

LIN-GERING THOUGHTS

COMMISSION STORY

BY CHALDEACHANGE



“Friday at last...”

I breathed a sigh of overwhelming relief as I practically *crashed* into the seat of my chair – with enough force that its legs inched back and I almost spilled backwards. **“Woah!”** Fortunately, however, I was able to avoid that worst case scenario by grabbing onto the arms of the chair and shifting all of my body’s weight forward. The last thing I needed was a trip to the hospital because I’d done a backflip out of my fallen chair and crashed into the wall, splitting my head open in the process!

That would totally make the *news!* ‘*Young woman in her 20s almost falls to her death!*’ or *something* like that. It could even be worse if I *actually* died. But you know? My theory had always been that if I was *going* to die young? It would probably be in the stupidest way imaginable. It would be a little embarrassing if it happened, but it wasn’t like *I’d* be alive to suffer those consequences. Besides, if a story like that could brighten someone’s day? Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad.

“Die young, huh?” If you’d taken by words at face value, I could definitely see how you might arrive at the wrong conclusion entirely. If you heard someone talking like that, especially when I had an amused smile on my face, you would *probably* assume the worst, right? It wasn’t really the *dying* part I was thinking about so much as the *young* part.

The reason I was so relieved in the first place was because it was Friday night. I had *finally* finished what had been an unwanted *seven day* work week. Under normal circumstances I only worked five days, and that was already a little *too* much sometimes, but one of my coworkers had broken their arm and there had been no one else available to cover their

shifts on my days off. I suppose I could have said no, but I was a little too nice for that. At least my boss had given me a three day weekend to compensate.

But *boy* I was exhausted. I might have been working a little *too* much lately. Not only did I get tired more easily, but my back and arms had been acting up. Which was what had more or less led me back around to why I had been contemplating *youth* itself. I certainly wasn't getting any younger. The opposite was definitely true, and I couldn't exactly do anything about it. **"Well, might as well spent my evening playing video games. At least *that* won't age me any faster."** That was a little debatable.

I reached for the Nintendo Switch Pro Controller sitting on the coffee table beside my chair. I couldn't even recall *what* cartridge I had in the console that was in its dock beside my television, but I was definitely too tired to get up and change it. My plan was to just play around with whatever was in the machine.

Television? On. Pro Controller power button? Activated. It took a few seconds for the console in the dock to start up and show the main menu on my TV – along with the games I both had installed *and* inserted. **"Xenoblade Chronicles X, hm?"** Specifically, the *Definitive Edition* that had recently been released for the Switch. I didn't have any problems with *that* choice. I had played the original when I was younger, and I was glad to have a chance to replay it on more modern hardware.

"I wonder if they're going to roll out an update when the Switch 2 comes out?" I mumbled to myself as I selected the game. I took a moment to pull my longer hair up into a ponytail, since I'd already changed into a comfier tracksuit now that I was home. I also had to consider what I wanted to eat for dinner. Should I just order something? I *really* didn't want to cook. I was so tired that it was essentially the *last* thing that I wanted to do.

My game file loaded up and I finally leaned in my chair. Not exactly a *gamer stance*, but it was more or less necessary considering my chair was so deep. **"Oh, right! I was still pretty early in my replay. I just added Lin Lee Koo to my party, huh? Isn't she like the youngest member?"** Lin was only thirteen but was already a prodigy engineer aboard the White Whale. I couldn't relate to that. I hadn't been a prodigy when it came to more or less *anything*.

"Wish I knew what that kind of life was like!" I mused jokingly. The prodigy stuff didn't really matter. It was more or less me still fixated on my age, my energy, and how quickly I felt exhausted these days! It

wasn't like saying that would cause a *miracle* to happen. I couldn't go back in time to when I was Lin's age, after all. "**H-Huh!?**" Still, something really *weird* happened! My Pro Controller delivered a light shock to my hands, naturally prompting me to drop it and stand up with a start. "**What was that!? Is the controller broken?**"

I looked down at the dropped controller and then back to my television. The Switch was still on, but the game was *silent*. It had frozen? How could something that had happened with my wireless controller cause my console to freeze? It wasn't like the game freezing would shock me, either. That would be some *crazy* unnecessary tech, right? And it definitely would have happened by now. My Switch had frozen before for *sure*.

