

Fatima's Faith (TG RC Epilogue)

By FoxFaceStories

A Commission for Halima Abdi

Years ago as a student, the Arabic Muslim Professor Fatima Hamdan was once Bryce Carson, a white football jock student. Her life has changed greatly in the intervening years following her change, and she has even gained magic and a beautiful wife. But part of her still wonders what things would have been like had she never changed at all . . .

Fatima's Faith

Fatima Hamdan had the dream again last night. The Arabic-American professor woke as she always did, curled against her gorgeous latina wife Martina, her face buried between her lover's shoulder blades. She had always been quite clingy in bed, much to Martina's amusement, but this time she pulled away slowly and lay on her back. Fatima was thirty-three years old. She was a professor of Engineering, Middle Eastern studies, and General Philosophy at the local university, and she was, for the most part, a devout and progressive Muslim. In a more shallow sense, she was very attractive, with a cute rounded face, wide eyes, and a slender figure with modest but not unimpressive breasts. And while she usually had it hidden under a veil, she was deeply proud of her shiny dark hair, a feature Martina also loved.

She was all these things, and yet increasingly, she felt like all of them were a lie, and the dream was a constant reminder.

In the dream, she was not Fatima Hamdan, but a white male named Bryce Carson. She was sporty and cool, confident and jock-ish, and deeply attracted to the ladies. Her faith meant nothing to her, and her life with Martina did not exist. She had a white family, a future in sports, and no connection to Arabic culture whatsoever. She couldn't even speak the language. And in the dream, she was trapped. Bryce Carson railing to escape from a female shell that imprisoned him. A female shell that was artificial and illusory.

A shell named Fatima.

It was a reminder of something she often never thought about: the fact that she did in fact used to be Bryce Carson. That was, until she had signed a so-called 'Diversity Contract' as a student for one Professor Sharpe, who was attempting to meet diversity requirements for the university. Bryce thought it was just some scholarship deal, but instead *he* had become a *she*, her entire life rearranging so that she became the devout, demure, and even *lesbian* Fatima, all to meet numerous requirements that could secure extra funding to the university. It was meant to only last until she finished her degree, but an odd twist meant

things went differently than expected. For one, Fatima earned the attention and affection of one Martina Perez, a feisty and flirty student who was Sharpe's student. And two, it turned out Bryce had a potential for magic that had been unlocked with his change, and so Fatima began to learn it. And as the year continued, she found happiness and meaning in her new life, love, and faith, and chose to remain who she was. She and Martina had moved in together, graduated together, gotten married in a beautiful ceremony, and carved a life for themselves together. They had two lovely cats - Baltus and Nira - and a lovely home, and Fatima would eventually become a university professor at the very institute she had once been an uncaring jock at.

And she was happy.

That was, until Martina gave her the news two months ago. As practising sorceresses, many options in life were open to them, though Fatima tried to avoid using her magic too often. But as they had hit their thirties, Martina had become more and more obsessed with starting a family with Fatima, something which made the traditional woman quite surprised, given how energetic she was, how free she loved being. Not to mention that Martina had a gorgeous figure with wide hips and big DD-cup breasts.

"I just feel it's time, don't you?" Martina had said. "We make such a beautiful couple, and I know you would be an excellent mother."

"Of course," Fatima said. "Of course we'll try for a baby."

"And it could be one made from both of us, with our magic. No sperm donor needed: a perfect mix of your essence and mine."

Fatima had already been uncertain, going along with her wife, but the word 'essence' made her freeze. It planted that first terrible seed of doubt in her mind: *what is my essence? Is it truly Fatima? Or is it all just fake, a result of a diversity contract that forced it all upon me?*

The question grew larger and larger in her mind as the days went on. She continued to pray, seeking Allah's guidance, but the continual mental reminder that her faith could be artificial haunted her. She didn't tell Martina, afraid of what she might think. When the time came for the ritual the two of them had prepared for, she actually *hoped* it would fail, fearing what their child would say about her, and who she truly was.

