



YourEssence - Volume 2 (Q2 2024 Collected Edition Chapter 01 - 07)

Chapter 01

David woke with a shock. Something was wrong. He could tell somehow. He felt a weird confluence of instinctive anxiety and masculine defensiveness. Listening intently but still lying prone in his bed, David could swear he heard something coming from the living room. A second felt like an eternity. David drew in air, filling his lungs and providing him the confidence to take the next step. He had to confront the intruder in his apartment. His feet touched the floor, and he heard it. A fumbled action from the kitchen led to a loud sound. There it was—the proof that he was not alone. He heard a kitchen cupboard shut loudly. “No chance that happens on its own.” David crept over silently to his closet and grabbed a bat he had kept from his youth.

David went slowly toward the common space, delicately hoping to remain hidden. Staying adjacent to the wall, David leaned forward to see if he could spot the intruder. A shadowy figure was ruffling through the kitchen drawers. David steeled himself and counted backward from three.



Three... two... one...

The shadowy figure's head smashed into the counter a second after David's bat crashed against the intruder's back. David turned the lights on and saw the aftermath of his interaction with the figure. The gruesome sight stunned David, but he kept his cool. A second later, David was on the phone calling for emergency services and the police.

"Hello, may I speak with Diana Martin?"

"Yes, speaking. How can I help you?"

"Mrs. Martin, I'm calling David Martin's emergency contact..."

"Oh my God! Is he hurt?!" Diana interrupted.

"Mrs. Martin, I'm calling from the local police precinct. Your husband is okay, but he is being held for questioning."

Diana paused. She didn't know how to respond. She remembered that 'he' had a tendency to be hot-headed when she was running around in David's body. This call could be because David had done something wrong and was at fault. Diana shook her head. She immediately regretted that she had let herself think so poorly of David. "What happened? When can I see him?"

"We need you to come down to the precinct. We will explain everything when you arrive."

Diana spent the next hour a wreck. Canceling her classes wasn't a huge problem, but she didn't need Robert's extra attention. Still, this was an emergency, so he would just have to deal with the situation. The car ride was the worst. She sat there observing people doing their everyday routines or out for a coffee. They all looked so... free. Diana felt confined and boxed in by this whole situation. She was fuming inside. She was scared for David. She was longing to see him. In total, Diana was a jumbled-up bundle of fractious emotions. As her car pulled up to the curb to drop her before parking itself, she let some of her frustration out. She expressed her emotion by yelling at the car's dashboard and steering wheel. She just yelled for a few seconds, paused, and then repeated the action one more time before getting out of the vehicle.

She straightened her outfit as she stood up from her self-driving car. A moment later, her car slowly departed to its next task. Diana was silently furious; she thought, "David had better not have caused as much trouble as I imagined." Centering herself, Diana looked up and locked eyes with a woman standing by the entrance.

She was dressed neatly, wearing a button-down blouse and sharp-looking pants. She maintained eye contact, unafraid and confident, as she walked toward Diana. Diana did her best not to look away out of fear that it may implicate David somehow. Otherwise, she would have immediately broken eye contact out of social discomfort. Diana's memories told her that was incongruent, but she didn't have time to reflect on that now. The woman introduced herself as Detective Kara Lavigne.

The two women entered the police station, and Diana was left in an interrogation room. Diana was becoming more worried about how the earlier call had gone and this new scenery. They hadn't placed her in handcuffs, but she wondered if that was a possibility in the near term. With each passing moment, she felt her emotions rise. She knew she had to keep her calm, however. It would be hard to do it, given that she didn't even know what had happened to have David end up in this situation in the first place. An hour passed with only infrequent visits from the detective to ask if Diana needed more water or to be excused to the restroom.

Finally, as the sun was just starting to set over the tops of the skyscrapers, David was brought into the room Diana was waiting in.

"Oh my God! Are you all right? What happened? Why are they keeping you?"

"It's good to see you too, Diana," David said as he sat across the table from her. He seemed shaken but not broken... yet. Diana worried about how her and David's secrets might be handled if they weren't allowed home for the night. Diana

launched into a thousand questions with David, and he answered them.

"I heard a noise in the living room. I went out to check what it was and saw a man rifling through our empty cupboards. He didn't see me come up behind him."

"What?! Why did you get anywhere near him?"

"I thought I needed to stop him. He was a home invader! He was in 'our' apartment. That doesn't scare the shit out of you?"

"Of course it does! Still, you should have just called the cops straight away... What happened to the intruder?" Diana asked with a hint that she already knew the answer.

"I hit him with my bat."

"You didn't! Why?! David?!"

"I don't know, I just felt so fired up. I needed to defend myself. My home!"

"You're lucky you're not hurt. That's what you are."

"...Yeah"

"I don't like that response. What aren't you telling me?"

"Umm, well..." David started to answer, but the detective suddenly opened the door.

"All right, we've got everything we need here. Mr. Martin and Mrs. Martin, I'm sorry to have kept you. You're both free to go."

"Just like that? You've held us here all day practically, and you just come in and say, 'We're free to go?'" Diana was incredulous.

"Diana! Don't insult the detective. I'm sorry, Ma'am. We will leave straight away, thank you."

Diana opened her apartment door and let David in. They had agreed on the car ride back to stay at 'her' place tonight.

"So... I guess this is a bit awkward given our arrangement," Diana started.

"Eh, not really for me. I know I've been pushing the whole 'date as our new selves' agenda, but we are still married, as you've so eloquently put it. Our role fulfillment mission can pause while we recover from this."

"Yeah, that works for me."

"Cool, I'm glad."

The tension was evident despite their casual agreement to resume their status as a married couple. Diana felt awkward conceding to David's plan since he had insisted so ardently that she would move out. She didn't want that on any level. David, on the other hand, was feeling shaken. His actions had been so aggressive, and the result so gruesome. He felt ashamed as he was 'rescued' by Diana. Less than 24 hours earlier, he had flirted with another woman and liked doing it. He liked the attention. Now, he just wanted to isolate himself from the world and hide away. The less attention he received, the better.

Diana, similarly exhausted, informed David of her plans to retire to bed.

"Will I see you in there?"

"Uhh... huh, yeah, I guess so."

"Not the resounding confirmation I was anticipating, David. Is something else on your mind?"

"Oh, uhh, no. I just hadn't really processed how we would end up spending the night together."

"You just said we were pausing our dating mission. I just assumed."

"Totally fair. It's the right assumption; it's just that I don't feel like I deserve to be in such intimate company with you right now."

"Because of what happened with the intruder? Trust me, I'd rather you stay in bed with me than end up having to confront someone again."

"No, it's not that. I... Dammit, Diana."

"What? What's going on, David? You're scaring me."

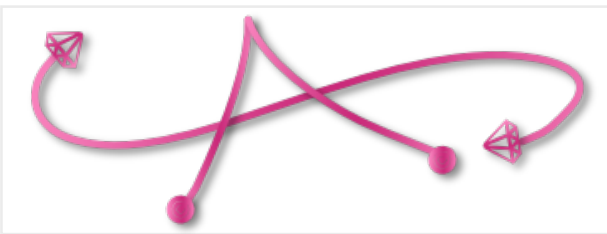
"I... I... need to confess something else."

"After all we've been through today, there's more?"

David sighed heavily. He didn't know how to say what he was about to say. He was scared and confused.

"Just say it, David. I think we're past the point where we have to tip-toe around each other anymore. There's probably no couple on the planet that 'gets' their partner as well as we do."

"That's true... And it's a good segue. 'David,' I don't want to be you anymore."



Chapter 02

"'David,' I don't want to be you anymore."

"You said that already. I heard you," Diana barked back at her 'husband' who had just dropped this bomb on her. She had been shocked into silence by the words the first time. Now, hearing them again, she was starting to feel angry.

"Well, you weren't responding. I didn't know if you heard me," David's response was curt.

"I did, and I'm just trying to figure out why you would say a thing like that to me," Diana said sharply in response. Her words clearly developed an edge that was meant to injure.

"Seriously? After what I went through in the last 48 hours? You are wondering why I would feel this way?"

"Yes, David. I am. Do you think I have had it easy myself? No, but I am not ready to go back on our agreement so quickly."

"Why not? Things are just... easier as our original selves."

"Not for both of us. You didn't have your parents visit and turn your brain into mush. I barely even remember my former life. You'd condemn me to the same fate

you are trying to escape!"

"That's ridiculous. I've tried to be nice. I've tried to be understanding. I have... tried. Now, I'm tired," David's words were becoming increasingly forceful, and his posturing was becoming more dominant. Diana felt his imposing presence and began to back up. "You must have been a closeted transwoman. I never picked up the signs. I wish you would have just been straight with me about it."

"Straight with you? You have access to my memories! Do you remember me going around wearing dresses and wishing for a different life?" Diana was incredulous at the insinuation.

"No, but I don't believe being around my mother would somehow turn you into me."

"You were there! You saw what happened. I fucking learned another language in a manner of minutes, David!"

"Yeah, I was there, and I saw you lean in. You were all into the girly stuff. You went and got your nails and hair done with Olivia! I never would have done that. So, connect the dots, Diana. You wanted this. My mother had nothing to do with it," David's voice quivered as he spoke in frustration and anger. He could barely get his thoughts out. He was so overwhelmed that he was finding it hard to control himself.

"You never would have called your mother by her name if you weren't experiencing the memory bleeding effect yourself! So, you might want to turn the mirror on yourself, David. You're not as perfect nor immune as you might imagine. So suck it up and be a man!" Diana barked her reply and posed confidently with her arms crossed across her chest as she concluded. She was visibly contented by her response and that, based on David's slip-up, she now had the upper hand in their fight.

David looked shocked in response. His face looked hurt, and Diana's stance softened as she saw David begin to tear up. "David, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that." It was too late; David turned and retreated to the second bedroom. He was visibly sobbing as he turned to escape, and Diana's heart broke a little seeing him like this. The door slammed shut, and Diana could hear David audibly cursing and causing a stir in the room. Diana tried to open the door, but David had locked it.

"David, come on. Open the door. I'm sorry for what I said. I was upset and wasn't thinking straight."

"Screw you, Diana! Go away!"

"We can't sort this out if you stay locked in there. Please, David. Let's let calmer heads prevail."

"No! Leave me alone!" David's words were forceful in a way that Diana had never heard him be before. It scared her.

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David finally sat down on the floor in the room, placing his elbows on his knees and hands on his face. There was no bed in the room yet, although the idea had been that there would eventually be a crib. The thought of having a child made his stomach churn and his head pound as he thought through all the recent events that had happened to him.

"Well, that's never happening..." David's thoughts turned against their joint vision of the future they had both settled into. They had never explicitly agreed, but they both knew that's what they were setting the foundation for. So much so it felt like a foregone conclusion, so they didn't need to discuss it further when Diana had come clean and admitted her desires. David knew it was what was driving Diana on a base instinctive level. He knew because he was feeling the start of those feelings but wasn't willing to acknowledge it consciously. Being immersed in extremely masculine events in the last twenty-four hours had brought it into focus for David.

