

# A Cautionary Tale

**For Anonymous**  
**By TheSpiralledEye**

*A hedonistic college guy who couldn't care less for studying offends a witch and finds himself transformed into a middle aged Vietnamese woman who needs to learn the value of hard work.*

Derek groaned; his ears were pounding and his head throbbing. Not just from the intense hangover but from the banging of a fist on his dorm room door. Groggily he reached over to his bedside table and flipped over his phone; 11:23am, who the fuck though it was a good idea to visit him before lunchtime? With a huff he curled up under the blankets, trying to block out the light and drift off again to sleep off the hangover but it was no use. He was awake now and having to deal with it.

The pounding on his door continued and a muffled voice called through but he couldn't make out what they were saying, mostly because he didn't care; he just wanted them to go away. With a huff he sat up, wincing at the bright morning light and grabbing two advil from his side table and swallowing them dry. He stumbled up to the door and yanked it open.

"What?" He growled out.

It was Jackson, his neighbour. Normally they were good friends but he'd not seen much of the guy the last few weeks; every time he'd asked him to hang he'd been too busy studying. Honestly, Derek had been considering dropping him as a friend all together the last few months. He was just such a stick in the mud, always wanting to talk about school or work and once they were a few weeks into the term, forget it. The dude was buried in his books. Now he was standing outside his dorm room with the audacity to look confused at his appearance and demeanour.

"Were you still asleep?" he gaped.

"Obviously." Derek sighed, "Now what is so important you had to wake me up dude? You know I don't get up till one on the weekends."

"It's Monday."

“Whatever.”

“Anyway,” Jackson cleared his throat, “The results are out today, how’d you do?”

“...results?”

“Of the midterms?” Jackson added, looking even more confused, “Oh God, don’t tell me you slept through your exams again. I don’t think they’ll let you retake the class a third time dude.”

Derek just rolled his eyes; Jackson, like most people, got so hung up on college. They liked to pretend it was this big serious thing that could change your life when really, all it took was a few years of real world experience anywhere to get a job these days. Something his father could get him easily.

“Relax, I went. I just don’t really care what my grade is. C’s get degrees dude. In five years time all people will care about is that we have the degree, not how well we did in the class.”

“*If* you get one.” Jackson shook his head, barging past and heading for Derek’s laptop. “The way you act I’d be surprised if you even end up passing half your classes.”

Derek held back a laugh; he was so serious. Who the hell cares if he failed? There were plenty of other colleges he could go to. Cheaper ones too, not that it mattered, whenever he asked his father for more money he got it; that was all that mattered.

He flung himself down on the bed and sighed as Jackson tapped away; only pausing to search around his desk for his student login details.

“Ouch.”

“What?”

“Three C’s and a D,” He winced, Derek just shrugged.

Jackson just shook his head once more in utter bafflement.

“How are you so calm about this? Don’t you realise these classes can change the entire course of your life?”

That was too much; Derek burst into laughter and sat back up, laying a hand on his friend's shoulder.

“Jackson, we’re in our twenties; this is the prime of our lives and you think I’m going to spend my time sitting in front of a computer studying all night?” He said incredulously, “College is all about partying, everybody knows that. When was the last time you saw a college movie without a wild party? Besides, connections are way more important than grades and last I checked, I’m a pretty popular guy.”

“That attitude is going to bite you in the ass one day, dude.” Jackson said seriously, “Mark my words.”

“Ooooh, I’m so scared.” Derek snorted, “Why don’t you go hop along back to your books while I order some breakfast.”

Derek flicked open his phone and started scrolling through DoorDash, looking for somewhere that was open. Jackson opened and closed his mouth a few times before throwing up his hands and walking out.

“Don’t know why I bother.” He muttered under his breath.

“Neither do I.” Derek called, he knew he was being a bit of an ass but that’s what Jackson got for waking him up early.

Especially today, if it really was Monday and their midterm results had just been released that meant the party scene was about to explode. Everybody was on holiday and ready to blow off some steam; the campus would be filled with gorgeous women ready to fall into bed and forget their books. Once again he cursed Jackson for waking him up; he was going to need his beauty rest today because come nightfall he was going to have his pick of wild parties to attend.

As expected, it didn't take long for the party announcements to start appearing on his socials. With the amount of people he had added he had his pick of open houses to join and eagerly he flicked through invite after invite, bookmarking the ones that looked the most promising. He was just drying off after his shower, flicking through his messages when a new one appeared and his smile went wide. Missy Darnell; one of his favourite classmates. Well, perhaps classmate was the wrong term to use seeing as they both rarely attended. She was everything the college films promised him as a young, horny, high schooler; blonde, busty and dumb as bricks.

She also happened to be so rich that nobody cared and was known for her absolutely wild parties. This one, it seemed, was to be hosted at her aunt's house. As he flicked through the pictures of her decorating Derek felt his eyes go wide; it was closer to an ornate mansion than a house and the giant swimming pool at the back was impetus enough. It wasn't summer yet but girls would look for any excuse to get into a bikini and squeal while the boys watched. He could already see it clearly in his mind as he texted back.

*'Count me in!'*

Looking at the time, he had almost an hour to get ready before the party itself started. Good; he wanted to look his best. Hopefully this would be the day he finally got that bimbo into bed; he'd been dreaming about her curves all semester. Unlike most guys, Derek didn't care if a girl slept around a lot, in his mind that just made her all the more experienced. Virgins were overrated and boring, the last one he'd had was so nervous she barely moved and afterwards gushed about the experience as if it had been magical. A complete buzz kill.

He smoothed back his short, dirty blonde hair and smiled. With his bright blue eyes, tanned skin and muscular psyche he had no trouble picking up the ladies. He gave himself a wink in the mirror; tonight would be no exception.

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The mansion was even weirder up close; as he stepped into the main foyer he was struck by the dark colour scheme of black and red tiles. The outside had him primed for one of those old southern gothic places inspired by plantations, with white marble columns and the like. Seeing dark velvet curtains across the windows and framing works of art almost gave him whiplash.

"Isn't it funky?" Missy grinned, greeting him in her bikini, "My aunt is so eccentric, I knew this place was the perfect spot for a party."

“That’s certainly one way to put it.” He chuckled, poking at one of the brass crows that lined the bannister.

Missy led him through the house, talking about how much fun it was to decorate even though the only party additions he could see were the occasional bunch of balloons and a streamer. They were just about to exit out of the hall and into the back yard when Derek stopped; his breath leaving him as his eyes turned wide at a painting on the wall.

It showed a beautiful woman; with ivory skin and dark black hair cascading down her front. She wore nothing, her modesty only barely maintained by those dark locks. She was staring right into him, her eyes twinkling with mirth.

“Beautiful isn’t it?” Missy sighed, “My aunt was an artist's model, that’s her favourite portrait.”

“This is your aunt?” Derek gaped, forget seducing Missy, this woman was already replacing her in his mind as the evening's grand prize. “Is she here?”

“Of course.” Missy replied oblivious to the hungry look in her companion's eye, “She’s out by the pool.”

He couldn't move fast enough, stepping out into the garden and taking in the sights. The pool already had a dozen or so people in it and he scanned the crowd for the raven haired beauty. He made his way over to the bowl of punch laid out on an elaborate mahogany table that looked decidedly out of place next to a pool.

The night was young and as a result the punch was still more fruit than alcohol, something that was sure to change soon. He kept scanning, looking for the woman of his dreams as he slowly walked the area. He was so focused he didn't even realise he was on a collision course until it was too late and he slammed into somebody, sending them both tumbling to the ground.

“Hey, watch it.” He grumbled, dusting himself off before getting to his feet.

The person in question was a woman, old, far older than anybody who should have been at this sort of party. If Derek were to guess, she had to be at least forty, verging on fifty maybe judging by those crows feet and the slightly grey tinge to her black hair. The woman's face twisted up in disgust as she hefted herself to her feet with a groan.

"No class, the men of today." She muttered, "A gentleman would have at least helped me up."

"You got to your feet didn't you?" He rolled his eyes, so dramatic. "Besides, *you* bumped into *me*. Now, if you'll kindly get out of the way I have somebody to look for."

