

## **A shared burden**

### **Part 2**

topic(s): BE

After her one-year-long stay in China, Jillian didn't take long to get back into the swing of her regular life. There was no stress anyway, as she and Abby had returned just in time for the summer break. The A-levels next year were still a long way off at the moment, and now was the time for even more partying. Dozens of friends and acquaintances, as well as their partners and second cousins had come to Jillian's reunion party a week after the return. Everybody wanted to hear her countless anecdotes, sex stories and funny observations from her time abroad, which she gladly and extensively recounted, only sometimes exaggerating details to make it more interesting. Granted, some came just for the free booze, sponsored by Mom and Dad. In the following days, Jillian continued to enjoy her free time clubbing, going to the cinema and open-air bath, and even trespassing on construction sites with some urban explorers amongst her circle of friends. While she was either drunk or being chased by security guards (or both), Abby remained rather conscientious. Not that she didn't like a night out with friends once in a while, but - everything in moderation. She just wasn't the type of person for that kind of lifestyle. Instead, Abby had started taking driving lessons as well as a good-paying summer job at a bakery. This would bring her closer to her dream of having her own Vespa, which could hopefully spare her the daily jostling in the metropolis' public transit system. One can imagine why that would be a relief for this girl in particular. And not to forget that Abby was a gifted violinist as well. So gifted in fact, that she had been accepted to the London Symphony Orchestra - one of the most prestigious bands in the UK - and spent hours practising every day. It was a rather exhausting routine, especially with her physique, and left her feeling drained when dropping into her bed at night. But also content.

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Four weeks into the summer break, something unexpected would happen. For Jillian. On a rainy Friday morning, she woke up hungover and - this was the unexpected part - with a strange sensation in her pectoral area. The skin around her breasts felt tense and there was a dull pain, as if she had run into a boom gate the day earlier. It wasn't excruciating, but hard to ignore and irritating. Jillian didn't have a history of out-of-the-ordinary health issues, so naturally she was pretty confused. The night before had been fun, but not out of control and she was convinced that she could recall every detail. The flirt with Caleb, Adri dancing on the pool table, Caleb throwing up in the metro - nothing special. Still, to be certain that there wasn't a mental blackout at play, the girl texted her friends asking if anything unusual had happened on their pub crawl yesterday. They denied. Next, Jillian considered her sleep behaviour as a possible cause, as she knew how restless she could be while unconscious - fighting her blanket, migrating all over the mattress like the DVD-logo screensaver and pantomiming everything from a napping seal to a dormant elk. Not unthinkable that she might have, somehow, inadvertently compressed her ribcage in an unfortunate way.

To her relief, the discomfort wore off a bit over the course of the day, temporarily confirming her assumptions. But her joy was short-lived. The next morning, the symptoms came back, and this time with full force. Her breasts were red, slightly swollen, and would blister with every touch. It felt like being sunburned, then getting hit by a train. Now, Jillian was convinced that something was definitely wrong and she needed to act. So she called Abby. Not because she deemed Abby to be an expert on the female chest simply by having enough of it for three, but because she trusted her judgement more than her own buzzing brain right now.

Abby immediately urged Jillian to do the obvious thing and see a doctor as soon as possible. Suspecting an inflammation or sepsis, however caused, she offered to walk her friend to their mutual gynaecologist that same morning. Jillian, who would've preferred self-treating her discomfort with Ibuprofen instead, reluctantly agreed with Abby's suggestion. Abby was always right.

So the anguished teenager called up the doctor, got herself out of bed with all her strength, skipped showering and put on her most lightweight summer tank top to avoid any unnecessary pressure on the affected areas. Every movement that involved lifting her upper arms sent lightning through her nerves.

After meeting Abby, the duo made their way to the office of Dr. Terfina Coxuckley-Choppington. She was a luminary in her field, and a specialist on anything related to the female chest. If anybody could help Jillian, it was her.

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“So, Ms. Taylor...”, Dr. Coxuckley concluded Jillian’s check-up, “I have no idea what’s going on, unfortunately. We’re gonna have to do a blood test and then go from there.”