From the flirtatious woman to the adrenaline rush of the home intruder, David's mind was overcome with urges he had never experienced before. He felt a need to assert himself. To make himself dominant. He felt rage and aggression. He felt a desire to push boundaries. He felt out of control but also like he was finally taking control of his life. It sharply contrasted the way 'she' had felt as Diana. That contrast drew David's attention to his memories of wanting to become a mother. At the moment, that feeling felt as alien as seeing little green men land in a UFO. As David continued to reflect, that feeling softened.

Rather than rejecting motherhood, David felt resentment instead. "Why do I feel like this?" David's thoughts were fraught. His body felt like pent-up energy, wanting to escape. To take action. To do something. He pounded his fists against the floor to try and work out some of the energy, but all it did was disturb the neighbors.

This resentment refined and became focused on a new target as he heard his neighbors yelling to stop the noise. A stray thought entered his mind and grew, "Why wouldn't she take her original pill? When she didn't revert fully, she wouldn't take 'David' pills. That shouldn't have been such a big problem." With that, a plan emerged. David would get revenge on Diana for putting him through this turmoil.

David was already gone in the morning when Diana tried to offer him a cup of coffee. She had made it how he liked it, anticipating a difficult but essential conversation. Diana was a little heartbroken to see that David had left without saying anything. Their dreams and plans seemed to be crumbling before her eyes.

Diana's texts to David went unanswered. He didn't respond to phone calls either. Diana would have worried that David was missing if it weren't for their shared family account showing their mutual locations. Seeing he was at their old apartment gave her some relief, but her feelings were thoroughly hurt.

Meanwhile, David had gone over two days without taking his YourEssence. His body had regressed some back to its original form, but he was now also experiencing the lingering effects of the pills. He stood before his mirror, holding a handful of YourEssence pills. He placed them down on the counter and picked up a single pill. "For science," was all he said as he downed the pill.

A week went by with no contact. Diana had cried herself to sleep every night since David had disappeared. Diana was just returning from work when she had the scare of her life. Sitting in her apartment living room was an identical clone of herself.

"Holy fucking Hell, David! What the fuck are you doing here looking like that?" Diana screamed in shock.

"I could say the same thing of you, 'David.' As you can see, there is no problem with taking your former YourEssence pills after you start showing signs of partial reversibility. That's what it's called, by the way—the condition we both have where we don't fully turn back into ourselves. Using someone else's YourEssence causes partial reversibility disruptions or PRD for short. Would you like to guess what the cure is?"



Diana's face was stunned with shock. She remained quiet as the original Diana spoke.

"That's right! It's your original YourEssence! Just another reason we are permanent customers of UniGlobal's now."

With that, Diana broke down crying and fell to her knees. Diana (Diana Prime) stood over her husband. "Are you ready to tell me the truth now, 'David?'" Diana remained on the floor sobbing, and the question only agitated the situation. So, despite her initial bluster, Diana' relented and helped Diana to her feet. The pair of women sat down at the small dining table, and Diana' started, "Why did you lie to me?"

"I don't think I lied. Maybe I was confused, but I read that it could be dangerous."

"Really? That's the truth?"

"Yes! I swear," Diana lied.

"Uh-huh. Where did you read that?"

"Probably the same places you looked. The dark web, forums, things like that."

"They were all saying the same thing?"

"Well, when I looked, yeah."

"So, your position would be that the whole internet's opinion on this has changed in a few weeks?"

"Uhhh, maybe. I don't know. What did you see when you looked?"

"Not a single thing. There was no mention of any risk at all. Why would there be? We were already taking each other's pills. That was way riskier than taking your own. So, I'll give you one last chance, Diana. Why are you lying to me?"

Diana's tears returned. She was incapable of speaking from the force of her sobs.

"Diana! Tell me!" Diana' yelled, leaning forward over the table to get right in Diana's face.

"I don't want to be a man!" she shouted back through a brief break before the tears returned.

Diana' rocked back in her chair from their sudden outburst and was in shock.

"You don't? Since when?" Diana' asked

"Since about six weeks ago when we had sex."

"The sex was that good?"

"No, don't be ridiculous. Something else changed."

"What?"

"I... I was pregnant."

"What? Oh my God!" Diana' was utterly shocked. She could barely believe what she was hearing. As she processed the statement, something grasped her attention, "Hang on, was?"

"I found out after the fact. I never took a test or even knew I was pregnant. It was over before I even knew, but the tests confirmed it."

"Oh, Diana, baby. I'm so sorry."

The two women embraced, and Diana cried into her clone's shoulder. Soon, Diana' joined in, and they both wept in each other's arms. After several minutes, Diana' continued her investigation.

"Why did that make you want to be a woman, though? I would think it would scare you off for good."

"It should have, I think I wanted it to. But it didn't happen. I just kept finding more reasons why I wanted it to be true again. I wanted to have your baby, well, David's baby."

"I see..."

"When I was around Olivia, we just clicked in a way I had never experienced. It made me feel things I'd never even known I could feel. It was euphoric. The idea of becoming a mother on top of that is like an endorphin rush. I can hardly help but think about it; I just get so excited. So when you suggested we return to our original selves, I panicked."

"I'll say..."

"I'm so sorry. I never should have lied. Can you forgive me?"

Diana' remained leaning back in her chair as Diana tried to reach out for her partner's hand. Diana' pulled her hand back, unwilling to reciprocate.

"I can't..." Diana' responded.

"What do you mean? You can't? Or you won't?"

"For now, I can't. Things are too messed up."

"Well, tell me about it! What's going on? Why did you change back to your original self? I thought you liked being David."

"You know, I thought so too. Then, I hit a guy with a bat and ended up killing him."

Diana gasped at her clone's curt response, but Diana' continued, "And I wanted to fuck another woman. Not even someone I knew, just some stranger that I literally bumped into."

Diana's tears returned. "Why are you saying these awful things?"

"Because they are true, and I'm tired of hiding what these pills are doing to me. What they did to you!"

"But, we wanted to gain a better understanding of each other. You were the one

who insisted!"

"Yeah, well, maybe I don't like who I became anymore."

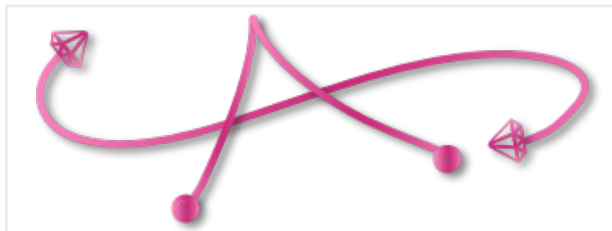
"What? What are you saying?"

"I saying, I don't know how I feel about you anymore, 'David.'"

With that last bombshell, Diana' stood up and walked to the apartment door.

"Wait! You can't just leave! Are you going to change back to David?"

"No... You are..." Diana' said as she dropped the bottle of David's YourEssence on the floor and closed the door behind her.



Chapter 03

The couple sat in Dr. Simms's office for the first time in months. Diana was her usually stoic and put-together self, but David was barely recognizable. Mary hardly recognized the 'man' sitting across from her, if you could call this person a man at all. She recognized David through his facial features, but his body was transformed entirely: breasts, a narrow waist, wide hips, long hair, and painted nails. The psychiatric part of her brain was processing this news clinically, but her more sensational thinking was running wild. She wondered what could have possibly happened to have created this circumstance. She wanted to know why he was wearing a skirt. Additionally, she wondered what his motivation was to shave his legs and whether her suspicion that he was wearing makeup was accurate. At the very least, Mary recognized that David was shaping his eyebrows. Mary's psychiatric training jumped into her mind with this thought and reminded her that David was likely using different pronouns now.

"David," Dr. Simms began, "it seems that you have made some significant changes since we last met. Before we begin, I wanted to ask if you could share your preferred pronouns."

"Uhh, yes. She/her, Dr. Simms," David spoke with a feminine register, startling Dr. Simms, who expected a more masculine tone.

"Very good. Thank you. Is David still the best name to use?"

"No..."

"I'm picking up on some hesitancy here. Is there something you need to tell me first?"

"It's just complicated. I've been going by... Diana. Up until a few weeks ago, at least," David answered, causing Diana to shift uncomfortably in her chair. Dr. Simms noted David's peculiar response and jotted down a note on Diana's reaction as well. She knew there was something unusual going on when she entered the room. Now, she suspected that there was a more profound mystery to unravel.

"I'm sorry, I don't know that I understand what you're saying. Were you asking people to call you Diana? But wasn't that confusing with your wife's name being the same?"

The couple stared at each other for a long pause, and then David continued, "I was living like Diana, so it wasn't confusing. We had swapped bodies, so she was living as me. The male version of me."

It was Dr. Simm's turn to uncomfortably shift in her seat at this news. She had heard of various forms of YourEssence abuse before. This was the first time she encountered it with her patients. Her training dictated that she would have to report this immediately to authorities, but there was a curiosity that she wanted to investigate further. If David had been abusing YourEssence by taking Diana's pills, then why did he look like a female version of himself?

Dr. Simms stood up and walked over to her bookshelf. She pulled a recording device out and pressed a button. She then entered a series of additional presses, and a second later, she dropped the device into the garbage.

"That's been formatted and bricked. It will never work again and can't be recovered. What you just told me is a federal offense. You should be going straight to jail..."

"Then why aren't we?" Diana jumped in with a bold retort.

"Why indeed? I will admit that I am acting against my own better judgment. You both have wagered a lot by coming here like this. By saying these things to me, you've jeopardized yourselves. You must have some motive. So, you've piqued my curiosity. I'll give you the rest of the hour to say what you came to say. Afterward, I'll decide if I destroy my secondary recording device... or not."

David and Diana spent the next thirty minutes explaining the events of the past several months since they had first met Dr. Simms. They were only stopped a few times for Dr. Simms to clarify a few details. Some of the stories were told by David, and some by Diana. Neither of them interrupted the other, which Dr. Simms noted. To her, it seemed that this description had been meticulously plotted out in advance.

"That's all very interesting, but why are you telling me all this now? You indicated that you were both aware of the consequences of your actions. I don't get why you're taking this risk?"

David stuck his hand out to pause Diana, who seemed ready to respond. "Because we need to figure this whole thing out, Dr. Simms. I've never wanted to be a woman before. Now, I track the days of my cycle when I'm most fertile with the hope that I'll get pregnant and become a mother. I don't just want to be a mother. I want to be a wife. To a man. A man like 'David,' but 'I' am David. I need your help, and so does Diana..."

"I..." Diana started but paused. A lump grew in her throat, and she began to sob a bit. "I... ahem... I have developed feelings towards women."

"That's not so unusual; you still love your husband even though she is living as a woman," Dr. Simms answered.

