

# Brave New World (Humanity to Fantasy Races TFTG)

By FoxFaceStories

## A Commission for Azena

*A year ago, the Creator of the Universe descended to Earth and shocked humanity by revealing that its efforts to make a 'perfect race' had failed . . . so why not let humanity's imagination have a go? Since that day, humanity was split up into numerous fantasy races and species, all from their great mythologies and stories and forming their own communities. After twelve months of chaos, the first multi-species colleges are starting up again. Xalyth, a dark elf who was once a man, must navigate her place in this changed world.*

## Brave New World

It's a funny thing, suddenly being turned into a fantasy species. One second you're Lewis Malcolm, ordinary Joe, and the next thing you're turned into a freakin' drow elf, and a female one at that! At least I can say I'm not alone navigating my way through this strange new existence, and I don't even mean in the sense that a few friends were also changed, or even a whole community. No, this affected the *whole damn world*.

It all happened a year ago. It was, for all of humanity, just an ordinary day. There were wars, as there usually was, and peace elsewhere, and plenty, and starvation, and traffic jams and poverty and a new movie was out and ripped jeans were coming back into vogue again and Uncle Larry's tractor engine had stalled for the umpteenth time while trying to harvest his fields.

Then, God.

No, literally. I'm not joking about that. God literally showed up. He, or she, or it - we all heard different kinds of voices from the Great One - suddenly erupted into being in the sky. It made no sense, but everyone in the world later reported being able to see it. There were *cave divers* who could see it. The being was magnificent, at once humanoid and yet made of starburst and clouds of nebula. Apparently, some saw it as Mother Earth, others as a great pagan deity. Me, it was a colossus of stars, neither man nor woman. I'd never seen anything like it, and I had a real sweet view too: I was out in the fields by myself, helping mend the fences so the cows wouldn't escape.

Then, as I said, *God*.

"Holy sh-" was all that managed to escape my mouth, and then the Almighty itself began to speak.

*'Behold mine glory, O people of my Creation! I return to speak with thee, and condemn thy race as failures and a Mistake. Try as I have done in mine good will, I could not*

*bring peace, beauty, and goodness to you! And so if mine own brilliance cannot craft Perfection, then perhaps the creativity you have been endowed with shall correct what has been done Wrong. I bringeth a new decree forward: thou race shall be turned into a diaspora of new species wrought from your own imagination. Thou will not war upon one another, but seek to strive for brilliance, that I in mine glory may find the ideal mould in the centuries to come.'*

To be honest, I had no idea what this great divine being was on about, but then my entire vision was flooded with light, and my body began to transform. I gasped and groaned as my form thinned and my muscles largely melted away, though thankfully I still retained my athleticism. My skin turned dark: despite my farm work I'd always remained a bit pasty before, but now my skin turned a blue-black colour, even as my body hair fell away. My hips, my waist, my legs all changed, and my face softened. I grabbed my ears as they extended into surprisingly long points. My hair also grew out, turning shock-white with an almost silvery hint to it. And, of course, among all this shock was the fact that I grew breasts and lost my dick. My clothes even changed, looking like dark garments hardly befitting a guy living out in the sticks, but they certainly conformed to my new body, showing off my rather attractive new physique.

I was a dark elf, as it turned out. And, like many millions across the globe, I was one of the ones who had changed in gender as well. Lucky me, I guess. I shouldn't complain too much. In many ways, I got kinda lucky. Elves are still very much like humans, whereas poor My Mom and Dad were both changed, Mom into a drow elf like me, Dad too. They didn't change genders, which made things a bit embarrassing for me. Jeez did they lose a few years though; turns out we get that elven longevity!

Others were not nearly so Uncle Larry suddenly found himself as an arachne girl: female top half, big boobs too, but with a big spider butt for the bottom half, eight scuttling legs and all. He's one area code over, so that ended up being a whole cobweb - heh - of trouble. At least his little daughter was so young that she'll never remember anything but being a spider-girl. There were numerous other transformations worldwide, of course. Whole communities and areas turned into orcs, goblins, trolls, giants, mermaids, sirens, gorgons, centaurs (hilariously, it was a massive NASCAR crowd that got turned for that one, talk about horsepower), harpies, fauns, even fox ladies out in Japan called 'kitsune.' And there were even weird ones than that! We were just lucky that this Creator, in whatever mercy he had left for us, made sure that there were no traffic accidents, no plane crashes, no deaths. Hell, the cave divers literally became octo-men and octo-ladies, able to slip right back out into the sun with even greater ease.

It was chaos at first, of course. Every man for himself, or herself if they changed gender like me. The United States basically only existed in a country in name only for a bit.

There was the initial tribalism of it too: if you were at a lake town you might all become mermaids, and then develop a bit of a rivalry and worry about the neighbouring minotaur villages up in the woods. Some went religiously crazy, claiming their species to be the superior one, though the fact that some inch-tall gnome communities were the loudest about it will always be a little funny to me. Little, get it?

But in the end, despite this being the single most important event in the history of humanity, things began to calm down. It still took many months, of course, but I think part of it was that a) we had all just seen the creator of the universe, and felt pretty united in being judged by him or her, and b) we were all getting used to our strange new bodies to start warring about it. Hell, just keeping the power running and the markets full put people in line; it could have all gone so very badly if people made things violent.

The government, led by a president who was now a magical pixie lady with beautiful butterfly wings (and hard to take seriously for a time as a result), appointed a number of censors to try and find out the patterns of what happened. The information was made public, and shared with the UN, which was now quite a colourful lot. Turns out that towns and villages usually shared a species, but cities were more subdivided by burroughs and neighbourhoods. But these larger communities often had similarish transformations. For example, New Jersey apparently ended up with tons of goblins, trolls, ogres, orcs, and the like. The kind you might see as the enemies in a *Lord of the Rings* flick, though thankfully they don't look nearly so nasty in real life. No pustules or boils on these guys and gals, good on them. Neighbouring New York, on the other hand, had a sort of flying theme: harpies and angels, birdpeople and even draconic kinds. I think they were a bit smug about that, having 'won' against their rival city.

