

Storyboarded (CEO to Female Animator TG AR)

By FoxFaceStories

A Commission for Camden Levy

Bryce Matthews is a greedy and sexist studio exec who is planning to replace the company's animation department with AI. But when the main cartoon character of a planned female-oriented show he axed out of spite comes to life before him, his life is turned upside down. Now turned into a young, female animator, the only way for Brianna to turn back is to get creative for the first time in her life and actually pitch a successful show!

Storyboarded

Bryce Matthews was practically radiating a sense of smug joy when he called Abigail Porter into his office. The studio exec was a large man, tall and solidly built and in his forties, with grey hairs just starting to grow around his temples. Still, his black hair dominated in a professional C-suite cut, and he wore a suit that was worth more than what most of his employees made in three months of full-time work. As Abigail stepped into the office, her demeanour a little nervous and appropriately obsequious, Bryce looked over his emails on his laptop again. This was a stalling tactic, one to make employees uncomfortable, which included pointedly *not* offering them a seat until he was 'ready'.

"S-sir?" Abigail said.

Bryce held up a finger to indicate that he'd talk to her in due time. He scrolled some emails, made sure to close the window where he'd been perusing some pornography, and then brought up the proposal that he was putting forth to the studio heads later that day. Finally, he pretended to remember that Abigail was there.

"You can take a seat," he said.

Abigail sat. He spent a little longer than necessary admiring her form. She wasn't his usual type; too flat in the chest, not Asian enough (though she looked a little mixed, ethnically speaking), and with slim hips. And yet she had a slim, fragile beauty to her, and coupled with her glasses and nervous disposition, Bryce experienced a predatory thrill to hold power over this cute woman. She was only in her early thirties, after all. It made him feel like a shark approaching a tasty seal.

"Miss Porter," he said in his suave voice, leaning back in his chair nonchalantly. "I'm told that you have a pitch for me. A new cartoon."

It was an animation studio, so this was their bread and butter. In truth, Maximus Studios hadn't exactly been churning out many successes in the last few years. Ever since *Popcorn Unicorn* ended the merchandise sales had started to dry up, and their attempt to

jump on the anime bandwagon had come too late, not that Bryce really *got* what anime was. It was just some weird Asian style, wasn't it? But budget cuts and endless corner cutting, most of it initiated by him, had made it difficult for new shows to be made, a fact that even he was starting to be aware of.

"Y-yes!" Abigail said, excitement creeping into her eyes. "I think it could be a real winner. I've worked with a number of our artists and storyboarders on this. We've done our market research, don't worry about that. And - and I think it could be a real hit! It follows current popular trends while also sticking out. Currently the working title is *Princess Gemstone*, but that's obviously subject to change if-"

Bryce looked over the documents she had placed before him in a filed submission. Artwork, posters, storyboards, the pilot episode script, even colour theming and projected episode costs. God, she'd even included a timeline in concert with their South Korean animation workers. This lady had gone the whole hog. And yet . . .

"What is this?" he said, holding up a slip of paper. It was a poster that showed a bright and colourful fantasy landscape, and a pink-themed princess leaping towards the screen, alongside several other female heroes.

"Oh, that's a drawing *I* did," Abigail said, a bit of pride creeping into her voice. "I thought it would give a good sense of the kind of energetic yet girly-"

"Girly?" Bryce said. "Girly? Miss Porter - *Abigail* - what on earth would possess you to think I would approve something girly?"

Abigail froze. "I - we haven't had a success since *Popcorn Unicorn*, sir, and that had sixty percent female viewership and-"

"Let me give you a bit of wisdom, Abby," he said paternalistically, leaning over his desk. "Boys buy toys. *Boys buy toys*. That was the wisdom when I first joined this studio, and it holds as wisdom now."

"With respect, sir, the research shows that not to be the case anymore. And I believe-"

"I'm sure I *could* approve this if it were a prince, and perhaps we sexed it up a bit. Maybe have three male heroes, two females. The dark chick and the emotions girl. They should hate each other of course. Bounce between the main hero as love interests. We'll need some cars in it. Sci-fi is bigger these days. And get rid of that title, of course. We don't want anything girly in this, Abigail."

Abigail was bright red, either with humiliation or anger or both. It made Bryce smirk all the more. Putting a forthright woman in her place was deeply satisfying. Though, to his surprise, she dug her heels in further.

"Mr Matthews," she said. "I really believe this can work. This is a trend we can be on top of, and I can tell you that our whole team downstairs is very excited about this. We think

it can be a real hit, while also having a lot of fun stories to tell about a princess finding her place and discovering her self-worth after being an ordinary girl for much of her life. There's a lot of feminist-

"Bah!" he declared. "Don't give me any of that feminist horseshit. Look, Abby, my girl-

"I prefer Abigail," she said, sitting up a little taller."

"Abby," he repeated. "You need to understand that the wind has changed. I actually called you in here on other business. Your pitch was a last chance, one you failed. But I'm asking you to be the bearer of bad news."

Bryce Matthews spun his laptop around to reveal his proposal to Abigail Porter, the proposal he had not yet sent to his studio heads, but was excited to do so soon.

"The benefits of generative AI as a replacement for unnecessary creative . . . Mr Matthews, this can't be what I think it is?"

The man leaned back in his chair, admiring Abigail. She actually was quite the cutie. "Fraid it is, darling," he said. "I'm axing the vast majority of our animation staff. The truth is, it's too expensive, too risky. You creative types keep trying to make *art*, but we're trying to make a profit."

A sudden fury began to rise in Abigail; he could see it in her features. "Mr Matthews, the only reason we've struggled to make a profit is because all of our shows keep getting axed just as they're taking off, and the constant budget cuts, staff changes, and endless *fucking* interference from studio executives have diluted the potential in-

"Watch your tone, Abby," Bryce said, putting up a finger."

"It's Abigail," she said.

He was actually pleased to see this fight in her. All the better to break in a beautiful bird and put her in a cage. "Generative AI is the future, missy," he declared. "Why have creative types when we can make better shows at the click of a button? Oh, the technology isn't quite there yet, but it will be. Soon, we won't even need storytellers and storyboard artists and writers and whatnot. At the click of a button, we can see our profits rise and the boys will buy their toys. Voila."

Abigail narrowed her eyes and folded her arms. "And you can finally put the human soul in all of its creativity and passion in the trashheap once and for all, is that it?"

Bryce rolled his eyes. "Please, we're making cartoons, not art."

"Animation is just a medium, *Bryce*. It is as valid as any other form of art, and for kids it is-

"I'll cut you off right there, Abby, my girl. The *only* reason I've brought you here is because, frankly, I need someone to help transition the animation department into our new AI department. I think it could be you, especially since I need a new secretary to help me

out, and I think you'd look rather lovely in a proper dress and some makeup. What do you say?"

Abigail stood up slowly. "I'll get my desk in order," she said.

"I'm glad you agree that-"

"So I can quit this *fucking job* and never have to see your *sexist, greedy, soulless AI-obsessed face ever goddamn again.*"

With that, she turned and stormed out of the office, not even asking to be dismissed. Bryce sighed. He'd gone a little too far, he realised. He should have complimented her a little more, made her think that this was her only choice to preserve some staff. That way, he could have had a pretty little bird as his secretary.

"Ah well, she made her choice. No severance package for her. And no more of these damned 'artists' getting in the way of what this studio needs."

He smiled as he read the AI proposal again. He'd put a lot of work into it. This really was the future. One could run an animation department with just a few underpaid souls and make record profits. It was magnificent!

"Just wonderful," he said to himself. "Simply wonderful."

"I beg to differ."

Bryce looked up. A female voice had come from somewhere, but he couldn't tell who it was. He frowned, then looked over his laptop.

Probably a porn clip or something that he'd forgotten to close.

It was the end of the day. The animation staff were leaving the office, and Bryce watched them go like a line of little ants. Abigail had not put in her notice just yet, but she had definitely cleared out her desk and left early. The others were going now, and had clearly heard the bad news; they shuffled away like a parade of Charlie Browns, their heads low, their eyes upon the ground.

"Sad sacks," Bryce commented from his fourth floor office. He flicked a spent cigarette out of the window and returned to his desk. He didn't usually work this late, but he wanted this proposal to be perfect. If all went well, then he would be going up in the world and could bid the animation department - AI department now - goodbye once it was successful enough. The wording was crucial; this had to be *his* and *his* project alone, and not passed onto Peter Schrafer or any of the other assholes who liked to steal credit for his work. This would be *his* victory. The ultimate triumph of profit over those damned creatives who had always been a set of sharp thorns in his side.

He proofread it one more time and readied to hit 'send', when suddenly that female voice spoke again.

"You should be ashamed of yourself."

That made the man jolt. He rose from his seat and tried to determine where that voice was coming from; it sounded so close, like she was in this very office. It definitely hadn't come from his laptop, he was certain of that this time.

"You need to do better, and make a difference in this world, not take away its beauty. And I swear, I shall fight you if you cannot change your ways."

"What the hell?" Bryce said. "Hello? Monica, is that you?"

It didn't sound like her. It sounded like a young voice, perhaps a woman in her mid-twenties, but with an almost regal quality to it; authoritative and strong-willed. The kind of woman he liked to break until she was submissive.