"No, not for David. For Amber. She's my girlfriend, I guess. Only on the weekends, though. I love as Diana through the weekdays."

"I'm missing something here. Are you saying that you are dating a woman on the weekend in your husband's body?"

"Yeah, that's right. So you can see why we need your help. Were both royally screwed up."

"I'm glad she destroyed the second recording," David spoke first.

"Yeah, that would have been a disaster if she didn't agree to help us."

"At least things should hopefully start to get better now. I caught myself researching lactation the other day. My brain is pushing every button it can to get me pregnant. I swear my nipples ache in the morning now."

"Maybe don't talk about nipples so much around me. It's getting me hard down there."

"So it's still not reverting fully? Your clit, I mean."

"No, it stays a lot larger than it ever was originally. And it works like your cock did... does."

"Shit, that must be tough to deal with wearing skirts around campus."

"A little, but my sexual appetite is mostly reserved for Amber. Your fucking brain and body are supercharged every time I'm around her."

"You're going to complain to me about having an affair in my body? With an incredibly hot woman? Should we get this over with, and I go get knocked up by some rando?"

"No, I'm sorry. You know how overwhelming these urges get to be. I'm not used to it."

"Yeah... I do. I know it's a lot to handle."

"Thanks, I just need to find a way to delicately dump Amber in the next few weeks so it doesn't raise any suspicion. We got lucky with Dr. Simms. We're not going to have the same luck with a jilted lover. Especially not one as hot as Amber."

"I agree with everything you said. I wish you weren't so male-brained about her all the time."

"You have painted and repainted the second bedroom in your apartment three times. Birds are getting jealous of the amount of nesting you do. So, I'd recommend you hold your judgment for someone else."

"Yeah, fair enough. Just don't get her pregnant."

"Amber! So good to see you, babe!"

"David!" the blonde bombshell of a woman cheerfully dashed forward and embraced her boyfriend, planting a kiss on his lips. A kiss that was very lovingly returned. Diana was in over her head. Amber was head over heels for the 'man' she was supposed to be, and Diana was struggling mightily.

"Hey, we should... uhh... talk," Diana said.

"Sure, just one thing really quick," Amber said as she looked both ways to see if anyone was around. Having identified that they were alone, Amber reached her hand down and rubbed Diana's groin, stirring her member to near-immediate attention.

"Hey, uhh, we can't... not here... not in public."

"Oh, is my stud too shy to perform in public? That's not what my hand is telling me..." Amber said before kissing Diana deeply. The two stayed there entwined, kissing passionately. Diana ran her hands over Amber's body, grabbing the places any man would relish the opportunity to squeeze. Amber's firm body had just the right amount of curves to press into.

"I'm not wearing any panties..."

Diana's intended conversation was thrown away with this simple statement. The pair spent three hours having sex in David's apartment. An apartment that had been emptied in anticipation of moving into a larger space. Those plans are now on hold. Unfortunately, Amber interpreted 'David's' empty apartment as a sign of lifelong bachelorhood. So much to Diana's dismay, Amber had begun to furnish her apartment.

Unexpectedly, Amber had chosen masculine decor for the apartment. So Diana now lived in a bachelor's pad but only fit the bill for a few days per week. Today was one of those days, and Diana was basking in her masculine conquest. Amber was lying next to 'him,' circling her fingers through his thick chest hair. Diana was convinced it was thicker than usual and felt a bold sense of pride in it as though her virility had sprouted the extra hair while making love to 'his' girlfriend. A mate that meant little emotionally to 'him' but a tremendous amount physically. David was an eight out of ten in attractiveness, so he could draw attractive women, but Amber was a perfect ten. Painters would want to reference Amber if they were commissioned to paint Aphrodite. She was that picturesque. It didn't hurt that she was fabulous in bed.

During sex, Diana entirely lost herself and became 'David.' The only remnant of her feminine self was her first-hand knowledge of a woman's body, which allowed 'him' to perform above normal. Amber remarked on his skill every time they climaxed. To her, David was the ultimate lover: passionate, caring, powerful, thorough, and selfless. He was the first man with which she actually looked forward to giving a blowjob. A fact that Diana noted. Amber's enthusiasm for giving 'him' oral fulfillment far exceeded her interest and enjoyment in doing the

same for her husband.

The two lovers were so entangled and voracious in bed that they would miss meals and only realize how much time had passed when the sun set... or rose. After a fifth session covering no fewer than three sexual positions, one that was brand new to the couple's repertoire.

"That was astonishing, David. I think you really outdid yourself this time. If you keep performing like that, I'll end up pregnant," Amber said, trailing off. Her statement was meant as a compliment to 'David's' virility and sexual performance, but Diana's brain woke up to the trigger of the threat of pregnancy.

"You need to leave... now."

"What? Why?"

"Just go. I'm not joking. You need to go."

"What did I do? Because I said that joke? I was just fooling around. I have an IUD. Your swimmers couldn't win this race if they were ten-time gold medal champions. So chill!"

"You need to leave, Amber. I'm serious," Diana's face and tone were aggressive, and Amber decided to give in to the demand.

"Fine, but you'll owe me next weekend. I'll be expecting your apology once you come to your senses."

"Lamaze classes, you can never be too prepared..." David contemplated to herself. The past month had been challenging after Diana confronted her. They had experienced fights before, but this was on another level. They didn't talk for a week after that incident. Diana had reclaimed her YourEssence while there, so David had no choice but to revert to her original form. At least the amount that her body could revert at this point. David's body was exclusively female at this point, even when the effects of Diana's YourEssence had worn off. Upon realizing this, David returned to the Dark Net to learn more about his body.

"23rd chromosome, dude. You 'healed' it by taking your bimbo's pills for so long. So, your body basically has two X's now. This is what you would have been if you'd been born a woman. Now, get over it and take your original pills. Or are you some kind of sissy now? lol, loser."

The words stuck with David. YourEssence did what it was meant to do. It kept her cells from suffering the effects of aging. In other words, it healed the cells so well that they were rebuilt with the otherwise missing genetic code that her wife's DNA provided. David remembered a movie where they had filled in missing genetic code for dinosaurs and figured this was roughly the same kind of thing. Another post on the Dark Net in response to his question was much more technical. It referenced telomeres, cellular regeneration in lizards, morphogenic bacteria, and a host of other topics that David didn't understand.

What David did understand was that she was newly unemployed, separated from her wife, and desperately attached to her femininity. So much so that the very idea of taking her old self's YourEssence repulsed her. She tried holding a pill up to her lips and gagged as the pill touched her tongue.

By the third day, David got the full confirmation that she was still entirely female. Her period arrived, and she got to experience PMS from another perspective. Diana's periods were regular and relatively low maintenance. David's were not. Cramps and bloating were immediate symptoms that David identified. Sore breasts and a raging headache were more.

Even when her period's flow hit their highest levels, David didn't lament her fate or body. It was this recognition which allowed her to write the letter to Diana. It was a letter of apology, first and foremost, but it additionally laid out a plan for repairing their relationship. David was broken, and from what she could see, Diana was too. David offered to meet with Diana at her convenience, and they decided to meet at the university.

David was shocked to see Diana appear as 'David.'

"What's going on?" David asked immediately.

"What? I thought this was what you wanted?"

"You and I both know that's bullshit 'David.'"

Diana started to lie but shortly changed course. "I'm as addicted to this as you are. What the fuck is wrong with me?"

"I don't know, it's not like we were ever supposed to end up like this. Maybe we are meant to suffer for our sins."

"That's ridiculous. We're the victims here. It was an accident that got us started this way, and we only chose to stick with it because of what Dr. Simms suggested

about being more empathetic towards each other. Well, mission accomplished. I fucking know everything you feel and how it feels to feel it. Stupid fucking male hormone bullshit testosterone horny fucking- -"

"I get the gist, 'David'"

"Well, it's fucked up."

"I agree, but you raise a good point. Dr. Simms was trying to help us process through how the other felt. What she said was working, too. I wouldn't have ever agreed to try staying as you if you hadn't invoked our therapy sessions. I thought it might speed up our sessions to get through them faster. Maybe what we need is to have Dr. Simms fix us. Or at least help us to fix ourselves."

"That's not a bad idea..." as Diana said this, a blonde woman with the most incredible body snuck up behind Diana and then planted a kiss on 'his' lips.

David sat stunned. "Are you going to introduce me to your 'girlfriend?'"

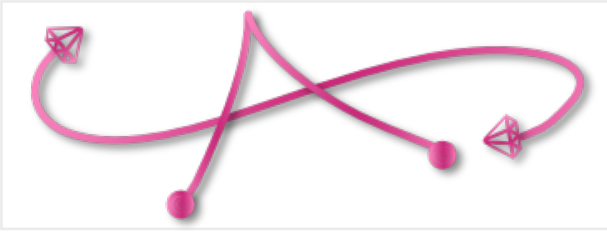
"Oh, uhh, 'Diana,' this is Amber. I guess we've been out twice now, is that right?"

"Yup, today makes three, and you know what happens after the third date..." Amber said, biting her lip. She clearly felt no competition from David.

"Uh-huh, well, 'David,' I forgive you, too. I'll send you the details for our next step so we can keep this going," David addressed Diana while standing up and then turned her attention to Amber. "It was so nice to meet you. Congratulations on your third date," David said with a wink. She hated that her 'husband' was entangled with a floozy like this, but she knew how powerful the effects of YourEssence were. It was easy to remember how testosterone and sex drove decision-making as a man. That those things weren't in control of David at this point was evidence enough that Diana should not be held to complete account for 'his' actions. So, David resigned that as long as Diana agreed to meet up with Dr. Simms later, she would forgive 'him.'

"I'll see you for our next meeting with Dr. Simms then?" Diana asked as David started to turn away.

"You know it. See you then."



Chapter 04

"Deep breath in. One... Two... Three... And release. Let your worries out with your breath. Every molecule carries an ounce of pain away from the body and brings in happiness and joy. The joy of your new baby, the life you've brought into the world," a familiar male voice rang in David's ears.

The sound of the voice soothed David. She felt so protected and cared for—Loved. A sharp pain disrupted the calm, and David's senses were flooded with panic. She looked down and saw she was in the hospital about to give birth. Her male self was standing at her side, holding her hand and reminding her of her Lamaze techniques, running through the breathing exercises. Pushing with muscles that she didn't know she had, David's passion for becoming a mother was manifest. She was finally doing it; with one last push, a feeling of great relief and an audible cry rang out.

David's eyes opened, and she saw the ceiling of her apartment. It was just as she had remembered it the night before and the day before that. Looking down, David's belly was its usual fit self. The curvature of growing life was nowhere to be seen. Even her breasts, a constant reminder of her femininity and form, didn't cheer her up this morning.

