

A Normal Transformation

By: The17thStatesman

(CW: Generification, Mental Alteration, Brainwashing, Purification, Femdom, Gradual Transformation, Environmental Transformation, Clothing Transformation, and two girls alone together, being pals, hanging out and watching C-SPAN, y'know, typical girl stuff.)

(This story serves as a debut for an original character I've been developing for a while named Kim Chaerin, or "Rin" for short, she's of Korean descent, so her surname precedes her given name. It also co-stars an original character created by my good friend [Anailater](#), Pam Isla, a reference bio for her [note that in her original context she was created as a Pokemon OC] can be viewed [here](#).)

On the main street of the city of Rocky River, California, a pair of young women walked towards the same destination, for similar reasons, from opposite directions. Both of them were seeking out a place where they could get some peace and quiet, a refuge from the hustle and bustle of the city life that constantly surrounded them.

The girl approaching from the West was short of stature, standing at just 4'6, with pale skin attained through a combination of foundation and a natural habit of avoiding sunlight. She had wavy, gently voluminous hair, dyed purple, that stopped just above her shoulders, as well as a pair of eyes that matched thanks to the colored contacts that she wore.

Her name was Pam Isla, and her makeup, hair style, and outfit all clearly marked her as a goth. She wore a grey long sleeve shirt with a purple pelerine that ran down to her elbows. Her shirt was tucked into a purple pleated skirt that ran down to her thighs, as her legs were covered by a pair of white and purple striped stockings disappearing into her black boots.

A purple carrying case adorned with a variety of pins and buttons was slung over her shoulder, the strap running across her chest as she held it securely in both hands, protecting it as if fearful someone might try and snatch it from her. Aside from that, the only accessories she had were a pair of small skull earrings dangling from each of her ears.

She was in her early twenties, just barely old enough to drink, though she had little interest in doing so. In large part because she knew that her lithe build would make her an absolute featherweight with no tolerance for alcohol. Though she dressed in a very ostentatious and particular style, she was actually mostly an introvert who preferred to spend her time reading or practicing one of her several crafts.

Meanwhile, the girl approaching from the East was... very different, but in the most ironic way. She was in her mid-20s, and arrived on main street by stepping down the stairs of a bus onto the curb in front of a bus stop. She stood at 5'4, the perfect average from a woman from her country of origin, South Korea. She also possessed pale skin, *extremely* pale skin. So pale that it was almost stark white.

It was a relatively normalized fashion trend in South Korea for women to attempt to make their skin look more pale through the use of makeup. But she maintained that color naturally. She also didn't have makeup to thank for how flawlessly smooth her skin was. She had straight black hair that ran across her forehead and then down to just below her chin, where every single strand ended at the exact same length with perfect precision.

Her name was Kim Chaerin, Kim being her last name and Chaerin being her first in accordance with the traditional ordering of Korean names. However, when she moved to the States, she adopted the abbreviated name "Rin." She had an average build, with an average weight, and an average bust: hips not too wide, and breasts not too big.

Her clothes were perfectly ordinary, a short sleeved white shirt and a pair of pressed black pants, with a pair of low heeled black shoes on her feet. She had no accessories whatsoever save for a black rectangular purse slung on her left shoulder. One could go so far as to say she was boringly dressed. She, on the other hand, would have called them sensible; practical, even.

She didn't dress like this to make a statement. She simply enjoyed wearing these kinds of clothes. She enjoyed being *normal*. In fact, she believed that everyone could benefit from a bit more normalcy and practicality in their lives. She prided herself on being an upstanding and productive member of society. Even as society seemed to be heading in an increasingly dysfunctional direction.

Ironically, she was so average, so dull, and so... *boring*, that she actually stood out more than most of the people around her. Her dark brown eyes were perpetually half-lidded, calm and sedate, resting behind her square-rimmed glasses, while her mouth rested in a dull, vaguely disinterested frown. People might've thought she was unfriendly, but that wasn't the case, she simply didn't experience emotions as frivolously as many others, she had normalized her feelings, and she didn't see the point in insincere or superficial displays either.

She walked straight ahead, with a clear intent and purpose, her heels clicking on the ground as she went. With each step she took, any cracks, stains or imperfections she tread upon vanished as she took her next step, as if she was somehow stamping out the abnormalities. She was aware that this was happening, but she wasn't doing it intentionally, at least not in this case...

BUMP!

A man walking in the opposite direction, eyes glued to his phone, wasn't watching where he was going. "Ah!" He yelped as he bumped into Rin's shoulder and tripped over her foot, he stumbled before she reached back and caught his wrist, pulling him back onto his feet. "Phew, wow!" He exclaimed in relief and amazement, "Thanks for the save, sorry for running into like that. You alright?"

"Yes, I'm fine." She replied in a calm, flat and sedate tone that sounded a bit like she was constantly sighing. Even though she was speaking at a perfectly average volume, which should've been drowned out by the sound of the city around her, her voice seemed to cut through everything else. "You should be mindful and aware of your surroundings, and consider devoting more of your attention to things that actually matter." She gave advice that could be easily interpreted as condescending towards a stranger, and the unemotive tone of her voice only added to that sense.

But for some reason, he wasn't the least bit offended, all he could think was... "You're right, you're absolutely right. I will try to be less distracted." He looked down at the phone in his hand, at whatever irrelevant content he'd been staring at, with a look of confusion. "Why am I wasting my time on this...? I've got so many more important things to do." As he spoke, his own voice seemed to become subtly more reserved.

"Of course, don't let me keep you from them. After all, I have business to attend to as well. Good bye." Rin wished him well, letting go of his wrist.

The man walked off, muttering to himself, "What was I thinking? I need to call my doctor about setting up my next appointment, then I should contact the auto shop about getting my oil changed, it's about that time again. Can't forget about the business proposal coming up next week either, have I even started on that?"

Rin lingered for a moment, the softest hint of a grin on her face as she watched and listened to the man who inexplicably seemed to have gotten his priorities straight, before she continued on towards her destination.

Pam arrived at the steps of the library and walked up to the front entrance of the somewhat outdated looking building. It wasn't dilapidated or anything, mostly because it'd been sturdily built in the first place. But it was obvious that modernizing it wasn't much of a priority for the city. Walking inside made it all the more apparent how antiquated a lot of the design choices were.

It felt more like stepping into an 80s office building, beige walls and light green carpet, with the smell of aged paper filling the air. She didn't mind though, that was one of her favorite smells anyway.

As she approached the front counter, she reached into her carrying case and pulled out a small stack of five books. "Excuse me, I've got a couple books here I need to return here and a couple I wanna renew?" Her short stature made it difficult for her to actually see over the counter, until she was right on top of it, so when she set the books down and didn't get a response at first, she was quick to assume that someone was just typing on one of the computers and hadn't heard her.

"Hello? Sorry if I'm..." She peered over the counter to see that the desk chairs were all unoccupied. "...interrupting something." She grumbled before letting out a frustrated sigh.