"Where are you?" he muttered, looking about the room.

"I'm here, and I'm not going anywhere."

He turned on the spot, only to sigh with relief. He'd been so busy and obsessed over this AI thing that he hadn't even noticed that Abigail had left her laptop on the floor. It was playing a number of test animation clips. Most were just a series of lines forming the character model, but a few were more elaborate, like finished animation footage. The depicted the princess in her pink and white armour, her hair a flowing silver as she battled foes and talked to her female friends. Various test clips played voice samples - he realised now it was Abigail voicing her, since no professional voice actors would be hired on yet, not without his approval.

Bryce laughed. "Jesus, it was just you all along."

The princess slammed her spear into the ground and stood triumphantly against a fantasy backdrop. "Yes, it was me. *Princess Thea of the Gemstone Palace.*"

He frowned. What a strange coincidence. "Well, too bad for you, Thea, because you're finished."

"The battle is never finished, Bryce Matthews."

Bryce flinched, then shut the laptop in a panic and threw it across the room.

"Jesus. I - I've been working too hard. Hearing things."

"You never work hard at all, Bryce."

Bryce jumped on the spot and looked to the new source of the voice. Abigail's proposal notes were still scattered on his desk, and the poster image of *Princess Gemstone* was actually *moving* now. Thea was no longer leaping towards the viewer but instead lowering herself to the ground and pointing right at him. The image on the paper was *moving* as if *alive*.

"What - what the f-fuck!?" Bryce stuttered.

"You just make others work for you, Bryce, and then you cut them down for their efforts. They work their creative magic and bring passion into the world, but all that matters to you is that a line on a profit board goes up. That's what I'm here for. I'm here to correct things."

Bryce crossed the room to his desk and ripped the poster to shreds. "No!" he cried, not even sure of what was going on. He threw the paper scraps away, but Thea's animation storyboard began to shift, the beautiful and exotic princess taking on new detail as she moved from one panel to the next.

"You need to be taught a lesson, Bryce. Abigail is my creator, and I will protect her. She put a great deal of time and effort into my world, and I will not see it undone without a fair chance."

"Shut up, you crazy bitch!"

Bryce ripped up more of the paper, destroying everything he could in a maddened, terrified rush. But Princess Thea kept hopping to new locations, even jumping to the business notes on his desk. Her other designs came to life - earlier versions who were younger, or had more muscle mass, or were brunette. They booed and jeered him as he pursued his frenzied crusade.

"Shut up! Shut up! I'm firing that bitch! She can get a job on the street if she needs some goddamn work!"

"No wonder you never approved this work," Princess Thea said, her face suddenly dominating the art upon his wall. She was beautiful and regal, and Bryce withered a little before her stare. *"You're a greedy, slovenly sexist. No young girl was ever going to benefit from the creative passion of this studio while you were in charge. Thankfully, that won't be the case anymore. It's time for you to learn the real struggle of this place, Bryce."*

And with that, the most terrifying thing happened yet: Princess Thea emerged *through* the artwork on the wall, stepping out into reality. Her form flickered, the animation lines on her not yet finalised, but she was there before him, a two-dimensional image moving in such a way as to simulate three dimensions. She was taller than him, and her figure was lithe, beautiful, yet fit. A spear manifested in her hand.

"No! What are you doing!? You can't!"

She crossed the distance between them, and Bryce *screamed*. But at the last second her spear shimmered, turning into a giant *pencil* of all things. She slashed it across his side, and then up along his arm and down the other in a whirlwind of chaos that only a cartoon character could properly produce. Bryce yelled, unable to process what was happening to him. His entire form was being redrawn. He tried to flee, but Thea just turned the large pencil around and erased his legs, causing him to fall to the floor. No blood let out, however, and in

moments she redrew his legs, only this time they were thinner, hairless, and in moments had a damn *skirt* covering his upper thighs.

"What the fuck!?" he screamed on the floor, kicking out his strange legs, dainty feet in women's shoes.

"Don't worry, I'm just getting started. You WILL understand the struggles of my creators, Bryce!"

He tried to crawl away, terrified of his own changed legs, but Princess Thea in all her cartoon glory was upon him, her giant pencil erasing him bit by bit or simply scrawling right over the top of him. It was all happening so fast that he could barely take it in, but he *definitely* felt her drawing over and *into* his chest. The man gasped in shock and disbelief as two small but obvious breasts sprouted from his chest, and again as his waist pulled in. His ribcage shrunk, and with a quick redraw of his shoulders, the man found that his big-boned structure had effectively evaporated.

"Stop it! Please, I'll do anything!"

The Princess paused, holding up the spear-pencil. *"No, you'll do a very specific thing, Bryce Matthews. You're going to be punished for your greed and your sexism. You're going to live as a beautiful young female studio worker. You're going to work with Abigail. You're going to retool me and finish the work she started. And you're going to make sure my show gets up and running. Only then will I turn you back . . . Brianna."*

"Brianna . . . no! NO!"

But there was no one left in the office to hear Bryce, and so his screams were all for naught. The pencil quickly redrew his entire form. His hair came out longer, grey in his temples gone. His lips swelled as she scribbled over them, and his entire jawline and facial features were quickly altered. His hips were widened, and when he tried to crawl away he was left groaning as his ass swelled a little. His suit changed to a professional white blouse, while his member - his *member was erased*.

"Oh God!" he cried.

"Not God. Just a passion project," she said with a smile, and with that, she scribbled beneath his skirt and then stood triumphantly over him. He whined, crying in a high, thin, female voice, his changes all finished, including *down there*.

"Just one little mental scribble now," she said, and applied her pencil one last time. Bryce cringed, unable to fight her superior strength. His mind instantly bloomed with changes, his very sense of self becoming female, his name automatically registering as Brianna.

"Ohhhhhh," she whined, clutching *her* head. "I don't deserve this!"

“Sure you do. You were willing to ruin the lives of an entire studio of passionate creatives all so you could - what? - use some cheap generative AI to make some soulless, artless slop?”

She placed her hands on her lovely hips as Bryce/Brianna rose. The former man was startled at her figure. Everything was so damn wrong. She was small, perhaps only five-foot-four at best, and had none of her former muscular strength or dominating presence. Her hair was long and fell down her shoulders, and she had a pair of glasses on now. She tried to remove them, only for the world to turn blurry. Traumatized, the new woman lowered her hands to cup her breasts. They were perhaps B-cups, maybe C's. Just a little larger than Abigail's, she imagined. She was even wearing a goddamned *bra*, not to mention a skirt that went down past her knees!

“Oh God,” she whined. In a panic, she touched her crotch, her dainty yet calloused hands gliding over her skirt and feeling the women's underwear beneath, and the complete absence of a member. “You t-took my cock! You took my damn cock!”

Princess Thea smiled and tousled her lovely silver hair. It was like having a stroke or severe hallucination, seeing a two-dimensional cartoon character taking up space in Brianna's office.

“And I won't be giving it back,” she declared in an authoritative tone. *“Not until you learn your lesson and do what you're told.”*

“I'll do anything!” she squeaked, still not used to her mousey female voice. “Please! Goddamn it, bitch, I'll do anything!”

A smile. *“That's good to hear, because your misogyny will absolutely be something to work on. That, and your actual work ethic. The first thing you need to know is that you're not the big boss anymore, Brianna. You're one of Maximus Studio's storyboarders and concept artists. You're going to be working with Abigail instead of against her, and you're going to fight the good fight just like a warrior princess, and get this show out there. That's right, you're going to craft a successful pilot, and get my show greenlit. Any questions?”*

Brianna had a thousand questions. Her entire life was falling apart.

“My office-”

“Not your seat of power anymore. You are now the underdog, the valiant heroine from the people, as I was in my story. Your elevation to royalty may occur, in the form of a successful show launch.”

“But people will look for me! You listen to me, you pink whore, you-”

The spear was suddenly at Brianna's throat, and Thea was very angry. *“Never use that word again. No one will come looking for you, because the big bad that was Bryce Matthews now never existed. Instead, your heroine's journey starts here. You are, and have always been Brianna Matthews, a twenty three year old creative.”*

“But - but I’m not creative! At least make me a goddamned man!”

“Not a chance. You must be redeemed, villain. Your story has ways to go yet. Now, begone! Head back to your apartment now and be ready for the morrow. Then your quest will begin. Luckily, you shall find allies! Farewell, Brianna!”

At this, Princess Thea grinned and leapt back into the many torn papers on the floor, becoming inert once again. Brianna was left in total shock, her life altered, her body changed, her very manly pride ripped away from her.

“What the fuck!?” she screamed.

Brianna drove like a madman. No, a madwoman. She’d quickly given up on trying to report some kind of crime; the officer on the phone had thought she was off her rocker, talking about some cartoon character turning her into a woman. She couldn’t even prove she was meant to be Bryce Matthews, wealthy studio exec, because the office had Peter fucking Schrafer’s name emblazoned on it now, and her ID and photos and everything all belonged to Brianna. Her phone had been downgraded, she no longer had her rolex, and her clothes were made of a cheaper material. It was a freakin’ nightmare.

