

Chapter 3

The ride back to the hotel was quite awkward. Each time the car hit a bump or a pothole, I felt my breasts bounce, and I finally crossed my arms over them, trying to keep them in place, but the feeling of my arms wrapped around my breasts, pressing against my big, sensitive nipples was also unnerving. “My boobs won’t stop jiggling,” I whispered to Cassie. “They tend to do that.”

“Are we, maybe, just stoned?”

“I don’t think so.”

We rode on further. I glanced out the window, watching the people, and then I had this sudden creepy feeling, like a sixth sense tingling. I turned and saw the Uber driver’s eyes in the rearview mirror, and there was this glassy, pervy look in his eyes that I instantly recognized as lust. I don’t know if it was some new female instinct or what, but I had sensed he was pervy on me— not admiring me or appreciating me, but mentally undressing me. I winced and looked away, blushing. Cassie, catching on, punched the seat. “Keep your eyes on the road, you creep!”

With our driver duly shamed, I looked down at my small, soft hands and then my legs, noticing how my thighs angled closer together, my knees nearly touching. I had sat this way without thinking, and it wasn’t because of my dress. I suppose with my wide hips and pelvis, it just felt natural to sit like this instead of manspreading like I used to do.

When we were dropped off at the hotel, the sun had begun its descent, and a cool breeze had begun to blow in off the water. Masculine eyes trailed us as we walked across the lobby, and when we finally headed back into our room I collapsed into one of the easy chairs and sighed no longer needing to keep my back straight against the new weight though it felt strange to have my big boobs now spread and weight down on my lower ribs. I tugged at the top of my dress. “I’m never going to get used to these things.”

“You and me both,” Cassie said, looking me over, but not like the guys had, but more just with a sense of curiosity and even disbelief. “Can you... I know this might be hard, but I think it would help me get my head around this if I could really look at you.”

“What are you doing right now?” Then, it occurred to me what she meant. “Oh, you mean— like all of me.”

“Yeah. I just— everything happened so quickly at the police station, I’m just having a hard time dealing with —” she made the classic hourglass shape. “I think it would help me process?”

“Well, I’m feeling just a little insecure right now?”. I said, “and I’m having a hard time processing–” I made the hourglass shape, “too.”

Cassie didn’t answer. She just raised an eyebrow and waited. And waited. I paced, Argued against things she never said. It was one of her favorite strategies. We would have entire arguments like this where she would just wait while I argued against myself until I got tired and finally gave in. When I finally broke, I tried to cross my arms over my chest, but my breasts were too big, so after an awkward moment, I crossed them under my breasts, feeling their soft weight resting on my forearms. “Fine,” I said. I turned and looked over my shoulder. “A little help?”

Cassie came around and I felt cool air against my back as I heard the “zip” of the zipper being pulled down. Cassie slid the dress off my shoulders, her fingers brushing against my soft skin. For a moment, I held the dress against my chest, scared, frightened to have her see me like this. Cassie came around front, and whispered “it’s okay.” She took my wrists and lifted them away from my chest. The dress fell to the floor and pooled at my feet. As the cool air from the hotel air conditioner swirled around me, my nipples immediately started to get hard. ‘Oh!’ I crossed my arms over my chest while Cassie took a step back and another step back and then looked me over, her eyes started at my face then dropping down slowly... slowly... from my shoulders to my collarbone, my chest, my belly. As her eyes dropped to my hips and then further, I reached down and covered my new sex with one hand while keeping my other arm draped over my breasts.

Cassie came to me, put a hand on the small of my back and guided me to a full length mirror. Without any tight clothes, my body jiggled and bounced as it had before, the sensation unnerving me. As we approached the mirror, I felt terrified of what I would see, the sight of myself as a her, a she, a woman. I stopped, started to pull away, but Cassie wrapped her arm around my waist now and led me along. “You need to face this as much as I do,” she said.

She brought me in front of the mirror. At first, I dropped my eyes, but I felt Cassie take my chin, turn my head, raise it so I was now looking at her, me, she. “Holy crap,” I said, looking at myself naked, with my glowing brown skin, those curves, those big, pretty eyes wide with shock. I looked like a supermodel.

