

Twenty-Seven

Part Six: School Traditions

Admittedly, it wasn't the best-smelling place to have a birthday party. The girls field locker room was one of the GHS campus's most remote buildings, tucked away in a little nook at the far corner of the student parking lot, a squat brick building that hadn't seen significant renovation since the Eisenhower administration. It was vacant much of the year, in use for soccer in the fall and track & field in the spring, with the softball team preferring the more modern comforts of the girls locker room inside the athletic wing of the school itself, where none of the light switches buzzed when you flipped them on.

Nevertheless, this place was one of fond memories. Memory, really. The day he'd first fully embraced not being a pussy and enjoying this gift that had, however accidentally, fallen into his lap. The day he'd taken Taylor, Abbie and Cassie and roleplayed the part of the stern, attentive coach making sure his sweaty athletes got proper showers.

Then some not-so-proper showers.

Today, most of his women were already here waiting for him. For a long time he'd felt the notion of them being "his" women was more than a little misogynistic, but it was undeniably how they all thought of themselves. Besides, whatever his principles, it was tough to feel like an ardent feminist while maintaining your own largely teenage harem. Do as I teach, children, not as I do.

"Happy birthday to you!" The girls began singing the moment he entered. Candy was carrying a sheet cake – at least double the size that a group this big could eat – with what he presumed were twenty-seven burning candles. The smoke almost blocked the background mildew.

"Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday dear... mffmfmffmmm, happy birthday to you!" The singing blurred around his name. Abbie called him C-dawg; Katie Mr. C; Isa striding in beside him with "master;" and Candy simply used his first name like a normal colleague. One of these days he'd start the graduates on that, but for now, their teacher-student connection was fresh enough – and hot enough – that the other terms worked fine.

He blew out the candles.

"What'd you wish for?" asked Katie.

"Nothing."

"Aw, come on, Mr. C! You gotta make wishes when you blow out the candles!" Abbie nodded. "Seriously, you can't tell me there ain't *sumfin* you still want."

It wasn't that Canon didn't have anything he wished for. It was simply that, as he told the girls, there was such a thing as being greedy. "Thanks, though, ladies. Looks great. Though I, ah, was expecting more of you? Cassie and Megan not make it?" Thanks to Isa's awkward shuffle and having to drag Horen around, they'd arrived plenty late.

"Mrs. Cassie's mom said they had to pick up one more thing but to go ahead and start without them," Katie clarified. "I offered to go with, but they said it was a big surprise or something. Guess I'm not on the trust-with-surprises list yet, huh."

"You're proving yourself more and more each day, Katie," Candy assured the girl. Since fucking her right after graduation, Canon had learned that she had been a pupil of Ms. Salata's for both of her two years at GHS. Not a favorite pupil – Katie had always been the sort of teenage girl that adult women instinctively disliked – but now that they were more colleagues than teacher and student, they were coming to tolerate her. At times, even appreciate. Katie's approach to serving Mr. Canon was far less erratic than much of what they'd seen these past few months with Taylor in control of his Serenex supply.

Someone suggested they dig into the cake while they waited around on the rest. Candy and Isa sat together off to one side, the former consoling the latter about her outfit and "Canon's" incredibly unfair decision to make her wear it every single day to school. Ironic consolation, considering her own attire. The costume contest was the theme of the big day, a collective gift from them to him, but the sole judge was forcing himself not to begin inspecting too aggressively too early. "Come on, mama, don't be sad. You look like such a hot, fuckable slut in that thing," she reminded her lover with a perky grin. Isa wrinkled her nose, but gave her girlfriend a deep-throated kiss.

Canon took a spot on one of the splinter-prone benches. Katie sat across from him, straddling the bench between her powerful thighs. To fill the silence, she shared memories of the cheer squad using this "super-spooky shithole of a locker room" for football games. Specifically, how the squad had stayed late after a brutal loss to Lakeview Prep, getting drunk and playing truth or dare which mostly wound up being trying to scare the crap out of one another with the lights off.

Abbie meanwhile straddled Canon's lap and, without being asked or even especially desired, where she hand-fed him his cake one spongy, messy morsel at a time, inviting him to suck her fingers clean every so often. Her own cake she extracted from his mouth like a baby bird; it struck him as sort of gross, but he had to concede her point when she insisted they swapped spit all the time anyway, so what difference did it make if there were cake in the spit.

