

CONTEMPORARY TV FICTION

MAGAZINE

"A DIFFERENT KIND OF BRIDE!"

A YOUNG MAN HELPS HIS SISTER BY
BECOMING A MODEL AT A BRIDAL FAIR.

VOLUME #50



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CONTEMPORARY TV FICTION

VOLUME 50

A DIFFERENT KIND OF BRIDE

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“Were women meant to do everything...
work AND have babies?”
Cadice Bergen



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“A Different Kind Of Bride”

By Catherine J. Sambark

Eventually, it was time to start preparing for the show. Lori had outdone herself. I would be wearing a different gown for each night of the exposition.

Lori and I drove over to the convention center to meet with Mr. Kuniyak, the show's promoters and the other models. I chose a red-stripped tank top, white skirt, and a red jacket. I wanted to look feminine, but at the same time I didn't want to stand out. These would be industry professionals, and I didn't want anyone to notice anything untoward.

Mr. Kuniyak met up with a smile, “Ah, the Woolsey sisters! I'm so glad you both decided to come. I tell you, this is going to be the show of shows.” He turned to Lori, “I've been looking over the sketches you sent me and I am rather impressed. If this show goes well, I can guarantee that ‘Lori Woolsey’ will be a name to be reckoned with in the fashion industry.”

Lori smiled sweetly, but I knew that she was barely restraining herself from doing cartwheels. “And you,” continued Mr. Kuniyak, now looking at me, “I've been showing your picture around. Once again, I've proven myself ahead of the game. Several designers have asked if you would be free next month to do some advertising spots for them. In fact, Jemi Tachamuchi (who?) himself said that the athletic look was making a comeback and you were the perfect representation.”

“I'm flattered,” I replied. I was flattered, but also angry. So what if I made an attractive woman, did everyone have to talk about it?

“Anyway,” my boss continued, “you'll probably get a few job offers before the week's up. I know you said you didn't want to do any more modeling, but if you change your mind, just

remember that I discovered you and should get first crack at making you an offer.”

Well, fat chance of that. The money was nice, but no way was I going to work towards becoming the next Cindy Crawford. After this show, I'd register for college and get on with my life.

“Hi there, stranger,” said a familiar voice from behind me. I turned and gasped. There stood Shawna, the woman who had helped me out so much when I did the first show. I gave her what I hoped would pass for a sisterly hug. Soon we were sitting down, chatting like old friends. It turned out that she would be working the same convention. That gave me a good feeling to know that that there would be someone there to help me out.

Our reunion was interrupted when the MC insisted that all of the models meet to discuss the plans for the show. We all grouped together in the cavernous convention hall. Like last time, there were quite a few male models.

The MC, who was tall, handsome, and as gay as a picnic basket, addressed us. “OK people, here's the drill. Each bride will be matched with a groom. Grooms will stand at the front of the catwalk; brides will walk down the aisle. You'll stand together, smile at the audience, and then leave together. Any questions?”

“What's he talking about?” I whispered to Shawna, “What does he mean, we'll be matched with a groom?”

“Oh, that. They're trying to make the production look more like a wedding. You'll walk down the aisle and stand next to one of the guys. It'll give the audience a better idea of how they'll look at the wedding.”

“So how do we know what guy we'll be matched with?” I began to panic. Just how far was this wedding illusion supposed to go?

“It's random. You'll probably be matched with a tall guy. Hopefully he'll be cute.” Yeah, that would be great.



My hand shook as Patrick took it in his. What were the chances that he would turn up as my partner in this photo shoot?

The MC began to read names. Shawna was matched with handsome, muscular guy with a shaved head. She winked at me over her shoulder; apparently she was happy with the choice. Name after name was read. I felt weird, like I was being matched with a life partner at one of those Reverend Moon group weddings.

Finally, they called my name. "Kimberly Woolsey? Let's see...you'll be with Patrick Elrick."

I looked around for my 'groom'. I hoped he wasn't sleazy. "Hello, how have you been, Kimberly?"

I turned to face the man who addressed me. It was my Patrick...I mean the same Patrick that I'd had that 'date' with, and he was just as handsome as the last time I saw him. Poor guy, he probably was matched with the one female model who could have cared less about he looks.

"Nice to meet you again," he smile.

"Patrick!" I nearly swooned, "I didn't know that you were a male model...and working this show."

"Yeah, the same with you. Chuck didn't tell me. I guess he didn't know. So how have you been, Kimberly?"

"Uh...fine...I guess," I stammered. What were the chances of him being in the same event as I? On the other hand, a lot of Lori's friends that I'd met over the past few weeks were models, so why should Chuck and Patrick be any different?

"So have you done a lot of modeling, Kimberly?"

"Please, call me Kim." It sounded more like my real name and less feminine. "Actually, I haven't. I'm just doing this one job."

I half expected him to tell me I could make it as a professional model. Almost every guy I met now gave me some line like that. But he simply said, "Well, it's a fun job if you're into it. I do it part time to help pay for college."

Patrick walked Lori and I to the street to help us collect a cab back home. Lori had a handsome dark hair guy she'd met at the meeting accompany her. We exchanged some more pleasantries and I excused myself.

As we parted, he took my hand, smiled, and said, "I'm looking forward to working with you, Kim." Then he turned and walked back into the studio. Well, he could have been worse, no flirting, no staring, and no sexist comments. Maybe it wouldn't be too bad.

That night, Lori took me out to get a makeover. My hair was professionally styled, my finger and toenails manicured and polished, overall body wax, and a better makeup job than I could give myself. As I walked out into the brisk New York night, I noticed the looks I was getting from strangers. They weren't all the leering stares of horny men either; many were simply the glances that people tend to give attractive women.

The scary thing was, I wasn't entirely offended. Though I'd never admit it, I felt rather complimented at people's attention. As a man, I never really turned heads, but as a woman it felt kind of nice to be noticed. I felt ashamed thinking that sort of thing, but what of it? Nobody would know of my secret pride and in a month, I'd be a lot richer for my efforts.

The organ music swelled, and I marched down the catwalk to the pre-recorded strains of The Wedding March. This was the last day of the show and not surprisingly, I was glad. For an entire week, I had been displaying myself like a hunk of meat for nine hours a day. Up and down the aisle, under the lights, in front of the cameras, in front of the audience. We had eight different dress changes a day. If I ever got married, I swore I'd give my wife all the support she needed in choosing her wedding dress. Lord knows I was an expert.

Without looking down, I thought about the dress I was wearing; probably the last one I'd ever wear. It was an ivory colored silk number with no veil and almost no fringe. I didn't like it; it seemed more suited to an older bride, a second-time-around wife, not a young 'girl' like me. Oh well, Lori had to

display the full spectrum of her work. I was only there to look good.

I took my spot next to Patrick. He grasped my hand. When he had done this the first time, I nearly fell off the stage, but now I could let him hold my limp hand in his with hardly a shudder. Like everything else I had been doing this week, I just put it down to part of the act and forgot about it.

After the MC described our clothes in detail, we walked, still hand in hand, back down the catwalk. At least they weren't throwing rice. Every time we did this, I still had the uncomfortable feeling that this was a real wedding and Patrick was looking forward to the honeymoon. It was a paranoid delusion of course, but after almost a month of being treated like a woman, I occasionally had thoughts like that. I guess it went with the territory.

At long, long last came the time for all of us to go out on stage and take our final bows. Patrick and I stood in a row with the other pretend couples and smiled at the audience, almost blinded by the flashbulbs. That's when it happened.

Shawna's groom reached over and kissed her. It wasn't a passionate kiss; it was more like one you'd see at the altar. That was like the floodgates opening, and soon every couple on the stage was kissing one another, everyone, that is, except for Patrick and myself.

Well, what did it matter? I was hired to model, not to kiss. Realistic wedding or no, I wasn't about to let him put his mouth on mine. I glanced in his direction... Everything went in slow motion. First, gentle pressure of his hand on my cheek, then his face slowly advancing toward mine. I was trapped! I couldn't jolt away or tell him no or try to turn my head. That would be too distracting; it could ruin the whole moment. Lori and Mr. Kuniyak would never forgive me.

His lips touched mine, not for long, and not lingering, but they touched. His lips were rough and for just the slightest

moment, I could feel the deep pressure from his kiss. Then it was over.

Later, I sat alone in the dressing room in nothing but a terry cloth robe. I was removing my makeup with damp cotton balls, thinking about what had just happened.

A guy had kissed me! Not passionately, not willingly, but I had been kissed. I kept trying to justify it by saying I really didn't have a choice, but I still felt guilty. Patrick really couldn't be blamed; in his eyes, it was just acting. Worst of all, Lori had seen the whole thing. What if she said something? What if she acted like I had enjoyed it? She had better not, if she knew what was good for her.

I looked at my reflection in the mirror. The month I had spent as a woman had taken its toll. I no longer looked as awkward and uncomfortable as a girl. In fact, even now, as I wore nothing but a robe, I still looked naturally feminine. It was scary how well I was pulling this off. I shook my head. Well, at least it was over.

I heard a noise and turned to see Lori smiling at me. "Here it comes," I thought. "Patrick and Kimberly sittin' in a tree..."

"Kim, you were sensational! Everything went perfectly!" She kissed my cheek. "Thank you so much for doing that. You really did a great job." I was relieved. Apparently she was not going to mention the kiss.

"Well, I'm just glad it's all over..."

"Well, it's not quite over. I mean, you're still planning on staying here for another week or two, right?"

"Of course, but what's the point of being Kim anymore? The show's over, and it's not like I'm going to be dressing like this again."

Lori sat down and laid a hand on my knee. "I know, Kim, but think about it. All my friends know you as a woman. All the places we've hung out know you as Kimberly. I can't very well tell people that Kim just left town in the middle of the night and was replaced by our brother, Ken."

"I hadn't thought of that."

"Look, Kim, you told me there were still a lot of things you wanted to do here before you went back home. It would be a lot easier if you just stayed as Kim. If anyone saw you as Ken, we'd have a lot of explaining to do. Besides..."

"Yes?"

"I've kind of enjoyed having a sister. I know it's temporary, but, well, would one more week really matter?"

I threw up my hands in frustration. Lori was right. I guess I couldn't thrust my male self onto the scene all of a sudden. Besides, I still had to pick up my check from Kunyak as Kim.

"Wonderful," said Lori, "There's a bit of a party tonight. I hope you'll come."

"After all the work I've been doing, I think it will be good to cut loose and relax."

"Great, I'll drive us."

I quickly changed into a pair of black slacks and a white blouse. I finished removing my stage makeup, and then made my face up again. I found Lori in the parking lot and we drove over to the party.

The party was at Mr. Kunyak's palatial house. I strolled in with Lori and began to mingle. It struck me as ironic how much more confident I was now. A few weeks ago, I would have moved heaven and earth to avoid going to a party dressed like a woman. Now I was looking forward to it.

I spent a long time discussing the show with Shawna. Soon we were talking about all the dresses we had seen at the show. I hated to admit it, but I was becoming a bit of an expert at women's fashion. Regrettably, the conversation soon turned to men.

"So what do you think of Tim?" she asked me. Tim was the man who played her groom.

“Oh, he seems like a nice guy.” He did. I wasn’t about to speculate on how attractive he might be.

“Yeah, he is. I think he likes me. I wonder if I should go for it.”

“Well, if it doesn’t work out, you can always get a free dinner.” We laughed, but inwardly I felt like I had betrayed males everywhere by saying that.

“So,” Shawna continued, “is anything going on with you and Patrick?”

“No!” I said, much too emphatically.

“Just wondering.” Tim came in, and soon all of Shawna’s attentions were focused on him.

The party was in full swing. I had a bit of a panicked moment when Patrick came up and started talking to me. I was afraid that he was going to hit on me, but all he did was congratulate me on the job I had done at the show. Thankfully he didn’t mention the kiss.

Woman or not, I was enjoying the party. It was nice to cut loose with the people who had become my friends, and I felt twinge of sadness that I’d never see them again. Oh well, when I picked up my check in a few days that would make everything worth it.

Soon it was well past midnight. I began to feel like going home. Most everyone else was well on the way to inebriation. I didn’t really enjoy drinking and their drunken antics were beginning to bore me. I began to look for Lori to see if she wanted to go home, but she was nowhere to be seen.

Eventually I located Mr. Kuniyak and asked him if he had seen my sister. “Oh, I’m afraid she overdid it. She’s asleep in one of the back bedrooms.”

“Asleep? How am I supposed to get home?”

"She left you her keys," he replied, handing them to me. "You're welcome to spend the night as well, but if you feel like driving her car, I can call her a taxi tomorrow."

