

Kit 'n' Kenzie

by: Sophie & Pudding

Premise: Kit Lonsdale is a college boy with a lot of problems, but nothing compares to the problems he faces when he signs up for an experimental study that turns him into a kid again! Unexpected side effects start to strain his relationship with his best friend, MacKenzie, and the two are quickly embroiled in a mess neither of them can handle. But MacKenzie starts to notice... maybe she can use this situation to her advantage. Maybe she can make Kit the person he always wanted to be.

Disclaimers: bedwetting, little, transgender, non-sexual, diapers

1.)

"It's called the Deageinator - it's really simple, you sit here and I'm going to shoot you with this machine, it's going to de-age you a year or two, and then you get paid. Simple, right?" I hadn't gotten too much response to my posting on Craigslist, but the girl who sat before me - or maybe it was a boy, there was a lot of androgyny at play and it was hard to tell - bore the telltale signs of college-age-malnutrition. I suspected he-or-she might have done just about anything for the \$500 I had on offer. **"Any questions?"**

"Yeah, kind of." I looked over the machine, which altogether looked something like a death ray from a James Bond movie, and ran my fingers along the edges. **"What do you mean de-age? Like it'll make me look younger?"** I certainly wasn't against the idea.

"Typically one of the side-effects of becoming younger is looking younger, yes." I fiddled with the collar of my lab-coat to make sure it was symmetrical and then checked myself in the mirror - when Doctor Izzy Drake perfected her creation, she was going to have to look her best for the camera, after-all. Then again, it's not like most famous scientists went out of their way on appearances, so I guess I was a unique case. **"I need your name for the consent form."** At least the kid's name would solve the gender conundrum.

"Kit Lonsdale. That's with a K, like the candy bar." I still wasn't so sure about the idea of zapping me with some x-ray something or other, but five

hundred bucks was five hundred bucks. **"How does it work? Is there any chance it could, like... hurt me?"**

"Hurt? No. No, I imagine if there's a problem with the Inator you won't experience any pain." Just complete subatomic reversal, but that happened far too quick for the nerves in the body to complete a pain signal. **"Okay, Kit like the candy bar, you need to sign this paper here, and initial here... and here... and here... and six times on this page... and here... and over here... and here, but not here... and here. Oh, and sign here again. And here."** There was a bit of paperwork involved, but I did have to ensure complete indemnity.

Jesus. I wasn't so sure I wasn't signing over my life! I frowned and put the pen down on the desk when I was done, fiddling nervously with my fingertips. **"So... about that money..."** She'd have to pay me first, right? I mean, that was how it worked in all the other studies I did. Of course, none of them were quite so much.

"Oh, yes, yes," I opened the top drawer of my desk and took out an envelope marked "Subject 8121b" and handed it to Kit, nodding. **"Feel free to count it before we begin, I don't want you to have any doubts at all."**

I did just that, counting the stack of twenties. I did so twice, coming out to 500 both times. I slipped it into the pocket of my jeans, folded over, and nodded toward the chair. **"So I just sit right there, in that chair? And you shoot me with your laser, or whatever?"** I didn't wait to be told. I moved into position, trying to get comfortable in the mostly uncomfortable chair. **"How does this work, anyway?"**

"There're a lot of big words involved, it's easier just to show you." I pulled on a pair of safety goggles and began to adjust some dials and levers on the side of the machine, my chest tingling in anticipation. **"Initiating Deageinator, first-run test. In five....four... three...two... one..."**

It didn't hurt. I mean, there was no bright light or anything, and I wasn't sure it had worked at all. I sat where I sat, still the same me, and looked up at the woman as she removed the goggles from her eyes. **"Did something happen?"** I definitely didn't feel any different...

Well that had worked well - the scale on the wall behind the seat showed that the subject had shrunk about five inches - I wasn't sure what that meant chronologically speaking at first glance, but I'd be able to study that. **"Oh, it certainly worked. Take a look at your clothes, for example."** Clothes which were definitely too big now. There was a mirror on the far wall, but I wasn't sure how much of the changes would be visible from a first-person perspective.

I looked down at the long-sleeved shirt, the sleeves far past my wrists and over the palms of my hands. I was twenty-two before, my senior year at college, and I had been my size for quite sometime. I looked down at my pants next, which now covered the laces on my Converse. The clothes were definitely bigger, albeit a little... **"Wait, so I'm... what, twenty or something now?"**

"The test was for a twelve month chronological reversal, but the results seem to differ from that. I'll need to do some testing to find out exactly how different. Stand up, follow me." Unexpected results were annoying; they skewed my data and usually meant having to pay my test subject more.

I climbed back up onto my feet, which, for the first time, confirmed whatever she'd done had well and truly worked. I wasn't that much shorter, not really, but I felt incredibly off-balance. I frowned up at the girl, who was once the same height as me, and felt my cheeks get warm. **"I can't believe this crazy thing really worked..."**

"You think I would be paying you \$500 if my inventions didn't work? Please." I led the way over to the corner of the spacious warehouse that was my lab and directed for my subject to stand in-front of a tri-fold vertical mirror. **"Remove your clothes, please."**

"Excuse me?!" But the suddenness of the statement had been quickly replaced with the boy in the mirror staring back at me. My hair was about the same length, give or take an inch, but my face was much rounder. I could tell I had a bit of actual meat on my bones now, something I wasn't sure I'd had since my first year of college. I came across just as ambiguous as ever, though I wasn't sure that wasn't because of my clothing. **"What the hell!"**

"Is there a problem? Please remove your clothes - you'll find that your contracted to allow me to perform my post-experiment examinations, or you forfeit your remuneration." The child was clearly shocked by the image in the mirror, but I had results to gather - surprise and shock wasn't any of my business.

Remuneration? Was that the money in my now-too-big pockets? I looked away from the boy in the mirror and down to my feet. **"I... I can't..."** I could, I just didn't want to. The floral printed panties around my waist were loose, but they were still present. I bit my lip. **"Can... can I just come back in a little bit?"**

"You're free to go, but you'll be forfeiting your payment." Which was one blow, though it wasn't technically true. I just needed him to cooperate. The second came a moment later. **"And I won't be able to reverse the process without paying you. So, you see, it's your choice."** I wasn't even looking up at this point, double-checking all of the paperwork.

I felt my cheeks get hot and played with my hands in front of my body. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't keep my eyes off the boy in the mirror. **"Could I change... um... in a bathroom or something?"** I didn't want this woman to see me naked, but even less so, did I want her to know what I was wearing. I never used to be concerned about my nudity, though - not for years, anyway...

"No, you need to disrobe in my presence." I'd noted, finally, the "M" circled on the application form in his file - at least that solved one mystery - though the reluctance to undress would have confirmed that either way. **"Now, are you going to comply, or will I be finding another subject?"**

"No, I..." I bit hard on my lip and shook my head. I pulled the now loosly-fitting long sleeved shirt over my head, leaving my stomach bare and the top edge of the underwear showing vaguely beneath my pants. She wouldn't notice. **"Is that good enough?"**

"Are you naked?" I crossed my arm, clearly losing patience with the boy. Initial observation did provide a wealth of information, though - for instance, the pre-hormonal muscle underdevelopment had lowered my initial

estimate of eighteen down another few years - the boy standing before me couldn't be any older than fourteen now, fifteen at the top end of things.

"God, this is stupid..." For how little I wanted the woman to see me naked, I wanted her to see my underwear even less. I rolled the tops of my pants over the edges of the underwear and pulled them both down at the same time. With enough focus, with enough caring, you could probably see the girl's underwear between my legs as I pulled them away, or you could probably see the flowers poking through the white fabric. I, however, left little time for this, and quickly balled them up inside my pants, leaving me completely naked.

Girl's underwear? How curious. I took the jeans from the boy's hand and set them on one of my benches, and then motioned for him to follow me over to the wall where a mirror, scale and vertical height chart were. I'd take my initial observations here. **"Please step onto the scale."**

I did so, weighing in at about twenty pounds less than before despite the bigger tummy I sported. My height was down a few inches, which made me feel a little pathetic. I closed my eyes tight and shook my head, trying to imagine being anywhere but here.

"Interesting. Very interesting." I motioned for him to go and sit up on the gurney. **"Tell me, Kit, at what age did you begin to wear girls' underwear?"** It wasn't strictly a professional question, but I was curious only insofar as how it might skew my data.

"I... what?" My cheeks went bright red, though, confirming beyond anything else that what she'd said was accurate. How did she know? I thought I was careful... **"I don't know what you're talking about,"** I mumbled under my breath, making my way onto the gurney.

"It won't be listed on any of my official documentation - I'm merely curious about starting age so I can compare to your reduced age now." I laid the boy down on the gurney and began to take notes on his muscle development - or lack thereof.

"I really don't know what you mean..." I said softly, almost inaudibly. I felt very small lying naked on the gurney, the woman above me writing things down on the chart. Again, I closed my eyes. What was I even doing here?

"I... I'm probably around... seventeen... if it helps..." Five years. Five years were gone. She'd taken five years. **"I just... mean, this is how I kind of looked... near the end of high school... but you can put me back, right?"**

"I can reverse the polarity, yes." In theory, really, was more accurate. But if it worked one way, it should work the other, no problem. **"I... I wanna be put back now, please..."** **"Once I'm done taking data."** I pushed the needle into the boy's arm and started taking some of his blood. What were his hormone levels like?

I wasn't sure what happened. The woman filled vials with my blood and I felt dizzy and uncomfortable. Before I thought to argue with her, I was lightheaded. Maybe it was a minute later, or ten. I looked up at the woman, still writing on her clipboard, just a few feet away from me. **"What... happened..."**

"You're probably anemic." I didn't look up as I spoke, but did when I delivered the next piece of news. **"Your proportions"** - which by that, she meant the size of many different parts of his naked form - **"are congruent with a male fifteen years of age. Do you have any comments to make?"** Measuring his penis had been surprisingly easy as he was having his blood drawn.

Once the needle was out, I very quickly climbed off the gurney. The room spun and I fell onto the pile of my clothes. I wasn't doing this anymore. **"Put me back now, I mean it! Right now!"** I had rights, didn't I? I learned about this at one point - the rights a subject has in a voluntary experiment.

"You should eat - there's orange juice over there." The small kitchen was partitioned off from the rest of the expansive space that was the warehouse. **"Feel better, decide if you have any questions about your body or the process, and then we can restore you back to your masculine self."**

I frowned and looked away from the woman, balling my clothes up in my arms and slowly getting to my feet. Everything felt shaky. I managed to dress myself first, in the too-big clothes, but not before stuffing the girl's panties into the pocket of my jeans. Fifteen? I wasn't fifteen. At fifteen, I was still wetting the bed. I definitely wasn't fifteen. Right?

When the boy was starting to feel better from the orange juice and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, I was arguing with somebody about current and rate of draw and contractual agreements. In-fact, by the time I'd gotten off the phone, the boy had been sitting on on the stool for a good twenty minutes. I looked flustered, but more than that I looked annoyed.

"I'd like you to change me back now. I don't have any questions." And I didn't, either. I just wanted to be back to my twenty-two year old self and not my whatever-I-was-now self. I decided in that moment not to ever do another study with a large evil-looking laser.

"Unfortunately, the electric company won't allow me to use my Deageinator again today - apparently it caused some problems at their end." Six power relay substations had exploded, actually, and I was sure that would make the news. It wasn't my fault - Inators needed a lot of juice! **"Return to me in one week's time and I'll return you to normal."** I reached into my drawer and handed him a second envelop with another \$500. **"This should compensate you for the inconvenience."**

I blinked at the money in my hand and my chest welled with fear. **"I can't go to school like this! I look like a fucking kid!"** It wasn't entirely true - I looked like a teenager, but it was different enough to warrant my getting mad. **"You said this was reversible, so reverse it!"**

"It is reversible, child, but not without the power required." I sighed and handed him a third envelope - everybody had a price at which they'd make their situation work. **"Why don't you go and enjoy yourself? It's not every day you get to be fifteen again. Go buy some nice clothes - some new pretty panties, perhaps? I'll see you in one week's time."**

I felt my cheeks get warm and looked down at the second envelope. 1500 dollars for one day. I wasn't sure what I'd do about school or work, but 1500 dollars... I bit hard on my lip. **"I... I don't want to wait a week... what about Monday morning, before school?"** It was Saturday now. I couldn't go to class like this...

"The utility company said they needed to install some additional relays to my lab before I can conduct any further demonstrations, the one week time-frame is theirs, not mine." I set the clipboard down and

looked at the younger boy in front of me. **"Those are more comfortable if you wear them, and don't stuff them in your pocket, you know."**

"Shut up," I scolded, turning away from the woman and walking toward the door. I'd wear boy's underwear next time I came - I didn't know I'd be undressing! Really, though, it was my fault. Naive, Kit... **"I'll be back in a week..."** Though I wasn't sure what I'd do about school...

2.)

"So you got \$1500 for being in a science experiment? Sign me up for that, wow..." I was driving and talking on my hands-free speaker to Kit - he'd called and sounded pretty distressed and my job as his best friend was to be there. We went to the same college, but the girls' dorms and boys' dorms were on opposite ends of the campus and were so far away it warranted driving. **"So what'd she do to you? And why do you sound so stressed?"**

"You won't believe me if I told you," I warned. She wouldn't, either. Always the skeptic. But it was better she be prepared. **"She made this... de-aging gun or something. I know it sounds like something from a sci-fi book, but... I don't know. I definitely don't look twenty-two..."**

"A gun? You let her shoot you with a gun? Are you okay? Are you hurt? I'm parking now - I'll be right up. Are you going to be Kit or Kitten when I get upstairs?" Kit had told me when he was only seventeen about his propensity for girlish things, how it was a mood that came and went and how he never really thought about becoming a girl; but he did have Kitten Days where I'd spend the day in his dorm pretending - he had some nicer clothes than me, too!

I felt the heat on my cheeks, or maybe that was just the phone, and bit hard on my lip. **"Um... Kit, I guess, and it's not like, a *real* gun. It was-"** But she'd hung up the phone. I sighed and slipped the cell back into my pocket-still-too-big and sat down on my couch. I wasn't sure I even had clothes that fit this body...

Most of the time, when a girl came to visit a boy in the boy's dorm wing it

was automatically assumed that she was going up there for sex - but I seemed to be immune to the allegation - I guess people were more puzzled as to why MacKenzie Macintosh was visiting somebody like Kit Lonsdale. Social viewpoints didn't bother me, though, and it didn't matter that I was immeasurably more popular than Kit - we were best friends and that transcended that stuff. I knocked on his door when I got to it, noticing that it was locked for the first time in forever.

She was going to freak out. I put my hands on my head and waited by the door, contemplating. I could hide in here for a week, I was sure. Or maybe it wasn't that drastic a change. As much as the woman had said I was fifteen, I was still so sure I was closer to seventeen. Of course, I had little knowledge to back this up. In the end, I took a deep breath, and opened the door for my friend.

"Holy shitballs." I pushed my way inside and quickly closed the door behind me, not wanting to give anybody the chance to see Kit. **"Holy hell, I mean... what... I... how is this possible? What did she do to you? You look like you're in high school..."**

I bit my lip and looked away from MacKenzie. Even *she* was taller than me, and I wasn't sure she had *ever* been taller than me. **"I told you... she made me younger. She said only a year or two..."** It was clearly more like five, though. I decided not to mention that. **"Is it so noticeable?"**

"Uh, yeah it's noticeable. Jesus, Kit..." I crossed my arms and shook my head. **"Does this woman know she created the secret to eternal life? You could stay a teenager forever, just got zapped again whenever you turn twenty..."** And that was how I saw it, despite the insanity of the proposition, despite the concept being unworldly, I was jealous!

"I don't like it!" I said aggressively. I crossed my arms over my chest and looked up - seriously, I looked *up* - at MacKenzie. I hated this. **"I just want to go back to being me... she said she'll fix me next week. That means I have to wait until Friday..."**

"Go back?! Why? Fuck, seriously, Kit... she just gave you like... five more years of life. Five YEARS. And she PAID you for it, why would you go back?" I was pacing now, pacing like I did when I was excited.

"And think about Kitten, you're so much more androgynous now, think about how pretty you'll look."

I remembered that. I dressed like a girl. I thought of the underwear in my pocket. I thought of a lot of things. I bit harder on my lip and shook my head, trying to stop thinking, just for a second. **"I really... need to get... back to me..."**

"I bet your feet are smaller, too." It was a strong point, too - Kit always lamented the largeness of his feet; feet that had been dainty and elegant until he was seventeen and then had almost doubled in size when the testosterone finally set in. It meant that Kitten was always barefoot, because looking at girls shoes depressed him as they'd never fit. Now, though... I looked down and he did the same.

"MacKenzie!" My abruptness got her attention and I bit harder on my lip... **"I don't... want any of that. I don't want shoes or... or clothes or... or to be girly. I just want to go back to how I was, okay? Before anything else gets messed up."** And I did feel messed up, very messed up.

"Okay. Okay, I get it." I didn't, and I wasn't going to let it go, either, but I was also subtle. **"You wanna hit the mall? We can go to the one across town if you prefer, nobody will see you, then. I mean, you did just get \$1500, don't you wanna buy yourself something nice?"**

"Sure... just... somewhere far away..." I went to my bedroom and MacKenzie followed behind. I shuffled through the closet, looking for anything from when I was younger, but none of it came to college with me. **"I don't fit in any of these..."**

"I've got some clothes in the back of my car; jeans and tops; probably still a little bit but better than anything you own." I also didn't dress overly girlishly - I could when I wanted to, and had done so the day that Kit accused me of "wasting being a girl" - but strictly speaking I was all about jeans and tops and the occasional hoodie. **"Want me to go get you something?"**

"I don't wanna wear your clothes," I said almost spitefully. I finally got frustrated with my own, however, and crossed my arms over my chest.

"Whatever. I'll wear this. What do I care what people think about it..."
But I didn't want to stand out, either. Ugh...

"Look, since when are you insecure about wearing my clothes? It's not like I wear dresses or skirts." Both of which Kit had a pretty nice little collection of, in his closet, pushed all the way to the left and hidden behind the left door which didn't open. **"I'll just get a pair of jeans and one of my band tees, okay?"**

"I said no, okay?!" I felt something strange in my tummy, a kind of feeling I'm not sure I'd felt in a long time, and my cheeks went red. I looked down at my now-small feet and bit at my bottom lip. What was wrong with me...?
"I... I should just wait here until Friday..."

"No, we're going to the mall, and you're going to buy yourself something nice. Shopping releases endorphins, remember?" For as long as I could remember, those three words had been the justification for buying things we couldn't afford, even if it meant borrowing textbooks, being late on class payments or living on store-brand ramen. **"And you just volunteered to buy my lunch by being a pouty brat. Now come on, Missy."** It was a low blow, but Missy was a word I'd discovered made my best friend very shy and compliant, with glowing red cheeks to boot.

3.)

I was pulled out of the house long before I had a handle on the situation. I sat in the passenger seat of MacKenzie's car and looked down at my hands beneath the long sleeves. **"I don't like this. I don't feel right. I just wanna go back to the woman and get made better..."**

"Why a week, anyway?" I put the stick-shift into reverse and slid out of the parking space, the engine revving happily as I put it in first and started negotiating the lot. **"If she could do this to you now, why not reverse it? And how did she do it? This is really fucking incredible, you know that? Like magic shit..."**

"Shouldn't swear..." I mumbled beneath my breath. It was another minute before I thought of any of the responses to her questions. **"I don't know."**

She didn't tell me. And something about the power grid... or... I don't know." I sighed and put my head against the window.

"But she's going to put you back in a week, right?" I thought it was insanity to want someone to age you when you were just given a handful of free years in your life, but it also wasn't my choice to make. **"When you you ever going to be this age again? I think you should take advantage of this week. Gets kids prices at the cinema, wear things you wouldn't normally be able to fit into, get away with petty crimes, you know - the stuff you don't get to do anymore."**

"I just wanna be me, though," I said with a frown. Already, I felt so... wrong. I bit my lip and shook my head. **"Nevermind, you're probably right."** I shouldn't have tried to argue with MacKenzie - I knew better. It wasn't until we got to the mall that I realized where we were: *our* mall. **"You said we were going further away!"**

"We can, I just figured with everything so messed up for you right now, you'd like something familiar." We also knew where everything was at our mall, which was a perk. **"And everybody else is in classes, so it's not like we're going to run into anybody. If you still want to go, we can, I just know there's about a thousand things at our Hot Topic that you're in love with and there's no guarantee they'll be at any others."**

She was right. It was still early on a Saturday, and pretty much everyone was in weekend class or at work. I finally relented, following MacKenzie out into the mall. I felt silly in my slightly-too-big clothes, but I tried not to let it affect my mood. **"So what are we here for, anyway?"**

"Well, you owe me lunch, and I figured since you're all cashed up now, we could check out your favorite stores - either way you need a few cheap pieces of clothing that fits your new... old? New-old? Your younger body, anyway." I wasn't sure why this wasn't freaking me out more - it should have been - but right now it all seemed so amusing.

"I hate clothes shopping..." The words came out very simply, and I had to take a minute to think about it. Did I? I thought I loved shopping for clothes with MacKenzie. I remembered how upset I used to get, but since her, things were better. I shook my head, looking at my feet as we walked.

"No you don't, you love it. You love buying one piece of clothing for you so you have a reason to be in the store, and then you follow me into the girls' clothes and talk about all the things you're going to wear one day." It hadn't always been the case - Kit used to legitimately hate clothes shopping, we'd fixed that though... hadn't we? **"You know you used to hate it a lot, when you were younger. Said it made you jealous and uncomfortable and your stomach hurt."**

It made me... jealous? Uncomfortable I could very well understand, and the stomach hurting feeling, but jealous didn't seem quite right. Then again, I couldn't remember having ever said these things anyway. I shook my head again and followed where my feet took me. I knew MacKenzie and I were thinking the same thing...

4.)

The mall wasn't too busy this time of day, but there were still people around - the biggest problem though were the store clerks who had nothing better to do but lavish attention on us wherever we went; it was making Kit skittish. Still, we wound up in a clothing store... albeit, a girls' clothing store... and I started looking for things in his size.

My whole chest hurt. I kept my eyes closed for as long as I could without running into things. I followed MacKenzie around the store for a few minutes before we started getting in deeper. It was very clear this wasn't a "walk in, walk out" kind of store, and that made it so much worse. **"I'm gonna wait out front..."**

"Don't wander off, Missy." I picked up a few different articles of clothing - that one of them happened to be a dress in a size too small for me was obvious, but Kit didn't seem to notice as I corralled him toward the changing rooms.

I felt absolutely sick. MacKenzie closed the changing room doors behind me and I wiped the sweat from under my bangs. I did my best to smile at the girl. **"I'm warm and uncomfortable, and... and I just... I wanna wait**

outside..." But before I could do anything, my back was against the mirror. I looked up - still so strange to look up - at MacKenzie.

It was hard to remember the exact wording from the first time I'd made the speech to my best friend, but I did my best - I wanted it to be at least as similar as possible. **"Missy, life is like a buffet - you can go to the buffet and only eat fries and ketchup and never try anything else, or you can load up your plate with every single damn thing on offer and come back for seconds and thirds."** He looked up at me, his eyes watery, and I smirked. **"But once you leave the buffet, there's no coming back. You really wanna waste your life on fries and ketchup?"** I couldn't remember if it was exact - it had been so so long ago, mere weeks after he'd told me about Kitten, and then tried to take it all back.

"I..." I bit hard on my lip and looked away from MacKenzie. She still held my shoulders, still held me to the mirror. I shook my head and tried to push past her, but she'd have none of it. **"I don't know what you're talking about, okay? I just wanna go back to that woman and make her change me back. I'm tired of feeling confused and terrible!"**

"Enjoy this week, because you're never going to get another chance to be fifteen again while still knowing what you know now." I took his hand put it on the dress; the kind that would never have looked good before - even though he was androgynous, his shoulders spoiled a lot of choices and he knew it, and that was a problem that didn't exist at the moment. **"In a week, this'll all be over and you'll regret what you didn't do so much more than what you did."**

"I'm not wearing a dress, MacKenzie," I mumbled with a frown. Why was she so persistent about all this? I pushed past her again. She grabbed my wrist. **"I mean it,"** I said with a huff. **"I'm a boy, okay? Just... lemme go."**

I sighed and pushed my best friend down on the little bench in the changing room, pulling his way-too-big top up over his head and letting it drop to the floor as I took the dress off the hanger. **"Don't be a brat, missy."** Somehow what had happened was changing the way Kit thought about things, too; he wasn't just regressed physically, he was regressed emotionally, too.

"Stop calling-" I tried to stand up again, but MacKenzie's hand came down hard on my cheek. I felt tears on the edges of my eyes, and despite

how hard I tried to be an adult about it, I felt them slip down. I fell into immediate silence, sitting on the bench quietly.

I hadn't wanted to slap the poor boy, but he was really starting to become a pain. I lifted the dress up and slipped it down over his head, prompting him to stand as I adjusted it into place and then finally tugged down the way-too-big jeans. Gosh he was pretty - and not just pretty in a pretty-boy-ish way; he was probably prettier than I was!

I felt my cheeks take color - more so than the slap - at the fact I wasn't wearing underwear. I bit hard on my lip and pushed down the dress until it touched my knees. "**C..can we please go now... please...?**" Despite the girl's underwear in my pocket of my jeans, I couldn't seem to remember they were mine. 'Just some girl's' I said to myself.

"Kitten, look in the mirror." I directed his gaze, but the boy refused to look, so I lifted the back of his dress and slapped him again - this time on the bottom. **"Look."** Kit never wanted to be a girl, so he professed, he just liked being able to become one at will and whim when he was alone - that I was allowed to witness that was a privilege in itself - and now here I was, the one having to cultivate it again. **"You are so pretty."**

The slap on my bare bottom brought a whole new kind of reservation to my antics and I looked shyly into the mirror. The boy, mostly, who looked back was... actually very pretty. I dropped my gaze again, embarrassed, at both my clothes and at MacKenzie now knowing I didn't have underwear on.