“Typical.” This wasn’t an uncommon occurrence, the Library was almost always short staffed. All the workers here were most likely busy reorganizing, cleaning up, or restocking the shelves.

The Library needed more workers, but it wasn’t hiring because their resources were stretched thin as it was. Still, she wasn’t in any hurry, so she decided to just wait a minute to see if one of the secretaries was about to come back. It was early in the afternoon, so it was possible that one of them was just on their lunch break.

It gave her some more time to just enjoy the peace and quiet. That was another reason why she enjoyed coming here so much. Whenever she needed to take a break to recharge her mental batteries, this place was an even better safe haven than her own apartment. The reason for that mostly came down to her best friend, Anna.

Anna Takeo was the very definition of a gym rat, fitness was her entire life. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that her daily routine consisted of “eat, work out, sleep.” In fact, that was her motto. She was obsessed with athleticism, and often “accidentally” neglected to properly shower right after her routines, subjecting Pam to the dizzying smell of her unwashed body. She’d take the smell of old books any day.

Pretty much every day, Anna was knocking on her door, trying to drag her into some kind of shenanigans, usually one of her insane workout routines, when all Pam wanted to do most of the time was spend her day curled up warm and cozy with a good book. Meanwhile, Pam knew for certain that a library was one of the last places that the fitness buff would ever willingly set foot in. Anna was about as likely to enter a library as Pam was to enter a triathlon!

She could remember how their friendship started like it was yesterday. It was about two thirds of the way through 1st grade, she’d just been sitting on the sidelines while everyone else was playing during recess, reading one of her books like she always had ever since she learned **how** to read.

Then, out of the blue, Anna had walked over to her, with that same big smile on her face that hadn’t changed in over a decade and a half, and decided that she looked like she needed a friend. The rest, as the saying goes, was history! A classic case of an extrovert “adopting” an introvert.

But despite how much she could complain about her and how little they seemed to have in common, the pair were still lifelong friends. She still spent plenty of time hanging out with her, and enjoyed her company... At least, *most* of the time. She also owed her a lot, she was pretty sure she’d be anemic at this point if it weren’t for Anna’s pestering. Something Pam could get so into a good book that she’d forget to... eat. Like, all day. The unlikely duo were definitely a case of “opposites attracting,” but even that principle had its limits.

No matter how many times Pam tried to make it clear that she wasn’t interested in joining her for any of her “sessions,” she never seemed to get the hint. Pam hated getting all sore and sweaty.

Even if she didn't, she didn't want to get "jacked" or "ripped" or "swole" or whatever one of her seemingly bottomless barrel of euphemisms she pulled out that day. Even in spite of all that, she'd once made the mistake of giving in and humoring Anna on her birthday. For her troubles, she wound up with her bedridden for two days from the sheer strain she'd put on her muscles!

She knew she meant well. Pam just wished she would broaden her horizons, and show a little bit of the same passion towards expanding her mind as she did for expanding her muscles! Maybe consider reading a book that wasn't the owner's manual for a new piece of gym equipment for a chance? Pam loved Anna, she really did, but she was such a handful! Why couldn't she just be a little bit more... *normal*!?

Rin walked in just a few moments after Pam had, and she'd come for the same reasons as her. She walked up to the counter, noticing sooner than Pam that there was nobody there. "Hmm. Disappointing, but unfortunately not very surprising." She remarked flatly as she stood beside the goth girl.

"Tell me about it..." Pam grumbled in agreement, folding her arms, "They need more secretaries, I'd *love* to work here, but every time I ask if they're hiring it's always the same thing. 'No money in the budget.'"

Rin curtly nodded, before expositing, "Yes, it's quite a shame, isn't it? Third places like libraries are more important now than ever as places for people to disconnect in an increasingly disconnected world, and yet they seem to be increasingly undervalued." All the while never actually turning to look at Pam.

Pam however, turned and looked at her, raising an eyebrow in surprise, "Wow. That's... That's a really good way to put it. I mean, if it's a matter of money, at this point, I'd be willing to volunteer a couple hours a week, at least then I'd be able to check and return my books myself, hehe."

"Interesting. So this must be an important issue for you. I happen to feel strongly about this as well." Rin observed in the same tone that suggested she didn't feel strongly about *anything*, she stroked her chin, "That's why I'm currently in the process of gathering signatures for a petition to file for a motion to be voted on by the city council at an upcoming session, to draft and place a measure on the ballot that, if passed, would place a binding legal mandate on the county budgeting commission to allocate additional funds to the city library for the purposes of expanding payroll, renovation and refurbishment of library facilities, expansion and replacement of inventory, and promotion of local community events."

Pam blinked at the strange, pale girl standing beside her. She had a blank look in her eyes as between the remarkably monotonous and droning cadence of her voice, the density of the procedural verbiage she employed, and the sheer length of her explanation, she found herself zoning out. Almost as if she'd been hypnotized by it.

Realizing that she was finally done speaking, Pam snapped out of it, and tried to recount how much of that she'd actually heard, let alone understood. After a moment of silence, she replied, "Um, okay, I won't lie, a lot of them went over my head, but you really sound like you know what you're talking about, so I'd be happy to sign your petition and if there's anything more I could do to help, I'd really like to!"

For the first time in their conversation, Rin made eye contact with her, giving her what the goth girl was pretty sure was a grin, it was difficult to tell from how subtle the shift in her lips was. "Thank you. I would be glad to accept your assistance. Let me introduce myself. My name is Kim Chaerin, but you may call me 'Rin.'"

Pam wasn't entirely sure what to make of Rin, but at the very least she seemed responsible, calm and... As rude as it felt to say, there was a certain unremarkable, almost boring quality to her, but she knew she was probably just being a little presumptuous. Besides, she certainly didn't mind meeting someone who was more low-key, it was a welcome change of pace from Anna and her circle of friends. "Nice to meet you, Rin, my name's Pam."

"Pam, I see. It's nice to meet you too." Rin extended her hand to Pam. "I think you have a lot of potential." It was an innocuous gesture, but it still caught Pam off guard for a split second, she just wouldn't have expected it was all. She didn't usually shake people's hands in a casual setting.

Not to mention, what kind of comment was *that*? 'She had a lot of potential?' Was she making friends or was she interviewing her for a job? Then again, she did have to concede that Rin looked exactly like the kind of person who'd greet *everyone* with a handshake... More than that, she looked and sounded like the exact kind of person who'd be giving a job interview. She mentally shrugged, "*just take the compliment, Pam, it's not a big deal.*"

The goth girl reached her hand out to shake Rin's, but right before their hands made contact, an interruption came in the form of a loud-

POP!

In the tranquil and quiet environment, any noise that disturbed that serenity seemed to be amplified, and that certainly went for the sound of popping bubble gum that had just assaulted the ears of both girls. Causing Pam to viscerally cringe and wince, while Rin's response was much more measured, her hand simply lowering back down to her side and her slight grin settling back into her default expression with perhaps the smallest hint of visible disdain as her eyes shifted over to the source of the noise.