When Katie's story finished, Abbie took the reins. She raised her voice to make sure everyone present heard every last tawdry detail of that Saturday afternoon when Canon had first allowed her to become his fantasy slut. Though he sometimes forgot, it had mostly been her idea, or at least her constant pestering him to come up with a

proper fantasy for her. She embellished her own contributions a bit, though not much. Canon's own recollection didn't have her taking so much of a leadership position during the frenzied orgy at the end, but there had been such a parade of tongues and tits and cunts on his face that he couldn't have really sworn who he'd done what to that day.

"Wow. With your sister, huh? That's fucking nuts," Katie said. Her face was flushed, though. The details had gotten to her. Anything touching on how Canon had taken someone always hit this girl hard. She considered herself lucky to have him, and was such a good cheerleader at heart that she wanted to spur on *everyone* to know that good fortune.

"Stepsister," Abbie amended.

"Right, 'step.'" Katie added finger quotes with a wink. She wasn't the only one who assumed the Sterns were full sisters. They looked it enough, certainly, and anybody even familiar with their reputation could be forgiven for not believing them when they said otherwise. "Man. So like, is that what we're doing here? I know it's not any weirder to fuck the SRO or my government teacher than it is to do you or Cassie, but it *feels* weirder somehow. Am I cray-cray?"

"Once Cassie and Megan get here, we'll do the costume contest judging, let them eat, see what this surprise of theirs is, and then anybody who'd like to join me in the showers is welcome to do so. No requirements, though."

"You kidding, Mr. C? I'd consider myself—"

"—herself lucky to have you. That's what you were going to say, isn't it? I swear, you're like a broken record. Tay must have really overdone it when she spammed the masses with that shit."

Katie frowned. Unlike most of the rest of GHS faculty and staff, she actually knew about the Serenex through her on-going association with Mr. Canon. "Says Little Miss Tits-and-Ass-Sex-Object. His little fantasy slut, right? Because you totally never mention that."

"Girls..." Canon rumbled. He got paid to stop teenage girls from bickering ten months out of the year. This was his time off.

"She started it," Abbie griped, stuffing his face with another wad of cake.

Katie shook her head, but her cheerful nature won out. "Sorry, Mr. C. I'm just sort of competitive by nature, and it's honestly kinda messing with me to be the walking embodiment of male fantasy – cute blonde cheerleader in the girls locker room – and feel like I'm, I dunno, second fiddle. Never had to share a boyfriend before, you know? I'll do better, promise."

"Yeah, you better step it up if you wanna stay in the rotation, blondie. Next time you think you're one of us, you stop and think again 'cause—"

This was not the first time Abbie had acted like being fucked two months sooner somehow gave her squatters rights to his cock. Thankfully, their bickering was disrupted

by the opening of the locker room door. For just a moment, a trace of the old panic set in, that someone other than his women would catch him with Abbie Stern nestled in his lap. It was fleeting, however.

Cassie and Megan entered, the former in the lead and practically skipping. “Mr. Canon!” she squealed, dashing over and launching herself onto Abbie’s place. The younger Stern girl barely had time to dive out of the way of being smashed between them. “Happy birthday! Did we sing yet?”

“We sang,” Candace answered.

“Oh, bummer. Ah well. I don’t plan on going anywhere. I’ll sing to you when you’re twenty-eight, and twenty-nine, and thirty, and...” She paused, frowning in sudden realization. “Oh man. We’re gonna keep getting older forever, aren’t we...? I mean, obviously, but you guys, *think* about it. Like, one day Mr. Canon is gonna be like sixty and us girls will all be like fifty, and... Oh man. Is he even still gonna want us when we’re fifty? Oh my god, Mom! You’re already so much...” She wisely failed to finish the sentence.

“Maybe worry about that when you start nearing forty, hon,” he said, patting her rump lovingly. “For now, rest assured, you are very much wanted.”

Like that, she was all smiles again. “Yeah? You want me like last time? Sweaty and stinky and wet and soooooo frigging horny for you? Want me to turn the showers on, get it steamy? Or do you wanna just look for a while, let us horny cock-slobbering sluts get you good and hard before you take us in there and fuck us one after the other after the other, down the line, fucking and fucking and oh my fucking gawd I can’t wait...!”

