

## Masculinity 2021

by Cooper The Year 2021: The Present Day

You glance down at your watch, squint and raise it closer to your eyes, struggling to read the tiny face: 5:55. Five minutes to get two blocks. Shouldn't be a problem, but you quicken your steps anyway. You don't want to be late. You know how much it irritates Kaitlin. You see a cop ahead, standing in front of a shuttered electronics store, sipping a coffee, and you look away nervously as the cop gives you the once over. You can feel her mentally undressing you, imagining your soft, naked body, and you smile at the cop nervously and feel a momentary sense of relief as she tips her hat and gives you a friendly smile in return. Thank goodness, you think, as you feel the cop let her eyes drift to your tush.

Then, just as you are about to pass out of her reach, the cop grabs you by the arm and says, "Where you heading?"

You look up at the tall, broad shouldered cop and feel a lump in your throat, instinctively clutch your purse to your chest and say, "A friend's house. For dinner."

"Where is this friend's house?" The cop asks, her eyes locked on your breasts.

"Um, not too far. 69th street. "

"I better walk you," the cop says, keeping a firm grip on your elbow and steering you ahead on the sidewalk. "It's not safe for a pretty little boy like you to be out alone at night."

"Thank you, officer," you say, forcing a smile. "You're too kind."

"What's your name, pretty boy?"

"Cammie."

"Well, you are the hottest little thing I have ever seen."

“Thanks!” You say, struggling to keep the smile on your face, to keep your voice sweet and pretty, to hide your disgust because she’s exactly the kind of woman who gets turned on when a man is disgusted by her. You know the type too well.

The cop’s hand leaves your arm and slides to the small of your back. “Well, Cammie, I want you to promise me you’ll be more careful. A pretty little thing like you-- it just isn’t safe. You’re not the man you used to be, okay?”

“I forget sometimes. This is my friend’s house.”

“Girlfriend?”

“No,” you say, tempted to lie but knowing she might know who lives here and get mad if you lie.

The cop let her hand slide down and cup your soft, round ass as she pulls you to her. “Let me get your number. I’ll give you a call. We’ll get dinner. Go dancing. You’d like that wouldn’t you?”

“Of course,” you say, fishing your phone from your purse, eager to do whatever you need to do to get away from the big, intimidating woman. You tap your phones together and your number flashes on the cop’s screen, while your own screen remains blank.

“I didn’t get yours,” you say in a small, fake disappointed voice.

“Security. Don’t worry, honey. I’ll call you. The name’s Jack, by the way.”

“Well, Jack, thanks again and---“

The door to the townhouse opens and a man calls out in a high, soft voice, “Everything okay, officer?”

“Yup. Just walking with your little friend here. For safety.” “Thank you so much. We’ll make sure he gets home safely.”

“Goodnight, boys,” the cop says, and as you turn to climb the stairs to Kaitlin’s house, the cop gives you a slap on the ass.

You giggled and smile back over your shoulder at her. “Goodnight!” And then you hurry into the safety of Captain Kaitlin Schwartz’s house, tense and angry, feeling violated.

As soon as he closes the door, Captain Schwartz says, “Asshole.”

“Yeah,” you sigh and kick off your heels. “She made me give her my phone number, so now I’ll have to go out with her, or she’ll never leave me alone.”

“And if you report her they’ll send you for counseling. Women!”

You follow Kaitlin into the living room of his townhouse. Kate had squeezed himself into a metallic, spaghetti strapped mini-dress that hugged his wide, soft hips and huge breasts, showed off his long, tone legs and slender arms. “You have to work tonight?” You ask.

“Yeah,” Kate says, tossing his long, permed and bleached blonde hair back. “Right after the meeting.”

“You’ll get lots of tips,” you say. “That dress is really hot.”

Kate stops and turns, staring at you.

“Sorry. Just a slip.”

“We have to fight it,” Kate says. “Have to remember what it is to be man, to act and think and speak like a man. No matter what they make us do when we’re out in the world.”

“I know.”

The other three are in the living room already. Baraka. Goldberg. Oleg. They all look and are dressed like pretty, young women, or rather the way pretty young women had looked and dressed before the Invasion. Looking at them in their skirts and blouses, the tight clothes hugging their breasts and curvy bodies, no one would ever guess they had all once been soldiers, trained to fight, survive, kill in the harshest conditions. Once, when these meetings first started, you would all switch into old-style male clothes at the beginning of every meeting, but

it took so long to change in and out you eventually just started to stay in skirts. Still, despite your clothes these meetings are all about being men, men the way men used to be before The Hive.

You all shake hands, your palms soft and moisturized, and then Kate hands you a rocks glass half full of scotch and you all sit down, Goldberg drinking water, a hand placed gingerly over his swollen belly. You want to ask him how his pregnancy is coming along, the latest word from his doctor on the baby, but any talk of “women’s issues” is forbidden, so instead you sip your scotch and enjoy the feeling of the burn as it passes down your throat and then spreads throughout your body.

“I call this meeting of the Man’s Club to order,” Kate says, holding up his glass, delicate bracelets flashing at his slender wrist.

“Here, here,” you all chirp in your soft voices, holding up your own glasses and taking a collective drink.

You want to tell them about the cop, tell everyone how small and violated, how powerless, he made you feel, but you know Kate won’t approve. The code of honor is that you never acknowledge or discuss those kinds of things. You just go on with your life and pretend it never happened.

“Tonight we’re watching the first Sugar Ray Leonard, Markus Hearn’s title bout,” Kate says, holding up an ancient looking VHS tape in a plastic box.

“That’s a good one,” Baraka says.

“Yeah,” Goldberg says. “One of the best!”

“When Hearn’s...” you start, but Oleg shushes you.

“I’ve never seen it!”

So Kate puts the tape into the VCR, and the old, worn images of Thomas Hearn and Sugar Ray Leonard appear, and all of you pump your fists and cheer, shout and laugh as the two men go toe to toe, exchanging blows, their rippling

bodies slick with sweat as they strive for physical dominance, and part of you forgets, for a moment, about your full, soft, heavy breasts, and your small arms and long, tone legs, and you are just a guy watching a fight with a bunch of other guys. But then, and this always seems to happen, when Round 3 ends and the fighters go back to their corners, you take a drink and look at the other men, and you see... Baraka slip a hand into his blouse to adjust his bra strap, while Oleg crosses his long, tan legs at the knee and smooths his skirt, Kate hooks a few loose strands of blonde hair behind his ear and Goldberg sits smiling, idly twisting one his bracelets, and then you feel a little ashamed, ashamed of your small, soft, body, your breasts, your long hair and the make-up on your feminine face, and you think about those men on screen with their hard, angular bodies, and the body you once had back when you were a man, a real man, and that cop putting her hand on your ass and giving it a squeeze, and you want to scream and get up and smash something, but instead you just demurely cross your legs, smooth your skirt, hook your hair behind your ear and, nervously twisting your bracelet, you put a smile on those full, glossy pink lips of yours and say, "Helluva a fight so far, right guys?"

Full, shiny heads of hair nod, pretty voices open up in smiles, soft, little girl voices answer—"hell yeah... such a good fighter..." and these are all words and phrases you all once said in deep, booming voices as you with your legs spread wide and your arms thrown back, showing off your hard, flat chests, and now here you all are in skirts, with your knees together, and not a man in the room with smaller breasts than a C-cup.

Are you really preserving masculinity, or just kidding yourselves? Living in a dream world? Because the man you were, the one you remember before the invasion, the one who could, or thought he could, go a few rounds with Thomas

Hearns? He would never have put on a bra and panties, wiggled into a skirt and simply accepted this life.

But you did.

2019 The Past

You sat crushed between two sumo-sized Polynesian men on the C train, glassy-eyed and half asleep after an intense day hacking code for an APP building start up downtown, when the entire subway car suddenly began to buzz—or rather to fill with the sound of buzzing, like a swarm of bees had suddenly flooded into the car. Your eyes popped open, and you looked around in panic but saw no sign of bees or any other insect, and even as you realized the Firephone in your pockets was vibrating you saw the rest of the nervous crowd on the subway car start to fish out their phones.

“What the fuck?” The man next to you said.

You looked at your phone—the buzzing sound was coming from your phone, from all the phones, and you saw a text message had appeared: The Hive Has Landed.

Await Further Instructions. The message kept appearing appearing and appearing, “The Hive Is Here” over and over again, and you got pissed thinking about your ridiculous 200 text a month limit. “Some viral marketing bullshit.” And you held down the off button in irritation, at least hoping to stop them for the moment, but your phone doesn’t respond. It just keeps buzzing, message after message: The Hive Has Landed.

The train pulled into the station at 72nd Street, and you stood up and headed out onto the platform—everyone there had their phones out, and the whole subway platform was filled with the same incessant buzzing. Jesus, you thought. Whoever pulled this shit is going to have hell to pay. No way it’s legal.

You made your way up the stairs and into the fresh air of the city, still trying to get your phone to shut off, and as you zigzagged down the street staring at the messages flowing up your screen you became aware that people had stopped on the sidewalk and were looking up, murmuring nervously, so reaching the light at 73rd street you stopped and looked up and your mouth dropped open.

There was a giant, glassy black—THING—hovering in the sky above the city. An immense-- it looked almost like a giant egg made of black glass—just floating there, and you became aware that the object was also emitting the same loud buzzing noise as the one coming out of your phone.

“Is someone filming a movie?” Someone in the crowd asked. “It looks real.”

“Like a real what, though?”

“A real something. I guess a spaceship.”

“What should we do?”

You stared at the ship, if that’s what it was, stupefied. Could it be possible? Alien visitors, for real? It had to be some prank, right? What if it isn’t? Trying to decide how to react, you cycled through all of the invasion movies you’d ever seen, and turning back he rushed back toward the Trader Joe’s on 72nd Street with two clear thoughts in mind—stock up on can goods, and then lay low with your girlfriend Sienna until you had more information. Maybe make a break for the wilderness. Get off the radar. You tried to pull up the caller function on your phone as you walked, but the phone was locked up—just the buzzing noise and the messages; The Hive Is Here.

At Trader Joes you grabbed a basket and loaded it full of cans of chili, veggies and fruit. It was heavy as hell, and as you lugged it toward the checkout you suddenly stopped and set it down. There’s no need to panic, you thought. Everything is fine. The Hive is here to help us. You chuckled looking down at the basket and shook your head. I’m being ridiculous. And looking up you saw the

cosmetics aisle and the strangest and most illogical thought you've ever had popped into your brain as you thought-- I really need to get some lipstick!

You started down the aisle, then stopped. No. You needed the food. You were all in danger. Sienna.

But no. The Hive is good, the Hive wants me to be happy.

Everyone around you was smiling now, a calm, blissed out appearance coming over their faces, and most of them started to drift toward the exit, though a few guys started down the cosmetics aisle. You should, too. Get some lipstick. Some blush and mascara. The thoughts, images, impulses kept coming at you, in your brain like a.... buzzing.....

You rushed to the pharmacy aisle, found a pair of earplugs and ripping open the packaging, shoved them in your ears, blocking out the sound of the buzzing, and as soon as you did the growing sense of calm that had been washing over you vanished. The feeling of danger rushed back, and you grabbed the basket of food and headed back toward the checkout, but the cashiers and all the people were now wandering up the stairs, up to the street, laughing and patting each other on the back, and you backed away, watching the herd blissfully drift toward the street, worried that if they saw you they might try and drag you into their blissed out mob.

I am living in an actual alien invasion, you thought, scared and also a little excited. Holy shit. You had to get home and make sure Sienna was okay, and then—well, you'd have to see what happened. One thing you were sure of—you did not want to be part of The Hive. And if these aliens thought they would just walk in and take your planet, they were in for a big surprise.

Wandering toward the back of the store, you found the service elevator and made your way to the street, to light, and then plastering a blissed out, stupid



look on your face, you made your way back to your apartment, where you hoped to find Sienna waiting.

### 2021 The Present

You watched more of the fight, sometimes getting lost in the action, forgetting what you and they have become, the alcohol bringing a buzzing numbness to your brain and body, letting you relax, but then it's over, and you all finish your drinks and stand, smoothing your skirts and dresses, and when you go to the bathroom you slip out of your skirt and sit down on the toilet as you were trained to do, and when you finish you fold up a piece of toilet paper and dab yourself dry, just like a woman. You check your hair and make-up in the mirror, pull out a tube of lipstick from your purse and paint your full, soft lips, and you smile. You are pretty. Very pretty. And for a man in the new world that isn't just an important thing, it is the MOST important thing.

When you come out of the bathroom, clutching your purse to your side, Goldberg is waiting, one hand on his belly, one at the small of his back. "Walk me home?" He says.

"Sure," you answer, glad you will get a chance to talk with him about his pregnancy after all.

You shake hands with Kate, and he sees you to the door. "A fine night, gents," he says in that breathy little voice of his.

"Yes," you say. "Till next time."

"Goodnight," Goldberg says.

"You working the floor or dancing?" You ask Kate, looking over his bouncy, hour-glass body squeezed into that tiny little dress. He'd been caught early on fighting against the new world order mandated by The Hive, and they'd sent him for counseling. He'd come back with a bomb-shell body and a new career as a

stripper at a women's club. It was the punishment for any man who resisted the new masculinity-- to be turned into an old school male fantasy.

"Probably a little bit of both," he says with a sigh. "The gals will be pawing me all night."

"Well, hopefully they'll tip well."

"Yeah, well, if wishes and hopes were asses and tits, we'd all be strippers."

You all laugh, and then you and Goldberg head out into the night. You hook your arm around Goldberg's and ask, "How's the baby?"

"Great. I think she must like boxing. She never stopped kicking all night!"

"I bet she'll be a big, strong girl just like her father."

"We hope so," he said.

"And your due date is getting close, right? This month."

"Yeah. I just passed eight months, so I'll be popping this girl out very soon."

"Are you scared?" You ask. "Yeah. I am. I mean, I know I can do it, and I know it will hurt and all, but I'm just nervous about getting to the hospital, and what if I go into labor when Jim isn't there for me? And, oh , all the things a man worries about before he has his first baby, I guess."

"Well, I think you'll make a great little mommy." "Thanks! And you will, too, when the time comes. Are you and Sean thinking about it?"

"Yeah. Sean really wants us to start a family. She's always pushing for us to go to the clinic and get me ready."

"But you don't want a baby?"

"I do, and then I don't. I don't feel ready yet. It just seems so final, so much a... I shouldn't say any more because I don't judge guys who decide to become pregnant and have babies, I really don't, it's just that I..."

"Keep hoping maybe things will go back to the way they were? That you'll get to be back to being the kind of man you were before The Hive?"

“Yes,” you say, relieved to be able to admit it. “I just still don’t want to accept... this.” You gesture down at your round, soft body with your small, soft hands.

“I know. I felt exactly the same way.”

“So what changed your mind?”

“Jim was going to leave me. She wanted kids, wanted to be a dad, and it was either have her baby or he’d find a man who would. I couldn’t lose her. Didn’t want to be alone in this world, in this body.”

“I wonder if Sean would leave me? For not wanting to be a mother?”

“I don’t think so, but honey? Make sure she understands that you want a shiny ring on that pretty little finger of yours before you will even consider motherhood.”

“Really?”

“Oh yes. Because believe me—a pregnant man is not easy to deal with, and you want to make sure she’s fully committed to the relationship before you let her knock you up.” You stop in front of Goldberg’s building. “This is me.”

You hug and say good night, and you nervously hurry home, your heels clicking on the hard sidewalk as you move from street light to street light, just as afraid some group of rowdy young girls will come along and harass you as you are that some sleazy cop will come along and slap you on the ass.

It’s not easy being a man anymore. Not at all. And what if Sean did leave you? Now? You’ve been with her since before the change, have never been alone during or since your feminization. And the thought of being alone now, alone and so weak and vulnerable, makes you very nervous, and you start running through your morning: she barely looked at you, barely spoke as she was getting ready, eating the breakfast you cooked for her. And when it came time for her to go off to work, she’d just given you a quick kiss and then mumbled a distracted “See ya.”

