

Maiden Voyage

Commission for Charonshope

Written by Princess Kay

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Devin was laying in bed, as the clock ticked its way slowly from eight to nine, to ten. His fingers flexed on the bedding, rhythmically clenching and unclenching the sheets. Just trying to while away time, stuck in that area between sleep and wake where you could lose yourself in daydreams. There was no one to judge him for whiling away graduation day like this. His roommate, Mark, had hooked up with a girl from their party last night and was still out. Devin hadn't been so lucky. In Mark's words, he had been "too mopey" - and maybe the blond haired man had been right. Not that he'd admit it out loud.

They were both graduating college, today; Devin and Mark. Everyone else, too, but that seemed more like a vague concept than the cold reality that was facing him. They were both graduating, and they both had jobs waiting for them back home. Good jobs. Okay, starter jobs - Devin was going to work as a mechanic for his father, until he could afford to go to grad school. Mark was going straight into marketing.

They were also going to jobs across the continent from each other. Mark was going to southern California, and Devin was heading to his family's place in New York. They'd made half hearted plans to meet each other, but Devin at least knew that things would never be the same as their college days. They might cling to the title of friends, but they'd be lucky if they could maintain a fraction of what they'd

had as roommates. So maybe he wasn't exactly eager to go celebrating their graduation and separation. Maybe, because he'd actually thought things through, he was coming off as "mopey" - while Mark was just diving ahead as normal.

There was slight scratching noise at the door, and Devin checked to make sure he was covered up by the blanket, so that he wouldn't be caught in red boxers. Mark was supposed to knock first when he was bringing home a "guest" - but he didn't always follow the rules, and Devin had been embarrassed enough times by his blond roommate to learn a little control.

Devin needn't have bothered. Mark was the only one who came in. He stood tall in the door, just over six feet in height. He blocked out almost all the light from the hallway, keeping the room dim, but not so dim that Devin couldn't see the red in his roommate's eyes. The man had clearly been partying hard; maybe to forget the very things Devin had been dwelling on.

"You okay?" Devin asked, slipping the blankets off himself and standing there in his red boxer shorts. At his gesture to come forward, Mark stepped into the room and closed the door behind him. For the blond sprinter's part, he was wearing a half unbuttoned blue shirt with white stripes across it. The unbuttoning showed off the lean definition of his chest, narrower and much less muscled than Devin's - but women still seemed to fall over themselves for it. His black shorts were tight

around his muscular legs. He had maintained enough sobriety to walk out with matching shoes, too - not his expensive running ones, but the white sneakers he liked to wear when he was being casual. Only the right half of the pair was tied up.

“Dude....” Mark was grinning despite his state. Devin thought maybe he was still still a little drunk from last night, by the overall sloppiness of. Everything.

“Dude,” Mark repeated. “You will not believe what I scored.” He walked to the edge of the bed and slapped down two rectangular cards. His grin had only grown bigger in doing it, though Devin still didn’t know what the fuss was about. “Come on, dude, take a look!”

Devin leaned forward, letting the blanket fall off his chest as he did so. He looked at the tickets. “...You scored a week, at a party cruise. On the caribbean?”

“For two.” Mark grinned. “That girl I was with invited me to a late night party, after ours wrapped up. I won the raffle, dude! And she was so pissed that I didn’t invite her, but dude - it’s gotta be you.”

“Mark...” Devin stared at the tickets. Caribbean cruise, all inclusive... and it started tomorrow. “Mark. We’d have to leave right after graduation to make this. Our families will be pissed!”

“If mine can even show up,” Mark muttered, looking away. “It’s not like we aren’t in the same state, or something...”

There was a long distance between northern and southern California, Devin thought, but he wasn't going to say that. His own family had actually managed to come all the way from New York. "So your goal is to. Put our jobs on hold?" he asked. "Ditch our families? To go on a cruise?"

"Yeah!" Mark was still grinning. His eyes were also still red, and his outfit was just as sloppy as when he'd walked in, and he was almost definitely drunk... but he was also, obviously, serious. "Come on, dude. It'll be a last hurrah! Before we... you know..."

"Never see each other again?"

Mark shrugged, looking away. Devin hesitated, but only for a moment. Their friendship had been comprised of crazy antics. Mostly midnight parties, when they should have been studying. They'd barely held onto their athletic scholarships, a few semesters. Hell, Mark had barely graduated. They *had*, though - and while having a party and walking down the stage at graduation were fine ways to say goodbye to their school, it wasn't enough to properly mourn their friendship. They needed one more hurrah, while they were still together.

"Alright..." Devin sighed, getting out of the bed at last. He placed the tickets at the foot of the mattress, so that they wouldn't get lost, and went over to his dresser to pull out some black slacks and a white shirt with buttons. Most of it

would be covered under the heavy black graduation coat, but he still wanted to look nice when it finally came off. He glanced at his roommate, who was already undressing to change with that grin back on his face. Stripping clothes off his well defined figure.

Devin shrugged and then moved to his own clothes. He was a big man, taller and broader than Mark. It came in handy as a member of the football team, but it caused trouble when he was shopping for dress shirts. He mostly had to visit specialized shops for clothes, but he was determined to look good for graduation. Even if he was going to end up ditching the family festivities to go hang out with his roommate, one last time.

“You ready for this?” he asked, buttoning up his shirt.

“Of course, bro...” Mark was tugging his shirt out of his pants, making sure the belt was buckled and everything was ready. There was a smile on his face. There was always a smile on Mark’s face, though, and it was one of the things that Devin loved about his friend. “We’re going to graduate!”

“And then we’re going on a cruise...” Devin smiled, himself, and ducked his head to head to go through the door. He was grateful that they’d packed all their things, in a mixture of boxes and suitcases, in preparation of graduating. He’d have

to ask his family to store the furniture he'd brought with him, while he took the suitcases on the boat.

They walked to the graduation ceremony together, then exchanged a quick fist bump before moving to their families. It was a pretty traditional ceremony, Devin thought, though he had nothing to really compare it to. There was a somewhat inspiring speech by the valedictorian, someone he'd never met before. He listened as each name was called and clapped for the people as they took their diploma. He clapped a little louder when Mark's name came up, and a little softer when an ex-girlfriend or two crossed the stage. He made his own journey to claim a diploma without tripping over his own feet, which he considered success enough for the occasion.

His father yelled at him when the ceremony was over for being inconsiderate of the family. They exchanged a firm handshake, and his father told him he'd become a real man. Whatever that meant. He'd given his mother a hug, and been told to go on his adventure. Then he moved over to where Mark was waiting, no family in sight, lightly tapping the end of the diploma against his spare hand. He was frowning, but it turned into a smile when he saw Devin, and the roommates put arms around each other for a moment. Then they were on their way to the car, and Mark was sliding into the driver's seat, pushing the passenger's side open for

Devin. The black haired graduate took a moment to put his diploma on the seat and then pull the dark and heavy graduation coat over his head before climbing into the car, which was still hot even with its air conditioner blowing.

“Good idea, dude...” Mark began to pull his own gown off, revealing a plain white tee and belted slacks. After Mark threw the bundled up cloth in the backseat, and put his diploma in the glove compartment, Devin didn’t think you could tell the blond had been anywhere near a graduation.

They drove without speaking for a few minutes, the radio blaring some random Classic Rock tunes as they drove down the highway. The music blasted in the background, neither of them entirely listening to it, while Mark drummed his fingers on the wheel. After a few minutes, there was a little “Hmmm...” from the blond, and he reached out to turn the radio off. “So. Dude.” He wasn’t smiling.

“This is our last hurrah, you know? Our last time as roommates...”

“Roommates?” Devin smiled. “You mean we’re still going to be sharing a room, even on the sea?”

“Yeah, dude. But I called ahead to get us two beds, so it’s cool... and the same sock on the knob rule applies if you have a guest over. But yeah. We’ll be roommates, one more time.”

“And then we’re off to our jobs.” Devin forced a smile he didn’t feel, and held back his sigh. He felt like he could see his entire life stretching before him, there on the highway. He’d work hard as a mechanic over the summer, and look for scholarships so that he could get his masters in Psychology. Then he’d become a therapist, get married, and probably end up with two kids. He’d talk about his glory days with his children, and sometimes his clients. He’d lead a good, if slightly boring, life. A grown up, adult life. All sprinkled with maybe a few phone calls, and a couple rare visits with his college buddy, while they mostly kept in touch on social media with the occasional check-in.

It was going to be a good life. Yet he wished there was a way he could include Mark in it. Their lives were just on different paths, though, and this cruise was going to be their last hurrah.

“Dude?” Mark was talking. Had been talking for the last minute, Devin realized, though he couldn’t say what the man had been saying. “You alright, dude?”

“Yeah...” Devin laughed, trying to appear like everything was normal. “Just distracted. What were you talking about?”

