

**D**eep, rich hues ascended along the mountainous peaks as tawdry affairs and paid by the hour fares gathered their evening wares. Nobody relishes the walk of shame so out of their rooms they came as the darkness cloaked an anonymous name. Even though doors slammed and engines revved, nothing disturbed the detectives dead asleep in their beds. Soon another morning will wipe away the grime and cease all crime at the notorious Interstate Inn.

It had been a long, strenuous day for them. After executing legwork for FBI Special Agent Jack Stanwick, and their boss, Raymond Davenport, they had listened in on a disturbing conversation between four men at Prescott Chemicals. If that weren't enough, all three fell into a vat of liquid that needed to be showered off so a sordid motel room became their home for the evening. The guys were mighty tired.

Russ tossed and turned to find a comfortable position but instead felt the pangs of distress that were experienced earlier in the night. It was soon followed by moaning and groaning so he grabbed hold of his stomach, hurried out of bed and dashed into the bathroom. The door was locked behind him.

As the pain subsided, a tingling sensation began from his head straight to the toes. Again, the grandfather's emerald ring pinged against the tile, alerting him to what has transpired. With a quick feel over the entire body, a prolonged scream permeated the motel room. Russ dropped to the floor in hysterics. Bren and Derek woke up, scrambled out of bed and banged on the bathroom door.

"What's going on in there?"

"Russ, are you ok? Derek grasped the locked door knob.

"Like, no!" The sobbing sounded excruciating.

Bren looked at Derek. "Was that a woman's voice I just heard."

They pounded on the door.

“Open up, Russ,” Derek yowled. “I told you not to lock this bathroom door.

“Do you have a woman in there?” Bren yelled.

“Unlock this door!” Derek roared.

Bren sneered. “You better not be using our towels!”

“Like, I’ve wrapped my own around me,” squawked a feminine voice. “I so don’t want you to see me this way.”

“There is a woman in there,” Bren snarled.

“Open this door now!” Derek ordered. “Or I’m calling Raymond.”

“No, please don’t,” came her crying plea. “I’m totally unlocking it now.”

Once the click was heard, Derek flung it open.

“It’s pitch-dark in here,” Bren bellowed.

“Let me get it!” Derek switched on the light.

They jumped back with their mouths wide open as both simultaneously whipped the palms against their boxer shorts, covering up the private parts.

“Who the hell are you?” Derek belted out.

Sobbing hysterically, the woman squealed in a high-pitched tone, “Like, I’m Russ!”

“Nonsense...” Bren yanked open the shower curtain. “He’s not in there.”

Derek clenched his jaw as he looked at the trembling woman. “I’m in no mood for games. Where’s Russ?”

“Like, I am Russ,” she implored. “You’ve so got to believe me.”

Bren looked at Derek. “He...she...whomever this person is, they’re playing a trick on us.”

“I’m so not playing tricks,” she screamed. “It’s me, totally...for real!”

Derek stuck his head out and looked in Russ’ bed. “He’s not in his bed.”

“You need to stop this!” Bren slammed his foot on the floor. “This is not funny.”

Derek leaned and looked into her eyes. “Miss, don’t play games, please. You’re kind of scaring me.”

With tears gushing from her eyes, she said with a fractured voice, “Like, I’m so sorry!”

Russ is pulling a fast one,” Bren grouched. He walked out of the bathroom. “He brought one of his chicks, as he calls them, into our room to play a dirty trick on us. I know it. I bet you he’s outside this motel door.”

Derek looked on.

Bren grabbed the handle and opened it. The night was cold and quiet as he put his head out. After searching both ways, he darted to the car, gave it the once over then hurried back inside.

“I knew he wouldn’t be out there,” Derek remarked.

“The moron is probably under one of the beds.” Bren headed toward them.

Derek pulled open the closet. “He’s not in here.”

“Nor under the beds.” Bren shook his head.

“Where else could Russ be?” Derek shrugged.

“I don’t know,” Bren reacted. “But mark my words, he’s up to something.”

“In the meantime...” Derek pointed in the bathroom. “There’s a naked woman crying her eyes out.”

“Russ is good at goading us,” Bren stated.

Derek walked into the bathroom with his hand out. “He’s not that good.”

The girl sat on the floor bitterly weeping. "Like, I'm Russ. Please, you've got to totally believe me!"

"He has pulled so many pranks on us." Bren snapped his fingers. "I know..." He leaned close to Derek's ear. "We can ask her some personal questions about ourselves."

