

GENIE IN A BLENDER

by Supercake Studio (<https://www.patreon.com/supercakestudio>)

Early June, right after graduation, all the seniors empty out their dorms and frat rooms and whatever and dump the stuff they're not taking with them on the side of the road. It's like Christmas for broken furniture. You can get some good stuff there (just, for God's sake, stay away from the fuckin' mattresses), which is why Emma and I, broke-ass college students that we were, were going up and down the street looking for anything we could use in the apartment.

"V! Look! A whole box of *Sports Illustrateds!*" Emma chirped. She cocked her head. "Or should that be *Sportses Illustrated?* Whatever, they're in, like, mint condition!"

"Those are from *last year*. And you don't even like sports!"

"But I love free stuff!" Emma pointed out, bouncing up and down with glee. Her shiny coils of brown hair bounced. Her chest—which manages to have Realistic Jiggle Physics even though she's a damn string bean—bounced. Emma is a very bouncy person.

I'm not a very bouncy person. I'm less of a rubber ball and more of a beanbag. When I drop, I plop and I stay there. And I was feeling especially beanbaggy today because I'd eaten all the leftover pizza for breakfast (which was like half a large, *with* stuffed crust) and then had goddamn McDonalds for lunch, and frankly, I felt like a fat sack of shit.

"Hey, look over here!" Emma squealed. "There's a whole bunch of kitchen stuff!"

"Oh, let me see!" said a sultry voice from behind me. I turned around. There, having sneaked up behind me in a pair of expensive noise-canceling designer sneakers, stood Shaw McGinnis.

I really fucking hate Shaw McGinnis, because 1) her parents named her fucking *Shaw*, which is a yacht-ass name for a girl and 2) she mastered the art of the subtle putdown in kindergarten.

"Shaw," I said.

"Vivian!" she said, tossing her flame-red hair and shooting me a gleaming smile. "Hey! Great day for a walk, huh?"

See? *Great day for a walk* = *great day for you to take a walk* = *because you need the exercise* = *because you're a big old fatass*. Don't tell me she's not doing it on purpose.

Anyway, she went right by me, making a beeline for the cardboard box full of kitchen stuff, which I guarantee you she doesn't need because her parents are loaded, but she makes a big deal out of how much she likes "vintage" stuff anyway.

"Hey!" I pushed past her and knelt down to grab the box. "Emma saw this one first."

I lifted it up, and maybe I grunted a little. Shaw gave this dismissive little sniff, as if to say *of course it's hard for you, the only exercise you get is lifting food into your fat face*.

What an utter bitch.

Inside the box were three plates (in seven pieces), eleven pieces of flatware (of which no two came from the same set) and an old avocado-colored extremely 1970s-ass blender.

"I could really use that blender." Shaw said. "Our old one got broken during a party and I swear without my smoothie breakfasts I've gained five pounds from the pancakes in the caf."

And of course she brags about her healthy eating habits! See, this is why I don't hate Emma for being skinny, because Emma can't help it. She *eats* like a fat girl. It's not her fault she has a high metabolism.

But Shaw actually tries, and puts in the effort, and she looks fucking *great* and arrrrgh, I hate her!

"As a matter of fact, I've been thinking of switching to smoothies myself," I said, firmly pulling the blender out of Shaw's greedy little fingers. "I think this is the year I get serious about losing weight."

"Really? I mean, you don't need to," Shaw said. "Honestly, Vivian, you look fantastic. But if you

want to make a commitment to eating healthier, that's great! I can give you some of my favorite recipes!"

Biiiiitich.

* * *

"Now what am I gonna do with this?" I wondered aloud when we got home. The blender was bulky, ugly, and weighed a ton, and we didn't have a lot of counter space.

"Make smoothies?" Emma suggested.

"Smoothies are gross." I shrugged. "Maybe we can use it for margaritas if we can get the ice thing in the freezer to start working again. I've just got to clean it up a little."

I rubbed at the dusty glass with the hem of my shirt. The blender started to feel warm in my hands. It shook. A moment later, a cloud of smoke was billowing out of it.

"Shit!" I yelled "Electrical short!"

"But it wasn't even plugged in!" Emma protested.

"Well, it's doing it anyway!" I cried.

But it wasn't an electrical short. The smoke drew together, forming into an human figure, and suddenly a dark-haired, blue-skinned woman in harem pants was standing in the middle of our apartment.

"Okay, uh, who are you?" I asked, once we'd gotten the smoke alarm to stop beeping.

"Isn't it obvious, mistress?" she said. "I'm a genie."

"Like from *Aladdin*?" Emma asked. "Like, the Robin Williams genie?"

"No, mistress's friend," said the genie. "Although my name does happen to be Robin Williams."

"Uh... wait, seriously?"

"Yes. What's so strange about that?" she said, miffed. "'Robin' is gender-neutral, and 'Williams' is a very common last name, I'll have you know. And I'm thousands of years old, so the combination didn't mean anything special at the time. Now, mistress, your first wish, if you please."

This was all deeply weird, but she *had* appeared in a puff of smoke, and she *was* blue. Also, she was topless, so I was pretty sure that either the color wasn't body paint or else it had been done by someone who was *really* good at doing a subtle paint job on nipples.

