

Strange Saturday! (Platonic Friends to TG'd Couple)

By FoxFaceStories

A Commission for AnubisForever

Luke and Ava are two platonic friends who confess their feelings of unhappiness with their bodies while attending a music festival together. But when they make a wish to be their 'true selves', they quickly find out that not only can wishes come true, but they can come true in utterly unexpected ways! Now stuck as Luna and Aidan, the pair must grapple with their changed identities and strange new feelings for one another, all while exploring their newfound existences, and bodies . . .

Strange Saturday!

Part 1: Saturday Wish

I wasn't going to let it sour my mood, but then why did I step on the scale this morning if *not* to ruin my mood? It wasn't like I was obese or anything. Hell, I was pretty sure I wasn't even fat. But there's just something about getting into your forties and having to come to terms with the fact that you don't have the energy you used to, nor can you shed weight like you used to either. I'd always considered myself a pretty average guy in terms of appearance. I doubt anyone looked at me and went *oh man, that Luke Gavins is one big stud*, but I always got by knowing I was perhaps on the better side of average. Now, I was starting to feel a bit at odds with my body: it was getting just a little more sluggish, a little more hefty round the middle, and my brown beard was starting to get a few little grey hairs that were starting to make me panic. Perhaps it wouldn't have been the biggest issue in the world if not for where I was.

"Wow, we kinda stand out here, huh?"

I turned to Ava, who had her arms folded as she surveyed the crowd of much, much younger music-goers. It was the *Saturday Blitz*, the big music festival of the year, and we tried to go annually together. Ava had been my best friend for ages. A lot of people felt we should be dating but after a very brief and unexciting fling decades ago we thought otherwise. There was no real attraction or spark there, but I'd always enjoyed her easy company. Where I could be high-strung and anxious, she was a cool cucumber. Where I was always picking up new hobbies, she was perfectly satisfied with a good hike or a camping experience, or just the mead-crafting she had started up in her basement. She gave off that nonchalant vibe: she never wore makeup, kept her light brown hair fairly short, and tended to

dress down. There was never a woman who loved a casual hoodie more than her, I was certain. And the slight southern twang in her voice only aided that relaxed vibe.

"Sorry, I was lost in thought, Ava," I said. "What did you say?"

She gestured to the crowd. "I said that this is the first year I feel like I'm sticking out from the crowd, leastwise more than usual."

"Yeah," I said, exhaling. The music festival was not far from beginning. It was an open-day festival rather than a packed concert affair, but a crowd was forming towards the central stage and away from the stalls, ready for the opening act. It was impossible not to notice that we were a pair of forty-three year olds starting to look a little over the hill, while almost everyone else were in their teens and twenties. Oh, sure, there were others who were older too, but for once I no longer felt like *part* of the crowd, but *outside* of it. An irregularity. An anomaly.

"Hey, Earth to Luke! Y'all okay?"

I scratched the back of my head. "Yeah, I'm fine. Just thinking."

Ava smirked, and placed her hands on her hips. Some of the guys she had dated in the past before she settled on the single life had called her 'plain-faced' and 'average,' and while I couldn't disagree - hence my lack of attraction to her - there was no denying that she had a special magnetism when she was in full interrogation mode.

"Nuh-uh, there's something else going on right now, I can see that! What's on your mind, partner?"

I chuckled. She always went 'full southern' when narrowing her eyes at someone.

"Okay, well, this is gonna sound crazy, but I guess it's just what you mentioned, about us sticking out."

"I only thought it was funny, I didn't mean anything by it."

"I know, I was actually thinking about it before you mentioned anything. I guess I'm just fully realising I'm one of those old guys at the festival for young folk now."

"Luke, we're both forty three years old. We're not exactly one foot in the grave here."

"But you said it, we stick out from the crowd. I guess I'm just feeling a bit-"

A guitar chord was struck, and the crowd cheered - a lot of young voices emanating from people who were much bolder than I. Certainly, I was just in a shirt and jeans, but the crowd had a multicoloured vibrancy to it.

"Let's put a pin in this and chat later," Ava said, grabbing me by the hand and dragging me forward. "Looks like *King Moth* is playing."

It was a nice breather from my anxious thoughts. I wasn't the biggest King Moth fan and neither was Ava, but you couldn't deny the band could work a crowd. At some point Ava put a beer in my hand, and after a silent cheers we began drinking, and I even sang the chorus with the crowd, engaging with the energy of it. Still, I couldn't help but feel a bit like

an outsider, and that I was simultaneously overdressed and underdressed. Hell, just looking at some of the clothes even the gals in their early thirties were wearing was making me feel like an old fogey desperate to kick the kids off of my lawn.

"Okay, you big lug," Ava said, punching me playfully on the shoulder. "Are you feeling happier now? Lost the melancholy? Ditching the sad?"

The music was still playing, but we'd retreated to the stall to grab some hotdogs and further drinks in the meantime. The food was improving my mood, but I needed to get something off of my chest, too.

"I'm getting there," I said, taking a bite of my hotdog before adding some much-needed mustard. "Okay, cards on the table."

"Deal me in, partner," she said, deliberately amping up her accent.

"I stepped on the scales this morning and didn't like what I saw."

"Yeah, you're a real whale, Luke."

"I know, I'm not that big. But I've been good lately, and I *still* put on weight. And I saw the grey hairs in my beard and the bags under my eyes. I know guys aren't *meant* to be all self-obsessed, especially with image, but-

At that point Ava scoffed. "Please! Guys are even more obsessed with image than gals, y'all just don't *do* anything about it. But this isn't you just not liking what's in the mirror, Luke. You've complained about it before but never gotten all saggy over it. Hell, I'm starting to sprout greys and I can tell you, casual as I am, I'm not a fan. So what's this *really* about?"

I couldn't help but give a wan smirk. Ava always did have me figured out. I occasionally thought that if she were more my type and me hers, we could have made a great couple. Or perhaps a terrible one. Some people can be *too* insightful.

I put down my food and drink and looked her square in the eyes. "I don't know how else to put it, so I guess I'll just say it. You ever get the feeling that you were born in the wrong body? Or in the wrong circumstances? Or both?"

Ava nodded slowly. "Yeah, I do. I get that."

"You do?"

She raised an eyebrow. "Is that so surprising?"

"I guess I just thought . . . you're always so self-assured. You know who you are. I've never really felt like that at all."

"Fair," she said. "But the thing about being a nature gal, Luke, is that you get a lot of time with your thoughts. That's a lot of time to be at peace with yourself, but also time to wish you'd travelled the other fork in the road, as it were. So yeah, I get you. I look in the mirror too and don't always like what I see. I've never really given much of a shit about putting effort into my appearance, but maybe I should be, ya know? Maybe I could have been a bit prettier, or wore more sunscreen, or tried some new hobbies like you always do."

"Please, I go through them like nothing else."

Ava giggled. "The model train period was a dark time for you."

"You take that back. My train setup was *excellent*. I came third in the Steam Display and it was my first time entering."

We shared a laugh before she replied.

"Look, all I mean is that I'm kinda jealous of the passion you've always got. I do feel like sometimes I'm hiking through life on a kind of low-effort mode. I wish I could tick like someone else for a change, someone who burned with passion like these kids do. And hell, just to go back to what you were talking about earlier, I'm not loving getting older either. Heh, maybe we're just reaching a mid-life crisis. Does work tie into this?"

That made me exhale. She'd gotten to another root cause of this.

"You'd be right to suspect. I've been seriously contemplating quitting the bank."

"I thought you were angling for a promotion? It took you ages to get that managerial position as it was."

"I just don't . . . care anymore. It's the same thing each day. I used to tell myself it was just a way to pay for my hobbies, but now it feels like it eats away at my life."

"Yeah, I can see that. You know, it's a funny thing, but I've been feeling the same about the photography gig."

I sat up straight at that. "What? That's your passion. An actual passion."

She just shrugged. "Trust me, I know. I've been doing it for years. But it's not making what it used to, and I'm having to go to weddings and birthdays to compensate now. It's all banal. And the worst part is I can't seem to get a good photo anymore: a tree is just a tree at a certain point, and I swore I'd never try to see life that way."

The silence echoed loudly between us. Over at the stage, a new band was up, probably *Piping Hot Lead* from the sounds of it. They weren't bad, but like everything else at the moment, it was for the younger crowd.

"Maybe we're both just wishing for a fresh start and a new life," I said.

"Maybe so," Ava replied.

Again, that silence echoed. In the background, the crowd began to cheer, singing the chorus loudly. I didn't even recognise the song.

It was Ava that stood first. She drank up the rest of her beer in one big swill and then chucked it straight into the nearby trash receptacle. Then she held out her hand to me.

"C'mon, y'all," she said, putting on a mighty grin. "Enough of this sad sack routine from both of us. We can have an early mid-life crisis *after* this epic festival. Right now, it's a gorgeous Saturday, we're at the *Blitz*, and I'm sure there's gonna be at least one band a pair of soon-to-be fogeys like us will recognise. So what do you say, partner? Shall we make a good time of it?"

I couldn't help but grin. Ava was always like that; even when times got hard, she was able to shake it off and have a good attitude, or perhaps just keep her deeper thoughts squirrelled away.

"Sure thing," I said, "partner."

I took her hand and she helped pull me up and out of my funk. She let it go, then gestured to the crowd.

"Let's show those young kids what a real pair of rowdy attendees look like!"

I laughed and joined her, leaving my more upset thoughts behind me.

For now.

Ava was right to put a pin in the proceedings, because the rest of the Saturday Blitz was more of a Saturday *Blast*. We sang, we shouted, we ate and drunk - the latter way too much. A number of younger festival goers looked at us like a pair of aliens but for a sweet time we didn't much care. We were in the rhythm of the music, two best friends vibing out to the bands and the songs and general mood of the festival, even if we didn't recognise over half the bands anymore, even if the fashion all around us was totally different and made us stick out like sore thumbs.

When the festival ended, we slowly drifted back to the carpark. Numerous people were already heading out to go out on the town, but we were in our forties and feeling a bit over the hill by that point, so we decided to call it quits and say goodbye. The fact that so many young couples were openly making out or clearly heading off to get laid only made that decision more clear, because it only reminded us both of our own single status.

"Shame we're, like, totally platonic," Ava said, more than a little tipsy. There was a reason we'd had to call her a cab. Thankfully, my own drinks had stopped being alcoholic midway through the day, as the last time I'd gotten drunk had not been kind to me the next day.

"Yeah, I suppose it is."

"I really need to fucking get some, is all I'm saying, partner. Not from you - no offence - but I need to ride a good cowboy. Seriously, getting sick of having my way with things that run on batteries."

"Okay, let's get you to the taxi," I said gently, holding her swaying form. "Before you give any more TMI."

She snorted. "Okay. Yer a good friend, Luke. The best. You deserve someone. Should find a nice girlfriend. God, I'm gonna have such a hangover tomorrow. Wish I was younger."

"Me too," I replied. "Feel pretty achey from all that jumping already."

The taxi arrived and I waved it down. The man got out but I was already opening the door for Ava.

"We'll get your car tomorrow," I said. "You just take care of yourself."

But before I could close the door she grabbed my hand and looked at me, swaying just a little.

"Y'all are right, ya know," she said. "I *do* wish I could have a fresh start. You know, new body, new life and all that. Just ta see if the grass really is greener."

"You have a good night, Ava," I said. "I'll call tomorrow."

"Ooh, after midday. I'll have a concussion."

I laughed, shut the door, and the taxi sped off. Suddenly, all at once, I was hit with a deep sense of moroseness as I walked to the carpark to get my own vehicle. Ava was my best friend, but if even she was wishing she could start over, what hope could I have? I couldn't help but be jealous of the younger crowd around me. Hell, I didn't even want to be in my twenties again, just try to fork a different life in my thirties. Just ten years regained to try something new and find someone. It wasn't like I was trying too hard now; I just felt like I was past the dating phase and suffering for it.

Eventually, I found my car and got in. I took one more look at the festival in the distance, the remaining after-party dying down, and sighed as I turned the key in the ignition. I was about to drive off when I saw something that almost made me think I was dreaming: careening across the sky was a great blue and green ball of fire, with an enormous tail that washed and rippled the sky as if it were the Aurora Borealis. It passed over, an immense shooting star that looked to be almost magic. It reminded me of the old omen.

"I wish I could get a new, different start in life," I murmured softly.

The shooting star, or comet, or whatever it was, disappeared over the horizon, leaving festival goers cheering. After a brief pause where I wished I had gotten a photo, I turned the key in the ignition and drove away, that wish echoing in my mind as much as that image of the shooting star.

It had almost felt like an omen.

Part 2: The Change

The Entity careened across the great void, travelling where it may. Its consciousness reached out, observing and hearing, encoding and recording. There had been some rotations since it last visited this world, and during that space of time it had travelled to far

stranger places across many realms. The magic infused within its very being allowed it to exist in many skies at once, illuminating entire worlds and being celebrated and feared as one. Most of the time, it preferred to stay passive, taking in the stories of those across these realms and dimensions - valiant knights and beautiful princesses, ghastly monsters and fearful victims, shy housewives and domineering husbands, and so on. But occasionally, when the fancy took it, and its own comet trail burned brightest, the Entity liked to bestow its magical essence upon a world that it visited.

This was what it did now, travelling over the skies of the world known as 'Earth.' It heard the many whispers of those below, and decided through some arcane whim to grant a number of their wishes as they voiced them aloud. Such actions gave the magical being a sense of satisfaction, a reason to pour out its power before moving on and recharging. And so it listened, and judged, and selected, and allowed its reality-shaping energies to reach out and change lives. But not without a bit of mischief as well.

A woman in a deep desert wished to never be without water. The Entity granted her wish, and she soon found herself a mermaid in the wide ocean, a being of beauty and myth.

A man wished to be free of the wife and children who burdened him, as he saw it. He found himself upon a hidden tropical island, its only occupant.

An older lady wished to be young again, and revisit the 'good old days.' She got her wish . . . but was shocked to find herself in Ancient Greece.

A lonely child called out for help in the dark. She would wake with loving parents, kind siblings, and never want for anything again. The Entity had its sympathies.

A number of other wishes were granted. Some became rich, others free of disease, others still gained petty prizes - quite a lot of children across Barcelona woke with mysterious presents at the end of their bed, attributing them to a very early visit from Santa Claus.

But there was a pair of wishes that intrigued the Entity. Usually, most wishes were individual, but here were two friends of the opposite sex - another intriguing point - both of whom were wishing to have new bodies, new lives, and to be younger. To have a new path to tread. This pleased the Entity greatly; not only did it provide an opportunity for mischief, but also for genuine joy and change, the very foundation of magic itself.

It would grant their wishes, entwining the destinies of the pair. And perhaps it would also stick around for a while, hovering invisibly just out of sight of Earth and its denizens, and see what came next.

I woke from that strange dream. All nonsense about an Entity or a star or comet or something. I couldn't make heads or tails of it, and it seemed to drift out of my mind as dreams often did. I had a headache, and it made me groan in an oddly squeaky voice while I tried to get my bearings.

Where was I?

I was in my bed, that much was clear.

Why did I feel like my skull was about to split apart?

Ah, that's right. Once I'd gotten home I'd started to get all morose and contemplative about my conversation with Ava, and that had led to me making the frankly terrible decision to break some of the beers out of my fridge and drink more than I should have. I remember thinking I had overdone it a little, but judging from the migraine I was currently possessing, and the fact that my body felt all weird and spongy and wobbly in the oddest damn places, I could imagine I'd definitely hit the bottle with far too much aplomb. At least it was a Sunday, so I didn't have to go to work until tomorrow.

"Errgh," I groaned, placing my hand on my forehead. "What a day. What a night."

My voice definitely sounded weird. Oddly soft and high, though it had a tired rasp in it. God, if I ended up with a damn cold or sickness because I pushed my body to the limits I would be so damn mad at myself for being an idiot.

"Last time I go to the Saturday Blitz," I croaked, pawing at my neck. I didn't have a sore throat, at least. My neck felt strange though; like it was too soft. Hell, I couldn't even feel my Adam's apple for whatever reason.

Wait.

No.

What?

It couldn't be . . .

I raised my hands and ran them over my chin and neck and upper lip. The skin there was as smooth as a baby bottom, showing no signs of any hairy scruff whatsoever, or that there had *ever been* hairy scruff.

"Fuck!" I exclaimed, voice still totally off. Had I shaved off my beard last night? Had I seriously shaved my entire beard off while drunk? And since when did I have shaving cream *that* good!? It was enough of an embarrassment for me to run my fingers through my hair. My . . . very long . . . hair.

"What the . . . ?"

I raised myself out of bed. Something wasn't adding up, not least the way my chest felt strangely heavy and kind of . . . *jiggly*. I pushed the hair out of my face, wondering just when on earth I'd gone and put a wig on the previous night, but the hair felt too real, and when I tugged it, it pulled at the very roots. By this point I was being forced further awake,

rubbing the dust from my eyes, my heartbeat quickening as a serious nervousness came over me.

"Something's wrong," I mumbled to myself. "Why do I feel so weird?"

I went to rub my chest with my hands, only to cup something. Two things, actually. Two fleshy things that were not only a part of me, but hung *off of me*, and were strangely sensitive and full and round and *pert* at that. My heart actually skipped a beat. Very slowly, I lowered my gaze downward, some of my newly elongated hair falling down to frame the edges of my vision, easily shoulder length now, somehow. But that was of little concern to me by that point. What *did* concern me was the pair of fleshy orbs hanging off of my chest, looking like a rather decent pair of breasts, cupped up in my hands in such a way that they formed an impressively deep line of cleavage.

"Oh God!" I cried, leaping to my feet. I let go of my . . . my *breasts* in the same motion, and it only confirmed that they were real, because they jiggled heavily on my chest, feeling a little painful as a result. They were even topped with larger pink nipples, and a rather perfect set at that.

"No, there's no way. No fucking way!"

But the evidence was mounting. My voice was losing its early morning dry rasp, and increasingly sounding like what it actually was: a *woman's* voice, perhaps a mezzo-soprano. Sweet and high enough to be womanly, but with a dash of authority in it, not that I felt authoritative at that moment. The fact that was I was clearly shorter had something to do with that as well: I suddenly felt tiny, like I'd shrunk from nearly six feet in height to merely five-four or something. My hips were obviously wider, my skin smooth, and my arms felt like twigs compared to what they'd been, even though my thighs were thicker. And when I lowered a hand to between my thighs I could feel my underwear stretched tight upon this hips but flabby in the centre. Sliding my fingers underneath I felt a pubic bush, and beneath that . . .

"Gah!"

I nearly fell back on the bed. That had been a slit. A pussy. A womanhood. A *vagina*. Any consideration that this might not be the case, that I was just imagining things, was immediately diminished by the obvious fact that there was simultaneously a distinct *absence* between my thighs. I cupped my - my *boobs* - and bent over, shifting to hold them in my forearm the way I had occasionally seen an old girlfriend do while I pulled down my underwear.

"Shit! Fuck, it's real!"

I pinched myself just a few times to be sure, but I remained awake. Yep, there was no denying that I had a freakin' pussy. If it looked like a duck, felt like a duck, then it was probably a fucking vagina that had eaten my damn penis out of nowhere. I shifted upright,

only for my hair to flick around my head and obscure my vision. It made me wonder how much I had changed in full.

“Please God no! Please God no!”

I *ran* to my bathroom, a journey that nearly had me tripping over twice due to my sudden lower centre of gravity and difference in my pelvis. My boobs wobbled and my penis distinctly *didn't*, due to *not fucking existing anymore*, and I couldn't help but notice that my ass felt even a little bouncy.

“Shit! Shit!”

I had become a damn repeating record, skipping over the same sentences. But what else was there to say when you were looking in the mirror and seeing a woman stare back at you instead of the man you were supposed to be?

“No way, how did this happen?” the woman in the mirror asked of me, her reflection copying my own movements and speech perfectly, yet looking utterly foreign to me. “God, this is nuts! I look like a complete chick. I look - I look . . .”

There was only one word, really, above all the others in this morning of insanity.

“I look beautiful.”

That I did, despite feeling groggy and misshapen and strange and *wrong*, there was no denying that my new body was very good looking. The woman I had become was fairly short, perhaps around five-four as I had guessed. I had definitely lost years, at least if I had to guess: I looked to be thirty years old or so. There was no way I weighed anything over one hundred and thirty pounds or so, maybe one hundred and forty at the furthest outset. In fact, not only did I have a cute heart-shaped structure, but smart hazel-coloured irises that seemed to glimmer with a mischief I most certainly did not feel. I had longer eyelashes, more defined eyebrows, and my face was perfectly smooth just as I had felt earlier in bed. Coupled with my surprisingly full lips and my wavy brown hair, and I looked like the kind of woman I might have once carried a torch for, not that she was doing anything for me now.

And that was the strange part, or at least another strange part, because my new body was rather killer as well! Suffice to say I had curves in spades, which might have accounted for my struggle running about to this very room. My breasts, at an estimate - and this was just me spitballing - were maybe a D-cup? Or a C-cup? They felt big, but perhaps that was just my new angle on them? They weren't huge or anything, but certainly sizeable. I recalled that Ava sometimes complained about having a 'meagre B-cup' and my new tits looked a size bigger than hers, so C's perhaps?

They weren't my best feature though, as admittedly nice as they looked. My hips were where it was at. I didn't like to bandy around such terms in polite company, but holy hell did I have a set of total babymakers now. Seriously, I had a pair of hips that were absolutely dynamite. I looked like the kind of lady that even if you didn't want kids, you wanted to get

her pregnant. It was damn instinctive. At least it would be, were I not looking at my own twisted, feminised reflection.

“Jesus, even my legs look good. And this ass!”

I turned, and admired it. Flat it was not. It wasn't a huge bubblebut either, thank God, but any set of hips like I now sported would need an appropriate amount of padding on the backside to 'fill them out,' so to speak. Suffice to say, my new derriere would look damn good in a bikini, as would the rest of me. Hell, I even had the dainty hands and feet of a woman! Weird enough to feel so short and the world so much bigger, but I was fairly petite apart from my womanly curves. Even my stomach was taut and flat, apart from a slight pooch.

“Why do I have a - oh shit, it's because of my womb, isn't it?”

Most women had such a pooch, as I recalled. Helen, one of my old flames, practically buried me in an avalanche of a rant when I asked about hers. God, I must have been only twenty years old and a total moron to even mention such a thing, but she was very clear that it was entirely natural, and a result of having an entirely extra organ to what men had: a womb.

“Holy hell, I've got a womb now,” I whispered to my reflection. “A fucking uterus. Jesus Christ, this is too much.”

I placed my hands on my head, feeling as if my brain was going to leak out, or otherwise explode.

“This is crazy, this has to be a dream, what could possibly have led to this!? How am I even going to get to work when I'm suddenly a damn chick who's over ten years younger and doesn't even have an . . . identity?”