"Thank you very much."

"Thank you for everything. Say, Kim..."

"Yes?"

"I don't suppose you'd be interested in doing another job for me? Don't answer now. We'll discuss it when you come for your pay."

Soon I was driving into the night. It was rather enjoyable, out here on the highway alone, the wind in my long hair. Lori had bought a convertible with her insurance money. I thought back on all the crazy things that had happened to me, being a model, making friends as a girl, and making so much money as a bride. It all seemed so surreal. It hadn't even been all that unpleasant. I could admit that to myself: I had had a good time.

My thoughts were interrupted by the harrowing sound of a police siren close behind me. "Please don't let that be for me," I thought, hopelessly. The patrol car pulled up behind me and flashed its lights. My heart in my throat, I pulled over.

I waited for what seemed like an eternity, trying to calm myself. I supposed I had been speeding, but with my cash windfall, I could pay for a ticket.

The trooper walked up to my window. He was a tough looking customer; I was glad that speeding had been my only crime. "Do you know how fast you were going, ma'am?" he asked.

"About 60?"

"Are you aware that the speed limit here is only 50?"

"No, I wasn't aware." I fought off an urge to try flirting my way out of a ticket. I wasn't that desperate.

"License and registration, please."

I fished my license out of my purse and handed it to him. He took a few steps toward his car and stopped.

“Ma’am, would you mind giving me a valid piece of ID? This isn’t you.”

I looked at my driver’s license and nearly cried. It was me, the male me. There was no denying that the photo was of a young man. Barring that, under SEX the word ‘male’ was clearly visible.

“That is I.”

“Ma’am, I suggest that you do not make jokes right now.”

“No...” I didn’t want to do it, but I couldn’t think of an alternative. “I am a man.”

The trooper showed surprise just for a second. He looked at the photo, then at me, then back at the photo. “Wait here,” he said.

My stomach churned. Was it illegal to dress as a woman? I guessed not, unless he could prove I was doing it with fraudulent intentions. But what did it matter? What if he thought I was gay and was doing this out of pleasure? What if he hated people like that and arrested me? My God, it would be in the paper if I were arrested, wouldn’t it? That meant everyone would know that I was a guy! Konyak would probably refuse to pay me, maybe even sue me for faking my gender! Why hadn’t I obeyed the speed limit? Oh God, I was in so much trouble.

The cop slowly walked back toward my car and leaned into the window “Your ID checks out. You’re free to go, just try to keep it under 50.”

“Yes sir.” Had I heard correctly? Was he was letting me off with a warning?

“I’d take that advice seriously. Not everyone is as kind to...ah...people like you as I am. You could find yourself in serious trouble if you are caught dressed that way. Not all police officers are like me. Not all of them understand how it is.” He quickly turned and left.

I pondered his words all the way home. His advice was sound. I knew I was lucky not to be in more trouble than I was. But what did he mean by 'not all of them understand how it is'? Did he understand? Was he a cross dresser? Did he know someone who was? I never found out the answers and I never saw him again, though to this day I'm grateful for his kindness.

A couple of days later, I was at Kunyak's office to collect my pay. Not wishing for another run in with the law, I had taken a taxi. Kunyak smiled at me from across his desk as he filled out the check.

"Well Ms Woolsey, I must say you more than adequately fulfilled your end of the agreement. I couldn't be happier with your work."

"Thank you, sir," I replied, stunned by all the zeros on my paycheck, "You're too kind."

"I'm not one to give meaningless praise. A lot of people at the show noticed. You're a natural at modeling. You even make what you're wearing now seem feminine and alluring."

That was high praise. I had chosen the most severe women's business suit I could find for this meeting. I had finally managed to put my hair up in a bun and was wearing no makeup. I remembered how he had offered to find me more work, and I didn't feel like turning him down. I had hoped that my dull clothes would put him off the idea, but apparently they had had just the opposite effect.

"At any rate, I don't think I want to end our association. A lot of designers want to offer you contracts, but as I said earlier, I think I deserve to make the first offer."

I felt myself blush. I hadn't been this embarrassed in years. All I had wanted to do was a favor for my sister. Now it seems that everyone wanted to turn me into a Victoria's Secret model. This had to stop.

"Thank you very much, but..."

“Just hear me out. My company is putting together a new catalog for next year. Only we’re going to try something new. Instead of just having photos of models, we’re going to make it read like a story. We’ll follow a fictitious couple throughout their relationship. We’ll start with photos of them meeting, and end with them on their honeymoon. And I’d like you to play the bride.”

Yikes! Wearing a wedding gown was one thing, but I didn’t like the sound of going on a honeymoon with a guy, even if it was a fake. Kunyak continued, “Shooting will begin in September, and we’ll finish in July.”

Ah, there was my perfect excuse to back out. “I’m sorry, Mr. Kunyak. College starts in late August and I’m afraid that I can’t miss it. Thank you anyway.” I got up to leave.

“Sit down, please,” his voice was not to be denied. I don’t mean that he was threatening or bossy or anything. It’s just that he had the forceful, commanding way of speaking that made me feel that disobedience was not an option.

“Ms Woolsey, I didn’t get to where I am today by taking no for an answer. I want you for these shots. I’m willing to do whatever it takes.”

“I...I’m sorry, sir, but college is too important to me.”

“How are you paying for college? Scholarship?”

“No, student loan.”

“What degree course are you going to follow?”

“I want to be a psychologist.”

“That’ll be about five years of undergraduate work. Then, if you hope to find work, you’ll have to get your Masters. That still won’t guarantee you work, though it will mean you’ll be stuck with rather hefty student loan payments.”

“Mr. Kunyak, I don’t appreciate you trying to scare me into giving up my plans.”

“No one’s trying to scare you into doing anything. I don’t want you to skip college. I want you to postpone it for a year to do this promotion for me. In return, I will pay for your college until such time as you get your masters, no strings or questions. In addition, I’ll pay you a nice living wage. A student has to eat, doesn’t she?”

I nearly hyperventilated. Pay for college until I got my masters? That could take eight years! I could devote all that time to my studies without worrying about my finances or whether I’d find work after! If the job market was bad, I could work a low paying job without the loan officers banging down my door.

Kunyak obviously was used to getting what he wanted and he clearly wanted me. Why me? Was I that pretty? I must have been because he was willing to plop down a sizable chunk of cash just to get me to model for a year.

But then again, it would be for a whole year. Twelve months as Kim! No one but my family would know, but what would they think? Could I do it? Could I pull it off? The thought didn’t seem so repugnant now.

Mr. Kunyak mistook my silence for hesitation. “And of course, your sister will have plenty of work to do on the shoot. I’m quite happy with her work as well.”

That cinched it for me. Free college and work for Lori. All in all, I felt I was getting a pretty good deal. I stood up and shook his hand. “It will be a pleasure to work for you, sir.”

“You won’t regret it.”

I was halfway to the door when a thought hit me. “Who will be playing the groom?”

“Oh, that’s part of the beauty of it. It’ll be your friend, Patrick.”



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“YOU DID WHAT?”

If I was expecting my sister to be happy about the deal I had cut, I was sadly mistaken.

“Tell me you didn’t sign anything! You didn’t sign anything, did you?”

“Well, he had the contract all ready...”

“Oh, sweet Jesus, this is not happening. This is not happening!” I had never seen Lori this upset, not even after the car accident.

“What’s gotten into you? I thought you’d be happy.”

“Happy? You ruin both our lives and expect me to be happy?”

“Hey, you were the one who convinced me to dress like this in the first place. It’s not my fault it suddenly paid so well!”

Lori sat down. “Listen, Kim. The bridal show was one thing. A bridal gown could cover up anything we wanted hidden. But this is going to be a full year of shooting. It’ll end in the summer. You can’t wear heavy clothes then.”

“I guess we’ll have to think of something.”

“Think of something? Tell me, professor, what are you going to do when they tell you to put on a bikini?”

“I hadn’t thought of that...”

“Obviously not.”

“So what should I do?”

Lori massaged her temples with her hands. “Well, you signed the contract, and from the sound of things, he won’t let you renege, so that options out. I guess we’ll just have to think about it for a while. You’ll be wearing heavy clothes for the first few months, at least. We can figure something out by the summer.”

Lori stood up to leave, then paused. "Did he really say he liked my work?"

The next day, Lori woke me up to tell me she had found a possible solution to our conundrum. "I've been on the Internet all night and I finally found a place in New York that can help us."

"What kind of a place?" I asked sleepily.

"It's a clinic. They help out transsexuals."

"But I'm not a transsexual!" I meekly protested.

"True, but this place might be our only hope. I've already arranged an appointment. C'mon, get dressed!"

I pulled on a pair of shorts and a midriff-baring shirt. I had lost weight recently and didn't look bad in it. After making up my face and doing my hair, I got into the car with Lori.

We arrived at a small, nondescript looking building with a sign that simply read 'Pharmacy'. Lori parked and we walked in.

I was surprised to notice the absence of the traditional pharmaceutical counter. Instead, it appeared we had walked into a doctor's waiting room. Lori rang the bell. After a short wait, a middle-aged woman emerged from the interior of the building.

I found her attractive from an older woman point of view. She had curly reddish hair mixed with gray, a plump, voluptuous build, and a pretty face. "Hello," she said with a slight German accent. "May I help you?"

"Yes," said my sister, "I'm Lori Woolsey, we spoke on the phone earlier.

"Ah, yes, Ms Woolsey, and you must be Kim." I nodded. "Please walk this way."

We soon found ourselves in a small examining room. Standing by the examination table was a fiftyish looking man. He was compactly built, with stern features and surprisingly black hair.

“Please have a seat,” he said with an even more pronounced accent. “Which one of you is Kimberly?”

“That would be me.” I was beginning to wonder what was going on. Was this guy a doctor? A pharmacist? Just how was he supposed to help me pass as a woman for a year? He had a sterile, humorless air about him that frightened me.

“Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Heinrich Klauss. This is my wife, Greta.” He motioned to the woman who had lead us in. She passed the doctor a clipboard, gave him a flirtatious wink, and left us alone.

The doctor checked something off on his clipboard. “Ms Woolsey, your sister explained your situation briefly to us over the phone. Would you care to elaborate?”

Wondering how wise it was to confide to this physician, I gave a run down of my story from pretending to be a model, signing a contract, to having to pass close physical inspection for a year. The doctor nodded.

“So can you help me, doctor?”

“Yes, but you won’t like it.”

When a German doctor says you won’t like something, it’s cause for alarm. “What do you mean by that?”

“Ms Woolsey, did your sister inform you about what I do here?” I replied in the negative. “I help transsexuals achieve the bodies that they dream about. I give men the bodies of women.”

“You perform plastic surgery? You’re right, I don’t want any part of that.”

“Yes, surgery is one option, but I was thinking along a different line for you...hormones.”

“Hormones! That’s almost as bad!”

“As I mentioned before, I didn’t think you’d like the idea.”

Lori piped in, “What effects would the hormones have?”

The doctor replied as if he were addressing the AMA. "A softening of the skin, a reduction in the amount of body hair, an added silkiness to the regular hair, and a redistribution of body fat. It will stop collecting in the stomach and began to form around the hips and chest. There will be an increase in nipple size and sensitivity, and a decrease in male sex drive."

I got up to leave. "No, thank you. I don't want to have breasts for the rest of my life!"

"The effects aren't permanent. They take a long time to become noticeable, but disappear at a much more rapid rate. If I were to start you on estrogen now you would develop a lovely figure by next summer. If you were to stop taking the hormones shortly after, you'd be back to normal in a matter of months."

My head was swimming. "But don't I have to have a note from a psychologist to get these hormones?"

The doctor looked a little nervous. "The law says you must live as a woman for a year and have a psychologist's OK before I can prescribe you hormones. I do things a bit differently, I prescribe the hormones, and then after the patient has developed a life as a woman, any psychologist would have a hard time denying the patient permission to continue taking them."

"So you're giving out hormones against the law?"

"Perhaps, but is it fair to deny a woman the right to live as such because of some bureaucratic nonsense? If the hormones are a mistake, then they can stop taking them."

"So what do you think?" asked Lori.

"What do I think? You're asking me to illegally take hormones to give myself a feminine body! I'm sorry, my answer is an emphatic 'no'."

"Kim, listen to me. You agreed to model for a year. You knew that would mean that everyone would think you were a girl for the entire time. So you grow rounded hips and little breasts, what of it? It's not like anyone you know will think those are

strange features for a woman! You heard the doctor; in just a couple of months, your body will revert back to normal.”