The woman scoffed, crossing her arms and standing her ground. In fact, she stepped out in front of him when he tried to go around her.

"You think you can speak to me like that in my own home? If I had known Missy's friends were so rude I never would have let her host her party here."

Derek swore he heard a record scratch.

"Wait, you're Missy's aunt?"

"Yes." She said smugly, "Does that inspire any sort of apology young man?"

Derek gaped, looking the slightly plump woman up and down; how on earth had the beauty from the painting turned into this middle aged disaster. Her eyes were smokey and her lips bright red; a young woman's look that only turned him off further.

"But the paintings...Missing aunt is hot!" He gaped, "How the fuck did you get so...old?"

"Time does that dearie." She raised an eyebrow, "And I'll have you know I am what they call a mature beauty, I still model today?"

"For what? Halloween costumes? Maternity wear?"

"How dare you?" She seethed, "You come into my home, knock me down and now you insult me?"

"I just tell it how it is, lady." Derek scoffed, turning to go back to the party proper, maybe Missy was still about for him to bed. "It's not my fault you're old and washed up!"

He chuckled to himself, she didn't follow him of course, what would she say? Deep down she had to know he was right. In the time he had wasted wandering the garden even more people had arrived and the party was in full swing; he grinned watching several guys wheel in a keg; it had been a while since he had done a keg stand. Eagerly he ran over to help, setting up the funnel with practised ease.

The guys egged him on and a second later he felt somebody grip his ankles and he was upside down chugging while people cheered. The alcohol burned down his throat and when they placed him back on his feet his head swam pleasantly. He removed the funnel and cheered.

“Fuck school!”

“Woo!”

He grinned at all the other party goers and passed off the funnel over to Missy who did an admirable job following his lead. He followed the lead of many others, stripping down to his swim shorts and jumping in the pool. Derek forgot all about the stupid older woman and enjoyed himself. He swam, he flirted, he ate several little hotdogs wrapped in pastry; this was the life. He flopped down with a bunch of the other guys, all on the prowl and watching the pool like hawks for a slipped nipple or the like when somebody suggested it.

“A panty raid? That's old school.”

“Besides, there is only one house here and it's Missy's.”

“Her aunts.” Derek corrected, “The old lady used to be a model, I bet she's got some old sexy stuff from back in the day, even if all she wears now are granny panties.”

“Gross!” The guys jeered and one of them punched Derek on the shoulder.

“I Dare you to go get those granny panties.” One dared with a grin, “And jump into the pool with them.”

Derek grinned ear to ear; he was never one to turn down a challenge. Besides, that lady had pissed him off with her rudeness, he wouldn't mind embarrassing her a little. She deserved to be put in her place after being so superior with him.

“So this is your life then?”

He drunkenly swayed as he turned to find Missy’s aunt standing there, arms crossed.

“Wha’? The fuck are you on about?”

“Drinking, parties, slacking off; this is all you do?”

“Yup!” He grinned widely, holding up the panties and waving them tauntingly “Jealous huh? I’m in the, *hic*, prime of my life! Suuuuuucks to be you!”

“An absolute waste.” She shook her head, “I promised myself I’d give up the occult but I think perhaps I will make an exception this time.”

“Ooooh whatcha’ gonna do?” He said with mock fear, “Use a voodoo doll on me? Curse me?”

He burst into laughter as she rolled up her dark sleeves and began wiggling her fingers as though she were playing an imaginary piano. Holy crap, she must have been senile; he felt a small amount of guilt well up inside him at that. He probably wouldn’t have been as harsh if he’d known she wasn’t all mentally there.

He walked past her, heading for the door and trying to figure out exactly how to tell Missy how insane her aunt was when a force slammed into his back. It felt almost like being punched but when he turned to face it, all he saw was Missy’s aunt still half way across the room, with a small glow fading between her fingers.

“That should do it.” She sighed with a satisfied grin. She flicked her wrist and the sound of the lock slid into place in the door behind him.

“Hey what the fuck?” He pulled on the door handle and tried in vain to unlock it but no matter how hard he pulled, the lock refused to twist.

“I wouldn’t go outside if I were you.” She said smugly, “It’ll take time for the magic to finish feeding throughout this reality, it might be a bit confusing if you want out half baked before the world is ready for you.”



“The hell does that mean?” He growled, “You open this door right now lady, this is kidnapping or some shit! I’m not above hitting a woman, I’ll let you know!”

“I don’t doubt it.” She replied dryly, “You’re a nasty piece of work, hopefully you learn your lesson.”

“Listen here you....you...”

Derek blinked in surprise, he knew the word he wanted to say but he couldn’t think of it all of a sudden. The word that came to mind instead was ngu vâi but that wasn’t right. Since when did he even know what that word was? The woman said something else he couldn’t quite make out, not because he couldn’t hear her but because the words just...didn’t make sense. It was just a random jumble of sounds with no meaning.

Was he drunker than he realised? No that couldn’t be it, he’d been hammered before, many times, and never had this happen. He took a step forward and winced, his ankle felt wrong, in fact, his whole body was starting to feel strange. It was as if he had pins and needles, his skin tingling all over making it hard to move without wincing. Missy’s aunt cackled and said something else he didn’t understand, except the last part; ‘good’ something, good bye? No, good luck!

He wobbled in place, trying to keep his balance while his whole body itched and tingled before reaching out to give her the finger. He never got the chance though as the hand that appeared at the end of his arm was...wrong.

His skin was dark olive in hue and he could see tiny spots where the colour darkened and lightened slightly. His nails were long and before his very eyes he watched as a thin veneer of pink polish appeared over them as if painted by an invisible brush. He wanted to scream but he was simply too shocked. His fingers got longer, the skin slightly less smooth as that darker pigment slowly spread up his bare arms. As it did, his hard earned muscles slowly melted away, leaving thin, weak arms in their place.

For a second, he thought she was trying to magically sap his strength; magic was the only explanation for what was happening right now. That or he took some really hard drugs without remembering and frankly, the former seemed more likely right now, as unbelievable as it sounded.

The dark pigment moved to his chest and he felt his heart pound hard against his rib cage. A pulse emanated from somewhere deep inside him and to his horror, his skin began to wrap and change. Ballooning out at a rapid pace until his smooth chest was home to two large round mounds.

He knew what he was looking at but it just didn't make any sense! But as his nipples grew and dark brown circles extended out from them he could no longer deny what he was looking at. A pair of large yet strictly pert breasts were growing on his chest, getting bigger and heavier with each passing second as they turned to pretty teardrops and hung down on his chest.

If Missy's aunt was still saying anything he had no idea, all his focus was now on his warping, changing body. His stomach groaned and a strange pressure formed inside him, it felt as though something were pushing his skin from the inside, making it balloon out. His knees pressed together and he felt his face burn in humiliation as he was forced to lean forward; not just to accommodate the growing weight in his chest but to allow his ass to swell.

He twisted awkwardly, watching as his swim shorts began to struggle to keep it contained. The baggy material turned taut as the skin stretched and pressed into it and the elastic around his waistline strained. It was fully stretched out already, it simply couldn't stretch any further! Yet his hips just kept widening. So much so that he winced as the fabric cut into his skin, turning it red with the pressure.

There was no choice, he had to take them off before they ripped or cut off his circulation; he didn't want to wait around to see which happened first. He slipped his fingers between his wide hip and the material just in time and lowered them down. His new peachy ass jiggled as the elastic squeeze down on it before springing free as he finally managed to pull it over his rump.

He was so used to his pants dropping to the floor by that point but it seemed his hips were not the only thing getting wider. His thighs were growing too and he was forced to awkwardly wiggle and sway to get the short down onto the ground.

Laughter met his ears and he glared over at the woman who had done this to him. When he figured out how he was going to end her. He wanted to yell, to rage at her that when his father found out about this she would be sued to high heaven, but again the words failed him. It wasn't that he couldn't remember them, more than the words that came to his lips didn't seem right. It was almost like another language.