The medic was a tall, lean, above-fifty-years-of-age lady with the most crystal clear British English pronunciation and a permanent stern look on her face that revealed no emotion whatsoever. Her voice however made it clear that she was very much puzzled with what she was faced with. Jillian sat there topless on the examination table, bent over like a shrimp, with her chest still as swollen and reddened like it had been in the morning. Abby, who was in the room as well, could barely watch.

“So when will the blood te- ow- test be fini- ouch- finished?” Jillian stuttered.

“Well, our lab is currently being renovated, so we’ll have to outsource the analysis of the sample. Expect to hear from me in three days. Until then, I’m going to prescribe you a pain killer.”

“Sounds great”, Jillian joked, giving an ironic thumbs up. The doctor didn’t notice it and began filling out the prescription form with near indecipherable handwriting. Abby proceeded to help her friend with putting on her top again.

“And you didn’t want to go. Look at you. You’re white as a ghost”, she whispered into Jillian’s ear.

“Sorry mom.”

A moment of silence ensued, only disturbed by Jillian's groaning and the doctor's pen scratching across the paper.

“And what about you, Ms. Keys, everything okay?”, the doctor’s voice pierced through the relative tranquillity. “With your, um...”

Immediately, Abby tensed up.



*There it is. Of course she would ask me about it again. Ever since I had the growth spurt, she wouldn't leave out a single appointment to remind me of how desperately I need the reduction. I could place a bet on it. I mean, she's right. It's her job to give her patients the best possible advice from a medical standpoint - and it just happens to be that modern medicine unequivocally says that my breasts are way too big for my body. And I, not being an expert, can say that as well. Because I know how it feels, both in a physical and social sense.*

*Just three years ago - I had just turned 15 - everything had been normal. I was a bit chubby, dyed my hair red for reasons I can't recall anymore, and was pretty much invisible to the opposite gender. And my cup size: 32B. I remember it now, but at the time, I couldn't have told you that from memory, because I just didn't care. Apart from wanting to shed a few pounds and fix my crooked incisor with a retainer, I had zero body image problems. Instead, I was the one giving therapy to Jillian, who was anticipating her own breast development with the devotion of a sectarian awaiting armageddon. While being on good terms with most girls, she was clearly jealous of many. This whole topic basically*

*lived rent free inside her head, to the point that she had memorised the cup sizes of half the females in our form. Candall: C. Chelsea and Brianna: D. And Dominique, a thoroughly fit, tall, stunning brunette, unrivalled at a 32G. At that time, she was 'the' busty girl in school. The one that was frequently asked to connect her elbows, give jumping-jack tutorials and help with homework, at 9 in the evening. Jillian was obsessed with her cleavage, as was pretty much every guy - and our English teacher that had later been convicted for soliciting a minor in an unrelated case.*

*Just weeks after my 15th birthday, things started to change for me in ways I would have never anticipated. I still remember being a bit confused as to why all of my bras were starting to become tight all of a sudden. They couldn't all have shrunk, right? Still, I ignored it at first. I knew that some fluctuation in weight was completely normal, so I figured the best course of action was just to forget about it until the situation had normalised. Until two months later, during a sleepover at my place, Jillian pointed out wide-eyed that bras weren't supposed to fit they way mine did in that moment. And indeed, there was tissue spilling out from all sides and I hadn't even realised just how wrong it looked. So I got re-measured shortly after. 32DD in US sizes. I was flabbergasted. At that time, it felt like a dream, almost an out-of-body-experience. I remember standing in front of the mirror as the scales fell from my eyes - not only had my chest grown significantly, but I had gotten a tad slimmer everywhere else also. The difference was notable. It wasn't that I was completely horrified by what was happening, but I also started to get this thought that 'this isn't me'. I told Jillian about it and she did her best to make me shake off these self-doubts and accept my body the way it was. And probably, she would have succeeded if it had stopped there. But, evidently, it was far from that. Eight months later, it was the same situation all over again. Except now, I was in fact paying attention to the growth, but postponed resolving my increasingly exacerbating clothing situation. There was still a part inside of me that couldn't believe what was happening. When, once again, Jillian dragged me to the lingerie store, reality hit like a ton of bricks: I had surpassed Dominique. 32H. Another crushing moment of derealisation. Surprisingly, my developments hadn't been directly*

