCH!
HOW COULD I NOT HAVE SEEN WHAT YOU WERE DOING... RIGHT IN PLAIN SIGHT... AND TO YOUR OWN CHILD!
Slam!


"SUBJECT A" WAS ALEX!

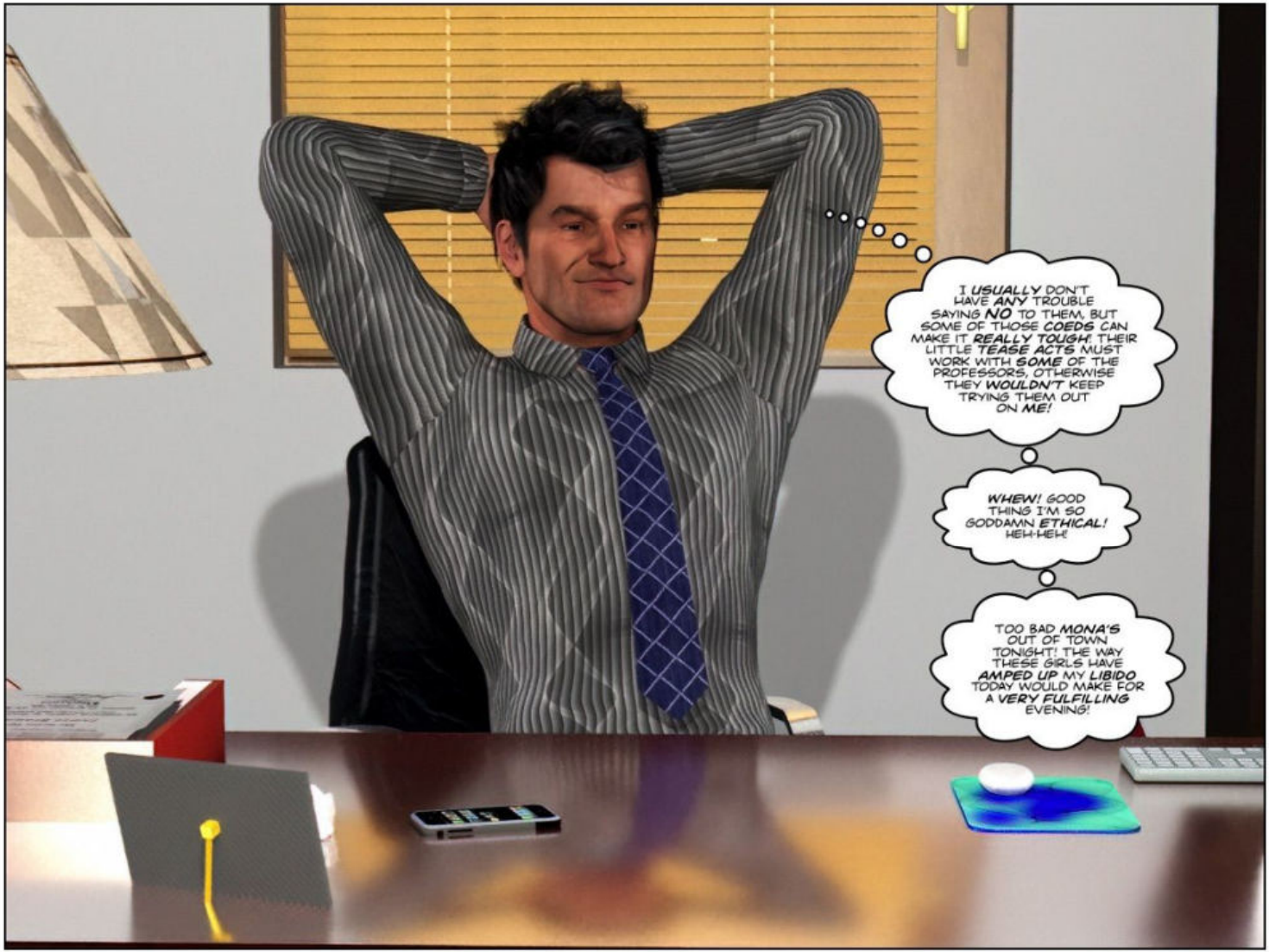

YOU HATED FATHER SO MUCH AFTER HE LEFT THAT YOU WOULD'VE DONE ANYTHING TO KEEP ALEX FROM TURNING OUT LIKE HIM! SO YOU PROGRAMMED HIM TO BE THE EXACT OPPOSITE!
YOU MADE HIM OBEDIENT, SPINELESS, AND DEATHLY AFRAID TO DISPLEASE YOU IN ANY WAY!
AND BECAUSE OF THAT, HE'S DEAD! YOUR PROJECT KILLED MY LITTLE BROTHER, MOTHER! AND THAT'S SOMETHING I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR!


AND NOW THAT RUDY'S PROBABLY INFORMED YOU OF MY.. HOBBY, YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT USING THE SAME TECHNIQUES ON ME TO TRY AND MAKE ME INTO THE PERFECT LITTLE DAUGHTER YOU THINK YOU DESERVE!
WELL, THINK AGAIN, MOTHER!


BECAUSE YOUR PERFECT LITTLE WORLD IS ABOUT TO COME TO AN END!


A couple of days later...
DON'T WORRY, CHANCELLOR, I'LL HAVE THOSE PROJECTED ENROLLMENT NUMBERS TO YOU TOMORROW!
SAME TO YOU, SIR! AND SAY HELLO TO YOUR FAMILY FOR ME!


*SIGH!*. LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO BE HERE LONGER THAN I'D HOPED! DAMN IT! I WAS REALLY HOPING TO GET OUT OF HERE AND AWAY FROM THE STUDENTS!
IT NEVER FAILS... RIGHT AFTER MIDTERMS... THE DELUGE OF STUDENTS CLAMORING FOR EXTRA CREDIT TO NURSE A FAILING GRADE BACK TO HEALTH! I'VE HARDLY HAD A MINUTE'S REST FROM THEM TODAY!


I USUALLY DON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE SAYING NO TO THEM, BUT SOME OF THOSE COEDS CAN MAKE IT REALLY TOUGH! THEIR LITTLE TEASE ACTS MUST WORK WITH SOME OF THE PROFESSORS, OTHERWISE THEY WOULDN'T KEEP TRYING THEM OUT ON ME!
WHEW! GOOD THING I'M SO GODDAMN ETHICAL! HEH-HEH!
TOO BAD MONA'S OUT OF TOWN TONIGHT! THE WAY THESE GIRLS HAVE AMPED UP MY LIBIDO TODAY WOULD MAKE FOR A VERY FULFILLING EVENING!


YES?
OH, GOD! NOT ANOTHER ONE!
Knock, knock!!


HI, DEAN MARTIN! IS... IS IT OKAY IF I COME IN?
ARIEL! UMM, YES... OF COURSE!
OHHH, DAMN! NOT A GOOD IDEA!


I'M SORRY TO SHOW UP UNANNOUNCED LIKE THIS WHEN I'M SURE YOU MUST BE VERY BUSY!
YES! YOU'RE TOO BUSY! SEND HER AWAY!
MY DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN FOR YOU, ARIEL!
THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR, BECAUSE THERE ARE A COUPLE OF IMPORTANT THINGS I REALLY WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT!
WELL, HAVE A SEAT, PLEASE!
STUPID, STUPID, STUPID!


FIRST, I WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE WAY I ACTED THAT DAY YOU STOPPED BY THE HOUSE!
I KNOW HOW CLOSE YOU AND MOTHER HAVE BECOME AND I DON'T WANT MY POOR BEHAVIOR TO JEOPARDIZE THAT! HER HAPPINESS MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME!
ARE YOU SURE? BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO OUR HOUSE ONCE SINCE THAT DAY!
IT MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME AS WELL, ARIEL! NOTHING HAS CHANGED IN THAT REGARD!
THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR MOTHER. BELIEVE ME!


I KNOW THAT IT'S ABOUT ME! AND THAT'S WHY I CAME HERE TODAY... TO TRY AND EXPLAIN MYSELF, IF YOU'LL LET ME!
OF COURSE I WILL, ARIEL!
I'M SO GLAD TO HEAR THAT, DEAN!
WHEW! I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'S DOING THAT DELIBERATELY OR NOT, BUT SOME OF THOSE OTHER COEDS COULD TAKE LESSONS FROM ARIEL! DAMN!


1
SO, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW MUCH MOTHER HAS TOLD YOU ABOUT ME... OUR FAMILY LIFE... THE ACCIDENT! BUT CONSIDERING HOW IMPORTANT YOU'VE BECOME TO BOTH OF US, I THINK YOU SHOULD KNOW EVERYTHING!
IF YOU REALLY THINK IT'S NECESSARY...
OH, I DO! AND I'M SURE MOTHER WOULD AGREE!


SHE PROBABLY HAS TOLD YOU THAT MY FATHER LEFT US WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG!
YES, SHE DID! I'M VERY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS!
THANK YOU, BUT IT WAS A VERY LONG TIME AGO AND I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT HIM! AND SINCE MOTHER NEVER REALLY DATED, THERE WERE NO STRONG MALE INFLUENCES IN MY LIFE GROWING UP!
BUT ALL THAT CHANGED WHEN SHE MET YOU!
ME? WH... WHAT DID I DO?


JESUS! DOES SHE REALLY NOT KNOW WHAT SHE'S DOING TO ME RIGHT NOW?
IT WAS NOTHING YOU DID SPECIFICALLY! IT WAS MORE THE WAY YOU AND MOTHER INTERACTED! I FINALLY GOT TO SEE WHAT THAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WAS LIKE, AND, WELL... IT'S HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT ON ME!
WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT MAKES SENSE, BUT...
BUT IT DOESN'T EXCUSE MY BEHAVIOR THAT DAY, I KNOW! THAT'S WHERE MY ACCIDENT AND MEDICAL HISTORY COME INTO PLAY!


YOU SEE, I WAS ALWAYS A FAIRLY SCRAWNY GIRL GROWING UP! AND THE CAR ACCIDENT ALONG WITH THE EXTENDED HOSPITAL STAYS DIDN'T HELP!
SO WHEN I GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, MOTHER PUT ME ON A REGIMEN OF VITAMINS AND HORMONES TO HELP ME, UMMM... DEVELOP!
WELL, KNOWING YOUR MOTHER, I'M SURE EVERY DECISION SHE MAKES IS FOR YOUR BENEFIT!
AND THAT PARTICULAR DECISION BENEFITS EVERYONE! DAMN!


UNFORTUNATELY, ONE OF THE SIDE EFFECTS OF MY MEDICATION, ESPECIALLY SHORTLY AFTER I TAKE IT, IS IT KIND OF CHARGES ME UP AND MAKES ME A LITTLE... IMPULSIVE!
AND THAT'S PRETTY MUCH WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY AT OUR HOUSE! I'D JUST TAKEN THE MEDS WHEN YOU STOPPED BY, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D WORN THAT BIKINI AND, WELL... YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED NEXT!
OH, I DEFINITELY REMEMBER!
YEAH! THE IMAGE OF HER IN THAT BIKINI IS SOMETHING I WON'T FORGET FOR A LONG, LONG TIME!


IT WAS JUST A PERFECT STORM OF HORMONE OVERDOSE, BAD TIMING AND CONFUSED FEELINGS, RESULTING IN A VERY POOR DECISION ON MY PART!
TRYING TO PUT THE MOVES ON YOU IN OUR OWN HOUSE WAS AN INCREDIBLY STUPID AND SELFISH THING FOR ME TO DO, AND I PROMISE IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN!
WELL, THAT'S VERY GOOD TO KNOW!
NOW LET'S SEE IF I CAN GET HER OUT OF HERE BEFORE ANY MORE IMAGES OF HER GET PERMANENTLY IMPRINTED IN MY MIND!


I'M SO GLAD WE HAD THIS CHAT, ARIEL! CLEARING THE AIR LIKE THIS CAN ONLY MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR ALL OF US!
I COULDN'T AGREE MORE! AND I'M SURE MOTHER WILL LOVE HAVING YOU BACK AROUND THE HOUSE AGAIN!
YEAH, ME TOO! HERE, LET ME SHUT OFF MY COMPUTER AND I'LL WALK YOU OUT!
OH, BUT I'M NOT LEAVING QUITE YET!


YOU'RE NOT?
OH, HARDLY! NOW THAT WE'VE CONFIRMED THAT THE HOUSE IS MOTHER'S DOMAIN, IT'S TIME WE ESTABLISH THAT CAMPUS IS MINE!
WH... WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ARIEL?
I'M TALKING ABOUT THE ONLY EQUITABLE WAY FOR ALL OF US TO GET WHAT WE WANT WITHOUT ANYONE GETTING HURT!
I... I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND!


IN OTHER WORDS, I'M CONTENT WITH JUST HAVING YOU HERE ON CAMPUS, WHERE MOTHER PRACTICALLY NEVER COMES! SHE CAN HAVE YOU EVERYWHERE ELSE!
DOES THAT WORK FOR YOU, DEAN?
HAVE ME?! YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY MEAN...
OF COURSE I DO, SILLY! I THOUGHT I MADE MY FEELINGS ABOUT YOU PERFECTLY CLEAR! AND YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT ME, WELL... THEY'VE BEEN OBVIOUS FOR QUITE SOME TIME! *GIGGLE!*
THEN YOU'VE TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY MISREAD ME! I DON'T...


YOU DON'T WHAT? DON'T CAST LUSTY STARES AT ME AND THE OTHER GIRLS ON CAMPUS WHEN YOU THINK WE'RE NOT LOOKING?
OH, WE KNOW, DAVID... WE KNOW BECAUSE WE WANT YOU TO LOOK... ME ESPECIALLY! AND YOU HAVEN'T DISAPPOINTED!
EVEN THAT VERY FIRST DAY YOU CAME TO OUR HOUSE AND SAW ME GET OUT OF THE POOL, I COULD FEEL YOUR EYES ON ME! I ADMIT, IT WAS A LITTLE AWKWARD AT FIRST, BUT NOW I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT!
ARIEL, I CAN'T... WE CAN'T...