Of course, as we all discovered, while we still had our memories blessedly intact, we also had new instincts and drives, even altered perceptions. Take Uncle Larry (Aunt Selicia, now), for instance. While there were a few wobbles, times when he/she forgot she had eight legs now instead of two, her new arachne instincts guided her to be able to walk 'normally.' It also meant, ahem, that she was quick to learn how to spin her webs. Makes her a killing now; it's industrial strength!

This was true of me as well. Try as I might to think of myself as Lewis, the name *Xalyth* (that's pronounced Zae-Lith, thank you very much) just kept ricocheting around in my mind. The same for thinking of myself as a woman. I wanted to be a man again, I was cognisant of the fact that I *should* be a man. But my brain still insisted on thinking of me as female unless I maintained steady concentration of my own thoughts, which was damn exhausting. That wasn't all, of course. My little rural community had to learn a lot about what it meant to be a community of dark and light elves, and what those distinctions even actually meant. Trust me, there was a lot to get used to, though I had the extra effort of having to

learn how to wear bras for my new, not exactly unimpressive chest. The fact that some of the male elves, dark or light, were starting to look rather nice to me . . . well, let's just say that I'm still confronting that particular issue. I'm not alone in it, of course, and others have been a lot more, let's say *eager* to embrace their new selves. Uncle Larry, now Aunt Selicia, took barely two months before she was shacking up with her best friend, whose gender had not changed. She's currently freaking out a bit as she bloats up with eggs; a real trailblazer, my Aunt turned out to be. Experts think she'll be the first drider to lay her clutch, much to her embarrassment.

So yeah, thank you Almighty Creator, for making me not only a female dark elf but also one that is very much into dudes. I definitely am not jumping with joy at that change either, no matter the occasional dream or lingering thought I get.

No, I'm going ahead with my original plan, one I've had long before all this Great Change nonsense got underway. Rural life has never been for me, even more so now that the sun is so harsh on my eyes and skin. I've always wanted to get into architecture, maybe even city planning, particularly when it comes to denser urban areas. It's always been a fascination for me, but the year of quarantines and travel restrictions during the chaos put off these plans, as did my own adjustments. Now, I can finally say goodbye to the country and say hello to Stanford. Freaking *Stanford!* I don't know that I'd normally be accepted, but it seems my chosen career path is one the new system is doing everything to support: they'll need new architecture and city planners just for all the strange new body types.

It's going to be a brave new world, that's for sure.

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When I stepped onto Stanford's grounds, I could barely believe it. Having lived in a community of dark and light elves for a year, with just a few arachne relations one town over, I had only news reports and the internet to give me an idea of what other people's changes were. Now, I could see the whole cavalcade of amazing, weird, and frankly stunning transformations that others had been through. There were other elves, the types of which I had never seen before, some with starry skin or rainbow patterning. There were little pixies flying past, asking people to excuse them and not bat them away like flies. And there were larger transformations too: one unfortunate giantess girl was apologising like crazy as she watched her steps; she had to be nearly fifteen feet in height, and claimed to not be done growing yet! Others were centaurs, with lower bodies that were a little smaller than a regular horse's would be, but still took up plenty of room. I was pretty shocked to see that they wore no clothing or covering over their lower halves, and that the men were shirtless! The women

just wore tied support bands around their breasts - even their nipples were showing through the material!

I suppose I couldn't judge; drow had their own new fashion sense that was compelled into us since the Great Change. I wore dark leather that bared my toned midriff, and the black skirt parted at each side to reveal my shapely legs. I had tried to cut my hair down to a more masculine style once, but it was like pushing against an invisible barrier; I simply couldn't do it. I suspected that might be the case with the Gorgon women with their revealing armour, not to mention the djinn people with their pantaloons and bright coloured veils. So there I was, with a rather impressive v-neck that was low enough to show off both cleavage *and* underboob, my girls of just one year smushed against one another in order to provide support. I certainly felt very much on display, and while we were all a strange mix of fantasy creatures, I very much felt watched.

*"Is that an elf? She moves like a dancer . . ."*

*"Looks like a dark elf?"*

*"Is that why she's wearing shades? She looks cool."*

*"God, I bet she was head of the cheerleading squad or something before the Great Chance. Girl moves with confidence."*

*"Check out that rack, those hips! I don't care if I've got a horsecock now, I'd bang her."*

I tried to keep my confidence and avoid worrying over the comments. The truth was that there were several things working against me. For one, a lot of 'my kind' were pretty connected to the land, as elves often were in human imagination prior to becoming real. As such, it really took someone with an absolute desire to come to the big city to make it, and even then I now had a lot of ideas on how to bloom forest and fungi into naturalistic architecture and town planning; that seemed a lot more important now. So of all the gorgons, goblins, fauns and kitsunes around, elves were not all that common.

And even if others were rare, I as an elf had another reason for drawing attention, and that was also tied to my new species. You see, be we light elves or dark elves (or even those Wood Elves apparently throughout Colorado now), we literally *can't help* but be elegant and ethereal. It's like in *Lord of the Rings*, where Peter Jackson uses all those strange shots and lighting effects and stuff to make the elves just captivating. A whole generation fell in love with Liv Tyler for a reason, and now I *was* Liv Tyler, with a sort of 'badgirl drow' vibe to boot. My hips swayed, my hair bounced perfectly, my every movement seemed practiced and perfect, as if I were a ballerina who simply could not fail. Even my expression often allured, as I had to bat off a number of dark and light elf men in my hometown.

Lastly, there were the senses. The ears were pointy for a reason; I could pick up everything that was being said about me. I could also read everyone's lips, and capture even the slightest glance askew to me. For a humble dude from rural Cali who just wanted to go to college, meet some nice chicks, maybe party a little, then follow his dream career, it was all a bit much.

Thankfully, my attention was quickly stolen, and the weird part was I was briefly jealous. A dryad nymph emerged from a tree, naked and glorious, a woman whose skin was literally soft bark and yet looked smooth and supple as the greatest Greek sculptures. She emanated spores that aroused some closest to her, and I did my best to skedaddle away.