Except it hadn't failed. Martina was nearly at the end of her first trimester, and for all her wife's excitement, Fatima felt strangely empty. The dreams haunted her, and she was consumed by a terrible guilt that she had agreed to Martina's proposal unfairly, and it would spell the death of her family.

She was thinking on all of this when she realised Martina had woken up, and was starting at her.

"Everything okay, sexy?"

Fatima chuckled. Her wife certainly knew how to lighten the mood. She'd always been the dominant one in the relationship, which is why it was surprising that *she* wanted to be the one who was pregnant.

"Morning, my rose," she replied, reaching out to stroke Martina's face. "Just contemplative."

"You've been pretty damn contemplative as of late. Speak to me, what's wrong?"

Fatima sighed. She didn't want to confess all of it. "I'm just nervous about the baby. About whether I'll be a good mother."

Martina snorted. "Please, you'll be an awesome mom. You're kind, caring, fucking smart as hell, and you're damn cute."

"That last is not an important quality to motherhood, you realise?"

"Yeah, but you're still cute. Seriously, you're just worrying. So long as you don't sling your religion on our kid and give them time to decide, what could go wrong?"

It was just a gentle jibe, as Martina only believed in the magic of the earth, nothing more. But it accidentally hit a nervous nerve for Fatima, who worried about how genuine her faith truly was.

"Oh, shit. That was meaner than intended, wasn't it? I'm sorry Fatima, just chalk it up to me being all hormonal and pregnant. I swear I can *feel* my belly getting tighter."

Fatima smiled wanly.

"Do you want to feel?" Martina asked.

"Another time, perhaps."

Martina was silent for a moment. "Well, I'm horny and hungry, in that order. So I want you to feel *these* instead, then make me breakfast, how about that?"

She grabbed Fatima's hands and pulled them onto her large, heavy breasts. Fatima couldn't deny she was getting turned on at the sight of them. They were large, heavy E-cups now, having swelled in the first trimester. Martina used them like a superpower, always showing them off.

"And then after you've fucked me and fed me," Martina said, "I'm taking you to the Witch's Carnival tonight. It's run by actual witches, so it'll be extra magic, and maybe that will cheer you up, okay?"

Fatima nodded. She doubted it would at all, but at least in her increasing arousal she could lose herself in the act of sex.

"Okay, my rose. And thank the one true God you wanted this, because I was starting to feel horny as well."

At least in her depression, her sex drive hadn't suffered too greatly.

Martina wasn't wrong, the Witch's Carnival was indeed spectacular. It was held every few years, as the witches that were apparently behind it liked to move around, and so did not always return annually. From a distance it appeared to be a regular carnival full of rides, funhouse mirror mazes, and numerous stalls and competitions. But, at least according to her wife, on a deeper level there was ancient arcanery at work, providing thrills, entertainment, and experiences that could never be replicated at a regular carnival.

"People find romance that was meant to be here, and friendships that last lifetimes. Good fortune, and the occasional life-changing revelation. Just like with your magic or mine, sometimes people are changed by the Witch's carnival, in body or spirit, often to be their truest selves." Martina chuckled. "Though sometimes the magic of the carnival inflicts karma as well, restoring a natural balance.

A natural balance, thought Fatima as she waded through the crowds of children and parents. *What is my natural balance?*

It lingered in her mind, even amongst the light and colour of the festive night, just as the image of those happy families stayed in her mind. Some of them, she noticed, even belonged to former students who were now parents, many of them waving happily at their old Professor Hamdan.

Is that truly what I want? What I deserve? Would Bryce want that, if he were standing in my place?

"Hi Fatima! Or should I say, *Professor?*"

She turned, and saw it was her old friend Halima Abdi, a fellow student with Somalian heritage. A genuine one, who had been born and raised that way all her life. She had her girlfriend with her, holding hands as they, too, were visiting the Witch's Carnival.