"Okay, I wish—" Emma started, before I clapped a hand over her mouth.

"Oh my *fucking god*, you dip, we only get three wishes and we have to be real fucking careful with them, okay?" I snapped.

Robin cleared her throat. "Ten thousand apologies, mistress, but you are mistaken. There's no limit on wishes. You can make as many as you want."

"Really?"

Robin nodded. Her mass of shiny black hair, tied back in a ponytail, bobbed, and her giant hoop earring jangled. "But there's a catch."

"Oh, I'll just bet there is."

"You can only make weight-related wishes."

"Um." Okay, goodbye, hundred billion dollars. Goodbye, world peace. Goodbye, spending a week as the filling in a Hemsworth sandwich.

But at least I could be thin, right?

"Weight-related wishes?" Emma said. "That's kinda dumb."

"It's easy for you to say that when you're skinny," I said. "Look at you, and then look at me."

I opened the closet and pulled her over in front of the full-length mirror. Emma's reflection looked like a god damn sylph who was going to burst into song at any moment. Next to her, I just looked tired and fat, with too-short hair and really janky bangs because I can't afford anything better than the discount student barbers.

Emma threw up her hands. “Oh my god, V, you’re not fat, okay? You weigh, what, maybe twenty-five pounds more than me? It’s not that big a difference!”

“It would be if you had to carry it around!” I protested. “In fact... Robin, I’ve got a wish.”

The genie perked up. “Go on.”

I couldn’t do anything about the bags under my eyes or my fucked-up hair, but I could sure as shit stop being “the fat one.”

“I wish that I had Emma’s weight,” I said. “And that *she* had mine.”

Robin nodded. “Tomorrow morning, your wish will have come to pass.”

“Hey, what’s that mean?” Emma said. Her face fell. “I’m... going to gain twenty-five pounds overnight?”

“Good thing it’s not that big a difference,” I said airily. I lifted up my shirt and gave my gut a couple of good slaps. “Enjoy!”

“Jesus.” Emma sank down onto the couch. “That wasn’t cool, V. What am I going to tell my girlfriend?”

“Do not worry, mistress’s friend,” Robin said. “When a wish is made, the world remakes itself so that the new reality was always true in the eyes and memories of all others, and history will be unfurled backwards to lead to the new present.”

“Oh! Like *The Lathe of Heaven!*” Emma said.

“The what?” I asked.

“Geez, V, read some LeGuin sometime. Anyway, I guess if you think about it, it totally makes sense it would work that way, because that’s why we’ve never heard of genies being real even though they are. Unless you’re the one making the wishes, it’s like nothing’s happening. Right?”

“Very perceptive, mistress’s friend,” Robin said, approvingly. Jesus. Now Emma was the smart one, too?

Oh well. Let her be the smart one. Tomorrow, I’d be the hot one.

* * *

“WHAT THE FUCK?”

I goggled at myself in the mirror. I was not the hot one. I was the fucking *huge* one. I must have doubled in size overnight.

“ROBIN!”

“Yes, mistress?” she said, popping in out of thin air.

“You want to explain to me why I’m a giant blob?” I shrieked. “I wished to be Emma’s weight!”

“Um, no, mistress, I’m afraid you did not.” Robin said. “You wished that you would *have* Emma’s weight, and she would have yours. So you received Emma’s weight.”

“Th-that’s... come on!” I sputtered. “Are you fucking kidding me?”

“If it’s any consolation—” Robin began, before a shriek from Emma’s room cut her off. “—Emma has also received yours.”

“That’s not what I asked for!”

“It’s not what you wanted, but it *is* what you asked for, mistress,” Robin said, shrugging. “I am only a facilitator.”

“Whatever,” I snarled. “I’m going to get Emma so we can get rid of this wish.”

Walking just *felt* different with all this weight. It was more of a waddle. I didn’t get out of breath, probably because the altered history meant my body was used to carrying this much, but I didn’t think I was going to be doing any running anytime soon.

Not that I ever *used* to do any running.

“Emma?” I knocked on her door. I could hear her freaking out inside.

“V!” she shrieked. “Oh my god! *This* is what you look like naked? You must have, like, the best

Spanx in the universe or something!”

I opened the door, revealing Emma in all her bulging glory. She goggled at me.

“Oh, damn,” she said. “Wait, how—”

“We didn’t trade weights, we each got each others’ weight added on,” I said. “Fucking genie.

ROBIN!”

Robin popped in. “Yes, mistress?”

“I wish I was the same weight as Emma.”

“But you are.” Robin slipped on a pair of thick glasses and pulled a whiteboard out of somewhere.

“As you can see, $115+142=142+115$, therefore your weights are exactly equivalent at a respectable 257 pounds each. Although Emma *is* an inch taller, so...”

“Ugh! I mean the weight she was yesterday!”

“In the yesterday of this timeline, she weighed just as she does now.”

“Fine, I wish—”

I stopped. I could wish to lose, say, a hundred and thirty pounds, and if it worked I’d be right down to my ideal weight. But what if the wish just ended up sawing off the top 130 pounds of my body? Losing weight directly might be dangerous with one of *those* types of genies on wish duty.

