

I woke the morning after the big beach trip and fished around my quilts and blankets for my phone. Groggy, I checked social media first thing. We'd all posted a bunch of pics from our beach trip, my friends and I, and I smiled as I saw we'd gotten a bunch of likes and comments. I was becoming more and more addicted to social media. It was almost like I didn't exist, wasn't even a real person if I wasn't posting, getting likes.

I saw a picture of me in my swimsuit, looking like a swimsuit model. I had my hands in my hair, pulling it back over my shoulder, the turquoise ocean waters and the sun behind me. Jayne had posted it along with a message: Pretty Girl! And a string of hearts. There were over 100 likes and a dozen comments already from guys and girls. So pretty! Luv! XXXY!

I giggled. I couldn't help it. It made me feel— special? I stretched, luxuriating in my new pajamas, the feeling of the silk gliding against my smooth, soft skin. I kept scrolling down, seeing what other kids had been up to, liking a few of their posts, but not too many. I didn't want to seem desperate or anything. One caught my eye. Two kids from school— Paul and Mary, holding hands, announcing they were going steady.

I bit my finger. How sweet, I thought, checking them out. Yes, I decided, they looked good together, made a good couple. Mary had done well! I clicked like as I wondered what all my friends would think of the news. I was sure everyone at school would be talking about it!

Bloop. A new friend request. It made me happy— for a second, but then I saw it was from cyberdawg456, the jerk from online gaming who'd tried to say my boyfriend was playing for me. I rolled my eyes. How could he even think I would want to friend him? Of course, I didn't have to wonder why he

would want to friend me, I thought, thinking back on that picture of me in my swimsuit, conscious of the ever present weight of my breasts.

I smirked and clicked ignore, finally putting my phone away, getting up, showering, getting ready. I was still brushing my hair, getting the tangles out, when I heard Valencia call, “breakfast!”

Halfway down the stairs, I paused as a realization struck me. Today, for the first time, I had woken up without noticing I was a girl, that I was in Alexis’ room. It had just seemed— normal? I was already coming to accept all of this, I realized, continuing down the stairs, my life as a girl was starting to seem normal. I couldn’t decide if that was a good or a bad thing.

“Good morning, mother,” I sang out as I entered the kitchen. “You look so lovely this morning!” Dramatic entrances were, it seemed, my thing. I went over to Stacey and kissed her on top of the head. “That romper is so cute!”

“Get off me!” Stacey squealed, but I could tell she was pleased.

Valencia gave me a strange look. “Who are you, and what have you done with my daughter?”

I froze. “I’m Alexis,” I said, anxiety sweeping over me. I felt terrified at the thought Valencia might discover me, find out I was actually her brother. Maybe some aspect of the spell kicking in. I resorted to sass. “Unh! Can’t I even be happy?” I said, rolling my eyes.

“There she is,” Valencia said, her face returning to neutral as she slipped a bowl of fruit and cottage cheese in front of me.

Fortunately, Valencia’s mind went to other things, as she reminded me to study, and that I couldn’t make any plans for the evening. “It’s family night!”

I'd been a single guy, doing what I wanted when I wanted, and it was odd and a little frustrating now to once more find myself a child, being mothered, my life ordered and controlled by another. And yet, I thought as I nibbled on a piece of pineapple, was being mothered really so bad? I was certainly eating better than I had in years.

After breakfast, Stacey trailed behind me, and when she didn't turn to go into her own room, but followed me toward mine, I turned. "Something up, kiddo?"

"Can I hang out with you for a while?" She said, suddenly seeming a bit shy, which was not her thing.

"Sure," I said, a little of the old Uncle Matt kicking in. I could tell something was up with her.

I resisted the urge to check my social media. We both lay on my bed on our tummies, heads resting on our chins, though I propped myself up on a pillow—breasts, am I right? "What's up?" I asked.

"Oh," Stacey said, blushing, dropping her eyes to the side. "There's this—boy!" She groaned dramatically.

My heart skipped a beat. Was this going to be girl talk? About boys? I knew nothing about boys— not from this side of the street, and besides, boys? Was my sweet, innocent niece already interested in boys? When had that happened? Part of me was afraid to have this conversation, but another part of me was really touched, moved, that Stacey had come to me. I had to be there for her.