She was a tan, tanned blonde girl with pink highlights and her hair done up in a ponytail. With her pink tank top, daisy dukes, and flip flops, she looked more like she was ready for the beach than a library. From the look on her face as she continued to loudly chew, blow and pop her bubble gum, she would've much rather been there than here too.

"Guess I might as well just start browsing while I wait..." Pam sneered at the girl and mumbled under her breath as she made her way towards the fantasy section. Rin followed alongside her, but kept her eyes fixed on the out of place bottle blonde.

"Ughhh, c'moon! Where the fuck is that stupid book? It's supposed to be like, *right here*, I mean, Sciences and shit, where is it!?" The blonde complained with no respect for the noise she was making as she started to pull out books recklessly, mixing them up and nearly going as far as to drop some of them on the floor, continuing to make a racket. "This is such bullshit, why isn't there anyone here who-!?"

"Excuse me." Rin spoke up, standing right next to the obnoxious college student with her hands behind her back. "Can I help you find someth-?"

"*Holy shit!* What the actual fuck!? Wh-where did you come from?" The girl freaked out and tossed the two books in her hands up into the air as she recoiled. "Uuuh, do you like... work here or something?"

"No, I don't. But I still might be able to help you. Can you tell me what book you are trying to find?" Rin asked with the dulcet tones of a phone operator, "I come here fairly regularly after all."

"Uh, yeah, no offense, but I can kinda tell. Damn, girl, you look paler than the paper in these books." The blonde remarked flippantly, putting a hand on her hips, "Other than that though, you are looking pretty good- wait! Are you like... Korean?"

Rin blinked, and answered simply, "Yes, I am."

"Ah! I knew it! I am like, *sooo* jealous, I swear, every Korean girl I see is just like *gorg*, it's like you don't even have to *try!*" The girl's voice took on a more valley girl inflection.

Meanwhile Pam was rolling her eyes so hard that she felt like they were going to pop out of her sockets, "Oh my *God*, please just shut up."

"Anyway, so like... I'm looking for this book here?" She showed her phone to Rin, practically shoving it right in her face. The phone's case was covered in sequins, with differently colored ones spelling out the girl's name, Bella. "It's like, right here, right?"

Rin adjusted her glasses, "*An Introduction to Bedside Manner*... You're looking for a medical book. Those are going to be in the Technology section, this is the Sciences section. Don't feel too embarrassed. That's an understandable misconception to make. It's easy to unintentionally conflate biology, which is a hard science and often overlaps with medicine. But medicine as a discipline is almost entirely shaped and facilitated by technological advances in treatm-"

"Wow, you like, seriously sound just like my professor, that is *crazy*... But I really don't need to hear *two* lectures today, sooo, can you just show me where it is?" The blonde rudely interrupted her.

But Rin still showed no visible signs of annoyance, simply cutting her explanation short and nodding, "As you wish." She led her over to the appropriate shelf and scanned it for the book in question. "But I would highly recommend you spend more time acquainting yourself with the Dewey Decimal System. It's a bit archaic, but it's still a very elegant system that has remained an intuitive and relevant schema for cataloguing and categorizing texts even 150 years after its conception... Ah, here you go." She retrieved the book from the shelf just as Bella popped her gum again.

As she rolled it back into her mouth, she bit down on it hard, grinding her teeth as she grabbed the book, "Yeah, thanks, again, could've done without you talking my ear off about boring shit, but like, whatever..." She took the book and sat down at a nearby table, leaning back in the chair and kicking her feet up on it.

Pam leered at her with a look of barely restrained disgust, but just exhaled and shook her head, at the very least she'd shut her up. Rin walked back towards her, and as she got close, Pam's expression softened and she gave her a relieved, "Thanks for that."

"You don't need to thank me for anything..." Rin assured her, "Everyone deserves an orderly and quiet space in which they can read and study peacefully. It's so fragile and hard to find nowadays, someone has to do what they can to encourage others to behave more normally."

"Yeah... Yeah, exactly." Pam nodded along, feeling downright inspired, "Y'know, I feel like you really-

But before she could hardly get a single sentence out edgewise, the sound of an obnoxious EDM ringtone filled the air, the bottle blonde struggled to dig her smartphone out of the pockets of her daisy dukes but eventually managed to get it out and answered the call. "Hey, guuurl! What's up!?" Bella cheerfully greeted the person on the other end of the line.

Pam's jaw dropped at the girl's audacity. "Are you shitting me...?" Rin's eyes narrowed on Bella as she stared at her intently.

"Naaah! I can talk... Yeeeah, I'm just at, like, the fucking library... Yaaaah, I *knooooow*, it's for that stupid report I gotta do... Yaaaas, I *knooooow*! Naaah, there's like, *nobody* here anyway, it's fine, I can talk, I don't really wanna be doing this right now anyways." She yammered away on her phone, in complete disregard for anyone else in the immediate vicinity.

"Okay, y'know what? Enough is enough. I've gotta say *something!*" Pam decided, driven to follow Rin's example, she was right, *someone* had to stand up for peace and quiet, she wasn't going to let this bubble gum bitch ruin her safe haven!

“Naaaah, gurlie, tell me all about it! Spill! That! Tea! I wanna-” She continued to yap loudly before Pam slapped her hands down on the table from the opposite side of her.

“Hey!” She whisper-shouted, just loud enough for the college student to hear her. Bella didn’t verbally react, but her smile vanished the instant she heard Pam’s voice as she looked her dead in the eyes. Her expression was replaced with the kind of curled lip of revulsion usually reserved for someone who just caught a whiff of a particularly ripe dumpster. “*Are you actually serious!? Can you at least take your phone call outside!?*” The goth seethed at her, “*What the hell is wrong with you? All you’ve done since you came in here is be as obnoxious as possible! Have some decency or get the hell out!*”

“Tsk!” The blonde brat scoffed, “Uhh, okay? Don’t remember asking you for *your* input, *Wednesday*, how about instead you mind your own fucking business and put in some earbuds, or go back to the rest of the Addams family, alright? **Ptew!**” She dismissively snapped back at Pam, before punctuating her insult by going so far as to spit her gum at her!

The pink, worn down wad bounced right off the girl’s shoulder and landed on the floor as Pam’s pale face turned red as a cherry and twisted up in outrage. For a brief moment, she almost felt like Anna’s spirit had possessed her, telling her to lay this bitch out flat! But Pam knew that she didn’t have the strength to be able to do that, even though part of her *really* wished she did. Instead, she decided to finally do what she should’ve done when she got here and look for a library attendant to report her misconduct to.

“Yeeaah, that’s right, *buh-bye, Little Miss Hot Topic! Gawd.*” Bella groaned as she watched her stomp off angrily. “Sorry about that, Macy, what were you saying...?” She quickly got back to her conversation, “Oh, that? Naaaah, it was nothing, just some knee-high little weirdo thinking she could tell me what to-!” But that wouldn’t last long.