*"Welcome everyone of all kinds!"* an announcement came over the speaker.

*"Stanford is pleased to have its first proper classes in person in over a year. We know there is a lot to get used to, and accommodations may be subject to change depending on your needs and number of legs and/or wings, but please proceed inwards when you can and we can organise your dorm rooms."*

I bit my lip, hoisting my bag with me. Even that movement seemed practised to gain the interest of a lion-bodied lamia man nearby.

"Hubba hubba," he said, winking.

"Cool down, cat," I replied.

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My dorm wasn't too large; others had been extended to allow for larger individuals such as centaurs or nagas, the latter of which needed space to coil their tails. One man had already apologised to me, emphasising his 'ssss's, when I almost tripped over his tail. Of course, being an elf, I ended up accidentally making it a graceful forward cartwheel.

"Two forty five," I said. "Two forty - ah!"

I got out my key and opened the door. It was in the female wing, of course. *That* would take some getting used to. After a year I was more accustomed to being a woman, even an elven one, but being 'one of the girls' was likely to be a different experience altogether. Perhaps I would end up having a classic college girl experience? That would be almost amusing, in a stereotypical sorority kind of way. Maybe I'd end up with rooming with a cute mermaid, or dryad, or even-

The door opened, and I was taken aback. Standing on the other side was a woman who was none of what I expected. She had vibrant fiery red hair and a slim figure, but she had large bird talons instead of human feet, and her arms twisted into red-feathered wings the same colour as her hair, albeit with taloned hands still available for use. I could see from the angle that she also had a bright bird tail, and because she was just wearing a crop top

and specialised shorts, I could see those feathers had lighter patterns on her midriff. Even the edges of her face had them, and her eyes were unusual; blacks instead of whites, and with yellow pupils.

She scowled as soon as she saw me. "Oh, great. Lemme guess; I'm rooming with an oh-so-perfect elf, huh?"

I grimaced. "I'm not perfect."

"Sure. But this is your room?"

"I think so. I'm Xalyth. It's . . . an elven name."

The woman sighed, opening the door wider. I had to squeeze on through so she could close it.

"Sabrina," she replied. "I don't get a fancy name, just lots of feathers."

"They look very . . . pretty."

I noticed as she talked that she had some rather sharp teeth, as if they were all canines. She folded her 'arms' and raised an eyebrow. "Sure they are. Look, I'm just here to get an education, not have some kind of 'dorm sister' friendship or whatever. So this is your side of the room, and this is mine. I'll try not to shed any feathers on your side, and you try to, I don't know, meditate or do elven dances on my side."

I bit my lip. "We don't meditate. We just go into a kind of meditative trance in order to sleep. It just goes for four hours."

She rolled her eyes. "Even your sleep is better. Why are you wearing shades?"

I cringed. "I'm a dark elf. We're a bit . . . sensitive to the sun. I was kind of keen to get into the building actually. We're usually nocturnal but I've been adjusting my sleep schedule, but the brightness is difficult at times. I generally keep the curtains closed when relaxing."

Sabrina scoffed. "Good luck with that here. I'm keeping them wide open. I may be stuck as a bird person, but at least I can enjoy the skies. Anyway, sort yourself out. I expect it all to be done after my flight."

"Your . . . flight?"

She smirked, then opened the window. The light that flooded in made me step back a little, though as usual my movements ended up poised and precise. Then she literally, to my shock, jumped right out of the second story window, unfurled her wings, and took off into the sky.

"One thing you elves can't do!" she shouted back before ascending to the sky.

Yeah, I really didn't like her.

"Ah, you're rooming with Sabrina. Best of luck with that."

I turned, only to see a somewhat familiar sight in the hallway. It was an arachne girl just like my Aunt Selicia. Like my former uncle, she had a bulbous spider body supported by eight legs, black in colour. Her upper half was pale, with dark hair and - I must admit it's hard

not to notice - a rather large pair of breasts. My own ended up more bountiful than I would have liked, but this girl had pure melons that were almost spilling out of her dark purple dress - a dress that hung down between her many legs. Unlike my uncle, she had *eight* eyes. Two were normal human eyes, the other six were smaller black spider's eyes. Still, I wasn't too taken aback, and in fact I actually smiled, which she noticed.

"Not too scared of the spider-girl, I can see," she said.

"Not at all. My Uncle became one. Well, Aunt now. They're a community near hours, alongside some dullahans to the south. They're the Frankensteiny ones that can remove their own head."

The woman chuckled. "I guess us 'dark monster' types need to stick together. I'm Arachne. Yes, my own Great Change wasn't subtle."

I shook a leg that she had extended, and that seemed to pass another test, as I did it so casually.

"I'm Xalyth," I replied. "Elven name. I was Lewis before this all went down."

"Lewis? You were gender-swapped?"

I nodded, gesturing to myself. "Kinda weird to end up like this."

"Try ending up as a spider-girl! Though at least I was still a girl before all this went down." She gestured to her bosom and legs. "Though obviously I ended up more 'enhanced,' ha! Still, I adjust. Of course, I'm not rooming with Sabrina."

"Does she have a reputation?"

"Oh, yeah. She comes from the northern 'burbs, with the minotaurs, gorgons, and ogre-types. Ask me, she got off lucky. Not sure what's giving her the birdshits, but she got here nearly a week ago with the early lot and has been souring people ever since. You've got some fun ahead of you."

I couldn't help but show disappointment on my face. I had really been hoping for a more communal experience. But then the arachne-girl wrapped a leg around my waist and pulled me closer.

"Don't worry. I'm the next room over with a naga I haven't met yet. How about you and I grab a drink? Don't worry, all those rumours of spider-girls drinking blood are totally false. We just like lots of sugar. You down?"

I smiled. "Yeah, I'm down."

She flashed her fangs. "Sweet."

