

JAMES J CRAFT

**GONE
GIRLY FOR
GOOD**

**“Big in Japan” by James J. Craft
A Tales of Transformation Book**

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illustrations by Joe Six-Pack**

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2011 Second Edition

Design, illustrations & cover © 2007, 2011.

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Thanks to D.S. for guidance.

The body text is printed in New Caledonia.

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Printed in the United States of America.

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BIG IN JAPAN

“We’re what?” I stared at the record executive like he was a Martian, thinking his thousand-dollar suit was restricting air to his brain. The man smiled and repeated his words, “You’re big in Japan, huge in fact. Even though we aren’t renewing your contract here, our Japanese unit would be *more* than willing to sign you over there... that is, if you’re willing to go there.”

I looked at Ken, then at Murray, our manager, then back the Todd, the condescending “I know the music industry better than anyone” VP of Torsion Records, then back at Ken. He had that “maybe we should check it out” look on his face. Murray knew what we were thinking and nodded approvingly. I turned back to Todd, “so we do this and we might make another album, if we don’t then...” my voice trailed off.

Todd’s smile evaporated, “If you don’t go to Japan then you become another has-been, one-hit-wonder trying to shop their latest washed-up material around to other uninterested labels.” The words stung. He was basically summing up our entire music career in one painful sentence. We *did* have a big hit, six months ago. It *was* overplayed. Our CD sales and downloads *did* tank. The record label *was* going to drop us as fast as they could. We *could* shop our latest material around, but we’d look desperate, which we were, and they – the other labels – would know it. Pretty soon we’d have run out of money (if we hadn’t already), and we’d be back in Montana at the local feed mill, like we had started out. We knew the shelf life of a male pop duo was limited, and we also knew that if someone liked us somewhere... anywhere... we should go and be there. So if we were big in Japan, then that is were we would have to go.

Moments later we were all shaking hands, having ended our contract with both Murray and Torsion and signed a new contract with Torsion Records Japan or TRJ, without having had it looked over by our lawyer. We left the office tower and had our limo driver take us back to the hotel suite we had been calling home since last spring. Since Torsion had been footing the bill, we were essentially being evicted, which was okay, because TRJ had arranged for a first class flight to Tokyo later that night. We had just enough time to pack our stuff, call our families, instruct our lawyer to cancel the leases on our condo and the sports cars and SUV’s that we had acquired, and go out for a final night on the town.

With our suitcases already en-route to Japan, we packed some of our personal effects in a carryon bag and left in the limo, while we headed into our favorite club. The club was called *Rush* and it pretty much summed up our experience over the past year.

It all began when we auditioned for the reality show, American Superstar, and even though we only made it to the final ten, Torsion Records saw something in

us that had potential. That and the girls loved us. Both Kenny and I were pretty good looking. Not in an overly macho way, but in a way that teen girls seemed to appreciate. “Boyish” is what Murray called it. We both quit our jobs at the feed mill and went to L.A., to begin recording the first single. We were to be known as the “Gnarly Boiz.” Torsion had picked the name for us, and it was a stupid name, but we couldn’t just go by “Mike and Ken,” or so they told us. And so from there we got to here, in *Rush’s* V.I.P. section buying a round of drinks for all of our “friends.”

One such friend was a girl named Jo-Anne. She was originally from Montana too. We met at the DMV two weeks ago when I was getting vanity plates for my Lexus. I suggested that she come out one night for a couple of drinks. She had seen our video and loved our hit single, so it didn’t take much to get her to join us in the V.I.P. section. We were with a bunch of girls that would do pretty much whatever we asked, and Jo-Anne pretty much fell in line. Needless to say, our “girls” made sure we were always satisfied, but Jo-Anne had resisted providing sexual favors on that particular night. I was determined that I wouldn’t leave for Japan without having had, at the very least, a blow-job from her.



Kenny and I were wearing our flashiest designer threads when we entered the V.I.P. suite. Our groupies were already there, and looking *fine!* I had given one of the girls a couple of C-notes to take Jo-Anne out and get her looking sexy. Now that I saw the results, I should have given her *five* C-notes instead. Not that Jo-Anne didn't look good... she did... but compared to the rest of the sluts that hung out with us, she looked positively dowdy.

She had already been drinking, and I could smell marijuana in the air. She was pretty loose, and after a couple of dances... and a few more drinks, she was all over me. Seated in a booth with two other groupies on either side, Jo-Anne moaned softly as I kissed her neck, running my hands up her black nylon covered legs, under her tartan pleated mini skirt, to touch her upper thighs. My other hand had unbuttoned her blouse and, as she had come to the club braless, was massaging her breast and fondling her nipple. She was putty in my hand, but she wasn't getting the point as quickly as I had hoped.