“Let’s see all of you,” Cassie said. Swallowing hard, I first let my arm drop from my breasts. They were big, firm, gravity defying breasts that floated in front of me. I raised my shoulders slightly as I looked, and they rose and swayed slightly. I had big, plump brown nipples, now hard, and I couldn’t help but reach up and cup my right boob, lift it, amazed at how it felt to

have such large breasts, to feel one being touched, lifted. While I was distracted by my new breasts, Cassie gently took my other arm covering my crotch.

“Why do you need to see– it?” I said.

“I just do.”

She gently drew my arm aside.



“You’re completely a girl,” Cassie said. “There’s no doubt about that.”

I had to look now, so I let my eyes drop down to my soft hip, my soft tummy. Down until they reached a triangular thatch of shortly trimmed hair. I felt the old male thrill at the sight, even as my mind reeled, trying to comprehend the fact that after all these years looking at porn, at real girls, I was now looking at me and seeing the same shadowy hint of my mound, my sex, my— I didn't want to say it. Couldn't say the V-word.

Having seen my front, I turned to the side and examined my profile, seeing the impressive jutting of my chest, the sway at the small of my back leading to the dramatic swerve of my butt. I turned more, looking back over my shoulder, taking in the sight of my plump, heart shaped rear, once more getting some decidedly male and decidedly confusing thoughts as I looked at the girl I'd become.

"You're gorgeous," Cassie said, taking in all of the new me. "I can't even."

"That makes two of us," I said, rotating back around and now, having seen all of me, I once more felt a little shy and lay one arm across my breasts while using the other to shield my V. It was such a feminine pose, one I'd seen more than a few girls do, and seeing myself like that, standing like that, a pretty girl, blushing, those big eyes sparkling, it threw me. Once more, my mind reeled. I was that shy, pretty girl. Me.

Cassie picked up the dress. "Let me help you back into your dress."

"I don't really think of it as my dress," I said, but I slipped into it nonetheless

Cassie went to her phone. "I'm calling The Embassy," she said. "This— we can't just let them get away with it. This must violate international law." She put the phone on speaker, sat down and laid it on the bed. I sat down next to her, my dress kind of getting caught up under me, and I stood back up and this time smoothed my skirt under me the way I'd seen women do. The ringing stopped, but when the voice started speaking on the other end it was a recording: "Thank you for calling The American Embassy in the beautiful United Arab Emirates. We're sorry, but the embassy is currently closed. Please leave your name, number and the nature of your request. A member of the staff will contact you as soon as possible."

"Closed?" Cassie said. "Do embassies close?"

"I guess so."

The phone beeped. Cassie gave her name and number, then just stated that we'd run into some legal trouble. "Now what?" I found myself playing with my long hair, twisting it around my fingers.

"I guess you're stuck like this until we hear back from the embassy."

“It sure seems that way. Well, hell,” I said, now burying my hands in all that hair, lifting it and tossing it back over my shoulders. I was beginning to understand that having long hair was going to be a lot of work, and the thought crossed my mind that maybe I should get it cut. “Look, I’m really sorry to ruin the vacation.”

Cassie thought for a second, and it was her serious thinking face, where her lower lip stuck out and her eyes narrowed. “So, look, this is so weird and insane, and all that, but, I say, we don’t let this ruin our vacation. We can still do everything we planned to do.” She glanced at the hotel bed. “Almost everything.”

“Babe,” I said. Now that I was in the safety of our room, I really didn’t want to go out again. I was creeped out by the way men looked at me, and I could even walk without this bouncy body of mine making me feel totally embarrassed. “I really don’t feel up to the whole sightseeing thing. Not like this.”

Cassie came over and knelt next to me. “I’ve been dreaming of this trip to Dubai for years. I worked extra shifts to save up the money for it...”

“I know, but—”

“Please,” she said. I did. “You know I don’t make demands, and a good relationship is all about compromise, but I need you to just suck it up and be a man for me now because I did not come all the way to Dubai to spend all my time sitting in a hotel room.”

I counted down from ten. Her comment stung. It did feel like I needed to man up for her and just deal with being a woman. I closed my eyes. Nodded. “Okay, I can do that.”

