

All Secretaries Are Women



Eleanor Darby Wright



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ALL SECRETARIES ARE WOMEN

by Eleanor Darby Wright

I - EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

What's in a name? In my case, everything! I'd been hired and working at Ekco for over two months before I found out that Executive Assistant really meant 'secretary'. I mean, I knew what an Administrative Assistant was in Newspeak, but it took Rosemary Henning (Roz to everybody) just ten seconds to clue me in.

"This is a Ladies' Bathroom!" she'd laughed when I tried to enter the E.A. Room. Everything was initialled and labelled at Ekco. I hadn't tried to go in before be-

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cause I wasn't sure that the initials stood for the position I held and, well, because I was new.

"But I'm an Executive Assistant," I protested, red-faced. I had overheard a conversation between two of the bosses about the keys to the executive washrooms. One had mentioned that she was so glad to be able to graduate from the E.A. Room then, and leave that for the Executive Assistants.

Roz giggled but stood in the doorway, resisting my attempt to enter the room I was entitled to use. I was tired of having to go down to the basement all the time where the janitors, security guards and visitors would go. I was the only one from the top floors down there; and it was quite a trip sometimes when the elevators were in constant use.

"Oh, yes," sneered Roz. "You are an E.A. I forgot that Dana had to hire a male secretary for herself!"

Things clicked suddenly into place for me. I was embarrassed by the way Roz was smirking at me.

"But just because your name is Pat," Roz said, the words floating after me as I retreated back down the little hallway, into the glassed-in main office, where the secretarial pool, the grouping of administrative assistants, was located. I was quite flushed by the time I got to my boss's office.

Dana Hansen, Vice-President, Contracts, my boss, was the epitome of feminine chic. She just smiled at me when I blurted out my predicament. Her perfect grey silk blouse matched her perfect brown, thick, wavy hair and perfect, grey business suit.

"Well, Pat," Dana drawled at me, a glint in her blue eyes. "Since I broke the gender barrier in this firm to become the first female VP, I felt that it was only fair that my Executive Assistant be a man and break that barrier, too."

“But, but,” I protested with color in my cheeks, I know, “what, what I really am, is a, a secretary!”

Dana’s exquisitely made-up face mocked me again. “Personal secretary,” she explained, handing me a stack of folders with a smile.

Angry and embarrassed, I took the stack as Dana folded her arms, daring me to protest more and say things about men and women and which jobs we should have. Yes, I did need this job. It was highly paid and, I had thought, up until my encounter with Roz, that it might lead to something better and more permanent at Ekco.

But secretaries were never appointed to executive positions. I knew that from all the companies I’d worked for, in the last two years, since I’d got my degree. Now, I’d have to look somewhere else to get ahead. I should have enquired more fully about the ‘executive’ in executive assistant. I’d just presumed I knew what the title meant. All that resonated in my mind was what Dana had just said. She’d said I was her secretary.

I went back to my work station in the front section of Dana’s offices. She actually has three office rooms, more than any of the other VPs. It was the only thing that Roz, or any of the other staff, had spoken to me about, as if Dana was really making herself out to be something special.

Dana’s office arrangement was only natural, I guessed, as I sat and thought about it at my desk, fuming over the embarrassment I’d just suffered. Dana has her inner office where she does her work and has her business meetings. I’m in the outer office with the files, computers and stuff. Her third room is what Dana calls her dressing room. It has a bathroom as well. Well, if the Executive Washroom was really for men,

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as the EA room was for women, where could Dana use 'the facilities'?

If you knew Dana and how she thought of herself and her privileges, you'd know that she'd never use the same room as the EAs, assistants being a lower level to the assignment she had 'won', over many men.

The barbed remarks I'd received and not really understood, the raised eyebrows when I was introduced to other EAs on my first day of work, the winks and such from some of the men when I said who and what I was, all surged up to the front of my memory, making me feel so stupid. The reception had been so disconcerting at the start that I'd become something of a recluse around the company. I don't think anyone really knew who I was, now, as I didn't introduce myself any more, not wanting the winks and nods that I'd seen so much on my first day.

I tried to concentrate on my work. I had a program to write for my Laser 3000A computer, preparing a graphic display that Dana could use in her explanation to the Board of Directors, about why she would not be recommending the Technivision contracts.

On the surface, the contracts were fine and legally sound, but the liabilities were enormous. I had calculated them for Dana, the insurance premiums staggering. The New Accounts Division had been glowing in its praise of Technivision. I was the one, however, who'd researched the contract, clause by clause. My year in law school had helped me. I'd thought that was the reason why I'd landed a prestigious job with Ekco. I was pleased with myself and the work I'd done on Technivision. Now, I'd found out that I was 'just' a secretary.

I became more annoyed as I worked. When I'm angry, I work quickly. When I'm furious, I race through

any problem in front of me. I had the program completed and had the printer set for print handouts that the oldtimers on the Board always insisted upon.

Dana strolled out of her office, checked the program, raising her eyebrows at me in surprise and pleasure at what I had done.

"Pat," Dana said with a smile as I silently handed her the computer disk with the whole presentation laid out on it. "I'm gone for the next week. You'll hold the fort here until I get back. Damian will be after you for an advance look at our Technivision report."

Yes, I noted the 'our' in front of the work that I'd done entirely. Later, that 'our' would become 'my' in Dana's talking about the work. It had already happened twice in little papers I'd prepared for her.

"Don't tell him a thing, Pat," she ordered me, taking the papers that the printer had completed. "I want to surprise Damian Robertson with it at the next Projects Committee. Not a peep. If he knows anything about this before then, I'll know who to blame."

I looked up at Dana in shock. I couldn't believe the malicious look she gave me as she went into her inner office. Through the open door, I saw her put everything into her safe before she locked it.

"Not a word," Dana reiterated to me as she left. "See you at the end of next week!"

Dana Hansen looked smug as she stopped and chatted to some of the secretaries, sorry, administrative assistants, who seemed to think that she was really something. I knew what she was thinking of, her rivalry with Damian Robertson, one of Ekco's other Vice-Presidents. I think there were fifty Vice-Presidents at least. But some vice-presidents, as it says in *Animal Farm*, are more equal than others. Dana and Damian each had quite a lot of power and influence at

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Ekco while others were just names filling titular positions.

Damian was a 'coming man', Dana had said to me sarcastically, when she'd talked to me and told me about him. Roz had said, "Damian Robertson, he's one of Dana's string," when she'd gone down the list of VPs and oriented me to Ekco's ways of working, on my second or third working day.

No sooner had Dana left than Roz appeared in the doorway of the outer office. Roz is a striking redhead. A big girl, she's as tall as me, somewhat overweight, but she carried it well and dressed to disguise her real figure.

"So, Pat's in charge of Dana's office," Roz said, coming in and sitting on the edge of my desk. She gave me a wicked, little smile. "I'm surprised you're not in there," she signalled with a toss of her hair, at Dana's inner office, "exploring."

"Please, Roz," I said grimly. "I have a lot of work to do." I didn't really.

Roz's sly glance and raised eyebrow took in my clean desktop, the empty mail 'In' tray and the neatly stacked mail in the 'Out' tray. She smiled smugly at me and swung her legs off my desk. I thought she was going but she lifted the top of the printer and took out the original of the Technivision print report.

"Roz!" I snapped. "That's private for the Board." I moved to get it from her, but she was quicker at moving than I was. She was reading the recommendations before I could stop her.

"Roz!" I yelled again, snatching the copy from her hand. "That's strictly confidential!"

Roz gave me a stunned look. "You guys," she said, even though she knew Dana's work habits, and that I

was the one who did the research for her. "You're nixing the Tech bid!" she gasped.

"That's privileged information!" I snapped at her, something like panic rising in me as I knew what a gossip Roz was. Dana was hardly out the door and the secret she'd told me to keep would be common knowledge in Ekco before the nightshifts came on.

"Good grief! That's going to cause conniptions," smirked Roz, sitting down in my chair and grinning at me. "Damian," she went on, her voice highly amused. "He'll blow a fuse. Oh! Oh! That's why Dana's taken off for the week. Left you to deal with the blow-up."

"No," I told her in a panic. "That's privileged, Roz! You mustn't tell anyone what you read in here!"

Roz wouldn't, couldn't, it seemed, just leave it alone. "It won't be pretty," she said. "Damian Robertson will have your head, Pat, if he can't have Dana's, when he sees what you're recommending about his pet project!"

I couldn't tell Roz what Dana had said to me. Appealing to her better instincts wouldn't work. The woman had none, I thought sourly. But I didn't want it all over the office that she'd seen the report and what it recommended. That surely would have made Dana fire me. I would leave Ekco soon, but I wanted it to be on my own terms. My thinking and fuming about being an EA, a personal secretary, had made up my mind about that.

"Roz," I interrupted her glee at what would happen when Damian found out about my recommendation. "You shouldn't have seen this report."

Roz smiled at me. "I shouldn't see inside Dana's office either," she pouted at me as I shivered. "I won't tell about either one, if you don't."

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I was trapped, sort of. Would Roz be a blabbermouth about the office? I didn't know. She was clearly the outer office 'snoop'. She had her nose in just about everything.

"All right," I agreed. "For a few minutes."

Dana's inner office was comfortable, though Roz found the carpeting 'upgraded' from her, Rosemary Henning's, boss, another VP. The pictures were originals, she said with certainty.

Dana's 'third office', her dressing room as she called it, was an eye-opener for me as well as Roz. I'd only had glimpses from the inner room when Dana had gone in there to get something, like a different jacket.

The room was pink with full drapes and lace curtains across the room's only window, concealing the room from the skyscrapers looking down and across at the Ekco Building. There was a huge dressing table, surrounded by soft lighting, mirrors and just about every cosmetic known to humanity. There was a huge, walk-in closet, that Roz oohed and aahed at. Dresses, in plastic covers, hung there in rows.

There were shelves of women's shoes with high heels of every height. There were wigs on the shelves above, mostly in Dana's natural hair color, in styles that I had seen before and admired. I recognized, as well, several different colors, including the long, blonde fall that Dana had worn for a 'special occasion' once.

"Luxury!" murmured an astounded Roz, her hands caressing a gold-threaded dress. "This is incredible. It's as if Dana had her own apartment right here!"

"She doesn't have a bed," I pointed out. "It's just what Dana says that it is, a dressing room."

"This is so much more than that," sighed Roz, opening drawers in the dressing table and lifting out packages containing fancy women's lingerie, dark blue and red, very sexy.

"You know that she has to entertain a lot after work," I said as Roz examined each drawer, the panties, bra and stockings, very closely.

"Wow!" exclaimed Roz as she shifted the heavy, dark curtain at the end of the room. It was a shower curtain in fact and revealed a low, shiny, black bath tub behind it. "She definitely does have the power, doesn't she, our Dana!"

"Perhaps she deserves it," I said uncomfortably as Roz caressed the long drapes that had concealed the bath alcove. She continued on with her inspection, reaching up to the cupboards above the pink marble sink and john. She giggled as she showed me a pink safety razor.

"Time to go," I said to Roz, opening the door to Dana's inner office.

Roz looked around, envy written clearly on her face. She touched the frilly, feminine lamps and the padded, pink chair.

"And you have all of this to yourself, Pat, for a week," Roz said with a coy smile at me.

"I'll be at my work station," I said firmly, locking the dressing room with the key that had opened it from the key-set Dana had given me some weeks before.

"I wonder if her dresses would fit me?" mused Roz as we left the inner office.

"Roz!" I exclaimed in alarm.

"Well," Roz said, with that same supercilious smirk on her face as when she had defended the EA bathroom from me. "They'd fit you all right. Dana would

never know if it was you who tried them on. But I suppose," she looked down regretfully at her arms and plump hips, "she'd know right away if I did."

"Don't even think of it!" I snapped at Roz.

"I won't if you won't," laughed Roz, giving me a playful tap on the shoulder. "You'd look good in that black and silver ball gown, though. Imagine, with a wig and that fox fur stole. Um, um, um, you'd look as good as your boss, you know. I would love to see you in it. Can't we have a dress up party some time next week when my desk is as tidy as yours?"

Rosemary Henning went off laughing at my flushed face. I shuddered at the thoughts she had left me with and just hoped that she could be trusted not to gossip about the report or Dana Hansen's dressing room.

II. THE CRISIS

"I want to speak to Pat," said the female voice on the phone.

"Pat speaking," I said easily.

There was a short silence. "Oh," said the woman who had called Dana's office. "This is Cheryl Bonney, Mr Robertson's EA. He's on his way over to collect some papers that Ms Hansen left for him."

"Which were in what connection?" I asked her politely.

"The Technivision report," said the woman after what seemed like a search through some papers in front of her. "Ms Hansen has left you, Pat Kirk, in charge of Contracts, hasn't she?"

I hesitated. What if I agreed, and also agreed that there was a report? Damian Robertson, a VP, could or-

der me to give it to him, and what could I do, but to give it to him?

"I thought that I should warn you," said Cheryl quickly. "Mr Robertson is really anxious to get his hands on the contracts so that the project he has promised can get under way. Roz let the cat out of the bag in the EA room. She said that Pat, that's you, isn't it, had really done the work, not Dana, um, Ms Hansen.

"The girls in this office all want to be the first one to bed our handsome Damian. You know how it is. So, one of them, not me, told him all about the report and that Dana was gone for a while. So, watch out. He's coming in and looking for Pat. Heads up!"

I was flabbergasted. "Th-thanks for the w-warn-ing," I stammered.

"That's all right, girl," came Cheryl's voice. "Now, if I were you, I'd go home sick. You do sound very throaty, you know. You're on the spot with Dana away, aren't you, dear? So, go home quickly."

"I'm," I began, confused with her calling me in the first place, and then calling me 'girl' over the phone. I mean, my voice isn't that fruity, is it?

"I used to work for Dana," came Cheryl's cheerful, disembodied voice in my ear. "Back in Legal Affairs. You can tell her from me, when you see her, that we are close to being even now."

"But," I gasped. Cheryl had hung up, however.

Roz chose that moment to come busting in. "Oh, Pat," she moaned, looking at me like a little girl with a big sin to confess. "You'll never guess what I did."

I looked at her stonily. "You blabbed about Technivision," I said icily, "and Damian Robertson is on his way over to browbeat a copy of the report out of me, a report I was told by Dana expressly to keep secret for the next Board meeting."

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"It's worse," Roz said with a worried look at me. She bit her lower lip, smearing her teeth a little with lipstick.

I reached for a tissue to give to her.

"He's in Magus' office right now," Roz said. Magus was the company's Comptroller, his office on the same floor as Dana's, just a little way down the hallway. "I came up behind him on the elevator. He was talking to Mort Cooper. He thinks that Pat Kirk is female!"

I grimaced at Rosemary Henning. "Then, he'll have another think coming, won't he?" I said, turning back to the program that was running calculations on two overseas contracts Ekco wanted to take up. I was finding it hard to reconcile the insurance costs to the size of the operations. One of the contracts was definitely dubious, as proposed.

"You didn't hear him," said Roz fearfully. "Mort asked him what he'd do if you were a man. And Damian Robertson laughed. He said that he wished you were because he could then fire you on the spot if what he heard about your report, yes, he said Pat Kirk's report, and not Dana's report, was as bad and as biased as he'd heard."

"He can't fire me," I said to her with a tremble in my voice. "I work for Dana Hansen, not him."

"Mr Robertson said he could do that," said Roz in distress. "Fisher in Personnel will do whatever he wants, he said to Mort. He said that Pat Kirk was a woman's name, though, and you know what that meant. You'd be in tears and crying at him if he so much as raised his voice. So, he hoped he was wrong and that you were a man. Then, he'd have you out. He'd have the report downloaded by a computer tech before Dana could do anything!"

"But," I gulped, "Dana, Ms Hansen, gave me very specific orders."

"If you're fired," cried Roz, "you have to turn everything over anyway to Personnel!"

"There goes Len Fisher," cried Roz, pointing out of the glass windowed door to a grey-haired man who was heading down the hallway. He stopped and talked to Christine, the blonde, office flirt, in what had once been the steno pool.

"It won't come to being fired," I said weakly.

"I bet Fisher is going to Magus's office," said Roz emphatically. "If Robertson or Fisher sees you in here, they're just going to say, 'On your way. Turn what you're working on over to Personnel', and then Damian will have your report. He'll have the whole office to rummage through, for Dana's files, while she's away and you're not here!"

"He can't do that!" I gasped, a knot in my stomach. I was supposed to be the gatekeeper, in charge of Dana's office files. "I'll protest!"

"To the Harassment Office?" Roz asked, actually wringing her hands together in her distress. "That's just for women. Do you know where Dana is?"

"Skiing out west," I said. "I'll call the resort she said she was going to."

"No time," said Roz, pointing to the little knot of people gathering close to Christine. A tall dark-haired man was laughing with her, his arm on Len Fisher's elbow as if he wanted to talk to him and get him to do something for him. "There's Damian. He'll see us if we go out!"

"I'm fired," I told Roz, my heart fluttering in my chest at the distress I felt.

"If Pat were only Patricia," said Roz and then her eyes opened wide as some idea hit her. "Come on!"

she blurted out at me. She grabbed my hand and began to pull me into the inner office.