Is she losing interest in me? You wonder, feeling very insecure. You haven't been talking. Who knows what's even going on in that head of hers? And when was the last time she made love to you? A week ago? And even then, you felt she'd seemed distracted, and she'd come and rolled off you without caring about the fact that you hadn't orgasmed, and you'd had to go into the bathroom and finish yourself.

And now here you were out with the boys, and where was she? Who was she with? You pull your phone out of your purse and text. "B home soon."

Then, you keep hurrying along as fast as you can in your tight skirt and heels, holding the phone in your hand, watching the screen, eager for a response, all sorts of scenarios playing through your mind... could she be dead? Hurt? But most of all, you keep seeing her with other men, holding their soft bodies, kissing their glossy red lips, squeezing their round, soft asses and kissing them on their swaying breasts before lowering them onto the backs.... And...."

No. No. Don't get all hysterical. It's probably nothing.

But what if it isn't?

## 2019 The Past

You had made your way through the glassy-eyed crowds, gotten to your building to find the elevator out of order—again—and so you'd made the climb up the narrow stairs to the fourth floor, getting to your apartment, putting the key in the lock. Would Sienna be home? If she was, would she be a blissed-out zombie? You didn't care. If she was, you would kidnap her, drag her out to some little cabin in the Catskills and deprogram her, save her somehow. You'd have to. You loved her more than your own life.

Inside the apartment you smell vanilla and cinnamon. The flat screen is on, and on the screen the words keep appearing: The Hive Has Landed. Await Further Instructions. You drop the basket of food, your hand aching, and you hurry over and unplug the television. There is flickering light coming from the bathroom, and you head there, tense, bracing yourself in case Sienna has become a Hive-mind automaton. The door is partially open. You can't hear anything—the earplugs are still in your ears, so you push the door open and peek into the bathroom, and there is Sienna in the bathtub, her candles flickering and thick white bubbles all around her. She has her head back, her eyes closed, but as you enter she opens her eyes, sees you and smiles, saying something.

You point to your earplugs and shake your head. Sienna looks amused, thinking this is just one of your goofy games, and you signal for her to stay in the tub. You'll be right back. She makes her funny, are you kidding me face, and then you hurry off, coming back a minute later with the dry erase board from the refrigerator and a marker. Sienna has her eyes closed again, but this time when you come back she looks annoyed and clearly wants to be left alone in her bath to relax.

You decide to get her attention, let her know you're serious, and you write the words "We are in Danger" and show her the sign.

Sienna sees the words, sees the look on your face, shrugs and takes the board. "WTF?"

You write, "Get Dressed." Then, placing a pair of earplugs on the bathroom sink, you write, "Put the earplugs in. IMPORTANT."

Sienna grabs the board. "R U fucking with me?"

"No. Life or Death."

She nods.

You leave the bathroom and go to the living room, opening the bedroom window and looking out—craning your neck, you can get a glimpse of the alien ship still hovering in the sky above your building, and you duck back into your apartment, feeling wired and excited and happy, so happy that Sienna is not a zombie, that she's fine. How many times had you complained about her taking baths all the time? And now it had turned out to save her, to save both of you.

You go to the refrigerator and grab a bottle of Heineken, twisting off the cap, tossing it back, feeling like you really need something to take the edge off at the same time you realize that you are starving! You need to eat, but you'll wait for Sienna. Now more than ever you want to share your meal with her. Once, that is, you figure out a way to explain to her what's happening.

Do I even know what's happening? You wonder. Not really. But you'll tell her what you do know.

Sienna comes out of the bathroom wearing her little silk robe—a small, floral patterned robe that comes down to the middle of her round, soft thighs, the top open revealing her shadowy cleavage and, and her dark hair is up, a few wild curls dangling at the sides of her face. You see that she has the earplugs in her ears, and you take a moment to check and make sure they are fully in, giving her a little smile and then taking her by the hand, you lead her to the window, and point up. She looks up, sees the spaceship, looks at you, and you nod, and then without warning she climbs out the window and onto the stoop, then starts climbing up toward the roof.

You don't like the idea. Better not to draw attention to yourselves, but you follow, not wanting her out there alone, and soon you are both on the roof of the building, staring up at the giant ship, and you can feel the energy of it, a humming, throbbing energy, and Sienna hugs you, and you hug her back, and you hold her tight, her slender little body in your arms, and you stand there as the

sun sets on the first day of the new world, the world that is even now more than you realize being taken over by the hive, minds and soon bodies to be conquered.

You lead Sienna cautiously over to the edge of the building, and you point down, and through the tree tops she can see all the people gathered, and they are staring up at the ship, but now they are swaying in rhythm, like a bunch of tranced-out dancers at a rave--swaying and smiling in a state of rapture, and you swear, then and there, that you will protect Sienna, keep her safe, that the two of you will never give in, never surrender, and you will free all those people, your friends, your enemies, every single person who has been mind-fucked by the aliens.

Sienna is holding you, and then she shifts, and looking down you see her fishing in the pocket of your ratty old cardigan, and when she pulls her hand out she's holding a compact and a tube of lipstick. She gives you a confused look, and you reflect it right back at her, because you clearly remember choosing not to go down the make-up isle, not to give in to that sudden compulsion you'd had to ---

And yet there in her hands is the make-up, and so suddenly blushing furiously you mouth, "for you," and reaching out, you close her fingers around the make-up, and she smiles and nods, still looking a little confused, and when she puts the make-up in the pocket of her robe you feel angry and think, "those are *my* colors."

## 2021 The Present

You click-clack along as fast as you can in your heels and tight skirt, constantly checking your phone as all sorts of terrible scenarios play through your mind—Sean cheating, Sean slipping in the tub and now unconscious, dying

while you have the audacity to doubt her loyalty to you, getting home and finding a note from her telling you she's run off with some slutty young boy she met at a Women's Club...

Why can't she just take a sec and text you back?

You enter your building and get into the elevator with Carl, a tall, slender woman with very large hands, and you politely say hi and then turn to stare up at the digital read out as it crawls upward... 2.... 3.... 4.... And you can feel Carl's eyes drop to your plump behind, high and round and showcased in your tight little skirt, and it forces you to think about the cop again and her slapping you on the ass and sometimes you are tired of all the things a guy has to put up with these days.

Standing in front of your apartment door, you hook your purse over your forearm and stealthily slip your key into the old brass lock. It's loose in the cylinder and has been for a long time—Sean keeps saying she's going to fix it but always seems to have something else to do, and you slip out of your heels and quietly push the door open, creeping into the apartment on your tiptoes, suddenly sure, more sure than you've ever been of anything in your life, that you are about to find your girlfriend kissing some other boy, and when you peek into the living room there she is... there she is! Sitting on the couch, her legs spread wide.... Watching Sports Center.

Relief and embarrassment send blood rushing to your cheeks and you call out, "Hey."

Sean barely reacts, just glancing over her shoulder and saying, "Hey."

The reaction gives you chills, so you say, "Want a beer?"

"Yeah."

You go to the refrigerator and grab a beer for her and one for you, but you put the second one back. You've already had a little too much scotch, already feel



tipsy, and alcohol is really hard on your figure, so you carry the beer over to Sean and hand it to her. She grunts, “thanks” and twists off the top, and you climb onto the couch, tuck your legs under you and duck your head under her arm, putting your head against her belly and nuzzling. “I missed you,” you whisper softly.

“I missed you, too,” she says, putting her arm around your shoulders and giving you a kiss on the head. “How was your... thing? With the boys?”

“It was fun!”

“Great. Great. Glad you had a good time.”

She’s not really here, only half listening, lost in her thoughts, in the highlights from the basketball game, and being this close and feeling this far scares you, bringing back all those same feelings of insecurity, and though some part of you think you should probably just let her watch her show and be content to be held, you start idly unbuttoning her shirt, reaching in and tracing your fingertips gently up and down the ridges of her hard, firm abs.

Sean makes a small noise and gives you a little squeeze, and you playfully reach up and give her nipple a little pinch, and she chuckles and runs a hand through your hair and says, “You thinking what I’m thinking?”

Instead of answering, you let your fingertips glide back down her sternum and along her abs, and then you slip your hand under the band of her pants and underneath the elastic band of her briefs, pausing just a second before letting it slide down over the stiff hair on her vagina. Sean grunts and throws her arms back over the back of the couch, and you slide down onto your knees and undue her belt and then pull her pants down to her knees. Sean looks at you, her eyes hard and glassy, and you smile up at her, lick your lips and then lean in, burying your head between her thighs and starting to play, pleasuring her with your lips and your tongue, your own nipples getting hard as you start licking, and you hear

Sean make that deep, guttural groan that tells you she is loving this, and you feel a surge of excitement pass through your slender, soft little body.

Sean puts her hand on your head, digging her fingers into your long, thick hair, and she is massaging your scalp with her strong, powerful fingers, pulling you into her soft, wet sex and you love the feeling of being there, both in her control and in control of her, and you ignore the pain that's start in your knees and you bury yourself in the woman you love and just want to please and tell her through your passion that you love her and need her and never want her to leave.

Sean arches her back and gasps and you feel the tremors shaking her body as she orgasms, her hands coming out of your hair and you picture her putting them over her breasts and squeezing as you finish. You wipe your mouth with the back of your hand, looking up at her, your cheeks and the tip of your nose flush, your nipples are hard as diamonds, straining against the soft cups of your bra, and you're ready now, ready for your turn, and you put your hands on her knees and push yourself up onto her belly and then her chest, crawling up her body your breasts pressing against her body, and she smiles down at you and kisses you, and then she unbuttons your blouse and slides it back off your shoulders and cups your breast and gives it a squeeze, rubbing her thumb across your erect nipple, and she whispers "You're a naughty little boy, aren't you?"

"Yes," you whisper when the kiss ends. "I'm a bad, bad boy."

She pinches your nipple, and you reach down with one of your small, soft hands and you grip her nipple, looking right into her hard, wet eyes, and she says, "You better not."

And you pinch her nipple, hard, digging your long nails into the meaty flesh, and she pinches you just as hard and you lock your mouths together, grinding

your hip into each other, your bodies getting sweaty, and Sean laughs and grabs you, lifting you effortlessly off your feet and throwing you over her shoulder. You scream and giggle, shouting, "Put me down!"

And she carries you into the bedroom and tosses you onto the bed, your hair tumbling into your face, and you stare up at her through your hair, and Sean steps the rest of the way out of her pants, which had dropped down to her ankles, and she throws them aside and climbs onto the bed, grabbing the hem of your skirt and pushing it up your soft, round thighs and up onto your hips, and then she grabs your panties and yanks them down and you feel a thrill as she climbs on top of you and pushes you all the way on your back, and she straddles you with her thighs and runs a hand through her short hair and looking down at you she lets her eyes play over your breasts, still straining against your lacy, push up bra, and then to your face and she shakes her head and says, "Goddamn you are one sexy little boy."

"Take me," you whisper, so hot, so desperate to have her on you, "take me. Please take me."

And she smiles and starts to play with your breasts, squeezing and caressing them until you get hard.

## 2019 The Past

You kept the television off. Shut down the computer and threw your phones into a bag and buried them in the closet under mounds of clothes, and for the rest of that first day and night you kept your earplugs in, eating, writing messages back and forth, and then playing cards for a time. Then, you felt the whole building shake, the glass in the windows rattled, and outside there were flashes and concussive explosions, and you both hurried out the window and out onto

the fire escape. Sienna had started to climb up, but you had grabbed her wrist and then put an arm around her waist and held her back.

You saw something streaking towards the alien ship, and it impact in a blinding flash of white light, another concussive impact shaking the building as what seemed like two fighter jets screamed over your building, and then another impact and a third, your eyes temporarily blinded by the flashes, you rubbed them and looked up hopefully, but... the alien ship still hovered there, surrounded by some sort of flickering force field, and then as the fighters started to make another pass the ship seemed to tremble and deep blue rays of energy poured out of its surface, grabbing each fighter jet, slowing them and causing them to float in the air, absurdly, and then they were drawn slowly toward the ship and through its force field before vanishing into some sort of docking bay.

You looked down into Sienna's eyes and saw the same look of despair and disappointment. For a moment you'd both felt so much hope, hope that the aliens would be defeated, their ship knocked out of the sky, that everything would just go back to normal, but instead the attack had only shown you that you, your people, your whole planet, was powerless against these invaders, tiny little gnats – less than gnats because the attack hadn't seemed to even annoy the aliens but just to maybe at best amuse them.

So you went back into your apartment, and you climbed into bed and clung to each other in the dark and shared your fear.

In the morning everything was the same but felt completely different. You woke, your arm numb and trapped under Sienna's waist, light streaming in through the curtains on your narrow bedroom window, dust motes swirling in the air. Sienna crinkles her face up and rolls away from you, pulling the pillow over her head.

It's 6:05am. You should be getting ready for work and you feel the tug of habit pulling you up out of bed and toward the shower. Your ears hurt from the earplugs, and as you slipped your arm out from under Sienna and sat up, you struggled with the desire to pop the earplugs out, to make the pain go away, but remembering Sienna had managed to stay un-zombied in the bathroom, you wander in there, close the door and take a deep breath. If you're wrong and you take them out, this could be your last moment of life as you, your last moment before you become a stoned-out Hive zombie.

But you can't keep your ears plugged forever, and god they hurt, so you carefully pull out one and then the other, and dropping them, all waxy and warm onto the sink, you stand there for a moment, listening intently and hear—nothing.

And looking in the mirror at your droopy, tired face, you definitely don't see a blissed out zombie, but just a tired, stressed out dude who really needs to hide those dark circles with some good, cream colored base.

Again. Damn. The same thoughts, alien thoughts. Oh well. You pull down your jockeys and relieve another pressure that's been building up, and as you stand there Sienna comes into the bathroom and slips past you into the shower, mumbling, "Yoink!"

It was one of her endearingly annoying habits, waiting until an opportune moment to steal dibs on the shower, something she did once a week or so, and as you heard the water start to splash down into the tub and the bathroom started to fill with steam, you thought for a moment about slipping in there with her, making love to her under the steaming jets of the shower head, but instead you thought again about the aliens and your next move.

Escape. It seems like the only way out. Escape from the city, find an isolated place, a cabin in the mountains somewhere, someplace you can live off the land,

you and Sienna living like pioneers, cutting your own wood, hunting for food, waiting until the right moment to strike against the Hive.

It sounds great. You can picture the little cabin under a tree, up there on the side of a mountain, the sound of your ax echoing through the valley, Sienna in a cotton dress gathering berries... but then you look down at your soft hands, hands that have never even held an ax let alone swung one, and you wonder if you could even survive for a day without a cup of coffee. Sure, you spent a couple years in the Air Force learning some survival skills, but mostly they trained you to work on computers and sit in an ergonomic office chair with lumbar support while other people took risks.

## 2021 The Present

Soft hands. You lay on your back, staring at the ceiling, your breasts rising and falling gently. Sean lies next to you snoring. She usually falls asleep right after sex these days, while you almost always find yourself staring at the ceiling, your emotions as tangled as your hair. You lift your hands in the darkness and look at your palms. They are softer now, smaller, tiny little doll hands. Turning them over you look at your long nails, your perfect French manicure.

Sean certainly showed an interest tonight. She took you the way she had taken you in the early days of the changes, pulling you inside her and bringing you to a screaming orgasm you were sure woke up the neighbors.

So why did you still feel so alone? So insecure? You thought about Goldberg again, about your conversation. Maybe it was time. Maybe it wasn't just Sean that wanted a baby, but maybe you want to have her baby. Maybe it's time to just accept the new world, the Hive world.

But can you? You feel so... diminished now... so trapped in this soft, fleshy body... your breasts so heavy and full, your behind so round and soft, even your

thighs were now jiggy and soft and round... Take all that extra flesh, that soft, sensitive bouncing, swaying, jiggling flesh, and on top of that the clothes... the skirts and heels, the bras and blouses... always too tight, too small, made out of fabric that was prone to tear and stain, that forced you to move extra carefully and be extra conscious at all times, and it was .... It was hard! You had so little freedom of movement, just to walk down the street like a normal man used to...

