


EPILOGUE:
THE ROAD AHEAD



Oh,
man...

...that was a
really weird
dream...




What the
fuck!?!

A man with dark hair and a light complexion is lying in bed, shirtless, with his arms raised behind his head. He is looking towards the viewer with a slight smile. The background shows a wooden headboard and a dark pillow. Three speech bubbles are positioned above him, containing text.

Oh, hey!


Good
morning!

It's quite a
shock waking
up next to
yourself,
isn't it?



No...
...this... this
shouldn't be
possible...

...shit... this
is actually
real...

A 3D-rendered illustration of a young man with dark hair, shirtless, lying in a bed. He is smiling and looking towards the viewer. His right arm is raised behind his head, and his left hand is open and resting on the bed. He is covered up to his waist by a blanket with dark and light vertical stripes. The bed has white pillows and a grey sheet. The background shows a dark room with vertical blinds. Three speech bubbles are positioned above him, containing text.

Oh, it certainly is real...

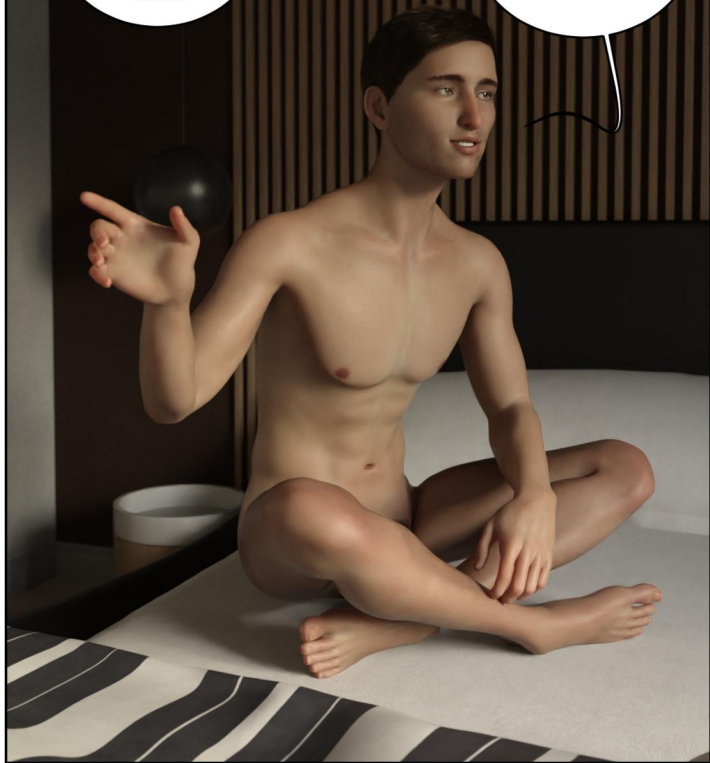
...and don't worry, it'll only be a few more days of waking up like this...

...by the end of this week, waking up with a naked Robin in your arms will feel completely normal.

Anyhow,
speaking of
Robin, she's
already out in
the living
room.

Oh, and
don't mind her
appearance...

...she's trying
to build up her
courage for work
tomorrow.



*So she could really
use some words of
encouragement at
the moment.*





Hey!

Good morning!

Good morning...!


...um...
present-day
Evan?




Yup.

So how's it going? My ...umm... future self said that you were having some trouble...


'Trouble'
is putting it
lightly...

A young man with short brown hair is looking down and slightly to his left. He is wearing a grey, long-sleeved, button-down shirt and blue jeans with a brown belt. The background shows a modern living room with a white sofa, a blue and white patterned wall, and a large window. A speech bubble is positioned above his head, containing text.


*Like, I've
nailed down my
glamour's physical
appearance...*

A 3D rendered character with short brown hair and a grey long-sleeved shirt stands in a modern living room. The room features a blue and white zigzag patterned wall, a white sofa, and a window with a view of a city. The character has a speech bubble above their head containing text.

...but I can't seem to extend the illusion to my movement and mannerisms.

A 3D rendered character, a young man with short brown hair, is shown from the back and side. He is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans with a brown belt. He is standing in a modern living room. The room features a white sofa with blue and grey cushions, a wall with blue and white chevron wallpaper, and several framed abstract art pieces. A large window in the background shows a bright outdoor scene. A speech bubble is positioned above the character's head, containing the text: "Like, look at how much my hips sway when I walk!".