OH, BUT WHY NOT, DAVID? I LOCKED THE DOOR WHEN I CAME IN AND ONE OF US IS ALREADY HALFWAY UNDRESSED!
*GASP!* HOW DID YOU... WHEN DID YOU...
YOU WERE SO DISTRACTED BY THESE, IT WAS EASY! I'M ALSO VERY FLEXIBLE! *GIGGLE!*


NOW, UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN, THIS'LL BE A LOT MORE INTERESTING WITH THESE OFF AS WELL!
OH, STOP IT, DAVID! YOU KNOW YOU WANT THIS AS MUCH AS I DO! YOUR FALSE INDIGNATION IS GETTING A LITTLE BORING!
ARIEL, YOU HAVE TO STOP THIS... RIGHT NOW!
THERE'S NOTHING FALSE ABOUT IT AT ALL! I...

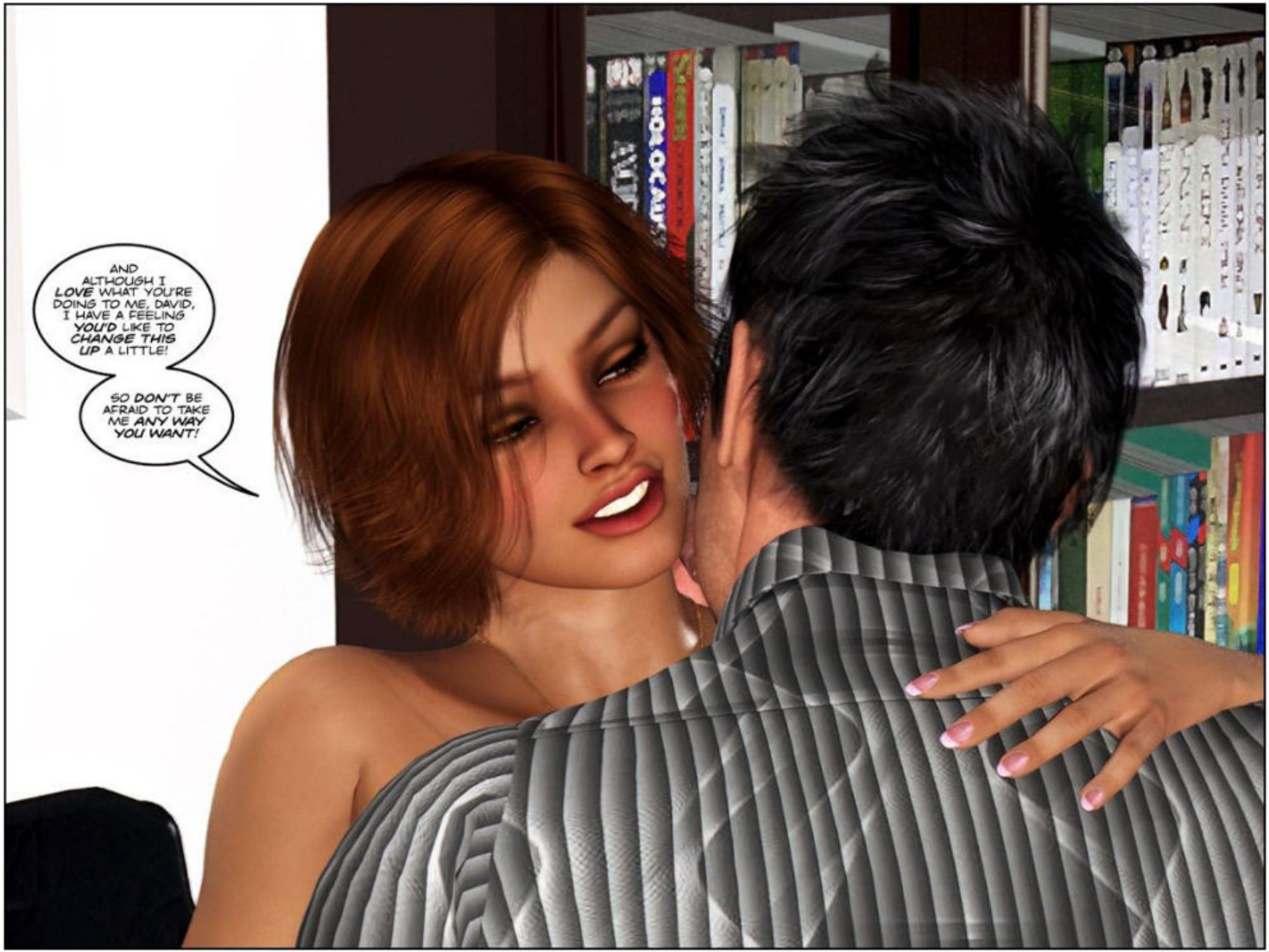

*GROAN!*
MMM-HMMM! THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH THESE THINGS, DAVID... THEY NEVER LIE!


OH, GIVE IT UP, DAVID! YOU WANT TO... DESPERATELY! YOU'LL ALWAYS WANT TO! I'LL SEE TO THAT!
THE ONLY PERSON YOU'RE HURTING BY HOLDING OUT IS YOURSELF, AND I, FOR ONE, DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU SUFFER!
SO STOP FIGHTING IT AND GIVE IN, DAVID! IT'LL BE WORTH IT... I PROMISE!
BUT, I CAN'T... I SHOULDN'T.. I... I...

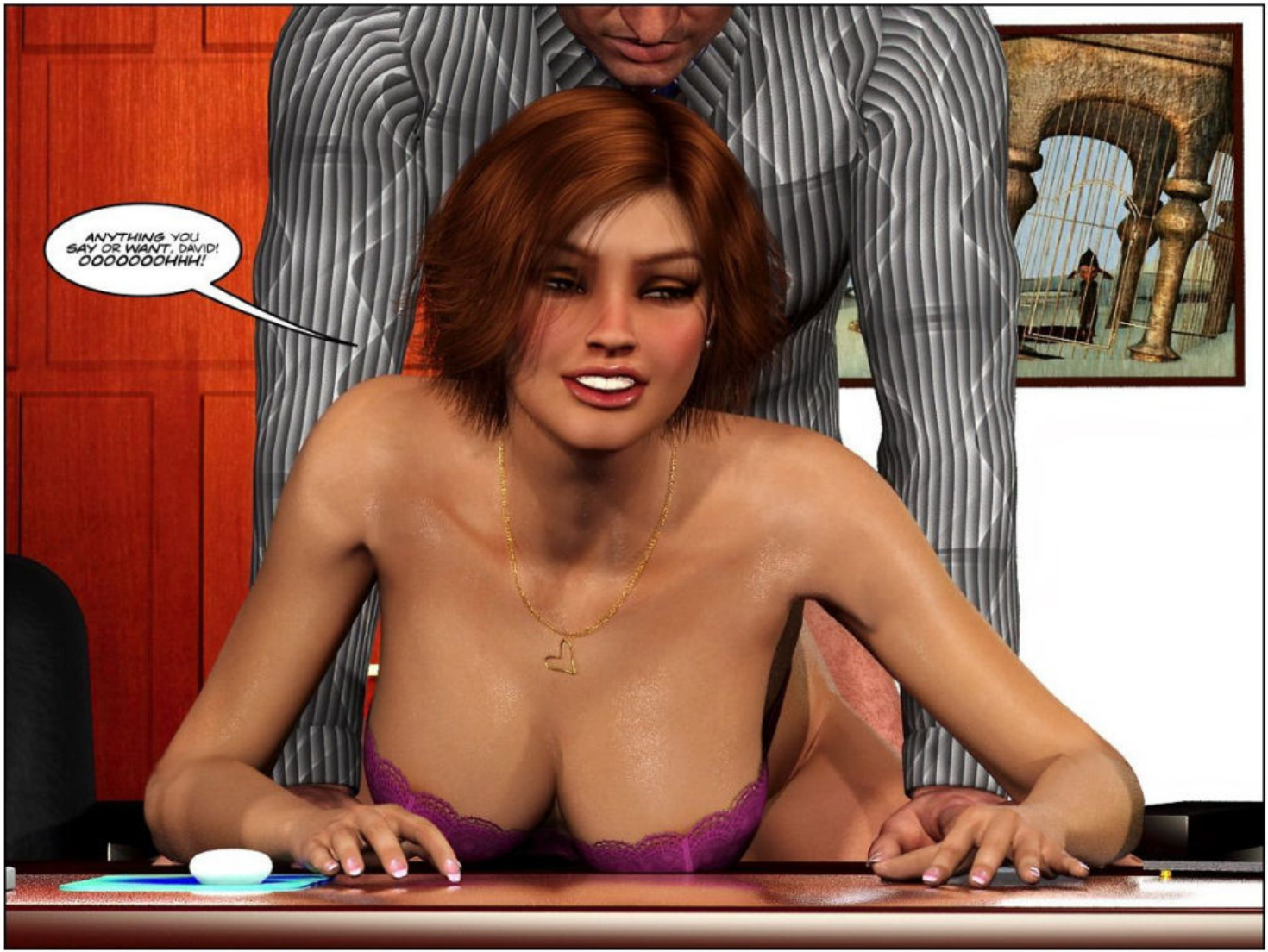

DAMN IT...


OOOOHHH! NOW THAT'S WHAT I WAS HOPING FOR!


MMMM, YES! TAKE CONTROL, DAVID!


AND ALTHOUGH I *LOVE* WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO ME, DAVID, I HAVE A FEELING *YOU'D* LIKE TO *CHANGE THIS UP* A LITTLE!
SO *DON'T* BE AFRAID TO TAKE ME *ANY WAY YOU WANT!*


MMMM, KINKY! I'LL BET MOTHER NEVER LET YOU DO THIS WITH HER! *GIGGLE!*
DON'T... PLEASE DON'T MENTION HER RIGHT NOW! JUST DON'T!


ANYTHING YOU SAY OR WANT, DAVID! OOOOOOOHHH!


OOOOHHHH!!!
AAAUUGGHH!


A while later...
GEE, I DON'T KNOW WHY PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS AFRAID OF BEING SENT TO THE DEAN'S OFFICE! I KIND OF LIKED IT! *GIGGLE!*


IN FACT, I'M ALREADY VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO MY NEXT VISIT!
THERE CAN'T BE A "NEXT VISIT", ARIEL! I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET THIS HAPPEN IN THE FIRST PLACE, BUT... BUT I JUST LOST CONTROL!

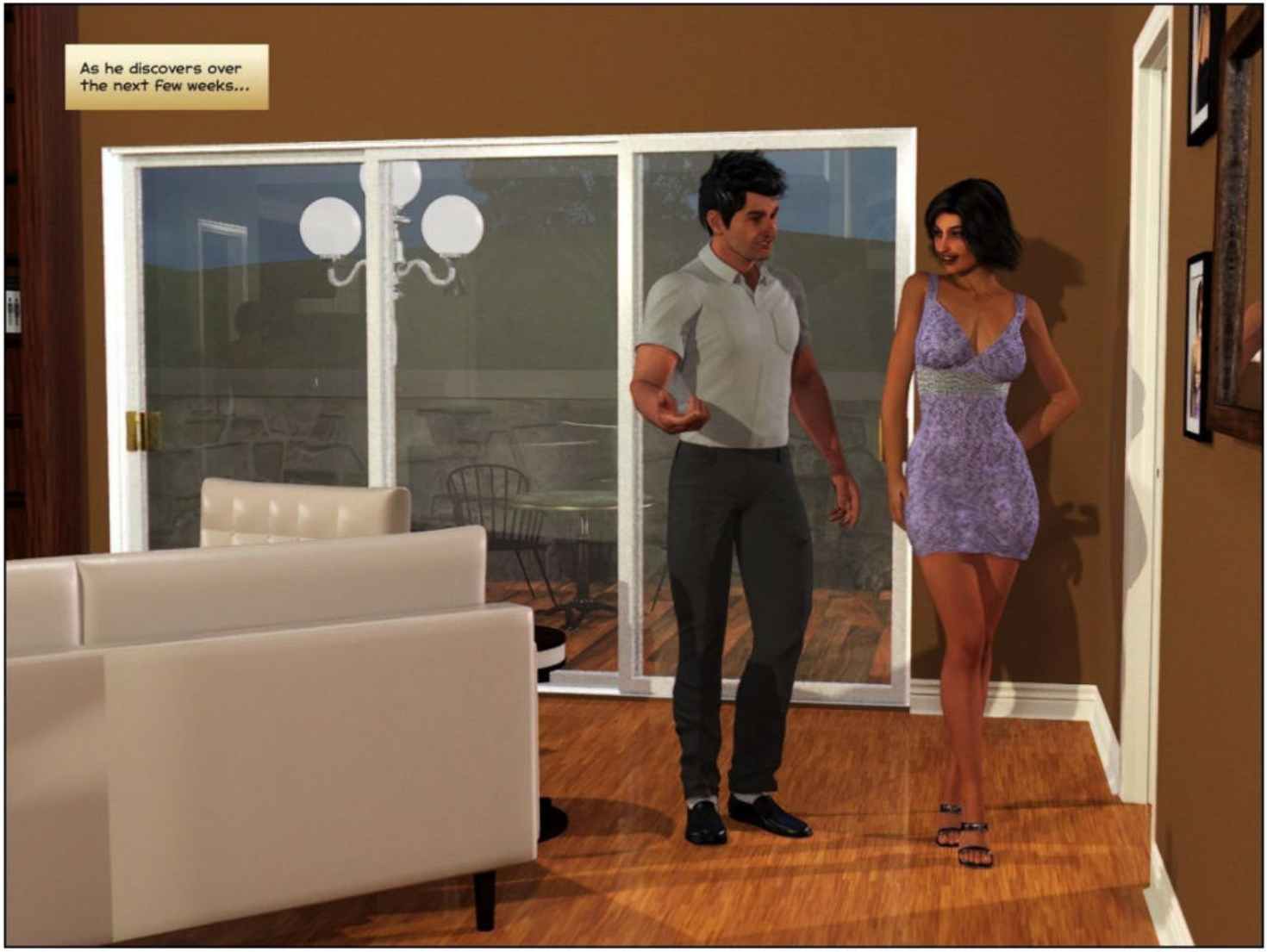

OH, DON'T BE SILLY, DAVID! YOU KNOW VERY WELL THIS WAS SO MUCH MORE THAN YOU JUST LOSING CONTROL!
YOU WANTED IT AS MUCH AS I DID! AND YOU'LL CONTINUE TO WANT IT... TO WANT ME... EVERY TIME YOU SEE ME! IT'S INEVITABLE!


