A few days later Harlow dressed himself to leave. Carefully pulling the floral babydoll cami dress over his new chest. His chest was roughly the same size but now it was real! There was no protective prosthetic from his skin and his clothes. He had the medical bra but that was minimal at best against his newly sensitive nipples. His face and stomach were free of bandages and not soon enough his feet would be free of the same.

“Ooh, someone’s looking totally pretty.” Valerie cooed as she opened the door.

Instinctively Harlow covered his chest. Even though he wore more clothes than he normally did, he still couldn't shake the feeling he was now more exposed than before.

“Yeah. Pretty weird.” Even though his words were negative he still spoke in a breathy voice unconsciously at this point. He never considered just what an effect a sensual voice had on men before it became his own. The male nurses fawned over him almost constantly, bringing him extra snacks, or pillows, or just little trinkets to brighten up his room.

Val blew a raspberry at Harlow and pulled the feminized man into the small bathroom, “Please, like, the whole false modesty thing totally doesn’t suit you. Look at you.” She said with a saccharine smile, “You’re a total knockout.” Harlow was once again forced to face his new face. When they had removed the bandages they explained that what he currently saw wouldn’t be permanent as there was still some swelling and light bruising that would go away in a few days. But the major changes Harlow saw? Those would be permanent. Or permanent enough until he could find another doctor to fix his face. He knew he never had the most masculine of faces, if he did his disguise would never work, but the once prominent bridge of his nose was all but gone when he looked directly in the mirror. His nose had been reshaped from a vaguely romanesque quality to a cute button nose. That alone made him look five years younger, but with the addition of an adjusted hairline and perky breasts he was sure to be carded in any casino and strip club until he could fix the quack’s screw up. “Don’t you think so?”

“I…guess.” He lied slowly. If he was too honest he risked her pestering him until he told her the truth. And she would no doubt call the cops, or worse Jefferson.

“You guess?”

Harlow did his best to smile as he said, “I am.”

“Are what?”

“Pretty.”

“That’s not what I said.” She giggled.

“A total knockout.” Harlow giggled back uncontrollably.

“That’s my girl.” Valerie smiled as she gave Harlow a side hug. “Come on, let’s get out of here.” She said, grabbing the small bag she had brought containing Lucy’s clothes, “I bet you’re, like, totally bored out of your mind.”

“You have no idea.” Harlow placed the heels Val had brought along with his clothes back in the bag. He wished he could wear the much cuter heels. According to the butcher masquerading as a doctor Harlow wouldn’t be able to wear heels again for another two weeks. Something that he would have originally been happy to hear but, despite the surgery, his feet still felt weak. And the small protective boots he had been given were just totally ugly.

“Hey, what’s this?” Valerie asked, picking up a small paperback book. On the cover was a shirtless muscular man pulling a beautiful bride against him, mere inches from a passionate kiss.

“Huh? I think, uh like, one of the nurses left it here when, like, my tv went out.”

“Did you read it?”

“Pfft, no way!” Harlow giggled nervously.

“Then why are you so red?!” She teased.

“Cause it’s hot!”

“I bet it is!”

“Not like that!” Harlow pouted. “Where’s Daniel?”

“Missing your hunky cover model?” They both giggled.

“Shut up.” Harlow crossed his arms under his new chest.

Val’s smile shrank as she took the bag from Harlow, slipping the book into a side pocket, “He had to work.”

“What?”

“It’s…not a big deal.”

“What isn’t?”

“We’ll, like, talk about it when we get home.” Valerie walked Harlow out of the room.

Harlow was a mess when the entire drive back home. Was Daniel really that hurt? Was Val really about to kick him to the curb for upsetting Daniel? Was she about to throw him to the wolves? Finally back home Harlow sat at the dining table. Remembering the time his mother had forced him to sit at the dining table as she told him the devastating news that his father had died. “Do you, like, want a drink?” Val asked, setting the small bag on the floor by the door.

“...Sounds like I’ll need one.”