“Hey.” Rin’s voice, ever so slightly more dull even than usual, bared down on her as she let out a gasp when she felt her hands grasp her shoulders, “You really should listen to my friend, Pam. She’s right.”

The girl felt a strange numbing sensation creeping through her body, then her mind, and then her *soul*. She fearfully looked up to see Rin’s icy, emotionless face looking down on her with all the dispassion of Death itself. “This is a public library, and if you want to continue to make use of it,” Rin’s fingers tightened around the girl’s shoulders, “then you will be more considerate of others.”

Her phone fell from her hand as the voice on the other end of the line called out for her to explain what was going on. But it went silent as Rin gently pressed the toe of her right shoe down onto it, not crushing it but *changing* it. The sequins melted away as the gaudy, overpriced phone began to morph into a more practical, a more *average*, midrange device, devoid of unnecessary accessories or apps...

Bella couldn't have even described what was happening to her, it was all so fast! One second she felt so very strange, and then the next. She felt so... so...!

Normal.

"What the hell is up with this place? Is there *anyone* working here!?" Pam complained as she combed the aisles, looking for any sign of an employee and coming up short. She managed to loop her way around back to where she started, only to find that the obnoxious blonde wasn't there anymore. Judging by the fact that she couldn't hear her annoying voice anywhere, she had to figure that she'd decided to leave.

She sighed, she supposed that was fine, she would've preferred she be banned... No, frankly, she would've preferred if she was arrested for battery, she literally spat on her! She at least felt a little better when she spotted Rin again looking over one of the shelves, rearranging the books on it from the looks of things. "Oh, Rin... Hey, I don't suppose you saw where that bimbo went, did you?" She asked irately.

"Where that 'bimbo' went?" Rin restated with a raised eyebrow, "I didn't see her leave. However, I think you can get some help at the front desk now."

"Really?" Pam turned and looked back to see a secretary sitting at one of the computers. "Oh, it's about time! Did you already get your books taken care of?"

Rin shook her head, "No. I was waiting for you. After all, you were first in line, Pam."

Pam gasped, "Awww! You didn't have to do that..." She remarked gratefully as she put her hands over her heart, "Rin, you are just so...! I- I'll be right back." Pam told her with a smile as she rushed over towards the desk.

She called out to the secretary, "Excuse me, do you mind helping me out? I swear I've been here for nearly ten minutes and you're the first person I've..." She slowed down as she examined the woman, something about her seemed uncannily familiar, but she wasn't quite sure how at first.

She was young, around Pam's age, and had straight brown hair that ran down past her shoulders. Her brown eyes were nestled behind a pair of round reading glasses, and her skin was a slightly pale shade. She was wearing a plain grey button up vest over a white undershirt, with a black pencil skirt, nylon stockings and a pair of black heels. A small golden nametag on the left of her vest gave her name as "Belle." The woman turned to look at her, "Yes, miss? Was there something I could do for you?" She asked in a pitch perfect customer service tone, polite and collegiate.

Pam thought she was going crazy, but seeing the woman's face reminded her of that valley girl brat, there was no way that they could be the same person though. The secretary in front of her was the very model of professionalism, courteousness and politeness; she couldn't have been further from that bitch! She couldn't be a twin sister or something? No, there was no way. She decided that it was best to just put it out of her head, she probably just wasn't thinking straight. "Um, y-yeah, I just have some books here that I wanted to- um, o-okay the first three I want to return, and the bottom two I want to renew."

"Ah, so these are *your* books! I was wondering who they belonged to. May I please see your library card?" Belle held out her hand expectantly.

"Yeah, of course, here you go." Pam dug through her carrying case for it, so distracted that she'd completely forgotten to have it ready. Usually she was quicker on the draw with it than an old west gunslinger.

"Perfect! I'll just be one moment." Belle grinned at her demurely as she took the card and rapidly typed her number into the numpad on her keyboard. "Hmm, alright, here we are... Okay, so these three are coming back in and *these* two are being renewed. Done and *done!*" She finished her task with a flourish, tapping down firmly on the enter key from a diagonal before drawing her fingers away in the opposite direction, like she was making a checkmark in the air. "Now then, is there anything else I can help you with today?"

Pam considered mentioning the trouble maker, but decided against it, "No, that's it, thank you..." She retrieved the two renewed books from the counter and stuffed them back into her case before heading back towards Rin.

As she walked away, she heard Belle give her a perfectly rehearsed sounding farewell, "Thank you for visiting the Rocky River Public Library. We look forward to seeing you again soon!"

"Um, Rin?" Pam had butterflies in her stomach as she approached her newly made friend. She almost couldn't believe she was about to do this. "I don't want to pull you away from anything you're looking at, and I know you might be busy, but I just wanted to ask... Would you be interested in just, like, hanging out?" After everything that'd happened, she'd kinda lost her appetite for browsing... Speaking of her appetite, she was also getting a bit hungry.

Still, she *never* was the one to ask someone out... Like, to hang out, obviously, she meant. She was so used to only being the one invited to, or more often press-ganged into, social engagements. But Rin was just such a refreshing presence, someone so much less intense than the people she usually spent time around, she just wanted to spend a little more with her.

She didn't expect much, so Rin's response came as a very pleasant surprise, "Certainly. I very much enjoy your company, Pam, and I would welcome the opportunity to get to know you better."

“R-really? That’s great, I-I!” Pam cheered, before catching herself and lowering her voice, realizing that she was ironically the one who was making noise now. “Hehe, um, well, would you wanna get something to eat?”

“I was actually already preparing to make food for myself at home. But I would be happy to prepare extra for you, if you would like.” Rin shot her down, but extended an invitation to her house.

“Oh, um, sure!” Pam went along with it, after all, she was an amateur when it came to this stuff. “So, uh, d-do you want to, go like... now?”

“Yes, I’m ready to leave. Just let me renew my books and check this one out and we can head back to my condominium, it’s a relatively short walk from here.” Rin informed her as she looked over the book in her hand. It was a comprehensive breakdown of several dozen tax forms... An incredibly dry subject, and just one of many books of tax codes that were located on the shelf that Rin had been rearranging for the past several minutes. That wouldn’t have been unexpected in the reference section... But this was supposed to be *science fiction*...

Fortunately, most of the books would return to their usual states a short while after Rin left, once they were separated from her strange influence for long enough. The same applied to *most* things, and even people, that the mysterious girl “normalized...”

Emphasis on most, for Belle, formerly “Bella,” even if she ever partially “recovered” from being subjected to the full force of Rin powers, she would never be the same again. No matter how hard she tried, the inconsiderate loudmouthed brat would be forced to be a polite, respectful, and productive member of society... Oh, the horror.

