

Bambi La Belle



Eleanor Darby Wright

Copyright © 2014, Mags Inc./Reluctant Press

Mags, Inc/Reluctant Press TG Publishers

This story is a work of fiction. Any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. All situations and events herein presented are fictional, and intended only for the enjoyment of the reader. Neither the author nor the publisher advocate engaging in or attempting to imitate any of the activities or behaviors portrayed.

Persons seeking gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy or any other medical and/or body-altering process should seek the counsel of a qualified therapist who follows the Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorder.

Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet

We need *your* help! We spend several hundred dollars to edit, illustrate and typeset *each story*. It is important, therefore, that everyone works to help keep professional fiction alive on the Net.

The civil penalties for copyright infringement can be severe, including substantial monetary damages, injunctive relief, and liability for attorneys' fees incurred in prosecuting a case. In addition, criminal penalties may be imposed if someone willfully infringes a copyrighted work for commercial advantage or private financial gain.

Mostly, though, we just want to be able to keep offering this service to our authors and our readers.

Report stolen books by using the contact form at reluctantpress.com or call us at 800-359-2116

Thank you.

BAMBI LA BELLE

by Eleanor Darby Wright

I. The Uncle

The big man wanted to talk only to Monsieur Nureddin, the owner of the club. He pronounced it slowly with a grimace as if he recognized that the name was surely false. He glowered then at the fastidious manager-choreographer who repeated again and again that Monsieur Nureddin was not in. He was indeed the only one to do the hiring and firing at the Club.

Zolie, the choreographer, fluttered his hands as he spoke. The gestures immediately brought more scowls to the big man's strained, sweating face. He hunched over a little more and shuffled forward towards the stage, his left leg dragging a little. But Zolie didn't stay to be confronted by a man twice his size. He retreated from the look on the unknown

face and backed towards the male dancers for support.

No-one, of course, moved to help him. Andre Leibman even laughed at Zolie's obvious discomfiture.

"How? ... How did you get in here?" asked Zolie, edging across the stage, smoothing his very tight, neatly pressed white pants. They matched his white, silk shirt with the golden buttons. They matched the necklace and earrings that Zolie wore through force of habit.

"Didn't Cesar," he was the doorman, "tell you that we were not open?" asked the choreographer. Zolie's voice faded as the man reached the stage. He stared at the fluttering hands and the bleached blond hair of the choreographer. Obviously, he didn't like what he saw though a lot of men did.

"He said you weren't," grunted the big man, shuffling along towards the stairs that would lead up onto the stage. Marc and Henri immediately vacated the area at the top of the stairs and went to hide behind Zolie. They clearly had no intentions of confronting the big, powerful, dangerous looking man advancing grimly on Zolie. I should never had said I was the manager, thought Zolie desperately, looking over to the bar but even Rioux had disappeared from his usual post for the rehearsal.

Zolie didn't know what to do. The big man's dark eyes, hidden in bushy eyebrows, were fixed on him. Behind the invader, the Club was empty. The booths and tables were dark, the chandeliers were dimmed. In the long mirrors and glassware of the bar, only a few lights reflected from the stage where the boys had begun rehearsing the new opening number.

It was then that the first 'girls' came on to the stage. Chantal led the way in a long, dark evening gown that gripped her feminine figure so tightly. Her blonde wig piled hair on top of her head, vividly showing off the long, sparkling earrings that she wore.

"Oh, come on, Zolie," Chantal said crossly in the nasal drawl affected by most female impersonators in the show. "We don't want to be around here all afternoon!"

Zolie at last had something to do. He turned from the glowering, hunched figure and began to structure the presentation as he wanted it to appear. He had most of the girls who'd joined him on stage in place when two young men, laughing and skipping in most unmanly fashion, came running through the club, brushing by the big man as if he wasn't even there, only stopping in the wings when Zolie glared at them.

"Late again!" snapped Zolie, waving a limp wrist at the grinning pair.

"Oh, we don't have to change, do we, Zolie darling?" lisped the darker haired one, the thinness of his femmy eyebrows denoting what he was in the men's clothes.

"Yeth," said the fair-haired Marianne, even more affected in his speech mannerisms than 'her' friend, Yvonne. "Thith ith only to get the playthings, ithn't it?"

Zolie hated the voice that emanated from Marianne. It was as if she couldn't say any word with the sound of an 'S' any more since she'd taken on the role of a professional female impersonator.

Zolie looked at Chantal, standing with one arm on her hip, tapping her high heel in disgust at the newer chorus girls' unprofessionalism. "Don't do it again," said Zolie as he placed Marianne and Yvonne on stage, in their sort of boyish street clothes, and went through the moves with them. The other girlish figures watched, posed like fashion models. All the 'girls' liked to stand that way. After Zolie had finished the example, the 'girls' brought in the real boys, who smirked at Andre and Gaetan who had to hold onto the still masculinely dressed Marianne and Yvonne.

The big man had moved back slightly, into the shadows at the side of the stairs but Zolie could feel him, anyway, watching the whole rehearsal, his body seething through with intensity. Finally, the man sat down at one of the tables, his face drawn and tense, watching what Zolie wanted the girls to do.

Zolie wanted the ending to be a kiss on the cheeks or lips of their male companions. The girls all gave a high-pitched shriek and got to it, the boys pretending to back off from such debauchery. Of course, Yvonne wasted no time with Gaetan, who held her away in mock distaste. In the show, however, Gaetan would be a real professional, Zolie had no doubt of that.

Yvonne would be the one to be carried away in the kissing, once the show started and she was properly dressed. She always was. She was just learning how to be a professional, the swirl of her dresses and wig sure to make her so-o-o excited. Well, the other girls loved that from 'her'. It excited and stirred them up a little as well. It was a much

livelier troupe of feminine dancers and singers since they'd added Yvonne to the group.

With the big man settled, Zolie retreated to the wings. The band was not there, the extra expense for them to sit in not worth it, not when a tinny tape recorder could produce the rhythms the girls had to learn. The sound of their high heels soon drowned out any melody anyway.

The big man sat where Zolie would normally have sat but there was no way Zolie was going to move from the security of the wings now he'd reached them. He fumed, however, as the boys, with fewer changes than the girls, went through their moves in such a desultory fashion. Some of the mimics were awkward as well, Claudine quite deliberately.

Claudine, like many of the others, hated early rehearsals. Denise and Frou-Frou were making rude gestures instead of the graceful, girlish gestures Zolie had showed them. They saw Zolie glowering at them and began to over-exaggerate the feminine gestures they made, smiling at their partners who, of course, encouraged them.

Zolie wished he'd insisted Yvonne and Marianne dress in something female as what they were doing looked so obscene, men dancing with men that way. Zolie had a moment of introspection as he thought of himself doing what these so-called 'girls' were doing with their men. Did he look just as obscene when he was doing a pirouette with Andre as Marianne was attempting to do? Surely not, Zolie sniffed to himself. Whether he was in drag or not, Zolie was always classy. He knew it.

Denise noticed the other presence just off the stage and started playing to the attention of a man

she didn't know. She was way off the beat as she began to improvise what she clearly thought were sexy, girlish movements. Zolie swore and scampered forward to turn off the tape. The rehearsal run-through mercifully came to an end.

"Who is that?" asked Denise with a smile at Zolie. Her voice was low but sultry like many contralto women. She flicked her long hair back over what was, for a man, a very effeminate face.

"He's here to speak to Ahmed," said Zolie in an equally, quiet tone. He raised his voice, criticising all the impersonators until, finally, lifting her bobbed nose high in the air, Chantal stalked off in a huff. Paulette and Andre said that they'd talk to Chantal and would bring her back. Of course, they didn't do that, just disappearing as well.

All in all, thought Zolie in frustration, it had been a completely wasted afternoon. It was all the big man's fault. He had flustered Zolie all afternoon. And yet, he'd done nothing. He'd just walked into the club and watched them try to rehearse, such a baleful look on his face that the other girls were twittering about it now. They headed off with hops, skips and sashays, some stopping to look back at the grim invader from the safety of the curtains.

Vidal Mercier, often called simply Vidal or Vee, or, known by some as Ahmed, Ahmed Nureddin, also paid a visit to the Club that afternoon. Cesar, the doorman, was back at his post. He gave Vidal a shrug as if to say that he couldn't help it. Vidal had a little warning as he walked into the club and saw a stranger watching the ragged performance on the stage.

At first, Vidal thought the dark, bushy-haired man was a friend of Zolie's, so avidly was he watching the rehearsal. Vidal stepped over to the bar to help himself to a drink, wondering where Rioux was. As he'd hoped, he got a much better view of how Zolie's new presentation was supposed to work. Seeing Vidal, however, Zolie came running from the stage, his arms in the air, wrists bent, the girls disappearing by then, to tell 'Monsieur Nureddin', in his so mannered drawl, how the stranger had ruined his afternoon.

The dark eyes of the big man stared at Vidal as he moved, frowning, to the table where the stranger sat. "You came to see me, monsieur?" asked Vidal in his best, Parisian accent.

The big man eased himself into a new position. The man appeared to be lame in one leg, Vidal saw.

"I was in Lebanon," the dark-haired man growled, his jaw set defiantly.

Vidal Mercier had never been to Lebanon. Had 'Fatima' Nureddin, the drag queen who'd owned this place before him and insisted Vidal maintain her 'family name' in the business, had a connection to the Middle East? He doubted it but suspected the stranger would claim a family connection. Vidal sighed, guessing that a contribution was being asked for. He reached into his pocket for his cheque book. He must seriously think about ending the Nureddin connection. It wasn't as if it brought in any new business these days anyway.

The big man scowled when he saw what Vidal was doing. He shook his head emphatically. "No," he said bitterly. "I didn't come to lean on you for that."

But Vidal noted that the big man's eyes hungrily followed the cheque book's return to Vidal's pocket.

"You need a job?" asked 'Ahmed Nureddin'. Vidal had continued the masculine names at least from the last owner of *Le Salon Rose*. 'She' had wanted him to keep the Fatima as well but Vidal had pointed out that keeping the male name was keeping to the letter of their contract.

Vidal didn't know that a drag queen would have known so many demeaning, drag queen and gay words for what she thought of him then. Now Vidal answered to the name 'Nureddin' as his own though he would never answer to 'Fatima'. That name was the alter-ego of the departed queen who'd once owned this now much improved night club. 'Fatima' had departed with 'her'.

'Ahmed' fitted the part of a swarthy North African. It was a perfect disguise to terrorize the 'girls' on occasion, or even the boys, or Zolie. Now, with a big guy like this one beside him, even with a bum leg, thought Vidal with a wry smile, the suave, slender 'Ahmed Nureddin' would look like a force on the street to be reckoned with. Even as a bouncer, this big guy would be fine.

Despite his looks, Vidal had actually never been to North Africa. The nearest had been when he had taken female impersonator shows on tours of night clubs in Italy. It had been a very special tour and had raised a lot of ready cash for him. It had been very lucrative until the police came and bounced them all out of the country, threatening to prosecute him, Ahmed as a pimp, which would have put him in jail.

Luckily, a highborn, powerful and influential Italian had made the authorities make a deal with Ahmed. He and his 'girls' left but all of them had lined their pockets and learned valuable lessons as well. He was never going to go road tripping like that again even though the girls kept badgering him for another. They'd enjoyed themselves so much.

"I'm not the one who needs a job," said the big man, glancing back to the stage where Paulette, skirt slit to reveal smooth, anti-hosed legs, had emerged and was doing a very sexy wiggle across the stage. Zolie preceded her, showing her how to do it, rehearsing Paulette. Paulette seemed to be smiling, Vidal noted, as Zolie moved so girlishly; yet, he still had a male aura about him because of the way he was dressed in his white, tight pants and shirt.

It had been the previous owner's rule, Fatima's rule, that all the performers arrive at the club in male clothes, no matter how they dressed 'chez elles', in their own apartments.

"After all," declaimed the original Madame Nureddin, over sixty, and still, in the club, dressing as Fatima, a slave girl, one of the most wrinkled of her kind Vidal had ever seen, "this is a female impersonator club. Here, men impersonate women. I insist that my performers arrive and depart as men!"

The older performers still lived up to the old queen's rules. Vidal hadn't changed them but, when Chantal had arrived one day in a tight skirt, her hair permed and primed, carrying her insufferable little dog, Vidal, the new Ahmed, hadn't objected. Nor had he objected to her breast augmentation. Now he had, what, ten, no twelve, heck all but two or three of them with bouncy boobies as the Swedish Mai called them.

Laura had been the latest to have herself 'improved', to become one of the girls who could work bare-breasted. It was quite a sight to see a whole line of moving breasts on what were men and one of the reasons why the clientele of *Le Salon Rose* was expanding so greatly among those of refined taste in Paris.

On stage, Zolie clapped in time and put his hands on Paulette's, making her wiggle and swish even more femininely. Paulette smiled as she got it right, causing Zolie to applaud her.

The big man shifted in the chair beside the one Vidal had pulled up to his table. While Vidal had introduced himself, the other had said nothing. Now he turned away from the spectacle of the pretty Paulette to face Vidal more squarely. "I have a cousin," he said, his face grim and tense. "His mother has been very indulgent with him."

"He likes to dress up in her clothes?" suggested Vidal into the pause that followed the announcement. The big man seemed to be groping for the right words to express what he wanted to say. "Your cousin is a transvestite?" He didn't say 'travesti' which might have implied that the kid was a performer like Paulette.

Vidal knew that, soon, he'd have to explain to this, this enforcer, yes, that was the word for him, that just because a boy liked to put on women's clothes, it didn't make him a travesti, a performer, a female impersonator. That had to be learned. Most of the girls here had come to him after long careers, through their teens, of trying to be straight, boy dancers.

A flush spread over the big man's face. He looked away, towards the darkly shrouded tables and the long bar beyond. He looked quite ashamed of himself as if talking of such things in public, of private family scandals, was something a man shouldn't do and definitely not to a person like Ahmed Nureddin.

The big hand on the pink tablecloth trembled slightly as the gruff voice framed a reply to Vidal's suggestion. "He, he looks very good in women's clothes," said the big man. "I, I thought he was her daughter when I first moved in here. My aunt cries a lot, worrying what will become of them if anything should happen to me again." He grimaced and shifted his leg.

"She worries," he went on, "if, if, he," the big man had a hard time saying that, "will ever earn a sou," he grimaced again, "with the way he is. I've assured the sister of my mother that I'll look out for her son, if, if anything does happen to her, and he does not have her widow's pension to support him any more.

"I've enquired about places where he," again the choking came at that word, "he could work. He is an artist, you know, but that would never support him, not the way he is, after his mother is gone."

Vidal made a few gentle, conciliatory noises, wondering how to get rid of this big, big man, who seemed very averse to giving out any names at all.

The man brushed aside the condolences and prattle Vidal made that 'it might not come to that.'

"Officially, all I have is my disability pension, after Lebanon," the big man said. "But, as you might guess, I do have other income, a great deal more than it might appear. I would not be ungrateful when the time came, when you might need some-

thing from me, Monsieur Nureddin. I would want you to know that.”

Vidal felt a chill creeping through him as the big man looked at him. Whoa, he wanted to shout out. What sort of business do you think I’m in to need the services of a strongarm like you? But the look on the man’s face was so fierce that Vidal quaked and kept his mouth tight shut.

“I saw pictures of this club in *Le Soir*,” the man went on. Vidal knew what he meant, the publicity shots he’d had to pay an arm and a leg for. It had been a slow news day or the story wouldn’t have run at all. But in the end, the expense had been worth it. That week, attendance at *Le Salon Rose* had peaked. Vidal was trying to think of other ploys he could use to get his ‘girls’ into the papers but in a less expensive manner.

“It made me think,” grunted the big man. “I asked around.” He tried to smile but that chilled Vidal inside even more. The smile on the somber face that the man had presented in the main so far was frightening. “I got a few odd looks. I visited other drag clubs like yours. A couple of them,” the best, the most expensive, the ones with police protection, Vidal guessed, “told me to get lost, without even the courtesy of at least seeing my cousin. I didn’t like that.”

A chilling, alarming thought went through Vidal’s mind then. He had phoned the owners of his rival clubs to commiserate with them. The kitchen fire of unknown origin that had closed down *Les Filles Naturellement* and the second accident that had befallen Santiago Dufarge now didn’t seem unexplained or accidental, Vidal thought with coldness seeping through him.

It had happened to *Madame Georges's* as well. *Girls Talk* was a lesser club, really no more than a stand-up bar and three to six performers. It was where Denise and Laura had come from to *Le Salon Rose*. *Girls Talk* had been fire-bombed, he'd just heard, which is why he'd headed to his club for a quick check but nothing seemed to be wrong, save for this big stranger, sitting where Zolie normally did.

Where do they get the names from, Vidal wondered idly as he waited for the big man to go on. Now he expected threats against himself and *Le Salon Rose*. He was shaking again as he recalled the ambulance hurtling through Montmartre with the owner of the *Madame Georges* inside.

"Then, I checked into this place," said the big man finally with that terrifying smile again. "You are not the original Ahmed Nureddin." He almost leered. "I've seen pictures of Fatima from years ago." Vidal shivered, wondering what the original Ahmed must have looked like in drag as a younger man. "I served with the Ninth in Lebanon."

Vidal guessed that he ought to know what that meant. He had no idea but he raised an eyebrow and nodded.

"So I thought I should let you know how serious I am," said the big man. Vidal didn't doubt that he was. "All I ask of you is a viewing to see if I am right. I think that he belongs in a place like this, my cousin."

The big, injured man paused. There were beads of sweat on his forehead, Vidal saw in surprise but the man pressed on determinedly. He seemed to be suffering from something. It clearly wasn't his leg as

he was now propping himself up with all his weight on it.

“It wasn’t you, but it might have been a relative of yours,” went on the big man cryptically. Vidal had no idea what he was talking about. “He won’t remember me, Armand Martin, such a forgettable name. I could never forget the name, Ahmed Nureddin, though, and what he did to get us out of Suk-el-Gaib.” He grimaced. “Then I got this in East Beirut.”

Vidal nodded sagely. No need to disillusion the man that he’d never been in Lebanon, or that his real name was Mercier, the most common of last names in all France.