It was then that I noticed something else. My bathroom rack had changed, and I wasn't talking about the rack that I was sporting on my chest either. It was as if I suddenly had a female visitor or girlfriend staying over and slowly remaking my bathroom setting, as women were wont to do over time. There were nail files, lip gloss, a makeup rack full of numerous colours, foundation sponges, a hair straightener and hair dryer, even what looked to be eyeshadow and eyeliner products. Looking in the draws I found tampons and pads for menstruation, as well as a lot more items intended for shaving delicate places.

I was starting to realise that more than just my body and gender had changed.

Slowly, my hips still feeling a bit odd and my centre of gravity different, I backed out of the room and made my way back to the bedroom. Sure enough, now that I was looking for it, I could see that much more had changed. My room was a lot cleaner, for one, and didn't have as many collectibles lying around, though there was still one glass case. My calendar had changed from a sporty focus to one of serene environmental landscapes, and my closet was totally organised. The clothing there had shifted, becoming entirely feminine in nature.

"Why the hell do I still have my male underwear then?" I asked, before looking down.
"Oh, come on!"

Without me even noticing, they had changed, becoming a pair of white female underwear that fit snugly and oddly comfortably around my hips, and no longer had any baginess to them. Instead, they were smooth over my crotch. My *venus mound*, as I recalled from long-ago sex ed classes.

"Shit, they even show off my ass a bit!"

Well, they weren't a *thong* or anything, but they certainly seemed to cup my cheeks well, emphasising their rondure nature.

"God, this is insane. This is fucking crazy. How could all this change? Has even my identity transformed?"

There was only one way to find out. My wallet was meant to be on my bedside table, only now it wasn't there. It took me an embarrassingly long time to realise that women didn't often have wallets, they had *purses*. Not that I could find a purse immediately either. What I *did* find was my phone with a pastel blue cover with slots for cards. My background photo was me standing in front of a lake with my arms outstretched, wearing a bright yellow dress. And by *me* I meant the woman I had become.

"So, what, I'm a nature girl now, like Ava?"

I shook my head and pulled out my ID card from the phone case. A sensation of something like dread came over me as I looked at the pretty face in the corner of the ID card and the name that was displayed by it.

Luna Gavins.

So I was Luna now, and for who knew how long! From Luke to Luna, just like that! And just like I had assumed, I was only thirty years old, having just lost - or gained? - thirteen years of my life. My birthday date was unchanged, at least. It listed me as July thirteenth, which wasn't far away now.

I gained access to my phone. It responded to my fingerprint, but I also tested my old code and found that this new life of mine, whatever had caused it, knew me well enough to leave my passwords and passcodes in place.

"Let's find out just who the hell you even are, Luna."

I spent the next half-hour scrawling over my phone, stopping only to throw a shirt over my head, one that was fit for my new size, and then to make myself a coffee and toast due to my stomach rumbling. My headache was fading, but that knot in my stomach was only getting bigger as I came to terms with the strange changes to my reality that had taken place.

The good news was that large structures of my life were still in place. Judging from the photos, I still had the same Mom and Dad, and the same younger brother, though

apparently David was actually *older* than me now. I was his younger sister, which was just bizarre to think about. My bank account was still healthy - not as good as before but that was to be expected given that in this reality I'd lived for thirteen less years - and my credit rating was good. I was still paying the mortgage on this place, so it was mine. And a lot of my phone contacts remained the same: the people who were my friends and family.

The bad news - other than *changing my fucking gender* - was that I couldn't find Ava on there. She wasn't even in my photos. In fact, some of the events we had definitely been at just had this random guy who I'd never seen before in my life, a taller fellow with light brown hair and blue eyes, with a nice bit of muscles. He looked nice, but I didn't know him. My gaze lingered over his form for longer than it should have and I had to blink several times, questioning what I was doing.

The other bad news - even if it wasn't strange news - was that I was still a manager at the bank. Somehow, that kind of disappointed me.

"There's no way I can just walk in and do the same job," I murmured. "Can I?"

Somehow, the thought of my entire life changing but my boring job remaining in all its banality came across like a kind of sick job.

I put my face in my hands and screamed. It was all I could really do to try and achieve some kind of catharsis, and a last ditch attempt to try and wake myself from this crazy dream. Of course it didn't work, and when I looked down at myself there were still the same pair of tits, and a shorter, softer, petite body with its broad hips. Hell, even just my hair felt alien to me; it was swishing about with every movement and I kept tucking it behind my ears.

"This is too much to deal with. I need a freakin' shower."

So that's just what I did. I took off my new female clothes, sighed softly in that new womanly voice of mine, and got into the shower after gazing at my changed reflection one more time. It was weird showering as a woman. My skin was so much more sensitive, yet simultaneously I wanted the water to churn so much hotter. It felt wonderful on my skin, and I couldn't deny that the smoothness of my form was strangely pleasurable. I relaxed quite a bit purely by running the soap over my body and mixing the shampoo through my full hair. It clung to the back of my neck and shoulders, and I found myself sighing, my heart beat beginning to relax.

"Okay Luke. Luna. Whatever and whoever you are. So you're a woman. What caused this? How do you deal with this? Who to even talk to?"

I needed to chat to Ava, that much was clear. She *had* to remember me. She just *had* to. My life was already upside down, but I damn well *refused* to accept the possibility that my best friend in the whole wide world would somehow forget the person I was, even if everyone else had.

That was the thought I focused on as I cleaned myself, and it calmed me further. But soon I was also calmed by something else, and this was a thing I never imagined. With the steam and heat rising in the shower I began to explore my new body. You can't blame me, right? Who hadn't imagined turning into the opposite sex and copping a feel at some point in their lives? Perhaps it was just a stress reaction, perhaps it was simply curiosity, or perhaps I genuinely was getting unexpectedly aroused, but I slowly started to cup and feel my breasts, lifting them and letting them bounce, even thrusting out my chest to see how big they were and how they obscured my daintified feet. My nipples were goddamn gorgeous, and as I ran the soap over my boobs I began to sigh softly. They tensed, feeling almost like they were throbbing as I caressed them again and again, first with the excuse of cleaning myself, and then even after I put the soap away.

"Mhmmm," I moaned, my voice a little sultry, a little sensual. "That f-feels pretty good. Ahh . . ."

I began to pinch and play with those nipples, squeezing my breasts and fondling them. I wasn't necessarily *attracted* to them. How could I be? But the sensations they gave me offered a small shard of pride. If I was stuck having boobs for however long, why not try and enjoy them a little? Maybe it would turn me back or something! Besides, the pulses of pleasure they provided as I massaged my nipples and cupped the sensitive skin only stirred forth further feelings. I began to feel hotter, and not just from the shower. A warmth was developing inside me, and it manifested in an unfamiliar yet blissful sensation: my new pussy began to grow moist. It was the oddest damn thing I'd ever felt: I had a fucking *tunnel* leading into me, and it was lubricating itself.

I also, at least in that moment of arousal, didn't care too much. I just wanted to fucking feel good before I confronted all of this insanity.

"Mhmmm . . . yeah. That's it . . . ohhhhh . . ."

I lowered a hand, feeling between my soft thighs. So bizarre to be using my hands to please a woman's needy pussy, only for that woman to be me, and that pussy to be mine. My fingers made contact with my slit, brushing up against the moisture of water as it mingled with the moisture of my aroused womanhood.

"Nngghnnnn . . . ahhhh. Oh G-God . . ."

The sensations were *wonderful*. It was so different from stimulating oneself as a man, and yet I found it hard to describe. It was slower, that was for sure, like it took longer for my body to heat up. Helen had once accused me of being 'too eager' to get down to the actual sex part and skip the foreplay, and now I finally understood why it was so important to women that men take it slow at first. But the build was incredible. I rubbed my slender fingers over my opening, and when I found my clitoris it was practically bulging, small but definable,

ready to be touched and teased. It sent shivers of delight up through me new nethers, and I wobbled a little, before continuing to grope my new tits.

“Mhmm . . . yeahhh. Mhmmm, that’s the s-stuff. God, is this what it f-feels like for a lady? They have it - ahhh! - good! Mmhph!”

I let go of my breasts, caressing my face as if to calm myself. This was in response to me slipping my fingers *inside* of myself. Now I wasn’t just teasing the sensitive clitoris or labia, but actively stroking and stimulating the nerves of my vaginal passage. I was getting wetter by the second, and I was definitely not talking about the shower anymore. My moans were like those of a woman in heat, and that’s what I *was*, really. I gasped and groaned, moaned and murmured, whimpered and wailed as the delirious pleasure bloomed within me. This was no quick stroke in the shower, no unburdening of sexual tension by ‘rubbing one out’ as a guy. This was a dance, and one that I was only just beginning to practice. I sensed, even as I teetered on the very edge of my first female orgasm, that I wasn’t even remotely close to mastering the absolute delight that could come from female self-love, but God if I wasn’t determined to feel it.

“Yessss . . . so close. So damn c-close. So close! Close! Close! CLOSE! YES! YES! YESSSSSS!!!!”

And then it hit me, and I immediately lost all control. I squeezed my right breasts, fondling the nipple with my thumb and extracting as much pleasure as possible in that very last moment, right before I was enveloped in female pleasure. I was embarrassed to find myself crying out loud, screaming like an old girlfriend used to do when she came, and yet it was an involuntary reaction born of the heights I was being sent to. This was no orgasm like a man experienced. I would know: I’d had to have quite a few dates with Miss Rosie Palms in the last few years while absent a girlfriend. That had always been a rush: a surge of power and dominance that was strong as hell but just as brief, like a display of fireworks going off, illuminating the sky but only for scant seconds.

This was different. This was *submission*. I had to grip the railing of my shower just to stay on my wobbly legs as I rubbed my inner walls and massaged my clitoris. Far from a brief but powerful explosion, this was like being submerged in water. It swept over me slowly yet surely until I could stand no more, and then like a drowning sailor I could only gasp for air as wave after wave sent me deeper. Only there was no agony, just a climax I experienced two times. Two times! Didn’t women get more than that, from time to time?

“Oh God, holy shit. My legs . . . I can’t feel my legs.”

I had to cling to the railing as the post-coital calm finally settled over me. That had been an experience, alright. And if nothing else could prove it, this was the thing that made me truly believe my changes had occurred. There was no way my imagination could have conjured *that* kind of sensation.

I stumbled out of the shower, quickly drying myself (badly, at that) and getting dressed in a pair of jeans and the green shirt I'd put on before. The former was too snug around my butt, at least as far as I would have liked, and the latter showed off my chest - not greatly, but as far as I was concerned, simply *having* boobs and others knowing I had boobs was too much.

"Okay, find Ava, that's the number one priority. Find Ava, and maybe see if her nature wisdom or something could tell me about-"

Suddenly, the doorbell rang. I paused, my heart skipping a beat. Then it rang again. And again. More rings, followed by knocking.

"I'll - I'll be right there!" I called. My hair was still all wet and making my shirt wet too. That's right, women put a towel around their head after showers. Stupid. Still, I couldn't *not* answer the door. I moved to it, trying to think of how to present myself normally, when I realised my nipples were poking at the fabric of my shirt. God, I needed to wear a damn bra now! Judging from the jiggling of my chest, I definitely could use one, humiliating as that would be. But the mysterious visitor was still knocking on the door. I reached it, only to notice that my phone was buzzing; someone I didn't know who was listed as 'Aidan.' I put it away. I could deal with that later. Instead, I opened the door to a dishevelled looking man who was much taller than me and surprisingly handsome despite looking like a hot mess.

He had light brown hair that suggested he'd just gotten out of bed recently, and striking blue eyes that reminded me of Ava's. He was perhaps around six feet tall, about thirty years old, and had some light scruff on his face; not a full beard, but certainly not well-shaved either. He was strong - not overly muscular - but had a lean, manly look to him. Weirdly, I found it hard not to stare at his bare forearms as he stood there in a poorly buttoned flannel top and track pants that did not suit his look one bit.

"I - who are you?"

"Who am I?" he said, his voice surprisingly baritone in pitch. "Who are you?"

My eyes widened. "I recognise you! You're the one from my phone!"

"I wasn't calling you," he said, "I was calling a friend. Are you staying over or something?"

It was then that I realised we were having two different conversations; the man had a phone in his hand, one that was calling out. And my phone was still buzzing.

"Aidan!?" I asked.

He frowned. "I - yes, I guess that's my name. Look, I'm trying to find a man named Luke. Luke Gavins. He lives here. I'm y'all have some . . . reason for being here." His eyes roamed down to my nipples, which were very obvious in the tight shirt. I covered them up as he continued. "But this is an emergency, okay darling? I need to talk to Luke. He lives here."

It hit me, what was going on. In fact, it crashed down upon me so hard that I wobbled on my legs again, and had to grab the door frame just to steady myself. The man named Aidan reached out and helped me.

“Woah, nellie! Are you okay?”

I got my first hint of true feminine emotion sweeping through me like a wave of estrogen, because despite my normally stoic self, I suddenly felt tears form in the corners of my eyes and begin to spill down my cheeks.

“No, I’m not okay,” I said. “It’s me, Ava. I’m Luke. Only I’m Luna now.”

His eyes went wide. “You - you too? Dear God, Luke, what in the sam hill has happened to us?”

Part 3: Working it Out

A good brew of coffee can do wonders for settling a lot of worries, or at least bringing some calm back to the room. Ava/Aidan was now in the kitchen with me, looking around at all the ornamental decorations that had overtaken a number of my hobbies. I wasn’t too happy about my train set being gone - or at least packed away somewhere - but some of my *Star Wars* collectibles no longer being around was at least a good bit of declutter. I’d gone a bit overboard during that sci-fi craze of the sequel trilogy. There was also a distinct lack of sporting equipment lying around, and that was probably a good thing since I never used it. Aidan remarked on each of these, all while telling me about her/his side of things, and how she/he had woken up similarly to me.

“So you had a strange dream too, then?” I asked, passing him a coffee. It was impossible to think of Ava/Aidan as a *she* now, really, given how much bigger and clearly manlier he was. The voice alone was impossible to reconcile with womanhood.

“Yep,” he said, taking a sip. I’d made him up some bacon and eggs too. He hadn’t eaten, having woken up later than me. “Some weird comet thing - that shooting star from last night - was circling about, only it was alive. I thought of it like some kind of entity, a magical being or whatnot that liked to grant wishes, only in that trickster Genie kind of way.”

“It was the same for me,” I replied, leaning over the table. I still wasn’t wearing a bra, so my boobs kind of ‘swayed’ a little as I did so. It left Aidan to smirk.

“You’ll have to get some support for those things.”

“Don’t start. I’m not used to them, and I’m not wearing a bra, I can tell you that.”

“Well, I’ve got a hefty bit of swing between my hairy legs right now that I don’t appreciate. Do guys always get stiff randomly like this?”

I shrugged. "From time to time. It can be a bit random. But it's usually when something turns you on."

Aidan scoffed. "I ain't ready to have that conversation, lemme tell you. So we both had a dream about a weird magical being sort of watching us."

"Yeah, and I think it changed other people too. I think a lady became a mermaid; big green tail and clamshell bra and all."

"I don't remember that, but I *do* remember some asswipe leech of a CEO wishing to have a nature site be all his - for some redevelopment of course, rat bastard - only he got turned into a damn deer. A female one at that."

I smirked. "Doe."

"Yep, a deer."

"A female deer," I continued.

"Ray, a drop of a golden - no let's not get off topic. This is all too weird. Apparently I'm thirty one years old now."

"I'm thirty, so I guess you got me beat in seniority, finally. My full name is Luna Hailey Gavins."

My masculine friend huffed. "And I've gone from Ava Susanne Kensey to Aidan Stuart Kensey. All because of some magical shooting star that thought it was funny."

I put my coffee down, a remembrance coming over me. "No," I said. "Not *just* because it thought it was funny. Because we both made a wish. At least, I know I did. But in the dream, *you* made the wish too. The same one I did."

Aidan's eyes widened, and I could see some of Ava in them. "That's right. Holy damn hell, I was thinking about that conversation you started before the Saturday Blitz began, about how you wished you had a different life; a new body and everything. And I guess I was feeling shit after drinking way too much, so when I flopped on the couch all groggy-like when I was dropped home, I wished out loud for that too. I was just feeling a bit worn out and lonely, and I was thinking about those photographs all around the room, and how they didn't stir no passion in me anymore." He gestured to himself. "And then I woke up like this, big dick and all."

I raised my head from the table. "Big dick?"

Aidan gave an amused smirk. "Want to see it?"

"Ew, no. No more than you want to see my new tits."

"I admit, I'm desperately curious, but then girls are nearly so precious about that kind of thing. You've got a good set, at least. C-cups, I'd guess."

"Yeah, I have bras. C-cups, alright. Yippee for me. I'm still at the bank, at least."

"That sucks. The reality change fairy star or whatever it was could at least have given you a fun job to make up for it. If it's any consolation, I'm still into photography, though there's some urban shots I know I never took before, at least not in this timeline."

Silence stretched out between us. Funny how so much had changed, and yet all the same problems remained.

"Goddamn it," I finally said, standing up and accidentally making my boobs jiggle again. "When I wished to have a new body and life, I didn't mean like this! This is the kind of woman I might have been into, not one I wanted to be!"

"Hey, I'm in the same boat here, partner. I like a guy with a bit of muscle - maybe a little more than this, though I've got the height - but I don't want a dick swinging between my legs. And while they weren't great, I was rather attached to my tits - literally!"

I sagged back down, my butt providing extra padding when I sat. It was weirdly comforting.

"What the hell do we do, Ava?"

"Have you tried wishing to be a man again?"

I sighed. "Tons. And with lots of pleading and rewording and begging. There's a reason I had to go to the bathroom for quite a while before, all these dumb female emotions were getting to me as I wished. I even prayed, for God's sake."

"Funny that you mention emotion, mine feels turned down. Not dull or anything, it's hard to describe. It's like I have this need to act. Actually, that makes me think of something . . ."

Aidan, or Ava, or however I thought of the man opposite me, pulled out his phone and began typing.

"Sorry, not used to larger fingers. Gimme a tick."

I drank my coffee and waited him out. I still wasn't used to the sensation of my chest heaving up and down with each breath, raising and lowering my breasts. I pushed some of my hair behind my ears. It was wavier than expected, and while Aidan had said it looked good - especially the dark brown colouring - I really just wanted to give it the chop.

My mind wandered, fearful that this could be permanent. Would I have to live as Luna for the rest of my life now? What would that even mean? Certainly, I'd have to expect a monthly visitor. Dear God, I was actually going to experience periods, wasn't I? And what about men now? As a guy, I'd been pretty much immune to creeps, but there was no way that I wouldn't get catcalled or something with hips like these and a nice pair of breasts. There was no denying that I was beautiful. And what about relationships? Was I just a lesbian now? Surely I had to be, there was no way I was getting attracted to guys. Especially since, presumably, this body could get knocked up.

That thought spun wildly around in my head. What would that even be like, to grow a life inside me? It was as repulsive and terrifying as it was strangely . . . intriguing to me. I had wanted kids, once, and now this body could actually provide them. If I was a woman forever, would I actually ever dare to take that step and-

"Found it! And it's good news! Yes! Look at this!"

I was pulled from my frankly bizarre thoughts by Ava's exclamations. The new man rose and plonked himself down next to me, placing his smartphone between us. It was a meteorological article that he had up for me to read.

Unexpected Comet Illuminated Eastern Seaboard, it read. Below it was a summary of the fascinating phenomenon, and numerous attached social media posts from people on the street and even celebrities, along with commentary from astronomers about its trajectory.

"So it was real," I said. "Only we and a few others like that mermaid - and good luck finding her - know that it's a magical entity of some sort. How does this help us?"

Aidan grinned and scrolled down further. "Because read *this*," he said.

I did, and slowly I began to realise why he was starting to look hopeful.

While the comet, which has been dubbed Kallen's Comet after the first astronomer to spot its unanticipated arrival, has gone for now, those who missed it can rejoice. According to that same discoverer, Professor Abigail Kallen, we are going to bear witness to an extremely rare and exciting event. The current trajectory of the comet, matched with its present speed, will result in it slingshotting around our sun and passing over Earth a second time. Because of the nature of the slingshot and the comet's slower speed, the actual course of the comet will take a wide arc. To put it simply, any astronomical enthusiasts or simply those that wish to see the impressive comet can do so again . . . in almost exactly three months time. We'll have a better idea of when as we get closer to the date and more information comes in, but Professor Kallen and her team estimate that in approximately 90 days we will not only see the comet again, but witness it take a reverse course out of our system.

Victory seized me. I balled my little fist and cheered, once more causing my chest to stir. "Yes! Aidan - I mean Ava - do you know what this means?"

The man chuckled. It was a nice sound, actually. "I can sure guess," he said, "given that I was the one to share the article with you."

"Oh, yeah, sorry. But this means we might not have to stay in these ridiculous new lives and bodies! We can make a wish again, as soon as the comet passes back over us. We can plead with that magical entity thing to change us back."

"That's the plan," he said. "Only . . . three months."

That was the sticking point. "Yeah, three months. That's . . . somehow still longer than I expected."

"And we don't even know if wishing when it comes back will change us back."

"It *has* to," I said. "I'm not staying as a chick for the rest of my life. No offence."

"None taken. I've long held the opinion that men couldn't handle it."

"Shit!"

He raised an eyebrow. "What is it?"

"Three months," I repeated. "Three damn months before even a *chance* of turning back. You know what this means? I've got to go through three damn periods, Ava!"

There was a slight pause, and then, much to my surprise, my formerly female friend suddenly *burst* out laughing, a big belly cackle that rumbled out of him and echoed through the room.

"What? Hey, what's so funny?"

He wiped a tear from his eye, calming down. "Oh, nothing! Just that I'm starting to think there might be some benefits to this whole gender swap thing. I could do without periods for a quarter of the year. And being taller and stronger."

I folded my arms beneath my chest.

"And what do I get out of it?"

He smirked again, raising his coffee to his lips. "Well, *honey*, we might have to teach you the finer points of *makeup*."

My jaw fell, and only a faint, feminine gasp escaped my mouth.

Aidan began laughing all over again.

"I'm glad *someone's* enjoying this," I said.

Part 4: First Day Back

That one strange Saturday continued to extend out across the following two days. The next morning, I woke up with the hope that this was all some crazy dream, only to still be a woman. I was shorter, I was thinner (pretty damn petite, in fact), and I had the womanly curves to match. I had to wear bras, and it was only thanks to Aidan that I was able to get used to putting them on. That was a good thing, because I still had my job as a manager at the bank, and was expected to turn up and run the show from Monday to Friday.

As a woman.

A woman.

To say that the experience was odd as hell would be greatly understating things. I won't claim I had ever been the most manly man. In fact, I've always been pretty proud of the fact that I'm pretty in touch with my emotions, and able to express them in a way most

men struggle with. Ava - Aidan now, I suppose - had often complimented me on it as well. It was likely that we were able to converse so well in our friendship partly because of that. But that didn't mean I wasn't in the grips of ego death thanks to the loss of my manhood! Every man knew the importance of the member between their legs. The sheer value of it to one's sense of self. It was more than just a piece of reproductive equipment, it was the thing that *made* one a man, even if one didn't always admit it. I mean, guys made dick jokes at each other's expense. Women mocked dudes who had tiny dicks. Men everywhere were utterly self-conscious over the size of their wieners, or, on the other hand, utterly boastful that they were a true man because of how well-endowed they were. To be castrated was to be torn loose from the ranks of maleness itself, to lose not just a body part but a symbol of all that you were supposed to be. Even the most emotional, in-touch-with-himself and subversive man felt this on some level, including me.