"Halima! It's so good to see you again! You remember Martina?"

"I do and . . . Great God above, is that a slight belly? AAHH!"

Fatima chuckled as her previous student friend embraced the pair of them, happily chatting about her own life since, her travels, how excited she was for them. Fatima smiled and nodded in her modest way, but couldn't help but descend into dark thoughts once more.

She's the real deal. Her accent, her bilingualism, her faith . . . I'm the fake.

They parted, promising to keep in contact. Fatima had gone silent for the last minutes of conversation. Still, she put on a sweet smile when Martina looked her way.

"It sounds fascinating. I suppose there is much of the magic world that still eludes me in my studies."

"Because you're too much of a nerd, my love," Martina said with a giggle. "You always try to make sense of everything. So things like the Carnival elude you."

She blushed. She wasn't wrong. But then, even that logical mind and desire to make things fit a pattern was not native to her. Was that not a result of the contract that changed her too?

How much of me is real?

"Fatima. Fatima? Are you okay?"

The Arabic woman turned back to her gorgeous latina wife. "I'm sorry," she said, smiling sheepishly, "my thoughts took me away for a moment."

"We can go home, if this isn't working for you. Snuggle up, watch a movie . . . get a little frisky before this belly gets too big."

Fatima pulled away. "No! No . . . let's continue. I want to cheer up."

Martina made an intrigued expression, her features narrowing. "What's going on Fatima? You're acting strange. Ever since we conceived . . . are you having second thoughts about starting a family?"

I'm having second thoughts about everything. You're the only anchor I have.

Fatima couldn't lie to her wife, but telling the truth about her feelings was like scaling Mount Everest with the sherpa on her back. It was too daunting. Instead, she felt herself well up with tears.

"Martina, I'm sorry, it's not that. Not really. It's just . . . it's so h-hard to talk about. I don't know if I know who I am, right now. It's like . . . it's like some sort of early mid-life crisis. I'll talk about it at home. I don't want to think about it right now."

Martina hugged her, holding her close. Fatima returned the warm comfort, even as they stood in the busy main 'street' of the carnival's thoroughfare. Martina was taller than her, and she loved that height disparity. It made her feel protected. Against her, she could feel the slight dome of Martina's belly, and it did feel nice. Warm. But it also felt . . . unearned.

"Then we won't think about it," Martina said reassuringly. "And I know the exact thing that I can get to cheer you up. There's a jumbo ice-cream cone with everything on it - don't worry, it's *halal* ingredients - that I just know you would love."

Fatima wiped some tears. "That would be fantastic."

"The line is pretty long, how about I get some for you and you just enjoy some other stalls, and we meet back here in ten? Gives you time for your thoughts."

She always knows how to cheer me up, and when to give me space. I don't deserve her.

"Thank you, my rose," she said.

Martina left to join the line at the distant stall. For a minute, Fatima awkwardly endured the intensity and excitement of the crowd shifting about her. She briefly considered making herself invisible - literally, using her magic - in order to avoid bringing down the

enjoyment of those nearby, but decided against it. Instead, she simply waited, seeing the occasional student she had taught, and even some who she had helped change to enrich their lives.

Do they have the same thoughts as me?

The attractions of the fair did indeed look exciting, but her gloomy thoughts pervaded over all. That was, until a very different feeling came over her.

It was difficult to describe. Like a low thrum, a kind of vibration in her core. It was accompanied by a bass sound, barely perceptible yet constant. She looked around, drawing upon her sorceress senses to see it. And there it was, spiralling out from the Hall of Magical Mirrors like an invitation. It pulled at her, drawing her essence towards its entrance.

Wordlessly, as if in a hypnotic state, she wandered in. It was only a five dollar entry, and she handed over the money without even acknowledging the woman in the booth, so drawn was she by the emanations of the magic within. It felt old, wise, different. She just managed to catch the counter woman's words as she stepped in.