Katie gave Abbie an impressed look. “You weren’t shitting me, huh. That orgy really did happen?”

“You thought I made that shit up?”

“It’s just, you say a *lot* of things to flatter Mr. C and half of them are kinda bullshitty, though I will grant you his cock is pretty big, definitely way bigger than my boyfriend’s. Well, ex-boyfriend, but I keep forgetting to tell him that.” Katie giggled. “One of these days he’ll smell Mr. C’s cum on my breath and figure it out, I guess, ya know?”

Meanwhile, after several minutes of waiting for Canon and Cassie to stop making out and finally realizing they didn’t apparently intend to, Megan cleared her throat. A few times. And finally tapped her daughter on the shoulder. “Um, sweetie? You’re not the only party guest.”

Cassie blushed, awkwardly retrieving her hand from her neighbor’s pants. “Sorry, Mom. I got the hornies again.”

Mr. Canon cleared his throat, and tried to clear his head. “Right! I have to say, ladies, I’m excited to get the ball rolling. I don’t know which one of you came up with this idea, but it’s a solid one. Been looking forward to it for weeks.”

Abbie rolled her eyes. “It didn’t take genius level inspiration, C-dawg. If there’s two things you love, it’s your harem of hot sluts, and judging people. Obviously we’re gonna give you both for your b-day.”

“Obviously,” he echoed dryly.

“Line up, bitches! Let’s let y’all get your failure and humiliation over with.”

“I doubt if all of us will be getting our humiliation over with any time soon,” Candace observed aside as she fell into the lineup next to Isa. “Huh, Stephy.”

“Fuck you, Candy.”

The stern look Canon summoned for Isa did not come easy. “Hey. You know she doesn’t like to be called Candy in front of other people. Apologize.”

“But she...!” Canon didn’t back down at a little whining, though. “Sorry, Candace.”

Candace offered her a conciliatory kiss, which Isa hungrily reciprocated. “Water under the bridge, Stephy.”

Canon swept his eyes across the girls several times. They’d outdone themselves, truly. Not a one of them hadn’t gone above and beyond. Several of them had defied his expectations, too. After all, a sexy costume contest was random and subjective. Isa in a slutty nurse costume might outshine Katie in a slutty vampire costume simply because it fit her better, not because he had a fetish for healthcare professionals. Conversely, Abbie might have cucked Isa out of slutty cop and done it better, even though it *belonged*, was objectively the right outfit, for Isa.

This, however, was something else. The girls had one and all refused to tell him whose idea it had been, as if knowing would impact his impartiality. He could have made them, sure, but this seemed a harmless enough secret to let them keep. “Now before we get started, I want to say that there’s no losers here.”

“Except for Stephy,” Candace crowed, nudging her girlfriend with an elbow. Isa narrowed her eyes, but her own smile didn’t evaporate. Once in a while, she lightened up enough to actually let her enjoyment show in something other than an orgasm.

“Except her,” he relented. “You all look dynamite. That was the hardest time I’ve ever had enjoying my own birthday cake, waiting to do this. Thanks to Abbie for making it interesting. Now, before we begin, let’s not forget the prize for first place.”

Megan nodded. “One week’s vacation, with Mr. Canon joining or not joining or providing support as the winner decrees.” He’d long thought she might be the organizer, but she had refused to confirm or deny. The prize had been left deliberately open-ended, reasoning that Isa might want to get out of town for a while with her girlfriend and enjoy some private time, or that Megan might want to go on a trip with her daughter before

she left for college in the fall and leave Canon to babysit her son Robby. He wasn't going to let such considerations influence his judging. These women did a lot for him, and he wanted to respect the commitment this had taken.

After all, this was not a standard costume contest, nor even a "standard" sexy costume contest. No, this was something else, something concocted precisely for him.

He began with Abbie, who looked to be an exemplar of the spirit of the competition. She'd leaned hard into the bad girl aesthetic, a lot of black and a lot of leather. Or vinyl, he thought, for those pants. They clung to her like a second skin, glossy and black. Compared to what most of her competitors were wearing, they were actually somewhat chaste – or so he'd thought until inspecting her from behind, giving her ass a good thorough feel only to find there were holes in the material right below her ass cheeks. Apparently cribbing ideas from Isa's outfit. He was glad he'd sent her to chaperone that little mall outing.