“Hey, the cupboards are full of snacks and stuff!” Emma marveled. “And look at all the baking supplies I have! I guess since our metabolisms didn’t change, we had to eat a lot more in the past to weigh this much now. I must make *hella* cookies.”

Hmm. Okay, maybe what I really needed was self-control. If I was fat in this universe because I ate like a damn pig, all I had to do was give myself more willpower. It wouldn’t be an instant fix, but the weight would just melt off in a few months or so, and it would stay off. And everyone would think of me as an inspiration! A miracle success story!

“I wish—” I was going to say *I wish I could stick to a diet*, but then I’d probably wake up with a paleo cookbook superglued to my face.

“I wish I could pick a diet and stay with it every day.”

Robin nodded. “Tomorrow morning, your wish will have come to pass.”

With some time to kill, I wandered back into my room and flopped down on the bed to look through some old photos on my phone. It was weird to see situations I basically recognized, except that I was now way fatter in them. I could even trace myself getting bigger over the last five years or so.

I held up the outfit I’d laid out the night before – skinny jeans and a sexy midriff-baring top that I bought it a moment of insanity. When I’d put them there, they’d been a little too small for me to actually wear them, but I’d assumed that I would shrink to fit into them. Now, of course, the outfit was a whole bunch of sizes larger (and the bare midriff had been replaced with a belly-hiding empire waist shirt.) I could have put it on yesterday and it would have fit like a tent.

Today I tried it on and it was *still* really tight. I must have gained weight since I got it. God damn it. I looked in the mirror, running my fingers over the huge roll of fat topping my jeans. I’m used to having a muffin top, but this was more like, I don’t know...do they even make muffins the size of pizzas?

I put my hands on my face and squished. My body was one thing – it almost just felt like I had someone else’s body now – but seeing my own face all puffy like this really drove it home. I was so fat. *Not for long, I reminded myself. Starting tomorrow, it’s going to start going away.*

Pretty soon this gigantic outfit would actually fit me. Whoop-de-doo.

My nostrils twitched. Something smelled amazing. I opened the door to my room, and it hit me – the most tempting wave of aromas I’ve ever smelled. I swear, all 257 pounds of me were lifted off my feet and carried to the kitchen by my nostrils, like in a cartoon.

Emma was baking some cookies.

Emma was baking the *fucking shit* out of some cookies.

“This is awesome!” she said, turning around and grinning with a flour-smudged face. “There’s a

box of recipes, but, like, I barely need them! It's like... muscle memory or something. I'm a baker, V!" She snorted in that Emma way that lets me know she's loading her joke cannon with something immature.

"I'm a *master baker!*"

"Good for you," I said, trying to sound unimpressed. It was hard through all the drool.

It turned out Emma wasn't just good at cookies. She could, and did, make bread, cakes, biscuits – if it had flour in it and went in an oven, she could make it, and it was *incredible*.

"Mmm," Emma moaned, cramming another cookie in her face. "No wonder we got so fat."

I took another cookie myself. I was on my eighth or ninth. Okay, yeah, I'd given up all attempts to resist. I figured, why not? In my case "I'm starting the diet...*tomorrow*" was actually true. So why not have one last hurrah before I was magically forced to slim down?

Emma baked until there was no more flour in the house, and we ate it *all*.

I lay on the couch in a late afternoon bread coma. I'd actually had to unbutton my gigantic fucking circus tent jeans, that's how much I'd eaten. Emma was still mobile, barely, and was lethargically clearing up the mountains of dirty bowls in the kitchen. That's when the doorbell rang.

"Oh, shit!" Emma said, poking her head out of the kitchen. "Laney!"

"Laney?"

"I had a dinner date tonight!" Emma said. "And I guess I still do!"

She dusted about a fifth of the flour off her front, ran her fingers through her hair, and opened the door.

Laney Liao has been Emma's girlfriend since freshman year; they met at a Valentine's Day bowling mixer where they were both shoved onto the one "I guess we have to do this for inclusivity" queer team in an otherwise relentlessly heteronormative event. This version of Laney was pretty much the way I remembered her: goth-nerd style, heart-shaped face, piles of thick, black hair. She was maybe fifteen or twenty pounds heavier now, which, for someone who'd been dating the baking machine Emma had become, really isn't that bad.

She also had a history of dating prom queens, head cheerleaders, and at least a couple of actual professional models, so I always figured she was dating Emma at least partly because Emma was conventionally smokin'. So I was kind of impressed that she'd still gotten together with Fatass!Emma, too.

"Hey," Laney said, holding up a bottle of champagne. "Brought the sparkly. Is dinner ready?"

"Uh," Emma blinked. "Dinner?"

Laney grinned. "Don't tell me you had a change of heart. I know you're a friend to all animals and everything, but I was promised a fancy anniversary dinner! C'mon, make with the lobster already."

"Ohhh," Emma said. "Well, *that* explains *that*."

"Explains what?" I said.

"Why there's a live lobster in the bathtub. I was kind of wondering. I figured it was maybe, like, in this timeline people keep lobsters instead of dogs or something. Hey! I thought we were going to a movie?"