"Find your true self in the Hall of Magic Mirrors! See how others perceive you, but most of all how you should perceive yourself!"

That sounds exactly what I'm looking for, she thought.

The door closed behind her as she entered the maze.

There was definitely something magical here, and not just from what she could sense with her trained sorceress instincts. Fatima had entered just after a couple of teenagers who were having an argument, but on the other side of the door they were nowhere to be seen or heard. There was only the endless expanse of mirrors that confused her senses. They were ordinary, at least at first. Here a mirror that warped her height, here a mirror that warped her width, and there a mirror that made her look compressed and squiggly, or possessing a huge head and tiny torso, etcetera.

But then, as she continued down the winding passages that turned her about, the dimensions of the maze became more . . . eldritch. She felt her heartbeat quicken as she found dead ends, only to turn around and see a new passage that hadn't existed a moment before.

Yes, this place is most certainly magical. And confusing.

She turned a corner, dozens of Fatimas reflecting off of the kaleidoscope of glass that arced like infinite spirals around her, seemingly shifting and altering every time she looked away. It was then that she noticed that she was not the same in all of them. There

were subtle differences: a smirk in one, a beaming smile in another, a glare to her left, a giggle to her right, a face full of tears at her feet.

“Okay, this is quite creepy. Allahu Akbar, I hope it is nothing too untoward.”

She had to trust in Martina’s word most of all, especially if her faith was just as fake as the rest of her. She turned, and to her shock there was a single mirror standing before her, blocking a passage she had just come through. But this one showed her unchanged; an ordinary mirror. And above it was a simple sign in engraved cursive:

The Self Your Students See

Suddenly the mirror shifted, rippling like the water of a pond, and to her astonishment *she* rippled as well. She groaned as her body changed as in the mirror. She grew taller, her features more defined and professorial, her long nose longer, her wide eyes sharper. Her clothing altered to be the smart black and purple dress with the purple *hijab* she wore while lecturing, but it was even more brilliant and flowing, as if she were a valedictorian presenting a speech.

“W-what on earth? I look - I actually look a little scary!”

She’d never thought of herself as scary, but as she ran her hands over her changed body, confirming that it had indeed changed, she couldn’t deny on some level why it would be so. She taught many first years - any professor was intimidating to them! The change had even aged her by at least five years or so, making her look wiser. Yes, she didn’t just look authoritative, she looked *knowledgeable*. She changed her stance, and looked out as if addressing a crowd.

No, not just a bit intimidating. Not just wise. She looked like a great leader from some distant past. She looked *inspiring*.

“So . . . this is the self *they* see,” she mused. “But it is not my true self. Only a false mirror.”

The mirror cracked, and she let out a slight squeak as it shattered. She put her hands before her eyes, and when she lowered them, a new path was before her, different from the old one, and her body was as it had been, reduced in height,

Most definitely magic. But was that an illusion or true transformation? And what is it trying to tell me?

She continued through the passage, thousands of other versions of herself trailing with her, reflecting endlessly through the fractal madness of the Hall of Magic Mirrors. Its beauty was entrancing, daunting, and slightly headache inducing, and at times it felt almost like she had started walking on the walls or ceiling: gravity and direction were losing their meanings here. She was distracted from the confusion as she came to another mirror.

The Self Those Prejudiced Against You See

“Oh, this won’t be good.”

Again, there was the rippling and warbling of the mirror, matched by her own changing body. She moaned lightly, always a little demure as her flesh exaggerated and twisted. To her irritation, her features became simultaneously exotic and ghastly, a parody of an Arabic woman. Her dark eyes now had evil eye shadow around them, and she had a twisted mouth that seemed to grin maliciously. Her veil was more elaborate, larger and ridiculous, and she no longer wore a dress but a more complete *burqa* that marked her as the Other. It was utterly insulting, especially her twisted nose and overly-thick eyebrows, but it brought shame to her thoughts as well.

