

All Secretaries are Women



Part Three

Eleanor Darby Wright



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ALL SECRETARIES ARE WOMEN 3

by Eleanor Darby Wright

XX. THE DAY AFTER THE BALL

Karen Barnes wanted to have lunch with me and wasn't taking 'No' for an answer. She'd be at my door in forty-five minutes. Tricia had better be ready to go with her to *Prospects*. I so did not want to talk to Karen Barnes, not after seeing the report in the local Sunday newspaper of the AIDS ball.

There I was smiling at Damian Robertson, as if besotted with him. I was chilled as I looked at the woman I'd become. When I turned a page, there I was again, in a candid photo. in Damian's arms, looking for all the

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world that I was kissing him when all he was actually doing, at that point, was bussing my cheek.

I shook all the time I prepared myself for meeting Karen. I tried on three skirts before settling on a neutral grey one. I tried on several tops, finally settling for a short-sleeved yellow sweater that made my chest look so female. I'd just decided I couldn't go out in that, not with my hair swirling about my face, when the doorbell rang.

Karen smiled as she came in. "Oh, that sweater is so pretty," she said. "It looks so good on you. It's warm enough that you won't need a coat. Oh, and I love your hair! It didn't get messed about as Sir Edward was dreading! I guess you and Damian didn't make it between the sheets after all!"

"Karen!" I protested guiltily, knowing that I might have if he'd really wanted me to be his woman. Yes, he would have had a shock when he got my panties off me, wouldn't he? She laughed at me, put her arm through mine and gave me a great hug and squeeze.

"Al was green when that Matinich woman, the wife of the guy in international affairs, said Damian had a new popsy to warm his lonely bed," said Karen with yet another giggle. "I was all straight-laced, telling her you were my friend, and not that sort of girl at all. I was right, wasn't I?"

I shuddered and looked at her, the beautiful wife of my boss's brother, a man that the woman inside me was really attracted to. "Well," I began shakily, as Karen roared with laughter, putting her arms about me, hugging me as if I was a girl, just like her, dancing me womanishly around the floor of my apartment, my hair swirling around my neck and necklace.

"I nearly went to bed with Damian myself," she said, picking up my evening purse for me, taking out my perfume and putting some at her wrist to try it out.

"Oh, this is adorable, Trish. You wore this at the ball? Can I wear some with you today as we go out? We'll drive the men at *Prospects* wild again and make all the women jealous!"

"I don't want to do that!" I said, transferring the makeup and lipstick from the evening purse to my day shoulder purse that went with my sweater and skirt.

"No?" asked Karen, her thin nose and pointed chin grimacing prettily at me. "Then you're wearing that lovely sweater and skirt for what reason?" Her rounded cheeks dimpled as she laughed in womanly fashion at me again. She'd left her hair in the same hair style as she and I had worn it to the ball the night before. Mine was stripped of the cap and pony tail and unpinned. The weaves swung thickly about my neck.

"Not for what you think," I told her as I let her take my arm. We giggled together as we went out of my apartment, smiling at Cory and his girl friend, leaving at the same time as us. Ooo, yes, with Karen like she was, I really did feel so girlie and desirable, as a girl, of course, as she danced down the steps at the front of the building entrance.

"You didn't tell me a girl like that lived in the building," the girl said to Cory as Karen and I ducked into her Mercedes.

"Oh dear," laughed Karen, her shapely legs just like mine I was pleased to note. The chauffeur took us down to the restaurant, *Prospects*, that I'd been in just the day before with Karen. There was quite a lineup. I held back and would have walked away. Everyone was looking at me as Karen sailed in and hugged the maitre d', asking him if he he'd seen my pictures in the paper that morning.

We were shown to a table right away by the smiling man, who asked Karen where her picture was. "Oh, they don't take pictures of married women when eligi-

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ble, beautiful girls like Trish are available," said Karen cheerily, ordering soup and a quiche. I nervously followed suit, trying not to respond to the grinning admiration that the maitre d' was trying to share with me.

"Where, where's Barry today?" I asked her nervously when we were alone, glasses of white wine, in front of us. Of course, our nylons were crossed on our legs, mine as nice-looking and slim as were Karen's in her dark stockings.

"In bed, recovering," said Karen with a smile. "I got a little tipsy at the ball last night and that always means that I'm insatiable in bed. It's Barry's own fault. He shouldn't have let me drink so much but then, we were supposed to dance on the second level with the other VIPs and that was no fun. You looked like you were having much more fun on the main ballroom floor. I wanted to come and join you, but Barry said I couldn't, as Dana and Al would have come down as well. That would have put Al right beside you some of the time. Oh," she said then, a bright smile on her glossy, orangey lips, "it's not Barry you want to know about, is it? You want to know all about Al and how he felt at being dumped by you."

"I didn't dump him!" I protested. Oh, I sounded so girlish as I said that. I felt myself wriggling in my skirt, as well, putting on the feminine gestures that I'd tried to learn from Karen as she was so girlie when we were out together.

Karen looked at me with sparkling eyes. "I knew it!" she said. "I told Barry you were looking forward to dancing with Al at the ball. You'd even tolerate a slog about the floor with Barry if you could spend time with his brother. You could have knocked me down with a feather when Al showed up with Dana on his arm, not you, and giving out some story about you really wanting to be there with Damian Robertson."

"Damian came for me and I thought that it was Al at the door," I said, crossing my legs, as smooth and shapely as Karen's. I wished I hadn't worn the tight, revealing sweater now as I saw a lot of men around us sort of glance at me, well, glance at my chest as well as my legs, anyway.

Karen wanted to know what Damian had told me, word for word. She wanted to know about the 'feud' with Dana, that Damian had seemed to be clueless about. "Damian did seem very nice," I told her, flushing as she stared at me. "But, he did bring me home and was really nice. No, he didn't try to come in, but he did tell me that Al has been sweet on Dana for ages." Karen shook her head, smiling, sloshing her wineglass that had a women's lipstick on it, like mine. "But, but Dana's been so very good to me," I had to tell her, so that she wouldn't think I was mad with Al or anything like that, "recommending me to take her place and so on to Al, whose said nice things about her, to me."

There, even when Dana did 'out' me at last, perhaps Karen would recall that and know that, all the wretched things I'd done, had been known to the people who were saying such awful things about me.

"I should have known Dana Hansen had a hand in the catastrophe last night," said Karen with a deep sigh. She put her lovely hand on my arm as I shuddered at her female caress and gasped femininely as well.

"Catastrophe?" I asked, stunned by Karen's words.

"I saw Al this morning," said Karen reaching gripping my hand. "I think he drank all night. He was paralytic and a step away from death's door, I thought, when I first saw him, and it was all because of your rejection of him, you have to know." I tried to intervene to deny what she was saying but she was going on, staring, yet smiling at me as she spoke. "Barry said

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that Al did that once before, drank all night, when the girl he was engaged to went off and married someone else. But that was ten or twelve years ago."

"Oh no," I said, raising a manicured, red-painted hand to my lips, glossy and red like my fingernails I knew. "I didn't reject Al ..."

Karen shushed me as if she understood. "Men," she said before making me drink some more. Then, she continued on. "Luckily, Al zonked out as Barry and I were thinking of calling a doctor. Barry said he'd sit with him," Karen continued with a smile. "I said I'd have it out with you."

"Yes, I have to tell you, my lovely girl friend, darling Trisha, that you can't treat our Alexander like this, you know." She spoiled the order in that by giggling and squeezing my arm femininely again. "It's Barry's words. Al's not like Barry who can roll with the punches. Al's a sensitive guy. That's why when I tease Al, as Barry knows, I make sure that it isn't anything too, too personal to him."

"I'm not treating Al like, like ..." I protested, quivering as I re-crossed my legs and felt the wonderful touch of my stockings, one on the other, as I sat with my woman friend and we talked about our troubles with men.

"You were snuggling up to Damian Robertson as if you liked it," said Karen, smiling directly at me. She was right. As the night had worn on and Damian had been so nice to me, I had enjoyed being a woman and being in his company. I had loved kissing him as well. I flushed as I thought of all the men I'd kissed since I put on a dress. I seemed to like almost any man who kissed me, and cuddled me as if I was a woman, save for Marty.

"Tell me all that Dana told you about the feud she has with Damian," said Karen then. Over the wonder-

ful lunch, I, a glamorous woman, did just that, telling Karen about Technivision, what Dana had said to me, most of it, on the phone or in her office, after she was back from her doctor's holiday, and what Damian had said to me at the ball.

"So now you don't know who to believe," mused Karen, grinning at me then, as she was twirling the remains of the second glass of wine she'd insisted we have. "What I don't see is what Dana expects to get out of all these machinations with you. There must be more to this than stealing Al from you at the ball. Do you know what it is?"

"D-Dana might, might be trying to protect Al from m-me," I told Karen nervously, squirming in my panties and feeling my stockings pull more tightly on my garter belt as I shifted in my seat. Oh, I had some ideas about what Dana was going to with me. I was going to be severely embarrassed in some way, and probably with someone else, probably Damian, if she had something she wanted to get even with him for.

"Why?" asked Karen sharply. "What's wrong with you, Trish? Do you have some big, ugly secret to hide?"

I nodded anxiously, certain that the way that Karen was looking at me, that she could see right through me. I wouldn't have to say more.

"You're married," breathed Karen, sitting back, and showing no willingness to leave or to leave me alone. "I never thought to ask. Are there children?"

"Oh no," I said, holding myself so stiff that I could feel every piece of feminine lingerie that was holding my phoney body to its female shape.

"Good," said Karen, leaning forward to stroke my hand again. "Abusive husband?"

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"No," I gasped, my hair and earrings swinging quite violently about me. "It's nothing like that!"

"You're not married?" asked Karen, her face showing such relief when I shook my feminine tresses again. "Then it has to be something immoral or criminal, doesn't it? Don't tell me Dana knows and is using it against you to bolster her position at Ekco. Oh, that's it, isn't it, Trish? I can read it in your face!"

"No, Karen," I said, shivering, and trying to appeal to her as the new girl friend that she said she wanted to be with me. "It, it, it's just something that would hurt Al a great deal if he knew the sort of girl he's been promoting in the firm. That's why Dana pushed me off on Damian. She doesn't care about him."

"She doesn't care about Al, either," said Karen angrily. "She only thinks of herself, does that woman. Well, Trish, this is a pretty problem. Why don't you tell me your dark, dark secret? I'll bet it isn't as bad as you think it is. You haven't been arrested for prostitution, have you?"

"Oh no," I said with a shudder.

Karen smiled. "You'd make a terrific escort, you know," she said. "Men like the quiet, dewy kind of girl you are. I wanted to try it, you know, but the madam told me I'd have to change my attitude. Men wanted a submissive, sweet little woman in bed when they paid for it. Well, I tried to change and did hook Barry with my new attitude. Then he had the nerve to say to Al, when I could hear him, that he liked his women to be smart and sassy." Karen grinned at me. "I'm making him eat those words."

"I think that he really loves you as you are," I assured Karen, taking a girlish drink, two hands about my glass, my fingernails gleaming. Karen laughed at me, waving off my attempt to take the bill for lunch.



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Girls shared, I had heard, but she wouldn't let me do that, either.

"You are so sweet," she said, shaking her blonde hair back over her shoulders. "I wish I could be a woman like you, Trish, all soft and womanly and cuddly."

"You're all of those things, Karen," I assured her.

"Just not as much as you," Karen said as we left *Prospects*. She wanted to check on Barry and Al, the invalids, as she called them. "Oh, I'll take it easy on Barry, I promise," she said with a brilliant smile that made people all about us smile. "And I've a lot to say to Al. He'll be in touch with you, very, very soon."

Very soon wasn't the next Monday. I did see him in the distance as my heart went flip-flop as I minced along the executive hallway to the office which I shared now with Roz, Dana ensconced where I had sat for a month. Al just waved nonchalantly to me and went back to poring over some document Jim Matinich was showing him.

I felt so forlorn, yes, womanly forlorn, when I went back into the office and sat at the computer, my short dress showing of my pretty thighs. I stared at the screen blankly, wondering what I should be doing. Clearly, Al Barnes didn't care. Dana had taken all the work I'd prepared for the next New Projects committee meeting. She was studying my work hard as she was going to be there in my place.

I quivered and hoped no-one gave her a hard time at the meeting about my work. I felt as if I was living on hot coals whenever I looked up and saw her looking at me, pursing her lips or tapping her cheek with a pencil. Dana sent shock waves through me as I could almost hear the gears turning in her head as she worked out when would be the best time to reveal that Trish Kirk, in her attractive business suit, high heels

and long, stockinged legs, was nothing but another man.

XXI. BEFORE THE STORM

A week went by. No-one spoke to me at all. No-one spoke to me, that is, of the subject weighing down on me. A coward dies a thousand deaths and a brave man, or woman, but one, I kept saying to myself miserably, but each time there was a call for me, especially after Dana went out to a meeting, my heart fluttered. I expected it to be Al with some condemnation of me for pretending to be a woman to him.

One man did come to our office, all the time, but it wasn't the man I wanted to come. Damian Robertson wanted to take me out. He wanted to take me to lunch. Dana, of course, insisted I go with him. Damian joked and talked to me and didn't press it when I told him that I just couldn't go out with him. I had a lot of work to do, looking for a new job, now that Dana was back. He might not see me for a long time, very soon.

Damian was actually nice about it. He didn't try to hold me or kiss me in front of everyone. He complimented me every time he saw me, on my clothes, my new shoes, my makeup, or my hair. And he asked me out every time we met, making me tingle all over in the tight skirts and pretty blouses I had to wear as Dana had become my fashion dictator.

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But a week went by. I got up enough courage to approach Treasury about my checks. Tom Johnson smiled and said he'd do everything he could to get them re-issued for me. He delivered them to me personally and stayed to chat until Dana came out to find out what all the fuss was about.

"Oh, those checks," Dana said, all sweetness and light. "I found those on my desk after you left on Friday, Trish. Of course, I didn't look at them. I quite forgot I had them." She brought them to me. Tom shook his head as he took them and ripped them apart. I had new ones to use.

Dana said something about us girls being so preoccupied with the Ball, to which Tom nodded in agreement. "I saw the pictures," he said as he then went on his way. I'm sure he thought me a real bubblehead which was entirely what Dana wanted him to think.

"Don't think you can run away from me now, Tricia," she said sweetly, as I held on tightly and anxiously to my newly issued finances. "You will go out with Damian to the concert on Saturday. I promised him I'd talk to you and apologize for what I did to your invitation to the ball. But I knew that you and Damian would get along, sweetie. After all, he was boffing," she used the much cruder form of that word so that I would know what she meant, "the last tranny we had working here at Ekco. She was his secretary. They'd disappear for hours and take all kinds of long lunch breaks. But then she had the sex change," her hand made a motion like a pair of scissors cutting paper, "and Damian quite lost interest in the poor, little thing.

"But she married well, well enough, that, when I made just a simple remark about wondering what had become of her, Barry had me in his office and blistered me for even talking about her. If I even mention her name to anyone and he finds out, he'll fire me for cause, he says. Everyone in this firm has their mouth

nailed shut, I'm sure, if they even knew about Angela Morton at all."

"H-How did you ...?" I began nervously. Oh, how I shivered in whatever skirt or dress I was wearing when I met Dana. I didn't feel like a girl when she was in the office, as I often did now with Roz, the two of us often having 'girlie talks' about women's fashions, sales on undies and gowns and such.