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I must have seemed quite the country bumpkin to Arachne, who'd grown up her whole life surrounded by skyscrapers. Apparently most drider-folk and other insect-people in this new

world were generally located in the city, apart from hopper-folks and the like. That was because, as I learned from her, skyscrapers and tall buildings made for excellent webbing.

“Oh man, have you seen the footage of New York?” she asked me. “Just webs between all the buildings. It’s crazy, and awesome. I can’t wait to go there. I wanna get my art degree first.”

I found that fascinating, but as she explained, actually turning into a spider-woman had unlocked even further passion and possibility for her art. “Just think about it, I’ve now got ten limbs instead of four! Eleven if you count this big spider abdomen butt of mine; it shoots web and can shift around a bit, so I might as well. The possibilities for brush, sculpture, paint . . . it’s endless. And that’s not even counting what I can do with my webbing. I sorta need to ‘express’ it otherwise I get ‘full,’ like a crazy weird version of a lady with breastmilk, I guess. Sorta embarrassing but I’m used to it.”

I giggled before taking a sip from the cafeteria tea I’d ordered. I’d been a coffee person before, but my tastebuds were a lot more elven now: I *loved* tea, though unlike the wood and light elves I could still eat meat. Mushrooms were much more my jam though, of course. Night fungi and all.

“I just can’t believe how well you’ve adjusted, no offence,” I told her.

“Really?”

I gestured to her and then me. “Arachne, you’ve changed way more than me, but you’re not only adapting to it, you’ve got stuff to look forward to. Me, I’m stuck as a dark elf lady and I feel like I stumble around.”

She rolled her eyes, all eight of them. “Please, you’re literally the most graceful thing I’ve seen. All the elves are. A lot of this cafeteria can’t take their eyes off you. I’m pretty sure that satyr is masturbating over there, actually. Poor guy; I hear his kind are just way too horny all the time, and I’m not talking about what’s on their heads.”

I blushed, turning to look at the crowd. A few looked away. At least there was a sexy djinni capturing a lot of attention in her pink sari.

“That’s just the thing, we elves can’t *not* be all graceful. It’s just . . . in my nature now, I guess.”

“Well, I’m not saying I’ve totally adapted, Xalyth. I’m still not *exactly* happy with where my, erm, *womanly equipment* shifted to. And look, I know big butts don’t lie but there are limits, you know? I didn’t expect to be carting a big mini-fridge around for the rest of my life. And while a girl likes bigger tits, these are just . . . too big, ya know? But I try to look on the bright side. Besides, I won’t lie, I think I’ll still gonna have a few ‘catches in my web’ when it comes to the male persuasion.”

I blinked. “Really?”

“Yeah, won’t you? I heard most people that changed gender end up attracted to their new opposite sex. Am I wrong?”

I clearly blushed deep enough on my dark blue-grey skin to make the spider-girl cackle.

“I’m not acting on it!” I exclaimed, loud enough to briefly startle some dwarves on the table over. I apologised to them; at least with my elven senses I could tell which ones were female. There were lots of internet memes already of people mistaking a bearded dwarf for a male one and stepping right in it. “Others in my hometown ended up adjusting, especially the light elves. Or sun elves, whatever you want to call them. But I don’t know. I was a guy my whole life. I dreamed of picking up chicks in college. Now I am a chick-”

“A very hot one too, if I may say so, girl.”

“-and being an elf only seems to make some of them stare more. It’s just in our magic, I think. We draw attention. It’s why I’m grateful there’s some nymphs and dryads here.”

“So you’re telling me you don’t plan to act on anyone here?” she said.

“Nope. Just studying to be an architect, like I told you. Or a town planner. They connect a lot.”

“Don’t change the subject, elfy. So you’re telling me you’re not going to act on even a hot drow elf guy? You know, the kind that looks all tall and muscular and brooding and handsome?”

I screwed up my face. “No! Of course not.”

“Shame.”

“Why?”

The spider-girl nudged me with one leg, and pointed ahead with another without losing a semblance of balance. “Because one that matches that exact description seems interested in you right now.”

I turned in my seat, and immediately regretted it. Just two tables over, behind a group of chatting imps who were playing way too much with their food, was the most ridiculously handsome-looking man I had ever seen. Seriously, it should be criminal to look that hot. He was a dark elf, just like me, and his hair was long and silky, like spider webs, only in a sexy way. He was buff too, but in that slim elven way that still showed a bit of androgyny. He was wearing a simply elven robe with a silver trim, but it had a v-neck that gave a tantalising look at his developed pecs. The short sleeves showed his lithe, athletic arms, and I drank in the sight of them.

“Holy shit,” I murmured.

The man waved, and I waved back, as if stuck in a hypnotic state. Then, catching myself, I swung around immediately.

“If you don’t pick him up,” Arachne teased, “then I definitely will. That’s a spider snack if I ever saw one.”

I returned to my meal, trying to pretend not to see him. But I still snuck a few looks.

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Things began to settle, at least as much as they could for such a new chaotic school with a vast menagerie of intelligent species to populate it. Apparently the giants and giantesses were already unhappy, along with the cyclops folk; some of the necessary facilities hadn’t been renovated in time to accommodate them. A giant’s anger was a pretty terrifying thing, too, so it made sense that the admin cut the red tape to move fast and fix it. Other rules and regulations had to be handed down: flight paths and restrictions for the harpies, for instance. Gee, *that* made my life happy. Sabrina was already a cranky bird, now she was a snapping cockatoo as far as I was concerned.

“Bad enough that I get stuck with a fucking haughty better-than-me elf, but now I can’t even do the one thing that gets me away from it all!”

I could only wince and try to interject. “Sabrina - Sabrina! You’re shedding feathers.”

“Ugh, don’t talk to me about shedding! And stop putting your stuff so close to my side of the room. It’s in the way of my tail when I turn around so it’s your fault if it gets knocked off, okay?”

I didn’t really have much of an idea about why she hated me. She wasn’t gender-swapped like me, and she had the power to freaking *fly*! Plus, unlike other species such as mine, she wasn’t compelled to wear fantastical clothing like we had just emerged from a *Dungeons and Dragons* book or something. Instead, she got to be trendy and wear cute modified crop tops and shorts, though I got the sense that dresses were out; poor for flying, after all.