Roz demanded the keys. I gave them to her, thinking she'd lock the inner door but Roz went immediately to the dressing room and opened it, hurrying me in there. I was quite confused at what she wanted me to do, there, in the back room. I supposed she would lock me in and hide me away from Damian Robertson, but the computers were still in the outer office. They could be taken away for some tech to play with. I doubted if what I had done would be concealed for long.

Roz went straight for a wig blocks, eyeing me speculatively as she did so. Suddenly, it clicked! I got the picture of what Roz wanted me to do.

"No!" I said. "Hey no, Roz. I'm not doing anything silly like that!"

"It's the only way to save Dana and your job," insisted Roz. "Quick! A wig! A little makeup. That's all. We'll put a scarf about your neck and a loose coat on you. You'll sit all the time. I'll say you have a cold and can barely whisper. Oh, come on, Pat! It's the only way to keep Damian Robertson out of here! Oh Pat!" she began to cry. "Don't you see? When this all gets out, everyone will know it was me who was the blabbermouth! I'll be the one fired! I can't lose my job, Pat, I can't! I've got my kids to think about!"

Funny, I hadn't been thinking of the predicament Roz was in. When Dana got back, however, there'd be hell to pay. I was sure of that. Cheryl, and other people I didn't even know, already knew that it was Roz who'd given Damian the spur and the excuse he needed to come up and rifle Dana's office.

"Oh, sit down, Pat!" cried Roz; I sat.

"This won't work," I insisted.

Roz whipped my tie off. The silk scarf she re-tied about me was orange and black, soft like a cravat. The dark-haired wig she put on my head fell partly across my face.

"Roz!" I exclaimed but she began combing and poking. I looked like a hippy version of myself but with curled, wavy hair. It was odd to see how I looked so pansy-ish, so femmy, so quickly. Roz grabbed a stick of lipstick, very pink, and quickly dabbed it on my lips. A few deft lines followed with a dark pencil at my eyes and over my eyebrows.

"See," said Roz.

I shuddered. My gender orientation was definitely changed if only you had to look at me from the neck up. I stared at my face, at my girlish face, my clone, I thought wildly, looked back somberly at me. It was amazing that with so little, a wig and a darkening of my eyelashes, makeup on my eyes, and I could see what Roz must have noticed about me long before. I did look womanish!

"Quick, the coat!" hissed Roz. She draped a loose, dark, shaped coat of Dana's over my shoulders. We heard the noise from the outer office. We'd barely got out of Dana's sanctuary, when Damian Robertson came bursting into the main, or outer office.

Mr Robertson, as I thought of him then, came to the inner door and stared across the office at Roz and me. My stomach hit the floor as I saw the intense look on his face as he stared at me, stared at Dana's wig that Roz had insisted that I wore. I had to sit down behind Dana's desk, my legs shaking as I thought about the absurd thing I was doing.

"No, Len," said Damian over his shoulder to someone behind him. "I won't need you after all."

“Mr Robertson,” said Roz brightly as I wished for the world to end as I expected the man to march over to me any second, pull the wig from my head and expose me as some kind of pervert, to the office. “Mr Robertson,” Roz went on, “I don’t think that you’ve met Pat Kirk, Ms Hansen’s Executive Assistant, have you?”

Damian Robertson’s slate-grey eyes hadn’t left my face at all. I knew that I must hold his look, but I could barely do it. He knows, I thought, panic-stricken. How stupid could I have been? Roz had gotten me into a crisis even worse than the one she’d been trying to get me out of. I felt hot, shivering as curls drifted over my face. I remembered how girls used two hands to push their hair back from their face. I tried to do that, but not disturb my wig at all.

I had to look away, down at the woman’s coat covering my shirt and pants. I shivered as I saw Damian Robertson fold his arms, lean on the door frame and glare at me.

“You’re acting in Dana’s place these days?” asked Damian Robertson with a pleasant smile on his tanned, handsome face. Well, I’d heard girls say that he was the handsomest man in Ekco. I suppose with black hair and eyebrows, piercing blue-grey eyes, a straight nose and a firm chin, he was handsome. He was also obviously athletic, and rich, or so I think all the VPs were.

I looked to Roz, but she seemed as flustered as I was. I glanced back at Damian and saw him smile, even white teeth shown, as he caught the exchange of looks between Roz and me.

“You girls have been talking,” Damian Robertson said abruptly, still staring at me.

There was a pause as his dark grey eyes bored into me, demanding that I acknowledge him. I nodded a little, quivering inside, the long hair falling over my face again. Once more, I had to use both hands to push it back from my face, as I was hoping that I looked womanly to another man.

Damian sighed and stepped into the inner office. He sat down in the chair opposite Dana's, where I was sitting and shivering, and shook his head ruefully at me. "Well, Ms Kirk," he said to me with a twist of his mouth that I later realized was his typical smile, "if the secretary's hot line is as good in this firm as it was in my last, I expect that you know what I want from you."

"Ms Hansen," began Roz as I looked away, shivering at the intensity of the scrutiny I was under.

"Let her tell me," Damian cut in quite rudely.

I looked up at his intent gaze once more. What have you led me into doing, Roz? I asked myself once again. Briefly, I shook my head again as I tried to gather the words I must say to him. Should I try to alter my voice and how could I do that, I thought frantically.

But it didn't matter. Damian took my head shaking to be a 'No' from me. He was off into a long harangue about who I thought that I was, a secretary, yes, that is what he called me, intervening in a huge enterprise in the way that I apparently had. Who did I think I was, he thundered at me. What experience did I have in business? He went on for nearly ten minutes while I just sat there, squirming, saying nothing to all the questions that he posed. I just sat and trembled on the inside, fearful at any second that he would realize that he was not talking to a woman. I hardly heard what he said, making no sense of all the personal attacks upon me and upon Dana Hansen.

Finally, Damian stopped in mid-sentence, glowering at me, as my heart seemed to jump up into my mouth again. "He knows!" I screamed inside. "He's about to jump over this desk and, and ..."

But, of course, Damian Robertson did nothing of the kind. "How come I haven't seen you around before?" he suddenly asked me abruptly. "I thought that I knew every beautiful girl in the building."

Damian's wide smile showed off even, white-capped teeth but the look in his eyes was purely terrifying. I couldn't help the involuntary shudder that went through me.

Damian's smile faded. He almost snarled at me when he spoke again. "All right, Miss Iceberg," he snapped. "Give me the Technivision report and I'll be on my way."

He held out his well-manicured hand across the desk to me. My shaking was again pretty involuntary, as was the folding of my arms and my leaning away from him in alarm.

Damian glowered, said a few choice words about me, about Dana's choosing someone like me who didn't understand the simple rules of being a secretary. He slammed his chair back and exited Dana's office in a huff, while I just sat there, quaking in the backwash of the other man's fury at not getting what he wanted.

"Phew!" said Roz, her mouth agape as she watched the outer door's trembling finally stop.

I stood up, weak at the knees and wobbled over to Dana's inner sanctum. The dark-haired 'girl' stared at me from the mirror, looking as frightened and anxious as I felt. Thank goodness, I said to myself in relief, as the girl removed her wig and then had to attend to her makeup. Why ever did I just do what I had just done, pretend to be a girl? At least, it's over for good!

III. THE REPLACEMENT

"But you can't be away that long!" I insisted to Dana when she telephoned the following day.

Dana laughed. "But I am," she said with a girlish giggle. "And I've met such a cute doctor. Well, you don't need to know all about that. Anyway, I've recommended you to Al," that would be, yes, Alexander Barnes, her boss, and son of the company's founder. "He'll guide you through the presentation you can make, for me, to the Board about Technivision. He said he'd be delighted to assist you, Pat. You'll surprise him when he sees who I have as my new Executive Assistant!"

"But Dana," I gasped into the phone. "I can't ..."

"Just do me a favor and lay the mistakes made in this process with Technivision at Damian Robertson's door, Pat," said Dana gaily. I guess if I was taking a further month's holiday cruising the South Pacific, "investigating a takeover and possibly a new job", as Dana had confided in me, I'd have sounded pretty happy, as well.

"Now, don't let Damian intimidate you," Dana warned me much too late. "He tries that on with all new people but, after you stand up to him, he'll be much more pleasant to you, you'll see. Anyway, Damian will try to take over and run Contracts as soon as he knows that I'm away for a while. But Al knows all about him. He knows you'll be my Acting stand-in while I'm away. You can do it, Pat. You really can. And Al will help you out if you ask him."

"But Dana," I was still protesting when she hung up on me, before I could tell her what an idiot I'd been, playing such a juvenile trick on Damian Robertson. I could only sit there, stare at the phone and blush as I

thought of how I'd met him as 'Patricia Kirk' in order to save Roz's and my jobs. Trust Roz to breeze into the office at just that moment.

I put the phone down slowly, trying to think through all that I'd just heard. I was suddenly aware of all that it meant, all that I would lose. I would have been an Acting Head of the Contracts Department. It would have been such a boost to Pat Kirk's budding career.

I really didn't want Roz's blather at that point. She parked herself on my desk again. I rolled my chair over to my work station, trying to concentrate on Texas Videotronics, but my mind wasn't up to it. The screen stayed a mass of incomprehensible, patternless figures, as I thought about what Dana had said, and what I'd done, in her office, with Roz.

Roz grabbed the phone, when it rang, before I even had the time to turn around.

"Ms Hansen's office," she said brightly. Suddenly, she gave a snort and said, "No, this is not Miss Kirk." Then she listened and went, "Ah, hum," a few times before slowly putting the phone down.

"Why didn't you tell me that you were an Acting Vice-President?" Roz asked me accusingly.

"Not Vice-President," I told her nervously. "Dana just wants me to be an Acting, in her place, while she's on holiday for a month." Or more.

"You'll have to have a new EA," said Roz, staring at me as intently as Damian Robertson had. "I think that it has to be me."

"Now, Roz," I began, knowing Personnel would do that job, and probably slip someone with an ear out for Damian Robertson, into the office with me.

"It has to be me," said Roz firmly, standing up. "That was young Mr Barnes' secretary. She thinks that



it's Miss Kirk who's got the job here and so does Mr Barnes." My stomach did flip-flops as I heard what I didn't want to hear. "He's looking forward to going over your work with you at the Projects' Committee meeting."

My knees felt rubbery. I blushed, felling that my mouth was dry, too. "I have to call them back, correct things," I said, reaching for the phone but Roz stopped me.

"And get me fired," she said. That look in Roz's eyes when she was pleading with me had returned. "Damian saw me in here with you. I introduced you to him and he's on the Committee."

"So, what shall I do?" I croaked. "Call in sick on the days the Committee meets? Just send in my work."

"I'll cover for you," Roz said urgently. "But there's one thing that we have to do right now."

"W-What's that?" I asked, shivering nervously at the look in her eyes.

"We have to do what we did to Damian," Roz said with a strange, enigmatic smile on her face, "because Al Barnes is on his way over to meet you before you go to Projects on Monday."

"I can't do that again!" I said, a flush rising all through me as I thought of how I, Pat, had looked in the dark-haired wig of Dana's.

But I did do it all again. In fact, I did more. I actually put on women's clothes, a dark pant suit of Dana's, and women's shoes as well as the wig and makeup because, as Roz pointed out, I was going to have to stand away from the desk. Mr Barnes would see me, all of me, if I had to move to the computer and show him what I was about.

"My, my voice," I croaked dryly again.

“Just keep it up, breathy and light,” Roz urged me. “He’ll never know the difference. I’ve a hard time sometimes, when you talk to me, figuring you out.” That gave me quite a start. I’d talked to Cheryl on the phone. Damian’s secretary had called me ‘girl’ which had sent a tingle through me. When I answered the phone at home, I was always being asked if my mother was at home. I usually had to clear my throat. Then, there were apologies all around for mistaking who I was.

“Keep it up, light, breathy,” repeated Roz, “and Al will never know. We’ll say that you’ve just got over the flu and still have some laryngitis. Keep pulling on the box of tissues and dab at your mouth. It’ll set up a reason for you not being here for Monday’s meeting, as well.”

Roz had hardly stopped talking as I was thinking how silly this all was. I should change back right away and just be myself. Al would laugh at the way he’d mistaken Pat for a woman’s name; and that would be it.

Roz brought a mascara wand to my eyelashes which was too much, I decided, standing to go back, and stop this silly game we were playing. A tap on the glass, front door to the office, and Alexander Whitelaw Barnes, junior, walked into our offices as though he owned the place, which he probably did.

Al Barnes was about thirty-five years old, just starting to thicken at the waist but carrying it well at over six feet tall. He was starting to grey which gave his dark, black hair a distinguished touch. His features, to me, were what I’d have called regular, but the girls in the office, I heard from Roz, swooned over him nearly as much as they did Damian Robertson. I’d seen him in the distance many times. He was always smiling

pleasantly at someone. Today was no different as his eyes lit up at seeing Roz and me.

Roz tried to take over the conversation for me right away. Oh, I was so thankful for that, as Al Barnes kept on smiling at me.

"Mr Barnes," Roz said, batting her thickly painted eyelashes at him. "How nice of you to drop in and see how we're getting on in Ms Hansen's absence."

Al Barnes' mouth tightened a little, but he knew Rosemary, as he called her, and the two exchanged pleasantries as I was introduced. I had to let my hand go limp, Roz had told me I must, while he gripped mine firmly before letting go.

I felt so queasy that I didn't have to feign, very much, being sick. I could only imagine what I looked like to Al Barnes with my made-up face, this wig so hot on my head. My stomach was barely under control as my feet wobbled so uneasily in high-heeled shoes.

Al Barnes was watching me, my temperature beginning to soar, as Roz babbled on about how we had everything under control. "Is it Pat Kirk?" he asked me when he could get a word in edgeways with Roz. I caught the doubtful tone in his voice and felt a moment of panic again.

I couldn't help flushing and looking down at Dana's pretty shoes on my bare feet.

"Of course, she's Pat Kirk," cut in Roz nervously. "Who else would she be, in here?"

Al Barnes was staring at me when I lifted my eyes to look at him. I looked around for a place to run. There was really only Dana's inner sanctum.

"I don't think that we've ever met before," said Al Barnes with a frown at me, ignoring Roz, and indicating to me to sit in Dana's chair on her side of the desk, while he sat opposite me. It was quite a trial for me to

do that, to keep my arms in and to cross my legs after I had been seated, as Roz had told me to do. Al waited so politely for me. This was so silly!

My thoughts were panic-stricken. Whyever was I doing this, wearing clothes that a woman would, pretending that I was a girl. Oh, to save our jobs, that's why we were doing this. But I didn't need to do this when Roz had been babbling at me, did I? I should confess to Al Barnes and let him fire me! No, I couldn't do that now. I had to play this out and then be sick, very, very sick!

"I thought that we should meet before Monday's Projects Committee," said Al Barnes, his blue eyes sparkling as he smiled at me. "Is it Patricia Kirk that you normally go by, or do you have some other diminutive that others call you, like Trish or Tricia? I like to get those things right. Or is it Pat?"

"We call her 'Trish' over here," said Roz immediately. "It's the people out of the office who call her 'Pat'."

"Well, I won't again, Trish," said Al Barnes warmly as I wanted to kill Rosemary Henning on the spot.

Flustered, I reached for a tissue as Roz had suggested and felt the hair again falling over my face as I leaned forward. I began to blush and couldn't look at Al Barnes as I did that feminine thing again, pushing my hair back off my face and behind my ears. If he thinks I'm a man, I'm going to die of embarrassment, I thought fearfully. But if he thinks I'm a woman, I'm also going to die, of humiliation. I couldn't face him at all.

"I've heard a rumor about a report on Technivision," Al Barnes said with a smile of encouragement to me.

Oh no, I thought. Why can't they all leave that one alone for a while, at least until Monday?

"Dana said that the work was all yours, Trish," Al Barnes added, his voice trailing off as he started to frown at me.

I'm found out! I thought frantically as he stared at me, but Roz intervened to save the day.

"Miss Kirk's report on Technivision is right in here, Mr Barnes," she said with a smile, indicating the safe in Dana's inner office. "Would you like a copy of Miss Kirk's intended presentation as well?"

I glanced up through dark lashes, shuddering at the thought of how stupid he must be thinking I was, as I couldn't talk to him. My mouth seemed to be frozen shut by the lipstick I could feel on my lips.

"I would like to look over the work," Al Barnes said thoughtfully. So, I had to get up and then kneel in some sort of weird Bunny Dip position as Roz called it as I opened the safe. I took out the disks with my work and presentation for Dana, as well as a written copy of the recommendations, and a summary, of the rest.

I wobbled to my feet and made copies of the disks before returning the originals to the safe as Roz rattled on about how sick I was and how I was recovering from a 'vicious' attack of the flu.

"I can look this over?" asked Al Barnes politely. As Acting Head of my Section, or whatever, I nodded that he could take it all with him.

"Might as well," I mumbled at last, trying to be light and flippant in tone. I looked over at Roz as I said, "Everyone else has." She flushed. Al caught it and frowned at us. I think there was a gleam of understanding in his face as he smiled at me as I stood in Dana's womanly pants and pushed my hair back again from my face.

"Great!" said Al Barnes enthusiastically. He tapped the envelope of disks and recommendations I'd given him, a shiver running through me as he did so. "I like this. Dana is always so secretive about projects before she springs her alarms on us at meetings of the Board.

"I'm one of those who hates surprises. I wouldn't mind sending out the written summary to all section heads. Would that be all right, Trish? Please, if you need more time to think about it, a change in Dana's policy, just like that, just tell me. You are the Contracts Section Head now, you know, and you can tell me where to go."