“I’m still not convinced.”

“Ms Woolsey,” interjected the doctor, “allow me to give my opinion. You have been successfully living as a woman for how long?”

“Over a month.”

“And you agreed to do it for an additional year.”

“Well, yeah...”

“And you do make a lovely woman. When you two walked in here, I honestly didn’t know which one of you was the man.”

Lori bridled a bit at this, much to my satisfaction. Dr. Klaus continued, “The point I’m trying to make is if you are resigned to living this way for an extended period of time, then hormones are your best bet. If you take them, odds are you’ll never be discovered, even in a swimsuit. If you don’t take them, well, I’m almost certain you will be discovered.”

“Kim,” said Lori, “he’s right. If you don’t go through with this, we’ll have to tell Kanyak the truth. It’s the only way he’d let you out of your contract. If he found out during the shoot, he’d have to scrap everything, which would cost him millions.”

Someone once said, ‘Life is what happens when you are making other plans’. That phrase had never hit home for me until then. “OK, but I’m only doing this for the cash.”

The doctor rubbed my arm with cotton and gave me an injection. “This is only for starters,” he assured me. “By the time you are away on your trip, we’ll switch you to an oral regimen.”

Lori and I walked back to the waiting room to pay Fraulein Klaus for the visit. “Doctor,” I said as I fumbled in my purse, “I’m curious. How does a guy like you get into the illicit hormone trade?”

“It’s a rather interesting story,” he replied “When I was a physician back in the old country, I received a shipment of

antidepressants from a supplier in the former East Germany. I prescribed them to a young patient of mine who was going through the post-adolescent blues.

“After a few months on the pills, I realized something was up. My patient was experiencing exactly the same side effects I described to you earlier. I did an analysis of his medication and realized that it was actually estrogen tablets that had been mislabeled.

“I was about to inform my patient of the mistake, when I realized something interesting. He no longer seemed depressed; in fact he seemed to be enjoying life more than ever. I had originally attributed this to his medication, but since hormones obviously have different effects, I was stumped. But he was happy, so I kept the prescription the same.”

“You did what?” I asked, horrified.

“Like I said, he seemed happy. Of course, he was confused as heck about the changes that were happening in his body, but I told him they would pass in time.”

“How could you do that? That’s horrible!”

“Well, it made an interesting psychological study. By the end of six months, he lost all trace of his former depression. By the end of a year, he was living full time as a woman. After two and a half years, he flew to Sweden for sex reassignment surgery. Of course, I had to come clean long before then. He obviously figured out what he was taking wasn’t antidepressants.”

“So was he angry at being experimented on like that?”

“At first, but he got his revenge.”

“What did he do to you?”

“I married him,” answered Greta with a giggle.

The doctor put his arm around his wife and, for the first time, smiled. It took me several seconds to figure out what they were implying. “You were the patient?” Lori stammered to Greta.

“My name used to be Hans,” she whispered with a grin.

I couldn't help giggling when we were alone in the car. Greta, the doctor's attractive, curvaceous wife used to be a man! My God, I never would have guessed. I'm sure the doctor never would have guessed either.

Then a frightening thought hit me. "Lori, hormones can't change the way you think, can they? I mean that they couldn't make gay, could they?"

"No, of course not. Why would you ask that?"

"Well, look at Greta! She wasn't a transsexual, but hormones certainly changed her life. I don't want to end up married to Heinrich Klaus, Jr.!"

"Well, I'm no psychologist, but it would appear that Hans liked life better as Greta. I'm guessing you prefer life as Ken over life as Kim."

"Of course."

"Well there you go. Just keep thinking like a man and it'll all be OK." I nodded, but I wasn't convinced.

Soon the two weeks were up and it was time for me to return home. Since I still had about a month before the photo shoot started, Lori and I decided to spend a little time with Mom.

Mom was shocked when I called to break the news about my plans for the next year. "You're going to be living as a woman for a year? Ken, honey, don't you think that this is kind of a radical step?" I could tell that she was worried about me.

"Tell me about it, but I'm just doing it to pay for college. Trust me, this is all going to work out for the best." I could tell that Mom wasn't so sure.

Later, I asked Lori what she thought. "Well, Kim, you know that Mom's always felt guilty about not being able to afford to send you to college. I guess she's feels that if she could have provided for you better then you wouldn't have had to do this."

“She shouldn’t feel that way. If I didn’t think I could do this, I’d just get a loan.”

“I know. Just let her know that this isn’t going to be a traumatic experience for you. Show her what a great woman you make.”

I guess that’s why I was wearing a floral sundress and heels when Mom met us at the airport. What the hell! No one would recognize me now. In fact, I think Mom had to do a double take when she realized it was I. But she quickly recovered. Mom was calling me Kim before we had finished the drive home.

That night we all stayed up late and talked. It was kind of funny. I had grown up being the odd man out, so to speak. Mom and Lori were women and I felt that they had always been closer to each other than to me. It was no fault of theirs, there are just some things mothers don’t discuss with their sons and sisters don’t discuss with their brothers. Now things were different.

As we all sat in our nightgowns eating popcorn and watching the late movie, I suddenly felt like I belonged, and that I was truly one of them, one of the girls, as it were. Obviously, Mom and Lori hadn’t forgotten my true gender, but the fact that I was now living as a girl helped them to open up to me more than I ever remember them doing before. I went to bed that night contented, I felt like I had truly bonded with the rest of my family.

Sitting in front of the makeup mirror, I gazed back at my reflection and liked what I saw. My makeup was done to perfection. It was a little excessive for daily wear, but I needed to wear extra for the camera to pick up my features. My hair hung in curls, framing my face. I had spent hours trying to make it look like I hadn’t done anything special with it. The dangling earrings that bordered my face added to my prettiness.

It was the first day of the big shoot. Today would make or break me. Today I would prove to Mr. Kuniyak, Lori, and myself

that I hadn't done a dumb, selfish thing by agreeing to the shoot. Today, I was going to be a woman.

Looking at myself in the dressing room full-length mirror, it wasn't hard to believe that I really was a woman. It was early fall, so most of my femininity came from the clothes that covered my body. A long black skirt, pantyhose, and a blue and white striped jersey were reminiscent of something my sister would wear. Of course, I had been living as Kim for several months now, so I was used to dressing like this. I was living with Lori again, and in order to simplify things, I never went back to being Ken since the last shoot.

What clothing couldn't give me, padding provided. I still wore the device for hiding my penis, and generous padding for simulating breasts. Of course, this sort of thing would only work when I was heavily clothed. Once summer rolled around...well...I was working on that.

After several months on hormones, I was beginning to notice their effects. For starters, I no longer worried about appearing too muscular for a woman. Most of my muscle tone had disappeared, or more to the point, it had changed into flab. Before going on estrogen, I never worried about keeping weight off; now I had to go to the gym three times a week just to stay slender.

My weight distribution had changed as well. Fat now gathered in my hips and rear. Nothing that you would really notice, I still had to wear the padding. Still, I knew that these changes were only the beginning. Because of the extra sensitivity in my chest, I knew it wouldn't be long before I'd start to need a training bra.

There was a knock at the door. "Come in," I called. Randy, the teenager who did odd jobs around the set, stuck his head in.

"They're calling for you, Ms Woolsey," he said, with forced nonchalance. I smiled back at him and he nervously left. I found his crush on me a little disturbing. At first I thought being mean to him would get him to keep his distance, but it just wasn't in

me. He was just lonely and didn't deserve to be mistreated. I simply tried to ignore him as much as possible.

I slipped on my heels, put my purse on my arm, and walked into the studio. As I mentioned before, the theme of Kunyak's catalog was that it would be composed of seemingly actual photos of a couple falling in love. Today we would be shooting the 'They Meet' scene.

The studio was set up like a coffee shot. I was to sit at a table, and sipping my espresso. Patrick, wearing a flannel shirt and khaki pants, was to sit at another table. One shot would be of him noticing me, another of him walking shyly towards my table, and a third of us talking, seemingly hitting it off. There would be several more of us talking, and then a final one of me handing Patrick my phone number. Each shot would be cleverly arranged to show off a particular garment on Patrick or myself. While the whole scene would only take up a couple of pages of the finished product, we'd be lucky if we finished in one day. Oh well, that's why I got paid what I did.

Patrick was already on the set. "Hey, Kim," he said as he grinned at me.

That was another source of my unease. Patrick and I had never really talked in depth. I knew we'd end up shooting lots of romantic scenes together: holding hands, dancing, and, unless I was very lucky, kissing. I just hoped that Patrick knew what I did on camera in no way reflected my feelings in real life. I guess I shouldn't have assumed that he would be interested in me, but I wasn't about to take any chances. The first time I sensed he was getting too into it, I'd take him aside and politely tell him to back off. Checking my makeup one last time, I slid into my seat.

There would be no more than eight pictures from this scene in the catalog, but the shooting took over nine hours. I was exhausted by the time Kunyak decided we had had enough for the day. I quickly retired to my dressing room to change back into my jeans and sweater. Though I had planned on leaving my makeup on until I got home, a glance in the mirror told me that

stage makeup looked foolish on me. I cleaned it off, and then reapplied it at a normal thickness. I sighed. Applying makeup had become a daily ritual with me. I was lonesome for the days when getting ready to go out meant taking a shower, and nothing more. I shook my head and left the dressing room.

The studio was dark, but there was a light coming from under the door to the area where the film was processed. 'Slim' Arlo, the chief photo technician was probably working late again, trying to get everything processed and ready in time. I slipped through the door and into his workroom to tell him good night.

Slim was hunched over his computer, manipulating the shots of the day on his screen. "Hey, Kim," he said, not turning around, "Check this out."

Grudgingly, I walked over. Slim had the tendency to make me slightly nervous. He was middle aged, an ex-GI photographer from the Vietnam War who had a tendency to relate gruesome combat stories. Still, there was nothing overtly bad about him, so I bent over the screen to see what he had been working on. To my surprise, I was looking at a finished copy of the day's shoot, just like it would appear in print.

"I'm impressed, Slim. How did you manage to get this done so fast?"

"Ah, you guys did all the work. They sent me a copy of the captions earlier, so all I had to do was..." he then gave me a fifteen-minute technical explanation that might as well have been in Chinese for all I understood.

I gazed with interest at the screen. The page was titled "Love at First Sight". Each picture contained a small caption describing a particular article of clothes. Everything was related in details, including my jewelry, and the name of the manicurist who had done my nails.

"This is kind of an odd feeling," I thought out loud.

"What's that?" said Slim, still never having looked up from the screen.

“All these photos of me and all these descriptions of what I’m wearing. It just seems like a lot of fuss over me.”

“Hey, you’re a professional model. There’s nothing strange about it.”

“Oh, I’m not really a model.”

“You’ve said that before, but you’re doing a yearlong shoot for a major bridal company. That makes you a model.”

I didn’t feel like arguing. “I guess it just hasn’t sunk in...”

“Here, let me show you something.” Slim pulled up another picture on the monitor. It was one of Patrick and I sitting at the table. Patrick is smiling and I’m laughing as if he had just told a funny joke. That had actually been a hard one to take; it’s not easy making a fake laugh look real. Luckily, Patrick had known a few actual jokes to help me along.

“You see here,” said Slim, “what do you see?”

“The photo from earlier today.”

“OK, but say this wasn’t of you. Say you were someone else seeing this photo and not knowing what it was from.”

“I see...” and then I stopped. I didn’t want to say it. I couldn’t admit it. What I saw was a photo of a handsome guy and a pretty girl out on a date. We didn’t look like models. We just looked like a couple of young people enjoying being together. It was a photo of me on a date and I was the girl.

“See what I mean?” asked Slim, almost reading my thoughts. “Most models make these shots look staged and awkward. You two, hell, if I didn’t know what I was looking at, I’d swear you were Patrick’s girlfriend.”

I was too flustered to reply. At my request, Slim gave me a copy of the photos from his color printer. I returned home to study them. There was me on a date...me on a date in a skirt...me on a date with a guy...me on a date as a girl!

When Lori came home, I showed her the photos. “What do you think?”

"You look great. You're becoming quite the makeup artist."

"No, I mean what does this picture remind you of? Pretend it wasn't staged."

"It looks like a couple of young people out on a...uh...out having coffee."

"That's not what you were going to say. You were going to say, 'out on a date'."

"Maybe, but look, don't worry about it! It may look real, but we know it's staged. It's just a photo shoot. Don't sweat it."