I paused for a moment, taking in what it would really mean for me to deal with being a woman for possibly a few days. In that awkward silence between the two of us, I realized I could feel pressure in my bladder. At first, I didn’t think anything of it, I have used the restroom like anyone has before. But a sudden realization hit me. I could feel myself blush. This would be the first time I wouldn’t be able to stand while I went. I imagined myself sitting there, on the toilet, in a uniquely feminine experience, like I’d always seen Cassie do, forced by my anatomy, denied of my male privilege I’d had all my life, the ability to stand up while peeing. I slowly forced myself to get to my feet, and said timidly, like I wasn’t quite sure, “Um, I think I need to pee,” like I was admitting something embarrassing.

“Ok, just go then,” Cassie said.

“Yeah, the thing is I’ve never, I don’t really—”

Cassie looked at me compassionately. “Oh. Um, just sit down and try to release, I’m sure it’s very similar to before for you. Just don’t forget to wipe.”

To me, it didn’t seem similar at all.

Going into the bathroom, I hiked my dress up and sat down on the toilet, the fat from my hips and butt spreading completely over the bowl. I felt totally humiliated. Standing to pee had been a badge of honor for me as a boy, a sign of my superiority to the girls. Now, I was sitting just like them, and when the little tinkling noises started, I cringed, hoping Cassie couldn’t hear me.

When it was done, I took a piece of toilet paper and wiped, this time from the front, just like I had seen Cassie and previous girlfriends do before. Now, I too, had that space to wipe myself from the front. It was the first time anything had touched my— you know. It felt weird. I wasn’t supposed to have a— you know.

I dropped the toilet paper into the toilet wondering if I’d even done it right. Was that all there was to it? I had no idea, but wiggling my dress back down, I flushed the toilet, thinking maybe I should put on something just in case I dripped.

I came out of the bathroom and found Cassie checking her phone. “The sun will be setting in a little over an hour. So, we need to head down to the Dubai Fountain so we can catch the show just as the sky is full of colors.”

“Also,” Cassie said. “I know it may be strange for you and all, but you really might want to consider trying on the bra. I mean, as big as you are up top—”

“I’m fine,” I said.

“Suit yourself, but with boobs like those, you’re probably going to regret it.” She stretched. “I’m gonna jump in the shower and then get dressed to go to the fountain,” she said as she headed to the bathroom.

With Cassie out of the room, I walked over and sat on the edge of the bed, propping myself up by putting my arms on the bed behind me to keep me from falling backwards. With a sigh, I glanced around the room wondering what to do while she got ready. My eyes focused on Cassie’s suitcase on the floor, left open with some of her clothes strewn about. The dress the Dubai police had given me was tight and hot and it felt like I was wearing a blanket. Glancing at the closed door to the bathroom, I heard the shower turn on and Cassie step inside. Something about the clothes piqued my interest, her clothes were for women, and now that I had been turned into one, they suddenly were more relevant to me. I got up from the bed, and slowly walked over to her suitcase, lowering to my knees next to it, my thighs spreading against my calves, and feeling my butt pressed up against my

ankles. I picked up one of her skirts that was left on top. It was such a pretty shade of powder blue. I'd never really noticed colors much, but my eyes were drawn to her clothes, how feminine they looked. Clothes designed for a woman's figure, a figure I now had. I picked up a pair of her jeans to admire the floral stitching on a back pocket. Then, one of her blouses, thinking the balloon sleeves were so cute, and I just couldn't help myself. I held it up in front of my body and posed in front of the mirror. She had a t-shirt that was kind of a race car red with white collar and trim, and it was the color that once more seemed to dazzle me. She had a lot of cute clothes, dresses, jeans, rompers and skirts. When Cassie came out of the bathroom, she caught me holding a sun dress up in front of myself as I admired the way the skirt flowed as well as the pretty, pink pattern. Much to my surprise, I felt so curious about how I would look if I wore that. "Uh, Colin, what are you doing?" She said with a worried tone. I jumped a little when she caught me. I had gotten carried away and forgot she was here.

"I wonder if maybe I could borrow some of your clothes?" I said. "This dress is so hot and, I mean, it's the desert, right?"

Cassie raised an eyebrow. "You want to wear my clothes?"