Al Barnes smiled at me again so sincerely that I couldn't help the shiver that ran through me. "All right," I croaked.

"Nasty colds at this time of the year," Al said sympathetically. "I hope you'll have recovered enough to speak to your own work at Monday's meeting, Trish. In the meantime, I'll let you decide about the copies to Section Heads. If you could ensure that they all get them, if you don't change your mind after I leave, I'd appreciate that."

I nodded, not daring to say more.

Al smiled again, his face so alive with good humor. "It will also cut the ground from under Damian Robertson's feet," he said, "as secrecy won't be an issue any more, but he'll still come to the meeting, armed with his counter-attack. That is, I am presuming that you have genuine concerns about Technivision and what we are about to offer them. And that Damian will oppose you."

I nodded as Al stood and held out his hand to me, again. I was trembling, the wig hair swishing so girlishly about my head, as I reached out and let him shake my limp hand.

"Welcome to Ekco, Trish," Al Barnes grinned boyishly at me. "I'm looking forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead."

IV. NO-ONE'S GOING TO KNOW!

"I can't do this, Roz! I just can't!" I told her as we retreated to Dana's dressing room. Shuddering, I tried to get out of the things of Dana's that I'd put on.

"You can be a woman," insisted Roz, her words making me shiver all over. "Look at yourself."

I looked at the girl in the mirror who looked back at me in abject terror at what she was doing in Dana's dressing room.

"You want to go back to law school, don't you?" asked Roz. "You want that combined MBA-Law degree. Well, do you know how much money you'll make as Dana's replacement? What if she decides not to come back, and they ask you to stay on for one more month? In the time till someone else gets appointed, you'll have made sixty thousand dollars plus.

"Heck," she went on, counting on her fingers, while I squirmed in the skirt that I was wearing, one she'd asked me to try on, "I figure they might keep you on indefinitely! If you get past the end of the fiscal year, you'll even be entitled to a pro-rated bonus! And the way I figure it, even if they find out then, after a month or two, how you fooled them, they'll be willing, in any case, to pay you off quietly to just get you out of here."

"And what about you?" I croaked at her. "What are you going to get out of this? If I'm discovered, then they'll be coming after you. They'll know that you knew. You won't have a job after all your scheming, anyway."

"They'll pay me off as well," said Roz uncertainly. "Look. You have to shave your legs before we can put you in a skirt. You know the unwritten rule. At Board meetings, all the women wear skirts and blouses and colorful power suits. It's what the old fogies expect! Even Dana complied with that rule. On Monday, you'll have to wear a skirt!"

"I'll have to be in drag!" I told her, mentally kicking myself for the predicament I'd put myself in. I should just pick up the phone, call Al Barnes back and confess what had been going on.

"It will be easy for you!" insisted Roz, indicating my face where she had glamorized me after Al Barnes had left. Now I had thick, false eyelashes on my eyes that curled femininely in front of me. I had rouge on my cheeks and face powder while my lips were a fresher, shiny pink than they had been before. Somehow, Rosemary had disguised my eyebrows and re-pencilled them on me as feminine arches. That, with my hair held back by barrettes and clip-on earrings that she had found somewhere, I looked, I could see in fascinated astonishment, like an attractive, elegant young woman. And, with Dana's clothing on me, I even felt like a woman as well!

I stood up unsteadily and opened the jacket of the black suit that I'd worn in front of Al Barnes. Roz tried to stop me. "No one's going to know," she insisted, her hand on my arm, pressing the silky material of the blouse I wore, against me. "We keep track of Dana's movements. The day before she's due back, you hand in your resignation and accept the big check they'll give you.

"I'll bet they give you a recommendation to another company as well. I'll say you fooled me, if I have to, if Dana does come back. I'll say that I thought you were

transgendered or something and had the permission of the brass to dress as a woman. I never said anything because I was a loyal employee, not wanting to hurt the firm or you, who was a darling to work for, so sweet and kind and ..."

"Stop!" I yelled at Rosemary Henning at last. "Just stop, Roz, please, and let me think."

"What's to think about?" asked the irrepressible Roz. "You get fired today or you get fired five weeks from now with twenty-five thousand plus, at a minimum, no bonuses, in your pocket. I can't think further ahead than that. Oh, by the way, this form is your request to Personnel to lift me one grade in the pay structure and appoint me as your Executive Assistant."

I kicked the high heels off my stockinged feet and began to undo the black skirt that Roz had had me wear. How had she persuaded me to do this, get dressed in drag, even in female underwear! "Just try these on and let me show you how easy it will be for you," Roz had said, while I had been studying my sort of mannish appearance in the pantsuit.

The phone rang in the office. Roz went out of the open dressing room in a hurry and picked it up from Dana's desk. "Trisha Kirk's office," she said gaily. "Oh, yes, Mr Barnes, I will tell her that. She would thank you if she had any kind of voice. Oh, that is most kind of you, but I have already promised to give Trisha a ride home in my car. I will tell her. Yes, I will, and thank you, Mr Barnes."

While Roz's attention had been taken up with the phone, I'd hastily taken off the skirt and blouse and taken the stockings from my legs. Back in my own vest and underpants, I still looked like a woman because of the wig and the makeup. I took the wig off, put it on its stand and looked at myself. Oh, I recognized what I

looked like, then. I shuddered as I looked at a caricature of a woman. I looked like a man who wanted to be a woman, a she-male, I think they called it.

It was the earrings and the necklace. I took them off and the pain at my ears was intense. I hadn't realized how tightly they had clung to me. The false eyelashes came next and then I smothered my face in the cream that was clearly marked as makeup remover.

Not all the lines on my face came clean. "Here," said Roz, opening the curtain and turning on the bath. "This is what you need to get rid of all that completely. You need to soak for a while in the warm and open up all the pores. Then the makeup will come off easily."

"Thank you," I told her gratefully, as she ran the bath and pulled forward a screen, that would have prevented anyone seeing me in the bath, even if the door was open. I dropped my pants and vest on a chair while Roz re-positioned the screen and told me to enjoy a good soak.

"Hey!" I said as Roz poured in several oils into the water which almost immediately seemed to waft an array of scents up to my nose.

"Dana has such wonderful, expensive things," enthused Roz. "I wish I was the one in the bath right now but you're the boss, Trisha."

"That's not my name!" I told her, but Rosemary only laughed as she bustled out.

"Hey!" I yelled after her. "What did Al Barnes say to you on the phone?"

Roz came back and smiled. "He told me to tell you that your presentation disks are the most impressive he's seen in years, Trish," she said. Oh, I felt so elated at the praise. But, at the same time, I was deflated at being praised now, when I couldn't react to it at all as I should. I would be doing no presentation on Monday.

"He called you Trish," smiled Roz, "and offered you a ride home to discuss how he'll introduce you at the meeting. He told me to tell you to make sure you wore a skirt or a dress on Monday as the men will all be looking at your pretty legs."

"Oh, yes," I had to laugh at her. "I bet he said that to my secretary."

"Well, maybe he didn't quite say it that way," said Roz, "but he was thinking it, believe me. All the men around here are like that. Boobs and legs, it's what they look at us for, all the time."

"Well, I won't have that problem," I told Roz, "as I do not intend to be at the meeting on Monday. I am going to be very sick for the next little while, as I think out what I am going to do."

Roz gave me a shocked, intense look then, came forward and moved the screen again. "I told you what you should do," she murmured but I chose to ignore her and not reply to that.

It was very pleasant to soak in the water and run some over my face and hair as Roz had told me to. I heard her bustling about in the inner office and twice heard her talking to someone.

Finally, I stood up, water dripping from me, took the towel and let the bathwater go. Roz must have heard the gurgling sound. It brought Roz back right away as I was drying myself.

"Roz!" I said for the umpteenth time. "A little privacy, if you don't mind!"

Rosemary shrugged but pulled the screen back. There was a pretty, white dress with blue flowers, I noticed, hanging on the front rail of Dana's walk-in closet. I didn't see my clothes anywhere on the chair where I'd left them.

"What are you looking for?" asked Roz innocently as my gut tightened. I shivered as I knew she had done something with my stuff.

"My clothes," I began as Roz moved forward and stroked the dress, making it rustle as clearly it was layered with undershirts, petticoats I supposed.

"My real clothes," I said angrily. Roz went all wide-eyed and innocent on me again.

"But Trisha," she exclaimed, "this is such a pretty dress and will suit you so much better than the ratty old duds I just sent out to the Sally Army."

"Roz!" I bellowed at her, charging out to the inner office. I ran around, looking in all the obvious places where she could have hidden my male clothes.

"They're really gone," she said, mocking me, "save for your keys, money and cellphone. I tossed that ratty comb you had in your pocket into the trash along with those handkerchiefs you like to use. You should use tissues anyway."

"Roz!" I swore at her. "If you don't bring my clothes back right away, you're fired! I'll see to that!"

"Oh, Trish," said Roz with a pout from where she stood. "And after you just appointed me your EA? Personnel just sent you a note to tell you I was transferred to you, Miss Patricia Kirk. Yes, Trish, they've amended all their records concerning you so that your name is used correctly. They want a photo of you, you didn't ever have one, you slacker, a pretty one in a summer's dress like the pretty thing you'll be wearing home tonight!"

I was speechless as I looked at the conniving woman who'd become 'my' secretary. I mean, my Executive Assistant.

"I sent out all those hideous pantsuits of Dana's as well, to the cleaner's," said Rosemary, smiling at me.

"So, Miss Kirk, if this dress isn't to your liking, why don't you come into your dressing room and choose something briefer and more revealing to wear, something that you do like?"

I fumed and hollered. I had a temper tantrum. But nothing mattered in the end. The cleaning staff would come in very soon. I was lucky they hadn't come in already to see me as half a man, and half a woman. They'd find me in a towel, in a woman's dressing room, in a woman's office, if I stuck it out that long.

"This is only for a month," said Roz as I looked anxiously at all the feminine finery in Dana's special room. "But you have to do it right, Trisha. You really do have to attend to those legs while I have to get that dark stuff off your face."

I thought that she meant the makeup, but Roz didn't. I finally sat down in the towel in front of the dressing table mirror and Roz slathered something all over my chin and around my eyebrows.

The bath was running again as I turned to ask her what she was doing. "Shush!" said Roz. "In for a penny, in for a pound, Miss Patricia Kirk! No gain without a little pain. Just think of all those lovely dollars, coming your way on your next paycheck, and let me help you make this work."

Before I could effectively protest, Roz was daubing lotion all over me, over my back, under my arms. She pulled away my towel and lathered my legs and hips and even my pubic area. There, the stuff got splattered everywhere as I tried to keep the madwoman off me.

"Into the bath," she said as she capped the bottles she'd used. With the way I smelled and with how greasy I was, I had to do it, glowering at her all the way.

I knew what was going to happen as she got a rough cloth and began wiping me down. All the hair on my body came off on her cloths. Yes, Roz was getting her way. To get out of the office tonight, I trembled at the thought, I'd have to wear nylons on my legs, the hair totally gone from them.

My face stung at what she took from me. I don't have much beard, but I had none after the application she put on my face. I shook nervously at the evidence of no beard or hair on me anywhere, as I stared at myself. Almost all of my eyebrows were gone as well. Only two small arches remained over my eyes.

"What, what?" I began fearfully but I knew what Roz had done and why she'd done it.

"Look, Trish," said Roz firmly. "We can get away with this but only if you take it as seriously as I do. I can help you to be a woman, to look and smell and sa-shay like one, even to sound like one. But you have to co-operate to earn the big money that you will be the one to get. I will just get to keep my job. At best, I'll be bounced back a grade if they find you out, Trisha, and know that I helped you deceive anyone. Or they'll fire me."

Co-operation meant putting on a woman's underclothes, even more seductively than that first time, when it was all just trying to find something to fit me. It meant wearing a tiny, bikini bottom tightly about my genitals and a flowery pair of Dana's panties on top of those. It meant wearing a bra and having pads inserted so that I looked like a woman in front. It meant being made-up smartly, which means somewhere between what Damian Robertson had seen on me and what Roz had done to me after Al Barnes had gone.

"This is too much!" I gasped at Roz as she put a girdle about me, tightening it horribly about my waist. She padded my hips and tush with clean panties from Dana's drawers.

The stockings felt so different on my bare legs with the tug of the garters, as Roz called them, that dangled from my girdle, sending weird sensations through me.

"A girl has to have a figure and you have the money to be able to afford one," said Roz, "or Dana does, at least."

She put the wig, the earrings and the necklace on me as I shivered and shook as I watched Trish Kirk, someone who wasn't me, Pat Kirk, emerging from all the things that Roz was doing to me.

"Well, you've come this far," said a slyly smiling Roz. "It has to be the dress and the shoes now, doesn't it?"

I wish that I could have been ridiculous in a dress, but I wasn't. I might have felt ridiculous but the girl who looked at me so fearfully from Dana's mirror in Dana's pretty summer dress was me. When I moved, the dress shimmered and swayed about my legs and a million humiliating shivers went through me.

"Beautiful," said Roz, standing beside me and putting her arm about me, smiling at her masterpiece. "Damian was quite right when he called you that, wasn't he, Trish?"

"I can't go out like this," I said to Roz who nodded right back at me.

"You're right," she said. "You need a coat, a scarf, gloves and a purse at the very least. Let me teach you as well how to accessorize like a woman."

I didn't want to know how to accessorize like a woman! I just wanted out this whole unholy mess that Roz had managed to land me in.

"You have to be home," I said to Roz, noticing suddenly how the day had just sped away. "You have your kids to attend to."

"Don't speak from down there," said Roz. "Come on, Trisha. Pay attention. Speak from up here." She indicated her head and upper throat. "Don't worry about volume yet. We're just trying to find the right pitch for you that you can hold consistently."

"Your kids, Roz," I began again, swallowing hard as I saw the cosmetics and perfumes she was putting in a black shoulder purse before she handed it to me.

"Ronnie has them this weekend," said Roz with a wicked smile at me. "So, guess what? I'm free for the next two days to teach you, my dear Trish, how to be woman enough to fool those old fogies in the Projects' Committee meeting."

"Roz!" I gasped as she brought me a red, shaped coat with square shoulders that made the girl in the mirrors look stylish, elegant and definitely female. It made the man inside her, inside her shapely, soft, silky, women's lingerie and pretty dress, feel silly, wimpish and completely ashamed of himself for allowing himself to be in such a mess as he was in.

"That was better," said Roz. "That was high enough and breathy enough not to be challenged at all. You don't bring a car to work, do you? So, I'd better give you a ride home tonight. Then, you won't have to lie to Mr Barnes, junior, when he asks you how you got home on Friday."

"He won't ask me!" I blurted out as Roz put her hand under my chin and went, "Up, up, up" even as I continued speaking. "I'm not going to be at the stupid meeting in any case!"

"Oh, yes, you are," said Roz with a smile. "With all that work you did, girl, you have to be there to get the

credit. And Alexander Barnes will ask you. He's a man. By definition, men who are interested in talking to pretty girls, flatter us. Well, they did when I was thirty pounds lighter. It makes us feel that they're considerate and, well, nice guys, to be so concerned about us. It makes it easy for them then, to ask us out on a date."

"Roz!" I screamed at her while she chortled at me.

"Horrible tone," Roz said. "No, don't think of changing out of that pretty dress and coat. You don't have any other clothes to leave the building in, unless you mug one of the janitors! And your ride is leaving, Trisha my darling. So, come on, girl, let your sister Rosemary take you home!"

Walking to the front office was stressful enough. The dress swayed against me as my legs felt as if they were bare of everything, even stockings. It was the oddest of sensations. Then there were my high heeled shoes, I should say Dana's high heels, that I had to walk in, with such short steps, putting one in front of the other so that I swayed like a girl as I walked, a walk that Roz really approved of.

I stood at the outer office door at the start of our exodus from the building, while she checked out the empty area, where the administrative assistants were usually grouped. She went down the hallway and checked the offices as she went by.

"There," Roz said with a knowing smile as she came back and looked at me, shuddering in fear in the doorway to the office that was mine for a month, if I could make it as a woman. All I would have to do was dress like this every day. Every day I would have to feel the tug of bra straps, the tug of a garter belt and the pinch of a corset or some such thing. I would feel the earrings at my ears and the tight pressure between my legs.

And I would smell of roses, or gardenias, or some such fragrance, feel long hair about my face, a gloss on my lips and have to get used to a thick fringe in front of my eyes.

No, when I got home, I was going to get rid of all this female stuff. I was going to get a few stiff belts of whiskey and beer chasers in me. Then, I was going to take off for the West Coast where no-one knew me. I would forget the way I was dressed, the way I was walking and the way I was talking.

The elevator was empty when we got on but, of course, it had to stop on several floors. People whom Roz knew seemed to get on at every stop, almost all saying the same thing. "Hi, Roz! Working late? Is she your new boss?"

And Roz, gushing like mad, made sure that everyone knew I was Trisha Kirk, the Acting Section Head while Dana was away.

Only one person, an older woman frowned and said, "Didn't Ms Hansen have a man in her office?"

You can imagine the laugh that Rosemary Henning and her acquaintances gave to that line. The poor woman's face was quite red. "She's been trying out several executive assistants, male and female, lately," said Roz. "But guess who got the job? Me! I'm Miss Kirk's executive assistant until Dana Hansen returns. Then, I'll either go with Trish or stay with Dana, depending how good I am."