One of the other girls was also growing impatient with Jo-Anne's progress, and began to gently guide her. The naïve midwestern girl went through the motions of unbuckling my belt, unbuttoning my pants and fishing out my throbbing cock. Shyly, nervously, Jo-Anne responded to the other girl's instruction and was soon stroking my hard unit with her soft hand.

Then came my crowning achievement, as Jo-Anne fell to her knees and began to perform oral sex on me for the first time. I was in my glory. Me, the powerful music star, could turn timid women into wanton sluts at whim. She looked up at me as she brought me closer to orgasm. I smiled then turned to the girl that had guided her through her task and nodded with a smile. She knew what to do.

Seconds later the second girl had slipped out of her panties and moved Jo-Anne out of the way before lowering herself onto my lap. As she bucked and rocked, I looked down at the floor where Jo-Anne still knelt. She looked quite upset, knowing that I had had used her and then discarded her like a forgotten toy. The thought must have destroyed her, but it only made me feel more aroused.

When the slut I was fucking had finished, I buckled myself up and scanned the suite for Jo-Anne, but the ungrateful bitch had already left. *Oh well*, I thought to myself, *it was her loss. After tonight, it could be months before I was back here, and even after that, she'd be back. She needed me more than I needed her. And if she wasn't, then there would be some other girl for me to use.*

I found Kenny in another part of the suite, finishing up with a couple of chicks in a similar fashion to what I had just done. We said our goodbyes to our posse, and headed for the airport. Soon we were seated in first class, (drunk but still drinking) flying to Japan to try and sing a few more songs and make a few more bucks before they tired of us like our American audience had.

Ken spent a sizable portion of the flight talking about how many hot Japanese chicks we were going to bang.

“I’m telling you man,” he slurred after taking a sip of his bourbon, “those Japanese chicks *love* American men. We’ll have to fight them off with sticks!”

It was hard to ignore the thought of screaming Asian girls in their super short skirts and super high heels clamoring over each other to see us. Maybe this wasn’t going to be too bad after all. In fact... this might just be the best thing to happen to us... *ever*.



After getting through customs and immigration we were greeted by a flamboyant Japanese man that introduces himself as “Koshi,” and who we would learn, was to be our guide, assistant and stylist while in Japan. It didn’t take too long for both Ken and I to agree through shared glances that Koshi was as queer as a \$3 bill, as the saying goes. He spoke with massive lisp (even in Japanese you could tell) and dressed in a very androgynous pantsuit with very feminine collared shirt under it. Ken pointed out in the limo that the “dude was wearing makeup,” referring to the subtle eyeliner and lip-gloss that Koshi wore. He had leaned over to whisper it to me while Koshi was gabbing away on his cell phone in Japanese, occasionally looking us over with a look of disappointment on his face. He almost looked offended. If I didn’t know any better, I would have sworn he was complaining to the person on the other end how “straight” we looked.

The limo tore through the streets of Tokyo. We both couldn’t help but be impressed by the sights that passed by our windows. The buildings, the neon, the people... it was just like any of the pictures or movies that we had seen. We saw plenty of good looking Japanese girls which only further boosted our over-inflated egos. Kenny went so far as to roll down his window so that he could smile at a group of young women, dressed in what we would have called “Goth” clothes, back in the U.S. The girls smiled and giggled amongst each other as Ken winked at them.

“See man,” he said as we continued on our way to wherever we were going, “They *love* us. We’ll get laid every fucking night!”

I had to admit the thought was appealing. Very appealing. “Ken,” I said to him, “this is going to *rock*.”

“Hey, pull over here!” Ken yelled, opening the door and causing the limo to come to a sudden stop. He ran out up to a building and pointed at the window. It was a series of machines that looked like giant upright pinball machines. People were lined up like they were playing slots at Binion’s. “Pochinno!” Ken said.

“Pachinko,” I corrected. I followed him out of the car as he kept running along the sidewalk.

“They let you gamble all day long at these places, and just out in the open!” Ken yelled at me, almost drowned out by the noise of the street. “It’s illegal, and the cops can’t do nuthin!”

“Get back in the car, dumbass!” I yelled at him. It only caused him to continue further down the street, staggering drunkenly from side to side.

Koshi leapt out of the limo and begged us to get back in the car, waving his arms and gesturing flamboyantly. He was creating such a scene, I just decided to join Ken. We quickly ducked out and found a bar not far down the street.

We got good and sloshed in there. Some of things they served – have you ever had absinthe? – it was a wild spot. I was liking Tokyo a whole lot. “I’m never goin’ home!” I told Ken.

“I’m with you all the way!” He replied.