“Get back home, sort this out,” she told herself, squeezing the wheel tightly. “Get back home, sort this out.”

It was a mad mantra, the only thing keeping her sane. Every few seconds she kept touching her breasts to make sure they were real, only to recoil; her nipples were much more sensitive now.

“Fuck!” she cried. “Just get home!”

Except that, somewhere along the way, she took a wrong turn. She ended up in Mayhughe, a neighbourhood that was far from her wealthy manor-like home in Jaybrook. And yet . . .

“No,” she said, the realisation hitting her. She hit the button on her keys, and sure enough, the parking garage of Unit 3, 24 Crescent Avenue opened up.

“You’re kidding me! I don’t even have my fucking house anymore!?”

She drove in and parked erratically, then got out and tested the door. Sure enough, her changed key let her in. She strode through, into this much smaller apartment. The portraits and photos on the walls were a mix of cartoon sketches and her. It made her gasp; it was the first time she’d truly seen her face outside of glimpses in the rearview mirror. The new woman swallowed, taking in the visage of her cute face with its button nose and dark eyebrows. The way her black hair was put into a cute do as she posed in a dress in some park. She looked very attractive, but in a cute, pixie-like way. Delicate and pretty. It was

enough to make her run for the bathroom, which she found almost instinctively. There, she took her entire form in, and even more so as she literally ripped her shirt from her body and pulled down her skirt.

“Fuck! You’ve got to be fucking kidding me! I look like a goddamn sexy secretary!”

She had nice breasts, pert and not too large, but certainly not small either. They jiggled when she moved too quickly, and her nipples stiffened visibly, pink and perfect and surrounded by wider areolas. She had a nice hourglass figure; it was clear that her wider hips and nice tush were her best features, along with her very cute face. She looked almost like an Audrey Hepburn type; those wide, dark eyes with perfectly expressive eyebrows.

“This can’t be happening,” she said, and it was not the first time the new woman had spoken those words tonight. She touched her own face, feeling her cheeks, observing her dimples, and turning to view her naked body in profile. She did indeed have a pert, generous rear, and a wide set of hips at that. And between her legs . . .

“A fucking *pussy*,” she whined. “I’ve got a fucking *pussy*.”

It was impossible to believe, and yet when she touched her new private parts, the new woman shivered. The sensation there was strong, to say the least. Slowly, she slid her fingers inside of her.

“F-fuck!”

She pulled her hand back. No way was she dealing with this now. No, she had to sleep. She had to get away from these damn tits and damn pussy and damn *all of it*. Somehow, that fucking cartoon had come to life, and now it had cursed him to live as some stupid weak-looking cutsie secretary bitch down in the animation department. Way down.

“I’ll get my body and my life back,” she vowed, clenching her fist and pressing it against the surface of the bathroom sink. “I’ll get it back, and then I’ll get back on top. I’m not stopping *shit*, you crazy cartoon bitch. I’ll play your game, and when I’m back, I’ll cut goddamn *everything*. I’ll axe it all to the ground and use AI to generate every fucking program we have going forward. Just you wait.”

Despite the prior night’s determination, all of Brianna Matthews’ confidence had evaporated the next morning. She had a weird dream involving a rather attractive man climbing on top of her naked body, quite the opposite of her usual unconscious imaginings of sexy nurse ladies in stripperific outfits all attending to him. It had left her greatly unnerved and aroused, her passage warm and wet, her nipples hardened. A terrible way to realise that the events of the previous day had not been a nightmare, but instead a reality.

And yet, she had to soldier on.

So she got dressed, navigating awkwardly around her bra, which was indeed a B-cup, though her breasts felt like full C's to judge from her new point-of-view and the cleavage that was presented. She put on her blouse and skirt. She put on her heels - why the fuck did she have only heels? She put her hair into a ponytail, which took longer than she expected. She pointedly *did not* put on makeup, despite the fact she had a lot of it in the bathroom, and by a dresser. She checked her reflection again and sighed, annoyed at the fact that she had to wear glasses. Gone was the white collar alpha male, broad-shouldered and intimidating. Now she was Brianna Matthews, the pretty and slim-waisted creative working in the trenches, surviving on low pay and even lower self-esteem.

"Fuck this pussy bullshit," she moaned as she got in her car, which overnight had transformed from a swanky BMW into a much less impressive twelve-year old Mitsubish. With a sigh, she headed off, trying to still the nervousness in her heart.

When she rolled up to Maximus Studios she had to remind herself not to park in her old spot. That was taken by Peter Schrafer, the asshole who'd been her main rival the last few years, and just as eager for climbing the corporate ladder. Instead, she went into the backlot and, with yet another heavy sigh that reminded her of how her breasts rose and fell with each breath, headed into the building.

"Morning Brianna!" someone exclaimed, a person she didn't know.

"Uh, hey," she said, trying to look away.

"What's up, Brie?" an older man said, waving as he passed her.

She gave a sheepish nod. "G-good to see you. Uh, Richard."

"Roman," he said. "You know me! You okay this morning?"

"Just had a b-bad sleep," she replied, looking away again. She made her way to the creative section. She'd visited there before; all the storyboarders and writers and sketch artists gathered there. It had never looked to her like they did any work at all, especially on the camera feeds. She winced as she entered, trying to look smaller than she already was. But before she could even take in her surroundings in the first of several poster-covered rooms she had stepped into, she was immediately bombarded with a rant delivered by *Abigail* of all people.

"Brie, thank God, there you are! Have you heard the news? I can already see you haven't. Jesus, it's all screwed up, Brie. All the hard work we put in on *Princess Gemstone* and it's all been washed down the freaking toilet."

"Oh no," Brianna said unconvincingly. She was a bit distracted by the fact that she no longer found Abigail attractive, and that the beautiful woman was now, somehow, *taller* than her. "That's, uh, terrible."

"Terrible is right," the woman continued. "Goddamn that Peter Schrafer."

A man in the corner with his legs up on a desk scrunched up a piece of paper and threw it into the little basketball hoop affixed over the trashcan. "He's got his dick in the AI pipeline," he said. "Fucker probably wants to hump an AI wife since his real one left him."

"Stanley, shh!" Abigail said. "The walls have ears."

"Don't be paranoid, Abs," Stanley said, leaning back with his hands behind his head. "That would cost money. And our man Schrafer is all about *saving* money by cutting us all to the bone. All so he can pad his own damn Christmas bonus, the bastard."

Stanley was a fit-looking man with a well-trimmed beard and goatee, though the hair on his head was like a misshapen brown rug. Somehow, the look came together; he appeared somewhat like one of those genius creative types who don't give two hoots what anyone thinks of them.

"I mean, cost-cutting *does* make sense," Brianna voiced, trying to stick up for her old profession, even if it meant defending Peter Schrafer. "It's not like what we do is cheap."

The pair looked at her, and a few other heads raised as well.

"You going corporate on us, Brie?" Stanley asked.

"Yeah, what gives?" Abigail added, hands on her hips. "You were all on this with us. You're going to defend Peter Schrafer now? You realise he's taking an extra eight million dollar bonus by the end of the year, right? That's on top of the tens of millions he already gets, yet he can somehow *never* find the budget for his own animation department. The man is a blight."

Brie felt a chill run down her spine. She attributed it to her new feminine weakness, because she actually found Abigail's passion and intensity *intimidating* now, instead of something to toy with. To her own surprise, she backed down in the face of it.

"No, of course, you're right. The man is a total fuckwit."

"There's our Brie," Stanley said.

"And he's wrong about the show," Brianna continued, looking around the room at the various pencilled characters, storyboards, even the computer guys running their animation tests and looking rather despondent at all of their wasted work. "It's a show that needs to run."

Stanley shrugged. "Well, I don't know about *needs*. I'm still in favour of my *Robot Tom* idea."

"Schrafer already kicked that down twice," Abigail said, collapsing back into her chair with a sigh. "Maybe he's right. We need that toy demographic more, but that doesn't mean we need to shit out some *Transformers* ripoff or whatever. We can still make something *good*, using the core of *Princess Gemstone* and—"

Brianna stepped forward and slammed her hands down on the table, startling them both and several others in the adjacent rooms.

"No! It has to be *this* show. It has to be!"

Abigail regarded her. "Look, Brie, this is my passion project. I've sunk so much of myself into this. I would love nothing more than for *Princess Gemstone* to become a reality. But Schafer is all on that AI train now. It's only a matter of time before we're junked. I'd rather try and find another pitch to keep us afloat and employed, at least while we try to find some place - any place - that still wants actual freaking creatives making shows."

"Instead of slop," Stanley said, throwing another scrunched-up piece of paper. Despite his laidback attitude, Brianna could see the anger in his features. The man was fighting back a sneer as he took apart his sketches, which he'd clearly worked hard on. She approached, standing behind him, and he paused to look up at her.

"Hey," he said, smiling.

"Um, hey," she replied. God, he was kind of . . . handsome. It was not a nice thing to know for the former man. "I just want to see your work," she said. "Before you pointlessly destroy it."

"Have at it, Brie. You know me, just venting my anger."