I'd known for a long time that Roz was a consummate gossip, but I hadn't realized how glib she was, how she could turn almost any situation to her advantage. She'd got me to do this silly thing to save her job for her. Gods in heaven, I had bought into that, hook, line and sinker.

I shouldn't have been dressed like I was, my makeup expertly done as if I was a woman going out that night after work. Other women got into the elevator. Several older ladies looked frazzled while younger ones, primed and spruced up just like I was, smiled and chattered, anticipating wonderful nights for themselves. I couldn't believe it when I looked at my reflection in the dark, smoked glass of the elevator.

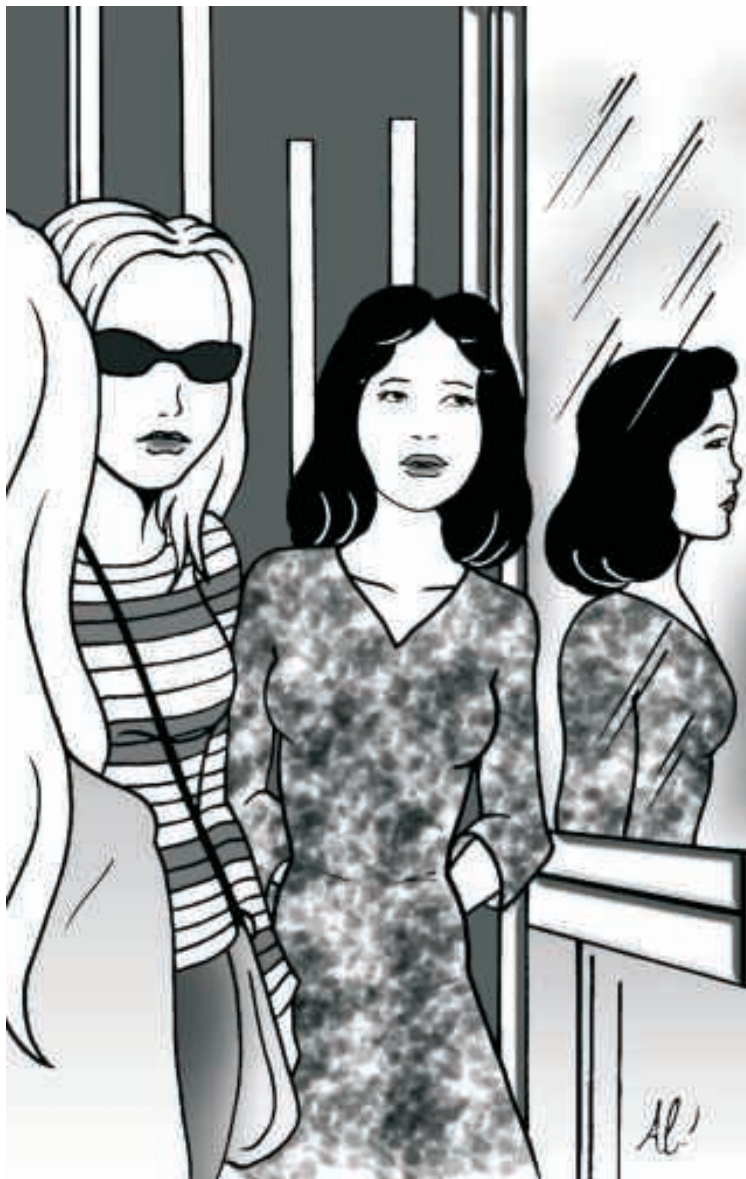
Not one in the group of women seemed able to tell that I wasn't one of them. Well, I couldn't tell that I was a man, either. The swish of my dress, my dress (!) for goodness' sake, and the touch of my long hair on a shoulder or my cheek, made me feel so enervated, yes, effeminate, as no woman would really feel.

V. A FEMALE NIGHT OUT

"Rosemary!" said a huge, stocky guy as we edged out of the elevator into the parking area of the Ekco Summit Building. I was frantic as I made just a few tentative steps forward. This huge man came right forward, swept Roz up off her feet and swung her round and round, she laughing with delight.

"Tony Parker!" Roz crowed, hanging on to the bear of a guy while a few people who were ahead of us, from the elevator, turned back and smiled at Roz being greeted so effusively. "What are you doing here? What rock did you just crawl out from under?"

Roz seemed delighted to see this guy while I held back, appalled at the hugging and, yes, the kissing that was going on, in front of the parking level doors. A new elevator disgorged more people, including Damian Robertson, who made me shiver all over as he glowered at me. But, thank goodness, he walked right



on by me to a long Cadillac that stopped in the driving lane to let him in.

A blonde woman was smiling out at Damian who turned as he entered and gave me another thunderous look. I just stood there in terror of discovery of being a man. I tried to pretend that it was perfectly normal for me to have a dress and petticoats swinging against my stockings while Roz, who had said that she would protect me, didn't even notice that I was there, beside her.

Roz swung from side to side and acted like a crazed school girl as Tony Parker held onto her most lovingly. "You didn't come over and wait down here just to see little old me," Roz said, teasing the stocky guy outrageously.

We had reached the parking level for Roz's car but, even though I caught her eye, and silently implored her to move to it with me, she just ignored me. She left me to suffer as all the people looked at me, as they went by.

"No, I was just here doing a little sales job on Ronnie Magus," Tony Parker said. "Geez, Roz. How come you're still working here for a fusty outfit like this one? I bet you haven't had a raise since I left."

"I got a raise today!" screamed Roz in excitement that I had never heard or seen the like of, in her, before. "And this is the girl who got it for me. Meet my new boss, Tony. This is Trisha Kirk, the new boss of Contracts."

Tony Parker grimaced as he looked at me. I quite agreed with him. I waited for him to announce to the world what a fraud that I was. "Lousy job, that one," Tony said. "Always stepping on everyone's toes, especially high fliers like Robertson and Franchone. Wouldn't want it myself."

"She didn't really have a choice," laughed Roz as I shivered. My hair seemed to blow across my face as another car came up the ramp and passed us.

"How about a drink?" asked Tony Parker eagerly. "Come on, Roz. I'll treat you at the *Sheriff*. English beer for me and snooty French wines for you, my love."

"Oh, I'm giving Trish a ride home," said Roz, her expression completely crestfallen and dejected.

"I can take a cab," I whispered though the thought of finding and ordering a cab, when dressed as I was, terrified me.

"She can come with us," said Tony Parker at the same time, drowning out my soft, breathy tones. "There're half the higher ups from Ekco in the pub, babe. She'll be in her element. And if she don't like guys from Ekco, I can find her a dozen guys from a dozen different firms who'll be willing to take her home!"

"Tony!" shouted Roz, punching him playfully in the shoulder. "This is my boss, Tony! Try to be nice, please."

I didn't get to say 'yes' or 'no'. In fact, I didn't even hear Roz say 'yes' to going to the bar with Tony Parker. We were just drawn along to a huge Cadillac.

"Only car for an oversized American like me," said Tony as he opened the doors for both of us, Roz beside him, leaving the back seat for me.

"Let me get in first!" said Roz, smiling at me. I guessed that she meant that I should get into the car just like her. I shuddered as I turned backwards, sat gingerly on the back seat, feeling my panties and garter belt along my thighs, as I slid in, on my coat and dress and petticoats, pulling my stockinged, silky legs in after me, quite together. I was breathing hard at the feminine things that I'd done but Tony Parker seemed

to ignore me completely. He only had eyes for Roz, which was enlivening her no end.

"Just a quick drink," whispered Roz in my direction when Tony got out to open the car doors for us outside *Ye Olde Sheriffe of Nottingham's Alehouse*. "Loosen up! Enjoy yourself! It must be some fun at least to have all these guys totally fooled by you, a guy in a dress. You wait and see how many men will want to buy you a drink!"

It was all very well for Roz. She had spent her whole life as a girl. She must be used to having men buy her drinks. I didn't know what to say when Gordy brought a Pink Lady to our table and said I should try it. That was only the first of the drinks that Tony's friends bought for me. I looked around in alarm as I realized how expensive a round of drinks was going to be. I owed everyone at the huge table Roz had brought us to.

"Well, I never," said Gord with a laugh, taking my money. I had tentatively taken out my purse. I quickly put it back as I squirmed femininely on the bench beside him. Gord and Tony Parker's other friends cheered on the Lakers' opponents in the basketball playoff game on the noisy bar's television.

"Ladies don't pay here, Trish," Gord said with a big smile, "though I do appreciate the gesture. I'd like it even more if you actually drank some of the stuff me, Willie, Sam and Dave bought you. I think we got it figured out that the guy whose drink you actually imbibe is going to be the lucky guy with you tonight."

"How, how revolting an, an idea," I said breathily, pushing my scarf up higher about my neck. I had anxiously had to take off my coat and reveal the white and blue dress I was wearing. It seemed to attract every

eye in the place and I could see why. There wasn't a girl in the place wearing a summery dress like I was.

I wanted to rush out of the place, sure that I was going to be laughed out of it, sooner or later, but then the drinks had started coming. I even had a Heiniken beer from someone named Neil which I would have loved to down. But when I had put my hand on it and moved it beside the white wine from Sam, I think, Roz had shaken her head at me. She didn't have to. I knew better than to be a girl beer drinker among a host of men.

"Would you like a soft drink?" asked Gord then. I agreed that I would. I was thirsty. Of course, I didn't expect the Virgin Shirley Temple that was delivered to me. It was delicious but just the way it was served told everyone that it was a girl's drink. And I was drinking it. I must be a real girly girl to like such a drink.

"So, I win," said Gord with a smile as I was so thirsty. Half the drink vanished before I thought that a girl wouldn't drink the way us men always did. "You drank my drink."

Unspoken was the conviction that, somehow, I was his 'date' or 'girl friend', now. I shivered and shuddered inside my summery dress, trying just to listen to what was being said. I wanted to catch Rosemary's eye and get out of the place that was becoming more crowded, by the minute.

Finally, Roz got up, smiled at me, and said to Gord that we had to go to the Ladies' Room. That meant that I had to stand and walk in high heels around twenty or thirty men who all seemed to peer at me in surprise. before smiling at me. I couldn't help that I was overdressed for a night at the bar.

"You did it deliberately, didn't you?" I hissed at Roz as we stood in a corner where no-one was near

enough to hear us; or interested enough to want to hear us.

"What?" asked Roz. I could see in alarm that she was tipsy, that alcohol was influencing what she was saying and doing. She'd opened the purse she'd given me and was busy spraying herself with one of Dana's expensive colognes, one of which she'd slathered me in, earlier.

Nervously, I waited as a blonde girl came near us, washed her hands, examined her makeup, smiled at Roz, re-doing her lipstick, noted how I was dressed, smiled again and moved away.

"You dressed me like this," I said to her as quietly as I could and still be heard. "No-one else is as summery and rusty as me. I stand out and everyone is looking at me."

Roz grinned at me. "Sorry, Trish," she said, her eyes half-slitted. I had to wonder how much she was putting me on. "I didn't do it deliberately. But you do look very, very pretty, you know. Everyone is asking me who you are! I wasn't expecting to be coming out tonight even though Ronnie has the kids. Do you want to go home now?"

"Yes!" I hissed at her, having to take the lipstick that she wanted me to and do my lips. Two more girls came up beside us and began to tug themselves into more pronounced female shape while I just stood there and shivered. Roz smiled broadly and winked at me.

"I can't drive now," Roz said. "Too much too drink. We'll have to call a taxi."

She held onto my hand as we weaved our way back through the crowd. A number of girls from the office stopped Roz. All of them told me what a lovely dress I had on and said that they hoped to get to know me, Trish, really soon. I felt as if it was all a great big con

game, but I really did feel so girlish as we worked our way through the crowd of 'other' girls. At any moment, I thought, quivering in distress as it made my dress rustle about my almost bare legs, they would all yell, "Surprise!" and point at me. Oh, how I would be so totally embarrassed!

Ye gods, I had spoken to many of the girls, smiling at me, and wishing me well, at Ekco. Yes, I'd spoken to many of them, several times, over the last two months. But it was as if they were looking at me for the first time, as their eyes swept over my makeup, my female figure, and my hair. They spoke compliments that they thought were delightful, but which only made me squirm and feel so belittled and ill-at-ease.

I was a man; yet, I had beautiful eyes. I had gorgeous hair. I had lovely legs. I was wearing a beautiful dress. It was a Francesca Brown, wasn't it? It was so delightful in color. They must all get their summer dresses out as well for work; and where was I going in my designer dress? Was I going to Alexander Barnes' party at the *Mirabelle*? That must be why I was dressed so prettily, and in such high heels, after a busy day at work.

I was quite numb as I tried to let Roz answer most of the queries of me, prefaced by, "Oh, Trisha has such a bad cold, please don't make her talk to you."

Trisha had more than a cold. Trisha was almost in a catatonic state as she felt all the female things about her pulling her this way and that. And Trish, me that is, wished whole-heartedly that she'd never allowed Roz to tape her chest as she had. Yes, each time I looked down, my bustline seemed to be becoming more and more female and feminine.

I sat with Gord again, my dress smoothed beneath me, making the womanly touch on my stockings, so

silky (!), rouse all sorts of feminine feelings inside me. I tried to just smile and pretend, watching how the other women sat, legs crossed and arms in, looking everyone in the eye. I quivered and quivered girlishly, but then Tony and Roz got into a row over her calling a taxi to take us home.

"I'll drive you," said Tony loudly across the table so that everyone could hear him. "You two girls don't need to leave anyway. Gord and Kevin are hosting a party over at their place. They've got the games room on the roof and the pool for the night! You girls will love it!"

"The girls can come on one condition," Gord cut in. "And that is that they do take a taxi and don't drive with Tony Parker."

That brought a great shout of laughter from the table. Oh, people were beginning to talk louder and louder. Yes, alcohol was taking over, the girls smiling more brightly, the guys being louder and coarser about which girls they wanted to take to a party.

Gord whispered in my ear as I trembled and shivered, trying to keep my dress covering my thighs and legs. "Tony never knows when he's had too much. You're so right to take a cab. Why don't all of you girls go in one cab?"

Gord stood up and repeated it then as if it was my invitation to all the other girls at the table to come with Roz and me. That led to a lot more noise. Gord put my coat about my shoulders. I tried to do as a blonde girl, Michelle, was doing and flick my hair over the collar of the shapely coat.

I thought that we might have been able to get away at the outside of the pub but there were three cabs disgorging passengers at *Ye Olde Sheriffe's*; and Gord was holding onto my arm, as he started piling people into

cabs, holding me back against him. In a panic, I saw Roz go off in a crowded taxi with Tony Parker. Then, Gord got into the back of a fourth arriving cab. I was pulled in with a rustling of skirts after him, onto his knee as more laughing, noisy people piled into the cab on top of us.

Gord and some other guy were tipping the cabbie an extra twenty each and so, in the end, after checking his mirrors, we were off, Gord's hand about my waist, my legs feeling so funny as my garter belt tugged my stockings up about me. It wasn't a long ride. Soon I was standing on the sidewalk in my high heels, my dress blowing about me, my hair blown all over my face shivering, well, shivering like a girl, as Gord organized the passage of fifty people and more into his apartment building, his arm about my shoulders, or my waist, all the time. Gord gripped me, stroking me, making shiver with how feminine I felt, so that I couldn't get away without some kind of fight.

"Now you have no excuse," said Gord with a grin as we rode up the crowded elevator to the top floor where the games room was. His roommate, Kevin, had the party started, it going full blast, already.

"You have to have a proper drink," yelled Gord into my ear, steering a trembling, feminized me towards the bar. My dress flowed, making the weirdest of girl-ish sensations flow through me. I shivered of my own accord as my pretty dress swirled about me, constantly reminding me that I had taken on a female role at the party.

So, I shuddered and was hugged by Gord, my 'date'. Yes, I took the drink, rum and coke, that Gord had made for me. I hated seeing the lipstick bow around the top of the glass. Luckily, I didn't have it for long as Gord set our drinks down and told me that he

wanted to dance. So did the two hundred or so people at the party. The room was so tightly packed that I wasn't exposed as a man by my dancing with another man. All I could do was let Gord put his arms about me, tremble in feminine distress, and hold on to him in my turn as we swayed to the music.

"Too many gate crashers!" yelled Gord in my ear.

"Me!" I managed to croak out earnestly. I was perfectly willing to get out of that place. Oh heck! What would it be like when I got home and went into my own apartment dressed as I was? The Misses Brent in the front apartment would have a field day telling everyone what an idiot I was.

Gord changed his grip on me, making me panic as he drew me, a feminized male, right up against him, pressing me into him. "Not you, darling," he whispered in my ear. He didn't know how he sent chills and frightened feelings through me as he held me close, my padded chest pressed into his muscular one. I could feel his hands on me, wherever he touched, caressing me on my derriere, pressing my garter belt and panties tight against my shaven, softened skin, making me feel so feminine! My dress swished as Gord stroked me, lifting my petticoat over my stockinged thighs, while I shivered in his arms.

"You can stay as long as you like, Trisha," said Gord, holding me, his hands squeezing my tush just as if I was a rounded girl. I panicked by what he was saying and by the expression on his face. "In a little while, we can slip down to my room and get to know each other a lot better."