After the matter of Rin’s books were taken care of by Belle, who Pam couldn’t help but notice seemed oddly deferential to Rin, the two girls both left the library together. Pam followed Rin’s lead as they started walking towards her home, and along the way, Pam tried to make some small talk. “Um, sooo... Aside from reading, obviously, and politicking it seems like, what do you like to do for fun, Rin?”

“What kind of activities do I enjoy?” Rin scratched her temple, “Aside from those that you just mentioned, I have quite a few interests. Cleaning, Yoga, Meditation, Grocery Shopping, My Job... Walking. I’m fond of logic puzzles, crosswords and Sudoku in particular. I’m also an avid Go player, though it’s somewhat difficult to find other competent players here, at least in person.”

“Cleaning? Well, I guess I know who to call the next time the junk starts getting out of control in my apartment.” Pam joked.

Rin however, took her statement completely seriously, “Please do, I’d love to help you better organize your space. You would be astonished how liberating it is to rid yourself of unnecessary

clutter. Not only does it free up space in your home, but it frees up space in your mind as well. I've never understood why people complain about having to clean. There are few things in the world that are more satisfying than taking something messy and making it orderly, *normal*, again."

Ironically, there was something about the way that Rin said that word that struck Pam as decidedly *abnormal*. The level of weight, almost reverence that she put behind it. "Did you say that your job is something you do for fun? That's a nice surprise, most people have hobbies just to recover from how much their job takes out of them. What do you do for a living?"

Rin took a gentle breath, a soft smile on her face as she looked up at the sky, "I'm an administrative clerk at the city hall... My daily tasks consist of a wide variety of organizational and bureaucratic duties, including but not limited to filing paperwork, alphabetizing and archiving documents, data entry, and approving or denying permits..."

"H-huh... Really?" Pam asked skeptically.

Rin's gaze turned towards her sharply, "Yes, really. What's the matter? Would you like me to show you my employee badge?" She started to reach into her pocket.

"N-no, no! You don't have to do that." Pam waved her hands before looking down at the ground, "I'm sorry, I just- well, to be honest, that sounds like one of the most boring jobs I can imagine."

Then Pam heard a sound from Rin that caught her off guard, "Heh. Heh. Heh..." She chuckled, or at least she *thought* it was a chuckle, it could've just been three short sighs, but it seemed to have the intention of mirth behind it. "I suppose that many would agree with you. It's another sign of the times I suppose. Though, perhaps I am a bit divorced from the norm in this case. I genuinely do love my job... Not only am I providing a crucial public service that helps to ensure that city resources are utilized effectively and efficiently, but I have always had an affinity for the tasks that other people dubbed 'boring.'" She held up her fingers and made air quotes around that word.

"The more tedious, monotonous, menial, or procedural the task I am given, the more enriching and stimulating I find it. Some people have told me that this isn't normal. But tasks such as these are foundational to the society that we have built for ourselves and that everyone lives in..." She turned her head and stared firmly at Pam. "Wouldn't you agree, Pam?"

"Me? W-would I agree, er?" Pam felt a bit smothered by her utterly calm but oddly intense gaze, "I- I never really thought about it before, but, I guess now that I do...? Y-yeah? I mean, every city has tons of paperwork that needs doing, n-not to mention every business. Even ordinary people have to file taxes, I guess, e-even if most of us just pay someone else to do it."

"Exactly. So you agree with me that tasks such as these are normal... If they are normal, then shouldn't more of us enjoy them?" It seemed like Rin was trying to lead Pam down a certain line

of logic, but Pam couldn't tell what for, "Don't you think that life would be more convenient if that were the case? If more of us took pleasure in the simple, the mundane, and the ordinary, that would be a good thing, wouldn't it?"

"Well..." Pam thought over her words, and she still wasn't sure what she was getting at, honestly she was getting a bit creeped out, but Rin had made such a strong first impression on her, she wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt. "I suppose so, yeah... But that's kind of just wishful thinking, isn't it?"

"Perhaps." Rin replied as she turned her head back to the sidewalk ahead, "But also, perhaps not. I've always tried to be a good example for those around me. As the world becomes more chaotic and disorderly, I'd like to show people that they can still slow down and enjoy the quieter, slower moments of life. That they don't always need to be so overstimulated. That things can get back to *normal*. You might be surprised at how much of an effect a positive role model can have on others."

"I can agree with that, mostly at least." Walking through the crowded city streets, Pam became aware of one of the things that she really liked about Rin. She was a very soothing presence. Pam usually felt on edge walking through the city at the height of its hustle and bustle like this, but standing close to Rin just made her feel more at ease. "Heh, maybe you could help my friend Anna take things a bit slower... Eh, on second thought, scratch that, she might be a little more than you're comfortable with."

"Don't be so quick to assume. Anyway, we've arrived." Rin announced as gestured up a short staircase to the entrance of a single level condo. Rin unlocked the door and motioned for Pam to step inside. "Please take your shoes off on the mat beside the door, if you don't mind."

"Oh, sure thing, I don't... mind at all." Pam answered, before looking around the inside of Rin's home. It was very... *white*, with the occasional splash of grey and black. From the floors, to the walls, to the *very* limited furniture. Ahead of her, just the foyer, was the living room, containing a white rug on the softwood floor with a wooden table sitting in the middle of it. Against the wall and beside the table there was a black couch, and across from the couch was a wooden cabinet, over which hung a flat screen TV.

Pam also spotted a treadmill, and a yoga mat, but with very few exceptions, all of Rin's furniture was as minimalistic as could be. The sad thing was that even *this* was more furnishing than Anna's home had... She pretty much only went home to sleep, so it made a certain kind of sense, but it never stopped being distressing to a homebody like Pam.

After taking off her shoes, she spotted a bookshelf slightly obscured by the treadmill, and was eager to check out Rin's collection. "Hey, you don't mind if I just look around your living room a bit, do you?" She politely asked first.

“Not at all. You’re my guest, please, make yourself at home while I start preparing dinner for the both of us.” Rin gave her permission as Pam rushed across the room, or she almost did, but then thought better of it and decided to walk instead, there was no need for her to do something like that.

As she stepped in front of the bookcase, she immediately scanned it for the sight of any titles that she recognized. Finding books that they’d both read would be a perfect conversation starter, because much to her embarrassment, Pam was realizing that she didn’t really know what to *talk* about with Rin... She was polite, respectable, mature, and... *bland*. She felt terrible for thinking that, but it was the truth! Everything about her seemed so plain. B-but she still figured that maybe she was just being unfair and jumping to conclusions, maybe she just wasn’t rushing to open up, after all, Pam was still a practical stranger to her.