"Just something to wear to get me out of this hot dress," I said. "At least I can wear some of your shorts, they're worn by men and women, so it'll be pretty much the same thing."

"Are you sure you want to wear my clothes?" Cassie said, crinkling her nose. "They're definitely only for women."

"Shorts are shorts," I repeated. "And they're less unmanly than a dress."

"Fine," Cassie said. "Knock yourself out," Cassie said, "though with your figure, everything is probably going to be a little tight. "Actually, I'll pick something out for you." She gave me a once over, then just shook her head and went looking for some clothes for me. She handed me a pair of shorts. When I started to step into them, she said, "No. You can't go commando. You need to wear underwear."

"My underwear won't fit."

She flung a pair of panties that landed on my face. I pulled them off and held them up. "You want me to wear these?" Now I was the one thinking the clothes were just a little too unmanly. Super unmanly. Panties?

"I don't want your pussy rubbing all over my shorts," Cassie said. "And those panties are yours now."

I didn't feel I had much choice, so I stepped into the panties and pulled them up my long legs, unnerved by the way they cupped the now flat space between my legs. Next, I pulled on the shorts, which were so tight like the dress, though at least over a smaller area. Lastly, I pulled on the shirt, which proved a minor victory as I was not used to trying to put on a t-shirt with such long hair and such big breasts.

Cassie's shorts were so much shorter than anything I had ever worn, and as she predicted, her t-shirt strained against my much larger chest. I tugged at it, but it was still better than wearing that over-sized blanket they'd given me. When I looked in the mirror, I was once more struck by just how beautiful the woman looking back at me was. The shorts only came halfway down my thighs, exposing my long, smooth legs, my brown skin looking tan and radiant. I had bigger breasts than Cassie, both of them straining the shirt, which caused it to raise more in the front, and offered a tantalizing glimpse of my flat tummy and belly button. The soft cotton stretched and became wavy over the area between my two breasts, forming those horizontal lines you see often in women's clothes. My small, round shoulders and skinny little arms were pretty, too, the short sleeves of the shirt, tight against my little arms, ending just past my shoulders. I can't believe how sexy the girl in the mirror looked, tossing my hair out of my face, and hooking a strand behind my ear. I was about to tell Cassie I thought I looked like a supermodel, but then I stopped myself.

"We better go shopping," Cassie said, coming up behind me, pushing my hair aside and kissing me on the neck. "My clothes don't really fit you, and, besides, I'll have nothing to wear by the end of the trip."

"Shopping?" I said. "Can't we just send your clothes to the laundry?"

"If you wear my clothes," Cassie said, reaching up and squeezing one of my boobs. "You'll stretch them out and ruin them."

"Stop," I said, pushing her hand away from my boob. "It's totally weird to have my girlfriend feeling me up."

"I can't help myself," Cassie laughed. "Your tits are amazing."

The Dubai Fountain is huge, and they put on light shows with dancing water that jets into the air as high as 150 meters. So, there I was, walking along the sidewalks as hundreds of other people streamed toward the fountain where we could watch the show. Free of my full body dress, I reveled in the feel of the sultry evening breeze as it caressed my bare legs, my smooth, hairless arms. "I'm not even going to be able to see anything," I said, getting on

my tip toes and trying to look past a pair of guys who were leaning on the rail. I hadn't been this small since I was a teenager.

Being short sucked, but the guys heard me, turned and looked the two of us over. I could see the approval in their eyes. "You ladies come up front," one of the men said. "We can see over you."

"Thanks," Cassie said. But I hesitated. The way he'd looked at me made me a little nervous he might try something. "That's okay..." I said.

Cassie grabbed my hand and yanked me to the rail. "Don't mind my friend," she said. "She's shy."

We took our spots at the rail, and the men stood behind us. Were they a little too close? I wasn't being touched, but I could feel the man behind me was almost touching me. "A beautiful girl like you should not be shy," he said. "But it is quite a pleasant quality."

I felt it would be rude not to respond in some way so I turned my head, tilted it back so I could look him in the eye and smiled. "Aww, shukran." I said, my voice rising to a higher, prettier place, not realizing the word I had used.