Late that night, I thought about what Lori had said. It was just a photo shoot, but that picture looked so real. What would the coming photos look like? Me at a dance with Patrick! Patrick asking me to be his wife! Me as a bride! Me on my honeymoon! I didn't like to imagine what those pictures would look like.

"Lori, have you been using my razor again?" I called out through the bathroom door.

"Sorry, Kim, I'm out of blades."

"Damn it, Lori, you know I have a shoot today! I can't very well go in with patchy legs!" Lori was a great roommate, but she got on my nerves at times. As I searched for a fresh blade, I pondered getting my own place. After sufficiently denuding my legs, I wrapped a towel around me and walked to my bedroom.

Lori saw me and giggled. "What may I ask is so funny?"

"Nothing. Sorry."

"It must have been something or you wouldn't have laughed."

"Oh, it's just the way you're wearing that towel. Not around your waist like a man, but under your armpits like a woman. It's like you're trying to cover your breasts."

Annoyed, I disappeared into my bedroom. I hadn't even realized I had been doing that! Of course, I had picked up a lot of feminine habits recently. I now frequently ducked into the lady's

room to check my appearance. I was careful with the way I handled things. I didn't want to break a nail. I signed my name as Kim without consciously thinking about it. The summer couldn't come soon enough. I wondered if I'd ever tell my wife what I had done this year...if I ever got married.

I pulled on a sweater and a long skirt, caring little about how I was dressed. As soon as I made it to the studio, I'd have to change anyway. I arrived at the studio about a half-hour early and found the crew setting up the scenery. The set was supposed to be 'my' bedroom in my imaginary house.

"Hey, Kim," said Slim, who was readying his camera.

"Hey, Slim. Ready for another day of work?"

"You bet. What's the deal with the bedroom shot? Inviting Patrick to spend the night already?"

"Har de har har. Patrick isn't in this one. It's supposed to be of me getting ready for the date. I have to go through about a dozen outfit changes."

"For one date?"

"It's supposed to be like I'm so smitten with Patrick that I have to try on every outfit I own just to find the perfect dress."

"Sounds like an excuse to show off more of Kunyak's designs."

"Bingo. This will probably take over a month to do."

I left to find Kunyak to see what the outfit of the day would be. "Good morning, Kimberly." Kunyak, as usual, was relaxed, as if everything in his life was going exactly how he had planned. Who knows, maybe it was.

"Good morning, Mr. Kunyak. What am I going to be wearing today?"

"I thought we'd start you off simple. DuProit and Company sent over a pair of jeans and I thought we'd have you try those pumps we discussed earlier in the week."

Mr. Kunyak was the only man I ever knew who could say something like that and not sound effeminate. I, on the other hand, sounded totally girlish whenever I discussed my clothes.

I looked the Jeans over. They certainly didn't leave much to the imagination. I'd have to pad extra carefully that day, so the tight jeans would show off my 'curves.'

"And what did you have in mind for the shirt?"

"Well, that depends. Um, have you been dieting?" Mr. Kunyak had been very embarrassed when he asked me if I could try to lose ten pounds. He was of the conviction that I was beautiful the way I was, but since other designers were also contributing to the catalog, he had to put forward their suggestion that I slim down, just a bit.

"Well, it hasn't been easy, but I think I've managed to flatten my stomach a bit." I pulled up my sweater to display my tummy. I wasn't as flat as Lori was, but thanks to my working out, dieting, and hormones, my belly now curved inwards.

"Thank you, Kimberly. In that case, I think we'll put you in the short sweater." I looked at the pink garment. It was a design by another company; a light sweater that cut off just above my navel. I gathered my clothes together and went to try them on.

Getting into the jeans was trickier than I thought. They barely left enough room for my panties. It would have been impossible to fit so much as my keys into jeans this tight. Taking a deep breath, I managed to fit all of me inside. They were uncomfortable as hell. I felt like my testicles had been forced up into my throat.

Next, after adjusting my falsies, I slipped on the sweater. I regarded myself in the mirror. The diet had paid off; I could proudly display my flat little tummy, as was the style at the time. After applying my makeup, we began the shoot.

The entire day's work left us with only one picture. Me, standing in front of a wall mirror looking at myself skeptically. There might as well have been a thought bubble above my head

reading 'Will he like me in this?' Nine hours of shooting and all it netted us was a shot for page six of the catalog. Oh well, that was Kuniyak's business, not mine. He obviously knew what he was doing.

After all was said and done, I didn't feel like peeling myself out of my jeans. "Mr. Kuniyak, do you mind if I just wear these home?"

Kuniyak assented with a wave of his hand, a gesture only the truly rich can successfully make. "Come back tomorrow. We'll discuss the future shots."

"OK, see you bright an early."

"Don't bother. You won't be in any shots tomorrow. It'll be Patrick's turn. Come in around noon."

As I hailed a cab to take me home, I began to regret not changing at work. The pants were so tight that they were hard to walk in and the midriff showing sweater was a bit chilly in the late September evening. The construction worker who whistled at me didn't improve my disposition, either.

"Hey, Lori, I'm home."

"Hey, Kim, I...wow, you look great!"

"What do you mean?"

"That outfit, it really suits you."

"Please. These pants are about five sizes too small."

"Really?" She looked at the tag. "They're not too much smaller than the pants I got you when you first came here."

"That can't be. Hell, I've been dieting, they should be looser, not tighter." I noticed Lori was looking at me in an odd way. "What?"

"Kim, do me a favor and get undressed."

"Why?"

"Please, I want to see something."

I went into the bathroom and removed everything but my sex-hiding thong and panties. Lori knocked and entered. She smiled.

“What?” I was beginning to get angry at her cryptic behavior.

“You haven’t noticed? Those hormones have done a number on you.”

“They might have made me a little chubbier in areas, but I fail to see anything major.”

“I guess you’re too close to notice. Good God, girl, your rear end is about twice the size as it used to be and your hips are as big as mine! Your waist is thinner, but that’s probably due to your diet. And your chest!”

“What about my chest?” I examined it. It had changed a little. The nipples were larger and darker, and they stuck out as well, just a little. Humiliated, I pulled my top back on.

“I don’t see what you’re making such a big deal about,” I said, trying to mask my embarrassment. “We knew there’d be changes. That’s the whole point.”

“I know. I just think it’s cute. You are developing a nice figure, Kim.”

I snorted. Didn’t she know how hard this had been for me? I think she sensed my unease. “Kim, don’t get mad. I’m not trying to tease you. It’s just hard sometimes not to think of you as a woman. I mean it as a complement when I tell you that you make a cute girl.”

“Well,” I said, somewhat mollified, “if you want to make me feel good, no more compliments.” Lori winked at me.

The next day, I returned to the studio. After a brief meeting with Kuniyak to discuss the order and times of the shooting the following weeks, I stopped by the set to see how Patrick’s shooting was progressing. The crew was taking a break. I glanced at some of the proofs Slim was editing.

“What the heck’s this?” I said, looking at a picture.

“What do you mean?”

“What do I mean? All yesterday everyone kept telling me to look nervous and self-conscious, like I was worried about what Patrick would think of me. But Patrick looks like he’s about to go conquer the world.”

Slim grinned, “It’s what Kunyak wanted. Patrick is supposed to be totally sure of himself, but you’re supposed to be frightened that he won’t be interested in you.”

I turned away. It was a nasty experience to know what sexism is like. I guess people like Lori had to put up with it their whole lives. I was just starting to notice it.

I was interrupted from my sulking by a voice behind me. “Hi, Kim, didn’t expect to see you here today.” It was Patrick.

“Hey, Patrick, what are you up to?”

“Just finishing up around here. So what are your plans tonight?” Without thinking, I told him I didn’t have any.

“Well, maybe you’d like to have dinner with me?” he asked. He wasn’t cocky about it, but he was clearly asking me out.

I opened my mouth to tell him no, when I began to think. We would be working together for a long time, and asking me to dinner was rather innocent. If I said no, he’d probably think I was being snobbish and felt too important to hang out with him. I’d be working with him for many months, and I didn’t want him to think I was a bitch.

“OK. Sure. I’ll meet you here around 5:00.”

When I got home, I was restless and uneasy, wondering if I had made the right choice. Lori noticed my discomfort, and wangled a confession out of me. “So you’re going out with Patrick tonight?”

“It’s not like that. We’re just friends.”

“I understand. So what are you going to wear?”

“I’m not sure. The last thing I want to do is give the impression I’m excited about going out with him. But I don’t

want him to think I'm annoyed or bored with him. Jesus, I'm turning out worse than my image in the catalog."

Lori smiled, "Just dress nice, but not erotically. Be friendly, but not flirty. I know you want to stay on his good side, so just relax and have a good time. Most guys can tell when someone isn't interested in them romantically. If you play your cards right, he'll get the picture without you having to say a word."

"Good advice. Now can you help me get ready? What should I wear?"

Lori and I scoured both my closet and hers. Finally, we selected a pair of black slacks, a tight gray sweater, and heels. The outfit gave the impression that I had put on something nice for the outing, but nothing out of the ordinary. We would just be a couple of friends out for dinner.

I met Patrick at the appointed time. "You look nice," he said. As we walked to his car, I mentally dissected the three-word sentence. What exactly did he mean by 'nice'? What was he implying? I told myself to calm down and stop worrying.

We pulled up to a rather nice restaurant and soon we were seated and talking. It was the first time I had ever really talked to Patrick and I quickly realized what a nice person he was. He wasn't vain or stupid or overtly sexist. I began to regret that I wouldn't be able to be friends with him after the year was over.

As the night wore on, I found myself doing something that I normally avoided. I started drinking. Maybe it was that I needed to unwind after the past couple of days of shooting or maybe it was to hide my nervousness at being on a sham date. Whatever the cause, I found myself downing quite a few glasses of wine.

The liquor relaxed me. Soon I was guardedly talking about my fears about the photo shoot and how I would be glad when it was all over. "It's not that I don't enjoy modeling, per se," I babbled, "It's just that it's really not my thing."

"Well, you're rather good at it," he replied. "Do you think you'd like to do more of it after this year?"

"I doubt it. I told you about the deal I made with Kunyak. After this, I'm hitting the books."

"Wise choice."

"Hey, what about you? I thought you were a college man."

"I dropped out."

"Why? I mean, if you don't mind my asking."

"I...I just went through a nasty breakup. I couldn't concentrate on my studies, so I took a year off. Hopefully working on this shoot will help me to forget...things."

I smiled my sweetest smile. "Well, it beats the foreign legion. I'm sure you won't even remember her name once we're finished."

Patrick got an odd look on his face when I said that. For a moment I feared that I had offended him. For all I knew, he didn't want to forget her. We were silent for a while.

When Patrick spoke again, he took the conversation in another direction. "Kim, I've really enjoyed tonight. You're a good conversationalist. I feel that I've known you for a long time."

'Oh God,' I thought, 'Here it comes. He'll tell me what a friend I am, how he feels a bond between us, how he thinks we'll get along well, and would I like to come back to his place? Forget it.'

I had misjudged Patrick, however, as I found out when he continued speaking. "Kim, I'm going crazy here. I was in love last year and when we broke up...I guess I'm wondering if I've made the mistake of my life. I'm sorry to unload on you. You're the only person I know here in New York."

Relieved that he wasn't going to make a pass at me right then, I began to relax. "Patrick, I know how lonely this town can be (cue musical score). If you feel like talking, I'm a good listener."

He smiled, "There's not a lot to tell. I guess I'm wondering what I've given up."

"I take it that you still have feelings for her?"

Patrick got the funny look again. "Kim, I know I'm telling you a lot of personal things for someone you don't know very well. Seriously, we can talk about something else, if you like."

Though I didn't exactly feel like playing Freud that night, I figured he needed a friend to listen to him. "Please, Patrick, let it out. It's OK."

"Kim, can I tell you something personal? Something you'll have to swear not to tell another soul?"

"Sure...certainly." Actually, I didn't like the sound of that. Just what was he about to reveal to me?

"The relationship I ended last year," he paused again, "It was with a guy."

I guess my shock was obvious because he looked deeply ashamed. "I shouldn't have said anything," he said, humiliated.

"No, no, Patrick, please." I felt like the biggest heel in the world. After all, I was sitting there dressed like a woman. Who was I to be shocked at someone 'coming out'? Overcoming my revulsion, I reached over and patted his hand. "I just had no idea you were..."

"But I'm not!" he interjected. "I never have been!" He couldn't make eye contact when he said this "But when I met Jeff last year, I dunno... First we were friends, but then it got physical. I never thought I'd ever feel that way for a man, but I guess that was the closest I've ever come to being in love."

"So what happened?"