But as she looked over the bookshelf, her excitement started to dwindle as her worst fears were confirmed. Not only did she not see any books she recognized, aside from maybe the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, but she didn’t see any books she’d choose to read even if they were the last books on Earth. Her face grew increasingly distraught, “what is all of this? Okay, an encyclopedia set, that’s not too unusual, even if it is a little outdated. But... *Report on the Geology Survey of Nepal? Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States? Chile: An Economy in Transition? Salt: A World History?*”

Pam ran her hands through her purple hair, not noticing that it seemed a bit straighter than it’d been before she walked in here. “This is ridiculous! All of these books are so dry, just reading the titles is making me feel like I’ll need a-”

“Glass of water?” Rin held out two glasses of water to her, having seemingly appeared beside her out of thin air.

“Ahh-!” Pam gasped, “Oh my gosh, Rin... You were so quiet.”

Rin blinked and flattened out her lips, “That’s the second time in an hour I’ve startled someone like that, odd. Anyway, since you’re my guest, I wanted to offer you some refreshments, but I wasn’t sure if you prefer your water with or without ice, so I took the liberty of preparing two glasses. Don’t worry, I’ll drink whichever one you don’t want.” Sure enough, one of the glasses contained a couple of cubes of absurdly square ice, while the other didn’t.

“Uuhh...” Truth be told, Pam would’ve preferred something at least slightly more flavorful than plain water, even just something like lemon or cucumber water would’ve been more to her taste. But, she was a guest, and she’d been offered a drink, so she felt like it would’ve been really rude to just refuse. “I’ll take it with ice, th-thanks.”

“Of course... Ahh, I should have figured that you’d be drawn here.” Rin turned her attention to her bookshelf, her voice swelling... Or more like, very subtly shifting, with pride, “Truth be told, I’ve already read every book on this shelf at least once from the library, but these were the ones

that I found so thoroughly enriching, I wanted to own a copy for my private collection. Feel free to look through them at your leisure, and if any of them grab you, just let me know beforehand and I'd be happy to let you borrow them."

"Th-thanks, I'll definitely keep that in mind." Pam extended her gratitude, it was a nice offer, even though she was pretty much certain she wouldn't take her up on it.

"You're welcome. Allow me to thank you for coming over, Pam." Rin returned her thanks with thanks of her own, "It's very nice to have company, especially company as normal as you." Her voice made a subtle but distinct shift from monotonous to serene.

"O-oh, well, of course! Thanks for having me over, I like your place, by the way, it's very..." Pam pursed her lips, realizing that she'd inadvertently just boxed herself into a conversational corner. Then it came to her! "It really matches your style." Her "style" of course being best described as "Radical Minimalist who thought Beige Moms don't care enough."

"Thank you, dinner will be ready in about half an hour. I'll call for you when it's almost done." Rin turned around and walked back towards the kitchen.

Almost as soon as he was out of her line of sight, Pam sat down on the couch and pulled one of the books she'd renewed to pick up where she left off. Only a few moments later, she heard Rin ask her, "By the way. After dinner, would you like to stay and watch C-SPAN? There's an important procedural vote taking place tonight that could have major implications for the legislative agenda of the remainder of the session."

Pam looked at her for a moment like she was joking, *C-SPAN*? The channel so boring that she'd heard it referred to as a punchline at least four times as often as sincerely? The channel that was 90% an image of politicians milling around in a big room doing absolutely nothing? She was so genuinely gobsmacked by that offer that she couldn't even give a definite yes or no answer, instead copping out with an, "Um... M-maybe?"

"Alright." That seemed to satisfy Rin enough for her to get back to work. Before long, Pam could hear the sounds of chopping coming from the kitchen, and then eventually she heard a stovetop click to life. But oddly enough, she didn't really smell much of anything. That's when she started to get concerned about what exactly Rin was going to feed her, considering her current track record, she didn't have high hopes for it being any kind of flavor extravaganza.

As she tried not to worry about that and focus on her story, however, she found herself getting distracted by thoughts of some of the books she'd seen on the shelf. Could it be that perhaps she'd been a bit too presumptuous? She was pretty harsh just dismissing them all out of pocket, not *all* of their titles seemed that boring, in fact, the more she thought about it, some of them seemed downright intriguing... If someone could actually sit down and write an entire book about *salt*, well then, surely there was something interesting to see in there, right?

While Pam considered walking back over to the books to give them a second chance, she couldn't help but notice how the initial sense of slight unease she felt walking into Rin's house had almost completely faded away. With each passing minute, she felt more and more comfortable here, more at home. She even found herself wondering if maybe *her* home could do with taking a page out of her interior design book. It felt like something was pressing into her from all sides, almost like a massage, smoothing her out, rounding off her edges and oddity and abnormalities.

It felt nice. Maybe she could just close her eyes and take a short nap. Closing her book and setting it down, she laid her head back and relaxed, her eyelids growing heavier and heavier as she slipped into a peaceful sleep...

A little over twenty minutes later, Rin set down her and Pam's plates, alongside another pair of glasses of water (one with ice now that she knew Pam's preference) in the adjoined dining room, connected to the living room and kitchen. "Pam, the food is ready." She softly called out for her. When she didn't hear a response, she figured that she may have been using the restroom, or else simply didn't hear her. She walked out into the living room and called out, "Pam? The fo- Oh." That's when she noticed the girl asleep on her couch.

Rin's head tilted slightly as she watched her for a moment. It was normal to be surprised, after all, you'd be surprised too if someone fell asleep at your house shortly after you invited them over. She observed her, not long enough to be considered weird or creepy, but long enough to see the color from her wavy hair fading away, the purple giving way to pure, natural black. The ordinary girl walked over to Pam, leaned over towards her, and reached out to touch her shoulder and gently shake her awake. "Pam. Wake up."

"*Uuunh~!*" Pam came to, letting out a soft noise between a sigh and a moan. Her eyes fluttered open as she felt a strange hot and cold sensation almost like menthol on her shoulder; slowly radiating out through her body. "Oh shi-, did I actually fall asleep?"

"Yes. You did. Please, follow me to the dining room, dinner is ready." Rin succinctly answered as she removed her hand and stood up straight. Pam found herself involuntarily reaching for it on her shoulders as she pulled it away and turned around. Trying to shake her head clear, she got up from the couch and followed Rin into the dining room.

It was about the same as the living room, white walls and wooden flooring, with a round table with four chairs around it. The "centerpiece" of the table, if you could call it that, was an empty vase. Couldn't she have at least put some flowers in the vase? Even some *white* flowers? Looking at the food on the plate confirmed a lot of her worst fears. "Um... So what are we having tonight?" She asked, as if it wasn't blatantly obvious.

On the plate before her was a meal split into three portions, the first, and largest portion was rice. White rice. Plain white rice. As she sat down, she thought that maybe she could detect a hint of citrus coming from it, but she couldn't be sure. Next to that was a fairly large helping of

chicken breast, sliced into even, half inch thick pieces, perfectly lean and very lightly browned. Then, the most colorful element of the plate was ironically also the one she was looking forward to the least. Slices of green bell pepper that'd been gently sauteed. Pam didn't mind bell peppers, but she always found them bitter on their own.