She un-scrunched a piece of paper that had a pencil sketch upon it. The style was simple, all rushed lines and angular points, and yet the kinetic movement of it was impressive. It showed Princess Thea running at a slight angle towards the viewer and to the right, accompanied by an impressive wolfhound that was both fierce and loyal.

"Woah," she said. "This is impressive. Did you generate ideas for this?"

He looked at her quizzically. "What?"

"You know, with AI? Is that where the ideas came from?"

There was a brief pause, and then the office erupted with laughter, and not just from Abigail and Stanley, but from various other figures as well, including the in-house animation boys off to the left. Brianna immediately realised her mistake and giggled along with them.

"You kill me sometimes, Brie," Stanley said. "All cute and innocent and then you catch me underfoot with your sarcasm."

He raised his coffee to her, and she found herself smiling back at him. Inside, her male pride seethed with anger. Thanks to being a small woman, she felt much less dominant now. The fact that Stanley now looked *handsome* to her, with his nice body, was even worse. Still, his sketches were impressive. Some were coloured in, and others were in the process of being digitised, to judge from the display on his laptop. For the first time, she could truly see some of the artistry in what he did, and it annoyed her a little, to *have* to see that.

"We have to make this show," she reiterated.

"Look, I'll make this show one day," Abigail said. "But I made my case. If I make it now, Peter will just pollute it and-"

"It doesn't have to be exactly the same. We can workshop it. Make some necessary changes. Abigail, we fucking *have* to do this. You don't get it. *I* have to do this. *Princess Gemstone* must have a pilot episode. It will be picked up. I promise, we'll goddamn get it happening. Fuck! We can't fail."

"Someone's got a potty mouth this morning," one of the other sketch artists said.

Abigail smirked a little. "Wow, you're really passionate about this, Brie. I - I never knew. Enough to actually drop some bombs there."

Brie blushed a little. Damn, this female body had a thousand ways to humiliate a guy. "I just have to be part of it," she said. "Otherwise I can't get where I need to go. I can't explain it without you thinking I'm crazy."

But at this, both Stanley and Abigail seemed to understand. They exchanged a look and smiled.

"Oh, we get it. That's the spark of inspiration right there. The creative passion. Okay, Brie. Lay it on us, what can we do? You're an equal partner in this project, so take it away. How can we save the show?"

Brianna bit her lip. "Um . . . I haven't thought that far ahead."

Stanley groaned and leaned back in his struggling chair. He tossed a hackysack up into the air and caught it, before repeating the action.

"Well, that's a great plan!"

"I've got ideas!" she exclaimed. "I just need to . . . refine them, that's all."

Abigail sighed and went for the coffee machine. "Well, in the meantime, it's just advertisement work for us, girls and boys. And that new Maximus Logo thing, with that big dumb action hero man on it."

"God, that thing's outdated," one of the animators said. "I hate doing the movements on his stupid big chin."

Abigail placed a hand on Brianna's shoulder as she moved past.

"Tell me if anything changes," she said. "And thanks, Brie. That means a lot."

It was a strangely warm thing to hear. Brie couldn't remember the last time she'd heard those words so earnestly, and not just as part of another business meeting.

She took a seat at her table and brought out her laptop. She had a lot to learn, and not a lot of time to learn it.

The next week was a whirlwind for Brianna Matthews. Not only was she a woman, and merely a creative sketch artist in the animation department, but she was also having to play catch up in a career she'd never actually possessed. To that end, she stuck close to Stanley

and Abigail, the latter of whom was her boss and the former of whom was another artist and designer like her. Not that she'd ever *actually* designed something before. She'd made projections. She'd made *graphs*. But when she was called upon to make several suggested poses for Maximus, the gladiator-themed action hero that was the studio's mascot, as part of his promo, she'd held a trembling finger to the paper to jot down some ideas.

And somehow, something had *flowed*.

It made no sense. As Bryce, she'd only drawn as a child. She'd loved it then, of course. Making all sorts of treasure maps and strange characters and made up beasts. But she'd grown out of such juvenile activities and learned what the real world was; a land of sharks and minnows, and the choice to be either the former or the latter. It was a world of lines and numbers, of percentages and interests, of investments and ladders. She'd put it all away as a grown man, as the ultra successful Bryce Matthews. But now she was Brianna Matthews, and the line art flowed easily from her fingers. No, that wasn't quite right. It flowed *artfully* from her. She made corrections. She became dissatisfied with the pose. She adjusted his shield with the large 'M' upon it. She drew several copies, all with different poses and facial expressions, and then worked to start storyboarding her assigned sequence: Maximus leaping into action from the left of the screen, scaring away a large lion, and then planting his gladius into the ground in order to pull the animation studio name from the ground. It didn't make all that much sense from her perspective, and that bugged her, enough to tell Stanley when she showed him her work.

"Damn, Brie, this looks stunning. You realise this is only a storyboard, right? Don't need to go the whole hog."

"You do," she noted, pointing at some of the animatics he'd personally coloured without need."

He grinned and shrugged. "Yeah, but everyone knows I'm a crazy guy. I stay late and don't even get OT because I'm in it for the love of the game."

"I just think it would make more sense if he struck the gladius along the ground of the colosseum, and the dust was kicked up to form the Maximus logo."

Stanley nodded slowly. "We'll run it past Abigail. Higher-ups might shoot it down, but I like it. It actually makes sense."

"And maybe make the lion less cutesy? It kind of feels . . . mean, as it is. Shooing away a nice lion."

Stanley chuckled. "I've been making that complaint forever."

It was a strange series of creative days, emphasis on *creative*. Clearly, the fictional and magical Princess Thea had endowed her with some relevant skillsets, because Brianna had an innate knowledge of how to draw, how to fashion up storyboards, and how to pose characters in their animation program. Their head in-house animator for their smaller,

non-Korean based work was a man named Dutch. He was African-American despite his name, and a real anime nerd to judge from his computer - though she had to actually ask what anime even was to understand the strange designs of the characters.

“Man, you don’t know anime? You must have been living under a rock, Brie. We’re trying to copy some of their styling now. Real popular now in the US, but this generative AI bullshit is making it hard, because it copies a generic manga style more and more, which gets us a backlash. So now we’re on the hunt for a new style. Real shame.”

Brianna didn’t exactly understand everything Dutch was saying, but she could see from the way he and the other creatives and animators talked about AI that it was something they were all afraid of. She tried not to be sympathetic, but there were two problems with this. The first was that she was now a woman, so her damn empathy was higher thanks to all that freaking estrogen coursing through her system. The second was that she was talking to these people face-to-face as an equal. It was a lot harder to demonise creative types when they were living, breathing human beings in front of you, human beings who made your coffee just the way you liked it and praised your work. It was particularly strange with Abigail; just a few days ago she’d been coming onto this woman, demeaning her and trying to put her in her place. Now, Abigail was technically her boss, though the whole group treated her more like the team mom despite being in her early thirties. She was the one keeping morale up most of the time, keeping them busy despite the recent layoffs.

“It’s okay guys, we’re just going through a rough patch. The same was the case right before *Popcorn Unicorn* took off. We had layoffs, we lost Jim Kalper and that was the hardest time for us ever. But guess what? We got our hit, and a month later Jim was back with us as if he’d never left. So let’s work on this Robot show and maybe, just *maybe*, we can actually get an okay from upstairs.”

But Brianna knew better. She knew that ‘upstairs’ were just going to keep on pursuing generative AI for everything and purge the creative department. They only had a little extra time thanks to her previous self no longer existing; Peter always had been slower to act, more cautious, and yet fast to take credit. He’d be weighing up options over the next few weeks. Which meant she really, really had to retool *Princess Gemstone* in a way that would see Thea come to life. Otherwise, Brianna would be trapped as a woman for good.

Already, she was having trouble with her new body. She was getting better at putting on a bra, and she had given up on trying to maintain a manly strut after Stanley had laughed at her and assumed she was trying to perform a character action for an animatic. Now she let her hips sway naturally, which was a little awkward, because she caught a man looking her way with interest as she passed him in the grocery store. She didn’t exactly have an assistant to fetch her shopping list now, but it also meant she had to be out in public as a

woman. A woman with a little bit of cleavage on display because her shirt had a lower neckline than she'd thought it had.

"Did you see that chick? Total hottie."

"I know, right? I'd seriously bang her. From behind, obviously. That ass is no joke."

That was the conversation of two teenage boys she'd overheard as they passed her in the aisle. She'd turned straight around and accosted them.

"Hey! Listen up, you pimply-faced fuckers! Don't you ever say that shit about me. I'll wreck your shit if you say one more word about my ass. Y'hear?"

They'd looked like a couple of deer caught in headlights, but then settled as they looked at her smaller form.

"Yeah, right, lady. Fuck off."

"And do it in that direction, so we can check out your sweet ass again."

She'd never been so humiliated in her entire life, but it was only the beginning. Because on Friday, just before leaving, having spent the whole week working on mascot animatics and promos and banging her head against the wall on what to do with this Gemstone bullshit, she was summoned before Peter Schrafer himself, right to his office. The bald asshole was some kind of Jeff Bezos wannabe, but his height and manner was, all of a sudden, rather intimidating for the young woman. She was tiny before him, and he gestured for her to take a seat, tapping away at his computer just like Bryce had.