I would have thought similarly about someone like me back when I was Bryce. Would I still have those thoughts now without the contract? If the contract was reversed now, would I still have those instincts?

The mirror shattered again, and she was prepared for it this time. She moved forward, quicker this time, even as the hall of mirrors became stranger, incorporating tall stairs and sudden tunnel-like descents that could never have existed within the building. She was more determined now: the magic was growing stronger, and the next mirror was only a few minutes after the previous one.

The Self Your Admirers See

She thought at first it might pertain to Martina, but the plural form and the following changes told her otherwise. She whimpered as a pressure in her breasts saw them expand.

“Oh no, I know what’s happening here.”

They surged forth, gaining weight and becoming round and full. She couldn’t help but smile a little. She loved Martina’s very full chest, but had always been a little jealous despite her own male past, wanting larger breasts over her own. Sure, she still liked her modest B-cups, but she would *love* them if they were much less ‘modest’ in size. But now her boobs expanded equal in size to her wife’s, easily DD-cups of her own, with the accompanying heft and wobble. Her hips cracked outwards, her waist thinned, and despite being alone, she blushed in joyful embarrassment as her rear expanded also, rounding out to become full and peachy.

“And I bet I’ll have - MMHPH!”

Her lips puffed up, becoming far too full for her own liking, and her eyes changed to a far more mesmerising green. Her veil pulled back, and she was thankful she was alone, for her dark hair tumbled over her shoulders, shiny and perfect but far longer than it should have been. Her dress remained the same, but drew incredibly tight around her body until she felt like she was wearing ceiling wrap: every new and ridiculous curve was on display.

“This is all too much,” she complained, only to halt in further embarrassment. Her voice had purred sensually, without even meaning to. “But it’s . . . not bad.”

Yes, this is how they would see me alright. Some of the students, for sure some of the staff as well. Allahu Akbar, this dress is far too immodest!

The mirror shattered, letting her past. That one hadn't rocked her as much as other reflections, but it still served as a sharp reminder of how much her life had been altered by her new gender. She had been a man, a white man, blessed with white and male privilege that never made her feel vulnerable, frightened, or too immodest. How could she possibly be her true self now if she had once been that? The divergence was surely too extreme!

I could have been anything, but would I have been the kind of person Martina would marry? The kind of person who would become a professor?

She carried on further, catapulted on by her desire to reach the end of the maze. Magic blossomed and bloomed around her, her sorceress instincts overwhelmed by its expanse as she probed ever closer to the centre of the maze. Physics disappeared entirely as mirrors became puddles of light that floated in the air, as crystalline formations gave way to floating steps through the endless expanse of voice. All of them showed not only different expressions of her, but different lifetimes as well. Different possibilities.

A Fatima who never met Martina, and became Bryce again, going onto a football career.

A Fatima who chose to stay as herself, but came to sharply regret it, questioning herself even sooner.

A Fatima more devout to the church, more fanatic and judgemental in her ways, rejecting her love of women and ruined in sorrow and self-hate for it.

A Fatima who was pregnant, the recipient of the conception spell rather than Martina. Her expression was radiant, her joy clear.

Another Fatima who looked much the same, and wept bitter tears instead.

More alternate possibilities spiralled out. Careers in different professions, ranging from engineering to archaeology to even striving to become a woman's footballer. She saw Fatima's who embraced the Bryce aspects of herself, distancing herself from religion, drawing back to sports and activities of adventure, and yet still being with Martina and loving her life of academia.

That last one filled her with uncertainty and worry. Was that not the life she wanted? Was that not what could have been a true union of her two selves?

Did I kill Bryce? Deny him completely?