*addressed too much by my classmates at this point - or so I thought. Only gradually I started to pin down all the seemingly innocent looks, comments and advances as obviously being related to my chest. I felt naive and betrayed. And despite Jillian's best efforts, my already poor confidence started to suffer even more. That's when I began to wear baggy shirts and sweaters almost exclusively. At this point, it was my mom that urged me to go see a doctor about my issue. She was as supportive as Jillian and never made me feel bad about my looks, but she seemed to understand better that - and this is not a dig at Jillian - at some point you can't just mind-trick yourself into loving your body, especially when your back is already hurting like crazy after getting stared at nonstop throughout a double period of PE.*

“Well, I mean, okay would be an overstatement, but they haven't grown at least...”, Abby hesitantly replied, sheepishly brushing her hair back.

“That's good to hear”, the doctor said with a monotone voice, “but have you changed your opinion on the reduction?”

Abby pressed her lips together in indecisiveness, while she tried to thread Jillian's upper limbs through the armholes of her tank top without causing too much agonal groaning.

“I've... I've thought about it, but I think... I'm still not there...”

*If there's anything I'm terrified of, it's any form of invasive medical treatment. It is the only reason I haven't reduced my breasts a long time ago. I just can't get over this mental blockade that even turns a dental visit into a nerve-racking experience for me. As long as it's just the usual poking-the-gums-until-it-bleeds procedure - fine, but when a drill gets involved I start feeling like a victim in a Saw-movie. And so it's not surprising that the very thought of someone literally cutting away several pounds of flesh from my body, even knowing I would not consciously experience it, gives me beads of sweat. The reason for this whole mess*



*is very much known to me. Basically, I know what it feels like to not be unconscious during surgery.*

*Ten years ago, I broke my calf bone when I forgot that gravity works around trees as well. A nightmare for me at the time, but on the face of it - not a big deal, right? Well, it wasn't a clean break, so surgery was needed. Kind of a bigger deal. During the first procedure, they overlooked a bone splinter that was nested in between my muscles. So another one was done shortly after. And the third one? To replace the whole-ass bone plate implanted during the first surgery as it somehow turned out not to be clinically approved. And it was during that procedure, that I experienced about twenty seconds of indescribable horror until the anaesthetist finally realised her mistake.*

*Of course my parents sued the hospital, but in the end, nothing ever came out of it. But even if they had been awarded damages in the millions - it wouldn't have relieved the harm that had been done to me. On that day, something had snapped inside me. And I don't know if I can fix it.*

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Unfortunately, the blood examination did not bring the reason for Jillian's mysterious symptoms forward. Three days after the appointment, Dr. Coxuckley called Jillian - and could merely eliminate a handful of possibilities, but not pinpoint a cause. Essentially, Jillian was told that her tits at least wouldn't fall off in the foreseeable future - fingers crossed. Which was indeed a relief for the young woman. However, unbeknownst to the doctor, Jillian's condition had already improved considerably at this point. So much so, that she even could afford to pass on the painkillers already. After the nightmarish second day, the pain, redness and prostration had gradually subsided until Jillian was left with nothing but a dull sensation of tension. And another thing.

“...but I think - if I’m not completely mistaken - that they got bigger. They’re not swollen anymore, but it looks like - they actually grew”, Jillian explained to her doctor on the phone.

“Oh. That’s interesting. So, how large? Roughly?”

“Well, I haven’t measured, but I can just tell.”

At Jillian’s size, this was indeed pretty much the best answer she could give. Even after her perceived growth, there were still no fruits or vegetables flat enough to describe her breasts. The change in volume compared to before was barely perceivable to the untrained eye and her chest could still be easily mistaken for that of a skinny bloke. But naturally, Jillian’s eyes were very much ‘trained’ in that regard. After so many years of reproachfully staring down her underdeveloped girls in the mirror, hoping for the slightest sign of growth, she knew that what she was seeing now was not explicable by a period-induced fluctuation in size. Keep in mind: She had been a quadruple-A before. Or in other words, *nothing*. So it was, that although still not quite filling out the 26A-cup bra an earlier boyfriend had cluelessly gifted her for her birthday a while ago, Jillian’s breasts had at least tripled in volume. And for her, it awakened a faint hope already.