Laney cocked her head. "No, we agreed on a romantic dinner in. We can go to a movie *anytime*. Our anniversary only comes around once a year."

"But... we met in February."

Laney laughed. "Sweetie, I'm pretty sure it was June. We met in line for ice cream at the beach, remember? If that was February, I'd remember the hypothermia."

"You... didn't go to the Valentine's Day bowling thing that year?" Emma asked.

"I dropped by," Laney said, "just to check it out. Didn't have time to actually sign up."

"Or you backed out because you didn't see anyone hot enough on your team," I muttered.

"Ex-excuse me?" Laney bristled, turning slightly pink. Yup. I'd just fucking nailed her. *You're a little bit shallow after all, aren't you, Laney Liao?*

“You know, I saw they were doing another bowling thing tonight,” Laney said, recovering. “It’s raising money for something. Maybe you should check it out, Vivian.”

That was about the least subtle *get the hell out so we can have a romantic dinner and then probably fuck* I’d ever heard. It’s not like I wanted to stick around. The thought of watching Emma and Laney rubbing their domestic bliss in my face was about as unappealing as the thought of watching Emma working her Snow-White-ass self up into boiling a live lobster.

The problem, the extremely, *searingly fucking humiliating* problem, was that I wasn’t sure I could get off the couch. I was fat as hell and so full of bread I felt like a Thanksgiving turkey.

It took both Laney and Emma hauling on my arms to get me up. *This, V, this is your goddamn fucking rock bottom*, I thought, and then my unbuttoned jeans dropped to the floor.

I managed, through *extreme* effort, to get the fucking things zipped and buttoned again, and left Emma and Laney to their night of lobster and face-sucking. I just wandered around campus for a little while, praying my jeans wouldn’t burst off in public. It wasn’t like I had anything else to do. On top of everything, I kind of wanted to eat something, even though I was already so full I could puke. I guess my body was used to constant eating, and sweets and baked goods on their own just weren’t completely satisfying.

You know what? I thought. *Fuck it.*

After tonight I’d be hungry for what would probably be months until I adjusted to the new diet. It’d be worth it, but it wouldn’t be fun. This would be my last night to really pig out, and I might as well do it.

I’d like to say I went to some fancy, once-in-a-lifetime restaurant, but I just went to the damn caf, because it’s right there, my student ID already pays for it, and it’s basically a giant buffet.

This was my goodbye to all these delicious, fattening foods, and I couldn’t leave a single one behind. I had a hamburger. I had a slice of pizza. I had a scoop of lo mein. I had a fried chicken drumstick.

You get the idea.

I didn’t wolf it down like a pig. I spent three hours in there. Three long, slow, uninhibited hours. By the time I was finished, I’d tried a little of nearly everything, and I was packed solid with food. I staggered outside and lay down on one of the benches near the quad. I’d seen drunk students sleeping it off on these benches before; now I was going to more-or-less do the same. I rolled over on my back watched my huge, pale, luminous belly rise and fall in the moonlight. God, I was so fucking crammed. It hurt, but for once in my life, I’d eaten whatever I wanted, and I didn’t have to be even a little bad about it.

I pulled my jeans up as well as I could – the fly was open again and there was no way I was getting myself zipped back into these things now, but sleeping outside without pants on seemed like it was maybe a bad idea – and let myself sink into slumber.

* * *

I woke up, stiff and sore, and headed home in the misty quiet of a morning on campus. Just call it the Waddle of Shame.

Last night had been a dream, but now it was time to wake up. My wish had taken effect. Starting today, I was finally going to stick to a diet.

I passed a bakery. The smell of freshly-made donuts wafted out. And I...

I had absolutely *no* desire to go in and eat them.

It worked. *It worked!*

I mean, okay, maybe the fact that I was still pretty bloated with cafeteria food helped, but trust me, being full has never killed my desire to have a donut before. This was the real thing.

What a day! I was so happy I didn’t even mind the mess Emma and Laney had left. Bowls in the sink and flour on the counters, champagne spilled on the table, Chinese takeout containers, Emma’s bra

hanging from the ceiling fan.

I lifted the lid of the toilet. The lobster was inside with a pair of Laney's panties in its claws. It waved its antennae at me. I closed the lid. I could go later.

I spend the next few hours marveling at how not-in-the-mood for junk food I was. My self-control was amazing. I was *dieting*, and I didn't hate it!

At 9:13 AM, a cookie materialized in my hand and I stuffed it into my mouth.

"Whaaff?" I said around the crumbs. I swallowed. Another cookie appeared. I ate it.

Okay, this was unexpected. And bad. Really bad. The cookies weren't stopping.

"ROBIN!" I yelled.

The genie appeared. "Yes, mistress?"

I held up one cookie, managing to wave it in her face before I jammed it into mine. "Whaff the *fuff*?"

"What's wrong, mistress?"

"I'm supposed to be on a *diet*! What part of wishing to be on a diet equals magically appearing cookies I can't stop myself from eating? That's not a weird interpretation of a wish! That's just wrong!"

"Um," Robin said nervously. "So, your wish was 'I wish I could pick a diet and stay with it every day.' Yesterday was your day to pick the diet. So today, and every day after, you'll eat the diet you picked. I thought it was kind of funny that you chose such a fattening diet for the model. I don't think you're going to lose very much weight."