So yeah, I'd say that I was feeling pretty damn humiliated by the fact that I now had a *pussy*. And that wasn't even getting into the ample C-cup tits, and my overall shortness and so on.

Or the work skirt. Or the woman's blouse. Or the slim, feminine jacket.

"I can't believe I'm looking like this," I said, checking myself out in the mirror.

"You look great!" Aidan said from behind me. "You haven't done the best work with the makeup, but it's pretty good. Smart and professional and, if I may add, pretty sexy!"

I had to blush. It was my first day back at the office. I had taken a sick day to sort out the insanity of me suddenly having a vagina, but when I'd gone out to buy some necessities with Aidan, a few people asked if I was okay because I looked 'sick.' Aidan had to inform me that it was because most women were expected to wear makeup, and this would only get worse if I rocked up to work looking all professional but not 'done up.'

"Do my lips have to be so red?"

"Relax, buddy. It's not even party makeup. You look great. How's the bra feeling?"

"Tight."

"Lemme see if I can adjust it."

"Just close your eyes!"

"Relax, it's nothing I haven't felt before."

But it wasn't just that. It had suddenly become very . . . different, to have a man touch my body. I mean, it always would have been, but I should have welcomed Aidan's help, knowing he was usually a woman. Instead, my body shivered at his touch, my nipples stiffening a little.

"I can do it!" I declared quickly, perhaps a bit too much so. The new man just shrugged.

“Fine, but don’t say I didn’t warn you. A badly fitted bra can really hurt your shoulders - the straps will dig right in.”

She wasn’t wrong. Going into work I kept scratching at my shoulders, trying to adjust my bra straps without anyone noticing. My skirt was slim and professional, but it was still bizarre to experience the greater airiness and freedom that it offered, and wearing dark stockings was just the opposite in terms of how they encased my legs. I won’t lie though, they *were* oddly comforting.

“Morning Luna!” Jacob said as I came in on that first day back. My hair was better that morning, more professional thanks to Aidan’s advice, though having jewellery around my neck was all kinds of wrong.

“M-morning Jacob!” I replied, trying to play it cool. “Any news this morning?”

“One of our big fishes wants a meeting with you. They’re dissatisfied with the savings they’re getting on their long-term deposit account, and are continually threatening to switch banks unless they can withdraw at will instead of the set release date.”

I sighed. This would be Mr Erick Hartley, asshole extraordinaire. Real old money type who loved to say the words ‘diversified portfolio’ in any given sentence, especially to people who could never afford such a thing. It was always his way or the highway, and I had always struggled over how to handle him. It was always a display of dominance with the man, right down to the incessant insistence on crushing my hand when Erick shook it.

“I’ll take care of it,” I said, rubbing my temples. “I’ll try, at least. I’ll be in my office. Please tell me that the coffee machine is working again.”

Jacob, loyal banking assistant that he was, had ensured that it was repaired thanks to a continual spam of maintenance requests to the relevant people. He personally delivered my regular morning coffee to my desk, but I was surprised by the sweet aroma coming from it.

“What’s this?” I asked.

“Your standard coffee,” he said with a slightly confused smile. He was a tall beanstalk of a young man, Jacob, with bright ginger hair and an earnest smile. “Vanilla latte with extra sugar.”

I experimentally lifted it to my nose. “I don’t drink - oh wow, that smells good. That smells really good.”

“Well, it is your usual, Luna.”

I had to put on my poker face. “Of course, I must just be feeling off today. Thank you Jacob.”

He left to go man the desk, ready for the bank to open. I took the time to answer emails and collect myself. My own office now had the name ‘Manager Luna Gavins’ upon it, and the same was true of the little nameplate on top of my desk. There was now a mirror on

my desk - one of those little circular adjustable ones that were used to quickly check and re-apply makeup that women used. I used it now, looking at myself.

Still pretty.

Still with reasonable long hair, albeit tied up in a professional ponytail now.

Still female.

And younger, I couldn't forget that I had also become younger. My cheeks still even had some baby fat on them, even though I was now thirty years old; it would have been impressive were it not for the fact that it was freaky as hell.

"At least everyone sees it as normal, I guess," I mumbled to myself. I tasted my vanilla latte, wishing I'd had my usual long black, only for the drink to elicit a slight moan from me. Goddamn, *this* was delicious! I'd always hated overly-sweet drinks, at least when it came to caffeinated beverages, but it seemed that this new body also came with new taste buds, because now I wanted more.

"Thank you Jacob," I said, grinning just a little. "I'll see if I can't get you a raise some time."

Of course, my happiness was short-lived. At my desk, I could effectively just be my old self, but there was no stopping the fact that Erick Hartley would be coming by to complain and moan and throw around his alpha male attitude as always. There would be a butting of heads, and I felt seriously underprepared now that I was in a smaller, lithier, more petite female body. My voice alone commanded far less respect, and it would be hard to hold an even stare against him when I'd be looking *up* at him. I decided to simply deal with various emails and go over my calendar, then make a few appearances around the bank and see that the employees under my care were all undertaking their duties properly.

But an hour and a half later, *he* arrived. I had to take a deep breath as I saw him enter, which naturally left my breasts rising and falling, pressing against the material of my bra beneath my blouse. Aidan had been right; I *should* have let him adjust the straps, because I clearly had not fitted my boobs into the cups just right.

"Jacob," I told my assistant. "See to Mr Hartley here and then bring him to my office."

"Um, sure. Don't you want to see him now?"

I shook my head. "He hasn't seen me yet. He'll appreciate a show of strength; he comes to me."

Jacob nodded, loyal adjutant that he was, and once more I had to reflect on the fact that this job wasn't giving me the satisfaction I desired anymore. Once, this would have been a heart-racing challenge. Not, it was just making my blood pressure rise. Sure enough, the door to my office opened not long after and Jacob let Erick in. I stood, naturally, and extended a hand for him to shake.

"Mr Hartley, it is wonderful to see you," I said. "Please, take a s-seat."

I almost failed to finish the sentence; instead of gripping my hand firmly as usual, he instead took it demurely and then actually *smiled*. Not a vicious, shark-like smile either, but an *actual* smile. It took me quite aback.

"Luna! If it isn't my favourite bank manager! I was very much hoping to see you instead of the other riff-raff around here."

"Oh, Mr Hartley, you know I run a tight ship," I improvised. "Hardly riff-raff."

"Please, call me Erick, Luna, you know I insist."

"Erick then. How can I help you this morning? I saw from your email that you were hoping to procure funds from your long-term deposit early? If so, I have some bad news on that--"

He chortled. He actually fucking *chortled*. "Oh, please don't tell me bad news! Ah, but at least it's better from your lips than anyone else's. Go on then, tell me what I can and cannot do and we shall make some good argument about it, ha!"

Oh. That's what this was about. I was an idiot. Erick Hartley was old, but he was also old-*fashioned*. He always wore his three piece suit with a red tie, his white hair combed over and his disposition professional. Even his rudeness was that of someone with a forceful and imperious personality, not your average angry Joe. And now, in this newly changed reality, I was a rather gorgeous yet professional woman, still damn good at my job. *Of course* Erick Hartley would be chivalrous and gentlemanly, even as he sparred with me. It was exactly his type. Still, I couldn't help but smile.

Maybe I could use this.

"You know I do love to argue with you, Erick," I said, adding perhaps just a little giggle into my voice. "Just as I always enjoy your company. Let's discuss the policy, shall we? You've certainly come in ready for the details, what with that very sharp suit. That's definitely the war tie I see there."

He chortled again. "War tie? I like that! Ha, I like that a lot. But you know me, Luna, I always try to dress up when attempting to impress a fine woman."

"Well, as a fine woman myself, consider me impressed. Now, about this policy, let's get stuck into it, and you can tell me about how Getrude is going as well . . ."

I could scarcely believe what I was doing. I won't claim it came totally naturally to me, but it wasn't unnatural either. I was actually *flirting* with the old dog! Not in any genuine sense, of course, and he knew that well too, but in that fun back and forth way that signalled a different kind of a cat and mouse game between us, and one that was much more fun and less contentious. I won't say I was supremely comfortable with him remarking how beautiful I was, or that he was "riveted" to spend time with an "energetic young woman such as yourself," but there wasn't a whole lot of malice either. Weirdly, it even made me like Erick a

lot more to see this more joking side of him, one that clearly liked to relive his glory days of being a bit of a chivalrous flirt.

Afterwards, Jacob knocked upon the door and checked in on me.

"How did it go with him, Luna?" he asked.

I must have looked quite surprised, because his expression became more concerned.

"Oh, that badly?"

"No! No, just the opposite, Jacob. I - I think it went rather well, actually. It seems being a woman has some uses when it comes to men like that."

Jacob's eyebrows raised, and I realised what I'd just let out.

"Um, I mean that he tries to be a gentleman in my presence."

"Of course. Will you be needing anything else?"

I tapped on my desk for a moment. My longer, perfectly manicured fingernails made a nice little *rap rap rap* upon the wood. I hadn't felt a single inkling to chew them again, perhaps another good thing about this form.

"You know Jacob," I said. "I'm already hankering for another one of those vanilla lattes. Think you can help me with that?"

Aidan and I caught up after work, again at my place. I was eager to tell him how I'd gone, especially since I'd acquitted myself rather well in my role. My employees seemed a lot less stressed, and I was thinking that I should chalk that up to my new female intuition. It really *was* a thing, I'd discovered. Now that my system was flooded with estrogen, I was in possession of a lot more natural empathy. Not that I'd ever been a hard taskmaster; I always tried to take care of those under my charge, but now I could notice the little flicker in Erica's eyes that spoke to anxiety, or that Jessica was clearly trying not to cry after an interaction with a customer; both microexpressions that would have flown over my head prior to that strange Saturday's events.

"It sounds like you're getting in touch with your female side a bit," Aidan said, sipping a beer. We were on my back deck, an idea space to chat about our bizarre gender swap without any concerns about people overhearing us.

His words made me blush. "Sort of. I mean, I suppose, in a way. It's all just chemicals, isn't it? Biology, chromosomes, etcetera. It was bound to make me change perspective in some ways."

Aidan shrugged. “y’all seem to be trying to put a scientific spin on it, honey. But we both had the vision of that entity: I’d say we’ve entered a realm of magical when it comes to that.”

“You know, I hadn’t realised it until now, but you sound like much more of a cowboy now that you’re a man.”

Aidan grinned. “Woah nellie and hold your horses, really?”

I laughed. Then, to my embarrassment, I actually teared up.

“Hey, it was just a joke. Luna, you okay? Luke?”

I covered my mouth, accidentally imitating quite a feminine position. “Sorry, it’s just a lot. Today was such a rush! I’ve been a woman for three days and I feel like it’s all just coming down on me right now.”

“Hey, hey, it’s gonna be alright,” he said. He put a broad, surprisingly powerful arm around me and held me close. He ran his fingers through my hair, and that too was rather lovely to experience. It soothed me in a way that human contact hadn’t for quite some time. “Trust me, y’all just need to let it out, okay? Just let it out. It’s a female thing, sometimes. Trust me, I could cry with the best of them. y’all just let it out, Luna.”

And I did. To my embarrassment, my throat even caught on a couple of sobs. It had only been one day of actual work - of public life as a temporary woman - and I was already breaking down. How could I possibly keep this up for several months? *Three whole freaking months!?*

“I j-just feel s-so emotional r-right now,” I managed.

“I know, I know. I’d feel the same in your position, but being a man now dulls me a bit to it, at least. I won’t deny I’ve had a couple of tears though. For a woman, it’s just more . . . powerful, I s’pose. How do you feel?”

I wiped away the last stray tears from my cheeks and finished my sniffing. Slowly, I untangled from my friend’s arms, mourning the loss of their comfort as I ran a mental self-diagnosis.

“I feel . . . better. A lot better, actually. Why do I feel a lot better?”

Aidan just laughed, and it was an attractive belly laugh, a sort of friendly rumble that made me feel warm in his presence.

“That’s just how it is sometimes, bein’ a woman. y’all just gotta let it out, get the waterworks flowing, have another gal - or guy, I suppose, in my case - be there to support you, and then . . . *catharsis*.”

Catharsis was certainly the right way to put it, because it was like the fog clouds in my head were suddenly clear. I took a deep breath in, then let it out.

“I’m being all self-obsessed here. I should be asking how you went today. You went to take some shots, right?”

Aidan scratched the back of his head. I was reminded once more of how well-muscled his new form was, given that he was wearing hiking shorts and an ordinary blue shirt. He wasn't enormous, but had a fit liveness to him that was surprisingly appealing to my female brain. Not that I would tell him, of course. This was just a stupid consequence of my dumb wish and that even dumber entity.

"Well, it ain't no public appearance like you had to go through, that's for sure," he said. "In many ways, I guess I was still kinda hiding from the world. I mean, I was basically just taking some hiking trails and snapping photographs that people might want to pay and frame for. The forest reserve also wanted me to get some snaps of the deer population, maybe catch a wildcat if I was lucky, for their promotional material, but I was mainly just focused on myself."

He was itching to say something, I could sense it.

"And? What aren't you telling me?"

He smirked, lowering his head. "y'all always could read me. Having a new face ain't changed it much. I . . . I had a good time, Luna."

I furrowed my brow. "You did?"

"No, that's a lie. I had a damn *great* time. I know this sounds crazy, me bein' actually a woman in her forties down deep and all, but the strength and power of this body, and all that commanding testosterone, it was something else, honey!"

"You've got to be kidding me."

He took a sip from his beer, and with the casualness of his pose, he looked like he'd been a man all his life.

"I really ain't. I was able to walk faster and further than I've ever done before. I knew, intellectually and all, that men were stronger than women. That they had more endurance and reserves of energy and all that. But I had no idea how completely true that was until today when I was out in the wilderness, legs pumping, my back hauling all my equipment with ease, and just *something* in my system wanting to push me to go even further. This is gonna sound even stranger, but I even began to feel like a lumberjack, or a wild man or something. I had this image of myself with my hair grown out and with a full beard and everything, just this macho man out in the woods."

I didn't even know how to respond. After experiencing so much doubt after just a day or work, of feeling utterly emasculated from the loss of my member and befuddled by my soft curves and breasts and feminine voice, I was mostly just *jealous* at how Aidan had taken to being a man like a fish out of water.

"That's . . . wow. I guess that's something, Aidan. I'm glad *someone's* enjoying this."

He scratched the back of his head nervously again, giving me another look at his biceps. "I know, right? I mean, I even had a lady compliment me as we walked. Said I looked

'fit as a fiddle.' I didn't really know how to respond; I'm more used to guys cracking on to me rather than the reverse. Still, it made me puff out my chest."

I emphasised my own obvious bustline. "Yeah, well I can't *not* puff out mine."

"You get comments?"

I sagged. "Not too many. I'm a bank manager, so that intimidates some. But I felt . . . looks. Stares. Pretty sure one guy was looking at my ass when I bent over to do some paperwork. Oh, and I definitely raised an eyebrow when I spread my legs while sitting."

He chuckled. "Yeah, you definitely gotta watch that, hun!"

I laid back against the couch set. It was one of those deck swing sets, and so we gently rocked it together. I rested my head against his shoulder as he had often rested against mine. There was nothing sexual in it; we were just platonic friends as always, and yet . . .

And yet Aidan did smell nice. Manly, in a way that was good? It was hard to quantify, and my tired mind didn't really want to quantify it.

"If it's any consolation, I still don't love this," he said.

"Yeah?"

"Well, for one, being hairy is not entirely my jam. Or at least, it'll take a while to get used to. And I feel like I'm more aggressive than before."

"You were never a daisy flower."

"Oh shut up, you. I'm just getting used to the impulses. Also, having a cock."

I nearly spat out the beer I was starting to sip. "Y-yeah, I miss mine."

"This one's a massive gun. Seriously, I'm packing a pistol here. Did you want to see it?"

"Absolutely not."

Aidan chuckled. "Well, I guess I suck at shooting the shit like a guy too. Pretty sure I still walk too much like a lady. There's a lot to get used to, being taller and broader and the like. I don't know. It's a big role reversal, to be sure."

We sat in silence for a while, both of us taking in the proceedings of the last few days. I was distinctly aware of how much bigger my friend was than me, and how coarser, and hairier, and manlier. Meanwhile, my chest stuck out thanks to my breasts, and the jeans I was wearing were tight against my widened hips. Coupled with my longer hair and other intrusive features, and there was no denying that I was a woman.

"We're going to have to adapt to this, aren't we?" I said.

"Yeah," Aidan said. "I guess we will."

More silence followed, melancholic but companionable. But then a bold idea struck me, and while it was also a little embarrassing to say out loud, I knew I had to say it anyway.

"Maybe . . . maybe we should move in together."

“What? Are you serious?”

“Just for a little bit,” I explained, “while we get back on our feet. Look, I’m not good at being a woman, and you still have a bit to learn about being a man. We need to help each other when it comes to clothing, fashion, style, mannerisms, how we act around different groups, and all that. We’re the only ones that understand what the other is going through. If nothing else, I can help you figure out whatever is going on with that baby beard of yours, and you can help me sort out my hair. It wouldn’t be permanent, but it’s not like you haven’t slept over before. It’s not sexual.”

Simply saying ‘it’s not sexual’ seemed to make Aidan look me up and down. His gaze lingered just a little bit further upon my chest, and again that embarrassing warmth flowed through me.

“Of course,” he said. “Yeah, that makes sense. I guess I just didn’t expect y’all to be so . . . forward. That’s kinda my thing at the moment, right? But you’re not wrong: we both wished for a new life, and now we have to deal, until we can turn back. This might just be the best way.”

He extended a hand. “Shake on it?”

I took it, and then winced as he crushed my daintified hand a little.

“Oh, sorry! Don’t know my own strength.”

I shook my hand. “That’s another thing we’ll have to get you adjusted to.”

Part 5: Shopping

The next two weeks saw us start to fall into a rhythm. It was decided that Aidan would stay at my place in the spare room. For one, my place was bigger (given that I made more money), and had a nice back deck, but it also *had* a guest room in the first place. He set up shop there, bringing over the clothes and things he felt he needed, though to him tell it he’d left quite a bit behind.

“I was thinking of shopping for clothes myself,” he explained. “Put my own style on bein’ a man rather than letting the universe choose it. You could join if you want? I was thinking of going this weekend.”

It wasn’t the worst idea, actually. Now that I was younger and - let’s face it - better looking, it made sense that my wardrobe had a few . . . provocative things in it. Nothing outlandish of course, but the idea of wearing shirts that were tight against me, especially ones that showed off a bit of cleavage, was totally anathema to me. I was a bank manager, so I didn’t want anyone to get the wrong idea anyway.

So after a week of being a woman - of sitting down to pee and putting on makeup and bras with Aidan's help - I was finally free of work. It was a good thing too. Not only was I still getting that same malaise when it came to dealing with my occupation, but I was starting to notice more and more when men looked at me, or flirted with me, or generally made comments as I passed. Not too much *at* work, thankfully, but certainly when I ducked out to get some lunch, or when I had to run errands and the like. And there had been that one construction worker pair who had called out to me.

"Hey sugar tits! Nice pencil skirt! Love the way it makes that ass bounce!"

"I think I see something else bounce too, honey! Maybe undo another button; give us a tease, baby! Just a tease!"

I'd never been the biggest fella before, or the most prone to violence, but I probably would have thrown down or at least stepped up against a man who'd said that about Ava in my presence. But now, stuck as a smaller woman, I was instead just incredibly self-conscious and nervous, and the notion of getting back at these men began and ended with me ignoring them and giving them nothing.

"You made the right choice," Aidan told me afterwards. "That's what I would have done. Hell, I did it today when another lady got harassed outside the supermarket. I should have said something, but I completely forgot I was a guy, sort of. People gave me dirty looks, and rightfully so."

"Yeah, I was getting *dirty* looks in a different way. How do women stand it?"

"Well, the attention can be nice in other ways, in the right context. That's why we should go shopping. Figure out who Aidan and Luna are gonna be for the next few months, huh?"

That made me smile. Aidan may have changed, but he still had his female self's fundamental optimism and ability to roll with the punches.

"Yeah, okay. Let's go, then. Just so long as you don't try to get me all dressed up as a prank or something."

"Cross my heart."

I soon discovered that Aidan's promises were worth nothing, despite that southern Texas charm that dripped from his cowboy's drawl. We spend *far* longer going through the mall than expected, and he practically *dragged* me to Coquette's, where a woman named Elizabeth was just *dying* to find me all the right clothing for the approaching summer.

"Oh, trust me, if you're looking for a new wardrobe, I can absolutely help you! Is it a rebirth? A new occasion? A celebration?"

"It's just . . . uh, a matter of fire damage. I lost a lot of my clothes. I need some stuff to help-"

"Flatter her figure," Aidan said, teasing me.

"That's not what I-"

"Something that lets her know what it is to be a woman," he continued. "She's told me before that she wants to be more proud of her body."

I narrowed my eyes. "Can I talk to you privately?"

"Of course, *honey*."

I pulled him away from Elizabeth, who looked a bit confused.

"Honey? Proud of my body? Be a woman? What in the hell are you doing?"

Aidan grinned. "Just havin' a bit of fun is all! I figured while we were here . . . why not indulge?"

"What does that mean? You said we were gonna find our own style to cope with this insanity!"

"Exactly! Look, I've been thinking ever since I did that big hike, and when I went for a walk yesterday again. No one else gets the chance we do, right? Who else gets to spend a few months as the opposite sex? And to be younger and much better looking!"

"Don't be so humble," I said sarcastically, placing my hands on my womanly hips.

"Actually, I was talking about you, there."

I bit my lip. That stupid warm glow returned.

"My point is," he continued, "we should embrace this! It's weird, and strange, and horrifying, but also wonderful. So we should go bananas with it. I mean, this is far too much information, but last night I finally bit the bullet and skinned the snake."

I raised a quizzical eyebrow.

"You know, played the one-string fiddle? Strangled the polecat? Roughed up the one-eyed bandit? Had a date with Rosie Palms?"

"Oh. Oh! That's - interesting. How did you find it?"

He went a bit red. It was a cute look. "Definitely different. Powerful, actually. All the pleasure at once, and a much quicker build up. I can't believe I lasted that long. You should try it yourself."

"I . . . may have already."

"No way. When?"

I coughed. "The first morning?"

"Oh my God, y'all are such a fox! Was it just that one time?"

It hadn't been, but I was eager to get off the subject. No point admitting that I was starting to get a little addicted to pleasuring my female body at night.

“Okay, fine, I get your point. We’re adapting, so why not embrace it a little and see where it goes, right? Since it’s all just temporary.”

“Exactly. We wished for new, different lives. This is our chance to actually try them out.”