"Yeah..." He turned toward Russ, who was sobbing. "Miss, Miss—"

She looked up.

"Can I ask you something?"

The girl had tears streaming down her face as she replied, "Like, totally."

"What's my favorite color?" Derek asked.

She sniveled then took a deep breath. "Green."

He looked at Bren. "It's right."

"Ask another?"

Derek turned back. "What's my middle name?"

"Patrick," she replied.

Bren pushed him aside. "Ok, Miss smarty-pants, what are mine?"

Whimpering, she replied, "Your favorite color is burgundy and your middle name is Alexander."

"I'll give you that, but what is my sister's name?" Bren prodded.

She sniffled. "Tabby, which is short for Tabitha."

Panic removed Bren's smug expression. His head rapidly turned to face Derek, who appeared bewildered. He swung it back around and looked at the woman. Her lips were quivering.

"What's happening?" he shouted out.

Derek flew by Bren and grabbed Russ. He slung his arms around her. "I'm sorry, Russ. I'm really sorry."

Her arms shook as she put them around him. "Like, I totally am too."

As the hysterical minutes flew by, they slowly calmed themselves down. Russ left the embrace of Derek, walked out to a chair by the window and recovered the T-shirt which was now dry. She removed the towel and tossed the garment over her shoulders. It dropped to nightgown length at mid-thigh.

"Like, oh my God," she cried out. "I'm way smaller, and my fierce muscles are gone."

Derek rushed over and gave her a huge hug. "You wouldn't want all that bulk to ruin your hot body."

She pulled the T-shirt tightly against her figure. "I do have a blazing bod, don't I?"

"Russ..." She turned her head.

Bren snapped a few pictures on his digital camera.

"Really?" Derek yelled.

"It's called evidence." Bren placed the camera into his satchel. "After all, I am a detective."

"Then use your skills to figure out what we should do..." Derek huffed. "Since you're supposedly the brains of our outfit."

"I am." He paced the floor. "Let me think a second."

Derek spoke up. "What about the hospital?"

"Thank you," Bren reacted. "I never would have thought of that."

Derek smirked. "That's sarcasm, isn't it?"

"You think?" Bren flung out his hand. "I know, we'll tell the attending physician that our friend just suddenly and unexplainably turned from a man into a woman in the bathroom of a seedy motel, and we were wondering if you

had a pill, shot or suppository that would change our friend back into the fun-loving dude he once was!”

“Now, that is definitely sarcasm,” Derek remarked.

“Wait a minute...” Bren hopped on the bed and grabbed a cell phone out of his satchel. “Thank the sweet Lord this wasn’t with me when we were drenched. I’ll give Raymond a call.” He dialed. “He’ll know exactly what to do.”

“Awesome!” Derek laid Russ on the bed and covered her up. “You need to rest.”

“I totally can’t,” she uttered.

Derek climbed in next to her. “Just try.”

She closed her eyes.

“Hello, Raymond? It’s Bren, and we have a huge problem. I’m putting you on speaker phone.”

“What’s going on?”

“I’m really not sure—”

“What?”

Bren exhaled. “I have no idea how to tell you this.”

“Just tell me.”

He cleared his throat. “Russ has turned into a woman.”

“What did you just say?”

“Russ has turned into a woman,” Bren enunciated.

“I thought that’s what I heard,” Raymond stated. “I cannot believe it.”

“I am telling you the truth.”

“I’d never doubt you,” Raymond maintained. “Now Russ on the other hand—”

“You’d take him with a grain of salt.”

“Ask him what we should do?” Derek requested.

“We thought about bringing him to the hospital but that would never work,” Bren noted.

“No, don’t do that,” Raymond insisted. “I’ll have to call my friend, Dr. Munson, and tell him about your predicament,” he said. “I’ll call right back. Just hold tight.”

As the dial tone blared, Bren hung up.

Derek looked over at Russ, who appeared to be sleeping.

“Raymond will take care of this,” Bren claimed. “I just know it.”

“We don’t know what we’re dealing with here,” Derek countered. “I doubt that Dr. Munson will either.”

“We just have to hope and pray he does,” Bren lamented.

Derek nodded. “Yeah, for our sake.”

A few tense minutes had gone by when finally the cell phone rang. Bren hit the speaker button. “Hello?”

“Boys, I’m en route to pick up Dr. Munson.” It was Raymond. “Where are you?”

“We are at the Interstate Inn, room twelve,” Bren replied. “The motel is just off I-95 on Rt. 80 in Cantor County.”