“You’ve been through a ton this week.” She walked into the kitchen.

“Yeah.” ‘And it keeps piling up.’

She returned with two glasses of clear liquid. A cursory sniff told Harlow it was definitely alcoholic so he threw it back. “Whoa, careful now. You can’t drink like you used to.”

“I can still drink you under the table.”

“Is that so?” Valerie threw back her glass, swallowing the warm vodka down in three large and painful gulps. “Ah.” She opened her mouth to show it was indeed all gone.

“Let me smell that glass.” Harlow narrowed his eyes on her.

“Why?” She pulled her glass away, clutching it to her chest.

“Because yours totally could’ve been water.”

“You don’t trust me?” She pouted. Harlow just continued to stare, “Fine.” She slid the glass to him. Giving it a good sniff he confirmed it had been the same vodka he drank.

“Fair. But you still didn’t drink it as fast as, like, I did.”

“Wanna go again?”

Harlow thought for a moment, “No. We should, like, talk about Daniel I guess.”

“We should.” Valerie pouted, “But after a quick game.”

“Come on!” He called after her. Val had already ran into the kitchen and grabbed two bottles from the counter.

“You’re way too tense. We’ll play a quick drinking game then we’ll totally talk. I promise!”

“I’m not in the mood.” He pouted.

“Why don’t we make a bet then.”

“...like what?”

“Like…” Valerie pretended to think for a moment as she marked both bottles with a sharpie, “I’ll let you touch my boobs.”

Harlow thought for a moment as he imagined being so close to living out his decade long fantasy, “No.”

“No?!” She stuck her head out of the kitchen and gave Harlow a confused look, “Are you fer real?”

He nodded, “I have boobs of my own now,” he giggled awkwardly, “what I don’t have are pants.”

“Pants?” Val giggled back.

“Girls wear pants. So when I win, I get pants.”

“Because *girls* wear pants?” She emphasized the word, checking to see if it was a Freudian slip or intentional.

“Exactly.” He nodded happily. Or as happy as he felt he could be given his situation.

Valerie smirked, “Fair.” She returned a moment later carrying both bottles, each marked at halfway. ‘*If* you win I’ll get you some sexy hip huggers.’ she thought, ‘Or some cute little skinny jeans that’ll show off your pantyline.’ “But if I win you have to make a wedding album.”

“A what?”

“You know, a collection of things you want for your wedding. And you better take it seriously.”

“That’s a big if.” He gave her a cocky smile.

“What? Not afraid are ya?”

“Definitely not. You’re on.”

“Good.” She smiled and started back to her seat.

“Let me see.” Harlow demanded. Valerie rolled her eyes and sat both bottles in front of Harlow. He eyed the marks, ensuring they were even, then opened the bottles and sniffed confirming the first bottle was vodka. As he was sniffing the second he heard Valerie laugh and couldn’t help but join her, “What?”

“You look so cute.”

“What?” He leaned back, his turn now to give her a curious look.

“When you did that, I just thought…well you look like a bunny.” She giggled again.

Despite himself Harlow giggled, “Shut up.” He blushed and slid the second bottle to Valerie. “Let’s get this over with.”

“Somebody’s in a mood.” She stuck her tongue out successfully taking the half filled bottle of water and sitting in her chair.

“I am. So none of those stupid rules. It’s too easy for you to cheat that way.”

“Me?! Cheat?”

“Yeah, you. We’re just going to drink. Shot for shot.”

“Glass for glass.”

“Whatever. Full pour. Finish your last shot before filling another. Last man standing. Or the one who finishes her bottle first wins.”

Valerie smiled, “May the best woman win.”

Harlow scoffed, “*I’ll* win.” The pair both filled their glasses before sitting the bottles aside and staring each other down. “Ready?”

“Set?”

“Go!” They shouted in unison and picked up their glasses and drank as quickly as they could. Valerie pretended she had to force herself to drink.

Valerie’s bottle, like Harlow’s, had at one time been filled with vodka. A couple of nights ago it had been one of two bottles Danny had been working his way through over the last year.