“What does he do, this cousin of yours?” Vidal asked with a little smile. He was going to have to see ‘her’ after all, he knew.

“Do?” asked Armand Martin blankly. “Do? I just told you. He dresses up in women’s clothes.”

Vidal Mercier nodded. “Yes, of course,” he said as Zolie began again with all of the girls in dresses and wigs, even Marianne and Yvonne, running through the entry they should make at the start of the show, to stun the audience with the excellence of their impersonations, to set a tone for the whole show. All the girls held their dresses up as Zolie demonstrated and curtseyed, circling then to the positions that Zolie wanted them to take. Their legs looked like girls’ legs. Vidal was a stickler for that. If he had been running a real night club with female dancers, it would have been the same. He wanted no thick-legged or sinewy dancers. The male dancers moved in behind the ‘female’ dancers.

“All our impersonators wear women’s clothes, Monsieur Martin,” said Vidal calmly. “But also, like women, they dance, they sing, they mime, they perform in skits. What does your cousin do when he is a woman? Why should I hire him for *Le Salon Rose*?”

Armand Martin’s face took on a deep flush. His jaw was clenched tightly. He stood then and stumbled away from the table towards the entrance to the night club.

What an ingenuous, bumbling fool, thought Vidal Mercier, admiring Chantal’s legs as she did her patented high kick. She smiled down at him, in his familiar viewing spot. Vidal felt a stirring in his loins as Chantal, his star, smiled brilliantly at him. It was a real pleasure for him to see her so sweet and femininely charming in the show.

Chantal really was easy to please. All he had to do was treat her as if she was the woman he was married to and, more than anything, arrange for her to attend parties as a woman. That was what they all craved. Vidal had the contacts to make dreams come true for some of his ‘girls’ at least.

Vidal stood, blew a kiss to Chantal, and went back to the front of the club to see Cesar. He wanted to tell him that Armand Martin was not to come into *Le Salon Rose* ever again. As Vidal half expected, Cesar almost cowered away from the door as the big man stood there, possessing it.

“I will bring my cousin to see you,” Armand grunted. Vidal groaned inwardly. What if the cousin resembled this man in any way? Well, Vidal shuddered but bowed to the inevitable.

“I can always use a new female impersonator, if he’s pretty, in the chorus,” said Vidal, looking at the cringing Cesar. Vidal could understand the bouncer. Armand Martin looked like an ex-para. Vidal couldn’t think of any three men he knew who would be willing to tackle this force of nature, even together. “Bring him around at nine o’clock tonight for Zolie and me to look at. I can at least do that for an old comrade-in-arms of my family.”

II. La Cousine

Vidal Mercier had actually forgotten, in the bustle of getting ready for the first evening show, placating Thomas, the maitre d’, and encouraging the kitchens, that he had an audition to conduct later that night. He was fully engrossed in ensuring that the sissies who served as waitresses, that was what the club had always called them, were properly scented and primped with makeup and fingernails, ribbons and bows. Yes, they were all ready to serve the growing crowd at the best of Paris’s female impersonator shows. They could claim that for a while as *Madame Georges* and *Les Filles Naturellement* were closed for a least a week.

Cesar had already shown the pair into Vidal’s inner office before Vidal remembered he was going to have them called and put off for one night at least.

“A thousand pardons,” Vidal said, bustling into his office, where the pair, perfectly punctual, sat, quiet and very tense, waiting for him. “As always, a new show, changes, a thousand things going wrong at the same time and I have to solve them all per-

sonally. The special guests always phone in so late and Thomas cannot seat them where they wish.”

Vidal went on and on, gossiping about the people who'd be in the club, rich and famous names. The thin, young man beside Armand Martin seemed barely to hear him.

In fact, Vidal rattled on to cover his inspection of the young man. It was hard to tell his age. Eighteen might be right, or Vidal could be off by two years in either direction.

Vidal hadn't expected someone totally unsuitable and he wasn't disappointed. The young man sat quietly, hands folded in his lap, dark-fringed eyes downcast. He was very pale and clearly under great stress by the way that he sat. His face was smooth and clear, his dark hair neatly parted and combed. He was a thin, handsome boy, but there was, too, a delicacy about him, a too-thin nose, lips a little too full and curvaceous to be appreciated as masculine.

“Now, if you will stand up, monsieur,” Vidal said. He went on about the number of auditions he conducted each week. The boy looked up, startled, from blue, blue eyes. He looked at Armand for guidance.

“Stand up, Gerard,” snapped Armand Martin. He now wore a dark suit, one he would wear to a funeral, thought Vidal grimly. ‘Her’ agent or manager, Vidal thought in amusement.

The boy stood. Vidal looked him directly in the eye. “Good,” he said with a smile of encouragement. “Not too tall. In high heels, you should be perfect.”

The smooth-skinned face blushed so quickly that Vidal was surprised. He wasn't used to reticence in the few ‘girls’ he found it necessary to inspect before hiring them.

“I shall, of course, wish to see you dressed as a woman,” said Vidal, returning to his natural, easy, courteous manner. “Did you bring your own makeup, panties, lingerie, dress, with you?”

The boy’s face went an even deeper red. His head slumped to his slender chest.

“We didn’t tell his mother,” began Armand Martin.

“No matter,” said Vidal, “though we do prefer our travestis to wear their own panties. Are you wearing panties by any chance under your jeans, Gerard?”

Gerard shook his head, his hands twitching nervously at his sides.

“We can fake almost anything,” Vidal went on, standing and taking the boy’s hand who shuddered at a man touching, stroking his hand. Yes, it was soft and girlish, not a boy’s working hand, thank goodness. Vidal signalled to Armand to stay. “But I like to see good legs. It makes such a difference to see shapely legs in silk stockings.”

Vidal tugged on the boy. They went out into the passage where shrill noises came from the open door where the ‘girls’ were getting ready. Strange, the boy almost shrank back behind Vidal as he led him into the place where he should have been longing to enter. It was where the buxom Fanny, painting her lips and adjusting her pantyhose as she stared at herself, almost filled the doorway. She swayed on her high heels and turning her head to check how her headdress fitted.

Fanny smiled at them, her face a mask of over-emphasized, feminine lines as Gerard stopped, transfixed. Their nostrils were assailed immediately with a melange of aromas, fragrances and scents.

All that could be seen on all sides were skimpily-dressed feminine figures in the briefest of female costumes.

Blondes with high, feathered headdresses leant before mirrors and adjusted their boobs into the bras they wore. Some openly put pads in their bras to fill out their chests to more striking female proportions. Brunettes leaned before other mirrors, sitting with legs crossed like women, adding more and more lip gloss to already overpainted red lips. Red-heads with willowy, feminine figures attached more feathers to their tushes, their tight, sequin laden bras and panties not concealing how rounded like women they were in many parts of their anatomy.

Fishnet stockings were on most legs, female-shaped legs. If you ignored some of the deeper voices and the loud drawls, you'd think yourself in a dressing room for a chorus line of beautiful women, thought Vidal, looking at the agony and amazement on the face of Gerard. Not one person in the room, of course, was a 'real' woman. This was *Le Salon Rose*, after all, specializing in the best of female impersonation.

"Come on," said Vidal with a smile to the wide-eyed, shaking, scarlet-faced boy. "Here is Janine Duffray." An elegant, blonde-wigged 'girl' turned from powdering her nose and began to drape a loose-fitting, almost transparent woman's negligee about her female-contoured figure. "Janine, I would like you to initiate Gerard for me!"

Janine looked at the owner of *Le Salon Rose* in disgust. Gerard tried again to hide behind Monsieur Nureddin as one of these fantastic female, scented figures paid attention to him.

Janine looked on the point of saying 'No' to the owner of the club but then she remembered the advance on her wages she'd asked 'darling Ahmed' for, the night before. He'd smiled and said that he'd think about it. Janine looked at the weedy kid, hiding behind Ahmed and sighed. Clearly, the boss had thought about it.

"My dear," said Janine, her pink lips parting in a forced smile. "So you want to be a pretty girl like me, do you?"

Janine put out long-nailed fingers, bright with red, gleaming nail polish and took one of Gerard's trembling hands. Gerard jumped at the touch but didn't dare to look at the 'woman' in front of him. He didn't dare to look anywhere but down. He flushed coyly as all he saw were what appeared to be women's legs in stockings and high heels.

"The other, the other girls," Gerard began desperately as the long, shaped fingernails flicked the knot in his tie open and then the buttons on his shirt. He spoke so quietly that Vidal could barely hear him in the feminine hubbub around the pair of male-dressed figures.

"Oh, darling," said Janine, arching on the stool on which she was perched as if she was indeed a glamorous model. She batted her eyelashes at Vidal and dropped her voice into a normal male, baritone range. "There are no real girls in here, you know. Only wannabes like us two."

Gerard could barely move. He stood clutching Janine's hand, his mouth open as he looked at her at last, at the painted, female face smiling at him and yet speaking to him like his Cousin Armand.

Janine stood and directed the young boy to take her place, leaning over him so that her breasts were almost entirely out of the golden bra she wore. Certainly, Gerard could not fail to see how they wobbled and how real they were on the baritone's chest. His cheeks were crimson. He sat with his legs pressed together, casting fearful glances at the other lovelies about him.



At any moment, Vidal could see, the young boy would bolt from the room so full of primping, gossiping, female figures. Many were adjusting the skimpy bras which they wore in the first production number after all. Zolie had decided to stick with the routines they'd followed for the last month and save the new beginning.

"Janine," said Vidal sharply and wondered why he did that. Did he really care whether this boy, the cousin of that elemental force in his office, could pass an audition as a woman? "Go easy with this little, little cherry."

Vidal would have said 'virgin', as he was sure that Gerard was, but the epithet was clear to Janine. She looked at the boy in surprise. Her blonde wig swirled about her face as she smiled at the boy and stroked his arms, whispering something in a more feminine voice about waiting for the girls to leave when they'd be alone. Janine even tried to look a little demure herself though she was the brassiest of blondes when it came to her individual act.

"In fact," said Vidal, again wondering why he just didn't leave the kid to a barracuda like Janine who'd have him for breakfast, in more than one way, and let fate decide on the kid's future, "some privacy in dressing might be best for our novice." He nodded to the costume storage room which had some mirrors and lights for girls to be measured and fitted for new costumes.

Janine pirouetted femininely on her high heels and smiled sweetly at the owner of *Le Salon Rose*. "About my advance," she said with a bright, red, lipsticked smile, again taking the boy's hand in hers. Gerard looked as if he was going to be sick as

Janine led him through a little group of girls, well travestis, Vidal thought with a nod to Janine, wondering what Gerard must be thinking.

“Amateurs,” said Janine in the sultry voice she did so well as they passed by the travestis, smoothing their hose into place over their rounded tushes. Some adjusted the padding so it would stay where they needed it as they did their feminine sashays across the stage. Gerard disappeared into what seemed a mass of femininely shaped and womanly perfumed globes of girlish flesh.

III. Bambi Labelle

Back in Vidal’s office, Armand Martin had relaxed somewhat, even opening his jacket to show off his long, black and white, spotted tie.

“Well, just the two crises I had to deal with,” said Vidal, putting on the fairly smarmy mannerisms and voice that he thought of as Ahmed’s. It wasn’t at all like the original of course. If he had wanted to sound like the real thing, Vidal would have had to flounce into the office, pout and behave like an aging woman still trying to be a teenager.

The biggest of the crises had been the non-arrival of Belinda Bell, as French as her name was American, like the songs she sang. Belinda was a featured ‘artiste’, a diva in every way, he thought gloomily. The cabaret featured her several times in the show. Just as Vidal was about to order Zolie to change into drag and do some of Belinda’s parts, which Zolie could do but it meant changing the order of

the show in parts, Belinda came prancing in from the stage door.

Gogin, the old man who protected that passage from the stage door johnnies, snarled after Belinda for leaving the door swinging open. There were a lot of johnnies, surprisingly, after the shows, waiting for the girls, just as if this was Broadway in America. Some of the girls loved it, loved the variety of partners they could take up with. Some put even more care into the way they dressed, as females of course, to entertain the men who wanted to treat them as dainty flowers. He'd heard one of the men saying that to Janine, days before. Janine had cooed to him like a little schoolgirl. What was it Paulette had said? Oh yes, the stage door was the best part of working at *Le Salon Rose*.

Vidal had wanted to speak to Belinda but she'd stalked past him, pushing Zolie out of her way. "Men!" she'd said furiously as she strode into the dressing room. Everyone had cleared out of her way as she tossed her fur coat, bought for her by her latest lover, at Vivienne-Marie, the young chorus girl who often served as Belinda's dresser.

"The cabaret is only going to be delayed by about ten minutes," Vidal said, back in his office, sighing in mock relief as he poured another glass of wine for the big man. He studied Vidal just as hard as Vidal had studied his cousin.

Vidal offered a cigar but Armand Martin declined. Vidal lit up and sat in the comfortable rocking chair behind his desk. Despite the flap over Belinda Bell, he knew that the show, and the front service, would run like clockwork now. The sissies were so reliable. They expected to be 'punished' girlishly for any errors they made. Of course, they acted out their 'ter-

ror' of Thomas so well that their 'nerves' necessarily caused them to make errors, when they needed to, around the maitre d'.

Thomas was always ready to oblige in disciplining his corps of workers whom he inspected like a drill sergeant each night, from makeup and wigs to the straightness of stockings and the perfection of the frilly panties. The sissy waitresses were already famous in the city. They'd loved the second article in *Le Soir*, costing another bundle, that had focussed on them.

Many of the waitresses, like Thomas, Zolie and some of the impersonators, Janine came to Vidal's mind, had worked for the original owner. They were the only ones now to remember to call the original Ahmed Nureddin, 'Fatima', while Vidal was 'Ahmed' to them all. It meant that his other businesses he could run as Vidal. No-one was shaking their head and wondering what the manager of a female impersonator club was doing in financial planning.

Still, Vidal did wonder what all the sissies and the female impersonators thought of him. Probably called him a 'late bloomer' or 'latent'. It was their word for so many men who were interested in girls like them. Well, it takes one to know one, Deirdre, the prettiest of the sissies would say. Regretfully, for her, she would never get to know what it was that made Vidal's motor tick over,

"Tell me, Armand," Vidal began expansively. "How did you ever get Gerard to come with you here tonight?"

"It wasn't easy," growled Armand, his nose wrinkling. With a sigh, Vidal extinguished his expensive

Cuban cigar. "I had to order him to come in the end."

And Gerard wouldn't dare to defy that, I imagine, thought Vidal. He sighed again. It was one of the parts of being Ahmed Nureddin that bored him the most. Well, he was the boss of *Le Salon Rose*. Armand Martin was not the first to suppose he might recruit 'girls' for his club in this way. Well, for a rich customer, Vidal would look a 'girl' over but he never employed them, save for one or two as waitresses.

No, *Le Salon Rose* was one of the best female impersonator clubs in Paris, and that meant the world, in Vidal's estimation. He had Zolie to scout acts in other shows. If Zolie found someone worthwhile, he'd move in and do the actual recruitment.

Zolie was very good, as the way he was making Paulette bloom showed. He could envision the girls in another show in a different setting at *Le Salon Rose*. He'd helped to develop many girls into the talents they were, divas like Belinda Bell, a mere chorus girl until Zolie had taken her under his wing.

"He's here because you wish it, not him, Armand?" Vidal went on, more coldly than he intended but his cigar was out in consideration of the other. "Why are you really foisting this young man on me? True, he likely enjoys dressing up and playing the coquette with you. But, in what I've seen so far, Gerard seems most reluctant to be a girl publicly. What talent does he have that could possibly attract the manager of a drag club into taking him on?"

The tense, stricken look had returned to Armand Martin's face once more. Many thoughts worked

their way across his features as he clearly tried to form some kind of positive reply to Vidal. At least, there were no threats, Vidal thought, but then, Armand probably didn't need to say anything along those lines, not after what Vidal had learned had happened at the other leading travesti clubs in Paris.

When Armand spoke he rumbled on in words that were unintelligible until finally he stopped. An uncomfortable silence settled between them. A sudden tapping on the door made Martin jerk. A hand flew to his pocket. Well, I know where he keeps his weapon, thought Vidal miserably, as he called loudly for whoever was there to come in.

Janine immediately swished into the room, exaggerating her smile and pose as she stood beside the chair where Armand could get a real eyeful of her. Her perfume probably overpowered him as well. Another girl came timidly into the room after Janine. Without even thinking, Vidal stood as he always did when a woman joined a group he was with.

"I didn't know whether you wanted a blonde or a brunette," drawled Janine, sitting on the arm of Armand's chair, her stockinged thigh almost on his hand. "So, I got as close as I could to her natural color."

The dark-haired girl's eyes were downcast. Her cheeks were lightly blushed but Vidal didn't doubt that her color would have been more intense if she hadn't been so professionally made up as it was. Janine was an artiste with makeup for girls off-stage as well as on. Her work on Gerard deserved a bonus, thought Vidal, as he looked at the silent brunette in admiration.

Gerard stood a trifle awkwardly in the white, satin-covered high heels, his slender legs in skin-toned stockings. Clearly, he didn't know what to do with his hands. Janine smiled at her creation. She took the girl's arms from behind her back and put them in front of 'Gerard', making one hand rest in the other in a girlish pose.

I shouldn't think Gerard any more as 'he', 'him' or 'his', thought Vidal Mercier as he looked at the delightful, ingénue girl in front of him. Oh, yes, he could do wonders with a girl like this. No wonder Armand Martin was so speechless or so stuck for words to describe her. She had a loveliness that Vidal hadn't seen in the kind of girl who worked at *Le Salon Rose*, in an age. Well, he hadn't seen it in any girl, real or false, of late.

The brunette girl didn't know what to do with her hands when they brushed the skirts of the many-petticoated, rustling, ultra-feminine dress Janine had found for her lovely protégée. She, the brunette, trembled like her dress, and that produced more feminine rustlings and so more tremors. It was delightful to watch, thought Vidal.

