

Proteus

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Nobody knew what to do that day when I became a shapeshifter. My body started to change, and everybody only saw trouble.

The kids at school avoided me, and the teachers tensed up every time I asked a question. They all saw something that I have yet to know, only that was clear. Maybe it all started when my mom told me girls need to shave their armpits; it's unhygienic, she said.

Or maybe it started when I wore baggy clothes to hide my "feminine form", with a beanie to conceal my long hair. I then discovered that men would give me a simple nod, and simply walk away. I felt, for the first time, victorious. The answer was so simple. I just didn't know yet.

It could be the time my aunt told me to wear some goddamn shorts in the house. Walking around in my underwear is unladylike. After all, your dad's a boy, she said.

There was another time I dressed in more "boyish" clothes. Grey hoodie, black and white plaid button up, and some men's jeans I found at Goodwill. When I wore that outfit, it made my friend blush. She looked really, really cute, when she did.

Don't get me wrong. I still found joy adorning shimmering jewelry and palatted dresses. In ribbons and in blue satin sashes.

However, there's just something about 'mixing things up' that makes me feel so powerful. When I wore that silky black skirt with the boots and rough denim zip-up, I felt like a force of nature. Wearing my grandfather's vest over my great aunt's blouse, never before have I stood closer to God.

And then, I got caught.

I thought it was the clothes, but the scaly tail was also a dead give away.

There was so much disappointment in my dad's eyes. But in my mom's, they couldn't even meet mine. Brief nods bid me farewell when I exited the car, and after school, only the sound of silence welcomed me home.

The more I sat with them during sermons, the faster my body shifted.

Once the horns sprouted, my mom grabbed the suitcases, immediately.

They held a funeral service in my honor.

I moved in with my girlfriend, and thank God she already knew about the changes.

It took me time to accept the horns and my tail. But she did very quickly. Said

they made me more beautiful, plus more sensitive places to tug and hold onto, she teased.

My face turned red, so much.

I'll never forget that Sunday afternoon, sweaty and panting into each other's arms. She kissed my thighs and her tongue, working wonders. When my back arched, I felt sharp waves of pain, concocted with pleasure, as feathered wings pullulated, and stretched across the bed.

I expected her to freak out as I did.

Her eyes locked with mine, and she kept going. Tongue flat. Deeper than before.

Whenever I came home from a long day, I would plop on the couch to rest my eyes for just a few minutes. I would wake up to her massaging my scalp, rubbing circles where my crooked horns meet skin. She then pays attention to my ashy tail with lotion, helping me prep for my shedding season. She knows all the right spots on my speckled wings to press on. The sore ones, and the ones that leave me breathless.

God, she's divine.

She joined me on trips to visit my grave site. On her first visit, she adorned lavenders on the stone, and always made sure to buy ones with long strands so they covered my dead name.

We kissed and kissed. And then more. I was Mary Shelley, [though she can't say she did it on her own grave.]

She held my hand, unafraid as she kissed it, while we walked down the street. I preferred it when others kept to their business, but of course, what are onlookers for if not to stare?

I wasn't sure if it was my tail slithering around, the protruding horns, or the big-ass wings, but that day in particular triggered the firearm of a particular nobody. Maybe it was the way she kissed my forehead. Or the way I kissed her lips.

The shot rang, and I pushed them back as my wings knocked the air out of the shooter. I wrapped my wings around her. Blood splattered on silver feathers, and on her yellow coat.

I held her tight as my wings took flight.

I rose higher and higher, and flapped my wings towards empty space.

I didn't know our destination, but I knew we needed a new home. I didn't rest until we landed on the moon's surface. There, I used my claws to extract the bullet with careful precision. I licked her wounds clean, kissed every surface until they closed up.

I've never sobbed such ugly tears before until she woke up.

It always starts ugly, then joyful, if we're lucky.

I held her like a bride as we descended back down, like she held my heavy heart. We couldn't go back to our apartment, to our jobs, to our world, not anymore. The lower we flew, the bluer the surface.

She asked me if I could finally do it. We've had many discussions about it, but decided to wait for the right moment.

What better moment than this, right? She asked.

I lulled her into a kiss as my hands snaked around her waist. My claws were shaking as I lightly touched her face.

I focused all my energy on her, my arms cocooning her, and her transformation took root.

Murky scales glimmered her entire body. Her legs, now a tail, shimmered a dull silver. Webbed hands coated in green mucus. She emitted a rotted grass smell, like winter melons left for days.

She was absolutely perfect.

We plunged into the sea, and welcomed our new home with my dear goddess residing with me.