Rin was employing a pair of chopsticks, but she'd laid out a knife and fork for Pam's convenience. Using her utensils, she highlighted each of the contents of her plate. "Pan-fried chicken breast, white rice drizzled with lemon juice, and sliced green bell peppers sauteed in olive oil. I've lightly salted everything, just enough to provide you with your daily recommended dose of iodine."

As Rin began eating, Pam just stared glumly at the food. There was no salt on the table, and certainly no pepper. Would it be rude to ask for some salt...? As if just salt would be able to salvage such a bland meal. This was all getting to be a bit too much for her, it felt like some kind of joke was being played on her. What was up with this girl? "Rin, I'm sorry, but do you eat like this every day?"

"Hmm?" Rin looked up from her plate, "Every day? Well, no, not exactly... I wouldn't usually brown the chicken this much, or saute the peppers as long, and I might've gone a little heavier on the lemon juice than I typically do with the rice; but I wanted to make things a little special since you're my guest and all." She answered candidly.

"*This is her jazzing things up...*?" Pam thought to herself incredulously, she couldn't take it anymore, she had to say something. "Rin, don't you think that this is... *boring!*? I mean, no seasoning, no sauces, or flavors just... plain chicken, rice and one of the least appetizing vegetables on its own that you could've picked? I-it feels like you're playing some kind of prank on me."

"Hmm." Rin let out a soft, bemused exhale as she faintly grinned and brushed her hand against her hair beside her forehead. "I assure you, Pam, that I'm not. But I can understand why you feel the way you do. I realize it might not be the kind of food that you're used to eating, but it highlights something I've been repeatedly stressing all day." She rested her chopsticks on a chopstick holder and folded her hands before laying them on the table.

"The meal I have prepared is both economical and quite nutritious, you'll find. It contains a dietarily appropriate ratio of fats, carbohydrates, and protein as well as a diverse mixture of micronutrients. The reason why you'd think it's bland, and in need of additional flavorings is because your palate has become desensitized to overpowering flavors. The average American's diet is overloaded with an excess of sugars, salts, fats, oils and artificial flavorings. These are added to make food unnaturally palatable, but the result is that you come to expect them. You spend so much more money than you need to on them." Pam sat still, quietly listening to Rin's explanation, soaking in her words.

"Your sense of taste is distorted, almost every product you find on the shelves has some degree of added sugars. You've lost your ability to appreciate the subtle, *clean* flavors of natural wholesome ingredients the way that your ancestors did for thousands of years. Certainly they had access to herbs and seasonings for flavoring their food too, but nowhere near to the excess of the present day, and everything served a nutritional purpose. If you just give your tongue a chance to recover, you'll find your sense of taste stronger than ever. I promise you, this is a delicious meal, I wouldn't be eating it if I didn't enjoy it." She finished, proving her point by promptly putting another piece of chicken, mouthful of rice, and slice of green pepper into her mouth.

"He-heh." Pam scratched the back of her head, "It's funny, Rin, I never thought I'd say this, but you kinda sound like Anna right now. She's always talking about how much unhealthy junk is put in our food too. Hmm..." She looked at her plate again, was it really so bad? She hadn't even actually tasted it yet. She picked up her fork, stuck it into a piece of chicken, watching how the tender meat's juices softly seeped out onto the plate as the prongs of the fork sank in deeper, and brought it up to her mouth.

"Mmm..." She nodded as she chewed, surprised by just how much she could already see, or taste, the truth in Rin's words, as she swallowed, she went to try the rice next, able to pick up on the surprising richness of the humble grain, and the sharpness the lemon juice added. She still had little hope for the green peppers, but even they surpassed her expectations, providing a subtle sweetness that cut their bitterness, with the olive oil adding depth to their flavor. "... I can't believe it, it's good, it's *really* good!"

"I'm glad that you're enjoying it." Rin remarked as the two proceeded to eat their meals in mostly silence. As they were finishing up, she reposed her earlier offer, "So, have you considered staying to watch the C-SPAN broadcast?"

Pam looked up at her, "O-oh, uh?" She thought about everything that'd happened since she got here, how her presumptions about her furniture, her books, her food, all of them had turned out to be wrong. Maybe she was wrong about this too. "Y-y'know what? Sure! I think I will."

"Excellent, just let me take your plate, and we'll be just in time to see it start." After Rin took care of their dishes, they both returned to the living room, sat down on the couch, and for the first time in her life, Pam intentionally tuned in to C-SPAN.

Speakers and representatives that she'd never seen were making proposals and motions that she'd never heard of and yet she found herself oddly gripped by it in a way that she couldn't tell why. It was kind of like watching the gears of a big clock, or the workings of a Rube Goldberg machine, there was just something about seeing the working of civil procedure in action that had her enthralled. Pam felt at peace, she felt drained, but not in a bad way, it was almost like she was being *cleansed*, like all sorts of unnecessary gunk inside of her was being washed away leaving her shiny and new.

There were questions she wanted to ask, but every time she even thought about opening her mouth, she heard something on the TV that grabbed her attention again. She was simply too engrossed in the proceedings, she didn't want to miss a second of it. Finally, her patience was rewarded with a ten minute recess where she could talk freely.

"So, how are you enjoying it so far?" Rin asked her, if Pam didn't know better, she'd have thought she could see the slightest hint of smugness in her voice.

"I... I would've never imagined that politics could be so engaging." Pam remarked in a state of near breathless astonishment, "Seeing the system in action like this, all of the technicalities and intricacies, it's really given me a newfound perspective."

Rin nodded slowly, satisfied, "This is real politics, stripped away from the sensationalism and spectacle that has so thoroughly degraded discourse and engagement. Civil participation is such an important duty for each member of society, but most people are too distracted or alienated to make their voice heard and do their part. Local government is especially neglected, but it's where the biggest impact is often made, and where each individual voice has the most power."

"You sound like you could be a politician yourself, Rin. Have you considered running for office?" Pam asked here, though she almost immediately realized that she'd probably face some... significant difficulties in the polls.

Nonetheless Rin was gracious for the compliment, "Thank you, Pam. I have indeed considered it, unfortunately while I have full faith in my knowledge and competence in terms of the functions of government, I doubt I could present myself with the charisma necessary to attain an elected position." Yeah, there it was.

"However..." She folded her hands and rested her elbows on her knees, with her chin on top of her hands. "There are positions of administrative authority other than elected ones. My goal is to work my way up the ranks of the bureaucracy, I'm eying a position in the county government, from there I could find myself in the staff of a representative or senator, even the governor. Then, ultimately, if I continue to apply myself, I may have the opportunity to fill a cabinet position for a presidential administration. Then I could really start to make a difference."

Once again, Pam couldn't help but feel a sense of inspiration towards Rin as she explained her ambitions. Then, she realized that there was something else she was feeling, specifically a sudden pressure in her bladder. "Excuse me, Rin, not to interrupt, but I'm just going to use your bathroom, if I may." Without realizing it, she spoke in a more stoic and polite tone than she ever had before.