Vidal indicated that the new girl should sit where she had before. She blushed deeply again, as she swished in her dress and sank into the armchair, automatically brushing her skirts against her stockings as she did so. She crossed her legs as the dress rustled as well and the earrings that hung so charmingly from her ears moved and glistened.

The brunette glanced at Vidal then from well painted eyes, her eyebrows thin and femininely proportioned to her face. The crossing of her stockinged legs clearly thrilled her but Vidal's examination of

her made her appear uncomfortable and embarrassed. She tucked the elbows of her thin, bare arms to her sides. Her fingernails gleamed with the nail polish on them, her neck and shoulders delightfully clear and feminine.

“Thank you, Janine,” said Vidal with a warm smile to the blonde showgirl who was trying to entice a reaction from Armand that Vidal knew would never be forthcoming. “An excellent transformation. I think that advance is yours as you want it. Talk to me or to Marie-ThérPse tomorrow and we will make arrangements.”

Marie-ThérPse had once performed at *Le Salon Rose*. Now, in her fifties, she lived as a woman, had a gentleman friend with whom she lived, whom she always called her husband. Her friend always referred to her as ‘my wife’ which was rather touching. She worked as Ahmed’s bookkeeper, filling in as a dresser, costumier and anything else that needed to be done at the club.

Janine smirked at the big man, looking at his ‘cousin’ in stone-faced contempt. Janine swished and made sure her scented feathery tush brushed fragrantly over Armand, who didn’t move at all. Janine gave it up, shrugging femininely to Vidal before she minced, her tail swinging, out of the office. The ‘girl’ was left to the two men.

Vidal stood before the brunette as the door closed. “Look at me,” he said to her.

The girl’s painted eyelids rose. Janine had overdone the makeup a little but she had emphasized the lovely shape of the girl’s eyes. The earrings shook beneath the line of dark, curled hair. The glossy, pink lips quivered as the girl who had been

Gerard tried to look the owner of the female impersonator club in the face.

“Very nice,” said Vidal, noting the look of surprise in the girl’s face. Did she expect more, he wondered in amusement. Well, he didn’t want to tell her what he really thought until she’d worked with her trainers for a little while. Vidal reached out to touch the dress top. The tiny, exposed dress straps didn’t conceal the bra straps at all.

As he expected, the girl shrank from his hand, hair and earrings in motion as she glanced wildly at Armand. She’d have to learn not to move away from a man’s touch, Vidal thought, or another woman’s. That idle thought set off a lot of permutations inside Vidal’s head. Yes, this womanly boy had to be part of the club.

Gerard was remarkably pretty with makeup on her face, Vidal could see, but she’d be even prettier with less. He’d have to check with Zolie. Zolie had sniffed and reminded Vidal that they really didn’t need another impersonator in the chorus line. But, the more Vidal studied the anxious, feminized figure before him, the better she looked. Even her embarrassment and nervousness made her appear more and more womanly to Vidal’s eyes.

So few of the artistes had a really soft, dewy, feminine look like this girl had from the very start. How some of the ‘girls’ in the show appealed to audiences Vidal had never understood. Marianne and Yvonne were always in demand after shows while the girls with breasts like Chantal or Paulette were often ignored by some men.

But, here, on the threshold of this brunette girl entering the world of female impersonation, Vidal

Mercier felt an intense excitement himself as he thought how he could mould her to his own idea of what a woman could and should be. Then, he sneered at himself. He knew the ways of travestis too well. 'She' would eventually be like all the rest. Ah well, but for a few months at least, she could be intriguing.

"Now," said Vidal, easing back a little after making the girl quiver so much. "I want you to take off your pretty dress."

The girl's mouth opened. She glanced in horror to Armand, who sat stiffly in his armchair, glowering at Vidal.

"I need to see your legs," said Vidal, smiling and knowing he was going to be talking too much as he tried to allay the girl's fears and ease her embarrassment at being paraded in public. "As you could see by looking at Janine, we expect our travestis to wear very brief costumes at times. I need to see, and Zolie needs to see, just how much padding and stuffing we have to apply to you to make you look like an acceptable showgirl."

The girl shivered as Vidal indicated to her to get up. She looked at her cousin again.

"Do it," snarled the big man. The girl uncrossed her legs and shot to her feet, not even a wobble on her high heels. Her dress swished about her legs and stockings noisily. Vidal had her pirouette then. The girl stood stiffly as she did it, her earrings swaying. From the back, she was just like a girl to Vidal, he'd have sworn it.

Vidal touched the zipper on the back of the pretty girl's dress. She jumped at the slight touch, letting out an audible gulp. She partly turned, clutching at

her dress, heavily mascara-laden eyelashes flickering rapidly, as she looked again towards the impassive Armand Martin. She seemed to be begging her cousin not to make her go through the indignity of removing her dress in front of another man.

Vidal eased down the zipper, revealing the silky slip and the tight, black bra strapping across her back. Vidal retreated to his desk and sat on it, indicating to the wild-eyed girl to take the dress all the way down.

The girl, Gerard, stood there, the white high heels wavering, her creamy jaw working, her glossy lips quivering.

Armand Martin glared and hunched his body away as she looked back to Vidal. She silently pleaded with him but he indicated to her once more to lower her pretty dress and show him more than her legs.

There was a sparkle in the painted eyelashes. Vidal was sure she was crying as she slipped the thin straps of the dress down her bare arms and let the dress slide down her body to the floor. Now, Vidal could see how stiff her bra was with the padding they used at the club. The nylon slip was short, silvery, and barely covered the panties revealed by the falling dress.

The girl, Vidal would not think of her as Gerard, he told himself, shivered as if an Arctic wind had blown over her bare, hairless body. She brought her stockings together instinctively, like a boy, thought Vidal in amusement, as the dress, then the slip, assisted by Vidal's strong hands, fell to the floor.

Even though the girl, Vidal must call her that despite the scowl on the face of the big man in the

armchair, stood in a very ungirlish pose, there was real potential there, Vidal saw in satisfaction. His time was not wasted. She did not know at all what to do with her hands save to place them in front of her panties, as if the men could see anything there unfeminine.

Janine had made sure that the girl wore stockings and a garter belt and she stood there in her high heels swaying and not knowing what to do. Well, Janine would have made sure that she was gaffed. So, Vidal took her arm, bent it as she looked at him in alarm and placed it on her hip so that she could stand like a model.

Oh, she was boyish all right but boyish in a good sense, like a girl just starting to develop. She couldn't look at Vidal as she stood as he wanted her, perhaps as she had stood many times herself, when she'd done this before in the safety of her own room. But here she was under the critical eye of a stranger as well as her male cousin, staring at her in her woman's lingerie.

Her posterior needed to be fuller and rounder. It was always like that with new girls. They knew how to deal with that in *Le Salon Rose*. Vidal, Marie-ThérPse, Zolie and Dr Vassy would make the changes finally in 'her' that would make her so close to being a woman. The fine thing was that she was slender. Her legs weren't muscled like a boy.

Vidal wouldn't employ anyone at all, not to wear long dresses, anything, if her legs weren't long and trim as this girl's were. Yes, with taping and strapping on her chest, and some paddings, they could do wonders with her, he thought with a jolt of good feeling. She smiled demurely back at his gesture, right there in front of him.

“Stand up straight,” Vidal said. She did, lifting up that beautiful, little, pointed chin that she’d disguised so well as a boy by looking down so much. “Chin up a little higher. Fine.” Her eyes now had to look at him. There was fear there but was it of being accepted or rejected? Vidal smiled again. She paled at his look, slightly shaking her head as if to negate what Vidal was thinking. But Vidal didn’t care what she wanted or didn’t want. He knew that he was going to use her at *Le Salon Rose*.

“Put both your hands on your hips,” Vidal ordered the girl. “Now, turn to your left without moving your feet and look at me. That’s it, look at me over your shoulder. That’s it. Now, smile. Very good. Let’s try it the other way and keep on smiling at me as you do it.”

The half-hearted smile convinced Vidal Mercier that she wanted to be in his show. It was a shy smile, a desperate, fearful smile but it was a feminine smile, a practised one, if not completely mastered, and it got to him. He knew that it would get to certain select clients at *Le Salon Rose*, as well.

‘Ahmed Nureddin’ would use the girl. They must, however, decide on a name for her. She would start in static tableaux while Zolie taught her female movements. Gerard? Geraldine? She should have two names, a stage name and a female name for off-stage so that ‘Ahmed’ wouldn’t slip and call her ‘Gerard’ some time. Oh yes, she may not have known it entirely yet but her days of being a boy and wearing men’s clothing were over. From now on, she would not be in anything but girls’ clothing and makeup.

“All right, chérie, my dear,” said Vidal with a smile. She watched him back to his desk, saw him

take the contracts out of his desk, her eyes widening in disbelief as he passed them to her cousin. She looked genuinely frightened, her heavily madeup, showgirl face quivering as Armand took the papers Vidal passed to him.

“You can put your slip and pretty dress back on,” said Vidal. She did so, the petticoats rustling so femininely about her. Vidal got up and helped her to zip up the dress before escorting her to the sofa where her cousin sat. Armand watched her as she sat, smoothing her noisy dress beneath her, a little smile on her flushed face. She looked up at Vidal before she crossed her legs, the little tremble surely a movement of pleasure. Oh yes, this boy, for the last time in his life, was going to love being made into the girl of his dreams, thought Vidal.

Armand glanced at the interplay between his cousin and Vidal. He looked surprisingly angry, considering he had brought his transvestite cousin into the night club in the first place. He knew that this was a club devoted to female impersonators. What was he expecting, that Vidal would turn down such a pretty, brunette girl?

“Well, Armand, you were correct,” said Vidal with a gentle smile. The brunette girl sat very stiffly, blushing vividly at each rustle of her dress as that produced a frown or grimace from her cousin. Clearly the touch of her dress on her stockings affected her. Vidal admired the way she sat as if her bosom were in fact real. Yes, they must do something about that as well, and quickly.

“Your cousin does indeed make a beautiful girl,” said Vidal as the girl’s earrings swayed femininely against her long neck. Her hair moved and made her fidget which the club owner found delightful. “I am

willing to sign your cousin to a three-month contract to perform as a female impersonator ...”

“How much?” cut in the big man quite curtly. That was a definite quiver that passed through the girl as she listened to her uncle, her eyelids, so fully painted in greys and blacks by Janine, downcast demurely.

“We start our chorus line at two hundred ...” began Vidal.

“A week?” sneered Armand.

“Every two weeks,” said Vidal in his cool, most unsurprised tones. He’d negotiated many of these contracts before.

“That’s not enough,” snapped Armand, shaking his head.

“We provide dresses, clean lingerie, makeup, and our expertise,” said Vidal with a shrug, sitting back in his chair. This was what he was so used to, bargaining, wheedling, usually, though, with the girls. The older girls all tried to wheedle extras out of him for their special favors, which they’d even put in writing, but Vidal made them sign a proper, professional contract.

“You don’t know what you’re missing,” Belinda Bell had told him. “All the other managers get freebies from the staff, you know, however it is you like it.” She’d coyly gone to the door, making Vidal seriously consider changing his mind. “By this time next year,” Belinda pouted, “I bet you’ll be in bed with me.”

“I wouldn’t ‘bed’ on that,” said Vidal with a smile. Belinda had given him the loveliest, girlie smile before leaving. If she’d stayed a minute longer, she’d

have proved her case, and demolished Vidal's, as to 'their' future.

"We want four hundred a week," said Armand, his face strained.

Vidal looked at Armand's cousin as he protested Armand's price. She looked at him as if beseeching him to turn down Armand's demands. Well, that wouldn't release her from Armand's clutches, Vidal supposed.

"Six hundred every two weeks but your cousin will have to work for it," said Vidal frowning. It would make 'Gerard' the lowest paid girl around if Armand went for it but four hundred a week was a little exorbitant since they really didn't need an extra girl. Ah, but Vidal had to have her in his club now that he'd seen her. To see her in another club and know he'd missed her would be a torture to him.

"All right," agreed Armand grumpily.

Vidal wrote in the figure and signalled to the girl to stand up. She did, flustered by the dress that Janine had chosen deliberately, Vidal knew. It was intended to make its wearer feel all frilly and feminine.

"Sign here," said Vidal, pointing to the right line. "I expect your pretty, girl- cousin, Monsieur Martin, to be here each afternoon for the next week before the contract begins and earning begins. We shall have much to do, from wardrobe and makeup to movement and presentation but a week from today, your cousin, Armand, should be making her debut in our show."

Vidal deliberately used the feminine pronoun for Gerard. It passed right by Armand but the big man's

cousin gave Vidal a funny look at the reference to 'her' and to being Armand's girl-cousin.

A red-painted nail held down the page, flustering the girl again as she saw what had been done to her. She signed 'Gerard Barrieu' and paused over the lines which said, 'to be known as' and 'stage name'.

"You need a stage name to work under, like Frou-Frou, or Bernardette," said Vidal. She shot up straight as if he'd hit her. "What name do you call yourself when you are all dressed up at home?" She went all wide-eyed and scared at that. "Geraldine? Martine? Michelle Barrieu? Or Brigitte? Whatever you use, you can change it whenever you like. A lot of the girls here change their names like they change their panties."

Bad choice of expression, thought Vidal. Neither the girl nor her cousin Armand were pleased with Vidal's words at that point. Her lipsticked mouth was very firmly closed, but still she had full lips, Vidal noted, not thin like Chantal's had been until Dr Vassy's fine work on her. Chantal had told him how much her boy friend liked her now. They kissed so much that it hurt her. She was glad to come to work just to rest her mouth, she said. It didn't stop her from talking, unfortunately, thought Vidal.

"Then I'll name you," said Vidal to the stiffened girl, whose scent floated over him. He carefully wrote on the 'stage name' line. "One of the most famous of all female impersonators and so beautiful was Bambi," said Vidal. The girl reacted with a shiver of pleasure. Clearly, she knew about Bambi even as Armand frowned heavily. "So I think Bambi as your stage name or Bambi LaBelle, something like that."

“Bambi LaBelle,” murmured the girl as if trying it on. Well, why not call her the beautiful girl, using the feminine of the adjective, thought Vidal smugly. Yes, this girl was going to deserve the nickname in time. She might as well start out using the lovely, girlish name.

“The girls will call you Bambi anyway and never use your last name,” said Vidal, thinking that he’d encourage them, through Zolie, to do that.

“Why was a female impersonator named after a male deer?” asked Armand.

The brunette rolled her eyes at Vidal who smiled as well. “Yes, Bambi on the stage,” said Vidal. “You’ll be twice as pretty as the original Bambi when we’ve finished with you. It’s just the right name for a pretty travesti like you.”

IV. At Home

Madame Barrieu was, of course, in bed when the cousins arrived back at the row house in which they lived. Gerard hastily made the hot chocolate his mother liked so much and poured a mug for Armand as well. His cousin expected Gerard to wait on him, and do all the female chores about the house, as he called them. Gerard was used to starting work the moment he stepped in through the door.

Armand, of course, went straight to *Le Soir* and buried his head in soccer results he’d read more than once already. Only when Gerard placed the chocolate in front of him did Armand look up and

reach out to grasp Gerard's nervous, shivering hand. Armand grimaced at the painted fingernails that had just gripped his cup.

"It's not going to be bad, is it, for a fairy like you?" Armand said angrily to his white-faced cousin.

Gerard remembered the looks on the faces of the 'girls' as he'd passed by them to and from the dressing room. They were so eager to be on the stage, so excited to be showing off the feminine sides of themselves, and yet, they were all men! 'Not going to be bad'? No, it wasn't, he thought trying to keep the delight off his face. It was going to be what he'd only dreamed about before! The owner of the night club had known how Gerard would feel right away.

It was exhilarating in one way, however, but Armand wasn't correct. In another, it was terrifying! Gerard had spent brief moments in the company of 'women' whom he'd only read about, men like himself who wanted to dress as women, men like himself. And they did, all the time! Monsieur Nureddin made them! That had to be, surely, a fake name. Monsieur Nureddin had given him to Janine Duffray who said she was a man and a showgirl.

But she couldn't be, Gerard had thought wildly, until Janine had said in a baritone voice she was a man, like him, and that all the other girls he could see were men as well. She must have been joking with him, Gerard had cringed, but someone had left a program in the costume room where Janine had taken him. There was a picture of Janine, before as a man, and as she now was. Her name was there as well, beside that of Fleur, another man like her.

Janine had been so pretty. Gerard had sighed several times on the way home in the taxi as he thought how lovely Janine had been. Her skin and her platinum blonde hair had been so soft, her breasts so womanlike! She'd smiled and said to him, in a lovely, lilting woman's voice, on the way back to the office, that she was just like him, a man in a dress!

You could be just like her, a tiny voice said in Gerard's mind. He recoiled from the thought as if he had been stung. He should never, never have let Armand catch him dressing like his mother. Maman had warned him to be careful so many times.

"You'd better get to bed after you've cleaned that off," said Armand as the shivering youth sank into an armchair on the other side of the black metal fireplace, all the fingernails gripping the cup of cocoa the same shade of pink. "You heard what Monsieur Nureddin said. You have to be there at *Le Salon Rose* ready to work at noon which means that you must be there an hour before to be ready for that. It's the bus and the Metro tomorrow as well. No more wasting money on taxis."

Gerard had a brief image of himself in the dress that he'd had to audition in. He imagined himself dressed as he'd seen himself in the mirror, travelling around Paris on the Metro. It was a nerve-tingling thought. But what had Monsieur Nureddin said. All the 'girls', and he meant the female impersonators, came to the club, usually, in skirts and makeup. And there wasn't a huge outcry. It wasn't in the paper! What would happen if he, Gerard, did go out in one of his mother's dresses? Would he be arrested?

There was a click suddenly as someone pushed open the kitchen door. It was Madame Barrieu, entering the dimly lit kitchen area.

“Ah, so it is you, Armand,” Madame Barrieu said, breathing heavily as she entered the tiny kitchen. The words came out slowly as Mme Barrieu spoke, her breath short, the effort to speak almost overwhelming. “Gerard must not be out so late, Armand,” she went on. “He’s not strong, as you are.”

