

Photoswap



Photoswap
doesn't just
change your
picture. It
changes
your life.

Cooper & Kadee

“I am soooo bored,” Michelle said, lying on her bed, scrolling through her social media.

“I know, right?” Cassie said. She was sitting at the desk in their dorm room, watching videos on her laptop. “There are, like, millions of videos on Click Clock and MyYube, and yet how come they all suck?”

“I need a new hobby,” Michelle said. “I just wish I could think of one.”

“Me, too!” Cassie said.

Just then, the lights flickered, and the room almost seemed to shake.

“Was that an Earthquake?” Cassie asked.

“Beats me.”

When Cassie looked back at her laptop, she noticed an icon she didn’t remember seeing before. “Photoswap.” Hmm. Ignoring the alarm bells ringing in her head warning her it might be some kind of malware, she clicked on it, and the APP opened up, revealing what seemed like one of those apps where you could put different filters on a face— old, female, glamor, as well as different hairstyles, outfits. It also had automatically accessed her pictures folder.

“Check this out,” Cassie said.

“What?”

The two girls crowded around the computer. Cassie pulled up one of her own pictures and clicked on Bad Boy. Her face morphed, giving her thick brows, a square jaw, dark stubble. ‘Oh! I want to kiss me!’

“Do me,” Michelle said.

Cassie pulled up a picture of Michelle and made her a Bad Boy as well. This picture was from the waist up, and they could see she now had

bulging biceps and thick forearms writhing with muscle. “Check out the gun show.”

“Let’s do Jerry!”

“Oh, yeah!” Cassie closed their pics, clicking cancel instead of Save Changes.

They both had a half crush on Jerry. Physically, he was just their type—bookish, super smart, reedy, but he was also kind of a sexist asshole, which for some reason made them both like him more, as much as they hated him, too.

Michelle loaded a picture of Jerry, then clicked VS model. His face morphed— his eyes got big, his nose small, his chin turned sweetly feminine, and he wore full makeup. “He’s cute.”

“Really pretty.”

Cassie clicked UNDO and restored the photo. “Let’s just see what he looks like with girl’s hair.”



“Haha! Love it. Let me pick.” Michelle scrolled through the hairstyles and found one she liked— all curls and waves, bangs draped across one eye, and it was clearly a glamor dye job of the kind that only came from a salon. She clicked, and the feminine hairstyle framed Jerry’s face. “Wow. Just the hair makes him look like a girl.”

“He has androgenous features,” Cassie said. “I didn’t really notice so much until now.” They both giggled at how much the hairstyle made the sexist jerk look like a female. Just then, the fire alarm went off. Both girls groaned. There was a prankster in their building who loved to set off the alarms.

“Here we go again,” Michelle said as they got ready to head out. She clicked Save Changes without even thinking about it, and the two girls headed outside to await the “all clear” signal from the fire department.

When they got back to their room it was late, so they both went about studying, having completely forgotten about the Swap APP.

Chapter Two

The next morning, Michelle and Cassie settled into their chairs in the lecture hall, awaiting the arrival of Professor Clark, their sociology teacher. They were both tired, already glazing over, when Jerry walked past them—and they each did a double take. His high and tight haircut was gone, and he now had the exact hair that they had put on him the night before using Photoswap.

“Um, is that Jerry?” Michelle whispered, not believing her eyes.

“I think so. Is that the same hair from last night?”

“It can’t be, right?”

Jerry took his usual seat in the front row, tossing his hair back over his shoulders. The whole class was mystified, wondering what was going on. The sociology professor was a feminist, and Jerry, the president of Campus Conservatives, was always getting into it with her about gender roles. Was his fashionably feminine hair some weird prank?

Dr. Sandra Clark came into class, dressed in one of her trademark flowing dresses, satchel over her shoulder. “Hello, hello...” she said, greeting various students, then stopping as she spotted a young woman with cafe curls, she recognized, but... “Jerry?”

Jerry, feeling far less confident than usual with his new hairstyle, dropped his eyes. “Hello.”

“I love your hair,” Sandra said as she took her place behind the podium.

Jerry blushed.

All through class, Cassie and Michelle watched as Jerry fidgeted with his long hair, just like any girl. He was constantly tossing it back over his shoulders, brushing it away from his eyes, twisting it around his fingers.

Jerry, for his part, found his sexy new hair incredibly annoying and distracting. How the hell do women put up with this crap? He wondered, though he fully believed it was part of the natural order for them to have long hair.