You look at Sean sleeping there on her back, her hard, flat tummy, small, athletic breasts, and strong, broad shoulders. Her face was just as pretty as always, and you couldn't get enough of her strong body, firm, muscular arms, but every change for her been for the better. She'd gotten bigger and stronger, and it wasn't right, wasn't fair.

You get quietly out of bed, and find a silky nightie in the wardrobe, slip it on over your head and then make your way out to the living room. Running your hands through your hair, you pull it back over your shoulders, brush the bangs out of your eyes, and sitting down at Sean's desk you open her laptop and log into your account. You go to Hive It and type in the word "pregnancy" and click on the first link, an article entitled Seven Things You Need to Know about Having Your First Baby from GQ Magazine.

There's a picture there of a man smiling at the camera, one hand proudly on top of his swollen belly, with the caption: It's a Boy's Duty to Have Babies.

You start reading the article:

Let's be honest. Nothing scares boys more than babies. In fact, recent surveys show that motherhood is the number one fear among boys, ahead of even death and getting our legs waxed! So, if you find yourself getting nervous whenever the P word is mentioned, you're not alone. We all get a little nervous, and we should. After all, motherhood is a big responsibility, and pregnancy will

bring about a lot of changes in a boy's body. Many of us think we'll just never get pregnant. Lads, let's face the new reality: a boy is meant to have babies. It's a part of our biological make-up, and we have a responsibility to have children, so we are all going to have to face up to motherhood sooner or later. Here are seven things you should know about doing your duty, having your first baby and joining the millions of happy boys who've left behind all that gloomy baggage of old-world masculinity and joined the glowing ranks of happy young mothers!

The screen grew fuzzy for a second and you sit back, for a moment thinking it might be your eyes, but then a pop up instant message appears reading: Resist! The box is Black with Sharp White Letters, and you stare at it for a moment, and then a second box appears with a picture of a man—an old school male with a hard, flat chest and rippling abs, broad shoulders and thick, powerful arms, his jagged jaw bristling with a day's worth of growth and as you lift your small hand to your soft, smooth cheek you realize the man you are looking at is you—or was you—before the invasion, back in your days in the Navy.

A third pop up box appears with the message Remember Who You Are. And then a fourth: Resist.

Your heart starts to race and you feel suddenly afraid, slamming the laptop shut and resisting the urge to scream for Sean, and you sit there in your panties and your silk nightie and you have your hands on your cheeks because you know you should tell Sean about this and let her handle it, but you think about that picture of you, the old you, the real you, and you want to be that man again.

## 2019 The Past

Once Sienna got out of the shower and the both of you dressed, you decided to see if you could get out of the city. Sienna was scared, nervous, and she



wanted to get away to somewhere. So the two of you dressed, tossed some supplies and water into backpacks and headed out, Sienna holding your hand nervously and walking slightly behind you as you walked across town to the Eastside and Grand Central Station.

The alien ship hovered mysteriously above the city, unmoved and unmoving, and people milled in the streets, going here and there, faces placid, plastic, entranced. Sienna nudges you at one point. "Look at all the guys," she whispers.

You take off your Ray Bans and see it now- they are all wearing lipstick, mascara, foundation. All of them, and you suddenly feel very self-conscious about your clean scrubbed face.

You pull your baseball hat down on your head and pull Sienna off down a side street. "We better go back," you say. "They'll spot me now for sure."

"Okay," Sienna says, and she smiles.

"What?"

"Nothing."

But as soon as you get back to your apartment, Sienna says, "Let me do your face so we can get out of here."

"What?"

"You said it yourself," she calls over her shoulder as she heads to the bathroom. "You're going to give us away unless you look like all the other guys."

"Yeah, well, maybe we should rethink the plan. Make a run for it at night."

"Scared?" She has a tube of lipstick in one hand, mascara in the other. You look at them longingly, badly wanting her to put them on your face, to make you pretty, to make you feel normal, but no... no... this isn't you.

"No, but I just don't think it will work."

And then your phone rings. You look and see that it's work. "It's work," you say, confused.

"Answer?"

"Why? I mean, if we're going to make a break for it and all."

"Then, check the message when it's done."

You nod, and Sienna goes back and gets more make-up as you nervously watch her, wondering if maybe she has been brainwashed after all. Once your phone buzzes and says you have a message, you check and hear the voice of your boss, Kevin Mason. He's talking in a whisper:

"Hey, buddy. Missing you. Get in here as soon as you can. The Hive requires we report anyone who doesn't show up at work today, but if you are in by noon you'll be fine. Hope to see you."

"Shit."

"What?" Sienna says.

You tell her about the call. "What should we do?" Sienna says, and her voice breaks and she's in tears. "If you don't show, they'll come for you. They'll come for both of us."

You take her in your arms and hold her, kissing her on the top of her head. "It's going to be fine. I'll protect you. I'll get you out of this mess one way or another. But, I need you to be brave for me, okay?"

"Okay," she says, nodding.

"I'm going to go up to the roof and see what I can see. Kevin sounded... nervous." You start and Sienna follows, and you say, "Wait here."

"No," she says, wiping her tears away with the back of her hand. "I need to be with you right now."

You kiss her, take her hand and grabbing your old field binoculars you head to the roof, find a good spot and-- "Shit," you say.

“What is it?”

You hand her the glasses and point her toward Grand Central, and as soon as she sees what you saw, she gasps, “Oh my God.”

All around the station are smaller, gleaming black egg-shaped structures, and around them tall, Amazonian women in black military gear, and they are inspecting each and every person who tries to enter the station, occasionally grabbing one and dragging them into the egg-shaped objects.

“We would have been caught for sure.”

“Yeah.”

“So, what do we do?”

“Go to work,” you say, leading her to the fire escape and back to your apartment, a little smile on your face, a smile you later which you hide when you look at her, trying to look grim and embarrassed. You sit down at the table where Sienna has spread out the make-up, and you say, “If we’re going to survive, I need you to do my makeup.”

Sienna smiles and says, “I never thought I’d hear my man say that.”

“I never thought I’d say it.” Sienna giggles as she looks at a couple of tubes of lipstick, rejects them and then finally smiles and says, “This is a perfect color for you.” It’s a creamy pink, like frosting on a little girl’s birthday cake, and you recognize it as the tube of Maybelline you took from Trader Joe’s. “Pucker up,” Sienna says.

“I’m doing this for you,” you say, giving her a stern glance. “Don’t make it harder than it has to be.”

“Okay,” she says. “I won’t respect you any less, and anyway, it’s just make up. Don’t be a girl about it.”

You want to answer, but now you can’t speak, because your lips are puckered and your girlfriend is putting on your lipstick in what you never

imagined would become a daily ritual for you in your new life under the rule of The Hive and you love it and hate it as you feel so very, very ashamed, and so very, very happy.

When Sienna finishes doing your face, she looks you over and says, “Wanna see?”

“No,” you lie, because you know you shouldn’t be so excited to see yourself all painted and pretty, and Sienna gathers the lipstick and compact, a tube of base, and she hands them to you. “Take these with you. In case you need to freshen.”

You clutch the cool plastic containers to your chest and carry them into the den, finding your briefcase and putting them in there with your laptop and file folders, your pens and notepads. “Off I go,” you say, heading toward the door. Sienna gives you a hug, but when you lean down to kiss her goodbye she stops you and says, “Your lipstick.”

“Oh,” you say, stopping, and it all makes sense, but she’s never refused a kiss from you before unless she was angry at you, and it disturbs you even though logically you know you shouldn’t feel this way.

You leave the building and head to the subway station, and you find yourself checking out the other guy’s faces as you go. Most of them look a little ridiculous, some look incredibly silly, and a few actually look pretty, so you start to wonder and worry-- do I look cute? Or ridiculous?

And you really want to look cute. You need to look cute.

The Hive is at the Subway entrance on 8th Avenue, and you plaster a blinged out, smiley look onto your face, and the tall, broad shouldered women of the Hive barely give you a second glance as you drift down into the darkness of the subway tunnel. When you finally get on the train, you sit down, knees together, and you put your briefcase on your lap and open it, eagerly fishing out your

compact and popping it open, and you look at your face, your lashes are thick and wet and dark with mascara, your skin looks smooth and radiant, and your lips full and deliciously pink. Sienna gave you nice, flush cheeks, and she used eyeliner to give you what you recognize as “the butterfly look” from commercials you’ve seen on television, and your smile grows wide and your eyes sparkle because--- you look cute! Cute! Even a little pretty, and there is nothing more important than being pretty!

You know it’s wrong, and that it isn’t you, or wasn’t you, and the man in you feels confused and embarrassed, but no. No. You love the way you look, and you stare at your pretty, painted face, turning your head and looking at yourself out of the corner of your eyes, smiling and then you close your compact and put it into your briefcase and snap it shut, straightening your back and looking around the train car, confirming again that you are prettier than any of the other guys and even some of the girls.

Okay, you think, taking a deep breath. Enough of that. Let’s not forget this is just for now, just a disguise, just a way to survive for a few days until you and Sienna can get out of here and join the resistance, which has to be out there. So, for now, it’s time for you to get back to being a man.

You almost make it to your stop before you check your face again.

At work, things are normal and not normal. All the guys you see are wearing make-up. Everyone, male and female, has the same vacant smile and wide-eyed look of euphoria on their faces. Male and female alike are all just thrilled with all of the guys wearing make-up, and as you go from meeting to meeting, or into the break room, anyone who sees you takes a moment to say, “I love that color on you!” or “Oh my God, you look so cute!” You do the same, eager to fit in, and within a few hours it just seems natural to see a male

co-worker and immediately say, “Your eyes are really popping” or “I am jealous of your lips!”

But otherwise everyone is just going about their business, doing their jobs as they always do them. It’s just that everyone is now a little prettier than before, and what’s so wrong with that?

You cross paths with Kevin a couple times, but there are always people around, so you both smile and complement each other, but you can see something in his eyes, something hard and you’re sure he wants to talk to you, so you keep waiting for a chance, and finally a little after 4 o’clock you see him heading down the hall to the Men’s room, and you follow and when you get into the Men’s room you two are the only ones there.

Kevin is in the stall, and you go to the mirror and check your face. “Thanks for the call,” you say.

“So, you are still normal,” Kevin answers from the stall.

You pause, wondering if you should really trust him, but you decide to take a chance and say, “Yes.”

Kevin finishes and comes out from the stall, joining you at the mirror and you stand side by side, looking at your painted faces. Kevin looks ugly. He’s older, bald, and he has clumsy, extremely masculine features that look absurd, and he picked colors that just aren’t right for his skin tone. You fight back the urge to suggest some different choices, knowing it will reveal to him your secret weakness, and instead you search for the proper response for a man and say, “Don’t we look ridiculous?”

“Like a couple of homos,” Kevin says, and you smile, hiding your resentment.

“So, what the hell is going on?” You ask. “Do you have any idea?”

“Not much,” Kevin says. “Probably no more than you. For some reason all their brainwashing stuff didn’t affect me at all. I went out in the hall and saw what

was happening with my neighbors, and my girlfriend is totally gone over the edge. I turned on the news, but it's just Hive propaganda all the time."

"What are they saying?"

"They keep calling us their liberators, promising they are here to make life better. No more war. No more crime. Advanced medicine."

"What about this?" You ask, gesturing toward your face.

"They haven't mentioned it. Everyone who is under the influence of their shit just started to do it. But, I think it could be part of, well, they are all female, and they keep talking about total equality between the sexes."

"Total equality?"

"Yeah."

"Total equality? I wonder..."

But just then you hear someone approaching, and the door opens, and Jamal from accounting walks in, and you meet his eyes in the mirror and you smile and say, "You look so pretty!"

And he says, "Oh my God, me? Look at that those big pink lips of yours!"

"You both look amazing!" Kevin says.

"You look ten years younger," Jamal says smiling at Kevin, and those eyes of yours are so bright I think I need shades!"

They asked everyone to stay and work late that first day, so you texted Sienna, and she texted back that she's been told the same thing. There didn't seem to be all that much work to do, but you kept busy as much as you could, played some Minesweeper, and when you finally went home at 9PM that night, you were so tired all you had time to do was eat, take off your make-up, give Sienna a quick kiss goodnight and plop into bed.

It went like that for a few days. You got up, did your face, went off to work. They kept you busy in meetings all day, gave everyone extra tasks to prepare,

kept you late and sent you home too exhausted to do much more than go to bed and sleep. Rumors swirled. The Hive had taken over the capitol cities of every nation, the presidents had all been executed. No. No. Others would say that they'd all been taken prisoner.

Stories circulated that a group of soldiers had orchestrated an assault on the Hive ground forces outside Dallas, blown up some of their pods and killed nine of their people, and that a Hive ship that had been floating above Moscow had suddenly lost power and crashed into the Kremlin, but you found you and the entire staff called to the conference room as the networks broadcast video of both locations showing no signs of damage and refuting any reports of violence. "The Hive is here to make your lives better," a soothing woman's voice announced as images of the Hive ship above Moscow transitioned to an image of Hive soldiers handing out food. "We are not your enemies, but your partners in a greater future, a future of abundance and total equality."

You plastered a smile on your face and nodded along with everyone else, surprised when they all chanted, "Total Equality" in response to the message. Nervously, you stared straight ahead, hoping no one had noticed when you failed to join the chant, but the only person who seemed to notice was Kevin, who gave you a grim glance as you all filed out of the room.

You could feel it slipping away, your chance to break free, make a run, get out of this crazy mess with Sierra and live free of The Hive and whatever their notions of total equality turned out to be—and you knew this was no accident. The long hours, the constant calming messages... they were keeping you all too busy to plot, to plan, and then suddenly Friday came along and you were in no way prepared for the next phase in their plan. It was a little after 10:30 in the morning. You were at your computer, working on a report The Hive had requested detailing the self-reported birthplaces and ethnic identities of all the



employees, a maddeningly complicated form that required to enter the same information over and over again in different ways, leaving your head pounding, and then a voice, not any voice you recognized but what sounded like a Hive soldier, called out over the Intercom, “All Males please report to the lobby and await there for further instructions. Total Equality.”

The woman speaking couldn't have sounded sweeter and more nurturing, and the message combined with that maternal condescension sent a wave of panic through your system. Run. Run, your mind screamed, even as all the men around you chanted “Total Equality,” stood up, smiling, and started toward the lobby. You stood, looked toward the Emergency Exit, started toward and then heard Janet Cosway, one of your EVPs say, “You lost?”

You turn and smile. “I was wondering if I would need to freshen my make-up?”

“No, sweetie. Just scurry on down there and wait for further instructions.”

“Yes. Thank you.”

You hurry down, and as soon as you arrive a smiling Hive Soldier puts a bright pink rubber bracelet on your wrist and leads you to a line of men being herded into a bus. You desperately want to call Sienna, to tell her what's happening, to run, to get away, but you're surrounded and there is no escape, and you left your phone in the office, so you just keep smiling and you climb up onto the bus and take your seat, and as the bus is filled and a Hive soldier calls out “Go”

Two Hive soldiers, tall, broad shouldered women, like them all, walk down the aisles with an air powered hypodermic, and they inject you each in the upper arm. You sit there like sheep as they inject you, somehow paralyzed, obedient, unable to do more than vaguely wonder why you don't at least try to resist, and then there's a sharp pain and a popping noise, and you rub your arm even as you feel yourself drifting into a blurry haze and the whole world seems to swirl and

shift, and all the colors get brighter as the world strobes past you—the bus, cold white halls, a stretcher.... Beeping monitors and a television playing some sort of message over and over and over.... And then blackness.

You open your eyes, and the light seems too bright. Too sharp. You have no idea where you are. Some kind of bed, and there is a television screen mounted on the wall across from you. It's confusing and unnerving, waking up in a strange room with only hazy, drug-washed memories to fall back on to explain how you got here, and as you try to move your arms and realize you are tied down, you feel a rising sense of panic and looking to the right you see. "Sienna!"