Until Valerie came home one night after a date and heard the sound of heavy leather slamming against drywall coming from the garage. Quietly she opened the door to find Danny punching a heavy bag without gloves. “Danny?” she asked gently.

“Unfortunately.” He slammed his fist into the bag again sending it crashing against the wall.

He paused and took a long drink from his water bottle.

“Is everything okay?”

“Just peachy.”

“You’re just, like, the worst liar ever.” She said, placing a hand on her hip and cocking it to one side, “Tell me what’s going on.”

“It doesn’t concern you.” He growled before slamming his left fist twice into the bag before hitting it with a right hook, rocking the bag side to side.

“That’s where you’re wrong.” Valerie grabbed his hands as he was loading up another series of shots, “It concerns you so it concerns me.” Danny’s knuckles were skinned and bloody from his continued assault on the innocent heavy bag. “Where’s your brace?”

“I feel fine.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

He nodded to a small work station in the corner where he had thrown it, “The doc said I was good to go.”

“Fine. Now tell me what’s got you pissed off.”

“I’m not mad.”

“Your friend there begs to differ.” She gestured to the heavy bag hanging from two chains instead of the three it had started with.

“At least he won’t break up with me.”

“What? Did Lucy break up with you?”

Danny sighed, “She kicked me out of her room at the hospital.”

“Why?!”

“I don’t know.” He walked to the speed bag hanging from the ceiling and slammed his fist into it, “We were just talking about her transition and-”

“What? Why would you attack her like that?”

“Attack her?! All I did was talk. You always say communication is key!”

“But, like, you gotta communicate in the right way with some people. That was sooo not the right way.”

“What are you talking about?! Aren’t these things we should talk about if we’re a real couple? If we want to build a life together?”

“It is.” She sighed and gave her brother a brief hug, “Have you been drinking?”

“No…”

“You smell like a brewery.” Danny bit his lip as he tried to think of a lie. Val sighed and picked up the water bottle he had been drinking from and gave it a good sniff. “Just the absolute worst.” She sighed slamming the bottle cap shut,

“Where were we? Oh. Look, like, you can’t attack Lucy like that. You have to accept, or like, at least go along with whatever excuses she makes no matter how unbelievable they are. Lucy isn’t just transitioning physically, okay?. She’s going through stuff mentally too. Like I told you before. Making deals and bets is her way of coping. She needs something to…blame. Basically.”

“That sounds…unhealthy as hell.”

“You’re not wrong. But one step at a time. Like…she didn’t used to kiss you, right?”

“Well yeah before we weren’t dating and she was…you know.”

“Mhm. What I mean is she totally could not deal with those feelings, so I had to, like, tell her that she had to kiss you to test her makeup.”

“You had to convince her to kiss me?”

“No!” She reached up and smacked the back of his head, “She clearly wanted to be with you before this. I gave her an excuse. Something she could blame if you freaked out. Her feelings wouldn’t be her fault. They’d, like, be mine instead.”

“So what? I just never have an honest relationship with her?”

“You will. One day.” She added, “But not if you keep pushing her. She’s still scared.”

“Jefferson *is* still looking for her.”

“I’d say she’s not as afraid of him as she is us rejecting her.”

“But…we obviously don’t.”

“Yes! And on some level she knows that, but that level is buried under a lot of fear and trauma. Danny,” she bit her lip as she thought how best to word this, “you’re the only family she has left now. Her mom is in hiding, her dad ran off when she was a kid. She, like, never got to be a kid, not in the way we did. She was the man of the house during her most important years. Her whole identity is wrapped up in being a man so she never got to explore, like,...herself. And your jock friends didn’t help.”

“What did they do?!”

“They always bullied her for being *too girly*. That group is a whole thesis paper right there.”

“I tried to stop them, but I wasn’t there for everything and I can’t fight every battle for everyone.”

“No, you can’t. But you, like, get my point. Right?”

“I guess. So what do I do now, then?”