EVEN IF YOU'RE RIGHT, I CAN'T LET IT CONTINUE! I COULD LOSE MY JOB... MY WHOLE CAREER!
I WOULDN'T ONLY BE HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH A STUDENT, BUT ALSO WITH MY GIRLFRIEND'S DAUGHTER! WHAT KIND OF PERSON WOULD THAT MAKE ME?
A MAN WHO HAS IT ALL, DAVID! HOW CAN YOU SAY NO TO THAT?


AND AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO STICK AROUND AND EVENTUALLY CAJOLE YOU INTO ANOTHER GO-AROUND, I HAVE A CLASS TO GET TO!


GOOD BYE, DEAN! AND THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL YOUR HELP! *GIGGLE!*


JESUS!! WHAT THE HELL HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?


As he discovers over the next few weeks...






The answer to the his question...




becomes painfully obvious...
28




28


Until, a few days later...


OKAY MOTHER, I'M OFF TO...
MOTHER? YOU LOOK UPSET! ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
I'M... FINE, DEAR! JUST A LONG, LONG DAY!


BREAKING
NEWS
I THOUGHT YOU AND DAVID HAD A DATE TONIGHT! DID HE HAVE TO CANCEL OR SOMETHING?
OH, I THINK "OR SOMETHING" COVERS THE SITUATION PRETTY DAMN WELL!
WHY? WHAT HAPPENED, MOTHER? IS HE OKAY?
TRUTHFULLY, HONEY, I DON'T REALLY GIVE A DAMN HOW HE IS!


MOTHER... WHAT'S GOING ON?
IT SEEMS THE DEAN HAS SUDDENLY DECIDED TO TAKE A NEW JOB IN OREGON!
OREGON? HE... HE'S MOVING TO OREGON? WHEN?
TOMORROW, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE THAT! HE SAID A FRIEND OF HIS CALLED AND OFFERED HIM THE POSITION ON THE SPOT! CLAIMS IT'S A "BETTER FIT" FOR WHAT HE WANTS OUT OF LIFE!
CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT CRAP? OREGON, OF ALL PLACES?!
OH, MOTHER, I'M SO SORRY!


OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, DEAR! I'LL BOUNCE BACK... I ALWAYS DO!
WELL, I WAS GOING TO GO OVER TO SOME FRIENDS AND STUDY, BUT I CAN STAY HOME IF YOU'D LIKE! WE CAN WATCH A COUPLE OF OLD MOVIES TOGETHER!
NONSENSE! A VIBRANT YOUNG WOMAN LIKE YOU NEEDS TO BE OUT WITH HER FRIENDS, NOT TENDING TO HER MOTHER! I'LL BE FINE!
ONLY IF YOU'RE SURE!
I AM!


ACTUALLY I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE NOT GOING OUT WITH CHAZ TONIGHT! NOTHING'S WRONG BETWEEN YOU TWO, I HOPE!
OH, WE'RE DOING WONDERFULLY, MOTHER! HE JUST HAS SOME SILLY FRATERNITY FUNCTION TONIGHT, SO I THOUGHT I'D USE THE TIME TO GET READY FOR FINALS!
*SIGH!* YOU ARE SUCH AN AMAZING YOUNG LADY! I DON'T KNOW WHAT I EVER DID TO DESERVE A DAUGHTER LIKE YOU!
JUST LUCKY, I GUESS! *GIGGLE!*


I WAS PLANNING ON BEING HOME RATHER LATE, THAT IS, UNLESS YOU'D RATHER I COME HOME EARLIER!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! ENJOY THE TIME WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING!
OKAY, MOTHER! I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU, TOO, DEAR!
BREAKING
JAILED NM SWIM TEAM MEMBER CRITICALLY ASSAULTED IN PF




*SIGH!* SO WHAT IF DAVID IS GONE! HIS LOSS, NOT MINE! I GOT WHAT I REALLY NEEDED OUT OF HIM, THE REST WAS JUST BETTER THAN AVERAGE SEX!
I WOULD'VE HAD TO DUMP HIM EVENTUALLY ANYWAY WHEN SOMETHING BETTER CAME ALONG!
AND IF ARIEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHAZ KEEPS GOING IN THE DIRECTION I WANT IT TO, SOMETHING MUCH, MUCH BETTER COULD BE ON THE HORIZON!


NOT ONLY IS CHAZ'S FATHER FILTHY RICH AND DIVORCED, HIS THREE UNCLES ARE EQUALLY AS RICH... AND TWO OF THEM ARE ALSO CURRENTLY UNMARRIED!
IF I CAN KEEP ARIEL ON THE RIGHT PATH, SHE MAY NOT BE THE ONLY ONE MARRYING INTO A RICH FAMILY! *GIGGLE!*


Later that evening, at Chaz' "Fraternity Function"...


HEY CHAZ, WHERE'S THAT **PRETTY LADY** O' YOURS? YOU AIN'T GOIN' **STAG** TONIGHT, ARE YOU?
OH, **HELL NO!** ARIEL GOT HERE A **WHILE** AGO BUT WENT **STRAIGHT** UPSTAIRS TO FIX HER MAKEUP, OR **SOMETHING** LIKE THAT!
A LADY AS PRETTY AS **THAT** DOESN'T **NEED** MUCH FIXIN', THAT'S FOR DAMN **SURE!** HEH-HEH!
**TELL** ME ABOUT IT, GRIZ! HEH-HEH!


OH, IS SHE COMING? DID SHE FINALLY DECIDE ON A LIP GLOSS COLOR? HEH-HEH!
UHH, DON'T THINK THAT'LL BE NECESSARY, DUDE! WHOA!
THEN AGAIN, SHE HAS BEEN UP THERE FOR AWHILE! MAYBE I SHOULD GO CHECK ON HER!


UMMM... THAT AND A FEW OTHER TOUCHUPS!
HOLY...
OH, YEAH!!


I'LL TAKE THAT AS A SIGN OF APPROVAL!
HIYA, GRIZ!
HEY THERE, PRETTY LADY! LOOKIN' GOOD!
THANKS! *GIGGLE!*
WOW! I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LOOK SO... SO...


SEXY? DESIRABLE?
UHHH... YEAH! WH... WHY THE CHANGE? I ALREADY THOUGHT YOU WERE DAMN SEXY!
WELL, I JUST FIGURED IF I'M GOING TO BE THE GIRLFRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS FRATERNITY ON CAMPUS, I NEED TO STAND OUT IN MY OWN SPECIAL WAY!
AND I DON'T THINK MY "GOOD-GIRL" SEXY VIBE WAS GETTING IT DONE! SO I OPTED FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE LESS... SUBTLE!


SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK? AM I PULLING IT OFF?
THEN I'D CALL THAT A DEFINITE "YES" VOTE FOR THE "NEW" ARIEL, RIGHT?
OH MY GOD! YOU ARE SO PULLING IT OFF... AND THEN SOME! I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYONE ON CAMPUS HOTTER AND SEXIER THAN YOU!
OH, HELL YES!


GOOD! THEN THAT MAKES IT A 2-0 LANDSLIDE WIN, WHICH GUARANTEES YOU A VERY SPECIAL CELEBRATION AFTER THE PARTY TONIGHT!
'FRAID SO, BABY! AS THE PRESIDENT, YOU NEED TO STAY AVAILABLE TO MAKE SURE THIS PARTY RUNS SMOOTHLY!
OOOHH! DO I REALLY HAVE TO WAIT THAT LONG?
HEY CHAZ! THE KEGS ARE RUNNING OUT!
SEE WHAT I MEAN?
*SIGH!* I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT!


SO WHAT'LL YOU DO WHILE I'M MAKING THINGS RUN SMOOTHLY?
OH, I'LL JUST BE THE IDEAL HOSTESS AND MAKE SURE EVERYONE'S HAVING A GOOD TIME!
GOD, YOU'RE PERFECT!
YES, WE ARE, AREN'T WE! *GIGGLE!* NOW SCOOT, YOU!


YOU KNOW, ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU NUMB-NUTS ARE GOING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET THINGS DONE AROUND HERE WITHOUT ME... I SWEAR TO GOD!






YEAH, HAVIN' AN OKAY TIME! PLENTY OF BEER AND LOTS OF PRETTY LADIES LIKE YOU TO LOOK AT!
SO, GRIZ... HAVING A GOOD TIME?
WELL, IF YOU EVER GET TIRED OF JUST LOOKING, BIG GUY, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME!


REALLY?! BUT... WHAT ABOUT CHAZ? HE'S MY BUDDY!
THIS MAY SOUND A LITTLE CONFUSING, BUT HE AND I LIKE TO SNEAK AROUND WITH OTHER PEOPLE WHEN WE THINK THE OTHER ISN'T LOOKING!
IT'S KIND OF A GAME WE PLAY... TO KEEP THINGS INTERESTING!
NO SHIT?
NO SHIT!


WELL, HELL THEN! WHAT SAY WE HEAD ON UP TO MY ROOM RIGHT NOW AND...
WHOA, BIG GUY! AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO, IT'S GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL LATER! SINCE I JUST GOT HERE, I NEED TO BE SOCIAL FOR AWHILE!
BUT REST ASSURED, YOU AND I WILL GET TOGETHER BEFORE THE NIGHT'S OVER!


SO CONSIDER THIS AS A LITTLE PREVIEW!






Over the next hour or so, as Chaz deals with the party, Ariel makes the rounds...


Making most of the guests
Feeling very welcome...


IF CHAZ ISN'T BACK PRETTY DAMN SOON, I MAY BE PAYING GRIZ A VISIT A LOT EARLIER THAN I'D PLANNED!
DID YOU HEAR WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT GUY IN PRISON UP IN NEW MEXICO?
I'M READING ALL ABOUT IT NOW! EWWW! THAT'S DISGUSTING!


OF COURSE, THERE'S NO REASON I CAN'T PAY GRIZ TWO VISITS THIS EVENING! *GIGGLE!*
AND HERE SHE COMES... THE NEW QUEEN OF THE FRAT HOUSE!
OH MY GOD! I THINK I DATED THIS GUY ONCE IN HIGH SCHOOL!
I THINK HIS DATING DAYS ARE OVER FOR GOOD NOW! *GIGGLE!*


WHY THERE YOU ARE, RUDY! WHEN I DIDN'T SEE YOU FOLLOWING CHAZ AROUND LIKE YOU USUALLY DO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE DECIDED TO SKIP THE PARTY!
I'VE BEEN HERE THE WHOLE TIME... KEEPING BUSY! BUT FOLLOWING YOU AROUND INSTEAD!
ME? SOUNDS A LITTLE CREEPY! DOES CHAZ KNOW YOU'RE STALKING HIS GIRLFRIEND?
OH, I THINK HE'LL APPRECIATE MY DILIGENCE... ESPECIALLY WHEN HE HEARS WHAT I HAVE TO TELL HIM ABOUT YOU!


AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE, PREY TELL?
THAT YOUR SAD LITTLE "GIRL-NEXT-DOOR" ACT WAS FAKED FROM THE GET-GO! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A CHEAP WHORE TRYING TO GET YOUR HOOKS INTO HIM FOR HIS MONEY!
WOW! THAT'S A MOUTHFUL! AND I SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT THIS WHY?
BECAUSE I HAVE PICTURES! PICTURES OF YOU TONIGHT... BEING THE COMPLETE SLUT YOU REALLY ARE WHEN CHAZ ISN'T AROUND!
TAUNTING... AND TEASING... AND RUBBING UP AGAINST ALL THE GUYS HERE TONIGHT! IT'S PATHETIC!


*SIGH!* OH, RUDY, RUDY, RUDY! YOU POOR MISGUIDED LITTLE MAN! DO I LOOK LIKE THE "GIRL-NEXT-DOOR" TO YOU?
WELL... NO, NOT NOW! BUT, YOU CHANGED YOUR CLOTHES AND...
AND CHAZ COULDN'T BE HAPPIER! THE "GIRL-NEXT-DOOR" WASN'T AN ACT... I JUST GOT RID OF HER BECAUSE I KNOW THIS IS WHAT CHAZ REALLY WANTS!


AND AS FOR MY "SLUTTY BEHAVIOR" TONIGHT, I PROMISED CHAZ I WAS GOING TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAD A GOOD TIME!
WHEN YOU'RE A GIRL WHO LOOKS LIKE ME, THAT'S HOW YOU DO IT! CHAZ IS AN ADULT AND UNDERSTANDS THAT! I'M NOT SURPRISED THAT A BOY LIKE YOU DOESN'T!


SO GO AHEAD AND SHOW HIM THOSE PICTURES AND TELL HIM YOU THINK HIS GIRLFRIEND IS A SLUT! I'M SURE HE'LL JUST WRITE IT OFF AS A SILLY MISUNDERSTANDING!
ESPECIALLY AFTER YOU EXPLAIN TO HIM WHY AND FOR HOW LONG YOU'VE BEEN STALKING ME!
YOU... YOU FUCKING BITCH!


YOU KNOW, I THINK YOU'VE JUST PUT YOUR FINGER RIGHT ON THE HEART OF THIS LITTLE MELODRAMA!
YOU'RE JEALOUS! JEALOUS OF ME BECAUSE YOU'RE NO LONGER CHAZ'S FAVORITE BITCH! I AM!


ENJOY THE PARTY, RUDY!


THAT BITCH! THAT BITCH! THAT FUCKING, FUCKING BITCH! I'LL SHOW HER!


NOW, IF I KNOW MY SNEAKY LITTLE TWERPS, THAT ONE IS SENDING A FULL REPORT TO MOTHER RIGHT ABOUT NOW!
HE FINALLY REALIZED THAT I CAN DO NO WRONG IN CHAZ'S EYES, SO INSTEAD HOPES TO GET BACK AT ME THROUGH MY DEAR, CARING MOTHER!
SURPRISE, DIPSHIT! THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED YOU TO DO!