"You're awake," she says, reaching over and putting a hand on your forehead.

You feel calm seeing her there. Safe. You know she would never let anyone hurt you, and you smile and say, "Where am I?"

"The hospital. They brought you all here for your inoculations."

"Inoculations?"

"The Hive was worried they might have brought some viruses here that could harm humans, so as a precaution they inoculated us all against the risk. They really are our friends."

Friends? Hearing Sienna say that gives you chills. It all sounds like nonsense to you, this inoculation story and all the rest of it, but you decide it's better not to talk about things like that, so you smile and say, "Thanks for being here for me."

"Of course, sweetie."

"Can you untie me?"

"I'll call the nurse."

The nurse comes in after a few minutes, looking at you and saying, "You're awake!"

“Yes,” you say.

“How do you feel?”

“I don’t know,” you answer, having not really considered it, then doing a quick inventory, you answer, “okay?”

“Good. Good. Now, you’ve had a little reaction to the inoculation. It caused you to lose some weight. You’re very frail now. Very delicate. So, you’ll want to take it easy. ‘Kay, cutie?”

“Yes,” you say, hiding your annoyance with the blissful smile you’ve practiced these past few days. “Thank you.”

The nurse undoes your restraints and then looks at Sienna. “I’ll leave you two alone.”

Sienna nods, and as the nurse leaves to lift the covers, your arm trembling, and you sit up and immediately feel your head swim, but you fight through the waves of nausea and the urge to lay back down because you are staring at your hands, your small little hands, and your slender wrists and tiny little arms.

“My arms...” you say, and looking down past the hem of your pink hospital gown you see skinny, bony legs, legs like a child. “What happened to me?”

“Maybe this is too much for you right now,” Sienna says, starting to cradle you and lower you back down onto the bed, but you struggle weakly against her, as weak as a bird, and say, “No. No. I want to see.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

So, Sienna put one arm under your legs and another around your shoulders and as she effortlessly lifts you into her arms you instinctively throw your tiny arms around her neck, and she carries you over to the full length mirror on the door and you stare at the image of the two of you and shake your head in disbelief because what you see is Sienna carrying a skinny little boy toward the

mirror, and then she sets you gently on your small feet, and your knees are weak and you fall against her, clinging to her for strength and it seems impossible because what you are seeing in the mirror is you, but you when you were 12 years old.

You have no muscle. Your arms, your legs, are all just skin and bones, and the pink hospital gown hangs off your slender, bony shoulders, swallowing your narrow frame. Your face has regressed, taking on the same boyish, almost pretty, fresh-faced appearance from your old middle-school yearbook pictures. “It isn’t possible.”

“It is,” Sienna says.

“I must be still drugged.”

“No.”

“What am I going to do now? I look like... a child.”

“It’s not so bad,” Sienna says, holding you tight, kissing you on the head. “I’ll take care of you. And, besides, the same thing is happening right now to all the men on Earth.”

And then everything went black.

You wake to a bright light being shined into your left eye, and you try to squint against the pain but someone has their hand on your forehead and is holding your eyelid open, preventing you from turning your head. “Can you hear me?” You hear a woman with a slightly Indian accent ask.

“Yes,” you answer.

She lets go of your head and you close your eyes, which are now stinging with tears, and when you open them again you are looking into the face of a middle-aged Indian woman in a white doctor’s coat. “What happened?” You ask.

“You fainted,” the doctor replies, smiling and patting you on the leg. “But luckily Sienna caught you, so you didn’t end up banging your head and injuring yourself. I’ve seen that happen a few times today!”

“I... what? Fainted?” You’re looking down at your small hands and slender wrists again, still shocked to see how they look, and you nervously glance around to find Sienna sitting on the other side of the bed, and you feel yourself grow calm at the sight of her.

“Yes. Nothing to be worried about.” And then she says the words that will become a refrain you will hear again and again over the coming year. “In your frail, delicate condition, you’ll need to take it easy. Try your best to avoid any shocks or surprises, and you shouldn’t try to lift anything too heavy. Nothing over 10 pounds.”

“Ten pounds.”

“Maybe eight for you,” she says, looking at your small arms. “Your body has gone through a very traumatic transformation. It has taken a tremendous toll and will leave you physically very weak for a very long time. The best thing for you to do is just accept that you are in a frail, delicate state and allow your girlfriend, Sienna, to help you.”

Frail. Delicate. Weak. The words are all coming at you like slaps in the face, and you shake your head, and say, “how long? How long will I be like... this?”

“The rest of your life.”

Sienna helps you dress. She has brought some of your old clothes- a long sleeved t-shirt and sweatpants, and they hang sack-like over your tiny body. The sleeves and pant legs hang flopping past your hands and feet, and you push the sleeves up to your elbows and then roll up the pants legs, and finally Sienna hands you a pair of her old running shoes that look way too small but are,

thankfully, blue and black. “I think they’re going to be too small,” you say, turning one of them over in your hands.

“I think they will fit perfectly,” Sienna says.

“Wanna bet?”

“Loser buys dinner.”

You slip the shoe on, and it is actually a little too big. “I win,” Sienna says as you lace up your little shoe on your little foot, feeling sick at this latest missile strike against your masculinity.

You start to correct her, since she had bet the shoe would fit perfectly, but you don’t want to admit that it’s too big, that you now have smaller feet than she does, so you just force a smile and whisper, “We need to make a break for it.”

“Let’s not talk about that now,” Sienna whispers. “These walls have ears.”

You nod and stand up becoming more aware now that you aren’t so focused on yourself that Sienna seems slightly taller. Sienna looks you up and down and says, “you look cute”

You give her a dirty look and walk out with her, instinctively reaching for her hand as you make your way out onto the bustling sidewalk packed with tall, adult-sized women, who make you feel like you are a little boy again.

For the next few days, you sleep a lot. The effort of getting up to eat leaves you light-headed, faint, and Sienna has to help you back to bed. You twist and turn, and wake up feeling like you’ve had fever dreams, but the details seem to scatter like cobwebs as soon as you wake, just fragments remaining, you running, running, being chased by tall, faceless women through forests and derelict buildings, scurrying through a dark, deserted parking garage menaced by a knife wielding woman in a leather mask. But then you wake, your sheets twisted around your arms and legs, your thin, hairless body slick with sweat, and

you look at Sienna, and you feel calm and safe and grateful that she is here for you.

Finally, on the third day, you wake up and practically bound out of bed, feeling energized and full of perky energy. You stretch and walk out into the living room where Sienna sits at her laptop working, and you smile and say, "I feel better" doing a couple quick jumping jacks to show her.

She looks up at you and smiles back, her look a mixture of relief and concern. "You look better," she says, "but let's not overdue it."

"It was just a couple jumping jacks," you say hurrying over to her and throwing your arms around her shoulders. "I love you so much."

Sienna turns to accept your kiss, now looking a little confused. "I love you, too?"

You slip into her lap, your arms around her neck, and you say, "I just want you to know how much I appreciate you... taking care of me, sticking by me. I am the luckiest guy in the world!"

Sienna gives you another kiss, then taps you playfully on the nose. "I'm the luckiest girl, and you are a little cutie. Now, sweetie, can I ask you for a special favor?"

"What?"

"Can you take a shower, please? Because after three days of fevers and night sweats, you are a little stinky."

"Oh god," you say, getting off her lap and moving away, suddenly conscious of the damp animal smell of your clothes and body. "I am gross."

"But still super cute!"

You strip off your gross sweat pants and t-shirt, toss them in the laundry hamper, and as you slip into the steamy hot shower, you start thinking about Sienna, and you skin tingles, and you know you desperately need to make love,

and your heart flutters when you hear Sienna open the bathroom door, thinking she's going to slip into the shower with you, but instead she says, "I have to go to work. Don't overdo it, okay, sweetie?"

"Okay," you say, and as you hear the door close you feel sad and lonely, and you know she has to go to work, and how could she know you wanted to have sex anyway after being sick for so long, but then another quiet little voice in your head says, she should know. I shouldn't have to tell her.

When you get out of the shower, you look in the mirror at your little boy body, your flat little chest, like balsa wood, your ribs sticking out, your tiny arms and small, narrow shoulders, and you feel fear. Fear. Maybe she doesn't want to make love to me anymore, you think. Not with this skinny little body.

And insecurity over your body begins to set in even as you vow to start loading up on protein, getting back to the gym and lifting until you look like a man again.

2021

You stand up and back away from the computer, and everything about the movement feels wrong-- your breasts swaying, your nipples rubbing against the soft silk of your nightie, the feeling of your long hair swishing against your shoulders and back, your wide hips and soft thighs... It's all wrong. You look at your small, soft little hands again, just like you did that first day when you woke up so small and tiny, thinking they were turning you back into a little boy, and you feel sick with shame and disgust at what you've become.

Something touches your shoulders from behind, and you scream and jump, spinning and backing away, raising your little arms weakly and cowering, and you see it's Sean, who's looking at you with a confused, bleary look on her face, and says, "Are you okay?"



And it's like you are seeing her for the first time, the woman you have been living with all these years, and she is all wrong. She's tall and broad shouldered, with small, athletic breasts, and though her arms are still slender like a woman's is or was, they are rigid with tendons and veins, and her jaw is more square than it used to be and she looks kind of like a young man, and no. No. How did all of this happen? Why are you just noticing now how truly, terribly wrong this all is?

You start to cry, and Sean approaches, and though the thought of her touching you makes you skin crawl, you let her take you in her arms, and you feel your breasts, your huge, pillowy breasts, pressing against her hard ribs, and when she takes your chin gently in her hand and tilts your head back, you accept the kiss, and you squeeze her the way you know you should, and then she looks in your eyes and says, "Tell me what's wrong," as she almost carries you to the couch.

And you want to tell her. You want to tell her so badly. Tell her about the message on the computer, and how you suddenly feel like-- an alien, an alien in your own body, and how she isn't Sienna anymore, she's not the woman she's supposed to be, because you know she'll know what to do, what to say, she'll protect you and she'll make you happy to be her pretty little boyfriend, and if she can't...

Counseling. You know you will end up in counseling, and you've seen the men who've come out of counseling, and you know you don't want that. And so you make a decision, and you think it's probably wrong, and so much of you feels you are betraying the woman you love, but you decide to lie and searching for the most believable lie you can come up with you whisper,

"I got molested today."

"What? Who?" Sean says, her eyes hard and angry, like a bull's.

"I don't know," you say. "It was random. On my way to Kate's."

"How can you not know?" Sean asks impatiently, grabbing you by the upper arms so hard it hurts.

"I don't know the person, I mean, it was a cop."

"What happened!" Sean yells, squeezing your arms even harder and shoving you backward until she is almost on top of you.

"You're hurting me!" You squeal, the tears flowing freely, and Sean realizes what she is doing and lets go.

"Oh babe," she says, stroking your cheek and giving you a quick, apologetic kiss. "I'm so sorry. I forget how delicate you are sometimes. Let me get you some water."

You sit up, tossing your long hair back, pulling it out of your face, rehearsing the story in your mind as she gets the water, trying to make sure you have the details you want her to know right, and when she comes back you smile, and she hands you the glass of water and says, "I'm sorry."

You tell her about the cop, leaving out the part about giving her your number. The whole thing seems surreal now, like some kind of crazy dream. You see yourself sitting there cross-legged in a nightie, looking and sounding just like a young woman, telling your angry boyfriend all about some creep who harassed you, and for the moment you are able to ignore the feelings of shame and embarrassment over your condition as you get caught up in your story and the triumphant realization that Sean is buying it, and she will not send you off for counseling.

The next day, you wake up half hoping that you will be back to normal, just accepting your new life and the new masculinity mandated under Total Equality, but no. As you get up, taking a moment to sit down on the cold toilet seat to pee, it all feels just as wrong as it did last night-- your jiggly body, soft skin, your women's clothes, but you know you need to keep your routine, so you just resign

yourself to play along, heading off to the kitchen, putting the kettle on, grinding the Costa Rican coffee beans-- Sean's favorite-- pouring them into the French Press and then getting out the bacon and eggs, getting them cooking, the whole apartment filling with the sweet smell of the Maple Bacon, and you hear Sean , on cue, turn on the shower. She'll be out and ready just as the coffee and food are ready, and you'll get a kiss and maybe a squeeze on the ass as a thank you for being such a good little wife.

And you feel the wrongness of it all, just as wrong as your huge, swaying breasts, and you feel the pressure building to do something, anything, to get back to being a man.

But you keep up the act being the cheerful little wife, and when Sean leaves you stare at the laptop. You should report the message. Report everything. But you're tired of this life, tired of being small and weak-- delicate and fragile, of having to be scared all the time and put up with jerks.

So you walk over and open the laptop, log into your account and go back online, back to the same website, and then... nothing happens.

So you get in the shower and wash your smooth, hairless body with a floral scented body wash called "Pretty Boy," and you wiggle into your bra and panties, a tight little skirt and a blouse with a plunging neckline that shows off your puppies, and slipping into your heels you grab your bag and head off into the big, scary woman's world for another day as a perky, cheerful little executive assistant.

2019

That first day, fresh out of the shower, you had gone back to your bedroom and started going through your dresser looking for something to wear, but

everything was too big, and so drab. How did I never realize how boring my clothes are? You wonder.

So, you wander into your walk in closet looking over your suits and slacks, but quickly you find yourself rifling through Sienna's dresses, all hanging neat and pretty on hangars, and you touch the slender straps of a floral summer dress, and you feel a thrill of excitement at the thought of slipping into it, of seeing how your shoulders would look, your arms, with those pretty pale blue straps. The dress is white with a pattern of blossoming pale blue roses and matching silk trim and you sigh looking at it, because it is so pretty, and you loved Sienna in it and want to look just as pretty as she did.

They've done something to your mind, you realize, stepping away from the dress. Turning back to your suits, your khakis and dress shirts. It's just like with the make-up. They've made you want to wear dresses.

You have never worn a dress. In fact, back when you were in high-school, some of the other guys from the football team had done a talent show where they dressed up in drag and done a dance routine to "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" but you had refused, saying it was too "gay" and then, of course, feeling a little jealous when they had gotten done performing and all the girls had swarmed over them and praised them for having the courage.

So, whatever, that had never been your thing. Or maybe, a voice whispers, it was your thing and you were just afraid? But no. No, you insist, standing there in the closet between the suits and the dresses. You never wanted to wear a dress!

But now you do really want to see yourself in that dress. You need to see yourself in that dress. But you are determined you will NOT give in to this urge, this need, because you know it was planted in you by The Hive, and you will not let them turn you into a girl. Besides, what would Sienna think?

"Sienna will never know," you answer yourself, turning back and slipping the dress off the hanger. "It's not like I would tell her. Of course, I'm not putting it on," you say, still talking to yourself as you carry the dress carefully out into the bedroom. "I'll just hold it in front of myself, and see what it would look like."

And you do. You stand in front of the mirror holding the dress in front of yourself, one leg stuck out the way you've seen women do it, and you turn side to side and smile and think, and the dress looks so pretty, and you know you would probably look great in it, and you say "why not?"

Your skin tingles and you giggle as you step into the dress, feel the cool fabric glide up your slender, hairless body, and you feel a thrill of excitement as you pull the little straps over your shoulders and let the dress settle onto your body. It feels good. So good. And you take the skirt of the dress in your hands and do a twirl, giggling, your cheeks flush. The mirror is there, just to the right, and you are excited and scared as you stand there, trying to build up the courage to stand before the mirror in a dress for the first time, to see what you look like, and biting your lip, you make a little hop in front of the mirror, putting your hands to your cheeks and letting your eyes take in the sight of you, so small and slender in a pretty summer dress, and it shows off your little arms and small shoulders, and it's too big, but my goodness you do look cute!