I crossed my arms over my chest and nudged the boy to keep looking in the mirror as I spoke. **"Say hello to the girl in the mirror, Kitten."** And then, as an afterthought, I added in. **"How come you're not wearing any underwear, missy?"**

I looked again at the mirror, at the boy shyly staring back. Neither of us said anything. I looked away again and up at MacKenzie. My cheeks were bright red, or at least, the boy's in the mirror's were. **"I... I don't really remember... I just didn't have them on when I got home."** I couldn't even remember the last time I'd put underwear *on*...

I picked up his jeans, checking to make sure I hadn't missed anything - like maybe they were lost in the creases, but I didn't find anything... until I

checked the pocket. **"Oh, these ones are cute - probably too big for you now, though, right?"** The way I talked about the floral-printed panties made it abundantly clear that I didn't see anything odd about the fact they belonged to my male best friend.

I puffed out my cheeks and turned entirely from the boy in the mirror. **"Those aren't mine!"** And they were certainly too big, even if they were. But they were ladies' underwear very clearly, and as I'd pointed out again and again, and seemingly, again: **"I am not a girl, MacKenzie!"**

"No, you're a boy who likes to wear dresses. You told me this when you were seventeen..." The penny dropped. **"...which you're not, yet, now. Wow. Huh..."** I thought a moment and then continued. **"You told me when you were twelve, you used to wear your sisters dresses when you were at home alone for one hour on Friday afternoons - she was younger, but you're small so you fit."** This particular confession had come from Kit when he'd been quite drunk with me one night, however; so I wasn't 100% certain of its legitimacy.

My chest tightened and I looked up at MacKenzie in bewilderment. I stumbled to find something to say, some words, but none could find their way past my lips. How did she know that? I didn't tell her that! Did I? No. No, I hadn't told... told anyone... **"I... I didn't..."**

"You used to rent movies from the video store that had boys who dressed like girls, or body-swapping stories, or anything like that." It was surreal now, like Kit didn't remember that he'd told me all of this - there was a cost to becoming younger it seemed... it was like his entire self had reversed in time, not just the physical elements.

"I. Did. Not!" I didn't! I mean, I did. I was interested one day when I was eleven, and I started searching for them when I was fourteen... but I hadn't told anyone. Had I? I couldn't remember doing so... **"I'm tired of these games,"** I said with a frown, snatching my jeans back from MacKenzie.

"My prom-dress is in your closet, because you cried on my shoulder one night when you were drunk about how you wished you got to own a prom dress. So I gave you mine. You'll see it when you get home." And that was irrefutable. I took the jeans from the boy, and his top, and then handed him the floral panties. **"Put these on. Now."**

I remembered the prom dress. I didn't remember the prom. I didn't remember crying. I didn't remember ever being drunk. I didn't remember the closet very well, and I didn't even remember the prom dress anymore. I felt dizzy and shook my head, stomping my foot like an angry child. **"No!"**

"Fine." I took the panties from the boy, tore the price tag off the dress and left the dressing room with all of the above and his jeans and top, too, heading over to the counter to pay for the dress. The dress he was wearing. The dress he was going to wear around the mall.

"MACKENZIE!" But the door had shut and I was left alone with the dress. I felt the panic rising in my chest and shook my head again and again. I couldn't go out there. But I couldn't stay in here either. If someone knocked, if someone saw me... I played nervously with my hands in front of my body, shaking my head back and forth. Damn it, damn it, damn it!

5.)

It was probably not a very nice thing to do to leave my best friend in the dressing room, in a dress, without panties - but there was the very real chance that I could help things happen differently. So I paid for the dress with the tag, and I stood in place with my arms crossed and a smile on my lips, waiting for the dressing room door to open.

It would be worse if I never came out. I knew someone would knock eventually, and I'd have to say something to someone, and things would get awkward when they asked what I was wearing. If I walked out, if I walked right to the door, never looked back, no one would say a word, right? I didn't have a choice. MacKenzie was out there. I bit hard on my lip and went over to the door, opening the handle and stepping out. Without looking up from the floor, I hurried out of the store.

With a smile the size of the crescent moon, I followed Kit out of the store and let him get all the way to the bench out in the mall proper before taking his hand and smiling. The sun streamed down from above and I kissed his cheek, so much softer now that it was spared from many more years of shaving. **"Oh Kitten, I didn't think I'd ever see you out in public."**

I felt my cheeks heat up and snatched for the bag in her hands. She pulled it away, frowning down and my little self. I hated being short. I hated MacKenzie treating me like a kid! **"Give me my clothes - I mean it. I'm not wearing this around."**

"Yes, you are, and nobody is going to second guess you so long as you don't argue anymore. If you argue, people will see a super pretty boy in a dress. If you promise not to, then I'll do your hair and makeup and people will only see a girl." He opened his mouth and I put my finger to his lips. **"Stop. Count to five in your head. Think."**

"I think you're being a cunt." The vernacular was very high school, something I'd grown out of... um... sometime, hadn't I? Maybe I never had. Nevertheless, I didn't like being talked down to. **"Just because I look like this doesn't mean I'm not still twenty-two. You can't treat me like your kid brother, got it?"**

"No, I'm going to treat you like my kid sister." Once upon a time, Kit had confessed to me how the word sister made him feel when referring to him - like his stomach was going to boil over and his chest might explode into a rain of butterflies - he smiled in a very particular way, too, but when I questioned him further when sober he denied the reaction.

I bit hard on my lip, contempt flaring up in my eyes. I looked around the mall for signs of anyone I knew, but I was having trouble remembering the faces from school. I couldn't even really remember the classes I was taking. What day was it, anyway? **"Just give me back my clothes, MacKenzie. I don't like this."**

"Pretty boy in a dress it is." My hand took his and I began to walk beneath the majestic skylight above, gently reminding the boy of one crucial fact. **"You shouldn't make a scene, might make people pay a little too much attention to you."**

Part of me wanted to hit the stupid girl right there, and I was *not* a violent kid. Kid? Adult. Person. Boy. But MacKenzie was right, and the rational part of me knew it. If I started causing a commotion, the shoppers would grow attentive. I needed to keep my head low, which was exactly what I did.

"Now, Kitten, I have a theory you see." We were wandering down past stores now and I let the boy into a Claire's with a small smile on my lips but no skipping to my words. **"Wanna hear it?"** There was a lot at stake here, but I was almost certain I was correct in my belief now.

"Not really," I said with a frown. There were few girls I thought I could be properly rude to, but MacKenzie and I had been friends since forever. Still, as I was pulled into the girl's accessory store, I had the feeling that my wanting to hear MacKenzie's theory and my actually hearing it would have no correlation.

"You once told me that you were a boy who liked to wear dresses. And gosh, Kit, the dresses you own could make a sixteen year old prom queen swoon. Right?" I started to pick up various hair bows and hold them each one at a time against the boy's hair, frowning, then smiling, and frowning again.

"I really don't know what you're talking about." And I meant it this time. As many words as what MacKenzie was saying were correct, at least in some degree, to some extent, they were things I had never told her in my life. Then again, it would often slip my mind why MacKenzie was older - that I had lost my age to the damn machine.

Finally, after searching through the entire back left wall, I found what I was looking for - a barrette with a yellow star trailed by a rainbow, like some sort of colorful shooting-star. I put it in Kit's hair, and then stood him in front of the mirror. The barrette was significant, too - I'd worn the same one in my prom pictures, the pictures that had him cry, then deny crying, then ask to borrow my prom dress. And now, here, in the dress he was wearing? I was sure the memories would trigger.

I looked at myself in the mirror for just a minute, just a second really, or even a fraction of one. My stomach felt wrong and I suddenly felt very close to throwing up. I looked down at my feet and spun away from MacKenzie. **"I wanna go home now... this isn't funny..."** I closed my eyes tight.

"Come on, then." I paid for the barrette, and a few other things, and then held my best friend by the hand as I led him out of the mall - the mall that wasn't our mall, that wasn't anywhere near our college - the mall we'd

driven an hour to get to. He'd not even realized that on the way in, but the view from the doors we left the mall by was very different to ours - primarily because the beach was on the horizon.

6.)

"I want to drive," I told MacKenzie when we reached her car. She never liked the idea of anyone driving *her* car, but I'd been able to do so on a few occasions. Mostly now, though, I only wanted to do it so I could feel an inkling older than how childish she'd made me feel our whole stay in the mall.

"You're fifteen." I replied curtly, having decided that was the age appropriate for my best friend. And then, finally, I took his chin and pointed out to the horizon. **"Plus it's an hours drive by to our school."** I was beginning to worry now, worry about just how much the boy was losing, how completely he was becoming his teenage self. What would be left when all was said and done?

I looked out at the beach and then up at MacKenzie, my face curled up in confusion. My eyes followed the pavement up to the mall, and again to my friend. **"But this is *our* mall. I'm not stupid, MacKenzie. This is where we live."** An hours drive away? **"And I'm not fifteen - I'm twenty-two."**

"We go to Wonimoga College, Kit. Which is in Wonimoga. Where are we now?" The penny was in the air and I smiled, waiting for the realization to hit. Maybe he'd trust me more once he realized he was losing memories and I might be the only one who could help him.

"Kirkland Hills..." I said with hesitation. Was this a trick question? But it was Kirkland. I remembered the city so well, from the bakery on the corner to the obscurely lined parking spaces. This was our city... **"Why would I be in college?"** The words slipped out only just before I remembered - age ray, right...

"Kit, I need you to listen to me. Your body got made younger, but your mind seems to be following you. The Kit I know is a reasonably ordinary, calm, relaxed and level-headed college senior who spends

the weekends dressed in girls' clothes in his dorm room." Put like that, it actually sounded a little bit depressive.

"...what are you talking about?" I looked up at the girl halfway between incredulousness and fear. My mind was... following? What did that even mean? **"I remember everything just fine, if that's what you're saying."** Didn't I? Of course I did.

"Okay. What is our plan next weekend?" The trip across state to the Anime convention was something we'd both been planning for months, something I knew Kit wouldn't forget. Well, twenty-two-year-old Kit, anyway.

"We..." Our plan next weekend... next weekend... hell, I didn't even know the damn date! I bit hard on my lip and looked out toward the beach, the horizon just beyond, and everything in between. **"You're being stupid. We don't have plans..."** Right? We didn't. I'd remember...

"Midwest Animax." We'd scrimped and saved and done little bit-jobs on the side to afford the weekend passes, there was a band we liked playing, there were actresses we adored who'd be there, and it was our vacation for the year. He couldn't forget something like that...

"Right..." Right? Of course! We'd been looking forward to it for months! **"It just... slipped my mind. I remember that, now. I do. I promise."** And I did. And I remembered college, and my three very long years already. I remembered a few other studies I'd done before the de-aging one. And then, as quickly as it was there, it was gone. I closed my eyes tight. **"I don't feel right..."**

"I think we need to go back home, and maybe I'll stay over for the night, okay? We can watch the new season of Supernatural together and speculate about the 12th Doctor. Sound good?" I slipped into the driver's seat and waited for him to sit in the passenger side; he smoothed the dress subconsciously and made sure not to flash his panty-less state - I was remarkably proud.

I didn't now what Supernatural was, or the 12th Doctor, but I decided not to argue. The rest of the night was spent with my hazing in and out of conversation, mostly when my memory would allow it, and a very uncomfortable evening sitting panty-less on the carpet. MacKenzie wouldn't

let me change until I was tired enough to sleep, and only then into a pair of pajamas I would *never* buy.

"Do you remember which of your sisters' dresses you liked the most, Kit?" I knew he'd argue, so I followed it up with. **"You know that I know, you know that you told me even if you don't remember it. So don't argue. Just stop and thinking, and tell me."** He was in his bed, and I was sitting on the edge, smiling at him.

"Taylor's..." I said quietly. Still, I didn't know how MacKenzie knew all this. I could remember things in shifts, but I couldn't *ever* remember talking to her about my sister's dresses. I felt my cheeks turn pink and slip further under the blankets. **"They were... more girly..."**

"You wore a lot of her dresses, right? In that period of time between when you realized you liked wearing them, and when you got just a little too big for that." I'd love to have taken credit for the words, but they were mostly his words, just redirected back at him so long after he'd first told me.

"I'm really tired..." I mumbled into my pillow. I felt dizzy with information. All this stuff MacKenzie shouldn't know and it was all stuff she did now. I kept it to myself for so long... had I really told her? Why couldn't I remember? Still, I wasn't lying. I was almost asleep already.

"You trusted me, Kit. Even if you don't remember anything else, remember that, okay?" I didn't know why, but I wriggled into the covers with the boy and put my arm over him from behind. There were reasons there was nothing between us outside of friendship, but right now he seemed like he needed a hug.

I would have protested, but I really couldn't remember the last time someone had held me like this. Was that perspective from my own, or from the younger me? Why were the memories so tricky? But none of it mattered - in a minute, I was fast asleep.

7.)

Girls my age didn't really have a whole lot of experience with waking up with the sticking warmth of wet bedsheets beneath them, and it took me a few minutes to realize what had happened. And when I did, I sat up with a start and then tumbled out of the small twin-sized bed, looking down in a panic. Not my period. And not my pee... which meant... **"Kit... hey, Kit, get up."**

I really didn't want to get up, but there was little choice in the matter. MacKenzie pulled on my arm until I finally sat up in bed, sleepily rubbing my eyes. I thought maybe yesterday had been a dream, but even from here, sitting in place on my bed, I could tell I was still smaller. **"What...?"**

"You had an accident." That was considerate-friend-speak for you pissed all over me in your sleep. And it was clear, too, in his lace-trimmed white pajama-pants that he'd been the culprit. Was this a side effect of that gun? I didn't understand this at all.

"Shit..." No, no, no... gosh, no. Seriously? No. I climbed out of bed in a panic and looked down at the pajamas I was wearing. It was definitely me. I'd kicked this habit, though, when I was... oh. No. No, I didn't. I felt my cheeks burning up, soon as bright as the rising sun, and tried to find the proper words, stumbling over myself. **"I... I'm so... so sorry, and... and lemme just... I gotta clean this... all up..."**

"Get in the shower, I'll take care of the sheets." I smiled weakly, wanting to do anything but, but really just trying to be a decent friend. **"Go on, we'll talk about this later. Go and shower, and change into something pretty when you're done."**

Maybe it was because I was coming to terms with the situation of what MacKenzie knew about me, or maybe I was just afraid of everything that had already happened that morning, but I dressed myself in one of the prettier floral dresses from the closet, all the way to the right. I felt stupid in a dress, but I wanted to stay on MacKenzie's good side. She came up from the laundry room just as I stepped into the living room. I immediately looked down at my feet.

All the annoyance I'd built on the walk down and especially back up from the laundry melted away when I saw Kit, and I smiled. **"You really should have been a girl, Kit. You're so pretty - you look way better in a dress"**

than I ever would." I'd come to accept Kit's rules about how he managed his girl time, that it was just a game for relaxation and nothing else. But all bets were off now.

I didn't know how much MacKenzie knew about me, I knew by this time, by the time I had turned fifteen, she hadn't known I'd wet the bed. I had no intention of telling her, but I felt the same way about the dresses in Taylor's closet. I bit hard on my lip, refusing to look up from the ground. **"Thanks, I think..."**

"I have a theory," We'd ordered pizza on the back of Kit's newfound fortune and were sitting around the small table in his dorm living room, a pizza crust he'd handed me was in my hand and I lazily dipped it in a pot of marinara sauce. **"Wanna hear it?"**

"I guess so..." The embarrassment of the incident that morning had worn off to a degree. She didn't bring it up again, and I sure as hell wasn't going to. I'd have to figure out what to do, though, until I could get my proper body back. I couldn't keep pissing the bed every night. Water control would help. **"What is it a theory about?"**

"You." Obviously. I didn't have very many other theories. **"I think you want to be a girl. I think the twenty-two-year-old you doesn't want to be, because you convinced yourself it was stupid. But I think you, now, at fifteen - I think you want to be."**

"Well, you'd be wrong." I took another piece of pizza, amounting to eating the inside two-thirds before passing it on to my friend. She took it graciously. **"What I want is to get my body back to normal. I have school tomorrow. I can't go like this..."**

"You would deny it. It's two more years before you're due to tell me you like to dress as a girl sometimes." I ignored the comment about classes - we both knew that nobody would notice, nobody cared in a place like this. Of course maybe with his renewed teenage hormones, things would be less clear to poor Kit.

"I don't like it. I just sometimes do it." I was still in the particularly decorative dress from my closet, the one I'd put on this morning to avoid talking more about the incident. I put the next piece of pizza down with only

one bite taken out of it. **"I don't like it at all. I hate it. And I hate that I do it..."**

"You think it's messed up - that's because your Dad is homophobic and in your head dressing in girls' clothes meant you must be gay, even though you adore girls. That's why you hate that you do it, and you project that hate onto your affection." I was finishing another slice and I looked the boy up and down. **"You adore it, though - you love looking in the mirror and imagining going outside in a dress, people calling you miss and ma'am, and getting girl perks."** None of the above was worded as questions, either; they were statements that I found particular certainty in.

"Can we please talk about something else?" I wasn't comfortable with this. I wasn't sure if she was right or wrong, but I knew I was very uncomfortable. I decided against eating the last two pieces of pizza and pulled my knees to my chest, showing off the boxers I had on below the dress.

"Uhhuh - how're your studies for exams going?" I was going to ask about the scientist, the woman who did this to my best friend - but I saw an opportunity, I saw a way to give him the sort of happiness he never found before. And if she put him back, that might all go away.

"I have no idea," I said honestly. **"Exams are in... two weeks?"** She nodded her head and I let out a little sigh. **"I don't even remember my classes. I barely remember high school. I need to make sure I'm back to normal by those exams or I'll flunk out..."**

"I'm not sure you should rush into that." Though outside of my own desires to make him happier, I didn't have a very compelling argument for my insistence. I could through something together, though. **"You're like a can of soda that's been all shaken up - you need to allow time to settle before you mess with things again. What's the worst that could happen?"**

"I could flunk out of college. I could get investigated by the CIA or some shit for looking like a goddamn toddler." Swearing wasn't something I did when I was young, and I still wasn't comfortable with it, but

it was definitely enriching knowing I had no parents around. **"I'm going to talk with her tomorrow. Maybe she got her machine fixed..."**

"The CIA aren't going to care, and you don't look like a toddler - for one, there's no diaper under your dress." I smirked and reached across the table to play with his fingers. **"You're not going to flunk out, all your brilliance is still in there, we just need to bring about some order to the chaos. I'll help you study, if you like?"**

"It doesn't matter - I'll learn it all over again when she fixes me." I climbed up from the chair, pulling away from MacKenzie, and returned to the kitchen to clean up. Her comment about a diaper only reminded me of that morning, though, and I felt all the more pathetic. **"I'll send her an email after this."**

8.)

"Hey Kit..." We didn't have any real romantic interest in one another - it wasn't for lack of anything, we'd probably make a fantastic couple but it had never really happened. Fifteen year old Kit, though, fifteen year old Kit harbored a deep affection for me that he was always too shy to bring up - in-fact he'd told me only last year that he spent years of his youth wishing I'd ask him on a date so the ice would be broken. **"Would you like to take me on a date...?"** I felt a little scummy, but this would at least distract him.

"What?" The plastic cup I'd been rinsing under the faucet slipped into the sink and I felt my cheeks heat up. MacKenzie was never an unattractive girl, and the years had definitely done wonders for her. Regardless, I turned away from her and shook my head. **"You're a little too old for me, honestly. Ask next week..."**

"You're turning me down?" Time to do what girls do best. I frowned and looked away, blinking enough to get my eyes glassy enough that I could rub tears off them with the back of my hands. I was going to make him beg to go on a date with me.

It was the silence that struck me as odd, and when I finally turned around MacKenzie was crying. Not really crying, but her eyes were very watery

and she tended to wipe her cheeks a lot. I bit at my lip and looked at the floor. **"It's really something you want? I mean, I want it. I mean, I just figure... maybe it's smarter to wait until... you know, I actually look like someone you could date."**

"You think I care how old you look, or what people think?! You stupid boy..." I shook my head, a few more tears, and then stood up and started to pull my purse over my shoulder. He'd stop me the moment he realized I was intending to leave, and he'd go a date with me, and then he'd be content to be his younger self while I worked on the girl stuff.

She was leaving? **"No, MacKenzie..."** I hurried to her side, taking her hand away from the doorknob. **"I'm sorry, I am. I'm being stupid. You're right. I'll go, okay? We can go on a real date. I actually find you really beautiful, and I'd be honored..."**

Boys. One day, in time, Kit would learn what I'd just done to him and would use it on his own projects. I bit my lip and looked down at the boy, then back toward the door. **"You sure...? I thought you'd have been more excited... I want you to do this for you, not just for me."** The beautiful comment didn't go unnoticed, however - not for a second - and the blush was hard to fight.

"I am excited, I promise." I smiled happily and ran my thumb along the back of her hand. She had really soft hands. I bit my lip again and looked at my feet. I didn't like being shorter than MacKenzie. This was not how I ever imagined a single day of my life.

"I have a request..." My tone went coy and playful and I let my eyes wander to his as he looked up, and then over to the far wall as soon as his gaze found mine. **"But you're going to think it's weird or stupid... you know what... forget it..."**

"No, it's... it's fine, that's fine." I smiled, pushing my mouth higher up my cheeks. A request? Maybe she wanted to pick where we ate. **"I want you to be comfortable, so just ask. It couldn't hurt."** Right? I had no intention of laughing at MacKenzie, no matter what she said. She was my best friend.

"I..." I turned away, a little dramatically, and then sighed. **"I think it'd be**

really cute if you... I mean... no it's... you're going to say no, and then you'll get mad at me, and then the date will be ruined over my stupid ideas." My hand was still in his, and I could feel his pulse quickening to my words like a puppet on the end of strings.

"Your ideas aren't stupid, and I won't think that. Okay?" But she was so unconvinced. I sighed and looked up into her eyes, still so far away. Gosh, why was she so sad?! **"How about I just say yes? Does that make it easier?"**

I pause for a moment, and then finally looked down, past his gaze. **"I think it'd be really sweet... and a little bit..."** I forced my cheeks to light up a little, **"... hot, if you'd wear my panties on our date."** Maybe I'd been going about this all wrong, working from the present, backwards. I needed to work from the past forwards, and I could almost put money on it that this was an idea that had gone through his head - that I was suggesting it absolved him of any shame.

"Oh..." Wear her underwear? I'd worn girl's underwear before, but only Taylor's. It had been years... or rather, years since I was fifteen. But I'd already agreed, hadn't I? It would make her more comfortable, she'd said. And she even called it hot. **"Alright, I guess... it's just underwear, right?"** But the nervousness was so evident in my voice.

"It's just underwear that the girl you're dating has been wearing... all day." I smiled with a little bit of coyness and then wrapped my arms around the short boy that was once so much taller than me. Working from the bottom up. **"Thank you, Kit, I... I didn't think you'd ever understand something like that... it was so hard for me to ask."**

"Yeah, sure..." MacKenzie hugged me and I hugged her back. She was warm and soft and wonderful to hug. I felt my cheeks glow when she finally pulled away. **"So I'm going to... um... wear... um... ones you've worn?"** I wasn't sure why, but I was under the impression it would have been more like Taylor - I'd just take a clean pair out of her drawer. This was definitely weirder...

"Well, it doesn't have to be this pair, I just thought you'd find it sexier. How about you just come to my dorm and you can pick out a pair

from my drawer?" Step one: suggest panties. Step two: Manipulate into picking out panties. This was working great.

"Yeah, I think that's... cleaner." Cleaner really was the best word. I thought her suggestion was for the next day, or the day after, or whenever our date would be, but she'd taken my hand and dragged me out of my front door before I had a protest. **"My shoes, MacKenzie!"** But it wasn't my real concern. I was still in the dress I'd put on that morning.

9.)

My car was only out the front, down two flights of stairs. Nobody was around anyway and nobody would really notice - a lot of girls came and went from the boy's dorms and seeing two of them together wasn't too odd. We got to the first floor and I smiled cheerfully. **"Come on, don't dawdle missy."**

I'd been struggling the entire trip down the stairs and it wasn't until we were out by the doors that I finally managed to pull free. My cheeks were scarlet and my heart beating like crazy. **"MacKenzie, I really need to change. You know I can't go out in this."** I was whispering, which wasn't necessary since no one else was around. It wasn't uncommon.

"You can go back up three flights of stairs, or you can get in my car which is right here." I motioned to the purple hatchback, tilting my head. **"What's it going to be?"** Admittedly, part of what I'd just done was out of spite that he'd been squicked out by the idea of wearing my worn panties, but then again he was fifteen so I had to allow him some concessions.

"I don't have shoes... and I'd have to get out of your car to go into your dorm." Which was on the edge of campus, and conveniently on the first floor. **"And I don't have a change of clothes at your place."** Right? **"And... and I'm going to go change. I'll get my shoes, too."**

"You have clothes in my dorm, and shoes, too." Admittedly, I'd just give him a pair of my jeans and a top and pass it off as his clothes, but he didn't know that. **"Get in the car, sweetie."** I'd never really done condescending, but something Kit had told me once went along the lines of this: he felt like

he'd never be talked down to, never be seen as smaller, or weaker, or more helpless - things he associated as girl things. And he longed for that.

I opened my mouth to protest again, to think of something direct and finalizing that would get me upstairs and out of this dress, but I had very little logic in my head. I eventually relented, climbing into the girl's car. Realistically, I couldn't be sure of it, but if she said she had clothes for me, she likely did. Then again, they wouldn't fit me anyway. Nothing fit me anymore.