Still, apart from my roommate and those early troubles, college life was actually starting fairly nicely. My class was full of all kinds: there was even a siren in a wheelchair with a lovely musical voice, though she was threatened with expulsion after she tried to use her song to influence a profession. Yikes. I found that I didn’t need the extra help, though. I knew my elven senses were good, but I hadn’t quite realised I had developed a borderline photographic memory until I was studying later and realised I could recall just about everything Professor Maynard had spoken to me. And that was impressive, given that he’d become a ferocious looking werewolf type, which distracted more than a few others.

And that wasn’t all, either. Since I only needed to go into a four hour trance to get my energy back, I quite literally had more of the day than anyone else. Sure, my body was still getting used to sunny days and I had to put my shades on when it was bright, but those

extra hours before dawn allowed me to go for a run, try out the gym, and generally see more of the campus life I was getting into. Arachne was often out and about, scuttling with her other spider-buddies or cavorting with a few dullahans - some of them loved freaking people out by removing their heads as a 'prank.' She always had time for me, though.

"If it isn't my favourite drow!" she called out, turning her big spider butt and moving on all eight legs to me. I had just entered the gym, and was heading for the section still designed for humanoid bodies.

"Hey, Arachne, how's it going?"

She grinned, baring her fangs. "More than good." The woman leaned down conspiratorially, nearly spilling out of her tight dress with those pale ripe melons of hers. "I had a rather lovely gentlemanly caller last night."

"Really? One of your spider followers?"

I gestured to the two male driders further away, working their equipment. Like actual spiders, they were noticeably smaller than Arachne as a female counterpart, something I think she took simultaneous frustration with and pride at.

"Oh, they're just competing over me at the moment. No, last night I had a nice taste of *minotaur*, would you believe it or not? Henry Jeston. He used to be a woman, but my, did he know how to use that big bullcock of his. Mmm-hmm!"

I couldn't help but laugh. "Oh my God, really?"

"No kidding. What, I'm meant to just go with my own kind all the time? Nah, I liked all types of men before I turned into this, so you can bet I'm not being picky right now. Dude was into this big black butt of mine, and I was more than happy to take that bull by the horns."

I laughed, bewildered. Part of me almost wished to have her level of sexual confidence, rather than just that elegant elven *appearance* of it. I told her as much, and she grinned once more.

"You're always welcome to try. In fact, I've got an idea."

"Oh no, I don't want to act on anything, I just - WAGH!"

She had already scuttled past me and then quickly shot a wad of web right into my midsection, pulling me along as if she were the horse and I was a cart. I tried to remove it, but by the time I got the webbing loose I realised where she had taken me. Or, rather, *who* she had taken me to.

It was that handsome drow again, working out silently in the corner, lying back as he pushed up his weights.

"Hey there!" Arachne called.

The dark elf looked up, noticing her for the first time. "Hey," he said, uncertainly. "Can I help you? I don't know if this is made for arachnid types."

“Oh, it isn’t. But my good friend Xalyth here - pretty name, right? - well, she really wants to get more into working out. She’s from the country so she’s not used to all this fancy gym equipment. Would you be willing to walk her through some of it for me?”

So that was a complete lie. I’d been raised a tough country boy. I knew how to damn well work out!

Still, he racked his bar and began to sit up. “Sorry, I’m in the middle of my workout and-”

The sexy drow stopped as he took me in. I was wearing the female drow version of a gym outfit, a kind of dark satin band to support my breasts and a short-loose skirt. My hair was tied back in a ponytail, but pretty much everything was on display, and I wasn’t the biggest fan of how much cleavage I was showing. But this man’s eyes locked onto me, roaming over my body and my curves and making me feel very self-conscious indeed. Without thinking, I sort of cocked my hip and brushed a hand through my silky white strands that had escaped my scrunchie.

“Um, hi,” I said. “I’m Xalynth. It’s, uh, an elven name.”

He almost had to bring himself back to reality. I often had that effect on people, though not yet on a male drow. I had avoided them until now.

“I’m Dennath. It’s, well, it’s an elven name too.”

“Welllllllll,” Arachne said, pushing me forward a little as she swung her drider behind around, nudging me straight to Dennath. “Looks like you don’t need me! But don’t worry, I’ll be keeping an eye on you two . . . or eight!”

I cradled one arm with the other, scratching the floor with my bare foot. That was another thing; elves really tend to go barefoot. I could see Dennath was the same.

“So, you got turned into a dark elf too?” he asked.

“Yeah,” I replied. “I was, well, I was kinda different before.”

“Me too. I definitely wasn’t this ripped, so I’m trying to keep it.” He gestured to his muscles, perhaps quite deliberately, and I had to bite my lip. His pecs were crazy.

“I was . . . a bit bigger than I am now.”

“Oh?”

I blushed. “I’ll tell it another time.”

“Well, if you don’t mind me saying, you look amazing now. I mean, you look good. Well, I mean that you look *healthy*.”

I nearly broke through my lip biting it. “It’s okay, I know what you mean, I think.”

He was definitely checking me out, and I could feel his own nervousness.

“Maybe . . . let’s just do the workout stuff today,” I suggested.

“Of course!” he replied. “Let’s get to it.”

And we did. I won't lie, I was excited, even as I tried not to be. My heightened elven vision and smell were trained on him, taking in his hard work and sweat, every perfect line of his body. He helped spot me as I did my bench presses, and even I was surprised by what I could take. I did a number of sets, and we worked our way through the arm workouts, spotting each other and comparing our stances. There was a lot of checking out the other going on; I was well aware that my long legs were on display, let alone my bust and midriff. And because we were both so poised, I think we both fell under the spell of the other.

Afterwards, it took a lot of energy not to brush my hands over his bare skin as we sat for a water break and chat.

"I may look all dark and brooding, but that's just the elven aesthetic, I assure you," Dennath told me. "I'm getting into photography and film work. Being a dark elf actually makes it so much more fascinating: I can detect shades in darkness that no other species can see, except maybe some goblins and kitsune."