Armand lay down his paper, sipped his hot chocolate, or cocoa as he called it. He drummed his fingers irritably on the table in front of him several times before the old lady ran down on the subject of colds and flu, her slow peroration about what a weakling Gerard was finally coming to a halt.

“You must get used to Gerard being out late on many nights in the future, ma tante,” Armand said formally to his aunt, his tone rather smug. “Gerard now has a job that will take him out on many a night until very late.”

Gerard felt the muscles of his face contract as he tried not to blush or to show any emotion in front of his mother. His hands, however, felt clammy, as he tried to hide them from her, his throat dry as he waited for his mother to ask the inevitable questions.

“Gerard has a position?” asked Madame Barrieu, making the mundane into the genteel as she did with everything.

“Sort of,” said Armand smugly, taking up his cup and trying to look enigmatic to his aunt. He twisted his fingers about his thumbs as he always did when he was feeling good. The pain, but not from his leg, was making him sweat again. “And I was the one to

get it for him. Knew no Arab would fail to want to put one over on a member of the Legion.”

Marthe Barrieu was confused. “Gerard has to work with Arabs?” she asked, her veneer of servility cracking.

“He’s not really, maman,” said Gerard softly. “Monsieur Nureddin is actually quite nice.” Well, he was. He smiled a lot and had been complimentary to Bambi, as he was calling ‘her’, the brunette girl Gerard had become so easily

“But he’s an Arab,” objected Madame Barrieu. “I don’t want my son to be under such a man, Armand.”

“I think I can truly say, Tante Marthe,” said Armand Martin, “that Gerard will never be under such a man.”

Armand was so serious and forthright in saying that. Madame Barrieu finally relaxed and swung her gaze to Gerard. The dark beads that were her eyes inside the puffy cups that surrounded her eyelids seemed to penetrate beyond Gerard’s outer skin. He flushed, sure that she knew, must know, what it was that Armand had procured for Gerard.

“After eighteen months,” said Gerard’s mother slowly. Gerard flushed even more, recognizing the note of censure in her voice. Gerard had got his baccalauréat early but there had been no job for him. Madame Barrieu would not have her son working in a menial job. She expressly forbade him to take the waiter’s job he’d obtained. Neither would she let him take the job as a mail room clerk and tea- or coffee-maker in a large firm where he might have ‘worked his way up’. None of those jobs were good enough for her son.

“You’ll be pleased with the company he’ll be keeping in this position,” said Armand, leering at the blushing youth from a position where he couldn’t be seen by Madame Barrieu.

Gerard’s mother took the hot chocolate that her son had made and turned back to the door. Rosewater scent trailed behind her as she passed her son, patted his cheek and eased herself past the doorpost. “Do the best you can, Gerard,” she said in a whisper, seeming frailer than she had in the last few months, Gerard thought in alarm. “Always do your best at whatever Armand wants you to do. He’s the head of the family now.”

The door clicked once more as Madame Barrieu left. “She knows!” said Gerard to his hulking cousin who was grinning at him.

“She ought to,” sneered Armand. “I’ve told her enough times what I was going to do for you, Bambi!”

Gerard lowered his head in shame, yet with a tremor of excitement running through him at the use of that name. Bambi! Yes, he was going to become Bambi Labelle, a star female impersonator at Monsieur Nureddin’s club. He was going to be able to wear lovely dresses and makeup and wigs about his scraggly hair. He recalled all the lovely photographs on the long walk into the club, many posted in the outer windows for passers-by to ogle. He was going to be in one of those, with his legs exposed! Monsieur Nureddin had said that he, Bambi, had lovely, feminine legs. Such a thrill went through him at that compliment. For that, he could put up with Armand’s sneers and leers for a little while.

Armand's money had kept the rent collector from their house when Maman had invited her nephew to stay with them. Gerard had tried to explain to his mother that Armand was clearly some kind of gangster but Madame Barrieu would have nothing of that. She'd surrendered the rentbook willingly to Armand. Now the house, Gerard knew, was in his cousin's name.

"He's going to make a man of you, Gerard," his mother had snapped at him. Gerard had to try not to mind the taunting of his older cousin.

At first, teasing and taunting had been all Armand aspired to. He wondered openly why Gerard couldn't get a job if he was so smart. He made a lot of limp-wrist jokes, even in front of Madame Barrieu that made Gerard squirm.

There had, inevitably, been a day of discovery. Madame Barrieu could scarcely move and was always so quiet that she'd discovered Gerard on several occasions. So, it was inevitable that Armand would catch Gerard in an act of cross-dressing.

Told to tidy up the attic, Gerard was twirling in front of Maman's long, dressing mirror, pressing the crinoline about himself, waltzing gaily to Aznavour on the old record player when he felt he was being watched. He whirled around, letting the skirts go as they swirled so pleasantly about his legs. Gerard stared at what should have been a closed doorway. Armand stood there, however, in the door frame, glaring at the boy in the long, crinoline dress.

"I was just ... imagining ..." began a flustered, crimson-faced Gerard.

"Now I know what my nancy-boy cousin does with his time when I'm not here," said Armand. He

didn't seem taken in, Gerard saw in despair, as he, Gerard, tried to slip the dress from him and toss it away. "Well, wear it then," Armand went on, goading his cousin. "You know you want to. Why are you wearing your own clothes underneath? I'm sure that your maman has beautiful corsets and stockings in here you could put on as well. Let me see you all dressed up!"

Gerard had tried to run from the room but Armand's brawny forearm had laid him flat on his back. He was blubbering as much from the hurt, as quaking in embarrassment, when Armand leaned over him and said, "When I tell you to do something, nancy-boy, you do it. Understand?"

Gerard understood. Armand had picked up the dress and then pulled it over Gerard's head. He hauled Gerard to his feet and the dress fell down over Gerard's vest and underpants. Armand had picked him up like a little doll. He held Gerard with one hand while he went through the contents of Madame Barrieu's old, travelling trunk.

"Well, see here," Armand had said, pulling out the blonde, curly wig that Gerard had admired for so long. His mother had acquired it when he was just a little boy. He'd shaken with emotion each time he'd seen her wearing it. Armand forced it on Gerard's head. A bonnet with the wide pink ribbon had to go atop the wig. In the mirror, Gerard could only squirm as he saw his tear-streaked face, his ruddy complexion and the trickle of dried blood at his nose.

Armand was frowning as he tried to hold onto his squirming cousin as well as buttoning him into the long crinolines. "You'll have to lose some weight," Armand had grunted as Gerard stared at the image

of a crying girl in the white, wrinkled dress in the mirror. Only one arm was still in a muslin sleeve. 'She' looked like a street walker with one bare shoulder exposed.

Armand had fastened the dress which Gerard had never done before and put his arms about the girl on his knee, holding her and smiling into the mirror. "You do make a pretty girl," Armand had said as he used his hands to show her how narrow her waist was.

Armand had found the makeup box and was taking that out when Gerard found the strength to get free. Rage and frustration gave Gerard extra strength. He'd pulled free of Armand's one hand and arm about him. Gerard had fled from the attic, out the door to his own room and change back to being himself. He'd run, almost knocking Maman down in the process, as she came creeping up the stairs. Her face was scandalized to see him in her old, evening dress.

"Gerard!" she had called after him as he fled but Armand's hearty laughter came flowing down the stairs. Gerard's cousin loudly explained to Gerard's mother exactly what his transvestite cousin had been doing in the attic while no-one was supervising him.

"Oh, he does that all the time," Madame Barrieu had said. "Well, it's a harmless habit, isn't it? Your father was the same way, Armand, or didn't you know that? I remember when you were a little boy you used to dote on your Aunt H elPne. Surely you remember her. Well, she was your father, just before he went out on his little trysts. Your mother said allowing him that hobby made him more tractable as

a man. So what you saw Gerard doing is quite harmless.”

Armand didn't think it harmless. He raised the subject at the dinner table. Gerard couldn't eat at all with the words said about him. "You haven't really seen him," Armand had said at last. "Tomorrow, at dinner, we should let Gerard show himself off to us both as Mademoiselle Barrieu."

"No!" Gerard had screamed in fright.

"I don't see why not," said Madame Barrieu with a faint smile.

In bed later, sipping on a warm chocolate, Gerard's mother had patted his hand. "It is Armand who pays the rent, darling," she said to her son. "If he wants to see you in my frillies, why not let him? It won't going to take him long to see it's just harmless fun. Wait till you get a job and meet some lovely girls at work. Then we can ask Armand to find another place. But until you find a position, Gerard, we must do as our master says."

It was Madame Barrieu who called Gerard to her bedroom after a tense day after the incident with the crinoline dress. It was a day, of course, on which nothing had been said. No teasing had taken place. Armand had simply read his paper while Gerard prepared the supper. Everything was cooking when his mother called and had the meat, potatoes and vegetables set on 'low'. Gerard nervously brought her another glass of wine from the 'vin ordinaire' flagon in the cold pantry.

He was just about to ask his mother about why dinner had to be slowed down when he saw what was on his mother's bed. Gerard shook as he saw the women's underclothing that his mother had laid out on the counterpane. She smiled painfully at Gerard as well as she closed the door firmly behind him.

"It is almost time for dinner," said Madame Barrieu. "And you can see what I have laid out. Armand isn't going to know what a wonderful idea he had. Mademoiselle Barrieu is going to be as beautiful as his Aunt H el ne. He always used to say she was the most beautiful woman in the world. He was going to marry her when he grew up. He was only a very little boy, of course, but I don't want to disappoint him tonight."

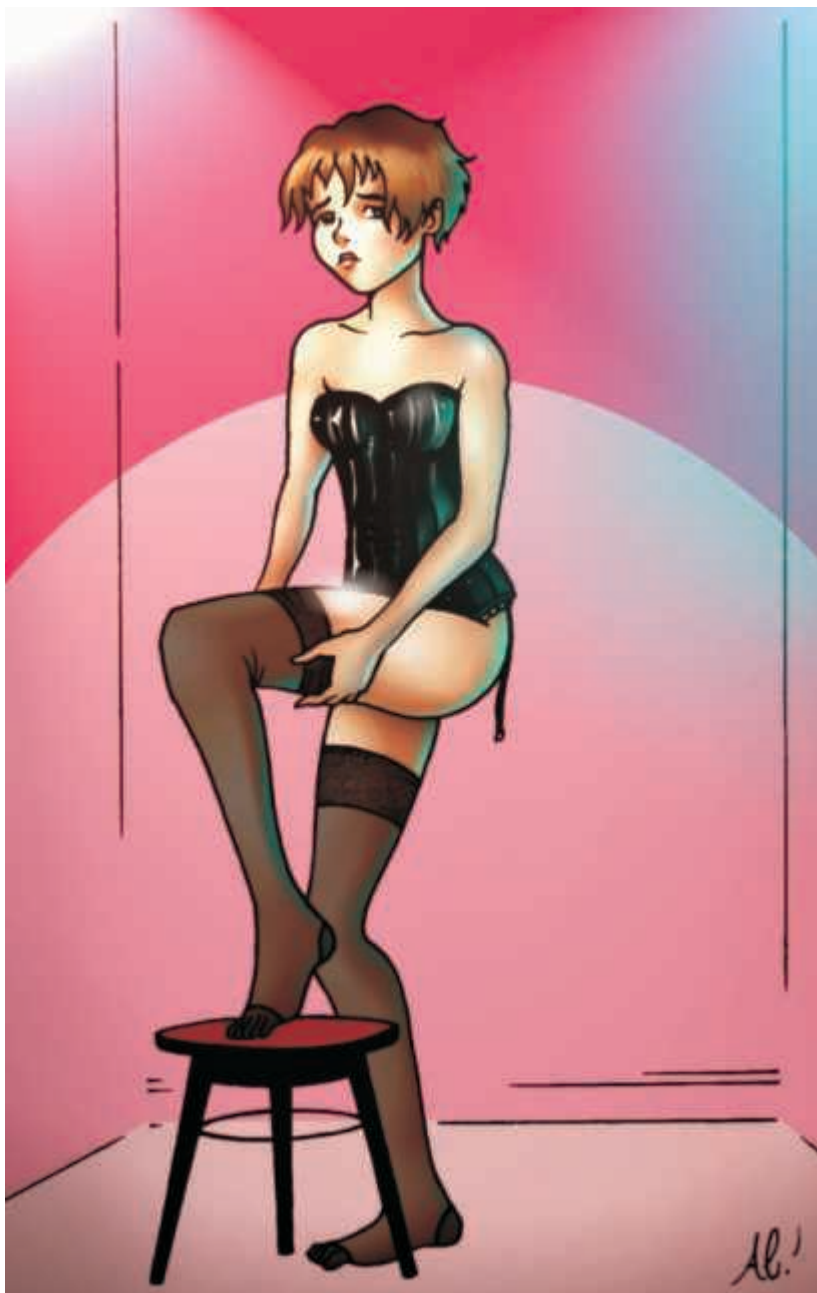
"Oh, maman," cried Gerard. "I, I can't do this!"

"Oh, sure you can," said Madame Barrieu. "With my help, this is going to be so easy for you and a pleasure for me." Gerard stared at her in stunned surprise. "Well, I never have had a daughter, did I?" she asked with a smile. "Now you can help to make up for that loss, darling Gerard!"

Gerard might have run from his mother's room then but she locked the door, a crafty look on her face. It occurred to Gerard that she might not be well. He didn't feel well himself. He felt downright sick, in fact.

"Now, we won't be disturbed," said Madame Barrieu with a smile that shocked Gerard through and through. "Where shall we start? Well, of course, you must remove your clothes, Gerard, all of them, and put on these garments I've laid out for you here on my bed. These little things, we call them panties,

must go on first. When you're ready to put them on, just tell me. I'll turn my back and let you do that."



All protest was brushed aside with, "It's for Armand and he pays the bills." And, of course, Gerard so much wanted to do what his mother wanted him to do. He wanted to put on the pretty, girlish panties with the pink frills and the large roses painted on the front. He wanted to be laced properly into the shaping corset for once in his life and he was in bliss when his mother, his own mother, whispered that every girl must have some shape to please the men, mustn't she? Maman padded the front of 'his' corset so that Gerard actually had breasts like a woman.

Maman made him put on another, tighter pair of panties as she said that she could see that her son had returned for a moment. This was the time for her daughter, not her son.

"Are, are you feeling all right,?" asked Gerard more than once as he did the other wonderful things his mother wanted him to. He put on her stockings, so fine and silky, and had to straighten the black seams before he attached the garters on the corset to the stockings. Maman praised him for his smooth, hairless legs. It was good that he was a boy who had such nice legs and such a smooth body. Gerard had to blush as he knew it was the chemicals he applied to himself in his bathing and not any genetic twist that gave him such a girlish body.

The saucy, small underslip almost gave Gerard fits as it covered him and his feminine clothing so easily. His body now looked so girlish. He could look down and see the mounds in front of him, covered in black silk and there was his chest showing how heavily he was breathing. Maman wanted him to stop that but, when he looked down at the edge of the slip and his stockinged legs, the slip touching

him so sensitively, he just couldn't stop the emotion running through him.

"Oh, maman," Gerard said impulsively, taking hold of her and hugging her. "Can, can I put on the dress now?"

Maman laughed. "How like a boy to say 'can I!'" she said. "Mademoiselle Barrieu! From now on, never use that expression again! A girl says 'may I'. My daughter is, will be, a perfect mademoiselle. And no, you may not yet put on your dress. First, my daughter must fix her face. You cannot go in front of a man looking like that! You cannot serve Armand his supper with your hair and your hands in such a mess!"

Gerard's heart started to beat faster and faster as he sat in the chair he had seen his mother sit in so many times. She made him cross his legs. Thrills coursed through his heated body at the feel of his stockinged legs one on top of the other. The soft rasp they made as he moved was also so wonderful.

What was even more thrilling was his immersion into the world of feminine vanity and makeup as his mother, his own mother (!), showed him how to prepare his face for makeup, how to shape his eyebrows naturally as a girl would, how to apply a light brushing of foundation, of blusher and highlighter.

Gerard had no mirror to look in but he listened avidly to his mother as she put false eyelashes on his own thick, natural ones. She said, though, that he really didn't need them as he had beautiful, fine eyelashes for a boy but a girl could always use a little extra, couldn't she? Gerard listened as his mother explained what she was doing with the eyeshadow wand, the grey on the back of his lids,

the black in the crease and the white above, blurring, always the blurring of one into the other, Maman said.

Gerard hadn't realized that lip color could be painted on or be so glossy. Maman had made him outline his lips first with a pencil, re-doing the shape several times until she was satisfied. She held onto him when he stopped. "What is it?" asked Gerard, frightened that his mother had seen something amiss that he hadn't.

"Your lips are prettier and more shapely than mine," said Madame Barrieu angrily. "And so wasted on a son!"

"But, but," began Gerard in a whisper and then his mother smiled at him.

"Of course, you are right, darling," Maman said. "You are not my son now, are you? You are my daughter. What is your name tonight, pretty girl?"

"Ger-," began Gerard and his mother put a finger on his lips right away. She smiled and held up a finger covered in lipstick. After she had wiped that away, she took up her lipstick brush, had Gerard pout and painted his lips again.

"My daughter's name is Hélpne," said Gerard's mother. "Now she must be blonde as well. Since I saw you in the attic with Armand, I thought this wig you wore then would suit you. Of course, I've bushed it out a lot. It isn't as curly as it once was but let's try it, shall we?"

"Oh, maman!" sighed Gerard, almost in ecstasy as his mother brought forward the blonde hair and put it on his head. The wig hugged him tightly, long

strands falling over his ears and neck. “What, what do I look like, maman?”

“Why you look like HéliPne,” said Madame Barrieu, combing and brushing the hair about his neck and his ears and down his back. He hadn’t realized that it was as long as it was. Maman worked on it for a while before she took pins and began to attach the wig to Gerard’s head, sometimes hurting him, at which he grimaced. When she’d finished, Madame Barrieu smiled at her creation, reached into an open box on her chest of drawers and pulled out a pink ribbon which she put about the hair to hold it back from his ears.

Maman clipped small, golden earrings to Gerard’s ear. Gerard would have preferred the large ones, ones he had tried surreptitiously before, but he didn’t dare to say anything. Maman had a locket for his neck, one with a picture of her and a dark-mustached man whom Gerard knew was not his father.