"Pillow talk with Damian," Dana said with a laugh. "Yes, I had the bug for him once myself but all that heavy male testosterone, always wanting to be on top; well, I couldn't take it. But it would suit you, darling Trish, wouldn't it? And when you go out with Damian, you won't need to fear him discovering what you are. You're much prettier than Angela ever was. He boffed her for over a year when he first started here. I was thinking of organizing a bridal shower for her when she went off and then it was all over."

"I am not going out with Damian," I told Dana directly, who laughed at me.

"Afraid of your inner urges?" she mocked me. "Don't be, pretty Patty. He'll be delighted by the surprise in your pretty panties, I can assure you. Our wonderful bachelor prince swings both ways, you know. You saw all those female impersonators in the chorus line, the pre-op trannies? Damian has quite a reputation among those so-called ladies and all of it is earned."

I shuddered as I thought of Damian and the beautiful 'girls' at the AIDS Ball. I didn't have a clue whether Dana was telling me the truth or not, but Damian did drop by on Friday and asked if he could pick me up at seven for the concert.

"Wear something really pretty," he told me, with a smile. "We can go dancing ourselves after Mariah finishes her last encore."

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I didn't say yes. I didn't say no. How could I with Dana and Roz watching me?

"You're not going out with Damian again, are you?" asked Roz as soon as everyone was gone. I'd showed her my new checks, and didn't talk about Damian or about me dating men, now. We took them to the bank and deposited them. I'd then written her a check for half what Ekco had paid me as a bonus.

"Now you're free to get away," Roz told me. I guess she was wondering why I was turning up day after day, still in all my female finery, still behaving like a woman, and still taking tips on everything, from makeup to patterns of speech, from her.

"This weekend," I told her. Well, why not? Al clearly wasn't going to call me, no matter what Karen had said. He was about the firm every day. He must be avoiding me as I didn't see him anywhere.

"No," I told Roz with a shudder. "I'm not going out with Damian again. So, expect the fan to explode with the news on Monday, Roz. Your life won't be worth living for a while. If you want to brazen it out, blame it all on me, no matter what Dana says. It might help you. You might get knocked back a grade, but they might keep you on. Al Barnes and Karen are nice people." And Barry, whom I really didn't know. He'd been kind enough to protect Angela Morton and whoever she'd married at Ekco.

"We should have one last girls' night out to celebrate," smiled Roz. "Come on, Trish. Get dressed up in something gorgeous and let's go wild for one night. There's that club over on Barry Street that I haven't showed you off at, yet."

I really didn't want to, but Roz insisted. She came back with me to my apartment and selected a showy dress for me with slits and ruffled petticoats. "This is a country bar, not like the ones you go to with your high

falutin' friends," said Roz with a big smile. "Here, you have to be really femmy, darling Trish. Look, this dress is the most feminine thing you've got, save for those Merry Widows you wear. We'll put on big earrings and have bows in our hair. We'll be dancing every dance, you'll see."

I must admit that it sent a few tingles through me again as we packed a suitcase for me and went over to Roz's place to make ourselves into pretty girls for the evening. It was actually quite exciting.

Roz's daughter, Abigail, wanted to watch me transform myself. "Well, why not?" she asked Roz belligerently. "If your boy friend ..." That was as far as she got before Roz yanked her out of the bedroom where I was sitting in my black and red corset and black stockings. I'd been painting my eyes with nervous fingers as Abigail watched me.

Roz came back after the yelling ceased. "That girl," she said fiercely, "is going to have to learn to control her mouth."

"She's right though, Roz," I said nervously as I stood to let Roz slip the skimpy dance dress over me. I don't know why but I seemed to be almost topless again save for the red spaghetti straps over my shoulders.

"You are my girl friend," stated Roz emphatically. "And until she gets it through her silly, little head that that's what you are, she can stay in her room until we go out."

Abby did come out of her room to tell me how pretty I was. She wished me a good time at the *Dukes* nightclub which we were apparently going to. "I know I should have driven us over," said Roz as we tripped on our high heels to the massive shopping center near to where her apartment building was. "But then I

couldn't drink," she said with a giggle. "And who can have a girls' night out without a few shots."

I'd seen Roz drink. 'A few shots' was putting it lightly about the way she drank. Almost all the ones she claimed to buy for me she would drink herself. I clutched my purse and felt the sway of my dress and petticoats about me. If this was to be my last night out as a girl, as I'd decided that it would be, hadn't I, maybe I should lighten up and enjoy myself a little bit. Seeing Tim, who'd kissed me so nicely, standing outside *Dukes* had nothing to do with it, of course. A wide smile appeared as he saw us approaching.

"So, this is where you girls are hanging out now," he said. Tim and his partner Mike had walked us home from Danny's Bar on my first night out as a woman. Tim had kissed me, my first kiss from a man. It had been a dizzying and wonderful experience. If Marty, Tony Parker's friend, had been my first, I might never have kissed a man again.

"I'm just waiting for some friends," Tim told us, "but I promise I'll look for you ladies inside."

"There," said Roz with a laugh. "You're set up for the evening." She flashed a fifty-dollar bill as she paid the cover charge. We went into the loud, swinging scene, centered on a country band and a wide dance floor on which several couples were gyrating wildly, the girls being thrown up into the air, smiling in delight as the crowd clapped along as well with the band. I shivered as I saw how the girls touched their skirts to make them billow and show off their legs and panties. I wasn't sure I wanted to do that with all the men standing about the bar.

Roz was a known item as she had been at Danny's Bar. I'd been there with her twice. She pulled me to a table where Tony Parker, her old friend, was waving to her to join him. There was no Marty there but there

were three good-looking guys and two girls, dressed just as femininely as me.

"You brought your pretty friend," yelled Tony over the noise. Despite all that, I could feel and hear the rustle of my dress as I sat. But it wasn't for long. Mark wanted to dance with me and then Lou and Rod. I was swung and twirled and I liked it. I smiled as my partners hugged me and told me how beautiful I was. I felt my hair float about me as I hugged my men in the slow songs. I skipped prettily in the quick ones on my high heels.

And being lifted up in the air wasn't so bad as my skirts swirled about me so lightly. My freshly shaven legs looked really pretty and feminine in the bar mirrors when I saw myself. Being treated like all the other girls did make me feel 'femmy' as Roz called it. I saw her smile, encouraging me to flirt with the guys and lead them on.

I let the men put their arms about me, feeling so feminine, I had to admit to myself. Was I going to miss all this, the 'female outings' with Roz, yes, I thought that I might. I even danced with other guys from tables about us, one of them being Walt, the biker from Danny's Bar. "I got to get to know you, Roz's friend," he told me with a crinkly smile. "You didn't come in with that bunch of losers you're sitting with, did you?"

"Now, now," I told him. "I didn't come in with Roz's friends but I'm sitting with them; and they are buying me drinks. Be nice."

"You come and sit on my knee, little girl," Walt said to me, a sparkle in his eye, "and I'll buy you all the drinks that you want, little doll."

I smiled, shivering inside as a man propositioned me so, as if I was a real woman. I thanked him for the offer. I said that I might take him up on it another time. Ooo, how I trembled at the admiring smile on his face.

Shuddering again, I knew that there would be no other time.

I saw Tim dancing with a blonde girl who had her arms about his neck. I was with Rod at the time who looked over at Tim who winked at me.

"You know Tim McCarthy?" he asked me.

"From Danny's Bar," I said with a forced smile. "The pool tables."

Rod grinned down at me. "Oh, yeah," he said, hugging me tight to him. "Tim doesn't take his wife there, does he? Claudine's a lot of fun. She comes here on her own if Tim doesn't take her out on the weekend. We all have to be a little careful around both of them."

Tim was married? I shivered as I smiled and put my arms about Rod for the slow, slow dance. I'd never thought about that when Tim had walked me back to the Mortimer Apartments and kissed me outside Roz's apartment. No wonder he knew how to kiss a girl so nicely. And that thought made me shiver as I thought about what I was, which was definitely no girl, despite the way that I was dressed and the swishing that I made with every step. I had my soft cheek against Rod's beard as I let him hold my padded little body to him and think that he had a chance with a girl like me, later on.

"No, Tony," said Roz after we had been a couple of hours, or more, in the bar and danced with just about everyone. I'd even done line dances that I'd never done before, Mark's hands lightly on my waist to direct me into making the right steps. Oh, if there was anyone whom I'd like to go home with, he would have been the one I chose. Roz, however, was definitely tipsy and determined to leave even though the band were coming back for one last set. "I'm going home with Trish," she went on loudly to Tony, "and you

can't come in tonight. I'd be no good for you, anyway. I'm too tired."

And too drunk, I thought. Then Tony did a nasty thing. He had said that he'd drive us home, but he angrily changed his mind. Roz pouted and led me outside where several couples were waiting, in front of the main doors into *Dukes*. A taxi drew up and one couple took off in it.

"We can wait here and get a taxi back," said Roz, swaying and leaning against me. But after ten minutes, the crowd outside the club had grown considerably. When the taxi that did come next stopped, he was at the wrong end of the line. He took off with a boisterous bunch of revellers who were screaming "Losers!" to the rest of us as they went off.

"Oh, what the heck, we could be home by now," said Roz drunkenly. "We walked here and we can walk home before a cab comes."

"But it's late, Roz," I said anxiously. "Tim and Mike said that it was dangerous to be out after midnight when they took us home."

"They only said that," Roz said tipsily, "because they wanted to get in your panties, my pretty, little Patricia. Come on. Don't be a scaredy-cat. Walk home with mama."

It was fine across the shopping center and almost up to Danny's but then we entered an area of small stores, some of them boarded up. The sidewalk was wider but there were no lights. We were just three blocks from the Mortimer, though. Roz was laughing and singing as we swayed along, the clicking of our high heels really noisy. There were other people walking along as well, some of them from Danny's Bar. We could hear them across the street yelling at each other and at us to come and join them. The purr of a motorcycle suddenly beside us terrified me.

"Hi, girls, need an escort home?" asked Walt, the biker I had seen in both bars, and earlier that night. I really didn't like the way he was smiling at me. Nor did I like the big, silent guy whom I had seen with him in Danny's. He wasn't smiling at all. "Why don't you hop on the back?" Walt asked me smoothly, showing me his nice teeth.

Roz giggled and looked like she was about to do it, which startled Walt, but then two more motorcycles came up.

"Well, well, the pool shark," said Teddy, the biker who had frightened me so much in Danny's Bar. He terrified me again as he leered at me. There was a blonde, gum-chewing, hard-faced woman, holding on to him as well, as he stopped beside us. His friend, Larry, grinned at us from his big bike, edged beside Teddy's.

"Beat it, you guys," snarled Walt to the newcomers angrily, making me tremble all over. I shivered and could definitely feel my dress rustle as I tried to take Roz's arm and get her to move past the guys on the roadway beside us. "We saw these chicks first."

"But they want to go along with us," said Teddy with a horrible grin. I felt panic and hysteria coming over me. I tugged at Roz, but she just stood there, smiling, as if this was some sort of dating contest to see who'd take the girl home. "Candy will go with you, Walt, Ern." The quiet one, Walt's friend, put out a hand and the blonde transferred from one bike to the other with practised ease, not a trace of emotion on her face.

"You can have Roz," said Teddy, leering at me, grabbing at my wrist and I heard my dress swishing again about me. "Larry will share with me!"

Roz started screaming then. I did the only thing that I could think to do in the terror that I was feeling at the

way that Teddy was leering at me. I pushed on the motor bike that Teddy was astride and surprised him with my strength. He fell into Larry and the two bikes went down, one skidding down the road as Teddy released the accelerator, I think. The pair of them were cursing and swearing as I grabbed Roz and started to run in my high heels.

Ern and Candy took off after the spinning bike. Walt reached out and grabbed for me. I avoided him, but Roz didn't. He held onto her as Roz started hitting Walt with her purse. He was actually laughing and trying to calm her down. Teddy grabbed my foot as I stepped back and tried to help Roz get free. It wasn't much of a fight. I was pulled down, my coat and dress flying up in the air as Teddy hung on to my legs and pulled me along the ground as I screamed. Teddy crawled over the sidewalk and got on top of me.

"Don't you dare bite me, bitch!" Teddy yelled at me as he put a hand over my mouth. I struggled in terror to get free of him. "You took three hundred of my money and I'm gonna take it all back tonight in trade."

I screamed as Roz did, as high-pitched as her, as a limping second biker loomed over me. "This is too open, Ted," he yelled, looking around to where there'd been people but now there was no-one, trying to haul the angry biker off me.

Beside me, I could hear Walt grunting as Roz was screaming. "If he can do it to that old cunt," screamed Teddy, "I can do this one here on the road as well."

"In the alley," yelled Larry at him, "while I pick up the bikes before we get made."

I rolled over on the pavement in front of a dark, shuttered store, screaming and wondering where all the people, who'd been calling to us when we went tip-tapping past the old stores, had gone. Teddy stood up and tried to hit me. He grabbed at my hair and

some of it came off in his hands. I kicked and stabbed at him in my high heels as he was trying to open his pants. He swore and screamed at me.

Then, almost like a blessing from heaven, we were all lit up. There was a helicopter overhead! I could hear a loud voice telling us all to lie on the ground and cease the activity we were engaged in.

The flashing lights of a cop car, jumping the curb and coming at us so fast, convinced me that I was going to be run over and killed. Larry was swearing as he lay down while another car came hurtling up as well. Teddy only got to hit me a couple of times on the side of my head, breaking my stupid, big earring, before the cops had him. My initial terror was over.

But when I looked over at Roz, she was almost naked. Walt, the so-called nice, biker guy, had his pants about his ankles. It was clear what he'd done to Roz. Two of the cops pounded him. I must say that he deserved it.

One of the cops, an older guy, helped me to stand on my high heels, my dress swirling about me. I stood, trembling in woman's high heels, swishing dress and garter-raised stockings. I also wore Roz's coat that I'd borrowed, now a complete mess. "Did he rape you, miss?" the cop asked me urgently.

I shook my head. No, Teddy hadn't had the time. Someone must have called the cops, one of those wonderful people I'd thought had just vanished into the night when the motorbikes trapped us. "Roz was, though," I told him, tears flowing out of my eyes and making me look so awful, I was sure. "The others wanted to get me in the alley."

It was a nightmare of a night. Roz had to go to hospital. The doctors there wanted to give me the rape kit as well. I was frantic as I told them that I wasn't hurt at all.

“Have you seen your face?” asked one of the nurses in concern. Only then, did I see the swelling and the bruises on me. It took me a long time to get makeup off me, attempt to resurrect my hair into a female style, all the while acting as girlish as I could, under the intense scrutiny of a young nurse. She finally did help me put mascara and eyeliner back on my eyes. With a touch of lipstick, I looked like me, but the nurse wouldn’t let me use makeup on my bruises until I was photographed by a policeman.

“I look a mess,” I told him, shivering inside as all the people about me were so sympathetic and treating me as if I was a real woman. And this is what does happen to real women, I thought, shaking like a leaf. And we had been luckier than most, two women on the street as we were. I wanted to tell them to attend to Roz and not worry about me. Then, I learned she’d been knocked out and would have nothing to say for quite a while.

So, I was the main witness. I shivered and shook in my dress as policemen looked at me so intently and asked me questions about what we were doing walking in that neighborhood at that time of night. I could guess what some were thinking by the way they looked at me. I felt so guilty. I felt as if I’d committed some kind of crime, walking along a street at night in such a pretty dress. Of course, I’d have been charged with a crime, I’m sure, if they’d known what I really was. I couldn’t help the fear, or the tears that flowed from my eyes. Soon, the interrogation seemed to relent.