Eventually, Koshi caught up with us, and threw us back in the limo. We were too drunk to fight it or even know what day it was. After another half-hour of driving, we finally arrived at the offices of TRJ. They gave us a few cups of coffee to try and sober us up, and we were hurried into a conference room to meet with Hurato Muriata the Executive Vice President of TRJ, the Japanese equivalent of Todd, the Torsion VP back in the States.

Hurato was the stereotypical Japanese businessman, dressed in a very average-looking navy blue suit and smiling at us and asked bullshit questions about our flight, or if we had enjoyed our limo ride from the airport. I’m sure he could tell that we were both still quite buzzed, having just drank the city dry. He even offered us some Japanese beer. We didn’t want to be rude. And our buzz was starting to fade. So while we drank the cold brewskis down (and they were pretty good too) Hurato and Koshi took turns showing us data on the sales of Gnarly Boiz, and how the local media was buzzing with the anticipated arrival of the group. But then things took a very bad turn.

Hurato explained that when the single was released here, an error was made in the translation of our name. It would seem that the “Gnarly Boiz” had been inadvertently changed to... the “Girly Boys,” and before anyone noticed, the single had been released to the radio stations. Ken and I looked shocked.

“What?” I nearly spat my beer out, “Did you say... girly?”

“You’ve got to be kidding. How the hell could you guys screw that up?” Ken chided, “I mean... Girly Boys? What the f.. “

Hurato bowed, I guess in embarrassment. “We did not think you would come to Japan. Your image wasn’t as important to us as selling records.”



“But Girly Boys?” I yelled. It was kind of a sore sport with us. We weren’t exactly towering, hulking figures of manliness, but we were a long way from being confused with some swishy guy like... Koshi. “You gotta be joking.”

Hurato was facing the ground, still bowing. “It was a simple way to market you...”

Ken’s face was red with anger. “That’s no excuse! How do you idiots expect us...”

Koshi cut him off, “Before you pass judgment, you may want to look at the sales statistics,” he slid a sheet of paper over the table to us.

My look of anger and horror changed to one of disbelief. The numbers were amazing. We had done well with our first single in U.S., but it didn’t last long. The numbers in Japan were 50% higher, plus, they had released a techno-remix that sold almost as much as the original.

“Oh my god,” Ken mumbled. All I could do was stare at the paper. Hurato slid another paper over the desk. It was our contract.

“What’s this for?,” I asked, “I can’t read this crazy-ass language.” I meant legal jargon, but I think he took it to mean the Japanese language. He wasn’t pleased.

Hurato’s demeanor changed in a flash, from humble to hostile. “This is to remind you that you have been brought here to ensure the launch of the album is a success. We abhor failure, as I am sure you do also,” Hurato said dryly, having lost almost all traces of his accent, “and I know you will agree, as you already

have done in the signing of this legal document, to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the first album of the Girly Boys is a complete success.”

“What do you mean... whatever it takes?” I asked.

“And why did you call us the Girly Boys... you’re going to correct that, aren’t you?” Ken piped up.

“In a manner of speaking,” he smiled, “We do not have much of a choice but to use you. We have been told that we must use you, and so we *will* use you.” He turned his back to us and examined a small framed picture on the wall. “But,” He said, leaving that word to hang as a threat. “We believe that it is much too late to correct the name of the group, as the image has already been cast in the minds of the Japanese public...”

He paused as his smile grew wider, “...as we have already produced and released an animated video, starring anime female likenesses of you both, and we’ve used those same cartoon characters on the album cover, so its really too late to suddenly say, *Sorry, we were mistaken, the singers are actually men.* You see, here in Japan, trust is very important, and they, your fans, trust that what the animated character look like you do. They trust TRJ. We are worthy of their trust. So in order not to betray their trust, and dishonor yourselves and this company, *your* image will have to be corrected to match the image that has been formed in the public’s minds”



I looked at Ken, he looked at me, and then we both turned to Hurato and Koshi, “Huh?”

Koshi took over, explaining that the contract that we had signed (without even looking over) contained clauses that gave TRJ executives the legal right to make temporary alterations to our appearance so as to aid in the marketing of the “product,” which was our group. In short, the public expected Girly Boys to be, well... Girly. And so under his direction, with a team of hairstylists, makeup artists and wardrobe people, as well as two personal trainers to help us learn the fine art of being girly... *and* Japanese, we *would* do as we were told and we *would* be made to fit the bill as the “Girly Boys.”

Kenny and I sat in stunned silence as we were driven to our apartment condo to get settled in. Even as we were shown around our expansive new digs, we were in shock as to what had just transpired. Less than twelve hours previous we had been on top of the world... and now it seemed that we were back on bottom. Maybe it was just the stun of trying to understand what had just happened, or maybe it was the drinking, but that was really when we should have backed out. We didn't.