"I think we should go out for Vietnamese food, there's that one place on 12th that I've heard is really good, and then you can take me to a movie." He had to feel like this was his date, but I also wanted him to feel as though I was in charge and that he was the more submissive participant; he was 'the girl'.

"All that is happening tonight...?" I'd obviously have to come back here to change, but even then, what would I change into? None of my clothes fit. This would be so much easier if we'd just go on our date in a week...

"You want to wait...?" That same tone from earlier, that same 'oh, I feel so stupid, what is wrong with me...' tone, and I looked out the window, nodding in understanding. **"I'm sorry, I'm so stupid, I just thought you want to... I got excited..."**

"No, I just didn't know! I still want to!" Gosh, I wasn't sure I'd ever seen MacKenzie so upset by something so trivial. Maybe it wasn't trivial to her. How badly did she really want this? **"Tell me about Vietnamese food. It sounds gross."** Somewhere in me, I knew I had a memory of it, but I couldn't figure it out.

"It's like Chinese, but it's spicier and has a lot more bold flavors, less sticky sauces and more strong undertones." I nodded like I knew what I was talking about and we pulled into the parking lot at my dorm building. **"Look I... if this is just a pity date, please don't... I only want you to go on a date with me if you want it. Like really want it."**

"I do." I said quickly and confidently. **"I promise, I do. You've always been... I don't know. Special. And we've been friends for forever. And I**

really like you, you know. I never suggested it because I... I don't want anything to get weird, but I promise, I want this."

"Good." I leaned over and kissed Kit's cheek, before opening my door and getting out. We'd kissed before - at parties when we were drunk, or when being silly and playing games. But all that was after he'd turned seventeen or eighteen - never at his current age. Right now, even the fact it was on the cheek would mean the world.

I felt my cheeks get hot - in particular, right where her lips had touched - and I quickly climbed out of the car and followed her into her dorm room. MacKenzie shared a dorm with another girl, and because of this, her dorm was much bigger than mine. We both went directly to her bedroom and closed the door behind us, keeping the both of us safe from uninvited guests.

"You're blushing - you look really pretty when you blush." I started to go through my many pairs of jeans, looking for a pair that was a little small on me and that wouldn't throw up alarm bells for Kit. **"My panties are in that drawer. Pick out a pair. "**

I could honestly say I had never gone through MacKenzie's underwear drawer. I felt my cheeks stay hot as I pulled open the drawer and ran my fingers across different pairs. I couldn't even remember the last time I'd worn a girl's underwear, and the fact that MacKenzie was offering was... very strange. But I'd promised. I finally picked out a pair from the bottom, covered in ice cream cones.

"Nice choice." I didn't let anything ulterior slip into my voice as I smiled and handed the boy a pair of jeans and a top that was form-fitting to a girl's body, but that he hopefully wouldn't notice. Subtleties were important. **"Here, you get dressed."**

"These look small..." They were boyish enough clothes, but MacKenzie wasn't strictly the girly-girl of fashion. **"They aren't mine, are they?"** But then again, maybe that was better. I certainly couldn't wear my clothes without looking I'd gotten hit with a shrinking ray, which, honestly, was pretty much exactly what happened.

"Try everything on, and I'll find you a pair of flats to wear." Kit was

going to be my darling little pretty boy tonight - it was a small first step on his way to acceptance, but it was a first step nonetheless. Maybe he'd even let me do a little mascara or eyeliner under the guise of 'hiding how tired his eyes look'.

I was about to question her again, but she already left the bedroom. I sighed and unfolded the pair of jeans. They were... particularly small. But anything was better than the dress. I changed out of my clothes and into the new ones, panties and all. They were tight, but not uncomfortably so. I wondered if MacKenzie still wore these.

10.)

I spent a few minutes catching up with Alice in her bedroom - she was studying, but spared a few minutes to chat, before wandering back to my room and knocking on the door. **"You decent? Can I come in?"** There was a muffled affirmation and I opened the door, looking at the boy with a cheeky and very proud smile on my face. **"You look hot, Kit..."** And then, coyly, my hands linked behind my back, I asked in my cutest voice. **"May I see your panties?"**

"They aren't mine," I said with a frown. Before she could try to correct me, I pulled the edge of the waistband up the ice cream underwear just above the waistband of the jeans. I felt stupid dressed like this, but I looked no stupider than I had yesterday in my too-long shirt and pants.

"You look fantastic... gosh..." My hand took his and I dragged him to the full-length mirror with a sly smile. **"Look at you, can you remember ever looking so hot?"** I'd build him up, then make a comment about his tired eyes and how I could fix them. Strangely, though, I was starting to feel giddy... excited.

"Sure..." I thought I looked silly. The jeans were much too tight for me to wear, something I noticed very exclusively on girls my age rather than boys. The t-shirt was blue and simple and mostly harmless, but the cut was just a little... wrong. I bit my lip.

"I think you look pretty." I turned him to face me, and ran my fingers

under each of his eyes. **"You know, you really need to take care of the skin under your eyes better, sweetie..."** And here we go.

"My skin... under my eyes?" I didn't really know what to say to that, but there was a strange feeling in my tummy having MacKenzie so close, and having her so tall, like she was wearing six- inch high heels. Her fingers played along my cheeks and I felt dizzy. **"Um... I guess..."**

"Can I try something? Just a little something to make your eyes look nicer. I promise if you don't like the end result, I won't push it." He'd like it, though, because my hand was on his behind when I asked.

I wasn't sure why I nodded. I should have asked what she was talking about. But I felt tingly and special and I really didn't care. She wanted to do something with my eyes? I didn't understand that, but I didn't question it either. **"Kay..."**

With one little pot of white cream in my hand, I dabbed it under each of the boys eyes with a finger - it was cold, but my finger was warm and I ran it under each of his eyes, looking into them with a smile that didn't fade. I set the pot down and picked up a little tube of liquid eyeliner and cupped his chin with my free hand. **"Do as I say, and don't move otherwise, okay sweetie?"**

"MacKenzie..." But no words followed. I had a question, or a statement, or something, but I couldn't find the words anymore. She held my chin and started playing with my eyes, a brush in her hand. I didn't like it - it scared me, honestly. But I didn't say a word.

It was nothing severe by the time I was done - eyeliner and mascara and a light concealer under his eyes; but the effect was amazing - his baby blues shone like two spotlights piercing through a cloud and I stood back to admire my work, before turning him around and pointing him at the mirror. As before, I kept one hand on his bottom, and cuddled up close to his side, kissing his cheek. **"Tell me what you think."**

"I look stupid..." I answered honestly, but my voice was a little lost in the meekness of it all. There was no aggression or determination from the day before. A simple fact. **"I can't go out like this..."** I well and truly looked like

a girl, or at least, a boy trying to look like a girl. My stomach swam uncomfortably.

Drastic measures, MacKenzie. I turned him around and pressed his back to the mirror, then pressed my hands to his hips, and my lips met his. He was going to associate the way he looked with kisses, and kisses would make him happy. My own stomach was swimming in treacle, though, despite my attempts to compartmentalize. I didn't want to be with Kit... right...?

My fingers were trembling as I was let away from the wall. The girl didn't move her hands from my hips, though, and I couldn't meet her gaze. My cheeks were on fire, and I suddenly regretted the surprise kiss. Gosh, if I'd known, I would have kissed better! **"That... was nice..."**

"I didn't intend to, it wasn't planned, I was going to tell you that I'd clean up your eyes, but then I looked into them and..." I bit my lip. His pretty eyes, made-up by me - they'd won him a kiss. He'd know that now; he'd know that being pretty won my favor. **"You have beautiful eyes, Kit, so beautiful..."**

"Uh... thank you." MacKenzie finally pulled her fingers away from me and I held onto the wall for support. My knees felt weak. Never in my life did I ever think MacKenzie Macintosh and I would kiss. Never in my life did I think she would push me up against the wall. I wasn't sure I'd ever felt so strange in my entire life.

"You... want me to clean your eyes up now... or later?" I made sure to keep my eyes fixed on his, that adoring little smile, wanted to make certain he knew how much I adored the way he looked right now. If I'd done any of this with current-age Kit, he'd never have been receptive - he was a rock, indisputable. But this Kit... this Kit needed me, longed for me, and wanted to be with me...

"Um..." I turned again to look in the mirror, but MacKenzie put her hands on my cheeks. She smiled softly and forced me to look into her eyes. I felt my chest race and shook my head, still in her hands. **"They're okay for now... I guess. I mean, they're probably fine..."** I overreacted a lot, didn't I?

Those words led to a smile and the smile led to me leaning forward and leaning forward led me to kissing him again. I let it linger for a moment as I pulled back, then whispered softly. **"I'm glad to hear that."** It wasn't like me to manipulate anybody with my whiles, but I was good at it - and Kit needed me to be good at it.

11.)

I wasn't sure what to expect in terms of a date with MacKenzie Macintosh. She'd only dated one other boy since I'd known her when I was fifteen, and I couldn't quite pinpoint the other boys she'd dated since. We never talked about our relationships very much, usually because they weren't very important. **"Where are we going?"** I wasn't sure how she got me out of her dorm room with the eye makeup still on, but I couldn't manage to look myself in the mirror.

"Vietnamese Palace. You can get Thai food there, too, but I'm going to get the noodle wonton soup because it sounds delicious." Kit looked all sorts of stunning, beautiful for a boy and pretty for a girl; he fidgeted with his hands in his lap, fingers playing over the tight fabric of the jeans.

"Gosh, Kit, you look amazing. I wish you looked like this all the time, because everybody would be so jealous that I'm dating someone as hot as you."

"I don't think we should say we're "dating" until I'm back to normal," I mumbled. I wasn't sure if it would lead her back to a bout of crying, but she seemed pretty stable right now. **"I just mean, with the way I look, and us in college, I just think it's smarter..."** But today, this date, this still counted.

"You know your ID still says you're twenty-two - there's really no difference between you at that age and you now apart from the fact you're so much hotter right now than I've ever seen you." I was fiddling with my iPhone as I spoke and I put one of my radio stations on, setting the phone down in the center console.

"Flattery won't save you," I said with a pout. I still didn't look up from my lap, careful to avoid reflections in the windows. **"I know I don't look the**

same," at least, mostly. I was shorter now, by at least six inches, and the structure of my face was softer. I had no facial hair, though I always would shave anyway, and my hair was a lot longer, just over my ears and touching my eyebrows. I had gotten rid of this style of haircut when I was 16 - it should have tipped me off, really, early on.

"Well, I think you're hot, and if you want to be dating me, you need to start paying attention to my opinion. That's what a twenty-two year-old would do." I nodded sagely, using an angle I knew would work - he wanted so badly to stay connected to his older-self.

Well... she wasn't wrong, and it seemed to shut me up. It wasn't until we pulled up the vaguely familiar Vietnamese place. I tried to focus on it, to figure out if I'd been here before, but turned up nothing. Again, inside, the same feeling. I sat down at a table with MacKenzie and shuffled uncomfortably in my seat. **"I've been here, right?"**

"I want you to try to figure that out." I stared into his eyes with a faint smile on my lips, a little excitement, as he looked at me and then quickly looked away and then down at the menu. I didn't need to look, personally - I knew what I was getting.

I decided not to go with Vietnamese. I still wasn't sure how I felt about it, and I was starving. I closed the menu and looked around the place, from booths to the paintings on the walls. I couldn't pinpoint anything in particular, and that upset me. **"I think they have an ice cream machine, like at buffets, and sprinkles..."** But I couldn't see one, no matter how much I searched.

Kit ordered Pad Thai and continued to glance around the restaurant with his gorgeous blue eyes. Mid-way through his monologue about ice-cream, I took his hand in mine and played my fingers over his soft skin. He continued to talk, and I reached into my purse and took out a bottle of baby pink nail polish, gently shaking the bottle while looking at the nails at his hand.

I looked curiously at the girl as she pulled out the little bottle of nail polish. MacKenzie loved to paint her nails, despite not being overtly feminine. I didn't think anything of it until she pulled my hand toward her. With a huff, I

pulled it back. **"Don't start, MacKenzie, you're lucking I'm wearing *this*. Anyway, what about the ice cream machine?"**

"You love it when I paint your nails, at least... twenty-two-year-old-you does..." I let the words trail off - whether it was the truth or a lie, I knew he'd believe me and I knew he'd want it, too. I hand my hand out expectantly, waiting for the boy to consider the options.

"Well, I don't now..." I was hesitant, though. Did I really like my nails painted? It seemed so obscure, to the highest degree, but so did the dresses. I felt the tingling familiar feeling over the dresses, though, and not this. I crossed my arms and looked down at the table. I hated this...

"If you give me your hand, I'll tell you why you think this place has ice-cream." I gently unscrewed the nail polish, the faint scent of would be something he smelled, something else that made it hard to deny me. Kit looked at me with his eyelined eyes and bit his lip - something I'd never seen him do.

"One nail, and you'll tell me about the ice cream..." I didn't want my nails painted, if my twenty-two year old self liked it or not, but I wanted answers. The more answers I had, the more puzzle pieces I could fit into place. One pink nail was worth it, wasn't it? So I put out my hand. **"One nail."**

I gently ran the brush down the center of his index finger-nail, explaining as I did. **"You want to aim for three brushstrokes only, center, left and right, and never any more than that or you get unevenness and it looks like shit."** Three strokes is what I did, and I did it so quickly it seemed like magic - I could see his curious eyes, see the boy who wanted to be a girl wanting to ask questions, wanting to see more. **"Want me to show you again?"**

"Not really," I lied. It was something I'd never given any thought to. Painting nails always seemed so magical - a brush over the place, and the colors were always so perfect. I was a terrible painter. **"And you shouldn't swear."** The nail was drying as I looked at it, careful not to touch it against something. **"Now tell me about the ice cream."**

"There's an ice-cream parlor in the next store, and you can get to it through the door by the bathrooms, like adjoining hotel rooms." I took Kit's hand and started to blow softly on the painted nail, looking up at him and smiling as I did. I knew he wanted more.

"That makes sense, I guess..." I tried to think about if I'd noticed it on the way in, but I was pretty focused on my shoes. Maybe I really was remembering, or maybe I was just noticing things subconsciously. **"Do I like it here? Do I like Vietnamese?"**

"I could tell you, but it's going to cost you another nail..." Somewhere in the course of human history, I was certain somebody must have used this manner of negotiation technique - but I really couldn't picture where. Maybe I was a pioneer.

"Seriously?" I frowned, putting my head down on the table. How long until food got here? **"Fine, one more, but you better be more descriptive this time."** It seemed my nails were bargaining chips. If I was really going to let her paint them all, I'd make sure I was getting my money's worth, so to speak.

I was giddy as I smiled, and I took his hand and began to pain the next fingernail with the soft baby pink that seemed to sparkle a little in the light of the restaurant. **"When you were nineteen, you decided you wanted to eat in one of every different asian country restaurants in the city."** Technically I answered him - he had been here before, but I was very vague about it.

"Why did I decide that?" I wasn't even sure I liked any asian food beyond Chinese. But I ordered Pad Thai, and I wasn't even sure I'd ever had it. **"So I have been here. But you didn't tell me if I like it or not. And don't try being coy - I said details, and you agreed."** I suppose that was what the painting nails were - signatures.

"You adore Vietnamese food, it's your second favorite after Thai." He'd ordered Thai, too, which meant he remembered that. Or it meant that he was just taking my suggestion from earlier. **"As for why you decided to do that, that's another question, which means..."** I moved to his ring finger, smiling as I ran my finger over the unpainted nail. He knew the cost.

I sighed and looked down at my most-painted fingernails on my left hand. It was strange to see the baby pink over the tips of my fingers, a kind of strange that was familiar in no regard. I wasn't sure I'd ever had my nails painted before, and that meant MacKenzie might have lied. **"Why are you doing this? Why do I need my nails painted just so you'll help me?"**

"Because it makes me happy. You do want to make me happy, don't you?" If I implied it was for his happiness, he'd refute it and deny it - but he could do no such protest when it came to my happiness.

I bit my lip again and looked away from MacKenzie. I supposed, realistically, she was tolerating this a lot better than I'd thought. Her best friend had turned into a fifteen year old, and she'd asked me on a date. I should be more grateful. **"So why did I want to try asian places? You never answered."** And my nail was already painted.

"You felt like your life was empty, like something was missing, like getting to the end of a lego kit and not having some of the pieces you need, so it's unfinished." I looked up into his beautiful eyes and smiled. **"So you started to try things to fill the void. Trying new foods was one of the things."**

"That's stupid," I said under my breath, but luckily, the food came a moment later. I was trepidatious over the pad thai - wasn't it supposed to look a little better? But I decided not to say anything and take a bite instead. **"Damn... wow...."** I took another bite. **"Really, wow."**

"Those were your exact words the first time you tried Pad Thai. Exact. Words." I twirled up a fork full of noodles and vegetables and scooped them with some soup into the large wonton spoon, and then handed it to him. **"This is wonton noodle soup. Try."** He'd adored this, too, mostly because until that point he'd never considered that a soup could require chewing.

I really had no interest in soup - I never liked soup - but I didn't suspect she'd give me something I didn't like. Then again, maybe I'd never tried it before. Still, I took the bite. **"That's soup? That's really weird soup..."** It wasn't bad, though - it just didn't go with the pad thai very well.

It was very interesting how lukewarm his reception was to the wanton soup and I smiled, thoughtfully, as I continued to eat. His nails caught the light and I kept watching his, the boy in my clothes, wearing my panties, in makeup with three painted nails. Gosh he was cute. **"You know why we never dated before?"** There was a loud wailing from the ceiling, though, and suddenly the emergency fire sprinklers started to pour down water over the entire restaurant. I sat there, we sat there, looking stunned and mystified as we were drenched head to toe like a summer storm had just erupted indoors.

12.)

Everyone ran. I was very unhappy. I didn't like getting wet, but I seemed to like this pad thai much more. I tried to take another bite, but it just didn't taste right with the sprinkler water on top. I climbed up from the booth and followed MacKenzie out of the building, behind everyone else. My clothes were soaked through, or rather, MacKenzie's were.

When we got out the front, we both looked a mess, but there was something about Kit with his hair slicked down by the wetness, his eye makeup smudged a little, the white top a little translucent and his skin shimmering with wetness... There was a sheepish smile on my face as I let my hand slip into Kit's and we watched the owners of the restaurant try to figure out what had happened. **"I wonder what happens now - do we still have to pay...? Do we wait...?"**

"I'm not sure, but I kind of just want to find some new clothes..." I was still very hungry, though, and the idea that my food had been ruined really upset me. I tried pulling the white top away from my skin, unhappy with the way it stuck. My hair was dripping water down my cheeks, like I was crying without any of the dramatics.

"Let's go to the thrift store across the street - pick out something temporary to wear, and then look for somewhere else to go for dinner." I wasn't falling for Kit, I wasn't. That was just inconceivable, and not the sort of thing I'd do. He was stubborn, and self-centered and didn't know what he wanted from life. He was a good friend, but he couldn't be anything else. And yet... this Kit seemed so different to that.

We didn't drive. Maybe because we were wet and MacKenzie really liked her car, or maybe because the thrift store was just down the street. The sun was starting to warm the cold air around the both of us and I kept my eyes on my feet. **"So, you were talking about why we didn't date... what were you going to say?"**

We crossed the threshold into the thrift store and I ignored the question, pretending like I hadn't heard it over the jingling of the bell above the door. There were clothes all up and down the back half of the store and that's where I led Kit to, my hand still in his. We looked like a pair of drowned rats, but he was still so damn cute.

I kept trying to shake out the shirt, still on my body. The warmth of the sun was gone, now, and the air conditioning of the thrift store made it so much worse. **"I'm gonna go pick something out to wear. I need something that fits right, anyway, so maybe it's good that we're here."**

"Kit..." I pulled the item off the rack that had caught my eye - it was a junior school uniform from one of the private schools. Kit had told me how his sister used to go to a private school, but her uniforms were always under lock and key, that he'd grown up longing for a uniform like that - it was something his collection was lacking, and this was his size, too, the faint pink with plaid lines through it, and a peter-pan collar. It was something else.

I looked back at MacKenzie as I was walking back to the boy's section. We were only ten feet apart when I saw the uniform, and then noticed that it was very much not in her size. It wasn't mine either, or at least, it wasn't before. Then it clicked. **"No. No, no, no. Absolutely not, MacKenzie!"**

"Try it on? For me...?" I batted my lashes and took his hand in mine, then touched it to the fabric of the school dress. It was such a lucky stroke to have found it here - people didn't tend to donate school uniforms like this. I could see the look in his eyes, the longing, he wanted it so badly and just needed a way to have it without having to admit it.

"I said no, MacKenzie." I pulled away from her, from the dress, and felt my cheeks turn pink. I had known fairly well when I was young how curious something like this was, but not now. I was older, smarter, and I'd gotten

better. I wasn't twelve anymore.

"I'll let you put your hand up my top in the changing room." It never would have worked on Kit the way I knew him, but this was a fifteen year old version. Fifteen year olds were easy. I held the uniform in my hand and tilted my head cutely, motioning to the changing room.

The idea was... definitely something. But this was our first date. I was still fifteen, if I liked it or not, and I just... it wasn't comfortable. I looked down to my feet and took two steps back. **"I'm gonna go look at the boy clothes..."** Which was, after all, where I should be.

Without my clothes, without the makeup (I'd cleaned the remnants off in the changing room), Kit was just any other boy - albeit one wearing my panties. I liked that he chose to stay in them, too, I liked that we didn't argue about it, that it wasn't even a question that came up, he just kept them on. That was progress, if nothing else. **"Will you let me finish your nails?"** We were on the way back to my dorm, now, and I saw him staring at his nails thoughtfully.

"I just have to take them off before school tomorrow," I said quietly. The car lent itself to the quiet rather well. I put my head against the window and closed my eyes. I needed to call that Izzy girl - I couldn't do this all week, I just couldn't...

"Deal." I made sure he saw the smile that played across my lips and when we finally pulled up in the parking lot, I could see the boy staring at his painted nails - the three that were - and smiling faintly.

13.)

"Yes, this is Dr. Drake." I nodded absently as I picked up the phone - it was four in the morning and the voice at the other end of the phone sounded only vaguely familiar. **"You'd better have a fantastic reason for calling me in the middle of the night."**

"Hey, um... this is..." "I know who this is." "Right. Well, I want you to put me back to normal tomorrow." I knew she couldn't. I knew she had

some rules or something. But I wasn't going to give up. **"I have finals next week, and if I take it like this I'm going to fail. I don't even know what classes I'm taking! So can we just... find a way around this or something."**

"What the devil are you talking about? The Deageinator doesn't impact your memories, it's purely physical - you will be fine doing your exams." His voice sounded different, though; a little bit lost, or scattered - but that could be a factor of the point that it was the middle of the night.

"Well you better check your damn machine again!" I said angrily into the phone. The woman seemed very skeptical though. Did she really not know? **"I don't remember anything after I was, maybe fifteen! I get glimpses sometimes, but it isn't going to help me on my exams. Now fix me, or I'll..."** What could I do? Take legal action?

"Very well. I'll prepare the lab - meet me there, post haste." I didn't usually say things like Post Haste but it sounded fancy and I was feeling fancy right now. Memory reversal was fascinating - oh, the implications, the applications! Criminals could be reversed to a point before they turned bad and allowed to grow up right... I was rubbing my hands together with a big smile on my face long after I hung up the phone.

"Hey... MacKenzie..." "mm..." The words were slurred into her phone, and I bit hard on my lip. **"Are you awake?" "No..."** She wouldn't be, not at five in the morning. **"Can you do me a favor?" "No..." "Please?" "Ugh, what is it, Kit?"** I took a deep breath, preparing myself for the eventuality. **"I'm in jail. Could you come bail me out?"**

"What... go back to bed, Kit, you're drunk..." I rolled over and tucked my hand with the phone back under my pillow, but his voice continued and I put the phone back to my ear. **"Hello? Kit... what... jail? Ugh... how?"** I wasn't impressed as I slipped into my car in my nightie and rubbed my eyes, yawning. He'd refused to tell me what had happened over the phone, which left me a mixture of curious and seething as I drove to the county jail.

"We caught him driving a car," the officer told MacKenzie. MacKenzie didn't seem to catch on, though, and I crossed my arms in my chair. **"So?"** she inevitably asked. **"...well, when we asked for his license, he gave us this."** The officer showed my license to MacKenzie. Again, she looked

bewildered, and again said, **"So?"** **"You expect me to believe this boy is twenty-two?"**

Oh man. I bit my lip and nodded, taking the boy's ear. **"How many times have I told you, don't take your brother's license."** I took an apologetic tone of voice and sighed. **"I'm sorry, officer, ever since Mom passed away, Jules has been a little bit wayward."** Kit looked at me and I hoped against hope he'd follow along. **"Did anybody get hurt? Was there any damage? I'm dreadfully sorry, I'll pay any damages - plus don't judge him harsh, he was closer to Mom than any of us."**

This was such bullshit. I couldn't believe she was trying to pass me off as her younger brother! But we wound up walking out of the police station with both my license and my car, no fees or anything. Of course, we'd have to find someone else to come pick my car up from the impound lot. I didn't say a word until we got into the passenger seat of MacKenzie's car. **"I can't believe this crap."**

"What the hell do you think you were doing? Where were you going at 5am that couldn't wait?" My tone was stern, strict and motherly - which surprised me - and when he looked at me to protest, he met my gaze and then looked back down at his painted nails instead. **"You could have got in so much trouble, Kit, do you have any idea? And how would you pay for fines, or court fees? Did you even think?"**

"You're the one that said I don't look much different! You're the one that said my license said twenty-two! Don't start yelling at me; I'm still twenty-two if you or the police or anyone believes it or not." I fumed like a child, crossing my arms over my chest and staring out the front windshield.