“I understand...”, Dr. Coxuckley murmured pensively.

“Is that normal?- I mean, not normal, but does it explain the symptoms I had earlier?”

“No. I’ve never seen anything like this, to be honest...”

“Okay... so... what should I do now?”

The doctor didn’t answer immediately, as she tried to make sense of the situation.



“I think the best course of action is: If the pain comes back - just come by again. And... well, just pray they don’t keep growing, right?”

The doctor laughed, which prompted Jillian to return an awkward chuckle. She wasn’t religious.

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“Hellooo, sunshine!” Jillian warbled with a beaming smile on her face as Abby opened the door of her parent’s apartment.

“Hi”, the shorter girl returned with a weary smirk. Since she had just spent most of the day rehearsing with her orchestra and was pretty knackered in the process, dealing with the live wire that her friend was for the rest of the evening would cost her some nerves for sure. Granted, that was a bit harsh. Of course, Abby looked forward to today’s movie night. She had the place all to herself (and the family’s tomcat Bronco) for the entire week as her parents were on vacation. A Quentin-Tarantino-themed marathon in her bedroom it would be, at least under the presumption that both girls wouldn’t be fast asleep halfway through the second movie.

“So, do you want to eat something or-” Abby proposed as she observed Jillian fighting with the zipper on her platform shoes. As Jillian hopped all across the entrance room on one leg, giggling over her own clumsiness, one could barely miss the jiggling and wobbling under her skin-tight tank top. A lot had happened in the past four weeks since her visit to Dr. Coxuckley.

“Oh *boy*, I could devour an entire farm, workers included”, Jillian joked as she finally managed to free one foot from her wickedly expensive Valentinos. “But as promised, I’ve got some provisions as well, look-”

With one shoe still on, Jillian limped over to her backpack and began unpacking the truckload of snacks and beverages she had brought along. Abby observed the spectacle with increasing amusement. Jillian never failed to put a smile on her face.

“So... a pack of doritos, salt sticks, salt sticks again, Pringles, um- that might have been an apple?- yuck... okay, what else... one Heineken for you, some beer for me-”

“Hold on”, Abby interposed in astonishment, “how does all of that fit in there?”

Jillian paused for a second, with played confusion.

“What do you mean? These?” She cupped her breasts, pushing them up her cleavage. “Good question.”

Abby rolled her eyes.

*Never change, Jil, never change. She's so incredibly proud of her new 'boobies', there hasn't been a minute in the past month where she wouldn't either bugger about with them, eye them with the loving expression of a female tarsier monkey beholding its newborn, or reference them in the most random of occasions. And most importantly, she would brief me about the exact metadata of her growth, to the point where my WhatsApp-chat almost turned into a live-ticker. Every day in the morning, she would wake up before 9 voluntarily - which was already impressive for her standards - take ten measurements around her chest, eliminating all but the smallest result - she really wasn't cheating - and compare the overbust-underbust difference with the corresponding cup size. Oh, and not to forget that Jillian documented all of this not just in our chatlog, but also an Excel-spreadsheet for good measure. I know the whole procedure, because on the fifth day after the doctor's appointment, I happened to be present when she officially reached her eagerly awaited A-cup. Jil was basically uncontainable for*

*the rest of the day. I couldn't help but feel happy for her, but also started worrying that she might get a bit too invested into the whole thing. With Jillian, you never know for sure if she's currently committing to a bit or being emotionally unstable for real.*

“Oh, and let's not forget...” Jillian rummaged through her bag and pulled out a pink bra, holding it up triumphantly like a hunting trophy, “...I don't need this one anymore.”

*The B-cup I lended her two weeks ago.*

Abby frowned in astonishment. “I gave you that *two weeks ago*- you don't say-?”