He had bigger issues than his lack of communication skills though. While feeling his shoulders slope and his chin round over was bad enough, soon he could feel that tingling growing stronger in the very worst place; between his legs. He could only watch in horror as his cock began to shrink right before his eyes. Shrivelling and disappearing into the curly dark hair there along with his balls. He winced feeling them push back up inside him; Derek swore he could feel his insides churning, almost as if they were moving around.

Humiliation flooded his system and he watched as his now dark olive skin flushed even darker as he blushed. His face was burning but he could see the dark reddish hue

spreading across his breasts and thighs as well, there was even a slight burn in his ass. He'd never been so embarrassed or emasculated before. He hugged his new middle, groaning as his body continued to become more and more feminine against his will.

A cool breeze seemed to emulate from nowhere, causing him to shiver as it brushed against his inner thighs. There was more there now too, a strange dampness and absence where his cock had been. He looked down at himself; the big boobs, the peachy ass...surely not though, surely his manhood had not been replaced with a pussy. That would just be too much. He felt lightheaded, though whether it was shock or the physical strain he could not be sure.

Suddenly somebody was in front of him, Missy's aunt, she was taking him by the shoulders and smiling. He could only blink at her, he was so confused, what was going on? She smiled one last time and said something his brain couldn't comprehend.

And then she pushed him backwards.

His centre of gravity had shifted, his new curves unbalanced him and Derek felt himself fall. He squeezed his eyes closed, bracing for the impact of the hard wooden floor and-

He hit a mattress.

He blinked a few times in confusion. Instead of the ornate, high ceilings of the mansion he was looking at dingy grey plaster. He continued to blink, expecting his vision to clear and moment but it didn't. He sat up and found he was in a tiny bedroom about a quarter of the size of his dorm room. Most of the space was taken up by a bed in which he was currently laying and he grimaced at the cheap, cotton sheets that itched at his skin. His skin!

It was still that dark olive colour and as he pulled back the sheets, confused as to how he'd even gotten under them in the first place, he saw his body was still that of a woman. He sat up, head still swimming as he looked around the room; it was cramped and full of strange looking clothes and boxes. Morning light was streaming through the windows; what the hell had happened last night?

He got up, wobbling a little, still unused to his new centre of gravity. He opened the door, expecting to find the rest of the apartment but instead found...a bathroom. That couldn't be right, there were only two doors in the bedroom and opening the second revealed a dusty looking hallway. He closed it and collapsed back against the door in horror. This...this couldn't be the whole apartment? Why on earth would he have come to such a horrible place?

He ran back to the bathroom, grabbing a towel from the rack and wiping the moisture from the mirror. A face stared back at him; one he didn't recognise. Yet when he recoiled in shock, so did the woman in the glass. He raised a hand, so did she. He pressed a hand to his cheek, watching as the gesture was mirrored.

The woman was older, in her forties perhaps, with thin, almond shaped eyes, and jet black hair still mussed from sleep. There were laugh lines leading the bottom of her nose down to his chin and crows feet by her eyes. She wasn't hideous by any measure but she was old and age had taken some of her natural beauty away.

One more he prodded at his own face, watching the woman's hand move in tandem. The disconnect slowly melted away as his stomach turned cold with dread. The change; it hadn't been some weird dream. This was really happening and the woman in the mirror was *him!*

He opened his mouth and an unfamiliar scream escaped as he stumbled back. This couldn't be happening! The sound of pounding at the door made him jump, for a moment he was back in his dorm, being woken up by Jackson before the new reality slammed back into place. With trembling fingers he unlocked the door and came face to face with another Asian woman who looked worried.

"Ah! Huong, are you alright?" She panted, "I heard you scream."

Derek's mind was racing; on some instinctive level he realised this woman was speaking Vietnamese yet, he understood every word. And not even in the sense that he was translating it to English in his head he just...knew it. It was with horror that he realised he was thinking in that language too!

"I saw myself in the mirror." He said quietly, bewildered to hear the breathy feminine voice saying words that should have been foreign to his ears. "I gave myself a fright."

"That's it?" The woman gaped, "For God's sake I thought you were being murdered by a client or something."

"Client?"

"Yeah, did you drink too much last night or something?" The woman narrowed her eyes. "Maybe you should take tonight off, if you can afford it."

“Okay.” Derek just wanted this woman to leave so he could figure out what the fuck was happening.

Seemingly fed up with her neighbour's strange behaviour the woman gave him a little, almost sarcastic bow and headed back down the hall. The moment she disappeared Derek crept after her, reading the little notepaper sign slid into the nameplate; Quyen Lan. He rushed back to his own, confused to see his own familiar handwriting on a similar piece of notepaper; Huong Do.

That's what that woman, Quyen, had called him wasn't it? But was that his first name or last name? Did the Vietnamese go last name first like some other Asian countries did? He didn't even know; Huong could have been his surname for all he knew. He went back inside and leaned against the door, breathing heavily.

“Calm down, Derek.” The words felt odd on his tongue in that foreign language, “Just breathe and you'll sort this out.”

After taking a moment to calm his racing heart he began to look around the room for any clues as to how he got here and who Huong, who *he*, was. The room was tiny, boxes of clothes, some western some more Asian inspired, all stacked up together as there didn't seem to be much of a closet. A tiny kitchenette with about five feet of cheap linoleum was at the foot of the bed and contained a sink, a microwave and a tiny stovetop. The fridge was filled with items he didn't recognise despite being able to read the labels.

He picked up a few and sniffed, making a face. Pungent was the word he would ascribe to them and he didn't have the faintest idea how to go about using any of it. Derek barely knew how to cook normal food, let alone what to use shrimp paste for.

Under the bed he found more boxes and finally found something useful. A cheap mobile phone and a password chief among them. The passport showed the same woman he'd seen in the mirror and according to the date of birth she was forty-two years old and originally from Hanoi.

He turned on the phone and after waiting a frustratingly long time for it to turn on, typed his name into google. No social media pages that he could find, at least none that matched the details he knew about but at least he now knew that Huong was his first name. He typed in the neighbours and learned that frustratingly, she had written it last name first. That meant her first name had to be Lan. So bloody confusing, couldn't they just do it the western way? It made so much more sense, after all they were called first names and last names for a reason.

He hesitated for a moment before typing in his real name; shocked to find...nothing. No facebook, no Tinder, no Instagram...none of his accounts were there. Had Missy's aunt somehow deleted them or something. He googled up Missy and Jackson, both still there so it was just him that was missing.

He sat back on the floor in a huff and squeezed his eyes closed, willing the universe to right itself but no such miracle happened. He opened the tiny window and was met with sights and smells unfamiliar to him. He was on the second floor of an apartment building that looked as though it had seen better days. There was a mishmash of cultures outside his window, he spied more Vietnamese words on the shopfront down the street, though most of the signage seemed to be Chinese, or Japanese, he'd never been able to tell the difference. He scanned the skyline and noticed a pretty blue glass skyscraper well in the distance. He recognised it; it was a major shopping mall in the central city.

He used it to try and orient himself and realised he was on the opposite side of town to the college and if the decor was anything to go by; he was in Chinatown. But how? How was this possible; magic? It had to be. Honestly, the realisation that magic was real was the last problem on his list right now. He had to figure out how to get back into his real body and that meant he needed to pay Missy's aunt a little visit.

After a while of searching he managed to find his keys, wallet and some suitable clothes. For some reason most of the articles were so...skimpy. The sort of stuff to be worn by a woman half his current age. Was Huong going through some sort of midlife crisis or something? He threw on a pair of jeans and a high collar blouse, trying not to think about how tight the former were. He couldn't even fit his wallet in his pockets. The fabric was so tight, he had to grab a random black purse from where it was hanging on the bedroom window and use that instead.

He was just about to walk out when he realised his chest. He'd done what he was used to and simply buttoned up the shirt but as he looked down at the crisp white fabric he realised his breasts were clearly visible. His face burned with humiliation realising what he had to do.

He had no idea how to put on a bra, take them off, yes. Hell, he could even do that in the dark but it turned out doing those little hooks back up without looking was another level of difficulty entirely. He wobbled and stumbled, trying to keep his balance as he walked around with his elbows sticking out like a chicken. Eventually he gave up and did the hooks up on his belly before spinning it around and wiggling it up his body.