“...It’s nothing, dude. You gotta stop getting so far into your own head, though. I mean, I love you dude, but...”

“Yeah.” Devin nodded. “Out of my own head. We gotta enjoy the time we have together, right?”

“Exactly!” Mark grinned, and it didn’t even look a little bit forced. Devin was envious of that. He only hoped his own worries weren’t so obvious that the other man would pick up on it. “And hey. I promise that no matter how hot the babe I spend my nights with, you’re going to have my days all to yourself. We’re going to have fun together.”

“Uh-huh. We’re not going to have any fun together if you miss the boat, you know... you wanna step on the gas?”

“No need, dude...” Mark made a sharp turn to the right, to take an exit. “We’re gonna be there in just five minutes.”



True to Mark’s words, they were pulling up to the dock in just four minutes and fifty nine seconds later. Devin counted it out on his watch, mostly to distract himself. His buddy was busy chatting on about what a wonderful trip it was going to be. To hear the blond man talking about it, there were going to be a whole wave of big breasted ladies just waiting to warm their beds every night. Not to mention a slew of advertised activities that would keep them bonded forever.

Devin wasn't feeling it, though. He wanted it to be true, especially the last part, but making this boat wasn't exactly going to change the future he'd envisioned when they'd driven down the highway. It was just going to delay things. Time was as relentless as the waves they were about to set sail on. It was with that pessimistic thought process that he opened up the passenger side door, and stepped onto the asphalt of the parking lot. A chill wind was blowing in from the ocean, carrying with it the scent and even a little taste of the ocean. There were seagulls letting out noises of happiness overhead, and he watched as a Pelican swooped close to the ocean to scoop up a fish.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" Mark was grinning behind him. Devin was smiling pretty wide, himself, he realized. "And we're going to see a *ton* of it. And a ton of other natural beauties, if you catch my drift." He patted Devin hard on the back, and then moved around to the trunk. "Come on. Get your stuff out of the back, so we can go board."

Devin nodded, slowly, taking a moment to look back at the ocean again. It didn't change anything, he reminded himself. This whole trip was just a blip, a last detour. Still. He was going to be surrounded by this gorgeous ocean, rooming with his best friend, and enjoying fun singles activities with gorgeous ladies. Maybe it wouldn't hurt him to relax, just a little.

The football player moved to the back of the vehicle, pulling out a plain black suitcase. Most of his stuff had gone home with his family, like sports posters and trophies, but he'd packed enough clothes to last him the entire trip plus an extra week, just in case.

Mark, meanwhile, didn't really have anyone to send home with his stuff. Everything he'd brought to college, and everything he'd collected through the year, was all stuffed into this one car. For the actual cruise, though, he was bringing a small but loud purple suitcase, stuffed with clothes, condoms, and trophies from his time as a sprinter. He lugged it out from under some posters, spilling out a couple loose ribbons in the process - which he quickly stuffed in his pocket. "Can't forget these," he grinned. "Gotta have something to show for those four years."

"Other than your degree?" Devin prompted. His friend just flashed him a grin, and started walking across the asphalt and toward the wooden docks. There was a big white ship, and a smaller one with just a single mast next to it. And then another ship that looked like it was going to tip over from the simple weight of its own sails, assuming it didn't sink from a hidden hole in its rough features. Devin half expected that to be the one they were getting on, but Mark continued leading them down the line of ships until they came across the cruise ship itself.

It was massive. All white, except for a single blue line about halfway up the body. Devin wasn't entirely sure how the damn thing stayed afloat, except maybe sheer surface area. The water seemed to reject the idea of it staying above the surface, too, waves bashing at it, yet it just sat there; barely noticing the ocean. "We're getting on that?" he asked, voice a little awed. "It looks brand new!"

"It is." Mark was grinning. "It's the maiden voyage of the S.S. Funne. That's why the tickets were cheap enough for a raffle party - they're sending out a few tickets as prizes to colleges, and stuff, so that us young folks will post all about it on social media."

"So what I'm hearing is that it's untested." Devin was scowling a little, now, some of his earlier pessimism back now that he was actually faced with the prospect of climbing on the boat.

Mark prodded him in the small of the back, though, and then elbowed him lightly in the rib when he still didn't move fast enough. "Come on. It's a trip on the Caribbean! The next time we do this, we'll probably have wives and kids dragging us down. Try to enjoy it a little this time, okay?"

"...Alright. You maybe have a point on that." Devin's feet started moving, again, carrying him toward the gangplank. Having to walk across the water over a large wooden platform might have been another sticking point, for him, except for

the throngs of happy families already doing just that. Mark practically skipped his way up, luggage jumping and bumbling behind him. Devin took a more careful approach, pressing his larger weight on the board and satisfying himself that it wouldn't squeak or tremble or crack before carefully starting to walk up the plank and toward the ship itself. The blond haired sprinter was waiting for him when he finally made it up, with a familiar grin on his face. It was the same grin he wore when Devin got to a bar late. The grin almost always meant his friend had gotten himself in some sort of trouble, and didn't even know it yet.

“Check out the redheaded hottie standing by herself...” He moved his head in a swift tilt, gesturing past a gaggle of talking grandmothers toward what had to admit was a pretty nice looking woman. She had one arm on the railing, leaning a little over it, a small smile on the corner of her lips as she turned the page of a book. She had a nice ass, shown off by a pair of black tights, worn under a loose red skirt that blew up with every gust of wind.

“She's out of your league,” Devin said to Mark, automatically. “And probably with someone.” He knew he was being a wet blanket, but he'd seen his friend get into trouble like this many a time. Swooping in on girls way too hot for him, and usually getting punched in the face by their angry boyfriends.

“Maybe. And maybe.” Mark shrugged. “But come on - how can you say no to one more story about how you pulled my ass out of the fire, mid ocean?”

“How about you wait until we’re actually *in* the ocean?” Devin suggested, but his sprinter friend had already started to walk forward. He slid around an arguing couple, bowed his head to the white haired ladies, and then he was standing next to the redhead he had his eyes on. Devin followed, almost bowling over the couple in his hurry, and actually tripping over the older ladies’ bags, to a small chuckle. When he stumbled his way up to his fiend, trying not to think about the throbbing pain in his toe, he was just in time to hear, “and this is my best friend and college roommate, Devin. We’re basically a package deal, most days, though - uh - I work alone at night. If you get what I mean.”

The woman smiled. It looked forced, to Devin. “Why don’t we leave the nice lady alone?” he suggested, reaching out to grab his friend’s arm. “We can check out the singles activities.” Before he could reach it, the woman grasped his hand.

“My name is Maria. The activities lead for singles, on this cruise; which your companion’s made clear you both are.” The woman smiled, again, and it looked a little more real than the time before. “I will be seeing you both at the

singles mixer tonight, yes? Open buffet, lots of women, and I think I can get you hooked up with a couple extra drink coupons if you show up early.”

“We’ll... uh...” Devin traded a glance with his blond friend, who shot a grin back. “We’ll be there,” the football player promised, squeezing Maria’s hand lightly. “Thanks for the invite.”

The woman gave Devin a warm smile, and Mark a look that Devin couldn’t make out or interpret at this angle. It might have been amusement. “I’ll see you both later, then. The fun starts on the party deck at eight pm. I hope to see you then.”

“I’ll see you then...” Devin promised, but Maria had already slid out from between the two of them, and was making her way to a small group of women walking a few feet away. The former college student heard “Ladies!” and then it all faded into background chatter.

Distracted, Devin almost forgot about Mark until the sprinter gave him a light punch on the shoulder. “She likes you!”

The football player’s eyes widened, and a faint blush touched his cheeks. “What? No! She was doing her job. Besides,” he added hastily, “you were talking to her first.”

“Yeah... but she was way more into you.” Mark was grinning, despite the words. Or maybe because of them. He was rarely the jealous type, always preferring to celebrate someone else’s successes. It was part of what Devin loved about his best friend. Whatever other traits the man had, he sincerely cared about his friends. Even if he could get a little enthusiastic about it.

“Come on,” Devin sighed. “Let’s go check out our room, and then we can talk about game plans for getting someone else in them...” he frowned. “Why do we have only one room, anyway?”

Mark shrugged, looking a little embarrassed. “It was a package deal; two tickets, one room. Just be glad I got us two beds, dude... though I doubt we’ll have a night where we’re both sleeping there, if you catch my drift!”

“I always catch your drift...” Devin sighed. It would be nice to have two rooms, but he could settle for having one as long as he had his own place to sleep.

“Come on. Cheer up! It’ll be like college, all over again - except better.” Devin shot his best friend a skeptical look, but Mark plowed on. “Free food, lots of beer on tap, hot girls, and no tests to study for. Plus, we get to be roommates one more time - and it’s not like we’ll both be needing our *own* room tonight. You can just keep busy with a girl in her room until we’re both done.”