BREAKING UP MOTHER AND DAVID WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING! NOW, WHILE SHE'S STILL REELING FROM THAT, SHE'LL SUDDENLY DISCOVER THAT HER PERFECT, DO-NO-WRONG DAUGHTER ISN'T WHO SHE THOUGHT SHE WAS!
THAT MEANS I CAN FINALLY STOP PRETENDING AND SPEND THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS DRIVING HER CRAZY AS THE DAUGHTER FROM HELL!


EVEN IF SHE DECIDES TO KICK ME OUT, I'VE GOT MORE THAN A FEW OPTIONS! ONE OF THEM BEING LEAVING TOWN ALTOGETHER!
I THINK I KNOW A CERTAIN SOMEONE IN OREGON I CAN PROBABLY CONVINCE TO TAKE ME IN! *GIGGLE!*
THERE YOU ARE!


AND NOW IT'S TIME GIVE THE LITTLE WEASEL WHAT HE DESERVES!
I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU, BABE! I...


HEY! YOU LOOK UPSET! WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S NOTHING... REALLY! AT LEAST NOTHING I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT TONIGHT... DURING A PARTY...
ARIEL! IF SOMETHING'S BOTHERING YOU, I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT!
I KNOW, AND I LOVE THAT ABOUT YOU, BUT... THIS JUST ISN'T THE RIGHT TIME!
PLEASE... JUST TELL ME!
*SIGH!* IF YOU INSIST!


EVER SINCE WE'VE BEEN DATING, MY MOTHER HAS ALWAYS SEEMED TO KNOW A LOT ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP! AND UNTIL RECENTLY, I JUST CHALKED THAT UP TO HER INSIGHTFULNESS AND INTUITION!
A FEW DAYS AGO, I ANSWERED HER PHONE FOR HER AND THE CALLER IMMEDIATELY HUNG UP ON ME! WHEN I CHECKED THE CALLER ID, I SAW IT WAS RUDY!
THAT'S WHAT I WONDERED... UNTIL I LOOKED THROUGH HER CALL HISTORY!
UNTIL RECENTLY? WHAT CHANGED?
RUDY? WHY THE HELL WOULD HE BE CALLING YOUR MOTHER?
AND... ?


I HATE TO SAY THIS, BUT... I THINK MY MOTHER HAS HIM SPYING ON ME!
I... I DON'T KNOW! SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN VERY PROTECTIVE OF ME! MAYBE IT'S HER TWISTED WAY OF MAKING SURE YOU'RE TREATING ME RIGHT, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT!
I KNOW, BUT... IT WOULD EXPLAIN HOW SHE KNOWS SO MUCH ABOUT US!
BUT WHY WOULD YOUR MOTHER ASK HIM TO DO THAT?
THAT... THAT'S CRAZY!

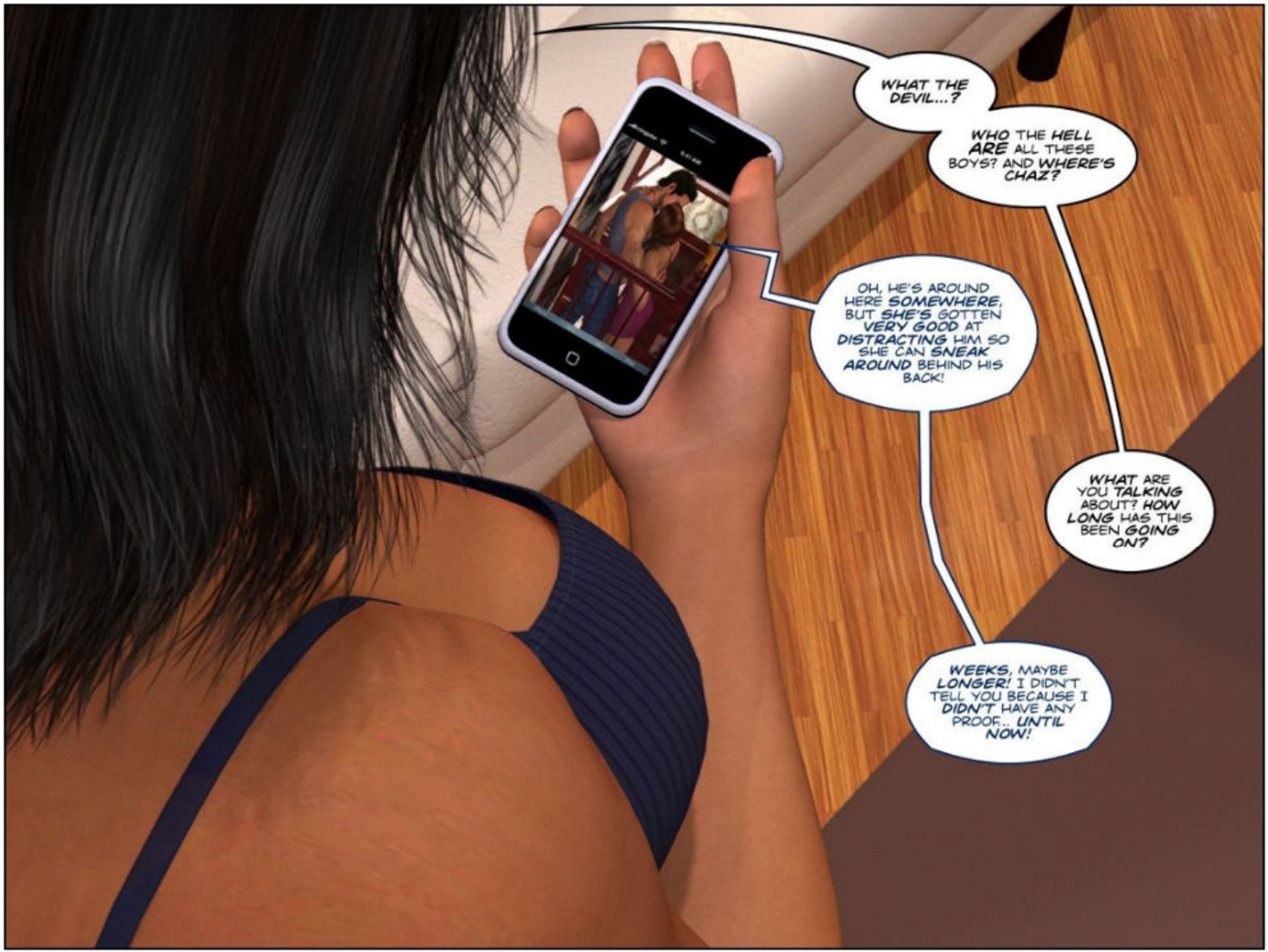

AND LIKE I SAID... IT WASN'T JUST THE ONE CALL! THEY'VE CALLED EACH OTHER DOZENS AND DOZENS OF TIMES... EVER SINCE WE STARTED DATING!
WHAT THE... WHY?!!
I WASN'T SURE UNTIL TONIGHT! WHILE YOU WERE BUSY WITH THE PARTY, I NOTICED HIM TAKING MY PICTURE EVERY TIME I TALKED TO SOMEONE!
IT... IT KIND OF FREAKED ME OUT, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH!
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON WITH THAT GUY?


IN FACT, IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO ME UNTIL NOW, THAT THE VERY DAY AFTER WE FIRST MADE LOVE, SHE ASKED ME IF WE WERE BEING "CAREFUL!"!
NOW MAYBE THAT WAS A COINCIDENCE, BUT...
THAT LITTLE SHIT! HE TOLD YOUR MOTHER ABOUT THAT? THAT'S SICK!


WAIT 'TIL I GET MY HANDS ON HIM!
OH, NO, HONEY! PLEASE DON'T DO ANYTHING RASH! *GIGGLE!*


THAT'LL PROBABLY KEEP HIM BUSY FOR A WHILE! LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO HAVE A QUICK VISIT WITH THE GRIZ! *GIGGLE!*
Knock!
Knock!


And, at that very moment...
WHAT IS IT, RUDY? ARIEL ISN'T EVEN WITH CHAZ TONIGHT... SHE'S STUDYING WITH FRIENDS! SO WHY ARE YOU CALLING?
STUDYING, HUH? WELL, TAKE A LOOK AT THESE AND THEN TELL ME WHAT KIND OF STUDYING YOU THINK YOUR PERFECT DAUGHTER IS DOING TONIGHT?
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?


WHAT THE DEVIL...?
WHO THE HELL ARE ALL THESE BOYS? AND WHERE'S CHAZ?
OH, HE'S AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE, BUT SHE'S GOTTEN VERY GOOD AT DISTRACTING HIM SO SHE CAN SNEAK AROUND BEHIND HIS BACK!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON?
WEEKS, MAYBE LONGER! I DIDN'T TELL YOU BECAUSE I DIDN'T HAVE ANY PROOF... UNTIL NOW!


I'M UPLOADING EVERYTHING I'VE GOT TO YOUR PHONE RIGHT NOW! IT'S NOT JUST FROM TONIGHT, I'VE SEEN HER CARRYING ON LIKE THIS AT CLUBS, ON CAMPUS, COMING OUT OF THE DEAN'S OFFICE...
DEAN MARTIN! I'M SURE THEY WERE FOOLING AROUND BEFORE HE QUIT!
CONSIDERING WHAT YOU'RE ACCUSING MY DAUGHTER OF, IT BETTER BE IRONCLAD PROOF, MY LITTLE FRIEND!
WAIT! THE DEAN'S OFFICE? WHICH DEAN ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?


I DON'T BELIEVE IT! YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY MISTAKEN! I...
*GASP!*
LOOK, I DON'T CARE WHAT SHE DOES WITH THESE OTHER GUYS, AS LONG AS SHE STAYS AWAY FROM CHAZ!
I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR THIS, BUT SHE'S NOWHERE GOOD ENOUGH FOR HIM!


HE DESERVES SOMEONE WHO'LL BE LOYAL TO HIM... SOMEONE WHO TRULY LOVES HIM! SOMEONE LIKE... LIKE...
YOU... YOU MEAN... YOU'RE NOT FURIOUS AT ME FOR TELLING YOU ALL THIS?
YES... I KNOW WHO YOU THINK HE DESERVES, RUDY. BUT THAT'S A SUBJECT FOR A LATER DATE.
YOU'VE SHOWN ME THE TRUTH. HOW COULD I BE ANGRY AT YOU FOR THAT?


I... I WAS AFRAID YOU'D HATE ME! THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T TELL YOU SOONER!
SINCE THE DEAN LEFT, YOU AND CHAZ ARE THE ONLY THING CLOSE TO A FAMILY I'VE GOT!
I KNOW, DEAR! AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO ABANDON YOU, NOT WHEN YOU'RE HURTING SO MUCH!
SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO HOME AND GET SOME REST! WE'LL TALK ABOUT EVERYTHING SOON... I PROMISE!


O... OKAY! THANK YOU SO MUCH, DR. BRANSON!
HEY, RUDY!!


HMPH! I WAS THIS CLOSE TO LETTING THE LITTLE SNITCH DROWN IN HIS OWN PATHETIC TEARS! BUT A NEEDY PERSON LIKE HIM, WITH SUCH LOW SELF-ESTEEM, COULD BE USEFUL TO ME DOWN THE ROAD!
BUT FIRST, I HAVE TO DEAL WITH THAT DUPLICITOUS DAUGHTER OF MINE!
Laugh a lot
CHILL BURST
Cosmo world


HER ABHORRENT BEHAVIOR IS OBVIOUSLY DUE TO SOME KIND OF LEFTOVER INFLUENCE FROM THAT CHLOE PERSON! I THOUGHT I'D KNOCKED ALL THAT OUT OF HER!
WELL, A FEW SERIOUS TWEAKS TO HER "THERAPY" SHOULD SET THAT TAKEN CARE OF ONCE AND FOR ALL... I HOPE!


UGH! I AM SORELY, SORELY TEMPTED TO JUST WIPE HER CLEAN AND START ALL OVER FROM SCRATCH... MAKING HER MUCH MORE AGREEABLE TO MY WAY OF DOING THINGS! BUT WE'VE MADE SO MUCH PROGRESS AND PUT IN SO MUCH HARD WORK, IT'D BE A SHAME TO LET ALL THAT GO!
I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE SURE I MONITOR HER MORE CLOSELY FROM HERE ON OUT!


HEY THERE, PRETTY LADY!
HEY THERE YOURSELF, GRIZ! GOT A FEW MINUTES TO SPARE?
ANYTIME FOR YOU, GORGEOUS!


SO, UMM, WHERE'S CHAZ AT?
GUESS NOT! HEH-HEH!
OH, HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO GET MORE BOOZE FOR THE PARTY! BUT HE'S MORE THAN LIKELY BANGING THIS BLONDE CHEERLEADER IN ONE OF THE BACK ROOMS!
HE'S NOT QUITE AS SNEAKY AS HE THINKS HE IS! *GIGGLE!*


OKAY, TELL ME IF I'M SEEING THINGS, BUT ARE YOU ACTUALLY UP HERE WATCHING THE NEWS INSTEAD OF OUT THERE PARTYING?
I KNOW IT'S WEIRD, BUT THEY'RE TALKING 'BOUT THIS GUY IN PRISON WHO GOT HIS JUNK CUT OFF IN A FIGHT, AND...
LLOYD WAS ARRESTED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO AS PART OF A DRUG STING AT PHOENIX STATE UNIVERSITY AND WAS BEING HELD AT THE STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY WHEN HE WAS ATTACKED...


YOU KNOW, HEARING THINGS LIKE THAT JUST TURN ME OFF! WHAT SAY YOU CRANK UP SOME OF THOSE TUNES OF YOURS SO WE CAN GET BUSY, HMMM?
ANYTHING YOU SAY, HOT-STUFF!
6'0"
5'8"
5'4"
NEW MEXICO SWIM TEAM
ALTHOUGH SEVERE AND GRISLY IN NATURE, LLOYD'S INJURIES ARE NOT EXPECTED TO BE LIFE-THREATENING.


