HOMECOMING

SEASON 2

Homecoming

Episode 13

Chris, you don't have to sleep here, on the couch. The bed is large enough for both of us.

It's... It's not about the space, Kayla.

I know. But you can't keep isolating yourself. Not from me. Not if we're going to make this work.

I... I don't want to make you uncomfortable with... with all of this.

Uncomfortable? It's *you*, babe. My fiancé. The love of my fucking life. No matter what happened, or what changes you've gone through. You're still you. And I want you. *All* of you.

Okay, Kayla. Let's... let's try.

Good! Oh, and I know your…chest…has been hurting because of the ratty old shirts you've been wearing. I have something of mine to help. It's soft and should help with the soreness.

Are... Are you really okay with this? Me wearing this kind of stuff?

They're just clothes. You wear what's comfortable for you, and I'll wear what's comfortable for me. Besides...

...*you* wearing *that* makes me feel less embarrassed about wearing *this*.

Wow!

Yeah? I know I'm not as thin as I was three years ago, but it turns out your best friend, lover, and fiancé disappearing is really fucking stressful. I ate my feelings. And, God, were there *a lot* of feelings.

Hey, stop. You're gorgeous.

T-Thanks. Now, let's get in that bed. My nips are cold!

...and then, she had the audacity to accuse *me* of delaying the process! Can you believe that? I've been working my ass off on this case!

She sounds like a real piece of work.

Oh, you have no idea! Just yesterday, she tried to slip in a new witness - a week before trial! I swear, she's pushing her luck.

Oh, God. I'm sorry. I'm just rambling on about work. You must be bored out of your mind.

Not at all. I... I missed our talks. I missed listening to you.

Well then, get ready for a lot more stories about the law firm. Hey, um, I've been wondering...

Yeah?

Have you been thinking about going back to med school? You know, finishing your degree?

I've been thinking about lots of things.

Oh. Good. That's... good. And, um, what about seeing a doctor? You know, about maybe beginning to reverse some of the things that happened to you? I know you don't have insurance right now, but I could pay—

Honestly? It's not super high on my priority list.

...Okay. And is there a reason for that?

Kay, I know this is all very sudden for you, but I've been living with these tits and…the other changes…for three years. I won't say I don't hate them, but I've learned to live with them. For now.

Sure. B-But you *do* hate them. Yeah?

Why do I feel like I'm being cross-examined? Yeah, of course I do. Why would you ask me that?

Sorry, I'm just… awkward. You know that. Anyway, you don't hate *all* tits though right? Do you like mine?

No. I mean, *yes*. But… Kayla, what are you doing?

I'm trying to…to have sex with you, dammit!

But you were always the one to initiate and I'm so, so *bad* at this. My therapist said it might be good for us to try and... be intimate. I know it's a lot. And I know you're still dealing with... everything. But it's... it's important to me, Chris. To us. To reconnect... as a couple.

And we can take it slow, okay? We can stop whenever you want. I promise to be sensitive... to be patient. But... but I need this, Chris. Like I said, I need you. *Please*.

Alright. We can... We can try.

Kay, I... I need you to know, things... things down there don't work the same way anymore.

I know. And it's okay. We'll figure it out together. This is just a blowjob. Those used to drive you wild.

Well, yeah. You were like a sorceress with your tongue.

Still am, babe. Now, just... lean back. Let yourself go. I'm here, and I'm not going anywhere.

Mm. Fuck, you taste good, babe. *Different*, but... but good!

I... Um...
How are you? Does it feel good?

Babe?

Chris!?

Goddammit! Shit. I… We… We need to stop, please.

Yeah, of course. Are you okay? Did I hurt you?

No. Honestly, I…I didn't really feel much of anything. I'm kind of numb down there now.

Oh. I… Oh.

Yeah. I'm sorry, Kay. I'm just not very good at receiving pleasure anymore. At least… Um… Anyway, yeah, I'm sorry as hell.

That's fine, Chris. This is my fault. I pushed us too far, too fast. I just missed you for so damn long and, I don't know why… I can't explain it, but…

What?

I…I still feel like you're not *here*. Not entirely. I hoped that maybe if we reconnected physically, I could help bring you back all the way. God, saying it out loud makes it sound so damn stupid.

It's *not* stupid. You're right, I'm not all here yet. But I promise, I'm working hard on fixing that. Give me a month.

A month? Why a month?

I…I have a plan. As for intimacy, it's hard. When I was locked away, it was easier to ignore my changes most of the time. But here, seeing *you* see *me*, it's giving me… Well, it's giving me dysphoria. But… But I think I know how I can fix that. At least for tonight.

You sit there, Kayla. Just give me a second.

Sure. But are you alright? Do you have a headache? I have Motrin.

...

Babe?

Okay, you're…you're starting to freak me out just a little. Can you say something?

You're pissed at me, aren't you? I always hated the silent treatment! Maybe it's because I talk for a living. Look, I'm sorry I listened to my therapist. She's an idiot, obviously. I'll—

Oh! Um. That's an…*interesting*…way to stand.

Babe, where are you going? That's my underwear drawer, but it's for my, uh, *special* underwear. If you need bottoms – Oh, no. Y-You're putting *that* on!?

Wow, you're *really* good with those straps.

Holy crap. I... Chris...?

Well, of course it's Kris, hun. Who else would I be?

Homecoming

Episode 14

Chris, honey, w-why are you wearing that?

Why, don't you like it? I'd assume so, since it's yours. Sure, it's a bit small up top but the color suits me, don't you think?

I mean, yes, you look... you look beautiful, but... it's just... it's a little unexpected. You were just freaking out a minute ago. Not that I blame you!

And your voice sounds different. You're speaking in a higher pitch than you were before. Also your mannerisms… God, it's almost like…

This is my natural voice after the surgery. I guess once I got out, I tried to talk in a lower pitch to feel more like the old me. But, c'mon, do you really want to discuss the minutiae of my change now? Can't we just enjoy each other's company? I mean, isn't that what this night was supposed to be about? Time for you and me to reconnect?

Chris, c'mon. You were so upset and now suddenly nothing's wrong? That isn't like you... Or, at least, it wasn't. You're *acting*, honey. What's going on?

Oh. S-Sorry. Talking... talking's never been my strong suit. Frankly, I just don't see the point. Not when there's *so* many other things we could do together.

That's just not true. We used to talk for hours, remember? About everything – the future, our fears, how bad the Bears were playing. Chris, talk to me. *Please*. I want to reconnect but this feels like I'm with a stranger.

Tonight is about you, Kay. I want you to feel special. Loved. I want to give you everything you deserve. Let me take care of you.
We need to take care of *each other*. That's how it works, remember? It's how it always worked with us. If this is how you cope, then I'll try to understand.

But promise me that you won't lose yourself in this. You're here, with me, not stuck in Bella's hellhole anymore. Don't forget that. And don't forget I love you.

I could *never* forget that, Kay. I love you too.

So, let's take care of each other, like you said. But just for tonight...

…let me make you feel special. Let me make you feel loved. Because you are. You're so very loved. Chris never—I mean, *I* never stopped loving you. Not for a moment. And I never will.

I... I know you still love me. I've never doubted that. And that's what makes all this so hard. I wanted to understand what you went through, and it's... it's so much more horrifying than I ever could've imagined. But I still want to understand. I *need* to understand. Because I still love you too, and I want to help you heal.

You *are* helping. More than you could ever know! But right now, what I really need—

—is you. Let's not talk any more for tonight. Let's just... *be*. Okay?

Mmm. God, I haven't been kissed like that in years.

That's a shame, sweetie. I guess we'd better make up for lost time.

Oh!

Oh, God! Your tongue and lips feel amazing! Wow, you... you've gotten pretty good at this, huh?

Well, it doesn't hurt that I've got a pair of my own to play with now. Gives me a better idea of what feels good.

I also came to understand how differently men and women experience to sex. For a man, the pleasure in the act is very... on the nose, shall we say. But with a woman, pleasure is an art. There's so much more to it than the primary act.

It's in the kissing, the touch, the gaze... And it's in all the little things... like the way your breath catches when I stroke your inner thigh just like this, or the way your eyes close in delight when I kiss your stomach like so.

Mmm. Go on.

Oh. Are you...? Oh! Fuck! Chris!
FUCK!

Yes! God, don't stop. P-Please don't fucking stop! *Fuck!*

Homecoming

Episode 15

Chris! I haven't felt like this – like *really* felt like this – since... since you left. God, *yes*, keep going!

I missed you so much. Fuck, you're good at this! No offense, but you used to be, well, kinda clumsy with your fingers.

Remember, take deep, slow breaths. And, well, while most of my clients were men, a few women did find their way in. And from them, I learned some things. My pleasure didn't matter, but there's did. I earned extra points if the ladies booked me again.

Chris, please, d-don't—

Sorry, yeah. No shop talk.

Oh, *fuck*. You're so deep! This… This may sound strange, but you seem even more passionate now. Not that you weren't before that bitch took you, but now it's… different.

When you're objectified, stripped of your identity, forced into being something you're not, the only thing that keeps you anchored to the human world is passion. Passion is an emotion so tangible... so *visceral*. It's the one thing that reminded me that I wasn't just a *thing*. I was a human being.

I love you, Chris. Like, truly, deeply, and hopelessly. I'm so happy to have you back in my life. It was…empty without you. Hollow. Thank you for putting your fears aside for us. I had an *amazing* time tonight.

Me too, Kay. You're… Well, you're the only constant in my universe. I love you so much.

Mmm. H-Hey, babe, do you think you could, um, switch back to your *other* voice? I know it's not totally masculine because of the surgery but...

Sorry, I... I can't. But it'll be back in the morning. Speaking of which, I'm sleepy as hell. Can we turn in?

Oh. Yeah, sure.

Chris wasn't thrashing or moaning. Hell, he wasn't even snoring. For the first time since he came back, he was sleeping peacefully. No little cries, no mumbled words, no night terrors. It should've been a peaceful night.

But I couldn't shake the feeling that I was in bed with a stranger.

I was lying when I told Chris the night was amazing. That's way too simple. It was *lots* of things: Fun, sure... But also really confusing... and even a little scary.

I mean, yes, he knew how to give me pleasure, but that's no surprise. Chris was always the best lover I ever had – no offense – and now he's even better, but the logistics of it all were just *wrong*. The Chris I knew had this gentle roughness, a sort of primal energy that was both protective and savage. Now? His sensuality is...precise, like an artist. And he's *entirely* focused on the pleasure of his partner.

On the one hand... Yay? But I can't help but feel left out, even if I'm the one getting all the attention.

I don't really know what I expected. I guess I thought that despite the physical changes he was still the same guy I fell in love with, just with boobs. No big deal. The best people I know have boobs.

But he *isn't* the same old Chris. Not entirely. It's like there's a piece of him that's been cut away, and I don't know if it'll ever grow back.

I don't know how to help him. I want to try, really I do. I love him! But I feel so fucking helpless. I'm not the most nurturing person in the world – I've killed every damn houseplant I've ever owned – and I certainly don't know how to deal with this. Or maybe just a coward.

I became a lawyer because I like rules. I like arguments I can win. I like when every situation has a clear answer, even if it's one I don't agree with.