“Now, your hands,” said Maman, tut-tutting at the state of them. “We give you far too many girls’ chores to do, HéliPne,” she said. “Soak them for a while in my lotion and then we’ll do something about your nails.”

What Maman did to Gerard’s nails was to file them into points like a girl’s nails. She took away all the bluntness and lacquered them as well.

“Not really long enough,” she said. “You must let them grow, darling, or else we shall have to buy you some of those false nails that are so prevalent on streetgirls these days.”

Maman said streetgirls. Gerard blushed as he knew that she meant the lowest of prostitutes.

When Maman talked of courtesans, however, who were the high end of the same profession, she spoke of such women in glowing terms.

Finally, Gerard's nails dry, it was time for the dress and shoes. The black taffeta dress glistened with all the sequins on the bodice as Maman took the rusty dress from her closet.

"Oh, Maman," whispered Gerard as his mother raised and slipped the dress over his head and it cascaded down along his femininely shaped body. Maman adjusted the corset more tightly, before closing the rusty dress tightly about her 'daughter'.

"Yes, blonde hair and black, sparkling dress, it is a bit much," said Madame Barrieu as she sat and tried to catch her breath. Gerard could not resist twirling in the dress and listening to it rustle, knowing that the feminine rustle came from him. It was such a delightful idea. Oh, and how wonderful his legs felt to be rid of heavy pants and jeans and to be light and free to the air. It was so wonderful to be like a girl in his stockings and in the swirling dress. His arms were also bare, thin straps of braided, shiny, black material over his arms.

"Try the shoes," said Gerard's mother and Gerard did so. He almost toppled over as soon as he tried to stand.

Madame Barrieu laughed. "Young girls have to practice in their high heels all the time, mademoiselle," she told her daughter. "But they are pretty. They were supposed to go with that dress but I never did wear them when they were given to me. Now, stop that wobbling and step forward in very small, very dainty steps. Good, now, to have a proper female walk, set one foot in front of the other

and do the same thing over and over. No, don't look down! That's why we girls of my age always had a book on our heads and had such excellent deportment. Not like girls today. You need to practice if you want to wear high heels like girls of my day did!"

"Oh, I will practice, Maman, I will," said Gerard fervently.

"And whisper more, my darling," said his mother with a frown, as she took a perfume bottle and began to put drops of perfume on her daughter's wrists and shoulder, neck and chest. "That is the best your voice can be at the moment, I know. Ah well, I guess we must go and face the music sometime, mustn't we? So, let's go and see what Armand thinks of his Hélpne now. You do look as pretty as the woman he used to say he was going to marry."

Gerard tried not to wobble as he followed his mother out into the hallway but he did wobble badly as he looked into his first mirror. His mother had shuffled towards the living room, leaving Gerard to look at the blonde girl in the black dress. She was shaking as she approached the room where Armand was probably still reading his newspaper or watching sports on television. One thing about Hélpne was that she looked nothing at all like Gerard.

Oh, but that girl is me, the excited, exuberant thoughts shot through Gerard. The beautiful, blonde girl is me! Oh, maman, what have you done to me? I really am your daughter! Gerard stood there transfixed as he looked at the beautiful hair brushed about the girl's shoulders. He had thought that his mother was making it too airy and not at all what he would have done but it was just perfect.

The earrings were so feminine as well while his face, well, it wasn't Gerard's any more. It was HéliPne's!

"Mademoiselle Barrieu!" called Madame Barrieu from the kitchen and the main living room. "Come in here and look at supper. I do think that the meat is burning!"

Gerard tried to step quickly into the living room but he wobbled and one of his high heels almost came off his foot. Flushing, he slowed, minced with dainty steps as his mother had told him and entered the room. He was aware that Armand had gasped and got up to his feet as the blonde girl entered. Maman had one of her frilly aprons for Mademoiselle Barrieu to put on. Trying not to look at his painted fingers that made him feel so absurdly female, Gerard checked everything to find that all that was to be cooked was cooked well and was ready to be served.

Mademoiselle Barrieu had to lay the table as she always did, find the right wines, red for Armand and white for Maman and Ger-, no, for Mademoiselle Barrieu. She brought the bread and butter to the table and placed the meat in front of Armand's chair for him to cut and serve.

"Come on to the table, Armand," snapped Madame Barrieu. "Stop staring at your cousin. You'll make her think you haven't seen a woman before."

"Her?" grunted Armand, getting to his feet, coming to the dinner table in what they called the kitchen area.

"You wanted to meet your cousin, HéliPne, didn't you?" said Maman sweetly. Armand paled. His mouth dropped open as he looked at the older woman for once. A shivering Gerard was able to rus-

tle over to his normal seat and sit down. He had to do it again as Maman made him stand, sit down and cross his legs properly like a girl.

“It’s quite amusing actually, darling HéliPne,” said Maman as the mostly silent meal progressed. “Your cousin, Armand, here, had quite a crush on a blonde woman just like you at one time.”

Oh, please, Maman, thought Gerard in a panic. Please don’t go on again with that old story. Can’t you see the look on Armand’s face when you do? Look at the way he’s gripping that knife, Maman. If looks could kill, you would be dead now!

But Maman did go on. She went on and on. Then, while Mademoiselle Barrieu cleaned up as she always did, Maman went and sat with her wine and the television. For once, Armand appeared at Gerard’s elbow, took the dishcloth from her hands and began to help ‘her’ with chores!

“So this is how you really look, Mademoiselle Barrieu,” Armand said as Gerard shivered. He washed and Armand wiped like any domestic male and female couple. Anyone walking into the kitchen would certainly have presumed that about them, at least until Gerard was forced to open his mouth.

“I’ve been trying to find you jobs in the wrong professions,” said Armand with a salacious grin.

“I can find my own job,” murmured Gerard, his hair swinging over his shoulder. As he looked to his maman, he could see she’d fallen asleep as usual, the empty wineglass dangling from her fingers.

“As a hooker on the stroll in Montmartre, maybe,” said Armand, his words sending shivers up and down Gerard’s back. “You’d probably earn more

money doing that than in a respectable job for someone like you.”

“Are there any respectable jobs for people like me?” asked Gerard, a flash of anger passing through him. Armand actually smiled at him. Armand even reached out and caressed Gerard lightly on the arm which made Gerard cringe. Armand frowned angrily.

“Being a travesti is sort of respectable,” said Armand. “Your maman would approve, you know. The travestis from the most expensive clubs are treated like courtesans by the demimonde that likes that kind of trade.”

“I don’t want to be a courtesan,” said Gerard with a shudder, looking down at the blonde, so well madeup girl in the clear water in front of him.

“It’s that or the streets,” laughed Armand. “It will come to that if I can’t find a place for someone like you, someone who makes as cute a girl as you do.”

V. Rehearsals

Rehearsals were supposed to start at eleven but Armand had Gerard at *Le Salon Rose* by ten. It was a good job that he did because Zolie, in full makeup and an off-the-shoulder cocktail dress, made ‘Bambi’ gulp and shake as the flirty woman, so like a sister to the swishy man she’d been the day before, took one look at the new arrival and whisked him right away into the dressing room. ‘She’ transformed Bambi as she had transformed herself.

Gerard tried to object to the immediate makeup and powder applied to his face but Zolie said to him,

simply, “Why are you here, mademoiselle?” in a feminine voice. That ended all arguments or protests. Gerard was a female impersonator in Zolie’s eyes and that meant that he had to get out of his ridiculous male clothes and into female lingerie right away. A red-faced Gerard, beneath his makeup, trembled with both excitement and embarrassment at ‘her’ tutelage, her scolding him for not arriving dressed as a woman, as he must from now on.

Gerard had to learn so much, Zolie ranted at him, as if he ought to be more welcoming of all the things ‘she’ was doing to make him a girl. And Zolie was a she for that day. He had to learn everything, Zolie found out, from how to dress himself to how to conceal his male parts as all the other ‘girls’ did without a second thought.

It was Zolie who showed him how she did it, undressing and showing off her panties to Bambi without a second thought. Zolie applied her makeup as Bambi had to apply hers. The female Zolie did her hair as well, finding Bambi what she called the right wig, a blonde hairpiece like her own.

As well, Bambi had to get used to the fact that he, she, was a ‘girl’ in everyone’s eyes, even the male dancers, who casually glanced at the ‘new girl’ and smiled at the dancing tights Gerard, now Bambi, had to wear. They showed off his, um, ‘her’ legs and the high heels he, she, had to wear so much because his, her, skirt was so tiny and barely covered his, her, panties. Bambi’s chest, as well, was padded out to female proportions. The men thought it was funny as Zolie made Gerard’s bust larger, like hers.

Then, Gerard had to sway like a girl. Zolie wasn’t at all embarrassed at the way she, Zolie, wiggled in

front of the men. She danced easily with men and demanded that they treat her, Zolie, with 'class'. But Gerard, still trying to get used to being called Bambi, was almost ashamed of himself as he tried to do what Zolie, another man, did so easily.

Bambi had thought she'd know what to do. She'd practiced with a smile in the attic at home. But it was so different for Bambi to simper and swish in front of so many critical eyes. She had to sashay like a girl as Zolie showed her. She had to take such small steps, the swing in her rear end clearly evident when she dared to glance at the flustered 'girl' in the dance mirrors.

The most vital thing Bambi had to learn, however, was that a chorus girl, that was what she was, had no privacy at all. She had none in the way that she was handled by Zolie or in the way she was re-dressed, her dress stripped from her right in the middle of the stage or dressing room if Zolie wanted to do that. If Zolie wanted 'her' to change to a longer skirt, she, Bam-Bam, as Zolie called her, just had to whip off the old and put on the new. Who cared who was looking, male dancer or other impersonator, or 'girl' as Zolie called them all, including her, Bambi.

Gerard just wasn't Gerard any more. She was Bambi Labelle, or just Bambi, Bam-Bam or even Bébé, 'Baby', for the initials of his new name. In any case, she wasn't ever 'he' any more. She was called she and soon she answered to nothing but 'she'. It sent shivers through 'her' all through that first day as 'Bambi'. Zolie made sure that she was initiated into the ways of men who liked to dress as women, who liked to act like women, and who liked to perform on stage as women. Zolie totally expected that 'she' should be just like the other 'girls'.

Modesty was a thing of the past. Nakedness so common in the dressing room that no-one even seemed to notice how awkward 'Bambi' was. It was both thrilling and embarrassing to put on a frilled corset in front of the others. She wore flirty dance dresses and tried to move like a girl as they all did. It was so hard not to notice that the sexy, womanly body of Belinda Bell had extra appendages between her legs when she took off her panties from one act to switch to different colored panties.

"You should always wear a gaff and panties under those horrid male things," said Zolie, tossing Bambi's 'street' clothes into a basket and kicking it under a makeup station. Zolie was standing in a female pose and making the trembling, energized Bambi do the same at all times. Zolie selected a black gaff that was tied with strings. It hurt Bambi as she was re-dressed, shivering in humiliation, to wear it in the manner her new instructor wanted of her.

"You might as well be like all the other girls from the start," scolded Zolie, looking so gorgeous in the evening gown she'd changed to, her bust and tush so shapely and rounded. Janine Duffray smiled at Bambi as Zolie was going on and made a face and gesture behind Zolie's back that amused the other girls. Zolie was a nag as a woman, it was clear, and everyone knew it.

It was Zolie, however, who took the time and showed Bambi where her testicles were supposed to go, back into her body cavity, and where her penis, how she shuddered at the oddness of that expression, had to go. It allowed the gaff to be tightened so that it looked as if Gerard - no, he was gone completely - it looked as if Bambi had no male equip-

ment. On every day following, Bambi had to follow the same routine, putting on a gaff, black, padded panties, tights or panty-hose, corsets or body shapers, a wig and makeup and be ready for instruction with the other girls at eleven o'clock.

Bambi must never be without feminine makeup when she left the dressing room, said Zolie. She made sure that Janine and Elise Renoir, the girls Bambi was seated between knew she must be just like them. Bambi was never allowed to drop her voice or mutter a word in a masculine tone. She was a travesti. Yes, she had to act at all times as if she was a woman.

The first time a man put his hands about Bambi's waist and pulled her to him, kissing her cheek, Bambi almost fell over. She squeaked in alarm. Zolie came rushing over to berate her for the clumsy way she'd moved.

"All right, André," said Zolie after showing Bambi how the pirouette she'd learned earlier now had to be done with a man, giving Andre a kiss after she had finished it. "Practice that with this new girl, will you, Andre? I don't think she's going to be ready for chorus line for a while but she will do tableaux. We'll work her in as she progresses."

"What a lovely perfume," the male dancer who'd been singled out to coach Bambi murmured in her ear as his hands spun Bambi into his arms just as the other girls were doing with other male dancers.

Bambi looked up at André in terror as she was supported from falling only by the man's arm. "Th-Thank you," she finally managed to whisper.

"Just starting in the show?" asked the muscular guy, taking her hand, putting her on her

high-heeled feet and twirling her so that the little rehearsal skirt spun out level with her hips, revealing the black panties she wore and her derriere in the panty-hose. "Zolie will keep you in skimpy costumes for a while until you get you used to it. You haven't been trained as a dancer, have you? It's going to be a very hard month for you, Bambi, beautiful as you are, as we try to get you up to snuff. And if you keep resisting me touching you and trying to get you to relax like a girl, it's going to be a hundred times harder for you."

Zolie, in a Marilyn Monroe dress and wig, had Bam-Bam strip and re-dress, the new travesti's life almost unbearable as Andre zipped her up and kissed her soft cheek. She tried not to think 'unbearable'. But they all knew she was a boy, all the eyes watching her! It was embarrassing to move femininely all the time, and with grace, feminine grace. All the while, men tried to coach her in being feminine every moment she was on the stage. For so long, Bambi had tried to eliminate female gestures that crept into the way she acted as a boy. Now, she was praised, and that was a thrill, when she acted in outrageous fashion as if she was a girl.

André Liebman kept his arm about Bambi all the time, sitting her on his knee, holding her shivering hand, as they waited for the call to dance again. Sometimes, he took her to the open wing areas and rehearsed steps with her. She was so nervous but Andre always smiled and tried to get her to relax, as the main group worked on the front stage.

Then, it was her turn, in a class of one, save for different male dancers like Gaetan and Henri. A panicked Bambi saw herself in the long, rehearsal mirrors being whirled by one man after another in

dance after dance. She blushed seeing herself so awkwardly trying to be a girl but then she saw 'other' girls checking themselves out in the mirrors constantly.

She had to do that, André told her repeatedly. "Look at you, Bam-Bam," he'd whisper in Bambi's ear. "Watch us in the mirrors as we dance this time and see how much like a woman you are now!"

Only it wasn't her, Gerard, but this new girl, this Bambi Labelle, in the mirrors being swirled and pirouetted by André. Bambi was a girl, she saw, a little excitement creeping into what she was doing with André. She was a girl, really a girl, in brunette wigs and blonde, in short pageboys and manes of hair, in short skirts, and long gowns.

All of the time, the male dancers kept telling Bambi, to smile, to show how much 'Bebe' enjoyed being a girl, and to share her feelings with the non-existent audience. But when Bambi smiled, her lipsticked mouth showing off her white, white teeth, the mirrors showed her looking so much like a girl she shuddered, not believing it was her, moving as 'she' did. Bambi had to look away, her senses reeling. How could it be that she loved so much to be a person dressed in such flimsy clothing of the opposite sex?

Even on the first day, Bambi wasn't allowed to leave in the early evening. She had to stay, be a sort of assistant dresser in the dressing room, the girls despatching her for different wigs and changes of costumes. She had to stand, in a dress herself, in the wings with Zolie, an elegant blonde woman, and see beautiful girls performing in front of an audience. And what the boys said was so true. The girls

she watched always smiled so marvellously. They were applauded loudly as well no matter the act they did.

Once, Paulette did not show up as she was apparently sick. For a heart-stopping moment, Bambi panicked as she thought that she'd be dragooned into appearing on stage. But it was Zolie in the end who entered the dressing room, took off his jacket, shirt and pants, he was a man that day, and began to make up his face.

Eventually, a girl with blonde hair appeared. Bambi, her heart racing with the ease with which Zolie transformed himself, had to help 'her' with taping her chest and closing the bra tightly on the gel pads, bouncing so naturally in front of Zolie, now a female.

Zolie's ballet dancing with Andre and Hugo was spectacular. She came off beaming with pleasure. Each of the male dancers kissed her most enthusiastically on the lips, their arms about Zolie's waist as they clinched.

"No, Bambi," laughed Zolie, taking Bambi's shaking hands in hers as they hugged. "You don't have to do that after a turn. It's just something I have to have after a performance as a woman. I just have to have a little male attention. The boys here know that about me. They've probably decided already who is taking me home tonight."

That flustered Bambi a lot. "Take you home?" she gasped.

"Yes," said Zolie, looking the neophyte girl in the eyes. "One of the male dancers will take me home tonight and will have sex with me. We will have sex

many times, I hope. After my performance, I definitely deserve it.”

“Why, why don’t you dance all the time?” asked Bambi nervously, as the blonde embraced her again.

“I don’t need it that often,” laughed Zolie. “Besides whoever goes home with me I have to favor in dancing practices. That’s why they want me to make love to them. It isn’t my pretty face any more.”

Bambi was trembling as she tried to digest what Zolie was saying. She shook as she was led back into the dressing room where several girls were jiggling into can-can costumes and checking that their seamed stockings were straight.

“Obviously, I used to do a lot more with men,” said Zolie, her voice softer and less strident than when she was dressed as a man. “My last partner was Paolo, a Brazilian. We were together for eight years. He fucked me every night of every day of that incredible time. It’s a wonder I can still walk. It really is!”

“Where, where is he now?” Bambi asked, frightened by the words she was hearing. She stared at her image in the wide, flaring dress Zolie insisted she wear at stage shows. She shuddered at Zolie beside her, realizing she was comparing the other ‘woman’ to Bambi.