I sighed, admitting defeat. He was right, of course. I returned to Elizabeth, who was a woman in her forties with long, dark hair. I was briefly a little jealous of that hair.

“All sorted?” she asked. “You wanted to try something on?”

“I did,” I said, giving a hesitant look over to Aidan. “I wanted to try a bit of everything, actually.”

What followed was a veritable *show*, one that Aidan spent far too much time enjoying. At first it was just ordinary things: some denim pants, some tracksuit bottoms, some hiking shorts that fit my new momma hips (not that I was a mother, dear God! But they certainly fit the bill), as well as some tops and blouses. But then, with Aidan pressuring me and my own curiosity starting to bloom, came other choices as well. Soon I was trying on crop tops, new bras (even a push-up bra for ‘special occasions’, and I couldn’t deny it made my cleavage look *fine*), summer dresses that were free and flowing upon my body, skirts that were shorter than expected, tops that bared my midriff, and so on. It was a strange thing to be caught up in the excitement of, but it truly felt like my life had briefly become one of those montage dress-up scenes from a romantic comedy: I would emerge from the changing booth in my latest outfit - in this case a one-piece bathing suit that Aidan had somehow convinced me to try on - and he would clap and ask me to spin around. And, because my new self was just that tad bit more submissive to a man’s requests, I would do so, turning on the spot and letting him get a good look.

The man actually dared to *whistle*.

“Hey!” I said.

“I can’t help that you look good and that my new body finds you nice to look at.”

I scowled. “Don’t even go there. God, this was a mistake.”

“Well, you could always try on a bikini . . .”

“No chance.”

“We’ll just have to buy this one then; we are definitely hitting the beach now that the weather’s getting warmer.”

I rolled my eyes. “Well, you’ll have to go shirtless, in that case.”

“Intriguing. Actually makes me a bit nervous.”

“Okay, I’m heading back in. I’ve just got these pinafore overalls and I’m done.”

It was these last ones that suited me best of all, and actually made me pretty glad that I’d gone through the whole dress up hijinks after all. My body had some nice curves, and was certainly quite ‘hippy’, something which I’d noticed Aidan noticing whenever his gaze fell

to my hips or rear. So wearing an outfit that gave me a sort of 'next door neighbour' look was actually validating: it covered me up pretty well while still being quite feminine and conforming to my best features nicely.

"Yeah, that definitely works for you," Aidan said, giving a little dramatic clap in the store as I exited from the changing stall. "You've got the 'hot mom' appearance nailed down."

I snorted. He wasn't wrong. I looked into a nearby mirror and turned a little, and couldn't help but smile a bit. I had never been particularly happy with my looks as a man. I was . . . I guess you might say *resigned* to them. Not unhappy, but not proud either. I was just . . . me. And perhaps it wasn't enough. It's embarrassing to even think of admitting, but looking at me with my brown hair and hazel eyes on my cute face, my rather shapely body wrapped up in a pinafore dress, I actually felt . . . cute. I beamed a little.

"What are you smiling about?" Aidan asked.

I signalled to Elizabeth to come on over, and she eagerly did, sensing a big sale.

"Oh, I just think I found a style I like."

"Great! We'll purchase this, then get out of here."

But I just wagged a finger in my handsome friend's new face. "Oh no! I had to wear a women's swimsuit just now! You don't get off that easily; it's *your* turn next. And there's a men's fashion place right near this one . . ."

Aidan tugged at his collar in a show of mock nervousness, before falling into laughter with me.

I could scarcely believe how much money I'd spent. I wasn't exactly lacking in funds, but it fully dawned on me when I saw the outrageous pile of clothing practically erupting from my shopping bags.

"Oh God, what have I done?"

"What have *you* done? I own *men's aftershave* now thanks to you! Not to mention a wardrobe of new shirts and pants. Do I really need that many singlets?"

He didn't, but I'd pressured him to buy a few more for reasons I *definitely* didn't want to admit, namely that my imagination had run a bit wild during my friend's montage, and I had started thinking about him showing off more of his shoulders and arm muscles more often.

"Of course you do," I said, placing his pile separately from mine. "Besides, I'm sure we can return some of this at some point, or it'll magically change to the right gender once we change back."

Aidan was already changing into a new shirt. For a moment I faltered, not knowing what to say. Something about the chest hair his body had . . .

“y’all looking at something?” he asked.

I snapped right out of it. “N-no! Just curious as to what you were thinking of wearing.”

“You’re welcome to change too, you know.”

I blushed, grabbed a bag, and moved to my own room, then closed the door. He made a muffled complaint through the door, but still looked pretty happy when I emerged in my apparent ‘hot mom’ look, denim overalls and white women’s shirt and all.

“Looking good,” he said.

“And you look like a total cowboy. When did you get that hat?”

It was literally a cowboy hat, and he gave a boyish grin in response to my noticing it.

“When you weren’t lookin’. I figure if I sound and look the part, why not go the whole wild hog?”

“God, you are going to be just insufferable as a man, aren’t you?”

“Maybe,” he said, still smiling. “But you’re taking to a woman a bit more now that you’ve got past the emotional hump.”

I put my hands on my hips. “What do you mean by that?”

“Oh, only that y’all ended up buying quite a few cute dresses, I couldn’t help but notice. And some bras - is this a push-up? Holy shit, y’all bought that white push-up bra that made your C’s look like big ole Double-D’s! It’s the same one! I bet you could-”

I snatched it right out of his hands, my cheeks so red I probably looked like Raggedy Ann.

“That was a *private* purchase, thank you very much!”

He folded his arms. I swear his grin could have eaten half the shit in a New York sewer drain. “Really now? Because that kind of push-up would make some private parts very *public*, far as I can tell. Are you gonna put it on?”

“No, I’m putting it in the trash now. I don’t know why I bought it.”

“Aw, c’mon, y’all could at least show off the girls a little. We could go on a date night!”

“Nope.”

“It’s not like we didn’t already pretend to be boyfriend and girlfriend at the mall.”

“Still nope.”

“Shucks. Well, I plan to embrace this for a spell. We’ve got the clothes, we’ve got the bodies, and we’ve got the new identities. And we’ve still got almost three months left on the clock, really. So, what do we do?”

I tucked the push-up bra away, along with some of the other dresses I’d purchased without thinking; the more revealing ones, including that black dress with the glimmering star-like pattern and the plunging neckline. *That* I didn’t need Aidan to see.

"What we do is just live normal lives," I said. "We help each other cope with this gender bending nonsense, and then we go back to normal."

Aidan shrugged. "Sounds a bit boring, but fair enough. I was thinking of hitting on some ladies on the town."

I blinked. "You can't be serious."

"Oh, I don't know if I'd have sex, though I've gotta tell ya that my new pecker is definitely more interested in women now - no offence, but you really confirmed that before."

"Ew!"

"Trust me, you are not ew. Not. At. All. But I figure we're both single, and we've both had poor relationship game recently. Maybe this is our chance to see how the other side lives; pick up some tips! Are you in?"

I chuckled. "You're on your own for that one, Aidan. I plan to stay inside as long as possible while a woman. I doubt any of this clothing will see the light of day, in fact."

It was a promise to myself, to not slip into that strange excitement I'd had back at the mall. That almost feminine glee of experiencing the new life I'd kind of wished for.

Of course, I had a long history of breaking promises to myself, as I'd soon find out.

Part 6: Adaptation

By the time the first month had passed, I'd actually become far more comfortable in my female body than I ever could have imagined. It was actually kind of disturbing how well I was adapting to my changed life, in fact. With Aidan's help I had mastered the art of makeup, and even more than that, I had secretly started *experimenting* with it, even buying a few lipsticks on the side to see what it would look like if my lips were a bit more glossy, or trying out some subtle eyeshadow to give me a sort of smokey quality. I justified this practice by telling myself I was just doing what Aidan had suggested after that first week; attempting to understand the 'other side' and what they go through in the hopes that I would raise my relationship game after the fact. But I knew I was kidding myself; I was starting to get a little dopamine rush when I got my makeup just right, or tried a new look that worked well with my hazel eyes and cute freckles. Aidan had taken to complimenting me outright when he noticed, but other times he just smiled, the cheeky bastard.

I no longer needed his help for dressing up as well. I couldn't remember the last time I put on my bra wrong or let the straps dig in. I still hadn't worn *that* particular bra, but I hadn't returned it either. This was because I was evidently developing a bit of feminine vanity, particularly when it came to displays of my *decolletage*. Look, I had a pretty good set

of hooters, that much couldn't be denied. Sure, they weren't big D-cups or anything, but my C-cups were certainly ample enough to fill a palm each, and they had plenty of jiggle and wobble to contend with. To put it simply, sleeping on my stomach as I had done most of my life was now out of the question unless I wanted to be feeling aches in my chest the next day. So they were pretty pert, pretty heavy, pretty *sensitive* - as I'll get to in a moment - and pretty *pretty*. I wasn't exactly showing them off, but after another three weeks of being a woman, and as the summer weather really started bearing down, I was getting more and more comfortable wearing open-button tops, or summer dresses, or even the occasional crop top. Just around the house, of course - I only wore the most conservative summer dress in public - but Aidan certainly noticed.

"y'all really looking quite feminine lately," he remarked from the couch while reading a book, himself just in a singlet and shorts that were too damn good looking on him despite their simplicity.

"I'm just . . . adapting," I said, as was my refrain. I swished my bright orange summer dress with its orange flower patterns. "And I won't lie, this is very comfortable. Very airy."

"I miss summer dresses more than anything in this weather. But at least I can do this!"

And with that comment, he put his book to one side and removed his singlet entirely, leaving him shirtless. I had to look away, it was like staring at the sun. Was his body getting even fitter from all his walks and runs and workouts? It had to be!

"I can do that too," I said, letting his expression briefly become hopeful. "But I'm just not going to."

I smirked in a way I knew was cute, teasing my friend.

"Aww!"

That was our back-and-forth a lot these days. We didn't talk about it too seriously, probably for fear of exactly what that would mean for our platonic friendship, but neither of us could deny our *physical* attraction to one another by this point. We were both much better looking - and younger - than we had been, even if we were gender flipped. And with my heightened libido and new arousal in response to men specifically, it did mean that Aidan liked to continually tease me by flexing his arm muscles or doing the work in the yard I no longer had the physical strength to do. I teased right back, of course; hence the crop top I wore the other day. I even got to bring up the classic quote.

"Hey, my eyes are up here, thank you!"

That got a laugh from us, and quite a hefty blush from him.

But these moments of dress-up and joke-flirting didn't leave the actual house. I ordered groceries to the house most of the time, and preferred to go to work as my professional female self and then head straight back home. Aidan was a lot more outgoing,

and even had hit the clubs just to see what it was like as a guy. He'd struck out evidently, but didn't tell me why, only that it 'hadn't worked out.' He hadn't been again, but still went on his hikes. His fresh perspective was doing him a load of good for his work: he'd made a number of great sales and gotten more than a few commissions for his recent nature photography work, and he attributed it all to being a man.

"Sexist," I told him.

He just laughed. "Oh, it's not that. I'm just seein' things from a new perspective, is all. I was gettin' stale before, as all artists do. I would have found a way to reinvent myself, it was just that the universe got there first, darlin'."

"I suppose you're not wrong," I said in response. "I feel more comfortable at work. Jacob feels more like a friend than a colleague, and I get along so much with the girls there. It's like I've always got my finger on the pulse of how people are feeling. Female intuition, I guess."

"Not to be underestimated. I still have it a bit, but I'm more forthright now. I'll miss that when I change back. I feel it suits me. So, are you thinking of sticking around with your work?"

I sipped my beer. The back deck was our regular 'debrief' space.

"Maybe. I don't know. I still don't feel satisfied with it. I make good money, but I've saved up a lot. I guess I just want to know if there's something more, y'know?"

Aidan shrugged. I envied how much he'd taken to his new life, instead of being wracked with doubts all time.

"You tell me if y'all find it," he said. "I think . . . I think maybe I'm on my own journey right now. Maybe I'll know who I am a bit more by the end of it, ya know?"

"Hopefully me too," I said, clinking my beer bottle against his in a quiet cheers.

But no epiphany was coming yet. Instead, there were just the nightly urges. I had actually tried to get to sleep more than once without flicking the bean, as it were, but my new body was surprisingly . . . randy. I swear I couldn't help it, though I was probably doing a bad job at not encouraging it. I just had this *need* to climax at least once every two days, mostly once a day, really, and when I was trying to get some shut eye that's when my big pink nipples would start to stiffen and my new plumbing start to get wet. My willpower was evidently pretty weak, because I would toss and turn and then finally give in, groping and caressing my sensitive tits before lowering a hand down to between my thighs, just as I had that first time.

"Ohhhhhh, mhmhhh," I would moan as it began, biting my lip as to not be so loud. I was pretty sure that Aidan was masturbating as much as I was, probably more given he was a man with all that testosterone, but thinking on that only made things worse.

Y'see, I was starting to think about *Aidan* too.

Aidan and that big package he'd boasted about possessing.

I hadn't seen it, yet. I didn't want to see it. That's what I told myself, at least. But in those moments when tiredness broke down my mental barriers, I couldn't help but replay images in my mind of his muscles, his shoulders, his *back*. God, I didn't realise women liked men's backs, but I could see it in my mind. That and his chest hair. And that handsome square jaw of his. And the beard he was starting to grow because he didn't like shaving - would it bristle against me?

It was all kinds of wrong, I know, but it's funny the justifications the mind will come up with when it wants its pleasure. As I rubbed my sensitive clitoris, as I placed my fingers *inside of me* and moaned from the bliss that followed, I told myself I wasn't thinking about having sex with my friend, just the male body that wasn't his. And yet it was his smile that I imagined, his cowboy grin, his playful and flirty teasing as his body hovered over mine, his dick hard and big and ready to enter m-

"Ohhhhhh, yesssssss! Yesss! Yesss! Yesss, Ai-"

I had to cover my mouth as the orgasm came. I had let loose quite a loud cry, and the unbelievably powerful waves of delirium that followed made it almost impossible to keep my act a secret. I shuddered as I imagined in my mind's eye my friend not just against me but *inside of me*. What would it feel like? Would it be as heavenly as *this*?

I quaked, and only in the post-coital aftermath did I manage to calm myself, take stock of what I'd just pictured, and then sink into a state of complete and utter embarrassment.

Aidan could never know.

"I hate this," I said.

"You told me I could choose an activity to drag you out of the house."

"I should have seen that you would choose *hiking*."

Aidan snorted. "Yes, how awful this is. Fresh mountain air, scenic views, a good workout. It's basically hell on earth, darlin'."

"Don't you darlin' me with that Texan drawl of yours," I said, trying to keep pace with him. "I've got a woman's musculature now, and I'm shorter than you! This is a lot harder than it would have been. Not to mention . . . my outfit."

He regarded me, then winked. Clearly *someone* was enjoying the fact that I was wearing a pink hiking top that dipped lower than intended and even showed a thin strip of midriff. The fact that my hiking shorts left much of my thighs on display didn't hurt the overall appearance.

"You didn't *have* to wear that," he said, "not that I'm complaining. Besides, you keep looking at my bare arms, so I can't say I didn't dress to impress."

I scowled, even as I took in the gorgeous mountain view and the enormous forest that dipped low into the valley to our left.

"Can we not talk about the fact that we're kinda attracted to each other? It's . . . weird."

"You weren't attracted to me when I was a woman, were you?"

I shrugged. "You were good looking, but not quite my type. I don't know, we'd been friends for ages, friends when we'd been in relationships. I just couldn't see you that way."

"But y'all see me now as quite sexy, right?"

"I said can we *not* talk about this."

"I'm just saying, I see *you* as pretty sexy. It's just my new male mind. It'll go away and all, I'm sure. But I don't think we should ignore it. We could even have a little fun with it."

"I am not having sex. Especially with you."

He almost spluttered, surprising us both. "Woah, Nellie, hold your horses. I was not thinking of sex. That scares the shit out of me, and I don't want to ruin our friendship - I'd never want ta ruin that. I was just thinking we could go on a date or something."

I put my hands on my generous hips, savouring the stop to catch my breath. A had more sweat than I'd like between my boobs, and my stomach was feeling all funny too. Sort of crampy.

"A date," I said flatly.

"Yeah, just like we used to do. Not a romantic date: I just mean like we did at the Saturday concert before this all got started. We used ta meet up for all kinds of fun. Why stop now?"

"Well, I grew tits and a vagina. And you grew a penis."

He shrugged. "And we're still *us*, some . . . weird little new impulses aside. I'm just saying, y'all need to loosen up. You're so much more used ta being a woman now, but it's like you're a total shut-in at the same time. We should get y'all out of the house a bit more, and not just on a hike like this."

I sighed. "If we do, no more hikes. I am seriously feeling cramped after all of this."

"No more hikes, then," he said, though his obvious disappointment did sadden me a little. "But you must be a total weakling, cramping up like that."

"Oh, shut up, before I get you to carry me down the mountain."

"Fine by me!" he said.

My eyes went wide, but I couldn't even get a word out before he scooped my kicking female form up in his strong arms and began walking me down.

"Woah! Hey hey hey what are you do-"

He pulled me against himself, so that I was cradled in his arms and looked up at him, my hands around his strong neck. He was like Hercules.

"You really are pretty s-strong," I managed.

"Sure am," he said. "And y'all are pretty . . ."

He didn't finish the sentence. I think we were both beet red by that point.

"I think, um, maybe you should put me down now."

"Y-yeah. That's a good idea."

We walked back down the mountain in near total silence, both of us sensing that something had gone too far. Still, I rubbed my arms more a bit, swallowing occasionally as I came to terms with what had just happened.

Being nestled in his arms had felt more comfortable than I could ever have imagined. It was so wrong that it had felt so damn right.

Any follow up activity or further development ceased when the real source of cramping was identified, one that both of us should have foreseen:

I was having my first ever period.

"This s-sucksssss," I groaned on the couch, a heat pack over my abdomen. It was either that or an ice pack; I swear my body was alternating temperatures and I kept switching out what I needed. Aidan was a wonder.

"Don't ya worry a hair on that pretty head, honey," he said in that drawl of his. "I've been through many of these. You'll get out the other side of it. We'll watch some classic cheesy B-movie action flicks ta get ya through it."

It really did help. I won't dwell on the experience of having my first period, but I was distinctly aware that my fucking *uterus* was shedding, and that my flow wasn't exactly little either. I had to swap out pads quite a few times - hell, I had to *wear* pads. I didn't realise that during a period one's boobs also got real sore, and also bloated. It wasn't sexy to have bigger tits though, just aching.

I was pleased when the feelings left me, and even more when Aidan gave me the alternative.

"Hey, it's good news you got the period at least, right?"

"How come?"

"Well," he said, grinning a little. "Imagine if the 'new life' the entity gave you also added a bonus surprise. Imagine if you were knocked up."

I almost coughed up my soothing green tea. I was an image that stayed with me when I went to the supermarket to pick up groceries a week later. I was in my orange

summer dress again, wearing my makeup and actually feeling a lot better about myself, when suddenly I saw a young mother who looked like a blonde version of me pass. She was herding two adorable little children, one with mischievous red hair and freckles, and as she gently reminded them to mind the passerbys - including me - I couldn't help but notice that she was subtly pregnant, one hand falling to her belly.

I didn't even mean to do it. My own hand fell to my belly too, and she caught me in the action.

"Oh, sorry about my twins," she said. "They're a handful. Are you expecting too?"

I gaped for a moment. "Oh n-no. I was just . . . you look very beautiful."

The woman beamed. "Thank you. I'm coming out of the first trimester now. Feeling a lot better about myself, I can tell you that."

"Is it . . . how does it feel?"

"Tiring," the woman admitted. "And the morning sickness is no joke. But . . . it's like no other feeling on the planet. I swear, despite all the risks and dangers, men don't know what they're missing. There's nothing else like knowing you're creating life. Do you plan on some little ones in the future?"

"I, uh, always wanted kids. I just don't know if I want to have them . . . myself."

"Well, they're a handful, as I said, but they fill the cup more than they empty it. I wish you the best with whatever happens, dear. I'm Charlotte, by the way."

"L-Luna. I'm Luna."

"Lovely to meet you, Luna. I'm always here on Saturday around this time. If you ever want to talk more, feel free to hunt me down, okay?"

It was an interaction I continued to reflect on throughout the following week, even as Aidan continually asked if we were going to get out there and be more 'active' again. The thought that my body could create life within it was mind boggling. For the first time in a while, I didn't feel the need to masturbate when I went to bed (which, amusingly, meant I could hear Aidan grunting down the hall, the dog). Instead, I remembered the woman's appearance and her contentment, the joy she had in her children. A curiosity bloomed within me as surely as a child was blooming within her. I stroked my stomach, imagining what possibilities lay there, casting aside any male ego for the moment.

The next morning marked Sunday, exactly a month and a half since I had first become a woman, and Aidan a man. Exactly halfway until the entity returned in its comet and we could beseech it to change back. Something in my perspective had changed. I felt a little more daring, knowing that with every passing second I had less experience of womanhood ahead of me than behind me.

And so it was that I surprised Aidan quite a bit when I actually knocked on his door while still in my pyjamas, and he still in his, and made a proposal in a voice that was probably a little *too* excited.

“Let’s do it,” I told him. “Let’s go on a date.”

Part 7: Not-Date Night

“Okay, you have *got* to tell me where we’re going, I’m getting nervous here.”

Aidan chuckled at me. “Oh, nervous on a date? Welcome to womanhood. At least you know you can trust the guy.”

I punched him playfully on the shoulder. “I’m serious! I still don’t know if this was a good idea.”

“You proposed it!”

“Yeah, well, that was until you took over the proceedings with whatever madcap adventure this is going to be.”

“y’all worry too much. You look good, by the way.”

I smiled. I really did look good. I couldn’t claim to have dressed up fancy or anything. Despite having quite the lovely female body I doubt I was going to be donning any little black dresses or cleavage-exposers anytime soon. Still, I had selected a rather nice red blouse that hung loosely around my waist, and a longer black skirt that almost made it look like a dress with the way the two parts came together. I had gotten better at heels but chose not to wear them; Aidan had also insisted they were not necessary. I *had* styled my hair just a little, but ended up dissatisfied with it so now it was just in a smart ponytail. My makeup was nice, at least, and I couldn’t fault the way I’d chosen to match my red shirt with my lipstick. I’d even done a little work on my eyelashes, just to see if I could, and the results were pretty damn good. I *did* look like I was out on a date, and pretty chic besides.

“Thank you,” I said to his comment. “And you don’t look too bad yourself. Blue suits you. It matches your eyes.”

My friend smirked, keeping his eyes on the road but clearly chuffed with the comment. He was wearing a long sleeve button shirt, blue with faint white stripes, the kind of shirt you would wear on a date or to a fancy club. But, in typical Aidan fashion, he’d paired this with some rather casual jeans and runners. Despite the mishmash, he managed to bring it all together, though he was damn smug about having to do very little about his hair.

“Oh this stuff? I just threw it on. Can’t believe I had to wait so long for you to get ready.”