I spent a long time with a policewoman who had me sign a statement about it all. I repeated all the details of the fight as I’d seen it and she wrote it all down. She wanted to know how much I’d had to drink and why we were along such a dangerous stretch of road so late at night.

"Roz said it would be all right," I told her. "She lives in the Mortimer. Oh, her kids! Should I go home to them or should I stay here with her?" Luckily, a distraught Tony Parker arrived then, totally blaming himself for what had happened.

"Whatever made you walk home across the Westside?" he did ask me nastily. "A girl like you should have more sense."

"We couldn't get a taxi at *Dukes*," I told him, realizing that his nastiness to me was because of the guilt he was feeling, "and Rosemary wanted to get back to her kids." I didn't know how a 'girl like me' could have more sense than a real girl like Roz, who lived in the area.

I signed a statement for the police as Trish Kirk and was given a ride to the Mortimer to see to Abigail and David. Tony stayed at the hospital, cursing Walt, all of his crew, and promising to kill them all if he got his hands on them.

"You'll have to testify," said the policewoman in the car that took me back to the Mortimer. "But it's a pretty open and shut case. This Walter Dennison," Walt was the one I'd thought was so nice, "has been away for this, before. He's a three-time loser. The others have long records as well. It will take a while before this whole thing is over, maybe over a year, but we'll put them all away for a very long time."

I should have been pleased at that; but all I could think about as I went wearily up to Roz's apartment was that, for the upcoming year, I was going to be in women's clothing and going to court to testify as Trish Kirk. And what would happen if Dana took advantage of it all and told about me. I couldn't see how it would change what happened, but it would definitely be a sensational trial with all the details coming out about me.

I wondered what signing the statement as Trish Kirk would do to me when it all came out. I hadn't been thinking about it. I was just thinking that I was Trish, I was a girl and some men had tried to rape me. I'd played the part well, I thought bitterly, as I stumbled into Roz's apartment, and tried to grab a little sleep, in the nightie I'd brought over for my last night as a woman.

"I knew it would happen some time," said Abigail, as I tried to get breakfast for her and David, the next morning. I'd only told her we'd been attacked by some men on the street and that her mother was in hospital for the beating she took. I tried to be as girlish as I could be, in my nightie, robe and panties, my hair a real mess on my head. I tried to be female for Abigail and her much younger, goggle-eyed brother.

"I bet she was flashing the money you gave her around the bar," said Abby, eyeing me speculatively. Probably wondering why her mother had been attacked so badly and not the younger, prettier 'woman, me.

"It wasn't that at all," I told her, trying to keep the negligee in place as I worked in the kitchen and sat down as gracefully as I could to eat with the kids.

"You can see right through that robe you have on," said Abby as David started giggling. I panicked for a moment, but it was the dark fringes and garters of my corset they could see.

"So, you're going to be our mommy today," said Abigail with a smile.

"We should go up and see your mother in hospital," I told her sweetly. "You need to talk to your grandmother as well. She might want to come here, or have you there, while your mother is in hospital."

Abby's face changed at that. She looked at her brother. "We'll be very, very good, Trish, David and

me," she said with a threatening look at her brother, "if you'll stay and be our mommy for a while." The girl gave me a wicked grin. "It will be good training for you for when you have your own kids."

XXII. REVELATIONS

"You stood Damian up, this weekend," said Dana when I finally got into the office on Monday morning after parking Roz's car where she normally did.

"Yes," I told her, facing her in my dark grey suit, the skirt a little higher than others that I had. Dana had looked at it quizzically as it wasn't one of hers from her dressing room. "Have you told everyone about me yet?"

Dana was quite taken aback at my forceful enquiry.

"No," she said in surprise as I picked up the telephone. "Not yet."

"Good," I said. Dana looked at me as if I'd lost my mind. I nodded, the hair of her beautiful wig flowing about my shoulders. A stop the day before with Abigail at my apartment had led to me changing to my wigs again, to the ones with the frazzled hair weaves.

I'd needed Abby's help to get the wig right. I should have called Edward and have had his assistants fix the weaves properly, but I was still embarrassed by all that had happened to me. I didn't want to have to repeat it all again to anyone.

A day in Abigail's company, with visits to Roz and grandmother, had made me far more comfortable as me, as a sort of woman, for that was the way Abby treated me. She was into the dresses in my wardrobe right away and had to try on the wigs I'd 'liberated' from Dana's dressing room. That I was a man didn't seem to bother Abby one bit. Well, she hadn't ever seen me that way except when she'd seen me first, according to the talk she'd had with Roz, when Roz and I were first sleeping together. She wanted to dress up and presumed I'd love it as well. Of course, I did.

We went shopping. Abby wanted to try on all the perfumes at the perfume counter and presumed that I'd want to as well. She saw a 'darling' outfit she had to try on in the department store. So, I had to try something on as well, to keep her company.

Abby changed her clothes in front of me and expected me to do the same with her. She was into my drawer of panties and gaffs at my own apartment and begged and begged me to lace her into a corset and so I did. She used my perfume and makeup and got me to do her eyes the way it was recommended in a teen magazine. I didn't realize I could follow directions for a female, so well.

"You're so much better with this," said Abby, indicating my now very messy dressing table, "than my Mom is."

Probably that was because I just let Abby do what she wanted, I thought. And what Abigail wanted to do was everything any teenaged girl would want to do on a weekend in the city. A lot of it involved boys, being

near them in the mall and showing off to some whom she knew.

"This is my big sister," she said of me to the boys and girls we met. I found myself being swept along, acting giddily like an older girl, with the group trying out games in the mall. I got to pay for all the treats at the concessions, of course. I knew, too, when to back off and let Abby go off with her friends for hurried conversations which I hoped were not about me.

We got to talk to Roz at the hospital, but she remembered nothing about being raped. She'd been knocked out by Walt whom she couldn't, wouldn't, believe had done such a thing to her.

"Tony's being so lovey-dovey and sweet about the whole thing," Roz said to me, even smiling as she reached over to touch the bruises on the side of my face, where I had been hit. "He doesn't understand that I'm not awfully upset at what happened since I didn't feel it at all. I don't understand why Walt wasn't attacking you, though. You're much prettier than me."

"Teddy and Larry had claimed me," I had to tell her. "I was fighting them off and couldn't get to you before the police arrived."

"Tony said he'll take time off work and look out for the kids," Roz said happily then, her face still a frightful mess. "I think he's more shook up than I am. He was almost crying last night when he said he thought he'd lost me. He's the one who's going to bring me home, on Tuesday, they think.

"I just have to rest up and not go out and scare all the kids in the neighborhood for a while when I'm there. Tony says he'll move in with me for a while and be my servant for all the time I need to recover. Doesn't that sound great? But, Trish, you're going to be black and yellow soon, as well, my girl. Makeup isn't going to cover up all of what happened to you."

"Then Dana and others will just have to see me as I am," I told Roz, wondering then what had happened about Damian and the supposed date I'd had with him that night. But I didn't really care about that. I didn't know now how it was going to play out but I did know I was going to confront Dana Hansen some time about me living as a woman now. I couldn't go on with her like a knife pointed at my throat all the time.

My resolve held me all through the next day of being big sister to Abigail and for my first morning back at work. Dana hadn't noticed my injuries right away because of the makeup and wig I wore. And she wanted to berate me about Damian, 'standing him up'.

She was still frowning at my suit and top, obviously wondering if she, Dana, had bought such a stylish woman's outfit herself, and if she had ever worn it. I had news for her. I'd bought it for me with Abigail on the weekend. I was wearing it for the first time that very day. I was reporting for work as a woman, in my own womanly clothing. It sent quite a thrilling charge through me to think of myself like that, dressing as I was, all over.

"I want to report a work absence, Lily," I said to the woman in payroll as Dana listened to me on the phone, in amazement. "Yes, this is Trish Kirk." A thrill ran through me as I identified myself as a woman still. "Rosemary Henning was pretty badly beaten up on Friday. The police have the people who did it, but she's going to be off work for a while."

I had to give Lily more details than I really wanted but I did find out that, as Roz's supervisor, I could recommend she be maintained on the payroll until she was fit to resume work. I was very glad I was still Trish Kirk and could do that for her.

"The side of your face is bruised," said Dana when I hung up. "You were attacked as well."

"Yes," I told her.

"Did the men who attacked you and Rosemary try to rape you?" Dana asked, fascinated.

"Yes," I told her again. "But the police arrived in time to stop them from doing that to me. Roz wasn't so lucky. I got off with a few bruises and my stockings ruined."

"Oh, think what we'd all be going through now if you'd been raped," said Dana with a sickly grin. "Is that what they'd call it if those men and done it to you as a man, sticking their things in you?"

"Yes, Dana," I told her angrily. "They'd still have called it rape."

"I must tell Damian why you weren't there on Saturday," Dana said, going back into the interior office to call him. And that's how it was that, by noon, everyone at Ekco seemed to know that Roz and Trish had been raped on Friday night. I had a flood of visitors into the office all afternoon long. I was never hugged so much, or told how awful my face looked with all the swellings, by women who clearly meant well. Yes, I felt, at times, that I really was a woman, as well.

Damian came at the end of the day. "I just heard," he began coming in and holding out his arms to me. He was hugging me to him when Al Barnes came in behind him. The concern on his face was very clear.

"I just heard," Al began, just like Damian, from whom I separated awkwardly. Al didn't try to hug me at all.

"No, I wasn't raped," I told him. Al Barnes looked most relieved. But when I moved my head to show the men where I was hit, Al became very concerned.

"You shouldn't be in, working," Al said. "You should take a few days off. Dana won't mind."

Dana would mind, particularly with Roz laid up as well. "I can carry on as her executive assistant," I said to Al, which startled him. It shouldn't have. It was supposedly my job. Yes, I'd be a secretary again, wouldn't I? Well, I was a woman, wasn't I? With Dana back, I supposed that my 'Acting' status would be revoked. I'd go back to being what I was in everyone else's eyes, Dana's personal secretary, um, executive assistant.

Al looked at Damian and then at the empty inner office that Dana had vacated early in the afternoon. She hadn't told me where she was going after lunch. She'd just said that the parade of women to see me and commiserate with me was getting to be 'nauseating'. Since Dana knew all about me, and could see the bigger picture, I suppose that it was nauseating. I wonder if I'd have had as much commiseration, if the women had known that I was a man. It was the perfect time for Dana to tell everyone about me, I thought.

"Hasn't Dana told you?" asked Al uncertainly. "We're changing and re-organizing this section of our business quite extensively. Dana herself is going to be moving into a new job, a promotion for her, a new challenge."

"The Contracts' section is going to become part of a larger Financial Auditing department," said Damian with a smile. "And you can guess who's thrown his hat into the ring for the top job in the reorganization that's coming."

"Oh," was all that I could think to say. Well, it shouldn't bother me at all. I wasn't going to be working for Damian in the future, no matter what he seemed to be thinking.

"And I forgive you for missing our date on Saturday," said Damian while Al gave him a very wooden look as he said that. "You could have called me, you

know. How many times have I given you my phone number now?"

"A lot," I said hurriedly. "Another time ..." I began, meaning to say that I hadn't actually agreed to go out on a date with him, despite what Dana said.

"I'll call you," said Damian confidently. "You have to give me your cell number, though, Trish, and I can keep in contact with you at all times."

So, miserably, in front of Al Barnes, I had to give Damian my phone number. "I'll call you later," Damian said, kissing my uninjured cheek and leaving the office jauntily, clapping Al on the shoulder as he left.

"Dana has accepted a position in the new company Barry and I put together from assets we've been acquiring over the years," said Al to me, looking me over in my new suit and top. It made me flush as he looked down over my long, bare legs to my new high heels as well. "She'll be working out in Los Angeles and so we'll be throwing her a farewell bash at Dunning Park in a week or so. I hope you'll come, Trish, though I suppose Damian would bring you anyway."

"I wouldn't come with him," I said desperately, surprising Al.

"You wouldn't?" he asked in surprise. "Then what Karen has been saying ...?"

"If she said that I wanted to go to the ball with you," I plunged on, not thinking of the consequences, just wanting Al to think right of me before I disappeared and disappointed him entirely, "she was telling you the truth. I was never more surprised in my life when Damian was at my door to escort me. He wants to go out with me and makes these dates that I don't show up to."

Al grinned. "He's known for his persistence. He's worn down many a girl before now who said that she'd never go out with him. At least," he smiled ruefully, the way that I liked to see him, "that's what I hear in the locker room, so to speak."

"Well," I said, giving the devil his due, "Damian was very nice to me at the ball."

"And Dana was very nice to me," said Al, a slight chill returning to his manner. "She told me how Damian had asked you first but that you didn't think that you could turn me down as I was your supervisor."

"It wasn't true," I told him nervously, shivering femininely again, in my skirt, my long hair touching me so girlishly. "You were the only one to ask me to the ball. I was looking forward to our," I could barely say it, what was I thinking, saying what I did, in my girlish voice, to another man, "to our second date," I finished, my face flushing, I'm quite sure.

"How about we rectify that tonight?" Al asked me. Ooo, chills ran through me. Ooo, I couldn't go out, on a date, not now, not with a man I liked as he seemed to like me.

"I have to visit Roz," I told him; and Al nodded.

"She won't mind if I come with you, will she?" he asked with a smile.

So, my second date with Al Barnes was at the hospital where Roz was astounded to see us and especially surprised to see us holding hands. It was a new experience for me as well, to walk along, my dress swishing about me, with my hand in another man's. I felt his interest in me, as a woman, and felt his arm about me on several occasions as if to protect me. It aroused such lovely, feminine feelings inside me.

Abigail stared at Al, open-mouthed, when she saw us sitting there talking to her mother, Al's hand on my mine. "Is he your boy friend?" she asked me when Al went out to bring Roz more ice for her glass.

"Well, is he?" asked Roz impishly from her bed.

"I don't know," I said, coloring, and standing as I heard Al talking to Tony outside the small ward.

"Does he know all about you?" asked Abigail, bursting the lovely bubble I had been living in since we had left Ekco that evening. Oh yes, the memory flooded back. I am Pat Kirk, a man, I told myself, not Pat Kirk, a woman, even though I'm trying to look like 'her', in my womanly clothing and makeup.

I shook my head at that, my hair swirling about my shoulders, my bra tightening on me and my panties feeling so tight as I considered what Abby had just said to me.

"Don't tell him," said Abigail while Roz scolded her daughter and told her to butt out of my affairs. "I wouldn't tell him if I were you. He's nice. Wait until he says that he loves you."

"Abby!" said Roz, but she was laughing as I shuddered and shook with the shame that I felt.

Al came in with Tony and so we took our leave of Roz, who didn't mind a kiss from me. Women can do that to each other and no one thinks anything of it.

"Love your perfume," Roz whispered to me. "He's worth wearing a dress for, isn't he?"

Flustered, I held onto Al's hand as we left the hospital and agreed to go with him for a quiet drink before he took me home. "I do have work still to do," Al told me with a smile as we sat in the bar near to where I lived. Oh, it was so silly that I sat there in such womanly fashion, wondering if a man would think that I was pretty enough to be kissed that night.

"If I took you home now," Al went on, giving me a smile that made me shudder all the way down my womanly dressed body, to my tight panties, "would you throw me out after I kissed you good night and not listen to all the things I was saying to beg you to let me stay the night? I really do have some important calls to make overseas and they're all up and waiting for me in about an hour's time."