“Mhm”, Jillian confirmed Abby's unexpressed guess, “upgraded to my mom's C-cups and even they are getting tight lately.”

“Impressive”, Abby acknowledged half in earnest, half in jest, as she snatched the garment from Jillian's hand. “Seems like it's going back inside the bottom drawer...”

*But it's not just that Jillian is experiencing this massive growth spurt all of a sudden. Her appetite has completely changed as well. Before, she had been meticulously counting calories, scanning packaging labels for supposedly harmful ingredients that I've never even heard of and basically avoided consuming anything that throws a shadow. But in the past couple of weeks - havoc. She's been eating like a horse. It's absurd what she's suddenly able to absorb without blinking. And even more curious: without putting on weight. Well, with two exceptions of course.*

“Okay, so help yourself in the kitchen if you need more than *all of this-*”, Abby pointed at the pile of snacks, “-there's still some casserole left in the oven- I'd just like to take a shower real quick before we start. I've been sweating like a pig the entire day you know...”

“Okidoki”, Jillian, whose ears had immediately perked up upon hearing about the leftover food, replied.

As announced, Abby headed for the bathroom. She quite literally felt like a slug, as her skin was sticky from sitting for six hours in a poorly ventilated music room with forty fellow sufferers, at thirty degrees Celsius. She tossed the used, now useless bra into the laundry basket in the corner and closed the bathroom door behind her. Time to get rid of the smelly fabric that stuck to her skin like seaweed. First the baggy trousers. Pulling the hem down, bending one leg, slamming it into her chest inevitably, balancing on one leg while sliding the fabric down her thighs, then repeating the process on the other side. Now, it shouldn't sound like her chest turned this into a challenge for Abby, far from that - in fact, she looked considerably more slick compared to Jillian's earlier circus act. But it did affect her.

*It's simple tasks like these that inevitably remind me every time, just how absurd my body shape had become due to my condition. The obstruction of movement. The weight imbalance. The constant jiggling and swaying in the centimetre range, with every move. Just impossible to ignore or get used to.*

On to the top. It was a black short-sleeved skin-tight V-neck that, in its overstretched state, failed to hide the outlines and even the colour tone of her bra beneath. At least under (un)favourable light conditions.

*Obviously not something I'd wear outside voluntarily. But during this time of the year, I just have no choice if I don't want to die of heatstroke. Albeit, I try to strike a balance between breathability and modesty on heat days as well. Today for instance, I threw on one of my several plaid button-down flannel shirts - unbuttoned - to at least somewhat obscure the egregious side projection that eclipses my upper arms and elbows partially. It's not perfect, but better than nothing.*

Abby lifted the hem of her shirt, tugged it up with only momentary trouble here and there until it rested on her breasts, then crossed her arms to pull the garment over her head with one swift motion. Almost done. On to her bra. The best part. Its shoulder straps had already dug themselves into her flesh, and nearly every other square inch of the robust, uncompromising fabric was either poking or pressing or rubbing against her skin.

*I would love not having to wear a bra at home at least. But at my current size, even this is unthinkable. If the choice is between clamping a nerve in my shoulders once in a while and having these massive... things completely unrestrained, tugging at my already stretchmark-ridden cleavage, I don't have to think twice.*

Abby slid off the shoulder straps, revealing two reddened, downright worn-in dents in her skin. She then quickly flapped down the cups, letting her oversized breasts reclaim their natural footprint from under the armpit down to her navel. Next, she quickly pulled the band around, repeatedly bumping into the pendulous masses of titflesh, and undid the clasps. One, two, three, four, five, six, eight - unfortunately, the seventh one had bid adieu a while ago. For a few moments, Abby eyed the garment as she held it in front of her. As much discontent as her breasts gave her, Abby regarded this as her favourite bra - at least as long as she took her pre-macromastia wardrobe out of the equation. But this one - while it didn't look particularly exciting, it was worlds apart from the bland white, black or beige, industrial-grade, functional eyesores that she usually depended on. Instead, the fabric was kept in a mossy green, while the golden-colored stitches contrasted with it nicely. If anything, this would be her first choice for a first night.