“Wait - why do I need to be the one using the girl’s room?” Devin put a hand on his hip, and a mock scowl on his face. “You got to the last turn in our old room. I should get the first turn this time around.”

Mark raised his hands in surrender, grinning a little. “Alright. If you wanna defy tradition, I mean - first one to the room gets it. Second has to make due or lose out. Deal?”

A small nod from Devin. “Alright. You’re on. First one to the room gets it.” Though he’d probably be keeping it to himself tonight - no extra company needed when you were just trying to escape your own thoughts. Maybe he’d actually meet a girl that he wanted to spend the night with, though. He couldn’t lie, his sense of competition had been piqued.

“Now come on.” Mark started walking to the front desk. “They’ll give us our keys up ahead.”

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Devin walked along in silence, staying behind Mark as they made their way to the front desk. Although it had been clearly been screwed into the ship itself, anchored next to the door which led to the ship rooms, it still had the look of

something haphazardly built. A thatch roof and fake bamboo pole arms to hold it up all made it seem more like a place to grab a quick drink than the place to check in for your vacation. Devin figured that it perhaps doubled as something else during the trip proper.

For now, though, it was the place where impatient groups of guests were grabbing a hold of their room keys. Since they'd taken a place in the back of the line, the girls manning the desk had smiles that might have been held in place by fish hooks by the time they arrived. So when Mark asked one if "You come here often?" Devin sort of wanted to smack his best friend and roommate on her behalf.

The woman, Jennifer by her name tag, only gave a tired smile and asked "Tickets, please?"

Mark pulled out the rectangular pieces of plastic, slapping them down on the desk for Jennifer as if they were a spectacle to show off, and not something she'd seen hundreds of times before. The girl's eyes flicked down to read them, before she took the tickets, but her expression didn't change. "I see you're in one of our wonderful seawave suites. Your room is number 304. I hope you'll appreciate your trip with us, and have a wonderful day."

"Thanks," Devin interjected, wanting to cut off Mark before he could do any more flirting. His friend had a lot of good qualities; he was a tried and true friend

who would stick by a bestie through thick and thin, and a generous soul who was always giving what little he had to those he cared about. He was also impulsive, and clearly thinking with his dick. By his own words, there would be plenty of non-employees to flirt with. “We’ll head to our room, now.”

“Oh...” The girl seemed to perk up a bit, looking between them. “Are you two together, then?”

“Only in that we’re taking the trip together,” Devin admitted. “We’re both looking forward to the singles mixer.”

“Yeah. Pro homo, and all, but we like women. Guess I’ll see you at the single’s mixer?”

“Employees are discouraged from attending the mixers in a social capacity. I do hope you have a wonderful time, though.” The spark of interest had faded from her eyes, and she turned her gaze to the computer to type a few words. After a moment, she handed two key cards to Mark. “Have a wonderful stay.”

“We will,” Devin interjected, grabbing a hold of Mark’s arm and pulling him away. “Thanks.” Mark stayed quiet as he was led past the desk, and through the door that would lead to their rooms. “Think room 304 would be upstairs....” Devin muttered, putting a hand over his eyes to shield himself from the overhead

lights as he looked down the hall for the stairs. He could see the glint of elevator doors, and started walking down, luggage in tow.

“Yeah. Gonna claim the shower first, when we get there,” Mark chimed in, closing the door behind him. He was letting Devin take the lead as they walked down the hallway, though he reached past his friend to hit the call button for the elevator proper. “Meet some of the singles that are here to mingle, if you catch my drift?”

Devin nodded absentmindedly, wishing that he had thought to claim the shower first. He wasn't as excited about getting out as Mark; His friend had always been the more eager of them. Still, he was covered in sweat from his time in that heavy black graduation gown, and he was looking forward to showering himself off.

The elevator doors opened with a small ding, and they walked inside. There was a lady already inside, wearing a casual sundress, with a daisy flower print. She smiled at them as she walked by, and both Devin and Mark turned to stare at her behind. The woman turned, half way down the hallway, and winked. Devin and Mark met eyes, before looking away. Blushing on Devin's part, grinning on Mark's.

“Come on, dude...” Mark slid an arm around his buddy, gripping the other man’s shoulder with an easygoing smile as they moved onto the elevator. The door closed behind them, the elevator moving up.

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After finally getting his shower, Devin collapsed on a soft bed, and groaned faintly into the pillow. It had been a very long day, from graduation to driving to boarding the boat. Even after arriving in the bedroom, he’d had to wait to take a shower and wash the day’s grime off of him. By the time he finished it, Mark had already left. He vaguely recalled hearing a muffled shout while enjoying the hot water, but he hadn’t been able to understand what his friend was saying with the jets of hot liquid streaming down his face. Probably his roommate had already gone off to party and hit up some singles. At the current rate, he’d definitely be demanding the bedroom for the night, per their arrangement.

Devin, though, didn’t really want to leave the room. It was small, cramped by two beds and a nightstand. It only had a standing shower, not a bath. It wasn’t exactly the lap of luxury. Still, it had a soft bed with warm gray blankets and what might have been a feather pillow. All he knew for sure was that it was cozy, and it

felt good to lay his head against it. Laying like that, he thought he could while away the hours until night passed and morning came.

A gurgling sound from his belly ruined that plan as fast as it formed, however, and reminded him that he hadn't eaten anything since before the graduation ceremony. Reluctantly, after laying in the bed for less than ten minutes, Devin stood.

Putting on his shoes, and moving out into the hallway, the broad shouldered man made his way to the elevator. There was a map attached to the wall, atop the buttons, and if he was making it out right then the dining hall should be on the fifth floor. Pressing the button, he heard the faint whir of machinery, and felt the floor lifting beneath him. The doors opened on the third and fourth floor, a man and a woman joining first, and two children joining separately after. When it opened on the fifth floor, though, the normally conscientious Devin didn't wait for anyone else to get off. He moved immediately toward the smell of food, which was already causing his stomach to complain and his mouth to water. Within a few minutes, he had his plate piled high with mashed potatoes, gravy, tri tip, slices of turkey, and a little cranberry sauce. He was looking for a table when he saw her.

Sitting at a table by herself, a woman with dark hair and light features. She was eating quietly from a plate, a chicken salad and a plate of fries. She was

dipping the latter in a small bowl of ranch. Every time she ate a fry, she would carefully wipe her fingers and then turn a page in her book.

“May I sit here?” Devin asked, making his way to the opposite side of the table as the girl. There was no one else sitting near, surprisingly. Perhaps they had thought she wanted to be alone. Still, Devin remembered a lot of lunches alone, reading books, before he’d hit puberty and joined the football team. Long before he’d gone to college and met Mark. He’d always wished someone would come and say hello.

For the woman’s part, she looked surprised. Brushing a bit of her shoulder length hair back, she looked him over for a moment, before shrugging and putting down her book. “It’s a free country.”

He sat. “May I ask what you’re reading?” He smiled at her as he spoke. His stomach was gurgling, and he wanted to eat, but he was curious about this woman in front of him. Reading a book on a cruise, sitting by herself at dinner. She was gorgeous, and utterly alone, and he hoped she didn’t mind a little flirting.

She looked surprised by his question, raising an eyebrow. “If you’re really curious... it’s called *A Mermaid’s Tail*. It’s the story about a mermaid who gets turned into a human, by her rival in love. She has to find a way to return back to the ocean, so that she can confess her feelings to the one she loves most.”

“It sounds interesting.” A small smile. He hadn’t expected such a detailed explanation, but her eyes lit up when she talked about the book, and her luscious lips were spread into a smile. He liked seeing that. “Do you think I could borrow it some time?”

“I don’t see why not...” The woman took another bite of her fries, licking it without thinking, and then blushing when she realized. “I... um...”

“After you finish it, of course,” Devin interrupted. He thought it had been a little cute, actually, but he wasn’t going to say that when she was clearly embarrassed. “It’s going to be a long cruise, isn’t it?”

“Ah - and I read fast, anyway....” the woman murmured, glancing down at her plate. She ate a bite of her salad, while Devin helped himself to some of the mashed potatoes with gravy. “I’m... Nancy.”

“Devin.” The former student took another bite of food. For what came down to a free meal, it was excellent fare. “So. Uh. Nancy. Do you think I could convince you to join me on the deck, after dinner? We could take a moonlight stroll, or whatever you do on a boat.”

“A midnight stroll sounds lovely,” Nancy agreed, a slight hint of amusement on her lips.

They both ate their food faster, after that. Though Nancy didn't put down her book, even as she continued tackling the salad and fries.

Despite Nancy having considerably less food than Devin, the two of them finished eating about the same time, thanks to Nancy's reading. The brunette stood, and offered his hand to the darker haired Nancy, who graciously took it with only the mildest of embarrassed looks.

