

The Buc-ee's Confessional

At 2:14 a.m., Buc-ee's smells like coffee, cinnamon sugar, diesel, and the inside of a body that has stopped lying.

I am postmenopause, which means nothing leaks anymore except truth.

The automatic doors open like a blessing or a dare. The beaver smiles. He always does. He has never had to earn it.

Inside, the bathroom stretches out like a runway for women who were told to shrink and finally didn't. Twenty stalls. Twenty mirrors. Twenty chances to remember who you are when no one is touching you or asking you to perform gratitude.

I choose the far stall. Not because I'm shy. Because distance is a privilege I now claim.

That's when I hear her.

Not crying. Not sobbing. Just breathing too hard for a public place that insists everything is fine. That particular breath belongs to someone whose hormones have burned down the house and left the walls standing.

I wash my hands longer than necessary. Postmenopause has gifted me time. I don't rush anymore unless it's toward pleasure or away from danger.

She's standing at the mirror, hands braced on the counter, staring at her own face like it might finally tell her the truth if she waits long enough.

We are both queer in the way that doesn't need flags. In the way of posture. In the way we don't flinch when our eyes meet.

"You okay?" I ask, because I'm not scared of the answer.

She laughs once. A dry sound. "No."

Good. Honesty before caffeine. That's Texas hospitality, upgraded.

“I just left my husband,” she says. Not loudly. Not like a confession. Like a weather report.

I nod. “I left mine three years ago. Still feels like I walked out of a burning church.”

She looks at me then. Really looks. At my arms. My neck. The softness that didn’t disappear when I stopped trying to punish it.

“Did it get quieter?” she asks.

“Yes,” I say. “And louder. Depends on what you’re listening for.”

We stand there, two postmenopausal queers under fluorescent lights, free refills ten steps away, a thousand miles of Texas stretching in all directions like a test we already passed.

She says, “Everyone keeps asking if I’m okay. Like this is an emergency.”

“It is,” I say. “Just not the kind they know how to respond to.”

Outside the bathroom, a teenager stocks beef jerky with the seriousness of a surgeon. Somewhere, a man in camo debates fudge. America continues.

Inside, she presses a hand to her chest. “I don’t miss him,” she says, startled by herself. “I miss who I pretended to be.”

Postmenopause does that. Removes the costume. Leaves the bones. Hands you back the keys.

I pull a Sharpie from my bag. I carry one now. You never know when you’ll need to mark territory.

I write on a Buc-ee’s napkin. Not my number. Not a platitude.

I write: There’s a lake west of here where no one asks questions. Sunrise. Thursdays.

She watches me like this matters. It does.

“What if I chicken out?” she asks.

“You won’t,” I say. “But if you do, you’ll do it honestly.”

She takes the napkin. Folds it carefully. Tucks it into her pocket like a talisman or a threat.

We don’t hug. This isn’t that kind of moment. We nod. That’s better. Mutual recognition without obligation.

As I leave, the doors open again. The night air hits my face. Texas hums. Trucks idle. The beaver keeps smiling.

Postmenopause didn’t make me invisible. It made me exact.

I walk to my car knowing this is what the world needs: not hope, not youth, not resilience.

Just women who have nothing left to lose except silence.