So you turn and look at yourself from the side and then back over your shoulder, and you twirl and laugh at yourself, and then you think, "I have to see myself in this dress with make-up!" and you hurry off to paint your face, and soon you slip a couple of Sienna's bracelets onto your wrists and a necklace and you are thrilled with you find some clip on earrings and slip into a pair of Sienna's wedgy sandals and tottering back to the mirror you look at yourself with your mascara and eye shadow, your blushing cheeks, and pink, glossy lips, the little earrings flashing prettily in your ears as you turn your head, and you put one

hand on your hip and another out to the side and you think, *I'm cute. I am really cute.*

And you feel light-headed and excited and giddy, and you find your phone, trembling, and chanting to yourself "I'll never show anyone... I'll never show anyone..." you start taking selfies of yourself in your pretty dress, and you go and sit down on the couch in the living room, pulling your knees up to your chest, and as you look at the pictures you think, "I like this." And because it seems like too much trouble to change now and even this effort has left you slightly exhausted, you just stay in your dress and curl up on the couch to watch television, figuring you'll just change before Sienna gets home, and she'll never know what a happy, pretty day you had.

Because you are sure, pretty sure, that she would lose respect for you as a man if she saw you like this, not just because you are dressed like a girl, but because her dress is way too big for you, and you don't even look like a boy playing dress up right now, but much more like a little sister.

But in the meantime, you have your cell phone in your little hand, and you look at the pictures of yourself, and you smile.

The day drifts by. You feel like you should probably do something productive, though you are not sure what, and the thought of going out alone makes you uneasy, so you read, watch television, make lunch, just generally enjoying the feeling of lounging around the house in a dress, which seems so freeing and comfortable compared to your boy clothes, and so when you look at the clock and see it's after 4, you sigh with a little regret that your day of fun is over, and you slip out of the pretty blue dress, and slip the bracelets from your wrists and pull on a pair of baggy sweatpants and an old sweatshirt and even though it's kind of normal for guys to wear make-up now you decide to clean off your face,

then you put a little lipstick back on after all, and on impulse, you decide to surprise Sienna by cooking dinner.

When Sienna gets home she is surprised and clearly pleased you took the time to cook, and she rewards you with a big hug that lifts you off your feet and a kiss that leaves you weak in the knees.

"I just wanted to show how much I appreciate you taking care of me and everything," you say, placing a steaming plate full of spinach pasta and clam sauce in front of her.

"What did you get up to today?" She asks as the two of you eat.

"Nothing much," you say, hiding a smile as you relive your day of dressing up. "It was all I could do to get dressed, really."

"You're going to need some new clothes," Sienna says.

"Yeah. I feel like I'm drowning. Would you go to Macy's with me tonight?"

Sienna sighs. "I'm really tired."

"I need some things for work."

"Can you order some stuff online, and then we can just pick it up and get out?"

"Okay," you say. "Thanks."

You start to collect her plate to take it and wash, but Sienna surprises you by pulling the plate out of your little hand, standing up and saying, "I'll do the dishes, sweetie, since you did the cooking."

"Thanks."

"Go and start shopping, so we can get out right away once I'm done."

"Okay," you say, and Sienna gives you a little slap on the ass as you walk away. You look back, feeling odd about it, as the ass slapping has been your thing, and it disturbs you in the context of everything, and yet, it's just a sign of affection, so you decide not to overthink it.

Sitting down at the computer, you pull up the Macy's website. There are only two links under Apparel, Adult and Children, and you wonder for a second which one to click on now, but decide to click on adult, which takes you to a page full of women's clothing: dresses and skirts, women's slacks and business attire. You click around a little, but can't seem to find a link for men's wear, so you click on children and all you find there is stuff for girls, so you go back to adults and this time the banner at the top of the page catches your attention: Total Equality Collection.

You hear the sound of the water running in the kitchen, pots clanging, and you lick your lips nervously, tasting your lipstick, and you check Nordstrom, The Gap, Banana Republic-- and of course, you find the same thing on every website. Total Equality collections consisting entirely of women's clothing and just as you are reeling from that realization you hear a beep and check your email, and you see a message from your employer entitled New Dress Code. You click on the email, and it just outlines that all employees will be expected to dress in Total Equality clothing.

It all seems so sudden and strange, and yet so inevitable. It all has to happen this way, you think. It had to happen. It can't be stopped, and so you go back to shopping, settling into the new reality.

Sienna comes up behind you and sees the Banana Republic page you are looking at: women in skinny legged pants and blouses, high-heeled boots. "You shopping for you or me?" She asks, putting her hands on your shoulders and starting to massage.

"I don't know anymore," you answer, pointing to the Total Equality banner.

"What does that mean?"

"I think... it looks like there aren't any men's clothes anymore," you say. "Just women's."



"No way," Sienna says. "You must be doing something wrong. Scootch." She bumps you with her hip and you stand as she slides into the desk chair in front of the computer and goes right to the CNN website, and there is a big announcement right on the front page: Citizens Celebrate as Hive Introduces Total Equality Fashion. Beneath is a picture of a crowd composed of what look like little boys, all wearing matching skirts and blouses, smiling and celebrating.

"Wow," Sienna says, looking back at you. "It looks like you're going to have to get used to wearing a skirt, champ."

Of course, part of you is thrilled by the idea, relieved that you won't have to hide your new need, your new obsession, thrilled even that you will be able to pretend you don't want to do it, but another part of you really is terrified, terrified of where all of this is leading, of what you are becoming, and so you hurry to Sienna, take her hands, and kneeling down next to her you say, "Take me away from here. Please. Let's run, like we planned to, escape off into the wilderness, live off the land."

"I wish we could," Sienna says, squeezing your hands. "We can't. Not right now. You would never survive in your delicate condition."

"You can... protect me. I won't be too much of a burden. Sienna, please, I don't like what's happening to me, what The Hive is turning me into. I need you to... save me."

Sienna wraps you in her arms, rocking you side to side, holding you tight. "I will protect you," she whispers in your ear. "I will take care of you. I'll help you get through all of this. I just need you to trust me. Okay?" And then she holds you away, looking you in the eyes. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes," you say, nodding. "Yes."

"Good. Good boy. Then, let's go."

"Where?"

"Shopping."

"Wait? What? Didn't you hear what I was just saying?"

"Of course I did, but you have to trust me now, and the best way to take off a band aid is to just rip it off, right?"

"Right."

"So put on some shoes, and let's go. Just dive right in and get it over with. I've got this all worked out, and you've been through a lot, so for now let me do the thinking for the both of us, okay?"

"Okay," you say, bewildered and confused, but you put on your shoes, and then Sienna takes your hand and leads you out into the night, and it feels wrong and right, this arrangement, but most of all it feels inevitable. Sienna will make all the decisions for the two of you, and your job is to just be as supportive of her as you can. She loves you and cares about you, and she will always do what's best for the both of you.

When you finally return to work, it's like you've somehow passed into an alternate universe. The men are all small now, like you, and everyone is wearing make-up as well as women's slacks and blouses, women's shoes. However, that's as far as most of the men went. With Sienna's encouragement pushing your own blossoming femininity, you got your ears pierced and in addition to pretty little diamond earrings you are wearing bracelets and thin, girly necklaces, and you have a Juicy Couture purse hooked over your slender forearm. The buckles on your Mary Janes sparkle. The women all gush over your fashion choices, while the guys throw jealous glances at you.

You are clearly the bravest and trendiest man in the office, and you resolve to stay that way. You and all the men were nervous heading in, expecting a lot of teasing from the women about your clothes, but instead, much as with the

make-up, you received constant praise and compliments, all of you, about how cute, sexy and pretty you look in your new outfits.

The women are all taller, more confident, and you are all just getting settled in, chattering about Total Equality and what it's been like getting used to being so small again, when the Intercom system bleeps and an office-wide meeting is announced for the lecture room.

You all file into the conference room, and it is unusually quiet. No one speaks above a whisper, and you sit nervously, smoothing down your tight slacks and adjusting your blouse, and finally a Hive Soldier in full military gear strides onto the stage, steps confidently to the microphone and says, "Good morning to you all." Without waiting or seeming to care if there is any response, she continues speaking in clipped, flat, military cadences. "Boys are now frail and delicate due to unforeseen allergic reactions resulting from the inoculation program. In addition, they are experiencing some confusion and incoherence in their decision making process. Consequently, in order to protect boys, and to make life easier for them, The Hive is instituting a reorganization plan that will put boys in positions more suited to their delicate conditions. You will all receive specific details as to your new assignments following this meeting. Right now, I turn things over to your new CEO, Max Werther."

With that, Maxine Werther, formerly a vice-president at the company, strides onto the stage, and the women all applaud and cheer loudly, and you find yourself smiling and clapping along, even as you scan the audience looking for Anthony Perreli, the CEO, or now suddenly former CEO, but you can't seem to spot him in the sea of people, but he makes himself very visible because when the applause dies down and Max stands, a tiny little man, and he strides down the aisle toward the stage shouting, "This is bullshit!"

You barely recognize Anthony as he rushes past you in his open toed shoes, slacks with a flared pant leg that show off his ankles, and the silk blouse that clings to his narrow, slender body.

“Anthony,” Maxine says. “Now, now.”

“I’m the CEO of this company. I earned it! I worked for it! You can’t just take it away from me!”

“You’re obviously very emotional right now, and you’re not being rational, so...”

“We need to stand up to them!” Anthony yells, turning to face the audience. “We need to fight back!” He stomps his foot, and the women all start laughing, and his face turns red and he screams, “Listen to me! I am your boss!”

“Not anymore,” someone says, and even as Hive soldiers emerge from the wings and start moving toward Anthony, his face breaks and he’s crying.

“We can fight back,” he screams through the tears. “Resist! Who’s with me?”

But everyone just keeps laughing as the Hive soldiers take him by the elbows and lift him off his feet, and he kicks his legs and struggles weakly against them screaming, “Let me go! Let me go!”

And everyone is laughing as your former CEO is dragged away in tears, a helpless little boy in the arms of two big, powerful women.

“Poor little thing,” Max says when Anthony is gone. “We’ll make sure he gets counseling, and he’ll be fine. You’ll all see. And, I didn’t mean to lead with this, but if any of you other boys is having trouble accepting your delicate new conditions, just let someone at HR know, and we will be providing counseling and therapy for you, get those scatter-brained little heads of yours all straightened out.”

“What about us?” A woman calls out from the audience.

“I’m sure the women will be fine,” Maxine says, with a wink and a smile. “We’re all pretty strong. It’s my little boys I am worried about.”

The woman sitting next to you pats you on the thigh at that comment, and you flush with embarrassment.

And then Max drops another bomb shell. “Most of you boys did pretty well dressing yourselves in Total Equality Outfits, but some of you clearly did not read the email.” She lights up the overhead projector, and on the screen appears a male silhouette wearing a bra and panties. “If women have to wear bras and men don’t, equality is lacking. Therefore, please remember that starting tomorrow you will be expected to wear equal undergarments. You boys should be able to find training bras at any department store, or else borrow one from your daughter.”

The women laugh again, and you squirm uncomfortably. You don’t need a bra, and it just seems pointlessly humiliating to make you wear one, so you instantly decide you will not wear a bra, but then Maxine smiles and says, “As per Hive directives, there will be inspections to insure compliance in the name of Total Equality.” And you repeat the phrase, along with everyone else in the room, without even thinking about it, “Total Equality.”

The meeting goes on for a bit, and then when the new assignments are given you are not surprised at all to find that you have been reassigned as a secretary. Again, it all seems so inevitable, something that has to happen. Part of you wants to freak out, like Anthony, to refuse, to quit, to fight back, but you take a few deep breaths and get on your cell phone and call Sienna.

“What’s up, champ?” She says as she picks up the phone.

You tell her about the meeting, your demotion to secretary, fighting tears the whole time, feeling so powerless and weak, and Sienna listens patiently, and

then when you finish she says, "Don't feel bad. The same thing is happening here, everywhere."

"But, I worked for that job. That office. I earned, and now they're just taking it away from me. I think maybe I quit? Show them I can't be just demoted?"

"And then what? Get sent off to counseling? And who knows what that even means."

"I know, but...?"

"Remember, this is all being done for your good, sweetie. You are so delicate and frail now, and a boy in your condition really will be better off in a less stressful job."

"I guess."

"You'll do great," she says. "Just keep that pretty smile on your face, and do whatever your boss asks, and you'll be happy when it all works out."

"I just don't know..."

"But I do. Trust me."

"Okay."

"I want to hear you say that you're going to be the best little secretary you can be."

"No. No. That's just..."

"Say it."

"I'm going to be the best little secretary I can be," you whisper.

"Say it like you mean it."

"I'm going to be the best little secretary I can be."

"That's a good boy. Now take your cute little butt back in there and do it!"

"Okay. I love you."

"Bye," Sienna says, and the line goes dead.

Lana Quail is already moving her things into your space when you head back to what was formerly your office, and she gives you a condescending smile as you enter and says, "I love your outfit."

"Thanks," you say, forcing a smile on your face, and when you start to pick up some of your things, Lana puts a hand on your shoulder and says, "We'll have all this cleared out for you, sweetie. A boy in your condition shouldn't be lifting and moving heavy things."

"Oh, um, okay," you say.

"Okay, Miss Quail," she corrects you, and you smile and say, "Yes, Miss Quail."

"You are going to be a good little secretary. Now hurry off and go see your new boss. I am sure she is eager to get you started."

"Yes, Miss Quail," you say, turning, glad that your foundation is hiding how much your face is burning with shame.

"Hold it," She says sternly.

You turn and look at her, and she says, "Don't forget your purse."

"Of course not, Miss Quail. Thank you Miss Quail."

You hurry to your new boss's office as you were told to, and when you get there you exchange a rueful glance with the former occupant, Larry Wise, who is shamefacedly walking off with a small box of things clutched to his chest, and you smile and say, "Hi, Larry."

"Hi," he says, walking past quickly, and you feel lucky that Lana was nice enough to have someone move your things for you, but even as you watch Larry slinking away, you hear your new boss calling your name. You hurry into the office, and there she is, the woman who will now be giving you orders, Janet Crenshaw.

"You look nice," she says as you stand in front of her.

“Thank you, Miss Crenshaw.”

“But not nice enough. You represent me, and I expect you to be the absolute cutest secretary in this office. Every day. All day. Every day. Is that understood?”

“Cute? I’m not sure...?”

“Is that understood?”

“Yes, Miss Crenshaw.”

“Good. You and I will get along fine if you learn to listen and do what you’re told. That’s all I ask of you.”

“Yes, Miss Crenshaw.”

“Okay. Put your cute little purse down and get back in here to take some dictation.”

“Yes, Miss Crenshaw.”

“And get your nails done tonight. They look terrible.”

“Of course, Miss Crenshaw.”

She keeps you busy all morning, and when it’s finally time for lunch you hurry to the bathroom and stop, appalled to see the sign next to Women’s has been changed to Little Boys. Total equality my ass, you think as you push the heavy door open and go in to find, of course, the urinals have been removed and additional stalls added with a sign that says, “All employees must sit when relieving themselves.”

You grumble, but slip your slacks down your smooth, hairless legs and relieve yourself, and after you take a minute to stop at the mirror and fix your make-up, and as you watch yourself touching up your lipstick, you look at your hands and think, “Miss Crenshaw is right. My nails do look terrible.”

Miss Crenshaw keeps you late, and when you leave you feel stressed and overwhelmed. You need to get your nails done, go shopping for lingerie, finish up three reports she wants for tomorrow, and somehow spend some time with



Sienna. You said, “I love you,” to her earlier, and she just said bye, and it’s nagging at you, and you feel that same insecurity growing that she doesn’t find you attractive anymore, doesn’t love you anymore, because you are small and weak and wearing women’s clothes, and of course she hates you now.

Or she doesn’t, or she’s just as stressed about everything that’s going on and, you wonder, am I just being needy and emotional?

But you don’t want to lose her, can’t lose her now, and when you get to the salon to have your nails done, and the young woman says, “How are you?” It burst out of you and you share all your worries and concerns and she is so good at listening and understanding you leave feeling a lot better and resolved to just talk to Sienna and let her know how you feel.