"Sir, can I ask what this is about, I'm technically not on the clock and-"

He held up a finger, and the asshole silenced her. It wasn't so much fun from the other side, especially when he lingered his gaze upon her, clearly checking out the hint of cleavage she possessed.

"I want to talk about your appearance," he said.

"My - my appearance?"

He nodded, folding his hands beneath his chin, drinking her in. "Yes, your appearance. Brianna - may I call you Brie?"

"I'd rather-"

"Brie, you're obviously a very pretty young woman. You creative types work hard. But a flourishing environment is contingent upon one's surroundings. You don't see me calling that Abigail Porter in, do you? You know why?"

It clicked for her, and again her cheeks burned red with humiliation. "Because she wears makeup, sir. Is that it?"

"And jewellery. I know it's not technically in our regulations-"

"It's fucking illegal, is what-"

But he held up a finger, imitating her old self perfectly. "Watch the tone, Brie. I'll only say that once. I'm just saying that budgets are tight at the moment. We're looking into this AI

technology, and strides are being made. A young woman like yourself, only in your twenties, could be expendable. Of course, if your appearance lit things up whenever I visited, I might reconsider.”

She left the meeting throbbing with rage, incandescent with it, even. How could he possibly treat her like *that*? What gave him the goddamn right!?

But the answer was obvious, of course, and as she wiped her tears on the way through the parking lot, she tried her best not to confront it. Peter thought he had the right because he was a chauvinist, greedy, entitled asshole, and now she saw far too much of her own self in him.

“Goddamn it,” she said, tearing up again. “This fucking curse. I don’t deserve this!”

“Brie? Brie, you okay?”

She looked up, and to her embarrassment saw that Stanley was smoking a cigarette outside by his car. She’d thought he’d left already, but he was taking his time.

“S-Stanley. What are you doing here?”

He held out the cigarette. “Don’t drown my woes anymore, but tobacco scratched a nice itch. Want a drag?”

She nodded. “Fucking hell I do.”

The new woman wiped her eyes and took a long drag. The cigarettes were not exactly her trademark cigars, but God the infusion of tobacco felt good. She exhaled, blowing a smoke ring expertly, a trick she’d learned in her twenties . . . though she was in her twenties again, she realised.

“Nice,” Stanley said. He leaned against his car and left her to smoke it. “Everything okay? Heard you had a meeting with Schrafer. Wait, he didn’t . . . ?”

She caught the implication of his words. “Christ no,” she said, taking another drag. “But he told me to wear makeup. Treated me like a goddamn pussy. Like a secretary to show off. Fucking asshole.”

“Asshole is right. Hate these C-suite types.”

She paused for a moment. “Nothing wrong with C-suites. Just that guy.”

“Okay, well, let me be more specific: I had management assholes who only give a shit about the dollar value of everything and have passion for nothing. Nothing, that is, except for mistreating good women like yourself. I should have gone up with you. I’m sorry.”

“He wouldn’t have let you.”

“You’ve a right to an advocate if you think he’s acting-”

“Trust me,” she said. “He’d have a way around it. No, I’ll wear makeup. That fucker. Bad enough I have to act like a woman all the time.”

At this, Stanley cocked his head. “Oh, I didn’t realise. You’re . . . trans?”

“What? No! No way. I’m just . . . fuck. I guess I’m a tomboy.”

He looked her up and down, smiling at her appearance. There was something perhaps a little flirtatious in it, and it brought a rosy feeling right back up to her cheeks again. Her nipples actually tensed a little, and she realised she was looking at his shoulders.

"Coulda fooled me," he said. "Lack of makeup and jewellery aside, I always thought you were quite feminine."

"Would rather not be."

"Well, you're awesome either way. Too high strung, though. I've seen all these sketches on the Princess show. It's not getting made."

"It has to."

He shrugged and looked towards the setting sun in the distance as it melted into the rooftops of the outer city area. "Well, I guess I won't bet against you. You're a real firecracker. Surprised you didn't slap Peter silly."

She chuckled a little at this. From her, it sounded more like a giggle. Without realising it, she actually moved a little closer to him, her arm touching his.

"I nearly did!" she confessed. "But slapping your boss would be way too much of a lateral career move."

"Well, if he does it again, I'll slap him and then some. My job's probably next in the firing line anyway. Might be good to give him the old what-for. He deserves it, and not just for you, but all of this AI bullshit."

She passed him back the cigarette, and he took one last drag on it before reaching into his car and shoving it in the ashtray. When he stood back up beside her, she couldn't help but admire his height and strength. It was infuriatingly shameful to be so attracted to men now, and not only that, but to have the sexual libido of a young woman in the prime of her health. Brianna bit her lip without thinking.

"Thanks, Stanley," she said.

"Call me Stan. And what am I being thanked for?"

"The cigarette, moron," she said. "And for listening, or whatever. Just take the fucking compliment, okay."

She punched him lightly on the arm and walked back to her car, still craving another cigarette, and perhaps something else. She winced as she got in the car. She checked her rear vision mirror when she drove off and saw that Stan was still standing by his car, looking in her direction.

"Damn him," she said, a warmth rushing through her body. "Absolutely *fuck him*."

"Ohhhhhh, f-fuck him! Fuck m-me! Fuck me, Stan! Mhmmm!"

The weekend had passed without much affair, since Brianna refused to go outside unless strictly necessary. Instead, she'd done her best to learn how to apply makeup, foundation, eyeliner, contours, and so on, not to mention getting her ears pierced and grabbing some jewellery. But despite doing little else but sketching dozens of alternate takes of *Princess Gemstone* and Thea designs in particular, Brianna Matthews kept running into the same problem: her mind just hit a creative wall whenever she got horny. And unfortunately for her, the memory of that strange little encounter with Stanley, his arm brushing against hers, the way he'd looked her up and down with interest, it had left her very horny. And in the end, come Monday morning when she should have been eating a quick spread on toast and running out the door to work, she was instead finally *fully* exploring her body.

"Y-yesssss, ahhhhh. T-touch me there. Mmhmm, get ins-side of me!"

She moaned and gasped as she probed her passage and rubbed her clitoris, tensing as she hit her G-spot again and again. Her breasts were sensitive, her nipples lovely to the touch. They were stiff, and she took pleasure in pinching them and rubbing her areolas. But such indulgence also let her mind float free and her id take control. She couldn't stop thinking about Stanley; his handsome body, his offbeat humour, his relaxed ways, his creative spirit. Brianna gasped, imagining him enter her, his big hard dick sliding deep into her and causing her to -"

"OHHHHHH!!!"

The orgasms set off within her body like a series of explosives, and it took her a great deal of time to come down from them. She actually giggled until she finally bit her lip, realising what she was doing. In the aftermath, she cursed herself.

"Fucking stupid. Stop being such a little slut. You're meant to be a goddamn power broker! Not some kind of - oh shit, the time!"

She *rushed* to work, quickly taking another shower first just to wipe the scent of sex from her. Still, she felt nervous entering the offices, especially when Abigail called a little meeting of the 'Trio,' as she called them. Technically, Dutch and the others were part of their creative group, but she, Brianna, and Stanley were the main creative voices, and it made sense: Brie had been getting a strange itch to write lately, and evidently this was part of her new skillset alongside her new work friends. Peers.

Peers, she reminded herself. Not friends.

And yet Abigail was the first to comfort her. "I hope you don't mind, I pried out of Stanley what Peter did," she said. "I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have left when I heard you had a meeting, especially when I've had that talk years ago."

Brianna pouted. "It was just . . . unexpected. Though I should have expected it, I guess. It shouldn't happen again, at least." She gestured to her face. She'd finally mastered

lipstick and some nice foundation to mask any tired lines. It left her looking even more beautiful than before. In fact, she *really* looked like Audrey Hepburn today.

“Well, we don’t have to always play his games,” Abigail said.

“Does that mean resubmitting *Princess Gemstone*?” Brianna asked.

Abigail’s shoulders sagged. “I’d love to, but . . . I don’t know what could let it take root. If we give him an opportunity to see us as losing steam, he’ll fasttrack this AI thing. Plus, we’ve got that cartoon robot dog thing, not to mention these promos.”

Stanley looked ready to return to his table, but then he paused. “Maybe just let her give it a shot, Abs,” he said.

“What? Why?”

He shrugged. “First of all, look at her. Our Brie is pretty determined. And second of all, she’s also a maniac. Just look at all the Gemstone art she’s done during her lunch break in the last week alone. And thirdly . . . would you rather take the chance or not?”

“Yes!” Brianna declared quickly. “Exactly, damn it! We’ve at least got to fucking try. Where’s your entrepreneurial spirit? Just because your proposal gets pushed back, doesn’t mean you can’t climb that damn ladder again! You’ve got to bully the higher ups and speak their language so they don’t know it! Fuck them softly, goddamn it.”

Abigail almost burst out laughing. “I swear, I never get used to those words constantly pouring out of your mouth.”

“I’m starting to find it quite cute,” Stanley said, giving a flirty little wink to Brianna, who tried very hard not to blush.