“Please, you were a woman! You’re meant to be a woman! Don’t act like you’re some manly man who doesn’t understand a woman’s preparation to go out, now.”

He chuckled. It was a cute sound. “All I’m sayin’ is that I quite like being able to just go out without all that huff and fuss. But I’ll also say this: waitin’ for you was damn worthwhile. Seriously, Luna, you look amazing.”

I blushed. “It’s not a real date, remember? This is just us celebrating getting over halfway through this ordeal.”

“Yessiree, ma’am. Are you ready for our not-date, then? Because we’re here.”

I looked away from his face to where we were headed, and to my embarrassment I let out something like an excited squeal.

“The Drive-In Theatre? I’ve not been here in years! I didn’t know it was still running!”

Aidan was clearly happy with my reaction. “It’s only part-time now; each Saturday night and special occasions. And I’d say this is a special occasion.”

“It’s also just, you know, a Saturday.”

“Well, let’s not tell them that.”

He pulled through to the booth and paid for the tickets, insisting that I cover my ears and not pay attention to what was being played.

“La le la le la le la,” I murmured, a little giddy from the mystery.

“Okay, you can open your eyes now. Tickets acquired. I pre-booked, this is just getting my spot.”

He drove us round to a spot that was a little to the left of the screen. The design of the drive-in had a slight incline down to the enormous screen where the projector would display the film, and this meant that everyone got a decent view. It wasn’t tarmac or anything; in fact, half of it was effectively sealed dirt with white lines spray-painted over. Something about that made it feel even more old school. As we pulled up to a stop I could see a slice of Americana that wouldn’t have been out of place twenty years ago, but now felt like a blast to the past in this modern day of iPhones and streaming; several young couples, some not even in their twenties, were nestled against one another in their cars, also on dates. As the projector lit up, others were even getting out onto the hood of their cars.

“This takes me way back,” I said. “I took a woman named Shelby on our first date here. She didn’t like *Alien* much, though. That was a bad choice.”

“Or maybe she just wasn’t the right woman,” Aidan said.

“Maybe. Yeah, we didn’t work out. It was still a good night though. The frights certainly put her in my arms.”

“That’s what I’m hoping for.”

I turned to him, aghast. "You did *not* select a horror movie night, did you? You know that I'm way more jumpy and emotional now that I'm a woman. All these anxious hormones, I swear!"

He just shrugged. "You'll have to wait and see."

I fumed silently for a bit as several ads played, as well as the usual warnings about turning off the headlights, not leaving the cars running, avoiding cell phone sounds and lights, etcetera. A few trailers played, and this was also part of the appeal, because they were all trailers for films that had come out ages ago. The Drive-In had this wonderful guessing game for people that were driven up without knowing the movie, like Aidan was doing for me now. You watched the trailers and had to guess the time period, and hopefully you could then guess the film from there.

"Is it *Indiana Jones*?" I asked.

"Nope."

"*Star Wars*?"

"You don't even like *Star Wars*, and you know I ain't into that."

"What about *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*?"

"Swing and a miss, honey. I picked this one tailored, alright? You're thinking too much with a boy brain. Get your girlhood on."

I felt a little insulted by that, but tried to rack my brain. I was coming up empty, and in the end Aidan just chuckled. "Don't worry, you'll find out soon enough. It's about to start."

The projector flickered, beginning the film on the giant blank billboard. It even did the classic film countdown effect, at which point the introduction began.

"*When Harry Met Sally!*" I declared, recognising the introduction. "This is a classic. I've not seen this film in forever."

"Seemed appropriate for a not-date night," Aidan said. "Just don't get any ideas or be too frisky like our young friends over there."

He indicated to a pair of probably eighteen-year olds who were already making out, even before any actual romance had come up onscreen. I rolled my eyes.

"I think I'll contain myself. There's an intermission, right? Or are we having food after the film?"

At that, Aidan surprised me further. He got a mischievous look in his eye, then exited the car entirely. He opened up the trunk, took out a large picnic basket, and gestured me to hurry up and join him on the bonnet of the car.

"Are you serious?" I mouthed to him through the glass.

"C'mon, y'all are missing the movie!" he uttered, before sitting up in such a way as to deliberately block my view anyway.

I couldn't help but roll my eyes. Ava had always been a bit of a trickster, and clearly hadn't changed too much as Aidan.

"Looks like it's yet another strange Saturday for me," I groaned, getting out of the car. The air wasn't too cold, but Aidan had already thrown a comfortable and thick picnic blanket over his car's hood for us to sit on. It was rather comfortable, but best of all was the contents of the picnic basket.

"You've got to be joking," I said, looking over the contents within. There were fine cheeses and biscuits for them to go on, slices of rich salami and kabana, as well as flavoured dips. There were full blown scones, with tubs of raspberry and cream to top them with, and for a larger main two chicken salad wraps that appeared to have been made by Aidan personally. There was also a wine bottle - a lovely Pinot Noir, in fact - and two wine glasses for us to share, as well as some non-alcoholic drinks so we didn't, presumably, end up unable to drive on home.

"Do you want to have what I'm having?" he said with a grin.

I giggled. "We're not even close to that line! And it refers to a sex thing!"

"Well, food can be better than sex, especially when someone secretly makes it up when their friend doesn't know. Half of this was whipped up while you were getting yourself ready, by the way."

"Oh, har, har. Pass me the biscuits and cheese. Ooh, is that fetta?"

We began to eat, and Aidan brought out the wine for us to share. It was indeed delicious, though I didn't want to drink too much too quickly: I was keenly aware that my own ability to hold my alcohol had diminished now that my body was smaller and more petite. I imagined I could get pretty tipsy pretty easily. Slowly, we became absorbed in the movie, cackling with the audience and other hood-sitters as the jokes flew, and even 'awwing' at the sweeter romantic moments that built between the eponymous pair. We ate from Aidan's picnic basket, and I was once again thankful that my friend had gone this extra mile. Ava had always claimed that the life of a housewife was not for her, especially since she couldn't cook. It turns out that she was a damn liar, or just didn't realise how good she was with food. *He* now, really. I utterly devoured the chicken salad wrap he'd made, before returning to the delicious platter he'd put together. The diner scene arrived, of course, and we all shouted the line along with the film's most memorable one-scene wonder.

"I'LL HAVE WHAT SHE'S HAVING!"

The pair of us giggled, and by this point I was in such a state of relaxation that I didn't even think about the fact that I was leaning against my best friend, enveloped in his protective touch. The air was starting to get just a little chilly despite the usually warmer weather this time of year, and so his own warmth also comforted me. He placed a casual hand around my waist, and I didn't fight that either. I should have, I knew but this date was

so perfect and the mood so fine that I let it pass. The wine must have been going to my head a little, because I sighed and confessed something.

“Aidan, this is going to sound really, really strange, but . . .

“But?”

I kept my eyes on the screen, taking in the movie, but in a way it was background noise compared to where my mental focus was. I knew he was doing the same.

“But this is the best date I’ve ever been on,” I replied.

“You know what, Luna? I can safely say the same. Of course, I did plan it . . .”

I giggled, and used the excuse to nestle further against him. My heart did not beat quicker like the last few times something like this had occurred. No, instead of nervousness, a sense of peace came over me, an almost . . . romantic calm. As if there were no place I’d rather be. As if, were I to fall asleep right at that second, I would do so without any fear of anything happening to me, because my protector would be right there.

“You’re comfortable,” I said, after drinking another glass of wine.

“And you’re getting a little tipsy, I think,” Aidan said.

“What makes you say that?”

“One, you always hate it when people talk over a movie, yet here you are. And two, I’m sorry to tell you this, Luna, but girls always get a little bit handsy when they’re tipsy.”

I realised I had been rubbing his chest softly with one hand and pulled it away. I could feel my cheeks getting rosy.

“Sorry,” I said.

“Don’t be, I don’t mind it. But maybe let’s watch the film?”

We did so. By the end, I was practically weeping, despite it not really being that kind of film. When Harry made his midnight confession of love to Sally, was rebuffed, and then listed all the true reasons why he did indeed love her, I couldn’t help but get teary-eyed. I had to sob silently, wiping my tears away in a manner I hoped Aidan wouldn’t notice. I think he obviously did, but he didn’t say a thing, and part of my heart grew three sizes just to think that. I truly felt like a lady, in many ways, particularly when the credits rolled and this enormous cathartic release came over me. People (idiots, really) think that women are more emotional in the sense that they are *unable* to control their emotions, and therefore unreasonable and impractical. I hadn’t thought that way for a long, long time, but perhaps some biases lingered. Now, being a woman, I understood it completely. Women *were* more emotional . . . when it came to outwardly expressing emotions in a healthy way. I didn’t feel a pressure not to cry or even blubber a bit, or to feel pangs of pain when things didn’t go right for others, or even to talk about my feelings, even with Aidan. But as a man, I’d been just as emotional. Different emotions stirred to the surface - anger, a protective instinct, etcetera - but they were still emotions. But expressing them had been hard, especially the ‘wrong’

emotions. I understood that now, which was why it was so damn freeing to simply stop trying to hide it, and openly wipe my eyes and sniffle a little.

It was then that Aidan finally complimented. "Good movie, huh?"

"The b-best. Can I have a t-tissue?"

Apparently, he had those prepared too.

"Don't worry yerself, this film always made me laugh and cry at the same time when I was a girl."

"And now?"

He smiled. "The feelings are still there. I guess I'm just a little more stoic now. Or maybe I just want to stay strong so we don't both start blubbering."

I giggled at that. Other cars were starting to leave, but we stayed on the hood of the car longer, eating the remaining snacks and drinking more wine.

"Are you sure you're right to drive?" I asked.

"Please, I'm a right cowboy now. I feel fit as a fiddle!"

And with that, as I collected our things to get back in the car, he did the unthinkable; he actually slapped me on the rear. It was a light slap, but I twisted my head, shocked.

"How dare you!"

"Just getting you back from that one frisky time when we took a trip to see my family in Dallas."

I couldn't even fume. I wanted to. I should have. But as usually goes in these things, especially when alcohol is involved, I instead burst out into a series of giggles.

"You do that again and I'll slap you right back, and not in a fun place! C'mon then 'cowboy.' Drive a tipsy gal home. It's the gentlemanly thing to do."

"Damn right it is," he said, tipping an imaginary Texas ranger hat. He got into his seat and reversed out of the park, then drove us back onto the road and then onto the highway. My stomach was full of bubbles, and not in a bad way.

It was getting a lot harder not to put my hands all over my friend, no matter how wrong it would be. Of course, when you're a little drunk, there's a lot that doesn't feel wrong at all anymore.

Part 8: Making Mistakes

We arrived home, and Aidan had to steady me a couple of times before I got my feet in order. The process made me giggle - I seemingly did a lot of that while tipsy.

"I'm not even wearing heels!" I said.

"Maybe you need to sleep this off," he replied.

"Oh, please, I'm not that bad. What so we crack out that bottle again!"

"We finished it."

"What? As if!"

"Yeah, okay, we didn't. But we should save it. How about some beer?"

I gave my best Chesire grin. "That would super. I could really use a beer right now."

We slumped on the couch together, a few beer cans between us. I was still in my date outfit, and he was still in his, though he'd undone a couple of buttons. I couldn't stop myself from occasionally peeking at his chest and admiring the hairs there.

"What are you looking at?" he asked as he finished his first can.

"You're so . . . hairy!"

That nearly made him spit out his next sip. "It takes some getting used to. Nice not to have to shave, though. Especially this thing."

He indicated to his face, where a beard was starting to form.

"Does it suit me?"

I nodded, perhaps a little too eagerly. "It really does. Can I . . . can I touch it?"

"Sure! It's really bristly. I gotta say, I can see why guys grow them; it kept me warm during the movie."

I felt his beard, trying not to giggle again. It really was quite coarse and thick, despite not being that big. It did suit him.

"You kept *me* warm during the movie," I said, biting my lip.

"I noticed y'all didn't mind that."

I blushed and drank more. I nestled against him once more and moved his arm around behind my neck so he was holding me around the shoulder.

"I really don't," I said. "And I don't mind the beard, either. You're doing well as a man."

He drank more of his beer and I drank from mine. There was a rush to my body that I hadn't experienced before, a kind of warmth that was settling over me. My nipples were starting to stiffen a little bit with arousal, and it was hard not to squirm a little due to the growing wetness between my thighs. I knew I had to be careful, but it was like I was playing a fun and daring game of chicken.

"Well, I can't say I didn't notice you shave your legs now. You've done good work there."

"They're good legs!"

"I'll say. Not good for hiking."

We both laughed at that, and then when we stopped laughing, we sort of just . . . looked at one another. I couldn't really explain it, but it was like we were just lost in one another's eyes, his blue gaze kindly and intense and *manly* all at once. No one had ever

looked at me like that before, and I knew at once that he was feeling the same urges I was feeling, albeit from the masculine side. I looked down for just a moment to confirm my suspicion - he had a hand covering himself, but I had little doubt that he was getting stiffer there. I quickly pulled away and drank down far too much better. He did the same.

"So, we've been friends a long time," Aidan said.

"Sure have."

"But we were never right for each other."

"Just weren't . . . just weren't my type," I whispered.

"What is your type? I never really asked, though I had some ideas."

I swallowed. "You can't ask me that as a girl. My type's all changed."

"But before now."

"I guess . . . I guess I really liked girly girls. You know, quite feminine and motherly, in the sense of being around my age. I could have become a stepdad, I guess, is what I'm trying to say, but a woman in overalls and a cute white shirt just did things for me. Someone I could be the man for. I suppose I never really saw you that way because you're already such an outdoorsy, self-reliant type, always fixing things. I wanted to be that someone, you know, for someone else."

"And now you *are* that woman," he said, stating the unspoken obvious.

I looked down at myself. I wasn't wearing overalls or a pinafore get up or whatnot now, but I definitely had the vibe of an attractive, feminine woman who knew how to dress in casual, comfortable ways. Sleek and slinky dresses were not for me, but I had developed a style without even realising it that was modelled on the very kind of woman I liked. And I *liked* being that woman, oddly enough.

"Yeah, I suppose I am."

"And I'm the sort of guy that *I* was into: another outdoorsy type like myself, but not without his sensitivities. None of that alpha male gym bro bullshit. An ability to appreciate nature but also be more forthright and confident and . . ."

"And what?" I asked, looking back up at him. I was right up against his warm body now, desperately trying not to touch him too much, but as I stared up, I felt so much like more than a friend to him.

"And caring," he said after a moment's pause. "And loving."

That was when it happened. It seemed to take a long time, and it seemed to happen all at once. Slowly, I raised my lips to his, and lowered his face to mine. I opened my lips, parting them to receive him, and he matched my movements as if we were committing to some unspoken dance. Before we connected, I could have sworn that my heart skipped a beat. His lips locked with mine, and then his hand was on my cheek, and my hand upon his chest, and I was adjusting myself so that I could more easily kiss him. Our lips did not part,

leaving the kiss to be slow and sensual. I draped my arms around his neck, and in doing so pressed my chest against his, squashing my breasts a little and making me wish I didn't have a bra so I could fully *feel* him. I moaned, just slightly, just quietly, and in response he locked his lips with greater passion and held me as if he would never let me go.

"What are we doing?" he asked as we finally parted after what felt like over a minute of kissing.

I stared into his eyes. They were so lovely, like the rest of him. His handsomeness was rugged, and when my chin and lips brushed against his facial hair it was indeed coarse, and yet something about that, too, was right.

"What we want," I said. "What we *both* want."

"We can still stop."

His breath was on mine, our faces still so close together. He was examining me and my beauty as surely as I was examining his.

"Do you want to?"

Almost imperceptibly, he shook his head. "No. I don't. I want you, Luna."

"Then I want that too."

"What if it's a mistake?"

I drew even closer, our noses brushing against one another. My body ached for attention, *burned* for a man's touch in a way I could never have imagined just a month and a half ago. It seemed like, in this moment, I was Luna, and Luke was all but forgotten.

"Then let's make a mistake together," I said, leaning past to breathe the words into his ear as sensually as I could.

The alcohol gave me liquid courage, perhaps both of us, because after saying that there was no more position. We were kissing again, but now it was more like *making* out. I had made out with women before, and gone through dry spells where I'd dreamed about making out with women. Now I *was* that woman, I found all the little details had changed. I yielded to Aidan's stronger touch, letting him help me remove my shirt and then my skirt. My dainty fingers fumbled with his belt buckle, and soon we had that off too. With one move, he literally ripped apart his own shirt, and two buttons pinged off. I giggled, but then the passion resumed immediately, our bodies coming together so that naked flesh could touch. He gripped me around my smaller waist, and I held his magnificently powerful shoulders. His beard brushed against skin as he nibbled at my ear and neck, but I didn't mind it. It was so *right*.

"I want you. Get this off," I begged.

With a single hand, he easily undid the straps of my bra. I was momentarily speechless until I remembered that this man had been a woman for nearly forty years until recently. And yet still it was the sexiest goddamn thing. I held the cups gingerly, smiling with

a sheepish delight, and then I flung them away, releasing my C-cup breasts. They were, oddly, not as big as I wanted them to be in that moment, but that was purely because he was looking at them with lust and I wanted to please them. They were still ripe and full on my chest, pert and pretty.

"I have a whole new appreciation for breasts," he said, his member almost throbbing in his pants.

"Show me. I want you to feel them up. I don't know what it's like."

"Oh trust me, you're going to enjoy it."

I did. God I did. When he cupped my breasts and then began to rub his thumbs over my nipples, I involuntarily let out a moan. The sensitivity was wild, and even more so because this was a man who had experienced womanly pleasure, and so knew what he was doing.

"Oh G-God," I managed.

"I can do more, if you want."

"P-please. It's like little - ahhh - pulses of electricity. It's - mmhm - so different!"

"Then you'll love this."

He hoisted me up with total ease and pressed his face into my bosom. For a moment I didn't know what he was planning to do . . . until he planted his lips around my right nipple and flicked his tongue out against it, sucking on that most sensitive part. I moaned again, this time even louder.

"Holy sh-shit! You're s-sucking on my tits! Mmhm!"

"Just one tit, but here's the other . . ."

He swapped sides, this time drawing it out and flickering his tongue in a circular motion. It elicited even more sounds of pleasure from me, and then again when he used his spare hand to pinch my free nipple softly, rotating his thumb and forefinger over it to tease out every ounce of pleasure.

"Ohhhh G-God . . . mmhmm - don't s-stop! Don't s-stop!"

"Do you want to return the favour?"

"Y-yes!" I gasped, my voice even higher than usual, full of ecstasy. I instantly lowered a hand down to begin rubbing his member. It should have been repulsive to me, but instead I was getting even more aroused and *wet* from touching his big, hard dick. I gripped the band of his underwear and released it, widening my eyes just for a moment as I was reminded of what a monster he now had there.

"Holy shit."

"I'll say. Ughhh . . . keep going, Luna. That f-feels fucking good."

"Well, *you'll* love this."

I cupped his balls even as he continued to suck on my tits. I fondled them very carefully, then rubbed the very stem before sliding my hands up his end to rub the head of his penis.

"F-fuck me, that feels like something damn else," he muttered. He cupped both of my breasts and pressed them together, then lowered one hand past mine to feel my own crotch. I shivered with anticipation and momentary fear, and then his fingers were delicately sliding up and down, rubbing the most sensitive parts of my vulva and feeling my clitoris.

"Ohhh, mhmhm, holy sh-shit!"

"You like that, wait until I'm inside you."

Nevermind. *That* was the sexiest thing I'd ever heard anyone say. I parted my legs a little, shifting so that he could help me remove my underwear.

"I can't wait at all," I moaned. "Fuck me. Fuck me with *this*."

I stroke his cock again, loving the feel of its fleshy girth in my hand. What the hell would it even feel like inside me? Surely I was going too far? There was no way I would actually accept a man's hard cock inside me, right?

But these questions only lasted a few mere seconds in my mind, because Aidan shifted me, and I moved with him willingly to the comfortably carpeted floor. We kissed tenderly, and then I felt something push against my outer entrance: he was rubbing his dick against my wetness, softening me up for penetration. Aidan looked to me for confirmation, and after a moment's hesitation I nodded.

"Do it!"

He slipped inside me, parting my entrance and sliding slowly but surely into me. My eyes bulged, and for a few moments I was utterly breathless and utterly silent, unable to do anything but shake slightly as he penetrated ever deeper into my passage. It was unlike any sensation I had ever experienced. It was like being stabbed, or having a hard pole inserted into me. Only it wasn't painful or invasive at all, and there was only a minor discomfort before his dick was enveloped in my juices and began to slide more easily. My vaginal clung to him, and I was shocked to realise I had muscled I could flex there, gripping him unconsciously and consciously, even as he reached his zenith.

"Ohhhhhhhh, G-Go-ooooood!" I cried, digging my nails into his shoulders. "That f-feels so f-fucking weird. But don't you d-dare stop!"

"Had no intention of doing so, honey," he said in his handsome drawl, and then he bucked just that little bit faster to surprise me. I swear, it was as if the end of his dick managed to stop just shy of my cervix.

He froze there, and so did I. We looked into each other's eyes, as if fully realising what we were currently doing. But it was too late: my body was barely under my own control anymore, and any reason I might have possessed had been drained away and replaced with

liquid courage instead. Slowly at first, and then with gathering speed, Aidan began to thrust into me, his incredible girth sliding almost all the way out before plunging all the way back in. I moaned, panting, losing my breath as he began to jackhammer away, penetrating me again and again and again. He kissed me, and all I could do was moan into his mouth in response, I was so lost in the sensations. He placed a hand over my breast, massaging it and increasing the pleasure, particularly as he pinched my nipples, making me give a little squeal.

"I'm close already," he grunted, even as he fucked me. I gripped him with my thighs, resting my head back on the carpet as he continued to go so damn deep.

"A l-little longer!" I pleaded. "Just h-hold on! I'm n-nearly there! Ohhhhh! S-so close!"

"I can hold it, fuck! y'all are so tight, and so goddamn wet! I can't believe how good it feels to be so p-powerful!"

"And I can't believe - ahhh - how good it f-feels to have your big hard d-dick inside m-me! I'm s-so s-so -"

My eyes went wide. The sensations flooded over me. I had about a half-second warning before I had to *grip* my new lover with everything I had, including my vaginal muscles, in order to milk everything *he had*.

"Ohhhhhhhh! OHHHHHHH!!!"

I cried out in ecstasy, my entire body lit up with the fires of female pleasure. It coursed through me, blooming everywhere and setting me alight. Aidan took that as a sign to release, especially since my pussy would not let him go until he did. He thrust and thrust and then thrust one final time.

And then he came within me.

It added yet another orgasm to my symphony of them. Something about feeling his hard rod *pulse and throb* within me, and his manly grunting, like that of a powerful bear. He gripped me tightly, one hand squeezing my surprisingly sensitive ass, and then I felt the warm flood of his seed pouring into me. One spurt. Two spurts. Three. It was being actively pumped full of his cum. I should have hated it, but instead I simply let out a long, whimpering groan.

"Ohhhhhhhh yesssss, fill meeeee . . ."