David got up, got dressed, and headed out the door of her apartment. Despite her qualifications in sales and management, she had been unable to secure employment as a 'trans woman.' The fact that her documentation all had her male identity led to a large number of difficult conversations. Some people were friendly, and some were supportive. A small number of individuals were cruel and bigoted. None of them were interested in hiring David.

Fortunately, David was pulled aside by a woman exiting the same office as she was and given some advice, "The mall has a no-questions-asked beauty salon. You can style hair, paint nails, manicure/pedicure, whatever. You have to clean up after yourself. They only take 15% of your take home for themselves, and you can charge whatever you think you're worth."

"It sounds too good to be true. What's the catch?"

"Well, it's not exactly easy work, you realize. Additionally, there's only so much business you can drum up with walk-ins. You'll eventually have to advertise to increase your income. So that's not cheap, and it's hard to do on top of that."

"I see; well, I'll have to check it out. I'm desperate at this point."

David did just that and began with simple nail painting services. She wasn't trained in cutting hair or giving manicures and pedicures, but many older women still preferred a hand-applied touch for nail polish. David really dedicated herself and soon had a set of regulars who would visit weekly to have fresh coats of nail polish applied. David wished her skill had drawn the customers back, but she soon realized it was the company that the women were seeking.

David spent weeks conversing with these women and managed to build relationships with them. There were three women in particular that stuck with her. Greta, an older widow with three grandchildren. Janet, a relatively young grandmother of seven. And lastly, Amy, a divorcé who never had children. David was caught off guard one day when Janet asked a particular question.

"When are you..." she paused. "I just realized, I don't think I've caught your name. How have we gone this long without? Well, let's fix that now. Can you tell me your name, sweetie?"

David froze. He wanted to respond 'Diana' but she had agreed at her most recent couple's therapy session with Diana to stop impersonating her. Key among the asks was to stop using her name. Dr. Simms took Diana's side on this. "It will be better for your psyche to differentiate and actualize your own sense of self separate from Diana."

Looking across the room, David saw a simple arrangement of flowers at her fellow salon worker's station. Without a second thought, David responded, "Daisy is my name. That's so funny that we never swapped names," she said as she continued applying a second coat of polish.

"Such a pretty name for a pretty woman. Now, Daisy, when are you going to settle down and start a family? I know you modern women are all so career-focused, but you need to strike a balance! I did both and I'm glad I did. Plus, I can just tell by looking at you, you'll be such a great mother."

"Oh, that's so nice of you to say that. I'll admit, it is something I think about often."

"As well you should! You're practically glowing as we talk about it."

"I get pretty excited over it. I am working through some things, though. I had a... complicated relationship with a mother figure that led to some really mixed-up feelings. I have been trying to work through them with my therapist. It's slow progress, but I feel better about where I'm at than I had felt."

"It sounds like you have some complicated history, but being a mom is easy for women like us. Hell, it's harder to find the right guy than it is for two nurturers like us to raise a child."

"Isn't that the truth. My 'boyfriend,' if you could call him that, is pretty mixed up himself."

"Guys? They're all the same. Offer a BJ on your next date and they will give you anything you ask for. I got engaged twice that way just to see if I could!"

"Janet! You didn't!"

"Oh, I most certainly did! They only lasted a few days before I let the guys off the hook, but I proved my point to a friend. And now you can take my word for it, too. One BJ out of nowhere and you will have a man hooked for good."

"Hey, Mary. Good to see you," Daisy said to her psychiatrist.

"Hello, Daisy. It's good to see you as well. Please take a seat. Where would you like to start today? Are you still having those recurring dreams?"

"Yes, I am Dr. Simms, but I was actually hoping we could talk about another topic today. It's a bit more, umm practical for day to day life."

"Well of course, Daisy. Tell me what's on your mind."

"It's been about three months now since Diana and I told you our secret. Unfortunately, we're very much stuck in the friend zone still."

"Yes, we've been discussing this in couples therapy. You know I can't violate the confidentiality of what Diana tells me in our private sessions."

"Yes, sorry. That's not where I was heading. I promise, I have a question. I just need to explain it this way for it to come out right."

"Well, I've been working at the salon and I've been doing really well. I have a

number of regulars and they all have been helping me so much in adapting to living my life as a woman. A non-Diana woman. It's been weird, I still remember all the things that I did when taking Diana's YourEssence. I'm not fumbling around plucking eyebrows or applying mascara. I've got all that down still, but the part where I actually engage in a conversation, or talk about myself, is really awkward. I feel like when I was Diana I just went with the flow and everything came naturally."

Daisy noticed that Mary was taking a lot of notes as she was speaking. This led to Daisy pausing momentarily catching Dr. Simm's attention, "Go on, I'm just jotting down some notes for myself. I'm following everything you're saying."

"Well, I think I'm having a bit of an identity crisis is what I'm trying to get at."

"Hmm..."

"Hmm? What's that supposed to mean, Mary?"

"Oh, nothing. It's just I don't think you're having an identity crisis."

"Why's that?"

"Well, you just told me about how you are feeling and everything you said is distinct from how you behaved when you were Diana. I don't think you're having an identity crisis. I think you've finally found ***your*** identity."

"Let's not jump to that conclusion yet, Doc. I've still got a few things to say."

"Yes, of course. Please continue."

"So, I was working at the salon yesterday and my regular customer comes in. We talk about the weather, the local news, what colors look good on the customer's nails—typical stuff. Then out of nowhere the topic of dating comes up. I say I'm single, which I'm not even sure is true, but it comes out as though it were an easy truth to share. My customer then hands me a piece of paper folded over. It has her son's phone number written on it! She spent ten minutes talking him up to me. At first, I was just casually listening but as she continued to describe her son I became more and more invested. He's a software developer, trying to get a promotion to management. He plays videogames, likes superhero movies and is all around nerdy. He's like the antithesis of who I used to be. But I was captivated by the idea of this guy making his way in the world. Like he was living this life that he loved and I wanted that too. Or I wanted to be a part of it. I don't know! I'm feeling really mixed up," Daisy concluded running her hands down her skirt to straighten it out. Her fidgeting and flushed skin was giving Dr. Simms more information to process as she began to consider her response.

"Did you call the number?"

"What?"

"Did you use the number your regular gave you to call her son?"

"Umm, I--"

"It's okay, Daisy. You can tell me anything. Remember, I'm here to help you as much as I'm here to help you and Diana."

"David..."

"Huh?"

"Diana hasn't been back to her old body in two weeks. She's trapped with Amber. I think they've moved in together already."

"Oh, umm, *he* hadn't mentioned anything about that when we met last week."

"So, you met with David like I said? He didn't tell you why he came to therapy like that?"

"Daisy, I can't tell you that. I've already said too much as it is."

"Well, I did call Lyle. That's his name by the way, Lyle."

"Ok, and how are you feeling about that decision?"

"Fine... I guess."

"Are you not sure? Was your time speaking with Lyle unpleasant?"

"No... I... I know how I feel about it. The conversation was really nice. It reminded me of dating David."

"Daisy, we've talked about this. You didn't date David. Diana did."

"Gosh, yeah. You're right. My mistake. I guess that fluttering kind of feeling that I have been feeling just seemed familiar and that's what my brain connects to when I think about it."

"That's to be expected, Daisy. YourEssence preserves more than just genetic

information. It captures robust connectivity information of atomic positional data as well. That seems to allow it to store the state of neurons. That's not official documented behavior of the drug however. It's something I learned in my *extracurricular* studies these past months."

"Trust me, I'm the living proof. I can still speak fluent Spanish and make a mole rojo from scratch."

"Yes, well, the more you establish your own routines and choices as Daisy, the more that reality should fade. Speaking of which, are you going to be seeing Lyle?"

"Sigh"

"That's an unusual response. Do you not want to see him?"

"No, I do. I just feel like it's the beginning of another ending. That my marriage to Diana is ending."

"Do you want it to end?"

"No! Not at all. I love David! I want to be with him!"

"You said David though. Do you love Diana or David? Is this your Diana memories speaking? Or you?"

"Dammit. This is too fucking hard. I just want it to be easier!"

"I understand, Daisy. Really, I do. I wish there were an easier way forward through this for you. Now, why don't you tell me about Lyle?"

"He's sweet. He listens to what I have to say but he tells the funniest stories. He likes these movies that I've never even heard of, but they do sound kind of fun. I wouldn't mind watching one with him..."

"Well, that all seems perfectly reasonable. Why don't you ask him to a movie?"

"Oh, umm..."

"What is it Daisy?"

"I... uhh... already have a dinner date with him later tonight. I don't think we're going to the movies."

"Well that's great. A dinner date sounds lovely."

"It kind of does, right? I haven't decided what dress I'm going to wear yet. I was thinking something flirty but not too formal. Maybe something simple would be better, though. What do you think?"

Dr. Simms looked up at Daisy over her notebook and saw the excitement in her eyes. Dr. Simms wasn't dealing with a normal patient in the moment. She recognized all the signs, rosy cheeks, shoulders back, chest positioned forward emphasizing her breasts, her finger twirling her hair—Daisy was falling in love. Or at least crushing hard for Lyle.

"Something simple and straightforward seems appropriate for a first date, if we're speaking woman to woman. As your therapist I'd say you should pick the one that makes you feel the most like yourself."

"You're the best, Mary. Tell David that I miss him when you see him next. You know, not as my therapist or as his therapist. Just as my gal pal," Daisy said rising to her feet. She knowingly winked at Dr. Simms and let herself out of the small room.

Dr. Simms sat there bewildered by the conclusion of her session. Normally Daisy would want to sit and analyze every aspect of her choices, but this choice seemed to be one that she was looking for validation on. Mary had inadvertently given her just that. Mary took a few more notes on her patient and moved over to a filing cabinet that was behind her desk. Pulling out an old-fashioned key chain, she cycled through the keys until she reached one in particular. Using it to unlock the container, she filtered through a half dozen notebooks labeled "The Martins." She placed her latest notebook behind the other notebooks and closed the drawer.

"Where is he?" Daisy wondered as she stood outside her favorite Italian restaurant. It was back in Daisy's old neighborhood where she had lived with Diana before moving across town to her current two-bedroom apartment. Standing outside the restaurant, the distinct aroma of roasted garlic loomed large, but Daisy's attention was on every car that approached hoping it contained her date for the evening.

Daisy had chosen a simple spring dress for her attire, but complemented it with two pearl earrings that dangled from her ears and a bronze bracelet that accentuated the spray tan that Daisy had agreed to receive as part of her own cosmetics training regiment at the local beautician academy. She rounded out her outfit with a three-inch Jon Clue heel that had cost her a small fortune. Daisy had heard about the shoes from a customer and thought little of them until she saw them in person. The speed with which she went from indifferent to determined to

own a pair was remarkable for any woman, let alone one who was still figuring herself out.