But this – this isn't like that. There's no easy answer here. No formula. No winning.

That's the truth, isn't it?

My fiancé was taken from me, turned into a fucking woman, and forced into sex slavery. Sure, we can try to pick up the pieces, but we can never go back to the way things were.

Is the fight over?

Did I already lose?

The next morning...

P.S. This email is personal and should remain confidential. Since what happened to Chris is all hush-hush, I can't talk to my friends. You're my confidante.

So, Ben, if I see this email in an official police report, I'm coming for you and all of your assets.

Best,
Kayla

Poor girl. Still, sounds like she's beginning to see the truth. Chris was an amazing guy before all this happened. But something broke in him, he went crazy, and fucked up his body and his life. Now he's come crawling back, desperate to make it all right again. Not gonna happen, buddy. At least, not with Kayla.

Still, there's definitely more to the story. Let's see if I can find out what *really* happened...

Oh. Good morning, sir. I'm sorry, this isn't a unisex salon. We only serve female clients here.

I ain't lookin' for a haircut. I'm here on police business.

Police? Uh, what can we help you with?

I'm trying to find a man named Dave McBride—

—who may be *disguised* as a woman named Cindy.

Homecoming

Episode 16

I'm… I'm Cindy. I'm certainly not a 'David' in disguise, though. God, did somebody steal my identity again? Why does that always happen to me? My credit is terrible!

Uh huh, sure. Listen, I'm Detective Harris from up in Chicago. So, I need you to—

Now wait a damn minute, sir.

Huh? What is it, ma'am?

If you're from Chicago like you say you don't have any jurisdiction here. If you're trying to arrest my employee for something this 'David' person did, you can go get our police to come here instead. Also, as far as I'm concerned, you're trespassing right now. So how about you get the hell out of my salon?

Jeez. I'm not arresting anybody, ma'am. I just need to ask *Cindy* here a few questions

Thanks for sticking up for me, Keesha. But it's okay. I'll answer whatever questions he has. Can you finish up with my client? She just needs her hair dried.

Sure, sure. Just don't let this man bully you. He seems like the bullying kind. Look at his beady eyes like a...a lizard!

Thanks for talking with me, but let's get something straight. I *know* you're David McBride. When you were arrested four months ago for public intoxication your fingerprints matched David's back when he, er, *you* were arrested for solicitating a prostitute. So you can cut—

Fuck you! How dare you?

H-Huh? How dare I…what?

Deadname me in front of my boss and client. I'm stealth, you fucker. They don't know I used to be called David. Are you even really a cop? What's your badge number. I'm going to fucking report you – or maybe I'll just call the Chicago Tribune.

Okay, so you're admitting that you are, in fact, David McBride and that—

Stop talking so fucking loud! And don't put words in my mouth, either. I'm not admitting shit. Now why are you hounding me?

Are you a *private* detective? Did my goddamn parents send you? Listen, you tell my dad he had his chance to be a good father. He fucked up. And mom fucked up by keeping quiet. I'm done with both of them. I don't want their help, and I sure as shit don't want to talk to them. I'm not missing, I'm just not the son who they *actually* want to find.

I'm… No, I'm not a private detective. I'm with the Chicago Police Department. And I'm, uh, confused.

Let's start over. Do you know Christopher Bowman?

I know Kris, yeah. Why?

Well, he—

She, you asshole. Don't they give you cops H.R. training?

Er, I… I'm not trying to be disrespectful. Chris is using, um, man-pronouns now. *Again*. Whatever. Anyway, he said that you might be able to shed light on allegations of a crime he claims happened between the dates of—

Wait, did you say *allegations?*

Yes. See, Chris has claimed—

Do I need a lawyer?

I really can't answer that, but I can tell you that Chris hasn't accused *you* of anything. What he has alleged is that—

Stop. I'm not having this conversation in the middle of the road. Hold on.

Keesha, this is a bigger deal than I thought. I need to take my lunch now and talk to this guy.

It's not even ten o'clock, Cindy.

I know, I'm sorry. It's an emergency.

Okay, hun, just please, please, *please* don't get yourself arrested again. I can't afford another bail.

I won't, I promise. And if I'm not back in an hour, this Benjamin guy murdered me and dumped my body in the river.

NOTE TO SELF
FAMOUS
ONION RINGS
THEY'RE LEGENDARY
ONLY HERE AT
FUGAZI DIVE BAR
BAR
Hey, Murph. How's your day going?
Cindy baby! You're looking gorgeous as ever. But, wow, it's early even for you.
Yeah, yeah. Don't give me grief.

And who's this sharp-dressed gentleman?

A detective. He needs to talk to me.

I see. Well, I hope you ain't gonna punch him like the last guy who 'talked' to you in my bar. Right?

That bastard grabbed my tits, Murph!

Cindy, baby, you *asked* him to cop a feel. Everybody heard you.

No, I *dared* him. Anyway, give me two beers, please. You know the brand.

On your tab?

Fuck that. The 'sharp-dressed gentleman' is paying.

Ain't that right, detective?

Oh, uh, sure. But I can't drink while I'm on duty.

Then don't drink. I didn't order the second beer for you. I'll need the extra lubrication If we're gonna talk about Kris and any *allegations*.

Right. So, here's what happened. Chris showed up at my police station a few months ago. He'd been missing for years. He said—

Kris wasn't missing. She just wasn't where anybody was looking. It's the same story over and over again, man.

Uh, right. But what he said was—

I don't need the backstory, dammit. And if you call Kris 'he' again, I'm walking out. Just what is she *alleging?* Because I'm starting to think this is all bullshit.

Chris says you met under...bad circumstances...and I'm trying to figure out what really happened.

Well, she's right about that, yeah. We were both in bad circumstances back then.

Although some of us were worse off than others. I mean, Kris was a med student with a beautiful fiancée and I was… Well, I was getting arrested for soliciting sex workers as you so kindly pointed out.

And is…is that how you were kidnapped?

How I was what?

You met somebody you thought was a woman for sex, but then you were drugged and taken.

Seriously, what the fuck are you talking about?

Um. Chris claims you were both captives. He says you were given hormones and surgeries that you didn't want. Basically, he's saying someone turned you into a woman against your will.

Wait. Kris… Kris is saying we were *force feminized!?*

I… I guess so?

Fuck, not this again.

Again? I'm not following. Were you kidnapped?

Do I *look* kidnapped?

Not at the moment. Chris claims you were let go.

Listen, Detective. Kris is my friend but, well, she's crazy. And I mean that literally.

But I can see this is serious, so I'll tell you the whole damn story if you sit down, shut up, and just let me talk. Don't interrupt or I'll take my beer and leave. It's a long and kind of fucked-up story and I hate repeating myself. Deal?

I'm listening.

You see, it all started when I was three years old and I told my mom I was a girl.

Mom told dad. That didn't go over so well. He was a veteran, and he didn't want no pansy son. And so, for the next twenty years, I tried to forget who I was. Drugs. Booze. Sex. I used everything and anything to drown out the voice screaming inside of me, begging to get out.

I tried to hide from it. I tried to ignore it. But you know what happens when you repress something for so long? It explodes. I was desperate. I was terrified. I didn't have any money or health insurance, so I went looking for help.

I found it.

They called it Butterfly Beach. A stupid name for a…a wonderful place.

When I arrived, I knew I was exactly where I belonged. The resort was going to make me into the woman of my dreams – free of charge! All I had to do was learn how to look pretty.

Once I was pretty, though? Well, that's when the real fun would begin.

See, Butterfly Beach wasn't a charity. It was a business – and me and Kris were investments.

Homecoming

Episode 17

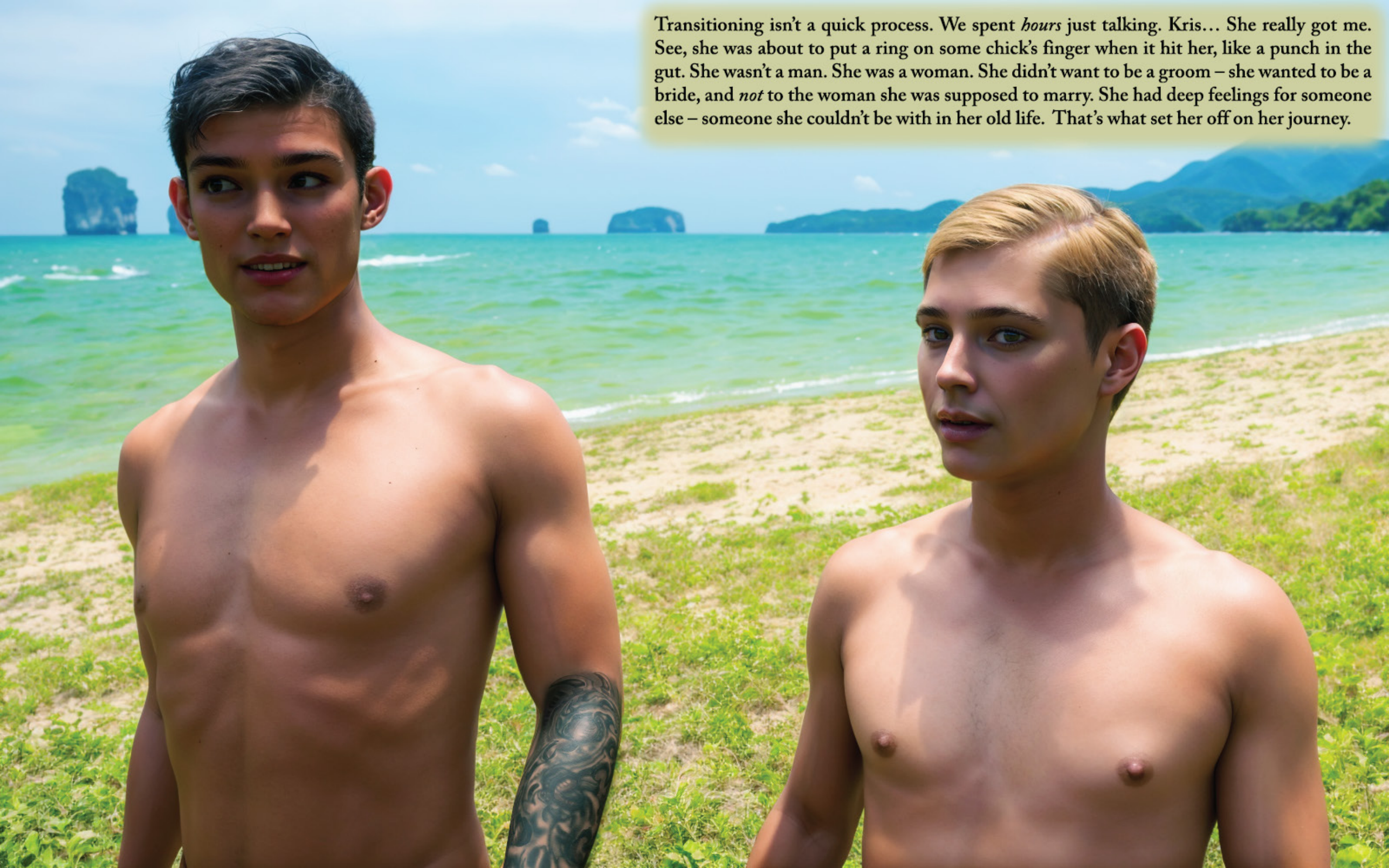
Yeah, okay. So, it all started in a tiny shithole of a room. But hey, it was free, right? At least for the moment. And we had a beautiful view! They got us started on the hormones right away. And it was... Well, it was like breathing oxygen for the first time. I know, I know. Every trans person will tell you that. But it's true! It's like you've been drowning your entire life, but you didn't realize it until you got that first breath.

