

Emily opened her eyes up, a dark hand filled her vision. She got up and was about to scream until she remembered yesterday. The transformation into an elf was still fresh in her mind.

“Right, dark elf.” She sighed. “Okay, I gotta confront this. You can do it Emily. Just have to acknowledge you’re an elf right now.”

The sound of her breaths filled the air. She couldn’t do anything just laying on her bed, so with one hand, she pushed herself up. She gazed down at her figure, her hot pink nipples still eye-catching on her breasts. A hand traveled down the length of her body, feeling every flat surface or new curve she now possessed. A tingle went up her spine. The hand took itself away.

“Don’t grope yourself, Emily. Get some clothes on. Figure out what’s going on. Then find a way to get back to normal.” Emily sauntered over to one of her cabinets. Opening it up, she looked over at something to cover her bottom half. A couple of experimental tugs through two, maybe even three, pants proved worthless. They were meant for a woman eleven inches shorter than her and with a dumpier looking bottom. Her shirts proved to be in the same situation, with only her button-ups remotely the chance of covering her.

Emily soon found some hope though, one of her stretch pants was really put to the limit. It said it was one size fits all, but eleven inches of height was still eleven inches. So Emily had to really try and grip the poor pants in her hands. After a few moments of this, Emily finished. It was a bit tight around the hips but she thought it was serviceable. Next was the shirt. In that regard, Emily chose one of the largest shirts she had, a very pretty sun symbol Tee that she purchased at the wrong size.

It kept escaping her that she had to return the shirt one of these days, but circumstances proved it was a necessity. Still, it draped over her chest and torso and revealed a bit of a belly button. Better than nothing she supposed. She turned towards one of her mirrors and stood admiring her new form.

She looked adequate. Given the circumstances, it was better than nothing. A sigh escaped then weariness followed. Already a smidge of mental energy had escaped Emily. She wondered what she was going to do next. Where did she even start trying to fix all of this? Her feet stomped on her floor, the weight of her thoughts almost transferring physically. After a few moments, she laid back down onto her bed. The ceiling fan was high in the air.

“You know what, first thing’s first. I’m going to tell everyone about me.”

She had debated internally about keeping her body a secret from her friends. But then realized that logically, it would be better just to admit what happened to her. What was she going to do, avoid everybody for a week? Hell, did she even know how long she would stay transformed? So after rummaging through her night stand, Emily found her second phone. Mostly used for emergencies; her mind wandered a bit wondering if her main phone was still at her Uncle's house.

“Shit, I had my wallet on me as well. I hope it's not gone forever..” Emily muttered. “Oh crap baskets, if it is...one thing at a time, Emily. Don't wanna stress yourself too much. Okay, who first?”

It was around seven in the morning, so there was Nikki who had her two sisters to wake her up. Percy woke up for his health, or so he said, alongside Bradley; both woke each other up, they were roommates who also worked close to each other's stores. Trent was probably asleep, same with Marcus. So, with her options laid in front of her, Emily decided to choose her targets.

Briefly, she wondered if she should've called Lisa. Maybe it would've been a good idea, but she shook her head. No need to worry her cousin about all this, she didn't wanna add her transformation on top of the trauma of losing her dad. That was insanity enough. She calmed herself, deep breaths, before she began to scroll through her contacts to find Nikki. Her most reliable of friends and a second sister to her. Briefly a shot of hesitation raced through her but she quelled it. Nope, better to tell everyone what happened than keep it a secret.

“Nikki.” Emily spoke.

“Morning.” Nikki spoke back, a light sprinkling of early morning deprivation was in her tone but for the most part Nikki kept a cheery attitude. Steadying her breath, Emily could hear in the background the sound of her friend's siblings. They met on occasions when her sister brought them over; Sharon had a deeper voice than Nikki while Dana sounded a bit more musical. They were obviously chatting about something, it involved two guys and a horse. If she focused, she could even hear their conversation becoming clearer. She was surprised about her elf hearing.

“Um, Emily. What's the matter? You're not saying anything.”