"Uh, oh," I said, remembering all the confusing feelings, the anxiety and excitement I had felt as a tween boy when I'd first suddenly noticed girls as something other than annoying. "What's his name?"

Stacey rolled onto her back. “Devin,” she said, sounding both disgusted and delighted all at once.

“Do you have a crush on him?”

“Ugh! No. Kinda but not really!” Stacey rolled back onto her belly, and we looked into each other’s eyes, connecting. “I think he likes me, but he does the dumbest things. Like, at lunch the other day, he actually threw a piece of bread at me, and this one time? We were waiting for the bus? I saw this gross bug, and I screamed, and then he ate it!”

I covered my face, remembering it all, being a boy and not knowing how to tell a girl I liked her, trying to impress her by doing idiotic things like eating bugs. “Um, he likes you.” I said.

“He does?”

“Yeah. The thing is...” and I paused, thinking through what to say, how to say it. “Boys? They aren’t really as good at talking as we are. They don’t know how to express their feelings, especially young boys, boys your age. So, they do things like—”

“Throw bread at me?”

“Yes, sadly, that is their way of saying, ‘I like you.’”

“Boys are so stupid,” Stacey said, exasperated as she processed this new information on the failings of the opposite sex.

I laughed. It was so strange to be on this side of the conversation, and to realize I actually agreed with her. Why was it so hard for a guy to just say how he felt? It had been a problem for me over the years, my girlfriends always complaining I didn’t open up to them, that we ‘never talked’ even though to my mind that’s all we did.

“There’s this stupid dance coming up,” Stacey said.

“Did he ask you?”

“No!” Stacey said. “I think he’s going to, though. Or maybe he’ll throw a heart shaped piece of bread at me that says,” and now she dropped into the flat, dull tones girls always seemed to use when imitating boys, “wanna got to the dance of something?”

“You’re really funny,” I said, giggling. I had never realized what a great sense of humor she had.

Stacey smiled. I realized I was the older sister to her now, and that as much as she tried to annoy me, she looked up to me, wanted my approval.

“Do you want to go to the dance with him?”

“I don’t know,” she said with a sigh. “I mean, he’s cute, but I’m not sure I like, like him?” She paused and the next words came out like a gusher. “The thing is, a lot of the other girls already have dates, and I don’t want to go alone like some loser.”

Now my heart went out to her. Even in my short time as a girl, I had become much more aware of the social dynamics among kids, the gossip and anxiety of being— weird. As Stacey’s uncle, though, I didn’t like the idea of her going out with some boy she didn’t really like just to fit in. It could be the start of a long life of bad relationships. “Only go if you want to go,” I said. “Don’t ever do anything because of what people will think, or because some boy wants you to.”

“Sounds like a meme from Pinterest,” Stacey said.

“Well, it happens to be true.”

“I saw this video,” Stacey said, frogging to another topic. She frowned and scrunched up her face. ‘It was weird.’”

Uh, oh. “A video?”

“Yeah. It was... well, it was a girl. She was, um? Herself?”

My mouth dropped open. Oh, my God. This was a whole new level of cringy. Stacey? She knew about– that? The Internet! My little, innocent Stacey? Why couldn’t there be some way to stop kids from getting on the Internet? Hell, even the streaming channels had stuff on anymore I didn’t want her to see. I panicked. Looked away. “Gosh, I really need to study.”

Stacey, however, was not going to be deflected. “Do you ever?” She whispered. “You know?”

Oh, shit! My brain went into panic mode. This is most definitely not Uncle Matt territory! I blushed, remembering my– experience– and Stacey gasped as she saw it on my face. “You have?”

Busted. Oh, shit. Now what? I dropped my head, ashamed, thinking, thinking, trying to find the right words. I thought about sex ed. They talked about– that. I wanted to lie, tell her no way, that’s bad, really bad! Sex is bad! Boys are bad! I didn’t want to lie to her, though. I just– I couldn’t. “It’s perfectly natural,” I said, thinking back on health class. “A way to relieve tension?”

“But, you have?”

I must have been as red as a beet. I could feel my face burning right to the tips of my ears. “I have,” I finally said.

“You’re a bad girl,” Stacey said, smiling wickedly. “I’m gonna tell Mom!”