HOW'S THAT?
OOOOOO... MUCH BETTER!


NOW, WHY DON'T YOU BRING THAT LONG, HARD MONSTER OF YOURS OVER HERE SO I CAN GIVE IT SOME SPECIAL ATTENTION!
YES MA'AM!


GOD, THIS BOD OF YOURS IS AWESOME!
JUST WAIT TILL YOU SEE WHAT I CAN DO WITH IT, BABY! HOLD ON FOR A WILD RIDE!


OHHH, YES! I KNEW THAT ROD OF YOURS WOULD BE SOMETHING SPECIAL!
OH, YEAH! RIDE IT, BABY!

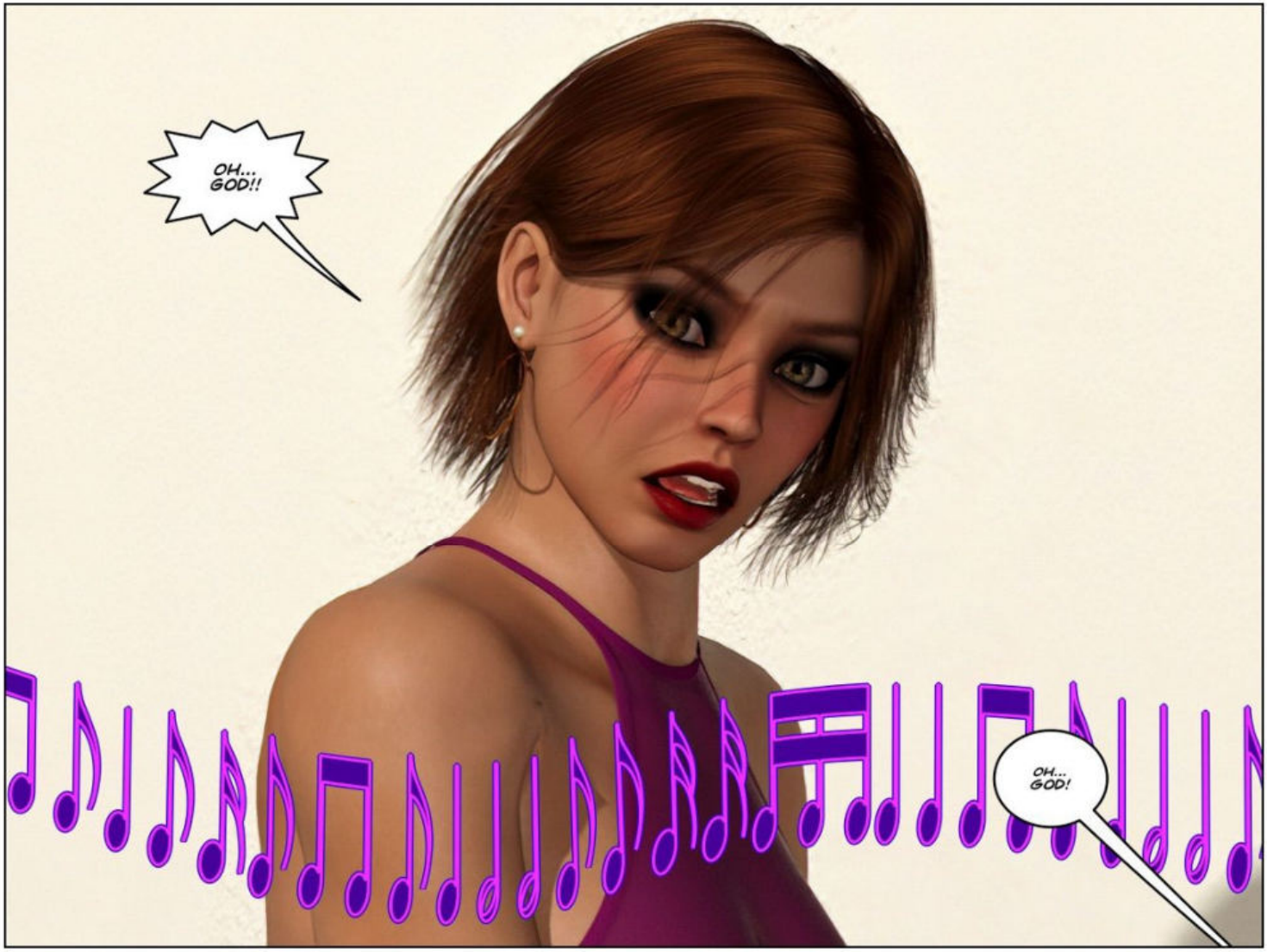

FUCKIN' A! YOU DO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOIN', DON'T YA!
MMMMM! DAMN RIGHT, I DO!


AND I'M NOWHERE NEAR DONE WITH YOU YET, STUD! JUST WAIT 'TIL I...


LIVE
LENNY DOUGHERTY
ASSAILANT IN PRISON ATTACK IDENTIFIED
... I...


OH MY..


LIVE
LENNY DOUGHERTY
ASSAILANT IN PRISON ATTACK IDENTIFIED


OH... GOD!!
OH... GOD!


C'MON, BOY! LEMME SHOW YOU WHAT DR. LENNY'S BEST AT! HEH-HEH-HEH!!
PLEASE... I... I...


NOOO!!!
YES!!


OH, GOD...! I... I HAVE TO... I... I REMEMBER...
I REMEMBER THE LAST TIME, TOO, GORGEOUS! IT WAS THE BEST!


BUT I'M ALWAYS LOOKIN' TO TRY AND BREAK RECORDS! HEH-HEH!
"GASP!" BUT...


OHH...
OOHHH...
GOD!!


OOOHHHH....
YESSS!!!


After another round... or two...
DAMN, GORGEOUS! I THINK WE RATTLED A FEW WINDOWS IN HERE TONIGHT! HEH-HEH!
I... I THINK YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT, GRIZ!


BUT REMEMBER, IT'S OUR LITTLE SECRET!
ANYTHING YOU SAY, PRETTY LADY!


THAT FACE... THAT FACE ON THE TV! I REMEMBER HIM! I REMEMBER EVERYTHING!


THE HORRIBLE THINGS HE DID TO ME IN THAT ATTACK! ALL THE SURGERIES! ALL THE LIES!
THE CAR ACCIDENT... THAT KILLED THE REAL ARIEL, NOT HER POOR BROTHER ALEX!
AND I ALSO REMEMBER FINDING OUT HOW MOTHER HAS BEEN MANIPULATING AND ESSENTIALLY BRAINWASHING ME THIS WHOLE TIME!

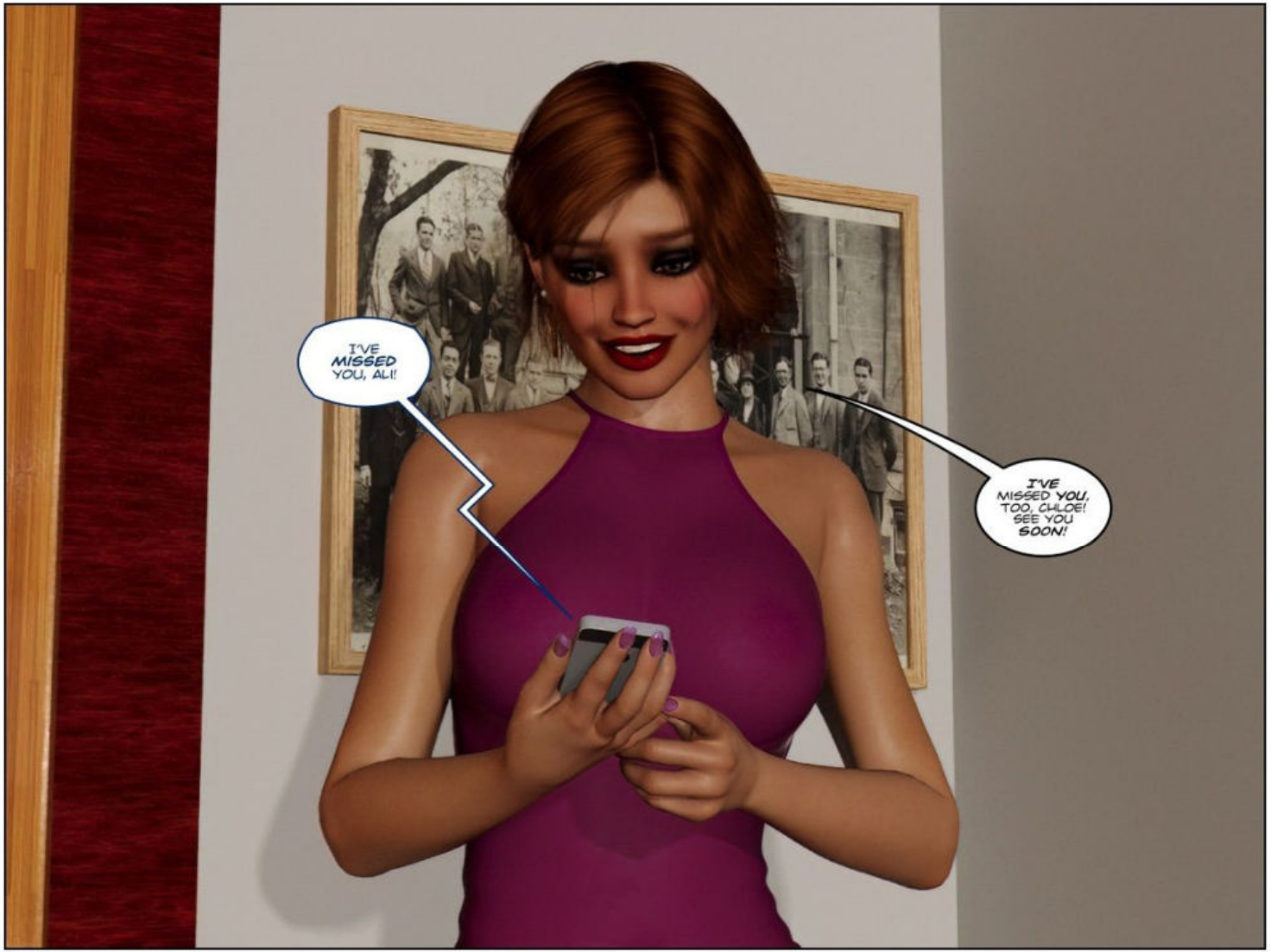

BUT... IF THAT'S TRUE, AND I REMEMBER ALL THIS, AND KNOW THAT I'M NOT THE REAL ARIEL, THEN WHY DIDN'T I LEAVE GRIZ'S ROOM AS SOON AS IT ALL CAME BACK TO ME?
I DIDN'T JUST LET HIM HAVE ME THAT SECOND, AND THIRD TIME, I WAS A WILLING, NO... EAGER PARTICIPANT ALL THE WAY TO THE END!
JUST... WHO AM I NOW?


THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WHO CAN HELP ME FIGURE THIS ALL OUT!
I JUST HOPE I HAVEN'T PERMANENTLY BURNED THAT BRIDGE!


After retrieving the phone from her bag..
PLEASE PICK UP.. PLEASE PICK UP..


HELLO?
CHLOE? IT... IT'S ME! IT'S ALI!
ALI?! IS... IS THAT REALLY YOU?
YEAH... IT'S REALLY ME! AND I NEED TO SEE YOU!


OH MY GOD, YES! OF COURSE! WHERE ARE YOU?
I'M AT CHAZ'S FRATERNITY HOUSE ON CAMPUS! BUT I HAVE A CAR AND CAN BE AT YOUR PLACE IN ABOUT 45 MINUTES!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE! I'M ALREADY IN MY CAR AND CAN BE THERE IN LESS THAN THIRTY!
O... OKAY! I'LL WAIT FOR YOU OUT FRONT!


I'VE MISSED YOU, ALI!
I'VE MISSED YOU, TOO, CHLOE! SEE YOU SOON!


THANK GOD FOR CHLOE! SHE'LL HELP ME STRAIGHTEN THIS ALL OUT!
NOW I JUST NEED TO GATHER MY THINGS AND SLIP OUT OF HERE BEFORE CHAZ COMES BACK!
WHOA, BABY! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING ALL EVENING?


HUH?
HOW COULD A GORGEOUS THING LIKE YOU ESCAPE MY SIGHTS FOR SO LONG?


WELL MAYBE YOU JUST HAVEN'T BEEN LOOKING IN THE RIGHT PLACES, STUD!
THEN HOW ABOUT WE MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME AND HEAD BACK TO MY ROOM FOR A LITTLE ONE-ON-ONE TIME, HMMM?


MMM... YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW TEMPTED I AM BY THAT OFFER, HANDSOME, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, MY DANCE CARD IS ALREADY FULL!
BUT I WILL DEFINITELY TAKE YOU UP ON THAT SOME OTHER TIME! OKAY?
LATER IS BETTER THAN NEVER, GORGEOUS! 'TIL THEN!


OH SHIT! THAT... THAT WASN'T AN ACT! IF I WASN'T MEETING CHLOE IN A FEW MINUTES, I KNOW I'D DEFINITELY BE IN SOME BACK ROOM, WRAPPED AROUND THAT GUY'S COCK!
IS THAT WHO I REALLY AM NOW? HAS BEING ARIEL FOR SO LONG PERMANENTLY CHANGED ME?


IF I REACTED THAT WAY TO A PERFECT STRANGER, WHO KNOWS WHAT I MIGHT DO IF CHAZ FINDS ME... OR, GOD FORBID, GRIZ!
JESUS! JUST THINKING ABOUT HIM RIGHT NOW IS MAKING ME WET! I'VE GOT TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE... NOW!


A few minutes later, as Ali gets to her car...


I CAN'T JUST WAIT HERE FOR CHLOE ONE SECOND LONGER! THE RISK OF ONE OF THE GUYS FINDING ME IS TOO GREAT!
I'LL JUST HAVE TO MEET UP WITH HER SOMEWHERE ELSE!


ONCE I GET FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM HERE, I'LL GIVE HER A CALL, AND...
WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?!