I turned my head intending to tell him that there was no way that such would every happen. He could get his hands off me or he'd learn something about me that he wouldn't want to know in a month of Sundays.

But I never got a word of my little speech out at all because, as soon as I moved my head to speak to Gord, he dropped his lips onto mine. Within a minute, I was struggling with him as he held me and kissed me so forcibly, his hand behind my head. I couldn't believe it as I leaned back and tried to get my head away from Gord, but he seemed to pursue me. His lips and mine stayed attached as we danced a tango or something.

Gord's tongue played over my lips as I tried to keep him out of my mouth; and yet, I was only swinging and writhing just like all the other girls on the floor, I noticed. If I didn't let him kiss me, I'd really be the odd girl out. I was the oddest girl of all, of course. I had no need to be singled out further.

I shook and shook as Gord's lips pressed on mine. His mouth moved all about my lips, but I stayed rigid, not letting him into my mouth, again. I was after all aroused enough as it was. I didn't know what was wrong with me, but I had raft after raft of incomprehensible sensations flowing through me. Gord was trying to rouse me to become a passionate girl with him, I knew, and, strangely, he was succeeding! I really did feel like a girl, I felt like a girl, swishing and gyrating my dress about me, about her. Oh, Gord's hugs and kisses were just right. A girl like me deserved the attention she was getting!

Gord hugged me so tightly that I thought that my padding might burst at any moment. "Don't you like me a little?" whispered Gord in mock misery as I tried not to kiss him properly, even as tremors ran through me. Gord kissed my cheeks, my face and my neck.

"You could kiss me back, you know," he murmured, his hands twirling my dress, caressing my legs, my thighs, my garter belt!

Kiss him back! What little hairs I had, wherever they were, seemed to stand on end as I was kissed and kissed by another man. Ooo, I felt so hot! Yes, I do mean like a pretty girl, attractive to her man, drawing him against me for another kissing session! My dress and my bra, my earrings and my hair, drove me crazy but now I was supposed to kiss him back as if I was a girl!

I tried to say, "I can't!" Just that. But that only gave Gord enough room to push his way into my mouth with his long tongue. I was French-kissed by another man. He made me put my quivering arms about his neck as we swayed together, my skirts rustling, my high heels clicking, as we danced, he the man, me the girl.

Gord swirled me, my dress swirling against him and everyone around us. Both his arms slipped down my waist onto my tush and pushed my padded back-side into him. I could feel that his maleness was very alert. If I thought about it for a second, I could tell that my own hidden manhood was responding as well, like my putative breasts were.

I was lifted off my feet by Gord's hands, my skin erupting in strange, yes, I have to say delightfully strange, feelings as Gord kissed my chest and the obvious lumps there. With his hands on my tush, he kept doing it as Fergie was playing on the music machine and rapping all about her lovely, lady lumps. It was incredibly agonizing to be pushed and shoved and kissed in time to that music while Gord's hands pulled tightly on my panties. I squealed inwardly in fright as I just tried to endure and not encourage him at all to think that I was a party girl.

"Come down to my apartment," Gord said at last, tugging on my hand to get him to go with him. That time, I was able to resist.

"To see your etchings?" I asked him lightly into his ear, the noise deafening in such a small space but directed to so many people.

"That too," Gord murmured with a smile, reluctantly giving me up for his roommate, Kevin, to come and smooch with me on the dance floor. It was all that could be done to try to cool down, act like a girl with other men. Stupid, stupid me! Guys like Kevin, Sam, Nick, Barry and Farley didn't care about dancing. They just wanted to hold me, the new girl, in ways that they hadn't thought a lot about, I hoped, and cuddle me, smell me, and tell me what a lovely girl I was.

All the compliments went through with such a tingling. Sam kissed me lightly on my face and then on my lips. That was when I did something wrong. I responded to the kiss. Well, it was so gentle! I'd fought off Gord's pressure with pressure of my own. But Sam's kiss was like that of a butterfly at first. I pushed back and soon was engaged in a delightful kiss. When I realized how much I was enjoying kissing and being kissed by Sam, I broke it off hurriedly, shock running through me.

Sam was so nice though. He held me, kissed my neck gently and held me as I shuddered so violently at the shame I felt at kissing a man and feeling the pleasure that I had. Sam's kiss on my lips a minute later was as soft and gentle as before. Before you could say Patricia Kirk, I responded again and shivered and shivered in pleasure as Sam Deegan kissed and kissed me. I felt, really, so girlie to be kissed by him, loving the swirl of my dress and petticoats for another first time, I think.

I could have danced much longer with Sam and gone on kissing him, I suppose, but Sam told me, regretfully, that there were lots of other guys who wanted to dance with me. He hoped I'd save him another dance. Maybe, he'd get a chance to see me again some other time.

I should have said, "No," right away. But I gulped instead and just nodded my head without saying a word which definitely seemed to encourage Sam. My mind was in a turmoil after that as I thought of all the stupid, silly things I'd once said about boys in dresses. Look at me, I was behaving in all the stupid, perverted ways of she-males or drag queens that I had laughed at so much. Now, I, Patrick Kirk, was behaving just like a drag queen, shaking all over at the thought of being and behaving like a pretty woman.

"Trish!" yelled Roz, coming for me and untangling me from a boy named Gerald who was most annoyed at the interruption. His mouth had been permanently attached to my ear or so it seemed.

"We need a break!" Roz yelled at me. I followed her again into another Ladies' bathroom, this one fuller than the first.

A redhead turned to me most aggressively. "Well," she asked belligerently. "Have you made up your mind which one you want to fuck you tonight?"

"Hey, Claudia, back off," said Roz as I was in shock beside her. "The girl is new to our ways!"

"She doesn't have to scoop up every boy worth having and make them all think she's going home with them," said Claudia angrily. Several other girls looked at me as if, well, as if I was some kind of slut.

"Oh, please," said Roz. "Trish came over with Gord. Gord's only trying to be a nice guy and not dominate a new girl. He's letting her get to know his

friends. Pull your claws in, girl. Go for any guy you want. Trish and I don't care!"

Claudia went off muttering something under her breath. I shuddered and shivered as I looked again at myself in the mirror, Roz leaning over me, combing and patting my stylish, wig hair into place.

"I like that wig," Roz said to me. "It must have cost Dana a fortune. But see how it falls back into shape all the time. Don't you just love wearing it, Trish?"

I looked at the wide-eyed girl with her dark, waved hair and vivid makeup and shivered. I knew what would be coming next.

"And that dress is so flirty and girlie on you," said Roz with a smile as more girls came into the bathroom. I couldn't say anything to her in reply. "You look so good in that dress, Trisha darling," she added with a wicked grin. "Don't you just love wearing it, Trish?"

I started to edge away from Roz. This wasn't the woman who had been so scared of being fired that she had made me feel sorry for her. Oh, gosh, look how it had ended up. She was definitely under the influence, probably of more than just the wine she said she was drinking.

Roz praised my shoes and stockings and asked me if I didn't just love wearing them. I had to get out of there before she started on the lingerie that I was wearing. "I'm going home," I told her as the party seemed to me to be getting wilder. I could bet there would be noise complaints soon and police there. And I would be arrested with everyone else and exposed. How they'd all be laughing and jeering at me, the girls probably grabbing at my dress and exposing me, a man, in all my girlie underwear. Oh, I couldn't let that happen!

Several guys tried to stop me as I got my coat, I mean Dana's coat, and the purse, probably Dana's as

well, that I'd come in with. Roz stared at Tony Parker smooching on the dance floor with some other girl who seemed to be making the most of the lip lock he had on her.

"Men," snarled Roz and took my hand firmly, making me wait as she got her coat and bag. Gord came over and implored me to stay, giving me a sticky kiss that transferred much of my refreshed lipstick to his mouth. Wow, did he ever taste good. I was shivering as I told him that I couldn't stay, my real boy friend wouldn't like me staying any longer and I had to explain when I got home to him. No, I don't know where those ideas came from, but they did the trick. Gord let me go regretfully, even escorting me down to the street, where the cold wind sent more strange, girlish sensations through me, as the wind rustled my dress and circled around my bare legs.

"I always knew that you were a little fruity, Pat," said Roz as she swayed in the fresh air of the street that we finally reached. "Kissing Gord like that. He wasn't the only boy you kissed tonight, was it? I saw you and Sam really getting it on, didn't I? Don't you just love kissing men, Trisha?"

"Please," I begged her as we clicked and clacked down the street, our dresses and coats swinging about us while the cold air made my nyloned legs seem as if they were bare. I couldn't answer that question as I didn't want to answer the other ones she had asked me. I still had the imprint of Gord's really firm kiss on my lips, his last before he let me go and went back to his party. I could still feel the caress of his hands over my padded derriere. And now I had to walk in a womanly way down the street, past ogling men, up on to the main avenue where there was a taxi stand a short way down.

The stand was right outside a bar. Several drunk and half-drunk men came tumbling out and, seeing Roz and me waiting for a cab, had to make a move on us. I was quite appalled at beery breath on my face and overly familiar arms about me as several persistent guys tried to convince me to go to another party with them.

“Don’t you love it, Trish?” smirked the girl who told everyone that she was my Executive Assistant. “Don’t you love the attention of all the guys you’ve been getting? You could party every night, you know! I bet Trish has had more action tonight than Pat has had in the last two months.”

“You’re wrong about that,” I half-whispered, half-croaked to her. I tried to tell the cabbie to take me home, but Roz insisted that we go to her place.

“You have to help me sober up,” Roz said, her eyes closed as the cab sped off into the night towards the Westside. There, condos and all sorts of tall building blocks packed with young marrieds and kids were located.

“I thought your kids were with Ronnie,” I said to her and Roz nodded, almost asleep.

“At his mother’s,” Roz said with a frown.

I didn’t want to get out. But the smiling look the cabbie was giving me, as I opened my purse and found the bills to pay him, made me glad to get out with Roz. I wouldn’t have liked to ride with that man alone to my distant apartment.

VI. A FEMALE WEEKEND

Roz’s place was an untidy mess but once in her place she seemed to wake up a little. She soon had the

television on. She kicked off her shoes and began to dance around the room to a rap video that she turned up high. "Come and join me, Pat-tricia," she said archly as she gyrated in front of the television. "I can't do this normally as the kids are in bed and I'd wake them. Come and dance with me."

My purse and my coat were urged from me but, strangely, my shoes weren't, nor was my rusty dress. Roz laughed at my 'dancing', I did try to jiggle like her, feeling really weird to be doing that. That's when she told me to loosen up. She criticized my dancing. It seemed that, as a girl, all I had to do, most of the time, was stand in one place and wiggle my rear end. I thought that I was doing that, but Roz said that I wasn't doing it very well. I wasn't very girlie at all. Wow, I felt so hot then as I wondered if I wanted to be that way, as girlie as Roz was in her swishy dancing.

"Yes, that's it!" said Roz finally and enthusiastically, twirling me, making me wriggle and wiggle, and that became my new way of dancing. We jived and rocked, with me also doing all the twirling as a girl. Roz did all the male parts that I usually did, she making me spin, in my high heels, as if I was a female partner in a dance.

My dress swirled and swished as Roz swung me. Then, she spun me so hard that my dress flared up. I had to grab at it, to keep it down. If we'd been on a dance floor, everyone would have seen my panties and garter belt as I spun on the hardwood floor in my heels.

A pounding on the floor made Roz put her hand over her mouth, run and turn the television down and bounce back to me, telling me to take off my shoes. I did so as she grabbed me as Gord might have grabbed

me. We waltzed a few steps together. Then she kissed me.

At first, Roz just pecked me on the lips but, then, seemed so surprised at herself from doing that. "Oh heck," she grinned at me. "Everyone else is doing it to you, aren't they?" she said. She hugged me against her ample front and thoroughly kissed me.

It was actually nice to be kissing a girl, even if was Roz, whom I wasn't really attracted to at all. She wanted to dance with me some more as well, slow dances where she hugged me tightly in my dress and told me what a lovely girl I'd made that night.

"But really, Trish," she went on, her eyes closed as we slowly moved, our nylons touching occasionally which was really weird. I felt strange tinglings shoot through me when that happened.

"I need to go," I told Roz, as she kissed me again, seeming to relish the stickiness of my lips.

Roz just laughed at me and pulled me by the hand down the little hallway to the bedroom at the back of her apartment. The canopied bed had silky, pink, satin sheets. Roz blushed at the grimace I must have pulled when I saw it.

"You're too far away," Roz said, with a yawn that made me do the same. "It's an hour, hour and a half to get a cab out of the inner city at this time of night. If you want to phone, you can. But then, you might as well lie down with me and have a nap until the cab gets here."

Roz was taking off her clothes as she spoke to me, switching to a long, white robe as she dropped rings, her necklace, her watch and bracelets, on the set of drawers on the far side of the bed.

"Oh, take off that dress," giggled Roz, "And your earrings, girl, and come to bed, Trish. I'm not going to

rape you or let you rape me. But we can get an early start in the morning, if you're still here, on the plans we have to make. Yes, my darling, my pretty girl, how we are going to keep anyone from finding out who the real Pat Kirk is!"

"I, I can't sleep in bed with you," I gasped but Roz really laughed at that.

"You'll be the first boy I've brought home this year who hasn't slept with me," Roz laughed. "Don't tell me that there really is something swishy about you, Pat, my lovely girl friend!"

"Stop saying that about me!" I said to her indignantly as Roz came over to me with concern on her face.

"I'm sorry," she began, putting cream on her face and then on mine. She showed me, standing there and shaking in my high heels, my dress moving femininely, again, against my stockings, how I, a man, should rub it in so that it would take my makeup off, as if I was a girl.

"I really didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Trish," Roz went on. I didn't know how to tell her to stop calling me that, particularly with the way that I was dressed. "Let me take your wig off before you get something on it that you shouldn't. Ooh!"

"What's that face for?" I asked her as Roz took the wig and arranged it on her set of drawers.

"You should see yourself with short hair, vivid eyes, a rosebud mouth and in a ruffled dress like that one," said Roz. "I want to put the wig back on you right away and bring back the pretty girl I was dancing with. You did like that, didn't you, Trish? You did like being all dressed up and being a girl a little bit, didn't you? The boys from the bar sure liked you, especially Sam and Gord."

"I'm not a girl, Roz," I told her, my whole body shaking as I wiped myself clean of makeup with the moist tissues she gave me. "I may have dressed like a girl tonight because of the situation I was in but that's all. I'm not gay or fruity or swishy or anything else that you're thinking about me. No, I don't like dressing up in girl's clothes. Why should I? I'm a man!"

Roz came behind me and opened my dress for me from the back, showing me how to allow it to fall about me. I picked it up and put it on a hanger in Roz's closet, nothing at all like Dana's chic walk-in.

Roz smiled at me as she grabbed my garter as I went by her. I turned to object, but she grabbed me again, wanting another kiss. I felt her negligee sweeping delicately against my stockings. It almost felt as if I was wearing the soft, womanly negligee myself.

"I don't mind at all if you're gay or not," Roz whispered to me earnestly. "But can you just cuddle up with me before I go to sleep?"

I forgot what a good player of me that Roz was. I went to bed with her in my women's underwear determined to show her that I really was a man. I didn't wear my panties or the tight bikini for long. Oh, yes, I sure showed her that I was a man all right. I left no doubt in her mind as, over the course of the night, she divested me of my bra and padding, my waist cinch, the garter belt and my stockings.

Roz was soon as naked as me. She surprised me with how inventive she was in bed. Roz liked to make love to me from on top a little more than she liked to be on the bottom. I didn't mind. It had been a long time for me between drinks, as we called it in my home town, and Roz seemed to act as if it was a long time for her as well.

I had no idea where I was the next morning when I awoke in a nightdress in a strange bed, in satin sheets. No-one was around to tell me what was going on. I sat up and remembered Roz. That's when I heard the sound of children's voices. They weren't outside. They were in the apartment!

Roz came hustling through the bedroom. "Thank goodness you're awake, Trish," she gasped, as she took off her negligee and tossed it to me. "Ronnie has been called out on a job. He's brought the kids back to me. If you want breakfast, put on your wig and the panties you wore yesterday under that nightie of mine. A little lipstick would help before you come and meet my kids."

The aroma of bacon cooking floated through the apartment as I trembled beside the bed, ready to jump back in it, and hide, if a kid came in. I fitted the wig on my head with tentative fingers, put on my earrings and was just putting on lipstick when a smiling Roz put her head into the room and said, "The bra as well, Trish. That negligee is more than a little transparent at times. Shall I send Abby to get you in a couple of minutes?"

"No!" I gasped in fright. "You wouldn't do that!"

"She'll come on her own to find out who Mum has been sleeping with," said Roz, already made-up. Her hair was neatly in place, she dressed in a skirt, blouse and stockings while I put on the bra that I had worn the day before. She came to help me. I didn't want her to but, eventually, I followed her meekly, yes, in women's clothing, hair and makeup, again, into the kitchen area of the apartment.



"Mummy said that she had a girl friend over, but I didn't believe her," said a serious-faced Abigail, Abby, staring intently at me. She might be fourteen or fifteen years of age. I could feel that she was looking right through me. At any moment she would ask the obvious question about me, such as why her mother's boy friend was wearing her clothes and makeup.