"Well, I wasn't gay, but Jeff was. Openly. He got tired of sneaking around, said he wanted us to be a couple. I couldn't do that, so we ended it." Patrick rubbed his forehead. "What the hell's wrong with me?"

I was surprised how despondent he looked. It wasn't hard for me to sympathize. He had done an unmasculine thing and now he was worried about the significance. I certainly felt for him, I

was in the exact same situation. Of course, I had Lori to talk to. Patrick probably didn't have anyone to confide in. On the other hand, Patrick did what he did freely. I had been forced.

I knew what I had to do. Knowing that I would soon be desperately trying to suppress the memory, I took his hand in mine. "Patrick," I began, "you have nothing to worry about. You were just curious, that's all. I bet you'd be surprised at the number of guys who've been in similar situations."

Patrick instantly brightened. I think he just needed someone to tell him he wasn't less of a man. I continued, "Now you seem to think highly of this Jeff person, but I don't think it would have lasted. You obviously aren't ready to make a relationship like that public and it would have been unfair to both of you to assume things would have worked out. Treasure your memories and don't worry about it."

Patrick smiled at me and squeezed my hand. I politely retracted it. "Thank you so much, Kim. I guess I just wanted to hear that from someone else."

"No problem, Patrick."

Patrick called me a cab to take me home. At the sidewalk, he gave me a hug. I wanted to wrench away, but I couldn't. Ducking out of a kiss was one thing, but refusing a hug from a friend would have been callous.

Due to a series of technical setbacks, Patrick and I didn't go on our 'date' until late October. This sat production back considerably. By the time we were ready, it looked like we'd have to work ten-hour days until New Years.

On the day of the shoot, everyone looked like they were ready to pull out their hair. I know I would have had I not just gotten a permanent.

Today's shooting would be outside on the New York City streets. I was wearing black leather boots, dark hose, a long charcoal skirt, and a white sweater. Patrick met me as I stepped out of the trailer where I dressed. "You ready?"

"I suppose. Let's get it over with."

Patrick grinned. "What kind of attitude is that for a first date?"

"I'm not in the mood, Patrick."

"No, I'm serious. We're supposed to be falling in love. I know things have been rough recently, but if both of us don't look like we're on cloud nine, Kuniyak's going to make us do it all over." He paused. "Just pretend...uh, that we're just going out for the night. Just us. No cameras, no catalog. Just relax."

It sounded suspiciously like Patrick was trying to make this a real date, but I ignored it. He had made a good point. He was playing my future husband, I shouldn't look as stressed and irritated as I felt.

"I'm sorry, Patrick. I'll put on a happy face. I've just been strung out recently."

"Well, with the schedule we're going to have to work, I can't say I blame you."

"It's not just that. I don't know what's wrong with me; I've just been really moody recently."

"Have you been on any medication? I was on this stomach medication once that made me loopier than a bedbug."

"Nothing new, just..." Just synthetic female hormones! Yikes! Was that why I'd been on an emotional roller coaster recently? I'd talk to Lori about it when I came got home.

Patrick took me by the hand and we went off on our date. We tried to act casual as the cameraman snapped shot after shot of us dining, talking, drinking, window shopping (in front of a store displaying many of Kuniyak's designs, of course), and strolling through the park at twilight. Finally, we came to the scene I had been dreading, the goodnight kiss.

Despite the fact that Patrick had given me a kiss at the bridal show, this was different. The bridal kiss had been brief and almost chaste. It was a public kiss from a groom to a bride. This

was different. This would be an 'end of date, will I sleep with this woman someday' type of smooch.

His lips would touch mine, and not briefly, even though it was all staged. We'd have to hold the kiss as the photographers set up the lighting, decided on angles, and a thousand other technical details. Which meant I could be spending about a half-hour with my lips against his.

My senior year in high school, I had been in a production of 'The Music Man'. In one scene, I had been called upon to kiss a pretty girl. I was all for it, but she let me know that there was no way. We got around it by my putting my back to the audience and pretending to kiss her. I had hoped that I could do it like that here, but no dice.

"The kiss," Kuniyak had told me, "is vital. This catalog is targeted to young brides. They have to be thinking 'this is true love.' After that, they'll associate my clothes with that feeling. So kiss him like you mean it. He's not bad looking, it shouldn't be too hard."

Shouldn't be too hard, right? Maybe if I was a real woman. But as a guy, I had no desire to lock lips with Patrick. I wondered what he'd think if he knew my true gender. At first, I thought he'd be disgusted and angry, but now that he had confided his romantic past in me, I began to wonder. Maybe he'd even like the fact I was secretly a guy. Well, it was an academic point. He'd never know my secret.

I approached the kiss the same way that I faced having my wisdom teeth removed. I didn't think about it until it happened. Even as I stood in front of him at the door to 'my' apartment building, my mind was elsewhere avoiding what was about to occur.



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As his lips descended to mine, my first reaction was to push away. I can't kiss him. 'We're both guys, for Chris' sake!'

Patrick placed his hand on my cheek. He moved his head closer. I could smell the chewing gum on his breath. His lips touched mine, and pressed hard.

At first, I closed my eyes and tried to pretend I was kissing a girl. No such luck, Patrick's stubble, prominent jaw, and rough hand precluded any thoughts of femininity. No, I was kissing a man.

I tried to relax, really I did. But the fact that I was locking lips with someone of the same gender kept creeping back to my mind. I guess it showed because Kuniyak yelled for us to stop.

"Kim," he said, "you need to calm down. I know it's not easy kissing someone on command, but remember what I told you earlier. Try not to look so tense."

Take two. I took a deep breath and let him kiss me. I put everything out of my head. With a little biofeedback, I managed to let my muscles go limp, my breathing to calm, and allow myself to be smooched. In a little more than ten minutes, it was all over. When Kuniyak announced we could stop, I got the irritating impression Patrick held on to me just a little longer than he needed to.

Wishing to avoid looking at Patrick, I excused myself to go home. In order not to think about what just happened, I engaged in mindless banter with the cabby.

Soon I was back in Lori's apartment. "So how did the shoot go?" she asked.

"It went OK, I guess." I could tell Lori was dying to ask about the kiss, but prudently held her tongue. She knew how sensitive I was about this.

"Lori, can I ask you a personal question?" I ventured, wondering if I should even mention it.

"Of course, Kim. What's on your mind?"

"Would you ever consider dating a guy who'd spent a year as a girl?"

Lori sat me down on the sofa. "That's a good question. I guess you deserve an honest answer. I don't know. That would be a lot for a woman to take."

I sighed. "Lori, I'm getting scared. I'm wondering if I've got in too deep. Being Kim for a year, growing breasts, dressing as a bride, not to mention I practically had to make out with Patrick tonight. Maybe I should just give this up and get my manhood back."

Lori slung an arm around me. "Kim, you're right, you are in very deep, too deep to walk away just now. After all you've suffered, do you really want to stop now? You'd be giving up a great opportunity, not to mention all the work you've done so far. See this thing out. You've worked too hard to quit."

"Maybe so, but I feel like I'm losing my mind! One moment I'm disgusted with myself, the next, I'm upset because I broke a nail. I go from ecstatic to weepy in a couple of minutes. This lifestyle is making me bonkers!"

Lori smiled, "I don't think it's the lifestyle, sis."

"Then what is it?"

"The hormones. You're experiencing the ups and downs of womanhood. Don't worry; you'll get the hang of it. Just keep a cool head."

"So in other words, I'm going through PMS. Jesus, could I be any less manly?"

"I'm starting to worry about you. I'll tell you what, maybe you're approaching this the wrong way."

"What do you mean?"

"Just forget you are a man. Pretend you were always a woman. Hell, sometimes I forget you weren't born my sister."

"Don't be stupid, Lori, I can't 'forget' my gender."

"I don't mean literally. Just stop thinking of how a man would act. Every time you have to do something unmanly, just tell yourself 'I am a woman.' Living in denial can be powerful."

I shook my head and locked myself in my room. I disrobed down to my panties and regarded my naked form. Hairless. Big rear. Hips. Flat stomach. Tiny breasts with sensitive, perky nipples, and my sex drive had decreased recently, as well. I could still get an erection, but the lust I used to feel for all pretty women was gone.

I pulled on a padded bra and looked at the girl in the mirror. "I am a woman," I told her. "I am a woman and the year will be over before I know it. Be brave."

It's weird how often an innocuous event can change the course of one's life. People meet their soul mate at a chance encounter at a 7-11. A car hits someone crossing the street to buy a newspaper. A summer job becomes the career of a lifetime.

Sometimes I'm amazed at how many little events lead up to what eventually happened. Lori breaking her legs, Kuniyak taking a shine to me, my avarice overcoming my pride when he offered me a job, and of course, there was the snowstorm.

November passed in a series of 10 to twelve-hour a day blurs. Patrick and I went on several more sham dates. Parties were held where dozens of models had a chance to show off their clothes. A symphony where Patrick and I could showoff our formal wear. There was a winter hike where we could show off the outdoorsy designs of one of Kuniyak's colleagues. We were about to get back on schedule and be able to slacken our pace again, when the blizzard hit town.

It was a freak late fall occurrence. Anyone who lived out east at that time is sure to remember it. Roads shut down, schools closed, electricity out, general headaches all around. Everywhere we had planned to shoot was buried under three feet of snow. We managed to do a few impromptu shots in the studio, but that quickly petered out. We could only show Patrick and myself in our 'apartments' so many times.

Kuniyak was beside himself. He'd pace the darkened studio, tearing at what little hair nature had left him. Every day without

shooting would mean a few less pages in the finished product, and fewer pages meant fewer ads, and fewer ads meant less money.

I remember it was December 3rd when Kuniyak called me at home, telling me to meet him at the studio ASAP. I wondered what was up. I hoped he had found a new photo location. With the money being lost every day, there was talk of postponing the whole project indefinitely.

When I arrived at the studio, I found Kuniyak leaning back in his director's chair, calm and confident as ever. Patrick arrived a few minutes later.

"So what's the big news?" asked Patrick. "Figure out a way to do some shooting?"

"Perhaps. Kimberly, would you mind showing us your back?"

"Beg pardon?"

"Your back. Could you pull up your shirt, please?"

Wondering what was going on, I hiked the back of my sweater up over my shoulders.

"Hmmm," said Kuniyak, "what do you think, Patrick?"

"Uh, about what?"

"About Kimberly's back."

"Um, well, it's nice. Muscular. A guy might enjoy rubbing lotion on it."

"My thoughts exactly."

I let my sweater drop, offended. "Are you two through?" I asked, angrily, "Or should I show some leg now?"

"I apologize," said Kuniyak, "but believe it or not, I do have a reason behind this. You see, I think it's time for you to sleep with Patrick."

"All right!" yelled Patrick. I assumed he was horsing around. I, however, was much less enthused.

“What exactly do you mean?”

“Hear me out. In catalog time, you and Patrick have been dating for almost half a year. I have a friend who has a cabin upstate. I was thinking catalog Kim and catalog Patrick could spend a weekend there. More outdoors clothes, bathrobes for when they change out of their winter things, and pajamas for the night (we’ll save the lingerie for the honeymoon). Also, a supplier of home furnishings has expressed interest in this spread. You know, bedding, curtains, and throw rugs. If this goes off, we can recoup most of the losses.”

That wasn’t what was on my mind. “So what does this have to do with my back?”

“Well, myself and several of the other designers thought that there hasn’t been enough sensuality between you and Patrick. We’re going to need a shot of you two in bed, and in order to really sell it, you’ll need to be topless.”

“Topless? No thank you! This is a clothes catalog we’re making, not soft core porn.”

“Relax, Kimberly. The shot will be set up with Patrick in the background, facing the camera. You’ll be facing him with your back to the camera. Very sexy, very erotic, but only your lovely backside visible.”

“So that means Patrick will see my bare chest.” Patrick looked nervous, but not unhappy, when I said this.

“I suppose, but if you just try to see things...”

“No way, not a chance! Nothing doing.” I couldn’t very well let Patrick see my tiny little fake breasts. He’d know the truth instantly.

Mr. Kuniyak looked at Patrick. “May we have a few moments alone?” Patrick excused himself.

“Kimberly, I have to be honest with you. We’re really hurting financially here. I can’t afford to keep everyone on the payroll when we can’t shoot. We must do this or I’m just going to write

this project off. And I'm afraid that means your scholarship will go too."

"Is it really that serious? I mean does this whole shoot depend on Patrick seeing my breasts?"

"I'm afraid so. The sponsors want sexy. You should have seen the shoot they originally wanted to do."