Her vest was much more involved. The center portion, both front and back, was a sparse mesh. From behind it showed off her ridiculous Juice WRLD tattoo, the Roman numerals of the rapper's birth and death along her spine. Just barely covering her tits were two scraps of black leather slung over her shoulders. Patches were sewn into it liberally, patches with skulls and chains and fire and busty women, reading things like Busty Biker Bitches or Die-Hard Dick Devils or Babes of Blood Lust. (He silently deducted a point for the added space on that last one.)

There were accessories, too. A few clearly temporary tattoos, his favorite of which was a girl, highly sexualized, sobbing as she was bent over a man's lap to have her backside paddled. *Just You Try It*, it read in a circle around the image. She'd dyed her hair black with some multi-hued neon streaks, which must have been no mean undertaking considering the sheer volume of it. And then there were the armbands. One around each bicep, each of them coated in a series of what were, upon inspection, throwing knives.

"Are those things real?" he asked, concerned.

Abbie shrugged. "Not if you're gonna be a bitch about the school policy on students having half a dozen deadly blades strapped to their arms."

"I told you, Abbie," grumbled Cassie.

"And no helmet, I see."

"Badass bitches don't wear helmets like little punks."

"Do badass bitches still get fucked like little bitches?" Canon asked.

Her grin was as wicked as her costume. "Oh god I fucking hope so."

Next up was Katie. He knew in a moment she was not the winner. Her costume was perfect, but it was also the least involved. She was a cheerleader. It was, per the assignment, apt self-assessment, even if it's the same assessment anyone present would have made for her. Not a cheerleader dressed in some sexy fetishized uniform either, but

an actual GHS cheerleader outfit. She'd gone with a ponytail rather than pigtails; Katie was the sort of girl who wore pigtails unironically, so for her costume, she'd switched things up. She'd popped in a couple pieces of gum since cake time, blowing noisy pink bubbles while he studied and admired her body, flouncing and bouncing as he spun her around. On closer inspection, Canon began to suspect that wherever she'd swiped the uniform from, she'd gone down a size or two. He'd had plenty of cheerleaders in his classes over the years, as they'd oftentimes worn their uniforms to school on the days of big games. Katie's top was much tighter across the chest, and instead of showing a couple inches of tummy, showed every inch of her between where her perky tits ended and her perky ass began.

She hadn't worn the panties. He almost didn't notice until, after giving him a long moment to inspect her from behind, she went down in middle splits, squealing in surprise at how cold the concrete floor of the locker room was. Plain white sneakers with knee socks in school colors, and of course, the undeniably radiant face of one the school's hottest hotties. No one could deny she was dressed as the idealized cheerleader slut, yet it was such a short walk from how they'd all seen her a hundred times that it disqualified her from the start.

Poor thing. She'd even prepared a simple routine – kicks, twirls and pompon shakes designed to titillate an audience of one. Any other time he would have rewarded her with a nice quick fuck, at minimum, but as it was Katie received a pat on the ass before he went to the next girl, bubblegum popping in his wake.

Megan took him a moment to understand what he was looking at. Not because it was unclear so much as it struck Canon as so perfectly suited to her. He couldn't at first understand why. He'd noticed her face right away when she'd come in. Thick layers of makeup, subtle as a freight train, adding blues and purples around her eyes, pinks on her cheeks, red on her lips. Makeup everywhere. It was almost but not quite clownish. Desperate was more like it. Desperate for attention. Desperate for a fuck. A woman who knew she was surrounded by a pack of tantalizing teens and twenty-somethings but wasn't about to be out-shined by them.

Her jewelry was as flashy, big bangly earrings, a sparkly crucifix hanging in the deep valley of her cleavage. Not for the first time Canon wondered if Cassie would have inherited her mother's tits, would he have ever fallen for Taylor Stern in the first place? He was a sucker for jaw-dropping tits. These were framed in a gaudy leopard print onesie, perhaps a swimsuit. With her hair a high-rising pile of black curls so full of hairspray that they hardly bounced while she preened for him, the top left her back completely exposed.

Beneath it? Jeans. Surprisingly simple jeans. They were crushingly tight across the ass, though, and a bit in the thighs, but less so by the inch. Her panty lines were

plainly visible through them, broad panties that would form a neat triangle over her ass. Chunky sandals on her feet, and that was that.