“Okay, fine,” she said. “I won’t . . . stop you. But I need you working overtime. And run all changes to Thea by me. She’s . . . she means a lot to me, and I wouldn’t want her to get a pilot if she betrays the spirit of what I want.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Brianna said, who didn’t much care about *that*. “I’ll get to work, then. This thing *will* be made, Abs. I promise you.”

Again, that feeling of camaraderie began to simmer and bubble up within Brianna. She didn’t want to experience it; humanising these people only made it harder knowing she would fire them when she changed back. And yet, she found herself smiling anyway, giving Stan a joyful high-five before returning to her desk. She had a new determination, and the fires of creative passion were only getting hotter.

Maybe she could enjoy this little slice of an alternative life.

Just a little bit, while it lasted.

Despite her determination to see *Princess Gemstone* made, Brianna could only work on the project in fits and spurts. She was alone in this, despite Abigail's own interest and Stanley's support. The former was their animation department lead, and was clearly already wounded from the project being officially canned. And Stanley was being overworked to hell and back with all the cuts going on. Dutch had been let go, along with several other digital artists, and Stanley had been crushed by it. They all had, and even Brianna couldn't escape the feelings of regret, despite knowing she hadn't actually been the one to fire him.

"I might have, though," she told herself, looking in the mirror two weeks later. She was dressing more feminine now, even getting used to her skirts. Hell, she was even crossing her legs, and shaving them after yet another gross comment by Schrafer! Each day she felt just that little bit more feminine, and it was doing her head in because the unnatural progression felt so . . . natural. Hell, she'd actually bought *new* clothes the other day, and in a fit of spontaneity had actually purchased a better bra that comfortably supported her boobs, though it lifted them up a bit more prominently. She caught Stanley admiring her form several times when he thought she wasn't looking, and somehow that led to her wearing it even more during work hours. More than that, she'd also found her emotional reactions were more powerful. Part of it was going through her period, which was a nasty and quite bloody surprise that left her vowing to *never* criticise a woman on one again, and gave her a miserable weekend.

But some emotions came just from watching television. Hell, she was even starting to watch *cartoons* on the kids' channel. She *never* watched cartoons, not since she was a kid. Not even as an animation studio exec, except to hear pitches. She just wanted the bottomline. But now . . . it was like her child-like enthusiasm had opened up. She found herself taking notes, doing little doodles on a page on a clipboard, or even writing little pitches while taking inspiration from other works. It was the kind of creative passion she'd never understood, but now it felt overwhelming. All-encompassing. She simply *had* to create. It was part of her, now.

At least while she was Brianna.

As such, she slowly made progress on *Princess Gemstone*. The series, as envisioned by Abigail, was a story of an ordinary woman struggling to find a job in New York, one who suddenly finds herself thrust into a fantasy world of danger, magic, and wondrous beauty slowly being taken over by The Tide, a dark force that seeks to subjugate all that is different and vibrant and uncomfortable.

"It's a bit of a metaphor," Abigail had told her. "Not exactly a subtle one. You know, I came out to my parents at fifteen and that was not a fun experience. So the bad guy being this homogenising force, well, its drawn from my own experience of being told not to stick out. And with all this AI bullshit coming out, there's a second layer there, right?"

Brianna had to agree. She didn't want to - wasn't AI the future? And yet the personal details of the story were all there. Thea goes from being a woman anxious about how she presents herself to the world to becoming a vibrant princess, one who is unafraid to be girly and strong at the same time. Authoritative yet soft. Kind-hearted yet willing to put up boundaries and not let people take advantage of her. She forges her own family - the dwarf Kazm, the elven archer Merell who is *very* strongly coded like a girlfriend to her. This was not just a cartoon, it was a personal story, one that contained a *soul*.

"Holy shit," she said to herself as she worked late, pouring over illustrations and storyboards and the series bible that Abigail had written up. "This is art. This is fucking art. How did I not see this before? Was I goddamn blind!?"

She worked harder with each passing day. She redrew Thea in a variety of different genres; a pirate version of her tale to appeal to the current craze. A more sci-fi oriented version that presented The Tide as an ominous force pouring from an all-consuming black hole. She made a version that cut down Merell's presence, but something in her gut told her how wrong that was. She tried different styles for the characters; a more zany, cartoony presentation. A more realistic one with proper body proportions. A more Flash-oriented style that could be animated more easily upon a flat plane. Nothing seemed quite right, however.

"You should relax," Stanley told her when he stayed past clock off time with her. "You're burning up, Brie."

"I just need to get this perfect."

"Why?"

She looked at him. "What?"

"Why does it need to be perfect? Why do you need this show so much?"

Suddenly, his expression became one of embarrassment. "Oh, shit. I'm an idiot. It's obvious."

"You - you know?"

He gave a sheepish grin. "You're into her, aren't you? Abs."

At this, she threw up her hands. "No way! I mean, yes, she's pretty, but this stupid body is not into her! I'm, uh, into men. I don't want to be, but I am."

Stanley chuckled. It was a nice sound. "Okay, I really don't get it, then. You're just that passionate about making this show?"

Brianna nodded instantly, and realised that, across the weeks, the former male actually had become invested in the show. Not just in turning back, but in the *show*. Hell, she'd practically gone the full day without even thinking of being a man again.

"I guess I am," she said, and it was a revelation. "I want to see it made. I want . . . to make something. Something real, and not just make a line go up."

At this, Stanley's expression became oddly contemplative. He regarded her, and not in his usual calm, laidback, slightly flirtatious way.

"You'll go far," he told her.

"What do you mean?"

"You've got the drive, and you give a shit. I don't know, I love sketching, I love drawing, I love designing. It's in my blood. Writing too, though that's Abigail and your specialty, I guess. But sometimes, in this industry, I find it hard to give it a shit, especially as we get cut to the bone. And now there's this AI craze."

Brianna bit her lip. "Hopefully it'll just be a fad?"

"Hopefully. Do you want a coffee?"

She grinned. "That would be amazing. You're the best, Stanley."

"Don't you forget it."

To her surprise, he started hanging around later with her more and more in the passing days. She felt like she was drawing close. Abigail's work was a passion project, and no way did she want to betray that, but practicality was also needed. Because it was so close to Abs, it also had extra detailing that could be cut away or trimmed; complex character designs were simplified. Thea's hair, notoriously hard to animate, was changed while still preserving that lovely silver look. Her armour, which had multiple segments, was simplified and made just a little more feminine to appeal to girls, while Kazm's presence was magnified a little more to appeal to boys. It was such a damn tightrope to walk, to appeal to viewers and toy sales but also still preserve the soul of the thing, but Stanley was by her side, helping sketch all of her ideas with her, making storyboards to show how the animated process could go, and bouncing ideas back and forth. When she fell asleep at her desk, she would often wake to find that he'd put his jacket over her, and then kept on working on her day responsibilities so she wouldn't be fired. He just grinned each time.

"Just getting my unpaid OT in!"

Soon he was bringing blankets to work for whenever she slept, and one time had to actually drive her home. She found herself leaning against him a little as he helped her out of the car.

"I'll drive us to work tomorrow," he said.

"You're nice, Stan," she replied, still a little out of it from waking up. "You're real nice."

"That's what I aim to be. The greatest quality a man can have; boring and nice. Lucky me."

He'd said it self-effacingly, but without thinking she went up on her toes and kissed him on the cheek, giving in to an impulse that she'd felt stirring within her for weeks now.

"Nice," she said. "But not boring. I'm glad I met you, Stan."

She went to bed and fell asleep instantly, not even thinking about what she'd just done. In the morning it came to her though, and she held herself, struggling against her embarrassment and the budding lust in her loins. In the end, the latter had won out, and she lowered her hands to give herself some relief.

"Ohhhh, Stan!" she cried, and the orgasms came like miniature earthquakes through her body as she imagined him on top of her.

"Oh my God," Abigail said as she looked at their notes and sketches and animation submissions. "This is . . . this is . . ."

Brianna bit her lip. She reached out and grabbed Stanley's hand beside her and clenched it tightly. He squeezed it in return. It was ridiculous, she knew, holding a man's hand. But she'd been a woman for well over seven weeks now, and damn if it hadn't made her more empathetic, much to her own frustration. That, and she really liked his hands.

"Is it okay?" Brie asked, nervous. She and Stanley had worked hard on the pitch, but there was no telling how it would go. She'd changed a number of things about Abigail's show, and one of the main ones was making an actual villain that represented the face of The Tide. He was called Sloane, and he presented some fun marketing and toy opportunities while hopefully not betraying the inherent metaphor of the show.

"Abs?" Stan asked. "You wanna give us something here? You can admit my robot show is better, of course, but I was hoping-"

Tears fell down Abigail Porter's cheeks. The beautiful woman had to control her trembling lip. "You guys - this is *amazing*. I can't believe you've done all of this. You even made a new series bible. I mean, there's some things I'd like to change. Kazm needs to keep his red scarf because of a revelation down the line about his backstory, and I want Merell's hair to stay frizzy because she's based on my best friend growing up, but . . . these are just minor details. You really stuck with my vision. You - get in here, both of you!"

She gripped them in a hug, though because of Stanley's size, she could only clasp part of his shoulder. Brianna got the brunt of the embrace, and because of her friend's joy, she couldn't help but feel some of her own. A cathartic release that left tears running down her own eyes.