“He’s in Marseilles,” said Zolie with a smile as she began to clear her face of makeup. “Along with Candy Parker, who used to be in the chorus line. I found her in my bed with him one day. You know what that louse of a boy friend wanted me to do? He wanted me to join them in a ménage a trois. Well, she was as good a lover as she was a dancer, was Candy. So, I kicked them both out.

“He’s still trying to teach her my routines in the drag act they do in the sleaziest clubs in Marseilles. Pretty soon, I should tell you, Bam-Bam, just as happened with Paolo and me, André will make a move on you, pretty, pretty girl; so, be warned. He’s a real tomcat is that one. He likes to do the whole chorus line in a season, even me. Now, he’s really good for a one-night stand, which is what I like, but he’s no-one to lose your heart to, even if you decide to be his partner.”

Zolie stopped then and looked at the tense, quivering face of the female figure assisting her to store away her sequinned panties, treating them with remarkable reverence as they were laid in the costume box. “You have been with a man before, haven’t you, Bambi?” she asked, now more like a he with her wig gone.

The stricken look on Bambi’s face clued the older travesti into the fact that Bambi LaBelle was a virgin. “No men and no women?” asked Zolie in an amused tone. “Oh, we can’t have that, can we? It’s all we talk about here at the club, our love affairs. We really must find you a man!”

“Thank you, n-no,” stammered Bambi, her cheeks definitely scarlet. “My, my c-cousin w-wouldn’t approve.”

That made Zolie laugh. Zolie hadn’t quite figured out the relationship of the girl, as she thought of Bambi, and the big man who’d be there to meet her and escort her out of the club, once more in Bambi’s drab street clothes. But, it was interesting, wasn’t it, that, by the girl’s reactions, the big man wasn’t her lover. It was something that Ahmed, Vee, would definitely want to know.

It was a thin Tuesday crowd a couple of weeks later that witnessed Bambi's debut on the stage. It was a Roman orgy scene and the stage rotated in the set and all she had to do was stand there and smile. She wore a fake female chest taped to her like a breast plate. It appeared, with the way the long dress was pinned, that she wasn't wearing a bra.

Oh, how Bambi flushed and shivered as she moved out of the dressing room with all the other girls for the first time, the robe opening as she sa-shayed, showing off her long, feminine legs. She had to stand with the slit in the front pulled to one side to allow her legs to be ogled at by everyone in the sparse audience.

Heavily madeup, along with the dark head of ringlets like the other Roman girls, Bambi was in fact indistinguishable from the other girls in the tableaux. Of course, some were in shorter dresses and did dances about the floor while she just had to stand there. work a large, fake, palm fan and smile as she was rotated past the audience.

André was there to assist her from the tableau as the rotation put the scene off-stage. Bambi's heart was beating a million beats per second as she tried to smile and be graceful like the other girls getting off the set. She was quite unprepared for the kiss that she received from André, her wits scattering as a man held her as if she was a girl, bending her in his arms and kissing her lipsticked mouth.

"Just the first of many," said André before letting her shaking body go. A shuddering, flushed Bambi had to lift her skirts and head daintily into the dressing room just like the other girls.

Bambi stood there, wriggling, for a moment, looking at girls changing into brief, femmy costumes, knowing she had to get into an evening gown as well. But Bambi couldn't quite think what to do as her mouth still felt the imprint of a man's lips upon them. She felt so weird. She'd been kissed by a man!

It hadn't seemed like the greatest sin in the world as Bambi had thought that it would be. It hadn't been that bad. In fact, when André's mouth slid over hers and demanded a little response from her, she'd kept her lips firm and even kissed him back. She couldn't decide for a moment or so whether she liked it or not.

Janine Duffray stood up, backing off from the mirror, checking her tights and her legs in the skimpy costume she wore in her next number. She adjusted her neckline and her breasts moved naturally as the firm breastplate across Bambi's chest would never do. Janine noticed the look on the new chorus girl's face.

"What's the matter with you?" Janine asked in her perfect simulation of a woman's voice. "You look like you've just been kissed for the first time!"

Bambi flushed at the other travesti.

"Oh, you were," said Janine with a smile then. Several other girls, Yvonne and Joy Baker among them, looked at her and smiled.

"André?" asked Joy, her American accent almost gone when she spoke in French. "Well, at least he waited for your first show, Bambi. He bonked me in the bathroom before we even finished the first rehearsal when I came here from Berlin!"

“Remember Annie Paris?” asked Yvonne. “And all her wild parties at the Coraine before they threw her out. Second night for me but at least Andre had me in a bed!”

“Yeah, but how long before he kissed you?” asked Janine as all the girls around Bambi giggled.

Bambi’s ears were on fire as all the girls began to talk about André, Marc, Henri, and the other dancers in the club. Belinda Bell beckoned Bambi to approach her. “Don’t listen to the other girls saying he’s mine,” she said with a sweet, girlish smile to Bambi. “I just had a one-night stand with him, that’s all. Monsieur Nureddin has introduced me to a much more interesting man than any dancer. So André’s all yours, Bébé darling. Enjoy! With my blessings!”

Bambi nervously managed to mince to the spot in front of the mirror assigned to her, near to the still ailing Paulette, and where Zolie, filling in for the sick girl again, would soon be coming back to change. Bambi, as most of the girls were calling her, looked at the brunette girl in the mirror while the conversation swirled all about her. As usual, it was about men, specifically about André, and how all of the girls rated him as a lover.

Zolie swept in, pirouetting and extending ‘her’ arms above her head in classical, feminine, prima ballerina style. She walked up on her toes in ballet pumps to where she sat beside Bambi. Zolie’s short, ruffled ballet skirts rustled as she sat down. She’d had Bambi dressed just like that in the rehearsals earlier in the day. It had been absolutely delightful and enervating to be a woman like that.

“Oh, before I forget,” Zolie said in the lilting, female voice she used when she was dressed as a woman to the still stunned Bambi. “You are to see Ahmed in his office before you go home tonight, no matter how late it is.”

“Why?” gasped Bambi as Zolie winked at her.

“I think that he has a date for you,” said Zolie with a smile and a laugh.

VI. Travesti

It was a week later, between shows, that Ahmed came for Bambi. He had brought out her contract when he had first seen her again in his office. She'd been terrified, thinking he intended to tear it up and turn her away from the club. Well, she wasn't the best dancer by any means. She was trying to improve. It was just so wonderful to come to the club every day and behave entirely as a woman.

Bambi was even able to smile a little on stage now as she really did enjoy being presented as a pretty girl so much. She had even danced a can-can for Laura one day, swishing her dress and showing off her ruffled panties, as she kicked as high as any of the girls. She flipped her skirts over her back and wiggled her derriere to the audience just as real chorus girls did. The other girls had hugged her, as they did the same, and told her how good Bambi was. She could fill in now at any time for anyone.

Ahmed had brought out her contract and showed her the empty line there. ‘Also known as’ read the line. “What is your name when you're not on stage?”

asked Ahmed quite seriously. Bambi knew better than to say it was Gerard.

There was a little pause for a moment before she said, "HélPne," quite softly in the new voice she was practising all the time.

"HélPne Barrieu?" asked Monsieur Nureddin, beginning to write her new name on the contract.

"HélPne Martin," said Bambi a little unsteadily as the club owner smiled at her.

"Mademoiselle Martin," he said formally as he put away the contract she'd signed before. "Very soon, on Friday the sixteenth in fact, I shall take you out of the club for a weekend. You do not need to tell any of the other girls, not even Zolie, about this. You should tell your cousin," he made a face at that, "as he will not need to be here to pick you up that night. I shall bring you back to him, safe and unharmed, on the following Monday."

Bambi sat up straighter in her short, cocktail dress, shivering as she hugged her crossed legs tighter to herself. "What sort of weekend?" she asked in alarm.

"Le Comte d'Embray is giving a weekend for his friends on his estate in Normandy," said Ahmed Nureddin with a smile. "He really likes girls like you, passable in the best of company. I know that you are that. Zolie is very impressed. I'll have clothes ready for you. Between shows, you'll change into the evening dress provided and join the Comte, his Comtesse and myself at my table to watch the second show.

"Edmond will certainly wish to dance with you. Then, as you will pass the audition perfectly, I know

you will, we shall have a last glass of champagne and be off after the last show as soon as Belinda Bell joins us as well.”

“But she’s a star,” Bambi said with a shiver. “I-I’m just in the chorus.”

“But you are quite a natural girl,” said Ahmed with that secretive smile of his, “not inflated like Belinda which is why you’re being invited to this particular party.”

So, the following Friday, as nervous as Gerard had ever been in his life, he concluded his act as a blonde-haired, can-can dancer, swirling his long skirts about his black stockings and black high heels, and returned in trepidation to the dressing room. The girls who were there, Joy Baker and Suzie Lee, were as excited as Bambi was herself when Zolie brought the long dark, white trimmed dress in for her.

“Someone has a heavy date tonight,” giggled Joy as she pushed in the uplift pads to her Merry Widow corset and scented the cleavage that she now showed like a real showgirl.

“Change your makeup,” snapped Zolie at the tense, frightened girl known as Bambi. “Marie-ThérPse will come and dress you.”

Bambi shuddered as she undid her can-can dress and hung it on the proper hanger. Several of the other girls, led by Chantal and a glowing Marianne, came swirling into the dressing room, flipping their dresses at the other girls there.

“Oh, Bambi, where are you off to?” asked Chantal in her lilting, feminine voice. She swirled up to the shivering, blonde girl in her black garters and

stockings, her white, ruffled panties and her padded corset. Bambi spread the makeup remover cream over her face as feminine, fragrant perfumes spread over her from the girl beside her.

“Why does she get to go out on a date?” asked Chantal petulantly as an older woman came and stood behind Bambi, stroking the soft skin of the girl’s shoulders, making her jerk as her bra straps were slowly lowered.

“Because she is requested,” said the older woman in a straight, grey skirt and a pink blouse. Her hair was neatly arranged. She was no older than Maman, Bambi thought with a tremble. Marie-ThérPse, however, looked so elegant and lively, her eyes so beautifully made up, her hair dyed and streaked, her hands and nails so femininely attractive. She’d said she was the club’s bookkeeper but she was clearly more than that.

Chantal turned on her high heel and flounced off while Marianne and Frou-Frou just looked at Bambi with large, heavily painted eyes.

“She won’t be invited to one of Monsieur Nureddin’s parties,” said the older woman pointedly to the travestis watching Bambi remove her makeup and start, with a shaky hand, to re-do her eyes lightly, “if she continues with an attitude like that.”

“Who is Bambi going out with?” asked Marianne, her rosebud mouth forcing a smile at the girl in front of the mirror.

“Le Comte d’Embray,” said Marie-ThérPse calmly with a beautiful smile. Janine had told Bambi this older woman had once performed in the show at *Le Salon Rose*. Bambi could scarcely believe it as she looked at the older woman assisting Bambi out of

her corset, re-scenting the breast shield that was affixed to the young girl's chest.

"I'd like to go out to a real night club with a nobleman," said Marianne dreamily as she swirled her can-can dress, getting Suzie Lee to help her out of it.

"What do you think *Le Salon Rose* is?" asked Marie-ThérPse dryly as the girl shimmered her feminine figure out of her dress. Marianne wore a treasure chest just as Bambi did, but Marianne got out of her corset without the help Bambi had received.

"Well, it's a night club," said Marianne, leaning forward and frowning at her makeup in the mirror. She picked up a lipstick and began to re-do her lips, smiling as Bambi did the same. Only Bambi did it much more lightly as she had practised with the older woman earlier in the week.

Marie-ThérPse took away Bambi's wig and exposed the wig cap on the girl's head. The older woman removed it with practised ease and began to brush back Bambi's short, blonde-dyed hair gently. She parted the front. Golden hair fell down onto Bambi's cheeks. The girl shivered as she recalled trying to explain to her mother that she hadn't been the one to decide her hair color was to be changed, 'for good', Zolie had said.

Marie-ThérPse pomaded Bambi's blonde hair, pinning the sides tight to her head and pulling the rest back behind the girl's ears, into the tight knot the older woman formed there. Bambi shuddered as she looked at herself and how delicate her features seemed. But her dresser, for that was how Marie was acting, attached a hair piece in the same, golden color as her natural hair to her head. She

brushed it out until a fall of curly hair fell and danced on Bambi's bare shoulders, making her feel so girlish. Bambi's hand shook as she took the eyebrow pencil and arched her eyebrows femininely as she'd learned to do in the intense makeup classes she had each day.

Bambi had to remove her panties as more assistants arrived, Geraldine and Dorothy, two sissy-waitresses, in maid's costumes. They looked like maids in their short, black dresses and exposed garter belts. Geraldine promptly had to bend and be switched by 'Madame' as she'd arrived late without all the bracelets Madame Marie had told her to bring.

Dorothy, in short, blonde wig and full makeup was switched for leaning over Bambi to help her put on her hoop earrings and locket. Dorothy yelped. Several girls patted her tush, Bambi noted, and stroked her legs freely as the sissy tried to retreat through the line of girls changing their costumes and showing off their female changes to the tall, masculine woman. 'She' was made to do several female tasks while the travestis had her trapped there.

Not just the stockings had to be changed on Bambi's legs but also her gaff and so her maleness was exposed as Marie sprayed between her legs with cool perfume. Bambi wanted to break away as she had a replica of a woman's vagina forced between her legs, a most unpleasant experience, even though it was like wearing a gaff.

"Oh, that's so adorable!" said Marianne, next to her as the older woman pulled the replica tight about Bambi's private parts. Bambi shuddered at the real girl appearing in her mirror. Marianne was-

n't the only one to look at her. Many of the travestis pointed at her and smiled as if they knew what it was put on her for, Bambi thought miserably.

"It's how the other one likes to see you," said Marie as the girl hopped about in front of her, for all the world a naked woman.

"I, I can't wear this thing," said Bambi nervously as Marie-ThérPse made her put on small, black panties and then a matching black bra.

"Of course you can, darling HéliPne," said Marie with a smile. "Blush on your cheeks, girl, and then powder while I put this garter belt on you and these nude stockings."

Under the watchful, admiring eyes of Marianne and Marie-ThérPse, Bambi completed her makeup and shook with nervousness. The older woman seemed to caress her legs deliberately as she put the stockings on Bambi, attaching them to Bambi's frilly, garter belt. She had quite an audience as a thin-strapped slip went over her head and slid down to her thighs making her shiver with pleasure at both the feel on her skin and the look she could see in the mirror of the blonde girl.

Geraldine returned with the proper bracelets Marie wanted for the elegant girl she was making of Bambi. Geraldine stood, awed, as Bambi had to step into the dress which Marie closed her into as if she was a young woman indeed. The black, open-toed high heels showed off Bambi's brightly painted toes as red as the fingernail polish Marie had told her to wear.

"Oh, I wish I was you," said Marianne, leaning over and hugging the girl who'd occupied the dressing table station beside her. Joy Baker had to hug

Bambi as well then as did several of the girls, Elise Renoir, Vivienne-Marie, Frou-Frou and Yvonne, girls whom Bambi hardly knew at all.

Marie-ThérPse took Bambi by the hand and led her out of the dressing room, past a pouting Chantal who sniffed and lifted her pretty, bobbed nose to the new girl.

“Don’t mind her,” said the older woman with a smile as she led Bambi to the owner’s office. “There’s always someone jealous of a girl prettier than they are. It was the same in my day. Zolie and I used to fight like a pair of cats over the men we knew. Well, we still do, actually.”

“You, you really did work here?” asked Bambi uncertainly as they stood outside Monsieur’s office and waited for Marie’s discreet tap to be answered.

“Of course, darling,” said Marie-ThérPse with a delightful smile. “I still could if I wanted to. But my husband likes me to keep my clothes on these days. He’s such a prude, my Denis. And before you ask, chérie, no, I was not ever operated on. Denis and I had a wonderful wedding here in the club. What a night that was. Zolie and Paolo did a lovely dance for us. He screwed her right there in the middle of the floor in front of everyone. How we cheered them on! Ah, the good old days. And so I’ve been Denis’ wife ever since. No, the state may not recognize us as husband and wife but everyone here does and that’s all that matters, isn’t it?”

Bambi wasn’t sure of that. The door to the office opened. Monsieur Nureddin stood there in a tuxedo and black bow tie. He gestured for the female-dressed figures to come into his office. A shuddering Bambi had to enter and be studied as she

had been before. She was tempted to ask the manager of the club if he saw anything he liked as he ran his hands over the thin, silvery straps that supported her dress at her shoulders.

He ran his hands along her neckline. Bambi was grateful for the treasure chest as she could barely feel his touching. Oh, if it had been real, on her real skin, she knew that she would have been swooning at being touched so tenderly as if she was a woman.

Monsieur's hands ran over her figure as she'd seen him do to so many girls. Always, the other girls smiled at him. Belinda Bell had kissed him most romantically as he checked her out in a silver, lamé dress that Bambi had hungered to wear when she'd seen it on her fellow travesti.

"Beautiful," murmured Ahmed Nureddin as his hands caressed her wide, slightly padded hips. "A beautiful job, Marie. And my praise to you as well, HéliPne. You have worked really hard here to be a pretty girl, haven't you? You have done really well. Le Comte awaits you. But before you go, HéliPne," he stopped her and reached up and removed the bangle earrings she wore, "I think diamonds will suit you much better."

And so, HéliPne shivered as a smiling Marie-ThérPse helped her to attach huge earrings at her ears that glinted with strands of sparkling glass that did look like diamonds. Monsieur Nureddin also had a necklace for her, a glittering string of fake diamonds. Well, they must be, mustn't they, she thought in excitement, as she turned and looked at herself in the mirror on the back of the office door.

The blonde girl in the long, shapely dress was smiling nervously. Bambi could scarcely believe she

was looking at Mademoiselle H elPne Martin. Oh, that’s me, thought the little bit of Gerard that was always there inside her. That’s me. That’s the girl I dreamed I could be. She loved the way that the dress clung to her and her female shape. Marie placed a silver, glittering purse into Mademoiselle Martin’s hand while Monsieur Nureddin lifted the white fur coat from the back of a chair in front of his desk and held it up for her to put on.

H elPne could barely contain the surge of delight that went through her as she put her arms into the white, caressing silk.