Of course, I didn't mind. I loved him driving me home, sitting so prettily in the car for him. I loved him holding my hand as he took me to my door, my high heels clicking as I swayed so girlishly to be 'Trish' for him. I definitely didn't mind him putting his hands about me and holding me to him before he kissed me. Oh, I loved and minded that so much. How could he kiss me like that, energizing every part of my femininity, making me want to have his hands inside my skirt and stroking me as he was on the outside. I leaned against the door frame and wiggled as his kiss entranced me and made me want him so much as if I really was a woman.

"May I come in with you?" Al asked me as I clung to him, he nuzzling the uninjured side of my face.

"Oh yes," I murmured, my high heel pushing the door open that we had unlocked when we arrived outside my apartment.

"You're supposed to say 'No' to me," said Al as I lifted my face and kissed him, yes, I kissed him, a man. Ooo, he responded to me, pressing my female padded body into his. I didn't care that I wasn't a woman any more. I just wanted to be kissed by Al, to be loved by him, to be made to feel so heavenly like a woman in his arms. Kissing him quite obliterated whatever I'd felt when Damian had kissed me.

"Let me take you to bed," Al said huskily. Ooo, I was so tempted! I stepped back with his lips again at-

tached to mine. His fervency made my hair inside my wig stand on end. Every nerve end in my body, some in the most unlikely places, like in my panties, began to tingle and indicate that I was totally aroused and ready for a man to love me as if I was a woman.

"Your, your business calls," I managed to say at last. Al sighed, as he hugged and hugged me.

"You're throwing me out," Al muttered as he caressed my back and my bra strap. I felt sure that my breast inserts must explode if he held me any more tightly. We kissed again. I did one of those silly things that women do, lifting my leg against him and so he was able to caress me all up my stocking leg and over my garter, up to my hip and my panties.

"I, I'm throwing you out," I murmured unsteadily as I moved into my apartment with Al still holding me.

"I love the way you do it," said Al with a smile, releasing me. I felt colossal disappointment as I put my leg down and my skirt fell about my thighs again. "I will stay soon, very soon, Trish, if you'll let me. But I must go and do what my father expects me to do right now, and which is very important in getting Dana Hansen out of your lovely hair."

So, I was left to dream again of Al Barnes and to think about how I was going to have to tell him what I must. Oh, but I didn't want to. Abigail was right, I thought as I lay in my lovely, lacy nightdress and pretended Al was with me. I should wait until he told me he loved me. Then, he'd forgive me, wouldn't he? I shivered and knew that such a course would only lead to extreme hurt, shame and embarrassment for us both. I must quit Ekco right away. I must.

Karen called and asked me to go to lunch with her and not to tell that bitch, Dana Hansen, that the two of us were getting together. Dana that day was engaged in 'important' conferences all day about Ekco's new



Western subsidiary, I gathered. I should just continue on as I always did, on contract reviews and investigations, that I was doing so well.

Karen looked critically at my hair. "Why are you wearing wigs again?" she asked me. I tried to explain about the hurt and the way Teddy had grabbed my hair. "You have Sir Edward's phone number. He'd be glad to re-do your hair properly. At least you're wearing a nice dress for a change. Not one of Dana's, I hope."

I was wearing one of Dana's dresses, a linen dress and white shoes that seemed to go well with the bright sunny day and the way that Al had made me feel. Then, what Karen had said made me realize that she knew more about me than I had let on to her. "Well, it was one of Dana's dresses that she gave to me," I said nervously, smoothing the dress and long slip that I wore beneath me as I sat down in *Prospects* again.

"The way that Dana tells it," said Karen with a wry smile, "you rifled through all of her clothing in her dressing room in the office and made off with half of it before she came back to stop you."

"When did she say this?" I asked Karen nervously.

"Oh, she regaled Barry, Al and I with lots of stories about you on Saturday night," said Karen, signalling to the waiter to leave us alone with our drinks for a while. "I really pitied poor Al having to take her home. Whatever have you done to the poor woman that she feels she has to put you down on every occasion she can."

I shivered in my dress and crossed my legs as Karen, being a real woman, had done so naturally when she sat down. I had thought Karen would have heard that Al had taken me out and wanted to know all about what the two of us were up to. I felt really guilty about that. I didn't know why I was still dressing up

like a woman, either, and being Trish. I should get out now, with the money I had and get back to being Patrick Kirk again, in some other company.

"And you're promoting this woman whom none of you like?" I asked Karen, who grimaced at me.

"Moving her right out of the company is more like it," said Karen bitterly. "Now, I have a question to put to you, Trish, about the hatchet job that you did on Technivision. Did Dana know all about that before she left on her little jaunt about the South Seas?"

I was mystified. "Yes, of course," I said. "She asked me not to let anyone see it until she got back but I had to pass it to Al when he asked for it."

Karen nodded. "I thought so. Ken Barton at Tech is suing Ekco," she told me, "claiming that we manipulated his stock so that we could make a killing in the market. Guess who was trading and dumping Tech stocks in the week before the company collapsed."

"Dana?" I gasped as Karen nodded.

"That's why Al's been circumspect about talking to you this last week," she said with a little smile. "But I hear that the two of you kissed and made up last night." I had to shiver as I thought about how right she was to phrase it that way. I could still feel Al's passionate kisses on me, his hands about me as I clung to him. I had to jolt myself out of that reverie as Karen was smiling at me.

"So, tell me," Karen said then. "Who is this transsexual that Ekco has been employing and whom Dana has promised Damian to unmask at her farewell party? Do you know?"

I spilled my drink on the table at the shock of such a question there in the quietness of one of the city's most exclusive restaurants. "How can, how should, I don't

want, I can't tell you," I babbled all at once, blushing as Karen stared at me.

"Don't say Angela Fenner, either," said Karen, staring pointedly at me as I mopped up the remains of my wine. "Damian knows all about her. She used to be Angela Morton when she started working for us. Dana knows we wouldn't be shocked about her, only shocked that she'd disobey Barry and subject Angela and Greg to considerable hurt and embarrassment in the firm. No, it's someone else, isn't it, Trisha. So, I have this very important question to put to you, Trish, as you seem to know most of Dana's little secrets."

I stared at the beautiful woman beside me and trembled as Karen leaned forward in her stunning, designer-made cream suit and lowered her voice to me. I knew what she was going to ask me and didn't know how I was going to respond. "Do you know who it is whom Dana is going to reveal?" asked Karen very quietly and very intently.

I looked into her exquisitely made-up face and, my throat dry, and shivers running through me, I slowly nodded.

"Well, Trish," said Karen with a tight smile. "Here's the million-dollar question then. Is it me she is going to be revealing to the world?"

"You!" I gasped before I could stop myself. I looked at the beautiful woman, the married, beautiful woman beside me, and almost cried as I saw the taut, distressed look on her face.

"Yes, me," Karen said. "Apart from my friend, Angela, who else could it be? It's not that I mind that much for myself. It's Barry and Al whom I really care about and old Alexander." He was the boys' grandfather. "He's so much wanted to have grandsons; and we've just figured out a way that we can do that safely

for all of us. But if this explodes across the firm, it'll destroy the old man and none of us want to do it."

"Barry," I said idiotically, "and Al know all about, about you?"

"Well, Barry has to," Karen said with a toss of her golden hair over her shoulder. "I am married to him after all and am a very loving wife to him. And the brothers are close as you must have seen. Well, Al was a little put out at first, but he's been great since the wedding. He can see how much Barry and I are in love. Even if I was to have the final change as Angela did, though, I could never bear any children for Barry. So we have to do it by surrogacy or adoption and that demands complete privacy.

"Angela would never tell as she's going the same route that I'm going to go, surrogacy. She'll be having her first baby, a daughter, in a month's time. That's why, when you see her, you'll see she has a false stomach on her. That's really for the other kids' sake, the three she's raising as a mother for Ron already. Those kids adore her and are getting ready for the arrival of their new sister. Ron is over the moon, of course."

"H-he knows," I stammered. "Barry knows all about Angela?"

"About Angela, of course," said Karen with a frown at me, checking me out, I could see, to find out what I was thinking about her revelations. "It wouldn't be ethical, would it, to encourage a man to love you and then have him find out when he's totally committed to you that you aren't quite what you seem on the outside. I just hope it wasn't one of them that let it slip to Dana what I am.

"I must say, Trish, that it's remarkable to me how you've just received the news that I've revealed to you. I expected you to jump up, run out of here, and tell me that you never wanted to see me again."

"It wasn't the Fenners, or Barry or Al, who revealed anything to Dana, about you or Angela," I managed to babble at her at last. "She doesn't know about you at all, if what you told me about you is true!"

Karen Barnes frowned at me. "You know that, for sure?" she asked, twirling her wine glass. "So, how do you know? Do you know who it was that Dana was referring to?"

"It isn't you that Dana's going to unmask," I managed to pull up the courage to say to her. "No, it isn't you that's going to be embarrassed by Dana's revelation. You should be quite safe from her. She thinks you are a woman, like her."

There was relief on Karen's face the like of which I've rarely seen. She shivered. I put out a hand to console her. She put her other hand over mine, matching mine with its painted nails, pointed, polished and so feminine, like mine.

"Then who could it be?" asked Karen, looking over to the maitre d' to indicate that we still weren't ready to order. "Could you help me to find out? If you know who it is, Trish, can you tell me who it is. I have to find the poor girl and protect her as much as I can from Dana Hansen."

"You'd do that?" I asked Karen unsteadily who looked at me in surprise.

"Of course, I would," said Karen hotly, "in the position that I'm in, Trish. I can't be me and let someone else like me be embarrassed and derided by a slag like Dana Hansen. So, who is she, Trish? Tell me and I'll do everything I can for her."

"You're looking at her," I told Karen nervously, screwing up all my courage as I finally admitted to someone else who and what I really was. Karen didn't seem to understand. She just frowned, stared at me and began to ask me again but I interrupted her. "It's

me," I told her. "I'm the man wearing female clothing whom Dana is going to 'out' as her going away present to you all. She's got it all set up for maximum embarrassment for everyone, even if I'm not there, as I don't intend to be."

Karen's lovely mouth, exquisitely covered by a plum-colored lipstick formed a perfect 'O' as she stared at me. "It can't be," she said, sending even more shivers and shudders through me as she stared at me. "You, you can't be a man!" she whispered. Oh, she couldn't be, either, could she, could she?

"But I am," I told her and felt tears coming to my eyes that I had to blink away. I sat there femininely and told an amazed Karen Barnes the true story of Pat Kirk and how I didn't mean to deceive anybody, I didn't mean to hurt anybody, all I wanted to do was to keep my job - and Roz's, of course.

"Your hair," said Karen all of a sudden. "Of course. But you're not on hormone therapy at all? You haven't had any feminizing surgical procedures?"

"I wouldn't know what they are," I told her.

Karen stood up then and picked up her purse. "I have to see it to believe it," she said with a smile at me. "So let's go to your apartment. It's closest. We can both prove to each other that what we've just said is true."

I shook all the way as I drove Roz's car over to my building. I couldn't believe Karen's female body as she stripped out of her clothes, just as she couldn't believe my mannish body as I got out of my linen dress. Karen's breasts were real and lovely, her hips wide and unpadding.

"I've had a million things done to my face," she giggled to me. "Lips, cheekbones, jaws, teeth, hair implants, brows shaved, and eyebrows lifted. Barry calls it my million-dollar face, but it wasn't anywhere near as costly as that. My body was much less, just breasts

and tush so far. It's what you need if you are going to stay a woman and you are, aren't you, Trish?"

I shook my wig that I hadn't taken off. "I can't now," I said miserably as Karen took off her panties and showed me that she was indeed a man like me. Well, not a man like me, really, considering the rest of her. I had to take my panties off then and let her see how I taped myself between my legs.

"That must hurt," said Karen sympathetically. "Since I'm on hormones, I don't have to do that as I used to, like you. I used to be getting all hard when I saw a dress I liked and wanted to wear, even one on a pretty woman. Barry says I had a hard on every seven minutes of the first year he knew me and he's probably right. Hormones cooled me off. I'm nowhere near the mannish size I used to be."

"It still works though?" I asked Karen uncertainly.

"In sex, oh yes," said Karen with a lovely smile. "And Barry loves it. This is why I haven't followed Angela Fenner to the chop shop." I grimaced at her choice of words. "But it's going to be absolutely useless for him when we begin our baby and he wants me to lactate and feed it. I am going to be so loaded up with female hormones that my little man-thing isn't going to be working at all."

"Barry won't mind that?" I asked the naked transsexual in my apartment who was starting to put her panties on again as we had proved to each other that nothing we had said was a lie.

"He wouldn't mind me having the big snip," said Karen candidly. "But I'd have to have a huge, working clitoris that could get really hard for him. I talked to Angela's surgeon. He's trying it out on some other girl right now. If she gets real pleasure from her clit, and her boy friend likes it, I might be under the knife next year just before our surrogate baby arrives and I can be

a mother, like all the other women I know, save for you and Angela.”

“I’m not going to go back to Ekco,” I told Karen as I began to redress as a woman.

“Oh, yes, you are,” said Karen vehemently. “And the first thing you are going to do is go into Al’s office and, after you have kissed and cuddled for a while, you are going to sit in his lap and you are going to tell him who and what you are, exactly. And after you and Al have worked that all out, going on or not, we are all going to put our heads together and spike Dana Hansen’s plans for good.”

XXIII. IF ONLY SHE WAS A WOMAN

It was all so much harder than it sounds. Karen and I finally dressed and went out to lunch as two smartly dressed, affluent businesswomen. I could scarcely believe it after the strange, intense disrobing in my apartment. I still trembled when I looked at her and knew that she had seen me exactly as I was. And yet she treated me totally as if I was a woman, a ‘woman’ like her. I just couldn’t think of Karen as anything else despite the evidence she had presented to my eyes minutes before.

The maitre d’ at *Prospects* was a little surprised when we returned and had salad lunches just like the other thin women in the restaurant. “I used to hate all the salads at first,” said Karen to me with a smile. “What I wouldn’t have done for a thick, rare steak and a couple of pints of beer when I started my transition, as the books call it. I’m still in transition, of course, but the salads here are so tasty. Besides, I’m used to looking after my figure now. Oh, how I cried at the start

when I starved and starved myself and still was as stocky as I always was. I don't know what Barry saw in me at all. I think it was the hormones that helped me most and the million and one dance classes I've been part of. But you haven't done any of that, have you?"

"No," I said nervously, a little anxious and appalled at the way that the 'new' Karen talked to me so openly. I mean, she always had, but now she knew things about me. She seemed to think nothing of making that a general part of her conversation.

"I can't believe that you can look the way that you do and have had no feminization procedures," said Karen, shaking her long, blonde hair. "Barry will flip when I tell him."

I shuddered as Karen noticed immediately. "Sorry, Trish," she said, lowering her voice. "But I do have to tell my husband. I don't have any secrets from him as you mustn't have from yours. Really." She added the last, as she saw the look on my face. "And speaking of husbands," Karen said with a smile. "If you're quite finished pushing that last piece of chicken about your plate, let's go into Ekco and beard the lions in their dens."

I swallowed hard as Karen held onto my arm tightly so that I couldn't run away. We walked right down Broadwalk, our long hair floating on the breeze, past all the most prestigious offices in the city, our high heels clicking in unison. We walked past flocks of young men on errands. I could see our shadows before us and felt almost sick as I saw the way my dress floated out about my thin, shapely legs on the thin points of my shoes.