The next day began early with our new trainers – a crusty old duo called the Ishikawas (I assumed they were husband and wife) who seemed to delight in our misery. Needless to say, they were to be delighted most of that day. They started by literally pulling our hung-over asses out of bed and throwing us into the showers. While showering, we were instructed to rub smelly white lotions over one another's bodies, including each others groins. When we initially refused, they reminded us that we were obliged by law to obey, and that if we didn't do as they said, we would soon be back in the U.S. facing a lawsuit from TRJ for breach of contract. It was humiliating, to say the least. We closed our eyes and proceeded to apply the cream to each other. I silently reminded myself that I was doing it for the money. I'm pretty sure that Ken was thinking the same thing. Without a doubt, it was the *gayest* thing that we had ever done, and I just closed my eyes and got it done as fast as I could. I prayed this was the last time I'd be this humiliated.

My prayers would *not* be answered that day.

The cream stung like hell, and burned our noses. At first we weren't sure what it was for until our body hair began to fall off in clumps and swirl down the drain. We looked at each other in horror, both of our expressions saying “*what the hell have we gotten ourselves into?*”

The trainers barked more orders at us to snap us out of the numbing stupor we were slipping into. We continued to wash ourselves off and exited the showers

to dry off in big fluffy pink towels. Moments later, we were each taken by one of the Ishikawas to our respective rooms, where an outfit had been laid out for us. I was to be with Mrs. Ishikawa, or Ishikawa-san as I would eventually learn to call her, and Ken with Mr. Ishikawa. She scowled at me when I asked where my luggage was, “You sirry boy,” she said in a ridiculously thick accent, “you should no arglue. You get dless fo crass light now and no talk.” Already feeling forlorn and dejected, I chose not to fight. Instead I opted to slip into the pink high-cut panties that lay on my bed.

The crusty old woman almost smiled in approval before affixing silicon pads to my buttocks to fill out my hips and ass some. When they said they wanted us to look girly, they weren’t kidding. More pads, which I was told were called *breast forms*, were affixed with some kind of acrid-smelling goop to my chest. I was then helped into a pink bra. I kept my eyes low, afraid that if I looked up, I might see my reflection. “Vely good sirry boy. You keep you eyes row rike ploper girl” Ishikawa-san chirped from behind me. I couldn’t get over the way she talked. She watched me put on the pair of girly hip-hugger jeans that had been on the bed, followed by a snug fitting pink tee shirt. With an approving grunt, she then led to me into our spacious bathroom



and sat me before a brightly-lit vanity. Ken and Mr. Ishikawa were already there. Ken was being shown how to gel his longish hair into a somewhat feminine style. He looked over at me with a terrified glance. Mr. Ishikawa barked at him to focus on his task. I could see fear in Ken's eyes... fear, and thin *eyeliner* around his eyes. Not only that, but his lips looked all wet and shiny... and a little bit... *pink*?

This was just nuts. I knew that the first chance any of these jackass executives saw us in these outfits, they'd scrub the whole thing. I mean, come on! They were just doing this to try and keep fleecing us for one more hit. We knew that and they knew that. This wasn't going to get any father than the next time that VP saw us.

"Mik-oh!" Mrs. Ishikawa barked at me, "pay attention. You must appry you makeup nicery now." She pointed at the counter top where an eyeliner pencil and tube of lip gloss lay.

Miko? I thought to myself as I picked up the





pencil and began to outline my eyes, *who is Miko?* I concluded, incorrectly, that Miko was a very rough Japanese translation of Mike. I drew around my eyes and then turned to my instructor. She looked very displeased. Of course she *always* looked very displeased. She mumbled something in Japanese then handed me a special moist pad and told me to remove the eyeliner I had just applied. I looked back at my reflection and could understand why she was so displeased. It was so poorly applied that it was almost comical. My second try was not much better, nor was my third. Mrs. Ishikawa gave me a few more pointers, called me a “Sirry Boy” several times, and then watched as I tried again. I *was* getting better, but it would take until my sixth or seventh try (I lost count) until it actually met her standards. Then came the lip-gloss, which was super shiny with just hint of pink color, and some blush on my cheeks. By the time I had completed *those* tasks, Kenny had finished and left the bathroom. *He must have caught on quicker than me*, I thought to myself as I was shown how to style my hair in a girly fashion.

It took several more minutes... Maybe even more... For me to figure out how to style my longish, light brown/dusty blonde hair into a somewhat feminine, funky style. Finally Ishikawa-san looked like she had simply had enough, and ordered me out. Feeling beaten, I walked out of the bathroom to meet Ken in the living room, where Mr. Ishikawa had given him new shoes. They were wedge-heeled sandals with faux-cork soles that sloped up to about two and half inches at the heel. My pair would be exactly the same when my instructor handed them to me.