And Good Lord, he did. It felt like minutes before his body, and mine, finally calmed down. A woman's pleasure was so much different to a man's. The female orgasm was less immediately powerful, and took longer to achieve, but it came in magnificent recurring blasts that knocked me off my damn feet . . . well, it would have were I not so comfortable horizontal and with legs spread already. Either way, I was left panting, my breasts rising and falling, still-touchy nipples rubbing against his hairy chest.

With a grunt, Aidan pulled himself from me. I gasped; it was almost as alien a feeling as being entered! I could feel his cum issuing out of me a little, but I just needed some time in that post-coital bliss.

"We just did that," Aidan said.

"Y-yeah," I managed, still getting my breathing under control. "We just did that."

"What does that mean?"

"I - I don't know. I need to get cleaned up, I think."

"We could . . ."

I looked to him, waiting to hear his suggestion. Aidan decided to continue.

"We could shower together?"

I looked down at myself. At the seeping semen slowly trickling down my thighs, at my still-stiff nipples, at my so-recently ravaged body.

"Sure," I said, trying not to giggle. "It's not like we haven't gone all the way already, right?"

Part 9: Regrets

I woke up to three different things.

The first was the harsh light of midday, rather than morning.

The second was the realisation that I had a splitting headache, and had definitely overdone it on the alcohol last night, despite what I had thought.

And the third . . .

The third was Aidan's naked body, curled around me, one hand planted firmly but comfortably on my breast, the other brushing against my butt which was against the mattress. I could feel his manhood against me, sitting in the crevice of my ass as he spooned me. I was unbelievably comfortable.

But my mind was already whirring, even through the headache. What the fuck had I done? Holy shit, we had slept together. I know we went out for our cute little 'not-date' but I'd never intended things to go *this* far! Images flashed back into my mind of what had gone down: the teasing that had become flirting, the honest conversation that had veered into the sensual, the alcohol that had unexpectedly broken down barriers, and, of course, the moment when our lips had locked and the deal had been sealed.

And then what had followed . . .

It was like some kind of dream. A nightmare and a fantasy rolled into one. I had really let Aidan have sex with me. No, that wasn't putting it right. It wasn't something he had just

done. Nor had I just let him. I had been an active participant. I'd actually made love to him, spread my legs for him, and bucked my hips as he thrusting into me. He'd cum inside me and we'd showered together, giggled, and gone to bed together, still holding one another. We'd done that.

I'd done that.

And worse of all, for all that my actions now disgusted me, for all that I had a painful headache and way too much light sensitivity, the thought of his hard cock penetrating me again and again was enough to make me feel wet, right now. My nipple hardened against my palm, and I actually shifted my rear several times, sliding against his unconscious form, as if willing his member to harden.

And it did.

Slowly, but surely, his length began to extend, pressing between my cheeks and taking on that brilliant girth from last night. My heart raced, and while I knew I should stop, something compelled me to keep going. The sensation of it was too good. I just had to stop myself before he woke u-

"Luna?"

I *rocketed* out of bed so fast that my chest hurt from the heavy bouncing. I quickly grabbed as much of the sheet as possible and covered my body with it, though its thinness probably gave a silhouetted impression.

"Aidan! You scared the shit out of me!"

He was groggy, clutching his head as well. He looked over himself, and I could see the same set of realisations passing over his mind as they had mine just minutes ago.

"Hold the horses," he said, his drawl a big more ragged than usual. "Last night . . . die we?"

"We did," I said.

"And then we-"

"That too."

"And we went to-"

"Bed together, yeah."

He blinked several times, as if processing this new reality.

"Uh, how do we, uh, feeling about that, honey?"

"Don't call me honey. I just . . . don't."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean nothing by it, Luna."

"And that's not my name either! I'm meant to be Luke. God, what were we thinking?" It all exploded out of me. "It was just meant to be a little outing like we used to always do. Something platonic. But you brought a fucking *picnic*, Aidan. *Ava*. A romantic picnic and watching a romantic film and then we both got tipsy or even drunk and then had sex. We

fucking *fucked* together. What the hell were you thinking? What the hell was I thinking? We shouldn't have done that. We shouldn't be doing any of this."

Aidan stepped around the bedside, covering himself just a little.

"Luna, calm down."

"Don't call me Luna! And don't tell me to calm down!" I yelled. Tears leaked down my eyes. "This is all too much. I need - I need to get some air. All of this was a mistake, Aidan. Ava. I shouldn't have you living here. You need to go elsewhere."

His expression became crestfallen, and for a moment something almost seemed to break in my heart. I managed, just barely, to harden myself against that.

"Please," I said. "Can we just separate for a bit. This wasn't meant to happen. I need time."

Aidan nodded, his eyes sorrowful but his gaze understanding.

"Of course, Lun - Luke. Of course. If that's what you need. Uh, I might need some time to shower and clean up and-"

"Yeah, of course," I said, repeating his words. "Don't skip breakfast either. I just need time to process all of this. I . . . I wasn't myself last night."

Again, he nodded, but no more words were given. I sidled past him.

"I'm going to shower. Just me," I said.

"Obviously," he replied, but then another realisation visibly struck him, of us showering together last night, touching one another.

I moved to the bathroom with some new clothing before any more words could be exchanged. I didn't want to think about *that* image any further, either.

Aidan was all packed up and ready to leave. I was surprised at how much of his stuff, from his cameras and photos to his clothing and bathroom amenities, had slowly but comfortably found their way to my home. We had been together for pretty much the entire period of our change, and had only a little over a month to go before we could, theoretically, beseech the strange entity to turn us back. By coincidence, just as Aidan was taking the last of his things out the door to his car, the TV was announcing that the comet - *Kallen's Comet*, as they were calling it - was set to return in that period, just as expected. We both briefly stopped to watch the news, and the announcer seemed to almost be in on the joke that was our lives.

"So for any of you that missed this astounding meteorological and cosmological event the first time, or for those of you who simply want another chance to wish upon the most impressive shooting star you'll ever see, make sure to keep your eyes peeled on the forecast, because Kallen's Comet is confirmed to be coming back."

I looked at Aidan, trying to ignore that surprisingly handsome beard. He nodded.

"A month and ten days," he said.

"A month and ten days," I repeated.

"Are we living separate for that whole time?"

"It'd be best, yeah. Just in case."

"Are we going to see one another?"

I bit my lip. I hadn't even gone through those details myself, in fact. "Let's just take a week or two and see how things go. I'm sure you need to take some captures for some events, get your nature shoots in as well. And this period is when the bank gets really busy. Lots of old grandmas and grandpas are coming back from cruises and want to get their balances in order. It'll be time for us to cool off."

"See where we stand with each other?"

The question caught me off guard. "We're just friends, Aidan. I know recent . . . events made it seem like more, but we're just friends."

Again, that stoic cowboy's nod. "Of course," he said. "I just thought . . . nevermind. I'll get out of your hair, now. I'm sorry this all happened, Lu . . . well, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for things to go this way, I swear. But I have to say my piece before I go: for what it's worth, I don't regret it. I know we were both into it. I don't regret it at all."

"Well, I do regret it, Aidan. I really do."

He gave a wan smile. "Then I'll give you all the time to need. I just hope we can still be close." He stepped out onto the porch, and for a moment looked ready to go, but then he turned and faced me one last time.

"y'all told me this morning - this midday, whatever - that you weren't yourself last night."

"I wasn't," I said, crossing my arms.

"The thing is, I was myself, Luna. Just let me call you Luna this one time, please. I *was* myself. I think I was more myself than I've been in years, believe it or not. And, at least I feel this way, you *were* yourself too. y'all always talk about how much you lack passion, and want to find meaning, well, you seemed to find passion and meaning last night, at least from my perspective. Maybe something to chew on in the field of thought while I'm gone."

And with that, he left the porch, got in his car, and gave one last wave. My own wave back was half-hearted, though not from any apathy on my part.

Something about his words rang truer than they should've, and I didn't like that.

Not one bit.

I returned to work, and found it a good way to clear my thoughts of the acts I had taken part in. I occasionally dreamed of having Aidan, or some other man, thrusting inside me, and when I woke I still had to 'sort myself' out, much to my own (sexual) frustration. The only solution seemed to be to throw myself further into work, taking on matters that I could have easily delegated to others, or passed up to higher powers beyond our branch office. Jacob was a class act of an adjutant as always, getting my coffee just the way I liked it, or at least how the Luna me liked it. I continued to wear my professional female getup, even applying lipstick and light touches of makeup elsewhere. I could do those things because I knew that this was just temporary, and that I was just playing a role. It was what people expected of me, but it would not last forever. I could be a working automaton, enjoy my better relationships with the staff and particularly the women at the bank, and use that to push the fact that I'd had sex as a woman far, far, *far* to the back of my mind.

"Are you sure you don't want me to pass the Handlen account to someone else?" Jacob asked me. "He's normally covered by Vance. She gets along with him, too, and your workload is really, really quite piling up, Luna."

"No, I can handle Handlen," I said, chuckling a little at the accidental joke. "I've trying to ignore some shit going on at home."

"Ooh, gossip?"

"Not in your dreams, kid. Just relationship stuff."

"This that Aidan fella?"

I widened my eyes. "How do you know about Aidan?"

"Oh, I don't . . . much. The girls sometimes run a betting pool about when you'll get together with that supposedly 'platonic' best friend of yours. I heard about it last week."

I frowned. "That pack of hyenas. Those Judases. It's funny, I went to the drive-in with a friend recently and saw a film that opens with the line that women and men can't be friends, because sex always gets in the way."

Jacob arched an eyebrow, and I knew I'd given too much away.

"And is this what happened?"

I rolled my eyes. "Go home, Jacob. It's five PM. I'm staying late tonight."

"Don't work yourself too hard!"

But I did. It was the only way to keep my bearings; by ironically keeping myself so exhausted that reaching out to Aidan was an impossibility. It wasn't just the sex either, but the connection I had increasingly felt towards him. To tell the truth, while the fact that I had allowed myself to be fucked as a woman played big in my mind, and certainly bruised my vestigial male ego, my mind actually drifted to our date far more. I kept dreamily thinking of that lovely picnic that Aidan had prepared while we watched *When Harry Met Sally*, and the way I actually gave myself over to my feminine emotions without shame, and how he had

comforted me throughout. It made me feel all gooey and warm, which was just what I was afraid of.

Still, work provided a release from such concerns, even if it didn't give me satisfaction. The wish may have given me a new life, but had it really given me the one I wanted? I wasn't just thinking about being female either, but the fact that I had the same job with its own accompanying malaise. I received an email informing me that a possible position overseeing multiple branch offices would soon be available, an advanced notice from one of my contacts higher up the food chain who owed me a favour. I even had a good chance of getting it, if I prepared and got my affairs in order and made the right emails to the right people. And yet . . .

And yet I couldn't bring myself to even do that. I could work as hard and late as needed in order to try to push myself past what I internally referred to as 'the Incident,' but that didn't translate to any actual enthusiasm. The fact that as a woman I was apparently a better branch manager than ever didn't really help me, because I still wasn't inspired to do anymore than I had. I was, effectively, on autopilot.

"Damn it all," I said as I finally clocked out after a full working week. "I need a break. From all of it."

But how could I even get one? I was, by my own choices, all on my own.

The second week passed without incident, but also without interest. Aidan messaged me occasionally during this time, and I gave him respectful but brief replies. It would often go something like this:

Aidan: How u going?

Luna: I'm fine

Aidan: Do you still need more time.

Luna: Sorry.

Luna: Yes, I do.

Luna: I've just got a lot in my head right now.

Aidan: U know it's the guy who is supposed to be the 1 who struggles to talk, right?

And the woman who always wants to talk?

Luna: Probably because I'm NOT a woman. We've been over this.

Aidan: Sorry, a joke. Look, I'm heading out for brunch. Did you want to come? We don't have to talk about anything big. Just catch up.

Aidan: Like old times.

Aidan: U there?

Luna: Sorry, I just need more time.

Luna: Work is really busy now.

Aidan: Ok. Offer stands tho.

And indeed, the offers kept coming, but I continued to rebuff him. I felt bad. Aidan was my oldest friend, even if he was a man right now. And yes, we'd had sex, but we'd nearly had a friends-with-benefits thing ages ago before it all fizzled. We were drunk and desperate then too, it just hadn't eventuated (I ended up vomiting before anything could happen, as I recall, and it wasn't like we were each other's type, really). No, it wasn't Aidan's fault; it was mine. I wasn't comfortable as *myself* around him. If I was being truly honest with myself, it was because I was afraid that I would go all Luna around him. End up staring at his forearms and get swept up in that male rustic charm he now possessed. I couldn't let myself be weak again.

I couldn't let myself be vulnerable. That way led to . . . well, it led to a level of womanhood I didn't dare venture into a second time.

But as much as I tried to, I couldn't throw myself into work completely. I still had my weekends and afternoons, and while I was a bit reclusive, I couldn't resist my female intuition entirely. So yes, I will not lie, I did watch the BBC production of *Pride and Prejudice*, and the film version starring Keira Knightley. And I won't lie again; I *did* cry when the confession came.

"You have bewitched me body and soul."

"God, why is it hitting so hard!"

I blamed my female hormones, but the fact that I was also wearing comfortable pink pyjamas and eating tubs of ice cream only made me feel even more like a total stereotype. I tried to compensate by watching some classic action movies, and thankfully still found I loved *Indiana Jones* and *The Raid 2*, but the human element of the stories also appealed to me more, and Harrison Ford in his prime was . . . something else. It made me think of Aidan, which immediately made me quickly switch to something else.

I decided to deal with the garden, an issue I'd been ignoring for a while. It gave me an excuse to wear my cute overalls and more practical gear, but after two weeks where I only wore makeup for work, I found myself deciding to go "ah, fuck it" and wear some of the stuff I had purchased alongside Aidan. It reminded me of him, of course, but it was a level I was more comfortable with. And besides, I *had* gotten used to being good looking and taking care of my appearance more, and it was a practice I wanted to get used to maintaining even as I became a man again. I hoped that this wasn't just an excuse on my part.

There were other distractions as well. I was evidently a little more social in this new life of mine as a woman, because a number of female friends on my phone were contacting me to catch up as well, mainly from work. And given that I was a woman for another month still, and I was starting to feel a bit lonely from my self-imposed isolation, I took them up on the opportunity for a few brunches here and there.

"She finally emerges from her twilight cave!" announced Heather when I arrived for our first get-together.

"At least you look lovely, Luna," Kiera said. "We had a running bet that you'd developed claws and stooped back and some kind of moustache."

"Oh, har har," I said, sitting down with them. In truth, I'd fetched a short and cute blue dress over casual denim jeans and done my makeup just so in order to look quite good, just in case I got this very reception. I ended up having an accidental 1970's style look to myself, though it didn't exactly look bad either. "I've just been going through stuff."

"Yes, I hear down the grapevine that you and Aidan are no longer speaking. What's up with that?"

I suddenly remembered that Heather's husband was Dave, who liked to go fishing. I used to be closer to Dave than Heather, but fishing was a hobby that Ava had liked, and presumably still did as Aidan. Did that mean that in this reality, Dave and Aidan had caught up, and this information had transmitted along? Judging from Heather's smile, I assumed the connection I had made was right.

"We just had a . . . disagreement."

"Ooh!" Jessica squeaked, piping up. "Would this be a . . . *romantic* disagreement?"

I blushed, tried to play it off with a smile, and went to change the subject.

"Oh, you know how these things go. It's all very boring. So what's happening with you three? Heather, that hat is amazing!"

"Isn't it just? It's part of my Sicilian prep trip! Getting ready for that Tuscan sun as well, when we travel up to mainland Italy."

She regaled us with her plans for a mediterranean holiday with her husband, and that thankfully took the heat off of me, at least for a bit. Occasionally the subject reared its ugly head and I had to put it down, but even when the food arrived and I drank my sweet vanilla latte, I found it hard not to let the moody clouds crowd in on my thoughts. Why couldn't I be honest with these new friends of mine? In less than a month, they wouldn't be my true friends anymore, so there wasn't any risk, right?

"To hell with it, then," I finally said. "I'll spill the beans."

Jessica was just chatting about an issue she was having with an annoying neighbour regarding their new fenceline, but she stopped dead silent and leaned forward.

"Tell us!" she proclaimed.

And I did. I told them the whole story. I didn't go into detail, of course, but I did give them the basic outline, no mistruths or information spared - other than the fact that I had been transformed into a woman by a multidimensional alien living inside a comet, of course. I spoke about how we had experienced this lingering tension lately, including a physical attraction that had not been there before (for reasons I couldn't explain, of course, but I was able to frame this as almost like an 'awakening' of sorts, which I didn't feel was telling a lie or even a mistruth). I covered our desire to go on a not-date, and this surprised them with how I phrased it - they were under the impression we were a lot closer already, and I should have seen this coming - we had been living together, after all! I explained this as part of our way of keeping company, but I'm not entirely sure they believed it. Certainly, Heather had assumed we were "already boning," to put it in her crude way.

So then I told them about the date, and how it had gone, and the accompanying film and picnic, and Jessica actually put on a fake swoon, stating that she wished her own partner went to such lengths. Evidently, they all thought it was a deeply romantic night that Aidan had arranged.

"That's just the problem," I explained. "It wasn't meant to be. It was . . . it felt like a betrayal of trust. But also not. I don't know how else to explain it."

I then told them, much more briefly, that we had gone back to my place, had veered from tipsy but legal enough to drive all the way to most certainly not. In our drunken states we had given over to our passions, and finally made love. And that we had gone to bed together, and it was only in the morning that I realised what we had done and effectively kicked him out. It was strange, pouring all this out to women who should have been total strangers to me. That memory effect of the change did help - I was able to understand that we did these dates often, and know what subjects were right and what subjects were not when talking to them, but it was more than that. In becoming a woman, I had found it so much easier to simply spill out my soul to close company, to vent and cry (yes, I was getting teary-eyed, and Kiera had to lend me a handkerchief so I could wipe my eyes. It was surprisingly refreshing to be able to confide, and to have confidants at all. Heather and Jessica gave me sidehugs, and the outpourings of affection, even the slight teasing, was hard to take.

"Oh, you poor thing," Heather said. "Can I tell you my take on this? You're not going to like it, but I think I've got the heart of the matter."

"Better listen to her," Kiera said. "She's the group psychologist, remember?"

I chuckled, wiping away the last of the tears. "I doubt you can really know the heart of the matter, but sure, shoot."

Heather took a sip of her coffee, then discreetly wiped her mouth with her napkin before settling herself. I was getting the distinct sense that my new friend was one for *Drama*, capital D.

"Here's how I see it, Luna. You've been single for a long time, wanting that perfect man but not ever really knowing who it would be, or should be. You've had this perfect idea in your head, and no one matches up. It's the reason you were never with Aidan before, despite - in my view, and I think everyone else's - the fact that you two are perfect for each other. And perhaps he's been the same. For whatever reason though, you've left it at being friends.

"Now, suddenly, something has changed. I don't know it's you entering your thirties, or something just clicked on one of your Saturday outings, or perhaps the loneliness creeping in that we all feel from time to time. But you chatted with Aidan, and you both decided to move in together, to keep each other company. Like roommates! Am I wrong so far?"

I hesitated. "That's not entirely it, but . . . I guess you're not entirely wrong."

She grinned, eyes gleaming with victory. Kiera and Jessica nodded, as if they were listening to a sage woman give her prophecy.

"But it's all gone wrong," Heather continued. "Because it turns out that perfection is just that; some mythical ideal that no one can live up to! And it also turns out that this outdoorsy, bearded fellow with a Southern drawl may not be the kind of intellectual, academic type or whatever that you were into, but *my*, now that you're spending time with him, it turns out he's a bit of a hunk. And let's face it, darling, you're quite the damn looker yourself. So both of you are getting comfortable, and realising there's an attraction, and for anyone else in the world this would be a totally normal thing, right? Just totally normal, and good, and healthy, and - I'm just gonna throw this out there because I can be a total fiend - sexy as well. But you have both asserted that this friendship is platonic, and that you shouldn't be together, and that you're just friends.

"But Aidan is the first to crack. He takes you out on this not-date, hoping you'll see things another way, or at least be open to a relationship. And he thinks it works, and it does! You have a great time, you find him attractive, one thing leads to another, and then it's the horizontal monster mash in the bedroom."

"We did it on the floor, actually." I said without thinking. I immediately cringed as the others giggled like schoolgirls.

"Hot," Jessica said. "I used to do that with Brent, until he got a damn dog. Now it's all shed hair on the carpet, so *no thanks*."

I looked to Heather, who was appraising me still.

"You don't know all the details," I said. "And it doesn't change the fact that I've got regrets."

"Do you?" she asked, staring me down. "Or do you just *think* you should have regrets, because that's the guidelines you've put in your head. Aidan is your friend, he's not your lover. And since he was briefly the latter, now you've got to jam him back into that box to feel in control of things."

I puzzled on this, taking a sip of my own very sweet coffee. "I don't . . . I don't know if that's exactly it. I can't explain it all, but I felt far too . . . feminine with him. Like I was allowing myself to be a woman, when I'm not that kind of . . . gal."

It was a weak finish. It wasn't like I could exactly tell the truth here. But Heather had her teeth bared, sinking them into the meat of the issue, and she wasn't letting it go anytime soon.

"So what? Most of the women on the planet wished they could have a man who made them feel like a woman, and most of all they can be safely vulnerable around. Look, I'm not saying you have to be with Aidan—"

"I am!" Kiera piped in, before Jessica shushed her.

"—but I am saying that you should try another not-date with him, and see if the feelings that led to that horizontal *carpet* mash were real or not. You are clearly torn up about this, but I don't want you to regret your *regrets*, honey. You work so hard and never seem happy. Were you happy on the date? Hell, were you happy when you got some?"

Nothing could stop my blush at that moment. The truth sunk deep.

"I was," I admitted, looking down, unable to look her in the eyes. "I, um, I was pretty damn happy, actually. Nervous, scared, but . . . happy."

Heather raised her cup of coffee as if it were a victorious cup of red wine raised after a battlefield success. "And there you have it," she declared, her voice louder and full of puffed up authority. "Patient thoroughly dissected. I'll take my payment via EFTPOS, thank you very much."

I laughed, and thankfully the conversation moved on there, led by Heather of all people. But from the way she kept giving me wry little looks, I suspected she knew exactly what she was doing. She didn't want to press the advantage and spoil things, but instead left me to mull over what she had said with deep consideration.

And I was.

Good God, was I ever.

Part 10: Reunion

Heather's words stayed with me, and Jacob's also, though to a lesser extent. I received a few more texts from Aidan, and responded with greater length, explaining that I was still thinking things over, but also that I wasn't angry with him.

'I don't blame you,' I wrote. 'I've been thinking a lot about it, and it was a good not-date, it really was. And everything that happened after happened with my consent. I just found it really awkward the next day, and I guess I just felt like a total woman, and we've never been like that before. It's hard to put into words even when writing, but I hope you know I'm not upset and I don't blame you, Aidan. This whole thing kicked off with that strange Saturday, but all these feelings we're feeling aren't our fault. It's that entity. It's not real.'