I sighed, taking a few moments, and then leaned over and kissed the boy's pouting lips, putting my hand under his hair, behind his neck. **"Are you okay? Tell me what's going on."** I felt a pushover of a mother, but I preferred the girlfr-... best friend role, and that role was easier to forgive and move on over things like this.

I let out a little sigh, my insecurities and upsetness melting away with the kisses. Now I just felt silly for all the loud words in her small car. **"I called the doctor woman, and she told me to hurry down to her office. I was**

on my way there... ugh - I forgot, completely." I pulled out my phone and started dialing her number.

"Put the address in my phone," I handed the boy my smart phone and began to pull away from the curb as he held his phone up to his ear. // **"Yes, this is Dr. Drake."** The boy had never shown up, so I made my way to the spare bed off to one side of my warehouse laboratory - I tried to figure out how long it had been since I'd fallen asleep. **"Where have you been?"**

"I got arrested, if you believe that." MacKenzie had been very sketchy about the whole doctor business, but it seemed like she was coming around. I smiled appreciatively and punched in the information to her maps app. **"MacKenzie had to bail me out - she's my friend. I can still come, as long as she can tag along..."**

"She'll have to wait in the car - she's not clear to know about my research." It began to occur to me, however, that it might have been a tad optimistic to think that now - especially because the boy was suggesting the aforementioned friend come along at all in the first place. **"I remind you, Kit, that your signed a non-disclosure agreement that prohibits you from discussing the details of our relationship with anybody else."**

"I did?" I bit my lip and looked up at MacKenzie. Shit. Really, shit. I didn't like to swear, but... well, shit. **"Would... it still apply if I didn't ever remember signing it?"** I heard a loud annoyed exhale on the other side of the phone and I tried to speak up to my defense. **"I really didn't know! I can't remember!"**

I sighed and finally spoke. **"She'll need to sign the same paperwork that you did - do your best to be convincing, Kit, if you've told her of anything, she needs to be bound by the same level of enforced discretion as you are."** I was already assembling paperwork from my desk and I pulled out a pen. **"What is the girl's full-name, I'll have her paperwork done up."**

"MacKenzie - M-a-c-capital K-e-n-z-i-e. Macintosh, like the apple, or like the Apple products." I ended the phone call a second later and took a deep breath. **"I wasn't supposed to tell you. I wasn't supposed to tell**

anyone, I guess. I signed a contract or something, though I can't remember it..."

"You know you're not old enough to sign a contract, now, right?" I pondered the legalities of that, and then thought to ask. **"Why did she want my name?"** This woman, whomever she was, was doubtlessly brilliant - but I still wanted very little to do with her or what she was doing. In-fact, if I had my way, we'd never see her again.

"She... she said you have to sign the contract, too. Um, she said that if you didn't, it could cause me a lot of problems... because I wasn't supposed to tell you." I bit my lip and looked away, unsure how she would take this. After all, she'd have to sign a contract...

"Just an NDA, right? A waiver that says I won't talk about any of this - that's fine. Who'd believe me, anyway?" The address that Kit had put into my phone was on the other side of town, down by the docks, and it would be at least a twenty minute drive.

Oh right. MacKenzie was pre-law. How did I know that? Maybe I was remembering after all... **"I... um... I think so."** I usually didn't read the contracts I signed - they were pretty standard, after all - and I signed a *lot* of them with how often I did these experiments. After all, they were regulated, right?

"Great. Then there's no big deal. You need to worry less, Kit - you'll get worry-lines around your eyes, and your eyes are your prettiest feature." It wasn't exactly true, though - his skin was beautiful, too, the sort of beautiful that most girls envied. Why would he ever want to be anything but a pretty girl?! Gosh.

We pulled into the warehouse parking lot early in the morning. The sun was just coming up and it was nearing six in the morning. I led the way into the double doors and through one of the hallways. Izzy's was the first on the left, and I led MacKenzie in.

14.)

"Good morning, Kit." I was preparing a small stack of documents as the boy and the girl came in through the door. **"And MacKenzie Macintosh, I presume. Right this way, you need to initial each page and sign on the 1st, 1th, 17th, 34th and 119th."** // I frowned and looked at Kit, mouthing the words 'one-hundred-nineteen pages' to my best-friend, the two of us wandering over to the girl with the forms.

"Hey..." MacKenzie was *not* amused. I closed the door behind us and Izzy sat behind her desk. The stack of papers in front of her were the same as the ones I'd signed, as far as I knew; well, at the very least, they were the same size.

"I'm going to have to read this before I sign or initial anything." A task that would take at least an hour, and that was only assuming I only read everything once. **"And I'm not letting you do anything to Kit without me being present."** // **"Please don't waste too much of my time, pet, there could be an issue with Kit's genetic stability and the longer we wait, the more likely there'll be an issue."**

"Wait, what?!" She'd never said anything about that! She said I'd be fine! I felt my heart rate jump and I very quickly shook my head. **"I don't want... genetic... that! Change me back!"** MacKenzie put her hand on my shoulder and pulled me close. It was strange with her height. I blushed.

"I need you to focus for a minute, okay? She's trying to goad me into signing this without reading it, and that makes me concerned. I'm just looking out for you, okay missy?" My voice was low and I smiled, looking over the first page. **"Please do be quick, I'll be over in the far corner preparing equipment for the process ahead."**

The word "missy" was an obscure thing for Izzy to hear, and I knew it. I felt my cheeks turn a little darker and took Izzy's chair once she left the room. I didn't even think twice about any of it... **"You said... the contract worried you... but I'm fine though, right?"** All this had to go through a medical board, or the APA, I was almost sure. Right?

"Well, these sorts of contracts essentially qualify as disclosure agreements, as well as indemnity agreements to ensure you can't sue

her. **But something like this seems very ironclad, and she seemed reluctant for me to read the entire thing.**" I picked up the boy under the arms and lifted him onto the table, sitting him next to the stack of papers as I started to go through the pages.

I felt pathetically small as she lifted me onto the table. Gosh... **"So I can't sue her for... for turning me into a kid, then?"** Then where did that leave me? What if she couldn't turn me back? I felt a little bit of panic wash over me, but did my best to keep calm. Everything will be okay...

"I bet this isn't notarized, though - was there anybody else here when you signed?" Kit shook his head, frowning. **"Rookie mistake. It's not a get out of jail free card, but it's something."** I was on the tenth page as I read, though, my words quiet under my breath. **"Wow... this is thorough... the lack of notarization seems to be a chink, at least."**

"But it's just about, like, the not telling anybody thing, right?" I was curious about the whole process. I knew contracts were a little scary, but this was an experimental program. Everything *had* to go through a board! I knew that. I took a session on it before I started all these experiments.

"Page 11, Paragraph ii, here..." I pointed to the line and then read it out loud. **"Subject agrees to undergo experimentation as agreed up for the recompense agreed upon, as well as any additional experimentation and/or study as deemed required."** Wording like that was the building blocks of contracts, words with enough multiple meanings so as they could be used to excuse a great many things.

"I don't get it," I mumbled, following the tip of her finger over the contract. I read along with her, but in the end, I understood it no more. **"So it just means something about making sure I do my part, right? I mean, I did get a *lot* of money..."** It was ten times more than I'd ever made on a single job before, though I understood why.

"It means she can do anything she likes, and can chalk it up to a requirement of the original experiment." And that was how it stood, too - Dr. Drake had freedom to do whatever she wanted to Kit. I was expected to sign the same forms, too, but so long as I didn't accept any payment, there was no legal binding over me with regards to her rights to experiment.

It was another half hour before MacKenzie signed the page, making sure I turned my back while she did so. She talked a minute about witnesses, and then about the process of everything. I understood very little of it - I didn't like law, I never did. Izzy waited outside, tampering with her machine, and I was the first to greet her, MacKenzie just behind me. **"All done. You can change me back now?"**

"Yes, yes, please just sit right here," I motioned to the stool and the boy made his way over to it, smiling as he pulled his way onto it. The girl followed, too, holding his hand and I smiled slyly. **"Please step back, MacKenzie."** **"Wait. Please. I want to discuss some details of the contract."** I sighed and made it clear how displeased I was, crossing my arms. **"Make it quick."** **"What is your intention? I remind you that under page 96, sub-section A, paragraph iii, it's outlined that you must be forthcoming when asked."** There was a silence over the vast space of a room, and I looked at Kit, then back at the woman.

Really? I looked over at the doctor, and, sure enough, the disapproval on her face was clear as day. She hovered away from the machine and crossed her arms. **"Hey, ladies... I just want my body back. I don't really care about anything else..."**

"This is a golden opportunity to further the data gathered..." **"I knew it! You have no intention of changing him back, do you?"** **"That's not fair to say."** **"But right now?"** The doctor was quiet, her hand on the large barrel of the machine.

"You weren't going to change me back...?" I frowned, my whole body shivering in mild discomfort. Before anyone could say anything else, I stumbled away from the chair I was sitting in and looked up at the woman, who was as tall as I used to be. I hated being so short. **"You have to change me back right now!"**

"Actually, per your contract, I'm not required to do that at all, especially if further steps are required for my research. If you're compliant, I'll return you to your former self in time. But if you disobey, I'll have no choice but to leave you this way." Which was, admittedly, something perfect for my desires, but I knew neither of them wanted that - the doctor wanted to continue her experiments, and Kit

wanted to be put back. I was the only one who liked him the way he was now.

I looked over at MacKenzie with panic in my eyes. She reluctantly nodded. I felt tears well up in place, refusing to let them down my cheeks, and turned back to the woman with fury. **"No! You make me me again! You said you would! Right now! I'll... I'll tell the... the medical... board!"** I wasn't sure what the medical board was called, but surely she was doing this through them.

"Oh darling, I'm an independent contractor, and you signed off an indemnity agreement, as well as a non disclosure. You could go to jail for a very long time if you tell even a single soul." Neither of the two youths looked happy, but I wasn't out to have anybody happy. I turned the gun to point at the boy and summarily pushed the button.

Again, there was no beam. There was never a beam. But I felt dizzy, just for a second, and slipped onto the floor, landing on my butt. The clothes I'd worn over had grown considerably, and I looked up at Izzy through the haziness around my eyes, and then over at MacKenzie. **"You can't just zap me with your stupid-"** But the voice wasn't mine. It was high pitched, almost girly. What...

I could have dated a 15 year old, if that 15 year old were Kit, if we kept things PG until he was 18 - but now he was...he was eight at best, maybe younger - a child! Truly a child. I was furious, and I reached out and slapped the woman's cheek, putting my hands on the machine. **"How do I make this work, you tell me right this instant, bitch!"** The doctor took me by the hair and pulled upward, sneering. **"It's rude to curse in front of a child, young lady."**

A... no! I looked down at my hands, still cloaked in the shirt, and tried to close them all the way. I was young. I wasn't a toddler, but I was *very* young. I stood up on my feet, shaking, and only came up to the chest of MacKenzie. My heart sunk. No, no, no... **"TURN ME BACK!"** The sound was shrill and high pitched, loud as could be.

"I'm going to fix this, Kit, you'll see." "Kit, darling, she can fix nothing - but if you're a good child, let me do my experiments, I promise to return you to your former well." "She won't, Kit, she's lying!" "Am I?"

Or do you just not wish for him to return to his proper age, mm?" I opened my mouth, but went quiet, looking away guiltily.

I didn't understand... I shook my head at both the girls, now nearly twice my height, and suddenly felt very uncomfortable. My head spun and I felt little things slip away. I closed my eyes tight and held the sides of my head - my hair was long for a kid, the same way it had been when I was young.

"Return to me in three days, let me study the results, and I'll return you to any age you wish." I bit my lip harder and looked at the diminutive boy, walking to him and kneeling down in front of the child, my hands taking his. **"What do you think about that, Kit? Just three days. You can stay in my dorm, nobody will know."**

"I... I can't stay... not like this for three days!" I was supposed to be bigger. I was supposed to be an adult - I was sure of it. But the memories were already slipping, and I felt a little dizzy at the thought. Unlike before, though, my body wasn't handling it so well. I couldn't keep from trembling, and I felt very lightheaded.

The boy lost his footing a moment later and I caught him in my arms, cradling him as he slipped away from consciousness. The woman came over and stood behind me, putting her hand on my shoulder. There was no way around this - we were stuck. We needed her. And she needed something else from us, too, from Kit - she needed data. Kit slept silently in my arms and I ran my fingers over his cheeks; he could have been a little girl for all anybody knew.

15.)

When I woke up, I had absolutely no idea where I was. The bed I was on - a double by any other standards - was as vast as a sea, and just as wet. I felt my cheeks color and looked down at the wet patch all across the comforter, tears streaking down my cheeks. Where was I? What was happening?

Despite the fact I was showering at the time, I still heard the sound of Kit waking up and I quickly turned off the water and wrapped a towel around

my body, making my way to the bedroom. And there he was, eyes red and puffy and tear-streaked cheeks, sitting in a large wet patch on my sheets, the darkness spread to my comforter, too. Great. I smiled reassuringly and nodded. **"Oh, Kit. Gosh. Okay, it's alright, I'll get the bed all cleaned up. Hop up please."**

I looked up at the woman as she lifted me off the bed and placed me down on my feet. The pants I wore - about twice too long, now - were soaked through, and it left absolutely no comfort left for me. I slipped my thumb into my mouth and tried my best not to cry anymore. **"Who are you...?"**

Who am I? Who am I? I looked at the boy with a frown and put my hands on his shoulders, looking into his blue eyes. **"Kit, it's me - it's MacKenzie."** He didn't remember me? How could he not remember me?! I went on a date with him yesterday, we kissed! This wasn't right, this couldn't be.

"Where's my mom...?" It was the only thing I could think to ask from the strange woman. I just wanted my mom. **"Where am I? Where's Taylor and Claire? I wanna go home, I wanna go home *right now!*"** Despite my best efforts, I couldn't stop crying.

Taylor... Claire... I took a deep breath and knelt down, looking into his red eyes with a kindly smile - I was never too great with kids. **"Kit, my name is MacKenzie, I'm taking care of you for a few days. Your Mom is out of town, don't you remember? She dropped you off here last night?"** He looked confused and rubbed his eyes and I smiled, nodding to the bed. **"Now, it looks like you have a tiny accident, but that's okay - how about I get you in the bath, and then I can tidy up and find you something pretty to wear."** The last bit slipped out, as though I were talking to my Kit - but I was curious how the child version would take it.

"Pretty...?" The word played on the tip of my tongue and I looked down at my feet. I couldn't believe I'd wet the bed again... I'd been doing so well at it recently. **"I... I don't think my mom mentioned you... I have another babysitter - her name is Julie - and she usually watches me..."**

"Julie had plans at the last minute, sweetie," I wondered if his future-blushing at the word sweetie applied at his young age. **"I know my dorm isn't very spacious, but it's only for a few days."** My hand slipped into

his and I used the other to gently pull his thumb free of his lips so I could hold them both. **"So how about that bath? I can make it have bubbles if you like."** At this age, Kit was so soft, and sensitive, and emotional - the sort of boy anybody would have looked at and knew he was different. How had he become the jaded boy I was friends with?

"Yeah... okay, bubbles, please..." I was undressed from the oversized wet clothes and Kenzie drew me a bath. Like she said, she made bubbles, but they didn't smell like strawberry and weren't as puffy as the ones I liked. I played with them nonetheless, drawing shapes in the foam. **"Kenzie - can I call my mom?"**

Kenzie? Kenzie, gosh he was adorable. I managed a smile without too much hesitation and shook my head. **"She said she'll call once she gets there, but it's a long drive and cell reception isn't so good."** I hated lying to Kit - when he was fifteen and I was manipulating him for his own benefit to being a girl, it was one thing. But this... he was just a child. How old a child? I took a handful of bubbles and put them on top of his impossibly silky hair and tilted my head.

I blew at the bubbles as they fell down over my face and puffed out my cheeks, then, without a second step, smiled up at Kenzie. I liked her. **"Julie puts my head back and puts water on it, then the shampoo..."** I'd showered on my own plenty of times before - I was too old for baths, really, but I liked them when my mom wasn't around.

"Well, if it's good enough for Julie to do, it's good enough for me." I gently laid the small boy back - small enough for the bath-tub not to be awkwardly small like most bath-tubs were on adults - and took a cup from the basin, filling it with water and gently pouring it over the boy's hair. **"You have such pretty hair, Kit, has anybody ever told you that? Told you how pretty you are?"**

"Nuh uh..." I didn't say anything else on it, though, and let the girl finish washing my hair. Kenzie towel dried me with a towel taller than me and wrapped it over my shoulders, like a very large blanket. My hair came down just past my eyebrows, barely in my eyes, as it started to dry.

"Now, your Mom was in a hurry and didn't leave you any clothes - but she gave me some money to buy you some, okay? So you'll just have

to borrow something of mine until then." I didn't have any idea what I had that would fit a body his size; though given my roommate was Korean and wasn't much bigger than Kit, that might have provided some options. I led the boy into my room and sat him down on my desk chair, wrapped in the towel, and began to strip back my bed. What was with the bedwetting?

"Yours?" I hesitated, looking around the obviously girly room, and the not-so girly clothes adorning Kenzie. She reminded me a lot more of my mom than either of my sisters, though, and I wasn't sure how that would work. **"I'm not as big as you,"** I said a little slowly, turning away from the girl changing my sheets.

"Yes, that occurred to me - Alice might have something that fits, though, she's not much bigger than you are." I balled up my comforter with the soaking wet sheets and wrapped them all in a large trash bag to take downstairs to the laundry room. **"It's just to go out to the mall in, so don't worry too much - you can pick your own outfits when we get there. Anything you like, and they'll be just for here - we won't even tell your Mom."** I hoped giving him the easy out like that would be enough to incite the boy into wanting to pick out some girl's clothes, but then again... he was only like seven or eight.

I met Alice ten minutes later, and her being "close to my size" was a bit of an overstatement. She was very small for a grown up, somewhere between myself and Kenzie. But her clothes probably wouldn't fit me, at least not anything she'd bought recently. **"Aren't you precious?"** she said, leaning down to try to meet eye level. She didn't need it much. **"I'm Kit. What's your name?"**

Alice looked at me with curiosity and then back down at the boy. **"Hello, Kit. I'm Alice. It's very nice to meet you."** Alice wasn't her real name - her real name was Li, but Alice preferred the more American sounding name she'd adopted. **"Kit, sugarplum, do you mind if I talk to MacKenzie in her room for a few minutes?"** She took my hand and pulled me into my room - this was going to be an awkward conversation at best, and Alice would think me batshit crazy at worst.

There wasn't a lot to do at Kenzie's, and her room was now occupied by two, the door closed. I sat on the couch in their living room, watching television, and unable to find any station that actually worked. Inevitably, I

turned the TV off and went over to the kitchen; I wondered if she had any Pop-tarts. We had a pantry at our house, but I couldn't find one here, just cupboards, and they were all pretty high up. I grabbed a chair from the kitchen table and pushed it against the counter.

Alice didn't believe me, not at first, not until she stormed out of my room and into the kitchen and looked at the boy on the chair, narrowing her already narrow eyes and then looking back at me with a small look of realization. **"I'll see if I have something that fits..."** Alice went to her room and I smiled at Kit, taking his hand and re-adjusting his towel, wrapping it around his chest like a girl. **"Alice is going to get you some clothes, and then we'll go shopping and get some breakfast, okay?"** I wouldn't usually have had the money for any of that, but my purse was stuffed full of bills from the doctor woman.

I agreed, mostly because they didn't have any Pop-tarts here. I sat on the countertop while Alice looked for clothes and Kenzie cleaned the dishes in the sink. There wasn't anything else to do, anyway. **"It's not very fun here,"** I said softly, doing my best to be polite. **"Your TV doesn't work, either."**

"Our TV works fine - were you using the right input? I bet it was still on the Xbox." I used one edge of the towel to dry the boy's hair a little, and then had an idea. **"Come on, I want to style your hair in the bathroom. If that's okay?"** Alice hadn't emerged yet, and I had all these thoughts in my head about Kit as a girl - did he even realize that at such a young age? He loved the bubble bath, he complained about the lack of strawberry scent, and he cried a lot. But I guess it would be Alice's clothes that would really give me a baseline.

I sat on the counter in the bathroom the same way I sat on the counter in the kitchen - it gave her a better height, Kenzie had said. I couldn't turn toward the mirror, but my hair was already mostly dry. The girl started to spray something around my head and I looked awkwardly at her. **"I've never had anyone style my hair."** It was her words, not mine.

"Well, that's just silly - hair as pretty as yours should always look its best." And it was soft, and easy to manage, too - it worked well with the hair-spray and didn't tangle at all when I brushed it. **"I like brushing your hair, Kit, it's so pretty and soft."** I hadn't planned to do anything over the

top - I didn't want to push the boy one way or the other until I saw his reaction to Alice's clothes, but I wound up styling it and then pinning his bangs back with a barrette adored in pink and blue polkadots, with a large plastic heart on one end.

I looked up at the clip, out of my vision, and then at Kenzie. She only smiled, though. It wasn't until she put me back down on the ground that I saw myself in the mirror. **"Am I allowed to wear this?"** I looked up at Kenzie and pointed to the barrette. She looked curious and nodded her head. **"Okay then."**

Am I allowed to wear this. Children asked, children asked when they were worried they were doing something wrong, and all it took was an adult to... I took his hands in mine and smiled. **"Kit, I want you to listen to me, and I want you to remember what I'm going to tell you, okay? Can you do that? It might be the most important thing you ever know."** He looked concerned, so I decided not to let him linger in anticipation. **"You're allowed to wear anything you like. You're allowed to be anybody you like. Do you understand? Some people will tell you no, but they're wrong."**

"Anything?" I asked. **"Anything,"** she said. I nodded my head, doing my best to understand it, and looked at myself again in the mirror. The barrette really was very nice looking. I smiled up at Kenzie and she smiled back, then took me by the hand and pulled me out into the living room again.

16.)

We got to the living room and Alice was waiting with a few articles of clothing; there was a pair of jeans with pink stitching that glittered, and a daisy embodied on each of the back pockets, they were extremely tight on Alice and she's bought them from the children's section, so she figured they might be a safe bet. She had a few tops, too; one of them was a baby-doll tee with a faded print on the front of a cloud with a rainbow arching out of it and the word "Adorable~" in pastel colors - she had it when she was a teenager, so that was a potential, too. She also had a pair of shoes, though they were slightly too big, and a pair of sparkling yellow glittery sandals.

I slipped my thumb into my mouth upon looking at the clothes and looked up at Kenzie with a worried expression. They reminded me a lot of Taylor's, and that made me a little nervous. Kenzie shook her head and smiled at me, as sincere as ever. I kept my thumb in place between my lips.

"Remember what I said, Kit?" The boy didn't say anything, though, and Alice looked at him with his thumb in his mouth. I took both of his hands and smiled, then directed his gaze to meet mine as I squatted down. **"What did I say? You remember, right?"** It had only been a few moments ago, but I was determined that, if nothing else, in the next three days he would learn this.

I nodded my head, looking over at the clothes once again on the couch. My cheeks felt hot, but Kenzie was a very nice girl. I could trust her. So I picked up the pair of jeans and the "adorable" top. It didn't look like anyone had any underwear, but that was okay. **"I'm gonna change in the bathroom."**

"Okay - be careful not to mess up your hair, okay?" He nodded and went into the bathroom, and Alice looked at me. **"You're taking an eight year old boy out of the house dressed like a sissy...?"** **"Not a sissy, Alice. A girl. Kit spent the past fourteen years of his life wanting to be a girl, but was always too ashamed. If I put it in his head now that it's okay..."** **"This isn't time travel, MacKenzie... it's not going to change him."** **"I think it will... I think when he goes back to being his age, he'll remember knowing that it's okay..."** **"But you don't want him his own age."** I looked away, not denying it.

Kenzie had to roll up the bottoms of my jeans, and the waistline needed a belt from Alice's closet. The top came down to my thighs, but it looked okay nonetheless. It was a little evident I was wearing too-big-for-me clothes, but with the hair clip in place, I was a lot more comfortable than I could remember ever being. **"Is it okay?"** I asked Kenzie, Alice curiously watching.

"It's always okay, as long as it's what you want to wear. Is that what you want to wear, Kit?" I stood the boy in front of my mirror while Alice watched, and I looked over my shoulder at her. We'd agreed that I wouldn't try to push Kit either way, that I'd just make it okay for him to choose what

he truly wanted. He looked absolutely adorable, though, and nobody would ever have taken the prepubescent child as anything but a girl.

I bit my lip and slowly nodded my head, smiling up at Kenzie in the mirror. **"Thank you, Kenzie."** For a babysitter, I think I liked her even more than Julie! **"Is Alice coming with us?"** I asked curiously, already trying on the shoes the girl had picked up. They didn't fit very well, though, and I wound up wearing the too-big flip flops.

I looked at Alice with a smile and she shook her head, walking over to Kit and taking his hand, leaning in the way that adults did with children. **"You look very pretty, Kit. Maybe next time, okay? I have homework."** She fished a hand into her pocket and pulled out a tube of lipgloss. **"Put your lips like this, okay?"** She led by example, pursing her lips, and waited for the boy to follow suite so she could slide the slippery, sweet-tasting lip-gloss across his lips.

I watched myself in the reflection of the window the entire way to the mall. I had to sit in the back, which I was pretty accustomed to, all and all, though the car seemed awkward from the back. I played with the clip in my hair and puckering my lips up over and over. Kenzie would watch me through the mirror sometimes, but never for too long.