He was surprised to find how much he liked the feeling of wearing a bra. His breasts were heavy and once he had the strong underwire supporting them it immediately took a weight off his back he'd not even noticed. Plus the skin was so soft and having that gentle, silky underlining cupping them felt wonderful.

He stepped out and slowly made his way down the stairs and out to the street and was immediately hit with the distinctive smell of Chinatown. It was called Chinatown but really it was a mix of all kinds of Asian cultures; as he walked he passed Asian grocers, Sushi shops, and stalls selling red bean buns along with all the usual suspects such as laundromats and banks.

Half the signs were incomprehensible to him; nothing but squiggles and lines. Included the ones he knew had to be written in English. On the opposite side of the spectrum, anything written in Vietnamese he read with ease. He felt almost as though he were on an alien planet in an alien body. Even the way he walked had changed. His hips swayed gently to accommodate his wider hips and heavy ass and even with the bra he could feel the subtle movement of his breasts beneath the shirt.

The scent of spices was in the air and his stomach rumbled; how long had it been since he'd eaten? The last thing he remembered were the little hotdogs at Missy's party but who knew how long ago that was, or if they even still counted. He looked around, hoping to pass a McDonalds or something on the way but had no such luck. He'd never liked foreign food; he rubbed his stomach with irritation as it complained again.

Just as he was reaching the edge of Chinatown a smell hit his nose that immediately made his mouth water. Like bread but different, he followed his nose to a tiny little corner shop covered in Vietnamese signs; banh mi. The word rolled off his tongue easily and almost as if in a trance he found himself buying one. The woman behind the little desk handed him a folded bread roll filled with shrimp and vegetables. It was the sort of thing he would have balked at yesterday but he was hungry and...it did smell nice.

He continued his walk, munching on the banh mi and finding it surprisingly delicious. The little shrimp crunched and ideally he wondered if he could use that paste in his fridge to make something that tasted similar.

He finally reached the edge of Chinatown and crossed under the large red gate that marked it and breathed a sigh of relief. The change was instant and he was surrounded by western buildings, dress and signs. Though that last part actually provided more of a problem. He'd never been to this part of the city before and now that he could no longer read English they were about as useful as sand in the desert.

That bitch may have taken his English skills but not his wits; something he vowed to make her regret. The taxi's were all still easy to find lined up at their bay and he slipped inside with a smile which dropped as soon as the cabbie turned and said something he couldn't understand. He looked down at the cracked screen of his 'new' phone; he had no idea what the address of Missy's aunt's house was and without the original messages he had no way of finding out.

“Could you take me to Windbourne College?” He asked, the driver looked at him confused and said something back in English he didn't quite get. Something about a stadium? no , understand? Did he say ‘understand?’”

“Windbourne. College.” Derek forced himself to say it as slowly and clearly as possible yet his accent still made the words sound strange, at least to his ears compared to the voice he was used to.

The cabbie said a few more words but then, thankfully, started driving. Derek sank back into the cool leather seat and watched the world going past, grateful when the surroundings started to look familiar. When they pulled up to his college the cabbie tapped the metre and his heart stuttered; that fare was...a lot more than he was expecting. Still, nothing in the grand scheme of things.

He opened his wallet and froze, a single, crumpled twenty dollar bill stared back. Not even half the fare. Awkwardly he dug around, looking for hidden compartments and credit cards but there was nothing. Surely this wasn't all he had, it just couldn't be!

The cabbie, obviously noticing his lack of funds started yelling, pointing at the door. Derek didn't need to know what he was saying to know they were threats and he still understood the word ‘police’ when it was shouted with such vigour. He left the twenty and darted out of the car, running into the college grounds and away from the cabbie as fast as he could.

The grounds were thankfully, fairly empty but those people he did pass looked at him oddly. It didn't matter, he just had to find Missy and somehow explain what was going on. He knew the way to the girls dorm easily enough and fortunately, there was a listing with all the names and assigned rooms. It took him a painfully long time to find Missy's name amongst the sea of others, slowly sounding out each one of the now alien sounding names on his tongue.

By the time he reached her room he was thoroughly over this day. The sooner this got fixed the better. He knocked, pounding hard when Missy didn't answer. Eventually the door cracked open and a very tired, very hungover Missy appeared and his heart leapt. He'd never been so happy to see her.

“Missy, you have to help me, you're psychotic aunt turned me into some sort of middle aged Vietnamese woman and now I can't turn back!”

“What?”



Missy rubbed at her eyes and mumbled some more words he didn't understand. Derek bit his cheek and focused, what were the words in English? He spoke the language and only that language for most of his life, why was it so hard to think of it now that he desperately needed it?

“Missy...Vietnamese....change aunty.”

“Change aunty?” She tilted her head then suddenly her eyes widened in understanding and she rapidly spoke, far too fast for him to follow but Derek smiled and nodded, convinced she must have understood. She ducked inside and stepped out with a bundle of clothes and handed them to him, much to his confusion.

“What?” He asked.

“Change aunty.” She said slowly, “You clean.”

Missy...thought he was a cleaner?!

“No, no! Change uh...party uhhhhh...mean lady?”

Dammit! Why couldn't he think of more words, if he could just explain then everything would be fine. Missy pouted, looking irritated as she took her clothes back. Looking down her nose at Derek she huffed and shut the door. He curled his hands into fists; at least now he knew how to call her a bitch in English again.

~

The sun was setting by the time he got back to Chinatown. With no money, he'd had no choice but to walk much of the way, occasionally lucking out and picking up a few coins until he had enough for bus fare. Then he'd spent another half an hour just trying to understand the bus schedule and figure out which one to catch. When he finally stepped out into the streets that smelt of wood smoke and spice he sighed in relief. What an awful day this had been. He never dreamed he would be slumming it on public transport, let alone having to scrap change in order to even afford it; this was the most humiliating day of his life.

Every sigh he passed in Vietnamese that he could read effortlessly was another kick to the gut. He never thought he would speak another language, learning had been too much effort. Now he was stuck on the other side .

“There you are.” Lan, the neighbour from this morning, smiled as he stepped up into the hall, “Did you want to work the corner by the bar with me tonight?”

Derek was so tired after his long walk and ride, the idea of working made his legs tremble with exhaustion. He wanted to say no but the knowledge that his wallet was filled with nothing but dust made him hesitate. He needed to figure this out, turn back into himself; but until then he needed to be able to eat and presumably pay the rent on the shitty room that was passing for his apartment.

“Yeah sure.” He nodded.

“You look so tired, are you sure you’re okay?” Lan asked as her brow furrowed, “I’d offer to help out but I barely got anybody last night, I’m pretty light on money myself. Especially with cigarettes getting more expensive.”

“Ahuh.” Derek nodded tiredly, “I’d better go put on my uniform.”

Lan gave him a bewildered look before giggling and nodding, waving goodbye as he practically fell into his apartment. It was so tempting to eat whenever he found in the fridge raw and then fall into bed but he knew that would be a mistake.

Instead he stripped off the sweat soaked clothes, including the bra and chucked them in the basket inside the tiny bathroom which he assumed was for dirty clothes. The shower was Heavenly, despite the fact the water was lukewarm at best. Still, it washed away the sweat and helped to give him a second wind. He peeled one of the lychees sitting in the bowl atop his mini fridge and popped it in his mouth, enjoying the sweet taste on his tongue while he rummaged around for his work uniform.

He had no idea what Huong did for a living but clearly she worked at the same place Lan did. Yet, almost half an hour of searching yielded nothing even remotely like a uniform. Even more surprisingly, for a lady who was clearly poor he sure had a lot of clothes. Skimpy ones at that, he picked up a pair of fishnet stockings and grimaced; such things were not for women over the age of twenty five in his opinion.

It was then Lan’s words began to sink in; working the corner, clients, the skimpy clothes, the fact that Huong seemed to only work with cash and not own a single card...no. No, he couldn’t be! Yet as Lan knocked on the door, dressed in a too tight corset style dress and heels asking to borrow his purple eyeshadow ‘for tonight’, he couldn’t deny it. Not only had he been transformed into a middle aged woman.

He had been changed into a prostitute.