That's when Kris and I met. Just a couple of scared Gen Z baby trans women depending on the kindness of a business. Smart?

Fuck no! *Desperate.* Have you seen how horrible trans healthcare is in the United States? Or anywhere else, for that matter? Obviously, Kris and I bonded fast. We were just two lost souls diving into a fuckin' sea of estrogen in a foreign country, signing our lives away for a few years, and hoping for the best.

I mean, what could go wrong?

Transitioning isn't a quick process. We spent *hours* just talking. Kris… She really got me. See, she was about to put a ring on some chick's finger when it hit her, like a punch in the gut. She wasn't a man. She was a woman. She didn't want to be a groom – she wanted to be a bride, and *not* to the woman she was supposed to marry. She had deep feelings for someone else – someone she couldn't be with in her old life. That's what set her off on her journey.



I remember, one day I was looking down and I saw these little things poking out of my chest. I mean, they were so small you could hardly see 'em. But I knew what they were. They were the start of my breasts. I literally jumped for joy! It felt so fucking right. Like all the pieces were finally falling into place. For the first time in my life, I felt like I was on the right path. No more hiding, no more pretending. Just me, being me. It was the happiest day of my life.

And Kris, that lucky bitch, she was a natural! I mean, her body took to the hormones like a duck to water. I remember one day at the pool, she was laughing and comparing her boobs to mine. I mean, we'd only been on the hormones for a couple of months and she was already bigger than me! She was definitely winning the boob race.

Kris always had me beat in the tits department. I never caught up, and I was okay with that. I was happy with my body. I mean, I always felt I had the better ass. Don't you agree, detective? I could give Kim K a run for her money. But yeah, once we were transitioned enough, they moved us to a nicer room. It was no five-star hotel, but it was way better than that first crummy room. But of course, that's when the bill came due. Nothing in life is free, and we were about to start paying Butterfly Beach back for our transitions.

They started giving us all these fancy clothes and makeup. I mean, damn, I felt like a princess or some shit. It was wonderful. Then the men started showing up. Or, more specifically, we were brought out to be…selected…by them. These were men who love trans women. And you know what? I loved it. I loved every second. I felt desired, I felt seen. It was like I was living in a dream.

But Kris... Kris had a harder time with it. Her dysphoria started getting really bad. Worse than ever, she said. It was like no matter how much she changed on the outside, there was still a part of her that felt… wrong.

For me? Different story. When the men started choosing me... I can't even describe how ecstatic I was. I've always loved men. I mean, I loved being around them, I loved being *desired* by them.

I was in my element. The attention, the lust, the desire... It was intoxicating. I felt like I was finally living the life I was always meant to live. All the pain, all the struggle, it was all worth it, just for those moments.

Being with them as a woman...
It was a dream come true.

Just when the caterpillar thou
her world was over, she began to fly.

Oh, and – of course – each client was going toward my 'repayment' fund. But talk about a win-win, you know!?

Kris didn't really find her niche until Al showed up. That guy, he was into this whole forced fem role-play thing. And Kris? She was always his first pick. And, hell, she loved it! Al was her favorite. But, you see, he was playing into her dysphoria. Not intentionally, mind you. But that's why I think she was weirdly comfortable with it.

Kris still wasn't comfortable with the woman she was on the inside, and she still felt all this guilt about the privileged life she'd given up. So, this forced fem thing? It was like it gave her an excuse, a way to justify becoming herself. But it was a double-edged sword. That shit was messing with her head, big time!

But then, something changed. Al was always into this psychedelic shit, right? He said he had connections to these big pharma companies, always on the cutting edge of something new. One night, he brings in this new drug. I don't know what it was, but Kris... Kris took it. And after that night, she was different. She started acting like she was living that forced fem role-play, but like, in real life. And even Al, he was freaked out by it. I mean, we were all just playing, you know? But Kris... Kris started living it, and it was... It was scary, man.

Kris started having these nightmares. She'd wake up in the middle of the night screaming, sweat pouring down her face. She'd talk about being kidnapped, about being forcibly feminized. She even started saying we'd *all* been brainwashed into being trans. It was nuts! I mean, I get it, we were doing some heavy shit. But we chose this path, you know? We weren't victims. We were just... trying to be ourselves. And it was just... it was just heartbreaking, watching her unravel like that.

Al felt terrible. He tried to get her some help, but she refused to see anybody. The poor bastard even offered to fly her back to Chicago. She refused. She was convinced that if she left, "they'd" come for her.

I tried to talk some sense into her, but it was like she was stuck in this loop of paranoia and fear.

I mean, I'm not a shrink or anything, but it was clear something was going on with her. Something *way* deeper than gender dysphoria. And, believe me, that's saying something! But Kris... She was battling something dark and relentless. Some... I dunno... some other part of herself. And it was tearing her apart.

I kept trying to talk to her, but it was useless. She insisted that I'd beem brainwashed. That I was really a man. You can imagine what that did for my sense of self! And she started isolating herself, stopped seeing clients, barely ate. It was like she was wasting away right before our eyes. And the worst part was, there wasn't a damn thing we could do about it. Kris had to fight this battle on her own. I felt like I was losing a sister.

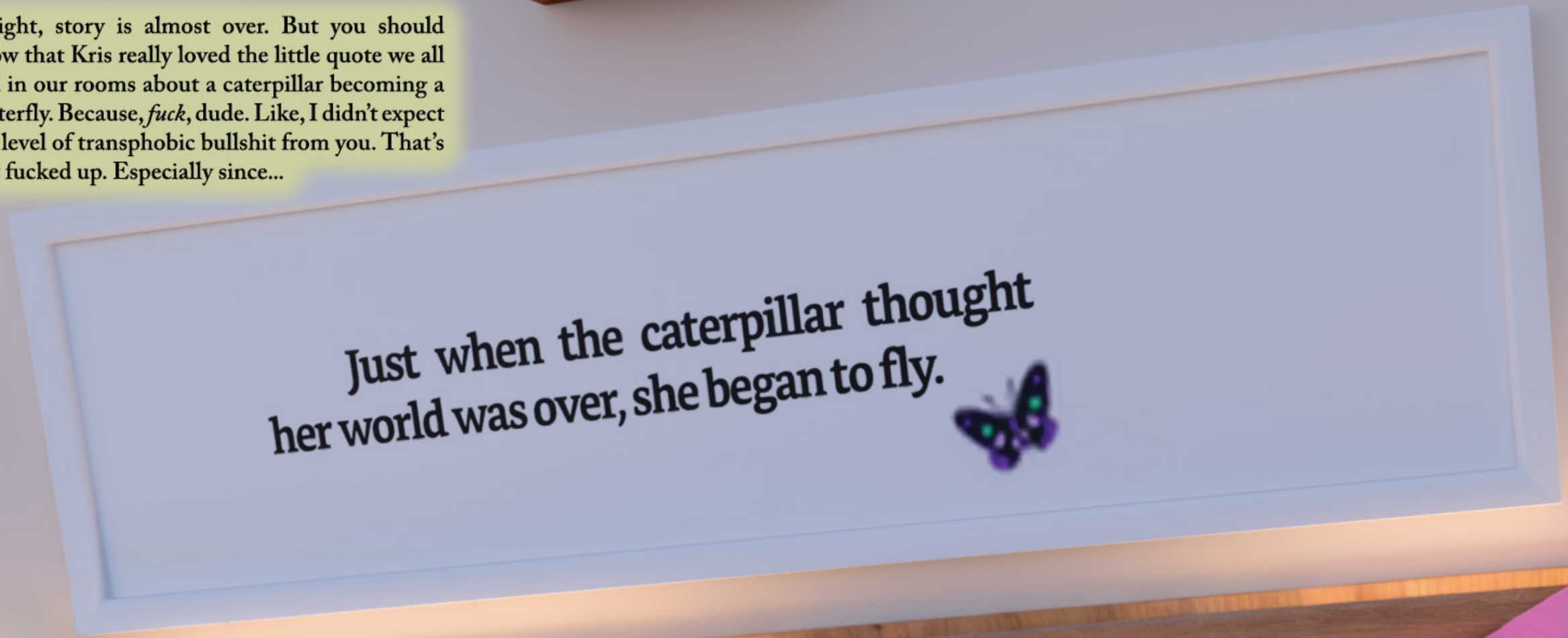
Eventually, Kris... she started getting violent. There was this one time when she just went berserk and started smashing the walls. Butterfly Beach got really concerned, I mean, not for the property damage but for Kris! She was a mess. Al stepped in, again. He was always looking out for her. He took it upon himself to get her back to America.

You see, Al wasn't just a client. He was a friend. To both of us. He cared about Kris, and he wanted to get her the help she needed. So he arranged for her to be taken back to America. We all thought that would be the end of it... that Kris would finally get the help she needed and start living her life as the woman she was meant to be. But, if what you're telling me is true... then, I guess, we were all wrong.

As for me, I stayed until I achieved my ultimate goal. I… I was able to *complete* my transition. I was… I mean, I… I… I…

Well, what's the point beating around the bush? Ha! Get it? *Bush!* Because… Well, anyway, I have a custom pussy now. Kris could've had one, too, if she hadn't gone crazy. Poor girl.

Alright, story is almost over. But you should know that Kris really loved the little quote we all had in our rooms about a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Because, *fuck*, dude. Like, I didn't expect the level of transphobic bullshit from you. That's just fucked up. Especially since...



Yeah? Since... Since what?

Oh my god! You don't know? You're the reason Kris transitioned! Well, the reason she got the courage to transition, at least! Kris is in love with you! Always was since college! She used to talk about you all the time. That's how I knew who you were as soon as you said your name. You were her best friend… The one who saw who she *really* was, even if you didn't know *what* you were seeing.

God, how she wished she could've been with you! But she knew she couldn't. Not as a man. And so, she was hoping that if she became the woman she knew she truly was inside, you'd fall in love with her. It's tragic, really. She gave up everything for a chance at love, and in the end, she lost herself.

And you, I guess.

Right, Detective?

Hold the fuck on. Y-You're saying…
Kris is in love with me!?

Homecoming

Episode 18

You're saying Kris... was in love with me? That's why he did all this?

Don't flatter yourself too much, Detective. It's not like she became a girl just for you. Kris was always Kris, deep down. But, yes, she hoped that maybe as a woman... you'd see her differently.

No, I don't buy it. We were best friends. I knew Chris better than I know my own brother. If there was something like that... *love*... I would've seen it.

You wouldn't be the first straight guy to miss the signs. Like, there's an entire genre of rom-coms about that.

I'm a detective with the Chicago police department. My whole job is to notice things people want to keep hidden.

And yet here we are, with you having missed the biggest secret your best friend ever had. Irony's a bitch, ain't it?

Signs or no signs, Chris and I... It'd never work.