I was growing upset. Giving up the scholarship I had sacrificed all these months for. I wanted to cry. But one fact remained, there was no way I could let Patrick in on my dirty little secret.

"Look, just think about it tonight. I'm sorry I have to be like this, but I'm a businessman first." I left without saying goodbye.

When I got home, Lori had just returned from visiting her friends. "Stupid sexist society," I muttered. "They can't even sell bed sheets without me taking my top off. I should have known better than to try and get away with this."

Lori wondered what I was muttering under my breath, and when I told her, she turned white as a sheet. "I know your breasts are growing, Kimberly, but I don't think any man would be fooled." I saw sincere worry in her expression.

"Yeah, I agree," I sighed. Taking off my shirt and inspecting my breasts, I wondered if they could pass for real. No, no such luck. While I was surprised at how quickly they were developing, they still looked like they belonged on a thirteen-year old girl, not a woman. True, they jiggled a bit. They were also pert and soft, with brown nipples the size of quarters. They were extra sensitive as well. I now knew why women wore bras, even when they were home alone. But I could never pass myself off as extra-flat. Patrick would think something was up.

But then I began to think. Hadn't Patrick confided an embarrassing secret in me? True, one homosexual experience wasn't nearly as weird as dressing like a bride, but it was a bond. Maybe if I leveled with him and told him what to expect, he'd

understand, or at least keep his mouth shut about what he saw if not for my sake, for the sake of his job.

Now the fact that we had kissed several times complicated matters. How would he react? Well, he had kissed another man willingly, so he'd probably let this go.

There was a knock at the door. I wasn't surprised when it turned out to be Patrick. "Kunyak sent you over, didn't he?" I said before he could say anything.

"Uh, yes he did. Listen, would it really be so bad? I promise to be a gentleman. Seriously, would this be the first time a guy saw your breasts?"

"Yes, Patrick, it would."

"Oh!" Patrick seemed stunned. I guess he didn't have me pegged for a virgin.

"But that's not why I'm scared," I continued. "Look, I'm mature enough to do this and I trust you, but I have a secret, Patrick. Something I'm afraid to let you know."

"Please, Kim, you can tell me. What? Do you pad your bra? It's OK, I won't tell."

"Well, yes, but its not that. Patrick, earlier this year you told me a secret, can I tell you one now? A bigger one?"

"Um, all right. What?"

"I'm not really a woman. I'm a man in drag." Patrick laughed at the preposterousness of my statement.

"No, I'm serious. I'm Lori's brother, not her sister. I had to fill in for her at the bridal show after the accident and I stayed on because the money was so good. Here, look at this." I showed him my old driver's license. "See, that's me."

Patrick stared at the picture a bit. Then, without a word, he stood up and kicked Lori's coffee table halfway across the floor. "You son of a bitch!" he screamed.



“Uh...Patrick, I'm really a guy...like you. I'm Lori's brother, not her sister,” I stammered as I exposed my growing breasts to his astonished view.

I began to fear for my safety. "Patrick, what the hell's gotten into you?"

"What's gotten into me? How in God's name can you ask that? You let me kiss you a bunch of times and then expect me not to be pissed off?"

"Well, Patrick, I thought you'd understand. I mean, you've already..." I trailed off.

"I've already what? Kissed a guy? Is that what you were going to say?" He punched the wall. "I guess you think that makes me a fag, huh? Well it doesn't. I told you before it was a one-time thing. I don't care how you live your life, but I'm sure as hell never getting close to you again. In fact, I'm going to tell Kuniyak the truth." He left before I could say anything else.

It had never occurred to me that he'd be this angry. I should have left well enough alone and quit when I still could. Now Kuniyak and all my friends from the shoot would know my horrible secret. I was sunk.

I curled up on the sofa and did something I hadn't done since Lori's accident, I bawled. Lori tried to comfort me, but she too was shocked by the vehemence of Patrick's reaction to my little revelation.

I must have fallen asleep on the couch. When I glanced around the apartment, I realized it was the middle of the night. I rubbed my tear-swollen eyes and got up. I wandered to the bathroom to wash my face. "What should I do?" I asked the frightened, disheveled girl who started back at me from the mirror. "Face Kuniyak or just run away now?"

I was interrupted from my introspection by the shrill ringing of the phone. Late night phone calls are never a good thing. Perhaps it was Mr. Kuniyak calling to fire me on the spot or Patrick, wanting to yell at me some more. Still, it could have been a real emergency, so I picked up.

"Kim, is that you?" It was Patrick.

"Yes..." I answered guardedly.

"I'm sorry to call so late, but I need to talk to you. Can we meet somewhere?" He didn't seem angry. I gave him the address of a local greasy spoon and told him I'd meet him there in a half-hour.

When I arrived at the all-night diner, Patrick was already waiting for me. "Kim, please sit down." Good, he was calm. Maybe we could work out some way for me to hold onto my secret.

"Patrick," I began, "I'm sorry for lying to you. I shouldn't have..."

"No, Kim, I'm the one who should be sorry. I confide a secret in you and you were there for me. You confide in me and I blow up. I had no right." I tried to interject something, but he held up his hand.

"Look, it's just after what happened between Jeff and myself, I've been really questioning my manhood. I was afraid that I was gay, and when I met you, I...well, I might as well be honest, I was really attracted to you. I've been thinking about you constantly ever since the first bridal show. I really enjoyed kissing you on all those shoots. When I thought I was going to see you topless...well, let's just say I was convinced that my attractions lay firmly with women. Then when I found out the woman I was fantasizing about all these months is a man, it just put me back to square one."

I hung my head. "I'm so sorry, Patrick. It wasn't fair to you. At least you were honest with from the start. I haven't been honest until now."

Patrick took my hand and I didn't pull away. "I'll tell you what, let's just pretend tonight never happened. If you'll forget my bad attitude, I'll forget your secret. If you do decide to do that topless shoot, trust me, I'll never tell."

As I left the diner that night, I was both relieved at Patrick's understanding and ashamed at my own deception. I was also nervous. I had no idea Patrick's feelings were that strong for me.

Of course, I ended up agreeing to that damn sexist shoot. Our jobs would have been in jeopardy otherwise. So for two solid days, I held hands with Patrick as we pretended to ice skate, I toasted him as we snuggled in front of the fireplace, and made out with him as we rolled around on a bearskin rug.

Finally, 'the' shoot came. I warned all the crew that if anyone so much as tried to catch a glimpse of my front side, I was walking off the project. It was bad enough I had to expose my new breasts to Patrick, a guy who admittedly had the hots for me. The crew agreed. Since my back was to the camera, they all stood a few paces back, allowing me security from any prying glances.

Patrick did a good job of playing it cool. Very rarely did I catch him stealing a glance at my developing nipples, but he did see everything, from my head to my navel. I was glad when Mr. Kunyak said, "That's a wrap," and I could get dressed again.

As I sipped hot chocolate and waited for the drivers to bring around the trucks to take us back to town, I pondered what had happened. Why did I feel so naked back there? I had been topless at dozens of pools, beaches, and locker rooms all my life, and yet with Patrick, I felt I was standing there without a stitch on.

God, these hormones were doing strange things to me. I guess that now that I had breasts, I felt quite girlish. Women don't take off their tops for the world to see. I guess I was experiencing typical feminine modesty.

Patrick tapped my on the shoulder. "Great shoot. Bet you're glad it's over with."

"Bet you aren't," I teased him.

"Well, I'm not the only one. Randy (the teenage gofer) has been pestering me to give a Technicolor description of what I saw."

"Wonderful. Just remember your promise."

"Yeah, hey listen," he looked around to make sure no one could hear us, "you told me you were a guy, but that sure wasn't

a man's chest I saw. I mean, they were small, but those were definitely breasts."

I blushed. "I'm taking estrogen. You might say that I've developed a bit."

Patrick shook his head as if to clear it. "Kim, I know you claim to be a guy, but if you don't mind my saying, you've got the makings of a damn fine woman." He hurried off before I could think of a comeback.

That was the last major shoot of the year. We all had a week off for Christmas. Lori and I looked forward to spending Christmas with our mother. Since my rapidly increasing breasts made wearing male clothes impossible, I elected to spend the holidays as Kim.

Christmas was relaxing. Mom eagerly asked questions about the shoot, the clothes I was wearing, how I wore my hair, and such. At first I found it a little unnerving. It was if I was her daughter and had always worn dresses, but after a bit, the three of us were chatting away about female clothes as natural as could be.

When Christmas morning dawned, Lori and I rushed to the tree as eager as if we were still both six years old. Mom and Lori both appreciated the clothes I had gotten them with my employee discount at Mr. Kunyank's firm. Most of my presents were my usual Christmas fare, books, CDs, a video game, but a couple of presents made me wonder. Lori had gotten me an expensive makeup mirror. Mom had gotten me a curling iron and a blow dryer. I thanked them, but I began to wonder. In six months the photo shoot would be over. Why would they get me presents that I would only need for half a year?

Finally, Lori and I opened two presents that mom insisted that we open together. I was surprised to find that both boxes contained a white sundress with a floral design. Lori squealed and thanked mom. I did so with less enthusiasm. It seemed like such a waste of money. I'd be able to wear it a couple of times in

the summer; after that it would just go to goodwill (or more likely, Lori's closet).

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked Mom, "Try them on!"

Lori took me by the hand and led me to her bedroom where we began to change into our Christmas gifts. It wasn't until Lori was helping me button up the back that I realized we both had just stripped to our skivvies without a second thought. We were both used to thinking of me as Kim, I guess.

Lori insisted that we dress as much alike as possible. Matching shoes, matching jewelry, matching makeup. When she finished, we stepped out and presented ourselves to Mom. "You two look darling!" she said, "Like twin sisters."

"Hang on, now," I replied, "Remember, only one of us is a sister."

"I know," said Mom, "but you could easily pass for one now."

I didn't want to cast a pall on Christmas by arguing, but I felt I had to say something. "What do mean by that? You realize I'm only doing this for the money."

"But are you having any fun?" asked Lori.

I was about to answer with a resounding 'NO!' but decided to think about it a bit. "Well, New York's been fun and I guess I've met some interesting people, but its only going to last for a few more months. Why did you guys get me all this girl stuff?"

Mom looked at Lori and she nodded. "Well," began Mom, "I know you keep saying you want to go back to living as a guy, but Lori and I both want you to know that if for any reason you want to continue being Kim, you won't owe us any explanations."

I tried to protest, but Lori beat me to the punch. "We're not saying that you like living as a woman or that you should or anything, but we both think you make a lovely girl. So we'd support you completely if, for some reason, you don't want to go back to being Ken."

I took a deep breath to control my temper. "Thank you, but that won't be happening. Now who's up for 'It's a Wonderful Life'?"

As we watched the Christmas classic, I tried to decide why my family was acting this way. I confronted Lori when we were alone. "What was all that about?"

"I guess we were a little presumptuous there. I'm still trying to figure out how you feel about things."

"Nothing's changed. I don't like this lifestyle and I can't wait to change back."

"We figured as much, but you used to complain about it constantly, now you seem to really be happy. I haven't seen you in male clothes since the summer and those hormones are turning you into a doll! I guess we just figured that if you happened to enjoy being Kim, you didn't need to be ashamed of it."

"Well, thanks for the sentiment, but come July, it's all over. Still, I guess I am getting used to being Kim. It won't be easy turning back."

"You'll do fine. Just remember what we said."

All too soon the vacation was over and we had to fly back to New York. We did not, however, have to immediately return to work. Kunyak had arranged a huge New Year's party for everyone involved in the shoot. Just about everyone attended. As the world rang in the new millennium Lori, I, and about forty crewmembers gathered at Kunyak's mansion to count down till midnight.

Soon the party was in full swing with all kinds of dancing, romancing, and drinking. Since I didn't care to do any of these things, I ended up in a back bedroom, watching a broadcast of the celebrations in La Paz, Caracas, and Halifax. I was lonely. This was the big New Years, the once in a thousand years celebration, and here I was, alone. No date, no chance of romance, not even a kiss at midnight.

There was a tap at the door, and Patrick walked in. He was wearing wet swim trunks and had a towel wrapped around his shoulders. I never realized how muscular he was. "Hey, Kim, you ought to go for a swim. The water's great."

"Sorry, Patrick. I don't exactly fit in a swimsuit."

"Oh, right. Sorry, I keep forgetting."

"So do a lot of people, my family included."

Patrick shut the door and sat down next to me. "So why are you back here all alone?"