"Tell me about it!" I replied. "The increase in senses is crazy. I could never dance before, or do handstands or cartwheels, and now it comes with ease. I also have this instinctive knowledge of how to survive in caves and forests, and how to grow the right fungi to eat."

He chuckled. "Same! But it's weird, because it's not exactly all useful to me, or great. Everyone back home thinks I've got my shit together because most of them became dwarves. I happened to be travelling to the next town over when I changed, so my sisters and cousins all think I'm full of it and that I'm so confident and so on. I'm not; it just seems that way because—"

"Because we're elves!" I exclaimed. "I know exactly what you mean. My harpy roommate - literally harpy, I mean, not as an insult - keeps telling me how good I have it. But I don't! And it's not like I'm perfect. I'd rather *be* messy from time to time. Besides, fungi may taste delicious now . . ."

Dennath passed me the water while he replied. "But it doesn't exactly mean we're happy to eat it, right?"

I nodded agreement while I drank. "Exactly! And not being able to be in sunlight so easily sucks."

"You've got that right." He turned, and together we noticed the sun rising through the gym window. It was absolutely beautiful, but as one we still reached for the shades and put them on. We actually exchanged a shared laugh at our nocturnal synchronicity, but I was desperately aware of just how close my hand was to his.

"Xalyth, this may seem a bit sudden . . . but do you happen to be single?"

I looked straight ahead, terrified of letting him see my expression. I wasn't even sure what my expression would be.

“I - I’m not with somebody, if that’s what you mean.”

“That’s generally what people mean, yeah. But . . . would you be open to going out with me? I’ve got some things to tell you, about myself I mean, but I’d like to know more about you.”

He closed the gap between our hands, brushing his fingers over mine. Courtesy of my elven senses, I was deeply aware of just how . . . perfect it felt upon my skin.

I jumped up to my feet almost immediately, pulling my hand back. I could tell I’d surprised him.

“S-sorry!” I cried. “I just - I just have a lot on my plate right now. M-maybe another time, okay?”

I began to speed walk away before he could even reply. That had been waaaaay too close for comfort, or perhaps waaaaay too comfortable *and close*. His smell, his good looks, his brassy voice . . . Dennath was dangerous. I’d really have to avoid him from now on.

No doubt Arachne would be disappointed.

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My first semester continued on. Sabrina continued to be a bitchy roommate, barely talking to me and sometimes inviting her other harpy friends, alongside some gargoyle gals, over to gossip and the like, which naturally included excluding me. I had no idea what had ruffled her feathers against me, but whenever I broached the subject, she just pretended not to know what I was talking about (or she took umbrage at the ‘ruffle feathers’ comment, which, you know, fair enough). I just tried to keep to myself when it came to that dorm room, and when I woke from my cross-legged trance I would go for my usual jog. Occasionally I saw Dennath out as well. I wasn’t rude or anything, I always waved hello or exchanged some words, but I didn’t want to fall into that dangerous temptation again. I was familiar with my female equipment by now, but the one night I was free from Sabrina I had succumbed to the temptation of imagining that gorgeous dark elf man upon me, unbuckling his trousers or removing his robe, and pressing his long, hard thick girth inside -

Whew. Sorry, it makes me overheat just to think about it. The point is that I always made a getaway, much to Arachne’s disappointment. It didn’t help that I had both her *and* him in my elective legal studies course. While learning all about the complicated nature of common law and the role of legal precedent I actually found myself distracted for the first time. It was Arachne’s fault, because she sat her big spider butt on the other side of me this time, resting it on the free seats behind her and ensuring I had a perfect view of Dennath as he took notes. He wore crescent spectacles despite not needing them, and it made him look

so, so . . . *elven*. Fuck, it was dreamy, and my apparently quite horny drow body responded. I wasn't sure if I'd ever get used to having a large pair of DD-cup, dark blue coloured breasts, but I was certain I'd never get used to the sensation of my nipples stiffening with arousal. The wetness in my tunnel likewise.

"You are the worst," I muttered while my centaur professor trotted backwards and forwards on stage, effectively naked while we all pretended he wasn't. "You know exactly what you're doing."

"Guilty as charged," my spider friend said. "What wicked webs I weave! Mwahaha!"

Her chest wobbled heavily as she cackled, and I had to admire the strength of an arachnid spine that could prevent those things from straining her shoulders.

"I'm not having sex with him," I muttered.

"Whoa, who said anything about sex? I just thought you two would look like a cute pair of flies together. Were *you* imagining sex with Dennath?"

My skin was still a dark blue-grey-black in tone, but I could have sworn I turned red as a raspberry for a moment.

"N-no!"

"Coulda fooled me. You can at least go on a date with him, ya know."

"I can't. I have to fight this. It's . . . it's too humiliating. I used to be a guy, and now I've got cleavage on display. Besides, he doesn't know I used to be a guy."

"Eh, if he thinks it's a problem then move on to the next leg that pulls on your web."

I sighed. "You are just all spider puns today."

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I thought about Arachne's words throughout the next week and beyond. Soon over a month had passed at Stanford, and I was in the thick of readings and assignments, not to mention getting involved in other areas of campus life. An elven mind is a patient mind, so I took to chess rather quickly, facing off against a very clever sphinx gal who I couldn't beat no matter what. I later learned that, like all sphinxes, she had a bit of precognition, so I think I came off all right, all things considered. I also joined up in various athletics groups, particularly running ones (non-centaur and drider divisions, obviously. There was still debate about whether minotaurs should have their own divisions). The fact that it was early dawn practice kind of riled me, since I was great before the sun rose and a little dazed when it finally came up, but it really did feel like I was starting to participate in college life and get the full experience, sans love life, of course. Arachne even introduced me to a few of her friends, including a hilarious kitsune couple who were foreign students from Japan: Keiko and Jin. Their many tails intertwined when they were being romantic, which was hella cute, but did remind me of

what I was missing a little. Still, it seemed like Stanford was a microcosm of the world entire: people were coming together again, despite our differences, and so far no new major conflicts had been declared. Hard to do so, when the grand Creator him or herself turned up to give the big wagging finger on that one just a year ago. There were times when I would switch on the news and actually smile at the vast sea of strange new life that 'humanity' now formed, and even think . . . y'know, maybe this was all worth it, becoming a dark elf and even a woman and all.