To my surprise, *he* was the one that barely responded this time. I let more days pass, and I kept looking at the messages I wrote to him, all trying to rationalise and explain the factors that had led to our coming together that night, and why it wasn't either of our faults. Finally, with just a day shy of three weeks left to go till Kallen's Comet returned, with all its magical wish-granting entity power, I got a reply to my latest message. It was small, but it hit me like a sledgehammer.

'Luna, thks for talking a bit more. I was going to call you, but this is better in msg I guess. I can't say about ur feelings, but mine come from me. Just me. I can't lie about them. They're real, and u know what they are for u. That's all Ill say.'

My heart skipped a beat. For a moment, that warmth flowed into an through me, suffusing me with an almost dizzy lightness. And then it faded with the full epiphany of what was being said: Aidan truly did view that night as Heather saw it: a moment when we had gone from friends to potentially being more, and he didn't regret it.

"God, what do I even do?" I said aloud, sulking in the house, not even showered yet despite it being 10am on a Sunday. "How do I know these feelings are even mine?"

I thought about Heather, but ended up reaching out to Charlotte, the pregnant woman I'd befriended and had talked to a few times, just to hear her perspective. I still had her number, and she was receptive to what I had to say.

"Dear, my husband and I clashed like nothing else before we got together, so sometimes the time isn't right until it is. Only you can decide if that's the case though, no one else. Think about your feelings, and see if they're valid."

"But how do I know if they're valid?" I asked.

She chuckled on the other side. "The trick is not to overthink them. Tell me the truth, if Aidan ended up knocking on your door right now, would you want to let him in? Would you be happy to have him back in your life?"

My pause was almost as pregnant as her belly.

"I would," I said, stuttering a little as I put words to the realisation. "I really, truly would. I - I miss him. God, I miss him. I've wanted him back for weeks but kept on fighting it. I've kept on pushing him away."

"Then it sounds like you need to bring him back; track him down and tell him that, before it's too late."

I thanked her, and wished her the best of luck with her baby - she was due in a month now. I instantly tried to call Aidan, but his phone wasn't responding. Confused, I tried to phone him several more times, but still no response. I didn't even consider waiting: I needed to see him now, and confess . . . whatever it was I was going to confess. I didn't know what the hell it was, my hormones were flying every which way, and I could only be grateful that I wasn't on my period again.

"Screw this. Time to man - er, *woman* - up, and go get the guy."

I showered. I got dressed up in something cute and dressy, and then instantly decided it wasn't for me. I wanted to meet Aidan as the woman I was, not some ideal. That had been Heather's whole point. So I put on my pinafore overall dress with a pleasant pink top beneath and my comfy denim jeans, and felt much better with myself. I still styled my hair, giving it that nice wavy look, and put on some natural-looking but complimentary lipstick and some necessary foundation. I ate a quick lunch, swallowed down the butterflies that were stirring in my stomach, and when I couldn't think of any more excuses to sit around nervously readying myself, I marched out to my car in my ankle boots, the slight heel giving me a fairly *womanly* confidence, and even used my damn handbag for the first time.

I was coming for Aidan, and I wanted him to see Luna. Not Luke, not Luna-for-now or Just-Luna-for-two-and-a-half-weeks, but me, Luna. The woman I was, here and now, and screw what tomorrow would bring.

"I'm coming for you, Aidan," I said.

He wasn't home. It was embarrassingly anti-climactic. I stood there, heart pounding and mind buzzing, flooded with anxiety and a speech prepared in my head, only for all my knocking upon his door to amount to nothing. I checked the windows, feeling a bit like a stalker, but the house was empty.

"Wait, he likes to drink a beer in his backyard on a Sunday," I said out loud to myself.

Making sure I didn't look like a crazy trespasser, I went around the side of his house through the side-gate and went to his little back deck. It was smaller than mine; no wonder he preferred going to my place. But there was no sign of life. I was about to leave when I

noticed a slip of paper had fallen from the front door as I passed it again, one that had meant to be stuck up, judging by the bluetac.

Luna.

Gone up the mountain trail to finish things up. Feel like getting away from it all. Turned my phone off so you can't message me. Sorry for everything.

Aidan

My heart dropped. Worse, it was *sliced*. It was as if an invisible knife had fallen down my throat, cut through my beating heart, carved through my intestines, and then exited me as my entire being fell apart. I clutched my mouth, my hand trembling, as my breath caught like a chain on a bicycle, producing a ragged, horrified sound.

"Aidan. Oh God, oh Jesus, what have I done?"

I trembled, trying to get a hold of myself, my mind going to all the worst places. I'd pushed him away, I'd isolated *him*, not just myself, and in doing so had pushed him to the brink. He'd tried to open his heart to me, had taken that daring leap, and for his efforts I had shut him down despite my own stirring feelings. I had stomped on his heart, and now he was going to 'finish things up.' 'Get away from it all.' Even turned off his phone so I couldn't stop him.

Tears formed in the corners of my eyes.

"Aidan. My Aidan, what are you doing?"

My breath caught a second time, but then I regained control.

No.

I would not lose him.

I would not leave him in despair.

I would *not* lose the man that I lo . . . that I cared so deeply for, whatever those feelings were or might become, or already had transformed into.

There was no time to lose. I ran to my car, belted myself in as quickly as possible, and then turned the keys in the ignition and sped off. I had to get to the mountain trail. I would *run* up the mountain if I had to.

I huffed as I ascended the mountain trail. The heat was surprisingly powerful, and I hadn't brought a hat with me, nor anything more than half a water bottle. I was wearing fucking *denim jeans*, and my shoes had small heels that made taking a hiking trail just about the worst decision ever. I inwardly cursed again and again my decision not to quickly dart back

home and put on something better fitting, but at the time I had been thinking about Aidan, and how I had no time to lose.

I was still thinking that now.

The pain of possibly losing the man I deeply cared for, my friend - or even more - drove me forward despite the increasing ankle pain and thirst in my system. I needed to see him before he did anything stupid, and already my mind was flooded with horrid images of Aidan standing at the very edge of a cliff reading to throw himself off of it in a dark and hopeless mood. The very place of beauty and freedom and nature that he loved would become his grave, and I would have been the one to have sent him to it, all because of my callousness.

So I pushed on, uncaring how I felt, no matter how much my muscles ached and burned. I was certainly in a more athletic body than I had before, but that didn't mean it was up to a man's either; I was reasonably sure my old body, as unpractised in physical activity as it was, still would be more up to the job. My hair was soaking up sweat and sticking to my forehead. I had to keep stopping, take a moment to gasp in big breaths, drink what small water remained to me, and then continue, keeping an eye out for Aidan. Several passerbys were able to give me some water, looking at me like I was a crazy woman, which I was reasonably certain I was by this point. I was advised to turn back, to not wear denim, and certainly to get a damn hat. One kindly man in the end gave me his, and I was too hurried and desperate to push back against his kindness. I didn't even want to think about the uncomfortable underboob sweat I was getting; I hadn't even realised that was an issue women faced until now, and it was incredibly not nice.

Still I pushed forward and upward. The great vistas surrounding me in all their beauty were an unfocused background. All that mattered was the next step, and then the next, and then the next. Like a zombie, I staggered forward, reaching ever higher inclines. The sun beat down upon me, but instead of wearing me down, I only picked up speed. Images of Aidan danced in my mind, his face far more weary than my own, his expression little more than a void of sorrow. It tore me apart, and soon, rather than *being* winded, a second wind came over me. I surged forward, picking up speed until I was jogging and then *sprinting*, uncaring that the path wound further uphill. Tears streamed in my eyes, an almost manic desperation coming over me.

What if I was too late?

What if I wasn't there in time?

What if I couldn't convince him?

What if I didn't have the words?

No, I *had* to reach him. I had to climb this mountain, conquer it to the very peak if necessary. I ran faster, my legs burning painfully, but even the pain was just a distant thing,

like a blip on my awareness. Factually, I knew that my body was giving out, but it was only a fact to me in the same way as the sky is blue and cats go 'meow'; it had *no* relevance to me in the moment, all that mattered is that I soldiered on and on and on, through the winding path with trees on either side of me and into the clearing by the cliff side where Aidan stood positioning himself dangerously near a ledge and *holy shit I'd found him I'd found him I'D FOUND HIM.*

"Aidan!" I called, my voice ragged and unrecognisable. "Aidan! Stop! Don't do it!"

I ran with all my might, hand outstretched, only to trip on a rock at the exact same moment as he turned to face me. His camera shutter clicked.

"Luna!?"

And then I barrelled into him, unable to stop myself tripping forward, and a terrific pain seized my ankle as it twisted and we fell to the ground together. A teeming flock of beautiful birds took off into the sky as I rolled onto my back, panting next to Aidan.

"Ohhhh," I groaned in pain, my lungs fit to burst, my ankle exploding with tension from where I'd possibly caused more damage than I'd realised.

"Luna!" Aidan said, getting himself upright. "What on earth was that about? y'all ruined my shot, ya dang fool!"

It was then that I saw the annoyance in his expression, followed immediately by the clear concern for my well being.

"God, y'all are a mess. You looked like you ran up the mountain; what are you doing here? Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

I was weary by this point, the world crashing down upon me. The edges of my vision blurred.

"D-don't care if I'm hurt," I squeaked, raising a hand to try and touch his cheek. My fingers brushed against his handsome, coarse beard. "Just had to stop you. Didn't want you to hurt yourself."

His eyebrows furrowed, and I realised something was wrong.

"Hurt myself? What are y'all talking 'bout?"

"Y-your letter. You said you were . . . finishing things up. Turning off your phone. Sorry for everything. I thought . . ."

His eyes bulged, and if I hadn't already cottoned on to something being off, now it was obvious.

"Hell's bells, Luna, is that what you took away from that? I was just trying to finish a photography job getting snaps of those downy woodpeckers you just got done scaring away. I turned my phone off because I wanted to think and be alone in the mountain air. Jesus, I'm as liable to throw myself off a cliff as to, well, apply to that dismal bank you work for."

It was a fascinating experience, to be flooded at once with purest relief and utmost embarrassment. Were my cheeks not so red already from the sun, I'd imagine I would have been so obviously humiliated one could have mistaken me for an overripe tomato. As it was, he still managed to read my expression anyway. He placed my hand in his, looking over me as I lay on the ground.

"You ran all the way up here? In *those*?"

"I . . . I was scared for you, Aidan. I was so scared."

And then the tears exploded from me. I sobbed. God, I sobbed. There's no other way to put it, because I couldn't control my emotions and no longer cared to anyway. The words poured out of me as surely the tears did, and I let them go freely, not wanting to hold any of it back anymore.

"I was so scared, Aidan. I thought I'd pushed you away and ruined our friendship and everything else. I thought I'd hurt you deeply and I couldn't stand it. I just couldn't stand it. It was tearing me up inside. I needed to see you and tell you that *I do* feel a connection, and that was so afraid of it ruining everything, but my regrets weren't what I thought they were; I don't want to regret having these regrets. I don't want to keep wanting to go back to an old life I don't like when I'm on this adventure with *you*."

Aidan was holding me by this point; my ankle still hurt too much to stand.

"Luna, what are you saying?"

"I'm saying . . . I'm saying, oh for God's sake, I thought you were going to do something terrible to yourself, Aidan, and I couldn't bare the thought because I *love you*. There? Are you happy, you masculinised *lug*!? I *love* you, and I'm not afraid of being in love with you anymore, no matter what body either of us are in. I . . . I love you."

He kissed me. It was not long, or passionate, but neither was it chaste. It was . . . loving. There was no other way to put it. In that moment, I felt protected, and all my fears dissipated, and even the pain seemed to dim. And then, when he drew back, there was that cheeky damn smile, that mischievous grin that he loved to plaster on his face.

"Took you long enough," he said.

"Oh, you're the worst!"

"But I appreciate it, honey. You did run up a mountain in those shoes just to confess your love to me, so points for that."

"Busted my damn ankle, too."

"Yeah, that's swelling, alright. Looks like I'll catch those woodpecker's another day. Still, I was too close to that cliff edge, wasn't I?"

"See? Can you blame me for thinking what I did! Your note sucked! Get some writing comprehension, Aidan."

He chuckled, and then easily lifted me, letting me hold onto him to keep my hurt foot raised. His muscles were comforting, and I leaned into him.

"I'll make a note of it - wait, that's a bad idea, isn't it? C'mon then, let's get y'all down the trail so we can get a proper look at this."

"I might need to lean on you," I said, pushing my hair back and still feeling embarrassed about this whole ideal.

"Of course," he said easily. "Anything for the woman I love."

That was enough to cheer me down the whole trail.

It was even better when he hoisted me up in his arms and lifted me for the final stretch. I'd gone up the trail thinking I would save him, and instead he'd been the one saving me. I didn't mind, though.

I was finally back with my Aidan, and I wasn't ever letting him go.

Part 11: Date Date

"I still can't believe how amazing you look."

I smiled from ear to ear despite myself. I'd actually gone the extra length this time, and for good reason: it was our first official date, almost a week on from that fateful climb up the trail. I'd needed a bit of time to recover, and for both of us to resolve our feelings. One thing was for certain though: Aidan was moving back in with me. I loved him, and he loved me, but such love was young, and I still didn't want to rush anything. So we spent some days getting back into our rhythm, getting comfortable holding one another and seeing each other in this new way, and he was the classic Southern gentleman, taking things slow and being as respectful as possible.

But now it was our date night. A 'Date Date' night, or a 'Not Not Date Night,' as Aidan called it. Just a simple restaurant appearance together, albeit at quite the fancy steakhouse. This was the moment we both knew would determine how things would proceed. My ankle was much better, albeit a little sore, so I wasn't in high heels like perhaps he would have liked, but then I didn't think I was much of a high heel gal anyway. I did, however, leave the pinafores and 'hot neighbour' look behind, and go a bit more classy and, dare I say, sexy as well. I'd embraced being a woman for however long I had left, and this included being *Aidan's* woman. I was still nervous for how the night might end, but nervousness was not the same as fear, and I didn't want fear to conquer me again. So, I'd thrown caution to the wind, and put on something that was both utterly me - the Luna me - and very attractive to the man I loved. It was a dark blue dress with a plunging neckline and a backless element held

together with interlaced ties. It had an old-fashioned element to it though, almost a slight 50's housewife look given the ribbon around the waist and the wider hem, which flowed around my ankles with each step. My bust was teased, tantalisingly so, but I wasn't threatening to spill out either. Together with my see-through stockings and slightly curled hair, I thought I was quite the looker, even if I had to walk easy on one foot. The fact that I'd finally gotten my ears pierced and now had small sparkling studs only completed the look, though I knew I had to be careful with relatively fresh piercings.

Still, to judge from Aidan had just said, it seemed to have all come together.

"Well, as I've said before," I replied, looking him up and down and licking my lips quite obviously. "You're not too bad yourself."

He was wearing a white button shirt that was almost a size too small for him, which was just okay by me from the way it emphasised his muscles. He'd even styled his hair, though just in that rugged, half-messy way he knew I liked. This time he didn't complain about how long it took me to put myself together though. And for damn good reason: he was struggling not to take me all in, at least not too obviously.

"So, this is an actual date," he said, taking the bottle of wine and filling my glass, then his.

"Yep," I said. "An actual date. The kind of thing our friends joked about for years. Only I'm the gal and you're the guy."

"And we've already slept together."

A snorted. "That too."

We'd already enjoyed some oysters for our entree, and our pork mains were likely not too far away. The lull allowed our previously light conversation (including teasing me for the mountain event yet again) to discuss what we were both thinking about.

"You know, it's the weirdest thing," Aidan said. "I've been bursting for this moment. I really have, Luna, and perhaps for longer than I thought possible. But now that we're here, hell if I know what to even say."

"Well, this is because you're not used to being the man on a date. You've only had one prior experience, right?"

He smiled charmingly. "Are you telling me you need to train me up?"

I swivelled my wine and swallowed some down. It was delicious. "Only if you're willing to train me up as well."

"Well, I had noticed you had your legs perhaps a little wider than a woman should be in a public setting. Not so in private, of course."

That joke would have made me become sheepish in the past, instead I now took a move I *did* know was quite womanly, and brushed my stocking'd leg against his beneath the table in an almost sensual manner.

“Well, I can only hope that you aren’t putting on a display through the trousers, from the way you keep checking out my cleavage.”

I managed to make *him* sheepish instead, which sent us both laughing.

“Okay,” I continued. “Let’s give each other notes on what makes each sex happy on a date, and see if that helps? I can give you a guy’s perspective, despite being anything but now.”

“This should be interesting! Especially given neither of us were exactly dating often back when we were single.”

I leaned forward, letting him see more of my cleavage. His eyes followed the action and I giggled.

“That’s *one* thing guys appreciate, right? So I’ll play to that. I also recall as a man that women found it better when you asked them questions and showed interest in their personality beyond looks.”

“But y’all are looking fine,” he said, barely containing another giggle. “But that’s a good point, I remember that! Also, speaking as a former woman, I reckon I should keep taking the initiative as the man to pour the drinks; what girl doesn’t appreciate a man taking the lead?”

“Not this one, for sure,” I said, letting him fill my glass again. “Oh, and as a man you should definitely keep your back straight and shoulders even. Makes you seem bigger and manlier, and does well to impress a . . . woah, yeah. Just . . . just like that.”

He indeed had changed posture, and it was *doing things* for me. Mhmm. Very much so. In turn, I followed his advice to keep leaning forward to give a peak at my breasts, as well as to occasionally throw a cute little smile his way. I rubbed his leg with mine under the table, and soon proceedings were getting a bit saucier. Hell, they were even saucier than the Italian pasta I’d ordered for a main, and that was saucy as it gets! We continued on the finer points of male versus female dating in between feeding each other bits of our meals, laughing at the most embarrassing parts of taking on a new gender, and how on Earth we would even feel going back to normal.

“I can say this,” I said, gesturing to myself. “I’m looking forward to no longer needing bras. God, freeing the girls at the end of the day is something else.”

“I can’t disagree with that, honey. I will say yours are bigger than my girls ever were, so I imagine it’s even more relief for you to get that bra off when you come home.”

“Absolutely,” I sighed, almost dreamily. “Of course, I *did* choose a pushup one tonight, if you hadn’t noticed.”

“Oh, I’d noticed. You’ve definitely slammed this whole ‘preparing for a date as a lady’ thing.”

"Well, I score you points as a man, Aidan. You certainly dress up better than I did, but not too good."

He raised an eyebrow, and I continued on.

"Well, I just mean that this girl version of me seems to quite like her guys rugged and a bit wild. You've still got that. Plus, I kinda like beards now, so I'm glad you didn't shave it off."

"I figure I'd go full masculine while I can enjoy it. That is . . ."

I frowned, sensing a turn in the conversation. A waiter came and took our meals and we ordered dessert before I got my answer.

"Okay, so cards on the table," Aidan said, leaning forward. I noticed he'd rolled up his sleeves, and again was surprised that my female vision drank them in. Women liked forearms a lot, who knew!?

"Cards on the table," I repeated.

"I'm thinking about not wishing to go back."

I nearly jettisoned the water from my mouth, and instead spluttered a little as I choked it down. "What? But we agreed-"

"I know, I know, to turn back. But, well, here's the thing, honey, I don't know if I want to turn back. I'm a man now, and I'm happier than I've ever been. Even happier now that I've got you."

"But you won't have me if I turn back. No offence, Aidan, but I don't bat for the same team as a guy. I'm clearly heterosexual in both realities."

He nodded, as if anticipating this.

"I know, and I don't want to lose you. But I don't want to lose this, either. This body, this life. I see the world through a new lens. My photography has never been better now that I have this outlook and inspiration, and I like being more forthright and confident. When Kallen's Comet comes, I'll see it past, but I won't wish to change."

I could see the pain on his face, and it moved my compassion in ways only my feminine self could be stirred. I held his hand, and he allowed me to hold it.

"Even if it means we can't be together?" I asked softly.

"Even then," he said. "The us that love one another is Aidan and Luna, not Ava and Luke. They're just different enough that our puzzle pieces finally lock together."

"So what are we doing here?" I asked, trying to keep my emotions under control. "Having this date, showing attraction to one another, saying we love one another!?"

A few patrons looked my way and I settled down before he answered. Aidan tapped the table a few times, gathering his thoughts, and when he spoke, it was in a deeply thoughtful drawl.

"I do love you, Luna. I do. Even in your most bipolar, indecisive, manic-crazy mountain hiking panic, I love you. You're kind, and you treat me right, and you always show interest in what I care about, and you take us both out of our comfort zones even if I know you always retreat back into yours. And you're open about yourself even if it takes you time to get there. You're smart, a lot smarter than me, and you're beautiful too, if I can count that."

That got a smile from me. "I'll take it."

"And y'all are also pretty damn loyal and protective. You ran up a mountain to save me. I didn't need saving, as you'll recall-"

I put my head in my hands. "Don't remind me . . ."

"-but the sheer effort of that was insane. The loyalty you showed as a friend and someone who loved me makes me love you, right through. But . . . it's not enough."

I blinked back a few tears. "How is it not enough?"

"Because all these moments, these realisations and connections I just mentioned? I made them when interacting with Luna, not Luke. Luke has all those qualities, but Luna has them in a way that just . . . meshes with me, I guess. I don't know, sometimes a cowboy just has a way with his herd that he couldn't with anyone else's."

"Great, so I'm a cow now."

"A magnificent heifer at that. The best."

"The best," I said, smirking. "I suppose I'll take it. And I am putting the 'udders', so to speak, on display. I guess I just imagined that we would change back and still love one another, and maintain that attraction."

"Maybe we would, but I don't think so. And even so, you'd be asking me to give up a new part of myself that I connect to deeply. Could you honestly ask me that?"

I sighed. "No more than you could ask me to stay a woman. It's not . . . it's not me."

"y'all sure about that? You're happier than I've known you in so long. You're dressing up, spending time with friends, opening yourself to romance - granted, it's with this guy, but that's on you."

I frowned. "Maybe. I am happier at times. But it's also confusing. This reality change wasn't what we were originally."

"People change. We just changed more dramatically. But it's not unnatural."

I saw the dessert coming, and it was a good excuse not to continue this conversation. It hurt too much. Still, I just had one more question.

"So, if you plan to stay, and I plan to turn back, then I guess this romance only has two weeks in it. Short as a mayfly romance. So what do we do with it?"

Aidan considered this, rubbing his chin like he was Michelangelo's Thinker.

"You know," he said. "I hear that mayflies pair up and mate for life, however short that might be."

I moaned as I lowered myself down upon Aidan and felt him begin to enter me. His words near the end of our date had aroused a passion in me. I was tired of missing opportunities and staying safe until the last second. If this romance was only going to last a couple of weeks, I wanted to make sure those two weeks were a whirlwind of excitement and love. So as soon as we had gotten home I was all over him, and he eagerly all over me. I didn't take long to slip out of my dress, and my lover didn't take long to caress and grope my breasts, making me murmur with sweet relief.