~

He was at a crossroad; on the one hand, he needed money, badly. On the other hand, the only way Huong had to earn it was on her back, a concept that made his guts twist and his face burn. On the surface, he wasn't against getting paid to have sex but this sex would inevitably be with him being pinned down by some greasy man and being forced to pretend he was enjoying it if he wanted a good pay day. Debasing himself in such a way was just too big a hit to his pride.

He sat in nothing but his panties and bra, plain black, afraid to put on anything raunchier. His other outfits were laid out on the bed, taunting him. Dress up sexy, earn money; dress conservative or stay home and he would keep the tattered remains of his pride but likely run out of food in the next few days.

He opened the fridge and was yet again met with all those ingredients he didn't know. If he could, he'd throw it all out and go down to the grocer to get something familiar but for obvious reasons that was off the table. He had no choice but to start googling the ingredients and figuring out what he could cook.

He couldn't help but grimace as he poured fish sauce and broth into a tiny pot with some noodles. He was sure this had to be a mistake, there was no way fish sauce of all things could make a dish taste good; it stank like an old boat! According to the internet though, most of the things he had on hand could be used to make a soup called Pho and out of all the options he found, that looked the easiest.

He sat cross legged on the bed with a piping hot bowl of the noodles and had to admit, it tasted rather good. The steam wafted into his face and he felt the heat open his pores. Perhaps he could make a decision about what to wear once he'd eaten; when he could think a little more clearly.

He slurped up the noodles, bracing for the stink of fish that never came. The meal was hearty, filling in that way that made your heart feel warm. He drank down every last drop of the broth and shoved the noodles in his mouth with alarming speed. He hated to admit it but between this and the bahn mi he was starting to think that perhaps he had been just a tad closed minded about trying foreign food.

He placed the bowl back on his tiny bench space, looking at the empty packet of noodles and almost empty carton of broth. He sighed heavily; there was no choice, he had to go to work tonight; much as it pained him.

“It’s not like anybody knows it’s you.” he whispered to himself as he took out a short red dress, “Just grit your teeth and get it over with, once you change back nobody will ever know.”

He squeezed himself into the tight dress, it was made of a stiff, almost glossy material with ribbons up both sides. One tug and the dress would fall off him; that was by design he imagined. His chest was pressed up and squeezed, nearly doubling the size of his cleavage; an impressive feat considering it wasn't small before. He brushed his short dark hair until it was a glossy black and rested just against his shoulders and finished the look with a pair of strappy heels that ran all the way to his knees

He looked in the mirror and frowned; he looked...wrong. Not just because he was a woman but the outfit looked almost stereotypical. When he imagined a corner hooker in his mind, this is what he saw. He pulled a face and tugged the ribbon sending the dress to the floor.

If he was forced to be a hooker he was at least going to be one with a bit more class. He riffled through, finding several traditional looking garments which he was tempted by but ultimately left behind after using google to search up similar outfits. Turns out ao dai's were traditional Vietnamese garb and somehow wearing them while working a corner felt...wrong. Even for him.

He settled on something in the middle. A western style mini dress with a high neckline that left a teardrop shaped gape for his cleavage to show through. A black dragon coiled around the hem, hugging his thighs and two bright green faux jade earrings hung from his earlobes. Carefully, he sat and applied a thick layer of makeup to cover up the crows feet and laugh lines, smoothing deep red across his lips and doing his best to follow a tutorial on smokey eyes. It was a bit hit or miss, he looked more tired than smokey but it was the best he could do.

A knock at the door told him Lan was ready to go and he took a deep breath before opening it. Lan was dressed similarly to his first outfit and she looked up and down thoughtfully.

“Interesting look. Sure to get some attention! Let’s go.”

Derek had so many things he wished he could ask; how long did they normally work? Why did they do it in the first place? How long had Huong been a prostitute? But he couldn't ask any of them without earning him more suspicion. According to the passport he'd found, he was here as a resident on a work visa, so at the very least he knew he wasn't here illegally.

Though there was no way he got a proper work visa if he wrote down prostitute as his occupation. He must have had another job at some point, surely?

As they approached the corner the sun just dipping behind the horizon, leaving the sky brilliant purple. His heart began to beat faster as Lan took up position beneath the street light. He had no idea what to do to make himself seem more appealing, he wasn't even sure he wanted that in the first place!

It didn't take long for a car to pull up and roll down its window. Lan approached like a pro, haggling prices in thickly accented English before giving her a little wave and hopping into the vehicle. In a roar of engine and spin of tires, she was gone. Derek was alone.

Time passed and other cars slowed but never stopped. One glance in the reflective window nearby told him why. He looked downright thunderous in appearance, hardly the sexy, willing toy men were on the lookout for. Lan returned and then went again, and again. Each time Derek didn't know how to feel, relieved that he wasn't being fucked or worried about his empty purse.

"Still nothing?" Lan sighed as she returned for the fourth time, "What's wrong with you Huong, you look miserable. You know guys don't want that. No matter how sad you are on the inside you need to look happy. Please them, that's how you earn good money here."

"But why?" He complained, "Why do we have to do this? Lan can't we get proper jobs?"

"And earn half as much for twice as many hours and be spat on by snooty westerners for not cleaning their floors right?" Lan pulled a face, "Forget it. Unless you speak English, labour is all we have and at least this labour has the chance to be quick and or fun."

Derek remembered the condescending smile on Missy's face as she handed him her laundry. There was a level of expectation there; what other purpose could a middle aged Asian woman with no English be doing but cleaning? His blood boiled in anger at his friend but also himself; he no doubt would have acted exactly the same way if he had been in Missy's shoes.

Lan was picked up again and Derek felt a sense of determination fill him. Standing here all night waiting for money to fall into his lap would get him nowhere. It was time to grit his teeth and just...get it over with.

He took a deep breath and put on his best smile, standing under the light in the most casual yet suggestive pose he could manage. Each time a car approached he bent down to fiddle with the straps of his heels until finally one stopped. Heart thundering in his chest he

approached and leaned down as the window rolled to reveal a shockingly put together man in a business suit.

“How much?” He asked in English, it took Derek a second but he understood.

“A hundred.” He said with more confidence than he felt the man scoffed.

“For a corner whore? You’re dreaming.” Derek only understood a little but he pretended the reaction didn't bother him.

“You lose. Next.” He said trying hard to look bored, as if he wasn't asking an exorbitant cost.

He watched as the man's eyes looked him up and down once more.

“Fine. A hundred.”

Derek did his best to hide his nervous swallow and opened the car door.

~

The drive to the charge by the hour motel down the street only took a minute, yet it felt like an age to Derek. He could not believe he was doing this. They parked and his companion, Charlie according to his drivers licence, paid for an hour. Each step they took toward the room felt monumental, like they were happening in slow motion. He couldn't make out any sounds save the deafening click of his heels against the concrete and the metal twist of the key in the lock as Charlie opened the door.

Derek wasn't sure which was trashier, his apartment or this hotel room. Though the hotel room had the audacity to be bigger which he felt almost insulted by.

“Right then,” Charlie grinned, “Time for you to show me you're worth a hundred dollars.”

*Fuck.*

It was fine, this was just an act right? All he had to do was...play pretend. He was a guy deep down, he knew what men wanted in the bedroom, or at least he knew what he liked. All he had to do was act like the women in the porno's he enjoyed and everything

would be fine. Hopefully he could be sexy enough that Charlie could cum quickly and the actual sex wouldn't last too long. He turned to face Charlie with what he hoped was a look of sultry sophistication.

“How want me?” He asked as best he could in his broken English, “Tit job? Hand job?”

He was glad for the make up on his cheeks hiding his blush; how degrading was it that those words were some of the few he knew in English now? He pushed up his tits to show them off and watched as Charlie's pupils dilated; he was doing something right then.

“On your knees.” He said firmly, “Tit job.”

Derek swore he could feel his dignity slowly slipping away as he sunk to the floor and slowly removed his dress and bra while Charlie looked on hungrily. He said something too quietly for Derek to fully understand but he was sure it had something to do with not enough Asian women having big tits; it took all of his self control not to punch this smug man right in the jaw.