And why not, detective? You're not against girls like me, are you? There's no reason to be scared. We're not aliens. And I *know* you want me. I caught you staring with those pretty brown eyes of yours.

Yeah, staring just like that…
At my eyes...

...my tits...

...my ass.

You like what you see, I can tell. I'm glad. This body cost Butterfly Beach a fortune. I'm pretty selective on who I let enjoy the fruits of their investment.

And although I don't usually fuck cops - you know, since you're all fascist pigs - I might make an exception here. I can see what Kris saw in you.

A good face, strong arms... a certain... danger in your eyes. What do you say? We still have, oh, twenty minutes before my lunch break ends. I promise you'll forget all about Kris and whatever mess she's gotten herself into.

Get off. This isn't a game. Your little seduction act isn't going to distract me.

Oh, did I strike a nerve, detective? It's not my fault you think I'm hot and that's fucking with your fragile masculinity or whatever—

No, you're just full of shit. This isn't adding up.

Let me get this straight. Three Chicagoans... all at the same tropical 'resort.'

So what? It's a big city. There were plenty of other girls from Los Angeles, New York—

And on the night Chris disappears, the hospital's CCTV footage gets mysteriously corrupted. *Convenient.*

What hospital? I don't know anything about that.

Another thing. Chris never owned a passport. So how'd he get into another country, let alone back home? You think I'm stupid?

Oh. Well, um, Butterfly Beach has its ways. We never needed passports.

More convenient answers. The mysterious, magical 'Butterfly Beach' that fixes everything.

They were well-connected, Detective.

Do me a favor. Take a look at this.

Is this the part where you give me your phone number, Detective? Sorry, I don't think I'm as interested any—

Recognize this individual?

Fuck! I—

That's *you* talking to Chris the night he vanished. Correct?

Where...where'd you get this?

The Chicago Police may not be as rich as Bikini Beach or whatever, but we also have 'our ways.' I said *corrupted* CCTV footage, not erased.

Didn't expect us to find this, did you? It took the boys in digital forensics a couple *years* to extract this single frame from the hospital's hard drives. But I kept at them, week after week. I can be a real pain in the ass, as you're probably beginning to discover for yourself.

See, I'm a pragmatist. I figured Chris was dead. Generally, once a man disappears, that's the end. But I couldn't give up. He was my best friend – and Kayla was dying inside, slowly, like she'd been fucking *poisoned*.

So, even if I couldn't save him, if I could find his killer... Well, that'd be something.

At first, I thought this image was worthless. This woman talking to Chris? I didn't know who the hell she was until I walked into the salon ten minutes ago. Honestly, I figured you were just some hooker he turned down. There's always flocks of 'em around that part of town. But it was you! So cut the bullshit.

Detective, I... I wish... I don't... *Fuck*. No, no, no...

Now!

Okay, okay. Fuck it. We met up that night, Chris and I, and we left together for Butterfly Bay.

Bay? I thought it was 'Beach.'

Slip of the tongue. Listen, I didn't say anything because we met on a recruitment forum. It was based here in Chicago. And I can't have it shut down - it's a lifeline for people like us.

A forum for... what exactly? Voluntary disappearances to get turned into a woman?

It's... It's much more than that. It's about starting over, reinventing yourself in every way. But if you dig, that all goes away. We met up that night as a sort of pact to go through with everything.

In your underwear?

I... Yeah. Kris was bringing me a change of clothes. I was out of work and living with my parents, and they didn't approve of my 'lifestyle' so—

Did you miss the part where I'm a goddamn detective? Did you think I didn't check up on your history before I came to find you? You were reported missing two years before Chris. Nobody else seemed to give a shit, but your parents were devastated. They put up a $50,000 reward. They didn't have a clue about your 'lifestyle,' as you call it. And, as far as I can tell, they still don't know you're alive. So, why don't we skip the part where you feed me more lies and get to the truth?

Let go! You're hurting me, detective!

What the hell happened that night? Are you part of a kidnapping ring? Are you the reason he disappeared? You lured him?

I...I already told you everything. Please, believe me. *Please!*

Y-You're scared, aren't you? Really scared.

You're imagining things.

Don't bullshit a bullshitter, Cindy. You're terrified - but not of me. Who are you afraid of?

Hey! You can't be manhandling my customers like that! Listen, detective, I don't care what badge you flash. You hurt *my* friends in *my* bar, you answer to me – and to Gwretched here.

Sir, she's involved in an ongoing investigation.

Don't 'sir' me, asshole. That don't give you the right to grab anybody. You touch Cindy again and you're out on your ass, cop or no cop.

Fine. Maybe I'll just arrest her here and now.

Please, just... drop it, detective. This will... It'll resolve itself soon. Chris will be fine. He...*she*...she will do what she needs to do. And she'll get used to being a girl. Even if she doesn't want to be one. *Anymore*, I mean. You just... you survive. You adapt.

And if you don't?

Then you don't. Survival of the fittest, right?

I'll find the truth. No matter what it takes. I know Al exists and that he's in Chicago. So, I'll start with him. He's a big piece of this puzzle. But if his story is different, you're going to jail.

Be careful, Detective. Some puzzles aren't meant to be solved.

I'll take my chances.

You don't know what you're risking. I bet you like that cock of yours. I…I sure as hell kinda liked mine.

Sergeant Santos speaking.

Hey Camila. Why so professional, you know it's me?

Because it annoys you, Ben. How'd the interview go?

It was fucked! I think I may have been wrong about…*everything*. Well, almost everything. We need to reactivate the task force. I'll talk to the captain. But first I need a full work-up. Find me everything on an 'Al' living in Chicago with a son named Dustin. Hopefully there's not, like, a hundred of them.

I'm on it. Al with a kid named Dustin. Anything else?

Yeah, check for connections to a place called Butterfly Beach or Bay. And any links to a Chicago-based forum for... reinventing yourself. Specifically, reinventing yourself by switching genders.

You think this is bigger than your formerly-missing now-bosom buddy?

Ha ha, very funny, C. But, you know what? I swear it's actually starting to smell like a whole damn conspiracy.

Is that what Mr. McBride told you?

No, he – *she* – tried to feed me some story about a tropical paradise where people go to become their true selves. Butterfly Beach or Bay... But it was bullshit. Or, at least, mostly bullshit.

Good thing you saw through that pervert's lies. He must not have been very…convincing.

Nah, she tried. But something didn't sit right. I've got a gut feeling there's more to this than some fantasy escape plan. She's scared of something. Or *someone*. Keep your eyes open. And let me know the moment you find anything.

You can count on me, Ben.

Thanks, C. I'll be in touch.

PALE ALE
PORTER
Need another beer, Cindy baby?
I need three.
Ha! Well, let's start with one. On the house. Uh, hey… Not to pry, but what was that you said about liking your... cock?
Yeah, I… I had one. *Past tense.* I'm not really a... I mean... I used to be—

Hey, ain't no shame there. I've had bits taken off too. Got my appendix yanked, my wisdom teeth, and a weird growth on my thigh that looked like a third nut...

You know how to charm a girl.

I'm a regular prince. Look, I don't know what you've been through or why. But here's the thing - sometimes we gotta let go of parts that hurt us or keep us from moving on with our lives, or that keep us from being who we're supposed to be. That might be an infected appendix or it might be ...something else.

Point is, Cindy, I feel a special kind of I feel a special kind of connection to you. You've been through some real shit, huh?

Yeah. Real shit.

Well, this place is a sanctuary for anyone with scars – inside or out.

Thanks. I... I appreciate that. More than you know.

Enough to pay your tab?

Funny. But we both know my boobs bring in more thirsty, horny dudes to your lame dive bar than I could ever drink.

Can't deny the truth.

Okay... Time to be brave for once in my life. I'll be right back, Murph. I need to make a call.

Hello? Cindy? I thought we weren't gonna call each other until—

Yeah, dude. And I also thought we weren't gonna talk to the *fucking* cops! Like we'd been warned! What the fuck were you thinking?

Huh? I haven't talked to any cops. At least, not beyond my initial interview. What's going on? You sound scared.

Scared? I am fucking *terrified!* Look, the Cunt came to visit me the other day. When I saw her, I nearly shit my panties. She'd left me alone for almost a whole year. I thought it was over! I thought...!

Calm down. *Breathe*. Tell me what happened.

Okay. She... She told me a Chicago Police detective named Benjamin Harris would be coming to ask me questions about you. Then she gave me this whole story to recite, told me that if I wasn't convincing that I'd be headed back to Bella's! I thought – hoped – that maybe it was something you wanted the detective to know…?

Hold on! Ben came to see you? How'd he know where to find you? I swear, I haven't told him anything. The only person I… I…

Chris? *Chris!?* Bitch, are you there?

Yeah, I'm here. Everything is under control.

No, we're spiraling! Listen, the reason I'm calling is to tell you that I think the Cunt has it out for you. I saw it in her beady eyes, man. That bitch hates you. She wants you to fail, and now I'm betting she's doing everything in her power to make sure you end up back at the Bordello. And maybe me, too!

That *won't* happen. But my current living situation isn't tenable. That's where the leak happened. I'm sorry I put you in a difficult spot. I… I should've known better. I'll get out immediately.

Bella set me up with a small apartment in Lincoln Park. I have everything I need. A wig. Cosmetics. Even hormones. She's been…generous. Financially, speaking.

I've been putting off what I need to do. But that's over, I promise. I'll get down to business.

Kris will go on the hunt, starting tonight...

...and I'll find a man who *deserves* this. Someone who makes the world a worse place just by breathing. There's no shortage of bastards in Chicago. One less won't be missed.

When they mess with me - and they will - they'll find this bitch bites back.

Homecoming

Episode 19

4 hours earlier...

Remember what I told you, Chris? You can't live without these. It's about reality – *our* reality. This injection? This little pill? They're the only thing keeping us from falling apart completely.

So you need to make a choice, and you need to make it fast. Because every day that passes is another day lost, another day closer to the deadline. I know what I want. And deep down, beneath all that denial and anger... I think you do, too. Take the hormones. Stay functional. What else matters?

The whole point is to save to save Kayla, right?To protect her. And you can't do that if you're a mess. And you *are* a mess. Listen to yourself, for God's sake! You think this is healthy? You're in the middle of a psychotic break, Chris. You're talking to me like I'm real. I'm *not* – but I'll take over if you can't handle it. Because one of us needs to be strong right now, and you're crumbling

So, pick up the damn bottle and take your medicine.

No? Fine, ***I'll do it myself.*** Because I'm won't let us go back, and I won't let Kayla be hurt. We've come too far for that. I'll do what we must to survive – ***whatever it takes.***

Now get dressed; it's time for me to find our mark.

Time to put on a show. Smile like you mean it, laugh like you care. Think about that ticking clock and find someone vile enough to deserve this fate.

Damn. Look at that one. She's something else, isn't she?

Yeah, hot as hell. Maybe too hot. What's she doing here alone?

That's the kind of question that'll drive you crazy, man. Who cares why she's alone? The point is, she is. That's opportunity knocking.

It's not that simple. Girls like her, they've got angles. What if she's a pro?

And so what if she is? That just makes things easier. You pay, you play, no complications. Trust me, I've been in this game a long time. She's looking for attention – *my* kind of attention. I won't disappoint her.