Despite the level of surrealism inherent with the fact my best friend was an eight year old now, I think I found myself slightly more perturbed by the fact he was sitting in the back of my car. I kept looking at him in the mirror, the pretty little thing playing kissyface with his reflection and I couldn't help but think about the life he might have had if somebody had only told him it was okay. What would change now, when he went back? Anything? I wanted him to be happy, wanting him to be who he was - even if that were a girl. We parked and I looked over my shoulder. **"Remember, Kit, everything is okay. I want you to find the clothes that you want, no matter what. And everything is okay."**

I wasn't sure what the emphasis on 'me' was in her sentiments, but I was young and not really keen to try making sense of it anyway. Kenzie took me by the hand and walked me across the street and into the mall. I shyly looked down at my feet, feeling ashamed of my clothing, and tried to remind myself: Kenzie said it was fine... I won't get in trouble.

Nobody said anything, nobody pointed and laughed, nobody made a fuss of it, nobody seemed to have any opinion whatsoever. We held hands and walked through the mall, wandering past stores on either side. **"If you see any clothing stores you want to look at, you let me know, okay?"** I knew Justice was on the left just ahead, and Claire's had cute accessories and that Hot Topic would be a bit beyond him. What did an eight year old wear? I guess clothes were typically a 'whatever you get at Christmas thing' at that age. I was going to change that.

I didn't say anything, but Kenzie pulled me into a brightly colored store nonetheless. I tried to read the sign before she'd pulled me in, but all I could catch was the letter J. This store was very obviously a girl's store. I shied closer to Kenzie.

We wandered through racks of clothing, though I didn't say anything to the boy, waiting for him to make his own opinion. One of the girls who worked here wandered over to us both with a cute smile and a chipper demeanor and peered her head around behind me to look at Kit. **"Oh, it's okay pretty girl, you don't have to be afraid. Is your big sister here to buy you some pretty clothes? I love your top!"** And there it was - any subtleties I was wanting to play with were gone; the clerk had made it clear she saw the boy as a girl and I guess all I could do now was see how things panned out.

"Thanks," I said softly, still up close against Kenzie's side. I didn't like new people, but I'd always been taught to be well mannered. **"I'm borrowing it."** The top probably looked strange in its slightly-too-big form, but it looked surprisingly natural on my tiny body.

"Well, I think it's a keeper." The clerk was bubbly like a bottle of soda that had been dropped down the stairs, and she picked up a colorful dress off the rack and held it up to Kit's chest, looking thoughtful and then smiling. **"This would be super cute on you, sugarplum. What's your name? I'm Dee."** 'Dee' still hadn't said a word to me, but I guess this was how she conducted business - you sell to the children.

"Um... Kit..." I looked up worriedly at Kenzie, my fingers trembling in hers. I wasn't a girl, but she thought I was. Didn't I talk like a boy, or act like a boy? But my name would give it all away, and she'd feel foolish, and I'd apologize, and I'd cry because I always cry.

"That's a pretty name for a pretty little princess." She was good, so very good. I didn't remember much of when I was eight, really - I knew I wouldn't have gone for that sort of thing, but I also knew that Kit was a very different eight year old. Dee held out the dress on the pastel yellow hanger for the boy to take and pointed over to the left of the store. **"Why don't you go and try that one on? I bet you'll feel so pretty."**

I looked up at Kenzie for confirmation, the worry still on my face, and she gave me a very small nod, her eyes bright with curiosity. I smiled back, looking at the yellow dress. **"Thank you, Dee."** Dee left us both alone and Kenzie pulled me into one of the changing rooms. I looked the yellow dress over, my fingers toying with the fabric. **"Mom would never let me keep it..."**

"You trust me, don't you, Kit?" The small boy looked at me, then back at the dress as he played with the material, before nodding. **"If I told you that your Mom will let you keep it, that I'll make everything work, and I'll prove to you that it's okay to be yourself, you'll believe me."** He didn't look up this time, and his fingers fidgeted a little more. **"I promise."** And this time, I held out my pinky finger. Little girl sanctity right here.

I put my thumb in my mouth with one hand and laced my finger around Kenzie's with the other. This made me nervous, but... but I'd get to own a dress. **"Taylor has a lot of pretty dresses back home,"** I mumbled as Kenzie slipped my top off over my head. **"Claire doesn't like to wear dresses, though. I think she's stupid."**

"Maybe she wishes she were a boy - that's not so strange, is it?" I gently lifted Kit's top over his head - the one borrowed from Alice - and took the dress off the hanger. He was still without underwear, so we'd have to fix that while we were here, too. And, for that matter, maybe do something to protect my mattress. **"Arms up."**

Again, I put my arms up and Kenzie slipped the dress down over my head. I still had my jeans on, which were far too big, but maybe that was a good thing. I wasn't wearing any underwear, after all. **"Maybe you're right... about Claire, I mean... she sure acts like a boy sometimes."**

"Sometimes people just need to remember that it's always okay to

wear what they want, and be what they want." I stepped out of the way of the mirror and smiled, adjusting some of the frilly detail on the sleeves of the dress. **"Like, if a boy wanted to be a girl more than anything in the world, if he looked at his sisters and wished on every star in the night sky that he could be just like them... well..."** I took a step back to let him admire himself. **"That's okay."**

I couldn't be sure - I couldn't be sure of anything at this age, really - but I thought Kenzie was talking about me in particular. She smiled, having found her way to her knees, and matched my height almost perfectly. I felt my cheeks get warm and looked away from the mirror. **"I like this dress... you really think Mom would let me keep it?"**

"Everything we buy today, you get to keep. I promise. So I want you to remember that." Even with the jeans underneath, the dress was simply adorable and there was no way anybody would ever see anything but a girl. **"So, would you like to buy this dress? We'll get you some pretty panties, too, so you don't have to wear the jeans if you'd rather wear the dress out of the store."** I wasn't sure if there was a 'surreal quotient' that once filled would make the world implode, but if there was, I must have been close.

"Yeah, okay..." I wasn't sure how I felt about wearing girl's underwear, but they were probably just like boys underwear, but prettier, a lot like dresses were like boy's clothes, but prettier. Kenzie left me alone for five minutes before coming back with three different pairs of underwear. **"You don't know what size you are, do you?"** I shook my head.

"Well, you can try on all three pairs. You're a little different to other girls, Kit, so you just figure out what fits best and what's most comfortable." I stayed in the changing room with him, but turned away to give the boy a modicum of privacy. Despite everything, Kit was still my best friend and I didn't want things to be weird.

Kenzie had bathed me, which seemed rather intimate in and of itself, but this was very different. Bathing was just something adults did with kids, a necessity of sorts. But I hadn't had a single babysitter since I could remember put my underwear on for me. I was glad Kenzie didn't break that streak. **"These ones."** I'd taken them off again, holding up the ones with

little pink hearts. They were clearly the most feminine pair, and I almost wished one of the others had fit me better. My cheeks got hot.

"Super cute. Okay, we'll get these and a few more pairs like them." I knew in three days that all of this would be pointless and futile, but that didn't matter - for the next three days, Kit was a princess. "You can leave those on, here, I'll take the tag off them so we can pay. Want me to do the same with the dress? We can still look at others, too."

"Okay." The underwear was again situated under my dress and I followed Kenzie out through the store. I felt awkward in my new dress, pale yellow a color I wasn't sure I'd ever worn before. Dee smiled at me, greeting us as we reached the checkout lane. I'd picked another dress in pink, a skirt, a nightgown, two tops, and six pairs of underwear. I wanted to tell Kenzie not to buy so much stuff for me, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. I was all smiles.

17.)

The change in Kit was profound - from the meek and shy young boy that had walked in here, he was now bubbly and giggling and smiling at Dee and babbling to me about the clothes he'd picked out. How could anybody else not have seen this? Were people so fucking ignorant? I rang everything up with Dee, and the clerk smiled and came around from the counter, taking a butterfly- adorned barrette out of a display and clipping it into the boy's hair. **"That's a gift, for my favorite princess. Hope I get to see you again, Kit."**

I waved goodbye to Dee and bounced off alongside Kenzie, out into the mall and again down the hallways. It was much more crowded now, but I wasn't shy. I held Kenzie's hand, a spring in my step, and smiled up at her. **"I like Dee! We should visit again! When do I gotta go home? Am I staying the night? Are you gonna talk to my mom about the clothes? I wonder if she'll be mad."** But no worry could touch me.

"You're staying with me and Alice for a few days, remember? I want you to remember to thank her for loaning you some of her clothes, okay?" Those clothes were in one of the bags now, long forgotten in the

wake of the pretty dress and adorable underwear. We'd been in Justice for an hour and a half by the time all was said and done, and it was coming up on lunch time. **"Are you hungry? The food court is just up there."**

I ate chicken nuggets from McDonalds while Kenzie bit into her big burger, or whatever they called it. A... a Mac, or something. What a stupid name. Kenzie - now that's a nice name. I dipped the chicken nugget into the barbecue sauce and popped it in my mouth. **"I could eat barbecue sauce on everything I bet!"**

"Oh, I don't know about that - what about cookies?" Despite the surreal quality of everything to date, this felt so much stranger - something as simple as McDonalds for lunch with my best friend was now like... we were sisters. That's what it honestly felt like. From best friend, to cute teen, to little sister. Oh Kit.

I hesitated, thinking about the deliciousness of cookies and the deliciousness of barbecue sauce. **"Maybe... I mean, if I had a cookie, I'd try it!"** I nodded certainly across at the girl beyond the table. She was still so much taller, even sitting down. My elbows were awkward on the table, and I kept my hands mostly on my lap when I wasn't eating.

"Maybe one day, we'll try it." I smiled and finished my burger, looking across the table. **"Hey Kit, does it make you happy?"** He looked at me curiously and I smiled back. **"Getting to be a girl?"** It was an awfully deep topic to broach with an eight year old, but one I figured this particular eight year old could handle.

"Well, I'm not really a girl," I said slowly, putting the second half of my chicken nugget back on the plate. I wasn't very hungry anymore, though I suspected it was because I'd ordered ten nuggets when I usually get six, and I'd already eaten eight and a half. **"But I like these clothes more than my other ones, I think. I always liked Taylor's..."**

"You know you can be a girl. Like really a girl. You can grow up to be a girl, just like me. Is that something you think about?" I didn't want to push, didn't want to take away the boy's happiness so immediately, but I was curious how an eight year old made sense of all this.

I looked across at the girl beyond the table, my thumb casually slipping between my lips. Curiosity was evident on my face, but much lower priority than the concern. It was a minute before the words came out around my thumb, slightly slurred. **"I'm a boy, though..."**

"You don't have to be. You could be a girl, you know. And never have to be a boy again." He was going to argue basic biology, but I smiled and took one of his nuggets, taking a bite after I dipped it in barbecue sauce. **"You can. You trust me, right? It might not make much sense right now, but it will. And as long as you remember what I told you, you can be a girl. What do you have to remember?"**

"I can be anyone I wanna..." I said softly, my thumb still in my mouth. But I didn't get it. Maybe she was a little crazy. I decided, though, not to say anything. So often when I was young did I answer not knowing with silence. I just didn't want to sound stupid, or maybe I didn't want to sound as stupid as Kenzie did.

"Just promise me you'll remember that, and one day it'll make sense to you." I finished up my eating and smiled, clearing away the table. **"Where to now, missy? Today is all about you."** We'd hit a drug store before we left, and I'd get a mattress protector and a pack of diapers that would fit Kit - he'd hate it, but I could sell the idea as necessary. I just needed my bed not to be ruined.

I shrugged my shoulders, having finally gotten up from the meal at the table. I shouldn't have eaten so many nuggets. I didn't go to malls very often, and when I did, I wasn't very interested in anything around. Kit held my hand and we went from one place to the next, none of which were as exciting as the first place. We stopped for ice cream somewhere in the middle, but nothing else fun afterward. I was already dreadfully tired, too, though the clock on Kenzie's phone only read one thirty in the afternoon.

"We need to make one more stop, okay?" I stopped when I said this, and sat the boy down on a bench in front of a drugstore. **"I just need to get some things to help with the problem you have at night, okay? It's nothing to be ashamed of, and it happens to a lot of girls your age."** I didn't realize it then, but my words had associated "wetting the bed" with "being like other girls" in the poor eight year olds head.

"Huh...?" I looked up at Kenzie as she knelt down in front of me the way she seemed to like doing. I really didn't mind looking up though, not really. **"Problem...?"** Sleepiness was already taking over in a way I always hated this time of day. I was still here though, still present, still curious. I would be fine until tonight, right?

"I just don't want you to wake up all wet again, I know it upsets you. So I'm going to get you a little something to help, just in-case it happens again, okay?" He was rubbing his eyes, though, and I smiled - an eight year old boy who still needed a mid-day nap - maybe diapers were appropriate.

I felt my cheeks catch fire and I quickly shook my head. **"Nuh uh! I'm fine! Really!"** I climbed off the bench and stood up as straight as I could. **"It was just last night, I promise it won't happen again... please?"** But it wasn't just last night. I didn't mention my lie, though. **"I'm almost eight, Kenzie... please, please..."**

"I'm not going to force you to do anything," I would, actually, if I needed to. **"But you're going to be with me for a little while. If it happens again, it would break my heart to see you crying and miserable again, especially since you'll be wearing your ever-so-pretty nightgown to bed from now on..."** I could use this angle - paint the inevitability and let things fall into place.

"Then I won't wear it!" I said anxiously. **"I'll wear all my old clothes, and we'll take the nightgown back."** Kenzie looked down, curious, as if trying to work out a puzzle, and finally said, **"What are you talking about?"** I blinked, looking down at the dress, and then at the drugstore. **"You... you said all young girls..."**

I smiled and kissed his cheek, sighing a little. Correlation always equalled causation to children. **"You don't wet the bed because you like to wear pretty things. You just happen to wet the bed, and that's common with girls your age. What you wear won't change it - it'll fix itself in time, I promise. It did with me."** Okay, so I never really wet the bed, but he needed a point of reference here. **"I just want to get you some special panties you can wear with your nightie, so you can sleep through the night and not have to worry about waking up all upset."**

"I don't wanna!" I stomped my foot angrily and looked up at Kenzie with a serious pout. Trainers were something I'd had to wear for years now, all because my stupid body couldn't understand the stupid idea of waking up. The doctors always said I was just lazy, but I really wasn't! **"I'm not wearing them."**

"What about if we get some really pretty ones? I bet you've never had pretty ones before, have you? Maybe that's the problem. I bet if you had some pretty training pants, it would help." I nodded earnestly in the way that an adult did only when talking to a child and making a ridiculous claim that they knew would be believed.

"None of them are pretty," I said under my breath, still fuming with unabridged passion. I detested having to wear pullups, and I couldn't remember a night in my life where I could go without. Julie learned the hard way, and I supposed Kenzie did too. But I wasn't going to give up the same way I did with my ex-babysitter. **"They're for babies."**

"Sweetie, diapers are for babies. Pullups are for big girls, like you. And like me, until I was ten. Are you calling me a baby?" I was sitting next to him now, my hand on his lap and his hands playing with my fingers idly. I was giving him a lot to refute and I could see the cracks starting to show. **"The ones I wore had butterflies on them."** I only knew from one of the television commercials, and I only mentioned it because Kit had once told me that he used to be obsessed with butterfly imagery when he was younger. I didn't know if 'younger' covered when he was eight, though, or if he meant older, or younger still.

"That seems silly..." I said, shaking my head. **"You think they really have some with butterflies...?"** Kenzie smiled widely and nodded her head. I bit my lip. **"I still don't want them..."** But my passion had faded.

"We could go have a look, at least, right? That wouldn't hurt? And then we can go home and you can slip into your nightgown and be able to have a nap without worrying about waking up with wet sheets." Or my bed being ruined, which was honestly my bigger concern.

I didn't want to, but I relented. If I followed her in there, then said no, she couldn't keep trying to convince me, right? But I lost all that confidence when we stepped into the aisle. **"I dun wanna..."** A boy in a girl's store was

more understandable than an eight year old in the diaper section. Everyone knew, now...

"Hey now, don't worry - we won't be long. Just gotta pick out something for your sister. She likes butterflies, right?" I wasn't talking any louder than usual, but my words were deliberately placed and inflected so he'd notice what I was doing. **"Do you see any with butterflies?"** I was also careful not to make him feel ashamed - I didn't say little sister, I didn't make fun, I simply made it clear to anybody he thought was listening that they were not for him.

I wasn't sure if her attempt made me feel any better or not, but getting out of here as fast as we could was probably more determinable by how quickly we found these pullups. I finally tugged on Kenzie's sleeve and pointed to the pink packages along the wall. Gosh, were they cute...

"Oh, look, uhhuh..." I picked up one of the packages in the larger size and read off the side. **"This looks like them - the ones your sister wanted. It looks like they have them in white with blue butterflies or pink with purple butterflies. Which do you think she'd like more?"** Kit was blushing, hiding behind that same restrained smile he'd worn all morning until I'd gotten him to Justice. He loved that they were pretty.

"I... I don't think..." But before I could get a sentence out, Kenzie had picked up the pink ones and taken me to the counter. I feel like I would have been more uncomfortable if I wasn't already so tired, but tired I very much was. I clung to Kenzie's arm, and even when the clerk talked to me, I barely heard her.

We made our way back to the car just before two in the afternoon, and by the time we got back to my dorm, Kit was struggling to keep his eyes open. **"Come on sleepy head, let's get you inside and changed and then you can go down for bed for a few hours."** It was strange, really, some things about Kit were so far developed, and others were more reminiscent of a five or six year old. Was he really like this, or was it a glitch on account of the ray?

18.)

I was out like a light long before we had gotten inside, and I didn't even stir when the girl changed me out of my clothes. Alice waited in the living room for Kenzie to return from her room, which inevitably happened five minutes later. **"He's down for a nap?"** she asked.

"Yeah, it's weird - I've never known an eight year old who naps during the day. I guess I base my experiences on me, though, you know - and I wanted to be out having a job at his age." I smirked and sat down on the sofa, looking at the bags from Justice on the kitchen table. This was such a strange week. **"He wants to be a girl so bad, Alice... it's so painful to see, because his real-age self is so jaded to the idea... like it's been broken and beaten down and cauterized out of him."**

"I'm still not sure this is happening" Alice said with a frown. She had already gone through the bags on the counter when Kenzie was in the bedroom. She hesitated at the next question, a little concerned over it all. **"And what's with the pullups? Isn't he supposed to be seven or eight?"**

"He wets the bed every night. I don't know why, or until what age - but I guess it makes sense - bedwetting is common in kids with worries and he worries a lot about everything. But you should have seen him today, Ally... when we were at Justice? When the clerk called him a girl, said he was a princess? He was a different person, like all that worry just went away." I already had the desire to take care of him, that much I knew and didn't doubt - but I wanted so badly for him to be happy now.

"So you're sure, then? That's Kit? Your Kit?" She nodded.

"Absolutely?" Again, she nodded. **"And an evil scientist made him a kid again?"** She sighed, but reluctantly nodded. **"Do you really think she'll change him back in two days? Do you think it's even possible?"**

"I figure if she can change him one way, she can change him the other, right? I mean, I'm not crazy for thinking that, am I?" Though I was beginning to doubt myself. At fifteen, if he were trapped that way, I'd deal with it. We'd grow up together, seven years wasn't so big a difference. But at eight... it would relegate me to caretaker, and not girlfriend. **"She'll**

change him back, and I'm hoping..." I didn't want to say it out loud - it made me sound crazy to talk about things like my theory that if I changed him now, it would extrapolate when he was changed back. That sounded like nonsense... but I really wanted to believe it.

"You said he remembered stuff, from before, right? When he was fifteen? Exams or something?" There was skepticism on MacKenzie's face, but she nodded regardless. **"What about now? Does he still remember things?"** It seemed strange to have a young boy Kit's age remember years and years of his life, but it was a sincere question.

"He doesn't seem to, no, it's different this time... somehow, I really don't understand it." It was true, though, and irrefutable - Kit did remember some things the first time he de-aged. This time it was like he was clean slate. **"I'm worried about what happens when he goes back to being his proper age. And I kinda...."** I bit my lip. **"I don't know if I want 22 year old Kit... I really adore his fifteen year old self..."**

Alice frowned, crossing her arms over her chest. **"He's a little boy, MacKenzie. And what does it matter what *you* want? Try putting him first - Jesus..."** Alice sighed and stepped away from the girl, turning toward the kitchen to look for something to eat.

"I know, I know, I want him to be happy. I just think about how bitter he was about the girl stuff at twenty-two, like he thought it was too late to bother. And if he stayed fifteen, that's perfect... I could help him be a girl, I could be there to guide him... we both know he wants it, you saw the look in his eyes this morning when he saw those clothes of yours." Alice, indeed, was a psych major - she should have know this stuff even better than I did.

"And what about you? You're going to date a boy, what, seven years younger than you? And what about his ID and his birth certificate? Is he going to lie about his age for the rest of his life? You aren't thinking this through, MacKenzie!"

"I..." I wasn't, either, I knew that. I knew I was being impulsive and irrational, but I'd seen Kit so unhappy for so long, I just wanted it to change. **"What should I do, Alice? You're the smart one. Tell me. How do I change his path, make him grow up to be someone happy?"**

She let out a little breath and looked down at the floor. **"I don't know, MacKenzie, but you can't keep living in your head. This is his life, not a fantasy. If you mess this up for him, it's on you. I'll help any way I can, you know that. I just don't want you doing something you'll regret..."**

"Do you think he'd think I was doing the right thing...? Deep down, beneath all the cynicism, all the doubt and self-loathing, the denial... do you think inside Kit's 22 year old self, there's the voice of that pretty girl in my bed right now, wishing she could be born?" Alice was always noncommittal, it was a psych-major thing I knew - she was learning to be impartial. But her opinion was really all I had to work with, here.

"I just met him last year, MacKenzie... I barely know him at all. I wish I could help, I really do, but..." She let out a little sigh and looked up at the girl, meeting her eyes. **"If you're sure, and I mean 100% sure, more than that, even, two hundred percent, then... then I'd be glad, if it were me in his position. I'd be glad to have a friend that is fighting for something I can't even fight for anymore..."**

A friend who can fight for what he can't even fight for anymore. I liked that - it made me feel like some manner of crusader, or warrior. I knew I was just being silly and thinking grandiose thoughts of myself - I got that way sometimes. **"Is there anything I should be careful with? I don't know kids very well, like... psychologically. I don't want to break him... and should I use him, or her? I don't wanna fuck up, Ally..."**

"Thing about kids," Alice started softly, a little smile on her lips, **"is that they don't have a lot going on in that head of theirs. If you want to know something, you should really just ask. That might not work with adults, but kids don't know anything except what they want. Trust him. He'll help you more than I can."**

"You're right. I know you are." Alice had been the one that told me what gender identity was, what it meant when Kit had told me about his dressing like a girl. He'd told me long ago, but Alice had been the one that made sense of it in my head. **"I have three days to make him see that he doesn't have to be ashamed of this part of who he is. Three days. I took him shopping already, I'm kinda tapped out. Maybe we'll hit**

Disneyland tomorrow, or the day after..." I sighed and looked across at Alice. "I'm kinda rich right now, wanna split a pizza and watch some TV?" Alice nodded, and I smiled. Even in all this surrealism, some things were simple enough.

19.)

I wasn't sure how to react to waking up late that afternoon - on one hand, my bed was dry, and on the other, the pull up very wet. I didn't remember getting out of the car, even, and I sat up to assess the situation. I was in the nightgown we'd gotten at the store, though I didn't remember changing it. I hiked up the hem and looked at the pull up. Wet.

"Did you hear movement?" I looked up from my textbook at Alice and then toward my room, the faint sound of rustling sheets and comforters was evident. "I guess he's awake." **"At least you won't have to wash your sheets now."** "That's true." I smiled as I walked toward my little bedroom and opened the door, peering my head in. "You awake, princess?" The boy was sitting up in the bed, looking at his pullup when I spoke - which obviously caught him way off-guard, because he scrambled to cover himself up.

"Uh huh... I'm up..." I pulled the nightgown down over my body, my cheeks red, and climbed up from the bed. I wanted to tell Kenzie I needed to change, but the embarrassment caught the words in my throat. Had she put the pullup on me?

I wandered over to the boy as he stood up, and kissed his forehead softly, lifting his nightgown like it was the most casual thing in the world. "You should lay back down sweetie. It looks like your undies did their job, but I need to change them for you now. Maybe into some of the really pretty panties we bought - did you have a pair you really wanted to wear? Why don't I get them for you to look at, while I change you?" I wagered distraction to be a good technique.

"I can do it..." I mumbled under my breath, lowering the nightgown. I wished I had something to be proud of, but all I had was shame. Why did I

have to have an accident? I wanted to prove I didn't need pullups... **"If you get me some clothes, I'll put those on, too. I'm really good at it."**

"Yeah? Well, maybe - you are a big girl, after all. Tell you what, how about you show me how well you can take off your trainers, and if you're a good girl, I'll let you get dressed yourself." I was almost jealous of Kit - only because he didn't remember his other two selves. I remembered them, and I'd see each of them, too, at varying points. It was hard to compartmentalize.

I opened my mouth to protest, but inevitably, no words came out. I wasn't an arguing type of kid - I knew that - and anyway, Kenzie had already seen that I was wet. So I put my thumbs under my nightgown and slipped the pullup to my ankles, stepping out of it. I stuck my thumb in my mouth afterward.