But it was when I turned in profile and saw how my hair flowed that I could see the shape of my padded chest, just like Karen's. Oh, my waist was so slim as well and my padded hips made my dress flair so airily.

Most men and women who passed us were in suits. Many paid a lot of attention to us. Karen's hair gleamed in the sun and attracted more than a few whistles and stares as we sauntered together, she smiling at all the attention we received, while I only glazed my eyes and tried to look away.

Karen knew a lot of the men and waved and said 'Hi, Brian, Steve, Grant, Michael, Paul, John,' and so on, to many handsome men. Some smiled and came and walked with us for a little way. "And who's your gorgeous friend," several of them said to Karen. I was shown off, my dress lightly swirling about my stockings that pulled on my garter belt. But Karen insisted we slow down and I be introduced to many people in the business world, she smiling and warning me against all of them and their weird tastes in girls, right to their faces. Most of them just smiled at her in delight and warned her that they were going to tell Barry all about her.

"Trish is our newest, brightest star at Ekco," said Karen, making sure that they all knew my female name and what I was doing at the firm. I shivered as all I could think of was how much further known my disgrace as a woman would be, after Dana Hansen got through savaging me. But of course, a little voice said inside me, you aren't a woman anyway. You deserve to be put in disgrace. But Karen is no disgrace, said another little voice. Maybe you can be a woman just like her. And that thought set me shivering all over. Karen finally relented and hurried up along the boulevard back to work.

We finally turned in to the Ekco Summit Building. The doors were immediately held open for the two slim, elegant women in their light-colored dresses and skirts as we passed through the lobby and into the elevator. A quick glance at the reflection on the mirrored tiles by me as we walked in and all I could see was a

vividly made-up girl in a swishing, pretty dress and lovely, white high heels.

"We'll do Al first," said Karen, smiling and nodding to people who knew us both now. They'd soon likely be gossiping like mad about seeing me as a girl on Karen's arm and being hustled into her brother-in-law's office.

Al's executive assistant, an older woman, told us that Al was in a meeting and that it was very important to Mr Barnes not to be interrupted, even by pretty relatives. We should make an appointment. I totally agreed with her, about me being a pretty relative, of course, not about disturbing Al, huh, no I thought the opposite, honest, but still, I wanted to run away right then, back to the safety of my own office and Dana's dressing room.

"Now, Joan," said Karen with a brilliant smile to the older woman regarding us grimly from a desk and work station just like mine with Dana, "when have I ever come in before, to see my brother-in-law, unless it was extremely important. This is important, believe me. Al will want to see Trish and me this afternoon. You can cancel any other committees he has today as this will take precedence. You can get my husband on the phone as well. I'll talk to him as he'll want to be in on this, later."

I just sat there with Karen in Al's outer office and squirmed in my tight, aching panties as she took over the direction of my life for a little while. Oh, just stand firm, Joan, I implored the older lady silently, as I shook at the thought of what I was going to have to do, tell a real man all about me. He was one whom I really liked and wanted to think well of me. But Karen insisted that I had to do this, confess to him. I had to be honest with a man. I shuddered as I thought girlishly about a man I was interested in, as if I was a woman. I flushed a brilliant red and felt my bra tease me as I moved, my

dress swishing so appealingly, and worried about what sort of man I was, trying to impress another man with my feminine attributes.

"Yes, darling," said Karen with a smile into the phone, sounding so much like any other attractive, married woman whom I knew. She just was the woman that I'd always thought that she was. "This is very, very important. Yes, it is about Dana and I've good news and bad news about what we talked about this morning. Yes, I had lunch with Trish. She put me straight about that. I want to tell you all but we have to talk to Al first. You'll understand later." She turned, looking so womanly as she perched on Joan's desk and laughed and smiled at whatever her husband was saying to her.

Her husband. I trembled as I looked at her, at the rings on her fingers and listened to the girlish way that she talked and teased her husband. And yet, just a little while ago, I'd seen her perfectly naked and with a definite male appendage between her legs. "I'm going to be around the office," Karen finished with a smile. "And I'm going to be flirting with every man in sight, Mr Should I Really Believe That My Wife Is Serious This Time. And if you're late and I see Damian Robertson and he makes the same suggestion he made to me at the office party at Christmas, I'm going to take him up on it!"

Karen saw the way that I was sitting, switching my legs again nervously. "You look like a bad girl waiting to see the principal in his office," she said with a giggle. Behind her, Joan nodded and smiled encouragingly at me for the first time. "It's not going to be half as bad as you imagine it's going to be. Really and truly, it isn't going to be bad."

"Could, could you come in with me?" I begged her. I could just let her chatter on as I got ready to run if Al

stood up and came after me as the bikers had, just a couple of nights before.

"I could," said Karen with a smile. She lowered her voice. "But this is really something best done by you. Al will really respect you for it even if it doesn't all work out well between the two of you."

We sat there in the outer office for nearly an hour, both in our dresses and every womanly make-up fashion. I went through an eternity of recriminations with myself for getting myself into this strange predicament that I was in. I had to smile and chat femininely to all the men and women who came by the office, several coming in just to say that they saw two pretty women in Al Barnes's office and thought that was unfair of him. I had to smile girlishly as if I was amused by that. But all the while, I played through a score of scenarios in my head about how I would approach Al and what I would say.

Then, suddenly, there he was, sliding right into the empty chair beside me. "Oh, wow, Trish, Karen," he said with a really nice smile to both of us. "Are you ladies ever a wonderful sight for sore eyes!" His eyes swept over us. The admiration was very clear in the way that he looked at both of us, at our smooth legs, female shapes and different hair.

"This is about Dana and Technivision," said Karen, returning his smile, "and you should listen to Trish about Texas Video something as well and Hatton and Dunn. I think that we have a real problem with what she told your New Products committee. But more important than that is what Trish has to tell you about the rumor Damian told us about. It is true and Trish will explain it to you."

Al just stared at me in astonishment as Karen rose and left his office, leaving me squirming again in my seat.

"Joan," said Al quickly then, turning to his executive assistant.

"I've already done it," said Joan grumpily, looking at the computer screen in front of her. "I've re-arranged your last appointments today for tomorrow. Tommy Pardoe is pleased. He needed more time. Mr Adams isn't so happy but agreed. Your brother and his wife are joining you in thirty minutes. Karen says that you won't need me." She looked hopefully at her boss.

"In that case, Joan," said Al, standing and taking my hand and directing my trembling body to precede him into his inner office, "you can close up shop and go home early for once." He gave her a big smile as I minced and swished into his office. I would have sat opposite the big chair behind his desk, but he directed me to the sofa he had there and sat down beside me, holding on to my hand, my stockinged legs stretched out before me so femininely.

"What do you have to tell me that is so earth-shattering and momentous," Al asked me with the same sort of smile he'd just given his secretary. He laughed. "I think those must be Karen's words that Joan was quoting in the message she left me. The hyperbole is distinctively Karen's, isn't it?"

"Yes," I said meekly as Al caressed my hands and feminine fingernails, sending feelings through me that I knew that I mustn't like, not now, nor respond to, not now.

"Where shall we start?" Al asked me. "What's this about Texas Videotronics?"

I stammered through the report I'd sent to him. Al frowned as I went through it all, keeping the other thing I had to tell him about, me being a fake woman, at a distance from having to talk about it. "Another Technivision," Al said grimly. "But why haven't you

made a report of this and sent it to me? Dana didn't know anything at New Products and was saying that she thought everything looked good, at our last meeting."

"I did send you a report," I told him in consternation. "I sent you a copy of a CD and of the written recommendations."

"And you gave them to Dana?" Al asked. I flushed. Oh, she couldn't have changed my work. She just mustn't have had time to look at what I'd intended to present myself to the New Products meeting.

"She is my supervisor," I told him, feeling my earrings bobbing against me in my nervousness, as he stared at me. "Maybe she's not up to date on this."

"Oh, she is very much up to date," said Al angrily. "She bought into Texas as she did into Technivision. I know this for a fact. The stock price went up on each just as we were looking to acquire them. But Dana unloaded Tech just before your report and recommendations came out. She's just done the same, unloading what must be her inflated Texas VT stocks. I was about to ask her about that and why she was doing it. Now I can guess why."

I shivered. "What-what are you going to do about that?" I murmured nervously. I hadn't seen him before looking so angry. I shuddered girlishly again to think how he was going to look when I told him what I absolutely had to.

"We're going to fire her and institute our own law suit against her," said Al fiercely. "With you on our side to point out all the illegalities in how she is using our insider information in court, she will probably do time. What is it? Is there something wrong in what I said?"

I sat beside Al, my hair bouncing about my face. I kept pushing it back in my nervousness as I thought

about what Dana would surely do when she heard what Al had just said. I could barely speak as I tasted the lipstick on my mouth each time I tried. I doubted that I'd ever get the chance to testify against her. I'd be laughed out of court long before that.

"D-Dana w-was going t-to d-do s-something else b-before she, she left for the new position that you've promoted her t-to," I stuttered in my anxiety about what was going to happen to me when Al learned what I had to tell him. Ooo, I shifted my crossed legs and felt so womanly with the touch and sound of nylon on nylon.

Al went very stiff then. "Karen didn't tell you about that vicious thing Dana said to Damian, did she?" Al asked me.

I couldn't keep my eyes from confirming to him that Karen had indeed told me of Dana's intention to tell all, to 'out' me to everyone in the firm. Of course, Al didn't know that the man Dana intended to ridicule for dressing as a woman was sitting right there in Al's office, beside him on the sofa, her stockinged legs crossed in front of him. And by the way that Al was smiling down at my legs and dress, I didn't think he knew at all just what a fraud of a person was sitting there with him.

"Look," said Al gently, stroking my hand and making my feminized body really tense. "It's vicious and it's dirty but it's best we don't answer such dreadful rumors at all. We'll just ride out whatever Dana says. Then, next year, when Karen has her first baby, well, it will all be put to rest."

"But Karen isn't ..." I began, twisting as I sat beside him, pulling my skirt down over my legs as if I could hide them and my stockings entirely from his sparkling eyes.

"No, she isn't a transsexual," said Al quickly, his face twisting in what I could see was annoyance. That made me shudder as he had just told me an outright lie. Oh, did he know, in truth, that Karen was a trans-something. I'd seen 'her' that very day, I could have told him, and that, what he'd said, was what she was! And yet I liked him even more when he said that, defending his sister-in-law, if Karen could ever really be that, to someone like me. Whom he would soon know about! "We can, we will, just laugh off everything that's said about Karen and get Dana behind bars where she belongs."

I shuddered as Al squeezed my hand again. "Dana doesn't know about Karen," I told him in a sudden spasm of feeling. I had to be honest with him as Karen had told me I must. Suddenly Al became very still beside me. Yes, he did know all about Karen. That was now very obvious to me.

"What?" he began. I knew that Al was going to protect Karen some more, to me.

"It isn't Karen whom Dana's going to expose at her farewell party," I told him miserably, unable to look him in the eyes, even though, if I looked down, I knew he would see more of the vivid eye makeup I was using, in imitation of the girls at Menoncinos.

"Then who?" asked Al in a choked voice. He was quicker on the uptake than Karen. He was looking at me in shock and horror even before I got the words out.

"Me," I told him, shivering in my whitish, linen dress as I sat, my legs crossed, my high heels dangling off the end of my toes. "Dana's going to reveal to everyone that I am not a girl named Trish Kirk, but a boy named Patrick Kirk."

Al stared at me as if I'd just hit him over the head with a two by four. His hand fell away from mine as if

there was no strength left in it to hold onto me. "Pat Kirk," I told him with a shudder. "I was always called Pat by everyone. When Dana left on that cruise she took, everyone save for Rosemary Henning thought that Pat Kirk must be a woman since I was her executive assistant, her personal secretary, I should say."

Al was just looking at me, studying my made-up feminized my face, I'm sure. He was looking at me as if I was something the cat had dragged in and deposited in an awful gory heap, in front of him.

"Damian was going to fire me if I was a man," I galloped on with the story that I'd thought I could tell but couldn't all at once, "but he didn't when he thought I was a girl. Roz had to help me be a girl to keep her job as well. Then, I had to meet you and do that meeting about Technivision."

I stared at his face. Al was turning all colors of the rainbow as he looked at me. "I, I should go," I began, standing, and beginning to edge towards his outer office, but Al cut me off.

"This isn't true," he said huskily, moving in front of me so that I couldn't get past him. He put out his arms and took my thin shoulders in his. "Look at you!" he said in awe. "You, you are a woman! Is this some kind of tasteless, practical joke of Karen's?"

"Oh no," I told him, my voice shivering girlishly as I spoke. How could I sound so womanish now when it had been so difficult for me earlier in the day. "No, no. I, I am sort of like Karen. Well, not like Karen because she has her breasts and I don't. M-my tush is padded as well. This is a wig I'm wearing. I, I am a man, really." I still saw enormous doubt in his face. "Like Karen."

"You are like Karen?" asked Al Barnes. Suddenly, he was collapsing back to sit in the chair that had faced

his across his large desk. "You, you're a man, a transsexual? You want to become a woman?"

"No, No," I almost screamed at Al in my so feminine voice, edging once again towards his 'out' door. "I just wanted to keep my job, that's all it really was, and dressing as a woman helped me. But, but now I have to stop. The money you've paid me as a bonus will help me to get far away and to go back to university. And, really, I can't testify against Dana. Really, I can't. I couldn't take everyone pointing and laughing at me. I couldn't! She, she made Damian take me to the AIDS Ball so that he can be shamed just as much as you, Al, as you took me out as well."

"And you will be denigrated most of all," said Al harshly, getting to his feet as my feminine hand closed on the doorknob. I began to open the door to the outer office.

"Well at last," said Karen Barnes, climbing out of the clinch she had been in with her husband. "We thought you were going to stay in there, all night long. Did he get you on the couch, Trish? Al says it's the comfiest one in all the senior offices but he doesn't say for what. Did you try it out together?"

"We've been talking business, Karen," said Al stiffly, fury clearly under the marvellous self control that he had. My heart sank. I felt the coldness in his manner and the way he avoided touching me, knowing I was now a man dressed as a woman. Meanwhile, Barry was clinging onto his beautiful wife and smilingly pulling her back into his lap.

"But the stuff about me," said Karen, hastily kissing Barry and then sitting up to look at Al and me. "Dana doesn't know about me. It's Trish who's to be outed. Didn't she tell you that from the first?"

"No, not first," I told her with a shudder as I stepped forward, my heels clicking again, as I left the

carpet. My skirts swished about me. I felt the tightness of my bra as I tried to breathe normally. Barry looked up at me as he released Karen. She came to me right away and took my hand. I felt as if I'd burst out crying at any minute.

"We just got to all that," said Al brusquely. "I thought, I had thought, that we had a good plan at last to get Dana Hansen out of our hair for good."

"We do," said Barry Barnes, standing up after Karen and putting his arm about her shoulder as she stared at me in considerable concern.

"It was a plan based on Trish Kirk being a woman," said Al thickly from behind me. "If only she was a woman, we could go on and get Dana, but Trish isn't a woman. That's going to be something that none of us can live with."

XXIV. PLOTS AND PLANS

"That brother-in-law of mine is a total disappointment," said Karen as we finally left the brothers together. Barry was looking at his brother in puzzlement, as if he didn't really understand what the problem was. I was sure Al would enlighten him, in no uncertain terms, as soon as I was out of there.