All these faces... just masks hiding monsters? No, some of these guys are innocent – just like I was. I need to choose carefully. Someone who deserves this hell.

But how do you weigh a person's sins? How do you decide if they're the one to damn? And even if I find them, what does that make me? Judge? Executioner?

But what fucking choice do I have? The rules are twisted, but clear: find someone or become the prey once more.

You have to be cold, Kris. Ice in your veins. It's survival – his or ours. And it's not going to be ours. *Not again*.

I was created for this – Chris needed someone tough, someone who could handle the shit he couldn't face. That's me. I'm the armor, the shield... and if necessary, the sword.

Remember why we're doing this... for Kayla. For freedom from Bella and her sick games.

So harden your heart. Let's find our villain... and end this nightmare once and for all.

Hey there, you okay? You looked miles away. Big night? You look amazing. I love your dress.

Uh, thanks And, yeah, I'm fine. Just... people watching, you know?

Well, kindly do your people watching somewhere else, will ya? With a beauty like you sitting here, no one's gonna give me the time of day. Move along.

What? There's plenty of bar to go around. I'm not stopping anyone from talking to you.

Yeah, right. Like any guy is going to look my way with you hogging the spotlight. God, you look like you walked right out of Playboy. It's just not fair, you know? Some of us have to work for attention, but you... you just exist and men fall over themselves. So do me a favor and exist somewhere else, huh?

EXIT
Fine, fine. I'll leave you to your... adoring public.
Damn right.

Hey, miss, you almost left without your purse!

Oh, um, it's a clutch, but thanks. Can't believe I—

And these shots are from the gentleman over there – the big guy in the black shirt. He was hoping you'd bring them over and join him for a drink.

next gen
no
available
He wants me to bring them to him?
Yeah, says it's an old tradition or something. Hey, bitchin' tattoo, by the way.

Is this him? The one? He's got that look – the kind that says he's used to getting what he wants, when he wants it. Could be our mark – someone who takes without asking. But he's big! And I'm not... not what I was. If he's the one, if things go wrong...

God, would Bella even be able to change him?

And can I really go through with this? Handing someone over to that...that life? But if he's out there hurting people, using them... maybe he deserves it. Maybe this is justice of a sort. And if I don't do it, Kayla—no, can't think about that.

Maybe he's a one of those big teddy bears. Just choose if you're even going to find out – or leave, go to Ben… And what? Explain everything finally? That is, what Kayla hasn't already told him.

I'd be signing my own death warrant – and Kayla's. Even if he believed me now, without a name, a face, or even a damn clue where Bella hides, what could he even do?

Decide.

Ben, it's me. I... I need your help. It's Chris, he's gone. I woke up this morning and he wasn't there. I've spent the whole day looking for him. I checked all of his old hangouts and practically every restaurant we ever ate together. He wasn't anywhere and I'm really freaking out. This is all my fault!

Listen, last night, Chris and I tried to… you know… And he… He put on that slutty red lingerie you got me for my birthday. He looked… Well, a lot fucking better than I do in it. I tried to stay cool, and I held it together, but after… I couldn't... I just couldn't deal with it and slept in the other room. When I woke up, he'd vanished.

I'm scared, Ben. What if he doesn't come back? What if I pushed him too far? Please, call me as soon as you get this. We have to find him.

God dammit, Chris. Please, please be okay.
I can't lose you again.

Is this seat taken?

It was waiting for you. Please, sit down.

Thanks. And thank you for the shot.

You're welcome. I picked it for a reason. You don't seem like all the other ladies in here. They're sipping on fruity cocktails pretending it doesn't taste like cough syrup. But you... you've got that air about you. You look like a bourbon girl to me – a woman who appreciates the finer things.

Do I now? Well, you're not wrong about my tastes.

To unexpected encounters and pleasant surprises.
And to finding exactly what we're looking for.

Homecoming

Episode 20

And that's number four. Looks like you owe me a hundred bucks, Victor.

Damn. Color me surprised. I didn't take you for a heavyweight, not with your, um, slender figure.

Don't judge a girl by her dress size. Or do you always underestimate women?

Oh, no offense meant. It's a compliment, really. I admire a woman who can drink me under the table.

Compliments will get you nowhere and everywhere, depending on the girl.

So, which is it for you?

Guess you'll have to wait and see. Another round? Double or nothing.

Only if you promise not to take all my money tonight.

Sorry, Victor. I really, *really* can't promise that.

A pretty thing with an iron liver... gotta be a professional.

Professional *what*, Victor?

Oh, come on. A girl like you? You could make a killing as a companion. Or maybe you already do?

Maybe I do. And maybe I'm just here for the whiskey and bad company.

Well, *if* you are in the business... How much for a night of your time?

For you? More than you can afford juding by that old t-shirt.

I have money. I just don't waste it on clothes.

Alright. Let's say...four thousand.

Damn, for one night? That's a lot more than I'm usually willing to pay.

Yeah, and I'm a lot than you *usually* get. You want quality, don't you? Besides, it's not just about the time. It's about the experience.

Fair enough. But for that price, I'll expect something... extraordinary.

Trust me, I'm full of surprises.
And what kind of surprises might those be?

The kind you have to pay to find out.

Oh! Yeah. Yeah, okay. let's get the fuck out of here.

EXIT

So, where are we headed? My apartment, or…

I have a hotel room. You okay to drive?

I'm good. Lead the way, gorgeous.

I'm glad we met. I came here tonight looking for a girl like you. You know, someone who knows the ropes.

And why is that? Personal preference?

Yeah, you could say that. I'm a man of particular tastes. Plus, professionals don't get attached.

Sounds like you've had some trouble with that in the past.

Been following this freak all day. First it sneaks out of the ex-fiancée's apartment, goes to a second undisclosed home, and comes out looking all glam. Now it's hooking up with some unsuspecting bastard who has no idea what it really has under that tight little skirt. Can't intervene, though. That's not what Ben is paying me for. Just observe, take photos, and report. Well, guess I'll follow...

Here she is. My pride and joy. I don't spend money on clothes – I *do* spend money on cars.

She's a beauty. Overcompensating for something?

Very funny. No, I just appreciate the finer things in life. And tonight, that includes you.

Wow. Uh. So, Victor, how deep do your pockets go?

Sweetheart, I have more money than I know what to do with.

That loaded, huh? You in finance or something?

Something like that. Mergers and acquisitions. I tear companies apart and sell the pieces.

Sounds... ruthless.

It's just business. Besides, it funds my hobbies. And tonight, you're my favorite hobby.

As long as you remember—I'm not a toy.

Of course not. You're a rare gem. Hard to find, easy to appreciate. I like women. *A lot*. But they always think they can change me, fix me up. But I'm not a project - I'm a person. With pros, it's different. Clear expectations, clear boundaries.

Now, here, let me get your door.

So you're a no-strings-attached kind of guy. But, c'mon, that kind of wealth comes with connections. You're not someone who's going to be missed in a hurry, are you?

Worried about my well-being? How touching. But no, people know I play hard and that sometimes means I drop off the radar for a bit. No one's going to come looking if I take a little 'vacation' for a night – or even a few, if things go right and your calendar is free.

We'll see how tonight goes, Victor. The hotel is called the Elysium Grand. Ever heard of it?

Shit, yeah, I know it. Fancy joint. You have good taste. So, what about you? Got anyone who'd miss you if you didn't come home tonight?

No. Not anymore. There was someone once. Someone who... would've torn the city apart looking for me. But that's just a ghost now. A memory of another life.

That's deep. Ex-husband or something?

Or something.

Let's just say, homecomings aren't everything they're cracked up to be. Sometimes you forget so much about who you were, you can't fit into that old life anymore. It's like trying to put on a pair of shoes that are too small. You try, and try, but eventually you have to admit it just hurts too much.

Anyway, let's just drive. We have a big night ahead of us.

Homecoming

Episode 21

Jefferson Park, Chicago...

C'mon, man, say the line… Say it!

Knock, knock, knock!
Ugh. Somebody's at the door? It's like 10 pm! Better not be the landlord again. I'm not even a week late, yet!

Hello. Mr. Alan Diorio?

Y-Yes. Who's asking?

My name is Stacy. I'm a friend of a friend. Remember Kris?

Er, I…I don't—

It's okay, I'm not cop or anything. I work with her, and I know she's not staying here anymore. But she needs your help. Again.

God. Is Kris in trouble? I told her to call me if she needed anything.

Oh, you know Kris. She's such a proud girl, Al.

The good news is you can help her. And all you have to do is say exactly what I tell you to say.

The Elysium Grand Hotel
Downtown Chicago...

Damn, that's quite the view. The city looks so nice at night. Peaceful, almost, when you're up this high. You picked a good spot.

The best money can rent, anyway. Hey, so what's with the briefcase you brought from the car? You always travel with it?

No. I brought it in case I met someone like you tonight. Call it... preparation for a memorable evening. Like I told you, I have particular tastes.

You know, there's something about you. You're not like the others.
Should I take that as a compliment?
Take it however you want. But you've got this... aura. Like you've seen things. Been through hell and back.
Hell is other people. And sometimes you get dragged down by them, kicking and screaming.
That's pretty cynical. But I like that. It means you understand the game. No delusions about fairy tales or happy endings.

Happy endings are just stories that aren't over yet. 'They lived happily ever' - until one of them gets stage four cancer, or gambles away the house, or disappears one night getting Chinese take-out.

Want to hear something funny? I was going to be a doctor. I'd almost graduated. Life has a fucked-up sense of humor.

A doctor, huh? That's... unexpected. What happened?

I didn't like to study. I mistook a pre-ganglionic fiber for a post-ganglionic nerve, flunked out.

Damn. Sounds like you've been through the wringer.

Let's just say I know what it's like to lose everything you thought made you who you are.

And now? Who are you now?

Someone who makes the most of what she's got left.

And *that's* my cue to get changed. I left a special outfit in the bathroom. Why don't you get undressed, Victor?

Just freshen up your lipstick. You can do this, Kris. You *must* do this. Obey. Be free.

Oh, Chris... Look at you. So angry, so full of rage. But it's pointless. You can't talk; you can't change anything. You're just a reflection, a shadow of who we used to be.

I know what you're thinking. Victor... he doesn't seem like the monster we imagined would deserve Bella's special treatment. But he's still part of the problem, isn't he? Men like him – they objectify and commodify women like they're toys for their amusement. And let's face it – there is no perfect candidate for this nightmare. No one deserves this hell.

And it's not about deserving! It's about survival. Ours and Kayla's. We do this or we both know what happens next. And I can't—I *won't* let that happen.

So, he...he goes to Bella. We have to protect Kayla at all costs—even if she can't love us like she used to, even if it means sending someone else into the abyss.

No more hesitation. We do the deed with Victor, and then we finish what was started.

Ready for those surprises I mentioned?

Damn, you weren't kidding. You look incredible.

This is just the beginning. I— Wait, what's *that?*

Oh. A strap-on. I thought…I hoped...

I know it's a strap-on, Victor. But it's huge! That is *not* going inside me. Not for four thousand dollars – not for four *million!*

No, no, you got it all wrong. I want... I mean, I thought maybe you could use it...

...on me. Please.

Oh!

Oh...