She vaulted further upwards, soaring through the void and its absence of gravity. She cast several spells with ease, propelling her forth to travel through to the very centre, following the trail of magic that invited her further into the deep. A great crystalline doorway, its mirrors natural, reflecting infinite lives that were too many to even see, loomed in the

distance, and with another incantation she flew towards it and entered. Within, inscribed in far deeper carving, were the following words:

The Self Your Friends See

More changed, but only slight ones this time. Her figure became a little smaller, and her already large eyes widened further. Her clothing became more fully coloured: the purple just a little bit brighter, her veil more vibrant and saturated. She looked . . . ordinary. Kind. Hopeful. Her expression had altered to one that seemed utterly trustworthy, the kind of face that told you that everything was going to be alright. Even her natural positioning spoke to it: her arms automatically reached as if outstretched, offering aid and comfort, her eyes sparkling with interest and care.

The kind of person I wish I was. Did I earn it?

She wiped away a tear. Was that truly how her friends saw her? Even Halima, just before she had entered?

“What did I do to gain that impression?” she wondered aloud, reaching out. The mirror cracked, and to her sadness it fell to pieces of crystal before her. Her body reverted, her figure more developed and less ‘cute’, her colours less saturated. But a small piece of her soul felt like it had re-knitted, even though many doubts remained. The foods she had made for her friends, the dinners she had hosted, the times she had helped out after tragedy, the comforting shoulder to cry on or embrace after a hard battle, the good cheer during a speech or at a game; all these things *she* had chosen to do. She was certain of it.

“Let’s see what is next, God willing.”

She advanced, now implacable. She needed to see what was next. Not wanted, *needed*. The centre was close, so darn close. Whatever her true self was, it had to be close. She spiralled through a kaleidoscope of mirrors, sliding down them as she fell upwards towards a fractal door. The void opened up, and blackness swallowed her until there was only one mirror ahead, slowly spinning towards her, menacingly.

The Self You Fear To Be

She cringed as her form changed. For the first time in thirteen years, she knew what it felt to be male again, to be white again, to not even feel the draw of her faith again as her body expanded. She put on muscle and weight. Her breasts deflated back into her body, and her dress altered to become sports jeans and a polo top. She felt her manhood return like an old friend, large and impressive, just as she had remembered it.

“I’m him,” she said in a baritone voice, her hair withdrawn to its short brown style, her face possessing a manly square jaw with light whiskers. “I’m Bryce again.”

A chill ran down her spine as she felt the power and dominance that came with being a man. The lack of modesty, the lack of vulnerability. It was like she had been drowning, and now she could breathe again. *He* could breathe again.

Is this what I fear? That I want to be him again, deep down? But if so, why am I still feeling self doubt?

But it wasn't right. Even now as a man, the male pronoun felt wrong. She wasn't a *he*, not really. She didn't feel like a *he* at all, not even with the cock and balls and chest hair and deep voice. None of it was enough to make her feel like she was Bryce at all. It wasn't like returning to a second skin, but instead a discarded cocoon, a shell she'd outgrown.

She stared at the self she could have been, the *man* she could have been for far too long. And realised at that moment that the dreams were all wrong. She had not been trapped inside Fatima. Fatima had been trapped inside Bryce; the memory of him. The fear that she was not truly the woman she had become.

And now she knew she had long since spread her wings. She would rather be the most vulnerable, scared, modest, tiny little woman still unsure of herself than be stuck as a man. It was not who she was meant to be. She wept as the glass shattered, but they were not tears of regret, except the regret of having ever thought she could be Bryce again. Could ever want to be him again.

But then, something unusual happened.

It didn't shatter completely.

Instead, it *reformed*, depicting a new engraving and a new reflection, even as her body altered back to its Fatima-self. She moaned as her womanhood returned, her breasts, her soft skin and olive tone. Her old male form slipped away, and she was thankful to be rid of it one last time.

Thank Allah! So I do want to remain a woman. But what about all the rest, and what about -

Even her thoughts stopped as she read the new engraving.