The two of them retreated to the deck, where the moonlight shone down on them. Devin was surprised to realize land was already nowhere in sight. He supposed if they were to sail the Caribbean in a week, they had to make good time.

The moonlit deck of the ship was beautiful, and almost empty. Perhaps it was because of the cold, or because of the water that occasionally sprayed over the edge. He didn't mind a little splashing, though, if he could walk along the deck with Nancy.

Nancy, however, didn't seem to feel the same way. "Maybe we should go inside..." She murmured, shivering a little.

Before Devin could respond, there was the sound of a sudden, horrible scraping across the bottom of the boat. The ground beneath them shook - and the boat lurched to a halt in the ocean. There were sudden screams, as a wave of water splashed above the deck, which was suddenly tilting.

Before Devin knew what was happening, the boat had begun to sink. There were calls for the lifeboats, of which there were thankfully plenty. Enough for everyone, in theory, though it might be a bit cramped.

“What’s happening...?” Nancy asked.

“I think.... I think the ship’s sinking....” Devin whispered. He moved, without thinking, grabbing Nancy’s hand and pulling her toward the lifeboats.

“Come on.”

He guided her toward the boats. There was one with two spaces left, and he helped her get on. When she held her hand out for him, however, he shook his head, “No....” he whispered. “I have to find Mark!”

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By the time Devin had reached the door, an alarm had already been sounded across the ship, a stream of people had were starting to come out. Since he didn’t want to get swept back out toward the doors, he stood to the side and allowed them to pass. He kept his eyes on the folks coming through, looking for Mark’s shaggy blond haired head. He didn’t see his friend.

Around him, every moment he waited, the boat sank a little more, the sea eagerly swallowing the behemoth ship. He couldn't help thinking it should never have been able to stay afloat in the first place. To make matters worse, it was starting to rain. The waves were getting bigger, too, crashing against the deck and making it slippery. He saw one or two people stumble, but so far no one had actually fallen off their feet.

The longer he waited, the worse the storm got. More and more people moved into their lifeboats, soaked to their skin by the rain but just eager to get off the sinking ship before it took them with it. He remembered an old myth that the suction of the ship itself would drag down anyone left standing on the boat when it hit the water, and he wasn't sure if it was true.

Someone in the crowd spotted him, and let out a shout. Devin couldn't quite make out what they were saying over the sounds of the rain and the crashing waves, but he was sure it was something like "Get on a boat, you idiot." They were dragged away by the flow of people coming out the door, though, and he didn't see them again. Devin's eyes were still glued to the ship, anyway, looking for Mark. He saw a head of blond hair, and thought it was his friend for a moment, but when he called out the person turned around to reveal a feminine face. She, too, was swept away by the crowd.

Soon, most of the lifeboats were gone. There were only a handful of them left. The steady stream of people had turned into a trickle, though, and he was able to force his way through the door, past a surprised member of the crew. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?” he heard, but he didn’t pause. His friend was still on the ship. He was sure of it. Even if he hadn’t been able to see his friend, Mark would have spotted him and called out if he had been one of the fleeing people.

Dodging around a few stragglers on their way to the lifeboat, Devin made his way to the staircase. The elevator was out of the question with the boat sinking, but even the stairs were getting difficult as the boat started to tilt down at one end. It made the climb steeper than it had a right to be, but he made it to the second, and then the third floor. He was only in room 304, so it was easy enough to thrust the door open from there.

Mark was tied spreadeagle to one of the beds. Utterly naked, and giving his friend a full view of the blond’s member. Devin didn’t know what he’d expected, but. It wasn’t that. Drawing a hand across his face, he asked “What... happened...?”

“Dude. It’s not what you think! There was this totally hot girl - and she was a guest, not an employee, I checked. She was into things, and I invited her back home, and... well, one thing led to another...” He tugged at one of the thick ropes

tying his hand to the metal bedposts. “Then there was this alarm, and she freaked out and ran off! She just left me here to die, dude! I totally thought I was a goner...”

Devin sighed. “Like I’d ever leave you. I knew you hadn’t come out, too...” He moved over to the bed. He’d start with the right hand, so that Devin could help with the untying, he thought. The rope was thick, though, and well tied. It took a few precious minutes to work the knot free, since he lacked anything sharp to cut the rope with.

“Thanks, dude...” Mark started working at his other hand, while Devin shifted to the lower extremities. Already knowing the knot made work easier, but it still took a solid minute to get the first foot free. He had both done, though, by the time Mark’s one handed fumbling and pulling managed to get his last limb free. “I’m going to put on some clothes, and then we can get out of here...”

“There’s no time for that,” Devin told him. “Just. Grab a pair of boxers and get out of here. I saw a few people in their bathrobes, you’ll fit right in.” It wasn’t a lie. People had stumbled out of their rooms in all sorts of dress, it being late at night when the boat started to sink. Mark would be lucky if he didn’t freeze his nads off in the rain, but they didn’t have time to worry about that. The ship was rapidly sinking.

“Seriously, dude?” Mark looked around, then grabbed a pair of gray boxers from the floor. He sat on the bed long enough to shove his feet through the cloth, and then they were both on their way out the door.

If going up the stairs had been tough, though, then going down them was a nightmare. The way was so steep, Devin almost tripped twice. Mark would have probably died if Devin hadn’t insisted he keep his hand on the wall or railing at all times. He kept trying to move faster down the stairs, and almost fell each time he tried. Eventually, they made their way back to the first floor. Devin thought it was luck more than skill that had kept them from dying.

The entire trip down, they didn’t see another soul. Even when they got out the door, and onto the wet deck, there was no sign of another person. When they reached the place where the lifeboats had been, he couldn’t see any of them left. He couldn’t even see any boats in sight. They had all fled.

Devin ran to the edge of the boat, looking over the railing. The water pelted at his skin. Behind him, he was aware of Mark speaking, but he couldn’t make it out. He was in shock. Another wave rocked the boat, and it shuddered, pitching him over the rail. A wave of water rose to meet him, and he crashed into the sea.

A moment later, there was another splash, as Mark dove after him, cursing all the while.

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Devin awoke. His throat felt parched, and his head was aching, but he was alive. He was lying on a beach, on his back. His clothes were soaked through, but that was only natural. The sun beating on his back was warm, but not warm enough to have dried him out yet.

He rubbed his eyes, trying to clear them, and looked down the beach. To the left there was only sand, a white semi circle of ground sea shell and rock as far as he could see, with ocean on one side and trees on the other. Looking to the right - he saw Mark. The man had lost his underwear, and was lying entirely naked, upper half in the sand lower half in the water. He was breathing. Actually, he was snoring. It was only water clogged ears that had prevented Devin from hearing his friend right away.

“Mark...” he called, moving over to his friend and gently shaking the man’s shoulder.

“Wuh... five more minutes, Devin...”

“*Mark,*” Devin repeated, shaking him a bit harder. His friend’s eyes opened slowly.

“Devin... We’re... alive?” Mark rubbed his eyes. “I was. Diving after you. I could see you in the water - I tried to grab at your hand, and... and...” He looked around. “Where are we?”

“An island?” Devin shrugged. “I don’t know. I don’t even know if there’s people around. But there’s trees. If we’re lucky, there’ll be fruit and water. Maybe even people.” He looked around, at the sea. “If not people, then as long as there’s fruit... or at least water... we might be able to survive until someone can find us...”

“So we’re basically castaways?” Mark pushed himself to his feet. Devin looked away. He loved his best friend, but the blond man still had no clothes, and Devin had no real desire to see another man with it all hanging out. “Hey. You’re going to have to take your clothes off, too,” the naked sprinter pointed out. “At least let them dry, or something. They’ve got to be cold...”

“Maybe after we find a stream to wash them in,” Devin suggested. “They’re full of sand and salt, at this point, so if I let them dry on the beach they’ll probably be ruined.” Also, if there were actually people around, at least one of them should probably be clothed when dealing with them.

“Whatever you say, dude...” Mark stretched, leaning down on one leg, and then the other. Devin, who had dared to glance back at his friend, blushed and looked away again.

“Come on... Let’s go investigate...” Devin gesturing toward the trees.

The foliage were thick, but it didn’t seem like they’d been completely without human interference. There was a path between the trees, that didn’t require them to cut through it. It didn’t seem well trodden, as there was a lot of undergrowth to wade through, but someone at some point seemed to have cleared away the actual trees and branches that would have stood in the way. They made their way slowly along it, the woods pressing in on each side.

“You hear any anything?” Devin whispered, about a quarter mile into their hike.

“Not really...” Mark shrugged. “Why?”

“It’s just. I thought there’d be birds, or something. But I don’t hear anything...” It was weird, was all. That, and the path; it was impossible to believe that there hadn’t been some human presence on this island. At least at some point.