Like, look
at how much
my hips sway
when I walk!




I'm terrified
everyone at work
is going to notice
how effeminate
I've suddenly
become!

*But isn't
that good?*

*Won't it make
things more
believable when you
tell people you're
transitioning?*





Well, that's
the scariest
part of
this...!

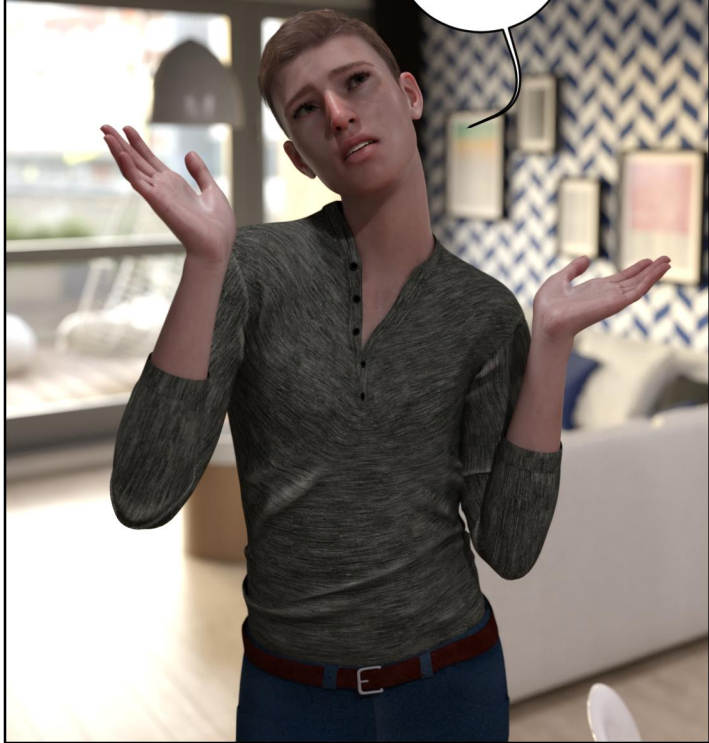
...the part
where I have
to tell people
about it!



I wish
I could just
gradually change
my appearance over
the span of a year
without saying
anything!

But when
people do
start asking
questions...

...which
they will...



...I'll need a
paper trail of
documentation
to back up my
answers to those
questions.



And to create
that paper trail,
I need to fake the
proper process
of a transition.



*Which means
talking to people
about it.*




Well, you
don't have
tell everyone
all at once...

...just start
with your
family
doctor...

...and take
it slow until
you get more
comfortable with
telling people
about it.






Evan, that's
like wading
slowly into a
cold pool...

...or slowly
peeling off
a band-aid...



...it's usually
better to just
jump right
in...


...rip the
band-aid off
right away.



But right now...

...right now, I'm stuck at the edge of the pool...

...trying to build up the courage to simply take a leap.



*...pretending
to be someone
who isn't me
anymore!*

Because
the longer I
draw out this
process...

...the longer
I'm going to be
stuck looking
like this...



Well, you
have the day
off...

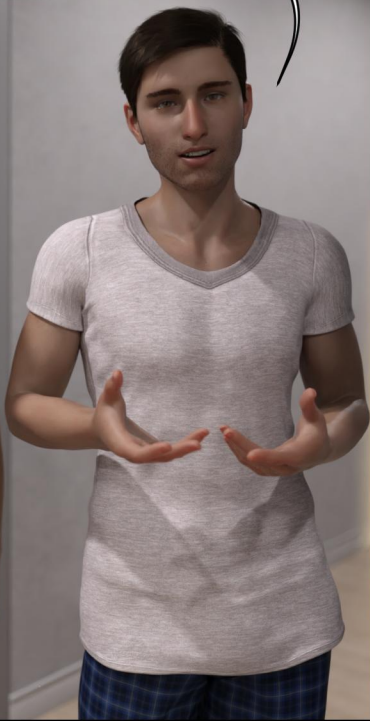
Why not
enjoy today as
'you' before you're
stuck being
'no longer you'
tomorrow?



Trust me,
you'll be fine
tomorrow.

You even told
me that as scary
as it was, it wasn't
as bad as you
thought it
would be.