“You better not,” I said, grabbing a pillow and playfully bonking her on the head with it. I could tell she was joking.

“Hunh?” She made a shocked look, grabbed a pillow, and smooshed it in my face.

“How dare you!” Pretty soon, we were on our knees, giggling, bouncing, pillows flying, just two sisters having fun. Finally, exhausted, we collapsed back onto the bed, exhausted, laying on our backs, plucking at our hair like mirror images of one another.

“You’re different,” Stacey said.

I felt that same sense of panic, and I was about to assure her that, no. Not me. I was just the same old Alexis, but before I could, she added, “I like you better now.”

And then just like that, in the ways girls do, she popped up and said, “See you later,” as some new imperative flooded her little mind. I rolled over and buried my face in my pillow. Had I said the right thing? Given her good advice? Had I been a good Uncle? A good sister? Either? Both? I might have lain there consumed with teen angst forever, but my phone buzzed. I grabbed it. A text and a picture from Jane. She wore a tank top with one shoulder strap pulled down, revealing her round little shoulder, and she had a come hither look in her big eyes. “Thinking of you,” the text read.

I buried my head back in the pillow and screamed, kicking my feet in the air, wishing I had a big sister to give me relationship advice. Well, I did have a big sister, but she was my mom now, and , I mean? I couldn’t talk about that kind of thing with my Mom, could I?

Chapter Two

Family night. The three of us curled up on the couch together, me nuzzling into Mom from one side, Stacey on the other. It felt nice to press

my big, soft breasts into Valencia's side. Hugs were better as a girl. We were all in our pajamas. It had been Stacey's turn to choose the movie, and she'd chosen a Hallmark film called Houseboat for the Holloways.

A Hallmark movie? I thought I would puke, but as it started I found myself totally drawn in, and I could see why Stacey had chosen it. It was all about a single Mom with two daughters, one 16, and the other 12. Kinda similar to our ages, right? Their Dad had died in a car accident, and their stay at home, housewife mom had been forced to find a job, but she could never afford to keep up the payments on the mansion they'd grown up in, so now they were all forced to live in a cramped, old and leaky houseboat, where they constantly bickered and fought. The boat was so leaky, it started to sink, and it looked like they might end up homeless.

Enter Maxwell, a super studly boat repairman to not only repair their leaky, sinking boat, but sweep Mrs. Holloway off her feet while becoming the perfect new Dad for the girls, thus fixing their leaky, sinking family just as he fixed their boat.

Corny, mushy, dumb, and yet I found myself crying at the end as the whole family posed for pictures after their big, harborside wedding, and Stacey cried, too, and we both hugged Valencia, who pulled us close, running one of her hands through my hair.

"Why did Dad leave?" Stacey asked as the credits rolled.

"Your father," Valencia said. "When we first met, he had no idea I was a witch. I hid my power from him."

"Why?" Stacey asked.

"I was young, and I thought a man might be intimidated by a powerful woman, so I hid my power, even from the man I loved. "Then, once we

were married, I thought it would be okay for me to show him the rest of me, to reveal my magical gifts.”

“What happened?”

“I was right. He was intimidated. He couldn’t deal with it, and he couldn’t deal with the fact that I was bossy, had a mind of my own. He tried for a time, but in the end he wanted me to renounce my magic, to give up my power.”

“Like Bewitched,” I said.

“Yes. Like Bewitched.” She paused, kissed me on the side of the head. “How do you know about Bewitched?”

“Oh. I must have seen it on streaming or something.” I tensed, worried Valencia might be suspicious, but fortunately Stacey, the ever-curious girl she was, had more questions.

“Why did he want you to give up your power?”

“Men, a lot of them are too insecure to deal with a powerful woman,” Valencia said. “Especially a woman who is stronger, more powerful than them.”

“I don’t want to learn magic, then,” Stacey said.

“Yes, you do, and don’t worry. You’ll find the right boy someday, one who won’t want you to ever be less than your best self. That’s the one you want, and you should keep looking until you find him. There were other reasons. Your father wasn’t ready to grow up and deal with the responsibilities of being a husband, a father. So, he left, but you should know he loves you both very much.”

“Does it make you sad?” I asked.