"Good girl, now go and put it in the trash can over there," I pointed by the end of the bed as I turned around and took the shopping bags off my desk and emptied them out onto the bed, outfits and underwear and accessories - she was one lucky girl, even by ordinary girl standards! **"Come over here, Kit, what do you wanna wear? Everything is okay."**

I threw the pullup in the trash can before going back over to the bed. I looked up at Kenzie with a little smile of worry. My voice came out soft, softer than usual, and still talking behind my thumb. **"I just want my other clothes, if that's okay..."**

"They're in the wash, sweetie - I can ask Alice if she has anything else, if you don't like any of your new clothes..." I trailed off in such a way that it made it clear that I thought he didn't like his new clothes, the sort of tone a mother uses, or a well-versed sister. **"We can take them all back, if you don't like them, I just thought you did."**

"No, I... I do! They're really pretty, and... and I like the... the... everything. Everything, I do." I was almost in a panic, but not quite. I sucked harder on the edge of my thumb and looked away from Kenzie, back to the ground. **"I just... I don't know..."**

I sat on the edge of the bed, amidst the clothes, and pulled Kit up to fit on my lap like it was the most logical thing in the world. **"What's on your**

mind, gumdrop? You don't have to keep secrets from me, I'm your Kenzie, remember?" The time was finite, and I didn't know if what I was doing was going to have any impact at all, but if it did... if it did, it was my goal to have Kit believing that it was okay to dress like, act like, and one day become a girl.

I sucked harder on my thumb, refusing to look up from the floor, refusing to make eye contact, and refusing to talk. Even on Kenzie's lap, I couldn't bring myself to really /do/ much of anything. I sat quietly and shrugged my shoulders. Shrugging. That's what I could do.

Okay, MacKenzie, you can work with this. Yes or no questions, not too complicated. **"You remember what I told you, don't you? That it's always okay?"** Kit shrugged, and I smiled, unfazed. **"Remember when we were at Justice - the clothes store - and the woman there called you princess? Remember? She looked at you, and she saw a girl. Remember? Remember the way you smiled?"**

I wiggled in some half-hearted attempt to get off Kenzie's lap, only to feel her grip around my waist pull tighter, keeping me in place. I felt my bottom lip quiver against my thumb and decided to suck harder. Even if I had to sit here for the rest of eternity, I wouldn't look up.

"You can dress in boy clothes. You can dress in girl clothes. It's okay to do that, it's okay to be you Kit. I talked to your Mom about it, and part of why she sent you to me as a sitter was so I could help teach you that it's okay to be whoever, and whatever you want." I lied, and I felt shitty for it - I'd lied a lot to 15 year old Kit, and I'd really tried not to repeat the mistake - but it was for a good cause.

I looked up at Kenzie with burning curiosity, very obviously trying to assess the truth in her statement. She'd never lied before, but that didn't sound right. It definitely didn't. I wiggled again until she finally let me up, and then only stumbled to my feet. **"Mom said I can't wear dresses,"** I said matter-of-factly.

"I know she did," the college student, so used to lying by convention, not skipping a beat, kicked into action. **"She thought it would make you sad if you weren't the same as the other boys, and she told you that you couldn't wear dresses. And when she realized it was wrong, she**

called me." I nodded in utmost earnest, no tells, no sign of my mistruth. **"She wants you to be happy, no matter what. And she knows now how much you smile when you get to be a princess."**

"She got..." I bit my thumb and winced at the pain, trying to make sense of any of it. **"She got really mad last time, when I had Taylor's... um..."** I closed my eyes tight, trying not to remember. I didn't like that memory. I shivered, just a little, and shook my head. **"I dun wanna be a princess. I'm a boy."**

"You're whoever you want to be, and nobody has any right to tell you what that is - not your Mom, and not me, and not anybody." I smiled, motioning to the clothes beside me on the bed. **"Why would your Mom give me money to buy you pretty dresses, if she didn't want you to wear them?"** I could see the logic stick with that one, and I continued. **"Maybe she was upset last time, because they were Taylors, and not because they were dresses."** The last bit didn't seem to sink in too much, though, the boy was fixated on the point about his Mom giving me money.

"I dun wanna wear them, though..." I was lying, and I was *not* a very good liar. But I knew how much trouble it had gotten me in last time, and even if I wasn't going to get in trouble this time, I must have gotten in trouble for a reason, right? **"I'll just keep this until the laundry's done."** The nightgown wasn't much better than the dresses, but it was a start.

My hand took the boy's chin in mine, and I looked into his eyes, making sure he couldn't look away. **"Princess Kit, prettiest princess in all the lands, I am here to escort you to the parlor for ice-cream."** I spoke in a put-on voice, acting a little over the top and exaggerated, the way a young girl would adore. **"We should hurry and get you ready, my lady."** Maybe this avenue would gain better results.

I opened my mouth, maybe to say something or maybe to take my thumb out, but neither of those two things happened. Kenzie stood up off the bed and pulled the nightgown up over my head, which was awkward in the fact that I was naked beneath it and it got caught on the arm with the thumb in my mouth. I replaced it a second later, the nightgown now gone, and looked up at her worriedly.

I picked out the prettiest pair of panties - these ones were stripes of soft lilac, pink, white and blue, and had frilly edging around the legs and waist, with a little heart-shaped pearl- button in the middle of the waistband; the epitome of childishly cute. I held them out, and Kit stepped into them, sucking his thumb harder as I pulled the panties into place. **"Such a pretty princess, the tales are true, my lady."** I decided to stay in character for a while longer.

Still, I said nothing. I took my thumb out of my mouth only a minute later as she slipped one of the fully detailed dresses over my head - something in blue, the kind of blue a boy would never wear. My thumb returned to my mouth after that and I did my best not to think about anything at all.

She was quiet, reserved, the way she'd been on the way to the mall and I sat her down at the stool in front of my desk, the propped up mirror against the wall making for a makeshift vanity. **"Kit, when your Mom picks you up, you can go back to being a boy if you want - but I'd very much like to spend the next few days with you as my princess. If you decide not to tell your Mom, she doesn't have to know."** Despite the fact I'd already said that she did, but I knew kids didn't have good detail for memory. **"Please? Just for now? It would make me so happy... like the little sister I never had..."**

"Kay..." Though I had no heart in my response, no inflection beyond my thumb. I felt very anxious about the whole thing, to be honest, and I couldn't seem to find the boy I'd been earlier that afternoon. How naive was I, then, and how much could I have really grown up in the time of a short nap?

I didn't know a lot about kids, or about what Kit was going through in that head of his - I knew a little bit about anxiety, however, and decided I'd just distract him for now. **"How about you put the jeans on that you borrowed from Alice, and the top,"** Which were 'boy clothes' so far as comparison went, **"And we'll go out for pizza? There's a pizza buffet just down the road, all you can eat - and a dessert bar, too."**

I hadn't really noticed in the time it took me to get dressed in the pretty blue dress, but I really was hungry. Pizza sounded pretty good, since Alice and I hadn't eaten like we had planned. I nodded my head, looking down at the

dress around my body. I didn't want to change, though. I really didn't. **"Is Alice coming...?"**

"She can come, or she can stay - what do you think?" Alice would never turn down free pizza buffet, but if I didn't offer it to her, she wouldn't be offended, either. Kit made no motion to want to get changed, so as I wanted for him to respond, I took a length of blue ribbon off my desk and tied it around his wrist, topping with a precious, bouncing bow - it went with his dress very well!

I looked down at the ribbon with a little smile, just something subtle I doubted Kenzie would notice. **"If she wants to. She's nice."** Really, all I knew about Alice was that she let me borrow her clothes. Dresses were not the same, though, and I started to wonder again if it might be best that I change. Kenzie would know, though. **"Is Alice okay with... um..."**

"Alice knows that sometimes you're a pretty girl," I smiled and nodded over to my desk. **"Do you want to wear some makeup to go out? Just some sparkly lipgloss? I could even do your nails..."** Makeup wasn't something most eight year olds were allowed to wear, boy or girl, so I knew the offer was special.

"I... I don't know..." I looked across the vanity trepidatiously, trying to assess what make up really was and what it would do to me. But I was already uncomfortable enough, and the discomfort really was starting to build. I decided to shake my head, the best I could do, and play with the ribbon on my wrist.

"Okay, well, let's go and talk to Alice. Would you like to invite her?" Kit was a shy boy, small and frail and non-confrontational, but when he'd been a girl, when he'd been at the mall...? He was bubbly, and exuberant and outgoing, even saying 'thank you!' when the clerk in the food court had called him pretty. I wondered if I could invoke that.

I nodded my head, still trepidatious at the idea of seeing Alice in what I was dressed in now. Kenzie had encouraged me, but I still wasn't so sure. Still, with my hand in hers, Kenzie led me out of the bedroom. I pulled back at the last second, hiding behind the door frame. There's a big difference between needing to borrow some girl clothes and wearing a dress.

"Kit, sweetie, is something the matter?" The voice belonged to Alice - she was standing in the tiny kitchen, a jar of pickles in her hand and a smile on her lips as she craned her neck to view the boy in the doorframe. **"Don't be shy, I don't bite."** **"She does bite, but only little boys who like to play in the mud and rough-house with each other. That's not you, is it, Kit?"** He looked out around the frame at Alice, and then at me, and then down at the ribbon on his wrist.

I wasn't sure why, but I hurried back into Kenzie's room. I sat on the edge of the bed, my chest pounding, my heart racing. I shook my head over and over, sucking my thumb harder and harder. It's okay, Kit. It's fine, you're fine. Don't start to worry - you always do this. Just calm down... but so much is easier said than done.

Alice came into the room and looked at me, nodding for me to wait out in the living room. I looked at Kit, and then at the small Korean girl, and nodded, leaving the two of them together. She wandered over to the bed, sat down next to Kit, and took his hand in hers. **"Wanna talk about it? Sometimes talking helps, you know?"**

I felt really sick having Alice see me the way I was. I wasn't sure what made her so different than Kenzie - maybe because Kenzie had gotten me this dress in the first place. I shook my head and looked down at my lap. My breathing was unnaturally heavy, but not so much that I noticed, and my thumb was starting to ache between my lips.

"Here..." Alice took the boys thumb from between his lips, and held it for him to see as she spoke. **"Each of these marks is a worry mark."** The little indentations in his skin were actually bite marks, but Alice was creative. **"So it looks like you have a bunch of worries. I bet I can take one of them away, through, wanna bet me?"**

My lip replaced my thumb a second later and I looked down at the little dots from my teeth. I wasn't that young, and I certainly wasn't naive. But Alice was trying, and she hadn't said anything about my dress. I looked back down to my lap. **"I shouldn't play make believe..."**

"Wanna know a secret? It's all make believe, all of this, everything and every one. I make believe that I'm American, and MacKenzie makes

believe that she doesn't have a crush on her best friend, the postman makes believe that he doesn't have the most important job in the world, and the school makes believe that the knowledge we learn is worth more than a house. One day I'll make believe that I'm a doctor, and MacKenzie will make believe that she's a lawyer. But you know what we are, Kit? Once you strip away all the make believe?" The boy shook his head, and Alice smiled. **"Nothing. We're nothing. We make ourselves, we make believe and that's how we become who we wanna be. Some boys grow up wanting to be astronauts, some grow up wanting to be firemen, and some grow up wanting to wear pretty dresses - what's wrong with that? Nothing, that's what."** Alice talked a lot, but somehow her words all seemed airy and light, like the comics page in a newspaper, easy to listen to and never overwhelming.

I opened my mouth to say something, maybe to agree or maybe not to, and found it closing again. I looked down as the bite marks faded away from my thumb and took a little breath. **"Mom says..."** But I didn't want to finish the sentence. I shook my head and smiled, or at least to the best I could, and got up from the bed. I was taller than Alice when she was kneeling and I was standing. **"Would you wanna get pizza with us?"**

"Will you let me put chocolate sauce on my pizza?" Alice smiled and tilted her head at the boy, grinning with very-white teeth in a playful manner. The metaphor would be utterly lost on the boy, but maybe one day when he was older he'd understand the significance of the comment.

"Okay." Alice and I went back out to Kenzie, who was sitting on the bar stool by the kitchen counter. I still wasn't so sure about going out in the dress, but at least a little bit of what Alice said had stuck with me. I smiled wearily up at Kenzie as she led me out of the building.

20.)

We made our way to my small car, Alice and I and Kit, and the two adults in the group got into the front seats, with Kit sitting in back. He sat in the middle so he could see us both, and Alice looked over her shoulder, smiling. **"Close your legs, sweetie, knees together - you gotta sit properly if you're wearing a dress."** I started the car and pulled out of the

parking lot, smiling thoughtfully - sitting like a girl was something adult Kit had practiced endlessly; it made me wonder. **"You'll need to practice, but I bet you'll learn quickly."** He hadn't, the first time around, and I wanted to see if that memory clicked.

I didn't say anything, but I closed my legs anyway. I guess it made sense - you aren't supposed to let strangers see your underwear, especially when you're a boy and your underwear are very clearly girl's. I didn't say anything most of the car ride, doing my best not to get nervous again, not to start breathing heavily. I did pretty well, too, all things considered.

The words didn't seem to trigger anything, and it was only a few minutes later we arrived at the pizza parlor, and a few minutes after that we were seated, me on one side of the table, and Alice and Kit on the other. She was giggling with the boy, putting her barrette in his hair and showing him how to pout - it distracted him from his worries at least a little. **"What's your favorite pizza, Kit?"** Cheese pizza when he was a child, pepperoni and bacon when he was older. I couldn't remember the age, but he did once tell me that he used to believe that anything else on pizza other than cheese ruined it.

"I just like cheese," I said up at Kenzie, who sat on the other side of the table from Alice and me. I didn't mind, really - tables are a little weird in that respect. The people you like most you usually want furthest away from you, because at least then you can see them. I liked Alice, but she sat beside me, and in no way compared with Kenzie.

"I like pepperoni and bacon, they just seem to go well together," word for word what Kit had told me the first time we'd ever had pizza, I looked at the boy waiting for any sign of recollection, but he just looked a little put off by the notion. **"Come on, lets eat. I'm going to take Kit up first, okay? Then we'll come back, and you can go up, alright MacKenzie?"**

Alice took my hand and pulled me toward the buffet. I wasn't really sure how I felt about a pizza buffet at first, but the whole thing was oddly surreal. I picked two pieces of cheese pizza up from the platform, which was, for all intents and purposes, far too large and far too variable. There were other toppings too, unapplied, and I skipped over them all. All the while, I did my best to avoid the people looking at me, though I never really knew why they were. Maybe it was my imagination...

There was another girl, about Kit's age, who had settled in next to him at the buffet and taken a slice of cheese pizza as well. **"I like your dress!"** She smiled, bubbly, excitable in the way that little girls tended to be. Alice watched with cautious optimism, waiting to see how Kit would react to the stranger's compliment.

"Um... thank you..." I was always taught to be polite, that if someone compliments me, they usually deserve one in return. She wasn't wearing a dress, though, and I tried to pick out a feature of the girl that I was fond of. **"I like your hair."** Which was true. She had long hair, the kind I was a little jealous over, and bit into my bottom lip. Thumbsucking wasn't proper in public, and my hands were full.

"Really?" The girl beamed and nodded, assuming the returned compliment to be open season for a conversation. **"Cindy cut her hair short and I was gonna cut mine short too but Mom said no, so I asked Daddy and he said yes, but maybe I like it long now..."** Alice picked out a piece of garlic bread for herself, and put one on Kit's plate, too, not wanting to interrupt the budding conversation.

My hair was not long. My hair was even more of a boyish style, and I started to wonder if she saw me as a boy in a dress or just a girl. Either was plausible, but a lot of childhood was based on attributes alone. He's wearing a dress, so he must be a girl. **"I want long hair, I think..."** It wasn't a lie.

"Oh, I think you would look really great with long hair! But brushing long hair is the worst! It's like ow ow ow ow and then Mom yells at you for being a crybaby, but it really does hurt! But it's okay, because then you get to have ribbons and flowers and feel like a princess. Do you wanna be a princess one day? I wanna be a princess one day, but Mommy says I gotta do really good in school for that..."

I had known a lot of girls at school, and either this girl was very sociable or she wasn't my age. I shrugged my shoulders - the best I could think to do - and looked down at my feet. **"Um. It was nice meeting you. I gotta go eat, though..."** Which wasn't a lie. I looked around to find Alice, but she was right behind me.

Alice led the boy back to the table, and smiled across at me. **"Kit made a new friend."** I looked at the boy, and he looked at his plate of pizza. **"She did? That's so great, I wish I could make friends so easily."** The female pronoun was an experiment, to see if he'd rebuff it, - current- day Kit was vehemently against being called 'she' cause, as he put it, 'he had a cock, so he was a boy.'

I felt my cheeks turn pink and looked down at my pizza. My stomach wasn't being very kind to the idea of eating, but I'd decided to try anyway. The pizza was *really* good, too! I took another bite and looked across the table at Kenzie. **"She was nice, I think."**

No rebuttal... he just accepted 'she' as, not even a protest! It was like... like nothing past this age had happened - why was it so different from when he was fifteen? When he was fifteen he remembered, mostly, if he tried. I got up to go and get my own pizza, and Alice smiled, holding up her cheese-and-chocolate-sauce pizza, smiling knowingly as she took a bite. That tiny Korean girl would go to great lengths to make a point!

I had a cone of ice cream with sprinkles when we left the pizza place, and Kenzie said something about not eating in her car. So we stood outside, just next to the car, and I licked at my cone while Alice and Kenzie talked. I didn't listen, mostly because I was watching the sky turn colors with the sunset.

I'd talked to Alice a little about my concerns about the differences in Kit from now and when he'd become fifteen, though with him around it had been difficult to find the opportunity to do so. It was okay, though, because she'd made a few quiet suggestions. I watched the boy watch the sunset as he ate his ice-cream, and started to talk casually. **"Hey, Kit, what's your favorite song?"** Kids didn't usually have favorite songs, and Alice had suggested that because the memory wasn't overwritten, the original might still be there.

I shrugged my shoulders. **"Um... I don't know..."** A lot of things came to mind, but nothing definite, and certainly nothing I thought of as my "favorite". I suppose I wasn't old enough to really be interested in music the way I was interested in other things. I only looked up at Kenzie for a second, to smile, and went back to my ice cream.

"I'm worried he's not in there, anymore..." Kit was sitting on the sofa at home, in his dress, his legs together as he delighted in the episode of Pokemon on Netflix. Alice and I stood in the kitchen, talking quietly as he watched him. **"What's different this time, do you think...?"** "I'm dunno Alice... all I can think about is that thing in Back to the Future where changing the past made the future not exist anymore, you know? Maybe he doesn't remember his 22-year-old-self because that self doesn't exist anymore." **"If that's the case, it's because you changed him."** "I know." **"MacKenzie..."** "I know..." **"Hey..."** "I know..." **"I meant it as a good thing."** I looked at Alice, smiling weakly, and then at the boy on the sofa who was becoming more and more a girl. Maybe she was right...

"Kenzie?" She'd just tucked me in before bed. Again, I was in my nightgown with a pretty pull up beneath it. I didn't dare tell Kenzie how interesting the new pull ups were to me. To think, all I needed to like something I so often hated was for it to be pink. **"You look sad a lot when you look at me. I wanna know why..."**

"I worry... I'm afraid." It was a profound thing to say to a child, and that's what Kit was now - a child. Just a child, like any other. Except in all the ways he wasn't. **"I think about how scared you are to be happy and that makes me sad, because if you stay afraid forever, and you're never happy... you'll never get a chance to blossom."**

I curled up in my bed, or rather, Kenzie's. She had offered again to sleep on the couch, but I told her I didn't mind her lying with me. She was just slipping into her pajama bottoms when she turned the light off. **"I don't usually like new people... but I really like you."** But before she could say anything else, or before she could climb into bed, I was already sleeping.

Kit fell asleep easily, maybe because he was tired - despite the afternoon nap - or maybe he just liked being held and having someone to cuddle up to. Either way, I knew the first day was over and I only had two more days to make changes in the boy's way of thinking. The thoughts in my head, though, they kept spinning around, begging the question that maybe I had already... maybe that's why he didn't remember his future self... but what if it wasn't enough? There were no second chances...

21.)

I woke up wet again, which surprised me very little. I wanted to see the butterflies beneath my nightgown, but Kenzie was in the room already. She dressed us both - myself in the skirt this time, which was much stranger than the dress had been - and we both went to the kitchen for breakfast. It was an inside day, she'd said, only because I didn't think she knew what else to do with me. That was okay, though - I was content to watch TV.

I made pancakes for breakfast while Kit sat in front of the television, and I sat next to him on the sofa, the steaming stacks of deliciousness sitting on the coffee table, along with the syrup bottle, and a shaker of brown sugar mixed with cinnamon. Pancakes were one of Kit's favorite foods, and I'd decided maybe I could measure progress by measuring favorites. And I'd inquire about other things, too, like... **"Hey, Kit...?"** He was busy pouring syrup over his pancakes. **"What's your favorite movie?"** Already he was sitting with his legs together, second-nature, so unlike his older self.

"Um. The Lion King." I wasn't sure why she was asking - maybe she was trying to get to know me better, or maybe she wanted to actually watch it with me! Either way, it wouldn't interrupt my pancake eating and Pokemon watching. I did both simultaneously. I was such a good multitasker.

"Oh, you know we have that in 3D, oh, Alice has the Bluray..." Kit had refused to watch it when it came out at the cinema, claiming it to be sacrilege to mess with. He got that way a lot, actually, stuck in his mindsets and inflexible. I wondered how far back that stubbornness went. Then again, I realized only too late, Bluray and 3D were probably foreign terms to this Kit.

I looked up at Kenzie with absolute confusion and she fished one of the disks out of the cabinet. I had only ever seen disks like that work with a computer. She put it into the machine plugged into the TV - which was a lot flatter than the TVs I was used to - and handed me a pair of glasses.

"What are these for...?"

"Oh, put them on, you'll see." 3D was probably a thing when Kit was younger, but only those stupid red and blue glasses and only when used as

a gimmick. Lion King 3D was in no way gimmicky, and I smiled knowingly as I turned off the lights and drew the blinds, before pressing play on the title screen. The kid was in for a treat!

"OHMYGOSH!" I took the glasses off and looked at the screen, but it was a terrible blurry mess. I shook my head in disbelief and put the glasses back on again. **"How is that doing that!"** I reached out, like I could touch the opening Disney logo, and failed to do so. I couldn't make sense of it. **"OH. MY. GOSH."** Alice came rushing out of the room a second later, very tired looking and in a panic. I was already on my knees halfway to the TV, trying to see how close I could get.

I was giggling when Alice looked at me, and then at Kit, and she then started to laugh, too, once she figured out what the commotion was about. **"It's like magic, right?"** Kit barely heard her, though, and she came over and joined me on the sofa where the boy had been, serving herself up a pancake. **"You can't grab anything, pretty girl, it's just an illusion." "I love this movie in 3D, it's like they took perfection and made it like a Shiny Pokémon version."**

I sat on the floor, halfway to the screen, for the entire movie. I was in complete awe. I'd jump when anything came too close to me, and one time I even fell backwards onto my back. I took the glasses off again and again throughout the film to make sure it wasn't real, and kept replacing them. When the film finally ended, my excitement had well and truly worn me out, like running a very exciting marathon, with fire pits and trap doors.

"So, what'd you think?" I was smiling like the cheshire cat. Kit had refused to watch this before - heck, Kit wrote off 3D as a stupid gimmick that needed to die, and hated the idea. It seemed like the talk I'd had with Alice was true... there really was none of the old Kit left in there. Which made me wonder and worry about what would happen tomorrow evening...

"It was amazing, so amazing, gosh... I can't believe... when did they make this? Why hadn't I ever... gosh..." I still sat, stunned, watching the menu for the movie and taking my glasses off and putting them on over and over.

"We have some other 3D movies, too, um.. like Avatar." Another movie Kit had abhorred and ranted about the shameful of for days, **"And Up.**

Oh gosh, sweetie, you've never seen Up, have you? Maybe today should be a movie day." It was so refreshing to have Kit free of all of his cynicism, excitable and bubbly and happy. Happy was a word I couldn't have used for him in oh so long.

The entire day continued so lively. I would have suspected a day of nothing but movies would be lazy and slow, but certainly not with the TV Kenzie had. It was seven-thirty in the evening when I finally gave up on watching the second half of Avatar, my exhaustion replacing the jubilation from earlier that day. I put my head down on Kenzie's lap and did my best to stay awake.

"Kit..." I was playing my fingers through his hair - hair I'd worked into tiny pigtails halfway through Up - as he lay on my lap. I'd had a lot of time to watch and think today, and it made me realize that tomorrow was the last time I'd get to spend with this beautiful boy. I wanted to make an impact. **"Who's your favorite Disney Princess?"**

"Um..." The dizziness of the day, the spinning of the room, and the blatant exhaustion had caught up. I fell asleep. But with Kenzie's fingers playing through my hair, I found myself awake again, so slightly. **"What...?"** She repeated the question. **"Belle, I think... from... Beauty..."**

I slipped the boy into a pullup and left him to sleep on the sofa as I sat on my laptop at the kitchen counter. Alice wandered out and went over to check on him, before coming to look over my shoulder. **"Whatcha doing?"** **"Checking some stuff... I think I wanna take Kit to Disneyland tomorrow."** **"Yeah?"** **"He goes back to being his old self tomorrow night, and I'm no closer to making him see he can be a girl if he wants to be."** **"Right, so what's Disneyland got to do with it?"** I leaned back and let Alice read the open tab on my screen - Disneyland Princess Makeover. **"Disney is dreams when you're a little kid, and I think if he sees he can become a princess, he'll realize it's possible..."** **"MacKenzie... have you considered..."** **"No, Alice, don't even. You really look at that boy and don't see someone who so desperately wants to be a girl?"** Alice nodded, relenting, and looked at the page. **"Who's she going to be?"** **"Belle. I just scheduled her appointment."** It was going to cost most of what I had left from my payment to pay for admission and the Princess Makeover; we'd be buying food at the park out of pocket. But it was make or break...

22.)

I woke up early, long before Kenzie, and evaluated the situation. I had fallen asleep on the couch, it looked like, and I was already dressed with the pullup beneath my skirt. I wasn't wearing pajamas, though. I lifted the bottom of the skirt and saw the absence of the wetness indicator.