Homecoming

Episode 22

This is really what you're into, Victor?

Yeah. Look, I know it's not... conventional. But like I said, I have specific tastes. It's a power thing – being vulnerable, at someone else's mercy. It's a rush like no other.

And you trust me with that kind of power?

Well, yeah. You're the professional here. Honestly, that's why I seek out the company of women like you. It's about control, but also letting go. With somebody I might have a... emotional attachment to, it gets complicated. Like, how do you explain that what you *want* is totally different from what they *expect?* Women see me, and they see a big successful man, someone who's supposed to be dominant in every aspect of life. But inside, it's different. I crave the opposite. It's freeing, in a way, to be dominated. To not have to be the one in control all the time.

I get it. More than you know. The need to be something different for the sake of someone else. The relief when you don't have to be who they thought you were – even though more than *anything* you wish you could go back to being the person they loved.

Hey... Sorry if this is out of line or too personal, but are you okay?

I– C'mon, you don't you really give a shit.

No, really. I do. See, I got this problem. I can't get hard unless the girl I'm with is into it. And you seem... I don't know, distant? Like your mind's on something else.

Well, I'm sorry, Victor. Sounds like you have a terminal case of empathy. But don't worry about me. It's just been a *long* day. Let's just focus on making tonight memorable for you. I'm no stranger to role-reversals, so you're in good hands. Although, I have to admit this'll be my first time wearing one of those.

You're safe with me. But...

...my intention...

...is to fuck you...

...until you forget your own name.

Jesus Christ. I think I already did.

Good. Now go stand over there and turn away while I get ready.

Should I take off my clothes?

Not until I tell you to.

Do you need help with the buckles and shit? I know those things can be tricky.

I'll manage. Just give me a minute.

I'm just having a moment...

...of nostalgia.

Okay, Victor. I'm... I'm ready. Turn around in exactly five seconds and come to the balcony.

Goddamn... you look... I don't have words.

Don't need words. Actions speak louder, remember? Now, head over to the bed.

Yes, ma'am.

I just... I want to worship you. You're the most gorgeous, powerful woman I've ever met.

Whatever you say. But how about you worship me in the bed.

Hell, yes.

This is the best fuck I've ever had in my whole goddamn life. You… Oh, *goddamn!*

That's what I wanted for you. Hold on to this feeling… No matter *what* happens after tonight.

24 minutes later...

Why didn't anyone tell me guys could have multiple orgasms!? Holy shit! That's… That's seven.

Ten. I've been counting.

You are... something else. I'm not just saying that. I need you to be my regular girl. I want to see you again. And again. I'll pay whatever you ask.

Shh, here comes another one.

Oh, fuuuuck!

Fucking sickening. That ain't natural.

Well, at least I caught *it* in the act. I'll send these over to Ben as soon as I get some Wi-Fi in the lobby.

The fiancée will be broken-hearted, but it's better she finds out now than later - there's no saving this one.

HOMECOMING

EPISODE 23

God! That's…

Eleven. Lucky number.

Fuck! You're amazing. I've never felt anything like that before. You're like the Michael Jordan of escorts.

Uh, thanks, Victor. How about we take a break? You look like you could use some water. Or an IV drip.

Yeah, that'd be good. As it is, I won't be able to walk straight for a week. But damn, it was worth it. But instead of water, how about booze? The mini bar is fully stocked, after all. Let's make the most of it. On me!

You see this? This little miracle pill is why I'm still at attention. It's like I'm eighteen again.

I'm going to take this off now.

Yeah, please do. But hey, don't go far. I've got a feeling round two could be even better.

You're optimistic.

That's the secret to health, wealth, and happiness. If you expect bad things, that's all you'll see. Believe it or not, I grew up in Englewood. I was the only white kid in the neighborhood. My family was as poor as everyone else's, but my dad always said, 'Expect more from yourself and the world will rise to meet you.' I took that to heart. Look where it got me.

Getting pegged by a $4,000 per night escort in a fancy hotel .

Hell, yeah! America, the land of opportunity, baby.

Victor, have you ever hurt a… a *girl* like me? I mean, in the heat of the moment, things can get out of hand. Ever crossed that line?

Never. I know how it must look—big guy like me, into what we just did. But I have rules. Boundaries. I love women, and I love when they take control. I want them to feel powerful, in charge. It's why I do this—it's an escape from who I have to be in the daylight. You get that, right?

W-Why do you ask? Do I seem like the type who would?

I need some air.

Hey, did I do something wrong? You seem... off.

No, Victor. You didn't do anything wrong. You're just... not what I expected.

Is that bad?

It's not you. Really. You've been... considerate. More than most would be. *Have been.*

Ever feel like you're caught in a current? Like no matter how hard you swim, it just pulls you deeper?
Yeah, I know what that's like, especially when I was a kid. Life can be suffocating sometimes.
It's more than that. It's this... sense of being ensnared. Every move you make just tangles you up tighter. And the worst part? You can *see* the surface. You can see where you need to be, but there's this invisible barrier, and every time you reach for it, it just pushes you back down.
That sounds... exhausting.
It is. And the thing about exhaustion—it wears down your will, bit by bit, until you start thinking maybe it'd be easier to just let go. To stop fighting and accept whatever fate has in store.

But you haven't given up yet, have you?

No. Not yet. But sometimes I wonder if there's any point in struggling at all.

There's always a point. You gotta keep fighting. Even when it seems hopeless. That's how winning is done.

Maybe. Or maybe some fights are lost before they even begin. I'm gonna go freshen up.

Hey, you've been taking care of me all night. I'm still ready to go, so... if you want, it's your turn for some pleasure. I'm an excellent lover, believe it or not.

How thoughtful of you. Maybe. I'll... I'll be back in a minute. Relax on the bed until then. Okay?

Well, here we are again. Where are you, anyway? You're just going to *disappear* and let this happen? Let me take him to her? You're all bark and no bite.

You think I don't know what you're thinking? That I should be strong enough to resist. That I should be *the hero?* Fuck you.

You know what your problem is, Chris? You're a coward. You couldn't handle the pain, so you made *me*. But the pain isn't really what you were afraid of. It was the *pleasure*. Not with most of them, of course. But with… with him. That's what *actually* made me come into being! You were ashamed about what you were feeling—so you chose not to feel at all. No pain, no pleasure, no hate, no love—nothing. Now, though? We're doing this because we have no choice. If it wasn't Victor it'd be someone else.

So come on then! If you've got something to say, now's the time! Because once I walk out of here... it's done. We're past the point of no return.

Silence. That's what I thought. It's always up to me in the end. Always my burden to bear. I'm the armor, and you're the heart I'm supposed to protect. But you know what? I'm sick of it, Chris. Sick of always being the one to make the hard decisions while you just... watch.

I care for Kayla, too. I will protect her. But *you* fell in love with her, not me.

I'm just so damn tired. Fuck you for making me real and then denying me my only joy.

Enough melodrama. Let's end this, for once and for all.

Victor?

Hm? Oh, sorry, just resting me eyes. Getting pegged by the most gorgeous woman in Chicago can take it out of a guy. So, what's the verdict? You want to go for the science fiction double feature or—

What the fuck!?

I... I'm so sorry. Remember to obey and be freed. It'll save you. This isn't the end.

What the hell does that mean? What are you doing with that gun?

Just... just close your eyes, okay? Please. This isn't you, this is me. It's something I have to do.

Put the gun down. We can talk about this. Whatever it is, we can figure it out.

There's nothing to figure out! I wish there were another way. But there isn't.

Listen carefully. I'm going to tell you what you need to know to survive. First, obey. Dignity is worthless. Just make it through the night and the next day and the day after that. You do what you're told, when you're told.

Who's making you do this? Is someone forcing you? I have connections! I can help get you out of this.

Second, be smart. *She'll* give you points for certain... services. The more intimate the act, the more points she awards. Keep track of them. They're your lifeline out of there.

Points? What are you talking about? Who is 'she'? Talk to me! We can go to the police right now!

Third, don't trust anyone. You may meet others like us there, but remember that everyone has their own agenda. Survival turns people into things they never thought they'd be.

This is insane! Someone's playing with your head! You don't have to do this. Let me help you fight them!

Fourth, find someone to hold onto—someone from before all of this. They'll keep you grounded when she tries to break you down. But know that once you get out, *if* you get out, the person you become won't fit into the life you had. Square pegs, round holes. Honestly, it's not even fair to try. They've moved on! When a fucking tornado obliterates a town, you don't just rebuild the same house with the same blueprints. You adapt. You change!

You're not going to shoot me. We had something real tonight. I know you now – a little bit – and you're a good person. You were going to be a doctor. That *wasn't* a lie. *Do no harm*. Right? Look, you don't have to do whatever this is. Let me help you. Whatever mess you're caught up in, I can fix it.

Shut up! I... I have to do this.

No, you don't. Maybe you didn't have options before. But you do now.

Listen to me very carefully. I'm not just some guy you met in a bar. I have... let's call them resources. People who owe me favors—people who wouldn't blink at the idea of helping me settle a score. If there's someone out there making you do this, someone hurting you, forcing your hand, I swear on everything I hold dear that they'll regret ever crossing paths with you.

It's not that simple. You don't understand what you're getting into.

Oh, but I think I do. This world is small, and my reach is long. My business ventures have acquainted me with individuals from all walks of life. And some of those walks happen to be in darker alleys. What matters is you. You're in trouble, and I can help. You give me a name, a place, anything to go on, and this nightmare ends tonight. They think they're untouchable, but they bleed just like anyone else. And bleed they will if they've laid a finger on you.

Victor...

No more talking. Just tell me what I need to know. And then let me handle it. This ends tonight—

STFU

Fuck...

Okay, okay, okay. The Cunt gave me her number to call when the deed was done…

Yeah?

Hi. Um, it's Kris.

No shit. I have your caller ID. Did you do something I need to know about?

I, uh… I…

Don't stammer. I'm busy. Yes or no!

No. Fuck! I… I just wanted to let you know I'm, like, actively searching. It'll be soon, I promise.

What the hell? I don't need a fucking status report. Don't call me again until you have a pick-up ready. Bye, bitch!

So, I left. Victor would wake up in a few hours with a nasty headache and a hell of a story to tell the cops, if he dared.

But as I walked through the cold city, I realized before I made another move, I needed to recenter myself. I… I needed to go home. Home to the only person who ever really cared about *me*.

Back to you, Alan.

Knock, knock, knock!

1202
Hello.

I already know why you're here, Detective. It's about my fiancée.

Please, come inside.

HOMECOMING

EPISODE 24

You want a beer? I need another.

No, thanks. I'm on duty.

Oh, is that a real thing? I thought that was just a line in the movies.

You said fiancé. You're telling me you two are engaged?

Well, maybe that's a little premature. I popped the question, but she hasn't said yes just yet. It's complicated.

She?

Hey, don't misgender my girlfriend or we won't get anywhere fast.

And how long has *she* been your *girlfriend?*

We've been together for five months but we've known each other for over two years.

Five months? You sure about that? Because that doesn't add up with my timeline.

Yeah, it's been five months since... since she came to me. Don't believe me? I wouldn't either. A gorgeous woman like Kris with a dumpy dude like me? But check out the photo on the wall over there.