“Oh, sorry. Listen, I have a problem and I need you at my house in...two hours. I'd rather you'd keep this private. It's a 'party' secret, so keep Sharon and Dana away.”

“Alright, sure.” Nikki replied. There didn’t seem any hesitation in those words, Nikki just trusted Emily. That done, Emily quickly texted both Trent and Marcus, they’d be up in about an hour, maybe two in Marcus’ case. Finally, she went to call Percy; she knew Percy would tell Bradley everything when she finished.

After a brief explanation about what was going on Emily was left alone in her room. She stood silently wondering what to do next. Her hand absentmindedly scratched her bottom, did the pants feel tighter? She wasn’t going insane was she? The drow shook her head, she didn’t need to focus on that, instead she prepared herself for her friends. A few jumps to hype herself up, Emily began to head to her kitchen. There, she prepared a couple of snacks, nothing fancy. Finger sandwiches, juice or water, all prepared in an hour and a half.

A few texts from Trent and Marcus broke up the monotony. They had their own questions which were answered with “Come to house and find out” , vague but all she could give them. Before they came, Emily unlocked the door. Her foot tapped to feel the silence, soon she’d meet her friends.

“Keep calm, Emily, you’re not a freak. You’re just an elf, a dark elf, but an elf.”

A ring broke the silence. A hastily shouted “It’s unlocked” came from Emily. A rumbling sound of multiple voices echoed in the hallway. Quiet enough they weren’t shouting but loud enough that one without elf-hearing could understand them. Emily’s nerves were frayed, the sight of an arm followed by its owner made the elf twitch in anticipation. The owner of the arm was Nikki who popped her head into the living room, blinked then flipped.

“Waaah.”

“Nikki what’s wrong?” Percy’s voice followed before his head turned to see the dark elf. Who, at this moment, was raising both of her hands up to ease their distress. A smile was forced onto her face.

“It’s me, it’s me. Emily!” She did her best to calm her friends down. The rest of the group finally piled into the lounge room to gape at their friend. There she was, a true and black dark elf. Straight out of a fantasy novel, right there in front of them.

“The fuck?” Trent broke the tension. Marcus stood slack-jawed at the sight before him. While Nikki walked closer to Emily, Percy and Bradley behind her.

“Come on, I don’t bite everybody.”

“What’s even happening right now?” Trent spoke.

“A dark elf sounding like Emily is sitting on her couch, get with the times.” Marcus dumbly replied. Emily sighed and rubbed her eyes. Nikki finally got over to stand near Emily.

“Emily?”

“It's me. How are you doing, Nikki?”

“Fine; you?”

“I’m an elf.” ” She spread her arms open. “ So...take that as you will.” It was like the release of a dam because the next thing you knew, everybody clamored to ask questions. The sound made Emily’s ears twitch in annoyance. It was like somebody was banging drums together.

“Stop, stop, one question at a time! It’s like being in the middle of a swarm of bees while a parade’s in the background. Percy, you first! I think you asked how I became an elf?” The dark elf cringed trying to the insufferable ringing in her ears.

She pointed at her friend, who nodded dumbly. She returned her own nod to him and began her story. It began with the time she left the group last night to when she woke up looking like this to this moment right now. The group found places to plant themselves while they listened, sometimes they broke up the story with their own questions but Emily focused mainly on the biggest one.

“Do you feel okay?” Nikki, always the caring one, asked Emily. Who assured her friend with the same words from before.

“I’m fine, just living as an elf right now.”

“Do you know how your uncle got the book?” Percy interjected.

“Nope, but if we can head to his house, we can probably find out.”

“Why are you so...well, hot.” Marcus interrupted with a nudge from the side by Trent.

“Don’t know Marcus.” Emily flatly replied. “But I do know one thing, I need to head to my uncle’s place to figure out how I’m going to get back to normal. I can’t run my store like this.”

“Come on, people all around would pay good money to have a genuine half-elf give them a selfie.”

“You mean full-elf right?” Trent chimed. Trent and Marcus shared a nod while Nikki and the others gave the two an annoyed glare. The elf straightened himself.

“We’re not gonna fix this standing in the house, let’s head over to my uncle and see how to change myself back.”