There were just two problems.

The first was Dennath. I continued to see him, continued to smile in his presence, continued to avoid him. It wasn't like I could just put on a thick sweater and hide the goods; my drow compulsions mandated that I dress 'appropriately,' which meant dark flowing clothing or tight leather that always managed to expose a good chunk of my ample chest and my thighs for good measure. Given that he wore tight tunics with his own manly chest on display, I had a feeling we were both unintentionally attracting the other, our sunglasses glinting in a similar fashion so to speak. And, given that there was a rather big party coming up, one in which couples everywhere were going, Arachne was pressuring me to stop avoiding him and, in her words, *'snare him in your damn web already! God knows I've already got a couple of drider boyfriends following me around!'*

But that was only the first problem. The second was Sabrina. Always Sabrina. She had remained a brat, a bitch, and a whiner for over a month now, and while she was no longer outright insulting me, she still treated me with coldness. I couldn't get a lock on her, even with my elven senses. She simply lost feathers over the smallest of things, and ended up scraping talon marks in the floorboards out of frustration.

"You have no idea what I've missed out on!" she screeched one time after I asked what was up, her voice literally becoming birdlike.

"Fine! Whatever! I don't care!"

"Of course you don't care," she squawked, patting her feathers down. "You're an elf."

I threw up my hands at this point. "Always this. Always that I'm a fucking elf. Fine! I am an elf. I can't help it. Hell, I'm an elf *girl*, even though I was a *guy* before the Great Change. I don't know what you've got against elves, but I literally can't give a shit anymore. I don't love having boobs or always appearing like I'm going to a formal, but I get over it!"

"I can't get over it," she spat.

"Again, *whatever*."

I slammed the door shut.

"Fucking harpy," I muttered to myself. "The name is right."

I was halfway down the hall when I started to feel bad. I had always been a bit of a gentle giant, and even now as a slim, if voluptuous, elf woman, I didn't want to cause conflict. I sighed, huffed, and turned around.

But the door was silent as I opened it, and I couldn't help but notice that my harpy roommate was huddled on her bed, crying. Actually *crying*. Full on sobs, I mean. She was looking at an image on her phone, and an ordinary person wouldn't have been able to make it out from a distance, but I easily could with my elven eyes.

It was a family picture.

An *elven* family picture. They were all bright, cheerful sun elfs with light yellow skin and golden-bronze hair. All except one figure in the middle, who was a red-feathered harpy.

The other shoe dropped. So did the pin, and any other metaphorical representation of an 'oh shit!' moment.

"Sabrina," I said, embracing my softest, most maternally caring voice possible.

Her response was pure sixth grader. "Go away."

"I'm sorry, I didn't realise. I . . . I have a friend who ended up stuck as a goblin. A female goblin too. She was driving home from her job and was in a different area when the Great Change struck. The rest of her family ended up as centaurs."

"It's not the same. And it's not *you*."

I sat down on her bed and patted her back slowly. She didn't fight it.

"You have no idea how close I was," she continued, still not facing me. "If I'd been *literally* just *one block over*. Ugh! My older sister Evelyn - sorry, *Eveleah* now - has been the golden child all my life and now she's *literally golden*. And to think I was treated as the black sheep before. I could have been *elegant*. I could have been *beautiful*. Instead I'm stuck as a freaky bird woman with gross scaly legs and a habit of always shedding feathers.

"But - but you can fly, Sabrina!"

She turned to face me, wiping tears from her eyes with her hands, fluttering her attached wings in the same motion.

"So what? I'll never be beautiful and graceful like my sisters, like my whole family. I'll be the odd one out. Eveleah always makes fun of me for being the 'bird girl.' Ugh."

I admit, my empathy had grown from becoming a woman. Were I a guy, I think I would have just rolled my eyes at this spiel, but as a member of the fairer sex, I felt touched by her words and what they meant.

"I know what it's like to be the black sheep too, you know."

She hesitated. "Bullshit."

"No, it's true. I'm a rural country guy - or at least I was - but I always wanted to go to the big city and work with big buildings and large planning spaces. It's even more exciting a job prospect now. But my family, much as I love 'em, always thought it was just a phase.

They probably still do, especially now that they're elves. It's put them even more in touch with the land and nature and the value of keeping away from bright city lights and all that. I think, on some level, that I'll probably always be a bit weird in their eyes."

Sabrina went to say something, stopped herself, and then decided on a more genuine reply. "How do you deal with it?"

I shrugged. "I guess I just have to be me, and accept I'm not gonna be like them, and that that's okay. You're not like your family, Sabrina, but that's okay, too. You can do shit I'll never be able to do as an elf: you can soar over the sky and fly where you want. Grace and poise look good, but that's about it. And I can guarantee your own eagle eyesight is better than mine. And besides, if I'm being completely honest here, I think you look fucking rad."

"You - you do?"

I nodded. "If I were still a guy, I'd be way into you. The red hair, the red feathers, the pretty colouring. The way you soar through the air. It's fucking badass, man. Look, I know it's not being a hoity toity elf like me, but trust me, being an elf has a lot of upsides but also a lot of upsides that just *look* like upsides. Being elegant all the time is kinda shitty when you just want to wear a baggy sweater and chill on the couch and play videogames. Seriously, I feel like I'm constantly advertising myself as the next supermodel when I just want to walk down the goddamn hallway."

Sabrina actually chuckled. "Welcome to being an attractive woman."

"Well, you'd know, right?"

She actually seemed pretty touched by my words, because what she said next nearly knocked me over flat.

"I'm sorry. I've been a complete bitch to you."

The fact that I didn't fight her on that statement definitely confirmed my own thoughts on the matter.