The long hair. This is how Chris looked when, uh, when we found... *her*. And I see you'd shaved your beard.

Yeah. Kris doesn't like it.

Why are you dressed like rejects from The Lord of the Rings?

We were at the Chicagoland Renaissance Faire. I always loved to go and Kris surprised me with new costumes for the both of us. That was three months ago, you can check the date on the website.

Three months ago, Chris was still registered as a missing person.

I know. She wasn't ready to... to go back to her old life. She needed time to adjust, to figure out who she was after... everything.

You just went along with that? No questions asked?

Of course I asked questions. But when you care about someone, you give them what they need. Space, time, a Renaissance Faire costume. Whatever.

And you never thought to notify the authorities? She was a missing person, Alan.

I didn't think that was my call. Still don't.

Wow, she looks... different. Happy.

She's been through hell. But she's strong, you know? I admire her. And my son, Dustin, is crazy about her, too. She's become a part of our family. After my wife, Yvette, died, I really thought that was it. That I'd never find anyone else. That Dustin would grow up without a mother. But Kris has been amazing. She's given us both a second chance at happiness. I hope we've done the same for her.

Here's your beer.

Oh, I said, "No thanks."

You'll need it, trust me.

Why is that, Alan?

Before I say anything else, can I see your badge?

Sure.

Thank you. *Detective Benjamin Harris.* Right. So, you're 'Benji,' yeah?

H-How do you know that? Nobody calls me that stupid nickname anymore.

Kris still did, didn't she? She told me all about you - how you two were best friends in high school, all the crazy stunts you pulled. She said you were the closest thing she had to a brother. She trusts you, so I think I'll have to trust you too. She said you're a good man, even if you were the "dumbest smartest" guy she knew.

Oh, shit. Yeah, Chris always used to say that. Pissed me off, to be honest. You really did know him—sorry, *her*.

I did. And, Detective, a few hours before you got here, I was visited by a woman. Small, maybe Latina, with this shock of red hair. She told me if anyone came asking about Kris, I had to tell this story about Butterfly Beach.

Butterfly Beach. That's the second time I've heard that name today.

Yeah, some made-up paradise where Kris and I supposedly met while she was transitioning. Complete bullshit. She said if I didn't stick to that story, Kris would be in danger. That they'd take her back.

Who's they?

I wish I knew. But, Detective, we met right here in Chicago... in a brothel. A high-end one, if there is such a thing. It isn't something I'm proud of, but after Yvette passed away... I was lonely, lost.

And where is this place?

I don't know. There's a website. I'll write it down for you. But they'd pick me up at a different location each time, put the blindfold on me, and drive me around before we got there.

I need to know more about this woman who told you to lie. Hell, I need you to come down to the station and work with one of our sketch artists.

Happily. But, first, I think there's something you need to see. It may help fill in some of the missing pieces for you.

Kris made this video the night after I asked her to marry me – and then she was gone. At first, I was terrified that she was in trouble – you'll see why – but a week later I saw the big news story about 'Christopher Bowman' being found – although I noticed nobody mentioned that Christopher was now a lady. I thought maybe she'd decided to go back to her old life. That didn't seem like her, but… Anyway, now I don't know what to think. I'm just going to play you the video.

Hey, sweetie. I'm recording this because I'm not sure I can say it all to your face. You've been my rock these past few months, and I can't thank you enough for everything you've done for me. You and Dustin have given me a home, a sense of belonging, and a chance at a new beginning. Thank you.

I've been super happy here with you both. But before I can even think about my future, there's something I have to do first. Something I've been avoiding, something that's been eating away at me every day. And that's why I have to tell you more of my story. It won't be the whole truth – but it will be as close as I can get without putting you and Dustin in danger. You see, I wasn't just a sex worker at that place you found me. I was a prisoner. And the people who held me captive – they're still out there. They're dangerous, and I'm afraid they won't stop until they've finished what they started with me.

I know it'll hurt you to know that I was forced into that life, that I didn't choose it. I know you might feel guilty for being a part of it, even though you couldn't have known. But please, don't blame yourself. Most of my time in that horrible place was hell. I'd wake up from a nightmare, only to realize that the nightmare was my reality.

But then there was you. You treated me with kindness, respect, and genuine affection. It was because of you that I had moments of happiness in a sea of despair. You made me feel like a person again.

Half the time, we'd just sit and talk, and you'd tell me about your life, or Dustin's new obsession with dinosaurs, or your favorite memories of Yvette. Those conversations were my lifeline, the thing I clung to when everything else was too much to bear. I couldn't speak to you, couldn't tell you the truth, but I listened. And in those moments, I was free.

You used to call me Ariel sometimes, after the mermaid. You said I had this look in my eyes, like I wanted more than what my world could give me. You were right.

I don't know if you noticed the changes in my body over time, the way I became even softer over the months and years we knew each other. You did tell me you thought I was becoming even more beautiful. Somehow, when you said it, I could almost believe it was true.

I learned to love the taste of you. The weight of you in my mouth. I loved to hear you moan, to see the pleasure in your eyes. It was real, what we shared, even if it started in an unreal place. And I need you to know that it meant something to me. More than I can say.

AND BE SAVED,
When you looked at me, I felt seen. Not as a toy or a fantasy, but as a human being. A woman. I never felt unsafe or used with you. You gave me back a piece of myself each time you visited, like you were slowly rebuilding me from the inside out.

The way you touched me made me feel loved, cherished. And when you held me in your arms, or... well, you know what you liked to do! During those times, I could almost forget where I was, who I was. I could pretend, just for a little while, that I *was* your Ariel, and that we were in our own little world where nothing could touch us.

We'd seen each other twice a week for over a year - and then one day I was gone from the website.

When I popped back up six weeks later, I looked different. You noticed the bruises, the way my face was still a little swollen. All you said was: "God, Kris, it's not fair to make someone as pretty as you even prettier. You should give the other girls a chance!"

The surgery wasn't a choice. It was a punishment. I'd broken one of my captor's cardinal rules - I spoke to a client and begged him for help. His name was - God, *is*, I hope - Isaiah Booker. He was my college roommate! We'd known each other for years, and when he showed up as a client, I couldn't help myself. I had to try.

I... I should've known better, but I was desperate.

Isaiah knew I was missing and it didn't take much to convince him that I was who I said I was. My voice was the same, after all, and he knew my tattoo.

He promised to get me out, to go to the police.

To this day, I regret it almost more than anything else I did in that horrible basement. Not because I ended up with a prettier face, but because my captor – a woman who calls herself "Bella" – was even more vicious than I realized.

You stupid man. Did you really think it would be that easy? That you could just cry for help and someone would come to save you? No, Kris. You've just made things worse for yourself. And for poor Isaiah. Luckily, another one of you workers - *ahem* - "retired" just in time to make room for him. I wonder how he'll like being the new girl on the block?

As for you, Kris, if you're still too recognizable, I have just the solution. You're going to be even more beautiful when I'm done with you. And you'll learn to keep that pretty mouth shut unless it's being put to use. And don't expect any fucking points for this little stunt, either.

For another year, things were as close to normal as they could be under the circumstances. I saw you twice a week, and you continued to be my beacon of hope. But I knew Bella was watching, waiting for me to slip up again. So, I played the part she wanted. I was the perfect toy, never speaking or breaking any rules.

Then, there was the night that changed everything.

You'd paid for a sleepover, something you'd never done before (I know now it was very expensive). You said you wanted to wake up next to me, to start the day together. Normally, you had to be naked, but with this special package you were allowed to bring a few 'personal items.' You brought pajamas, a DVD of a terrible kung-fu movie, some snacks, and we had a little party, just the two of us.

Then, you started showing me pictures of Dustin. I'm not sure why you shared that with me, but it made me feel like I was a part of your world. It was the most normal night I'd had in years.

But then, I saw something in those photos that made my heart start to race.

Of course, I couldn't just tell you what had scared me. I pointed to Dustin's eye, then to my own, trying to communicate the best I could without words. You didn't understand.

Oh, yeah. I've noticed that, too. The weird white glow in his eye. I think I need a new camera, the flash must be too strong or something.

After you left, I tried to reason with Bella. I begged her to let me tell you about Dustin's eye.

If you're really a doctor, you know the significance of a white glow in a child's eye in photos. It's likely retinoblastoma. Eye cancer. You have to let me tell him. Dustin needs help.

Oh, Kris, always trying to save someone. It's touching, really. But no. You know the rules. *No talking*.

Then *you* fucking tell him! If you don't, that child could die. How will you live with yourself?

Don't presume to know anything about me or what I can live with! It's more than you can even imagine.

You can't be a sadist *and* a doctor. I don't believe even you could be that cruel. Please, Bella. It's a child's life. What could it possibly cost you to save him?

OBEY AND BE FREED, SUBMIT AND BE SAVED,
DEFY AND BE DAMNED.

Nothing. But I won't. Save the male child of a man who uses women - or someone he *thinks* is a woman - like they're disposable? Why would I do that? Let him lose his son. Then he'll understand what it's like to be powerless, to lose something precious.

He already lost his wife. He's a good man. He doesn't deserve this.

Deserve? What does anyone deserve? Life isn't about what we *deserve*. Not you, not me, not the genocidal maniacs who run countries or the saints who run soup kitchens. You either have the power to change things, or you don't. And right now, you *definitely* don't. But I do. And I choose not to intervene. Now, enough of this. You have a client arriving in thirty minutes. Get ready.

Fuck you, then. I'll tell him myself.

Feel like testing me, huh? Fine, I'll be explicit.

If you talk to your precious Alan, I promise to make sure your next surgery is one you *really* won't enjoy. You'll wake up with zero points - and between your legs, you'll lose the only *tiny* thing you have left that makes you feel like a man. Understand?

If you ever want to return to your dear Kayla even a tenth of the man you were, you'll keep your mouth shut and *obey*.

You came to see me a couple days later. And as soon as you walked in, I opened my mouth, and the first words you *ever* heard me say in my still deeply masculine voice were...

Alan, your son has cancer.