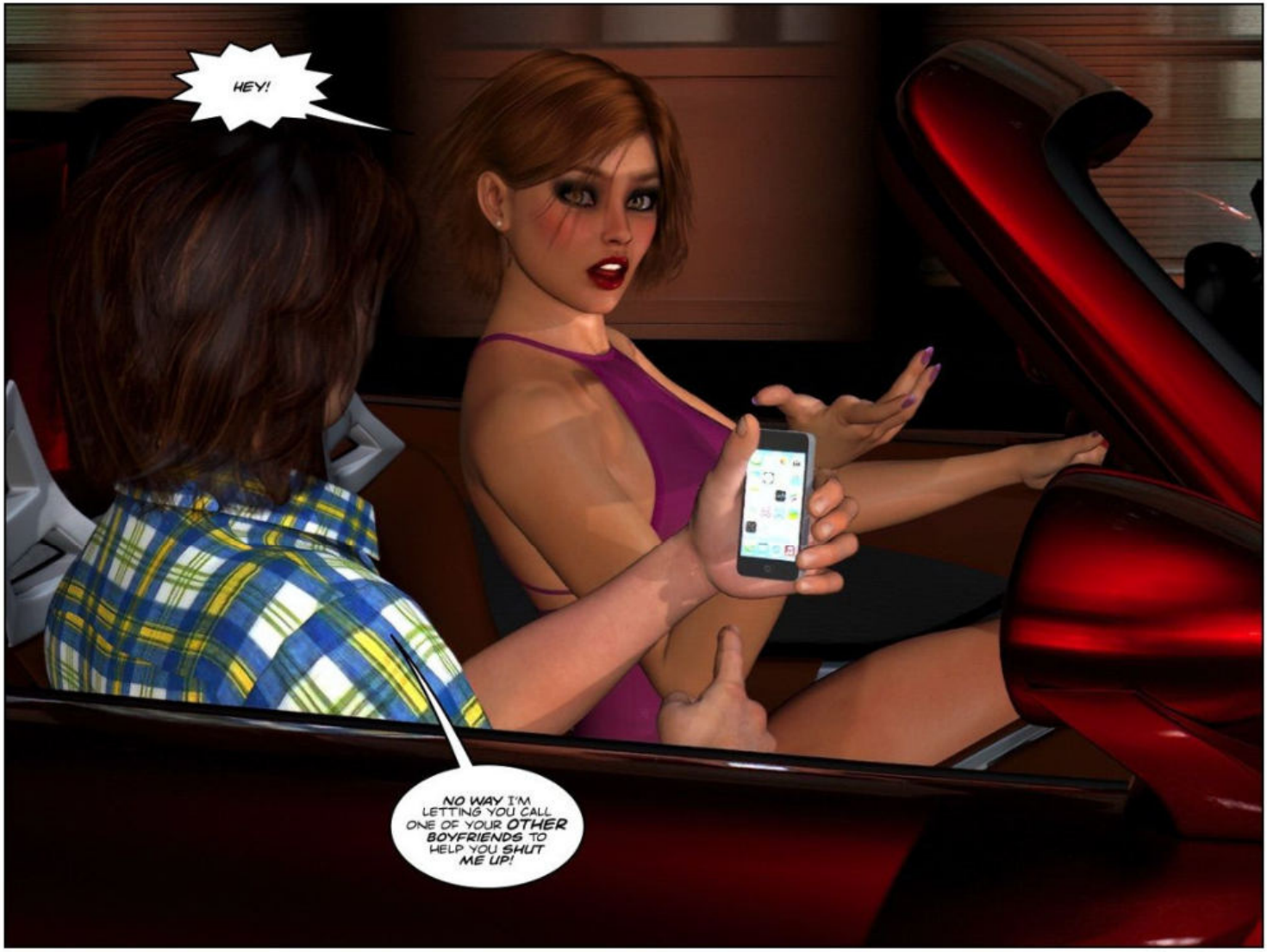

RUDY?! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? GET OUT OF MY CAR!
Slam!!
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE 'TIL I'VE TOLD YOU OFF, YOU BITCH!


OH, SHIT! I FORGOT ABOUT RUDY! I UNDERSTAND WHY HE'S SO PISSED AT ME, BUT THE LITTLE ASSHOLE BROUGHT IT ON HIMSELF!
FINE! TELL ME WHATEVER YOU WANT! BUT I'M NOT STAYING HERE!
STOP
DOESN'T SURPRISE ME! A DECEITFUL WHORE LIKE YOU DECIDING TO BOLT WHEN SHE'S FOUND OUT! TYPICAL!
Vroom!


LOOK, RUDY, I DON'T REALLY CARE WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT ME! AND IF YOU WANT TO BE PISSED AT ME, THAT'S FINE!
BUT WHAT I TOLD CHAZ WAS THE TRUTH! YOU'VE BEEN SPYING ON ME FOR MY MOTHER! DENY IT, I DARE YOU!
WHY WOULD I DENY IT? OF COURSE IT'S THE TRUTH! I KNOW WHAT KIND OF WOMAN YOU REALLY ARE AND I WANTED TO MAKE SURE CHAZ FOUND OUT BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE!


AND I WAS GOING TO TELL HIM THE TRUTH TONIGHT! BUT YOU BEAT ME TO IT AND POISONED HIM AGAINST ME!
HE SAID HE'LL NEVER FORGIVE ME! YOU'VE RUINED MY FUCKING LIFE!


JESUS! HE'S LOSING IT! I REALLY NEED CHLOE HERE TO HELP ME TALK HIM DOWN!
LOOK, RUDY, YOU NEED TO JUST CALM DOWN FOR A MINUTE SO I CAN MAKE A PHONE CALL! IT'LL JUST TAKE A MINUTE AND THEN WE CAN...


HEY!
NO WAY I'M LETTING YOU CALL ONE OF YOUR OTHER BOYFRIENDS TO HELP YOU SHUT ME UP!


MY PHONE?! ARE YOU FUCKING INSANE?! I NEED THAT BACK!!
Screech!!


Crash!!!


Several hours later...
WHO THE DEVIL COULD IT BE AT THIS HOUR?
I'M COMING!
Knock, knock!!


YES? CAN I HELP YOU?
ARE YOU MRS. MONA BRANSON?
IT'S DOCTOR BRANSON! WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?


Crash!!

# ARIEL 2.0

by CBlack



TGCOMICS.COM
TG
GENDER-MIX COMIX

08


Almost two years later...
YOU'D BETTER HURRY UP, DEAR, OR YOU'LL BE LATE!


THAT FIANCÉ OF YOURS WILL BE HERE ANY MINUTE! YOU DON'T WANT TO KEEP HIM WAITING, DO YOU?
CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT DIDN'T YOU TEACH ME THAT KEEPING A MAN WAITING IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO KEEP HIM INTERESTED?
TRUE! BUT NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT HIM CORRALLED, YOU DON'T NEED TO PLAY THAT GAME!


BESIDES, I'VE TAUGHT YOU MANY OTHER WAYS TO KEEP HIM INTERESTED THAT ARE MUCH MORE ENJOYABLE... FOR BOTH OF YOU!
TRUE! WHEN A MAN GETS BORED, HIS EYE TENDS TO WANDER!
BUT I LIKE PLAYING GAMES, MOTHER! AND DIDN'T YOU ALSO TEACH ME THAT YOU MUSTN'T EVER TAKE YOUR MAN FOR GRANTED?
OH, THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM WITH CHAZ... AND I DON'T THINK IT EVER WILL BE! I THINK IT'S SAFE TO SAY HE'S ADDICTED TO LITTLE OL' ME! *GIGGLE!*


WELL, I IMAGINE YOU'LL EASILY HOLD CHAZ' ATTENTION WEARING A SKIMPY DRESS LIKE THAT, DEAR!
AREN'T YOU GOING TO CHASTIZE ME FOR WEARING SOMETHING SO RISQUÉ, MOTHER? AREN'T YOU GOING TO SAY I LOOK LIKE A TRAMP?
ON THE CONTRARY! YOU HAVE A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT YOUR MAN LIKES THAN I DO!
OH, I THINK WE BOTH KNOW WHY I HAVE A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT MEN, ESPECIALLY CHAZ, LIKE IN A WOMAN! *GIGGLE!*


I'M GLAD WE AGREED THAT IT'S BETTER I REMEMBERED MY PAST, MOTHER! IT MAKES ME APPRECIATE SO MUCH MORE WHO I'VE BECOME!
ALL THE ANGST AND CONFUSION I SUFFERED THROUGH BEFORE IS GONE! AND WITH YOUR HELP I'VE BECOME STRONGER AND MORE CONFIDENT THAN I EVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE!
IT'S AN EXHILARATING NEW LIFE, ESPECIALLY SINCE I'LL BE SHARING IT WITH THE MAN OF MY DREAMS!


I'M JUST GLAD I COULD FINALLY HELP MAKE UP FOR ALL THOSE YEARS OF ABUSE AND LONELINESS!
OH, YOU HAVE, MOTHER... IN SPADES!


THAT MUST BE HIM NOW!
Knock, knock!


HEY THERE, GORGEOUS! WOW! YOU LOOK AMAZING!
YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW ME OFF TO ALL YOUR LAW SCHOOL BUDDIES! HOW ELSE DO YOU EXPECT ME TO LOOK? *GIGGLE!*
IT'S FUNNY HOW THINGS WORKED OUT! JUST WHEN I THOUGHT ALL WAS LOST...


*SIGH!* THANK GOODNESS WE LIVE IN A TIME WHERE MODERN MEDICINE CAN TURN EVEN THE DARKEST OF TRAGEDIES INTO AN OPPORTUNITY!
I OVERPLAYED MY HAND AND MADE A MESS OF THINGS THE FIRST TIME AROUND, BUT LIKE ANY GOOD SCIENTIST, I LEARNED FROM MY MISTAKES!


GOOD EVENING, DR. BRANSON! HOW ARE YOU?
I'M JUST FINE, CHAZ! AND ALTHOUGH I WON'T INSIST YOU CALL ME "MOM", AT LEAST NOT YET, CAN'T YOU AT LEAST CALL ME "MONA"? THE WEDDING'S ONLY A FEW MONTHS AWAY, SO WE'RE PRACTICALLY FAMILY!
YOU GOT IT... MONA!


OH, CHAZ, CAN'T WE PLEASE TELL MOTHER WHAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT? I'M SURE THAT, UNLIKE YOUR PARENTS, SHE'LL BE OKAY WITH IT!
OH, JEEZ... NOW WE KIND OF HAVE TO, DON'T WE?
OH DEAR! YOU TWO HAVEN'T CHANGED YOU MINDS ABOUT GETTING MARRIED, HAVE YOU?


JUST THE OPPOSITE! CHAZ AND I HAVE DECIDED TO ELOPE! WE'RE GOING TO SNEAK DOWN TO MEXICO THIS WEEKEND AND GET MARRIED!
I'M SURE YOU CAN APPRECIATE THAT YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT LIFE'S GOING TO THROW AT YOU, SO... WHY WAIT?
IT SOUNDS LIKE A SPLENDID IDEA! BIG WEDDINGS CAN BE SO STUFFY! AS LONG AS YOU TWO ARE SURE WHAT YOU'RE DOING, THAT IS!
DR. BRANSON... MONA, I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE SURE OF ANYTHING IN MY LIFE! I'M HEAD OVER HEELS IN LOVE WITH YOUR DAUGHTER!


AND I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GOING TO BE MRS. CHARLES BECKHAM! FINALLY.. IT'S LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE!
"SIGH!" AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, I DIDN'T KNOW IF HAPPINESS WOULD BE POSSIBLE... FOR ANY OF US!
BUT FROM THE FIRST TIME I SAW YOU TWO TOGETHER, WELL... I GUESS SOME THINGS WERE JUST MEANT TO BE!


I KNEW YOU'D BE HAPPY FOR ME, MOTHER! SOMEHOW, I JUST KNEW YOU'D UNDERSTAND!
OF COURSE, DARLING! YOUR HAPPINESS IS THE ONLY THING THAT TRULY MATTERS TO ME!


I DIDN'T THINK SHE'D BE OKAY WITH IT, BUT YOU WERE SO RIGHT! WE'LL HEAD DOWN TO MEXICO ON SATURDAY, JUST LIKE WE PLANNED!
I BOOKED US THE HONEYMOON SUITE AT THE RESORT WE WERE LOOKING AT! WE'LL HAVE A ROMANTIC VIEW OF THE OCEAN!
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME... AS LONG AS YOU PACK THAT RED BIKINI OF YOURS!
WELL, I MAY ONLY NEED THE BOTTOM HALF! I READ THAT SOME OF THE BEACHES DOWN THERE ARE TOPLESS! *GIGGLE!*


LIKE I ALWAYS SAY, IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...


That fateful night, almost two years ago...
I'M DR. MONA BRANSON! WHERE THE HELL IS MY DAUGHTER?!


DR. BRANSON, I'M DR. GRANT, THE EMERGENCY ROOM RESIDENT TONIGHT!
WHAT HAPPENED TO MY DAUGHTER? WHERE IS SHE?
THIS IS WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR...


YOUR DAUGHTER'S CAR WAS IN AN ACCIDENT DOWNTOWN ON I-10... IT WENT OVER THE GUARD RAIL AND CRASHED ONTO THE STREET BELOW!
ONE BADLY BURNED BODY WAS RECOVERED FROM THE WRECKAGE, PRESUMABLY THAT OF YOUR DAUGHTER! THE BODY IS UNRECOGNIZABLE AND THERE WAS NO ID!
PRESUMABLY?! I WON'T ACCEPT THAT, DOCTOR! WAS ANYONE ELSE BROUGHT IN?
WELL, THERE WERE TWO OTHER INDIVIDUALS BROUGHT IN WHO WERE ALSO INJURED... A MAN AND A WOMAN! BUT I THINK IT'S UNLIKELY THAT...