"Damn, I'm being such a pussy these days," she said. "Always crying over stupid things."

"Oh, come off it," Stan said, teasing her. "You've had like two hours of sleep in a fortnight over this. You cry as much as you want. Hell, I'm crying here."

He wiped his eyes, though she was certain he was just trying to make her feel better.

"I couldn't have done it without Stan," Brie said. "He was there the whole time, sticking by me, helping make it come true, Abs."

"You're a good man, Stanley," Abigail said, hugging him again.

"Nice man, good man, I'm racking up the beige comments lately."

"Well, I'd call you handsome, but I don't bat for your team. Maybe Brianna can confirm for me?"

Brianna almost froze. She looked Stanley up and down, and just to make things silly he made a pose that showed off his muscles. He wasn't actually all that gym-fit, but he was big in his natural build, and that did emphasise his strength and manliness.

"He . . . he is pretty fucking handsome," Brianna said. Her heart beat a little quicker even as she admitted it. What the hell was she doing?

"I'll take it!" Stan said, chuckling. "And if I can be so bold, you're pretty easy on the eyes yourself, Brie. Uh, and you, Abs! Just saying we're all a bunch of models here."

Abigail snorted, but Brianna just clenched her fists a little, trying to remind herself that this was only temporary. She was meant to be a shark, not some minnow. But God, right now she wanted him to take a little bite out of her. She'd never felt like such a little snack before, and somehow being *delicious* actually felt kinda nice.

Abigail smacked him up the ear. "Nice save, dumbass."

"It was a bit inelegant, I'll admit."

"Just ask her out already. Brie, I mean."

Stan turned to look at Brianna, and she suddenly felt like a deer in headlights. "Well, you heard the boss. Do you wanna go out?"

She almost squeaked. A torrent of emotions swirled within her, but her male pride thankfully won out. "S-sorry, Stanley, I just-"

"No, all good! Shit, I'm an idiot. I shouldn't have asked."

"Yeah, moron, I didn't mean you should ask her out right now and here," Abigail said. "Sorry to make this all uncomfortable, people."

"It's . . . it's okay," Brie managed. "Can we just talk about the show?"

Stan was trying not to look too embarrassed, but she found herself wanting to salve his ego a little bit and not humiliate him further. "So if we're happy with just some alterations, do we pitch it to Schrafer? Or did you want to do the honours, Abs?"

Abigail shook her head. "It should be all three of us. We're the core writing and proposal team. Safety in numbers. Hopefully that'll pressure Schrafer a little more. Besides, I've got a good feeling about this one. I think we can pull it off. *Princess Gemstone* is going to happen. I just know it."

Brianna had dolled herself up for the meeting, as had Abigail. Even Stanley was wearing a proper button shirt and tie, which just didn't seem to suit him at all. Things were still a little awkward two days later between them, but they were still friends. The only problem was, Brianna kept turning his proposal over and over in her mind. She hated how she felt about him. He'd done so much for her, and hadn't expected anything in turn. They chatted about drawing all the time now, and he was recommending all these great shows that she never would have watched otherwise. Also . . . he was very hot. Maybe not movie-star hot, but he had a laidback charm and confidence in himself that was doing things to her. Never before had she felt /ess like a mid-forties male studio exec. Hell, she didn't even feel like cigars anymore. It was all cigarettes for her, and that meant she could smoke outside with him and shoot the shit and talk big dreams.

"I don't know if I've got one. Rise up the ranks, I guess?"

"I'm not a ladder climber," he said. "I'm a man in the trenches, and that works for me. But I'd like to be part of a studio that gives a shit, y'know. Like you do. Something indie, internet funded. I wouldn't want to run it, but to not have to worry about goddamn execs breathing down our necks . . . damn, that'd be a good feeling."

It was a thought that stayed with Brianna as she and the others were called into Peter Schrafer's office. Like when she'd been Bryce, this was a power move on his part. They came to him, not him to them, despite all their animation software and the like being downstairs. The bald-headed man instantly evoked an angry response in Brianna's gut, but she managed to tame it and try to look appropriately demure. It required embracing her feminine side a little more, something she'd become almost too good at.

"Well, I hear you've got a pitch for me," Peter said. "Have at it."

"It's another take on *Princess Gemstone*, sir," Abigail said, indicating for Stanley to show him the artwork and the posters they'd put together. "This time, the animation is cleaner and less expensive, and we've retooled elements of the show in order to include opportunities for toys and to gain a wider male audience, as well as the core female. Brianna and Stanley here have done great work in addressing your concerns about the previous pitch, and we believe-

"I'm going to stop you right there," Peter said, holding up a hand. "Because otherwise you'll just be wasting your time. There will be no *Princess Gemstone*, and there'll be no robot dog show. If you had something truly revolutionary for me, something that actually used our new generative systems, I might have heard you out. But it's clear to me that a bigger change needs to happen. I'll be confirming with the studio heads that we're fully embracing AI in the animation department. There's a demo reel - more of a sizzle reel with all the buzz it'll generate - that will be going up on Friday. After that, there'll be some big changes. So

shelve that proposal for good and get up-to-date on the email I'm about to send out. It outlines all the new technologies you'll need to embrace and-

And Brianna barely heard a word of it. She doubted that any of them did. The only thing that mattered was that they were through. Princess Thea would never be animated.

The trio had lost.

Abigail was packing up her things. She hadn't said a word, but it was obvious that she was quitting, clearing out her desk just as Dutch and several others had in previous weeks. Her face was a dark frown, and Brianna didn't know what to say or do to make her friend feel better, so instead she just helped her.

"It's not fair," Abigail said. "I really, really believed it would work. At least, I was starting to believe."

"You can't change men like that, or their minds," Brie said. "Well, not unless they get changed first."

"I just wish he could experience what it's like to be a female animator himself. Down here in the trenches, putting up with the sexism and disregard of a boss like him."

At this, Brie actually giggled. "Maybe one day he will. It's just a shame that all of this belongs to Maximus. I'm sorry, Abigail."

"Well, that's one good thing," Abs said, holding up a sketch of Thea and staring at it lovingly. "This stuff *is* all mine. It's not owned by the company unless they actually pull the trigger and start production."

Brianna paused. "Wait. Hold up a damn second. Are you telling me that they don't own a fucking thing of *Princess Gemstone*?"

"It's just a pitch, Brie. You know this. You can pitch anything. It's only when they allocate larger funding that they-"

But gears were already turning in Brie's head. She felt like a fool. Then again, she'd never even tried to understand the actual business; animation had just been a way for her to climb up the ladder beyond the 'kids' stuff.' Knowing this, things had changed. Her old businessman mindset was churning again, her shark-like demeanour returning and combining with her new passionate and creative femaleness.

"Abs," she said. "If you don't own this, and Schrafer is embracing AI, then maybe there's a silver lining. Perhaps more than a silver lining."

Abigail raised her eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

"This sizzle reel that's coming out on Friday. The AI one. I think we can coincide a media release at the same time to nuke what Schrafer is doing and have a tiny shot at getting our show made."

Abigail paused, her brow furrowed. "How?"

"Let's just say I've really come to understand just what a fucking waste this soulless AI bullshit is. The world deserves your show, and I don't even care what it gets me anymore. It deserves to be made because of what it *is*. And if we can let the public get a taste . . . how good is Stanley at making web design?"

"Terrible. But I could reach out to Dutch?"

"Excellent. Fucking excellent. Get your *Gemstone* stuff, Abs. We've got one last card to play in this fight!"

They worked round the clock at Abigail's place. Stanley brought food, and Dutch arrived with several friends that had also been fired from Maximus. Brianna laid out her knowledge of the business, but also what they were *competing* with; exactly the kind of thing that Stanley dreamed about, those little indie animated studios who survived and thrived off of crowdfunding. They'd have to make a popular pitch, but such a thing would be easily lost in a sea of competitors. But if there was one thing that Brianna knew, apart from her new skills in drawing and writing, it was how to save money and get ahead of the news - or even *make* news. She contacted several journalists in the industry that had once been the bane of her existence, and let them know about Maximus' massive workchange culture shifts and its switch to AI generation. The sizzle AI reel meant to impress everyone would become a poisoned chalice; synonymous with firings, cash grabs, and most importantly of all, a direct competition of a genuinely passionate piece of creative work that was cruelly stabbed in the back. Brianna made the whole pitch, and Stanley and Abigail were rather captivated by it.

"Surely this won't work?" Stanley said. "I mean, I'm all for sticking a fork in Schrafer's back, but no studio will take us after this."

"Nor should they," Brianna said. "Because we're going to start our own. That fucking mascot was too much of a bitch in the ass to animate anyway. We deserve a better studio, something indie controlled by us."

"And how can we afford that?" Abigail said. "Seriously? Where is this magical money coming from?"

"Hopefully, from the public. At least until we can get bigger backers. Enough for us to make a pilot and then really get the wheels greased."

Their project lead frowned. "That would . . . take time. And it's not guaranteed to be a success, Brie."

"Trust me, I've got history in this sort of thing. I knew how to be a big enough asshole before that I could shift some levers around, and even as a dainty little lady I can still do that."

