

THINGS HAVE CHANGED

by

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CHARACTERS

LANA – 23, a trans woman; around her mom her defenses are up, closing off her usual caring side, and turning her sense of humor sardonic

EILEEN – 54, a cis woman; around her daughter she's torn between a drive to reconnect, and a reflexive instinct toward judgment and detachment

SETTING

A café in a mid-size U.S. city. Ambient sounds suggest it's popular, but not overly busy. When their conversation becomes heated, the two remember they're in public.

TIME

Present day.

EILEEN sits at a table, her fidgeting betraying her nerves. LANA enters and sits across from her, her expression slightly vigilant.

EILEEN

Hi Lana, it's good to –

LANA

I said in my email –

EILEEN

I know. I read what you wrote . . . I won't bring –

LANA

Okay . . . sorry I, you know, cut you –

EILEEN

That's fine. I'm glad we're visiting.

LANA

(under her breath)

We weren't visiting before, because you –

EILEEN

Lana, I want us – can we please start fresh?

LANA

Okay.

Pause.

EILEEN

How are you? You look, um, different. I mean, from when I –

LANA

I'm okay. I've been on hormones, so maybe . . . that's –

EILEEN

Oh, right . . . and the "hormones" are, um, safe?

LANA

"Safe"? Yes, mom, every post-menopausal –

EILEEN

I'm just asking. And not every –

LANA

They're prescribed. My bloodwork is – why am I even answering –

EILEEN

I'm just concerned is all. Any time you or anyone in the family gets medical –

LANA

Well, you wouldn't have known I'd gotten it if I –

EILEEN

Can we just try to visit? I'm glad we're here together.

LANA

Yes, we can visit. How are you?

EILEEN

Me? Oh, I'm fine. Just working and . . . gardening. The usual. You're working, right? I mean, I assume –

LANA

Yes, I'm – it's hard for me to “just visit” and not -

EILEEN

I've reached out before.

LANA

And when you decided –

EILEEN

That's not what I meant. I –

LANA

You all but disowned –

EILEEN

Lana. I'm here with you. I –

LANA

Okay . . . while we're here, why don't you explain for me why not supporting me when I came out is something –

EILEEN

I didn't know what you were doing.

LANA

I told you. I –

EILEEN

You were away at school. I thought, “Maybe he has some weird –”

LANA

She.

EILEEN

Huh? Oh, “she,” right.

LANA

So I was dumb, and people at my college convinced me to change genders, and –

EILEEN

That’s not what –

LANA

And that was a good reason to tell me not to come home if I “was looking like that”?

Pause. Eileen looks upset and anxious.

EILEEN

I reached out to you because I do want – I accept what you’re doing . . . that’s why we’re here, right?

LANA

I guess.

EILEEN

It was – I felt scared when you didn’t respond. Earlier, I mean.

LANA

I was mad.

EILEEN

I wondered if that was a thing. Like, if people in that community don’t –

LANA

“That community”?

EILEEN

Huh? You know, in the transgender, or –

LANA

No, it’s not a thing.

EILEEN

Oh. I wasn’t sure.

LANA

Most trans people I know jump up and down if the parents who stopped talking to them change their minds after three months.

EILEEN

Oh, but you didn’t – I mean, not that you had to jump up and down – but, you –

LANA

You cut me off. I was in school, and I suddenly had no –

EILEEN

(guilty)

Right.

LANA

Rent. Food. Classes – if that had been our arrangement before, I would have been –

EILEEN

I know. I was worried. I –

LANA

You did that right when I started the hardest –

EILEEN

I thought you’d gone crazy, Lance. I didn’t know what else to –

LANA

Lana.

EILEEN

Huh? Oh –

LANA

I don't know why we're even –

EILEEN

I'm just trying to explain –

LANA

I know nurturing is not your thing, but that was a time I needed –

EILEEN

You're being rude. Can we try to keep –

LANA

Fine . . . anyway, as I was attempting to support myself, finish school, transition genders and look for work, reconciling with the person who had explicitly rejected me didn't feel like a priority.

Pause.

EILEEN

I see . . . well, it looks like you've been doing well.

LANA

Thanks.

EILEEN

I'd like it if we could . . . be close again. Do you think that's –

LANA

Oh.

EILEEN

Isn't that why we're meeting?

LANA

Is it?

EILEEN

Lana – I asked you to, you know, be in touch a while ago. Now, you responded, so –

LANA

I thought we were here to . . . address things.

EILEEN

“Address things”? I don’t know what you –

LANA

Like what you did when I came out –

EILEEN

We just talked about that, didn’t we? You told me you felt upset. What else –

LANA

Are you serious? You think –

EILEEN

Is there something else –

LANA

(nervous)

You haven’t apologized.

EILEEN

I see.

LANA

And I’d like –

EILEEN

You do this thing I don’t understand, and I –

LANA

“This thing”? I –

EILEEN

Okay. I –

LANA

I transitioned, and it –

EILEEN

Excuse me if I don’t know every correct –

LANA

I lost friends, I was harassed, every cent I’d saved

I spent to –

EILEEN

I'm sure it was difficult.

LANA

It was. And you didn't support –

EILEEN

How many times are – yes, I know I . . . could have done more. Can we just agree about that and –

LANA

You mean, can I just accept everything you –

EILEEN

What? I didn't say –

LANA

(under her breath)

Didn't you? It would be in keeping –

EILEEN

"In keeping" with what? Do you –

LANA

How did you respond when . . .

(looks down)

I brought up . . . you hitting me when I was a child?

Pause.

EILEEN

I don't know. How –

LANA

You said it was probably difficult . . . and that I was one of many people to whom –

EILEEN

(looks away, guilty)

I imagine I said . . . my mother also – anyway, are you saying, what? What's happening now is –

LANA

You didn't apologize, you didn't say you shouldn't have -

EILEEN

Is everyone supposed to respond exactly -

LANA

You've treated me like shit, and maybe you were treated that way, too, but -

EILEEN

This is getting to be a bit much, isn't -

LANA

At school there were people who cared about me, and rooted -

EILEEN

You think I don't care? I raised -

LANA

You abused me.

EILEEN

(nervous)

Can we not talk about that here, please? We're -

LANA

Fine.

A tense pause ensues. Tempers cool, but both are still agitated.

LANA

My point was, it was clear to me when I began transitioning who I could turn to and who wished I just wouldn't be myself.

EILEEN

Well, I guess I didn't understand . . . do you feel like you can turn to -

LANA

No. I think -

EILEEN

No? Lana, aren't I -

LANA

Anytime I've had trouble, you blamed me. When I've wanted to -

EILEEN

You're exaggerating.

LANA

(cries)

I don't think you like me . . . and when I was closeted, I guess I didn't notice or -

EILEEN

That isn't -

LANA

Yes, it is. You act interested or proud when I do what you want, and -

EILEEN

Is this why you came here? To tear me -

LANA

No. Well, maybe - I think I hoped you'd thought about -

EILEEN

You hoped I agreed with -

LANA

I hoped missing me made -

EILEEN

I *have* missed you. It's why -

LANA

I know, and I've felt sad and guilty about not being in -

EILEEN

Okay, then let's -

LANA

I can't.

EILEEN

What do you mean, you can't?

LANA

It was too hard becoming who I am to be close to someone that doesn't respect me.

EILEEN

You think I don't respect -

LANA

Yes.

EILEEN

Well, you're wrong.

LANA

I was hoping I was, but -

EILEEN

(cries)

It isn't fair for you to just decide this.

Lana stands, nervous and guilty.

LANA

I know . . . goodbye.

Lana crosses from the table and exits.