"I don't think I'm going to lose *any* weight!" I shouted, spraying cookie crumbs. "I *think* I'm going to be a fucking balloon! This isn't what I wished for!"

"Weeeeeeell..." Robin said. "It wasn't what you wanted, but it is—"

"Oh, fucking shut up, you blue dumbass."

Robin frowned. "I can just leave, you know, if you're going to be abusive."

"No!" I yelled. "Oh my god, you have to undo this or I might literally explode."

"You have to make a wish—"

"Fucking *fine*. Let me think."

I wish I could eat what I want and only what I want. That should stop this force-feeding, right?

No, *I wish I could eat what I want and only what I want, and not gain any weight.* Yes. Better.

Comes with a bonus!

No! *I wish I could eat what I want and only what I want, and not have to worry about my weight.* If I just wished not to gain weight I'd still weigh 257 pounds (and probably more, now) but since I'd worry if I stayed this weight, wishing not to have to worry meant I should lose weight, right?

No, *I wish Emma and I could eat whatever we want and only what we want, and not have to worry about our weight.*

I glanced at the slowly rotating bra. You know what? Emma was having *no* trouble getting her plus-sized tits nibbled. Fuck Emma. She could wait. I was going to be the thin one for at least a little while even if it killed me.

God, I was getting full. This might actually kill me.

Still, I waited for a break in the constant stream of food and wished:

"I wish I could eat what I want and only what I want, and not have to worry about my weight."

"Tomorrow morning, your wish will have come to pass," Robin said coolly. "You know, Vivian, you really hurt my feelings. I'm trying very hard here, and you're treating me like—"

"Fuck off," I said, which was maybe a little harsh but at this point I was seriously worried that I was going to explode before the day was out.

I didn't explode, but by the end of the day, I almost wished I could. I was beyond stuffed by mid-afternoon and nearly in a waking coma by the end of the day. This *had* to work. I wouldn't make it through another day like this. Breathing shallowly, so as not to rupture, I let myself drift off to sleep.

* * *

I awoke feeling different. Still bloated. Still – I checked myself over – still just as fat as I had been the night before. But something felt different.

Well, I was wearing some kind of skin-tight spandex bodysuit. That was different. And instead of lying in bed, I was in some kind of harness on the wall. And I wasn't in my room, but in a little white windowless box. What the fuck?

I struggled, on the verge of panic. I couldn't figure out how to get out of the harness, and the thought of being stuck here, all alone, was terrifying. I thrashed at the restraints.

A door slid open in the wall and a man entered.

More specifically, a man *floated* in.

"Morning, Viv," the guy said. "God, you just missed a gorgeous sunrise. Sleep okay?"

"I—" I stammered.

"Let's get you out of there." He floated up to me and started undoing the harness. I floated loose like a soap bubble. I was—weightless.

Weightless.

"God fucking dammit, Robin," I muttered under my breath.

"What?"

"Nothing," I said. "Uh... this is going to sound weird, but where am I?"

"Uh, in the project module?" He blinked. "You feeling all right, Viv? You look... disoriented."

"I'm fine. I just... I just..."

Look, I'm not a damn moron. I knew what it meant when you were floating around like that. And just because I hadn't heard the magic words "you're in space" didn't mean I couldn't figure out that I was in space.

But I was also just a little off-kilter because *I was in fucking space.*

The guy was still staring at me and I realized, one, he was kind of hot and I was still fat—maybe even fatter than before—and my skin-tight bodysuit wasn't exactly flattering in the way it clung to every single bulge and roll. And two, I had no idea who this guy was or how I got here, which were things he would *probably* expect me to know.

"Uh, could I see the mission briefing?" I asked. "I just want to, um, review some stuff."

"Sure thing, Vivian." He drifted out the door and came back a minute later with a USB drive. "Here you go."

As soon as I had some privacy, I popped it into the nearest computer (thank god the password was 'PASSWORD1') and started learning everything I could about this new timeline.

I was on the International Space Station, as it turned out, on a mission called Project Eglon. The guy was Gregory Earhart (yeah, real lucky name for a pilot, huh) and there were a few other astronauts, but the most interesting file was mine. Apparently I was actually kind of famous here—I *was* an astronaut, after all—and there was a little mini-documentary about me that had aired on the national news.

"From an early age, Vivian Zielinski reached for the heights," the reporter intoned, over pictures of me doing a *fucking pole vault*. "At age eleven, she set a new record in the children's high jump."

What? No, I didn't. And I was *never* that thin, not even when I was eleven. Apparently my life had to be *really* different in order to get me out into space.

"Now, she's making history once again, as this young astronaut is set to break another, very unusual record."

The scene cut to me in, probably, my late teens or so, maybe twenty. I couldn't be that much younger than I was now, but it wasn't that recent, because I was still skinny (again, skinnier than I'd ever been at that age, which kind of pissed me off. I'd been that thin and *missed* it?)