"**That's... not good.**" At *best* I was looking at having to replace my Pro Controller, if not the Switch itself. Those were the sorts of unnecessary expenses that every young adult feared. That was just another reason it would have been nice to be young again. You didn't need to worry about stuff like replacing things. Usually your parents would do that, so long as they had the money of course!

My eyes moved back and forth between my controller and my television. What was the best way to handle this? Probably by ignoring the former and rebooting the latter. I still had my Joycons, so I could still *play* things even with my controller broken. That was the plan at least, but... Even I could tell that something was *wrong* all of a sudden. "**Wait, what?**" My attention *immediately* shifted downwards, specifically to the front of my shirt.

Now, I didn't *claim* to be 'busty'. Through my teens my chest had been pretty average, though at the end of that era I had benefited from a growth spurt that shot them up to the heavier side of C-cups that filled out my bra and the t-shirt I was wearing nicely. What had drawn my attention, then, was that they *weren't* filling out either of these areas. Not anymore. "**E-Eh? Why does my chest look smaller...?**" Was my mind playing tricks on me? It didn't seem to be as voluptuous as I remembered somehow? But that wasn't even possible!

What I thought was or wasn't possible seemingly didn't matter all that much, though. Not only was their shrinkage visibly clear, but I could feel that it was the case in my bra. My breasts just didn't fill them anymore. Since I was alone, I felt no shame about pressing my hands against them. "**B-B-cups?**" I couldn't tell for sure without measuring them, but that was my best guess. Aside from being smaller, they also felt a little *perkier* somehow?

My breasts are what I had *immediately* noticed, but they also weren't the only part of my body that had suffered that change. The pants of my tracksuit loosened a little bit too, namely because my peach-shaped ass deflated somewhat so that it was more of a bubble shape, and my thighs lost a little bit of weight too. But at the same time? Much like my bosom, it was akin to an *exchange*. I lost some of the weight that had defined my more mature form, but what remained was increasingly *perky*.

“What’s happening to *me*!?” Something was *clearly* wrong here! Boobs didn't just *shrink*! Well, okay. Not without surgery, but that *not* what was happening in that exact moment! I didn't even really have time to comprehend the fact that my voice had just cracked, largely because something *much* more extreme and *distracting* stood out to me. It would have been *very* concerning if I hadn't considering— **“Am I *shrinking*!?”**

At first, I wasn't really *certain* if what I was seeing was *actually* happening. It began a little subtler in the first five or so seconds, after all. If I was 5'5", and I'd lost a single inch, it wouldn't have been *that* apparent, right? But what if my height dropped much more significantly much more rapidly? At *that* point it almost felt like I was *falling*, as my tracksuit practically swallowed my limbs and became increasingly baggy around basically *everything*.

But something else was happening at the same time. Something that wasn't *as* easy to catch since it was happening to my *face*. The smaller I became? The clearer and tighter the skin of my face became. *Youth* returned to my features as I was pulled back *into* my late teens, and then my early teens as well. My full, mature lips lost their definition and thinned but something about their *shapes* shifted as well. They became more upturned in the corners.

The idea that I was getting younger while my height continuously slipped, but as my lips already demonstrated? Something else was happening simultaneously. My nose definitely became smaller as I slipped back in time, but its shape was *off*. My nostrils narrowed and its bridge thinned until it didn't resemble *my* nose even a little bit. The same could be said about how round my cheeks became. But what was most telling were my *eyes*. Not only did the colors of my irises dull to a chestnut brown, what was actually *more* concerning was their *shapes*. In their corners? They pinched in, while my lids were changed into a hooded variety instead. Not only did they look like the eyes of a young girl, but they were notably *Asian* too.