And now we were on the bed, in an altogether different position than the first time. It had been my suggestion, despite enjoying the way he took control in so many ways. I had wanted something that would help me 'dip' a bit more easily into the role of sex from the female side, and riding on top of him not only still gave me a sense of empowerment, but was also hot as all hell.

"God, you're s-so big," I whimpered as I lowered myself slowly upon him. I appreciated the sight of his manly body, especially how he closed his eyes for a moment, revelling in the way it felt to enter my pussy.

"Not b-bad, huh?" he replied. "You're so fucking sexy, Luna. So t-tight and wet. And those tits . . ."

"Feel them," I said, grabbing one of his hands and pressing it against my left boob. He instantly roamed my curves, squeezing the sensitive flesh and rubbing his thumb and forefinger over my nipple even as he reached the apex of his entrance into me. I shivered as I settled my weight entirely upon him. He could take it, but the experience of having his long, hard rod penetrating all the way into me was unbelievably alien. Last time, I was pretty drunk. I was far more aware this time, and in some ways, it allowed me to fully appreciate how strange and wonderful it was to take on this role.

"Are you ready?" he asked me, still playing with my tits.

I leaned forward, grinning from ear to ear. My boobs hung right over him as I planted a long, sensual kiss upon my Aidan. His beard brushed against my soft features, and for some reason the coarseness of that actually comforted me.

"More than ready," I replied. "Make me a woman again, Aidan."

He chuckled. "Well, how 'bout that? I didn't think I could get any harder."

"Don't waste it."

He didn't. He lowered his hands to grip my hips as I began to slowly rock upon him. I'd actually only had a woman ride me once before, but instinct kicked in, brought forth by a desperate need to please this man I had come to love. It was a little like being on one of

those carousel horseys at the fair, and I mimicked the motion, rolling my hips in such a way as to make his big dick slide in and out of me. He began to thrust a little in response to this, bucking upwards so that he drove deeper, then shallower, deeper, then shallower. If the sensation of being penetrated had been utterly foreign, then this was alien on a whole new level: he was going in and out of me like a damn piston, stimulating ever nerve - and there were a lot of them - in my passage, which in turn hugged his member as if afraid to let go.

Naturally, I began to gasp and moan in my high, feminine voice.

"Ohhhhhh, ahhhhh, that's . . . ahhh, that's g-good."

"You ain't seen nothing yet," he quipped. "I love these hips. And this ass."

He shifted his grip so that his fingers sunk into the soft tissue of my rear. It made me shiver, heightening the pleasure even as I picked up speed, rocking upon him and then bouncing up and down upon his rigid pole. My breasts bounced, a little bit painfully at times, but something about that somehow made the act even sexier, like I'd abandoned any sense.

"Yessss, oh God, Aidan, this is the b-best f-feeling! You're s-so big!"

"And you're so g-good at this. Didn't expect to have a woman r-ride me, but this is the best sex I've ever h-had and it's not even over. Ahhh!"

"M-me too!" I cried, whimpering and gasping more and more as I bounced upon him. I arched my back, thrusting out my chest and letting him grab them with both hands. I needed even more. More pleasure, more passion. I leaned forward, pressing my chest against him and kissing him, still moving in a motion to fuck his brains out. He responded by holding me tightly and then grabbing my ass again, helping with the motion of thrusting and going even deeper inside me. It was like nothing I'd ever experienced, even considering the first time we'd done this. I was giving myself full over to him, and it was only getting me ever closer to that moment of purest ecstasy. We kissed again and again, me occasionally rising up so that he could fondle my breasts. The erogenous pleasure of having him suck on my nipples was even better, but we could only do that for a moment: I needed to climax. I was so goddamn close.

"I love you," I panted, my voice high and reedy. "I love you so f-fucking much, Aidan."

"I love you too, Luna. I want this to last forever."

"I - ughhh - I don't! I want you to cum in me! Do you hear me? I want you to cum inside me!"

That seemed to get him going, because he bucked again in rhythm to me. I raised myself up, arching my back as the pleasure began to sweep over me.

"Ohh, yes! Yes! I'm going t-to c-cum, Aidan! I'm going to - I'm so close - I'm going to . . . aaaaaiieeee! Ohhhhhh! Yesssssss! Yes! Yes! YESSSS!!!"

Multiple orgasms flooded through my system, enhanced by his fingers still caressing my hypersensitive tits. I shook my shoulders, letting them wobble in his hands as blast after

blast of bliss hit me. His cock went rigid, then throbbed within me, and I could only cry out even louder as this feeling induced yet another orgasm. It was far, far better than that one night, and all the better because of the strength of the connection and love we now shared. For his own part, Aidan grunted, his sounds bestial, almost bear-like, and something about the animalistic nature of his climax turned me on all the more. I managed to shift my hips just a little bit more, milking his cock for all it was worth. Hot streams of semen filled my tunnel, warming my already slick insides, and I trembled in relief from it.

“God, Luna!” he exclaimed, right before I collapsed upon him, my breasts squashing against his chest, my hair falling in tangles over his face. We panted together, his dick still throbbing within me. The post-coital catharsis was incredible, and even as he softened within me I didn’t want to part from his member just yet. I held my lover, feeling his warmth and hairy chest, contrasting against my own softness, and there was only one way to describe that sensation.

It was *home*.

“That was incredible,” Aidan managed to stammer out in the aftermath.

I lifted my head, pushed some hair behind my ear and smiled at him. “Yeah, incredible alright. You were amazing.”

“Speak for yourself. We should probably clean up, huh?”

“I reckon so. I, uh, think you put a lot in me.”

“Certainly felt so, darlin’. Geez, you sucked me dry.”

I traced a finger down his chest and giggled. “I hope not. Because after we have a shower, I was thinking we could go really bold.”

He arched an eyebrow. “Oh?”

I kissed his lips. “Mhm-hmm. In fact, I was thinking we could do a quid pro quo. You go down on me, and I’ll go down on that big dick of yours. In for a penny, right?”

I could have sworn his softening member managed to go just a little harder within me at the thought.

Thirty minutes later, I was true to my word.

God, it was tasty. I could see why women liked doing that for their man; it was empowering and submissive all at once in the most sexy ways, and I even swallowed, much to his delight.

Part of me could imagine doing that more frequently, especially when his tongue was on my clitoris not long after. Now *that* was a sensation I wanted to experience as much as possible before my two weeks were up.

Part 12: Time Flies For a Wish

The next two weeks were simultaneously a rollercoaster and a homey experience. Aidan and I squeezed as much out of life as we could, and that meant I finally took some break time from the bank by calling in some favours. I still wasn't supremely happy there, and this gave me some time to start thinking about other future career paths, as well as to finally develop some hobbies. I'm embarrassed to say, but I actually purchased some sewing supplies, including a sewing machine. If there was one thing that I had been absolutely taken with as a woman, and had embarrassed me a lot initially, it had been trying on new clothes and styles and increasingly styling myself for different events. I wasn't an Instagram model type at all, certainly not in that same-same makeup style they tend to adopt, but the freedom to 'put on your new face' for the day or night was incredibly freeing.

I also started hiking a little, showing more interest in Aidan's past-time as I never truly had before, at least not to such an extent. My ankle had healed by the final week, so we made a habit of taking country trails even he hadn't experienced, and I would admire him as he took photos of the local wildlife and vistas, and then the two of us would settle for a romantic picnic. This time, I got in on the action of bringing some tasty treats. That same desire to experience good food and company together extended to further romantic dinners, and you can bet that I dressed up. Around the house, though, I continued with what Aidan occasionally teased me as my 'hot mom without actually being a mom look'; there was something just so *me* about pinafores and overalls and casual summer dresses that were airy but practical and pretty. Yes, *pretty*. I had come to love the word rather than shy away from it, especially when Aidan complimented me as such.

Which, of course, was the other thing we did: *each other*.

In-between going on dates and enjoying one another's company and the teasing and the flirting and the deep, soulful conversations, there was also the unbearable lust. It wasn't like my body's surprisingly strong libido had abated. In those weeks when I wasn't seeing Aidan, I'd still felt the deep need to pleasure myself, often trying very hard *not* to think about him. I didn't have that problem now, of course. Neither of us did.

So we made love.

We had sex.

We fucked like rabbits.

Having bodies that were ten years younger than what we had prior to our wishes made it even better, of course, as did the novelty of our traded places. But I won't deny it, something about sex just *clicked* for me as a woman. I'd always been a more sensitive guy, not the take charge kind, and in the bedroom this translated into wanting the other side to take the initiative. Now it felt like my natural place as the woman, and when I wanted to be

daring, well, I could still do that too, especially when I rode my lover on top, cowgirl style (which pleased him, as a Texan wannabe-cowboy type, ha!). It wasn't hard to get sex started, either. There was a dominance of a kind that came with the ability to just smile in a certain way, or show off my cleavage a little more, or put a bit of a wiggle in my step that drew his eye. I certainly could recall what it felt like to have a distracting boner when a lady put on a pretty display, and it was pure hilarity to tease Aidan with such. Of course, I was always happy to let him have what he wanted as well.

So yeah, I learned to find utter joy in spreading my legs beneath his manly body as he thrust deep inside me. I moaned and cried out in delight as he took me from behind, me on all fours and feeling utterly supplicant to him. To our shared surprise, we even found that - at least while we were in our current states - we both enjoyed going down on each other, even at the same time in that lovely reversed position. I got a bit embarrassed over how much I liked giving blowjobs in fact, but decided to leave that shame behind until I turned back into a man. For now, the sensation of making my man cum down my throat because I stroked and sucked him just right was *intoxicating*.

"Oh G-God, Luna!" Aidan called out once. He gripped my hair - softly, of course - and held my head in place as I bobbed up and down, stroking his cock with my dainty hand. And then he *erupted* into my mouth, and that warm, salty consistency flooded my taste buds. I kept my eyes on him the whole time, and it was difficult not to smile as I continued to stroke, ensuring that I emptied his balls entirely. Afterwards, I licked him clean, part of me unable to believe what I had just done, and not for the first time either.

"You seemed to like that," I replied.

"Oh yeah. I'm sorry to say, but y'all are just making me want to never be a woman again."

"Well, you can always try to persuade me with that tongue of yours, mister!"

And indeed, he nearly did. That was the crux of the problem, you see. I had spent so long slowly embracing my female side that it only left us a short time to truly be in love and together like this. For all the sex that occurred I wanted more, for all the dates we shared there were future nights I could imagine, and those homely moments of comfort were perhaps the more precious and limited fragments of them all: waking up with his arm around me, cuddling up on the couch to watch a movie, feeling his hand on my thigh when I drove the car and he was in the passenger seat. Even those shared little glances of interest, those non-lustful moments of love where we would just spy each other across the room and smile and laugh without any joke to instigate it . . . those would soon be gone.

Day by wonderful day, the hourglass was running dry, the sands falling through to the bottom chamber. In our last few days we took a road trip together, ate cheeses and drank wine and fucked in a hotel room and enjoyed a sumptuous bakery the next day. We took

snapshots and photos of one another, and they were goofy and silly because I took most of them instead of he, the professional photographer. And there was a strong bittersweetness there, because I knew they would not last when Kallen's Comet passed through again. The same would go for my first little experiment with sewing fabric together, and for the home we had already built together. It didn't help that Heather and Kiera and Jessica were over the moon about our relationship, literally cheering and clapping when we finally attending a brunch together with them. Heather ran up and hugged me, and I shed a few tears thanking her for her advice.

"Never forget to listen to my advice, doll," she said with a knowing grin.

And how could I think otherwise? And how could I not already mourn the loss of this friendship and the others I had cultivated in this new life of mine?

And moreover, how could I leave Aidan, knowing how much I loved him, and he loved me. It kept me awake at nights, where I would stare at the ceiling and feel alone despite his nearby warmth. And then, as if by some psychic connection, he would roll over and place a strong, comforting arm around me.

"Gonna be alright, darlin'," he'd say, and in moments I was back asleep.

Still, I dreamed of him, of the life we could have together.

And I also dreamed of a comet veering ever closer.

We had just made love. It was a slower, more intimate session than most, and the reason for that was obvious: this would likely be our last time together like this, so the lust and passion was also tinged with a sense of longing as well. We lay cuddled up against one another, unspeaking, for some time, until Aidan's phone alarm went off. He checked it, sighed deeply, and turned to me, caressing my cheek as he looked at my naked body.

"It's time," he said. "We've got to get cleaned up and packing."

We did so, not speaking very much. Neither did we speak much on the car ride over, either. My entire body was nervous, and it made me almost nostalgic for being a man already, where my emotions were so much further down from the surface. Aidan drove, and I occasionally rested my hand on his leg. He was wearing his hiking gear and so was I, though mine had a feminine touch for a nice farewell to the experience.

"Time to get out," he said. "Are you sure about this?"

"No," I said, voice cracking a little. "I don't even know if I will make the wish, to tell the truth. But . . . either way, I have to be there."

He put his arms around me from behind. God, I loved it when he did that. It was so much better than being the man, at least for me.

"You know what I'd want you to wish for," he said in a near-whisper. "But it's not my call, I know."

"Let's just talk about other things while we make the ascent. I don't want to start weeping like a woman."

"Which you are."

"Which I am."

We made the climb. It wasn't a big one. We weren't going all the way up the mountain, just to the first lookout that would give us a good look at Kallen's Comet. Aidan pointed out the birds in the afternoon light, and I asked to stop a few times, during which we talked about all the things we'd learned in our new life.

"I won't miss periods!" I joked.

"God, don't remind me!" he replied. "You'd be glad you just missed out on this last one, right?"

It was true, my third period hadn't come, which made me happy. I couldn't have made this hike otherwise. We continued upwards, and I was teased a few more times for that *other* mountain trip I'd made. By that point it was starting to get a little darker, but we made it to the overlook just as the sky was turning a lovely dim purple. In the distance, the powerful fiery green comet was approaching. The shooting star would not last long, but we had a few moments before it would pass overhead. My heart beat as I turned to Aidan, holding his large, coarse hands that I had come to love.

"So, here we are," I said. "Another strange Saturday."

"Three months later," he replied. "And full of changes. Have you made a decision, honey?"

I looked to the horizon, where the comet was burning closer. God, if only it could give me more time! But the strange entity was within it, I knew it had to be, and something told me that it would be receptive to a wish I made. Call it a woman's intuition.

"I . . . I think I'll know in the moment," I replied.

"Well, I'm sorry, I told you that I wouldn't make the decision for y'all, and I can't, but I also can't let the moment pass without trying to tip the scales just a little bit."

I cocked my head, confused at his words. But then my breath left my body, because in the growing green light, Aidan went down on one knee, produced a small black box from his jacket pocket, and opened it up to reveal a sparkling ring before me.

"Luna Gavins, I love you, and I know you love me. I don't know if you'll stay as this woman I love, but if tomorrow you wake up the same as you are now, then it would do me the greatest damn happiness of my life for you to be my wife, and for me to be your husband. I wasted way too damn long fussing about and not finding the one I wanted, and I know it's been the same for you. It took this crazy thing to happen for us to find one another

fully, and I don't want to lose that. I truly don't. I don't want to lose *you*. So . . . if you'll have me for life, or even just for this hour, then I'd like to ask you to be my fiancée."

I swallowed. Tears were in my eyes again. I flicked my gaze towards the comet, which was beginning to streak across the sky, so close my wish would need to be soon. And here was Aidan, down on one knee, somehow the even more captivating sight.

"Aidan, no matter what happens next, Luna will always be the woman who loves you. So yes, I'll be your fiancée. Yes!"

I giggled as he slipped the ring on and then picked me up, twirling me about as he kissed me. We pressed our foreheads lovingly together as the comet passed overhead.

"For as long as we are able to, I'll love you," he whispered in my ear."

And then the comet was above us.

There was only one wish to make as Aidan's hair was illuminated by the green fire of the lit up sky. I kissed him again.

"I wish to be your bride," I said aloud.

The Entity careened across the great void, travelling where it may. Its consciousness reached out, observing and hearing, encoding and recording. There had been only a quarter revolution of this world around its sun since it had visited, but this gave it long enough to assess the exciting changes that had swept across its surface, not just from its wishes but from the teeming masses of life in all their ordinary wonders. So many stories, so many tales of magic and love and action and adventure. The Entity absorbed them all, celebrating within its great essence the endless parade of creativity that marked humanity.

But it also made a few changes here and there of its own, adding a dash of mischievousness where it was appropriate, and even some sincerity where it was warranted.

The woman it had turned into a mermaid was faring surprisingly well, but wished to have company again. Well, the Entity could arrange that; a handsome merman was given form from a man halfway across the world wishing to experience something magical.

The individual who had been left on a deserted island after wishing to be free of his family was returned to them at last, finally seeing the truth of their worth. The Entity hoped that his story would fare better, now.

There were also new wishes, of course. A young woman with thick glasses, braces, and a stutter wished to live like her fantasy games. The Entity transported her to another dimension where she could be an attractive dark elf, with a life full of adventure. An older man wished for youth again, and for his kindly life, the Entity granted this . . . though with the added mischief of letting him experience life as a woman. A woman trying to fall pregnant

would be blessed with eight children. A man wishing to find perfect love was still too immature for it, but a golden retriever was perfectly loving, and would bring him company in the meanwhile.

This continued, with hundreds of wishes being granted. But there was an intriguing one that came from a mountain overlooking a charming town. Yes, the Entity recognised this figure. One half of a pair whose entwined destinies had finally begun to circle one another. For a moment, the Entity sensed hesitation in the new female, but then it absorbed the wish itself.

'I wish to be your bride.'

The entity had no lips to smile with, but its essence radiated mirth nonetheless. This was a wish easily granted. This time there was no mischief at all.

And then it was time to go, to leave this 'Earth' for a few hundred years, or perhaps just a decade, depending on the changing whims of the Entity. But for these lives, the wishes would remain as it had granted them.

Sometimes a happy ending is the best kind of story anyway, it mused.

Epilogue

"Don't walk so fast, you big lug!"

Aidan chuckled, then slowed his pace and returned to me. He extended an arm for me to hold, and I naturally took it.

"Any excuse to feel your muscles," I said, grinning cheekily up at him.

"And any excuse to feel *you*," he replied, running a hand down my back before squeezing my rear.

"Hey, you charming pervert! What if someone's watching?"

"Nah, this trail has been empty for ages, honey. Besides, it's just a little love. And there's a lot of you to love."

I snorted. "Oh, a *lot*, huh? You know, sometimes I wonder how things would have shaken out if *you'd* stayed the woman, and I the man."

"Well, we wouldn't be happily married and living together, would we? Nor would we have this little blessing."

With that, he shifted his hand to my front and rubbed my belly. It gave me little butterflies in the best way, and as if knowing it was his father whose hand was touching my stomach, our little son gave a little flurry of excited kicks. "Oof!"

"Someone happy in there?"

I took another breath, stopping our walk for a moment. "Oh yeah, I'd say so. I swear, being pregnant is the weirdest thing ever."

"I imagine so, especially for a former guy."

"Definitely. But . . . it's also pretty damn amazing. I mean, look at me! I'm growing a life here! A little boy!"

He cracked a smile as we began the walk along the winter trail.

"A son," he mused. "I can still hardly believe it. We're gonna be parents. And I'm gonna be a Dad! A father - that feels darn weird to say."

"No weirder than thinking I'm gonna be a mommy," I replied.

"At least y'all look the part, what with the big belly and big . . . uh, other parts."

"You're insatiable, I swear, always looking at my girls."

I smirked, looking down at my chest. I was wearing a warmer jacket for the cooler weather, but the unmistakable shape of my breasts was there, and at their larger size too. I had once expressed a private irritation that if I was going to be turned into a woman, then why not at least be a bigger chested one? C's were impressive, no doubt, but why not the classic DD's, as the guys lust after? Well, I didn't have to complain about that now. I had bigger boobies, alright, though now they were in strong maternity bras and resting on the dome of my expanding belly. I was five months along and could barely believe that I wasn't due, but I suppose perspective made for all the changes seeming bigger.

Getting pregnant so soon had been madness, but it turns out that when you have sex for two weeks thinking you're going to be a man again soon, you end up not really caring about contraceptives. That third period I had been delaying on? Yeah, it never came about, given that somewhere around our third day of actual dating my loving husband had knocked up. Not that he was my husband just yet, but after I wished to be his bride rather than change back, things moved quickly. There was another reality rewrite, a much smaller one this time. Turns out our friends were helping us put together the wedding already, and the actual 'true' engagement had occurred several weeks ago. We were going for an outdoors event near the backwoods, and it was happening soon. A good thing too, given I started getting morning sickness and sore boobs not long before we were set to tie the knot. It was Aidan that suggested the pregnancy test, and I had done so with great terror, only for the inevitable two lines to show. I cried, of course, and wished I had wished to be a man again. And then Aidan had comforted me, and I'd had a night to sleep on it, and soon I was more excited than I could imagine to bear him a little baby.

To finally have a family to call my own.

We made the announcement at the wedding, and that just added extra cheer. It would have raised questions why I wasn't drinking anyway. Besides, I was so excited and giddy and nervous I couldn't keep a secret if I tried.

And now, here I was, five months pregnant and walking up a calm winter trail with my husband. Definitely no mountain hikes for me, especially now that I was getting a winder waddle. But despite the aches and tiredness that came from pregnancy, the truth was that I'd never felt better in my life. I was making a life, embracing the ultimate act of womanhood, and I was doing it with my best friend in the world, a man that I loved. Plus, I had it on good authority that he thought my pregnancy bod was very sexy, though finding positions to do it was becoming increasingly restricted he always found a way. Plus, maternity dresses are so cute!

Which reminds me of the other developments in my life. I'll be on maternity leave soon, and when it's up, I've decided to leave the bank. It's been an important chapter of my life, but it doesn't provide my life meaning. I've decided to work my sewing skills and sell custom-made dresses. I've got a damn natural skill at it, it turns out, and besides, I want to be at home to raise my little boy for a few years anyway. The idea of being a stay-at-home mom with her own side hustle appeals to me. I just wish I was better at cooking, but Aidan insists on locking that up tight anyway, that wonderful man.

"We're here," he said in the present, knocking me out of my reminiscing.

"Oh thank God, a bench seat," I said, waddling towards the wooden camp tables. "I seriously need to get my pregnant ass sitting down already."

"I trust that means you're hungry?" my husband asked.

"Damn hungry. Eating for two, remember?"

"Then let's get this picnic started, darlin'."

He removed the picnic set from his backpack and set it down before me. My little baby did loops in my stomach as the food was set before me. I practically salivated at the hard cheeses - I preferred soft, but was being good right now - and the wonderful non-alcoholic substitute wine he had brought to share. And as usual, he had made the most delicious chicken wraps for us to share out.

"As always, you are the best," I said.

"Takes no effort," he replied, doling out some cheese and kabana on a cracker for me.

"No, I mean it," I said. "I can't imagine life without you. Especially not without these little picnics of ours."

He took my hand, leaned over the table easily, and kissed me softly on the lips.

"A picnic today," he said. "And every Saturday. Tradition, right?"

"Damn straight." I raised my glass. "To wishes well spent!"

He raised his glass, looking at me with love and attraction. "Hear hear, honey!"

The End