“Well, that’s about all, I think,” said Monsieur at last. He stepped out of the office, turning to Marie and handing her a set of keys. “The club is your husband’s and yours, Marie, for a few days. Chantal and Zolie are prepped to do Belinda’s numbers. Thomas is being cruel as he usually is to our waitresses, the usual complaints of too many red bottoms and difficulties in sitting without cushions. Oh, Joanie Guyette is being promoted from the waitresses to the chorus line and will do tableaux for Bambi while Paulette will fill in as a can-can dancer. She’ll object. She’s already tried it with me but I have promised her a big tip and a special night out if she co-operates with you, Marie.”

“I can take care of girls like that,” said Marie-Th erPse with a smile. “*Le Salon Rose* will still be running smoothly when you return, monsieur.”

VII. Hélène Martin

“I hope so,” called Monsieur Nureddin over his shoulder, leading Bambi away from the stage door exit. He put his arm under the slender, blonde beside him and led her along the passageway to the front of the club. The entry into the club itself sent a surge of fearful emotions through Bambi, oh, she was supposed to be Hélène, wasn't she, she thought anxiously as she minced daintily beside the owner of the club.

“Just hold onto my arm,” murmured Vidal Mercier to the trembling girl beside him. The noise of the club, the soft background music, customers standing and talking to one another was so new to Bambi. A new audience was being seated for the second show.

Bambi had rarely been able to see beyond the footlights. She could now and gulped as she saw all of the men in suits or tuxes like Monsieur Nureddin. Even the bouncer, Cesar, and his helper, Domenick, were in tuxes. Behind the long bar, however, pretty women were serving drinks and smiling to the men, seated opposite them.

As Hélène watched, one of the blonde women, a black bow in her hair, poured a number of drinks. A brunette waitress moved to take the tray and sa-shayed off. Her walk was an exaggerated parody of a woman's, as she swayed, smiling all the time, to a table where several couples, men and women, sat. The people looked up and smiled at their waitress. One of the men actually ran his hand over her

stockinged legs and tush as she bent to serve him. The waitress smiled and didn't object. The man kept his hand there while the woman beside paid the bar tab. The waitress, by her even bigger smile, had earned a very big tip.

"I saw that," said the club owner softly to HéliPne, following where her eyes had led her. "Yes, that's on the borderline of objectionable conduct, letting a man or woman touch her like that but Maxine is pretty experienced in handling men. Would you be able to handle a man like that, HéliPne? I'd thought at first I'd put you in a sissy job for a while and see how you liked it. Joanie is thrilled by the way to have a chance to be you for the weekend."

Another waitress in a short black skirt, black tights, a white blouse with puffed sleeves and a bow in her hair passed them. She smiled provocatively at the club owner as she wiggled over to the bar and gave an order to one of the older women behind the bar. "Amanda, a new girl," said Vidal, escorting the girl forward as a new group of people appeared in the entrance to *Le Salon Rose*.

Coats and scarves were being handed over the counter to the hat-check 'girl', a well-muscled 'woman' with as much makeup on her face as the dancers beyond the floodlights had to wear, thought HéliPne.

"Ah, Monsieur le Comte," said Vidal Mercier, pushing on HéliPne's arm. She had to follow him, her dress preventing her from striding quickly as the club owner was doing. "Here, my darling HéliPne," Vidal said with a smile while the group of people, two older women, smothered in jewels, and three men, in white tie and tails surveyed the club with

definite amusement. "May I present Le Comte d'Embray, and the Countess? And here is Mademoiselle HéliPne Martin."

The Count immediately moved to slide the coat from HéliPne's shoulders and her dress and shape were revealed to the women and men before her.

"Charming," murmured the Count, extending his hand to take HéliPne's as she did a little curtsy to him as she had practiced all week with Zolie. His light grey eyes sparkled at her as he raised her scented fingers to his lips and kissed them. "My friends, Gaston and Nicholas Narbonne and Nicholas' wife, Angela. She's American."

"I don't believe it," said Angela, staring at the smiling, wiggling Amanda who came by them then on her way to the stairs and the tables in the balcony above. "Everyone who works for this establishment is a man!"

"Ask Vidal," said the Count, pushing HéliPne's wonderful coat off on Domenick who retreated with it after giving the tag for it to the Count and not HéliPne. "He owns the place."

"Along with several partners and three banks," said Vidal with a smile, noting how the Count had retained HéliPne's hand in his. "If I might escort you to your table."

"All the waitresses are faggots as well?" asked Angela, staring at HéliPne as Vidal stepped forward and offered his arm to the Countess, amused and knowing the answers to the other woman's questions by the look on her face.

Vidal gave a chuckle at such a description he'd heard many times before. "Not necessarily, ma-

dame,” he said with as bright a smile as he could. “We do try to employ only sissies as our waitresses, though. It is a job that suits a sissy very well, isn’t it? But on stage, madame, are the true artistes, with talent to act, sing, and dance, to entertain as women. Some of them, for sure, I know to be what you would call faggots but others are happily married and others still would surprise you with what they really are or want to be.”

“Kinky!” said Nicholas Narbonne’s wife, staring all about her at the elegant men and women who were laughing and chatting before the second show was to begin.

HélPne sat and smoothed her dress beneath her as the other women did. The Count sat beside her and Gaston Narbonne sat on the other side of her. Vidal, they’d called Monsieur Nureddin. He hadn’t denied the name. HélPne shivered as she considered that no-one was who they appeared to be.

“And what is she?” asked Angela, indicating HélPne across the table, the question being so obvious. HélPne shivered in fright as all the eyes seemed to concentrate on her, studying her makeup, her false eyelashes, her neckline and swelling chest, her hair and her bobbing, glittering earrings.

“Mademoiselle Martin is the daughter and cousin of friends of mine,” said Vidal Mercier brightly as HélPne quivered. She knew her cheeks were colored brighter than the blusher she’d put on earlier. “In fact, her mother and her cousin, Armand, are seated right up there in the balcony but they graciously allowed HélPne to join us as we are an unbalanced party with men and women, aren’t we?”

“Martin?” asked the Count with a very false smile. “Do I know your family, mademoiselle?”

“I don’t believe so,” murmured Héliane, hoping her voice sounded like a real woman’s. She had been practising it enough in the previous weeks. She was stunned by the thought that her mother was there in the club. Her mother might have already seen her performing on stage. And Armand. He was there as well. What would the Count and Countess think if they were introduced to him?

Vidal raised his eyebrows and smiled encouragingly at Héliane as if to tell her to go on. “My family is very far removed from yours, milord,” she went on, remembering that she must smile, even to someone with whom she’d developed no relationship at all. “But we do know of the illustrious history of the d’Embray family, milord,” Héliane went on. “My father was from Normandy and served in a battalion with your grandfather, I believe.”

The Count positively preened at those words as Zolie had told the girl he would. “You see, Narbonne,” said the Count across Héliane. “Rank does still mean something in France.”

Beside Héliane, the dark-haired, young man who hadn’t spoken at all rolled his eyes and studied her as if he couldn’t believe what he was seeing. “You’re not what we were promised, Mademoiselle,” said Gaston Narbonne then, looking up at the sissy waitress who brought them champagne and talked in a little girl of ten’s eager voice. ‘Marguerite’ flounced off finally with a ruffling of her little skirt and panties, her Adam’s apple bouncing in her neck to the clear amusement of the women at their table.

The Count winked at HéliPne, still holding her hand, as Angela and the Comtesse began to giggle and point out all the masculine features of the sissies who served the club as its waitresses. “She could be a rugby player,” Angela laughed at Jacqueline as she tried to be so dainty doing a bunny dip as she served the table to which she was assigned.

HéliPne felt quite annoyed at the disparaging remarks, pouring out. The club’s owner did nothing to defend the efforts of the sissies, trying to be so feminine in the club.

Finally, the small combo of musicians began to play. All were dressed in black, female dresses. “See,” said Angela at once to Vidal. “There are women employed in *Le Salon Rose!*”

Vidal smiled at her and shook his head. “Ah, non, madame,” he murmured softly to her as the band played a lively Viennese waltz. Fanny, who served as emcee for the second show, waddled out onto the stage and into the spotlight.

HéliPne quickly forgot all the people about her as she watched the show. She studied the girl who was in her place. She seemed to be even prettier than the Bambi Labelle whose place she had taken. Oh, please, don’t be so girlish, thought HéliPne in dismay, as a beaming Joanie Guyette, so much better than Bambi in her fear-stricken performance earlier, waved to the applauding audience as she rotated off with the almost naked dancers.

Several times, HéliPne got all hot and bothered watching the show. She hadn’t realized how pretty Janine Duffray was. She hadn’t realized how sexy the inter-reactions were between the male dancers and their ‘female’ partners. The way the girls smiled

and batted their false eyelashes was frankly erotic. They looked like men and women on the stage magnetically attracted to one another.

In the Roman bath scenes, there were several simulated sex scenes that actually made you think that the girls were being made love to as women by the male dancers. “Oh, wow!” beamed Angela, looking around their table and joining in the huge round of applause from the appreciative audience.

Belinda Bell was gorgeous in her imitations of all of the latest prima donnas of the American music scene. “Is she really doing that or is it all lip-synching?” Angela noisily wanted to know. Several people nearby turned, looked at her and made shushing sounds.

“You can ask her yourself,” said Vidal with a smirk. “Belinda will be joining us for our little weekend in the country. I hope your brother-in-law will receive exactly what he was promised and commend me, and not blame me, for it!”

Gaston Narbonne had the grace to blush. “She’s the one coming with us?” he asked unsteadily, pointing up at Belinda as Madonna, in fishnet stockings. Her figure was more alluring than the real woman’s, an enraptured HéliPne thought. She watched spellbound as Belinda danced at high speed with Henri and the only male black dancer, Bertrand, from the Senegal.

HéliPne imagined herself dancing with the lithe, athletic Bertrand, shuddering as she thought of being catapulted about the stage as Belinda was. Clearly, Belinda loved the way she was treated, jumping lightly onto Bertrand, who supported her legs high about him, his hands holding her to him

as they kissed and simulated having sex while she was held to Bertrand's body. He pirouetted off the stage with her clinging to him.

"Wow, Gaston," laughed Angela at the nervous, red-faced man beside HéliPne. "Are you a lucky dog or what, Gaston?"



Chantal, Paulette, Suzie Lee with the partly Chinese male dancer, Chang, Frou-Frou, Denise, Yvonne and Marianne, oh how soft, girlish and dewy-eyed they all seemed, thought a bemused Helenne, loving every second of seeing her friends so pink and so female in front of her. The can-can, with the high kicks to show off the panties and garters of the dancers was such a thrill because of the exuberance of the dancers.

I look like that when I perform, thought Bambi Labelle, as she watched the whole, uplifting performance. She clapped wildly at the finale as all of the dancers and singers finally spread across the stage.

“Well,” said Angela as many of the patrons rose to their feet and applauded. “It wasn’t that good, was it? None of this was real.”

“Oh, Angela,” said the Countess, standing up with the people around them and applauding just as Hélène was doing. “It was a fabulous show. Now you can see why the sissies are down here with us. If they ever were as perfect as the girls up there, they wouldn’t be serving us. And Vidal,” she laid her hand on Vidal’s as he was beaming and applauding just like everyone else around them, “there was this beautiful girl in the show last week who wasn’t there today. LaBelle, the beautiful girl, that was her name. Where is she today?”

“Bambi LaBelle,” said Vidal. “Well, you know how these girls are, milady. It’s always something, a nose bob, a little augmentation in the right place, a little shaving of the Adam’s apple. It’s always something that keeps us all on our toes. Joanie Guyette was very sweet in her place, though, wasn’t she?”

“But I liked the look of that girl!” said the Countess petulantly, sounding just like Chantal to HéliPne’s ear. HéliPne trembled and waited for Vidal to tell the Countess all about her, that she was really Bambi, but Vidal did nothing of the sort. “She had such darling ringlets, ash-blonde and streaked, bangs at the front of her head. I expected you to introduce us to her, Vidal. It isn’t like you to let us down.”

Vidal smiled as HéliPne trembled. She felt a sudden squeeze of her hand and the Count was looking down at her while Vidal and the Countess went on about what he should be doing to keep his noble clients happy.

“Bambi LaBelle,” murmured the Count. “You’ve changed your hair and my wife hasn’t realized it yet. Come on, my darling girl. Let us dance a little while Vidal tries to pacify my wife.”

HéliPne shuddered as she felt the Count’s arm about her. He walked her out onto the area where the front of the stage had been recessed by the male dancers. They’d been joined by several of the huskier sissies in opening up a dancing area that many couples from the audience now entered to waltz charmingly to the female dressed septet’s version of *The Blue Danube*.

“How strange,” murmured the Count, holding HéliPne tightly to him as she strained in her tight dress to dance the light steps she should to such music. “Do you realize that there are actually several real women on the dance floor tonight? Whatever is the world coming to?”

HélPne looked up at her dancing partner in alarm. His voice had changed. He didn't sound at all like the wimp he'd been with his wife.

"Don't be alarmed," whispered the Count. "My wife knows me well and what my proclivities are. Vidal will amuse her as he has many times before. That will give us this weekend to get to know each other, my darling Bambi, in the most intimate of fashions, if I may say so."

HélPne, Bambi, Gerard, felt his-her nether regions all seem to contract as the Count swung her around in a most complicated turn in the Viennese waltz. "I-I don't know you," she murmured as the Count swung her most athletically. She had to cling to him, her head in his chest as she was whirled faster than she'd ever done before.

"Oh, you will, my darling HélPne," murmured Le Comte d'Embray into her jewelled ear, making her shudder with dismay. "I can't let my wife have all the fun this weekend, can I? She may not know who the delectable Mademoiselle Martin is right away but I do. Vidal Mercier has never let me down, ever."

Belinda arrived at the table, in a gorgeous white evening dress that seemed to be open all the way down to her navel and even a little lower than that. "Oh, I'm an American, too," gushed the long-haired, blonde girl, smiling at the real women, and then at HélPne, whom she called Bambi right away. Bambi didn't let on that she knew that Belinda wasn't American. Angela looked speechlessly at the new girl whom she'd seen on stage as a female impersonator.

"I'm an American," said Belinda Bell to the bemused Angela who was now gaping at HélPne and the Count speculatively, "just like you!"

“Honey,” snapped Angela. “You are not an American like me! And don’t say you’re a girl like me as you’re not that, either!”

Belinda hugged a flushed, awkward Gaston’s arm about her. “Well, one thing we have in common,” said Belinda with a smug smile, “is that we both adore French men!”

The Count wanted to move and so the girls did. Angela looked at both Belinda and Hélène very angrily, quite shattering the excited, anticipatory feelings that had begun to infuse Hélène. It had been so marvellous to be accepted by other women, not travestis or male dancers at the club, as a woman. She’d been doing whatever she could, as well, to appear feminine to the women at her table and others close by. But now that feeling began to evaporate as Angela stood up haughtily and brushed by the two travestis as if they were something very disgusting.

The Count got the beautiful, white fur coat for a trembling Hélène, smiling reassuringly at the girl in the long evening dress. Belinda appeared not to notice the frostiness of the other American and was even more girlish, flirty and feminine than Hélène had ever seen her.

As an astounded Hélène was standing there, her dress so tight about her womanly figure and the smooth, sensuous stockings on her legs, waiting with the Count and Countess’ party, for the limousine to draw up in front of the foyer, Gerard’s mother came down from the balconies. Madame Barrieu frowned at her ‘daughter’ as if she didn’t believe it as Armand brought her towards Hélène, a sardonic smile on his face.

“Armand Martin!” gasped Le Comte d’Embray, his arm tightening on HéliPne’s arm as Madame Barrieu put out her arms to her lovely daughter. A disturbed Gerard went forward and hugged his mother shakily, desperately hoping that she wouldn’t say anything embarrassing or shameful about her son.

“D’Embray,” said Armand with a nod, his mouth curling. “You be very nice to my favorite cousin, won’t you?” But Armand used the feminine form, ‘cousine’, emphasizing the feminine ending of the word which made Gerard tremble all over. Oh, he felt like Gerard, like a boy all dressed up and playing at being a girl.

“Oh, my darling,” gushed Madame Barrieu. “Look at you, so beautiful. No wonder they called you La Belle in the first show. You were just like a goddess! You really were. I was so proud of you. And now you’re going out with a Count and Countess!”

A stunned, cautious Comte d’Embray had to be introduced to Madame Barrieu. “Is it Mademoiselle Martin or Mademoiselle Barrieu?” he asked HéliPne after he’d bowed to her mother, making the girl’s back crawl with embarrassment. The Countess joined them and gave Maman kisses on both cheeks and told her what a lovely daughter she’d raised. She was sure HéliPne would have loads of fun over the weekend at the chateau. And La Comtesse would love to come to tea with Madame Barrieu when they came back into the city on Tuesday.

“Edmond and I would love to have you come and visit us soon with your beautiful daughter,” the Countess gushed on. HéliPne burned inside as she

was sure the thirtyish woman was mocking her and her mother.

“Well,” said the Count. “Any relative of Armand Martin will always be welcome in our residence.”

A relative, thought Hélène with a shiver as she saw the look the Count and Countess exchanged. But not Armand Martin himself. They both looked at Armand saying something in English to Angela, who laughed at whatever the joke was. She took his hand and let Armand lead her daintily to the waiting limousine.

“Monsieur Mercier,” said Armand to Vidal, who gave him a thin smile as the big man showed him he knew many if not all of Vidal’s secrets.

Vidal assisted the Countess into the long limousine while Madame Barrieu kissed her daughter, told her how much she loved her divine fragrance. It was so feminine, wasn’t it, milord. This was the first time for Hélène to be away from her for the weekend! She was going to miss her daughter dreadfully.

Since Gerard was scarcely in the apartment over the last month, and was always in male attire when his mother saw him in the mornings before he went off to ‘work’, Hélène shivered even more as her mother hugged her as if she really was Mademoiselle Barrieu.

“Hélène Martin is one of my daughter’s stage names,” said Madame Barrieu. “It’s much nicer than that other one Monsieur whatever-his-name-is gave her. Bambi, he’s named her, Bambi LaBelle, but when she becomes more famous, she can use her other name, can’t she?”