Mark just rolled his eyes, though, and moved ahead. “You worry too much, dude!” Devin hesitated a moment, but just as Mark had dove in after him, Devin couldn’t help but follow his friend.

The path ended at a clearing. A clear spring sat in the middle of the clearing, surrounded by purple and red wildflowers. Despite being still water, it looked crystal clear. “Looks like you’ll be able to wash your clothes in that,” Mark pointed out.

Devin just shook his head, though. “There’s no way I’m washing my clothes in this. It might be our only source of clean water... Assuming it is clean...” He couldn’t believe that it wasn’t, though. He could see deep into the silty bottom of the spring. It didn’t look like it had ever been touched by human hands. It was about to be, though.

Without even a hint of concern, Mark stepped forward and plunged his fingers into the water, cupping them and bringing some up to his mouth for a drink. He swished it around a little, and then swallowed with a satisfied sigh. “Tastes even better than the bottled stuff. Go ahead and give it a try.”

Devin dipped his own fingers in. As always, he was more cautious than his friend, but. He was thirsty. He, too, drew water into his mouth for a drink. It was as delicious as it looked, clear and free of any impurities, at least as far as his tongue could taste. He leaned down to take another sip, and then paused.

“Mark...” he whispered, uncertain as to what he was seeing.

“What?” His friend’s voice came out several pitches higher than normal. Of course, that wasn’t what Devin had noticed.

“Your hair... it’s getting longer.”

“Dude...” Mark reached out, gripping Devin’s hair, and pulling it a little forward. It should have been short cropped and black. Instead, it was now brown, lightning to platinum blonde before his eyes. It was also about shoulder length.

“So’s yours.”

Devin shook his head, tugging the hair free from Mark’s hand in the process. The straight strands were still growing, and by the time he had stopped shaking his head they had settled down around his chest. “This is impossible...” he whispered. His own voice came out higher pitched than he was used to, and he slammed his hand against his mouth in surprise. “No way... no way...”

“Devin...” Mark’s voice was soft, breathy, and feminine. If Devin wasn’t directly looking at his friend, he never would have believed it could come out of his best friend’s mouth. “What’s happening to us?”

“How am I supposed to know?” Devin fought to keep his voice under control, but it came out as more of a snap than he had expected. “Our hair’s growing longer. Our voices are getting high pitched...” *He was turning platinum blonde.* His breathing was coming out in panicked little gasps, as his mind started

to tease through the possibilities. “The spring.... It’s doing something to us...” He stared into the water. “There must have been something in the water. We’re probably - We’re probably hallucinating...”

Mark reached out, at that, gently taking a handful of Devin’s long platinum hair and *tugging* on it. “Ow!”

“Don’t know, dude...” It was so strange to hear that soft and breathy voice from his friend. So strange to hear his own voice, high pitched and squeaky. Like a girl’s, both of them. “It feels pretty real to me...”

“But it *can’t* be real...” Devin whined, clutching his head, tugging at the hair. He could feel it growing longer, pressing against his fingers as it shifted, down to the waist. “People don’t just change like this!” It was still growing, though. It continued growing until he felt it lightly touch his bottom, the pale blonde strands taunting him with sheer impossibility. “What’s happening to me?”

“I don’t know, dude, but... it’s happening to both of us...” Mark’s hair had grown as well. Where Devin’s had grown paler, Mark’s blond locks were getting darker, shifting color from blonde to a bright cherry red. It was easily as long as Devin’s, too, perhaps longer when one accounted for the flowing curls that the sprinter’s hair had taken on. “So hey,” Mark continued. “Whatever kinda crazy thing this is. We’re in it together, right?”

Devin felt a rush of gratitude for his friend, pushing back some of the fear and uncertainty. He managed a smile, which Mark returned. It was then, though, that he noticed something strange about his friend's face; about his hair, more particularly. His hairline was pushing *forward*. His cheeks were slowly shifting, too, taking on a more round appearance. His brows were shifting upward, while the bones around his eyes were shifting to lift the pupils out. Even his nose was shrinking, turning from a prominent focus point of his face to a cute little snub nose. The last thing to change was the stubble on his face, which broke away from the skin and fell to the ground.

Devin felt a warmth in his own face, felt his own bones shifting, and knew already that he was going through the same transition. The football player shifted hands to his cheeks as he felt them shift. He turned to the spring, slowly, almost mechanically, knowing what he'd see. His face, and Mark's face, reflected back in the water. Except it wasn't really *their* faces he was seeing, anymore. Their faces had been changed into something else, something that didn't belong on their male bodies.

"Devin..." Mark whispered, behind him. "I think we're turning into girls."

"...I know." Devin sat on the ground, and winced a little as he sat on his own hair, having to tug a few strands free. It was never a problem he had had before. It

was never a problem he'd wanted to have. It was something he didn't know how to deal with. "The spring. It's turning us into women, somehow - like. Like magic..."

He bit his lip. This... this was a lot to process. Magic - was magic real? Was it capable of - of turning people into women? Was this a thing that was actually happening? Or was it all some oxygen deprived illusion, as he drowned in the sea?

"You're overthinking things, dude," came a soft voice. Mark's voice, though Devin still wasn't used to it. "You're going to pop a brain vessel if you don't calm down."

Devin took a deep breath and tried to make himself relax, just a little bit. His chest did feel a little tight. Deep breathes, because he didn't want to panic right then. If he panicked, he didn't think he'd ever stop. "You're right..." he whispered, in his new voice. It sounded even more girly when he spoke softly like that. He tried speaking a little louder, more confidently. "You're right. We can't panic." The tightness in his chest hadn't disappeared. It had in fact been joined by a sudden blossoming warmth, surprising considering the still drenched clothes he wore.

"Oh no... no..." Despite his attempts to remain calm, he knew what this meant. The only thing it could mean. Desperately, he started tugging at his shirt, pulling the sea soaked cloth over his head. The wet fabric caught lightly at his

nipples, making him shudder with a sudden violent need, as that strange warmth spread from his chest and through the rest of his body.

Devin already knew what he was going to find, beneath the shirt. Mark was already slightly poking at his own chest, his plump lips set in a little “O” of surprise. Both of them had little baby bumps on their chest, gentle little risings beneath their nipples. Mark had only drunk from the spring a few moments before Devin, so their transformations were likely to be almost in sync. It didn’t seem like it was going to be exactly the same, though, just judging by the hair...

“Stop overthinking things!” Mark called, again. The sprinter laughed, a high pitched noise that sounded so alien compared to the normal deep laugh his friend had. “Just enjoy where this is going!”

“Enjoy it?” Devin asked, eyes wide, surprise written across his newly feminine features. He shifted his hands to cup his growing breasts, and tried not to panic at the feeling of warmth and need that shot in a line between his breasts and his dick. “How am I supposed to enjoy this?” he demanded, oh so aware of his newly feminized voice. “I’m turning into a woman!”

“Yeah... and a beautiful one.” Mark plopped down on the ground, next to the ground next to Devin, a small smile on his face. “Cuter than me, anyway.”

“N-No way...” the newly blonde man shook his head. “How are you just accepting this so easily?” He could feel himself changing, still. His breasts slowly filling his hands, the soft flesh spilling out from between his fingers, forcing them to spread out to make room for the growing flesh. The pink peak pushed against his finger, stiff from the cold and still a little damp from the clothes he’d been wearing. “I know I’m supposed to be the calm and rational one, but how am I supposed to deal with something like this?”

“You don’t always have to be cool and rational!” Mark told him, smiling. The redhead really did look gorgeous, when he smiled like that, and Devin had to remind himself that he wasn’t looking at a random woman but at his best friend - a man. A man with the face and hair of a woman, and whose thin frame was now sporting a pair of beautiful breasts. “Look at me! I’ve got tits, and I’m fine with it!”

“But how?” Devin asked, now trying to keep from crying. It looked like Mark was done growing, but Devin’s breasts continued to push against his hands, even as he desperately tried to shove them back into his chest.

Devin could feel the rest of his body changing, too. His broad shoulders were pressing inward, slowly narrowing. His hips were widening, his thighs thickening. He could see those same changes in Mark, too, and more: the skin looked paler, softer. The body hair that had long covered his friend’s legs and arms

was falling away, too, just like the stubble had before. More was coming, though. He could feel it, a pulling sensation between his legs, and he squeezed his eyes shut, knowing what was about to happen. What he was about to lose.

“Because I have you.”

Devin’s eyes snapped open in surprise, and he was greeted by the easy smile of his friend. Mark had leaned forward, in the moment that Devin’s eyes had been closed, and the redhead’s feminized face was now bare inches away from Devin’s.

“...What?”

Mark laughed, again, and this time Devin heard it for what it was: a feminized version of the old laugh, a soft and silky sound. “I can handle this because I’m going through it with you, dude. Because I know whatever happens, we’re in it together, same as ever. So I can handle the rest.”