"I would so much have loved to have had you for my sister," said Karen, taking me in her arms in front of my office and hugging me affectionately.

"So here you are!" said a voice from the office. Dana stood in the doorway. She looked surprised as Karen stood away from me. Dana must have known it was her hugging me as soon as she came to the door. Karen

was unmistakable wherever she went. "Oh, Karen! You're here too!"

Karen did something that I couldn't do. She smiled brilliantly at Dana, went over and gave her a hug as which took Dana aback, a lot. "I'm so going to miss you, Dana Hansen," Karen said, "when you and Damian are gone to LA. I was just arguing with my husband that he couldn't let Trish go with you as well. I'd have no-one to come over and talk fashions with any more. You won't believe it, Dana, but this girl says she owes all her beauty and fashion sense to you. I think it's really so nice of you to give her so much of your old clothing. She looks so good in your dresses and suits, don't you think?"

Dana clearly was nonplussed. She looked at me in my dress that she knew was not one of hers. "She does look good in my clothes," she said as I shivered in front of her.

"There," beamed Karen. "I told you that you should listen to Dana, darling Trish. She'll make an elegant woman out of you, Trish. If Trish goes to LA with you, Dana, which I'm going to insist to Barry not to let her, no matter that Al says her place is there with you and Damian. I'm taking Trish shopping with me tomorrow, Dana. She can treat me for lunch as we have a session at Menoncinis. Why don't you join us?"

Dana's face was really frosty. "I have work to do," she snapped. "Trish, there are several things piling up. I finally got to look at the work you did, in investigating Texas VT. It's another Technivision, isn't it? We have to talk to Al about it, if I can get a meeting with him. He's cancelled out this afternoon, and tomorrow morning, but this is important, isn't it?"

I stared at Dana and the look of innocent concern on her face. "I'll leave you girls to it," said Karen, going back along the passage and waving to me. "I must see

what my husband is up to. If he hasn't arranged our New York vacation, and Trish coming with us, you'll hear me screaming all the way down here!"

I followed Dana into her office and sat meekly, trying to be as girly as I had been, I think, in front of Al Barnes. Well, I wouldn't be doing this again, I resolved as I crossed my nyloned legs, they feeling so feminine. No, I'd be into my jeans when I got home. I'd cut off my curls, and be gone to the bus station, with a ticket anywhere, away from here. But yes, I did sweetly go over all the work I had done for Dana, showing her that I wasn't just being a negative 'nellie'. I had many companies that I'd listed for investing in, I was positive about a host of them, Dana's eyes widening in disbelief as I wiggled and made a very female display of myself as I left her with a folder that she could make her name with. Of course, I giggled as I went over the whole portfolio of problems, and non-problems, that I'd turned up when I'd been left on my own as Acting Head of the Contracts Section of Ekco.

"You should have pointed out this Texas stuff to me earlier," said Dana indignantly, waiting for me to point out to her that I had. I nodded, pushing my hair back. that flowed over my face then while Dana stared at me. "Did you discuss any of that, or all of this, with Al Barnes today?"

"Oh yes," I said softly, wondering if I had the nerve to take out my compact and lipstick, in front of her, and touch up my makeup. It might make her think that I was totally committed to a female life now. But I didn't do that, as she was looking at me a little nervously. "Mr Barnes knows now all about Texas Videotronics," I told her. "I told him that you hadn't had the time to get up-to-date on the file since you were back. He asked me to push you to read it and get back to him when you could."

Well, he hadn't said that. But Karen was telling bald-faced lies to Dana. Mine at least had a modicum of truth to them. "Are you going out with Al tonight?" Dana asked me then most suspiciously.

"No," I told her and blushed. "I, er, I won't be doing that any more, going out with Al."

"Why not?" asked Dana shrilly.

"He, he doesn't like me going out with Damian," I told her. "So, so it's over with him."

Dana stared at me. Very carefully, I lifted my dress a little and crossed my legs as she studied me. "Do you want me to go over again all the reports and the hot spots in them before you see Mr Barnes? He will likely ask you on the state of all our active files when he sees you but I think he'll be impressed with these new files you have to show him."

So, Dana and I got down to the real business of the office. Only after she'd left for the day did I realize that we'd worked together as two women. Not once had she made a snide remark about me, or me in her dresses from the time before. I think she was genuinely impressed with the investigations I'd done, how I was going about them. She tossed the discs in their cases, the discs with all the information on Texas VT, as well as all the other questionable features, or strong possibilities, of a dozen contracts.

"Perhaps I should take you with me to LA," Dana finished pleasantly. "Barry said I can take certain staff with me but, strangely, I never thought of you."

"I'd love to work for you in LA, Ms Hansen," I gushed to her, swaying slightly and feeling my dress against me again. It was just so nice to be dressed as I was and to be a woman. I was really going to miss it when I changed back; which I must do soon, like tonight, before Karen Barnes re-organized my life and I was a woman like her. What a shudder that thought

produced in me. That wouldn't be so bad, would it, drifted a strange thought through my mind?

I shivered even more as I thought of myself as a woman for the rest of my life. Damian liked me. He had experience with trans-whatevers. I shivered. Well, I wasn't a woman, I knew that, but what I really was, I didn't know. I should be a man, I thought with much feminine shivering, as I exchanged pleasantries with Dana before she went off, smiling, leaving me to complete securing the office for the night.

I had Roz's car still. So, I went over to her place to deliver it and to explain to her why I was still in my dresses and wearing makeup and a wig. Abby opened the door and threw her arms about me, hugging me and smiling at me.

"What brought all of this on?" I asked her, trembling a little at such a girlish welcome.

"I've got a new boy friend," Abby told me. "Come over to my bedroom when you've seen Mom and I'll tell you all about him. Mmm, I do so love your new perfume, Trish, and I love that dress. Did you actually wear it to work? Mom is going to love it as well. It really suits a slim, pretty girl like you."

Yes, Abby's words and actions raised all kinds of girlie sensations in me. Ooo, I had to get on, out of here, but I must say goodbye to Roz, my girl friend. Roz looked terrible as her bruises were turning all the colors of the rainbow. That, with her freshly dyed red hair, done to keep her spirits up, I guessed, and her new, orange nightdress, all made too garish an image for me to think of as 'pretty' as Abby had called me.

"I know," whispered Roz as Tony Parker went out for a while to let us have some 'girl talk'. "But Tony's partially color blind. I guess a lot of men are. He actually thought this was green," she touched her nightdress, "and would go with my hair."

I had to smile at that. Then, I listened to her. It was 'Tony this' and 'Tony that'. She seemed as enraptured as her daughter over her teenage boy friend. I made the mistake of pointing that out to Roz.

"Don't mention Sylvia to me," Roz said angrily. "And don't mention that Abigail has a boy friend in front of Tony. Please! It's bad enough as it is!"

"Sylvia?" I asked her, straightening my skirts as I sat beside her. Roz grimaced and took my nails in her hand.

"These need some work," she said.

"I'm going to Menoncino's tomorrow with Karen Barnes," I told her as Roz raised her eyebrows and smiled at me.

"You're going to take me there when I'm a lot better," Roz said enthusiastically to me. "You promised."

"Yes, we'll go," I promised her, thinking how that was going to extend the time I was spending, dressing as a woman. Well, that wasn't so bad, I thought smugly, as I compared myself to Roz, her messed up features, and somewhat stocky frame.

"Seven pounds," said Roz proudly. "I've lost seven pounds since last Friday and I'm on a very strict diet which I'm going to stick to, through thick and thin. Tony and I do have a real chance this time. It's him I'm thinking of when I'm not heading to the fridge for a midnight visit."

I did hope, really, that that would work out for Roz.

"Dana hasn't outed you yet," Roz said then.

"No, but it's coming," I told her. "I don't think you're going to be involved, Roz. You should be able to keep your job. But I do have to get going. I really

came around tonight, Roz, to tell you that I'm going off, back to being the real me."

Roz gasped and started telling me that I couldn't do that. I told her that I'd speak to Karen and get some kind of guarantee on keeping her on. After all, I'd never have thought of dressing so much in women's clothing if it hadn't been for her, Rosemary Henning. I didn't really know how to tell her that I now appreciated the wonderful opportunity, learning about the other sex and the feminine side we all had, that she'd given me, when she suggested I put on a wig and a coat and drive Damian from the office.

"What's wrong about this Sylvia then?" I asked her, trying to change the subject. "Is it what it sounds like?"

"Oh yes," said Roz. "Like mother, like daughter. I kept on telling her what a wonderful person you were and not to judge a book by its cover. Abby's been out with you as you really get along, don't you, as girls? See, you can't leave us, Trish. She needs you, more than she needs me now. She went to this party a couple of weeks ago and surprised a boy she hardly knew, trying on some girl's clothing and makeup in a bathroom. The poor kid had thought he'd locked the door."

"Poor kid?" I asked her.

"Poor kid," said Roz emphatically, "because he's allowed my darling daughter into his life. She's determined to make Sylvia into another Trish, if you can believe. She has him here and at Gran Henning's, in her basement. She took him out from there, completely dressed as a girl, to the movies last weekend.

"I guess they got caught, being a boy and girl, in the darkness of the movie. There was some shouting and hollering. The manager of the place rescued her and Sylvia from other kids, and Sylvia was able to get her wig back on. But the manager did ask Abby not to

bring her girl friend back again. So, she wants to have Sylvia in her room for a pyjama party and sleepover. She promises me that nothing's going to happen. Well, I wouldn't think so. And neither would you if you met the poor sap. But I have to think of my other kid, David, don't I, and Tony, and what they're thinking about it all. Look what it's done to Abby having you over here. Oh, I just wished she hadn't looked in our bedroom, at us. She'd never have known you weren't really a girl if it wasn't for that."

"I, I think she would," I said nervously, blushing, to Roz. "She does want to talk to me about her boy friend. That's what she called him. Shall I go and talk to her and see what's going on?"

"Woman to woman," Roz said with a snort. She sighed. "Well, I suppose so. But what can I do, really, Trish? This apartment isn't that big, is it? We don't have room for both Tony to live here and for Abby's boy friend, girl friend."

What about Tony? I wanted to ask her. Perhaps his intentions were honorable, this time. If they were, surely Roz wasn't going to be staying in this apartment for long. I touched up my makeup in Roz's room and went to see Abigail, allowing a sly-looking Tony Parker back into the bedroom, with my once upon a time executive assistant, um, secretary.

I tapped on Abby's door and went into a typical teenaged mess. "I suppose Mom's told you all about Sylvia," said Abigail, frowning at me.

"Strange name for a boy friend," I said lightly, handing her my bottle of perfume. She went into raptures as she put the fragrance on herself.

"Not as nice as Trish," said Abby. I shivered as I forced myself to remember that this girl knew about me.

"This is Steven," Abby said, holding up a photograph of a skinny boy with a mop of dark hair, quite long about his ears and the back of his head. "And this is Sylvia."

"Wow," I murmured. The girl in the second picture wore a wig that I recognized. It was one Roz had taken from Dana Hansen's dressing room for me. I'd taken to the one I was wearing and hadn't actually tried out the one 'Sylvia' was wearing. She was also wearing a black dress that I recognized but only because I'd been with Abby when she tried it on in a boutique. She'd dithered for the longest time but then had bought it.

"I wouldn't have thought you'd be lending out this dress," I told her. Abby's cheeks dimpled as she smiled at me.

"But Sylvia looks so pretty in it, don't you think?" she asked me.

"You met Sylvia at a party," I said, another photo showing Sylvia closer to. 'She' looked a lot more boyish. In the first, the makeup on 'her' face was not put on well and several blemishes showed, including the fact that Sylvia had a pronounced Adam's apple.

"It was one his sister was giving," agreed Abby. "I didn't notice him when I went in. I'd probably never have noticed him, if I hadn't gone all the way up to the top floor to use the bathroom, and he hadn't locked it."

"And he was dressed like this?" I asked her.

"As if," said Abby, taking the photos from me. "He was just awful, really. He couldn't even put his lipstick on straight." She grinned at me, reminding me of what she'd told me, in that regard, how girls learned to shape their mouths first with pencils before putting lipstick on. "He was much worse than you."

"I should think so," I told her. "Did I see that Sylvia was wearing high heels as well?"

"He loves them," said Abby impishly. "But he didn't know how to walk in them. I had to show him and have him practice every day, up and down the stairs in his basement. He looked quite natural when we went out. He really did."

"Remarkable how you use the masculine form to refer to Sylvia," I said to her. She looked quite crestfallen. "How was he discovered?"

"His Adam's apple," said Abby, pulling a face. "This idiot comes over to us, smiling away, his friends off in the distance. And he comes up and says we're really cool-looking girls and would we like to party. And I thought about it but Sylvia clutched at me. Then, this guy grabs her and kisses her right on her mouth." She giggled. "He got lipstick all over his mouth. His friends all started jeering. Then, he says, 'First time I kissed a girl with an Adam's apple. What else you got, girlie?' And he grabs Sylvia in the crotch. She started squealing. So, I clonked him with my purse and put my high heel on his foot."

"And there was a fight?" I asked.

"Not much of one," smiled Abby. "The guy who kissed Sylvia was staggering about, hopping on one foot. All his friends were laughing at him and at us. That's when the manager of the movie theater came and threw us all out."

"And Sylvia?" I asked her.

"Well, her wig was a little out of place," agreed Abby. "So, the manager knew what she was. He asked me if I was a boy or if I was a girl." She grinned lively at me. "The nerve of him! I wished after that I had told him I was a boy, as well. Only I had just got my sex change. I might do that again if we ever run into the same situation. Only, Trish, how do you manage to hide your Adam's apple?"

"I actually don't know," I told her. "I was just born the way I am, I guess. It's never been a problem for me."

"That's what I thought," said Abigail with a frown. "It's going to take surgery, isn't it, for Sylvia to have a lovely neck like you and me."

"I would think so," I agreed. "Just how old is Sylvia?"

"Eighteen," Abby said quickly, too quickly.

"Sixteen?" I asked her. She sighed and nodded.

"I think you should keep your dressing up to indoor parties for a while," I said. "Doesn't Sylvia have friends like her?"

Abby shook her head. "Sylvia's really nice," she said. "And so is Steven. But she and he are really clueless about transvestites. He just gets a thrill dressing up now and then, he says. He won't let me see Sylvia except on weekends. You'd think I was doing him a great big favor, letting him wear my clothes and makeup." She giggled again. "You should see him in Mom's black corset. I lifted it and laced him into it, last week. That's why we thought we could get away with him in public. He looked really good with the corset about him."

"Abby," I told her as gently as I could. "I think you're playing with fire. This boy hardly knows what he is or what he wants to be. I think you really should go out as boy and girl friend for a while and do your changing when you get home."

"That's not a lot of fun," said Abby, crinkling her nose. "The fun I had with you was when we went out shopping. I can't wait until Sylvia and I go to the mall!"

"Before you do that," I said, "look in the phone book, Abby, under Gay, Lesbian and ..."

"Steven isn't gay!" Abby cried. "He, he kissed me after, after I was so nice to him. He's really passionate when he kisses!" No wonder, I thought, after all the fun you are giving him. You must be like the girl of his dreams to him. But I hope that's all he dreams about, not about being the girl of his dreams and meeting the man of his dreams, as well.

"Bisexual and Transgendered Alliance," I said as if Abby hadn't interrupted me. "They have a hotline and they have help lines. They know help groups and psychiatrists who know how to help boys like Sylvia find out what they really are. If you really like Sylvia," I looked at her and Abby glared at me. "If you love Sylvia and Sylvia loves you," I amended what I was saying, "you should get help from people who aren't going to be molesters posing, as helpers, on the Internet."