He winked, and his wink made me blush. I looked away, nervous. Oh, no, I thought. I hope I didn't give him any ideas. Then, it occurred to me. Shukran? Why had I said that? The man didn't even look Arab, and I wasn't Arab, but it had just come out of my mouth like the most natural thing in the world.

Before I could think much more about it, the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth thundered over the sound system and the water jets and lightshow sprung to life. Cassie grabbed my hand and squeezed, happy and excited. I was glad I'd come here with her, for her. I loved seeing her so happy.

The music played, the water danced, the crowd ooohed and aaaaahhed... I saw it now, felt it as the rumbling sound waves passed through my body, the lights danced in my eyes... Of course, Cassie loved this. It was so beautiful, and it was something that I could see, hear and feel all at the same time. Maybe this would be a good experience for me, I decided. I was seeing the world just a little bit from a woman's perspective, and it gave me a new appreciation for what an amazing girlfriend I had.

When the show ended, everyone clapped. The guys made their move. "Hey, would you ladies like to join us for a drink?" The guy who'd winked at me said. "I'm Rob, by the way."

"Kevin," the other guy said, adding "we're Canadian."

“Bros,” I said. “Quite the show, am I right?” I held out my tiny hand for a fist bump. “The lights were so pretty.”

Rob got this weird smile and look in his eyes as he stepped closer, fist bumped me and then said, “Not as pretty as you.”



Oh, no. No, I thought, panicking as I realized this guy was actually hitting me. I had never been hit on by a guy before, and I had no idea how to respond short of “hell no.” Cassie came to the rescue. She took my hand. “That’s so sweet, but we’ve got plans tonight.”

“Oh, cool. Cool.” Rob said, a bit dejected. “Well, it was nice meeting you ladies. Goodnight, then.”

I watched as the two of them walked away and then quickly turned to Cassie, “That was so awkward,” I said. “I can’t believe those guys hit on us.”

“That kind of just comes with the territory of being a woman, unfortunately. But to be fair, the way you’re wearing my clothes doesn’t help. You look like a bit of a flirt in those, especially by not wearing a bra.”

“They’re that obvious?” I say, looking down at my chest. I can see the outlines of both my nipples pushing out of the shirt.

With the setting of the sun, a cold, briny wind had begun to blow in off the water. It tossed my long hair and gave me a slight chill. “I wish I’d brought a coat,” I said.

“Me, too,” Cassie said, then added, “Maybe you’ll remember how cold women can get once this is all over.”

With the breeze tossing my long hair, I almost felt like a model walking down the catwalk. It seems I wasn’t the only one, as I was getting a lot of looks from men. Cassie had warned me to expect this, but I started to feel more and more and more self-conscious about having all that hair exposed for men to see, as well as my legs. My thoughts turned to the hijab in my purse, the dress. Maybe I should wear it, since my hair really was causing all of these men to have impure thoughts? My scandalous clothing had tempted those poor men at the fountain and filled their minds with sinful thoughts. I should be respectful of the culture here, I felt and admitting to the seductive nature of my new body, I should cover up more. Yes. It was, after all, Eve who tempted Adam to sin. I still didn’t love the idea of wearing a full dress, but I also felt like it was a small price to pay for saving men from facing temptation.

We had dinner reservations at Dinner by Heston Blumenthal. The entrance was elegant with marble floors, and the room inside dark and opulent, rich woods and gleaming brass. Looking past the entrance, I saw couples everywhere, men and women, and I gasped when I realized how immodest it would be to walk into such a place dressed as I was, scandalizing both the men and the women with my bare legs. I cringed to think of the immodest thoughts I would arouse in men, the jealousy and condemnation in the eyes of the women, who would see me as little more than a hussy. “I don’t feel right about this.”

“Let’s not go through this little routine every time you’re to face a new experience, Colin. No one here knows you were a guy. It’s just going to be like any other meal.”

“It’s not that,” I said. “I– I feel it would be disrespectful of me to enter such a place without covering my body. It’s wrong for me to disturb the peace of the others by flaunting my legs like some sort of eahira.” Eahira was an Arabic word for prostitute.

“Omigod,” Cassie said. “It’s happening.”

“I don’t understand what you mean,” I said as I opened my purse and found the hijab.