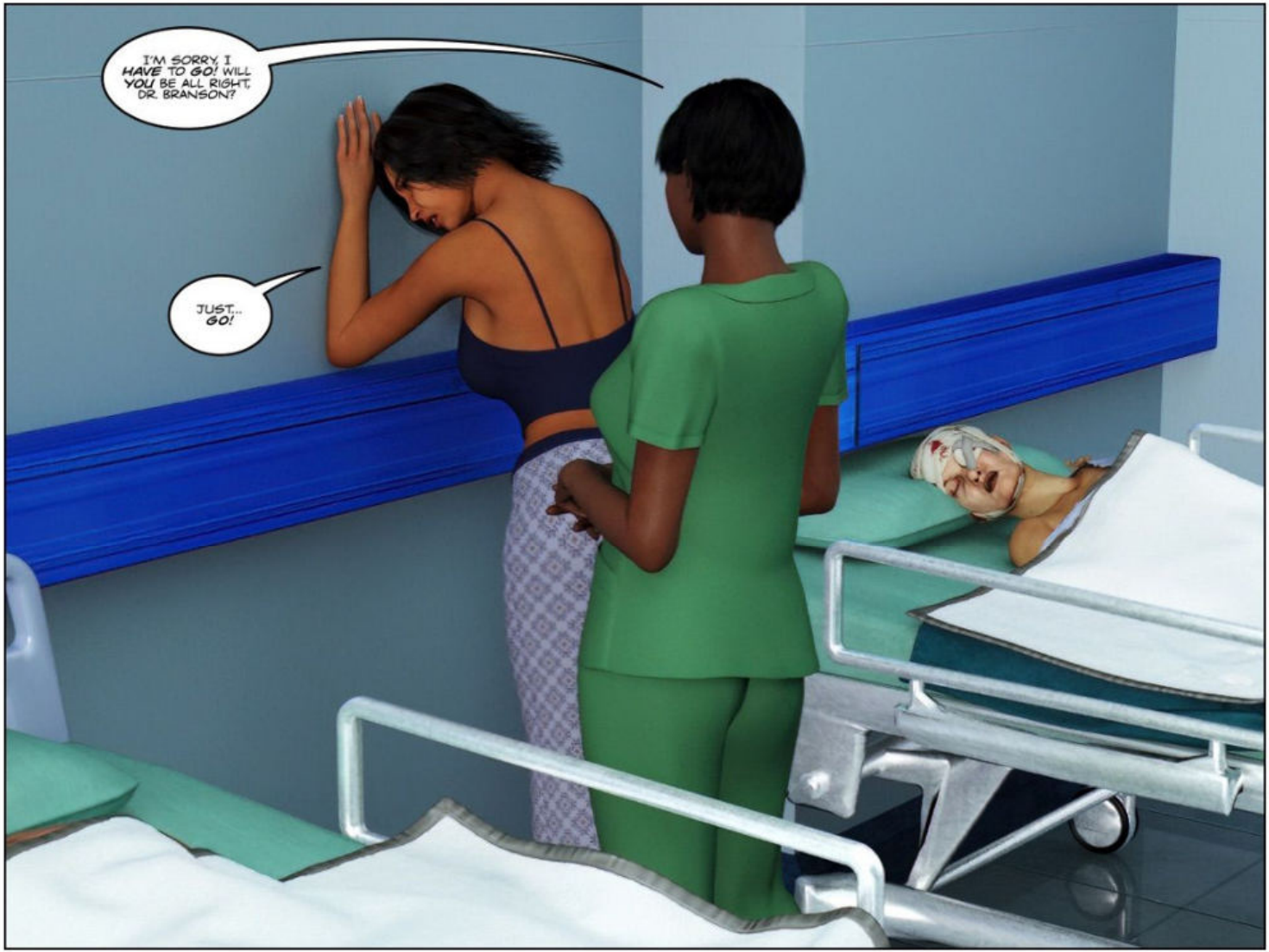

WHERE ARE THEY?! I HAVE TO FIND MY BABY!
THEY'RE BOTH STILL UNCONSCIOUS IN THIS ROOM AND NEITHER HAS ANY ID! WE DON'T KNOW IF THEY WERE PASSENGERS IN THE CAR OR BYSTANDERS, BUT, LIKE I SAID, I REALLY DON'T THINK...
SHOW ME! SHOW ME NOW!
BREAK GLASS
PRESS HERE
FIRE


I SHOULD WARN YOU, DR. BRANSON, THAT THESE TWO ALSO GOT PRETTY BADLY INJURED IN THE WRECK! SO BE PREPARED...
I'M A DOCTOR, TOO! I'VE SEEN MORE THAN MY SHARE OF INJURIES, DR! NOW LET ME IN THERE!


ARIEL?
ARIEL,
HONEY?

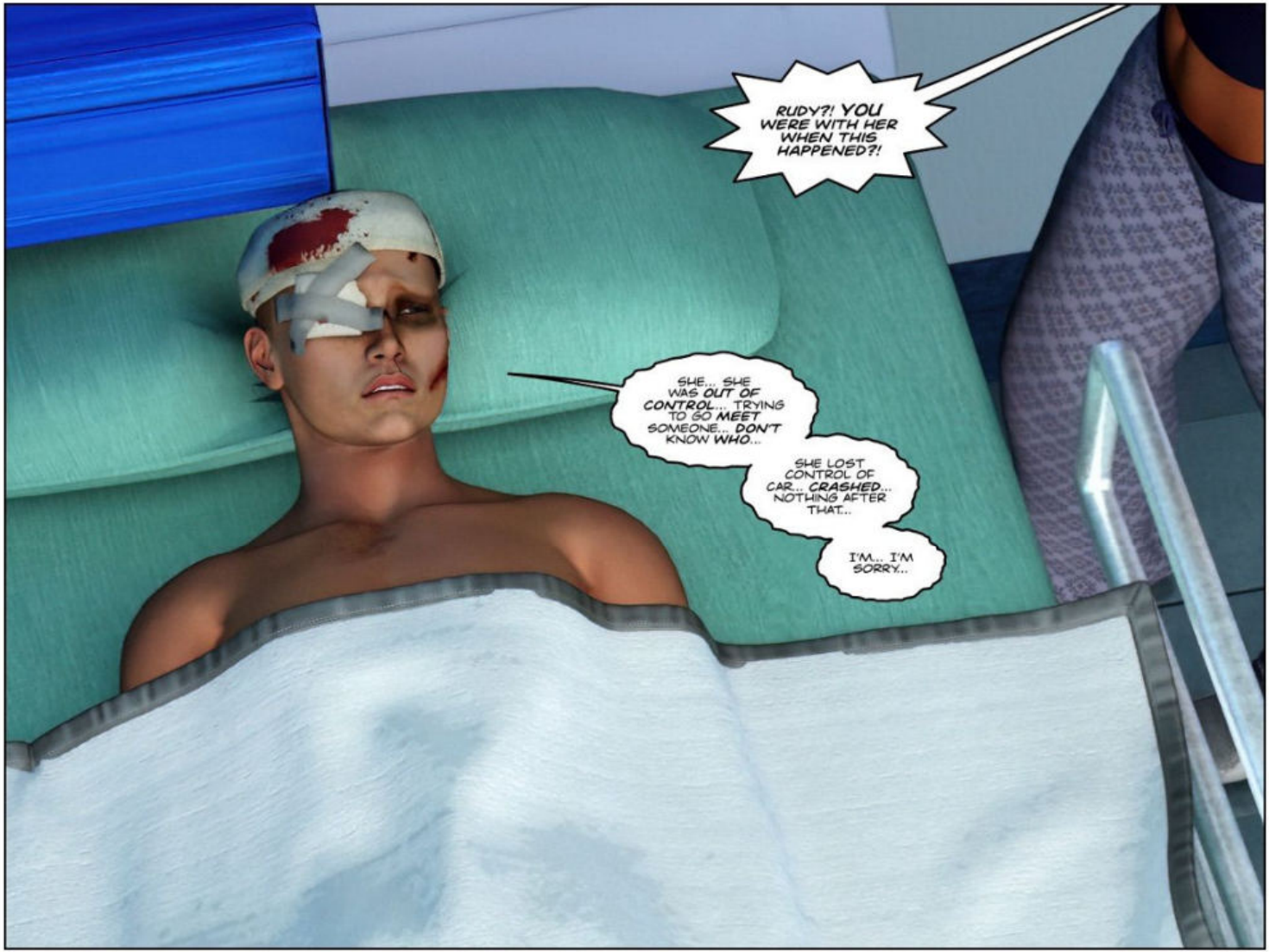

*GASP!*
NO!!


IT'S NOT HER! GOD HELP ME, IT'S NOT HER! *SOB!*
PAGING DR. GRANT... PAGING DR. GRANT...


I'M SORRY, I HAVE TO GO! WILL YOU BE ALL RIGHT, DR. BRANSON?
JUST... GO!


MY BABY IS GONE... THIS TIME FOREVER...
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?
I... I TRIED...


HUH? WHAT?
I... TRIED TO STOP HER...


RUDY?! YOU WERE WITH HER WHEN THIS HAPPENED?!
SHE... SHE WAS OUT OF CONTROL... TRYING TO GO MEET SOMEONE... DON'T KNOW WHO...
SHE LOST CONTROL OF CAR... CRASHED... NOTHING AFTER THAT...
I'M... I'M SORRY...


WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO BE SORRY ABOUT? I'VE LOST EVERYTHING!
YOU! YOU'LL HEAL! YOU'LL GO RIGHT BACK TO YOUR FRAT LIFE... TO YOUR PRECIOUS CHAZ...


I CAN'T GO BACK THERE! ARIEL TOLD CHAZ I WAS STALKING HER! HE... HE HATES ME NOW! AND SOON EVERYONE ELSE AT THE HOUSE WILL TOO!
I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE DIED IN THAT WRECK, BECAUSE MY LIFE IS OVER! *SOB!*


I GUESS THAT'S ONE OF SEVERAL THINGS YOU AND I SUDDENLY HAVE IN COMMON! TOO BAD WE...


... WE...




SO... HOW FAR ARE YOU WILLING TO GO TO GET CHAZ BACK INTO YOUR LIFE AGAIN?
I'D... I'D DO ANYTHING! ANYTHING AT ALL! WITHOUT CHAZ IN MY LIFE, I'M NOTHING!
THAT'S SO VERY, VERY GOOD TO HEAR, RUDY!


BECAUSE I THINK I HAVE A WAY WE CAN BOTH GET BACK ALL THAT WE'VE LOST!
AND ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT AND LET ME TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING!


So once again, over the next months, Mona pulls out all the stops and calls in more favors...



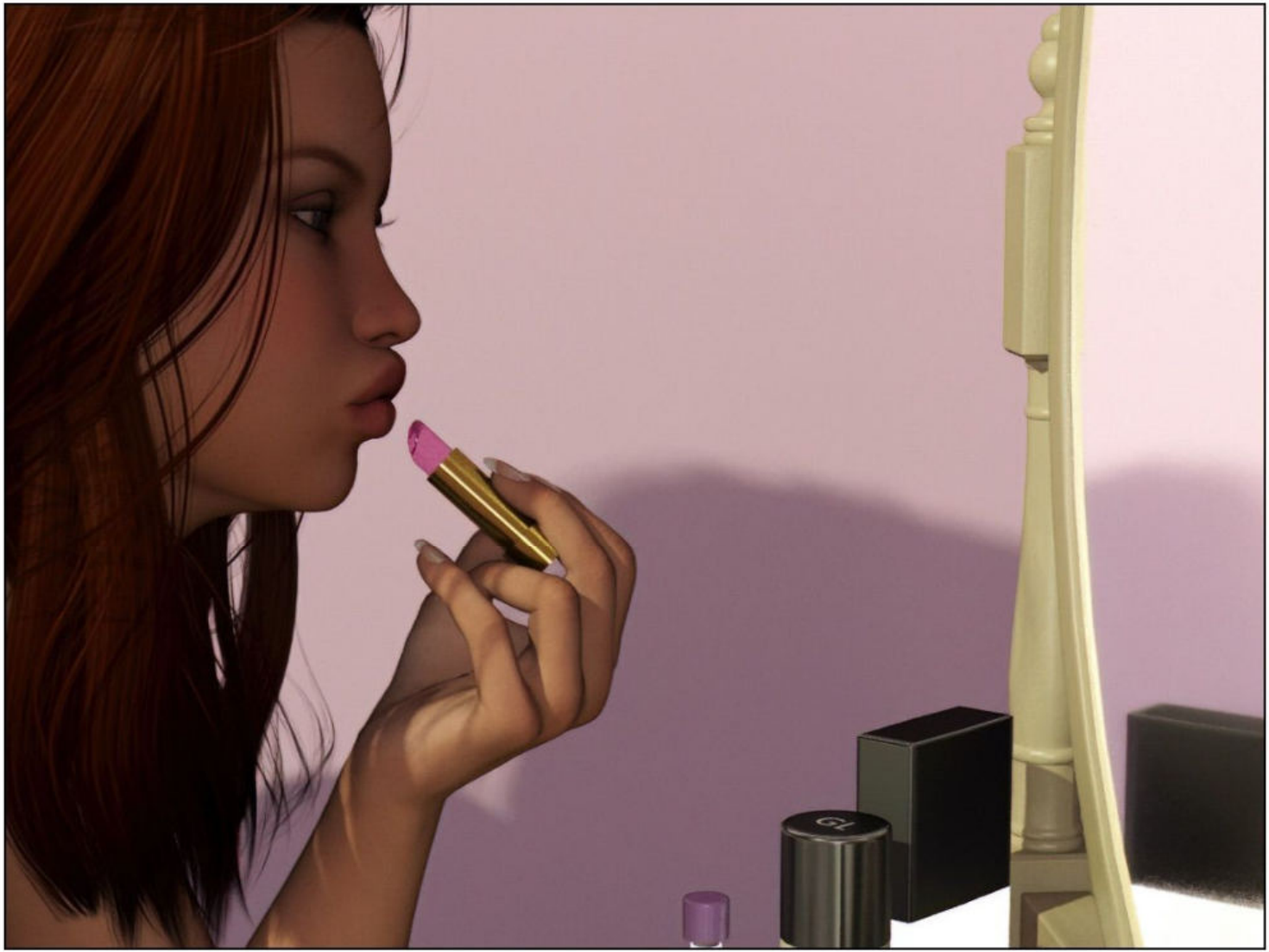



Reliving the rites of passage of a new mother daughter relationship...
SALE






A relationship that develops and grows quite rapidly...