*It does look nice in a way. But it still can't hide the fact that I look like a complete freak. Given how absurd these... bags of flesh appear when unrestrained, not even the most talented tailor in the world could display them in a way that looks somewhat normal. Without a shirt on, it's the comical size of the cups that leaps to my eyes immediately. It just looks like a movie prop.*

*And when fully dressed, it's not all that different. Women that are about half my size can make do with minimizer bras to a certain extent. These things obviously aren't minimising the volume, but rather distribute the tissue in order to reduce projection. This has its limits. At some point, shuffling a few grams here and there over to less noticeable areas becomes pointless by virtue of there just being too much everywhere. US 32L. UK 32HH. EU 70N. This is what it says on the label. It's insane. And the worst part... this isn't even my actual size. Over the past year, depending on the store, I got measured at 34O, 30N, and 32P in US sizes. Yes, P-cup. Just a few years ago, I didn't even know that the sizing system went past G, let alone into the second half of the alphabet. And my god, are they expensive. This one for example, I shelled out 80£ for. And as I'm still very much toying with the idea of getting a reduction after all, I hesitate to pay the same amount of money once again, just to temporarily get rid of the annoying pinching and tweaking by my current J- K- and L-sized inventory.*

Abby tossed the bra onto the existing pile of clothing and finally removed her panties. After entering the shower, shutting the curtains and letting the fresh, warm water pour down on her pale skin, she needed to savour the moment first before moving on. Bent forward, her head resting against the wall, arms and breasts hanging down, slowly ceasing to swing, she rested for a good minute. The continuous cracking that ensued, resounding in the tiny cubicle, was a clear indication that her lower back very much enjoyed this position. As stupid as it looked. Oh, and the sensation of clean, warm water running down the underside of her breasts, the area most of all prone to irritation and profuse sweating. In this moment, it was like heaven to her.

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“Is the dinner alright?” Abby asked, as she stumbled upon Jillian, who sat cross-legged on the bed in Abby's room, shovelling metric tons of casserole into her mouth with one hand, and ruffling Bronco's tousled fur with the other.



“*Ep-squisite*”, Jillian champed as she scraped up the final bits, “almost as good as my dad’s cooking.”

Abby giggled as she traversed the room, now wearing nothing but her silky-smooth silver-grey terry cloth bathrobe and a drying turban. “It was a frozen dinner though, so that’s kind of a low bar for a Michelin-starred-chef-”

“Oh.” Jillian shrugged as she put away the dishes, shooing away Bronco who was throwing a temper tantrum because the stroking had ceased for a second. “By the way, do you have something put on for me? It’s getting mad chilly in here”.

“Mhm”, Abby accorded with a grin on her face, proceeding to turn off the air conditioner that, without doubt, Jillian had mistakenly activated earlier while entering the room and searching for the lightswitch. “You can have this-”

She tossed her freshly worn monstrosity of a bra at her friend. Jillian wasn’t disappointed at all.

“Not what I expected but good enough”, she assessed jokingly and went on to remove her own crop top and bra in just a few moves.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, now that’s not what *I expected* Jil”, Abby exclaimed, instinctively adjusting the hem of her bathrobe, as her friend sat there bare-chested all of a sudden.

“Pshht. It’s for science”, Jillian murmured, as she went on to connect hook after hook on her new accessory.

*Now that’s a bizarre sight. Sure, that’s what I think already when I see myself in the mirror - but the direct comparison to a normal-looking woman like Jillian is something I hadn’t really imagined before. The only thing that reassures me a bit is that Jillian’s waist is way tinier than mine, so the*

*proportions are not that egregious in reality. But still. I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be depressed right now - or impressed.*

“Tadaa!”, Jillian exclaimed. “Fits like a glove.”

Obviously, it didn't fit like a glove. Her breasts didn't even occupy a quarter of the volume inside the spacious cup, hovering about a palm above the band.

“And... what's the conclusion of your experiment?” Abby asked.