Sandra got into her lecture, delving into changing expressions of gender identity. She'd been talking about how in many cultures, men had worn makeup and then speculated that modern American culture might be moving in that direction, putting a picture of Captain Jack Sparrow up on the screen with his manscara. Many of the members of the class clapped and hooted.

"Makeup can be a lot of fun," Sandra said. "Men might find they enjoy making themselves pretty."

Jerry tossed his hair and snorted.

"Did you want to say something, Jerry?"

"Makeup is for women," he said. "They use it to emphasize their femininity in order to attract a desirable mate."

A lot of the women in the class booed. Michell and Cassie exchanged a glance. What a jerk!

"Let's examine those assumptions," Sandra said, smiling. She enjoyed it when students challenged her and took it all in stride. Besides, Jerry's surprising choice to get such a traditionally feminine hairstyle, made her wonder if maybe his constant hostility to all feminist ideas was just a defense mechanism against his own repressed feminine side.

When class ended, he grabbed his books and started toward the door, his bangs draped across his right eye.

"Hey, Jerry," Michelle said. "I love your new hairdo!"

Cassie elbowed her, embarrassed.

Jerry scowled. "Get bent." He then stormed from the lecture hall, hair bouncing with each step.

Flashback!

Jerry had woken that morning and panicked, half thinking he'd started to go blind as he opened his eyes to see a gauzy, hazy world. Meanwhile, he felt like he had a mouse in his mouth, furry and wet. Retching, he'd sat up, lost in confusion as he felt something tickling his shoulders— he slept in just a pair of boxers, and grabbing at whatever was in his mouth, he yanked and looked down to see what looked like a mass of hair, which he now saw was washing over his shoulders and over his chest. Still half blinded by the bangs covering one of his eyes, he'd gotten up, struggling with the long hair, and gone to the bathroom mirror.

“The fuck?”

Instead of his short black hair, he now had long hair, curly, wavy hair, with blonde highlights like some sorority bimbo, but even more than the sight of the hair he was stunned to see, “I look like a girl,” he whispered.

Assholes. Jerry's first thought was that some guys in the dorm had pranked him by slipping a woman's wig on his head as he slept. He grabbed the “wig” and yanked. ‘Ow!’ He grabbed again and pulled, his time applying steady tension, and he felt his scalp move, stretch and start to hurt. “Fine.”

Jerry grabbed his clippers. He normally kept his hair high and tight, and though he went to the barber once every two weeks, in between he would trim it himself. He liked to look sharp. The clippers buzzed and vibrated in his hands. He sheared off one of the long bunches hanging down to his chest, watching the hair tumble down and gather on the floor at his feet. I am going to kill those guys, he'd thought, but when he'd gone to hack off

the other side, he'd yelped. Looking in the mirror, he saw— the same exact hairstyle, as if he hadn't cut off anything at all. He looked down and confirmed there was a pile of hair at his feet.

“What the hell?” He hacked off another bunch and another. Soon there



was a small mountain of glistening locks piled on the bathroom floor, and yet, nothing had changed. The hair just kept reappearing. Somehow.

“Am I going insane?” Jerry wondered, brushing the bangs from his eyes for already the 8th time that morning. None of this was possible, but his internal clock was ticking. He needed to get to class. He silenced the clippers and,

mortified, got ready to head out. A part of him, a very strong part of him, wanted to just hide. The thought of having everyone see him like this made him sick. There was something else, though, some force that was making him go to class. Besides, he never missed class.

He zipped up his jacket and pulled the hood over his head, tucking his hair under and inside, determined to do his best to hide his shame. The hoodie flipped back down. He flipped it up. It flipped back down.

Jerry gave up and headed to class, his hair sparkling in the morning sunlight.

Walking across campus, Jerry couldn't shake the feeling that some of the guys he passed were kind of checking him out, making eye contact, smiling. Remembering how feminine he'd looked, he cringed, but no, he decided. He was being ridiculous.

Then, as a couple guys passed, he heard one of them say, "I'd do her face but not her body."



Jerry's cheeks turned red, and he couldn't help but put a hand to his face, trying to hide it from the world. Do me? His skin crawled. Some guy wants to do me? And did that guy call me *her*? Her. He didn't like that; he didn't like any of it.

It made him feel— less.

*** Flash Forward***

After class, Jerry'd practically run back to his dorm, completely and totally ashamed. As he entered the dorm, a couple guys he knew, Hal and Evers, glanced at him, did a double take. "Jerry?" Hal asked.

"Yeah, yeah," Jerry said, hurrying past.

"Nice hair, bro."

"Screw you!"

The sound of gruff, male laughter trailed him to the elevator.