“I was sad for awhile,” Valencia said. “In the end, though, I would never have traded my marriage for anything. It gave me you two girls, and what would I do without two tween daughters to drive me crazy with questions all night long?”

She dug her hands into my ribs, tickling me, and Stacey’s squeal told me she was getting tickle attacked as well, and we squirmed and ran, laughing and shrieking as Valencia chased us, saying, “I’m the tickle monster!”

When the tickle attack ended, I was confronted with the less fun side of my new life. Dishes. Mom did all the cooking, and part of our chores involved cleaning up after. I had on a pair of dish gloves and scrubbed. Valencia insisted I wear them so as to avoid dishpan hands. Stacey stood next to me, accepting the dishes, stacking them in the dishwasher. Valencia was at the dinner table, looking at her smartpad, going over Stacey’s schedule. She was so organized.

“So, swim class tomorrow, and then ballet the day after,” Valencia said.

“I *know*,” Stacey said.

“Have you been practicing?” Valencia asked.

“Yes, *mother*,” Stacey said.

“Don’t use that tone with me.”

“Sorry,” Stacey said, taking a plate from me, placing it a row of plates in the dishwasher. “Alexis!” She suddenly said, all excited. “I have the most amazing idea!”

“You wash, and I fill the dishwasher?”

“I’m too short,” Stacey said, “and my idea is so much better. You should come to dance class with me!”

Ballet? I pictured myself in a tutu. “Um, no,” I said. “That’s a hard pass.”

“Come on!” Stacey said. ‘It’s so fun!”

“I think it’s a wonderful idea,” Valencia said.

I looked at her. She gave me “the look.” It was as good as a command. I groaned, but plastered a fake smile on my face. “I would love to join your dance class,” I said.

“Yeah!” Stacey did a little twirl. “My sister is going to be a ballerina, too.”

Yes, I thought, chagrined. *Uncle Matt is going to be a ballerina. Goody for me.*

Chapter Three

And so it was I found myself at the barre, stretching, looking at myself in the mirror that stretched the length of one wall, wearing a pink leotard. It hugged my body all over like a second skin, and gently cupped my new sex. I couldn't stop checking myself out. I had to admit, I looked really hot, the thin fabric stretching tightly over the swell of my breasts, clinging to my slender waist and full hips.

The rest of the girls were all skinny, boney, their lanky, tween bodies still young and developing. I could feel them checking me out, and I could tell a lot of them were jealous of my figure. I guess I really was changing, getting used to this new body and life, because it actually made me feel proud in a weird new way to know so many of these girls wished they had a figure like mine. We all had our hair up in ballet buns, wore leotards, and I realized, once again, that I was now one of the girls, even here at a dance studio, which I considered a fortress of girlhood.

At the same time, I felt intimidated. I had never taken a dance class in my life, and watching some of the girls spin, leap, rise up effortlessly and gracefully on their toes, I was sure they would soon be snickering when they saw me lumbering around like the big oaf I really was. Stacey came over to me. She must have seen the worry on my face.. She came over and bumped me with her shoulder, then put her arms around me.

"Don't worry," she said, hugging me, tight. "The girls here are all nice. It'll be fun."

"Girls, girls, girls," Miss Francine said, gliding into the room. She wore a leotard as well, with a ballet skirt. As soon as she entered, all of the girls sat

on the floor in a semi-circle, looking up at her adoringly. I sat next to Stacey, who patted my knee as she bounced up and down. I found myself adoring Miss Francine as well. She had a pretty face, with big, green eyes and high cheekbones, and a trim, fit, dancer's body and legs.

I would do her, I thought, reverting to my old male thinking patterns for a moment, that thought quickly turning to an embarrassing state of confusion as I felt myself getting a little wet, and I blushed, dropping my eyes to the side.

Class began, and it was— easy. I knew every move, every warmup. I held my hands just right, with perfect ballet fingers. I glanced at Valencia, who was there, a proud, happy mom, taking pictures. She just made a little, half-apologetic shrug, like, I got magic, right? She and the other moms whispered together as we practiced. I heard one of them say, “your daughters are so pretty.”

Ballet was so amazing. I felt so light and so graceful!

After warm ups, we'd been working on the dance for the recital, and there was a really hard combination all the other girls were struggling with. “Everyone, step back. Stacey, Alexis, come forward. I want you to demonstrate.”