Gerard was shaking with fear and loathing of himself as he slid into the car and felt how tight not just his bra was but the thing about his male parts. He felt so silly as Le Comte crushed him against Nicholas Narbonne who looked to be really out of sorts with his pouty wife.

Belinda, of course, held onto Gaston's hand but sparkled at Nick, as she called him as well. She made a point of crossing her beautiful, shapely legs and letting her dress slide up her thighs to show off more of her legs than she needed to. "And you brothers," she asked Nick coyly. "Do you really share everything as Gaston tells me you do?"

"Oh, yes," said Nick with a laugh, glancing at his wife who gave him a furious look.

"We share everything except our money and our women," said Gaston, putting his arm possessively about Belinda Bell's shoulder. She smiled and simpered at the man in a perfect parody of a woman. H elPne watched her in dismay, knowing she could never be anything like the woman whom Belinda was so naturally.

"You're related to Armand Martin," said Le Comte in a low voice into H elPne's ear.

"He is my cousin," H elPne whispered back. "He hates me."

Le Comte d'Emblay was amazed. "Why would he do that?" he asked. "It didn't seem to me ..."

"It's because of what I am," H elPne whispered again. "I think he only came to the club tonight to humiliate my mother and me. She's never seen me like this."

“Ah,” said Edmond, the Count. There was a pause as the crowded car sped through the night. “That would be Armand’s style all right. You do know what he does for a living, don’t you?”

“No,” HéliPne said, the movement of her head setting her hair and earrings moving and flowing femininely about her neck and shoulders.

“He’s an enforcer, a collector of bad debts, for the private bookmakers in the city,” said the Count. “He tortures people. My friend, who couldn’t pay, told me he loves his work. You, beautiful Bambi, you don’t intend to torture me all through this weekend, do you?”

“Oh no,” said HéliPne earnestly, looking up as the Count’s arm went about her shoulder to hug her. She went very still as the Count kissed her softly and gently on her lips. The thing beneath her panties seemed suddenly too tight for her. She felt her earrings bobbing wildly again as she opened her eyes in panic. Edmond easily withdrew his lips but hugged her even tighter.

“Very nice,” murmured Edmond. “I’m going to remind you often about what you just said, Bambi. The name suits you. You do look just like the original when she was very young. You have heard of the original Bambi, haven’t you, and the infamous *Carrousel*?”

“O-Oh, y-yes,” stammered HéliPne, aware of the smile on the Countess’s face as she watched her husband and the travesti from where she sat with Vidal. He smiled at his artiste with apparent approval. “But she was so marvellous. I’m not like her at all!”

“I think you could be,” murmured Edmond, giving her arm another hug. “And you are not to fish for compliments, Bambi, my lovely girl. Or I shall be forced to prove that you are wrong like this.”

The Count kissed her again, with a little more pressure this time. She felt herself responding to his mouth, shuddering and feeling so unsettled when he stopped and just smiled at her again. “It’s going to be a wonderful weekend, Bambi,” the Comte d’Embray told her as Belinda was kissing Gaston opposite her, Belinda’s earrings swinging as wildly as Bambi’s had.

There were flutes of champagne to be passed out. They had to toast the wonderful weekend they were going to have. Only Angela looked as if she wanted to spit out her wine as the Countess clinked her glass with her and insisted that Angela drink with them all.

VIII. Courtesan

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. The chateau had a party in full swing when they arrived after three o’clock in the morning. A delighted Belinda Bell dumped her coat on Vidal, grabbed the smiling Gaston’s hand and they were off. An inebriated crowd was dancing on the floor of converted banquet hall or so it appeared.

“Now, don’t torture me, Bambi,” said Edmond immediately, helping her out of her fur coat which also went to Vidal. He bore his demotion to general factotum with good grace. “I want to dance with you

all night. I really didn't get to at *Le Salon Rose* as it was far too crowded."

"But that's the best way to dance with a new girl friend," laughed the Countess. "Now, I'm going to settle our rooms with Vidal and Angela, my dear. So don't be too late coming to bed. We have the whole weekend and your playmate needs her beauty sleep like all of us girls do."

"Your wife," murmured Bambi nervously when they were swaying together between songs. The deejay had had to change music as the late crowd now wanted ballads to clinch to, rather than the electropop the deejay still wanted to play.

"Celia is a wonderful woman," Edmond murmured to the blonde girl he held in his arms, putting her thin, bare arms up about his neck. She looked up at him so anxiously as he hugged her to him. "She's my best friend." He was going to say more but suddenly a flash went off right beside them. A grinning, tux-wearing man retreated from them, holding his camera behind his back as Edmond called at him to give him the picture.

"My brother," said Edmond. "My younger brother and a general pain in the derriere every day of my life. Don't worry. I'll get the camera and the disc from him later, if I have to beat it out of him."

After two slow waltzes in which Edmond praised her lovely hair, her wonderful fragrance and her so feminine figure, Hélène was back in the state of raised, female awareness as she circled slowly in her high heels, her dress swaying so provocatively about her.

"Let's go to bed," murmured Edmond, leading her from the dance floor where only a handful of hardy

couples were still dancing. Many had slipped away in the slow dances. A shiver of fear and excitement came over HéliPne as Edmond had his arm twined about hers just like the lovers who were preceding them up the long staircase to the rooms above.

“Edmond,” said a man with lively blue eyes and a thick, grey mustache. What would it be like to kiss him, thought HéliPne with a shiver. He seemed to know what she was thinking as he winked at her and handed a key to Edmond.

“The bronze Capet room,” the older man said. “Lionel put Mademoiselle Martin’s suitcases in there along with a bucket of wine and some hors d’oeuvres. You must come earlier, my boy. The party was just as hot and entertaining as anything you had to stay in the city for.”

“I’ll escort Mademoiselle Martin to her room,” said the Count with a smile. HéliPne felt what appeared to be a tremor in her heart as she minced slowly up the stairs, having to hold up the front of her dress like the other girls in long gowns had. She could sense that the older man was watching her walk on Edmond’s arm. She tried to be as girlish as she minced away from him.

The bronze room was on the third floor. Edmond had already said he and Celia had the front room on the second floor. Her heart flutterings grew even more when Edmond opened the room with the old-fashioned key and led her into a fairly large room, dominated by a canopy bed. Two opened suitcases were on the sofa and a black, silky nightdress lay on the pillows of the bed, along with a set of men’s dark blue pyjamas.

“Your wife,” said HéliPne nervously, “will be waiting for you, Edmond.”

“I very much doubt it,” said Edmond, his arm entirely about her narrow waist. “Not on a first night. No, she is getting re-acquainted with your boss, I do believe, and has been for the last ten minutes. Besides, she knows where to find me if she needs me. So does Vidal.”

Edmond turned the blonde girl to face him. She shuddered as he put her arms about him just as he had when they were dancing. But this time, he wanted to kiss her. And Bambi, or HéliPne, or Gerard, wanted him to kiss her as well. This time, however, the pressure of his lips on hers was increased many times. She felt a heated, agonizing sensation pass all over her as she let herself be caressed and kissed by a man. She clung to him wantonly and kissed him back, opening her mouth to him as he gently guided her back to the bed. Then she was on the bed, a man on top of her. Oh, wonder of wonder, she was in female heaven.

Bambi rolled beneath Edmond as he treated her as she had dreamed a man would some day treat her. His hands traced out her breasts that she sort of felt. He touched her derriere which she really felt as she did his stroking of her legs and thighs. She loved him doing that caressing.

Bambi, yes, that’s who she was, the name he was whispering in her ear, hung onto the man kissing her and kissed him back, letting all the longing she’d felt since he’d danced with her in the club show through to him.

“You know what we are going to do together tonight?” asked Edmond as he lay on her and stroked

her face while she trembled beneath him. “You’re not going to torture me and say that a girl like you doesn’t know why I’m here with her in her bedroom?”

Bambi couldn’t say that. She trembled as she nodded, her cheeks flushed. They must be, she knew, as Edmond sat up, holding her hand. He eased over to the champagne sitting in its ice bucket and drew her to him, kissing her again fully, setting off bells in her head as his hands went up about her shoulders. He slid the straps of her dress down and kissed the exposed part of her chest, most of it not real at all.

“First, we drink,” murmured the Count. Bambi’s heart seemed to be beating so fast and so loud she was sure that he could hear it. He linked her arm about his as she sipped as he did and smiled at her. “You’ve never done this before, have you?”

Bambi was sure he meant more than just drinking wine with a man linking his arm romantically to hers. “No, no,” she stammered, letting him think whatever he liked but he just grinned at her.

“That’s the first part,” the Count whispered to her. “Now for the second part of our first evening together. This is where we take off all our clothes and get to see each other and what we are.”

A shudder of agony went through Bambi. “I don’t think,” she murmured, feeling hysteria threatening her.

Edmond kissed her as she felt him open her dress. “Your turn, ma belle Bambi,” he whispered to her. “You could undo the belt on my pants if you would.”

And so began a slow, sensual strip tease that finally made the chilled Bambi have to ask herself what she was doing and why she was doing it. He let her dress fall about her and rewarded her with kisses and caresses over her wiggly derriere. It was so very wiggly, she knew, when he had both hands on her derriere, caressing it so softly, tracing out the line of her panties.

Bambi had to undo his shirt and take it from him. After it fell, Edmond demanded a kiss from her as well. That was most thrilling and shaming of all as he did nothing to assist her as she kissed him. It was all her, leaning into a man, sliding her lips over his, trying to arouse emotions in him for the woman she was trying to be and knew she really wasn't.

Edmond's hands took hold of the straps on her slip. They went over her shoulders as he caressed her body again very slowly, letting the slip fall from her. Thus he exposed her bra, garter belt and panties. He put her hands on his slightly hairy chest, moving them over his small, firm, masculine nipples while he kissed her as softly and gently as she'd kissed him.

She felt her bra open and grasped at it wildly as Edmond smiled at her. He took her hands and placed them on his pants. She had to open them and hear them fall to the floor with a thunk. Edmond insisted that the blonde girl kiss him again, sitting on the bed and drawing her against him. He eased the bra from her hands and she looked down, wild-eyed, at the bulge in his underpants.

Edmond kissed the supposed nipples on her chest. She stirred herself as he suddenly pulled her beside him on the bed. He stood over her cowering, womanly body and grinned down at her. "I find it

best this way for taking off a woman's stockings," he said. HélPne thrilled at the way he still described her.

She shook as Edmond undid Bambi's stockings, caressing her smooth, hairless thighs as he did so. He lifted her legs as he slid her stockings down, pushing off her high heels. She felt goose bumps all over her skin. She twisted and moaned as he kissed her legs all the way up to her panties. She squeezed her legs together. His tongue came into play, almost giving her an orgasm on the spot as he explored between her thighs and kissed her painted toes, standing before her in his underpants.

Edmond slipped off his own socks and shoes then and pulled her to her feet and against him. It was a man's muscular body that pressed against her, his legs hairy against her, his manhood against her panties, his hands all over her back arousing her, teasing her hair and earrings as he undid her necklace and stored it on the side table.

"Your earrings as well, darling," Edmond muttered. "I don't want to hurt you or have you hurt me when we become passionate in our love."

"Oh," shuddered Bambi, staring at the man in front of her whom she'd so blindly obeyed. She was obeying a man she didn't even know.

"Together?" asked Edmond with that confident smile of his. She didn't quite know what he meant but then his pants fell down his legs. She blushed and even tried to step back as Edmond revealed his rampant penis to her. "Oh, Bambi, Bambi," he said reproachfully but he was smiling. "You were supposed to take your panties off at the same time I let mine go."

Edmond kissed Bambi as she clung to him. His hands were on her panties even as his manhood, the wet tip making chilled sensations hurtle through Bambi, pressed between her tight thighs.



Edmond took down her panties. There she was, revealed to him in her artificial vagina but he wasn't disappointed or amused at all. He took her hand and led her to the bathroom door with its long mirror, opening it. There she was, naked, and looking exactly like a girl, a naked man's arm about her. Oh, her lipstick was all gone as well as a grinning Edmond twirled her. She moved and there was nothing dangling between her legs.

"Wow," said Edmond, running his hands over her excited, inflamed body. Bambi ogled the blonde girl in the mirror and could scarcely believe that it was her. "Vidal said I wouldn't believe what you looked like undressed, ma belle. And I really don't believe what I'm seeing.

"You must keep that on for Celia tomorrow. I'm not going to tell her. She's going to have conniptions when you join us in bed. Now, don't you tell her, Bambi. Let's let her find out for herself. It will be such a shock and such a treat to put one over on her, you'll see. She'll love it! Can I fit in there with you?"

With that, Edmond picked up the shivering, nervous, protesting, lookalike of a girl and carried her to the bed, where he eased back the sheets but held her up so that he could put the nightie over her. Then he laid her lovingly in the bed. He switched off the dimmed lights. Bambi felt him beside her in bed, his leg sliding over her right away.

The Count d'Embray kissed her strongly, his intentions clear as he lifted her nightie. His manhood bored in on her between her legs. "Oh, please," she murmured in anxious protest but Edmond was far too aroused, it seemed, to listen to her.

It was sort of thrilling as she felt the Count's manhood pressing into her. There was pain in her own manhood. She wanted to awaken it as well, like Edmond's. The pain became more intense as Edmond took her as a man would have taken any woman, kissing and caressing her and encouraging her to caress and kiss him. She could only react timidly to that as she felt him spurt his manly essence into the thing she wore between her legs.

When Edmond pulled out, she felt so relieved that it was all over. It hadn't been so bad, really, had it? But Edmond wasn't done with her. His whole body pressed her down, even her phoney breasts. He lifted her legs over his back. She didn't realize what he was doing at first until he bent her legs up. She felt his erection, so thick and still moist between her legs, sliding against her tush.

"Don't! Don't!" Bambi squealed, wriggling in horror as he caressed her derriere and prepared her for the entry of his manhood.

"Too late," muttered Edmond through gritted teeth as he pushed into her as Bambi wiggled and squealed. She squealed and squealed but that only seemed to invigorate Edmond. His hands encouraged her to rock beneath him as he was in motion as well. Wild emotions surged through Bambi as she realized she was feeling what a woman must feel when a man penetrates her.

Edmond kissed Bambi frantically as she gripped him tightly. She felt herself becoming deeply and painfully aroused. Oh, she rocked with Edmond as he started bouncing in and out of her like a piston. Her whole body was in motion as if she was a woman with her man!

His fingers squeezed her manhood, through her vagina, and she rolled and shook with him in a frenzy. She clung to him she released the sexual tension she'd been under. She felt Edmond release inside her and felt so wonderful as they frantically stroked one another, rocking together, convulsing in ecstasy at their sexual union.

Bambi felt so much like a woman as Edmond rode her. He wouldn't stop for an age, making her know what it was to be a woman. She knew the pleasure and the pain, Bambi told herself, as she hung on to the Count who wanted to fill her tush again.

Well, he did. Edmond softened and hardened inside her. She was his woman again, caressing his chest with her nightie and her false breasts which really turned him on. He grew so hard it was as if she had a stick pushed into her. It gyrated and explored her insides so deeply as she imagined herself a woman and wriggled, trying so much to please Edmond. She only realized then, in pleasuring him, how much she was in ecstasy herself.

"Well," said Edmond, relaxing and drawing the trembling Bambi beside him as he relaxed. "That was really something, Bambi ma belle, it really was. I shouldn't stay away from *Le Salon Rose* for so long, should I? I'll let you tell Vidal tomorrow he can have his leases, all of them. He'll know what you mean and be very pleased with you."

Bambi trembled beside her first lover of any kind. For just a moment as she and Edmond had been coming together, she'd imagined herself as a woman, desired by this man. She'd felt something like a rush of love suffusing her, as if she and Edmond were man and woman meant to love each

other in this fashion but now she knew that it wasn't that at all, certainly not for Edmond.

Bambi's shaking was taken as a sign by Edmond that she wanted to be loved again. Well, Bambi did and Edmond obliged. He even raised her on top of him so that she could sit up on him and ride his pole until, finally, he came again. Even though she could have gone on longer, she still felt so awakened and aroused. She wished her breasts were real and that Edmond could really have caressed and sucked on them as he had on the phoney things she had. Still, his doing that had made her squeeze him harder with her tush. She'd almost come and would have in time but he'd beaten her to his climax. She was left shivering again.

Edmond undid the cords that kept the artificial vagina in place, putting Bambi in agony as he eased it from her. She had to cling to him, her nails digging into him as he lay on her. She writhed in the release of her male parts from their confinement.

Edmond caressed her gently then and slowly his kisses descended her body. She was almost sick as he took her penis and kissed it. She'd known that men did that to travestis. She'd heard enough talk by the 'girls' of the club and had learned that Marc and André were considered the best at giving head, as the girls called it. The reason the guys liked Chantal and Frou-Frou so much was that they'd do it anywhere for a guy, even in the wings on stage, waiting for an entrance.

Bambi had silently promised herself she wouldn't do that for a man, ever, but, when Edmond aroused her, he rolled over and drew her head onto his mostly flaccid member. She tried to tell herself it was only awful because she made herself think that

it was as Edmond's penis hardened and grew under the actions of her tongue and mouth.

It took a while but he rolled her over and took Bambi as he had before. Her own penis was wrapped in folds of her nightie and held by Edmond until she was jerking again beneath him. He worked her until she shrieked, pleasure calling from every nerve in her feminine body. She came more fully than when she'd ever come by herself. The wonderful hard thing inside her twitched and drove her crazy, filling her with feelings that must be akin to those any woman felt with a loving man pressing on her like the Count was on her.

Edmond whispered how adorable a woman she was and encouraged her to cuddle up to him. He went to sleep right away, his arm about her while Bambi, so many conflicting emotions running through her, tried to sleep in a man's arms, his leg against hers. She finally did so but only after a long soul-searching about the kind of woman that Edmond, le Comte d'Embray, must think her. Her last thought in her restless struggle to sleep was that she was a courtesan, which would please her mother. She'd be delighted that a Count was now her 'daughter's' lover.

##