She frowned, “Let me handle her. You wrap your knuckles if you’re going to keep boxing. If not, for the love of all that is holy, shower!”

Danny smirked, “Fine.” he opened a small toolbox and took out a small rolled cloth.

“And no more drunken boxing!” She said as she walked out of the garage back into the kitchen.

“But it’s such a good movie!”

“No. Pride and Prejudice is a good movie. That’s just a slugfest.”

“That’s why it’s good.”

A minute later Danny had his right hand wrapped when Valerie came back outside and placed the bottle back on the table before leaving again. Danny sighed and picked up the bottle, uncapped it and sniffed. “Figured.” He drank the ice cold water before returning to wrap his left hand.

Six glasses in and Valerie was doing a good job of acting drunk while Harlow was actually drunk. By the third glass he had started to sway in his chair. By the fifth he had slowed his pace. “Last one.” Valerie sat her bottle down. Empty. Harlow poured his glass while Valerie started to drink slowly. As soon as the glass touched his lips Valerie swallowed it all in one gulp. Harlow simply sat the glass on the table in front of him. “You okay?”

He nodded slowly. “I guess you were right.” he pouted.

“You’re not about to be sick are you?”

He shook his head. Stopped. And thought. “No?”

“Let’s get you some water.” She brought Harlow into the kitchen, filling up a large glass with water. “You drink that-no-drink.” she ordered, forcing the glass to his lips, “I gotta go freshen up.” She hurried to the bathroom while Harlow drank down the cool water.

A few minutes later, Valerie returned and fixed Harlow another glass of water. “Guess you won.” he said.

“Yup. No pants for you. Sorry not sorry.” She smirked. A pang of guilt shot through her as she watched Harlow sullenly drink his water. “When you feel better I’ll show you how to make your wedding album.”

“Come on black plague!”

“Hah. Hah.” Her words were filled with sarcasm, “Besides,” she continued gently, “we should, like, talk and stuff.”

“...Yeah.” He took a drink of water.

“Did you throw Danny out of your room a couple of days ago?” Harlow shrugged and continued drinking his water, “No, use your words.” She said more forcefully.

“Yes.”

“Good girl.” Valerie wrapped an arm around his shoulder, “Now, why did you kick him out? Are you guys okay?”

“He was being a d-a jerk.”

Valerie smirked hearing Harlow using more appropriate language, “He can be. How was he being a jerk this time?”

“He said I was, like, going to extremes with the surgeries.”

“You *did* kinda risk your health there.”

“Huh?”

“That many surgeries at once? It’s, like, waaay risky. But I get it.”

“Get what?”

“I won the bet right?”

“Yeah?”

“So, like, tell me the truth; how’d you get the AC fixed?”

Harlow blushed a deep crimson, “Called someone.” he lied and finished off the glass, his mind batting away memories of that day from his mind.

“Riiiiight.” She said skeptically and refilled his glass, “And Harry?”

“W-what about him?”

“Not your boy toy Harry. Your toy Harry. How often do you play with him?”

“Just the one time you made me.” He took the glass angrily and gulped it down.

“I won the bet. And you were enjoying it from what I saw. More than once.” She gave him a knowing look, having seen the dildo in different places more than once in the last couple of weeks.

He slowly drank the water under the watchful eye of Valerie who looked more than happy and willing to wait for him to respond. “Maybe.” He burned after emptying the glass, “What’s this got to do with anything?”

“And you and Danny have been going at it hot and heavy.”

“We’ve been pretending. In case Marcus breaks in again.”

“Good cover.” She smirked knowingly.

“And how’d you get your name changed?” Again she took the glass and refilled it.

“You were there.”

“Remind me.”

“We, I, like, talked to that guy. What’s his name?”

“I don’t remember you doing a lot of talking.”

“You know what I mean.” He took the glass and did his best to hide his face behind it as he drank.

“I don’t.”