He sauntered over to where Derek was kneeling as if he were the hottest shit in the world and Derek held back a huff of laughter. Look at this asshat, acting as if it wasn't pathetic he had to pay for his women rather than earning them at all. Derek was just glad he didn't ask for a blowjob, he wasn't sure he could resist biting the dude's dick if he had.

Charlie pulled out his member, already hard and ready. Derek bit the inside of his cheek; he hated to admit it, but Charlie was big, bigger than he had ever been. Somehow that just added salt to the wound that was his current situation. He placed his cock between Derek's heft breasts and he pushed them together, sandwiching the member between his tits.

Swallowing down the very last of his pride, Derek began to massage them, pressing the cock between his breasts as Charlie began to thrust. The humiliation was unbearable but even worse; it felt *good*. He didn't want to enjoy this! But as Charlie groaned and rubbed his cock between his two soft tits Derek couldn't help but do the same. The skin there was so sensitive he swore he could feel every last inch of the hot member between his tits and he found himself pressing his palms against the sides of his breasts even harder to be able to feel it more. A small amount of slickness began to form between the skin as precum dribbled down from Charlie's tip and into his cleavage, making them move together with even less friction.

Derek looked down, watching more precum drip from the tip. It was pointing right at him; any second now Charlie was going to cum and it was going to go all over his face.

Why the hell did he want that?

His insides were starting to ache slightly, a warm feeling bloomed between his legs and to his eternal shame he could feel wetness soaking through to his panties. It wasn't his fault! Anybody would get turned on having their tits pleased like this with a moan moaning so close by! At least that's what he kept telling himself. He was so caught up in his own head he barely had a moment to prepare before Charlie was groaning and a moment later hot cum splattered across Derek's chin and tits. He shivered; hating how much he enjoyed it. At least it was over now. He stood, reaching for his dress only to freeze as Charlie grabbed his wrist.

"Hey now, I haven't had my money's worth yet."

That warmth between his legs grew and Derek swallowed again. He told himself it was money; money was why he laid down on the bed and let Charlie slip his panties off; money, not because of the want that was steadily growing. He'd never experienced anything like this heat before, it seemed to emulate from inside him. Almost like a hunger, a need to be filled but instead of his stomach demanding food, his body was demanding cock.

A strange form of desire began to grow inside him as Charlie crawled up his body and pinned his hands beside his head. He'd never been on the bottom before; there was something about a strong man pinning him down, still half dressed that lit a fire inside him. He didn't want it too; in fact he wished he was recoiling in disgust right now like he expected he would. Instead he was breathing heavily, feeling the breasts rise and fall as Charlie's cock got hard again next to his thigh.

The man was laying kissing into the hollow of his throat, mumbling words he didn't understand and didn't care to. He let his eyes flutter closed so he could just enjoy the sensations. Like Lan said, this job could sometimes be fun and after the day he'd suffered through he deserves to have a little treat.

He moaned and whimpered, more than he felt just to make Charlie feel like the big man he clearly imagined himself as and soon he was rock hard once more and pressing his tip to Derek's hole. There was a slight burn as his muscles stretched and Charlie pushed inside. It felt so different to what he was used to as a man. He was used to being squeezed, being buried in wet warm heat, now he was that heat and it was glorious. He tightened around the length as Charlie sheathed himself fully and he felt the cock twitch inside him. It



felt so...intimate. So primal, to be filled this way and Derek found he liked it. He wanted more.

Acting on some instinct he couldn't describe he reached up to hold Charlie's shoulders, ground himself on the taut, solid muscles there and pulled him forwards to roll their hips together. He kept himself tight, squeezing the thick cock inside him and watching as Charlie shuddered in response. Derek could feel the tip of his cock brushing against the deepest part of himself and it elicited a primal form of gratification and pleasure he'd never experienced before. As Charlie began to thrust harder he began to slam into the back of his pussy and the ecstasy exploded within him. Turns out he needn't have worried about forcing himself to moan and act as if he was enjoying himself.

"Ah, ohhhh....ooohhhh I d-don't know how I-long i can keep going! So tight!" Charlie groaned.

Derek found himself in the shocking and embarrassing position of wanting to beg him to keep going. He could feel something building inside; each thrust felt better than the last and fed into that need growing stronger every second. He opened his mouth and a wail escaped as his pussy began to pulse and pleasure washed over his entire being.

A moment later Charlie groaned and came as well, watching him unlock something else primal inside Derek and before he could think he was leaning forward to pull Charlie as close as possible to ride out their orgasms together. The pleasure surged and finally faded, leaving them an exhausted pile of limbs.

Derek was in awe; he had just had sex for money...and liked it. The orgasm was so strong he felt almost light headed as Charlie withdrew and began to get dressed. Tossing him two fifties with a grin.

"Well worth the money."

Derek picked up the money and tried not to feel dirty as he put his clothing back on. A glance at the cheap hotel alarm clock told him it was only ten o'clock; the night was still young and he had to earn more than a hundred dollars if he was going to survive. It was time to get back to work.

~

Derek woke up and rolled over groggily, opening his eyes and finding a curtain of black hair blocking his eyes. He sighed; another day as Huang. Every night he went to bed secretly hoping to wake up as himself again, passed out on the floor of Missy's party after having too

much to drink. Too much time was passing for this to be a drunken hallucination though; he'd fallen into routine as Huong, working night and sleeping during the day while frugally spending his money.

Shopping at the Asian groceries was cheaper and easier than walking all the way out of Chinatown and he was slowly developing a taste, even a preference for Asian food. Especially Vietnamese food. He never realised how versatile noodles and soup could be. Not only that but there were a variety of dishes he'd never even heard of. He'd started swapping recipes with the local women, finding it was a nice way to meet people and fill the void that had been left by his rather large social circle as Derek.

With a groan he sat up and stretched, slipping out of bed and grabbing another lychee before boiling the jug for coffee. He'd been floating semi aimlessly through this new life. He had dug through the little apartment with a fine tooth comb to try and figure out as much information about his new life as possible.

From what he had been able to piece together he was a legal immigrant from Hanoi. The company he'd originally come here to work for had massive layoffs and as a result, he was now working as a prostitute. Work he had steadily gotten used to, and could even enjoy. Having sex as a woman was, loath as he was to admit it, great and he really enjoyed it. Far more than he had as a man, which was saying something. Still; he couldn't just stay this way but finding Missy's aunt was proving difficult. Mostly because of his limited English; even if he did speak English though, what was he going to do? Go up to Missy and ask where her aunt lives, as a total stranger? He'd be lucky if she didn't call the police.

He opened the cupboard and sighed; out of coffee. Of course. He quickly dressed and headed down to the shop, breathing in the scent of his new home with a soft smile. His apartment may have been small and crappy but there was something welcoming about that scent of noodles and spice in the air, especially in the morning when all the small food carts were in full swing preparing breakfast for all the pedestrians.

As he walked something caught his eye; a poster. It was written in Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean, presumably advertising the same thing; English classes. The idea of willingly having to take classes again made him grimace; he hated school. The only good thing about being Huong, besides the food, the awesome rack and the fun nights, was the fact that he didn't need to study anymore.

He chuckled at the thoughts; perhaps being a woman wasn't so bad, though he did miss being young. There were little tags at the bottom designed to be torn off, with the date and time of the classes to be held at the little community centre down the road. With some trepidation he ripped one off and popped it in his pocket.

If there was one thing he'd learned these last few weeks, it was that nothing was going to get better unless he drank a cup of concrete and hardened up. Hard as it was likely to be, he was going to have to learn English again.

~

"My name is Huong. I am from Vietnam. It is nice to meet you."

He recited the words over and over under his breath. The language felt so strange rolling off his tongue now. It was odd, to know that it was his mother tongue, the thing he had spoken for most of his life and yet, as he stared down at the messy page of notes it still took him time to sound everything out and related it to the correct Vietnamese term in his head.

His progress was slow going at first he just found practising and studying so boring. All his new friends spoke Vietnamese so he had nobody to practise with except those who attended the informal classes with him down at the community centre once a week.