Emily looked at Bradley and Percy. The two shared a brief look, Bradley pointed at himself and mouthed ‘me’ to the dark elf. She leaned her head a bit forward as an indication that yes, she meant him.

“Your windows are tinted right? ”

“Last time I checked, yep.”

“Good, is it okay if I can...?”

“Ride with us?” Bradley stopped her before she could continue. “Come right along.”

The group, now with a goal laid out before them, walked together towards the front of the house. Emily waited for Percy to open the door to Bradley’s car. Her hand slapped her forehead, she ran back inside. A few moments later, out of the house appeared the elf woman. Disguised, thankfully. She wore a large shawl, had her head covered by a floppy hat, and wore some gloves. A few select pieces of clothes muddle the look of her obsidian forearms and legs; any random pedestrian would mistake them for tights rather than flesh.

Doing her best to get into Bradley’s car, Emily had to maneuver a bit until she was comfortable. Finished, she waited while her friends got into their own vehicles. The group soon drove to her uncle's home.

She made Percy and Bradley park at the curb. Quickly she got out and headed towards the front door. It was unlocked, confused, Emily didn’t put too much thought into it and headed inside. Behind her, her group of friends followed in with Trent being the last one to close the door.

Inside, Nikki was the only one who didn't gasp at the vastness of the interior. The rugs, the old fashioned fireplace, the antiques, it was a bit much to take in. Marcus let out a sharp whistle, he went around the room to touch and prod everything.

"This place is awesome; why did you never invite me here?" Marcus announced. A sudden turn of his hand almost knocked a vase off a podium. It didn't break but the glare Emily gave him was enough to cause him to blush. The group marveled at the wonder downstairs and only turned their heads once Nikki and Emily made their way upwards. The hatch to the attic was still put into its 'stairs' mode, just as Emily had left it last night. Once they went up, the others followed.

"It's like a cartoon up in here." Marcus gaped at the way Stanley archived his attic. The dark elf ignored him and swiftly searched for the book. After a moment, she found it lying paper side down, its cover pointing upwards. She snatched it into her hand and looked at the contents. A faintly dim glow colored the page, yet she felt no jolt of energy like last night. The others gathered around their companion while she clutched the book.

"I'm not changing back, stupid book! I'm not going to be a dark elf for the rest of my life!" Emily shook the book, seeing if that did anything. Unfortunately, it did not. Percy laid a calming hand on her shoulder, he did his best to ease his friend's nerves.

"Steady, Emily. Breathe in and breathe out, maybe we have to find a switch or a key?"

"Maybe it was like a charge?" Marcus chimed in. "Once you touch it, you can't go back?" Trent nodded, Emily nodded, her lips puckered in a frustrated frown. Elsewhere, Nikki and Bradley were going through Uncle Stanley's cabinets.

The others swiftly joined in. The sounds of shuffling furniture, creaking wood, and the occasional cough broke the silence. Bradley shuffled around the cabinet until a discoloration drew his eyes to the back of it. His hand traced across the tiny gap and eventually found a curve to still his finger on. He pressed down on it, a soft pop of air brushed it. His finger twiddled at the gap, until it popped open to reveal a book nestled in a false panel.

Bradley announced his discovery with a 'Over here!' to his friends. The group walked right up to him and stared down at his hands. A journal, worn and stitched and smushed together, was in them. Bradley opened his hands and the group peered down. Inside were dates and highlighted words and even a few illustrations. Nikki, who looked down upon it, spoke. Here she narrated the first few pages.

*“Day 1: Since the Return. We’ve finally gotten back and I’ve decided to write my experience down in this book. Got to make a memoir for our trip. We stayed six months there, but it’s only been two hours since we’ve left home. Mom was worried sick about us and we got quite an earful from dad. Love ‘em but boy can the old man scream. Not as bad as Florence’s though, disappointment in her voice hit me like a school bus. But, seeing how exhausted I looked, the folks just led me and Theresa upstairs to rest. In my bedroom, I stewed in my memories. I’m still reeling from nearly two years of adventuring, I barely look a day older than when we left. Aches and pains that I took over the trip had healed or disappeared entirely, that headache that hounded me a month before we went home is thankfully gone. The others are in the same boat, Lars misses his ‘radical’ scar though.”*

Emily’s eyes widened. Percy looked at her and spoke:

“Isn’t Theresa your mom’s name?” Percy looked over to Emily. The dark elf nodded dumbly. This was a revelation that she wasn’t expecting today; a cherry on top of this entire catastrophe of a situation. The group sat, or stood, in silence until Nikki took the book gently from Bradley’s hands to read on.