So, while I was struggling with my hair and face, Ken had been practicing his walk, under Mr. Ishikawa’s watchful eye. Ken’s extra time in his shoes gave him an unfair advantage as we walked together down the hall to the elevator. I noted that our jeans were the same, and while my tight tee shirt was pink with some kind of Japanese character on it in white, Kenny’s was black with the same character in white. I must have tripped four times in a twenty-foot hallway, then again on the way to the limo, while Ken managed to make it all the way, with only a stumble or two.

We were driven to our culture, customs and language sessions that were designed to help us to understand the mindset of the “characters” that we were playing. At least that’s what the Ishikawas said. They began with basic instructions on how to speak Japanese, and if we couldn’t speak Japanese, they wanted us to fake an accent. Ken and I continued to be dumbfounded, as we progressed into our instructions on walking and composing ourselves like “goo rittle Japanese girr” as the Ishikawas called it. We assumed they meant *good little Japanese girls*. Who had taught these people English? I hadn’t spent much time amongst Japanese people, but the Ishikawas had the most bizarre accent I’d ever heard. It was way out there. They talked as if they were *trying* to mispronounce every word.

Anyway, all of this basically meant that we were to learn the finer points of what to do and what *not* to do in Japanese society. Our trainers called us by the names that the record label had given us (without asking for our input I might add). Ken was to be called Keiko, and I was to be known as Miko, which explained Mrs. Ishikawa's calling me by that name earlier that day. We continued to be paired with one of the two instructors throughout the week so that we might receive intensive one-on-one training in preparation of the early morning photo shoot that weekend. The CD release party was scheduled at the end of the following week. They were originally going to depict the anime versions of us on the album cover, but as they now had us in real life, the cover was to be changed. Of course, that meant that *we* had to be changed to resemble our cartoon selves, and quick.

It took a very long, very harsh week. Early morning starts, feminine underwear, girly jeans, wedge heeled shoes, language lessons, speaking and singing in a higher pitch, and being told to smarten up and act "ploperree" (which I assumed meant more *girly*). The Isikawas were relentless. Day after day it was the same things over and over again. So, exhausted and crushed from our training, we were finally delivered to the studio where the photo shoot was to take place the following Saturday. Ken and I were once again separated, taken by Koshi and his team to separate dressing rooms to be prepared for our first appearance as the "Girly Boys."

After a seemingly endless morning in a salon chair, I emerged from my dressing room to see my singing partner standing before me. I almost didn't recognize him. Ken was wearing a pair of black hip hugger flared jeans, with a studded black leather belt off center, hanging on one hip. On his feet were black boots with a chunky 3" heel and 1" platform sole. A really fuzzy black short-sleeve sweater was over his new white collared shirt, the collar having been left open and spread wide over the black fuzzy backdrop. His complexion was pale but fresh and clean, with thin black eyeliner and rosy blush. His lips were lined and colored with a glossy purple color. His short hair had been extended a little with short bangs hanging over his eyebrows. They had somehow made the brows look very thin and dainty, and the hairstyle was short and very funky. He could have easily passed for one of those goth freaks we used to make fun of in high school. Trouble was, I couldn't tell if he was a guy-goth or a girl-goth... He could easily pass for both.

He blushed when he saw me, as if embarrassed. It was funny 'cuz, I was equally embarrassed, and I must have also blushed deeply. We were both wearing our padding and forms and had been cinched in the right places to create a hint of a feminine body. I wore a pair of pink-colored Capri pants that showcased my now-hairless ankles and calves. On my feet, pink ballet flats. My shirt was a pink, retro-style, midriff cut tee shirt, that hung over one shoulder worn over a black padded bra.



My hair was also made longer with hair extensions, but was only down to my chin. It was blonde and frizzy, with long sweeping bangs combed over my left eye. Whereas the makeup artists had muted Ken's eyes and emphasized his mouth, they chose the inverse for myself. My brows had been covered with some kind of wax, hiding them from view, (I could only assume they had done the same to Ken) only to be drawn back in as thin arches, my eyes outlined with thick black liner, drawn out at the sides. The lids swept with dark, then pale pink, then white shadow, the lashes – two sets of feathery fake lashes – were coated in thick mascara. They tickled my skin when I blinked. They brushed light pink blush onto my cheeks and painted my lips in an almost white, almost clear colored pale pink, with several coats of gloss. As I stood before Ken, I couldn't help but stare at my reflection in the full-length mirror on the wall to the left of him. I was amazed at the transformation. I felt a stirring in my groin every time I looked at my subtle curves, pretty face... and those lips! *My god*, I thought in horror. *We look like the girls we thought we were going to meet here in Japan! We look HOT!* I looked over at my musical partner. We exchanged glances for a second, and I saw a little bit of a nervous smile form at the outer corner of his mouth.