"Yeah, when I was picked for Project Eglon, it was a huge shock," the me on the screen said. She

was being interviewed in a chair against a black background, wearing the same style of bodysuit I was now, but it looked a lot better on her. “There were, like, a hundred desperate-ass potentials competing, but I guess I was the best. I know it’s going to be a major strain on my body, but hey, if that’s what it takes to be a hero.” She flashed a smile.

“A strain indeed,” the reporter said. “Over the next three years, as she works on her degree remotely and prepares for her role in the mission, Vivian will be gaining over one hundred and fifty pounds, all in service of studying the effect of space travel on fat people. By the time she launches, Vivian Zielinski will be the world’s fattest astronaut.”

There was some stock footage of me working my way through a pile of hamburgers, dressed in a white tank top and stretch pants that were seemingly designed to emphasize all the pounds I was piling on (and to show ever last stray ketchup drip.) A voiceover played over the scene.

“Yeah, it’s a sacrifice, but the program needs me. There just aren’t any astronauts who are already fat. I guess we could have trained a fat person to be an astronaut, but, y’know, that’s just not how we do things at NASA.”

I shut off the video. Okay. Well, I guess now I knew.

“Greg?” I called.

“Yes, Viv?”

“I’m, uh, feeling better. Maybe I could come out and mee—” (*goddammit don’t say ‘meet’, you’re supposed to know these people*) “—hang out with everyone? Unless there’s any science stuff you need me to do.”

Greg popped his head back in and laughed. “Viv, you know you can’t come into the main module!”

“Why not?” I snapped. I mean, I was as much an astronaut as he was, apparently.

“Well, your...” He lowered his voice and looked embarrassed. “Your... rear doesn’t fit through the doors. You know that.”

“Oh.” I felt myself turning red.

“But you can eat!” he said, pushing a crate of some kind of bars into the room. “As per the mission specs, you can eat whatever you want.”

“Yeah, great.” I shoved the crate to the floor, where it didn’t stay, of course. “Uh. Do we have a phone?”

“Of course.” Greg looked puzzled. “You use it every day. Do you want to call the White House again? Or your parents?”

“No, uh. I want to call Emma. I...”

I don’t remember numbers. That’s what my phone is for, but I didn’t have it, and if I never went to college and met Emma, it probably didn’t even have her number in it.

“...I need her number looked up. Emma Kettleman, lives in the U District in Seattle. English major at UW. It’s important.”

It took an hour or so of fucking around with satellite links that I didn’t understand, but pretty soon this chick Anjali was handing me a phone. “Here. Emma Kettleman, university student, Seattle,” she said. She and Greg exchanged a look, like, *oh my god, Vivian has gone insane*.

“Emma...?” I said slowly into the phone. “This is Vivian. Do you... do you know who I—”

“Yes, I know who you fucking are!” Emma shrieked into the phone. “What the hell did you do, V? What did you wish for?”

“Uh, to be an astronaut, apparently. Not on purpose, but, uh, are you okay?”

“No, I’m not okay!” Emma screeched. She sounded like she’d been crying. “Everything is fucked up! I’ve been trying to get a hold of you all morning! Do you know how hard it is to call the International Space Station?”

“Um. Pretty hard?”

“It’s basically *impossible!*”

“Okay, sorry you had a shitty morning, but I don’t really see how me being an astronaut fucked stuff up for *you*.”

“Laney w-was gone when I woke up and when I tried to text her I was blocked, and I w-went to her class, and, and, and she *hates* me!” Emma sobbed. “She told me to leave her the f-fuck alone and that she never wanted to see me again. And it’s all your fault!”

“...Uh, walk me through the chain of events here.”

“You never went to the UW, so you never put that ‘roommate wanted’ ad on Craigslist freshman year, so I ended up answering Shaw McGinnis’ ad instead, and—”

“Jesus, you lived with *Shaw*? No wonder you’re crying.”

“N-no, I liked her, apparently, and w-we lived together while I was dating Laney, b-but there was this ever-present simmering sexual tension a-and one night I had too many wine coolers a-and my resistance crumbled and—”

“Jesus CHRIST, Emma! You FUCKED Shaw fucking McGinnis?” I shouted into the phone.

The other astronauts all turned to look at me.

“Sorry, guys.” I lowered my voice and spoke into the phone again. “Oh my *god*, Emma. But, I mean, Laney’s pretty cool? You apologize, give her a little space, and I’m sure she’ll forgive you for making one mistake.”

“Maybe,” Emma sniffed. “But then I made it ten or twelve more times, I guess.”

“Oh.”

“And then after Laney dumped me I kind of stalked her for a while.”

“Oh.”

“And apparently I showed up to her gallery show drunk and started crying and threw up on the snack table and everyone left because they only came for the snacks.”

“Oh.”

“And it’s all because you wished to be an astronaut!” Emma said accusingly. “You ruined what I had with Laney!”

“Well, I mean, I feel bad for you, but it really kind of sounds like *you* ruined what you had with Laney, sweetie.” I paused. “Hey, um, sorry to change the subject, but are you still fat? I’m trying to work out the rules here.”

“Yes, I’m still fat!” Emma said. “I still have my exceptional baking abilities, thank you very fucking much. That’s part of why Shaw moved out! She said she was sick of gaining so much weight and if I was going to make so many pastries I could do it without her in the house, and now I don’t have *anyone*, and—”

“Wait. Wait. Hold the fucking phone.” I felt a bubble of joy rising in my chest. “*Shaw* is fat?”