"You weren't a dainty lady before?" Stan asked, chuckling.

"Are you kidding me? I was a fucking *rock star*. Now I just get to be a bad bitch and stick it to Peter Schrafer one last time. Are you with me?"

Abigail hesitated, but Stanley's reaction was immediate. "Fuck it, let's do this. I'd rather follow my dream and end up in the gutter than never try at all."

"Goddamn right," Brie said, smiling. He still had that charm, and it was doing things for her, and her confidence. "Abigail? I won't do this without you. It's *your* show."

The other woman paused. Everything hinged on her. So strange, to think how things had reversed. Of course, Abs was now her friend. Her best friend, really. To think she'd been harassing her as a man just two months ago.

"Okay!" she finally said, exasperated. "Let's pull this trigger before I regret it."

Brianna paced back and forth. There would be no explosive moment. No singular second where the scales would tip from failure to victory. The three of them had already been 'let go' as part of Maximus Studio's retooling towards generated content farming; they'd refused to get with Schrafer's programming, just as planned. His generative reel had been released officially online for several hours now, as had their hard-hitting article on the great fall from grace that was the studio's present course. Posts sprinkled with artwork and details of *Princess Gemstone* had been posted across relevant boards and forums of interest, and attached to articles connected to journalist pieces. The words 'hoping to potentially crowdfund in the future' were used frequently to test the waters of interest.

"It's not too late, you know," came a familiar powerful voice.

Brianna turned. She was in her room, alone. That meant only one person could be talking to her now. She approached the scattered papers and confronted the face of Thea in her new style, now fully animated on the poster she'd left on her writing desk.

"Too late for what?" she asked.

"Not too late to just have the studio generate me, of course. I know you've thought about submitting to the Tide. I know your Sloane character is based upon Schrafter; the killer of passion and creativity. You could use the enemy's weapons, and I would have no choice but to turn you back. A deal is a deal. You could use AI to whip up a pilot for Princess

Gemstone. It would be terrible in quality, but it would work. You could be Bryce Matthews again, Brianna."

Brianna held up the paper. She didn't rip it this time. Instead she took in Princess Thea's features, redone since their latest proposal. They were *her* design now. Hers and Stanley's, mixed with the aesthetics of Abigail's original.

"I could be, couldn't I?" she mused. "I'd be on top of the world."

"Yes. A king of your realm. A powerful man, perhaps still villainous, perhaps changed for the better."

"And I could reverse things. Get Abigail's show done."

"You could . . . perhaps."

"Fuck . . . I could."

She looked down at herself, at her slim and beautiful body. At the dress she was wearing, casual but stylish, and hopefully enough to attract Stan's attention despite turning him down. Her mind was a mess, she knew. Her entire life she'd been a man, a corporate-climbing asshole who wanted money and prestige and would burn everything to get it. It was hard to imagine going back to that now."

"But I'm not really Bryce anymore, am I?"

"No," Thea said warmly. *"You've had your character development."*

"My redesign," Brianna said with a chuckle. "My genderswapped variant." She stood a little taller, despite her short frame. "I think I'll stay. We get this done together. I don't trust the old me. Besides, I'm not that asshole anymore."

Thea smiled. *"Welcome to the fight, creator."*

And with that she became still once more, just a sheet of paper. Brianna wanted to feel sad about her choice, but the truth was she didn't. There was little to mourn about the empty, sexist life she'd once led. In fact, she was rather looking forward to-

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of her phone ringing. She picked it up; it was Stanley.

"Stan? What's going on?"

"Brianna, open up your laptop right now!" he said, a strange buzzing noise in the background. *"Search up Maximus Studio and look at what's happening in the news! Check the comments! On our stuff as well! You won't believe it!"*

In a mad hurry, Brie put him on speaker and quickly fetched her laptop and opened it. She followed Stanley's instructions and looked up Maximus Studio, only to be hit by a veritable *barrage* of sites mocking, criticising, critiquing, questioning, and even *eviscerating* its latest generative video. The titles and taglines alone told her what the general reaction was.

'Soulless slop: the future of animation? What these ex-animators reveal about Maximus Studio's latest debacle.'

'From promised sizzle reel to fizzle reel: I can count six reasons on one hand why things look uncanny on this studio's AI embrace!'

'Employees let go at Maximus Studio in order to maximise profits, minimise creative output.'

'Princess Gemstone: a promising show cut down as the latest victim of AI greed.'

'Will this cool new fantasy show be saved by the public? Crowdfunding hopes are already growing for Princess Gemstone.'

They went on, and some of the articles included footage that Schrafer had released. It had robots battling, crowds in a cafe, an action hero sweeping a Bond lady off of her feet, a car chase across a desert, and so on. Lots of action, lots of sights, lots to draw in investors. And maybe it would work. Maybe. But from Brianna's changed perspective, she now wondered what she'd ever seen in this technology, at least as far as replacing creativity entirely. This was slop. Boring. Substandard, lazy, greedy slop. A mountain was floating. The secret agent had three hands. The focus blur was all strange. Even shots that looked technically right had no artistry behind them, no intent behind the composition. It was all too front-loaded, with little space for a meaningful background.

"Maybe one day you'll replace us," she said. "But I don't think so yet. Right now, you're still just a tool. We'll use you when we want, and put you back in the box when we don't."

"Nice speech."

Brie blushed, realising that Stanley was still on the phone. She picked it up and turned off speaker, pressing it against her ear.

"What can I say? I'm a dramatic bitch."

"Dramatic? Yes. Bitch? I'd say no. Or if you are, you're our bitch. This is good news, right?"

"Damn fucking right it is," Brie said. "And now . . . now we get to the real work. But first . . . you need to do something for me."

"Anything, after this."

She bit her lip, trying not to smile too broadly. "Would you be willing to drop off something at my place as soon as you can?"

"Sure. What do you need? Some of the sketches?"

"No, I just need you to drop off yourself. I need you, Stan. Specifically, I need you to do a favour for me."

"Okayyyy. Wanna clue me in on what you need?"

She felt like her heart would burst. “Nothing much. Just a little favour. I just need you to ask me out again, in person, just the two of us. I have a feeling you might like the answer this time.”

There was a slight pause, and then, to her surprise, a knock upon the door. She crossed the room and opened it, and somehow there was Stanley, grinning widely, looking dashing and perhaps a little out of breath.

“I was calling you from the car,” he said. “I was already heading to celebrate in person and, well . . . would you like to go out with-”

She jumped up into his arms, looped hers around his neck, and kissed him for all he was worth. Brie was right, of course. He *did* like the answer this time.

Of course, she liked it a *lot* more when they went all the way to her bed. It was a nice inauguration into being a full woman, and her moans of passion said it clearly; she had no plans at all to turn back, not with her new boyfriend thrusting deep inside of her and making her toes curl in delight.

Three years had passed. Brianna looked back on them with astonishment, even now. She could barely believe she’d once been a man, let alone such a chauvinistic and soulless one. She doubted she’d ever be as rich as she had been, but success came in many forms. Today, it was sitting beside her fiancé and holding her big man tight. Abigail was present also, her hand trembling until her girlfriend Sasha calmed her with gentle words.

“S-sorry,” Abs said. “I’m just nervous. This is the big moment. She’s actually going to be real.”

Five episodes. It’s all they managed to crowdfund. The three of them had hoped for eight, but knew that was a longshot. Hell, the fact that they’d released a well-loved pilot online a year and a half ago was nothing short of a miracle. But their online campaigns and kickstarters and crowdfunding had been successful enough, and if the show took off, then they had plans for an extended season.

“Just a minute to go until the first ep streams,” Stan noted. “Popcorn?”

They all turned him down.

“How can you be so relaxed?” Brie asked.

He shrugged. “I feel like we’ve already made it far enough to call it a win, honestly. This is just the icing on the cake. Plus, I don’t read the comments on the stream.”

“Ugh, I do,” Abigail said.

“Me too, now,” Brie added.

Sarah snorted. "I'm with Stan. Keep it chill. You guys have already won."

"I just hope they like it," Abigail said. "Thea is important to me."

"To all of us," Brie reminded her. She hugged her fiance tighter, and he in turn fed her popcorn despite her earlier dismissal. "Fuck, that's actually really good."

"Told you homemade is better. A butterier."

"Not a word," she said, before kissing him. "But I love you anyway."

"Love you too, ba-"

"Shhh!" Abigail said. "It's starting! The premiere episode is starting!"

They all leaned closer towards the television screen they'd co-opted for their stream. Gemstone Studios wasn't big, but this room was now special. Holy. The title card began to play, the soaring instrumentals - courtesy of Sarah - rising up as the fantasy world snatched Thea up from her boring life and into a far more interesting and dangerous one. They'd each watched this episode many times, of course, but seeing it now, knowing millions of others online were watching it, well, that made it different. Abigail cried a little, and Brie found herself getting a little emotional. She didn't fight that anymore. It felt right.

"We did it, Brie," Stan whispered in her ear.

Just for a moment, it looked like the cartoon Thea, rising as a gemstone princess, turned to wink at her. That had never been animated by Dutch or any of their staff. But she had seen it, that momentary acknowledgement.

"Damn right we did it," Brie said.

The End