Thanks in no small part to a very willing and active participant...








Whose whims Mona is more than happy to indulge...


And then the day arrived...
SLOW


CAN YOU BELIEVE THE SCORE OF THAT GAME THIS WEEKEND? MAN, WHAT A BLOWOUT!
YEAH, LIKE I HAD TIME TO WATCH ANYTHING THIS WEEKEND! MAYBE I'LL HAVE TO TIME TO WATCH TV AGAIN AFTER I GRADUATE LAW SCHOOL! HEH-HEH!


HEY, UMMM... I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU LATER, BURT! THERE'S SOMEONE I NEED TO TALK TO!
SURE THING! SEE YOU BACK AT THE OFFICE, CHAZ!


DR. BRANSON?
WHY, CHAZ, DEAR... IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU!
AND YOU, TOO! HOW ARE YOU?
I'M JUST FINE, THANK YOU!


I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT! I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T REACHED OUT OR TALKED TO YOU SINCE THE, UMMM... THE FUNERAL!
PLEASE DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT THAT, DEAR! WE'VE ALL HAD TO MOVE ON WITH OUR LIVES IN OUR OWN WAY!
YOU'RE RIGHT OF COURSE!
SO, WHAT ARE YOU UP TO THESE DAYS?


WELL, I GRADUATED LAST MAY AND AM NOW IN MY FIRST YEAR OF LAW SCHOOL!
MY! I'LL BET YOUR PARENTS ARE VERY PROUD OF YOU!
I SURE HOPE SO, ESPECIALLY SINCE I'M ALSO CLERKING AT MY DAD'S OFFICE PART TIME!
IN FACT, I'M TAKING MY LUNCH BREAK FROM THERE RIGHT NOW!


AND WHAT ABOUT YOU?
OH, I'M STILL KEEPING EXTREMELY BUSY WITH MY RESEARCH! BUT, LIKE YOU, I'M TAKING A BREAK FOR LUNCH!


IN FACT, HERE COMES MY LUNCH DATE NOW! I'D LOVE FOR YOU TO MEET HER!
AND WEARING A DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT OUTFIT THAN THE ONE I PICKED OUT FOR HER! HMPH!
WHY, SURE! I... WOW!


SORRY I'M LATE, MOTHER! I HAD TROUBLE FINDING A PARKING SPOT!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR! I HAD THIS FINE YOUNG MAN KEEPING ME COMPANY!
MOTHER? YOU MEAN YOU'RE...


HER DAUGHTER! THAT'S WHY I CALL HER "MOTHER," SILLY!
CHAZ, THIS IS MY OTHER DAUGHTER, ALEXIS! ARIEL'S YOUNGER SISTER!
YOUNGER BY EXACTLY 17 MINUTES, THANK YOU VERY MUCH... A FACT BOTH YOU AND SHE LOVED TO REMIND ME OF!
I... I HAD NO IDEA! ARIEL NEVER MENTIONED SHE HAD A SISTER... AND A TWIN AT THAT!


THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME! WE WEREN'T THAT CLOSE... EVEN FOR FRATERNAL TWINS!
ALEXIS STAYED BACK EAST WHEN ARIEL AND I MOVED OUT HERE! SHE FLEW OUT TO KEEP ME COMPANY SHORTLY AFTER THE FUNERAL!
AND LIKED IT HERE SO MUCH I DECIDED TO STAY!
WELL, I, FOR ONE, AM VERY GLAD YOU DID!
WHY THAT'S AWFULLY SWEET OF YOU TO SAY! *GIGGLE!*


NOT ONLY ARE YOU WEARING SOMETHING TOTALLY INAPPROPRIATE FOR THIS "ACCIDENTAL" ENCOUNTER, YOU'RE ALSO OFF-SCRIPT! WHAT'S GOING ON?
RELAX, "MOTHER"... I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!


YOU KNOW, IT JUST DAWNED ON ME... CHAZ! YOU'RE ARIEL'S CHAZ, AREN'T YOU?
I WAS! I MEAN, WE DATED FOR AWHILE, BUT... WE ALL LEARN TO MOVE ON! RIGHT?
ABSOLUTELY! YOU KNOW, MOTHER WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU... YOU'RE NOT ONLY CUTE, YOU'RE ALSO VERY SMART! *GIGGLE!*
WELL... THANKS! HEH-HEH!
Ring!


YES?
BUT I WAS GOING TO HAVE LUNCH WITH MY DAUGHTER! ARE YOU SURE IT CAN'T WAIT UNTIL LATER?
*SIGH!* FINE! I UNDERSTAND!


DON'T TELL ME, LET ME GUESS... WORK CALLS, AGAIN?
I'M SORRY, DEAR! I HATE THAT YOU HAD TO COME ALL THE WAY DOWN HERE FOR NOTHING!
I UNDERSTAND, MOTHER! PLEASE DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
UMM... IF I MAY...


I WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO TAKE YOU TO LUNCH, IF IT'S OKAY WITH YOU AND YOUR MOTHER!
THAT'S AWFULLY SWEET OF YOU, BUT I DON'T WANT TO IMPOSE...
SINCE WHEN IS SPENDING TIME WITH A LOVELY YOUNG LADY AN IMPOSITION?
WELL, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY... *GIGGLE!*


I'LL SEE YOU AT HOME LATER, MOTHER!
HAVE FUN, YOU TWO!


AHHH! IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...


... TRY, TRY AGAIN! HEH-HEH!


T··Mobile
Meanwhile, across town...


OH MY! IT WARMS MY HEART SEEING TALENT LIKE THAT WORKING THE STREETS!


WELL, SIDLE ON UP, GIRLFRIEND! THERE'S ROOM FOR BOTH OF US! *GIGGLE!*
BUS


OOOO! TROLLING A STREET CORNER FOR OUR SECOND ANNIVERSARY! KINKY!
HEY, I'LL TRY ANYTHING ONCE... AS LONG AS IT'S WITH YOU, HOT STUFF!


US
AM
TRO
TRANS
ays near


*SIGH!*
UH-OH, YOU'RE GETTING THAT INTROSPECTIVE LOOK AGAIN! WHAT'S UP?


SORRY! IT'S JUST THAT A DAY LIKE THIS MAKES ME THINK BACK TO WHEN WE FIRST MET AND THE PERSON I WAS AT THE TIME!
DO YOU EVER REGRET HOW MUCH I'VE CHANGED SINCE THEN?
YES...?
OH, HELL NO!


BUS
TO BE TRUTHFUL, I LOVE YOU MORE TODAY THAN I EVER DID!
THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO RECONCILE YOUR EXPERIENCES AS ARIEL INTO WHO YOU ARE NOW HAS MADE YOU INTO A STRONG, VIBRANT WOMAN!
IN FACT, A HELLUVA LOT LIKE ME! *GIGGLE!*
WELL, YOU ARE MY IDEAL ROLE MODEL, AFTER ALL! *GIGGLE!*


SERIOUSLY, YOU KNOW I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!
IF YOU HADN'T SHOWN UP AT THAT WRECK WHEN YOU DID, PICKING ME UP OFF THE GROUND AND GETTING ME OUT OF THERE BEFORE MY CAR WENT OVER THE RAILING, WHO KNOWS WHERE I'D BE NOW?
PROBABLY BACK WITH MOTHER, SMILING A MINDLESS SMILE WHILE SHE SUBMITS ME TO MORE OF HER INSANE EXPERIMENTS!

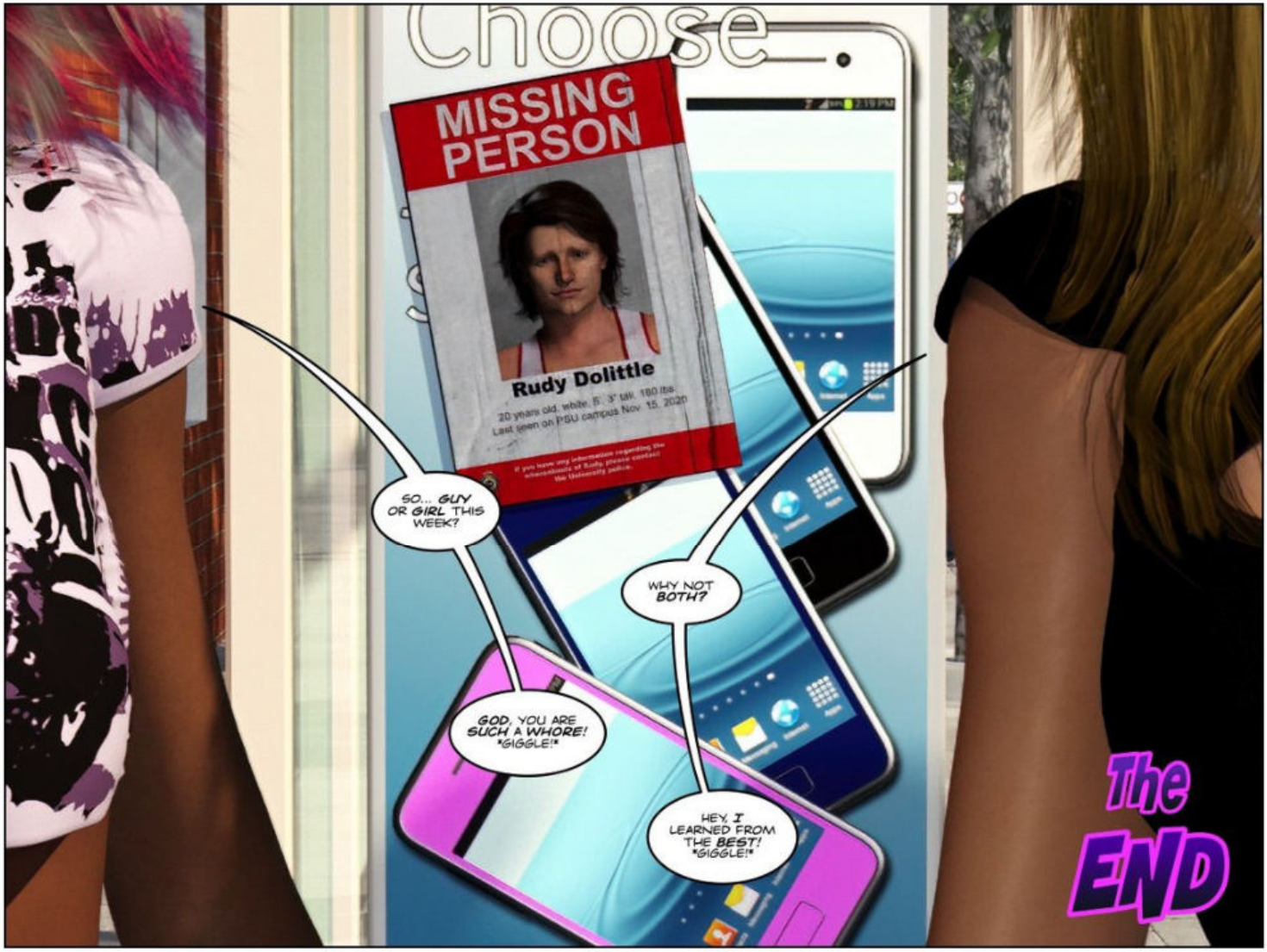

BUS
INTERTRANS
WELL, AS FAR AS SHE OR THE REST OF THE WORLD KNOWS, ARIEL BRANSON DIED IN THAT WRECK AFTER HER CAR BURST INTO FLAMES!
NO ONE, ESPECIALLY YOUR MOTHER, WILL EVER COME LOOKING FOR YOU!
I KNOW, AND I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER ABOUT THAT! BUT...


RUDY'S THE ONE WHO DIED IN THAT WRECK, NOT ME! I STILL DON'T SEE HOW THEY COULD HAVE MADE THAT MUCH OF A MISTAKE!
BUT...
IT WAS CHAOS, HONEY! YOUR CAR ENDED UP CRASHED INTO A SMALL HOMELESS CAMP! THERE WERE LOTS OF INJURIES THE EMTS HAD TO TAKE CARE OF, BUT FORTUNATELY, NONE OF THEM SEVERE!
THE ONLY DEATH WAS FROM A BURNED UP CORPSE BENEATH THE CAR! SINCE IT WAS YOUR CAR AND NO ONE KNEW RUDY WAS WITH YOU, THEY PROBABLY JUST ASSUMED IT WAS YOU AND LET IT GO AT THAT!
BUS
near


BUS
INTERTRANS
NO... NO WAY!
DEAL!
THERE ARE NO "BUTS"! THE ALTERNATIVE IS LETTING EVERYONE, INCLUDING YOUR MOTHER, KNOW YOU'RE STILL ALIVE! IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
THEN JUST RELAX AND CONCENTRATE INSTEAD ON HOW YOU WANT TO SPEND THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF OUR FIRST DATE!


SO, DO WE CELEBRATE ALONE TONIGHT, OR DO WE SCOUR THE TAWDRY CLUB SCENE FOR SOME POOR, UNSUSPECTING VICTIM TO HAVE OUR WAY WITH?
WHY MESS WITH A TRIED AND TESTED METHOD THAT HAS ALWAYS WORKED SO WELL FOR US IN THE PAST?
Rudy Dolittle


SLUTTY CLUB WEAR IT IS THEN!
THE SLUTTIER THE BETTER! *GIGGLE!*
MISSING PERSON
Rudy Dolittle


Choose
MISSING PERSON
Rudy Dolittle
20 years old, white, 5' 3" tall, 180 lbs.
Last seen on PSU campus Nov. 15, 2020
If you have any information regarding the whereabouts of Rudy please contact the University police.
SO... GUY OR GIRL THIS WEEK?
WHY NOT BOTH?
GOD, YOU ARE SUCH A WHORE! *GIGGLE!*
HEY, I LEARNED FROM THE BEST! *GIGGLE!*
The END


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ARIEL 2.0
BONUS