Abigail's face changed as she stared at me for a while. "I love the way you look, Trish," she said, touching my face gently. "That lipstick really suits you." She shivered. "I, I look at you and I see a woman."

"You want to look at Steven, Sylvia, and see the same?" I asked her. Abby nodded. "But everyone on this side of dressing up like someone of the opposite sex is different, one to one. We all tell lies to cover up the shame we feel. You can only help Steven if the two of you find others like you to help Sylvia emerge."

Abby nodded. "I'll talk to Sylvia when she's primed up next. She's very reasonable then."

That I wasn't sure of. "I only came to bring your Mom's car back to her," I told Abby as we went out arm-in-arm into the main room where Roz, in a white housecoat, was cuddled up with Tony on one side of her and her son, David, on the other, watching television.

"A nice visit with Trish?" asked Roz. Abby pulled a face.

"Can I go to the movies with Steven on Friday?" she asked. "He wants to catch an early show. I can stay over at Gran's. It's nearer to where Steven lives."

Roz looked at me. I nodded to her. I would tell her after, what I'd said. She could decide whether she wanted to make phone calls for the girl friends.

"Love your dress, Trish," said Abby with a smile, swishing the front and sides of it, sending lots of lovely, cool air about my stockings and panties.

"So do I," I told her and went down to the cab that was waiting for me.

XXV. FAREWELL

Edward didn't like what I'd done to my hair. Yes, I was still a woman. Karen had arrived at my apartment to take her 'sister' to work, and then on for an afternoon out. "But it was grabbed, Edward," I said to him as Karen lay beside me with her hair washed and in a towel. "And, and some of the weaves broke free."

"Then, you should have phoned me right away, Miss Kirk," said Edward definitely. "Did I not give you my own personal phone number which Mrs Barnes is avariciously wishing to steal from you?"

I shivered and stayed down under the sheet that covered the panties, all that I had over me. The beauticians would work on me next. My face, as Edward looked at me, was quite devoid of makeup. I swal-

lowed hard, thinking of Sylvia. She had been discovered because of her Adam's apple. I nervously tried to keep my mouth closed and not to swallow at all.

"You have such pale skin and such blue eyes," said Edward all of a sudden. He glanced away at Karen. "So, you know what that means."

I tilted my head and looked at a laughing Karen. My head was firmly put back in place. Edward sighed. "I see the bruises as well, Miss Kirk, that you disguised so well when you came in this morning. So, yes, a wig for just a little while more, but I am going to do your hair as if you did not need to wear a wig any more, a time which is very close for you, my lovely girl. And such light skin means that, like Mrs Barnes, you must be a blonde."

I should have protested. I was so stupid not to protest. How could I leave my apartment as Pat Kirk any more when I had curly, short blonde hair and my eyebrows were also blonde? "I would prefer just to attach a hair piece to your head like this," said Edward. He did so with pins and barrettes. I couldn't believe how light my head felt. Then he showed me what he'd done. I had to gulp at the picture I saw. I was a woman even without makeup on my eyelashes and eyelids. I'd need to have my head shaved, I guessed, to get back to being the boy that I was. That I am, I had to tell myself.

My eyelids, like my hair, didn't stay that way for long. The beauticians from Menoncinis took over. Both Karen and I were patted, petted and massaged before we were freshly scented and made-up. We had pedicures and manicures and leg massages. Our fingernails and toenails were painted the same color as the plummy color of our lipstick.

We did have privacy in the cubicles to get dressed. Well, I had always had privacy before, but Karen was



now, right there with me. She assisted me with the taping and padding I had to do. She even tightened my Merry Widow about me.

"You really don't need this at your waist, Trish," Karen told me as she took my breath away at the fierce way she hugged the corset shut. "We have to see my surgeon right away and get you augmentations," she went on. "No," she said as I mentioned becoming Patrick again, soon. "You really don't want that if you think about it. I see how much you love wearing a pretty dress like me and having a man admire you as well. You are not ever going back to being a Patrick again. Like me, you're going to wake up every day and put on your panties and bra, fluff your hair and do your makeup. You are going to be a woman for the rest of your life, Trish, just like me."

"I'm not like you, Karen," I finally managed to say as I shivered and put my stockings on, loving to smooth them onto my legs. Karen opened the curtains. I could see this pretty, blonde girl attaching her garters to her stockings and a flush came over me as I saw how pretty she was. She was so blonde that she didn't look like Trish at all. She definitely didn't look like me, Pat Kirk, executive assistant. No, if I looked like anyone at all, I looked like Karen.

"You're not like me?" asked Karen and began to laugh. She was just in a pair of lacy panties as she put her arms about me from behind and lay her soft hair and cheek on my shoulder, her soft breasts giving me goose bumps as they pressed so gently into my back, her nipples alert and spectacular against me. "We should be sisters, you and I."

"I can't be a sister," I breathed as Karen kissed my shoulder, knowing very well how it would make me feel.

“Oh, yes, you can,” murmured Karen in my ear as she blew on the tasselled earrings I had attached there. “This is my backup plan, one I think we should put into action anyway. I think that we dump this Kirk identity of yours,” I shivered as I thought of what she said and saw what it would mean right away, “and let my cosmetic and plastic surgeon go to work. Then, you’ll be introduced to everyone you already know as my sister. I wouldn’t mind if you wanted to keep the name ‘Patricia’. but I think it might be better if you were someone else entirely. I think that a girl should be able to choose her own name to fit her personality, don’t you? After Dr Benning and Dr Melain are through the first nip and tuck with you, the only person you’ll look like is me.”

“I can’t be a girl for the rest of my life,” I said nervously as the girl I was staring at put on her pink, pleated dress, her arms quite bare but for the gold bracelets and rings on her fingers. I shuddered as Karen put a thin, pink bow in her, that is ‘my’, hair, my hair (!!!), and took my manicured hand in hers. Karen’s fingernails were real while mine were not. I couldn’t be a girl on each and every day of my life, looking just like Karen and being her sister. There were such aches in my panties and at my phoney breasts as I thought about that.

I had trouble convincing my trembling inner mind that I could be a girl every day and that it would be wonderful, as Karen said that it was. I was putting on my pink high heels when Edward came into the cubicle. stood and looked at me. I colored as he smiled and clearly admired me.

“As beautiful as you are, always, Karen,” Edward murmured. “And I have several messages for you young ladies. Dr Benning, that’s Alan Benning, isn’t it, will see you this afternoon, Miss Kirk, and a Dr Melain, I don’t know him, has reserved an appoint-

ment with you for tomorrow. And both Mr. Barnes-es sent messages to you, Mrs Barnes, that the meeting with the lawyers is taking much longer than they anticipated. They will see you tonight for dinner."

"What is that all about?" I asked Karen after 'Sir' Edward had kissed me on both cheeks, told me how to fix my hair each day, scolded me again and told me not to wait but to call him if I couldn't do my hair myself. He would come and 'fix' me, he said with a laugh, no matter where I was in the city.

"Barry and Al are making Dana Hansen an offer she should not refuse," said Karen with a smile. "Our lawyers are hopping mad that they aren't simply throwing her to the wolves. They want to hand some files over to the Security Exchange regulators right away. Dana tried to blackmail Al about you in front of Barry and Ron Fenner, who was there to represent their legal interests. Ron then advised her to get a lawyer, right away, as she'd just committed two criminal acts, extortion and blackmail. He'd bring in the DA right away if she continued with what she'd said to Al.

"Dana has a lawyer now. and she's giving as good as she's getting, Barry texted to me. I really don't know how it's all going to end with her. That's why I want to start on my plan right away to have you leave the firm and have my sister put in your place. My husband, what lovely words they are, aren't they, my lovely sister, Barry doesn't seem to realize that Dana is a woman twice scorned, by the doctor she went chasing after, and then by Al. She's going to be a very tough nut to crack. She just might want her day in court to vilify everyone she knows and not care about the threat of jail. Partly, I hope so, as she'll get years and years in jail for all she's done in the files she's scammed and used."

So, while the men battled in the boardroom, we girls went to dinner, me in a nervous funk as Karen dressed me so femininely. Yes I could have been a Vic-

toria's Secret model, I could have. I found out what it was like to be a blonde in a Giselle Lewin creation in a crowded, swanky restaurant. Karen beamed at the attention and plaudits we received, her breasts almost totally revealed and bouncing like little puppies each time she moved, "I'm not wearing a bra," she whispered to me.

"So I can see very well," I observed nervously, while she giggled more girlishly than I thought she'd ever been in the time I'd known her.

When a few men came over and kissed Karen's hand, and then her sister's, mine, I wriggled femininely in my chair, smiling and thanking all the men for their lovely compliments. I found my new hair style so easy to manage, the soft touch on my shoulders all that I could feel now as I shuddered in womanly fashion. Ooo, yes, I thought as my dress swished about my nylons, I was a woman. I could be a woman for the rest of my life, as I giggled and talked about men and which ones I liked, with my darling sister, Karen.

Ooo, yes, I was a woman. I was! I was! The way my stockings pulled on me and my garter belt, taught me that that was true. I felt as a woman should. And each time I wiggled, as a man admired me, Karen made me squiggle and squirm as she told outrageous stories about me and what I was like as a little girl, her sister. "Tell him your name, darling," she said as this clean-cut, really handsome boy came over and was almost bleeding on our table to find out who I was.

"T-Teresa," I said as Karen laughed at me.

"That was very good," she said as the heir to the Foote fortune went back to his friends with my name. "We can still call you Trish in private. By the way, Charles Foote IV is a philanderer of immense reputa-

tion. He claims that he's never had the same woman in his bed two nights running.

"I asked him a year ago if it was true, and the young ninny said it was. I told him I was so sorry that he went to bed alone so often, but I hoped he would soon find a woman who could tolerate him for more than a night. He hates me now! He only came over to talk to us because of you. Oh, here's Gerard Lewin, the great Giselle's partner. What a letch!"

It was a relief to go into Dr Benning's cool, calm, professional office, in the building beside *La Contessa's Kitchen*. But the relief didn't last for long as Dr Benning had me undress. Karen came in with me and said terrible things that he must have known were untrue. "The poor girl just hasn't developed," she said to Dr Benning. "We're sisters and so I need her to be more social with men, just like me. My husband doesn't mind my fooling around and neither will Teresa's."

The quick smile on Dr Benning's face told me that he understood very well what 'more social' meant to Karen. Oh, did I ever shudder over that one as Dr Benning and Karen bargained for how big I was going to be in my chest and hips area.

"I have a cancellation for a breast augmentation plus," said the silver-haired doctor. "That will be on Tuesday next week. If you like, I could do Teresa then, Mrs Barnes. Oh, I've forgotten your name before you were married, Karen."

"Karen Ferenko," said Karen lightly with a smile at me. "You can see why I have to get my sister married off very soon. Who wants to go through life with a moniker like Ferenko?"

Karen gripped my hand and hugged me as soon as the doctor went out to get instruction forms on the procedures to me. "So, next week, you will have breasts and hips and a real female tush," she said,

squeezing me as I shivered and wondered whatever I was doing in an office like this, contemplating the surgery, which Dr Benning said would just be day surgery. I would be out and about and jiggling a little, the same night.

"You're going to be lovelier than me," said Karen enthusiastically as I stood beside her, Dr Benning beaming at me.

"If you blossom like our beautiful Karen did after she had the same operation as you," said the good doctor, "you will enjoy a real, girlish figure. In a year or so, if you want bigger breasts, it will be no problem to change them. Really."

"You won't want bigger inserts than the ones you're getting," whispered Karen as we tripped femininely out of one of the most luxurious of doctor's offices in town. "You're not on hormones, are you? We should start you soon. In a year, you'll have enough soft tissue on your chest to make even Charlie Foote come in his pants."

"Karen!" I protested as she smiled and held me to stop all the shiverings and quiverings that I told her were flooding through my feminized, well, a little feminized, body.

"Let's see how the boys are doing," said Karen smugly. "I bet my plan is going to be much better than theirs."

XXVI THE LAST DISCOVERY

Dana held out for three days. I was just being a lady of leisure through that time at Dunning Park, Karen and Barry's residence. Al hadn't been there at all. They'd made awkward excuses why he wouldn't come. But I knew the truth. He must hate for what I had done to myself and how I had flirted with him and made him kiss me and be so affectionate with me. I should have told him, right then, what I had done to protect Roz and myself, with Dana gone.

"Oh heck," said Karen bitterly, the second night, as we readied ourselves to be sisters again. "Once Al got over me, he told me then, over two years ago, that he'd have married me if Barry hadn't seen me first. I didn't realize that he didn't mean it, for real."

"If it's my feelings you think are hurt," I told her as we sat out in her rose garden on shaded swings in new summer dresses that Karen had insisted we buy at a new designer shop.

"That's Gabriel," she said, pointing to an obviously Spanish guy with curly brown hair. He turned as she pointed to him and smiled broadly at us. "He called me up yesterday and asked me to bring you into his shop. What do you want to bet that he's fixed it for a news photographer to take our picture going out of here in his clothes?"

"But he's wearing black pants and a blue shirt," I said, squinching up my eyes and pretending it would be so marvellous to be dressed as a man again. Karen hugged me, my blonde hair caressed me and my grey, flared skirt swirled out about me, making me feel so wonderfully feminine as I looked down at my almost

transparent, white blouse, the shoulders so fantastically padded to make my blouse quite square across the top of my shoulders.

"He can have them," said Karen with a grin. "I want to wear his dresses. Oh, and his panties as well. Wait till you see the pretty designs he has on them." Yes, I spent half the lovely morning, before going back to Dunning Park, wearing 'his' clothes, looking and feeling panties and buying matching bras although I really had nothing to put in them, until next Tuesday at least.

And the following week, I was going to have some work done to my face. Dr Melain spoke rapid French with Karen. I didn't really want him to touch me at all. But Karen insisted I have my nose 'straightened' and bobbed. I had to have some work, she assured me, about my eyes and about my chin that seemed very subtle to me. It was going to take me a while to have it all heal as well.

"You understand why we're having it done," said Karen to me as I sat in the swing and drank cold lemonade. "This surgery isn't necessary for your looks, my lovely sister." Ooo, how such affectionate remarks make me wiggle and shake in my short, swishy dress. "You are feminine and beautiful, Trish. This is to change your looks enough so that, with makeup, Dana Hansen will never recognize you again. She'll think that Trish Kirk has vanished off the face of the earth. Her vengeance will fall on barren ground."

Al finally came in with Barry that afternoon. Barry immediately sat on one swing and Karen climbed half over him, her arms about his neck as she ordered both he and Al stiff drinks.

I tried so hard not to tremble or shudder when I felt the men looking at me, Barry's eyes huge and approving of the simple cosmetic changes made to me.

"Well, here it is," said Al stiffly to me, gingerly dropping two sheets of paper onto the lap of my pretty, summery dress."

I picked up the documents and read them. Dana got to keep her ill-gotten gains. The firm promised to pay back any damages she'd incurred in the lawsuits against her. I gather that Ken Barton, the Technivision CEO, had found out exactly who it was who'd made a killing in his firm's demise.