"Well, so you will believe me next time," said Roz, ruffling the girl's long hair. A younger boy, about six, sat at the table and stuffed his mouth with bacon as he looked at me. My fingers wiggled nervously as I tried to keep the negligee closed over the thin nightie that caressed me so silkily anyway.

"Can I go over to Jeff's today since I'm home?" asked the younger boy, David, his mouth full.

"I have to go shopping for school," said Abby pointedly, looking over at me. "Where's your car, Mummy? Did you leave it at work again?"

"No. So, we'll go shopping downtown," said Roz gaily, bouncing around in a very good mood, smiling at me, while I tried to be invisible even as I shook inside with how I was dressed. "Is that all the breakfast you're going to eat, Trish? Go on then, David, and finish the bacon, dear." She smiled at me. "He eats like a man, already, does my boy."

Abigail smiled at me as well, her expression a copycat of her mother's.

"You can have the bathroom now, Trish," Roz went on, "while I see if Cathy will take David."

I retreated in nervous haste. Roz popped into the bathroom and poured masses of oil and salts into the water. "Soak," she whispered to me, "while I get rid of the kids."

I shuddered as I removed my wig, which Roz immediately whisked away with her. I settled in the bath,

the heavy scent of flowers rising about me. I waited for what must have been an hour before I finally got up, put a towel about myself, and went over to the mirror. What Roz had done to my eyebrows was awful. They were definitely female eyebrows, the way that they were arched and thinned. It changed the look of my face so that 'fruity' would actually have been a mild description of me. Then, I was so smooth as well, all over. I ran my hand over my face. There was no stubble in the few places where there always was.

A tap on the door signalled that Roz was there. "They're gone for just a moment or two," said Roz, leading me back into her bedroom.

"I need to get home," I said to her as strongly as I could.

"Yes, yes," said Roz. "Look, Trish. You'll have to wear my clothes to get out of here. Abby has only gone to the convenience store for milk and bread. She'll be back soon. So, you can't wear what you wore last night. My jeans are far too big for you as well. So, this," she swept a flared, pleated, dark grey skirt out of her closet, "and this." The second was a thin, ribbed, pink-colored sweater. "They'll fit you."

Roz opened another drawer and tossed stockings on the bed. "You can wear your other underwear," she said, having bundled the nightie, negligee, the panties and bra I had worn together on the bed, "but, I don't know how, girl, how you laddered your stockings something awful last night. Those you'll have to replace." She came across the room then, put her arms about me, still with the towel wrapped about me and kissed me, her tongue licking my lips.

I was shaken by that and by the look on her face. Oh no, I thought. I hope for heaven's sake that she doesn't think that this is some sort of permanent arrangement.

"Let me do your makeup and then you can dress," Roz said with a smile.

Roz did my eyes, talking to me all the time about what she was doing and how I must learn to do it as well. I tried to protest that I was never going to do this again, but she kept on telling me to raise my voice and to put on an accent as it made me sound much better. "Be one of those snooty English women we see on the business news all the time," she laughed at me.

I tried to protest again that I could wear her pants, but Roz shook her head. "Not with the tiny waist you have, Trisha, my girl," she said as she did my lips, powdered my nose and cheeks and then arranged the wig on my head. She put the bra about me again, taping me with transparent packing tape, which she then applied between my legs.

"Roz!" I began in a panic as she did that while she just tut-tutted me.

"It's how all the trannies do it who enter the competitions," she said to me. "I saw this being done on *YouTube*. The girl didn't win but, when she was in the swimsuit competition, she could have been real!"

The bell from the outer door rang. Roz moved to answer it as I put on the panties and padding from the night before, ignoring the discomfort of the taping in my panic. I popped the underslip over my wig and about me and hurriedly put on the skirt and the sweater that Roz had left for me.

The sweater was so eye-catching when it descended over me and took the shape that my padded bra made. I gulped as I looked at myself in the mirror. Oh, I really did look like a girl all over again, the wig so transforming of the boy with a woman's makeup on.

I could hear Roz talking to Abigail through the partially open door. I took up Roz's stockings and put

them on my hairless legs. Oh, smoothing them against me and attaching them to my garter belt was strangely thrilling. I looked into the mirror, posing girlishly for just a moment as I did the second, and felt a real thrill as it was like looking at a real girl. Ooo, I was a girl, wasn't I, I thought, as I fastened my garter belt, yes, mine, well Dana's, really.

"Nice legs," murmured a voice behind me. I whirled, my hair floating about my neck and face as there was a sassy-faced Abigail in the doorway, grinning at me in a replica of her mother's amused smile.

Roz came behind Abigail, snapping at the girl dancing off to the bathroom, laughing, laughing at me, I was sure.

"Oh, that girl!" said Roz, but she looked amused as well. "So, put your skirt down, Trish, and stop admiring your legs and my nylons. We'll bring the dress in on Monday to your dressing room at Dana's. Wear the high heels that you wore last night, downtown in the stores with us. I have to get Abby a new skirt for school and some summer dresses, something like the one you wore last night. Ronnie was supposed to pay but I guess I won't see that for a month or more, if ever."

Roz squirted perfume on my wrists and at my neck. Abigail, coming from the bathroom, wanted some of the scent as well.

"You smell so nice," Abigail said to me. "I really like this perfume. It must be yours, Trisha. Mummy never buys anything but what's on sale at Sears!"

"Brat!" said Roz fondly, taking the cologne bottle and putting it in the purse that she gave to me. "Now, if you want another spray, you'll have to be really nice to Trisha to get it."

"Thank goodness Trisha is nicer than you, Mum," said Abigail Henning lightly. "Ooh, she looks so pretty

in your pink top, Mummy. A pretty lady like her will give me anything that I want. I know it."

The arch smile Abigail gave me made my blood run cold. I didn't doubt at all that this precocious child knew that her mother's 'girl friend' was in fact a man in a dress. If Roz noticed that about her daughter, she didn't let on.

We put on coats and jewellery and flipped our hair, just like three women together, so that it was free of our collars and were on our way. I walked very gingerly, the discomfort between my legs pronounced while Abby urged us along, saying that we were walking like a pair of old women as Roz held onto me in sympathetic support.

I only had a few dollars left of the money I'd taken from my bank the day before, and so we caught a bus into town. I didn't dare to speak. I listened to Abigail talking and talking about her school, who was going out with whom, who had a crush on whom, and the three most favorite boys in the whole school.

"She's boy mad," said Roz as we got off on Seventh, next to the main shopping area. Abigail went skipping ahead. "I was, too, at her age. I couldn't think of anything but boys and making them smile at me. I bet you were the same way at that age."

"Roz," I said meaningfully, as she burst out laughing.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Roz said with a fit of the giggles as she hung onto my arm as we crossed the street. Yes, I trembled as everyone could see me, a man in a dress, and laugh at me. "Really, it was quite unintentional that time, Trish; it really was. I actually was thinking of you then as a girl. Fancy that!"

Fancy that, I thought, as I minced down the street with her towards Darby's through the throngs of peo-

ple bustling along one of the city's busiest streets. It was a relief to get off the street, and then a raging embarrassment, as we followed Abigail into the department that sold women's bras and panties where she had to buy a new bra.

"I am growing, mother," Abigail told Roz, who wanted to hurry her along. "Why don't you buy something for your friend? She'd look gorgeous in this, wouldn't she?"

'This' was a merry widow corset, in red and black, black suspenders attached to black stockings on the posed mannequin. "Where would I get five hundred dollars?" quipped Roz back to her daughter while I shivered and shook and imagined myself in that with my dark-haired wig and makeup. Oh, goodness, I would look so good in it, so good as a girl, that is. Oh, I could never wear anything like that!

I think we looked at every pretty dress in the place, many of which Abigail wanted me to try on, before Roz finally managed to get her into the Young Women's department and trying on short skirts, Scottish kilts in all but name, for her school uniform.

"Wouldn't you like one yourself?" asked Roz as we waited for Abby to come back from the changing room. "I used to have one just like it when I was a schoolgirl. Minis are on the way back in, you know, for slim girls like you."

"Roz," I said again uselessly as I tried to warn her about what she was saying to me. I didn't have time for more as she went off then to find Abby a new blouse or two. However, I had to give my opinion on them both when Abby came out and stood in front of the mirror, pirouetting in her little skirt.

"This one will do," she said eagerly.

"No way," smiled her mother. "You need something at least to mid-thigh."

"You'd let her wear it," pouted Abigail with a look at me, emphasizing the 'her'.

"Probably," said Roz indulgently. "But Trish would look good in it, my girl. She's not all spindly legs and flat chest like someone else here. That girl needs a longer skirt and to try on these blouses. Trisha likes the ones with frills."

I trembled as I stood there, women passing by and glancing at me. So did some of their husbands or boy friends. I wanted to object. I hadn't looked at the blouses at all, really. I wasn't wearing 'new clothes', with labels bouncing, like Abby.

"Well, she's got better taste than you, Mum," said Abigail, heading back to the change rooms.

It took us almost the whole afternoon to get one skirt and one blouse for Abigail along with the training bra and panties that she had chosen earlier. In all that time, I was jostled in a woman's dress and shoes, while my opinion on how a girl looked in her new bra and blouse was extorted from me.

"Ooo, look, Mum!" said Abigail, disappearing into the cosmetics department. Roz looked a little distressed when Abby asked to have a manicure. I realized that the problem was money.

"Roz, I have some cash. Let me pay for the manicure for Abby," I said as softly, as quietly, as I could.

"All right," said Roz with a grin. "Actually, you have your credit card, don't you? So why don't we all get manicures?"

And so, I had to sit there, my legs crossed, as a chatty girl worked on my nails and then Roz said that I should have acrylic tips put on. So then, as I shivered in suppressed discomfort and exhilaration, my false

fingernails were painted almost the same femmy color as my lipstick. I had long, shaped, girlish fingernails just like Abby and Rosemary Henning.

"These look so-o-o great!" said Abby, holding up her nails so that the whole mall could see them. I shivered as we went along, my high heels ricocheting, making my skirt swivel so girlishly about me as we moved. The woman at the counter hadn't been confused by my credit card at all, as I thought she was certain to be. I hadn't said a word, I didn't have to, as she interpreted 'Patrick Kirk' to be my husband and I signed 'P Kirk' as I always did.

This was too easy being a woman, I thought. Why doesn't anyone see me as I really am? "Can I have a Coke?" asked Abigail then and Roz agreed.

"I can get that," Roz said. "And we can walk over to the Ekco building and get my car from there."

I sat with Abigail as she stretched out her hands and fingernails and got me to do the same. "Yours are longer than mine," Abby said with a smile. Then, she frowned and lowered her voice. "Does my Mum know that you're a man in a dress?" she asked me confidentially while my blood ran cold. "She sure doesn't act as if she does."

"Abigail," I said, in as high and breathy whisper as I could, the shock of her finally saying what I had thought that she knew all along, scattering my wits to the four corners of the earth. "I don't know why, that is, how could you? You shouldn't say things like that, that really you don't know."

"Oh, I know," said the irrepressible girl with a big smile at me. "It doesn't bother me, really. I'm not going to tell anybody. Well, except for Tiff and Britt, my best friends. We tell each other everything. Tiff told us all about this girl like you that her brother was going

out with. Tiff said she wore these red, schoolgirl skirts and white stockings and garter belt. Tiff caught them in bed, having it on, all the time, the girl like you backed into her brother so he could stick it right up into her. Do you like it like that?"

"Abigail!" I gasped. "You're fourteen years old! How can you say such things! Your girl friend and your brother must be putting you on!"

Abigail laughed at me. "I can tell you're not a girl," she said. "That's why I've been leading you all over the store in the girls' departments. You're so embarrassed by panties and garter belts, aren't you? You're so afraid of everybody looking at you. It's a hoot, really. Oh, here come's Mum with our drinks. I won't say a word if you don't."

"So, what were you girls talking about while I was gone?" asked Roz.

"Boys," said Abby with a wicked smile, the image of her mother's. "Trish was telling me all about her boy friends and the guy she has a crush on in your office, Mum."

"Well," said Roz with a big smile. "Now I know you're lying to me, Little Miss Sunshine. There isn't any man at all in the office I work in."

At that, Abigail gave me a very secretive smile and didn't look at me at all. I sat, shivering in my padded panties, ready to run for it, escaping on my black, high-heeled shoes. Mother and daughter, however, led the way as I shivered and followed along behind them, occasionally catching a glimpse in shop windows of the pretty girl in a dress. Oh, gosh, I shook with the thought as Abby slowed and riffled my skirt about me, making me feel so girlish! But I wasn't the only one who knew I wasn't a real girl.

VII. DISCOVERED

"Abby knows all about me," I told Roz in the privacy of her bedroom after we had got back to her apartment and ordered pizza for the kids for supper.

"So that's why you're all in a dither," said Roz with a smile. "When did she say this to you?"

"Roz!" I snapped at her. "Are you listening to me? Your daughter knows I'm a, a man in a woman's clothing! She thinks I'm a funny story to tell her friends about at school!"

"Oh, she wouldn't do that!" said Roz, patting the skirt and pink sweater that she had loaned to me. "Why don't you relax and watch a little television with her."

"Relax!" I asked incredulously. "You think I can just sit here with a young girl who knows that her mother's boy friend is wearing her clothes? I bet your son knows all about me as well. Didn't you see the way he was looking at me when you were on the phone?"

"David thinks you're very pretty, Trish," said Roz, continuing to call me by the female name she'd invented for me. "You have to freshen up, Trish, while we're here. You must be bursting to visit the bathroom. Here." She tossed me the long roll of tape. "Will you be able to manage by yourself? You should be able to do your own lipstick, at least, by now. I think that we should change and go out, don't you?"

"You could take me home," I gasped in rage at her. I'd been sitting in her car at a stop light with Abby rattling on about Joshua at her school when I'd felt as if someone was staring at me. I turned my head and there was a woman, frowning at me and scrutinizing me most intently, from the back seat of her car. It had

gone ahead first but I felt so exposed. I was sure that she must have seen exactly what I was.

Abigail knew what I was! I crossed my nylon-covered legs in my skirt, held back my shoulders and tried to feel a little bit like a girl, as I had before we went shopping. But that feeling wouldn't return. Since Abigail had spoken to me, I couldn't help it. I quivered all the time as I felt just like a man in a woman's dress.

"If you wanted to go home so badly," said Roz reasonably, "you could have called a cab by now, couldn't you, and been on your way. Oh, we must dress up and go out, even for a little while. I haven't dressed up in ages. Please, Trish, come out with me. We won't be out long, I promise."

Roz announced it to Abigail before I had a real chance to tell her, 'No'. "I knew you'd be going out," said Abigail with a smile. "Trish would look gorgeous in that red organdie dress of yours, Mum. Are you going to go out dancing?"

"No," said Roz. "We aren't going to be out long. And only if I can find a baby sitter at such short notice."

I tried to catch her eye, but Roz wouldn't look at me. A second call, to high school girls Roz knew, produced a Cindy, whom the kids groaned at. "She's strict," pouted Abigail.

"She's what you deserve then," said Roz forcefully as Abigail looked knowingly at me. I shivered as she looked at me, as if it was my fault that she got a babysitter she didn't like. She seemed to know I'd told her mother what she'd said to me.

"What do you think you're doing?" I asked Roz as we retreated to her bedroom where she began to strip off her clothes.

"We'll just go up Main Street," said Roz with a smile. "It's a long time since I window-shopped with a girl friend. We'll see what shows are on at the West End movie theaters. If there's nothing we like, we can stop in at one or two of the bars around there. Do you play pool? Danny's over on a hundred and eighth has a table they reserve for women only. Danny says it pulls in lots of guys who sit around and ogle us girls, leaning over the table to play."

I trembled at the thought of men ogling me as I was shooting pool. It was an image that made me shake all over in the surety I had that, I'd definitely be exposed, then. The ridicule I'd suffer would be so awful in a bar where half the guys were macho. They'd be bound to want to prove themselves by beating me up.

I changed Roz's pink sweater for a blue, striped blouse, new earrings with a blue stone, and a new necklace and bangles for my wrists.

Abigail was disappointed I was so plainly dressed as she called it. "You should have jazzed her up, Mum," she said in complaint. "You should make her so pretty that the boys come flocking around her. Then you can snatch one from her for yourself!"

"What an idea!" laughed Roz. "Here's Cindy. So, give me a kiss and go to bed at nine thirty when you should. Nine for you, young man," she added to David.

While Roz hugged David, Abigail came over and put out her arms to me. I had no choice but to hug her as well even though I was shivering all over. "Mmm," murmured Abby as I let her press herself into me. "You smell so wonderful and feminine, Trish. I just love your perfume. I bet all the men you meet tonight will, as well."

"Abby!" laughed Roz as she opened the door to the babysitter. "We won't be very long." She repeated her instructions to Cindy while David came over, with a shy smile, and hugged me like his sister.

"Yuck," he said with a grimace. "You smell like a girl." That made all of us laugh, me with nervous tension and the others in amusement.

"Enjoy yourselves," Abigail called after us as I was out again in public, perfumed, made-up, and in women's clothing, clutching another woman's arm as we clicked and clacked in our high heels down the stairs of the apartment house. My skirt made me swing my tush, 'as I should', Roz said, noticing how I was sashaying, I suppose, along the road, to the busy strip. Several men, as we walked along, made a point of looking directly at us and smiling as they said, 'Well, hell-o-o-o,' to us.