"I guess I'm a little depressed. It's New Years and I'm alone. I can't meet a girl like this and I'm not interested in meeting a guy. I'm just stuck between two worlds and I'm beginning to realize just how long a year is."

Patrick patted my shoulder. Ever since I started being Kim, I became aware of how guys would use any excuse to touch a woman. I couldn't help thinking that even Patrick's friendly pat was an excuse to make physical contact with me. I sighed.

There was a hubbub from the main room of the house. I realized that the final countdown to midnight had begun. "Patrick, you better join everyone or you'll miss the big moment."

"Are you going?"

"No, I don't feel like it."

"Can I stay with you?"

"If you like." I could hear the other partygoers chanting TEN, NINE, EIGHT... Patrick touched my cheek.

"Happy New Year, Kim." SEVEN, SIX, FIVE

"Happy New Year, Patrick." FOUR, THREE, TWO... Patrick moved in to kiss me.

"Patrick, no!"



It was the new millennium and I was alone...and lonely. Suddenly Patrick's lips touched mine, and my loneliness disappeared.

ONE! Suddenly, all the electricity in the house went off and didn't come back on. We found out later that it was the work of a prankster who had snuck down to the fuse box to give everyone a Y2K scare. He screwed something up and couldn't get the power back on immediately.

We were on a heated patio overlooking the city. It was pitch black except for the city lights. Patrick gently took my face in his hands and pulled me towards him. I don't know why I didn't resist. "It's New Year," I told myself. "Out of all the girls here, he chose to be with me. What's the harm of one little kiss?"

His lips pressed to mind, soft, yet forcefully. We had kissed before, why should this be all that different? His arms wrapped around my waist. 'I'm going to have to tell him to stop soon, very soon.'

I laid my hands on his bare, powerful chest. His tongue probed my lips. We began to breathe harder. Suddenly, the flash of the lights going back on startled us, and there I stood on a secluded patio, making out with a half naked man.

"I have to go!" I said, as I darted from the patio and the room, back to the party.

The next day, as Lori nursed a hangover, I sat around and thought. Why had I kissed Patrick? Much as I wanted to think otherwise, Patrick never forced me to do anything. I stood and kissed him of my own free will. It wasn't for a shoot or for the sake of the public. I had kissed a guy for no reason.

Lori, even with her headache, noticed my squirrelness and asked what was wrong. "Lori, I need to talk to you. Can you promise to stay serious and be honest?"

"Of course, Kim," replied Lori, obviously worried.

"I kissed Patrick last night."

"So? You've kissed him lots of times."

"That was for the catalog, this was different. It was a New Years midnight kiss and it lasted a few minutes."

"I was wondering where you were. But what's the big deal? It was New Years and you got caught up in the moment."

I wished I could be convinced. "But it was more than that. I mean I'm a guy! What am I doing kissing another guy for?"

"Listen, Kim, you told me that thanks to the estrogen you've lost most of your sex drive. Patrick's a cute guy, and you've been playing the part of a woman for months now. You're just getting into the roll. I wish I had a nickel for every guy I kissed that I shouldn't have."

"So what do I tell Patrick when I see him next?"

"You won't have to tell him anything. Just because you kissed him, doesn't make you're his girlfriend."

I pretended to take Lori's words to heart, but I was still a bit disturbed. I wouldn't have kissed a woman I didn't like as long as I kissed Patrick. What had I been thinking?

When the time came for me to return to work, I honestly wanted to call in sick rather than face Patrick. I knew better than Lori about how guys think. I wasn't so sure Patrick wouldn't take my kiss as proof that I liked him.

I ran into Patrick in the studio parking lot. "Hey, Kim, great to see you," he said.

"Hi, Patrick," I replied, a little more enthusiastically than I had planned, "It's nice to see you too."

"I didn't get a chance to say goodbye after New Years."

"I've been meaning to talk to you about that. Listen..." How to put this?

"Don't worry, I understand. We just got caught up in the moment is all."

"Um, yeah, that's it."

“OK. I hear ya. See you inside,” he grinned and entered the building. It was as simple as that. He blew off what had passed between us just like it was nothing.

True, that was just what I wanted, but I felt strangely annoyed. I didn’t think anything of the kiss, but I was a little put out that it meant so little to him as well. He could have at least pretended I meant something to him.

The shot for today was another sham party with more models and more clothes to try on. As I pretended to mingle comfortably in my blue pantsuit, I tried to shake the bizarre feelings that assaulted me. Why was I so offended at Patrick’s seeming indifference? What did it matter?

I couldn’t think of an answer. All I knew was that I was miffed. I guess that’s why when Patrick asked if I wanted to have dinner with him that night, I agreed.

When I got home, Lori asked me how it went. “OK, I suppose, but, um, I agreed to have dinner at his place tonight.”

“Hmm, wouldn’t take no for an answer, would he?”

“It’s not like that, in fact he kind of blew me off. I don’t know why I agreed to do this.”

For a second, Lori looked stunned, but then she quickly recovered. “So he’s cooking you a meal? I can’t remember the last time a guy did that for me.”

I wore my hair up that night, with a long black skirt and a sleeveless white top that buttoned in the front. I put on heels and spent almost an hour doing my makeup. Lori helped me. Following her advice, I unbuttoned my top further than I was used to wearing it, and spritzed on a bit of perfume. A little voice in the back of my head kept asking me why I was making such an effort, but I ignored that voice, I wanted to dress up. I’d work out the psychology behind it later.

When I arrived at Patrick’s place, I touched up my makeup one last time. “This is just a friendly dinner,” I told myself, and knocked.

Patrick was showered, shaved, and dressed up. His apartment had been cleaned and I could smell something delicious cooking in the kitchen. Light music played on the stereo. Patrick took my coat and asked me to have a seat, and then he poured us each a glass of wine.

As I relaxed and Patrick finished the meal, I pondered what I was getting myself into. Obviously, Patrick had planned a romantic evening for us and wasn't letting my protestations of non-interest get in his way. For some reason, I was more flattered than disturbed.

During dinner neither of us mentioned what had passed between us earlier. We chatted, laughed, and enjoyed each other's company. After dinner, we sat on the couch and sipped some more wine. I giggled at Patrick's attempts to subtly turn the lights down lower.

I wasn't surprised when I felt Patrick lay his hand on the back of my neck. "Patrick," I said, in spite of myself, "I told you, just friends."

Patrick grinned sheepishly, but didn't remove his hand. "I know, Kimberly, but I'm only human. I told you earlier how hard I've fallen for you. I thought your, ah, confession would make me stop seeing you like that, but it hasn't."

I stood up to get out of his reach and turned my back towards him. "I'm sorry, Patrick, but you know...what I am." I couldn't bring myself to say 'you know I'm a man.' "I could never think of you in a romantic way."

Patrick put his hands on my shoulders. "Look me in the eye and say that. Tell me, face to face that you have no feelings for me and I'll never put the moves on you again."

"Patrick, I have no feelings for you!" There, I said it.

"You're still turned around. Face me and say it." Patrick's fingers pressed into my shoulders and gently massaged my neck. It felt good.

"Patrick, I..."

“Yes?” I could feel his breath on my neck.

“I...are you sure you want to get involved with me? I’m not sure what I want right now, but I am sure I’m going back to a life you can’t be part of in a few months. That’s a fact.”

“We’ll worry about that when the time comes.” I felt his hot mouth kiss my neck. I stopped talking.

A few hours later, I was home, disheveled, makeup smeared, and nervously happy. I removed all my clothes and climbed into the bathtub. I felt a little guilty, but not ashamed. While Patrick and I never went past first base (at my insistence, not his), we certainly had done more than I ever thought I’d happily do with a man.

I was confused, tired, and secretly happy. Nonetheless, I waited up for Lori to get home. She smiled when she entered and found me half-dozing on the couch. “So how did your...evening out go?” she asked, slyly.

“It was a date. We might as well say it.” Lori giggled.

“You like him, don’t you?” She seemed happy at the news.

“I’m not sure. Well, I guess... We just spent two hours making out.”

“You slut!” she chided, and then collapsed in a spasm of laughing.

“What’s so funny?” I asked.

“Nothing, I’m just happy for you. Patrick’s a great guy.”

I laid my head on Lori’s arm. “What the hell’s happening to me? I’m dating a guy! I’m not gay! I’m not a woman! So why am I enjoying it so much?”

“I dunno. Maybe I’m not the one to ask. You ought to talk to Dr. Klaus. He might have some ideas...or better yet, his wife.”

“Good idea. I’m not sure I like the idea of getting involved with a guy when I’m about to give up womanhood forever.”

Lori looked a bit sad. "Truth be known, I'll miss Kimberly. Just remember what we said at Christmas."

The next day, I managed to make an appointment with Dr. Klaus, the German physician who supplied me with hormones. As I hung out in the waiting room, a young redhead exited his office. She was pretty in a washed-out sort of way. What I couldn't help noticing was how tall she was. She was well over six feet, a good deal taller than I was. As I gaped at her height, I suddenly realized what kind of doctor's office I was in and the probable reason behind why she was so tall. I caught her looking at me from the corner of her eye; she had probably come to the same conclusion about me.

She left and I was called into the doctor's office. "How are you feeling today?" asked Dr. Klaus.

"Fine, thank you."

"You've taken to womanhood quite well, if I may say so. Tell me, are you enjoying yourself?"

"That's kind of what I need to talk about. Listen, is your wife in?" Dr. Klaus summoned his wife from the other room and left us alone.

I surveyed Greta again. It was hard to believe she was anything other than an attractive, somewhat plump, middle-aged woman. "So what can I do for you?" she asked.

"Well, I'm having a lot of confusing thoughts recently. I was wondering if you could help me sort through them."

"I'll do my best."

"You know I only agreed to get on the hormones for my job, but the longer I'm on them, the more it seems like my life as a woman is the normal one. I think less and less about changing back and more and more about becoming a woman. My family seems to think that there's no reason for me to become a man again. To make things worse, there's this guy..." Greta smiled.

“He knows my secret, but he still likes me, and I think that I’m falling for him! I don’t know why that should be, but it is! Does any of this make sense?”

“Of course it does. When I first started taking hormones, I had no desire to become a woman. I didn’t even know I was on hormones. But after the physical changes forced me to adopt a female lifestyle, I loved it! I was attractive, popular, and had much higher self-esteem. Perhaps you’re just finding that your life is more exciting and fulfilling as Kim than it was as Ken.”

I thought about it. My life certainly was more exciting with all the work, glamour shots, and popularity, but what about Patrick? “As for this young man, I’m willing to guess he’s a nice guy who you get along with. There’s no telling what’s behind your attraction. My advice is to just go with it. If he knows your secret and your family is supportive, then there’s no reason not to risk seeing where this leads.”

I thanked Greta and hugged her. When I returned home, I noticed a big bouquet of roses on the table. “Who sent you the flowers?” I asked Lori.

She sighed over-dramatically. “No one.”

My curiosity piqued, I looked at the card. “Kim,” it read,

“I had a wonderful time last night. I have a feeling this is the start of something wonderful.”

XXX

Patrick

“Oh, that is so sweet!” I said, no longer caring how girlish that sounded. Lori pretended to be jealous, but I could tell she was happy for me.

So began three months where I stopped thinking of myself as a man. I took a ‘why fight it’ attitude about the whole thing. I was going to be living as a woman, so following Lori’s advice, I starting trying to think like one. It made things simpler.

It was hard to describe the relationship I had with Patrick at that time. I guess the easiest thing would be to call us 'boyfriend and girlfriend', though it wasn't quite like that. I knew that come July I would be returning to manhood. I wasn't so far gone as to want to spend the rest of my life as a woman. On the other hand, we certainly acted like a happy couple. We'd go out every weekend, go on dates, and do a lot of kissing. Patrick, in fact, wanted to do a lot more than kissing, but I refused. I was growing very fond of him and didn't allow myself to think of what would happen after the shoot was finished.

I was living in a fool's paradise. Did I honestly think I could play with fire like that and then have everything turn out OK? I guess I assumed that Patrick never had any long-term plans that involved me, that he, like I, saw this as a fling, not a commitment. Still, the long nights and exciting weekends I spent with Patrick were a lot of fun. Little did I know how hard I was falling for him.

The whole thing came to a head when Patrick proposed to me. Not in real life, but in the catalog. It was springtime and I had shucked my winter clothes for halter-tops, sundresses, and spaghetti strapped tank tops. Patrick and I spent many days being photographed running through meadows, making necklaces out of daisies, and wading in brooks. I knew swimsuit season wasn't far off, which worried me, but Lori said she had the situation under control.