“Your thoughts are changing. You’re beginning to think like a ‘proper Arab girl’, making quotations with her hands. “You’re starting to use Arabic words, and just now there was even a bit of an accent to the way you were speaking.” She cupped my cheeks. “You have to fight against this.”

“Fight it? I don’t know how,” I said. That was true, but there was also something more stirring in my mind. A new thought that was most certainly one that had been implanted: it was wrong for a girl to fight. “Anyway, I mean, so it’s just a few words or whatever. What’s the big deal?”

“I’m worried it’s going to get stronger and stronger. It’s already more than a few words, Colin. You were just talking about putting on that dress, covering your hair. You’re going to be less and less you, and I don’t want to lose you.”

I tried to focus. “Okay. For you,” I said, but I took one step forward, looked in the dining room, full of men, and froze. No. No. I was not a slut. “I’m sorry, I just can’t,” I said. “I at least need to cover my body. It would be rude for me to scandalize the other diners.”

Cassie sighed. “Okay, fine. Let’s do this.” There were restrooms in the waiting room, so we ducked into the lady’s room. I totally felt like I was breaking the law, going into the girl’s room, a place which had fascinated me when I was young almost as much as the girl’s locker room. It wasn’t to perv on them.

Well, the Ladies’ Rooms in Dubai have flowers. A lotion. And hair pins and even perfume. It was all marble, and there were paintings, and the mirror was circled with round bulbs like a movie star’s dressing room. “Wow,” I said. “You ladies know how to live.”

“They’re not all this nice.” We went into the big stall together. I wiggled out of my tight little shorts, and Cassie helped me get the t-shirt off. I then stepped into the dress, feeling a sense of relief that I was being good now, wearing appropriate clothing. Putting on a dress seemed routine as I pulled it up over my hips and to my shoulders then turned my back so Cassie could zip me up. I instantly felt so much more– proper now that I was covered from the neck down. Though the dress had felt suffocating before, hot, even drab, I now felt more secure, safe, moral. Meanwhile, I had to bite my tongue as I looked at Cassie. Her

western clothes were, well, quite frankly, embarrassing for a restaurant like this. Well, she didn't know any better. The poor thing.

We headed back to the restaurant. 'I'm so hungry,' I said. 'I need to--' As we approached, I realized I had forgotten something. 'My hair,' I said. 'I have to cover it. It's just improper if I don't.'

I pulled the hijab from my purse. 'I need to be proper.'

'Colin. Fight,' Cassie said, taking my hand, trying to push the hijab back into my purse.

'You're not a woman. You don't need to follow these laws.'

I looked down at the hijab in my hands. Conflicting thoughts clanged together in my head. I'd always believed women should cover their hair, hadn't I? And yet, no. That wasn't true. I mean, I was always all for people honoring their own cultures and all that, but truly deep inside I had to admit I always believed women who went around flaunting their hair and their bodies were waqiha- sluts. 'I'm sorry, I need to,' I said. I found myself unfolding my hijab, nonetheless. 'I- I can't help it.' I knew I was not used to having such thick long hair, nor had I even put on a hijab, though somehow I seemed to have a sense of how to do it. Still, I found myself struggling to get my hair under control, and I started to feel increasingly embarrassed and ashamed as people walked by and gawked at the sight of me with my hands buried in my long hair, my back arched, unbound breasts thrust out. Many of the men smiled and laughed, but some of the older ones, especially, looked appalled. One even covered his son's eyes to protect him from the sight of me.

'Can you help me?' I whispered to Cassie.

'Sure. Sure.'

I, of course, had never put my hair up or worn a hijab, but some knowledge of it seemed implanted in my brain. Still, having some knowledge and actually doing it were two different things. I stood still as Cassie gathered up my hair up and pinned it in place. It felt almost like some new kind of bonding experience to have my girlfriend playing with my hair. 'What next?' Cassie said.

I'd been handed an under cap along with the hijab, and I knew it went under and would help keep stray hairs from falling out. Working together, we fitted the under cap over my head. It was tight against my forehead. Cassie then started to wrap the scarf around my head, but once more drawing on the knowledge that had been implanted in me I corrected her. 'No. No. It must be just so.' We got the hijab on, and I used my phone to check and see that it was all proper, sighing with relief.