“Me?” I squeaked.

‘Yes, you, and I am quite annoyed at you for fibbing to me. Never took a dance class?’

Stacey and I took out positions. She smiled at me. I winked at her. The music started and we spun, leapt and landed, our arms raised above our heads in an elegant, feminine pose.

The class clapped, though I saw more than a few of the bun heads lean together and whisper as Stacey and I did our pretty, ballet bows, smiling brightly.

Miss Francine came up to me after class and gave me a hug, my soft breasts pressing into hers. “You’re such a great little dancer,” she said, as I blushed furiously, trying to hide my attraction. “Now, no more of this never took a dance class. Where have you been studying ballet?”

“Um,” I said. “I don’t– I’m not supposed to tell?”

“Fine,” Miss Francine said, giving my shoulder a squeeze. “Keep your little secret, but I am so excited to have such a wonderful dancer join my studio!”

“So,” Stacey asked as we gathered our dance duffel bags and headed to the car while Valencia had a brief chat with Miss Francine. “Do you still think ballet is dumb?”

It must have been something the real Alexis had said to her. I shook my head. “Ballet is everything!” I sighed, pirouetting to emphasize my point.

Stacey clapped. “And it’ll be a way for us to spend more time together!”

“Well,” I said, throwing my arm around her shoulder and pulling her to my side. “There’s a down side to everything.”

“You witch!” She said, mock outraged, as she dug a knuckle into my ribs.

Ballet was everything. I adored everything about it. As we headed home, though, and I couldn’t stop thinking about Miss Francine, I realized I was once more going to need to *relieve the tension*.

Chapter Four

“You’ve got a good heart, Moxie. Just a fuzzy head.” I chuckle. It’s Millie from Helluva boss, which I have playing on YouTube while I text with Jayne. I’m wearing my Helluva Boss nightshirt, laying on my bed, and I’m hyper conscious of the feeling of my thong, the strap deep inside my plump butt cheeks. I feel like the clothes Valencia picked out for me are not just sexy, but arousing for my body in many ways. As a guy, I had always thought that if a girl put on something hot, it was all for me, but I was realizing now that maybe it was just as much a turn-on for them.

Jayne

“I want to kiss you all over.”

She’s getting bolder. I don’t know how to feel about it anymore. When I still thought of myself as Matt, a 20 something guy, things were clear. It was wrong, and that was the end of it. More and more, though, I think of myself as Alexis, a tween girl, she is becoming not a body and life I am trapped in, but my body, my life, my reality.

My old life as Matt is starting to seem almost like a dream, or just some movie I watched once.

Alexis

We could get in trouble.

Jayne

Trouble is fun.

Alexis

My mom is really strict.

Jayne

She'll never find out.

Jayne

When I think of you, I get chills.

Reading that gave me chills.

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Alexis

I'm not into girls.

Jayne

One kiss could change your mind.

Jayne

What are you wearing?

Alexis

Night shirt.

Jayne

Gotta go. Send me pic.

Alexis Okay.

I can't believe I agreed to send her a pic, and yet the idea excites me. I start posing, pulling the shirt tail up to give her a view of my thick, soft thighs. I pull the collar down over one shoulder, then hold my phone up, high, making duck lips, smiling, trying to look sexy. The first few tries I look like I'm having a stroke, and I laugh, covering my face with my hands and delete the pictures. I do a search for seductive faces, and I am looking at

hot women, but I am trying to imitate them, be like them now, and I pull my hair over half my face, muss it up, put a finger to my lips and snap the pic.

When I look at it I feel all bubbly. I look hot, and I send it to Jayne, and she texts back a whole bunch of hearts, and I clutch my phone between the swell of my breasts, and squeeze my legs together because I'm pretty, and I feel pretty, and I love being pretty.

The texting, dance class, Jayne and Miss Francine, I'm ready now. Nervous, feeling still like I am doing something wrong, something I shouldn't do, but I need to do because I'm going crazy, I pull up my shirt and push down my panties until they are stretched between my knees. I pull a pillow over my face and clench my teeth, fighting the urge to moan, cry out. I don't want Valencia to hear, or Stacey.