Oh, and your nails are super cute now, and you are sure Miss Crenshaw will be proud of you. Now, you just need to get some bras and panties, pick up dinner and snuggle up with your girl and everything will be fine.

What happened to making an escape? Getting away? Fighting back? Maybe you would be able to think about that and even plan, but who has the time? So, you hurry along to Victoria’s Secret, and as you walk nervously in a tall, confident sales girl smiles and says, “Shopping for your first bra, sweetie?”

“Yes.”

She takes your elbow and you follow as she gushes, “I’ll help you find something comfortable and—do you have a girlfriend?”

“Yes.”

“We’ll get something cute your girlfriend will love you in. Does that sound fun?”

It doesn’t really sound all that fun, but you are relieved to have someone who is going to help you pick something out, and she seems nice and knowledgeable, so you smile and say, “It sounds super fun!”

And she smiles and looking around you realize the store is full of slender little men being helped to choose and try on bras by tall, strong girls, and once again that strange feeling of inevitable vertigo strikes as it all seems so wrong and yet so right, and then the salesgirl is handing you some silky bras, and you're smiling and nodding and then being pushed into the changing room, where you strip off your blouse and the girl helps hook you into your first bra, and as you feel the straps over your shoulders and across your back, you feel like you are losing yet another part of yourself.

You wear one of your new bras out of the store under your blouse. Everything is right and wrong. You are excited and ashamed. Embarrassed and proud. The streets are full of little men and tall women, boys in dresses and girls in jeans, and you clutch your purse nervously to your side as you hurry along, feeling anxious and afraid. You don't like being out in the city alone, but you know Sienna can't always be with you, and sometimes you're just going to have to go out and do things alone.

You pick up the food you ordered from the Indian restaurant and then your arms loaded down with your purse and bags from Victoria's Secret and food you struggle the rest of the way to your building, and then you get on the elevator and when you finally push the door open and almost fall into your apartment with a sigh Sienna rushes over and says, "Sweetie pie! Let me help you with that," and she is taking bags from your hands and saying, "You have to take it easy, honey! This is too much for a boy to try and carry."

You stand there looking at her, the concern, the care, and you feel relieved and ashamed, confused again, because you are so happy to see that she cares, and you feel her love and know her love, and yet you feel guilty that earlier you

doubted her, and so you start crying as you look up at her, and Sienna gives you a puzzled look and says, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” you say. “Nothing.” And you run to her and throw your arms around her and she meets you for a kiss, holding you tight and when the kiss ends you cling to her and say, “I love you so much!”

She wipes a tear from your cheek with her thumb and says, “I love you, too.”

You smile and whisper, “Make love to me.”

And Sienna says, “What about dinner?”

And you run a finger along her sternum and say, “forget dinner.”

And so Sienna smiles, kisses you, and then she lays you down right there on the floor and takes you.

The next day Sienna lingers after breakfast, and she says, “I want to watch you get ready today” in a gruff voice.

“Okay,” you say with a nervous giggle. And Sienna sits on a chair in the bedroom, and she watches as you slip into your bra and reach back, clipping it in the back and then adjust the straps on your small shoulders. She watches as you wiggle into a skirt—your first skirt—and then carefully button up your blouse—it’s sleeveless to show off your slender arms and has a Peter Pan collar, and then you step into your pumps and sit down at your now mutual dressing table and start to put on your make-up. As you use the wand to brush mascara on your lashes, your mouth hanging open, you glance in the mirror and Sienna is staring at you, her eyes hard and cold and hungry, and you feel a thrill pass through your slender body, and when you finish with your mascara and pick up a tube of lipstick, you pucker and go extra slow, making your moves sensuous and graceful, your face becoming softer and prettier as Sienna watches, and when you finally stand up, smoothing your skirt and tucking in your blouse to your slender waist, Sienna makes a growling noise and says, “You are so damn hot”

and she stands up and charges across the room, grabbing you and bending you backwards as she smothers you with kisses.

You're shocked and thrilled by her passion, and you feel so pretty and loved, and you start to get hot, but then she stops and stands you back up on your feet and says, "I'll walk you to work. Let's go."

"Don't stop," you plead, putting a hand on her flat belly. I need you."

"Just hold that feeling and let it build all day, baby, and tonight I promise you will have the best sex of your life." And with that she gives you a pinch on the ass, and you giggle and grab your purse and the two of you head out into the city, your head swimming with desire for the woman you love.

When Sienna kisses you goodbye and you head into work, your head is buzzing. Your mind is filled with the image of her watching you in the mirror, that hard, hungry look in her eyes. Just as you had expected, Miss Crenshaw is more than pleased with your clothes and manicure. She gushes with praise for you, and when other executives come to her office, she has you stand and turn, and they all nod with appreciation and compliment you on being so pretty and professional. You find yourself enjoying your new job, and feel excited about the projects your boss is working on, and your day just gets all the more exciting when at the end of it all Miss Crenshaw says, "I have a surprise for you, Cammie."

"What is it, Miss Crenshaw?"

"You've been so cooperative and so good about adjusting to the new equality, that I am giving you a raise."

"A raise?"

"Yes. You stick with me little guy, and we will be going places."

"Thank you, Miss Crenshaw." And you walk out on air, just as happy and pleased as can be, because even though your job title is a little less impressive

and you don't have your own office, you're making more money than before, and that's really more important anyway, isn't it?

Sienna smothers you with kisses the minute you walk through the door, and she keeps her word, laying you down and bringing the two of you slowly, methodically to simultaneous orgasms. You fall asleep in her arms, without giving the slightest thought to escaping, getting free, and there, small and soft, nestled in your girlfriend's strong arms, the very rational and inevitable thought enters your mind that your life right now in many ways is better than ever.

The next day, you are all interrupted from your work at noon when the Intercom beeps to life and Max tells you all to go to your computer monitors to watch a streaming broadcast. "This is a Hive Directive."

When you open your web browser, it immediately goes to live coverage from the White House, and a woman reporter you haven't seen before is talking about a big announcement. Soon, the tiny little press secretary comes to the podium and looking up with consternation, stands on his tippy toes so he can speak into the microphone, and he says, "Ladies, the President of the United States."

The president and his wife walk into the room. President Bannister, like the press secretary, is now tiny—maybe five feet tall, and he is wearing a blue dress with a pleated, A-line skirt and wide, white lapels. A leather belt emphasizes his tiny waist, and his face is made up very prettily in soft pastels, while his wife towers over him, looking like she may be close to six feet. He holds his wife's hand as they enter, and he is gazing up at her with a bleary, loving look in his wide gray eyes.

Lady Bannister walks to the podium, and the president stands slightly to the side and behind her as she taps on the microphone and clears her throat. "Due to his delicate condition, my husband has decided that it is in the best interest of the country that he step aside as President of the United States. In addition to

being too frail and emotional to handle the stress of the job, he would like to dedicate more time to his family, and will assume the role of full time caretaker for our children.” She pauses and looks over the audience, and you look at President Bannister who is nodding and smiling as his wife speaks for him.

“As both the Vice-President and The Speaker of the House have also concluded that they are too weak right now to continue in their positions, The Hive has asked, and I have agreed, to serve as president until a special election can be called in the near future. The president would like to thank the American people for their understanding and continued support.” With that she stepped away from the podium, and even as the reporters shouted questions, she gave her husband a big hug and then led him quickly from the room.

Of course, you think as you pick up your purse and fish out your compact, checking your makeup. You’re surprised it took them this long. And so, while people all over the office start to cluster and chat about the latest development, you just go back to work. Your boss has big plans for the both of you, and you don’t want to let her down. So, an hour or so later when you proudly deliver the X-Cell spreadsheets she wanted and she stops you and says, “What did you think of the president’s announcement, Cammie?”

You just smile and say, “Oh, I’m too busy to worry about things like that, Miss Crenshaw.”

“That’s a good boy,” Miss Crenshaw says. “A good boy who’s going places.”

And almost overnight you get used to it, and what had been strange and new becomes routine: the Hive ship hovering over the city, the Hive soldiers standing guard, your life in skirts and dresses, heels and lipstick. You get used to being small and weak, and taking orders from the women in your life. So, of course, just when you are getting settled into your new life and things seem like they will be okay after all, you notice that your behind is getting bigger.

It's your skirts that make you notice first. They start to feel tighter and tighter in the rear. They are made of a stretchy blend, so they still work, but when you look at your profile in the mirror your butt is definitely taking on a larger, rounder, more feminine shape. You check out other boys in the street, but they all have the same skinny, boyish little behinds as always, while yours is bigger and rounder, yet lifted—just like a woman's. And as much as you want to deny it, you're getting hips—well, you had hips, the straight hips of a boy, but now they are taking on a wider, rounder, softer shape, even as your waist stays tiny. You are filling out to an hourglass shape—just like a woman.

They start to notice at the office. The boys make catty comments --drinking a few too many lattes? Look who decided to become a "hippie." Haha. But the women all go gaga, they comment and whistle and seem suddenly fascinated with your tush. Miss Crenshaw says you have the "cutest backside in the office" and other women ask if you are doing buns of steel. In the street, women walking past you turn and look, and you hear comments from women walking behind you, "look at that hot little ass" or "he has a cuter ass than I do." It confuses and disturbs you, because never in your life have you been so completely defined by the attention you are getting for your ass. You want to turn on them, tell them to mind their own business, to shut up, but you know boys are expected to put up with this kind of thing, and you don't want to be sent off for counseling.

None of the boys who've been sent off for "counseling" has ever come back.

When Sienna finally notices your swelling, girlish behind, she gives you a slap on the ass and seems more than delighted. "My God you are getting cuter by the minute," she says.

"Some of the boys at work say I am getting fat," you say, not sure what to think of her reaction.

But Sienna just hugs you, lets her hands slip down to your behind, and she gives it a squeeze and says, “No. No. No. You are just getting sexier.” She rubs her hands over your soft, round behind and squeezes again. “Oh my God, I just love the way you are filling out, honey. You’re driving me crazy!”

“I don’t know,” you answer, confused and disturbed by how good it feels to have her hands on your booty as well as the way it seems to be changing the way Sienna looks at you. “Maybe I should get back to the gym? I feel strong enough now to do some training.”

“That’s a great idea, sweetie,” she says, still feeling your soft, round rump. “Buy yourself some cute gym outfits, and we’ll go together on Thursday.”

“Great,” you say, both because you are going to get to do some shopping, and because Sienna offered to go with you. You’re scared to go alone now, and you know you will feel much safer with Sienna there. The women won’t hit on a boy who’s at the gym with his girlfriend, and you are tired of hearing all the comments about your hot ass.

As you turn to walk away, Sienna gives you a pinch on the ass, and you squeal and blush, and Sienna just laughs and says, “we are going to have some fun with that sexy booty of yours,” and you just smile and hurry away, not sure you want to even think about what she might have in mind.

2021

Everything is wrong now. This is not your body. These are not your soft, round hips. These are not your swaying, jiggling breasts. You are not supposed to be mincing around the office in a tight skirt and pumps, and the squeaky little tea-kettle voice that comes out of you every time you speak is most certainly not your voice.



And your co-workers? You don't recognize them. You know these smiling, perky little things in skirts and dresses were once the men you worked with, you remember watching them transform and adjust to their new lives, smiling and chanting "Total Equality" as every last vestige of their manhood was stripped away, but looking at them now all you can see are silly young girls, flirty, feminine and totally submissive to the tall, strong women who swagger around the office in their pant suits, and all day long you are subjected to a relentless stream of demeaning language-- they call you cutie, sweetie, honey, doll face-- DOLL FACE!-- or if they use your name at all they you Cammie, and they freely let their hands drop to your behind for a squeeze or a pinch, even as they overtly let their eyes roam up and down your curvy little body or stare hungrily at the breasts you've served up for their appreciation with a push up bra and an open collared blouse.

All day, you smile and smile, and each time someone calls you honey or cutie, you fight back the urge to slap them or tell them to shut up because-- well, you've seen what happens to boys like Captain Katie who speak out, or Anthony-- When he was done with counseling, they brought him back for a little awhile and paraded the giggling bimbo they'd turned him into for everyone to see.

No. No. You didn't want that. Never that.

But it's driving you crazy now, your bra straps across your shoulders, the hem of your skirt across your thighs, the bangs that keep getting in your eyes. Damn that computer message. Damn it. Because you had found a way, some way to be happy in this body and this life, this life with Sienna-- Sean-- and now you were sick again with shame and grief and part of you just wants to go back, back to the way it was when you were just a pretty little boy with no other thought in his pretty little head other than whether you were ready to have your first baby.

Miss Crenshaw notices. She has risen to Chief Financial Officer with you, her trusty Little Boy Friday at her side, and so sometime after lunch as you sit, staring at your computer screen and the half-finished daily report you'd been working on, she stops by your desk and says, "You okay, Cammie?"

You look up at her. She's been so good to you, and she's taken care of you and helped advance your career. And part of you wants to tell her. To tell her everything. Because you know she'll know just what to do, and she'll make the best decision for you, and you won't even have to think about it anymore. She can fix everything, and all you have to do is put a pretty little smile on your face and ask.

But then you think about that picture again. Your body. Your real body, with your rock hard pecs and six pack, tall and strong and confident, and you know you want to go back to that, and Miss Crenshaw will not help you get back to being a man. So you smile and say, "Sean and I got in a little fight this morning."

"You know what to do, right?"

"Morning fights, bedroom delights."

"You take care of her in the sack tonight, sweetie, and she'll forgive everything. Now, I need you to focus and get those reports done. Okay, honey?"

"Yes, Miss Crenshaw."

"Good boy."

You smile and turn back to your computer, and you start typing annoyed at your long finger nails that make you take an awkward position when typing, a position that hurts your hands, and then up pops that same image of your old self on the screen, and you glance nervously around to see if anyone is watching.

A woman in a UPS uniform walks up just then, and you turn off your monitor. "Are you Miss Crenshaw's boy?" She asks.

The phrase irks you, and you almost correct her, but instead you smile and say, "Yes."

"I have a delivery for you."

And she hands you a box and a tablet. You sign, she takes the tablet and walks away, and as you look curiously at the box it starts to play an old blues song, I'm a Man-- not with the words but just the music. Still, that music is aggressive and virile, and you feel a thrill of panic and excitement even as you grab a box opener and start to open the box, looking around and shrugging. . Men glance up from their desks, their pretty little faces curious.

You glance behind at the window to Miss Crenshaw's office, but she has closed the venetian blinds, and so you pull the phone nervously from the box, swipe it on and put it to your ear. "They are coming for you," a tiny little voice says.

"What?"

"If you want to be a man again, get up and walk to the break room.

"I'm in the middle of a report..."

"If you want to be a man again, get up and walk to the break room. You have very little time. Decide now."

"I don't know," you say, biting on a nail.

"Look toward the main entrance."

You look up, and you see two Hive soldiers coming out of the elevator.

"Omigod," you whisper. "They're here for me?"

"Yes. For counseling."

Counseling. The word fills you with terror, even more terror than the idea of disappointing Miss Crenshaw, so you grab your purse with a trembling hand, stand up and start walking toward the break room. Later, you will realize you

never even thought about Sean in all this, but right now the voice barks, "Leave your purse."

You hesitate. The purse has all your things, your make-up, wallet, keys, mace, and you just don't feel complete without it, but you know that's all part of the bullshit conditioning you've been subjected to, and you see the Hive soldiers making their way toward the receptionist, so drop your purse and start to hurry toward the break room.

"Just walk calmly like nothing is wrong."

"Who are you?"

"No questions."

You push the door open and walk into the break room, your heart racing. It's empty, though there is a steaming bowl of soup sitting on the Formica table.

"What now?"

"Open the window. Crawl out on the ledge."

"What?"

"You heard me."

"I... I can't. I'm scared."

"Then I wish you well in your new life as a stripper."