I didn't dwell on it, as we were escorted quickly and quietly to the stage where the shoot was to be done. The set was plush and pink, with thousands of fuzzy pink black and white stuffed animals strewn about. The photographer spoke virtually no English, so Koshi was in charge of translating everything for us. Several times the photographer turned to Koshi or some of the stagehands with a smile or smirk, while glancing back at us, and said something in Japanese. Both Ken and I were pretty pissed about the whole ordeal. It was pretty obvious that we were being mocked. Everybody seemed to be in on a joke except us.

He had us pose in different locations and positions around the set, sometimes smiling and laughing, sometimes looking deadly serious. Other times were told to try and look sexy, our lips puckered, our eyes low and smoldering. It was possibly the gayest experience in my or Ken's life... Even more gay than the experience in the shower. I again prayed it would be over soon.

Truth was, it was just beginning.



Less than three days after the shoot, the single was re-released with a punchier techno beat. Ken and I angrily objected, saying that the music didn't represent at all what we were about artistically, but TRJ didn't seem to care. And after watching the numbers soar to number one on the charts, it was hard to stay angry. That, and TRJ had made sure to point out that they were well within

their rights to modify the sound of the group. It was another of the many clauses in the new contracts we had signed. They were so happy with the results in fact, that they took the liberty of remixing almost *all* of our remaining tracks on the album. It really was a moot point.

Kenny and I spent the time between the photo shoot and the album release in an intensive regime of dance classes and singing in our high pitched voices, followed by culture and customs and language training, followed by more dancing and singing, then more culture, then more customs and more language. It was early up each morning and late to bed each night, followed the next day by more of the same. We were told that it was the Japanese way to learn as much as possible in as short a time as possible. "It like clam school," Mrs. Iskikawa said to me. I tried to tell her that it was "cram," not pronounced "clam," but she wasn't going to hear about it. She even had me say "clam" repeatedly to prove her point. Crazy.

After a one particularly grueling day, (I don't remember which one) we were lounging around our apartment, trying to relax and not think about what we were being made to do. They had informed us that we were to appear in costume on some Japanese talk shows to promote the album and sing our debut single after the album was officially released. Of course, as far as our instructors were concerned, we were not yet ready to appear in public as our girly selves... Or as they put it, "You are far too ignorant, stupid and awkward to be privileged with the gift of appearing to the public of our country. Your foolishness and clumsy mannerisms may be worthy of vile American audiences, but here in Japan, a higher level of decorum is expected."

Ouch.

"I honestly don't know what they expect from us," Ken bemoaned, absent-mindedly rubbing his eyebrows, or rather the freshly bared skin from where his eyebrow hairs had been painfully ripped earlier in the day, "I mean... I am doing my best here. It's like they're freakin' perfectionists, you know?"

I nodded, trying to hide the fact that I was grinning stupidly. Ken's newly waxed brows made him look chronically surprised. I marveled at how such a small thing, like thinner eyebrows, could change the whole appearance of his face. I was sure that my face was equally changed, as I too had undergone a similar procedure under Koshi's strict supervision. According to him, the makeup staff could save themselves almost an hour's makeup application time by giving us permanently arched eyebrows. It was all about efficiency, he told us. Neither Ken nor I were thrilled with the idea, as it was going to be hard to pick up Japanese girls when you had the same eyebrows as them. Not that we were being given many chances to even go looking for girls, what with our rigorous schedule and all.

“I know what you mean,” I replied, “I think it’s just the culture, you know? I mean look at the way they do everything... It’s like failure is not an option, or whatever. It’s probably why they make such good cars and stuff.”

“Whatever,” Ken sneered, “I know its just driving me nuts”

We were both dressed in the jeans we had been given that first day in Japan, with the tight low-rise waists and flared legs complete with girly short cut tee-shirt and cork soled wedge heeled sandals. We had given up asking about where our “real clothes” went, as Koshi would always fly into some unintelligible rage and storm away. There was no point in trying to get the answer out of him.

As for the shirts, we had learned that the Japanese characters on the shirts were our names... Miko and Keiko. Figures.

Also, the Ishikawas had given us new workout clothes for our training sessions. Girly, snug fitting track suits with white stripes down the sides. Mine was predictably in pink, and Ken’s in purple .

Kenny stretched, and then got up to walk to the counter to pour a fresh mug of coffee. A glimpse of something shiny caught my eye. I watched him carefully as he stood by the counter. The flash happened again. Ken caught me looking at his flat stomach, exposed be the short tee shirt. “*What?*” He whined.

I looked closer, at his belly button, but Ken quickly covered it with his hands. “Did you...” my voice trailed off as Ken blushed and looked at the floor.

“The fake one they gave me keeps falling off in dance class,” he began, slowly uncovering his pierced navel and shiny diamond tipped stud, “so they um...” His voice trailed off, as I looked closer. “And um... they...” he pulled his hair extensions behind his ears, showing the tiny silver studs in each lobe, “they did these too... while they were at it, I figured... you know... might as well.”