The edges of the scarf were soft against my smooth cheek, and I felt much more proper with my hair all pulled up and hidden. Although putting on the hijab, another article of women's clothing, added to the feelings I had earlier from putting on a dress, I felt more concerned about what future changes might occur to me. "I'm turning into more of a woman in my mind by the minute," I said, fussing with my new headscarf, which felt a little crooked. "If it weren't for you, I don't know if I'd even realize how much I'm changing."



"We're going to find some way to fight this," Cassie said, straightening my hijab for me, patting me on the cheek. Her eyes narrowed and she bared her teeth, which was her concerned face. I could sense she was seeing me changing, accepting things I never would

have considered only days ago. “Maybe we can try hypnosis or drill you on your actual memories. There has to be a way. I refuse to let this happen to you. To us. I’ll do some research. What was done can be undone. You just have to try really hard and don’t give in. Be brave for me, ok?”

“You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore,” I said, remembering words I had never heard before.

“That’s a little philosophic,” Cassie said, “but I like the spirit. Are you ready? I really need to eat.”

I nodded. “Yes.” As we headed toward the entrance, though, another disturbing thought entered my head. As I looked at Cassie's glossy, flowing hair, I felt a little embarrassed to be seen with her. Of course, she was American and couldn’t know that she was humiliating herself by displaying her sexuality like that, but nonetheless, I felt like maybe later I would need to have a talk with her.

We entered the restaurant. I stood meekly behind Cassie clutching my purse strap as she approached the host and handled the business. “ladies,” he said with a big smile. “Right this way.” Eyes looked me over. Men, women, even children seemed fascinated at the sight of me, and I found myself worrying they might realize I was an imposter. I felt like I was wearing a costume, and that everyone realized I was not an Arab woman at all, but an American man. Here I was wearing this woman’s shape, this woman’s clothes, and my biggest concern was that people would NOT think I was a woman. That just seemed so odd to me since only a day before I would have been appalled if someone thought I was a woman. Well, things certainly had changed.

When we reached the table, I slung my purse over the back of my chair, which the host held out for me and then pushed in. I thank him with a smile and a “shkran.” He did the same for Cassie, who likewise smiled and said thanks. “It’s kind of nice to have someone push in your chair for you,” I said, amused.

“Colin, I know you can’t help it, but it’s kind of a turnoff hearing you get into being treated like a woman. Can’t you just– not?”

I shrugged. “When life gives you lemons,” I said.

“Lemons?” Cassie said, glancing at my chest. “More like melons.”

“Tell me about it.”

“I guess we’ll just have to make the best of the situation.”

“Maybe after this, we should hit the mall and get me some clothes? I can’t keep wearing that same dress.”

“You want to go shopping now?” Cassie said. “For women’s clothes?”

“I don’t think I can fit into anything designed to fit a man. Not with this figure,” I said, gesturing to my body.

“I can’t argue with that.” Cassie thought for a minute, then said. “Ok, let’s do it. I wanted to do some shopping anyway, and at least now I won’t have to argue with you about it. Let’s just make sure everything can be returned if we can get you back to being yourself sooner than we thought.”

‘Lemonade,’ I said.

“Okay, Beyonce.”

The waiter came and took our drink order. He had perfect skin and a pretty, coffee and cream complexion, plus the biggest smile. Our eyes met, and I lingered there soaking in those chocolate eyes, smiling slightly, tilting my head to the side. As he left, I found myself gazing after him, he was so masculine, and something about him made me want to continue staring. When he came back my heart fluttered a little, overjoyed just to see him. I knew what was happening. I used to feel similar to this when I was attracted to a woman, but there was no way I would mention any of this to Cassie. She was already freaked out enough.

When he came back, I was about to surprise myself again. Cassie ordered the venison and pickled cherries, but when the waiter turned to me I tilted my head to the side and put my fingers to my chin. “I could just really go for a falafel right now, or a shawarma, but I don’t see anything like that here” I said to Cassie. “I just can’t seem to decide.”

Cassie, wanting me to make up my mind, suddenly jumped in. “My friend, she will have the Caesar salad.”