Anyway, the plans called for Patrick to 'propose' to me while we were out on a romantic picnic. As I adjusted my sleeveless, backless dress and put on my sun hat, Patrick knocked and came into my dressing room.

"So are you ready to pop the question?" I teased him.

"Yep, and look at the diamond the prop guys gave me." He displayed a little plastic trinket that would only pass for the real thing in a distant photo.

"You honestly expect me to say yes to that? Please..."

"Don't worry. If I ever ask you for real, I'll get something nicer."

I didn't like him even joking about that. Didn't he know this was a one-year thing? "Let's keep this serious," I told him.

He frowned. "Well, you never know what the future holds," he said defensively.

"I know what the future holds for me. In a few months, I go back to being plain old Ken."

"And adios to me?" he said, suddenly angry.

"Patrick, you knew when this started what my plans were. Did you honestly think that I was going to spend the rest of my life as Kim?"

"I honestly thought I meant something to you, that maybe we had something special. You never even considered a long term relationship?"

"Of course not! Well, I guess I thought about it..."

"Kim, don't do this to me. I couldn't stand to lose you!" I had never seen him this shaken up.

"I'm sorry, Patrick. You...I've never felt this way about a man. If I were a real woman, there'd be no problem, but I'm a man and I have to go back."

"You make a lousy man. You'll never be able to go back easily. Why do you need to go back at all?"

"How can you even ask that? I have to change back because...because...I just do!"

"You 'just do'? You're going to walk out on me because you 'just do'? Wonderful! Good-bye, Kim." He left and slammed the door.

That scene obviously cast a pall over the romantic proposal. It made both of us so edgy that Kunyak postponed the shot until tomorrow. Then, in front of the whole crew, he said, "I don't know what's going on with you two, but by tomorrow I want it

stopped. You're about to start a new life together, so try to project a little less hate." Ouch.

I didn't stop to talk to Patrick after the shoot. I was too angry. Did he honestly expect me to give up my manhood forever just to please him? What did he think? That I'd marry him? Be his wife? Settle down, buy a house with a white picket fence, and spend my life with him? I paused a bit, thinking about that sort of future, as a wife, Patrick's wife.

I shook my head. No! It couldn't be! It wasn't right! I was a man. Maybe it was for the best that we had a falling out now. It would save heartache later. I just had to get through the next few months and be done with it.

Slim, the fifty-something photographer tapped me on the shoulder. "What's up with you and Patrick?" he asked. He was always a direct. 'Mind my own business' wasn't part of his vocabulary.

"Just a fight, that's all."

"About what?"

About none of your concern, that's what. "Nothing. We just want different things out of life. I don't think it's going to work out."

Slim sat down and motioned me to do so as well. "Let me tell you a story," he began. "You probably aren't in the mood, but I'm old and you're young, so you really have no choice."

Looking off into the distance, he related his tale. "It was back when I was in 'Nam. I was young then and in love. Her name was Li Duk Thou. By God, she was lovely. I never stopped loving her. Everything I was looking for. I wanted to marry her, but..." Slim paused from the painful memory.

"She didn't want to come back to the States with me, not for at least a few years. I, on the other hand, had no thoughts but getting back. I had been overseas almost two years. One thing led to another and the next thing you know, I'm back stateside. I never saw her again."

“It’s funny really. I thought my whole future lay in coming back home, but when I did, everything was different. My friends were gone, my parents died a few years later, I couldn’t find work. I could have stayed in the country, lots of guys did. I didn’t have to leave her, but I was so caught up in what I thought my destiny was, I gave up my one true love. I’ve been divorced twice, and I never stopped loving Li Duk. I pissed away my chance at happiness for my friggin’ plans.”

“Listen, I don’t know how serious you and Patrick are, but before you decide to end it, think about your choice. Remember that plans can usually wait, but true love doesn’t happen often. Don’t ruin your life like I did.” Without making eye contact, he got up and left.

I went home, burst into the apartment, and screamed. Lori came running out of her bedroom and asked me what was wrong. “What’s wrong? What’s wrong? Everything’s wrong! Patrick wants me to stay a woman!”

“Well...I guess that’s bad news. Right?” She was uncertain.

“Yes! I have to be a man! I am a man! I’m going to change back!”

“So what’s the big deal? Patrick won’t die.”

“I know but...but maybe I don’t want to give up Patrick. I’m not saying I want to live as Kim forever, but maybe...one more year. Just to see how things work out.”

Lori hugged me. “Kim, maybe I’m not the one to be telling this to...”

Despite the fact that it was eleven at night, I took a cab to Patrick’s place. There was no answer, but the light was on, so I continued to bang. Eventually he came to the door wearing nothing but a towel and soaking wet.

“Kim!” he gasped, surprised to see me.

I barged into his apartment and shoved his bare chest as hard as I could. “You jerk!”

"Hey, what's the big idea?" He was confused.

"You jerk! I had my life all planned out and then you come along...come along..." I started crying again. "You jerk!" I sobbed and buried my head in his chest hair.

He wrapped his damp arms around me and held me. Finally, I pulled myself together. "I'm so confused, Patrick. I don't know what I want anymore, but I don't think I can leave you. I'm not promising anything, but...I can do another year as Kimberly. One year, that's all I promise. I'll be able to make a decision one way or another after that."

I didn't have time to say anything else. Patrick grabbed me and gave me a ten-minute kiss. Finally, I broke free. "Uh, Patrick, I think, your towel fell off."

"Did it?" he asked, running his hands over the back of my skirt.

"Put some pants on." Men! Always one thing on their minds!

The next day, Patrick proposed to me on the shoot. Kuniyak commented on how this time it really seemed like we were in love. Who knows, maybe he was right?

As June wore around, Kuniyak brought up the topic that I had been dreading: swimsuits. The shot called for Patrick and I to spend a day on a North Carolina beach with our 'friends', displaying a wide variety of beachwear. I was nervous. How was I going to fit into a woman's bathing suit? Lori had always claimed to have the situation under control, but would never elaborate. Well, it was time for her to come clean.

"Don't worry," she said, when I brought up the conundrum that night. I told Kuniyak that I had a special bathing suit I wanted you to wear. He approved it."

"So what is it? How will it cover up...you know?" Recently, I had found myself unwilling to mention my true gender, even to Lori. As for Patrick, he never brought up the true state of things.

Lori escorted me into my bedroom and told me to disrobe. This time, it didn't even occur to me to feel any sort of shame. Why shouldn't a girl get dressed in the same room as her sister?

As Lori left to fetch the swimsuit, I regarded my body. My breasts had blossomed. I still only had A-cups, but so did a lot of woman. I could, I supposed, shuck all upper body padding, but decided against it. The whole crew, Mr. Kunyak included, thought I was well endowed, and I couldn't very well let them know otherwise.

My hips were rounded, my stomach flat, my skin smoothed. Now that I thought about it, all that was left of my maleness were my genitals. I looked at my small, withered, and almost forgotten penis. It really wouldn't be so hard to hide.

Lori interrupted me by smacking my bare butt with a towel. I squeaked and jumped away. "So what kind of suit do you have for me?" I asked.

"A bikini!"

"You have got to be joking!"

"But I'm not. The hormones have really changed your appearance. It just took a little ingenuity on my part and I've made you a suit that will make you rival any swimsuit model you've ever seen."

My curiosity aroused, I took a look at what Lori displayed to me. The lower half of the suit consisted of a loose fitting, women's bathing trunks. They allowed me to show off most of my thigh and the area below my navel, but still covered my manhood. A latex sex-hiding device was sewn into the inside. I quickly grunted my way into it. Not bad, not bad at all.

The top of the bikini was a large, spandex halter-top. Inside the cups, two foam pads were sewn to give me the impression of large breasts. The top covered everything from the bottom of my neck to the bottom of my ribcage, covering up all areas where my breasts supposedly were. My arms, back, and shoulders were exposed to the air.

I twisted and twirled around in front of the mirror. "Lori, you are a genius. I never thought you could do it, but you made me look great in a bikini!"

"I didn't do anything. You made yourself look great!" We hugged.

The beach shoot was one of the most grueling we'd done yet and lasted for three days. We played volleyball, barbecued, and swam. Most of these activities I had to perform while wearing makeup, dangling earrings, and heels. I had to hand it to Lori, not once did anyone suspect a thing. Eventually, we came to the last shot.

It was of Patrick and I lying in front of a beach fire at night. I'd be laying back on a towel with Patrick bending over me. The next shot would be Patrick and I kneeling in front of each other. Patrick would be untying the back of my top. The final shot, only our feet would be visible behind a sand dune. In the foreground would lay Patrick's trunks and my entire swimsuit.

After everything was over, Patrick and I sat alone on the sand dune, still wearing our swimsuits (we weren't really naked behind the dune; they were extra suits in the foreground). We stared lazily at the dwindling fire.

Patrick put his arm around me. I winced. "What's wrong, honey?" he asked, concerned.

"I didn't put on enough lotion today. I'm burned." In the firelight I pulled back part of my top, revealing the contrast between my sunburn and the covered area. I now had a bikini tan.

Patrick retrieved some Aloe from his bag and began rubbing it in my shoulders. "That feels good. Don't stop."

Soon he had rubbed my entire back, arms, neck, and legs. I lay down so I could enjoy his touch more. I guess I wasn't surprised when he undid the back of my top to have easier access to my back. It doesn't take a genius to guess what happened next. My top came off, and soon I was being kissed and fondled in a

way I had never experienced before. I didn't move. I felt like I was melting.

Soon Patrick was groping with my shorts. "No, Patrick..."

"Kim, I love you. I need you."

"Oh, Patrick..."

"Let me make love to you."

"Patrick, be gentle. It's my first time."

There was pain, but more pleasure. There were tears, but more smiles. There was regret, but more relief. My decision was made.

An hour later, Patrick and I went for a midnight skinny dip. The ocean at night had always scared me, but with Patrick's arms around me, I felt safer than I ever had. Soon we were in up to our necks. He kissed me in the moonlight.

"Kim, I love you."

"I love you, Patrick."

"I want to marry you. Will you marry me?"

That was totally unexpected. "Patrick..."

"I promised myself I'd wait until you had more time to think about things, but tonight, I realize I don't need any time. I'm going to love you forever and I won't be happy until you are my wife. You don't have to make a decision now; take your time. Take a year if you need, but I want you to know just how deeply my feelings are for you."

I let him hold me. I felt drowsy. I remember the warmth of the water, the silver of the moon, and the ache between my legs. "Patrick, I don't need a year. I don't need another minute. I love you and I want to be your bride." And there you have it.

Kunyak was ecstatic when we told him we wanted to get married on the set. The final page of the catalog would show our actual wedding. Mr. Kunyak said that you couldn't buy publicity

like an actual wedding! Two models who fell in love on the set? People would go nuts!

The wedding was easy enough to set up. It was simply a matter of finding a cameraman who was subtle enough not to interrupt the ceremony and getting some of our guests to wear Kuniyak's designs.

I remember that mom started crying when my Maid of Honor, Lori, walked down the aisle, arm in arm with Patrick's best man. She wasn't ashamed; she had made that clear. She was just weepy. After all, her youngest daughter was getting married.

As the wedding march played, I paused. This was truly it. There was no going back. I couldn't very well get married to a man and then decide I didn't want to be a woman anymore. But then I caught sight of my groom waiting for me. Patrick! I had to stop from running down the aisle to be next to him.

Of course, Lori had designed my gown (and the gowns of my bridesmaids). My gown was white with a long train, huge ribbons, and a veil. I felt like the most feminine person on the planet. Who cares if I was still technically a man? We managed to wangle a legitimate marriage certificate and the union was legal. Maybe some day I'd have a full sex change, but we'd worry about that later.

Patrick and I danced every dance at the reception. Mostly with each other, though of course, he danced with my mom, Lori, and Greta. I danced with Dr. Klaus, Slim, and Randy (hands where I can see them, please).

Eventually, it was all over. We drove to the hotel where we'd spend the night before going off on our honeymoon (a trip to Hawaii, Mr. Kuniyak's wedding gift).

Patrick picked me up and carried me across the threshold, laying me gently in bed. "Kim, you've made me the happiest man on earth."

"Oh, Patrick, I love you so much." We kissed. We then wasted no time removing each other's clothes. The catalog

originally called for some honeymoon shots, but you have to draw the line somewhere. Tonight was ours and ours alone.

"Kim," he said, as he turned out the light, "we're going to have a wonderful life together. Welcome to our new life."

I kissed him and let him take me. Our new life? You bet. My new life? ABSOLUTELY!

The End



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