Dana accepted a consulting role with the new company Ekco was forming in LA. One look at the pay showed me that it wasn't much above mine as an executive assistant. She'd signed a confidentiality agreement about certain personal information on a member of the Ekco family, that she promised not to reveal, or she'd lose all the money she'd made in selling short several company's stocks, companies she'd invited to submit projects to Ekco, knowing that stock prices would jump just because of Ekco's interest. The lawyers had tied up that money, I noted, so that she'd really lose the money, or what she hadn't spent of it, in the years ahead. The claims of blackmail, extortion and fraud would be held in abeyance if the terms of the contract were followed.

On the second page, it was puzzling to me to read a clause that Trish Kirk was not ever, under any circumstances, allowed to visit any city in which Dana Hansen was working. "I don't know why," said Barry as I asked about that. "But Dana insisted on it. I think she had some idea that we were going to exile you out to LA with her to continue as her executive assistant. She told Al, Ron and I that she didn't want any drag queen floating about her office. So, we let Ron into the know about Trish Kirk. He's most sympathetic to you, Trish."

"You have to initial your agreement to those clauses involving you," said Al, ignoring his brother who was

being so nice to me, "and then it will be done. You can come into work next week and help me clear up the mess Dana seems determined to leave before she goes."

"Go into the office, Teresa," said Karen as Al frowned at us. "There's a pen in there."

I stood up and rustled past Karen and the men.

"I'll show you where they are," said Al, coming after me.

I lay the papers down and initialled where Al had said I should.

"What have you done to your hair?" asked Al, standing in the doorway and waiting for me to give him back the papers with Dana's signature all over them.

"My hairdresser's idea," I said nervously as he was staring at me. "It wasn't just to look like Karen, but it seems to have given her ideas." I told him all that had gone on with her, that I was going to have real breasts after Wednesday of the following week and then some plastic surgery so that Dana wouldn't know me.

Al went ballistic over that. "No, you're not," he snarled. "Don't talk to me about Dana any more. She wouldn't recognize you if she saw you now, as a blonde. I barely did as I came in. It really changes you, Trish, Teresa, whoever you are."

"Trish," I told him and handed Al the papers. He put them down on the table and looked at me intently. I shivered, knowing that there was something wrong with me.

"I love the name, Teresa," Al mumbled as I felt the strangest, most wonderful feelings going through me.

"I'm also Trish," was all I could think of to say when Al moved resolutely towards me. I was in a panic for a

moment but, when he reached out, his arms went about my small waist and he pulled me to him.

"Al," I murmured in panic. But I didn't need to panic as Al's head came down on mine. My lips were glued to his in a fraction of a second. Oh, that was the most wonderful thing that had happened to me in days, so much more wonderful than choosing panties to wear.

I clung to my male lover's lips as he clutched me to him, squeezing me so hard as if he was never going to let me go again. Oh, I didn't mind if he never did. I put my arms about his neck and kissed all of his face as he kissed mine.

"I've been such an idiot," Al said as my padded, phoney breasts bounced off him. I wondered what it would be like in a week or so when I had real breasts like Karen. "I, I didn't think. I know that whatever is in her panties, Karen is still a woman. With that right in front of me, I should have known that you were a woman as well no matter what Dana says about you, ever."

I trembled awfully at that one. "You think that I'm a woman?" I asked him, in a little distress. I mean, I knew what I was. I hoped that I'd been honest enough with him so far. He must know that I was male, no matter how my beauticians were making me look.

"So, tell me now, what is there between us that will prevent me taking my girl friend to bed with me?" asked Al as he hugged me and kissed me, my dress swishing about us. "What is to stop me this time in making Trish Kirk into my woman?"

My trembling and shaking, I wanted to say as I clung to his lips and suddenly he picked me up. "A-A-Al," I squealed as he carried me right back into the house, to a bedroom that I knew was back there, but hadn't known was his.



Al dumped me on the bed and came after me ferociously. Even as he kissed me, he opened my dress. I felt a man's hands in places I'd thought a man, knowing what a strange woman I was, would never touch me. My slip followed my dress. Al had complete access to my stockings, my garters, and my panties. He caressed me and untaped me as I squealed in pain and clung to him. I felt his huge manhood on my stockings but then he divided my legs. Suddenly, he was lifting my legs about him. Oh gosh! I realized what he was going to do to me, to make me his woman.

Oh, it hurt. I cried and couldn't let him stop because he wanted into me so much. Yes, I wanted Al to love me any way he wanted me. I writhed beneath him and felt him flooding into me. We relaxed a little. Ooo, he did it some more, caressing my thighs and suddenly it was marvellous. He penetrated more into me and rocked back and forth with me. I loved the way he made me feel as he kissed me, squeezing my phoney breasts against me and so wonderfully caressing my legs.

It was so wonderful that I had to do it again and, lo and behold, I came, splashing him terribly. I didn't want to do it, but couldn't stop as I was stroked against Al's bare skin. He then gently tugged on my garters as I bounced and wriggled in every way that I could to get him to make me feel that I really was his woman. A dam had burst inside me as I couldn't get enough of Al's touches and caresses. All I wanted was him to ride me, penetrating me, splashing anywhere he wanted inside and over me. I guess that's the best way to describe how we acted together. I wanted his head on mine, too, so that our lips could be sealed together. I caressed a manly body, as femininely as I could. Ooo, it felt so right as it made him grow inside me and want me more and more.

We were gone for hours, we knew, and as soon as we decided, shame-facedly, that we would have to go back and face the others, so we began to arouse one another all over again. Al was riding me again in no time and I was squealing in pleasure at what he was doing to me. "Trish, Trish, Trish!" Al moaned as I loved him recognizing me as a woman and hugging me again. He so loved my hair and my makeup.

"Do I have any left?" I whispered to him, but he couldn't answer as he found a new and unusual way to arouse me with his mouth. Then I had to do it to him. He became so hard that it was if he had never touched me before. It hurt as he went in, but it was a pleasant pain. I devoured his mouth and rocked and rocked beneath him. It was so wonderful because we both climaxed together, man and woman, I said to myself. Ooo, and then he whispered it to me as I loved him and told him so.

"I love you, Trish," Al Barnes whispered to me. "I want to love you just as Barry does Karen. I want you to love me as she does Barry."

"Oh, I do! I do!" I said as I kissed the wonderful man boffing me again and again.

"So, you love my brother," said Al with a smile. "Now tell me that you love me and will always be my woman."

"I love you, Al Barnes," I said unsteadily to another man. "And I will always be your woman." I was another man's woman. I'd be his woman for the rest of my life. I would. Just the thought of what I had said and, more, what I'd thought, roused me to a fierce passion of my own. Ooo yes, Al should have had no doubt at all that I loved him, the way I took him into me and made him come one more incredible time inside me.

XXVII. TERESA ALSO KNOWN AS TRISH

So, I did have the surgery that Karen recommended for me - and no-one seemed to know me at all. I stood opposite Abby and her girl friend, Sylvia, and watched them flirting and giggling with a group of boys and girls. I felt a tingle as I watched Sylvia being teased just like the others. She didn't mind one of the taller boys putting his arm about her.

I had seen her as a bridesmaid at Roz's wedding to Tony Parker. I couldn't attend as Trish Kirk but I was there as Teresa Fenerko, Karen's sister. I would have gotten away with it all until Karen, her arm through mine and my growing long hair blowing all about my face and gorgeous, yellow cocktail dress, called to me and pointed out the lovely furniture that Ekco had gifted Roz with for her new house.

"That's what I wanted to buy you and Al, Trish," Karen said enthusiastically, and Roz's head whipped around as she looked at me. Then she smiled and smiled at me. She had to give me a special hug at the end of the reception before she left on her honeymoon with Tony.

"You and Al," Roz gasped into my jewelled ear. "That's so fantastic, Trish. Will you come and see me soon and take me to Menoncino's?"

I promised her I would as the two lovely bridesmaids came up in their lovely pink dresses. They talked Roz into letting them go back to Sylvia's in their long dresses so that they could show themselves off to Sylvia's friends. They bounced off. I couldn't tell at all that Sylvia was a boy like me. I couldn't see anything

at her throat, though she was wearing a glittering choker like Abby. I was certain, however, that her breasts, like mine, were real.

"Karen Barnes' sister," said Roz, as the seemingly young and flirty girls bounced off, seizing boys from a waiting line and whirling the boys into a dance until the boys whirled them harder, their dresses flaring out prettily like their hair. They exposed their pretty high heels and lovely petticoats. "She must know all about you then."

"She's my sister," I whispered to her, my throat dry as I said and meant it. Karen was my sister. I was getting more like her each day. "Will you come to my wedding as well?" I asked. Roz raised her eyebrows and nodded happily to me.

Roz and Tony came, Tony surprised to be among so many of the leading lights of Ekco, the Barnes family firm. But he did look very pleased and proud with his slimmed down wife. Roz had lost over twenty-five pounds since I had first met her. She'd told me that she was determined to lose ten more as Tony really loved her new body. He didn't know at all about Sylvia, Roz told me, rolling her eyes. Neither she nor Abby intended to tell him.

Karen insisted on being my matron of honor. "I've been a bride but never a bridesmaid," she said and then she roped in the Fenner girls to be my flower girls and bridesmaids, the eldest twelve years old, smiling and smiling and running all the time to their beautiful mother, Angela, who took some time off here and there to disappear and breastfeed her addition to the family whom everyone 'knew' to be her real child.

"That's me next year," said Karen, her long dress rustling against my bridal dress and petticoats as we went over as sisters to coo at the baby and admire it.

"The lactating hormones really work," murmured Karen as Angela smiled at us and let Karen hold her baby.

"Phenomenally," said Angela in a soft, girlish voice, smiling at her younger daughter chasing one of the pageboys supplied by the Adams family. "Poor Ron! I get such urges! The poor man can't believe what a wanton hussy he married. I even have to have him come home in the middle of the day or else I might be getting off with the pool boy, I'm so horny!"

"But I'm like that now!" exclaimed Karen. "And my sister is worse than me!"

"Karen! I'm not!" I told her as Angela smiled uncertainly at me. She had come to Menoncino's and shopping with Karen and me but she was always checking her watch because of feeding her baby or picking up her daughters from school.

Barry and Al joined us then, each brother with his arm easily about his wife. His wife! I loved that I could call myself that now. I was Teresa Barnes as well, Mrs Alexander Barnes, and I loved the sound of it.

"I've just been calling Al all of the names that he called me for marrying my wife," said a smiling Barry. "I've been telling him the sorts of things he mustn't do with a girl like you, Trish. You'll never guess where my own brother told me to go."

Al hugged me then and even though there were no glasses clinking as there had been at the reception, he almost swung me off my feet as he pulled me to him and kissed me forcefully as I clung to him. All I could hear about me were applauding hands and whistling people.

"Your sister is just like you, Karen," I heard Angela say. "I love being friends with both of you so much."

“Good,” said Karen with a smile. “We’re going to need all the help you can give us in the next year as we become mothers like you, as well.”

“You’re going to have the operation?” asked Angela quite innocently, with just the four of us in earshot.

Karen shook her long, blonde hair. “Not a chance with the Barnes’ boys,” she said, waving to Al’s father who was talking to the bandleader to begin another set of music. Of course, it was a Viennese waltz. My dress flared out so wonderfully as my husband and I started the dance before I broke off to dance with Al’s father. He was so happy and proud of his son for choosing such a lovely girl like me. He couldn’t tell which of us was more beautiful, my sister Karen or me. I did feel bad about that, about the deception I was playing on so many people. Yet I was what I wanted to be. I was a woman. Al was my husband and I was his wife. It was what I wanted to be for the rest of my life.

Barry danced with me and twirled me all over the floor as the music got wilder and louder. “You and Al should slip away soon,” he murmured. “Count on Karen to keep this party going well into tomorrow but you and Al have more interesting things to do.”

We did, not that Barry had any intention of letting us slip away from our wedding reception. I was still shivering and shaking confetti out of my lovely, white, going away suit, and out of my hair, all the way to Florida on the company jet.

“What was so horrible that you said to Barry, and he had to say it back tonight?” I asked my husband who was making me squeak and wobble so delightfully. I cooed lovingly to him as he squeezed and palpated my breasts even though he was still frantically opening my dress to get at my womanly body.

I assisted Al and so my dress and slip floated to the floor. My tiny, lacy bra followed as I was under him, in our bed, my breast so wonderfully in his mouth. "I told him," Al said between his gasps and my frenetic wriggling, to get him so wonderfully into me, "to treat Karen as the beautiful, exotic woman that she was and to be the best husband in the world to her." He stroked my breasts as I began to bounce in desire beneath him, hugging his now naked body to mine, womanly in all parts but one for him. "Barry told me to do the same to you and you would be the woman of my dreams. He didn't seem to grasp that you already were."

So my husband and the woman of his dreams had a night of ecstasy and bliss in which I had a convulsion as Karen had told me that I would on my wedding night as a woman. Only it wasn't a convulsion, Karen told me, as I had felt them before and been scared of what was happening to me. So, I talked to my sister about what was happening to me. It would be my first orgasm as a woman, Karen said. I should learn to love them as they would be the only orgasms I had when I was pumped up with hormones and couldn't function as a man anymore.

I didn't want to function as a man anymore. My husband positively forbade it. I tried to be all womanly as I put on my black bikini nervously. He showed me up and showed me off the way that he treated me in public. Then, when we were in private, he kissed and did me as a man might 'do' a woman like me. He wouldn't stop until I had that orgasm again which drove all the neighbors in our hotel wild, listening to me, apparently.

Now, everyone knows I'm a woman. When my sister and her husband came to join us at the end of the week, they laughed and laughed at the reputation I had for being aroused by my loving husband, to ecstasy and orgasm every night.

"I told you that you were just like your sister, me," said Karen, sitting in the sand in a bikini like mine. She had me take my top off as well which of course got my husband quite worked up, like his brother with Karen, I'm pleased to say. But Karen and Barry were nice and kept watch as Al boffed me first. I could hear them giggling as I reached bliss and wriggled all over the place as Al loved me so wonderfully. Then they wouldn't do it on the beach.

"Not after that," said Karen. "My goodness, girl, I thought I was the queen of orgasms, but you are right up there with me. Barry and I need a little more practice before we can challenge that in public."

I don't know how, it might have been something Karen said, but soon everyone seemed to know that I had made it with Al out in the sands. Oh, did the men in our hotel ever treat me so marvellously. I had to dress for my reputation then, Karen said, and so I did.

But I was very subdued when I went back to Ekco as the Vice-President in charge of the Forensic Services Section. I might look like a model with the body I had. I certainly walked and paraded in designer clothes like one. But I was a working woman, as I said to the staff assigned to me. That meant that I would be checking up on their work as I would assign them to check on mine.

Herb Grant couldn't resist. "Mrs Barnes," he said as I thrilled to hear myself addressed like that. "We've all been checking you out from the moment we entered the room. You're the womanliest working woman any of us have ever seen."

"I can vouch for that," said my husband, coming in behind me and ruining my reputation again by taking me in his arms and kissing me, rousing me as he knew that he could do so easily. "You are all going to enjoy

being under a working woman like my wife, as I am every day."

I had to punch him, my ears burning at that one. But, as Karen said, what could Al do when I was working with an office, full of randy men. He was marking off his territory was Al, and I was his woman. He had made sure that they all knew that.

"Men are like that," Karen laughed at me as we tried out new lipsticks at the cosmetics counter in Darbys. "Aren't you glad that you'll never be one of them again?"

Oh, I was, I agreed, as I pouted and agreed that the shade did suit me in my new green, v-fronted dress that would make Al drool over my breasts. My sister was so right. I was never going to think that I was a man, ever again.

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