Checking her phone, Lyle was now fifteen minutes late and worse, Daisy recognized a couple walking down the street towards her. It was David and Amber. They were walking arm in arm with Amber smothering David in an overly needy way. Daisy chafed at the display. Daisy made eye contact with David about a dozen paces away but Amber kept her attention exclusively on David. As the married couple contemplated their next steps, a man placed his hand on Daisy's shoulder.

"Hi, Daisy. Sorry, I'm so late!"

Daisy turned to see Lyle dressed in a stylish yet comfortable pair of pants and button down shirt. He looked handsome, if a little bohemian for her tastes. The two had little time to greet each other as David and Amber were soon upon them. Daisy was panicking internally as her dalliance with Lyle hadn't been shared privately with David previously.

"Daisy, it's good to see you," David said stopping with Amber still clinging to his arm.

"It's good to see you too David. Let me introduce you to Lyle, he's the son of one of my regulars. She introduced us thinking we might 'get along,'" Daisy put peculiar emphasis on the last few words hoping to avoid any insinuation that she wanted to be there on this obvious blind date.

"Pleasure to meet you, Lyle. I'm David and this is Amber."

"Pleasure," Amber said in response to Lyle extending his hand to greet her. Her words practically oozed sex and registered almost as a purr.

"Party of two, Daisy. Daisy, party of two?" a waitress repeated herself looking for Daisy and her date.

"That's us!" Lyle called out. He seemed to be ready to move the date along and end this peculiar interaction on the street.

"Oh, you got a reservation here?" David asked.

"Yeah, I haven't been in ages. I wanted to get my favorite."

"Oh, huh. I guess I can't remember what that is anymore."

"Eggplant parmesan."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I fell in love with it."

David noted that this was neither his nor 'Diana's' favorite dish. "Well, we should be going—"

"Ooh! Eggplant. Let's get some too D-bear!"

"Uhh, I don't think—"

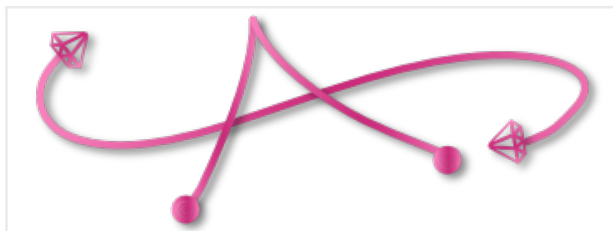
"Nonsense! Waitress! Waitress, hey. Hi, my boyfriend and I will be joining our friends."

"I see; give us just a minute, and we will adjust the table for you."

"Isn't this great! We're getting an impromptu double date in, D-bear! You can tell me all about how you two know each other. I'm Amber, by the way," Amber said, reaching her hand out to greet Daisy.

"Oh, we've met before, Amber."

"No, I don't think so. Ooh! Looks like our table is ready. This is going to be so much fun!"



Chapter 05

"Ungh, hrmph, uhhn, ahh, oh," Diana in David's body breathed heavily as he worked his hips back and forth mid-coitus. Amber was beneath him in a traditional missionary position, and the former woman who was now answering to David was overcome with horniness. Amber satisfied that need for him. He continued to make grunts and deep breathing sounds as he thrust harder and harder, relishing the view of Amber's ample breasts swaying from the motion.

"Oh, my big man! Keep going!" Amber encouraged as she pushed her breasts up and forward on her chest. This was her cue for David to lean forward and kiss,

nibble, or suck on them while continuing to fuck her. David's thoughts were testosterone-addled. All he wanted at that moment was for his dick to be doing what it was currently doing. Every extra offer was icing on the cake. So, like a good heterosexual man, David was sucking hard on Amber's nipples as a result of her prompting.

David's mind was awash in primal needs. None of his actions led to any real consideration on his part. There were two large breasts with juicy nipples, so his mouth thirsted for them. As he sucked on the nipples, he took pleasure in hearing Amber moan. These sounds were accompanied by the tightening of her pelvic muscles thus gripping David's length all the firmer.

It only took a few more moments before David unloaded his seed into Amber. They had only been together for about three months, but Amber had a deep breeding kink, so she wouldn't allow David to finish anywhere else. David, to his surprise, had little interest in this aspect of sex. He just wanted to orgasm as often as possible. Amber's kink meant they had regular sex, and that was good enough for David.

"Do you like my boobs?" Amber asked out of nowhere.

"Yeah, of course, I like them."

"Do you think they'd look better bigger?"

"What? No, you don't need implants. They are perfect the way they are."

"No, silly. Do you think they will look good when they get bigger and when I'm carrying your baby inside me?"

"Ahhh, are we roleplaying here... or..."

"Oh, Daddy. When are you going to get me pregnant finally?"

"Ah, yeah, those fat milkers are going to look so hot once they are making milk for all the babies I'm going to put in you," David said, feigning engagement in the fantasy for Amber's sake.

"Oops, can't let any of this leak out... teehee," Amber said as she placed her hand over her sex holding in David's seed. To David's knowledge, Amber had an IUD birth control device, so she was just playing with her words, but she was clearly deeply invested in that roleplay.

"You better not, you naughty girl."

"Oh, don't punish me, Daddy. I will be good," Amber said quickly, positioning herself on the bed on all fours with her ass turned up such that David had easy access to it. This was an aspect of the roleplay that David liked. He felt in complete control when Amber wanted to be spanked, and David could quickly lose himself in the enjoyment of being the dominant partner.

"Well, I clearly see a wet spot here. How are you ever going to have all my babies if you keep wasting my seed? That will be ten spanks, minimum."

"Ten?! But I tried so hard, Daddy!" Amber said, laying it on thick with her voice pitch turned to its highest registers.

"Make it twenty for questioning me," David said as he swung his hand, impacting Amber's ass. An audible clap rippled across the room. David hadn't slapped hard; he had to work up to more power, but the sound created the perception that he had.

"Ungh, it hurts, Daddy..."

"That's just the first one. Now, hold still..."

The second slap reverberated, and Amber sang out her satisfied moan once more. The sound from Amber was not followed by any further protest, so David continued to dole out his pretend punishment. By the fifth spanking, he could see Amber's skin developing a light redness. David's hesitancy in the breeding kink roleplay was now replaced by his eagerness to play the part of the daddy dom.

Spanking after spanking, David worked to deliver the pleasure and pain of their current play. Amber continued to encourage him with moans of ecstasy. This round of spanking had accomplished what Amber had hoped. David was raring to go for another round of even rougher bareback sex. This time they started in doggy style, which allowed David to combine his two favorite things—fucking and spanking.

By halfway through their second session, David was fully immersed in Amber's fantasy.

"Fuck me, Daddy. Put your babies in me."

"You're going to have twins when I'm through with you. No! Triplets!"

"Oh, yes! Daddy, I like it when you take charge!"

That was all David needed to hear. He felt as though his erection was pressing so hard that he was actually gaining length and girth all from his increased passion. Burying himself as deeply as he could, thrust after thrust, David came fiercely, but unlike their last round, David grasped Amber's hips and pulled her down, plunging himself ever deeper, and held her in this position as the last drop of his seed shot from his dick.

"There..." David said, slightly short of breath, "If the first time didn't get you pregnant, this time would definitely have done it."

Amber squealed in delight as she heard David embrace her fantasy with her. She contorted herself around to embrace David, but he was utterly spent, and the two collapsed to the bed entangled. They remained in this position through the night...

"Hello, Dr. Simms; a pleasure to see you again."

"Oh?! David? Or, umm, Diana? I'm sorry. Who am I speaking with here today?"

"It's Diana. I've been living as David for the last week or so. You can call me David today. I'm fine with that," David said as he sat in his usual spot on the couch. Dr. Simms jotted down notes feverishly at just that introduction. She found it odd that Diana was acquiescing to using a name she had recently publicly rejected. It had also been a significant point of contention in Daisy's therapy and the joint sessions. So, it was curious to see Diana swing to this extreme suddenly.

"That sounds fine to me, David. Maybe you could tell me more about why you're visiting me as a male today?"

"Ugh, it just became such a hassle. Switching back and forth, and Amber could only come over when I had taken a pill."

"So, you're taking things to the next level with Amber?"

"No, it's still just about the sex for me, Doc."

"Yes, you've said that a few times recently. When did casual sex become so important to you?"

"What do you mean? I've been thinking about sex every thirty to sixty seconds for the past ten years. Since my first pube came in, you know?"

"David, err, Diana. You know that can't be true. You have only been living as a man for a matter of months."

"Uh, yeah. Of course. Sorry, Doc. It gets a bit confusing sometimes. My statement still stands, however. I've been pretty focused on keeping my sex life active for the past few weeks."

"Did something change?"

"Hmm, I can't think of much of anything. I got my first blowjob. That was pretty amazing."

"Hmm, interesting. Did you notice any changes around that event? New memories? Strange sensations?"

"I remember that it felt amazing! I remember that I wanted to go to Pound Town with Amber as soon as she was done and as soon as I could go again."

"Hmm, very interesting. Have your feelings about Amber changed recently? Do you find her more attractive than before?"

"She was always a perfect ten in the looks department, but I guess I've gained an appreciation for her finer qualities, sure."

"More and more interesting. Well, I think we may have stumbled into an interesting conundrum, David."

"Oh? What's that?"

"I think you have crossed the mental threshold. You're now mostly male-brained."

"That's absurd. I'm still 100% me."

"If you think so, then you'd be happy to discuss some recent PMS symptoms I experienced, and maybe we could swap notes on—"

"Whoa, no thanks. I do not want to talk about... your period."

"Why not? You've had one your whole adult life except for the last few months."

"Because..." David was going to say 'gross' but caught himself. He realized that Dr. Simms was right. He needed to accept it before he said something he would regret. "No, I think you are right, Doc. What do I do?"

"That depends on what you want, David. What do you think you want to do? Who do you want to be?"

"I want to be in charge! I'm so sick and tired of being second fiddle. Dismissed, disregarded, discounted! I fucking hate it."

"That's good. Share your feelings. Tell me what else you're feeling."

"I'm feeling lonely, too. I... I miss Diana, oops Daisy, I guess she's going by now. She seems so happy. I feel like she doesn't need me around anymore."

"What makes you say that?"

"She started her own business! She's got new friends and is getting her beautician's license back at school. I'd just be in the way."

"Is that why you've stayed with Amber? You had said you were going to break up with her."

"Don't remind me. She wouldn't listen when I tried. But, to your question, yeah. I guess I haven't gone through with it because Daisy no longer needs me. So, I need to ensure I have my life in order. Amber's good at that; she keeps me moving forward. I got a new job with her help, and that's going really well."

"A new job too? Wow, you've been moving quickly."

"That's what a man can do. I can get a new job at the drop of a hat, and no one criticizes me for being bossy or bitchy. I feel like I'm in control of my destiny."

"But you are starting a new life that doesn't include your spouse. Is that the kind of control you are hoping to have? Or are you running away from something you would rather not confront?"