“Oooh we're not done yet- I'm gonna have to find out *exactly* how much I've got left to grow until... you know... we're evenly matched.”

Jillian then proceeded to grab everything within her reach in Abby's messy room and shoved it down the gaping hollow space between the C- and the K-cups. Towels, shirts, electronics - you name it. An... interesting sight.

“Are you actually sure you would like that? Being at that size?” Abby enquired by the way, as she smuggled her costly DSLR camera out of her friend's reach. Jillian ignored the question.

“Hey! I need that”, she called out, playfully attempting to snatch the device from Abby's hands.

“None of that!” Abby reprimanded her and turned the camera on.

“Time to document the intermediate results. For science.”

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Eventually, the girls were done goofing around and went on to make preparations for the movie night. Abby, meanwhile, had dressed again, going for her preferred casual look. Sports bra, sweatpants, fleece sweater. She flopped

down on her bed. Jillian, who had spent the past couple of minutes strategically arranging - and testing - the available snacks, switched the TV on.

NEWSREADER: *"It's 9 o'clock, I'm Lia Velasquez and you're watching Sky news, the latest news from the UK and around the world. Today's topics are..."*

"Wanna watch this before we start?"

Abby shrugged and grabbed a tortilla chip.

*"...we're starting off with very alarming reports from China. The far-eastern country has reported to the WHO - the world health organisation - that a new, mysterious illness has been detected in the city of Wuhan, in the province Hubei. At least 44 people have been infected with the unidentified virus as of now, while the estimated number of unknown cases is potentially much larger. It is being characterised as extremely contagious, and having an incubation period of 2 to 8 weeks. The symptoms that were listed by the WHO's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a press conference earlier this evening - are quite unusual. It is being assumed that the virus only affects biological females, and its most prominent symptom is rapid growth of the breasts. Other observed symptoms are chest pain, fever, nausea and shortness of breath- excuse me, breath. The Director-General stated that no patients have died yet and there is no indication of a danger to life as of now. At the same time, he warned the public emphatically, that the research is still at a very early stage and many key details are still unknown. Alice Parks from Wuhan with more information..."*

Throughout the newscast, the girl's eyes had been fixated on the screen, with their facial expressions ranging from bewilderment to worry. Both of them knew they were thinking the same. Abby glanced over in Jillian's direction a couple of times, in hopes of some sort of reassurance, that she was actually

hearing what she believed she was hearing. But her friend, biting her fingernails, appeared transfixed, almost hypnotised by the broadcast.

“Jil,” Abby called, snapping her friend out of her unresponsive state, “what do we do now?”

Jillian ran her fingers through her hair and shrugged her shoulders.

“Well, it’s not... exactly... clear that I actually contracted it-”

“You know that this would be a massive coincidence otherwise, right? Us being in China a few weeks ago, *this* stuff happening to you right after-”

“I know, I know. I’m just like... what did I just *hear*? This is so surreal... I mean, sure, I’ll have to get examined I guess...”

Abby leaned forward.

“We *both* need to get tested. *ASAP*. If you got it in Wuhan, then I have it as well - and Janet... your family, my family... and half the city of London.”

“You’re right,” Jillian affirmed. “But there’s one thing I don’t understand... if I have the virus, - and it’s as infectious as they say - then you have it as well... but my tits are growing, your’s aren’t.”

“Well,” Abby sighed, “thank God huh?”

“No, I mean... you’re sure your’s have stayed the same?” Jillian asked, peering at her friend’s subtle spillage that was outlined against her sweater.

“Yeah...”, Abby nodded, but assured herself nevertheless by taking a look as well, nudging her chest here and there and adjusting the fit of her bra. “I

haven't noticed anything at least. But... they said something about an incubation time of eight weeks I think-

"-You're right, I forgot that-

"-Which means... I'm not off the hook yet."

*And this is bad. I can't afford another growth spurt. I'm already way beyond any size that could be considered healthy, or attractive to anyone but weirdos, or at least within socially acceptable bounds. I can't even think of what I might look like if I get the same symptoms. I'd have to get the reduction, there's no way around it. I'm scared.*

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