"I know I'm projecting. I'm not stupid. But finding out I had an elven roommate when I finally thought I had a chance to break free of all that elven perfection . . . it broke something in me. But it wasn't fair on you. I'm sorry, Xalyth."

I started to feel emotional myself. I wiped a tear from my eye and wrapped an arm around her.

"Hey, I get it. But think of it this way: I'm a dark elf. I'm the bad girl compared to your haughty, self-obsessed family. And besides, I'm pretty out of water myself and getting used to all of this. I thought being a woman, in a female dorm, would make certain . . . thoughts more manageable."

At this, the harpy grinned, her sharp teeth showing. "Oh. My. God. How did I not see it? You've met someone, have you? A guy, obviously."

I blushed, stroking some of my white hair nervously. “Yeah. I mean, I have, but I can’t. It’d be too weird. I used to be a guy.”

She shrugged, hefting her wings for greater emphasis. “We all used to be something different, I bet he did too. It’s not one of those headless guys, is it? Because that might be a bit much.”

“No, no. It’s a man. A drow, like me. His name is Dennath.”

“And you’re taking him to the party, so you’re nervous.”

“No! I can’t take him to the party. I mean . . . I want to, but . . . it’s too weird.”

At this, Sabrina actually guffawed. She stood, fluttering her wings and clutching her head. “I’ve been such a bitch. All this time I thought you were on top of it, and you’ve been as lost as me. You just haven’t been an asshole about it. Okay, I’ve thought of a way I can make things up to you, Xalyth. I’ll get you your date with Dennath.”

I nearly coughed. “But I don’t want . . . I mean, I do, but . . .”

“If I can start moving on from this stupid self-hatred and start seeing the cool shit about being a harpy that you mentioned before, then you can actually be the confidence elf I mistook you for, grab life by the ovaries, and actually have a go of going out with this hot dark elf.”

I did want that. I really did. Arachne had been pushing me, but Arachne was Arachne. Somehow, the fact that my until-recently mortal nemesis was egging on me to try a relationship with Dennath was enough to actually make me realise I did want that. At least . . . to try it, even if it didn’t work out. The full college *girl* experience, I guess.

“Um, well . . . what did you have in mind?” I asked.

The harpy grinned. It was almost carnivorous.

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Dennath had a pattern. Like a lot of elves, especially dark elves like me, he had a place he liked to go to in order to feel close to nature, one that gave beauty to shadows and darkness intermingled with the faintest of lights. I knew where he would be because Arachne’s eight eyes were basically a spy network of their own. Far beyond the edge of the university, at the edge of Stanford itself, there was a gorgeous little hill from which one could see the night sky in all its perfection: a black void illuminated by twinkling stars. For a dark elf, light pollution was no obstacle to our super vision.

Just as I had hoped, I found him there, sat cross legged in a meditative state, his gaze fixed firmly upon the sky above. He was, as usual, exceedingly handsome, and in the warmth of the evening air he had discarded any coat or robe and simply had a light tunic that

did a marvellous job of displaying his muscles. And *of course* his silky white hair was swaying gently in the breeze.

Fuck, he was hot. How had I resisted his advances so long?

I looked down at myself. I could scarcely believe what I had let Sabrina do to me. I suppose it could have been worse: Arachne would have dressed me up far more slutty than this. Still, I hadn't expected a harpy of all people to have such an in-depth knowledge of what would make a dark elf appear even more alluring. I guess she'd had a lot of time to think about it. Not only had she taken me shopping and gotten me a black silky dress (as silky as my hair). It clung to my curves far more than even my regular clothing, and it had a starry glimmer to it that matched the very sky Dennath was staring at now. It also had quite the low v-neck, again even lower than what I was used to, or at least more overall revealing: my large breasts were very much threatening to spill out, though Sabrina assured me that was more appearance than a genuine reality. It certainly lent itself to a lot of bounce, just like the slits along both thighs only emphasised the sway of my hips. One thing I hadn't often worn were high heels, but my black pair were surprisingly easy to move in (elf power, I guess), and I could tolerate them in the short term enough to add an even more sensual aspect to my movements.

But the real benefit Sabrina had added was my makeup and hair. She had styled me in a way I never imagined I would allow. Red lipstick and foundation did a lot to bring out my features and make me appear sultry and romantic at the same time, and my hair! My God, I'd never styled it once (again, elven perfection, ha!), but she had given it a wavy quality and then poised it over one shoulder. I was even starting to think I was out of Dennath's league (obviously not, but damn if the Creator hadn't given me a body I'd been *wasting* up until now).

Still, nervousness wracked me. My heart quickened in my chest. I'd confided in Arachne what I was doing, and she sent her forty-third encouraging text.

*'You got this, babe! Trap him in yo web already! Eat him up!'*

Why couldn't she have become a centaur? But the horse puns would have been worse, I suppose.

*'Thanks,'* I replied. *'Here I go.'*

I put my phone away, took a deep, cleavage rising breath, and then strode up the hill. It was a good thing my elven grace made walking up a hill in heels no problem whatsoever. I reached the top and stood beside him for a moment, long enough for the handsome dark elf to stir, realise someone was standing right near him, and turn around to face me.

His reaction alone made it all worth it. It went from concerned to surprised to deeply, deeply intrigued, his eyes roaming up and down over my body in all the exact ways Sabrina had intended and Arachne encouraged.

“Xalyth?” Dennath asked, straining to keep his eyes trained on my own. “Why - why are you out here?”

I couldn't help but giggle, brushing my hair a little from my clear nervousness.

“For you, silly. I recall you asked me out a few times, right?”

Something of his former confidence returned to his face. He smiled, and it was dashingy handsome.

“I do believe I did. Are there any updates on that front?”

I looked up at the stars. They really were beautiful. But for once, I felt *more* beautiful. And something about that finally felt *right*.

“I was thinking you could take me to a party,” I said. “As your date.”

He smiled. “I'd really like that.”

“You know what? So would I.”

It seemed the university life would suit this drow girl after all. Thank you, Great Change.

**The End**