

THE LIFE SWAP

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It was a gloomy March day in London. Rain was pouring from the sky, and all of my clothes were drenched while I was waiting for my train to come. All I had with me was my bag, and a pair of headphones, but I didn't bother putting them on, in case they got too wet. The familiar intercom announcing the train being on its way was heard all across the station, and everyone started to walk towards the incoming train.

My train finally came five minutes later than it was supposed to. As I got onto the train, I could hardly see anything because it was so packed. The only seat I could find was beside a girl with long hair and scruffy clothes. I sat down in the seat opposite her and grabbed my headphones from my bag. As I was about to turn on my music, I heard a "Hey" from her direction.

"Oh, hello", I said as I pulled my headphones off my head to rest on my shoulders.

"I'm Jenny", she said with a grin.

"I'm Elliot", I said. "Where are you on your way to?" I asked her.

"I'm on my way home from my grandmas, what about you?" she asked.

"I was just at my dad's car garage. He gets me to help him fix his cars every weekend. He wants me to take over the business when I'm older, but I hate it so much." I complained.

"Lucky!" she said. "I wish my dad let me do that. He sends me over to my grandma's every weekend hoping that I will be able to learn how to sew, and make award winning dresses. It's so stupid."

I laughed to myself. "That's actually really cool. It seems like we both want to switch lives", I said.

"Ha, I wish", she said, in almost a sad tone.

We sat in silence for a while, until I had a thought and checked my watch which read 2pm.

"Jenny, do you come home from your grandma's at this time every weekend?" I asked her.

"Yes, basically. Why?"

"Well maybe we could teach each other what we learn each week?" I suggested.

She looked at me and laughed.

"You're right, it's stupid. That wouldn't work anyways" I said, but I was secretly disappointed.

"No! I actually think that's a great idea." She said with a smile, as she started to get up and I guessed we were at her stop.

"Ok, great!" I said.

As she was almost off the train I heard her shout "Meet me at the train station next Saturday at two!" and off she went.

The next Saturday I had everything in my bag ready to bring for Jenny. I had about three of my dad's car manuals, along with some of his diagrams and small car parts. As I finally arrived to the train station, I saw a girl with her hood on, and a big brown rucksack in her hand. It was definitely Jenny.

"Hey!" I called.

"Hi Elliot" She said as she pulled off her hood.

"I've brought basically everything I could with me", I said with a laugh.

"Same, but I didn't think a sewing machine would be very easy to carry", she said, grinning.

We walked to a nearby café and ordered a coffee each. We both sat down at a table and took out everything we brought with us. I piled all of the books I brought onto the table, and looked at what she brought. She had a bag full of every colour thread, different sized needles, pieces of fabrics and felts and some books too.

A short women and her son walked past our table. "Look Mom! That boy is looking at books with dresses in it. I want to read that book too!" He said excitedly. His mom looked disgusted.

"No you don't son, you want to do boy stuff when you're older", she said, giving Jenny and I a dirty look as they left the café.

"People's opinions are so outdated", Jenny said, but she mostly seemed unbothered which is what I like the most about her.

We sat there for hours. I taught Jenny as much as I could about car parts, the engines and how to fix cars, while she taught me how to sew and stitch.

"Oh, it's nearly five. I should probably get going", she said disappointedly.

"Yeah me too."

As I was about to get up, she said "Same place and time next week, yeah?" she suggested.

"Yep." I said, as we both walked our separate ways.

And so this became our routine. Every Saturday at 2pm, Jenny and I met at the café and taught each other as much as we could. This happened for the next three weeks, until everything changed.

We were at the café, and Jenny was researching where to get affordable car parts while I was sewing some fabrics together. Someone walked through the café door, but we didn't look up since we were so involved in what we were doing.

"Son?" said a familiar voice. Jenny and I both looked up, and I looked like I had just seen a ghost.

"Dad, what are you doing here?" I asked him.

"I could say the same about you. I had to pick up a car near here. What do you think you're doing here, doing that sewing or whatever that rubbish is. That is for girls," he said. I had never seen him this angry before.

"It's not for girls, dad, hobbies don't have rules. I really like this and I want to own my own dress-shop one day" I said quietly.

"You are supposed to be taking over my car garage when you're older!" he demanded.

"I hate fixing cars dad," I told him. "I don't want to own the garage when I'm older".

"Fine then." He said in an angry tone. "I'll go and find someone who would be better than you anyways."

"Jenny could do it!" I suggested.

"You don't really think that *she* would be able to run the business?" He laughed mockingly.

I looked over at Jenny, and she had a look of disappointment on her face.

"Girls can't fix cars, and boys can't make dresses!" And with that, he stormed out the door.

But he was wrong. He was very very wrong. It has now been 3 years, and Jenny not only owns her own car garage, but it is one of the most popular ones in London. I own my own dress-makers now, and it's right across the street from Jenny's garage. And as for our friendship, it is still as strong as ever.