Chinese, in fact.

“H-How small *am* I!? W-Wait, my voice too?” It wasn’t until my height had reached the bottom limit of 4’7” that I finally found *my* voice again. And I wasn’t quite sure that it was even *my* voice. It was high. *Very* high. Way too high to be my voice, much less the voice of an adult woman – which meant that my vocal chords had been altered, right? But the voice felt a little bit familiar, didn’t it? Where had I heard it before? It was on the tip of my tongue. **“I wish I knew what was going on here!”**

Whatever it was, it was *almost* done at least. My long, light colored hair had begun to slither back in length. I usually wore it past my shoulders, though considering I had shrunk down to such a meager height it had stretched down to my small butt instead. That was fortunately undone, and even if it *hadn’t* been I definitely would have cut it later! Still, it pulled up until a neat little, chin length bob that just so happened to darken to a pitch black, with my bangs swept leftward.

“Wait!” I suddenly remembered that I had tossed my purse beside my chair when I had gotten in and skipped over to it. Or, at least, that was what I would have *liked* to do, but the tracksuit I was wearing made it *way* more difficult than it needed to be. My pant legs were so long that I was practically tripping over them, and I had to roll up my sleeves to reveal just how small and adorable my hands had become. **“Gotcha!”** Once *that* was done, it was all a matter of using those tiny hands to root through my purse and pull out a small compact mirror that I opened while jumping up into a standing position.

My mouth hung open at the sight of my own reflection. The face that stared back at me wasn’t my *own*. Well, I guess it *was* technically? But it wasn’t! It was the face of a Chinese girl that didn’t look a thing *like* me. One with short, black hair... and one that couldn’t be older than *thirteen*. It was at this moment that, for some reason, I had a hard time thinking. **“Wh-What!?”** I wasn’t in pain or anything, but my head felt *full*. Fuller than it had ever been. It passed within a few seconds at least, but it took me a little longer to comprehend the full extent of it. The fact that *reality* had changed.

At least I understood *who* I was supposed to be.

“Woah! This is *weird*! I’m... I’m... a video game character!?” Well, more specifically I was *Lin Lee Koo*, but *how*!? Was it because I had been playing Xenoblade Chronicles XI? Was it because I had made that silly wish!? But what kind of magic grants wishes through *electrocution*!? That was definitely something I could figure out by taking the controller apart and tinkering with it, right? **“...Oh! Since when did I know how to do any of *that*?”**

There were *plenty* of things that I was beginning to realize now that the reality of these *strange* circumstances had finally taken a moment to settle. If I was Lin, I was *thirteen*, right? I was practically a kid again! Which meant my youth had been returned to me! I had a redo, right!? Wasn't that exactly what I wanted? But there was more than that, too.

“I’m also a lot *smarter*? At least when it comes to engineering-related things?” Searching my mind yielded plenty of knowhow regarding topics I definitely hadn’t understood before. Taking apart the controller on the ground was basically child’s play, something I could do with my eyes closed! Once I got it open, I’d be able to understand what made it tick with just a glance, too! **“Doesn’t this mean I could get into a good school pretty easily!? Hmm...”**



Although... the more I thought about it, weren't there *problems* with this too? **“Wait... What about my old life? My family? Is anyone going to believe that I’m Lin!? ...I mean, not Lin! Lin! E-Eh!?”** I had *mistakenly* thought that my mind hadn’t changed much aside from being smarter and acting a little more like the game character had. I could still remember the life I’d led, but... I couldn’t remember my old name, much less say it!

I stumbled over to my coat on the nearby wall with my smaller legs. The clothes I was *wearing* hadn’t changed, but somehow my coat looked smaller? And the wallet inside was cuter. The ID within... wasn’t mine. Well, it *was* mine. But it didn’t belong to who I’d been. It wasn’t even an official ID!

It was a student ID for the local high school!

“W-Wait! Just how much of my life has changed!?”