*“The others seem fine, but... we’ll skip to the next day. It’s just more about the neighborhood’s reaction.”* Nikki explained, she flipped deeper into the book, her finger traced ink across a page.

*“Day 2: Since the Return. Diary, you can’t speak, but I realized I wasted a few good pages yesterday. I didn’t even begin writing my memoir. Let’s (Oh, there’s an ink blot here, I’ll read over it) It all began when Theresa invited Carl over to our home. Thersea, in either childhood excitement or to impress her crush, wanted to show off the forest to Carl, who had recently moved in from the city and had never seen a forest ‘up-close’ before.*

*I still find that baffling. Lars, being Carl’s best friend, decided to tag along; Theresa was too sweet, she wanted Carl to herself, but with Lars in the way, her plans were knocked cock-eyed. Sarah, our neighbor, wandered into this group like she always did. I think she overheard Theresa going on an adventure, I don’t know what happened next was what she expected. Now, of course, trusting four pre-teens by themselves wasn’t a good idea, so through coercion and 15\$ given to me by ma and pa, I was summoned to be the group’s guardian. With me as an advisor, and Fiona who graciously gave up her time with Florence for us, the adults felt safe letting all of us wander into the deep, dark woods.”*

Emily remembered seeing old pictures of the town during Stanley's childhood and teenage years. The forest used to be much more wild around the outskirts, it was the type of place that sunlight couldn't even penetrate. She often wondered how her grandparents just let her parents wander around. She shook that thought away to listen back in on Nikki.

A couple of boring transitions, such as wandering past a few loose boulders and seeing a family of squirrels, gave way to Sinkhole Valley. Dubbed by the local children, the place was known for its terrifying sinkhole epidemic. Emily wracked her mind in trying to remember if this place was still around.

*"I don't know if it was either Carl or Theresa, but one of them slipped and pulled the other. I couldn't just let them fall, so I grabbed onto them with both hands. It felt like they were being sucked in though! Soon enough, I was falling in as well; Lars, who though I had disagreements with him since before this day and for the following adventure to come, I could always trust to be the first to help, rushed to my aid. Fiona and Sarah did their best to aid him but eventually gravity and loose dirt prevailed and we fell elsewhere...."*

Nikki blinked then read on:

*"Day 3: Since the Return. Mom and dad finally asked what happened in the forest, Florence wanted to know as well but waited until our folks spoke first. Theresea and I spun a yarn about a sinkhole, which had answered only a few of their questions, but was good enough for them to get off our backs. Don't know about the others though, hope they can conjure something up. I don't think telling their folks that they got 'transported to another world' would be an easy pill to swallow."*

"Your Uncle got isekai'd!" Marcus turned to Emily.

"I'd say Narnia'd' Percy replied. "Much more of a classic."

"What about Magic Treehouse?" Bradley piped up.

"I think we're all ignoring the old D&D Cartoon, everybody." Trevor interjected.

"Okay can we focus on the fact my parents, uncle, and their friends all got transported to another world and not argue about what type-portal fantasy it was!" Emily put her foot down. The others nodded and went back to listening in on Nikki. There were a bunch of words concerning their parents, their friends, and getting settled back into their life.

*“Being in the other world was terrifying, let me tell you. There sea, I hope she doesn’t find this, damned near pissed herself seeing a real life goblin pop up from the ground. “*

Nothing else was said, but the group realized that Emily’s family was a lot more complex than they realized. Words like ‘heroes’, ‘other world’, and ‘right outta of a fantasy novel’ were thrown around the room. It was too much for the dark elf, who fled the room in a panic.