"Amber, chill out," Diana said privately under his breath to his new girlfriend as he, his 'wife,' and her date were escorted back to a table in the Italian restaurant's outdoor dining courtyard. Music was playing, and a few couples were dancing on the makeshift stage that the restaurant had constructed to set space aside for couples to enjoy a whole night of dinner and dancing in one location.

"Oooh! David! Dancing, we can shake our stuff after dinner. You owe me a slow dance," Amber ignored Diana's chiding and emphasized her desires over all others.

Daisy looked over at Diana with a look of displeasure, but Diana shot back the same. The married couple were both exploring their new relationships, trying to understand their new identities. Dr. Simms had suggested they open the marriage up to this possibility, but Daisy had been hesitant—or at least less expeditious in exploring. Diana had already taken Amber on as a girlfriend before the discussion with their psychiatrist.

“Dancing after dinner sounds amazing! Right, Daisy?” Lyle offered. After all, this was a first date, and he needed to come across as open to exploring all activities. This just encouraged her further. She practically pulled Diana onto the dance floor right then and there. Diana stumbled as he was redirected and nearly fell. Daisy reached out and grabbed her husband’s arm to stabilize him.

“Thanks,” Diana said as he looked up into his wife’s eyes. The woman who had been his husband—the very man he saw reflected in the mirror when he looked at himself daily. The confusion of being in this mixed environment, interacting like acquaintances when they shared something so much more profound. He was almost compelled to just call the whole thing off with Amber right then. Grab Daisy’s hand, walk out of the restaurant with her, and go live the lives they were meant to live. Looking into Daisy’s eyes, he saw the same compassion that he had known from his partner. He felt overwhelmed, but the moment to act escaped him, “Here we are, table for four,” the hostess said as she placed menus on a table by the dance floor.

“Great! We can eat and dance even easier now!” Amber excitedly announced the obvious.

Dinner proceeded at a glacial pace for Daisy and Diana. Lyle seemed to be a good sport about everything, but the three were held mainly to short responses as Amber dominated the conversation. There didn't seem to be a topic that she didn't have an opinion on. Thankfully, food was served quickly so the group could eat. Daisy hoped that finishing quickly would allow her and Lyle to move on to another location to have more direct one-on-one attention for each other.

Again, Amber had other plans. Having barely touched her food from all the talking, she noticed others were done and proceeded to get the group onto the dancefloor. From there, she directed an employee to make the music more romantic for some slow dances. Daisy watched as she drew Diana in and pressed her body against him. She had to turn her eyes away, which Lyle seemed to pick up on.

“Hey, you okay?” Lyle asked as he held onto Daisy’s hand. Daisy looked up into Lyle’s eyes, and tears started to form. “There, there now. No need to be upset. We

can get going--"

"Isn't this so much fun!" Amber said, interrupting Lyle. She seemed to have a preternatural sense that events were unfolding that deviated from her plans. Daisy was at her wit's end with the constant meddling and had a laundry list of grievances to be addressed at her and Diana's next counseling session. She was entirely unprepared for what Amber said next.

"This party is just getting started!" she said, detecting Daisy's readiness to move on. "Why don't we all head back to David's for a nightcap?" Unfortunately for Daisy, Lyle's ability to read the situation faltered.

"Sure! If David doesn't mind," he said, signing on for Amber's plan. He believed that Daisy simply wanted to leave, not that she wanted to be away from Amber.

Back at David's apartment, the same apartment Daisy and he had lived in together, Amber continued to lay out her plans for the evening.

"David, pour these two a drink—a stiff one. I've got the best idea, and I want everyone to be good and ready to hear it with an open mind!" she said, then leaned forward and planted a kiss on David's lips. It was just a smooch of a kiss, but Daisy still disliked seeing this.

The four drank stiff drinks and had a more equally distributed conversation for the next few hours. Amber's behavior seemed to have drastically shifted. It was like she was performing in public, but now that she was in private, she could let go of the act. Daisy thought she almost seemed pleasant as they discussed some of the finer points of manicure techniques together.

Lyle and Diana talked about sports. Despite Lyle's nerdiness, he kept the conversation flowing. Occasionally, he'd steal a glance over Daisy's way and offer a simple smile. Daisy blushed each time, and Amber noticed.

"So... He's cute. How long have you been dating?"

"Oh, we're not dating. This was a blind date kind of thing. A customer of mine set this up."

"Mother? Or Aunt? HAHA!" Amber's intuition about the scenario and laugh were spot on in Daisy's mind. She also found the whole thing a little silly.

"How did you know?"

"Been on my fair share of those, but your customer seems to have done all right by

you this time. Usually, these all end up being toads with even less of a personality than they have looks."

"Yeah, I can imagine."

"You weren't sent through this ringer when you turned seventeen? It was like every relative or friend of our family was trying to marry me off. You're lucky you escaped that, especially someone as cute as you!"

"Thanks, Amber. I was a... late bloomer."

"Oh, did your tomboy phase last longer than the other girls? Once my period hit, I threw away all my T-shirts and baseball gloves. Hormones, am I right? Hahaha."

"Yeah, you could say that, I guess—"

"Well, hopefully, my surprise will be a welcome one. You should get to know him better before the night is over. I'll entertain David for you. I know how to keep his mind occupied..." Amber said with a mischievous grin that further reminded Daisy of the wedge being thrust between her and Diana.

"Uhh, yeah... sounds good," Daisy answered reticently.

Daisy and Amber walked over and to Daisy's dismay, Amber pulled David in and gave him a deep kiss which Diana seemed all too happy to return. Daisy pulled Lyle aside to give Amber and Diana some space.

"What was that about?" Lyle asked, referring to Amber and Diana.

"I think she's getting a bit tipsy. She wanted to get David's attention. I don't know. I don't know her very well."

"Oh, you two seemed to be hitting it off pretty well. I thought maybe you did."

"No, just girl-talk stuff. Nails, hair, stuff like that. What did you and David talk about?"

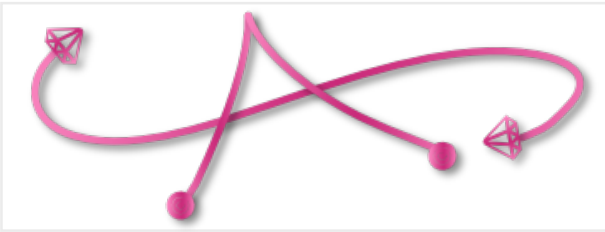
"Sports, cars, stuff like that," Lyle said with a knowing wink.

Lyle and Daisy got settled in the apartment bedroom, leaving Diana and Amber to make out in the living room. It was the first time Daisy had returned to the room since she moved out. It had since been redecorated in a very masculine manner. There was distressed wood furniture and a dark color pallet for the comforter and pillows, but the room was very tidy. This last fact lets Daisy know that Amber is a

regular guest. While David was many things, he was never this tidy in any permutation of his existence.

"So, are you going to tell me what the situation is between you and David?" Lyle asked, bringing Daisy's attention back to him.

"Huh? I mean, yeah. I can tell you. It's pretty complicated, though..."



Chapter 06

Lyle listened intently, and his ears perked up when he heard Daisy conclude, "It's pretty complicated, though..." Lyle had been a good sport going through the peculiar events that night, but the confirmation that his suspicion was apt surprised him, given his lifelong inability to successfully pick up on social cues. Usually, Lyle was the last person to "get it" when a room of people arrived at an obvious conclusion.

"David and I are technically... married," Daisy said, sounding contrite.

"Holy shit!" Lyle's response said everything.

"I know! I'm so sorry, Lyle. I should have told you sooner. It's just that we are taking some time apart to ensure that we have worked out some... problems... that we each have encountered this past year that shook us to our core. I'd go into more details, but... it's kind of... unusual."

"Okay... I am trying to decide between walking out right this minute or waiting to hear why it's so unusual. You do realize that this whole night has taken on a bizarre vibe now, right?"

"Yes, I completely understand. You've been nothing but a gentleman and accommodating to a very strange evening. It's just that you have to promise me you won't tell anyone. We could get in serious trouble if you told other people what has transpired between David and me."

"For real? Like trouble with the law kinds of trouble?"

"Yes! Exactly. Not that we haven't already had our fair share of that. So, do you want to know? Or is this where we decide to part ways?"

Lyle was at a crossroads. He could tell, even now, that his choice would change the direction of his life forever. He just had to decide if staying would leave him on a better path than he was currently on. Lyle was routinely lonely in life; his intellect and social awkwardness kept him from successfully mingling with crowds, and he frequently ended conversations early once he ran out of memorized 'small talk' questions. In reflecting on the evening, he had to admit that he had actually enjoyed his time. It had been unconventional, unusual even. Sort of like he was. The chance of making a more profound connection weighed on him heavily as he replied, "Tell me, but I still reserve the right to bolt if you tell me something I'm uncomfortable with."

"Of course, Lyle. When you hear what I say, I assure you, you are free to leave. I hope you won't, though."

"Good, so what's so unusual about you and your husband's past?"

Daisy collected herself by taking a deep breath before beginning, "David... was... hrmph. This is harder to say than I thought it would be. We've talked about it in therapy so many times, but saying it to someone else feels so... dangerous."

Lyle leaned in, hearing the tremble of Daisy's voice. His interest was at its maximum. "Go on, Daisy. It's okay. I promise I won't get you in any trouble."

Daisy looked Lyle deeply in the eyes; Lyle felt that he could practically hear Daisy's thoughts as she considered whether she could truly trust the young man.

"Yes, I know I can, Lyle. Thank you. I'll try again," she said, wringing her hands. Lyle reached out and held her hands in his own. The gesture was well outside his usual comfort zone, but Daisy made him feel differently about the world. He felt comfortable in times of stress and wanted to comfort her. Lyle looked deeply into Daisy's eyes with a deep appreciation and confidence that finally allowed Daisy to continue, "David killed an intruder, and we haven't been the same since."

Lyle leaned back in shock. "David... has killed someone?"

"Yes, it wasn't intentional, but he did. Someone broke into the apartment—this apartment, actually. It scared me to my very core knowing I had just narrowly avoided this whole situation," Daisy shared before continuing to detail how she had moved out to the two-bedroom apartment across town mere days earlier.

"Wow! That is pretty shocking! I can see why things would be strained between you both when you are going through something like that. But I don't understand why you were living apart?"

"Oh, that was just temporary. I moved across town because we were planning to... expand the family. If you know what I mean..."

"Oh! Oh my. Well, I can't possibly stand in the way of something like that. I wish you and David all the best—" Lyle responded before Daisy interrupted.

"Don't," Daisy said, grabbing Lyle's hands and pulling him back to a seated position.

"But, you're married. And you were planning to have kids."

"Yes, but things changed. We decided to take a minute in our lives before we would make that decision again. We're... not the same people we were then." Daisy replied.

"I'll say!" Lyle responded enthusiastically, causing Daisy to look a little nervous.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you're just so different from Amber. I can barely imagine that a person who would be so into her would also be into a low-key and sweet girl like you."