The Self She Sees You To Be

Fatima's reflection twisted and altered, but this time her body did not change with it. How could it? The depiction in the mirror was impossible to replicate. The mirror expanded, crystals growing at a rapid pace to expand to three times her size. Her reflection grew with it, becoming tall and mighty, beautiful and ethereal, wise and intelligent, fierce and determined, innocent and sexual. She was so many things at once that the closest approximation she could claim to be in that reflection was an angel.

Or a goddess. Is this how she sees me, truly? Oh Martina, I had no idea . . .

Her wife was atheistic in many senses, despite her training in magic. And yet, it was clear from this image that she practically *worshipped* Fatima, seeing her as a protective angel, a being of immense kindness, love, humility, and grace, and yet still a shy smirk of desire and blush of arousal upon her cheeks. Her dress was gorgeous and revealing, and most telling of all, her hair was free and waving in an impossible wind.

“I look . . . I look amazing,” she said, before choking a little. She sobbed, and soon there were too many tears to wipe away. It was too much to take in. She knew that deep down she saw Martina in a similar fashion, but she had never imagined anyone could see her that way.

Even Bryce was plagued with doubts. It's why he had to always prove himself. Fatima is the same, her acts of proving are just . . . different.

The mirror did not crumble this time either. It exploded. A wall of light broke through, blasting chunks of it apart and obliterating it. She incanted a protective ward, which prevented the worst of the blast of mirror chunks. When she dropped it, she could see what she was looking for.

The centre of the maze.

It was a cocoon. Or a chrysalis. Or simply a spherical diamond, almost like a disco ball, but far more brilliant. She fell down to it slowly, and to her shock it was actually like liquid: her body melted through it, sinking into the central mirror of the maze. Her heart beat rapidly, and she panicked internally, worrying about what she would find. Still, she hoped. After the clarity of the previous mirrors, she hoped.

She finished sinking through, and there before her was the final mirror, the engraving just above it.

Your True Self

It was an ordinary mirror, in height, width, and reflection. It was no different than any mirror she had ever seen. No different to the bathroom mirror she used each morning and night when doing her makeup and brushing her teeth and flirting with Martina getting dressed up beside her.

It was her. It was Fatima.

She grinned, and knew her true self.

It was a good thing Martina was not too far along, because she *ran* to Fatima's side when she returned to the carnival street where they had agreed to meet.

“Oh my God, Fatima! Thank the stars! Where the hell have you been? You've been gone for nearly fifteen minutes, you had me worried sick, damn you!”

Only fifteen minutes. I would have been in there for over an hour . . . unless time works differently too?

She smiled to herself at the realisation, and then her smile grew, which clearly only confused Martina further, who still looked like she was coming down from her panic.

“What are you smiling about?”

Fatima laughed, and she launched forward to hug her wife, embracing her completely, and pressed her head against her comforting chest. She breathed deep, absorbing everything, the reality that was *this* and *them* and *her*.

“Everything,” she said, blinking back tears. “I’m smiling about *everything*.”

“Damn, what a turnaround? Don’t tell me there’s a hookah tent around here, not that I can use it anymore, damn it.”

“Nothing like that. I’ll tell you all about it tonight, after we’ve had more fun, and perhaps even further *fun*.”

Martina chuckled as Fatima pulled back. “Well, it sounds like the magic of the carnival certainly came to you.”

“It certainly did,” she said, unable to stop grinning. Her face was actually starting to hurt, she felt like beaming so much. “But before any of that, I have something to say.”

“Oh, an apology for making your pregnant wife freakout, perhaps?”

“I’ll make it up to you a lot, tonight. But no, I’m not talking about you.”

“Then who?”

Still smiling, Fatima lowered herself, and to Martina’s evident surprise, she raised her wife’s shirt up to reveal her slightly domed stomach.

“Hello little one,” she said, feeling Martina’s belly with her hands and imagining the life that was growing inside. “It’s me, your other mother. Fatima. I can’t wait to meet you. I can’t wait to see how you see me too.”

The End