I'd stayed up far too late, planning everything, drawing together money. I'd gone to Kit's dorm and gotten the remainder of his payment, and worked meticulously with the pool of money. At 9:30am, a limousine would arrive to take us to the park - it was part of the deluxe package that I'd managed to budget for with the increased amount of money. We'd get there at 10, not have to wait in line to enter, and then we'd go for Kit's makeover. Once he was Belle, once he had all his pictures taken, he'd get to keep everything he was wearing. We'd then spend the day at the park, doing everything he wanted to do, and so wrapped in being a girl that he couldn't ever deny it. I wanted to make an impression, and this was it. My alarm beeped 8am, and I wandered out to the living room to see if Kit was awake yet.

I had learned very early on not to wake people up. My mom didn't like being woken up and neither did my younger sisters, mostly because they woke my mom up anyway. I ate Pop-tarts on my own and changed out of the pullup when it grew uncomfortable. Kenzie woke up a little while later and she drew me a bath. She seemed very tired, but by the time I'd gotten out of the tub, she seemed much more chipper. I considered the mug she carried in her hand.

"Today we're going out," I explained as I brushed the young boy's hair. He was sat on a stool at the kitchen counter, a towel wrapped around his chest like a girl - I'd explained to him that he had to learn to do that now. He also kept his legs together, despite not wearing anything girlish. I was proud. I also decided not to spoil any of the surprise of today, just keeping things very downplayed. At 8pm, we had to be at Dr. Drake's laboratory. But until then, Kit was mine.

I wore jeans, which was both concerning and comforting. I missed the dresses from before, but at least in this, I could pass as a boy if I needed

to. The shirt, however, was not nearly as boy-like. I wasn't sure what our plans were, but Kenzie took me outside after a phone call in the early morning. My hair was just dry when she stopped us in front of the black limousine. **"That's a big car..."**

"Yup, it really is, isn't it?" The driver came around and opened the back door, and I ushered Kit inside. It was huge, too, with spacious seats, a television on one wall, a fridge and a snack bar, and a sun-roof that could be opened. Kit had chosen to wear jeans today, but I'd done his hair and picked out his top and made sure he wouldn't be seen as anything but a girl. And in a little while? That wouldn't matter anyway. It was 78 degrees today, beautiful and clear skies, the perfect temperature for a day at Disneyland in a princess dress. I thanked any god that might have been listening as the car began to pull away.

"They have a fridge too! A fridge in a car! Gosh..." I wasn't often very impressed, honestly, but the 3D movies and the limousine had certainly done the trick. I was in complete awe. I kept running around the inside of the car, which I was allowed to be unbuckled in!

We didn't live very far from Disneyland, which was useful because it meant the drive wasn't very far - but we also came in a back entrance which downplayed the grandiose nature of the park. Literally, when we pulled up, as soon as Kit opened the door? He was going to get the surprise of a lifetime. Something to put the fridge in the car to shame. Though the makeover that would follow was going to trounce all of that anyway. The limousine slowly pulled to a stop and I smiled at Kit, keeping a poker face so as not to ruin the surprise. Kit had never been to Disneyland.

The windows were tinted dark, and even though I could see out of them, I saw much more of my reflection. I didn't bother anyway - I was too entranced with the vehicle. Eventually, though, the limousine came to a stop and the man from earlier opened the door. I stepped out into the much-too-bright-to-be-real day and lost all the air from my lungs. **"What... where..."**

"Come on," I put my hand in his and pulled the entranced boy from his stunned mooring, grinning happily at his stunned reaction. He knew where we were, he knew what this place was, and off to the right were the main gates of the park, hundreds of people lined up on the other side waiting to

get in - they wouldn't be allowed in for another half an hour. It meant when we got out from Kit's makeover, the park would be bustling, but for now it was empty but for the suited performers that paved the way to the castle in the center of the park - which was our destination. **"We have an appointment in the castle, we don't wanna be late, right?"**

"I... I..." Kenzie pulled me by the wrist and I followed behind in a stunned silence. I was at Disneyland. I. Was. At. Disneyland. And there was the castle, and those were the markets, and... and I was here, and there were people, and... and this was it. This was where I was. Me. Oh. My. Gosh.

The only people allowed in the park so early for those who'd paid for the Princess Deluxe package, so the performers knew why we were here - a man dressed as Prince Phillip took a knee before Kit and smiled wide, taking the boys hand and kissing it. **"It is an pleasure, my lady."** He tucked a plastic rose into the boys hand before standing back up and out of the way. Kit looked dizzy, but he was smiling. Gosh was he smiling.

I looked up at Kenzie, the rose in my hands, and almost crying with happiness. I didn't even know what to say. I didn't know what to do. I was completely awestruck. And when we finally made it to the castle, which was a million billion times bigger than any castle I'd ever seen, I thought my legs would give out.

This was something every other little girl probably dreamed about, and Kit was going to get to experience it. There were a dozen women, dressed in proper Disney attire to resemble handmaidens, all waiting when we arrived and one of them quickly came and took Kit's hand. **"Oh princess, right this way - you're going to be late for the ball."** I followed behind, wanting to make sure Kit wasn't going to freak out - I didn't foresee it at this point; he was too euphoric. He was going to be dressed as Belle, have his makeup done, his hair done, and pictures taken. I was actually jealous!

I waited for someone to say something, for someone to call me a boy, for someone to say I could never be a princess, but I'd fooled them, I'd fooled them all. When I was older, when I grew up and thought about things more logically, I'd consider the fact that they were getting so much money off Kenzie that there was no way they'd make me uncomfortable anyway, but for now it was bliss. I was taken to one of the chairs in the corner of the

room and a dress was brought to me, bright yellow and very familiar. I looked over at Kenzie curiously.

One of the handmaidens lifted up Kit's pretty top and another helped him out of his jeans. I'd been very specific in the instructions online that Kit was "shy being seen in her underwear" and so a pair of tights was pulled up his legs quickly and nobody seemed to pay any heed to the tiny bump in the boy's panties. The dress was brought over by three of the women while another helped Kit with the flouncy petticoats - he looked intoxicated. And finally, the three pulled the dress over his head, fussing over it here and there, tying it up in places adjusting details, lacing it in the back and adjusting the shoulders. It was breathtakingly beautiful - we really got our moneys worth!

I thought I'd die - actually die - when they took down my jeans. I tried to make mention that I could do it myself, but it all fell flat. But I didn't die, which was very good, because I was actually enjoying myself. I was dressed up in Belle's dress and taken to the chair. They started to put my makeup on, which was the first time I'd ever had make up on ever. I was in Heaven.

One of the girls tussled with his hair as another worked on his makeup, and a third spoke to me about options. **"There's the option of a wig for absolute accuracy, but a lot of girls her age find that bothersome, and it limits the rides she can ride. We can style her hair, though, make it very Belle-like. What do you think?"** I looked at Kit, the boy gone, the princess in his place smiling so wide it looked like his cheeks might break open with the force. **"Style it, I think."** I had other motives, of course, beyond the practical - I wanted him to recognize himself in the photos.

I was a princess. I didn't *look* like a princess. I wasn't *dressed* like a princess. I *was* a princess! I stepped out of the building into the bustling street with Kenzie by my side, and I couldn't breathe. I couldn't think. I hugged Kenzie tighter than I'd ever hugged anyone in my entire life, and did my absolute best not to cry. **"Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!"**

"I told you, pretty girl, you can be anything you want to be. You believe me now, right?" He was breathtakingly pretty, and everybody stared, everybody smiled at him, every little girl wanted to be him. He was,

to them, a princess. The park was crowded, but Kit was invincible right now - he was their princess and he was going to make this day his.

23.)

Rides came first, and that was quickly followed by food that wasn't Pop-tarts. I spent a lot of time greeting people, from Disney characters to normal people asking about my dress. I had probably met more people in that day than my entire life! Kenzie took pictures with a camera around her neck and I even found Belle to get a picture with. Lunch came and went and I started to feel a little lackluster. Kenzie bought me extra fries, though, and I started to feel better. She'd have to keep my sugar up all day if I wasn't going to nap.

The pictures taken with my camera were going to make an amazing album, but the professional shots they took in the castle - which we'd pick up on the way out - they were so much better. We ate fries together, the day as beautiful as could be hoped for, and I looked across the table at the boy as he started to perk up again. **"Where to now, your majesty?"** We'd explored a fraction of the park, which was to be expected - Disneyland was a three day experience - but that left plenty of options. **"Wanna do the River Cruise? I hear that's pretty amazing, though a little scary!"**

"I don't wanna get wet... it'll make my hair not look nice." I'd been very outgoing. I couldn't even remember the last time I was outgoing! I actually felt... really alive. **"I wanna go on the biggest one they've got - the biggest ride! So I can tell Taylor that I did and she'll be jealous. I dunno if I'll tell her about being a princess, but she'll be jealous of that too."**

"Well, how about that?" I pointed to the large white mountain - almost as big as the castle - that sat off to the back of the park. Faintly in the distance there were roller coaster tracks visible going in and out, as if the mountain were swiss cheese, **"That's the Matterhorn. I bet they'll let the Princess ride in the front car, too. You brave enough?"** I was tearing off part of an elephant ear and handing it to the boy, gently having dusted off all the excess powdered sugar so as not to spoil the dress. **"That looks like the biggest ride."**

"Okay! I can do it!" I finished the bite of cooked dough and jumped up from the table, grabbing Kenzie's hand, and pulling her all the way toward the large mountain. It took a long time to find the actual entrance, but when we did, we got right in line. I was just barely tall enough for the ride.

"Gosh, this is long... Don't I have princess powers or something?"

"I don't know, why don't you ask the man over there when we get to that point in line?" The man in question was in staff uniform, and I didn't know much how the whole Princess Package thing worked when it came to this, but I knew it would be the cherry on the cake of Kit's day if it was successful. **"You just ask him if there's a special Princess Entrance, okay?"**

It worried me. I didn't want to come across ungrateful, like the blueberry girl in Willy Wonka. But at the same time, aren't princesses supposed to be special? When we finally reached the man, Kenzie nudged me forward and I looked down at my feet. **"Um... excuse me... um... is there a princess entrance...?"**

The man smiled, despite the fact he was very busy directing the line and pressed a button on his ear-piece, mumbling something. Low and behold though, a few minutes later, one of the girls from the castle arrived out of nowhere and beckoned for Kit and I to follow her as she unbuckled the rope-barrier. It had worked! I wished tipping were a thing here, because that man deserved a tip! We were led through a door into a sparse looking corridor, and then let out another door which deposited us in the final line area, about ten people away from the front.

"Wow... that's so cool..." I didn't think it would work, I really didn't. I mean, a princess entrance... who would have thought? I got in line for the front car, which was a little longer than the other cars, but I didn't mind. I waited excitedly and looked up at the large coaster in front of us. **"It is a little scary, huh...?"**

"A little bit, but if you hold my hand I promise I won't get too scared." I nodded with a smile as the coaster was loaded. I knew a little about the Matterhorn; I knew it weaved in and out of the mountain and was had amazing light-shows inside and amazing views of the park in the outside

parts, but otherwise I was in for a complete surprise. Kit was all smiles, though!

We loaded ourselves into the front car and I got a very determined look on my face. No getting scared now, Kit. It's a roller coaster. It's supposed to look scary! I took Kenzie's hand nonetheless and squeezed tight.

The coaster gently clicked away from the platform, entering a dark tunnel at a slow pace and complete silence. I was vaguely aware we were ascending, but there was no clickedy-clack like most rollercoasters, almost like it was trying to be subtle about it. A minute passed before we emerged out into the impossibly bright light of the day.... at the very peak of the large mountain. The coaster moved lazily around the summit, giving us an all-round view - Kit was grinning, but the smile quickly faded as we entered a dark entrance and began to free-fall.

I screamed. I wasn't proud of the fact, but I wasn't at all discouraged by it either. When the coaster finally came to a halt, after a myriad of twists and turns and light and dark, I finally caught my breath. I stumbled out of the car onto the platform with a little smile on my face, the fear quickly draining.
"That was so cool..."

We'd both screamed, but it was so much fun! We left the ride, hand in hand, and I wished I had a sister like Kit. I wished Kit could stay this way. I wished for a lot of things, but my desire for him to be happy still won out, and we started to make our way to the castle to collect the photos from this morning. **"I hope you've had a good time today, Princess."** We could stay longer, even after getting the photos, but I could tell he was starting to get a little worn out.

When we finally made it to the castle - to get the pictures they'd taken earlier, Kenzie had said - I was starting to feel a little sluggish. The sun was low in the sky, but it was far from the end of the day. There was still so much to do, and I wanted to keep doing it, but the exhaustion was winning out. I held Kenzie's hand as we left the castle, putting my forehead on her arm.

"We're going to take the limousine home, and then we can do anything you want. Maybe look at your photos? Or you can slip into one of your pretty butterfly pullups and have a nap - it's up to you."

The mention of the pullup didn't make him sad, or frown, or anything this time - and I wondered what had changed.

It was seven in the evening when we got into the limo, but I wasn't excited about it. I waved goodbye to the castle and promised to come back and visit, but the second we pulled out of the parking lot, I was already asleep.

We got back to my dorm room about quarter past seven - though the Limousine driver graciously had carried Kit inside and set him on the sofa. He got a tip! I gently tugged down the tights, and his panties, and slipped him into a pull-up before wandering over to my computer with a sigh. Less than an hour. And half an hour of that would be spent driving, which meant he'd only get to nap for fifteen minutes. I felt sick, like I was killing somebody, killing this beautiful child. I could raise him... I could do better than his Mom had, I could make him happy. Take him and run away now... I bit my lip and rubbed my eyes, sipping my coffee while he napped in his pretty yellow dress.

24.)

"Are you going to take a change of clothes? He's going to rip that thing apart if he gets bigger..." Alice watched the boy sleep, sipping a coffee of her own, and talking to MacKenzie. She had already looked at the photographs from the castle, though she hadn't seen the pictures on her camera. **"Maybe you should change him now..."**

"I know, I know, I just didn't want to spoil it..." It was silly, though, I knew - the likelihood was that I'd change him into one of his other dresses while he slept, and then Alice and I would carry him out to the car. **"Alice... am I doing the right thing, by taking him to change back...? Why can't he stay this way... I'd be a good Mom, you know..."**

"What about his birth certificate? His driver's license? His social security card? People can't just change ages, MacKenzie. It's not possible. I like him this way, too. I think growing up in your care could be good for him. But that's not life. Life isn't that easy. I know it's hard, I do, but... there's no other choice..."

"I know... you're right. You are, I know you are. I just think of the cynical boy he is... and wish I could stop it. Do you think... do you think any of this will change who he is at twenty-two? When she changes him back?" I sounded hopeful, but I felt less so. The closer we got to the time, the less I believed it was worth anything except some photos. I'd picked out one of the dresses - one in pink and grey - and Alice came over to help me get Kit undressed.

Alice stayed and MacKenzie endured the car ride on her own. I slept on her the back seat for most of the way - the bag of clothes beneath me, where feet usually go. I only woke up when the car stopped, and that was because Kenzie was talking to me. I opened my eyes sleepily and looked around the car. **"Where's the other car...?"**

"I'll explain in a little bit sweetie. You remember being a Princess? Remember the day we had today?" I took a deep breath and smiled, looking over at the boy. **"Kit, I want you to know that you can wear pretty dresses whenever you want. And you can be anybody you want to be. And it's always okay. I know... I know you'll argue... or get sad, or tell me I'm wrong...but I'm not. I hope you realize that..."** I had tears in my eyes, tears despite my resolve.

"Hey... don't cry..." I climbed up over the seat and did my best to hug Kenzie from the awkward position I was in. She smiled a little bit, forced, and I put my head on her shoulder. **"I believe you. My mom didn't like me wearing Taylor's dresses, and she kept telling me what boys did, and I just don't think that's me. So maybe I'm not a boy."**

I smiled. Gosh I smiled. I kissed Kit's forehead and I smiled, holding his cheeks. **"You're not, Kit, you're not a boy. You're a girl, you're a princess, and you're special. Never forget that, okay?"** I smiled and wiped my eyes, looking at the clock. 7:55. We had to go inside. This was all about to change, and the unknown ahead made me feel so sick.

I didn't know where we were. Kenzie took my hand and led me into the warehouse, and while it wasn't the scary kind, I still felt very frightened. I was still wearing the pullup beneath my dress, though I could tell it was dry, and we finally stopped in front of one of the offices. A tall woman - a girl in a lab coat - came out to greet us.

The woman looked at me, and then at Kit, wearing the dress, and smiled a little. **"Very interesting. This way."** I squeezed Kit's hand and whispered in his ear. **"Don't be afraid."** We went across the warehouse to where a stool sat in front of what looked like some manner of ray-gun. The Deageinator. The woman motioned for Kit to sit, and I lifted the child up onto the stool. **"Please sit still, I need to take blood test results and do some scans before we can proceed."** I felt like I was going to throw up...

I whimpered when the needle went into my arm and tears fell down my cheeks. I made sure not to move, though, and that was something. Kenzie held my hand and I looked up at her with a lot of worry. **"Why are we here...? Is she a doctor...? Am I sick?"** The woman had walked away, and with her a vial of my blood. I felt dizzy.

"Uhhuh, she's a Doctor, actually. And she's just doing some check-ups, because we're going someone special after this and we need to make sure you're all healthy." It was so easy to lie to a child, and it broke my heart to do so, too. But Kit needed the optimism, needed the hope, so I smiled with all the legitimacy I could muster and kissed her cheek. **"You excited?"**

"Uh huh... I guess..." I didn't know where we were going, or why we were here, or why she needed blood or scans or anything, but I trusted Kenzie. She'd keep me safe. And I was excited, if only for another day, another two, another five in her care before I had to go back to my mom, go back to that other life.

"Very good. Very good. Everything seems in order. You have your report, as discussed?"I nodded and handed the woman a USB flash drive, and she nodded, slipping it into her pocket as she held up a little handheld device that beeped and glowed as she passed it over Kit's body and face, nodding at the results. **"Everything seems in order. Very well. Stand back."** This was it... I wanted to stop her, wanted to keep this Kit, wanted to run, wanted to beg... but I kissed the boys cheek and smiled, whispering. **"You're a girl, Kit. Never forget it. Never forget this."** Before stepping back out of the way.

25.)

It was only a minute later my body had grown, and with it the dress came apart around me. I was never a very big guy, and the dress seemed to know it. I pulled the blanket around me that MacKenzie had draped over my shoulders and slipped out of the remains of the dress and pull up. My head hurt like all hell.

I didn't know what to expect, didn't know what had happened, didn't know who Kit would be or anything of the sort. The doctor didn't seem at all interested, though - I'm sure she would be, once she read my report and discovered my objectives with the child Kit, but we'd be gone by then. I bit my lip and smiled at the boy. **"Hey Kit..."**

I was trembling as I climbed off the stool, the blanket wrapped around my otherwise naked body. I looked at the doctor with resigned fury and then over at MacKenzie. She had a small worried smile on her face and I shook my head. **"Why are you here...?"**

He didn't remember? He didn't know? I bit my lip a little harder, but forced a smile, slipping into my old lies. **"Dr. Drake called me to come pick you up... what's going on? She said you were a little ill."** This was it, then...? This was it? All for nothing, no change, no difference... just the same cynical boy...? I felt so much sicker than I had before.

"Right..." I looked up at the doctor, a smile on her face, and toward the gun she was pointing in my direction. The shards of clothing on the floor had little interest to me and I pulled the blanket around my body tighter. The last thing I remembered, really, was her putting her fingers inside me, of my accident, and I really just wanted to leave. **"Shoot, where's my stuff..."**

"Um... I'm not..." "I'm quite done with you, thank you. Please leave."

The moment it was clear to the woman that Kit was the same boy she'd seen when he first arrived here, she wanted nothing else to do with him?! I frowned at her, seething behind my teeth, but spoke softly to Kit instead.

"Come on, Kit, let's get out of here..."

MacKenzie handed me a bag of clothes and I changed myself. She didn't say another word until we were in her car. My head hurt so badly. I felt so dizzy. **"Do you have any Advil or something?"** My head spun, again and

again, and before long the car was a series of blurs. Jesus, what the fuck was wrong with me?

I'd started to cry when we got in the car, and I kept facing away from Kit so he wouldn't see. "**Uhhuh... gl...glove compartment...**" It'd been for nothing...I should have ran, should have taken little Kit away, and now she was gone, now the princess only lived in photos... I couldn't stop crying.

I slipped the pills into my mouth, two, then three, then four. I swallowed without water and put my head against the window. My forehead was so warm it fogged the glass, and I started to lose sensibility. I didn't hear MacKenzie crying, though she was doing it quite loudly, and I couldn't make any of it stop. Come on, pills, kick in...

I finally started the car and we began the drive home. I didn't know which dorm we were going to, or what we'd do when we got there, but I managed to quell my tears a little way into the drive. Kit didn't say anything, just wincing and rubbing his eyes as he tried to get comfortable. I couldn't talk to him...

It only took until we'd gotten home for the fever to really set in. I was sweating, and my head hurt so badly, and I was barely responsive. The world around me was so dizzy, and everything felt foggy. I was breathing heavily, even as MacKenzie pulled my face into her hands. I could barely see her. I was so warm...

"**Are you okay...? I...**" Those words were difficult, but I knew I had to be a good friend. We'd come back to my dorm, which was probably best now, and I looked into his heavily dilated eyes. "**Kit... baby, can you hear me?**" His forehead was incredibly warm and I frowned a little. He was sick? She'd made him sick?! "**Hold on, sweetie, I'll get you inside.**"

I have no idea how, but MacKenzie had gotten me into the house and set me down on the couch. I was whimpering as she did so, the pain in my head searing like a hot iron against the surface of water. I could barely breathe, or at least, that was how it felt. I gasped over and over for air, the whole world spinning. I was so hot. I felt so hot. So warm. So so warm...

"**Alice!**" The Korean girl stumbled out of her room at my shout and came over to the sofa quickly, looking at Kit was a vague smile, and then at me.

"Can you get the ice-packs out of the freezer? I think he's sick..." I laid Kit down and propped his head up, placing the first of the cold packs on his forehead. **"What happened?" "She turned him back, and he was fine, and now..." "Should we take him back?" "I don't know... I don't... I don't fucking know... I..." "MacKenzie, doll, calm down okay...? Please...?"**

MacKenzie calmed down, the girl leaning over me with her hand to my forehead. **"Fuck..."** She ran to get a thermometer out of her bedroom, only to come back a second later. She pushed it into my ear and pulled it out. **"MacKenzie... this really isn't good..."**

"I don't know what to do... do we take him to the hospital?" The stress was showing in my eyes, in my trembling hands, in my stammered words - the guilt and stress and illness in my stomach. I tried to focus, but my eyes kept filling with stars, and I felt woozy. **"Maybe we'll... call an ambulance...?"**

"I think an ice bath might be best. He's on the low end of 104 degrees. That can cause brain damage, MacKenzie..." Alice didn't know what to do. She was pre-med, and she was smart, but this... **"You should go find that woman, try to figure this out. I've never seen anything like it. I'll call an ambulance."** Before she could say another word, she'd pulled out her phone.

"Okay... okay... you stay with him, get him to the hospital, go with the paramedics. I'll go... I'll go speak to the doctor woman, okay?" I stood up, feeling woozier still, and steadied myself with a faint smile. **"Take care of him, okay?"** Alice nodded and I went outside, her voice on the phone echoing behind me. I started my car and began the drive to the warehouse district.

26.)

The abruptness of MacKenzie storming into the warehouse was one thing, but the slap to her cheek was another. The doctor sat, stunned, completely unable to find the words. Eventually, after the fuming of the girl had died down, she began to speak.

"Kit is sick. He began to start a fever as soon as we left and now he's burning up and might have brain damage and it's your fault and I need to know everything about what that stupid fucking gun does so I can tell the real doctors so maybe they can save my best friends life!"

Wow. Wow, I was a little surprised at myself, but I meant all of it - maybe it was the frustration boiling over from losing the beautiful little girl that Kit had been...

The woman frowned, rubbing her cheek, and looked at MacKenzie with a very unsatisfied expression. **"He has a fever, huh?"** That wasn't good. If this didn't work, if he didn't recover, then her research was useless. Going back in time seemed to work fine, but forward? What was she missing... **"It reverts the cells to previous states. That's all it does."**

"And what about.... if things have changed...? What if.. what if he changed how he thought of himself... when he was younger....?" My voice was small, not wanting to admit that I might be to blame for this. **"Would that... cause any problems?"** It couldn't... it wouldn't... right? My bravado was gone, now, though, and all I was left with was the quiet realization that I might be to blame.

"It was never supposed to affect memory or who he was or anything like that - it changes the cells of the body, makes them younger, and subsequently makes *him* younger. When you make him older, it's the same process in reverse. Cells maintain that memory, and everything falls back into place exactly the same way. It has nothing to do with what he thought or what changed - this isn't time travel."

"If it wasn't supposed to affect memory, then why couldn't he remember parts about himself when he was fifteen? And why couldn't he remember anything about himself when when he was eight?! I know. I tested, I tried! I pushed and pushed and he didn't remember anything about being older than eight years old. And when you put him back, he couldn't remember anything since you first transformed him! What's going on? Why is he sick? You tell me or I'll blow this whole thing wide open!"

The woman frowned at the statement. She really hadn't been expecting Little Miss Lawyer here... **"Listen. I don't know. This is my first**

experiment with something like this. I suppose... maybe it reversed the brain cells, making memory more difficult to access, since it shouldn't be there at all. That would make sense, since at 15 he could still remember *some* stuff, and at eight couldn't remember anything. The further you get from something the harder it is to remember, like how you remember being eighteen better than five."

"So why is he sick now?" I frowned and crossed my arms, looking at the woman. I wanted my baby Kit back... I wanted that child back, that child that finally saw that he was a girl.