A look of relief and then a blush to her cheeks appeared on Daisy's face. She paused with her head turned to the side momentarily before she leaned forward and planted a kiss squarely on Lyle's lips. Lyle's lips met hers and returned the kiss as his mind ignited with feelings and thoughts he could hardly process. It wasn't Lyle's first kiss. It's just his first in a long time. Placing his hands behind Daisy's neck, he took the lead.

The two kissed with increasing passion as Lyle's confidence grew. Daisy was putty in his hands as he kissed her firmly. Their lips pressed against one another, parting only momentarily to take a quick breath before Lyle returned to kissing. His hands began to move lower, and he felt his excitement mounting. So did Daisy. As Lyle's hand started to reach lower, Lyle was becoming bolder. As his hand began to reach towards second base, Daisy finally pulled back.

"Hey, I'm not sure I'm ready for that step quite yet..."

"Oh, gotcha. No problem," Lyle responded, and immediately after, a doorknob twist

pierced the otherwise silent room.

"Hey, you two. I had just like the best idea... again! Can you believe it?" Amber interrupted the couple.

"Sounds good, Amber. Should we come out to join you?" Daisy asked instantly. Lyle looked at Daisy, wondering if she was trying to escape the situation.

"Totally. Sharing the good news with you all will be a blast."

David was sitting in an armchair holding a full glass of brown liquor, which Daisy assumed to be bourbon based on her tastes. Amber had Daisy and Lyle sit on the couch and remained standing to introduce her idea.

"So, while I was making out with David, I started thinking—"

"Super hard, I'm sure..." Lyle interjected under his breath towards Daisy but inadvertently said it loud enough to interrupt Amber despite his intention.

"Thank you," Amber continued earnestly, "He is quite the man. It is definitely hard to think about how good a kisser David is when mid-kiss." Lyle leaned back, thankful his condescending comment hadn't offended his target.

"So, I started talking to David before things got too hot. It was just too good of an idea to let it wait any time at all."

"What's the idea, Amber?" Daisy tried to move the conversation along.

"Here it is. I'm hot, David's hot, Daisy's got... some good qualities, and Lyle is kind of cute, too—in his own sort of way. I've been wanting to do this for so long. So, here goes—we should date!"

"Like a double date, again?" Lyle asked.

"No, no. Tonight was fine, but I'm thinking of something more. I think we should all date each other."

"Uhh, what does that mean?" Daisy asked.

"Have you heard of polyamory, Daisy?"

"Uh, like those people who end up with multiple wives?" Daisy asked, looking

David in the eyes. David looked back with a straight face despite Daisy's glare.

"No, more like a foursome. We each date one another in pairs, trios, and all together. It would let us get more intimate with each other and not have to worry about boundaries. Even though David is hot to the maximum, I couldn't help but wonder what it might be like to get a little... randy with Lyle. Even you, too, Daisy!"

"Well, I'm flattered," Daisy answered again, looking David in the eyes, trying to convey her discomfort over David's girlfriend's suggestions.

"I think it seems kind of fun, too," Lyle shockingly shared his thoughts. Daisy immediately turned her attention to her date. "Really? You're into this?"

"Yeah, why not? I was already starting something new, and I can say that tonight's been the most fun I've had in a long time. I don't have any problem spending more time with all of you."

It was David's turn to show his concern. He leaned forward momentarily before rocking back in his chair, repositioning uncomfortably. Lyle noticed the male-repositioning—the move where a man has to shift in his chair due to arousal. Lyle was left to wonder if David was becoming excited that Amber's suggestion was gaining traction or if Lyle's explicit agreement had excited him.

Daisy was starting to look frustrated when David once again shifted in his chair, got up, and moved over to his estranged wife. Sitting much closer than the casual acquaintances Lyle had been led to believe they were at the beginning of the evening, David placed his hand under Daisy's chin. He lifted her face up so they were looking each other squarely in the eyes. "For me. For Diana. For us. Please."

Lyle watched as Daisy's eyes went from anger to caring to shock, back to love, and then finally landed on resignation. "Ugh, you always do this. For once, can we just be a normal couple of adults..."

"I think you'd agree. There's little normal about us at this point, Daisy."

"That may well be, but do we need to bring other people into it?" Daisy asked, ignoring the presence of the two relative outsiders.

"It will be fine. They seem cool, and it will be good for us. I think. If not, you know I love you, and I'll be with you forever. This lets us explore and have the best of all worlds."

"Uh-huh, and your girlfriend knows that you're married then?"

"Well, she does now... I'm guessing your new boyfriend already knew?"

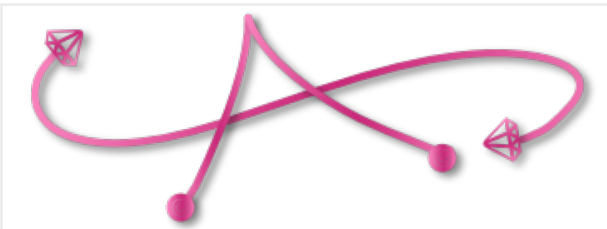
"As of about fifteen minutes ago, yeah."

Lyle watched in relative disbelief at how casually the married couple was discussing him and Amber while they were still in earshot. If he hadn't gotten the explanation from Daisy earlier, he would have bolted for the door by now. Lyle's thoughts turned to Amber, who he now assumed must really want to have sex with multiple people because she showed no sign of leaving or even surprise.

"I've known for the whole time, Sweetie," Amber said, directing her comment to David, possibly as a shot across Daisy's brow. "I just don't get why Daisy changed her name from Diana."

Daisy shot straight upright at hearing this. Lyle was unnerved by yet another secret being kept from him. For Lyle, the overwhelming number of instances of drama tonight had just turned the corner into being moderately entertaining. "David just mentioned Diana, too. If Daisy is Diana, then what's the story there?"

David stood up after planting a kiss on Daisy's cheek. A gesture that seemed to reassure the woman by Lyle's judgment. "Well, Lyle, Amber, it's a complicated story, but Daisy did change her name from Diana... You see..."



Chapter 07

Several Days Later...

Dr. Simms sat idly at her desk, taking a quick bite of a sandwich she had hidden in her drawer. While doing this, she also reviewed her notes from her last session with Daisy and 'David.' It had surprised the doctor to see Diana show up as David unabashedly at their previous session. Interestingly, by the end of that meeting, Mary was detecting signs of a similar conditioning as what had befallen the original David. An influx of strong masculine behavior-reinforcing stimuli had suddenly overwhelmed Diana and pushed her susceptible mind to accept and blend in more and more of David's memories. When the married couple recounted Diana's mother's visit and its impact on David in Diana's body, Mary noted how

certain aspects seemed to trigger more for the original David, now Daisy. For Daisy, the feminine nurturing and bonding of family had created all the impetus necessary for her persistent dosing with Diana's YourEssence prescription to flood and overwhelm the male brain. Seeing the signs that this was happening again, Mary hoped that she would be able to intervene and help guide the couple through this tumultuous period.

Dr. Simms' door handle turned, and she came to attention, ready to greet whichever of her patients was arriving first. She was not prepared for what, or rather who, she saw walk in.

"Diana?! Is that really you?"

"Yes, hi, Mary. It's me."

"Well, I have to say I am surprised to see you. Well, I was expecting you, but not this version of you..."

"Yeah... Daisy asked me, more like pleaded with me, to come like this today. So, I'm as in the dark on what's going on as you are."

"Uh-huh. Well, this is certainly going to be an unconventional session, then. Given how you spoke last time we met, I wasn't sure I'd ever see this version of you again. How are you feeling being like this?"

"Fine."

"I see," Dr. Simms scribbled notes on a pad of paper in response.

"What? I'm fine. Really," Diana tried to feign her shock at Dr. Simms's detection of her lack of acceptance for her current state.

"'Fine' is for describing wine and dining. It's not for describing how we feel. Now, would you—"

The door handle turned again, interrupting Dr. Simms once more. The room's occupants' jaws dropped in shock as 'David' walked in.

"Uhh, hi."

"What the fuck, David?!" Diana didn't mince her words.

"Hang on a sec..."

"David, this is highly irregular and a violation of our working agreement—" Dr. Simms said before being interrupted again by the door opening.

"What now?" Diana scoffed before mellowing. In the door walked Daisy arm in arm with Amber.

"Holy shit!" Diana exclaimed before passing out on the couch she was on.

"Dianna... Diana... err... 'David' wake up! Come back to us." a familiar voice rang in Diana's ear.

"Huh? Wha?" Diana managed to get out before fully regaining consciousness.

"Phew, you had us worried there," Daisy said to her wife.

"Yeah, I think I must have hallucinated there. I could have sworn you were back to being your old self."

"Oh, well you did see someone that is 'David' right now. But it wasn't me. It was Lyle. He's helping me out with an exercise I want us to go through today."

"Huh?"

"Hi, Diana, I guess. This is confusing. What should I call her? Him? Her... him?" Lyle sheepishly responded.

"Okay, this is messed up, Daisy. What you're doing here could get us in a lot of trouble."

"Well, we ended up there a few days ago anyway. Lyle isn't an idiot, and neither is Amber. Neither one of them bought our made-up story. So, rather than let them run away with the scandal of the decade and implicate us both, I decided to fess up and make an appeal that they with old judgment until they've understood us better," Daisy explained clinically.

"And that worked?" Diana asked.

"Yeah, I mean... they're here, aren't they?"

"You know, it's kind of hard to say who's here generally anymore," Diana sighed.

"I concur," Dr. Simms interjected.

"I'm sorry, Mary. I would have told you, but I didn't have much time to arrange this."

"And what have you arranged, Daisy?" Dr. Simms questioned.

"All right. So, the first thing I need to say is something that Amber asked us to consider whether we would be interested in a polyamorous relationship. I initially rejected this outright as I am married to Diana and love her. Our relationship had always been monogamous."

"Ugh, so boring. Get to the good parts," Amber expressed her thoughts for everyone to hear. Dr. Simms wrote notes feverishly.

"Yes, Amber. I'm getting there. Well, I needed to prove that we had really swapped places between Diana and me so that Amber and Lyle would believe the true story of what had happened between us and thus not turn us into the authorities. That's when it all clicked. Amber's idea could actually work. It could solve two birds with one stone."

"I'm failing to see the connection, Daisy. How does this solve anything? It seems like you've just made things worse," Diana asked critically.

"I'm getting to it, Diana. One more piece, and I think you'll see the puzzle come together."

"Okay, fine. What am I missing?" Diana relented.

"Us. We're the missing piece. You see, our relationship has been challenged since we fell into this routine. I've been coming to accept myself as a woman, but you've gotten caught up in the same whirlwind I had been like when I was overwhelmed by your mother's visit. Diana, you don't want to be me. Nor a man. I know it because I literally have your memories. Your desires. I know you as well as I know 'David.'"