“Huh? Yeah, kind of. Chubby.”

“Miss Perfect Shaw McGinnis is fat? Oh, my god. Tell me everything.”

“V, I—I—”

“How fat is she?” I asked. “Do you have pictures? Please, please tell me you have pictures. Jesus Christ, this is like... phone sex. Was she fat when you banged her? Did she have *cellulite*? I need these details!”

Suddenly, all the lights in the cabin started flashing red, and a pulsing siren began blaring. “Red alert!” Anjali shouted, glancing at the nearest computer screen.

“Holy shit, ‘Red Alert’ is a real thing?” I asked, letting the phone drift away.

“It is when there’s an asteroid on a collision course with the ship!” She ran her hands through her hair. “*Malam!* I have to get to the thruster controls!”

I couldn’t help. I didn’t know what I was doing. I couldn’t even squeeze my huge ass out of this single module. All I could do was sit back and listen to the the other astronauts freak out over the intercom.

“Impact in three minutes!” Greg shouted.

“Firing thrusters!” Anjali shouted back. “I don’t know if it’ll be enough. This thing just... it came out of nowhere!”

“Robin,” I growled. “Robin! Get your *goddamn blue ass* out here *right now*.”

She poofed in. “So, before you get mad, let me explain. Weight is different than mass, so—”

“Yes, I fucking figured out why I’m in space, thanks. Why is there an *asteroid*? Don’t tell me that’s a just a coincidence.”

“Well, it could be!”

“Is it?”

“...No.” She looked sheepish. “You wished not to have to worry about your weight. And you won’t, if you stay in space. But the mission only lasts so long, so to make sure you *never* have to worry about your weight...”

“I can never come back from the mission,” I repeated dully. “Robin, my god, you are so, *so* fucking bad at this.”

“I am *trying*, okay?” she snapped. “Do you have any idea how complicated this is? How many wishes have *you* granted lately, huh?”

“Two minutes, thirsty seconds!” Greg said. “We need more thrust, Anjali!”

“I’m giving it all I can, Greg! I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I wish I’d told you—”

“Told me what?”

“Told you I—oh, it doesn’t matter now! I love you, Greg. I’ve loved you for two years now. Ever since that day at the airport.”

“Anjali, I...I...” Greg stammered. “I love you, too. I never said anything because—I was scared. You were an ace pilot, and I was just, what, some goddamn glorified pencil pusher from Missouri. I never thought—two minutes—never thought you could really—”

“I did!” Anjali sobbed. “I always did! But you were always so distant.”

“I was worried about getting hurt. That’s why I threw myself into my work. That’s why I had that meaningless fling with Vivian.”

“I always thought you—that you loved her.”

“Every single time, I thought of you. I closed my eyes and imagined that I held you in my arms, that we were married, that we’d been married for a while and you just put on a ton of weight in your thirties or something, and god, god dammit, Anjali, I wish I’d said something. If I wasn’t such a *fucking coward*! We could have had so much. We could have had each other. And now we’re going to die.”

“No!” Anjali said. “*Atai kutu!* I’m not going to lose you now. I’m not!”

“We’re not going to—one minute thirty seconds—not going to make it, we—”

“Yes, we are! If I vary the power fluctuations, reroute our electrical grid to emit a varying thermostatic pulse, and jettison the project module directly into the asteroid’s path at the last second—it should give us enough momentum to move us away! We’ll lose the Project Eglon data, sure, but *we’ll* survive!”

“Hey, I’m *in* here, you assholes!” I yelled into the nearest microphone.

“Wait, I forgot!” Greg said. “I backed up the data just yesterday. Got the USB right here.”

“Can you even hear me?” I screamed.

“Oh, Greg Earhart, you brilliant man, my heart, my love—will you marry me?”

“One minute,” Greg said. “And yes.”

I felt the module shudder. “God dammit!” I pounded on the walls. I had to get out of here. I tried for the door—

And I got stuck like a cork.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” I yelled, pushing as hard as I can. Even my waist barely fit—it felt like I was wearing a tight, plastic belt—so forget about my enormous, ridiculous ass fitting through. “Robin!”

“Yes?”

“How am I ‘not worrying about my weight’ if my weight is literally keeping me trapped and about to die?”

“Your *mass* is keeping you trapped and about to die,” she corrected. Then she bit her lip. “Vivian, I’m really sorry. I never meant for this to happen.”

“Stuff your apology up your fucking blue cornshute and *help* me! I wish... I wish...” I couldn’t think. “*I wish I’d never made any wishes!* Okay? Does that count? Is that within your stupid rules?”

“Yes,” she said. “But, listen, you really need to stop throwing my *skin color* around as a pejorative. I mean, replace ‘blue’ with any *human* skin color in that sentence, and ask yourself how it would sound to—”

The module shuddered.

“Robin!”

“Okay, okay!” She clapped. “Tomorrow morning, your wish will have come to pass.”