“Call me if things become worse,” Raymond issued. “We’ll be there shortly.”

Bren hung up and looked at Derek. “Good, they will be here soon.”

“Soon?” Derek uttered. “Soon at best is an hour away and Raymond drives like an old lady.”

“The way he sounded, there will be no old woman on the road tonight.” Bren tried to sound convincing.

Russ woke and began to uncontrollably shake. She threw the covers off as the guys watched her enlarge. hair shortened as the face lost its womanly softness. the fuzzy facial hair and sideburns came in. The shoulders became masculine again as her breasts returned to a chest. The arms began to grow and churn out blonde hair. The legs came back to their muscular size and his male genitalia returned to its normal girth. The T-shirt fit like a glove.

“Oh, man.” Derek got off the bed.

Bren stood in place with his jaw askew.

Russ jumped up. “Dudes, I’m majorly back!” His virile voice vocalized.

Derek gave him a hearty bear-hug. “Awesome.”

“Like, totally—”

“Hopefully, a little nicer,” Bren quipped. “And for heaven’s sake, put some underwear on.”

Derek let go. “Man, I didn’t even notice.”

Russ laughed, put on his boxers and headed toward the bathroom to look at the results. As he stared at every inch and examined all his body parts, a grin came over his face. It looked like nothing ever took place. He exited and went up to Bren and Derek.

“Like, I can’t believe that just happened to me.”

“Me either,” Derek added.

“Remember the men at Prescott Chemicals talking about a formula they were to use on somebody and how it would make his masculine feelings become feminine—”

“Totally.”

“What if the vat we fell into contained that formula?” Bren surmised.

Russ looked at Derek.

“It would make perfect sense.”

Derek nodded. “The whole kit and caboodle was all lit up with dials moving every which way—”

“And that grody liquid was all warm and stank-smelling,” Russ recalled.

“We could have absorbed some into our systems,” Bren thought aloud.

“Like, I got some way in my mouth.” Russ squirmed.

Derek’s face puckered. “Me too.”

“I also did,” Bren added.

“So this could happen to us too?” Derek clamored.

“It could—”

“It will...” Derek shot back. “And when it does, I’m going to freak out.”

Bren huffed. “You need to calm down.”

“Yeah, sure,” Derek uttered. “The thing is we could change at any time. Who knows? If not today, maybe it’ll be tomorrow, next week, a month or even a year.”

“Just stop dwelling on it,” Bren insisted.

“But we could be at the post office, eating at a restaurant or even shopping in a grocery store grabbing a box of cereal then bam!” Derek snapped “You’re a woman.”

“Like, clean up in aisle seven,” Russ blurted out.

Bren gave him a dirty look then turned back to Derek. “You need to stop agonizing over it. You’ll put yourself into an early grave thinking about it, or even worse—”

“What’s worse?”

“Worrying so much that you go prematurely gray,” he replied. “You don’t want that if you’re a woman.”

“Oh, aren’t you funny,” Derek quipped. “Funny-looking, that is.” He smirked. “Why are you so calm?”

"This turning into a woman thing might never happen to me, and if it does, I'll deal with it then," Bren retorted. "Since Russ went through it and appears to be well—albeit still an idiot—I think I'll handle it just fine."

"You don't know what this is doing to our bodies..." Derek fumed. "We could get very sick, die or lose our manhood and stay a woman."

"I so don't want to lose my manhood," Russ uttered. "Like, its way needed for recreational purposes. My babes would majorly suffer."

"If you become a woman, just some of your babes would suffer," Bren countered. "Besides, you like them kinky."

Russ smirked. "Dude, it's called freaky."

"Is that the politically-correct term for it these days?" Bren asked. "At this point, I don't care. I'm going back to bed."

"C'mon, Russ. I'll get in bed with you and we can watch a movie," Derek offered. "It'll be awhile before Raymond and Dr. Munson get here."

"Cool, dude." Russ dropped his boxers and crawled underneath the covers. "You're so rad."

Derek climbed into bed. "I'm awesomely rad!"

Both faced each other and sniggered.

"I think Bren is taking this too lightly," Derek said. "He can go to that hard place, but I cannot."

"I totally can't either."

"We don't know what this is doing to our insides," Derek repeated. "I saw what it can do to our outsides. Seeing you as a woman freaked me the hell out. That could happen to me. The question is when?"

"How am I going to get any sleep with you two buffoons babbling on?" Bren sat up. "I thought a quiet movie was going to be watched. Emphasis on the quiet."