Devin stared for a moment. Then, slowly, a smile began to cross his features. His eyes darted down, looking to the space between them. Since the blonde was still dressed in pants he couldn’t actually see his own member shrinking, but Mark was on full display still. The football player was able to watch what was happening to his own junk, as the penis slowly shrank into a little nub, a tiny little button no bigger than a girl’s clit. Which was exactly what it was. A hard clit, at least in

Devin's case. He'd never known that the phrase "lady boner" could be so literal, until he'd felt it in his own pants.

"Are you...?" Devin bit his lip, unable to ask his friend if this transformation felt as good for him as it did in themselves. He saw the flush of his friend's face, though, and the way his nipples hardened. Heard how his breath picked up the pace. Faster, and faster. Licking her lips, she turned her attention back to the privates, eyeing the testes as they pulled completely into the flesh. They left smooth skin behind.

Slowly, though, the skin began to separate - the tight pussy lips forming. Devin could feel it happening to himself, a new opening in his body, a channel that would lead all the way to the womb. Devin shook her head, barely able to believe what was happening, barely understanding what she'd just witnessed, and hardly able to process the simple fact that she was *wet* - but still relieved that she at least had her friend with her. "Mark..."

Before she could finish, Mark's lips pressed in, close against hers. Devin's eyes widened, and she parted with a little squeak that she never would have believed herself capable of moments before. "What-"

"Sorry du- er. Girl." Mark laughed again, and Devin couldn't help but notice how it made her friend's breasts bounce. The tits were a cup size or so smaller tahn

Devin's, but her nipples were bigger; stiff and thick peaks that seemed to shimmer for attention. "Saw a pretty girl, and wanted to kiss her. You know how I am."

"But... I'm a guy. You're not gay. Are you?"

"Neah." Mark shook her head. "But the way I figure it, neither of us are guys anymore; at least on the outside. And I don't feel particularly broken up about it, either... and if liking girls, and not minding being a girl makes me gay, then. Hey. Pro homo?" the redhead grinned, an easygoing smile that seemed to say everything was going to be okay. It was so strange to see it on a girl's gorgeous face.

"So..." Mark whispered, leaning forward, pressing her fingers lightly against Devin's chest, gently pushing her friend to the ground. "Can I kiss you again?"

Devin nodded, weakly, wondering if this was how every girl Mark had ever been with had felt. Like they were about to be taken care of by someone strong, and supportive, and wonderful. She closed her eyes as soft lips met hers, and let out a mewling little noise of need as the lips left and the pressure on her breasts dropped away. "What do I call you?" Mark asked, suddenly, tilting her head curiously. "I mean. I can scream out 'Devin,' if you really want, but it might spoil the mood..."

“I... I hadn’t thought that far ahead...” Devin whispered, blushing a little.

“Why don’t you name me?”

“Only if you return the favor... Naia...”

“Then...” Naia swallowed, thoughts swimming. “I’ll call you... Alia?” she had never felt so doubtful in her life.

“Alia... I like it.”

Alia leaned down to place another kiss on Naia’s lips, and the blonde closed her eyes to accept it. She was only distantly aware of a sudden burning in her legs.

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The kiss lasted a long moment, and broke only with great reluctance on Naia’s part. The parting of their lips marked a return to the real world: real problems and real worries that couldn’t be solved by a simple declaration of love. The transformed blonde had many concerns: their ability to survive, their chance for rescue, and how they would explain their situation if help ever came. Despite the sea of dangers around them, though, she was startled to find she felt no *fear*. Though that wasn’t too surprising after that kiss...

The feel of Alia's lips on hers told her that she wasn't alone. The feel of those light fingers on her shoulders, delicate in nature but firm in their grip, told her that everything would be okay.

“Naia?”

The two of them would work together to make it okay. It didn't matter if they were men or women, so long as they were together. And if they were both attracted to the other's current body...

“Naia!?”

Well, if they were okay with being in female bodies, and they were both attracted to each other's bodies, did that make them lesbians?

Fingers slid into Naia's too tight wet pants, and delivered a faint pinch to her newly plump rear, making the young maiden jump to her feet. “H-Hey!”

“...You have a really cute ass. You know that?” Allia was still half lying down, one elbow planted in the dirt, in order to prop herself up. Her cheek was laying against the delicate fingers, and with her curly red hair she would have looked absolutely picturesque if it weren't for the dorky grin on her face.

Naia knew instantly that the smile was fake. Although the expression looked totally different on a feminized face, the blonde still knew her friend well enough to see when a smile wasn't reaching her buddy's eyes. “Alia?”

The woman in question shrugged, ringlets of red hair bouncing with the movement of her shoulders. “Just wanted to make sure you could still feel your legs, dude. I... don’t think the transformation is finished.”

“What are y...” Naia trailed off, mid-word, brown eyes widening in shock. Alia’s legs had begun to fuse together, heels forced to meld together as flesh began to bridge the connection between each of the thighs, and the upper legs. Further, a scattering of blue scales had begun to gather across the flesh, catching the light on her flesh.

“Alia...” Naia reached out toward her friend, then froze at seeing her own hand. When had her nails turned black? No, more important than the claws, when had webbing spring up between her fingers?

“Alia. What’s happening to us?” Why had it started with her fingers, instead of her legs? Now that Naia had been made aware, she could actually feel a burning situation inside her... pants. Had she been saved by her pants? Then the moment the pants came off...? No. She couldn’t assume even the pants would save her. Not without knowing what sort of transformation was going on. She had to get to the ocean quickly. She knelt down, careful to put her legs apart.

“Uh. Dude. What are you doing?”

“Grabbing my travel buddy.” Naia hesitated for a moment, unsure how to approach this, then settled for simply grabbing one of Alia’s arms and throwing it over her own shoulders, before starting to straggle up to her own feet. “You didn’t think I was gonna run to the ocean without you or anything, did you?”

“I sorta figured I could drag myself there eventually, if it’s me... But dude. If we end up in the same boat-”

“There’s no way you could drag yourself all the way to the beach.” Naia dismissed the idea, immediately, shaking her head violently as if to dispell the notion. “We don’t even know if you’re gonna have arms when this is all over! What if you turn into a fish?!”

“Fish?” Alia stared at Naia in surprise, then laughed. “Maybe I should come along with you, if that’s where your head’s at. There’s no way this spring turned us into such gorgeous babes just to make us fish, dude. We’re turning into-”

“Don’t say it!” Naia’s voice came out louder than she imagined, and was a little snappish. She felt embarrassed, but focused that energy into her legs. She was determined to make Alia go with her, even if she had to drag the other woman the entire way. She was determined to make it to the ocean *with* her friend, and live whatever sort of life laid ahead of them together. “I can accept weird springs turning people into fish. It makes a sort of poetic sense! Self stocking pond, or

whatever! But... Mermaids... Mermaids aren't real! If we're turning into mermaids, then this really is..."

"Magic." With a small grunt of effort, Alia forced herself onto her fused feet, lifting up alongside Naia and leaning heavily on her friend. "It's magic, dude; that means it doesn't have to follow any rules. That means we don't have to be in any trouble. That means we don't need to overthink. We can just see what happens, and go with the flow. I thought that it would be easier for you if you could get to the ocean, but... If you're just gonna worry about me 'til I get there, too. Then we'll do this together."

Naia's mouth opened, and closed. To her, it seemed as if her friend had given up on trying to control the situation, and was advising her to do the same. Just go with the flow. That had always been so easy for the sprinter, hadn't it? Whether as Mark or Alia, the redhead always let the whims of the world carry her where they would. Naia, though, she always had to think. She had to think all the time about what to do next, methodically planning every step. The only tools she'd ever had were her brain, and the brute force of her body, and off the field she'd always been determined to use the former. Keep sharp. Keep in control. Her friend didn't understand how hard it was to never be able to let go. Which made it even harder for Naia to accept that just this once, that her friend was at least partly

correct. There was nothing Naia could do about her situation, with the power of her mind. Which meant she had to rely on the power of her body.

Naia had lost a lot of strength when she transformed. The body she had now was well built, with a strong core and thickly muscled thighs. While her chest had grown considerably, her pecs had dwindled. She wasn't as broad in the shoulders as she'd been, either. But she wasn't the only one who'd shrunk. As long as Alia could support some of her weight, Naia trusted in her new body to get them both to the ocean. With that in mind, she grabbed hold of Alia's arm again, and took a step forward.

"I never left you high and dry before, Alia; I'm not going to start now!" Alia made a small noise of surprise as Naia stepped forward, and the cherry headed woman's arm tightened around Naia's shoulders, then relaxed, as they began to awkwardly make their way toward the ocean.

