

(868 words) *This originally appeared on Twitter. Slight edits have been made.*

“Mark, did you ever watch *Alicia Cracks the Case* as a kid? Y’know with the detective squirrel?” Patty asks.

“Aw yeah, I did! Watching that show was the first thing I did every time I came home from school.”

Patty smiles. “Yeah, it was one of my favorites, too. One of the few shows my dad would let me watch.” Patty turns in her chair to Mark, idly playing with one of her dreads. “Did I tell you about Dad and cartoons?”

Mark shakes his head, putting his phone to the side. “You said he was strict, but I don’t know anything else.”

“Yeah, he didn’t want me watching shows which didn’t teach me how to be a ‘proper lady’“ she says with a flourish. “He was all ‘You already gonna be in trouble cause you black; you don’t need to be a tomboy too!’ Though, he said ‘lesbo’ first until Mom yelled at him,” Patty adds, her painted fingernails covering her chuckle.

“Well, I certainly like you as a tomboy, but being a lesbo would be a problem for me as a man,” he says, laughing.

“Bah! I’ve seen your porn stash, I know it wouldn’t be that much of a problem. You can be a catamite for my gang.”

“Oh, right, you’re going to join a lesbian biker gang and let me be their boytoy servant. Beats retail, I guess.”

Patty guffaws as Mark scratches the skin on his forearm. “Yeah, it does beat retail, office boy. . . But there would be other benefits. . . Anyway, wanna know a secret about *Alicia*?” She says, leaning in.

“Do tell, Ms. Patty, do tell.”

“Well, Dad assumed I watched it because he thought I would see myself as Alicia.”

Mark nods. “I mean she was a very smart girl squirrel with amazing fashion sense, I can see why.”

“You would focus on her fashion sense! But yeah, I liked her, but I really loved Scrum, her partner.”

“The big rugby-playing cougar serving as her muscle? Li’l Mark related to his bravado hiding his vulnerability.”

Patty sighs, resting her face in her hand, dragging a claw across her cheek. “At first I wanted him as a lover.”

“I fit his description, don’t I?” Mark flexes his biceps, barely visible under the gray fur on them.

“Sure sweetie, whatever. . .” Patty says, her pointed ears drooping a bit in mock support. Marc grumbles and slumps back, before grabbing their comb to gussy up their tail.

“You wanted cougar-boy as a lover. . .”

“Right. At first, that’s what I wanted.” Pat’s tail whips behind their back. “But that wasn’t true. . . I wanted to *be* him.” Pat admits, taking a moment to stretch their legs, splaying their pawpads on the floor.

Marc stops combing to glare at Pat. “Didn’t I tell you to be careful with your claws on this floor?”

Pat picks up their legs in shock, wrapping their tawny arms around them. “Sorry, babe.”

“It’s OK,” Marc says, returning to their combing. “So, you said you wanted to be him. What do you mean?”

Pat tilts their head, tapping their left canine with their flat tongue as they think. “I mean what I mean. I didn’t love him as much as I wanted to *be* him. I was pretty scrawny as a cub, and got confused for a girl.”

Marc nods, as Pat continues. “So while I liked being intelligent, I’d’ve traded it for a strong body like his. I mean, at first, it was just a ‘tomboy’ thing, but then, well, it became more than that. More. . . Just ‘boy.’”

Marc smiles, showing off their long incisors. “I understand that better than you’d think. I was the ‘smart’ kid, a real nerd. So I felt a kinship with Alicia. There weren’t very many black nerds on TV.” Marc’s tail curls around them. “I took what I could get, and if that was a girly squirrel, well. . . Then call me a girly squirrel!” Marcia says, rising from her chair, her bushy tail following.

Patrick laughs, crossing his arms across his chest. “And call me a sporty cougar!”

“OK, you’re a sporty kitty.” Marcia says, bending over to kiss the cougar on his head. Patrick guffaws, blushing. Marcia sits back down and the cougar continues to boggle. She smooths out her dress while he recovers.

“So yeah. That’s what I wanted to share with you.” Patrick says, turning back to the computer.

“Like how your football jumper shares your arms with me, Scrummy?” Marcia teases.

“Hey, you know you like the gun show, Alicia,” the cougar retorts. “Just as much as you liked that cartoon. . .”

“Well, it’s pretty obvious that a great detective like would me would have loved detective shows as a pup. Though,” Alicia says, placing her phone in her paw, “Why would have *you* liked *Patty and Mark Take The Case?*”

Scrum turns back to his computer, pulling his thin tail under his thigh, the black tip peeking out the other side. “I have my reasons, Alicia. I have my reasons,” he says, “We all do. It’s a case you’ll have to crack.”

Alicia shakes her head while smiling. “Well, I have practice at that. You’re not that hard of a case, Scrummy.”