So don't
waste all day
today worrying
about it.



Well, there
you are,
words from
the oracle's
mouth.

My other
self has already
lived through this
week. If he says
it'll be fine, it'll
be fine.



*It still doesn't
make me any
less scared of
tomorrow,
though...*



Then take
your mind off
it for a bit...


...go outside,
take a walk,
and go shopping
downtown.



And besides,
what are you
actually wearing
beneath your
glamour?

Women's
clothing,
right?




A woman with short brown hair and green eyes is shown from the waist up. She is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans with a brown belt. A translucent blue energy field surrounds her, with a glowing blue orb in her right hand. The background is a modern living room with a patterned wall and a white sofa.

Well, yeah!
Of course!

Well, you told me your illusion works better when your shape more closely matches the image.

Which means you'd be better off wearing men's clothing when you go out in public for the foreseeable future.





Except, I don't have any men's clothing anymore...

...I changed every last piece of menswear I had into women's clothing.

I kind of assumed I wouldn't need any of it ever again.

Well, then that's the perfect excuse to go out shopping today for some new men's clothes.


...or, at the least, some unisex clothing that'll look good on both your male and female personas.



You should
also get your
hair cut.

Get a nice pixie cut
that better reflects
the length of the
hair you show in
your illusion.






Okay, but
if I spend the
rest of the day
as the real
me...

...it could cause
trouble later on
if I go out in public
looking like my
actual self before
she is supposed
to exist...

...someone
I meet today
might recognize
me if I bump
into them again
later...



Well, you
have your
glamour...

...make
yourself
blond or
something.

Give yourself an appearance close enough to your true self to feel like yourself...

...but different enough that nobody who meets you now will recognize you when you start walking around as your real self.



So...
how's this
look?






You look
fantastic!

Well, now
that we have
me sorted out...
what about
you?



We can't go
out in public
with two Evans
side-by-side.





Well, these next three weeks are going to be full of distractions.

Which resulted in me falling behind with my work and studies.


Fortunately, travelling back in time has given me a chance to catch up on all of the work I let slide during the whirlwind phase of our romance.

So I'm just going to stay here at home and take care of that while you two go out.




Are you
sure?

Yeah, I'll
be fine.




*Go out,
spend the day
together...*

*...just the
two of you as
a couple.*

A young man with short dark hair, wearing a grey t-shirt with a dark V-neck, is shown from the chest up. He has a thoughtful or slightly apologetic expression, looking off to the right. His right hand is raised with fingers slightly spread. A large white speech bubble with a black outline is positioned above and to the right of his head, containing text. The background is a simple indoor setting with a white door and a square light fixture on the wall.

Well, now I
feel bad about
leaving you here
to take care of all
of the work I
didn't finish...


A man with dark hair and a light beard, wearing a white t-shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is looking slightly to his right with a thoughtful expression. A speech bubble is positioned above his head, containing text. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

*Don't feel too
bad. When you
go back in time,
you'll have to
do it too!*








A black cat is sitting on a light-colored ottoman with a blue and white chevron pattern. The room has matching chevron wallpaper, a white sofa with blue pillows, and a large window with a white wicker chair. A speech bubble is connected to the cat.

*Finally... I
was beginning
to think they'd
never leave...*




They didn't
take that
long...

...besides,
we still have
the whole day
ahead of us.

A black cat with yellow eyes is standing on a light-colored, textured chair. The cat is looking towards the viewer. A speech bubble originates from the cat's mouth, containing two lines of text. The background is a blurred interior with a blue and white chevron pattern on the wall and a window on the left.

Good.

*Because
we have a lot
work to do.*



*I still wish I
could tell them
about this...*



They'll find
out soon
enough.


When dealing
with a time loop,
it's best to let
things occur
naturally.



Robin and
your past self
will visit Robin's
sister a few days
from now...

...and then
they'll discover
Cassie's secret,
just like they would
have without
this time loop...



A woman with long purple hair stands in a modern living room. She is wearing a shiny, purple and white outfit with a high collar, long gloves, and boots. She holds a long, dark sword. A black cat is sitting on the floor in front of her. A speech bubble is positioned to the left of the woman.

*...and then you'll
no longer have to
worry about
keeping your new
job a secret.*

TO BE CONTINUED IN BOOK TWO:
THE HEART GUARDIANS