They continued like that in silence until the spring was behind them and the trees were on all sides. It was all Alia could do to line up the trees in her sight and make sure they were traveling in a straight line towards the island's edge. Naia's attention was focused entirely on survival, on getting her friend to the ocean, to making sure they lived through this. Alia's attention seemed to be entirely on the trees, her nose lifting occasionally to catch the scent of the ocean. She had a smile

on her face. Even though they were moving at a snail's pace, slower than anything Naia had ever seen Mark willing to go, Alia showed no concern or uncertainty. It was as if she was certain everything would come together. It was annoying. But. A little inspiring?

Then, she tilted forward and let her entire weight fall against Naia, bringing the blonde down to her knees. "Oops..." Alia laughed it off, instantly, removing her hand from Alia's neck to flop down onto the dirt. The scent of the ocean was so close that Naia could smell it, but Alia didn't seem to care. She just pushed herself back up onto her elbow, brushed the red curls from her eyes, and smiled brightly at her friend. "Hey. If I'm dragging my way to the ocean from this point on, anyway. Why don't you take your pants off and join me down on the ground? It's gotta be hard, stuck in wet clothes, right?"

Alia didn't respond. She only got down to her knees, ignoring the burning sensation in her legs as she did so. She pushed her arms underneath her friend, and heaved the now-lighter woman up over her shoulders. Then she began to stand.

"H-Hey! I told you, we'll be alright even if we crawl, right?" Naia's voice was loud, and panicked. "Just take your pants off, finish transforming, and-"

"No." Alia spoke through gritted teeth. Her legs were getting harder to move, even with the pants. If she had to guess, her muscles were trying to change

and shift even before they fused together. That was the only explanation for why trying to stand felt like balancing atop a pillar of jelly. Her feet, too, were rebelling. She could feel the toes starting to narrow, and thin. On top of that, while Alia's transformation had focused on her now completed tail, Naia's body was changing in other ways, while her body was stifled - she had fins beneath each wrist, green membranes of translucent flesh that swept up her arm and toward her shoulders. Her ears had shifted, too, becoming longer and stretching out to be more fin like in appearance. Worst of all, though, was the feeling in her guts. Like something was being rearranged. Would gills replace her lungs? What if she couldn't breathe on land? And how fast would mermaids dry out in the air?

...These were questions she didn't have time for. Things she didn't want to worry Alia with.

"Please," she whispered, putting all her strength into wrapping delicate arms around her friend's shoulders and tail. "Please," she repeated, forcing herself onto feet that just wanted to collapse beneath her weight. "Bear with my worrywart brain a little longer, okay? Just until we get to the ocean. Then I can relax."

"...Dude..." Alia didn't resist, as she was lifted. She stayed as still as possible, as her friend began to take stumbling steps towards the ocean again.

"Dude..." She put her hands on either side of Naia's face, and gently directed her

steps towards the next tree in line. “If it’s that important that we hurry. I’ll be your guide, okay? So just keep walking forward, and I’ll make sure we keep going in a straight line.”

Naia had no energy for words of gratitude. She trusted that Alia knew her thankfulness, and put one foot in front of the other. Bit by bit she struggled forward. Her eyes closed. Her breathing became more labored. There was a harsh pain in both her sides. She was even aware of skin opening up, as new organs started to take hold of her breathing. Her lungs were still in it, and she didn’t seem to be drying out, so maybe some of her worries were pointless. She wasn’t sure.

She kept walking. Eyes closed, striding ever forward in the direct Alia pointed her. Once or twice, she heard something rustling through the bushes. There was the occasional snap of a twig, the caw of a bird, and what she would have sworn was a howl. Though that last night have been Naia's imagination.

Throughout it all, she kept her eyes closed, though. She kept her trust in Alia.

When she finally felt the waves of water soaking through her shoes, she knew that she was something close to safe. Still, she did not open her eyes. All she could do was collapse forward, holding out her friend in the hope of getting her just a little closer to the waves.

“...And you say I’m the reckless one,” Alia whispered, pushing herself back up onto her arms and shaking her head. “...Well. I guess I can finally take off your pants.”



When Naia opened her eyes, she was greeted by the distant sight of the moon, a pale circle distorted by the moving waters of the ocean. “The ocean...” She whispered out loud, and her voice came out clear and easily despite the water in her lungs. Some part of her still said that it shouldn’t be possible. There was no way something like mermaids could exist without people knowing, after all... but there was no point in talking about science when this was so obviously magic. Now that they were in the relative safety of the ocean, Naia could admit that Alia had been right about that.

Where was Alia? Her head swiveled around, turning around, and letting out a panicked squeak as long platinum blonde hair billowed out her, obscuring her vision. It took several seconds of battling it out with the drowned locks before she could get it down, and only after did she see Alia. Laying on the ground. Propped up on one elbow, and laughing softly at her predicament.

“Teach me to worry about you...” Naia muttered.

“You’re cute when you worry, though.” A slight shove of elbow on ground, and suddenly Alia was fully upright and floating in front of Naia. Her ringlets of red hair were drifting softly through the ocean, and her bright green eyes were smiling like everything was okay, which couldn’t help but ease some of Naia’s tensions.

“Taking a look at you, though... we really are mermaids, aren’t we?” she whispered. Both of their bodies were entirely transformed. Naia’s new tail was narrow, and thin, stretching out almost twice the size of her upper body. Her lower body was covered in green scales that caught even the dim light of the moonlight. She wasn’t sure how the effect looked on her, but if it was anything like the gorgeous ephemeral beauty that decorated Alia’s blue scaled tail, she would have to describe herself as beautiful. Looking at Alia, she also noticed a feature she’d missed when examining herself: the back of their tails had long, translucent fins running down them.

Naia was more interested in the other features, though. Even if they had been transformed by magic, without respect to the laws of evolution, every body depended on form to function. That meant that fins at her wrist lightly served a purpose, for helping her cut through water. The black claws that tipped her fingertips, meanwhile, were likely for catching and killing fish. Their ears,

meanwhile - they had become long and stretched out until they were almost fin like in appearance. She couldn't resist swimming closer to Alia's face to take a look at the ears, touching her own at the same time to feel the spines. "Can we move these...?" She wondered out loud, trying to wiggle her ears.

The experiment was cut short, without results, when Alia suddenly closed the remaining distance between them and pressed their lips together.

Naia's eyes shot open. She placed her fingers on Alia's shoulder, intent to push back, but the redhead broke the kiss before she could notice, and grabbed hold of a few of Naia's floating strands of blonde hair. The platinum blonde was tinted with green, now; something Alia hadn't noticed, during her stunted exploration.

"I love your hair," Alia whispered, before Naia could comment on it. Then she leaned forward to press a light kiss against Alia's lips, while the girl stood shocked and still. "Then again, I think everything about your new body is sexy. Your breasts; your hips; your tail. Your cute pussy..."

"W-What!? M-my what?"

"Your pussy, dude." Alia's tail shifted as she spoke, wrapping lightly around Naia's tail. If Naia's was long, Alia's could only be described as massive, easily three times as long as her entire upper body, with a frame that started thick at the

hips and narrowed down to a point. It was that narrow tail that maneuvered against Alia's body, so that the tips of the fins could ever so barely tickle against Naia's tail. The fin hadn't quite touched her sex, but it was close enough to the opening that Alia's body reacted, and she flushed horriedly as she realized that she was indeed a *mermaid*.

“S-Stop! Stop! This isn't the time to be thinking about stuff like - like that!” Naia shook her head quickly back and forth as she spoke, trying to shut down the conversation before it could begin. “We need to figure out our bodies; figure out how they function, and what they do, and what they're for. We don't know what happened to us; we don't know what sort of dangerous things live around here. We're not going to survive without knowledge!”

“Then. Let's get to know our bodies the old fashioned way?” Alia grinned, squeezing Naia's tail lightly with her own as she made her suggestion. “Unless you know another way to get all close and knowledgeable about two people's bodies in one go?”

“T-That's not... That's not very scientific.” It was a terrible excuse, Naia knew. She didn't realize how badly she had messed up, though, until Alia began to untangle her body from her blonde friend and push away to drift in the water.

“C-come on... I'm just...”

“You just don’t want to have sex with me, dude; I get it.” Alia stretched as she spoke, and when arched her back and thrust her chest out toward the surface, Naia was very aware of those prominent and wonderful nipples poking out toward the surface. “It’s okay. You probably just see me as a dude in a weird body, now, right? And it was weird to think we could just go from being friends to girlfriends or whatever, anyway, so-”

“That’s not it!” Naia’s tail flashed back and forth in the water as she spoke, driving her closer to her friend. She took advantage of this to grab both of Alia’s hands, and clutch them against her own soft breasts. “It’s not that I don’t love you. It’s not that I don’t want to be with you. It’s that I love you so much, I want to be with you forever; not just for the next five minutes. Not until we figure out how to fix this. Not until you go off to your dad’s marketing firm. I want to be with you forever, and the only way we can do that is if we figure out everything now, and have everything planned, and know how to deal with the next situation before it comes up! We have to-”

Words were cut off, as Alia pressed lips against Naia’s again. This time, when Naia froze, and pressed her fingers uncertainly against Naia’s shoulders, the redheaded mer made no move at all to back off. She only wrapped her tail around

Alia's body, pressed her weight down on the other mer, and slowly drifted towards the sandy ground of the ocean, so that they could kiss below the waves.