Roz took me into the huge shopping center there for her idea of window shopping. I looked at prom dresses and shoe stores, maternity wear and jewellery stores.

"You don't have pierced ears," said Roz suddenly, hugging my arm to her as we strolled the mall. I really didn't see any other women doing it but there were still lots of people about, shopping quite intently.

"No," I agreed. "I don't want them, either," I said in as breathy, high-pitched and English voice as I could. As usual, my protests, which I couldn't bring to the volume that I'd wanted, were ignored.

"Can my sister get her ears pierced tonight?" Roz asked loudly across the floor of one store. I was just humouring her by looking at the huge, circular earrings on sale.

"Oh, but of course," said a smiling, older woman, coming forward, and immediately commiserating on me on having to wear such harsh clip-ons.

"I keep on telling her," Roz went on virtuously. "But she never listens to me."

I glared at her, but I couldn't trust my voice in front of the woman to tell her that I didn't want my ears pierced. I just wanted back the clip-ons she'd detached from me. I thought they were Dana's. How was I to know that they were Roz's, actually?

So, I was soon seated in a chair and zip, zap, I had my ears pierced, sleeper studs put in. Roz had to buy me fancy earrings, huge and circular, and danglers, then, over two hundred dollars worth. Of course, the cost all went on my credit card. The woman frowned at the 'Patrick Kirk' on my card and looked about to ask me about it as I started to panic, knowing I didn't have enough cash to pay for Roz's unexpected purchases of dangling earrings for me, at all.

But the saleswoman shrugged when I signed the receipt, 'P Kirk', just as it was as the signature on the back of the card.

"Your husband's name," she asked vaguely, giving me a sharp look that made me tremble all over. I nodded mutely, anxiously, so glad to retrieve my card and hurry away from there with Roz. I could feel her eyes on me as we clicked and minced our way down the center of the mall.

"She made me," I said fearfully to Roz.

"Of course, she did," said Roz with a giggle that made me shudder all over and want to run off immediately to my apartment. "Let's find an outlet for your bank. You can get some cash for the rest of our night out. It's in the next exit, I think."

Only after I had taken out several hundred dollars did I think of the picture that would be taken of me, taking money out of my account and claiming to be 'P Kirk'. Oh, gosh, what were my pay checks sent to me as? If they were sent now to me as 'Patricia' after my promotion to Acting Head at Ekco, I might not be able to access my own paycheck. I could feel myself getting so overheated as the ramifications of this scheme of Roz's produced more and more wrinkles. It wasn't as easy as she had said it would be, to be transformed into a girl in any way.

"Let's go into Danny's," said my girl friend, hanging on to my arm and purse where I'd stashed my money. She wasn't going to let me get away easily, I could tell. We went into Danny's Bar and played pool on the quiet woman's table until two men who were playing opposite us asked us for a game for drinks.

I would have said 'No,' of course, but Roz said 'Yes' right away. A combination of her flirting, putting off the guys on some very easy shots, and my shooting, yes, I play a fair game of pool, and we won and won again.

"Drink up, love," said Tim, who had an Irish accent, 'from Boston', he said with a laugh, as he bought me another white wine. "It's the only way we men can win. You drink up and we'll get you drunk."

Other, older men drifted over and wanted to play after a while. We broke up as Roz sat down and chatted to Mike. Tim and I took on all comers, however, and won five in a row, until we finally lost to a sixty-year old pool shark who never let me even shoot a ball.

Tim put his arm about me and escorted me over and pulled out a chair for me to sit down. He dumped our

winnings in the middle of the table and asked me to have a real drink.

I could barely think of any drinks but beer and whiskey. I don't know why I said I'd like a Pink Lady as I smoothed out my skirt and my stockings as I crossed my bare, shaking legs. It was what the women across the bar were drinking.

"That's a drink that suits you," said Tim with a laugh. "And will you be having the same, Rosemary?"

But Roz wanted her namesake, a Bloody Mary. Mike insisted on buying that for her. I hadn't realized that the proper Pink Lady was made with gin, as well as grenadine and some other liqueur, as well. The fruit juice combined to give it its reddish coloration.

I took a sip and felt the alcohol right away. Wow, I couldn't drink more than one of those. I'd have been under the table in a very short time. But I had ordered it, trying to get another man to think that I was a girl. So I drank and played pool again with Tim. We won a couple of more games, even one over the sixty-year old shark when I got a run before he even got to the table.

The old gentleman took off his hat to me as it seemed to flow through the bar that Andy had been beaten and by a girl of all things! I finished my first drink; and there were two more waiting for me at Roz's table.

Lots of guys came over and wanted to play the girl who'd beaten Andy. They seemed delighted when Tim and I beat them as well. We went on another little run until we finally lost. Tim cursed as I hadn't had a chance again to get to the table against two very good players.

"I think that's enough anyway," I told Tim as I was exhilarated at all the wins and the compliments on my

play. I liked being 'the girl who beat Andy' even though I'd beaten him as he'd beaten me, by not letting him get to the table. I liked the friendly atmosphere and sitting next to Tim, he talking to me. He ignored the squeaks that came out of my mouth, completely accepting that I had bronchitis and shouldn't be drinking really. It was a strange and weirdly nice night, me feeling and being treated, so much, as if I was really female. Oh, it was a surprisingly pleasant feeling. I overacted as a girl a little bit, well, a lot, giggling inside before the guys helped us into our coats when we started to leave.

"You're not driving?" asked Tim doubtfully as I shivered in the silk lining of my pink coat, my long, wig hair caressing my neck and some of my face.

"We're in the Mortimer," said Roz, naming her apartment building. "It's only three blocks."

"Three blocks at this time of night?" asked Mike doubtfully. "On foot?"

"It's too short a ride for a taxi," scoffed Roz.

"We'll walk you to the Mortimer," said Mike then. "Right, Tim? You live that way, anyway."

"All right," said Tim, waving to a waitress, settling his bill after he divided a lot of money on the table, insisting that half was mine. So, I really didn't need to have gone to the bank after all.

Tim held my arm for most of the heel-clicking walk back to the Mortimer which I approached with dread. I knew what was going to happen and it did. Well, I had had a nice night, as Tim thanked me for it, and so a few kisses didn't hurt, did they? I mean, we both smelled of liquor, I'm sure, though Tim was a gentleman and told me how much he enjoyed my 'French' perfume.

I was waiting for Roz to finish with Mike. She said later that she was waiting for me to finish with Tim

and so the kissing really stretched out. Oh, Tim held me very tightly, caressing me and kissing me forcefully, which, strangely, I liked, a lot. My skirt swayed against me, my legs feeling so cold and feminine as Tim tentatively tried French kissing me.

I felt a burst of emotion rising in me as I clung to him. He encouraged me put my arms girlishly about his neck, letting him maul my mouth, my heart beating faster and faster as I realized that not only was I kissing a really nice guy but I was liking it, acting with 'my man' as if I was a girl as well, feeling truly as if I was.

I really hated it when Roz broke away from Mike. I had to let Tim go as well. They were really nice guys and knew we had to go in to babysitters and sleeping children.

"See you next week?" asked Tim shyly as I shivered.

I meant to make an excuse, to say 'Maybe' or something but what I said in the end was, "Oh, yes, I hope so." That earned me one last, lingering kiss that Roz had to tell me to end as Cindy was waiting to go; and I had the money to pay her.

"That was just an excuse to rescue you," laughed Roz as I went into the apartment block in a daze of femininity and followed her up to her apartment.

Cindy lived across the street in another block. She called her father while Roz walked her down to the door to meet him to take her home. Cindy was smiling by the extra tip I'd given her from the extra money that Tim had given me. Well, I was feeling so good as I kicked off my high heels and danced into the apartment. I just wanted Cindy to feel as good as I did.

"Let's go to bed, then," said Roz, a sly smile on her face when she came back. I had intended to be home

that night in my own apartment. My computer must be overloaded with e-mail after me not answering anyone for a day or so.

"All right," I said, imitating Tim's Boston Irish accent as Roz laughed at me.

"Try that all the time," Roz said to me, sitting on her bed and taking off her pantyhose. "Let me do that," she said when I lifted my skirt to take off my stockings and be like her.

Her hands caressed my legs and my skirt as she pulled me to her. Well, I'd kissed a man multiple times, not trying to stop him at all, and liked it. So, it was easy to kiss a girl. We were soon entangled with each other and our female clothing. Roz eased her hands over my panties, taking them down enough, even as her lips held mine to hers. I was freed from the terrible taping, my manhood able to appear as it should.

We were only partly undressed when I first penetrated Rosemary. She shifted so that she was on top of me, her breasts pressing on my blouse. She kissed the studs in my ears and whispered that, tomorrow, I must try on the pretty dangles she'd bought me. I rocked beneath her as she pressed down and giggled at me, her hands caressing my bra straps as I held her to me. We both came, her orgasm quite splendid.

"You can take off my stockings now," whispered Roz as I cuddled to her even though she was pressing down heavily on me. I ran my hands over her bare legs, puzzled.

"No, darling Trisha," she whispered. "I mean my stockings that you are wearing."

We entangled enough to clean off our makeup, to slide out of our bras and undies and to get into nighties. I began to feel oddness rising in me. I shouldn't

want to feel like a girl, any more, should I? Roz insisted I put on another of her bras, a much bigger thing with lots more padding. We giggled as we changed panties, all hers, since we hadn't thought to buy any when Abby was buying hers.

"We should have bought you that Merry Widow corset," murmured Roz as we hugged together, her hand stroking my hair about my face, reminding me suddenly that I still had my wig on. "Wow, just thinking of you in that, Trish, makes me want to make love to my darling girl again."

She wasn't the only one. Just thinking of myself dressed in a corset like the one we had seen in Darby's made me want to make love as well. I imagined myself in the Merry Widow and made love to Roz, or, rather, I let her make love to me. Oh, at some point, I was sure that it was Tim making love to me and kissing me, but then I felt her breasts, and trembled at the little disappointment overcoming my girlie-dressed body. But when I thought guiltily of Tim again, my manhood rose magnificently to the challenge of loving Roz. I don't think that Roz was dissatisfied with me at all.

VIII. GIRLISH GAMES

"Oh, I love your new earrings!" exclaimed Abby as I sat at the table and picked up the paper, my shiny, red fingernails so, so feminine as I turned to the sports page. "Did you buy some more?"

I shivered as I looked at Abby, knowing that she would be teasing or putting me on in some way.

"Trish bought several new pairs of earrings!" said Roz from over by the stove where she was frying some kind of egg toast that the kids liked.

I crossed my legs as femininely as I could and opened the paper to block out Abby's grinning face. I was in one of Roz's business suits, dark grey, my nylons a nude color, that's what it said on the label. My chest was tented as it had been for the weekend, the grip of bra straps almost familiar to me now as the bright, red blouse complemented the suit and the earrings that Roz had insisted I wore in place of the sleep studs.

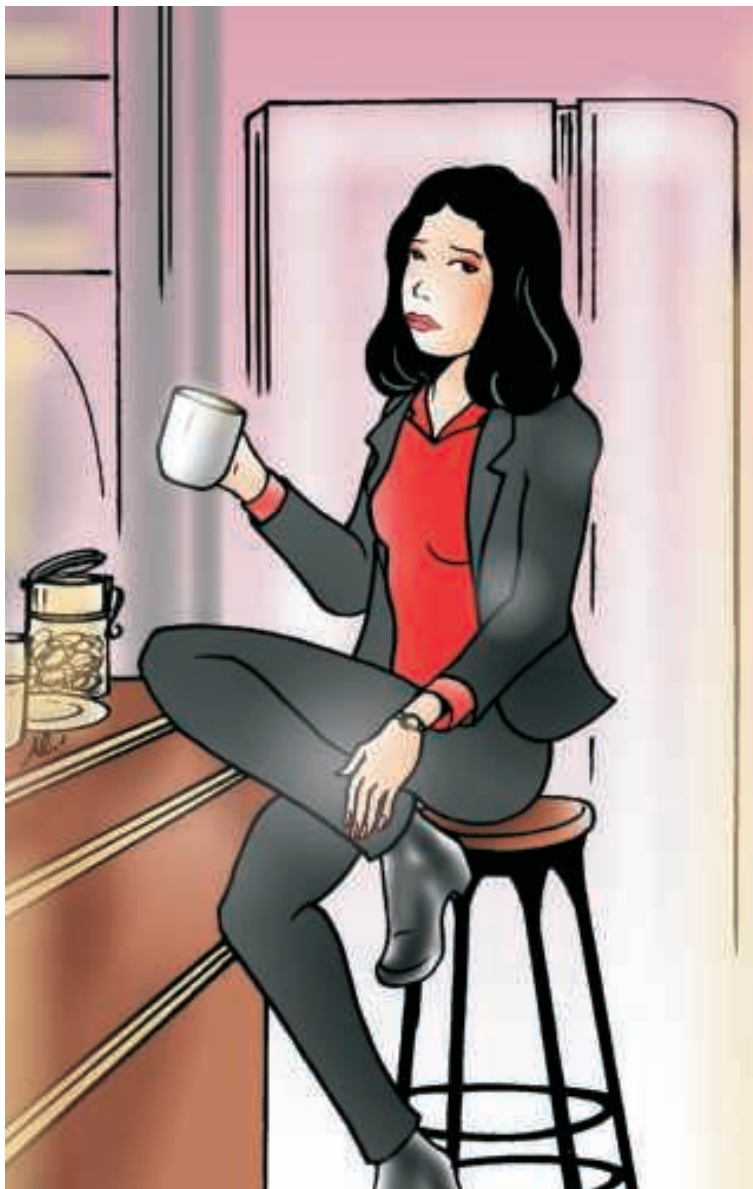
I couldn't read a thing on the page. All I could stare at were my fingernails and the bracelet dangling on my wrist and the hem of my skirt drawn above my stockinged leg. I sat there, knowing how I was bound and restricted below my tight skirt, well, Roz's tight skirt. Yes, I shivered, feeling so effeminate, while a fourteen-year old girl teased me.

"Oh, you smell so nice," said Abigail as she passed me with her breakfast plate and glass in her hand. "Mum, doesn't Trisha smell so nice? Can I borrow some of her cologne?"

"Ask her yourself," said Roz, who was supposed to be phoning a cab company for me so that I could get home, to my real home, in the women's clothes I was wearing.

"Oh, please, please, Trish," begged Abby, mocking me, I knew, by the smirk on her face. "May I have some of your girlicious perfume, please! Oh, don't your nails look so absolutely fabulous!"

I shuddered at her choice of words and looked to Roz, eating from the plate she held in her hands. She just shrugged at me as if it was no account that her male lover of the last two days was being teased by her daughter for wearing her mother's clothes and makeup. So, I didn't look as good as I had done when



Roz had put makeup on me first, but still I thought that I looked womanly enough.

I opened my purse, my nails catching on the clasp, took out the cologne bottle and passed it to Abigail who rushed off to the bathroom with it.

"Oh no," said Roz after David had alerted her to where Abby had gone and with what. "Now she's going to smell like a trollop all day long!"

"A trollop?" I had to ask her in my attempt at the Boston accent. "Now where did you get such a word from, Rosemary Henning?"

Roz grinned at me then, making an approval sign with her fingers and thumb, as she rushed to pound on the bathroom door and insist that a defiant Abigail come out on the instant.

"Can you do something with her?" said Roz to me as the phone rang as well. "It's Ronnie's mother. I have to take it!"

I stood up in my so familiar high heels and sa-shayed to the door. There is no other way to describe the swaying walk that I made and showed off in the hall mirror. I tapped on the door gently.

"Abby?" I asked. "Could I get my perfume back now, please?"

"Don't you know anything about girl's stuff?" came Abby's voice from the bathroom. "It's not perfume. It's cologne."

"Well," I said, my nerves rising. "Cologne then. I have to go soon, and you wanted to see the earrings I bought, didn't you? Why don't you come out? You can choose a pair, if you like any, and borrow them from me for a few days."

There was a pause for a little while. I could hear Roz arguing with someone on the phone. "All right," Roz said finally just as Abigail said it as well and emerged

from the bathroom in a cloud of Chanel, which Roz had had me buy at the drug mart in the Westside Shopping Center.

"This is different from the one you were using yesterday," said Abby, a smile on her face as she took my hand and pulled me into her mother's bedroom. The bed was straightened by me, the nighties and negligees put away, the panties and stockings in the laundry hamper.

The earrings were in the bag that Roz had carried back from the shopping center. Abby eagerly poured the contents on the bed and passed scathing comments on my and her mother's taste.

"You need bigger hoops," Abby told me, "and sexy danglers that reach right down on your neck. This is old woman stuff, like my Mum wears."

She liked the little, red flowers Roz had put on me. I took them off and gave them to her. I was surprised how they sparkled on her ear lobes.

"Just like they did on you," said Abigail when I told her. "I like your voice as well. It's kind of neat, isn't it? You even sound like a girl most of the time now."

"Way to give a girl confidence in herself," I told her, shaking in my skirt and high heels as the girl studied my made-up face with a frown.

"You did your lipstick yourself?" asked Abby. I nodded nervously as she picked out the biggest earrings Roz had chosen for me and gave them to me to wear. "You should use my Mum's lipstick pencil and draw in the shape first, especially in the middle there to make a pronounced bow. Then you just fill in with lipstick gently, stroking outwards. You look like you put your lipstick on, like a boy."