Later I feel that same sense of relief, wellness, and I am light, like I'm floating around my room. I go to my mirror and check myself out, idly running a brush through my hair. My arms keep running against my breasts, and I am looking at how they fill out the front of this shirt, the swell, the rise, the curve of them. They are heavy, and I can't believe they are mine, that I have such big, beautiful breasts.

There's a thought, fleeting. I think about sending Jayne a boob shot. No, I decide, pushing the thought away. It scares me that I even thought of it, considered it. It isn't right. I am a 20 year old man, right?

Well, if I really was a 20 year old man, I think, then I wouldn't have boobs, would I? But, these are not my breasts, I think. They belong to my niece. It wouldn't be right for me to take pictures of them, send them off into cyberspace. She'd be the one, in the end, who had to deal with the fallout when we change back.

If we change back.

No tit pics, I decide, putting my brush down. Just let it go.

And then, from YouTube, where Helluva Boss has been playing this whole time, as if on cue, Blitzo says: Goddammit, whore, you will NOT let that go!

Chapter Five

I should be studying, but I'm sitting cross-legged on my bed, painting my lips while Stacey kneels behind me, braiding my hair. There's something calming, soothing for me in the gentle tugging as she weaves my hair hand through my hair, pulling it tight as she binds it together. Using the mirror function on my phone, I pucker, look out the sides of my eyes. Stacey is behind me, and she's smiling. "Thanks for doing this for me."

She already has her hair in long braids, the same style she's doing mine. "Just remember me when you're famous," I say.

"I don't really care if I get famous," Stacey lies. "I just want to help girls be better dancers."

Stacey has decided the world of social media needs her, and she's starting a business. When she first told me, I thought it was cute. Then, she showed me the business plan she'd written, outlining her marketing strategy, talking about her target audience and how she planned to reach them.

TM?" I asked, staring at her computer screen, her self-designed logo that read, "Ballet Boss TM " in sparkling letters.

"Trademark, so no one can steal my name!"

"Does Mom know about this?"

"She helped me with it," Stacey says, then adds, "but it's mostly all me. Do you like it?"

“It’s incredible,” I say, once more shocked at this amazing little girl, and who sophisticated and worldly she can seem one minute, and what a goofy little airhead the next.

When she’s done with my hair, we record a video. It’s 30 seconds of choreography by Stacey. “No one,” she explains, “has any attention span anymore. Even thirty seconds is pushing it.” We’re both wearing Flashdance inspired retro outfits– off the shoulder shirts that read Ballet Boss, leg-warmers.

We do the dance. I pick up choreography so easily now thanks to Valencia. Stacey watches the video, this oh so serious look on her face that’s actually really cute. “Good, good,” he says, “Let’s go again, but this time more sass.”

“More sass?”

“It’s a promotional video, not a recital,” she says, and I am wondering who is this person? “Think– fun.”

We go again. And Again. After what seems like twenty takes, Stacey is pleased. “I can edit these together and make something amazing.” Then, finally, the button down business woman vanishes, and she giggles and gives me a hug. “This was so fun! Thanks!”

It was fun. We’re getting so close, and it’s like I discover a new side to Stacey every day. I go back to my room, and I should be studying, but I grab my phone and get lost in social media, seeing what everyone has been posting, catching up with my besties. Cassidy. Leigh. We share secrets, stories, hopes, and dreams. Or, they do. Leigh wants to be a doctor. Cassidy wants to go to Dartmouth like her older sister and study

architecture. I just post emojis and encouragement, wondering if they will even remember these goals and dreams a week from now.

Then, Leigh posts, "What about you, Lexi?"

I realize I haven't even thought about it. I've just been living day to day, thinking this was going to be over soon, that I would go back to being good, old Uncle Matt, maybe just a little but wiser for the experience.

What do I want to do? If I'm Alexis now? If I'm going to be Alexis, grow up as a girl, become a young woman? My fingers hover above my phone, and then, on impulse, I tap the first thing that came to my mind. "Ballerina. New York."

"Whaaaa? You hate ballet!"

"Not anymore," I type back. "It's a girl's prerogative to change her mind!"

I haven't even tried to contact Alexis, the real Alexis in days. What if she did decide she wanted to change back? What if she gave me a choice? Would I?

I didn't know. I would have to think about it, and it surprised me to realize that maybe, just maybe, I actually preferred my so-called teen girl life.