“I, like, sucked him off, okay? If you’re gonna tell Daniel I’ll, like, tell him you made me. Remember that?” He said as he sat the glass on the counter and faced the window. Harlow slowly ran his finger around the tip of the glass, remembering the night before his stupid operation while he danced for him again he had asked Daniel for money for an uber for the following day. Daniel had asked what was in it for him. When Harlow asked what he wanted he laughed and said a blowjob. He got the Uber, a full stomach, and a weirdly enough a case of blue balls.

Valerie smirked again watching the expression of tormented lust play on Lucy’s face, “I remember. I’m not going to tell Danny. But only if you tell me something. Call it, buying my silence.”

“What?”

“Did you like it?”

“No.”

“Don’t lie now. You and the clerk guy? Harry? Boy toy Harry? Danny? Were you enjoying any of it?” She gently ran her fingers up Lucy’s exposed arm, “In your heart of hearts: Can you honestly say you didn’t have fun?”

Harlow clutched his glass in one hand as he thought back to the first orgasm he had ever had without him or someone else touching his dick.

"W-w-I'm not gay." He whispered.

"I believe you." Valerie gently rested her head on Lucy's shoulder and wrapped her arms around her narrow waist. "But can you really say I forced you to do everything?" Harlow thought again about the AC repairman, "Did I make you have sex with Harry."

"Then how'd you get the AC fixed?"

"It wasn't Harry." He whispered.

"Who was it?"

"...Some repairman." Harlow admitted.

"Wow."

Harlow spun around, his face contorting in pain, breaking free of the hug, and bracing himself against the counter, "I'm not…, like, I was burning up and I couldn't, like, just leave. I didn't have money and he fixed it and I, like,…didn't have money."

"I'm not judging." Valerie gently said, "Honestly, I'm, like, super grateful. One more night and I would've done the same." She giggled.

Harlow giggled awkwardly in response, "You're…not mad?"

"Not if you tell me the rest."

"Really?" She nodded, "He…uh he knew I was -"

"Not that. You can skip the juicy parts for later. I meant, have there been more?"

“...On Ray’s birthday-”

“You had sex with Ray.”

“No…kinda. Um, Ray, Naomi and I-”

“Details for later.” She waved him off,"And believe me girl we are going to dish later!" She giggled, “Is that all?”

“Besides, like, the clerk guy…yeah.” he said with a giggle.

“Have you and Danny had sex?”

“Not really. We’ve just-”

“Like I said; details later. Except those.”

“Yeah.” He hung his head, staring at Valerie’s much cuter heels, “So…you’re gonna kick me out now? Call Jefferson or the cops?” He bit his lip in an effort to stop it from quivering. Despite the water his stomach was still in knots and he still had a big buzz going on. He hadn’t meant to say everything. Once he admitted that he hadn’t slept with Harry…the rest just came pouring out of him.

Part of her wanted to, if nothing else but to defend her brother’s honor, but it would be fruitless. Her brother deserved better. Once the deal with Jefferson was settled she would break them up but for now Lucy made him happy. “No.”

Harlow slowly looked at Valerie once again. “No?”

She shook her head. “So”–Valerie took Harlow’s hand–“and be honest. Did you enjoy it?”

Harlow swallowed the rock in his throat, “Y-yes.”

“You like having sex with men?”

“I mean…Look, it’s not like I want to sleep with men. It’s just….nobody…,like, nobody ever desired me so much and I know I shouldn’t like it but knowing a guy got hard just from Looking at me? Not that I, like, like seeing it or touching it or anything but just, like, knowing that feels good.” Once again Harlow found once he started talking he could not stop, as if someone opened the floodgates and everything came pouring out of him, “More than good. Heck it’s…what’s the word? Empowering! Like I said, I totally don’t wanna have my mouth around a guy’s dick but when Daniel’s cock tenses up and knowing *I* did that?” He stopped once he noticed the look on Valerie’s face. “Oh…sorry.” He grabbed a strand of free hair and twisted around his finger.

“It’s fine.”

Harlow frowned as he nodded, “Don’t tell Daniel, please?”