"Daisy, I get to decide what I want and am fine with being a man. I like it. It's been fun."

"See, there it is. You are settling! If you wanted to be a man, you would yell, scream, and get angry! But I've been on the other side of this, too. So, I understand that simple words won't suffice. Thus, I've brought Lyle and Amber into this. We will follow Amber's suggestion and date each other as a single

romantic group relationship."

"Why did I need to revert to being Diana to go along with Amber's plan? It seems a little counterproductive since Amber is straight and into me. I mean David."

"That's the part Lyle is helping me out with. For one night only, he is going to date you, as me, so you can remember that you like being a woman. If you go through the night and you decide you'd rather be a man, well, you can keep taking my pills and stay as 'David,' or you can go my route and hope that repeated use masculinizes you enough to be your own new person and we can say you transitioned. What do you think?"

"I think you're crazy, but I also love you. I wouldn't have shown up looking like this if I didn't. So, I'll go through with it. But it's just a one-night thing. I will go on the date, and then tomorrow, I will turn back to David, and Lyle can return to being himself. It makes more sense for our group to be even split between the sexes anyway."

"Don't get hung up on pragmatism regarding your body and gender presentation, Diana. It will lead to unhappiness to be trapped as a male if you still identify as a woman," Dr. Simms added.

"Mary? You think I'd be that short-sighted?"

"No, of course not. But we're moving things along very quickly here. I don't want convenience to be inserted in place of correctness. You need to do the right thing for you, not the right now thing," Dr. Simms counseled her patient.

"Yeah, that's fair," Diana responded.

"So, do we all have a deal?"

"Oh, no. I see what Daisy is doing. Ungh-Ungh, we are not going here. No way," Diana said to Lyle. She had already acquiesced to wearing a fancier and more formal dress than she wanted; she would not fall into the trap that Daisy had set for her.

"Huh? I don't know what you mean." Lyle cluelessly responded. He genuinely had no idea what Diana was talking about. He only knew that Daisy had instructed him to take Diana to this specific restaurant and to be sure that he and Diana split a bottle of wine over the meal.

Diana looked Lyle in the eye and detected no malice or blatant attempt to deceive her. "You don't, do you?"

"Honestly, no clue. I was just given this address and instructions to share a meal with you. I was told that was enough."

Diana sighed and then said under her breath, "Yeah, it just might be."

"What was that?"

"Nothing, Lyle. Let's have a nice meal. This place has great food and wine."

"Dancing too, I hear."

"Yes... that too."

Sitting at the restaurant, Diana felt a wave of nostalgia flow over her. This was the same restaurant she had brought David to all those months ago after their first foray into living life as the other. Wearing this extravagant evening gown, Diana felt oddly uncomfortable. It was strange for her since she was perfectly comfortable in her body, but something was different tonight. She wondered if she had spent too much time as a man. They could be invisible in a room if they wanted to be. Diana couldn't have that luxury with her current attire. Every man in the room wanted to catch a glimpse of her, and every woman wanted to judge her. Lyle sat in the booth beside Diana and placed his hand on her hand. "This place is so cool! Did you see how many people checked us out as we walked in?" Lyle asked in that tone David would use to convey confidence. "Yeah, it's like everyone's staring."

"Yeah, at you. You look out of this world good. I guess that's how Daisy ended up so pretty?"

"Hmm, you know, I never really thought about that. I assumed it was just her own mother she looked more like. And she definitely does, but I think you might be right. There's some of me in there, too."

"That whole situation is a really wild one. You two inadvertently swapped places the first time?"

"Yeah, it was an accident. I had to do David's job because he had a big client deal that needed a lot of work. So I went, and I fucking crushed it. I got him a promotion because I was so good at it."

"Wow, that's amazing! So, you'll probably want to stay a man, then? That's fine by me, by the way; I don't have any issues with it at all. Daisy seemed pretty sure she was right, though."

"Because she is..." Diana sighed before continuing, "She is right. Mostly."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I really like male privilege. It's like a drug for the competent. It makes a little bit of good judgment seem and feel like a superpower. I got to run a department of engineering sales, and frankly, I had no relevant qualifications to do so other than I was smart and a male. I didn't have the kind of recollection of David's memories that I have now. If you asked me an engineering question today, I could probably remember the moment in college when I was taught that. It's kind of freaky having a second-person's memories in your head."

"Yeah, I bet. Being someone else and seeing their face staring back at you in the mirror is its own mindfuck. What you're describing is on a whole other level."

"Gosh, you're so right. I've seen David's face in the mirror so many times now that it has become second nature. Now it's reminding me of how far I've strayed from myself."

"So you've decided then? You're going to stay living as Diana?"

"Yes... wait, no! I can't do that to Amber. I—"

As the couple continued their conversation, the waiter interrupted them, offering a complimentary glass of wine.

"Sure! We'll each have one. Thank you!" Lyle was quick to respond. As the waiter poured the glasses of wine, Diana stared right at Lyle, indicating she was not looking to drink tonight. The waiter excused himself, and Diana jumped right into his complaint.

"I don't want to drink tonight. I have a lot on my mind now with everything Daisy is doing and how I feel about my situation. I don't need a lubricant to get me behaving in a less inhibited way."

"Why not take the edge off a bit? You said it yourself; the day has been tough enough. So, please, have a couple of glasses of wine with me. I don't want to be the only one drinking, and things have been weird enough the last few days that I know I want a drink. Come on, we'll eat some great food and just get to know each

other better."

Diana relented and took a sip of the wine. To her surprise, the pair could easily engage rapidly in delightful conversation. The pair sipped their glasses of wine while they looked over the menus. Lyle was hoping to get something hearty and filling. Diana's nostalgia flared up again, recalling having the same conversation with David when she was in his body. Being in her own body now, she lamented that she couldn't also partake in the calorie-dense meal.

The pair ordered their meals, and Diana's sense of discomfort increased. The night she seemed to be playing out just like it had all those months ago. She had cringed a bit at being called 'ma'am,' just like David had. She was distracted by the eyes of others on her, just like he had been. She had wanted to eat a more substantial meal, just like him. The parallels were alarming. This led Diana to question her earlier assertion. Maybe she did want to stay as David. She was starting to feel very confused as all her feelings clashed against one another.

Nonetheless, the pair continued getting to know one another and found the exercise enjoyable. Lyle seemed like the kind of guy that 'David' could be friends with... and also the type of guy that Diana could be into. As the night wore on, the conversation flowed smoothly, and so was the wine. Lyle and Diana finished their first glasses of wine while chatting and waiting for their meals to arrive. Lyle noted that Diana finally seemed to be relaxing a bit. It had been like she was constantly looking for some threat that was never coming.

The couple's meals arrived, and Lyle ordered another bottle of wine. As the newly acquainted pair ate their meals, Diana was glad Lyle suggested they share some wine. She could tell it was taking the edge off the stress she had been carrying for weeks, if not months. So, feeling content with her meal and the conversation with Lyle, Diana let herself embrace the calmer vibe the evening was taking. Looking at Lyle sitting in 'his' body, her husband's body, Diana felt a stirring deep inside that she hadn't felt in a long time. She tried to shake herself off this sensation, but then Lyle looked over and smiled at her. The sensations Diana felt only amplified at this sight.

Surprisingly, her mind was restoring connections that she was not expecting. Diana felt a need to snuggle with her husband. She questioned these thoughts, knowing it was really Lyle in that body, but found her mind moderately clouded by the effects of the wine she had consumed. As these thoughts lingered, Diana felt it increasingly necessary to act on them. So, as casually as she could manage, she moved closer and closer to Lyle in the booth.

Lyle noticed that Diana was moving closer to him and that Diana seemed to be roaming her eyes over his body. Lyle was excited to see a woman as beautiful as

Diana finally giving him some attention. So, with Diana sitting beside him, he placed a hand down on Diana's upper thigh. Lyle gave a gentle but firm squeeze with his hand, which sent a burst of pleasure through Diana's body. She was startled momentarily but collected herself and then leaned against Lyle, having missed her husband's touch and relishing the restored connection she was feeling with this man; whether it was the original David or Lyle didn't matter at the moment. Lyle moved her hand around Diana's back, holding her close to his body. Diana responded by burying her face against David's shoulder. Her feelings were jumbled up, a mixture of concern and also contentment. Diana's confusion didn't abate when Lyle suggested they enjoy some dancing to round out the evening.

Diana felt the effects of the alcohol acutely when she stood up. Her body was slightly stumbling as Diana felt her balance fluctuate unexpectedly. Lyle caught Diana helping her to stand up. Once settled, they went to the dance floor, and Lyle took the lead. The songs were slow, so Diana could mostly lean against Lyle's larger body. Diana felt like a fish being thrown back into the water after being caught. Lyle's hand was placed behind her back, just above her ass. It made Diana aware of 'her' curves again, restoring the sense of pride she had in her body. The sensation of distance from her body's feelings only lasted a few moments, though, as Diana found the swaying motion of the dancing comforting. She soon had placed her face against Lyle's chest, and the two were dancing like any other couple would.

Lyle's inhibitions had lessened by the third song, and he moved her hand lower. It was now resting on the upper curve of Diana's backside rather than the square of her lower back. Diana had noticed. Her mind lit up as foreign, yet familiar, sensations flowed through her. "Is he trying to feel me up? What should I do about it?" Diana's thoughts raced. As she was about to reach back and move Lyle's hand, the song concluded, and Lyle held Diana firmly as he dipped her down. The rush of being dipped down redirected all of Diana's attention. Being stood back up, Lyle leaned in and placed a kiss squarely on Diana's lips.

"Whoa! Hey! What was that?!" Diana criticized Lyle's overly bold behavior.

"Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry; I don't know what came over me. I just felt so natural there dancing with you. Please, I'm so sorry. I would never. I..."

Diana pushed back away from Lyle and straightened her dress. "Hmph, well, I guess if there's anyone who would understand that, it would be me. I've been on both sides of this situation."

"Huh?"

"Daisy, she set this up so that we would end up here. I took her on a date when

she was Diana. The night went similarly then as it did tonight. It's like in our body's muscle memory or something. Our nights here always go the same way. We eat, get a little too drunk, dance, and then..."

"What?"

"Well, it's a bit indelicate for public discussion, but we usually go the full distance, if you catch my drift."

"Oh! Oh, right. Yeah, that's not happening. I'm not here to do that with you."

"I didn't think you were. Daisy just wanted me to remember all this. Trust me, you and I are good."

"Phew, I didn't want you to think I was some horrible person."

"No, not at all. You've been great to spend the evening with, Lyle."

"Yeah, you too, Diana. Or should I say, 'David?'"

"Hmm, I think Daisy hoped this would resolve my conflict. But to be honest, I'm not sure it has."

"Well, her plan did seem to be a pretty big long shot if you ask me."

"Yeah, I guess we will just have to see..."