"Okay. Okay." You push a chair over to the wall so you can reach the window, standing up unsteadily in your pumps, and you struggle but manage to get the window open. Then, pushing yourself up with your legs and using as much as you can get from your weak, tiny arms, you struggle up and feel a blast of wind as you stick your head out the window and make the mistake of looking down the 50 stories to the street below. Your breasts are getting crushed with the window frame, and they hurt. The ledge looks wider than you ever thought, maybe a whole foot, but still with your ample rear, you shake your head, "I can't stand on that in heels."

"Correct. Lose the heels."

You kick off your heels, and you're terrified, but you wiggle your way up and out onto the ledge, which is wider than you would have thought at about a foot, and somehow you find yourself on your feet, pressing your back against the wall, your breasts out, and the wind is whipping through your hair and you feel-- free. Free. "I'm free," you say into the phone you have pressed to your ear.

"Not yet," the voice says. "Work your way over to the right. To the open window."

You glance over and see the open window-- it's a big window, a picture window, and it's not that far. I can make it, you think. I can do this.

You edge your way sideways, and the wind gusts and you feel it push you forward, and for a moment you almost lose your balance, and you think you might fall, die, and even as your heart races and you face that fear, you feel a rush and a strong feeling that-- yes. Fine. If I die now at least I die fighting to be a man.

But you manage to regain your balance, and you make it to the open window, and then as you get in front it arms grab you and pull you backward into safety, your hair tumbling into your face, and even as you fall back you see a little man who is dressed just like you being helped up to the ledge, and then pushed forward to plunge screaming from the ledge, and a moment later you hear a loud thump, and cars honking, brakes squealing, and you pull your hair from your eyes and say, "Omigod."

"Congratulations," what looks to you like a tween girl says. "You just died." She's dressed in pretty standard clothes for a tween girl these days-- soccer jersey, baggy shorts and tennis shoes. She has a bowl cut and a strong wiry body with just the smallest hint of breasts.

"Did you just kill someone?"

"Yes."

"Who was he?"

"Don't worry about it," she says. "Are you ready to start living as a girl?"

"What?"

"Let's get this pretty little thing a hair- cut and tape down those udders, see if we can hide those hips."

"Yes, sir."

"The best way for the resistance to move about unnoticed these days is for us to dress and play the part of girls, my brother. So, starting today you are a 13 year old girl named Chris. I hope you like ponies and kittens."

"I do, but.."

"I was joking."

"Oh."

"While Doc cuts your hair, I'll fill you in. "

"Shouldn't we be making a run for it?"

"Nah. The street below is swarming with The Hive, and they are all reaching the conclusion that you just killed yourself rather than go off for counseling. We'll let it all settle, and then we'll just walk right out of here."

You just nod as you are helped into an old-fashioned barber's chair, and what looks like yet another tween girl, this one chomping on a cigar, puts an apron around your neck. "Your first haircut from a barber in a few years, I'm guessing," Doc says.

"Yeah. I haven't been to a real barber in years."

"I didn't say I was a real barber," Doc answers, smiling around his cigar and turning on the electric clippers. "Just a kind of fake barber really."

"He'll try not to cut your ears. Much," Barton says.

You smile. It's been so long since you heard guys talk like-- guys. Act like guys. And as Doc runs the electric clippers through your long, thick hair, with all its layers and curls and feminine complexity, you feel as if 100 pounds are being lifted off your small shoulders, and you smile and laugh as a nice, simple angular haircut emerges, and though with your wide eyed, feminine face you don't exactly look like a man, you sure as hell feel more like a man as with each pass of the clippers a layer of that absurd woman's life you've been living is sheared away.

2019

You settle on a pair of stretchy yoga pants from Lulumon, and a pink crop top. In the name of Total Equality, you have a sports bra underneath, hugging your flat, bony chest. You're checking yourself out in the mirror, seeing how the pants hug and shape your heart shaped rump, when Sienna walks in she sees you and whistles. "You look sexy as hell in those, babe."

You scrunch up your nose as she comes up behind you, throws one arm across your chest and reaches down to cup your soft, round behind. "I was thinking of wearing shorts over my leggings. It seems a little too... revealing?"

"Don't you dare," Sienna says. "I want you making all the other girls jealous!"

You sigh and look at yourself there in the mirror. You've gotten smaller, and Sienna taller, and the changes in your body have gone beyond your booty. Your hips have gotten wider, softer, rounder, and whereas you once had skinny, bony legs, they are starting to get fleshy and round, like a woman's. Hopefully, getting to the gym will help you get rid of some of this softness, this roundness that's taking over your body. You can't wait to feel some cold steel barbells in your soft little hands.

It's your first time back at the gym since the change, and dressed in your little outfit you feel self-conscious and insecure, so you cling to Sienna's arm as the

two of you enter and are greeted at the front desk by a tall young woman and a little man in a cute outfit a lot like yours. You sort of recognize them as Lisa and Kevin-- they worked here before the invasion-- but without his name tag there is no way you would have recognize that skinny little thing with the wide, innocent green eyes as Kevin-- he'd been a ripped and bulky gym rat before and now in his sports bra and tights, his face lightly made up, he looked like a skinny little pre-teen girl.

"Hey, guys," Sienna says.

"Hey," Lisa says, slightly raising her chin toward Sienna, then looking down at you, she looks back at Sienna and says, "Oh my god! Is that Cameron?"

"I know, right?" Sienna says.

"He's sooooo cute."

"The prettiest little boyfriend a girl could want," she answers, pulling you close, and you feel yourself blushing shyly.

"Just look at those hips!"

"He's filling out nicely."

"Okay. Well, Kev, why don't you take little Cammie and let him know about all our exciting new classes for boys, and I'll talk to Sean here about her program."

"Okay!" Kevin says, giving you a big smile as he comes around the counter. "We have classes in the back rooms for boys now."

You cling to Sienna, and mustering your courage you say, "Oh, um, I was going to lift some weights. If that's okay?"

"Oh," Kevin says, gently touching your arm. "No. It's really not."

"Hive directive," Lisa says, pointing toward a sign on the wall. "Due to your delicate condition, boys are not allowed to lift weights. You're too frail, sweetie. You might hurt yourself."



You feel your face getting red, and your anger rising. They want to keep us weak, you think. They want us all small and with these stupid, tiny arms. Total equality, my ass, but instead of giving them a piece of your mind, instead of telling them just where they can put their frail, delicate condition, you put a hand on Sienna's shoulder and look up at her pleadingly. "Can I work out with you? I really want us to spend some time together."

"The law is the law, and it's for your own good, sweet pea." She takes your little hand off her shoulder and hands it to Kevin, who gives you a little sympathetic nod and squeezes your hand in boyish solidarity. "Go have fun with the boys, and we'll see each other after."

"Okay," you say, allowing Kevin to lead you to the back classrooms, and as you turn and walk away you hear Lisa say, "He has an incredible ass."

"I know, right?"

"A class is just about to start," Kevin says, "so you're really lucky."

"Have you taken any of them?"

"Yeah. They're really fun, and they're designed for boys so we don't get hurt."

"Don't tell me you're buying into all this delicate condition nonsense?"

Kevin takes both of your hands and looks you right in the eye. "Better just go along with it, honey. Total equality."

"Total equality," you whisper back as he leads you into a large, brightly lit room full of pretty little boys in tights and yoga pants, sports bras and tank tops. You quickly survey the room and see only one other boy who has the kind of round heart shaped behind you have, and part of you feels a little proud, a little arrogant to have so much more ass than all these skinny boys.

The teacher comes in-- a tall woman with long limbs, and she looks over the room and says, "Okay, boys. Who's ready to dance his little feet off?"

A smattering of murmurs.

"Who is ready to dance their little feet off?"

"We are!"

"That's better. One more time. Who's ready to dance their little feet off?"

"WE ARE!"

"Okay! Let's warm up."

The first fifteen minutes of the class consist of yoga stretches, and you are surprised at how much more flexible you've become, though maybe it's due to the fact that you have almost no muscle mass anymore. Then, the teacher claps and says, "Take a position at the barre. Time to learn some new terms, boys: Releve and plie. Does anyone know what they mean?"

You all shake your heads. She demonstrates as she explains. "Releve: you stand on your tippy toes, and for plie you gently bend your knees. Let's begin."

"Can we do something a little more challenging?" The other guy with a girl's butt says.

"Ask me that again when we're done, honey buns." She turns on the music-- something from Swan Lake, and you start. It turns out that going up on your toes, down, and up on your toes, down, is really hard after five minutes, and killer after 10, and when the teacher finally says you can stop you all gasp with relief and reach down to massage your aching calves.

"Not so easy, but trust me. It's going to give you legs to drive the girls crazy!"

"Oh, good" you hear one of the guys say. "My wife says my legs are too skinny!"

You get some water. Mop off the sweat. The teacher fires up new music and shouts, "Okay, boys, now let's dance!" The song is something Sienna used to play sometimes. It's kind of repetitive. Beyonce? Who runs the world? Girls. And the teacher, Miss Snow, has you all kicking and side stepping, kick ball changing and throwing your hands in the air, smiling and laughing and dancing along, and

each time Beyonce says, "Who runs the world?" You all kick, throw your hands in the air and shout, "Girls!"

When the class ends, Miss Snow has you all give each other hugs, and she praises you all for working so hard and being such fun, perky little boys. The last boy you hug is the other one with serious back, and he says, "My name's Carter Schwartz."

"Cameron," you answer.

He smiles and says, "So how do you like being a piece of ass?"

You sense Miss Snow watching and feel nervous, so you smile and say, "It takes some getting used to."

"Yeah it does."

When you finally grab your towel and water bottle and start towards the door, you notice Sienna there, smiling. "Hey," you say. "Were you watching?"

"Just the last little bit. You all looked so cute dancing and singing."

"Well, cute or not, I have to admit that was a pretty hard workout."

"For a boy."

It annoys you that she is making fun of the workout, and you wonder if she could make it through, but you just smile and say, "Yeah, for a boy."

Sienna nudges you on the chin, puts an arm around your slender waist and leads you toward the door. You look back over your shoulder and call back in a high voice, "Thanks, Miss Snow."

"Of course, darling!"

"Gosh, we had to releve, and it really was hard to stand on my tiptoes so much," you say, nuzzling next to Sienna, enjoying her sweaty musk.

"Yeah," Sienna says. "Yup. Aren't you going to ask me about my workout?"

"Oh! Yeah! How did it go?"

"Well, I started with deadlifts, and I am really so much stronger than ever I can't even believe it."

"Really?" You say. "How much did you lift?"

And Sienna begins to tell you all about the heavy weights she lifted, and the whole time you act all impressed and amazed, but you keep thinking, "I bet she wouldn't last five minutes at the barre."

Friday night, Sienna has a surprise for you in bed. She has you kneel, and she comes up from behind you wearing a strapon and takes you. You don't like it. It feels degrading and humiliating, but also inevitable. She's been obsessed with your butt ever since it started to fill out, and you've been half expecting her to do this for days, so as you patiently sit there on your hands and knees at the edge of the bed, rocking back and forth, you think to yourself, I guess I'm going to have to get used to looking at the floor now. It was all just a part of being a good little boyfriend. You don't want to lose her.

And once again it all started to seem normal, and you got used to it, and other boys started to fill out, and just when you were settling into your new life and new situation, you became the first boy in your office to get your boobs.

2021

"You're former military, you have tech skills. That's why we recruited you," Barton explains while Doc covers the back of your neck with warm shaving cream. The smell alone makes you feel like more of a man again, and when you feel that straight edged razor scraping along your skin you clench your fists and smile.

"We have just about everything in place for a massive strike against the Hive. Your first task will be to undergo training on the Hive computer network, especially their security protocols. That's where Pete comes in," Barton says,

gesturing toward a thin, skinny boy with a narrow, angular face. "She'll be training you."

"She?"

"We have to refer to each other as girls at all times so as not to compromise our cover."

"Got it."

Your hair cut done, a couple of Barton's people fit you with a kind of sheath that presses down your breasts and gives you the impression of a more modest, girlish bust, and then you slip into a baggy Yankee jersey and a baggy pair shorts and you feel just like you used to as a boy again, and you find yourself hopping up and down, enjoying the feeling of clothes that are so free and not nearly as constricting as the skirts and blouses you'd gotten used to. For the first time in over a year, you don't feel your breasts bouncing and swaying, either.

Everyone laughs. "Like you just got released from prison, right?" Pete says.

"Yeah. Wow. I forgot how easy it is to move and breath!"

"Lose the earrings and the bracelets."

"Oh, yeah." You reach up and pluck the earrings from your ears, dropping them into a bucket full of jewelry that Barton holds out for you, and then you slip the flashing bracelets off your slender wrists and toss them in as well.

There's a knock at the door in the next room. Then a small knock. And another.

"That will be your mother."

"Mother?"

You hear someone enter, there's some small talk, and then a very pretty little blonde man with a stunning body wearing walks in. He has a poodle in a bag over one little arm, and in the other he has a cigarette in the cigarette extender,

and he looks at you with his big, green eyes, bats his thick, false lashes and says, "Is this my new daughter?"

"Yeah."

He minces over, looks you up and down and says, "You're cute."

"Thanks."

"I didn't mean it as a compliment. We're going to have to butch you up, honey. But, you'll do."

Barton takes a picture of you against a blue background, leads you over to a computer. Pete works the keys, and the picture Barton just took uploads into an official adoption document identifying you as Chris Hammerville, Female, 13 years old, adopted daughter of Felicia Hammerville.

"This is the point of no return," Barton says. "Press enter, and your old life is over. You will be a part of the resistance, living undercover as a girl, and there is no going back to your old life. Ever."

"My boyfriend?" You say, biting your lip.

"Gone. Just like everything else."

You reach out and press ENTER, and the document uploads, and after a moment the website reads, Adoption Confirmed. Congratulations.

"You are now officially a girl," Barton says, and everyone gathers around you, slapping you on the back and congratulating you. You turn and start to give Barton a hug, but he holds up his hands and says, "girls don't hug. That's for bitches."

Felicity hands you her dog and says, "Welcome to the family, Chris. This is Mister Pretty. Now let's go."

"Just do your best to fit in and we'll be in touch." And just like that, you walk out of the building with your mother and into your new life as a 13 year old girl.

Your life is now no longer your own. You go to an elite girl's school, and it's all about what you remember as young macho behavior, except for the fact that all these kids in pants and blazers, with their short, angular haircuts are actually girls. You easily fall back into the world of tough talking and teasing, and you eagerly walk down to the park with the other girls and flirt with and make passes at all the boys in their little pleated skirts and thin silk blouses that show off their budding breasts.

You have study sessions with Pete after school, and the resistance gives you treatments that cause your breasts and hips to shrink, getting smaller, and soon you have a more angular, muscular profile just like all the girls. The chemicals clear the fogginess in your brain, and your math skills come back, and soon you are easily finding ways around Hive security and devising viruses that will launch and cripple their entire operation.

Felicity is a not so annoying mom. It's hard to get used to being treated like a child again, and keeping up the act whenever other people are around, and since she has four servants for your rooms at the top of a palatial old money building off Central Park West, there are almost always people around, but truth be told a teen girl has more freedom than an adult boy under The Hive, and you soon find yourself heading out into the city with some other girls to skateboard or shoot hoops at Westside park. Weeks pass. Months. And soon even as you work in your spare time to bring down The Hive and end their reign, you find yourself liking your life. It's fun being a girl, and having a rich mom, and you start to wonder-- why would I ever want this to end?

But, of course, you aren't really a girl, are you? So, it has to end. Unless there is some way you can get a sex change? But no. That's crazy. You'll have to bring down the Hive, and then you'll get back to being a regular man, and that was even better than being a girl, wasn't it? Some nights you try to remember, but all

your memories of the time before the Hive seem fuzzy and unclear, more like a dream than a reality, and as you lay on your bed at night and look at pictures of boys in their bras and panties, smiling at the camera with their full, wet, red lips and ripe, heavy breasts, you wonder what it would be like to have a boyfriend.