"I don't *know!*" The woman was very unhappy with the turn of events, but she knew they wouldn't go away. She ran her fingers through her hair and sighed, trying to process. **"Memory works one way. When we took him backwards, we kept erasing lines, and when we put all those lines back, maybe..."** Izzy sighed and shook her head. **"What's wrong with him, anyway? How is he sick?"**

"He has a fever of 104. It started with a headache when we got in the car, and then it got to a fever by the time we were back to my dorm. Last I knew, he was catatonic on the sofa and my room mate was taking him to the hospital. You want this to come up? You'd better start talking answers. At eight, I helped him to see that he is transgender and that it was okay. That's a lot of new information, information that... what will happen to it? What will happen to any of the memories when he's put back? They'll be kept, right? His brain will know they're from that period, but there'll be nothing in between, so it'll extrapolate... right? Like repression, but in reverse. It'll fill in the gaps bases on the series of events..." Hell if I knew, but it made sense in my head, and made me smile to think about.

"Just stop talking. You're clearly not smart enough." Izzy sighed and sat down on the chair, running her hands through her hair. **"If memory is being affected, if memories are backstepping the same way his body is... then maybe moving forward locked those memories too? It was supposed to work linearly! You were supposed to get young, remember the same stuff, get old, remember that stuff, and keep going forever. It was never supposed to put memories in the mix with everything else."**

I didn't like the woman and her condescension, but I liked even less what was happening. **"Fix it. Fix him. Fix him. Make him better, make him okay."** I was going to lose him... I'd already lost him twice, lost the fifteen year old I wanted to love, lost the eight year old I wanted to save... I couldn't lose the twenty-two year old I'd grown into an adult with, too...

"There's nothing I can do. Even if the memories got knotted up with everything else... his brain is processing. That's probably the reason for the fever - overheating, like a computer. He has two sets of information for two different parts of his life now, and those have to be integrated." She sighed and looked up at MacKenzie, clearly too exhausted for all this. **"Go keep him company. There's nothing I can do. Let the *real* doctors take care of him."** And just when she finished her sentence, MacKenzie's phone rang.

"We'll talk about compensation once he's better," I frowned as my phone rang, and as soon as it did, I picked it up out of my pocket and made my way to a quiet corner of the warehouse when the Doctor McFuckface couldn't hear. All his memories knotted up... what did that mean? Did it mean that he was going to remember what I did with him at eight? The crush at fifteen? I didn't understand the ramifications. **"Hello, Alice?"**

"MacKenzie? God, I've been calling for ten fucking minutes. You should get here. Now." Without waiting for an answer, Alice hung up the phone. Izzy Drake watched curiously, but the curiosity was mostly resigned. She didn't care what happened to the boy now - only what came to happen to the next test subject. She'd have to pay more compensation for the next kid with the risk of permanency or sickness, but she was sure she could make this work.

I left the warehouse without a word to the woman and got in my car, pulled out of the parking lot and sped down the street and onto the interstate. It wasn't until I got to the hospital that I realized I was crying. Like. Really badly crying. I was still wiping my eyes, trying to hide the redness when I walked into the building and made my way to where they were keeping Kit.

Alice was at his bedside, a pathetic smile on her face, and played anxiously with her fingers in her hands. **"Hey..."** She didn't get up. Kit didn't move, asleep on the bed. Alice wiped her eyes and looked up at the heart monitor.

"His fever broke... so that's good..." But clearly, there was something not good.

"There's a but... what's the but? Please tell me the but...?" I didn't want to know. But's were never ever good. But he has brain damage. But he'll never wake up. But he has amnesia. But he can only speak French now. But we had to amputate. There was never a good 'but' in a hospital...

"The doctors haven't said anything yet..." But it didn't seem like MacKenzie was too tolerant of that answer. Alice sighed. **"I know what they'll say. They want to run more tests, and those tests will go for another twelve hours, but I know what they'll say..."**

"What will they say...?" My hands were trembling and the flood gates that held back my tears were straining. This was my fault. My fault. I should have ran, should have taken Kit and gone and never looked back, now... now everything that happened was my fault. My damn fault.

"MacKenzie..." Alice got up to hug the girl, but she pulled away. Alice sighed and looked back at the boy, asleep and so content looking. **"His fever reached a high 107. Brain damage is... inevitable. Most people don't survive what that kind of fever, and even if he does live, he probably... won't ever wake up..."**

"It's my fault Alice..." I fell to the floor, hitting my knees on the hard linoleum as I ran my hands through my hair, the tears inescapable now. **"I shouldn't have taken him back to her, I shouldn't... he was happy... the happiest little eight year old... he got to be a princess at Disneyland... he told me... he told me that he wasn't a boy. And he was okay with that... he was happy.... and I took that away from him..."** I curled up against the wall, my bruised knees huddled against my chest.

Alice shook her head and put her arms around MacKenzie. **"You had to. You had no right to keep him that way, and you know it. You know you did the right thing. If anyone's to blame, it's her. She was experimenting. She should have known better. She should have taken precautions. Kit went to her before you even knew anything about it, remember?"**

"I had the power to stop this..." The boy on the bed would never wake

up, never smile, never tell me that he was okay with not being a boy. Never tell me anything. This was a bad dream, a nightmare I wanted to wake up from, but it wouldn't happen.

27.)

Alice held MacKenzie through that night, and when the doctors came in the morning to say, word for word, what Alice said they would, she broke down again. Alice kept her arms around her. **"He isn't on life support. He'll stay alive,"** she explained.

"I'm gonna take care of him. Even if he never wakes up, Alice... it's my job. I made the decision that made this happen." I created the new memories, too, the ones that had been so hard to process, the ones that did this. My voice was shallow and inflectionless, hollow and empty and I felt like the color from my world had disappeared with the sound of his voice. I'd never felt guilt like this before...

"Isn't there... something she can do?" Of course, Alice meant Izzy. But what could she do? Scientifically, the brain cells were already dead. They wouldn't regrow. There would be no reunion, no happy ending. MacKenzie could spend the rest of her life here taking care of the boy, but it would never lead to anything.

"She doesn't care... she... she doesn't..." I was looking blankly out the window, what lay beyond barely registering. **"You know... maybe... maybe she can de-age him... maybe if she makes him fifteen, then the processing of the memories from eight will be easier to deal with..."** It was just a flight of fancy, though, just a stupid idea from a girl who needed such things. **"She said that... that the thing she uses... reverses the cells... like rewinding. Does that...what would happen if that happened now?"** I didn't hold out any hope or thoughts of salvation, it was just an idle thought of something that didn't make any sense to me in the first place anyway.

"I..." Alice paused, looking up at the boy in the bed, and back down at MacKenzie. **"I really don't know. You said it doesn't... rewrite anything, it just... rewinds. And that's the problem, because he had two sets of**

information over one spot in time, right?" But what did that even mean. **"I really don't know anything about this MacKenzie... I'm really sorry..."**

"Fix it... Alice... fix it... please fix it...? I'll do your chores from now until eternity..." I felt so pathetic - I barely even registered my phone ringing, it was only Alice that pointed it out. I picked it up out of my pocket with a sigh, and looked at the screen. **"It's her..."** I answered the phone with a frown, not wanting anything to do with this. **"Hello...?"** There was quiet on the other end of the line, and then the woman spoke in an annoyed tone. **"You're not the removal company. Blasted phone."** And hung up. **"She dialed the wrong number..."** I half-smiled at Alice and put my phone down, but it was only a few moments later that I frowned. **"She's said she was trying to call the removal company..."**

"She's leaving...?" Alice looked curiously at MacKenzie, then at the phone, and at Kit in the bed. **"I wouldn't blame her, really. If any of this gets traced back to her, it could have some serious problems..."** Alice looked nervously at MacKenzie.

"Will... will reversing his age again... will it make things any worse?" Alice looked at me and shrugged her shoulders and I felt a little tingling in my fingers. **"Are you... are you positive he'll never wake up...? That under no circumstances will he ever get better?"** I couldn't, could I? But she was leaving, and this might be the last chance we got...

"With that level of brain damage, I'm surprised he lived at all." Alice wasn't lying. She was amazed the boy's body was still pushing through. She was not the type of girl to lie, either, and certainly not in a situation like this.

"Help me get him out of here. Please?" It was probably illegal, really, but who cared about a brain-dead boy? I looked around the room and walked over to Kit, smiling down at him. **"He looks just like he's sleeping, doesn't he...?"** There was no time, though... she was leaving, we had to hurry!

"I can check him out," Alice said carefully. **"I'll have to schedule a nurse visit and get the IV drips and all that, but I could get him out of here in**

a few hours..." Of course, there was no guaranteeing Izzy would still be at the warehouse by then. Alice bit her lip. **"It's all I can do..."**

"That's too long..." I frowned as I wandered out into the hall and found a wheelchair, pushing it back in with all the calm charisma I could manage. If anything, I was a good liar - it's why I was in law. I pulled back the covers, and then, simply, without any help from Alice, I sat him down in the wheelchair, propping him up and draping a blanket over his lap. **"We need to leave now. It'll just be me and him, Alice... I don't want you to get in trouble."**

"Yeah, like I'm staying behind," she said with a smile. Alice was almost certain this wouldn't work, and even if it did, what would they do with Kit when they got him to the car? He was a small boy, but Alice was a much smaller girl.

"Is he okay to travel? It's a fifteen minute drive..." The idea of the incapable boy made me think of diapers, which made me think of the cute pullups, and little Kit. Gosh. I frowned and shook my head. We had to hurry, this had to work. It would work. Alice said it wouldn't, but it would! Because Kit deserved this.

Realistically, there was no harm to a brain dead boy in vehicular travel. The two girls managed to get him to the lobby before a nurse approached them. Alice stopped nervously and looked over at MacKenzie with fear in her eyes. **"Excuse me,"** the nurse asked. **"Can I ask where you are taking the patient?"**

"I'm his power of attorney, and it dictates in his LW&T that he's to be taken to his elementary school for a time no less than six hours, in the event of brain-death." The nurse looked at me skeptically and I sighed. **"He's twenty-two, and his life is over. Are you really going to deny him this? I can get the paperwork faxed over - what's the fax number here?"** I took out my phone as if to write it down - as soon as she went to check, we'd leave anyway.

"I'm sorry, but until the documentation is all prepared, we can't discharge," the nurse said with a frown. **"If you'll please return to your room, we'll get the releases signed within the hour."** Alice tried to wrack her brain, to think of any way around the system, and drew a blank.

"Look, come with me, I'll get the paperwork sorted." I motioned to hallway which led down to the nurses station, after shooting Alice a particular look - one I hoped she'd understand. The nurse looked at me with skepticism, and I sighed. **"Please? I've requisitioned a private doctor to oversee,"** I motioned to Alice, **"but she's on the clock and I'm anxious to get this under way. Take me to your fax, and we'll get this sorted."**

The nurse waited until Alice made her way to the elevator, and once the doors were closed, she followed MacKenzie to the nurse's station. Alice stopped off at the second floor, bounced into a different elevator, and went right back down to floor 1. She was out of the building before another nurse questioned her.

The moment we made it to the nurses station, I pretended to make a call as we stood by the fax machine., The nurse looked impatient, and once I was off the phone I smiled. **"It should come through any minute. Do you have a bathroom in here?"** She motioned to the rear wall, by the kitchenette, and I smiled. **"If the paperwork comes through before I get out, start going over it."** As soon as I was in the bathroom, I wriggled out the window and fell into a row of bushes, before scrambling out and meeting Alice in the car-park. **"Hi."** I smiled with a sense of proud achievement. **"Let's get him in the car, quickly."**

Alice sat in the back seat, Kit in the passenger's seat. The drive down to the river where the warehouses were wasn't too long, but the anxiety made it seem that much worse. **"It happens a lot, I think. I don't suppose any police will be after us..."**

"People steal people from the hospital all the time? That's so obtuse," I managed a smile, which seemed so surreal at a time like this. The warehouses looked different by daylight and we pulled up outside of the one that Izzy Drake operated out of. There were no trucks, no removal men - that meant she hadn't left yet, or she was already long gone.

"I'll wait here..." Alice said with a frown. She was obviously concerned. It was already late in the afternoon, and if the movers weren't here yet, they'd likely already been. She sat with a worried look and reached over to feel Kit's neck. He was still so warm, and still so lifeless, the endlessly sleeping princess.

I got out of the car and ran up to the door, knocking on it hard. Nothing. I frowned, took a breath, and reminded myself to be calm. I knocked again. And again. And again. And finally.... finally, the door opened. **"You? What do you want?" "Use the Deageinator on Kit again. Please. Please?" "Why would I do that? You saw what it did." "Because I'm going to sue the ever-loving-shit out of you for negligence, and your contracts aren't notarized. You wanna push me on this, or are you going to help?" "Even if I wanted to, any more layers in his memory will just make it worse." "Fucking do something!"**

Izzy frowned. This wasn't going to go away. If action was required, then the best chances... **"Perhaps... if I use the same parameters as before... his memory will pick up where you left it off." "What does that mean?" "I may be able to revert him to one of his previous states."**

Alice watched from the car as the two women talked, though she couldn't make out any words. She watched as Izzy exhaled and crossed her arms, looking at the girl only a few inches shorter.

"Even if it works, even if it restores his brain cells... he can't ever be him again. He'll either be the little dress up doll you had him as yesterday, or the teenage boy you had a crush on. And with cell memory, he might die at twenty-two all over again, the exact same way... it's not worth it."

"That's not your decision to make..." No, it was mine. My decision. He might die at twenty-two... so do I make him fifteen so he can try to fit into his current life... or eight, so he has more time to live? What was I supposed to do? What was I supposed to do...

28.)

"It's better than him dying now, like this..." That fact was simple. If there was even a chance that Kit would be okay, I had to do it. I looked down at my hands, and finally asked the question. **"His fifteen year old self... will he be affected by the changes and memories of his eight year old self...?"**

"Hell if I know," she answered honestly. **"This is as new to me as it is to you, kid..."** With a deep breath, and a bit of deliberation, she finally elaborated. **"If he assimilated the memories properly - as in, his fever went back down - then in *theory*... he'll remember it all. I don't know if that'll change anything, but he should at least remember."** MacKenzie stood there, frozen. Unable to make a decision. So Izzy thought it was a good time to remind her: **"I'm only doing this because I have nothing to lose. But after this, if it works or doesn't, that's the end of it. If he dies at twenty-two, I can't bring him back again."**

"Eight year old Kit would never understand what had happened... why he couldn't see his Mom..." It was as much convincing to myself as it was anything else, and I felt my fingernails digging into my other hand as I fretted and worried. **"It has to be fifteen year old him...unless..."** I paused. **"Unless eight year old Kit would have all his memories..."** But Alice had told me, the reason I'd brought him here in the first place... he'd have no ID, no documents, no anything; he'd be too far out of sync with his real self to ever exist. Fourteen years of nothingness, or seven years of real life...? **"Fifteen. It has to be fifteen. Do it. He's in the car, I'll get him."**

Alice was so intrigued. Of course, she wanted Kit to live, but she was also so interested to see this work. To see a laser gun actually turn a twenty-two year old basically-dead boy into a very alive fifteen year old one. Alice had asked MacKenzie about her concerns, about how selfish she was being, but in the end, MacKenzie was right, and even Alice relented to that. If he were eight years old, he'd have to say goodbye to his family, to his life, and he'd never understand. This was better. Seven years could be accounted for, to some degree, but not fourteen. Alice put her hand in MacKenzie's and with an invisible beam and a quiet whirring - she hadn't expected that - Kit's body was suddenly smaller. Not terribly so, but this was the first time Alice had seen this version of the boy. The hospital gown sagged on his slightly smaller body and he didn't move.

I rushed over to the boy after only a minute, Alice's hand still in mine. I had to know, I had to know if it worked, I needed it to work, I needed him to be okay. Izzy looked at the two of us huddled around the boy, but she didn't come any closer. **"Kit? Kit, darling, can you hear me...? Kit...?"** I looked at Alice with a worried expression, biting my lip.

The first thing anyone noticed was my eyes, squinting further shut rather than further open. It was another second before my fingertips twitched, and another before I squinted again. Eventually, my eyes opened, and MacKenzie was above me, her hands on the sides of my face. I smiled sleepily, like I'd just woken up from a long nap, and my eyes slipped closed again. **"Kenzie..."**

Kenzie...? That was what he'd called me when he was eight, but he was fifteen now, and... and I didn't know if I could kiss him, or be a sweet babysitter, or how to act or what to say. So I just smiled, and I put my waited for his eyes to flutter again, and spoke softly as I could manage, like this was our secret. **"Welcome back, princess..."**

The next second, my eyes slipped closed again and I fell from the stool. MacKenzie caught me and Alice hurried over to check my pulse. **"I think he's just sleeping..."** she finally said. Izzy sighed and watched the reunion, crossing her arms. **"So we're done here, then?"**

There was nothing else Izzy could - or would - do now, like she's said, and I nodded softly, holding the boy in my arms on the floor. The woman crossed her arms and looked at us, and then wandered to the back corner of the warehouse. I looked at Alice, and then at Kit with a smile. **"I don't know who he's going to be when he wakes up... how much he'll remember. He called me Kenzie, though... only eight year old Kit called me Kenzie..."** **"Seven,"** Corrected the woman, as she handed me a cheque. **"He was closer to seven. And I trust that will ensure your silence."**

Alice and MacKenzie both said their goodbyes to the woman with the magic machine and never saw her again, even on the news, even on the internet. It was never known what happened to her, if she sold her machine or what, but it was never a question of importance from that day on. I slept all through that afternoon and that night, and when I finally woke up, in Kenzie's bed, I was uncomfortably cold and slightly damp. **"Ugh, why me..."**

I was sitting on my desk chair, my knees tucked up underneath me and I only stirred from my own slumber when I heard Kit's voice. I rubbed my eyes and waved to him, yawning. **"Morning, precious. How're you feeling?"** It was the first real conversation we'd get to have, the first real

change for me to assess who he'd become. The only clue I had was the childish version of my name.... and now, it seemed, the fact he'd wet my bed.

My cheeks turned pink upon seeing Kenzie awake in the chair and I quickly pulled the blanket back over my body. **"Jesus, Kenzie - you scared me!"** I frowned, trying to ignore the fact she'd just seen me wet the bed. No use hiding it, I supposed...

That sounded more like a teenager, I decided, and I smiled - at least there was that. **"I'm not sure they make butterflies in your size, sweetie. But we'll figure something out, don't you worry."** The mention of the pull-ups was mostly to test for recognition - I was smiling though, I was so fucking happy - he was alive!

My cheeks took on the shade of a firetruck and I suddenly couldn't meet Kenzie's gaze. **"Oh right... that was you..."** I still didn't know how to piece the information together. It was all so jumbled, even though I knew how wrong I was. **"It feels like... like time travel. I knew a girl named Kenzie when I was young, the girl who... who took me to Disneyland. And she went away, and I never saw her again, and I met you six months later, but you were my age..."** I wasn't even sure I was making sense. **"We grew up, and you turned sixteen last month. And now you're twenty-two, and I'm still... me."** I took a deep breath and tried to smile, tried to make sense of it. **"I know about the age thing. I know it all happened start to finish. I know it was linear, but... to me, it wasn't..."**

Everything was there, everything that needed to be, anyway. I smiled, and I sat down on the edge of the bed, not even minding that it was wet. I leaned in close, and I kissed Kit's forehead. **"Do you remember the last thing we talked about when you were young? That day at Disneyland, when you were a princess?"** It must have been so weird for Kit, so strange putting things together, I was at pivotal points of his life and all out of order, and he knew I was but that still didn't make it make any more sense.

"Mom got mad." I said with a little smile, the recollection so long ago. **"I know it wasn't because of you, but it was a few weeks after you left, after Disneyland, and I was wearing Taylor's dresses again. She didn't give me the same speech, though - she told my sisters. I didn't wear**

anything like that again, but I know I've always wanted to be a girl, ever since Disneyland..."

"I want to help you. I want to help you because I know it's who you're meant to be." I smiled and bit my lip, taking his soft hand in mine. Fifteen was a good time to start, not too long into puberty, plenty of time to reap the benefits of change. I didn't know how I was going to tell him that he might die at twenty-two, or if I would, or if he would, or if I even had the right. I just wanted him to live, wanted him to enjoy who he could become. I wanted to see that princess again, that clarity and beauty that echoed through the words that night, and the words right now. Kit was a girl. Kit knew that. "You're going to be a girl now. Okay?"

"I didn't know she was you, for all those years..." I smiled shyly, looking down at the wet bed beneath the covers. "It wasn't until I just woke up, just now, that it really clicked. That girl who babysat me, and that girl I grew up with, and that girl I had a crush on, and... everything was you, Kenzie."

"I can't imagine how weird this must be for you, huh...?" I bit my lip and smiled coyly, looking at the boy with a curious glance. "You know I have a crush on you, right? But you're probably not interested in a twenty-two year old, I bet you want a girl your own age. Or... now that you're a girl, maybe you want a boy your own age?" I was only teasing, but I wasn't sure how this Kit dealt with things like that - he was a new person, a fifteen year old tempered by the sweet sensitivity of a child who knew he was a girl, instead of broken and shattered by the fear of being different. This Kit was quietly confident, soft spoken and calm; he didn't wring his hands, didn't seem stressy, it was like he was... at peace.

"I like twenty-two year old you very much," I said with a smile. "The last thing I remember was... was my getting hit with that laser, after you bailed me out from jail. Our date was really nice, even if we did get rained on. But the future... I don't remember..."

"You were a twenty-two year old boy without any friends, who dressed like a girl on weekends but got angry when his best friend asked if he wanted to be a girl. You were a boy who was bitter, cynical, and angry about being a boy, but one who believed it was wrong to want to be different. Then you were a teenager, a confused boy on the

cusps of adulthood who felt so much shame for wanting what he wanted, but still open to the possibility. And then... a child...a young child, who desperately wanted to be pretty, to wear pretty dresses, to be seen as a girl, to be a princess..." I looked down at his hand as I played with his fingers, smiling idly to myself. He was complete.

"But I'm not like that anymore," I said nervously, almost like a question. She shook her head. "I think that's because of you, because of what you taught me when I was little, or yesterday, or whenever it was." I sighed and felt the edges of the bedsheets. "Did older me ever tell you I used to wet the bed?" She shook her head. "It must've been a shock... sorry about that..."

"It's no big deal," I smiled, and I meant it, too. So far I'd cleaned up the bed for three different Kit's, and I was starting to get used to it. "You had the prettiest pull-ups when you were younger. I think they helped you become less ashamed, right?" I smiled happily, looking into his eyes with an adoring stare.

I felt my cheeks get pink and pulled the blanket a little higher up. I'd have to change the bedsheets at some point, but I didn't want to ruin this moment. Of course, I'd have to do so anyway. I bit hard on my lip and ran my fingers along the bedsheets. "Um... about that..." Kenzie looked curiously at me and I took a deep breath. "I actually... well, since I was... um..." How was I supposed to explain this? "I kind of like them now. I mean, whenever I go to bed, and I get to wear a pull up, I just feel... so much more... girly. It reminds me of my weekend with you..."

Little seeds grow into big trees, it seemed. I smiled, thoughtfully, and nodded without any judgment in my words. "I think that's all sorts of adorable." And I really really did. I didn't know how I felt about dating someone who liked to wear pullups, but I also didn't know how I felt about a lot of things lately. "So you'll have a padded bottom when we cuddle in bed from now on? I think I'm okay with that." I smiled and thought for a moment longer. "You know, I realized I was gay at three years old, and I never told old you... because you wouldn't have understood. But I'm telling you now, because now I know you will. And you're going to be my first girlfriend. How's that feel?"

"Even though I'm fifteen, and still wet the bed?" I wished I could remember particular parts about my future, most notably when I'd stop wetting the bed. Just because I liked wearing pull ups didn't mean I liked needing to. It would be a lot more enjoyable, I suspected, if I could *choose* when to do it.

"Absolutely. Are the pullups you wear as cute as the ones you used to?" I think this had been good for me, really, because a week ago it might have been weird for me that my potential girlfriend had been born a boy and enjoyed wearing pullups. But after all of this, I was about ready to be okay with everything.

I felt my cheeks take color, Kenzie much bigger than me in this way. Maybe I'd grow taller than her. Did I ever get taller than her? I was still under the covers and she was still on top, which was probably for the best. **"Kenzie, the bed is still wet..."**

"Well, we'll have to do some research and find you something cute." I laid next to him, albeit with me on top of the covers to keep me dry. **"Kit... nothing is life is a promise, nothing that you have today is guaranteed tomorrow. I want you to remember that, okay? And I want you to do everything you want."** I paused, deciding that was enough, and that was all I would tell him about his potential future. **"So show me right now what you want."**

I rolled over onto my side, careful to keep the blankets between me and Kenzie, and pressed my lips to hers. **"I love you, Kenzie Macintosh, and you're what I want."** Of course, I wanted other things too. I wanted to have sex, because I was a teenager, but Kenzie was very strict on waiting until I was eighteen. I wanted to figure out about my future, about the things I couldn't quite remember. I wanted to be a girl, a *real* girl, with dresses and boobs. I wanted to find a way to keep my bed dry that involved a very adorable undergarment. I wanted a house someday, and to figure out what I was going to do about college now that I wasn't twenty-two anymore, and I wanted to see my mom and watch her flip out about my being fifteen and wearing a bra. I wanted to tell my sisters about my new life that I'd be adopting and I wanted to make up a really fun story about how being a girl makes you look younger. I wanted to meet Alice properly, when I wasn't wearing her clothes or wetting her couch, and I wanted to remember it. I

wanted to remember everything from here until forever, and every second with Kenzie.

End.

Names & Colors

Kit Lonsdale

MacKenzie Macintosh

Izzy Drake

Alice