As time went on though he managed to dedicate more time to it. With his limited funds he couldn't afford to do much and there wasn't a lot of room for entertainment in his unit; he didn't even have a television. At first practising the words was like pulling teeth but then gradually it just sort of became part of his daily routine.

As had many other things he never would have imagined; playing Mah-jong with some of the Chinese mothers down at the community centre, going out for drinks with Lan in the early hours of the morning, cooking and cleaning for himself. It wasn't the life of a college party boy, far from it but it wasn't the worst. He was making the best of a bad situation; there was no point in being miserable all the time after all.

Though every time he had to get down on his hands and knees to scrub his bathroom tiles just to get them looking even vaguely clean he would groan. This body just had aches he wasn't used to, even bending over to empty the bin, an action which have been simple before elicited a twinge from his spine. Two or three glasses of wine was enough to have his head pounding the next morning as well and Derek began to realise just how right Missy's aunt had been about him taking his youth for granted. What he wouldn't give to not have to deal with aching knees after nights of walking.

He was just starting to recite his numbers when a knock at the door broke his concentration. With a sigh he put down the notebook, secretly glad to have a reason to stop studying. Lan was there smiling.

"Hey, did you want to go shopping?" Lan asked eagerly, "we only have a few days before New Year, we'll need a new outfit!"

“It was New Year three weeks ago.” Derek questioned in confusion.

He'd spent the night watching fireworks in the distance while he stood on his corner. It had been a very profitable night with all the men wrong too drunk to care about their wallets. Plenty of big spenders. He'd forlornly wondered what he would have been doing had he still been himself; going to a rager in all likelihood and enjoying the fact that he could get hammered and sleep off the hangover within half a day.

“Lunar New Year, dummy.” Lan rolled her eyes, “You're becoming a westerner, eh? No Lunar New Year for you?”

She was teasing and he giggled along with her to pretend he'd been making a joke. He thought Chinese New year was...well, Chinese. Apparently it was a lot more complicated than that. When he'd seen all the shops putting up decorations he'd assumed it was just because this was Chinatown, not because all the other little groups were going to be joining in.

He glanced behind him at the boxes of neatly folded clothes; most of them were for work, the others he could take or leave, style wise. Perhaps it would be nice to get something new. He had a bit of fun money stashed away and it was going to be at least a few more weeks until his English was good enough to confront Missy and her aunt anyway.

“Alright, I'll grab my things.”

Lan looped her arm through his and they walked down the street. Derek did his best to act as if he knew where they were headed; women's clothing stores hadn't exactly been on his radar since arriving here several weeks ago. Lan led him to a small shop with a Vietnamese sign that simply said 'Bian's'. The shop was cramped, not because it was small but because there were simply so many shelves and racks. It looked like a forest; everything from casual wear to intricate embroidered dresses in several traditional styles.

Most people in Chinatown, from what he had seen, mostly wore western clothes but there were always exceptions. Especially on holidays and special occasions. Right now the shop was bursting with women trying on everything from cocktail gowns to hamboks.

“Let's get in quick before all the good stuff is gone!” Lan smiled, dragging him into the forest of clothes.

Derek didn't know where to even start; he was used to jeans and shirts but something told him those were not going to be an option here. He looked at the western style dresses first, since they were what felt familiar but something kept niggling at the back of his mind. Buying one of them didn't feel right, not for Lunar New year.

He looked over his shoulder to where Lan was standing with several other women by a rack of long flowing tunics. A lot of the Vietnamese women he recognised who were in the store were standing around similar racks and as subtly as he could, he took a picture and searched it up. Ao dai, traditional Vietnamese dress. He bit his lip; the food had proven tasty and the culture and people quite interesting; who's to say the clothing wouldn't have its appeal as well?

He joined the others, walking along the large rack and letting his fingers brush against the fabrics. A flash of colour caught his eye and he found himself pausing to pull one of the tunics out. It was a deep, rich blue with red embroidered fish swimming along the hem and cuffs. It was paired with a pair of white, loose pants and on close inspection, they too had matching red fish swimming around the heels.

He didn't have any particular fondness for fish or the colour blue but something about this outfit was calling him. He held the tunic up against his breasts, letting the fabric flow down his body and imagining what it would look like on him. The size seemed almost too perfect; like it was made for him.

He didn't hesitate further, paying for the garment without a second thought to the high price tag. It was simply too beautiful to pass up. When Lan appeared, holding her yellow and white garment she pouted.

"You would find the best one." She sighed, "Ah well, do you have plans for New Year's night?"

"No..." He admitted, somewhat embarrassed, "I suppose just...work. Like usual."

"Bah! No way, you're having a night off, we'll walk the streets together, the street food is always cheap on New years and the party is sure to be fun."

"Party?" He looked around, as if for the first time noticing the signs advertising the street party for a few days.

It may not have been the sort he was used to be, but Derek felt a burst of hope within him; perhaps he could capture some of his old self again. To go to a party was exactly what he needed.

~

He felt different, putting on the ao dai. The loose pants were so light compared to his usual night attire. They swished as he moved and he could feel them brush against his ankles and inner thighs as he walked. The tunic was much the same. As a man, whenever he'd worn anything with a high collar he'd chafed, physically and mentally. He hated tight things at his throat but for some reason this dress didn't make him feel uncomfortable. He looked in the mirror and smiled, slowly applying a thick coat of plum coloured lipstick.

He looked stunning; his eyelashes tinted black, his age hidden behind tasteful make up and his hair brushed to a glossy sheen. For once he didn't feel awkward or overly done up in a sexual way. He just felt...pretty. It was a nice change of pace after nights of being preyed on by fetishists and perverts who couldn't wait to get what little clothing he had off. For the first time since waking up in Huong's life he felt at peace. This life wasn't all bad he supposed. If only he could dress like this all the time and earn money off his back, he might even be able to live with it then.

He looked over to his notebook where he'd been practising his English. Slowly, he was improving enough to start a letter. He wanted to have the perfect words to tell that witch exactly what she was and how to threaten her into changing him back. He was even working on a few comebacks just in case she refused.

He smiled; it was almost ready too, a few more weeks and this would all be over. So there was no harm in letting his hair down tonight in every sense of the word. He would have some fun before fully committing to perfecting his language skills enough to communicate what he wanted.

He quickly pushed two golden hoops through his ears to complete the look before stepping outside to meet Lan. There were sounds already echoing up from the busy street below. People had been rushing about all day and now that the sun had set the Lunar New year party was in full swing.

Lan greeted him on the landing in her yellow and white ao dai and Derek complimented her on it, even if secretly he thought the colour wasn't the best on her. They stepped out into the street together and were met with a whirlwind of noise and activity as they made their way to the food stalls.

The parties Derek was used to attending were certainly different. There were no drunk college kids jumping in pools while spiking punch bowls and smoking. Instead there were drums and loud flutes as dragons and kites flew under lantern light. It was loud and crowded, so much so that Derek was sure he and Lan were going to be trampled as they squeezed through the crowd, clutching their bahn mi for dear life, lest they lose it.

His hopes of regaining a piece of his old life were dashed. Why he'd been imagining his old kind of party here he had no idea. Still, everywhere people were talking and laughing, enjoying one another's company as a parade slowly moved through, complete with dragons and other fun little displays.

Lan was laughing, talking rapidly to him though he only caught every other word. It seemed like whoever was banging those drums was deliberately timing it so that he missed the most vital part of any sentence.

Still, as they finally found a spare set of steps to sit on by the side of the street to eat Derek found himself smiling. It wasn't the party he'd have chosen, but it was nice all the same. He bit into his bahn mi and sighed.

"Delicious!" He proclaimed clearly in English with a smile, Lan rolled her eyes.

"You think you're so clever because you're learning, why bother? It doesn't help our job."

"I'm not going to be a lady of the night forever." Derek argued, it wasn't technically a lie, "If I learn English, I'll be out of here in no time."

It was true, once he was good enough to speak to Missy's Aunt he would be back in his dorm, with his rich father's credit card and all his worries gone. He did feel a twinge of guilt for leaving Lan behind but what choice did he have? He couldn't stay here forever, even if the food was good. He could order Vietnamese food whenever he liked once he had access to his old bank account.