2019

You'd felt your boobs coming for a couple weeks. Your nipples had gotten really sensitive, and then your chest had seemed to get puffy, more sensitive and achy as well. Meanwhile, Anthony had finally returned from counseling, or what was left of him, and they had paraded the giggling, busty, bomb-shelled bodied blonde in a mini-skirt and halter top with big, hoop earrings and four inch heels around the office, and then had him speak at a meeting that afternoon in the very same conference room he'd been dragged from months before.

"I want to thank the Hive," he said, stopping to giggle and do a little knee bend. "I was just such a silly billy, and they showed me that I don't have to hide my masculinity anymore, that I can't be proud of my curvy body and wear pretty clothes and, you know, just be a boy!!!!!" He giggled some more and reached up with one slender, taloned hand to brush a strand of blonde hair from his eyes. "So, I am so glad now that they helped me become my true self, and also to Max for hiring me to be her personal assistant! Oh, and get this-- she is paying for my pole dancing lessons, so I can pursue my lifelong dream of being a stripper!"

And with that Max strode onto stage, and Antonia, as he now wanted to be called, squealed and threw his arms around the woman who'd stolen his job and his life, and he hugged her and gave her a kiss on the cheek and squealed, "thank you, thank you, thank you!"



And as you had watched him there you had found yourself feeling a little jealous of those big, firm breasts of his, and you had started to wish you had boobs, too, and then had wondered-- is that what's next?

And so, when Sean woke you one day by putting her hands on the perky little breasts you popped out seemingly overnight and began to play with them, you weren't much surprised, but actually felt relieved and thought, maybe she'll start paying attention to my front side again.

And boy did she ever. She couldn't get enough of your blossoming breasts, and every time you were together she has her hands under your shirt, caressing and squeezing your boobs, and when you made love she kissed them and sucked on your nipples, and you lay back and loved it, loved it, because it felt so, so good, and besides it didn't seem like you could get hard anymore unless you kissed and caressed each other for at least 20 minutes, and it wasn't long, either, before Sean began to tease you with, "you take as long to come as a woman, sweet pea," and you just giggled, because you knew it was true.

You were an early bloomer, and so you experienced the last, big, shocking yet inevitable change one night before it was really spread around on the news. You were on your back, your hands buried in your now long, thick hair, your legs spread, and Sean had been playing with your breasts, taking you into her as you got hard, and you'd been rocking together, totally in synch, and you'd been panting, your voice high and pretty, begging "take me... take me..." and then you felt yourself give in, Sean tightening and sucking the load right out of you, but then you gasped as your whole body had felt like it was opening, your legs had spread wider, your tummy had practically sung with pleasure, and then it was like you could feel your penis spread, and Sean grunted and you could feel all those juices reversing and flowing back into you, and you wrapped your legs around your girlfriend's body, and she started thrusting, filling, filling with all that hot,

steamy life, and you cried out in the greatest pleasure you'd ever felt and then collapsed, Sean laying on top of you, running the back of her hand gently across you smooth cheek and whispering, "what just happened?"

"I don't know," you answer, taking her hand and impulsively sucking on her fingers. "But I loved it."

Sean fell asleep, but you lay back, staring at the ceiling, lost in bliss, replaying the strange and fascinating experience in your mind, the feeling of having had Sean-- shoot her load? Into you, and you quietly got up and HIVED IT, but found nothing, so the next day after work you stopped by one of the free men's health clinics the Hive had set up, and when you shyly explained to the doctor what had happened, she's smiled and said, "Congratulations, Cammie. You're one of the first boys to develop your own womb."

And that's when you'd learned that in the new world of Total Equality, it would be the boys who had the babies.

2021

The year passes. Your first school year as a girl. You've been working on the tech work for the resistance, but spending more and more time hanging out with your friends, playing sports. The boys your age are too young for you, so although you find yourself spending more and more time looking at pictures of sexy little boys in bikinis on the Internet, and trading porn magazines with the other girls at school, you don't go to the dances or on any dates. The world thinks you are only 13, so it isn't totally weird, but in the meantime you think about them all the time, and when summer rolls around you go to the beach with some of the other girls from school. You see some older boys in bikinis gathered in a circle, and they all have full breasts and wide, rounded hips, and one of them is wearing a Rutgers Boy's College t-shirt that stretches tightly across his full breasts. His

face is full of freckles, and he has long, curly red hair, and he seems kind of shy, so when you see him get up at one point, slip into his flip flops and head to the boardwalk, you hurry to bound onto the stairs just in front of him and then, looking back you say, "Hey, cutie."

"Hey," he says, blushing.

When he gets to the top of the stairs, you fall in alongside and say, "Where you going?"

"To get some soda."

"I'll buy it for you. What flavor do you want?"

"How old are you?" He asks.

"I'm 19."

"You don't look it."

"I'm small for my age. You wouldn't hold that against a girl, would you?"

"Yes."

"Oh, that was very rude. I thought you were a nice little boy."

"I'm sorry," he says, stopping.

"Did you want something?"

"Yeah," you say, looking him right in the eyes, and then you take his face in your hands and kiss him. "I wanted to do that. Forgive me?"

"Only if you do it again," he says hoarsely, and you smile and take him by his small, soft hand, and you lead him under the boardwalk, where the two of you blush and kiss, and eventually you get him out of his bikini top, and it's the first time you've had a boy topless, and it makes you feel powerful and in control, and you kiss his breasts and pinch his nipples, and he giggles and squeals just like you used to do back when you were a pretty little boy just like him.

You're not a boy anymore. Now, you're a girl, and as you hold that smooth, sexy boy in your arms, one hand full of his full, soft breast, you realize you don't

ever want this to end. You want to be a girl for the rest of your life. You want to find a sweet, pretty little boy and make him your wife, just like any other girl.

You get Cassie's number, walk him back to his friends and kiss him goodbye, and you swagger back to your girlfriends smiling, and they high five you and say, way to go stud, and everyone wants to know how you got such a pretty, older girl to make out with you, so you smile and say, ladies, the trick is to make them feel special. Boys love that shit.

You call Cassie. You find ways to spend weekends together. You can't let him realize you are "only 13" so you make up stories about college life at NYU. He's naive-- he's only a boy after all, and for a month or so you are in bliss, kissing and making out, using a shunt so when he gets excited and reaches down he doesn't realize you're another boy, and you can slap away his hand before he gets too good a feel.

And then, one day when he is scheduled to meet you at Penn Station, and the two of you are going to have a romantic evening of dinner and cab rides around Central Park, you get a text that says, "You're only 13?" And you know it is over, and for the first time since you started living as a girl, you find yourself heart-broken and in tears.

"I had to do it," Barton says. "You were going to compromise the mission." It's the first you've seen him since the day he introduced you to your mother and your life as a girl.

"I understand," you lie, looking away from him, down the alley as if watching for Hive soldiers.

"I'm telling you all this because I need to know if you're starting to get lost in your role, kid. Remember, you are only undercover as a girl. You are not an actual girl."

"I know," you say, irritated.

"Do you? Because you are starting to act a lot like an actual girl these days."

"I'm undercover."

"But that doesn't mean you have to start dating boys. Kissing boys. Buying them flowers."

"I lost my head. It won't happen again."

Barton grabs your arms and yanks you back, shoving you against the wall. You shove back, and then he punches you hard in the gut, and you double over.

"Listen to me. Don't get any funny ideas. There is no going back. You've been violating their network, planting bugs, working with the resistance. If you get caught now, counseling will be the least of your worries. Do you know what they do to people they catch from the resistance?"

"No," you say. "What?"

"I don't know either, because we've never seen any of them again. Except for one we think they left as a message to us." He holds up a picture, and you see Captain Kate, dead, disfigured, in a pool of blood.

"Oh my god," you say, putting your fingertips to your lips. "I knew him."

"Yeah. He's the one who turned us onto you as a possible agent."

"They killed him?"

"Tortured and killed him. Dumped his body on the street and left it there. That's the reality of The Hive, and that's what they will do to you, me and anyone else they even think is part of the resistance, including your pretty little boyfriend."

"Cassie?"

"Yeah. You put him at risk just by texting him. Okay?"

"Okay. Okay. Oh my God. I am so sorry, Barton."

"Don't let it happen again."

"I won't. And by the way-- you punch like a girl."

"Thanks, kid." And with that Barton walked away.

You throw yourself into your work, digging deeper and deeper into Hive security, planting the viruses that will be activated to cripple all their defenses, bring them down. They Hive is arrogant, sure of themselves, and you are not surprised that their network security reminds you of all the other security you've seen from people who thought they were too smart to get beat-- a very large, thick wall, and nothing behind it to catch people who got through. Because, of course, they are sure no one will ever breach their supposedly flawless firewall.

And so summer passes, and though you still spend some time with your buddies, hanging out with the other girls, you are a little more standoffish, a little distant, and as your eighth grade year approaches, you try out for the girl's football team, and you are excited when you make the squad, and you're smiling, strutting home proudly to tell your mother all about it when you hear someone call, "Cammie."

You hunch your shoulders and ignore the voice, hurrying along, and when you hear urgent footsteps in pursuit you bolt, shoving through a couple older boys and knocking one of them down but you glance back and see your pursuer is closing in, and you recognize the big, tall woman running after you is Sean, and in desperation you race right out onto Broadway, barely dodging a cab, then a horse drawn carriage, and even as Sean yells after you, "Cammie! Cammie!" You cut down a side street, grab a fire escape, scurry up the ladder and making your way to the roof, you throw yourself flat on the ground and wait, listening to your heart pound even as you silently call out, Sean! Sean! And tears fill your eyes as you realize you still love her.

I'm a silly boy, you think. So emotional. Or I'm a silly girl. So emotional. A man? A woman? What's wrong with me? What am I? Why can't I just choose to be one thing or another, to live a normal life?

What do I want? Really?

Looking up at the sky, you see The Hive ship hovering there, lights flashing along its surface, so huge and dark and ominous. And yet you have been inside it, inside its network, and you know how vulnerable it is, how with one click you could send it crashing to the ground, and then you feel your phone vibrate, and your heart leaps because you are sure that somehow it is Sean, that she got your number, and she's calling you, and she's going to tell you to come home, that she'll make it all better, put things back the way they were, she'll think for both of you, and you'll take medicine and your breasts will come back, and you'll be her pretty little boyfriend and you won't have to make any decisions anymore at all; you'll just have to love her and let her love you like you did before, and so you fish your phone out of your pocket, and you look at it with bleary eyes, and you see a text from your mom telling you to get home cause it is time for dinner, and you wipe your tears and remember that at least for right now you are a girl, and your mom is worried, and you have to get home.

As you walk in the door, Felicia looks over from the couch, and as soon as you see him, you start crying, run to him, bury your head in his big, motherly breasts and say, "Mom!"

"What is it?" He asks, running his hands through your short hair, rubbing your back. "Where have you been?"

"I don't know. I'm so confused right now. So lonely."

"Tell me. Tell me all about it."

"I don't know if I'm a boy or a girl anymore. I don't know if I want to be a boy or a girl anymore. And I thought I saw Sean today, and she called out to me, and I ran but it made me wonder-- do I still love her? Did I ever love her? Do you know what I mean? Does that make sense? Am I going crazy?"

"No," your mother answers, "you are not going crazy. And, yes, that all makes sense. I feel the same way."

"You do?" You lift your head from his breasts and look him in the eyes, those eyes so carefully lined with dark eyeliner, the lashes thick and dark with mascara, the pink and purple eyeshadow.

"All the time, honey. All the time. The resistance cleared me of all conditioning, reset me to the man I was before The Hive came, yet every day I go out into the world like this, and I play the role of the new masculine man, and do you want to know something? Some days it's not so bad. Some days this seems better to me than when I was a man before."

"That's it. That's just it. I like being a girl, and I don't want to go back."

Your mother hugs you then, holding you tight, and says, "It's a choice we shouldn't have to make, but there is no third option. Anyway, just hang in there because it is coming soon, and know that I love you just as if you were my own little girl."

"Thanks, Mom," you say, wiping away your tears.

"Of course. Anytime you have a problem, just talk to me, Cameron."

It's the first time your mother has ever used your old name, your male name from before all of this, before you became Cammie and then Chris, and it surprises you and pleases you and yet-- that's not your name anymore, but you just smile and say, "I will."

"Now let's eat," your mom says. "We need to put some meat on that skinny little body of yours! "

You chatter and eat, sharing the details of your lives like any mother and daughter, and then when dinner is over the servants come to clean off the table, two pretty little boys in French Maid outfits, and you admire their breasts and long legs, and then head up to your room, throw yourself on your bed and sigh. It's



been such a long day. So much emotion. And it is so unfair, so not right that there is no third option because...

And then it occurs to you. What if there were a third option? What if you refused to choose between The Hive and The Resistance? You sit up, excitedly, running the ideas around in your head, and one word resonates above all others-- freedom. Not just for you, but for everyone. Rather than choose between the present of The Hive or the past of the Resistance, what if you made a new future where everyone could choose their own identity?

You sit at your computer and start to work, and the work consumes you for the next several days, but you know that it needs to be done and done now.

2020

"I would love for you to have my baby," Sean says after you have told her about your visit to the clinic. You are sitting on her lap, and as she talks she is gently rubbing your belly, thrilled and amazed at the idea that you now have a womb, just like her.

"Let's not rush into it," you say, both happy and disturbed that your girlfriend seems so excited about the idea of getting you pregnant.

"Why not?" Sean says. "We've been dating forever. I mean, don't you want to have kids?"

"I don't know."

"But we've talked about it before, and you said you did want to have kids when the time was right."

"Yes, and I am not sure the time is right now."

"What could be a better time?"

"A time when you were the one who was going to have to carry a BABY around in your belly for nine months?"

"So, it was a great idea when I had to do it, but not now that you're the one who'll have to put up with it."

"Yes. That's right."

"And why should that make any difference?"

"Why? Because I am a man, Sean. A man."

You start to get up off her lap, but she holds you there, and you squirm angrily.

"Men have babies now, Cammie."

"I don't want to talk about it anymore!"

So she lets you go, but the question hangs in the air. Sean leaves little hints around, and anytime there is a baby on a commercial or in a television show, she makes a point of mentioning how cute the baby is, how much she wants to start a family, be a father.

Sean? The father. It makes you so mad. You're supposed to be the father. She's supposed to be the mother, and that's not the reality anymore and you know that, but it is just so unfair. The whole thing starts to cast a pall over your relationship, to create constant, recurring tension, and you start to realize that if you want to keep Sean, you are going to have to become a mother.

2021

You had just finished football practice, tossed your pads into your locker, and you were getting ready to go get some Gatorade at a bodega with the other girls from the team when your phone buzzed. You looked down and saw the message-- Go. Go. Go. Your heart raced and you felt your fingers tingle, but you'd practiced for this moment and so you calmly just shove the phone back in the pocket of your jeans and say, "Hey, guys. I have to go. My mom just texted me."

You fist bump and high five some of the girls, who all seemed to have growth spurts during the summer and are now all taller than you, and it all you can do to hide your tears as you walk away because everything is about to change, and you will probably never see any of them again. You hurry to your location, pull your laptop out of your backpack, log onto Wifi, and at precisely 3:59 PM, just as planned, to active all of the viruses and worms that have been created, and the moment you active them there is a concussive boom from the Hive Ship, which for the first time in years starts to move, tilting sideways, askew, like it is broken, smoke starting to pour from vents along its surface, it moves north, north until it is blocked from your view by the skyscrapers of the city, but you know it is heading out over the open sea where it will plunge into the ocean and plunge into the sea.

And then you activate your next wave of viruses, the ones you designed yourself, the third option viruses, and once you have hit enter, you drop the laptop and walk away even as the laptop erases the identity of every single human and Hive agent on earth from every database-- names, sexes, all of them are eradicated, and all over the world as Hive ships smoke and lurch and head off toward their destruction, people's phones start to buzz, and looking down they see a message appearing again and again and again: You have been erased. You are now free. Define yourself.

As you walk, you think, Am I a man or a woman? A boy or a girl? The answer for me is yes. Maybe tomorrow I'll change my mind. Maybe one day I will want to be just one thing again, but today, today I say yes to everything. And everyone else can decide for themselves.

END