"Of course, it's just down and the first door on the left if you haven't used it yet." Rin directed her, "Just make sure you return quickly, you don't want to miss the best part."

"I will." Pam assured her as she made her way into the bathroom. She pulled down her black pants, did her business, pulled them back up and went to wash her hands. But that was when she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror.

She blinked in confusion at her own reflection. "What?" She flatly noted, her skin looked paler than it ever had before, her hair had somehow lost all of its dye and returned to its ordinary black color, and what's more it was completely straight. Her outfit, one of the most important means of expressing her identity, was completely genericized! Her purple and grey clothing replaced with a white dress shirt and black pants, she looked like- she looked just like-

She placed her hands on her cheek, "Oh no... Something's happening to me, I- I look just like Rin." She noted how remarkably relaxed her voice still was even in the face of this discovery, she couldn't even really bring herself to be worried. "Oh gosh, I sound just like her too. I think I need to leave." She decided, as she stepped out of the bathroom and started walking intently towards the front door, it was the closest thing to running that she could manage.

"Thank you for having me, Rin, I've had a very pleasant evening, but unfortunately, I think I need to head home a bit earlier than I originally planned." She excused herself.

Only for Rin to stand up and move to, well, not really *block* her path, but definitely stand in the way of it. "Wait." She implored her, her voice ever so subtly insistent. "I'm pretty sure I know what this is about. I would encourage you to reconsider."

"If you know what this is about, then why didn't you give me any kind of advanced notice?" Pam demanded to know. Try as she might to be upset, to feel betrayed, to feel *any* intense emotion really, she just couldn't do it.

"Why would I?" Rin answered bluntly, "I don't really see what's worth being concerned about. I also doubt that you believe it if I attempted to explain it. Besides, there's nothing wrong with what's happening to you, Pam. You're becoming normal, that's a good thing."

"Rin, it's a bit more than just normal, I'm becoming boring." The former goth girl objected. "What if I don't want to be boring?"

Rin shrugged and replied, "Why would you not want to be 'boring,' as you put it? Can you think of any downsides to it?"

"Can I think of any downsides?" Pam crossed her arms, looking away as she genuinely thought about it. What *were* the downsides of being normal like Rin...? Somewhere deep down she knew there had to be something, but. "I'll admit, I can't really think of any right now."

"Pam." Rin stepped closer to the shorter girl and stared her deeply into the eyes, gazing into the depths of her soul, "I would very much like for you to stay with me and be normal. There are no

downsides, think about how much easier it will be to live a satisfying and fulfilling life when you can take pleasure in the unremarkable and the conventional. You'll be happy like me."

"Hmm..." Pam closed her eyes, "Well, you're not wrong, Rin. This does feel nice."

"Embrace the normality, Pam. Let your doubts and concerns wash away. I know we've only just become friends, but I could see the potential in you from the very moment that we met." Rin tried to tempt Pam, never once deviating from her calm monotone even as she tried to assimilate her into her world of mundanity.

"The fact that you changed so quickly only demonstrates your own desire to be normal like I am. It would be very disappointing to lose the opportunity to get to spend more time with you and work together. Since moving to the states, I have made many acquaintances and colleagues, but you are the first person here I'd call a real friend." She took another step closer, practically face to face now as she reached her hands out towards her.

"You and I are both very compatible, we already get along well together. In truth, I gravitated towards you because I could see that we were kindred spirits. I could see the look in your eyes as I've explained my vision for revitalizing society; for bringing things back to normal. You feel it too. Stay with me and let's work together. I can get you a job at the city hall, and I promise you, you'll love it. As a team, we could be so much more effective and efficient than either of us would be alone."

Pam wracked her brain trying to think of a good reason to say no, and she just couldn't think of any. It didn't make sense to reject Rin over a reason she assumed existed but couldn't actually prove. It was like she'd said, society was becoming increasingly dysfunctional. What if her impulse to reject normality was just her being influenced by that dysfunction?

She certainly didn't want to contribute to it, it was what created people like that awful girl who'd spat on her at the library. Normal felt good. Normal was good. "You make a very good argument, Rin. I don't think there's anything I can say to contradict it, and right now I must admit that the prospect of working with you is a very tantalizing one." She reached towards Rin's open hands and took them on her own. "Alright. I do it. I'll be as normal and as boring as you are."

"Good. I believe that is the right decision." Rin encouraged her as her grip on Pam's hands tightened.

"Aaaahhh..." Pam let out a deep, cathartic sigh as the numbing sensation she'd felt earlier from Rin's hands on her shoulder spread through her hands and up her arms. She allowed the sensation to wash over her fully, her eyes drifting shut as her mind was enveloped in a tide of sterilizing, neutralizing grey. It felt like a pair of gloved hands were gently kneading and smoothing out every wrinkle in her personality, her interests in fantasy and the macabre gave way to more practical desires and hobbies. She didn't need such escapism, not when there was so much to be done to make the world a safe, calm, quiet and *normal* place.

Her body started to stretch out, her arms and legs painlessly lengthening as she rose nearly a foot in height to attain the average American height for a woman of 5'3.5, just slightly under Rin's own height. Her breasts and hips widened modestly in line with this *progression* to the mean that she was experiencing. This was a much deeper normalization that Rin ordinarily inflicted upon others, rooted in Pam's acceptance of and commitment to the changes.

In a typical case, the effects would've worn off upon separation from Rin, at least mostly, but with Pam internalizing her new normal lifestyle, she was being set down the path that Rin herself had discovered. In time, with her new friend's tutelage, she too could unlock the same powers that the young Korean woman had unlocked in herself.

Rin closed the final bit of distance and closed her own eyes as she puckered her lips ever so slightly and kissed Pam's. It wasn't the most passionate or indulgent kiss, but the affection behind it from both participants was undeniable as they folded their hands together and pressed their bodies against each other's. Neither of them saw anything unusual about it, after all, it was normal in many cultures to greet close friends with a kiss. Did it really matter the specifics of how the kiss was performed, or where, or how long?

The two girls pulled away and looked at each other with flat, stoic expressions.

"Would you like to stay the night?" Rin offered.

"Yes, I would. I just have one concern." Pam replied.

"What's that?" Rin asked.

"How am I going to brush my teeth?" Pam answered.

Rin smiled at her, "Don't worry. I've always have spare, unused toothbrushes in stock for whenever I need to replace mine. You can use one of those."

"Good. I'm glad that you're so organized and prepared." Pam returned her smile.

"I'm glad to have someone else who can appreciate that preparedness the way that I do. Now then, the recess is just about to end, so we should get back to watching." The normal girl pointed out as she continued to hold Pam's hand, walking her back towards the couch.

"Of course, let's." Pam contentedly agreed as she joined her new friend, soon to be coworker, and perhaps in time even *partner*, for an evening of bonding over congressional procedure and impartial analysis, as the sun set on what was to be the start of a very **normal** relationship.