"Thank you," I said to her, crossing my legs again as we sat on the high, firm bed. "I think."

Abigail flashed me a beautiful smile, assisting me to close the clasps and screws on the heavy earrings she'd chosen to borrow from me. "I like you," she said. "You're not like my mother's other boy friends. You're a lot of fun."

Roz came bustling in then, to change her clothes, while I was shuddering at what her daughter had said to me. "What are you girls doing?" Roz asked. "Oh, Trish, you're not letting her wear your beautiful earrings, are you?"

I stood up as Abby stood beside me, grinning at her mother who was sniffing the air. "Oh, I do hope that is you, Trish, that lovely fragrance," said Roz, "and not my spoiled-mad daughter."

"It's both of us!" laughed Abby at her mother.

"Oh no!" gasped Roz. "Your grandmother is going to be furious with me when we get over there!"

"I don't want to go over to grandmother's," objected Abigail, hanging on to my arm as if in the throes of grim death. "I want to stay and play with you and your um, that is, with you and Trish, Mum! Why don't we go shopping again and try on everything in the Westside boutiques? I bet they'll let Trisha try on the bridesmaids' dresses in the wedding boutique. I think she'll look so pretty in pink, Mummy!"

I think the penny well and truly dropped with Roz, at last, as she flushed and changed her blouse in front of us and then her skirt.

"You have to go to your grandmother's, Abby," Roz finally said firmly, not looking at me or the way that I was quivering in her skirt and Dana's high heels. "You're supposed to be there for Sunday dinner. There's no reason why you shouldn't be. Your Dad will be back."

"With his girl friend," pouted Abby. Then she smiled. "I like your girl friend, Mummy, much better than I like his."

It took Roz a while to get the girl to leave the bedroom and get changed, with promises to take off some of the cologne she'd borrowed from me.

"I'm sorry," Roz said nervously to me as I shook as well as her comforting arm went about my waist. "I didn't think she'd be like that. She's usually so out and upfront about things."

"Don't blame her," I said, still quivering with the shameful things I knew I was stuck was doing, at the forefront of my mind. "The fault is all mine. I shouldn't be here."

"Of course, you should," said Roz, frowning at her image in the mirror and patting her thickened stomach. "I should go to the gym and my dance class tonight. Would you like to come with me?"

"Me in a women's dance class?" I asked her, as Roz hugged me and gave me a quick kiss, stirring the oddest thoughts in me.

"Why not?" Roz asked me with a sly grin. "Haven't you done everything else that a woman should do in the last few days? I saw you with Tim last night, remember? It was a good job that I didn't wait for you to finish kissing him first."

I flushed at that and then remembered what Abby had said about my lipstick. Roz had to go and get David ready. So, I sat down at the bedside dressing table mirror, blotted my lips free and did them again as Abby had suggested. Yes, they did look a whole lot better, as if a woman had put lipstick on herself.

When I came out of the bedroom, Abby noticed immediately and told me how nice my lips looked. "I bet you'd get lots of kisses, if you went back to Danny's

with my mother tonight, with lips like those," said Abby.

"Now be nice, Abigail Catherine Henning," said Roz angrily, taking her daughter firmly by the arm and pulling her out of the apartment. "Oh, Trish, will you lock up for me, please?"

So, I strolled about the apartment in my skirt and top, my hair so nice, feminine, I meant to say to myself, after being freshly brushed and set early that morning by Roz. She wished we'd brought more clothes and wigs from Dana's dressing room and so did I. I did, that is, until I realized what it was that I was wishing for, more dresses, female underwear and wigs for me to wear.

I tidied up the little mess in the bedroom, took the bag of earrings and other female stuff I had bought, turned off all the lights, locked up and went down the stairs, all by myself, smiling at the couple going up, who didn't seem to notice anything strange about me at all.

Roz must have said something to Abigail because she was quiet and sulking all the way to her grandmother's house. Grandmother Henning, Ronnie's mother, greeted the kids as if she hadn't seen them in weeks. She wanted Roz to stay for a while and smiled as well as me.

I was introduced as a girl friend of Roz's from work, Trisha Kirk. Roz wouldn't stay. She hugged her kids and promised to be there at nine to pick them up as "it's a school day tomorrow and Abby has a new skirt and blouse to wear."

Abby came and hugged me before we left, a shiver going through me as she did that. "You'll be coming back with my mum, won't you?" she asked me.

"I have to get ready for work on Monday," I said, shaking, as I tried to sound right, that is, like a girl.

"Your throat is getting much better," said Abigail with a smile. "Trish has had a really bad cold and bronchitis, Grandma, but she's getting over it now."

"Oh," said the older woman. "Well, I wouldn't have known that."

IX. COMPLICATIONS OF BEING A WOMAN

"We should go back to the apartment and have you change into that summer dress you wore on Friday night," said Roz as she drove me away from the grandparents' house towards the city and in the general direction of my apartment.

"I want to go home," I gasped.

"The reason why I had you wear that dress was to get you used to it for when you are going there, to the big meeting, or to a social event with the bosses," said Roz, as we passed under the first sign for the suburb of Dunning Park. "Don't you ever read the memos you get for Dana? It's a garden party for the brass at Barry and Karen Barnes' place today. You should have been there, with a companion, if you were really filling in for Dana. She never missed one."

"I'm not ready for that," I said with a womanly shudder, thinking of all the Ekco VPs and their wives that would be at such a thing. I remembered the criticisms that Dana had had after the last two 'socials' as she'd called them. She'd noticed things about the other wives that I would never have. She'd sneered at just about everyone in the upper echelons of Ekco, even and especially the Barnes family, whom she'd de-

scribed as 'one step off the farm, still with you-know-what on their shoes'.

"Actually, you are," laughed Roz at the scared look on my feminized face. "But you're probably right. It might be just a little pushy for a woman like you, one day from being a secretary, to show up. We should work on your voice, as well. Let's just go home and have an afternoon of wild, crazy sex today. Your place or mine?"

"Mine," I snapped at Roz, sitting back in the car, looking down at the skirt that had drawn up to mid-thigh on me, showing off so much of my long, slim legs.

For the first time that weekend, Roz did what I wanted until she parked the car and got out. "You don't have to come in with me," I told her as I looked about at the familiar building that seemed so frightening now, as I approached it dressed as I was.

"You need to work on your voice still," said Roz. "You might find that you still need me if someone waylays you here."

Who should we meet just walking up the steps to the electronically locked doors but the guys from the floor above me, the 'swingers', everyone called them. Dirk made an exaggerated bow to open the door and welcome us into the larger, plusher building unlike the standard, barebones building Roz lived in.

"Which floor would you like?" asked Jack, holding the elevator for us. I had to walk past men whom I knew and had seen very often since I'd moved into the place. I sometimes saw them in the swimming pool but that, with the removal of all my hair, wasn't going to happen again very soon.

"Who are you going to visit?" Jack asked with that lazy smile of his, trying to turn on the charm, while I shook femininely inside.

"Pat Kirk," said Roz for me, taking my arm as soon as the elevator opened on the fifth floor. We didn't hear the elevator door close.

"They're watching us walk down the hallway," whispered Roz in an amused tone. She half turned and looked over her shoulder. "Yes, there they are, watching you walk, girl. Men! Boys, more like it!"

"They know me," I told her as Roz stopped me opening my purse. She rang the bell at my apartment and knocked on the door. She waved down the hallway as I stood there, not daring to turn my bewigged head to look at the swingers from the sixth floor.

I heard the ding of the bell as the door finally closed. With trembling fingers, I opened my purse that reeked of Chanel cologne. Abby hadn't tightened the top enough. a Roz took my key from me and opened the door, letting me into my apartment and safety.

"You know why they were looking after me," I told Roz in distress. "They recognized me. That's what they did. I could hear them whispering as we left the elevator."

"The fair one was saying, Nice," said Roz as she tossed her purse on my couch and gave my place the once over. "The dark one was saying that he didn't fancy the other one. In other words, he was laying claim to you, too, and leaving me to the fair-haired boy. I am fat, aren't I, Trish? That's why I just don't get any real respect, not even from Tony Parker. Goodness knows, I've opened my legs to him enough times in the past."

"I don't think you need to tell me that, Roz," I said to her as I set my own purse on the table and went to

turn coffee on. At last, I was home and I could soon become me, the man, Pat Kirk, again.

Roz didn't stop, however, with the spate of injustices she had to let me know that stocky girls suffered every day. "You see how it is," she said angrily. "You only have to wiggle down the hallway once with the cute figure we made for you," the padding had all been her idea from the start, "and the boys come flocking after you. Me, a real girl, they don't even give the time of day."

"They're too young for you, Rosemary," I told her. "Mike seemed to like you a lot."

Roz swung her foot in agitation as I made us both coffees, adding sugar substitute to the mix. "I'm not that old," she said to me snappishly. "I was only eighteen when I had Abigail. It's the extra weight that I carry ever since I had David. Don't have kids, Trish. You lose your girlish figure."

I had to shudder at that, doing an obvious double take but Roz, of course, was merely teasing me. She patted the couch. I sat beside her, surprising myself that I wasn't in any hurry to change out of my female clothing and be me again.

The ringing of the doorbell froze me for a moment or two. "Well, aren't you going to get it?" asked Roz. I looked wildly and fearfully at her, indicating anxiously how I was dressed.

"Well, it's your apartment," said Roz as the bell sounded again.

I swallowed hard in nervousness, got up and went over to the door, pausing to look at myself in the mirror. I didn't look like me. A dark-haired girl, earrings sparkling at her ears, hair fluffed out and needing a brush, looked at me in fear from the mirror.

I looked through the spyhole and there were two girls in the hallway, girls I didn't know except to say 'Hello' as we passed in the hallway. They were usually laughing and smiling at Dirk and Jack and had no time for me at all.

"It's two girls," I said to Roz, terrified.

"Do you know them well?" she asked me pointedly. I shook my head and the long hair bunched and flowed lightly about my neck.

"Use your accented voice like you did before," said Roz, staying on the couch. "Go on. It's rude to keep the girls waiting any longer. And your brother was working out and is taking a shower."

I've never felt so scared as I did when I opened the door and let Debbie Morrison and her friend, Fiona, into my apartment.

"Jack asked us to stop by on the way down," said Debbie, the prettier one, with reddish hair and lots of eye makeup. "We're having a pool party tonight and the boys are barbecuing out on the deck. Dirk's supplying the wine but anything else, to drink, you should bring yourself. We're asking all the singles in the Tower to come and join us. Your friend, as well as your brother."

"We have another party we have to go to," said Roz regretfully. "But Trish's brother might come."

"Well, sure," said Debbie, uncertain about whether that was a good idea. "If you do find that your plans have changed, come and join us. Jack's cooking up enough food to feed an army. He'd love to make your acquaintance, Trish."

The girls left with brittle smiles. I didn't have to use the laryngitis excuse as Roz was there to parry every enquiry they had.

"Next time," Roz said to me. "Turn on the shower and put a little radio into the bathroom. You have to talk more as well, you know. Hmm, the idea of a free barbecue for supper is awfully tempting, isn't it?"

"And how do I explain Pat, my brother, not being there?" I asked her indignantly. Roz wouldn't answer me until I said it again, at least trying to sound like a girl.

"I bet they'd accept that Pat was staying in to watch some game on television," said Roz. "I wish we'd brought that summer dress with us from my house. You'd be a knockout at any party, then!"

"Look, Roz," I said to her. "Just go home, will you? I'll see you later in the week when I've had time to think about a way out of this mess."

"You're not thinking of missing tomorrow's meeting?" asked Roz in alarm.

I began to nod. Roz seized me by the shoulders and before I could say, 'Trish', marched me into my bathroom, so that I could look at myself, in the long mirror there.

"This is what the men are going to see tomorrow," Roz told me, holding me. Man, was she strong. "Look, look at yourself, Trisha, and tell me what you see. Have you ever seen a prettier, girlish face than that? Look at this figure and the bra straps you can see through your pretty blouse. No-one's going to suspect you at all, Trisha. No-one!"

"Your daughter," I said with a shudder as I looked at the brunette girl in the mirror with her makeup so well done, earrings glinting through her hair, "recognized me as a man right away."

"She cheated," said Roz through clenched teeth. "She saw us in bed together when you weren't wearing your wig or anything at all. She couldn't believe it,

or so she said, when you came drifting out of the bedroom with long hair and a negligee. You had her confused until she decided to run a little scam on you."

"Abby saw us in bed?" I asked, shivering as I thought about what she could have seen.

"She covered us with a bedsheet, she says," said Roz. "She thinks you're really pretty, but she couldn't understand why I'd sleep with a man who wants to be a woman. I explained to her that you're not gay or some kind of trans- something. Well, I hope you're not, anyway. I tried to tell her you were like a female impersonator. We had to help you or both you and I were going to lose our jobs."

"You told her all about me?" I asked Roz, my hair trembling about my face in outrage at the way Roz was manipulating me.

"I had to," Roz insisted.

"She'll tell her friends," I said, shaking in my high heels, trying to kick them off but then thinking how it felt to walk in nylons. I kept them on.

"What friends?" asked Roz with a sigh. "I wish she did have friends, real friends, but we've moved around so much. Ron finally agreed to pay her parochial school fees which is why I had to buy her the new skirt. It's a different design from her last school where they didn't insist on dressing in school uniforms. She didn't show you the blazer she has to wear or the long socks, did she?"

"But she does know all about me," I said with a shudder. "She's probably telling Ron and his mother all about me right now."

"No, she won't," said Roz, her arm about me, squeezing my shoulder. "Abby likes you and doesn't think much of Ron. She thinks you're really cute. David says that you're pretty."

"Oh, Roz," I said, feeling so weird, even a little desperate and, yes, a little weepy as well. Roz drew me to her. I guessed she wanted to kiss me and so I let her. Well, one thing led to another. I showed her my bedroom. Soon, we did just what she wanted. I had an afternoon in bed, dressed in women's underwear, making love to another woman who wouldn't let me out of my nightie or my feminine make-up.

As before, Roz liked me to keep my girlie stuff on as long as possible, ruining my stockings just as she had the others, the day before, as she climbed all over me, wrapping my legs about her so she could caress them, while making love to me.

"You should feel like a woman now," she said, laying on me, kissing my face, her weight on me, her breasts bouncing on the padded bra I still wore.

"Why?" I began as she held my mouth.

"Higher, breathier," said Roz with a smile. I tried until she nodded.

"You really like being on your back, don't you?" Roz asked me, smiling. "It's really very cute, Trisha darling. It makes me feel like I have the penis and am screwing you. You lie there so submissively and let me French kiss your lovely, soft mouth."

"It's not that," I stammered in alarm. Roz cut me off with the most intense bout of French kissing I'd ever endured. She roused me. Yes, I shivered and shook when she came as I did. She was right. She was making love to me as if I was the woman and she the man. I was coming as well, bliss following, after a brief moment of shame. Her soft hands and mouth caressed me. I wriggled in ecstasy at the wonderful, womanish emotions that ran through me. I loved the soft hair at my neck, the earrings trembling. I loved her hands ca-

ressing my panties, my garter belt and definitely my stockings.

"You should come back with me tonight," said Roz later as we lay, exhausted and satiated. "You're beginning to get a little bristly."

I touched my face, but Roz shook her hair. "Not there, silly," she said. "Though I can wax your chin again. Your legs, girl, are a little stubbly. We need to do them again for tomorrow. You want to look your glamorous best for Al Bridges when he introduces you formally to the Products Committee."

I was going to call in sick. I was definitely not going to go. But I did go back with Roz to her place, smiling at and ignoring Jack and Dirk who came out in skimpy bathing suits to invite us, me in particular, to come and join them in the pool.

Roz laughed smugly as we drove to pick up Abigail who was delighted to see me. She gave me a big hug, introducing me to Ron as her mother's girl friend from work. Ron gave me a speculative look which Abby interpreted correctly. She slapped her father's hand.

"It's nothing like that, Daddy," she said with a smile. To me, as I flushed, Abby turned and said, "My Daddy has a very dirty mind."

That led to a cross rebuke from her grandmother as David wanted the front seat in the car. I sat with Abigail in the back. She noticed my ruined stockings beneath the hem of my dress.

"Good job Daddy didn't see those," she whispered to me. Then aloud, she asked her mother what my apartment was like and wanted to know all about the cool guys who lived there.

Roz told her all about Jack and Dirk. Abigail wanted to go back right away to have a barbecue with two cute guys. "I have a bikini," she told me, "but I

never get to wear it. Do you have a bikini, Trish? I bet you don't. We have to go over to Sherwin some time. I'll take you to this shop where they have the cutest bikinis. You'll buy up the store when you're there, I'll bet."

"Everything is 'cute' with her these days," said Roz fondly. "Maybe, if we see Trish next week, she'll come over to Sherwin if I drive us over."

"Ooo, yes," said Abby. "There's this Love Shop there as well with all these corsets in the window ..."

"Abigail!" said her mother. "Oh, give her an inch, Trish, and she wants to take a mile. I think you should start behaving like a lady, Abby!"

"Okay, mum," pouted Abby, taking up my hand and comparing fingernails again. "I'll try and behave like Trish, shall I?"

Roz looked at my flushed face in the rear-view mirror. "That would be quite an improvement in you, my girl," she said to her daughter who did then, for the ride home, try to act girlishly like me.

End of part 1