She was a MILF, he at last realized. Not a term he'd had much use for in his life, but here it was in front of him. A hot, horny MILF. Megan was right out of bullshit porn ads, except she really was hot and horny and in his area, looking to hook up. Had Cassie had a role in shaping her mom's ensemble? That girl spent more time on porn sites than any man he knew, and would know those ads like the underside of his balls.

Isa was next. He'd inspected her at length already, though she'd added a chintzy plastic badge and a pair of mirrored sunglasses since arriving in the locker room. It was the only outfit he'd seen before today, the one he'd been fantasizing about for weeks since the girls planned this contest. He tried not to let that weight things in her favor.

After Isa was Cassie, who had somewhat obliviously wandered in between the cop and her girlfriend. Cassie looked much like she had in their last rendezvous here, a purple sports bra, GHS volleyball shorts, her hair up in a top knot. It was an improvement over the last time, though, if subtly. This sports bra had a zipper in the middle, zipped almost all the way down for maximum cleavage. Unless he missed his guess, the volleyball shorts were the same ones she'd worn last time, except now someone had taken a sharpie to them, writing "BUTT SLUT" in all caps across the ass. Not exactly high craftsmanship, but message received, at least.

"Katie said it was sorta try-hard, and she's probably right," Cassie said apologetically after Canon read her footnote (assnote?) aloud. "But I wanted to dress up like a porn star, because ever since I became your booty call, I have sort of majorly fallen in love with having sex, and being sexy, and dressing hot, and being naked, and being touched and licked and fucked and everything, and really even how stupid it is that we shame women for a lot of that."

"Cassie..." Megan said in a low voice.

"I know, I know, I'm not allowed to drop out of school to do porn, even if I'm wasting my hottest years. So I didn't dress up like that, even though I wanted to, and even though you've pretty much already seen me as a slutty jock chick. But I wanted you to know that I really, really like taking it up the ass from you, so much that it's not just something I *like*, but something that I *am*, you know? And so yeah, that's why it says butt slut on my booty."

Canon couldn't help himself. He pulled the girl in for a hug and whispered something in her ear that was just for her. He was rewarded in kind with a long, sweet kiss that was only broken off when Abbie pointed out that "that skinny bitch is fucking cheating, you guys!"

With an apology, Canon moved on to the final girl in the lineup, Candace.

"Um, what am I, ah, looking at, exactly?" asked a confounded Mr. Canon. When he'd arrived, he'd figured she was wearing this over a costume, but now here they were

in the judging, and there it still was. She looked pretty, sure, but in the same way she always had. A sleeveless maroon top, an ankle-length denim dress. A hint of cleavage, the slightest suggestion that she had an ass under the dress, a pretty face that was no more or less so than any other day.

“Tell me you planned for me to win,” she said, a little grin touching the edges of her lips. She emphasized *planned* just enough to harken it back to her own Serenex programming. She would never do anything to disrupt his plans.

Canon chuckled. “All right. Candace, my plan is for you to win.”

“As you wish, master. Do the honors?” She pivoted to face the wall of lockers behind her, arching her back to place her butt as his disposal. Now what...?

Handles. There were... handles? On her dress?

Canon took hold of them; the way she eased her ass toward his fingers confirmed he was on the right track. What was he supposed to...

“Oh. Oh!” In a flurry of excitement, he gave a hard pull. It worked even better than he expected. The velcro tabs holding on Candy’s dress, her top, ripped away loudly and easily. Beneath it was a metallic thong, golden. No bra. When she turned, he saw there were two tassels attached to adhesive patches over her nipples. *Money Maker*, read the text over her pussy. A stripper would be embarrassed to be seen in that thing.

Abbie, Katie and Cassie started whooping and cheering as their social studies teacher launched into action, twirling those tassels with impressive breahterity. Her ass vibrated as she spun to twerk for him, clapping her pert little cheeks against his crotch, each clap trying to suck him deeper into her pussy.

“Because she’s your colleague, but also your fuck toy, master,” announced Isa casually, and not without a little disdain.

“That she is, Isa. That she is.” He let Candy hump her ass against his cock dutifully for a while, but finally, took a step back to give the lineup one last inspection.

