

I lay in bed watching the clock, pretending to be asleep. Occasionally, I glance over at my Lover who is knocked out. My neck itches, but I refrain from scratching because I don't want to disturb them.

When the clock strikes 1 am, I cough loudly to see if my partner is good and sleep. I pause waiting for any movement. Nothing.

Slinking out of bed, I grab my phone closing the door behind me. Like clockwork the group chat lights up.

Noctus: *Ya'll ready?*

Responses pour in from over 500 people.

Nightwing: *Almost! Unfortunately, Speedbump refuses to stop barking. My wife is annoyed and is pushing me to take him for a late night walk. I refuse to miss another night with you guys.*

I respond, *John, just bring him. It won't be the first time, plus he's like our little freak mascot anyway!*

Others chime in:

Duke Owlington: *We gotta get him a shirt!*

Scowl: *WE need shirts.*

Smiling, I move to the bathroom upstairs and run the water for a shower, making it as hot as possible. I hit the exhaust fan for a little white noise.

*Jumping in the shower, meet you guys at The Plunge.*

Owl Pacino: *Oh @Beyowlce, I've got a surprise for you tonight!*

Scowl: *It better be better than your last "surprise"!*

Stepping in, I allow the water to run over my body. I rub my hands over my body. My pores enlarge at my touch. It helps take the edge off of the itching.

I brace for the first crack, it happens in my shoulders first, then my back follows. The bones break and shift creating an eerie percussion you'd think I'd be used to by now. I hold onto the shower wall for support.

My arms stretch and elongate and my chest follows suit, expanding as my legs shrink. This part I've grown tolerable of, it's the next part that I'll never get used to!

Every pore on my body expands and contracts as oil slick black feathers emerge from every orifice. The itch is unbearable, but the surrender feels natural and organic. Every night I surrender, and every night I am equally happy I don't have to learn to fly again. My brow raises and eyes expand, making way for golf ball sized eyes filled with the night sky. I can hear multiple dimensions, which is one of my favorite parts, hearing things never heard before. I listen for my partner's heartbeat, it's slow and rhythmic...she's still asleep.

My first transformation happened on the Summer Solstice, the year I turned 27. It was random, and I was coming home late from the club. Thankfully, I was alone, but I was panic-stricken after WebMD confirmed I was definitely dying. But, I didn't die that night, I groaned and bared it while each change took place, and did the first thing anyone with a new set of wings would. I tried to fly and failed, luckily healing as an *Owlian* happens fast, and that's not the only perk that's made this new development tolerable. I can camouflage even with ink black feathers.

When I wish to disappear, I do.

Shutting the shower off, I shake any remaining water from the rest of the emerging feathers. Stopping in the mirror, my sharp onyx beak protrudes and I take in the nightmarish beauty. The human that remains intermingled in my night form keeps me grounded in my humanity and sanity.

I pull down the attic stairs and climb them rubbing myself against anything I can to help with the itch. Opening the window reveals the deep night sky, the same color as my feathers. I'm ready to fly but my talons ease in. It's annoying because it makes me late, every single night.

*Of course, the Black owl is late.*

I laugh to myself shaking my head, as I perch myself on the sill. Pulling in a deep breath, I relish in what's about to happen, and with a drop in my stomach I leap, spreading my big black wings as the wind finds me and I soar taking flight. *Owlian* flight is silent, and with the city being so loud, flying is a new form of meditation.

After taking in the city, I head to the forest; to the highest tree we affectionately call The Plunge.

Mostly everyone is already there when I arrive.

"Thought you weren't coming?" John, who's snow white feathers glow in the dark of the woods.

Speedbump runs up to me tail wagging. *To be continued...*