“*Tomorrow isn’t gonna cut it!*”

“*Well, that’s all I can do!*”

I pushed and struggled. My giant ass squeezed forward a fraction of an inch. But I could feel the module separating. The walls fall away. The atmosphere was pulled from my lungs in a rush. I saw a gleam of light and squeezed my eyes shut, hoping the asteroid would be quick.

No shit, it’ll be quick, I thought. It’s an asteroid. God, what a lame final thought.

The thing about the International Space Station is that it orbits the Earth once every ninety minutes. So the gleam of light I saw? That was the sun peeking over the eastern horizon. I’d just survived the shortest day of my life. It was morning again.

* * *

I was back on the street. On Earth. I stumbled as all my weight returned—but it wasn’t *all* my weight, not all that extra mass I’d been carrying, but my old, familiar, only-kinda-fat chub. My hand was inches from the box with the blender in it, and I pulled it back like I was about to touch a hot stove. Shit!

“Are we...?” Emma said, patting her once-again skinny-ass body down to make sure.

“Yeah.”

“Ooh, a blender!” Shaw’s voice came from behind me. She rushed past and scooped up the box. “This is perfect! Our old one got broken during a party and I swear without my smoothie breakfasts I’ve gained five pounds from the pancakes in the caf. Yeesh, it’s kind of dirty, isn’t it? Let me just wipe off—oh, no, electrical short!”

And in a puff of smoke, Robin appeared.

“Oh, wow, a genie!” Shaw beamed. “I’ve always wanted one of those. For my first wish—I want to be really, really famous!”

“T-tomorrow morning, your wish will have come to pass,” Robin stammered. I think she was a little shocked that Shaw was so fucking quick on the draw with the gimme-gimme-gimme. She shot us a quick glance over her shoulder as she floated after her new mistress, who was still bubbling over with wishes and not letting Robin get a word in edgewise about how they worked. We waved.

“Oh, this is too good,” I said, rubbing my hands together. “I can’t wait to see how Shaw gets fucked.”

“*Will* we see it, though?” Emma asked. “I mean—when she wakes up, she’ll be in a new reality. And we’ll be...”

She trailed off for a moment.

“Will we just forget?” she said in a small voice. “Or will this universe be left behind? Or...”

We stood there for a moment, alone in the empty street. I took her hand in mine and squeezed.

“You know,” I said, “I always wondered—in *Groundhog Day*, when the guy’s time reset, what

happened to all the *other* people?”

* * *

I had a hard time getting my new skinny jeans on, maybe because I wasn't exactly skinny. I looked at myself in the mirror and blew out my lips. *God, just look at you, Vivian Zielinski. What a fucking fatass.*

But it was weird. Yeah, I was getting kind of fat. I mean, I knew for a fact this was the biggest I'd ever been. But for some reason, I just took a long look at my flabby body—and I shrugged. *Eh. Could be fatter.*

Somehow an extra twenty-five pounds just didn't seem all that bad today. Shit, maybe I was even brave enough to wear that sexy midriff-baring top I bought in a moment of temporary insanity. I wriggled into it, and left the mirror behind.

Emma and Laney were on the couch making goo-goo eyes at each other and not even bothering to watch the TV. I scooped up the remote.

“Can I change it, or do you really need a fucking news report about Pizza Girl playing in the background to make out?”

“Mmm,” Emma said, snuggling up to Laney. “Watch whatever you want.”

Laney glance at me and did a double take. “God *damn*, Viv.”

“Ugh, I knew it. Too slutty?”

“Exactly slutty enough,” she said, drinking me in. “Holy *shit*, you're rocking that outfit.”

I felt a blush creeping up my neck. “Yeah, I guess. Maybe if I didn't have this fucking gut.”

“I hate to say it, but your fucking gut is kinda fucking *hot*, Viv. If I didn't know how relentlessly straight you were, I think I'd be a little worried about Em living with you.”

“You know I'd never cheat on you,” Emma giggled. “Sounds like maybe *you're* the one I should worry about. If you like V's tummy so much, maybe I ought to take up baking...”

“Oh, your 'tummy' is fine the way it is,” Lane said, lifting Emma's shirt and blowing into her stomach. Emma shrieked with laughter.

I rolled my eyes. “Yeah, enjoy each other's tonsils, you two.”

The morning news was *still* talking about Pizza Girl. I don't know what sad fuck decided she was some constant national new story. So some girl wins free pizza for life in a pizza-eating contest, gets fat as hell over the next couple of years because she eats it every damn day, and sues the restaurant. How the fuck is this the thing that's always in the media, when there are people get shot at in some other country, probably? It's not that interesting. And yet every other day you hear about Pizza Girl getting in a fight on Twitter with the loser who used to run Papa John's, or Chloe Grace Moretz gaining fifty pounds to play Pizza Girl in a movie, or something.

The latest twist in this boring-ass saga was that she'd just thrown a tantrum in court, screaming for a Robin or Reuben or something who she claimed had “made me fat,” so I guess she was just blaming it on random people now. What a nut job.

I flicked the TV off, left Emma and Lane to what I was pretty sure was going to be full-on fucking in a few minutes, and headed off to the caf. I felt a little bit sexy, a lot hungry...and now I was kind of in the mood to have pizza for breakfast.

THE END.