Mr. Canon admired for a time, but finally his peripheral vision couldn’t stop him from stepping back to admire the entire lineup. Biker bitch, cheerleader, MILF, jock who was about to lose her scholarship for posing nude, toy cop, and teacher-whore. All his.

That wish really would have been the height of avarice.

“Before you announce the victor, you might want to check on our little surprise,” Megan said suddenly. He hadn’t come close to deciding yet. Her smile was wide, ingratiating.

“What is it?” Katie whispered to Cassie.

“It’s outside. C’mon!” The redhead pulled the cheerleader along behind her. The other girls followed. Canon followed at the rear of the pack. Who or what else could it be? Hard to imagine *something* swaying the decision, especially something sitting out in

the parking lot. As for someone, there wasn't really anyone else it could be. That is, unless—

“Tabitha...?!”

The lithe brunette beauty stood a dozen paces outside the locker room, near a Mercedes – a graduation gift from her father, she'd told him – parked in the gated off lot next to the locker room. Her arms were folded submissively behind her back. Tabitha's own outfit was outstanding. In effect a sheer white dress, but it was segmented into half a dozen individual sections, each held to the others with a series of golden chains and clasps. It narrowly covered what it needed to, though that didn't extend to her long legs, her hips, her stomach, most of her chest, or her neck. It looked like a stiff breeze would blow it away like the fuzz of a dandelion. Her hair was done up in an elaborate style, the likes of which he usually only saw at school dances or other such fancy affairs. It gleamed in the sun almost as much as the gold. There was at least one ring on every finger, most of them jeweled, and a pile of golden necklaces hanging down her breasts. She looked like a Greek goddess, only with more class.

“Sorry I'm late, Mr. Canon. My flight only got in this morning.”

Having not seen her in the flesh in weeks, he threw his arms around her. “I didn't think I'd see you again until the fall – if then! How did you get away?”

“I told Daddy I was a grown woman and that I could fend for myself for the summer,” she said, full of self-assurance.

“Yeah, 'cause nothing says strong independent woman like rushing across the ocean so you can be there in time to dress up like a slut for your master in the hopes he'll let you run off and blow him for a week in some sleazy motel,” Abbie observed with a smirk.

“If that's what Mr. Canon wishes of me, I would be glad to do my best at satisfying the request,” she said evenly. “As would you, while you're putting on airs. And... I'm sorry, run off for a week? What's she talking about? Is this some kind of costume contest?”

Canon blinked. “You didn't know? But... I mean, you're...”

Tabitha looked herself over. “I wanted to look nice for you. I've been getting nothing from anyone while I was overseas. It was horrible.”

“You mean... You just had... *that*? In your closet?” Katie asked incredulously.

“No, I picked this up in Paris a couple weeks ago. I thought Mr. Canon might like me in something Mediterranean.”

He laughed happily, pulling her in for a long hug. Once there, his hand gave her backside a hard slap by instinct. Tabitha whimpered in bliss. “Damn. Well I'm so glad to see you. I have to rethink the winner now, for sure.”

“Right, so, winner of what? Sluttiest costume? Because I think we're in a bit of a tie, from the looks of things.”

Candace, mostly naked, was peering out from behind the cover of the locker room door. “Close. Most spot-on slutty self-parody, basically.”

“Oh, hi Ms. Salata! Didn’t see you there.” Tabitha glanced around at the others. “Yeah, I suppose that’s what this is, isn’t it. And I’m... Hmm. Well.” Her nose wrinkled at realizing her effort at looking nice had wandered into the territory of caricature.

“You didn’t know about this? How’d you even find us if nobody told you about the party?”

“Upon finding no one home at your place, I went next door. Mrs. Brown’s babysitter told me she had a meeting at the high school. She didn’t seem to have much by way of particulars, so I put two and two together,” she explained.

“Oh.” Then he looked to Megan. “But hold on, I thought she was the surprise. Did she not...”

Megan shook her head. “A surprise, but not the one Cassie and I put together for you.” She produced her keys from her jeans pocket, extending her arm and hitting a button on the fob. There was a loud beep, and then the trunk of her minivan slowly rose up to its horizontal position.

Inside... was a woman. Surprising though it was, it was the least surprising woman he might have expected to see inside someone’s trunk. After all, it was the only woman he’d already seen in one. She was sweaty, her thick honey blonde hair mussed, limbs curled up uncomfortably close.

Abbie gasped. “Tay...?!”