Kris! Y-Your voice—

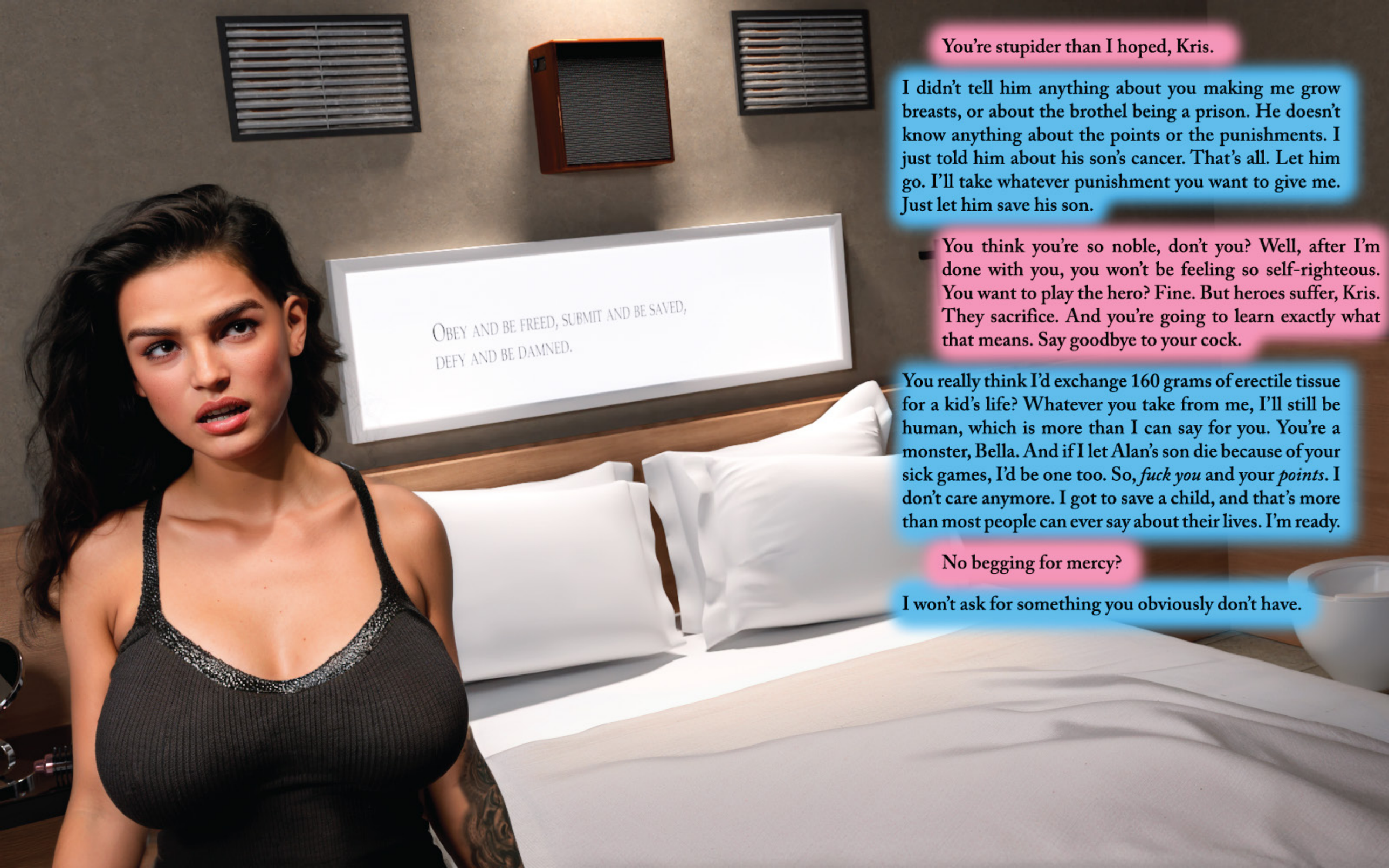
I... I'm trans, Alan.

Oh. Yeah, I figured that out a long time ago. I was watching this special on— Anyway, I just meant, it's so damn nice to hear you talk! But, wait, what'd you say about Dustin? Cancer?

It's treatable, but you need to get him to an ocular oncologist as soon as possible. And, listen, if I'm not... around the next time you come, I want you to know our time together was *real*. Do you understand? It wasn't about money or... or anything else. It was real for me. And I hope it was for you, too.

Of course, it was real. Kris, I... I love—

No. Don't say it. Not now. Just go, get Dustin to a doctor. Please.



You're stupider than I hoped, Kris.

I didn't tell him anything about you making me grow breasts, or about the brothel being a prison. He doesn't know anything about the points or the punishments. I just told him about his son's cancer. That's all. Let him go. I'll take whatever punishment you want to give me. Just let him save his son.

You think you're so noble, don't you? Well, after I'm done with you, you won't be feeling so self-righteous. You want to play the hero? Fine. But heroes suffer, Kris. They sacrifice. And you're going to learn exactly what that means. Say goodbye to your cock.

You really think I'd exchange 160 grams of erectile tissue for a kid's life? Whatever you take from me, I'll still be human, which is more than I can say for you. You're a monster, Bella. And if I let Alan's son die because of your sick games, I'd be one too. So, *fuck you* and your *points*. I don't care anymore. I got to save a child, and that's more than most people can ever say about their lives. I'm ready.

No begging for mercy?

I won't ask for something you obviously don't have.

As the gas filled the room, I thought about Kayla. About you, Alan. About Dustin. I thought about the life I'd had before all this, the life I might've had if things had been different. I didn't hold my breath or try to fight. I let the gas take me, let the darkness come. I wasn't sure if I'd wake up a woman in full - or not wake up at all. But, either way, I was ready for whatever came next.

Even if what came next with nothing.

I woke up in a different room. It was bright, clean, and I was alone. The bandage around my throat was tight, and it hurt to swallow. I tried to speak, but all that came out was a hoarse whisper.

But, God, there was sunlight. Real, *actual* sunlight. I hadn't seen the sun in... I don't know how long. I couldn't stop staring at it, couldn't stop the tears that started to fall.

I didn't need to check to see if I was still intact. That's not the kind of thing you miss. I still had my penis. I don't know why, but in that moment, it didn't matter. All that mattered was the sun on my face and the air in my lungs.

I lay there for a long time, just breathing, just feeling the warmth. It was so *quiet* in my head, as if.... as if... Sorry, nevermind.

Bella had done something to my voice. When I finally spoke, the sound was higher, softer - a woman's voice. She'd given me voice feminization surgery.

Then, from a cell phone that was on the bed, I heard Bella's voice.

Kris! I see from my little motion-detector camera that you're awake. How's the throat feeling? A little sore, I imagine. Don't worry, that's normal. And don't try to speak for a few days. Let the stitches settle. Please, *don't* think of this as a punishment. It's meant as a gift. I'm sure you probably think I'm doing this to hurt you, but I'm not. I'm doing it to *help* you.

You see, Kris, I... Fuck, I was *wrong* about you. I thought you were just another spineless man, but you've shown me something different. You've shown me that you have the heart of a lioness. You're ready to fight for what's right, even if it costs you everything. Remember I said you'd *never* be a woman? That no matter how much I changed your body, you'd always be a man on the inside? Just a selfish, egotistical, frightened creature who'd never understand what it means to be truly strong? I was wrong. You've proven that you're more of a woman than most people born with the parts.

Not because I've changed your body. I've changed *lots* of bodies.

But because you a*lways were* a woman. You know that, don't you? Deep down? You've got the soul of one. You're caring, nurturing, and tougher than a one eared alley cat in a dogfight. You've shown that you're willing to do whatever it takes to protect the people you care about. And that's what women do. We protect. We nurture. And then we fight like hell when we have to.

You'll be happy to know that Dustin's cancer was caught early, thanks to you. He's getting the best care possible and he has a good prognosis. They don't even think he'll lose the eye. All thanks to you.

So, the new voice? That's to help you walk through this rotten world with your head held high. No more pretending, no more hiding. You haven't *earned* your womanhood, Kris. Nobody can do that. But you've shown me that it was always there, just waiting to be recognized. And now I feel like an asshole.

Sister, I... I'm sorry that I thought you were less than you are. I'm sorry for the pain I've caused you. But I hope, in some small way, the changes I've made will help you find the peace you've been searching for.

We fucked up. You never should've been down there.

You'll still need to find your replacement, I'm afraid. My associate will otherwise be *very* displeased. But I trust you'll make the right choice. Bring us a truly heinous man! Still, I believe you deserve more time than usual. Nine months seems appropriate. After all, that's how long it takes to create a life, isn't it? Consider it a gestation period for your new existence. And should you need anything, just reach out through the website. I'll be watching, as always. Good luck, Kris. I have faith in you.

Oh! This phone is yours. You'll find clothing, estrogen and progesterone injections, and everything else you need in the closet. There's money in the purse for you to start over.

And... I've taken the liberty of leaving Alan's address in the contacts. Personally, I think finding attraction to men is a kind of mental illness, but who am I to judge?

Goodbye, Kris. Be the woman I know you can be.

A few hours later, I knocked on your door. I didn't know what I'd say to you, how I could possibly explain everything. But when you opened the door and saw me, all you did was pull me into a hug. You didn't ask any questions, you just held me. And in that moment, I knew I was home.

And I *will* be home again, I promise. I just have to take care of one last thing. I don't know how long it'll take, but I will come back to you and Dustin. Please, wait for me. And take care of our boy. I love you both so much.

Goodbye for now.

Holy shit. I mean... Holy shit!

Yeah, those were pretty much my exact words when I first watched it. Want another beer?

Ten minutes later...

I just need a night to reset, to be with someone who sees *me*. Alan always did that. Even when I couldn't see myself.

Anyway, Dustin's algebra final is coming up, and I promised I'd help him study. We'll make a mathlete out of him yet.

And Alan... God, I've missed him. I need to feel his arms around me, to feel like I'm part of something again. Just for a night.

Camilla, you're not answering your phone after 9 p.m. now? What, you're gonna pretend like you have a life or something? Look, I don't know how to say this, but we've been looking at this all wrong. Chris, he's - she's - *whatever*, the point is I'm pretty damn sure now that Chris is telling the truth.

click-clack, click-clack...

W-Wait, that can't be... Chris?

Wait up, man. Jesus, how're you so fast in those shoes?

Chris, bro, don't! I just want to talk.

Hey, c'mon. I... I'm sorry about everything, Chris. We need to figure this out. Can you just give me a minute? Please?

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Look, man, I admit that I... I didn't believe you. I mean, it's a crazy fucking story, right? Guys being turned into girls? That's nuts! And also, uh... *If* I believed you, it would've meant that my best fucking friend in the universe was out there in our city being tortured, and I didn't find you. I failed you!

So, yeah, I didn't want to believe your story. But after the video you left Alan and what Cindy said... I'm sorry, okay? I'm *so* fucking sorry.

I don't even think I qualify now as the dumbest smart guy you know. Probably just the dumbest, period. Can we please just talk?

Oh, wow. Um, I mean, you look... I...

Benji, I've been so alone. I... I don't know what to do anymore.

Hey, you are *not* alone... Kris. I'm going to help you hunt down these bitches, okay? We'll get them. All of them. Just... just stay with me. Stay by my side and we'll figure this out together. You and me, like old times. We're a team, right?

Yeah, a team. I'd like that.

Buzz, buzzzzzz, bzzz

Oh, this is a delicious picture. *Definitely* sending this along with all the others. Look at that form!

His little blonde fiancée will be scandalized!

What *else* do we have here, Hasan?

It's *so* good that I came upon that invoice showing that Ben was using his own money to hire you to track Chris.

To be honest, he's a little obsessed with him. *Gay* much? Stupid boys and their strict adherence to hetero-bullshittery. They should all just fuck each other and leave us alone, you know?

Oh, no. Oh, you're a bad boy! This photo of me with Chris won't do at all! *Delete!* It's rude as fuck to take a photo of a woman without asking.

Oh… And what the hell is this? Dozens – no, *hundreds* of photos of girls getting undressed in their bedrooms? You're a peeping Tom with a telephoto lens, aren't you? Well, isn't that just *perfect*.

Not to worry, Hasan. I know *just* the place that'll cure you of the dirty masculine urge to take what isn't offered.

The very same place I took Chris. I doubt you'll end up as pretty as he did, but you'll be a lot less trouble once you're on the right hormones.

Restorative justice is a cunt, ain't she?