After a moment, Naia's fingers gently slid through Alia's hair, gently grasped her head, and held her in place. They parted, though, when their gills had finally taken in too much and they felt the desperate need to breathe through their mouths.

"Hey," Alia whispered, after a deep breath. "What do you know? We can't kiss forever! I'm learning things already."

"...This is so... What if something sneaks up on us? And what if... I can't just relax like you can, Alia. I can't just go along with the flow."

"I don't need you to..." Alia gave her friend a smile smile, and then moved one of her hands to gently cup Naia's breast. The blonde let out a little gasp, squirming faintly as her friend brushed a clawed thumb over the tip of her nipple, and then dug the black talon ever so lightly into her flesh. Not enough to draw blood. Just enough to keep Naia rooted in this present moment, this present need.

"Naia. Dude. Girl. Whatever you are, or will be; you've always covered the shit I couldn't. You do the stuff I can't. And I help you relax when I can. Now, I'm asking you to let me help you relax in a totally new way! One that feels really

good. And if you don't want to? You don't have to. But I think you need some stress relief before your mind breaks."

"...And if we die because we were having fun and the next transformation or problem snuck up on us in the meantime?"

"Then I'll have died for a good cause, right?" Alia's easy going smile faded, and she shook her head back and forth. "I'm not like you, girl; you have all these thoughts and desires, and wants. I spent most of my... existence... just wanting to escape it all. A halfway decent job, some decent sex, and a partner to share it all with. That's all I wanted. Now, instead of a job, I get to try and stay alive. But. If I can have the rest of it, still? With you, of all people? Then... Dude... That's worth dying for. To me." The mer smiled at her friend, who was staring at her with wide eyes, and placed a gentle kiss on Naia's cheek. "But if you want to think things through, more, and be prepared, and know everything before we go any further. Then that's fine, too. It's enough just to know that you want this."

"..." Without warning, Naia twisted her tail about, pushing against the ground and forcing them into the air. Although her tail was a lot shorter than Alia's, the blonde still knew that she only needed to keep enough length occupied that the rest couldn't reach the body. Then her upper hands could grip Alia's arms,

and with her superior physical strength she would be able to hold them both in place as they slowly drifted back to the ocean floor.

Alia only looked up in confusion at this display, for her part, even as her body settled on the ground. "...Girl. What's that for?"

"...I..." Naia swallowed. "I want to get to know you your way. I love you; I love you now and always, and forever. And. I think if I keep worrying about the future, I'm not never going to get the forever I want. So. So. So take me now, okay?"

"...That would be easier to do if you were on the bottom, but... If you say so, girl. I guess I'll do what you want."

With a twist of her tail, Naia flipped herself back on top, before beginning to untangle the slender length of her tail from Alia. "I've never done it with something like this before, so I can use my hands if you prefer, but..."

"No... I want to feel y-your tail. In me." Naia flushed at her own words, embarrassment warring with sincere desire. "I want to get to know how our bodies work; so just. Give into your instincts. Okay?"

"...Okay. Just remember. You're the one who told me that," Alia warned.

Naia nodded, then yipped as she felt teeth latch onto her neck. The bite was soft, barely there, but definitely noticeable, especially when the teeth bit ever so

harder - especially when that happened at the same time that fingers ever so gently pinched against her nipples, a clawed thumb rubbing against her stiff peak before the prick of the claw ever so lightly poked her breast. She was distantly aware of another hand, touching her back, gripping her hair, and tilting back her head. Then lips were being pressed against the very spot she had been bitten, and she was being kissed up the neck, up her chin, up to the corner of her lips. A mouth was pressed against hers, and she opened her lips without thought, accepting Naia into herself, accepting the long tongue into her mouth as this time both hands began to explore her breasts.

Naia was a little embarrassed to realize just how easily her bountiful tits filled Alia's small hands. She was more than a little excited, though, to realize how good it felt to have her breasts pressing into another woman's palms, her fingers lightly running across the surface of her tits, and her back arching to press into the claws and the palms.

The kiss broke, and Naia flicked her tail to push up, so that she could offer her breasts to that hungry mouth. Alia of course took this invitation without a second thought, kissing the breasts, biting lightly on the flesh, teasing the skin with her teeth. The redhead wore a smile, as she pressed her lips against Naia's breasts,

and let her teeth ever so gently nip the peak. Naia thought nothing of that smile; she thought it was only satisfaction.

Until she felt something at her lower lips, pressing against her entrance. Then she realized the entire play with her upper body had been a distraction, while Alia got her tail untwined and in position. “W-Wait...” Naia whispered, a touch of panic in her voice now. “I’m not... I’m not sure I’m ready...”

Alia parted from her breast without a word. Didn’t say a thing to rush her. Only smiled at her, softly. And that smile told Naia that everything would be okay. So she nodded, in consent, and allowed Alia to drive the tip of her thin tail against her friend’s sex, with enough force that Naia even felt some of the fins pushing their way into her opening.

She squirmed; bucked; and came. Came more easily, more pleurably, more wonderfully than she ever had in her own form. She wasn’t sure if that was a sign of her body being built for easy pleasure, or if Alia was simply that skilled. Perhaps it was both? She wished for a moment that she had someone to ask.

Then Naia drove her tail into her again, and she realized suddenly that what she had felt had not been an orgasm, but simply the first waves of pleasure crashing through her body. She knew, suddenly and clearly, that this body had so much more to offer. That it could take so much more.

She didn't just want to take, though. She wanted to give. That's what drove her to move, pulling her breast from Alia's grip, and lowering herself instead to kiss the crook of Alia's neck and shoulder. Her fingers gently closed around the other woman's breast, and she began to tease fingers against the other woman's nipples as Alia let out a surprised gasp of pleasure, before pushing away.

“H-Hold up. I need to get my defenses up. This is all so sudden, you know? Sex as a girl...”

Naia stared for a moment, then burst out laughing. Come to think of it, she hadn't been on the attack at all, until this point... “Then I'll give you a moment,” she whispered. “But then I want to sixty nine you and see what my best friend tastes like.” Something she never thought she'd ever get to say.

Alia flushed bright red, at those words, but then slowly nodded. She hesitated a moment longer, but then moved without hesitation, swimming up and then down so that she was pointed to the ocean floor and Alia was pointed to the ocean surface.

“If we're side by side in the water... no one has top. Right?”

That was what concerned her friend? Naia could have laughed; she didn't, though. “No one needs to top,” she agreed, instead, wrapping her arms around the long tail. It was easy to see the fleshy folds, right where the tail met the body. She

just lowered her mouth to it, and kissed, soft and long. She tasted the sweetness and tanginess and the saltiness as the lustful liquids of her friend mixed with the salty ocean. She licked, and she sucked, and she nipped lightly on the clit, while her friend did the same for her. Until, at last, together, they came.

To the sound of clapping.

Naia flinched away from her friend, while Alia moved more cautiously to get back upright. They both looked around them - at the other mermaids. There were at least a dozen of them, each with slightly different features, differences in both their human and fish bodies. They were of different races, different hair colors, and different species if you went by their lower fish. But they were undeniably mermaids, every one of them.

“I’ve never seen two new girls adjust to the experience so fast...” murmured one of the mermaids. She looked like she had the lower half of a shark. Her teeth were sharp. Her body was big and curvy. Yet she carried herself with no apparent threat. “Were you women already, or were you transformed that way too?”

“Maybe we were... Deep down...” Naia whispered, still unsure what was going on.

“Does it matter?” Alia asked. “All I care about is that I have Naia, and she has me.”

“Well said.” The shark mermaid smiled. “The spring does a lot of things to people; it changes our bodies. Some of us think it might even adjust our minds a little, to help us adjust. But it doesn’t change who we are. Or the relationship we had with the one we came with.

“We all transformed in pairs; and some of us hated each other at the start, and some of us loved each other, but we all learned to live together. We were hoping that you, being the spring’s newest additions and all, would care to join us? It can be a scary world out there if you’re alone, after all.”

After a quick glance between Alia and Naia, Alia was the first to speak. “I’m happy to join if it’ll make Alia feel safer...”

“And I’m happy to join, if we can all get along; but there’s one thing I want to put on the record.” Naia smiled wide, and put her arm around Alia. “Whatever else happens. We’ll never be alone.”