The only downside was losing this ao dai. It really was beautiful; flowing yet somehow form fitting in all the right places. He never thought he would feel beautiful in this middle aged body but this tunic and pants managed to do it. Fireworks exploded above them and Lan gasped happily. Pointing out the ones in various shapes.

"Time to make a resolution! That's what those westerners do, right?" She teased, Derek laughed but secretly he did just that.

He resolved to make the best of this and then, when he was himself, never take his youth for granted again.

Derek clutched the letter he'd spent the last few weeks perfecting before his fingers. It had finally come, time to confront that witch and get her to turn him back. He held his head high as he walked down the street. He'd had months to come up with the perfect plan and now it was time to execute it.

Rather than ask Missy directly, he had found her social media pages and slowly begun trawling through her family members. Several, the older ones especially, did not have proper photos as their profile but when he saw one labelled Amanda Darnell, with a skull and rose as her picture he knew it had to be her. He spent quite some time eliminating all other aunts or female family members, even cousins, just to be safe before he settled on Amanda. Things would have been so much simpler if he had thought to ask his host's name at the time. But he had to be honest with himself, even if somebody had told him, he'd have forgotten it almost instantly as he had with any person who didn't interest him.

After that it had taken some serious internet sleuthing to find the address of her house. He'd spent days on the local library's computer doing it after his phone plan had run out of data.

The work had been worth it though. As he rounded the corner of the upper class neighbourhood he began to see familiar buildings and then, at the end of a drive he saw it. The house where all this had happened. His heart beat fast as it zeroed in on the window of what had to be the bedroom where he was changed. How she had transported him all the way from here to the other side of the city he did not know, magic likely. If she could change his age, race and gender she could do anything.

For the first time he felt a nervous shiver work its way down his spine. This woman was powerful, he hoped his words would be enough to convince her that he'd learned his lesson and turned him back. He pressed a hand to the gate and with a deep breath pushed it open.

Only to find it was locked.

Obviously. He looked around for a doorbell or intercom of some description and what he found instead made his heart drop. A sign, slightly faded from being out in the sun for weeks.

'FOR SALE'

The sound of blood rushing filled his ears for a moment. No, no she had to be here! His plan! He'd spent weeks working so hard; it couldn't be for nothing. Once more he looked up at the windows, each room with the curtains drawn. A layer of dust was visible on the glass and just to the side of the house he could see those hedges; so neatly trimmed last time he was



here, now they were overgrown and slowly filling with weeds. He was so shocked and filled with horror he didn't hear the approaching footsteps and almost jumped out of his skin when a voice appeared behind him.

"A shame, isn't it?" A woman walked past with a poodle mused, "Such a pretty house, I do hope somebody buys it soon."

"What happened to the woman who lived there?" He asked.

The woman just shrugged.

"Not sure, she moved out just before Christmas, odd time to move if you ask me."

She'd already been gone for almost three months. His heart began to beat even louder in his ears. No, no nonononono! He grit his teeth; he'd only been enjoying himself the last few weeks because he'd told himself it was temporary. He didn't want to stay in this life! He wanted to be young and male again! Free of all these aches, pains and stresses. The woman with the poodle left and he followed.

That witch would not get the best of him. He could best her; he'd find her and then his plan would go exactly as he'd planned from that moment on. It just had to.

~

Except it didn't.

Derek tried following up with the real estate agent but Amanda had left no forwarding address. He stalked her social media pages incessantly, waiting for any update but found nothing. Scrolling through her limited post history he found to his dismay that she rarely posted to begin with and had now seemingly stopped altogether.

He followed Missy on everything. Checking her accounts daily hoping for some sort of family reunion post. Every holiday he waited with baited breath for some sort of family dinner post but as the months began to drag on he began to realise it was hopeless. Missy never mentioned her aunt, not even when he scrolled back to the night of her party. If he hadn't been there, he would never have even known Amanda existed.

Eventually he bit the bullet and went to talk to Missy himself, claiming to be an old friend of her Aunts who wanted to meet her. Unfortunately, she remembered him from the first visit and refused to speak to him, or Lan when he asked for a favour with no questions

asked. She called them scammers, among other things and Derek felt his old life slipping through his fingers.

Even if he did find her, would she even consider changing him back? She had clearly gone to a lot of effort to hide herself away from him; who's to say this wasn't all for naught, that she would just refuse or worse, change him again and give him an even worse lot in life. A shiver of fear passed through him at the idea of being aged further.

Slowly, his efforts to find Amanda slipped down his priority list. He was too busy with his English classes, working and making new friends to have much time to dedicate to it. Before he realised a year had passed by in this life and he wasn't sure where Huong started and he began. His English was getting better, good enough that maybe he could stop working the night and get a job where he didn't need to sleep with strangers for money; that became his new goal.

If nothing else, he had learned the value of hard work now and he was not about to lie down and let depression take him. No, if this was the life he was stuck with he was going to do his utmost to make sure it was the best possible version it could be.

~

## **Epilogue**

Huong closed the front door behind her and sighed in defeat. Shoes were littered all through the doorway, their coats were on the floor and judging by the sounds coming from around the corner; cartoons were playing in the living room.

“Hien! Ahn! What have I told you both about keeping this entryway clear!”

There was the scrambled sound of feet on the floor as the tv was switched off and her two children suddenly rounded the corner looking guilty.

“Sorry Mama.” Ahn lowered her head, “We were just studying.”

Huong rubbed her temples as Ahn and her brother quickly picked up their shoes and coats and put them on the racks provided. She had no idea why they found it so hard just to be a little responsible with their things. It had taken her years to save up and afford this apartment on her humble salary at the show shop, the least they could do was keep it clean.

Not to mention the lying, the fact that her daughter could look her in the eye and lie in such a boldfaced manner; where had she gotten it from? Ever since she had been made

manager Huong was working longer and longer hours leaving her two children plenty of time to goof off from their study. Something they seemed to delight in much to her chagrin,

“You were watching cartoons.” She seethed, “I heard when I walked in. You know the rules, homework first.”

“It was just one episode.” Hein insisted, “And you make us study all the time! We’re already at the top of our classes!”

“And if you want to stay that way, you’ll keep it up.” Huong insisted, hanging her own coat and walking into their humble little home.

It was so much better than the tiny place she used to live. Every day she would walk past her former apartment building on the way to work and she always made a habit of looking up to her former window; a reminder of how far she’d come in the last decade.

“Now, to your room.” She clapped her hands, “Hein, you are only second in your class at maths right now anyway, you could use the extra study time.”

Both her kids groaned and she bit her tongue. Did they not realise she was helping them? What she wouldn’t give to go back and be young again with her whole life ahead of her. If only somebody had been firmer with her back when she was Derek, then maybe she would be a successful businessman or something by now. With a beautiful wife and so many opportunities ahead of her.

Not that she didn’t love her children’s mind; she did, that was part of why she was so hard on them. They deserved the life she’d cheated herself out of. They may not have had the classiest start to life; she had no idea who either of their fathers were after all. But once she got that job at the shoe shop everything had looked up for them. Now she had a respectable job and two kids at the top of their classes with bright futures ahead. All thanks to the hard work and study she had put into remaster English and her dedication once she had started working.

It seemed her little ones did not appreciate the effort though; they both rolled their eyes and slumped their shoulders as they went to their shared room and sat down at the desks.

“Now, I want to see some real effort.” Huong said sternly, “You’ll thank me one day.”

Hien and Ahn just mumbled something under their breaths but Huong let it slide. One battle at a time, so long as they studied that was what was most important. She hefted the shopping bag up onto the table and began unloading the groceries; perhaps she would make their favourite beef pho tonight, that might convince them to try a little harder. As she got out the pots and pans to cook, Huong caught a glimpse of her warped reflection in the reflective bottom of one of the silver pans.

Her laugh lines had only gotten stronger over the years and her hair was slowly heading towards grey rather than jet black. She sighed, placing the pot down and putting her age out of mind. Moping achieved nothing; this was the life she'd made for herself and if she was going to survive she had to make the most of it. That is what she had done from the very beginning and it was the only way to move forward.

At this point, what else could she do?