It was obvious that he was feeling rather uncomfortable with the whole ordeal.

Well, we were both in this together. “Cool,” I chipped, “Maybe I’ll get mine done too.”

His eyes lit up, “Yeah?”



“Sure, why not?” I replied, “I mean, we’re supposed to be a duo, right? If it’s good enough for you, then it’s good enough for me.” His expression changed to slight smile. “You know we always talked about piercing our ears back in the States. Lots of guys have both ears pierced. It’s no big deal.”

He smiled even bigger, “Yeah... you’re right.” We both knew that I was trying to come up with ways to justify what was happening to us.

Later it dawned on me that I was essentially volunteering to get my ears pierced just to make Ken feel better. But after all, Ken was my friend – my best friend – and here in Japan... My only friend. And if getting my ears pierced would help make him feel better about things, then it was a small price to pay.

So the next morning, after much thought and before anything was done on my hair or makeup, I told Koshi that I no longer wanted to wear clip-on earrings, and that he should pierce my ears like he had done to Ken. Koshi looked like a kid on Christmas morning, and without hesitation, called one of his beauticians over to fulfill my request. No time was wasted. It was as if he believed that my offer had a short expiration date. He was probably right. I closed my eyes in anticipation of what I thought would be a quick sharp pain in each lobe. I heard the pneumatic gun fire... three times, followed by quick jolts of pain in both the lower and upper part of my left ear. Then, a few seconds later, another three shots and complimentary pain in my right ear. I opened my eyes in surprise to see the shiny silver stud in my lower ear... right beside a second one... and a third one high in the top of the ear.

“Hey!” I whined, “What are you doing?”

But Koshi had already moved on to something else and was completely ignoring me. As was the hairstylist who was adding pieces of tin foil to my hair. She was chatting in Japanese with the beautician who was doing my nails. It seemed to be taking much longer than usual for Koshi’s staff to do our hair and makeup that day. They had *just* done my hair and nails a couple of days ago... And now again? I was a little confused. But everything would become clear as the finished me and led me to rear of the studio to wait for our limo. Koshi smiled as he said that I looked very nice for the album launch.

Shoot! I thought to myself, *the launch is today?*

We had been training so hard all week on how to act in front of everyone and I still felt woefully unprepared. My instructor, Ishikawa-san, basically said I was impossibly stupid and would likely never pass the test of the general public. “But,” she said, in broken English, “If in doubt... act like proper Japanese girl and smy-oh and gigg-oh... and bow you head.”

Not exactly a glowing recommendation, but sound advice none-the-less. Ken’s instructor had basically said the same thing... *if all else fails, smile, giggle and look down shyly*. I was actually beginning to understand the way they talked.

I repeated this in my head over and over as I approached Ken standing with Koshi at the door, waiting for the limo.

Smile, giggle, look down shyly.

Ken was looking down, mumbling to himself in Japanese as I drew near. He was wearing a variation of the outfit he had worn for the photo shoot. Instead of the black jeans, he wore flared black leather pants, and instead of the boots with the 3" chunky heel, he was given boots with a four and a half inch wedge heel. I could have sworn the padding they used to "fill us out" was much thicker, more noticeable. His hair was just a little longer than before, and looked just a little darker with barely noticeable purple highlights. His fingernails – now dark purple like his new lipstick – were nearly half-an inch long!

He stopped his mumbling and looked up with a smile when he noticed it was me.

"Hello," he spoke softly in Japanese, using a higher, sweeter tone of voice, "I am Keiko. I am honored to meet you"

We both bowed at each other and recited our mantra out loud in Japanese, "Smile, giggle, look down shyly."

We both broke into a fit of silly giggles, just as we had been trained to do. Still speaking Japanese, I complimented Ken on how nice he looked. Why not just go with the flow, I thought to myself. He of course returned the complement. I, like him, was dressed very similarly to the photo shoot, with tight pink Capri pants and pink Mary Janes flats. As with Ken, I was convinced they were using more padding on me too, and I knew my hair was slightly longer and lighter and my nails were longer and pinker. The extra time spent on each of us was done to ensure that, as Koshi put it, we were "perfect."

The ride to the release party was much like our first ride into the city almost two weeks ago. We were both sitting opposite Koshi, who was once again chatting in Japanese on his cell phone. This time however, aside from looking completely different than we *had*, we were even sitting different... at least Kenny was.

I looked over at my musical partner to see him sitting very daintily, toes pointed downwards, heels lifted, knees together, hands neatly folded on lap, looking down at his legs. I stared at him in disbelief for some time before he noticed my gaze. His posture suddenly changed as he turned to me, "What?"