“We will, as soon as we’re done talking,” Derek replied.

“Like, chitchat soothes me, so shut your hole,” Russ demanded.

Bren snickered. “Oh, you do need to relax.”

“I was completely chill until your backtalk,” Russ declared.

“Bren, go back to sleep,” Derek urged.

“Let’s pretend I got some in the first place,” he stated. “Besides, I’m not tired.”

“Well, we’re going to talk,” Derek remarked.

“What about?” Bren asked. “Your lives?”

“Maybe,” Derek responded. “They could take a very sharp turn into something we know nothing about.

“Oh, you’ll adapt!” Bren snarled. “We all would have to. There’s no other choice.”

Derek looked at Russ. “What did it feel like to be a woman?”

“It totally felt like me, just way prettier.”

Bren sneered. “He’s definitely back!”

“How did you see yourself if you were on the floor in the dark?” Derek questioned.

Russ swallowed. “Like, remember when I was on the floor the first time covered with the wet towels?”

Both promptly nodded.

“I had wicked cramps, so I totally grabbed my tummy and hurried into the bathroom—”

“Was it the runs?” Derek interjected.

“Yes, from his mouth!” Bren chuckled.

Derek glared at him. “Seriously?”

Bren scowled. “Don’t be such a killjoy.”

“Your joy isn’t the only thing I’m going to kill,” Derek remarked. He faced Russ. “Go ahead and tell us the rest.”

“Like, I sat on the closed toilet seat and was totally doubled-over then my face felt way weird. So I got up and looked into the mirror and watched myself way change into a woman. That’s when my grandpa’s ring fell off...” He jumped out of bed and rushed to the bathroom.

“Is it happening again?” Derek yelled out.

Russ came out with the ring securely back on his finger. “Nope, just had to find where this baby was majorly sitting.” He displayed it to them.

“Would you wear some boxer shorts to bed?” Bren grimaced. “Nobody wants to see all that yuck flopping to and fro.”

Russ turned around. “Like, how about all this?” He shook his bubble-butt for all to see.

“Blah...” Bren’s tongue flew out. “Double yuck!”

Russ leaped back into bed.

Derek laughed. “You two remind me of my brothers.”

Bren leaned forward. “How do you mean?”

“I have an older brother, Brayden, who is very smart. My younger brother, Royce, is the sassy one. As the middle child, I had to constantly break up arguments between them. Some became heated, but others were just mild banter. It’s the same with you two. One is the brain and the other the brawn.”

Bren snickered. “All of us know which brothers we emulate.”

“Yes, but I do not want that role again,” Derek maintained.

“Like, he’s so telling us to lighten up.”

Bren sneered. "You first, chunky."

"After you, bones." Russ jabbed.

"You two make me feel right at home," Derek stated.

"I'm the smart one, so that means you're the sloppy one." Bren pointed to Russ.

"I said sassy, not sloppy." Derek glared at Bren. "Supposedly, for being the smart one, you don't listen very well."

Russ stuck out his tongue.

Bren smirked. "I almost liked you better as a woman. At least it gave me something good to look at," he said. "Now I have to deal with you and your antics."

Russ grabbed his man area. "Dude, deal with this."

"If I do, you'll be back to speaking with your high-pitched shrill," Bren snapped.

Russ beamed. "That just totally gave me a cool thought."

"No more callers, folks," Bren announced. "We've got ourselves a winner!"

"Just ignore him and tell me," Derek uttered.

"Like, if we majorly turn into chicks, I've so got our girl names—"

"I already have one picked out for you!" Bren interrupted. "I just wouldn't be able to say it in the company of ladies."

Russ continued unfazed. "Bren, you'll totally become Brie. Derek, your name will be Darla and I'll be Rue."

"You have got to be kidding me—"

"We'll definitely need names if we become girls," Derek chimed in.

Bren scoffed. "That will never happen to me."

“Like, I so bet it will,” Russ quipped. “And unlike me, it won’t be pretty either.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Bren remarked. “I wouldn’t go out in public if that happened—”

“And the world takes a collective sigh of relief!” Derek heckled.

“I’m going back to sleep.” Bren turned over. “I suggest you both do the same.”

Russ fluffed his pillow. “Like, I could totally go for some shut-eye.”

“Brother, you just said a mouthful.” Derek shut off the lamp.

Peace and quiet fell over the room.

“At long last, no more blathering yaps!” Bren signed off.