"Nothing," I chirped, "Well... not nothing... it's just that well..."

Kenny's expression became almost angry, "Wha-at?" he whined.

"You just seem to be taking this whole thing pretty seriously. You know? Like the whole way you're sitting and the way you talk and stuff. It's really... girly. That's all"

His angry look melted to a scoff, “Well Duh! It’s *supposed* to be girly Mike. Haven’t you been paying attention? We’re the *Girly Boys* now Mike... the girrrr-lee boys. That’s what we are. That’s what the fans want, it’s what they expect.” He turned away and gazed out the window, as if collecting his thoughts before turning back to me, “Maybe *you* aren’t taking this seriously *enough* Mike. Did you consider *that*?”

I said nothing. It was really the first time Ken and I had disagreed on anything... Ever. It stung a little that he thought I wasn’t taking this seriously enough, though as I pondered it more it occurred to me that he *could* possibly be right. Maybe I *wasn’t* taking this seriously. But then again, just how seriously *should* I be taking this all? Here I was, in Japan, dressed as a girl, on my way to release my newly remixed *techno* album. If you had told me this would happen



even a few months ago, I would have laughed hysterically. The whole thing sounded ridiculous.

And yet... Here I was.

The release party was pretty standard fare for a record company, and pretty much identical to what had been done for us back in the U.S. We started on stage, lip-synching to our second single, then being introduced by the head of the record company, then were escorted by him and Koshi around the crowded hall to be introduced to dignitaries and executives. The primary difference that I could tell, was that the majority of the members of the audience were middle aged men in dark suits.

Hurato ushered us to the first group of executives. He made some sort of greeting in Japanese, and gestured to us. It was our cue. In sync, just like the Ishikawas had schooled us to say, we said, "He-ro, we are Glirly Boys."

With panic and anger in his eyes, he grabbed us both by the arms and dragged us away. "Do you have no *shame*?" He growled. "Do you have no *respect*?" Ken and I looked at each other in bewilderment. We were just doing what we had been told to do. "You disgrace your family and all of your country by talking like that! Your manner is so offensive to me and every Japanese..." And he was cut off by Koshi who quickly swept in and took Hurato aside for a moment.

They squabbled as they angrily talked, but I couldn't hear anything in the loud room. Our techno music over the speakers was drowning everything out. Ken tugged me on the arm. "What the hell?" He said. I shrugged. As I tried to figure out what the argument was all about, Koshi was pointing at a man in the crowd emphatically. He did so two or three times before Hurato could be bothered to look in the direction he was pointing, and when he did so, his expression changed. His anger was replaced by a look of pure fear.

He seemed to need to confirm whatever he had seen with Koshi, and then looked back over at us. He broke out into a sweat. I tried to see who they were pointing at, but I didn't see much. Just businessmen. And one person who was dressed a little differently. But I couldn't make it out. Hurato blocked my view, coming back over to us, dabbing his forehead with a handkerchief.

"You are speaking as your instructors have taught you?" He said to us. We nodded, unsure if it was the right answer. "That is good. Very good." He then straightened his tie and led us back into the crowd. I don't know if we ever figured out what the problem was.

By half way through the evening, both Ken and I were feeling pretty dizzy as we had been introduced to so many people, seemingly identical men in suits, and all of them had gazed upon us with the same leering smiles. "He-ro," we'd say. And then Koshi would whisper in their ears and they'd laugh hysterically. Neither Ken or myself understood, but we seemed to be going over pretty well. Still, dressed as we were, the laughing made me feel very awkward. Not to

mention it was quite uncomfortable and exhausting, since we had to smile and giggle and act like we were so very lucky to make their acquaintances.

“Do they even know that we *aren't* really girls?” I whispered to Ken while we were being hustled from one group of men to the next. He simply turned to me with a bewildered expression and shrugged, before forcing a wide grin as we were again introduced. This time, however, the man we met was not wearing a suit. In fact, he was dressed quite fashionably in a leather jacket with a high neck sweater. I must have blushed, as I was quite embarrassed to find myself thinking that he was dressed rather well, if I had been a girl, I might have even thought him handsome.

I shook my head as Kenny finished being introduced. *I am not a girl*, I said to myself as he turned to me and smiled, his hand extended, “Danny Chano” he said. His forwardness caught me off guard. I blushed even harder, fumbling to find the words.

“My... Mee... Miko,” I finally spat out, taking his hand in mine for a firm shake. His eyes were locked on my own. I quickly remembered my training, and smiled, giggled then looked down.

“Danny is the most famous talk show host in all of Japan” I heard Koshi say in the background.



“And a very big fan of your work,” Danny added, “I can’t wait to have you...”

I coughed, and looked up; his eyes were exactly where I left them.

“To have you on my show” he continued.

Hurato was very respectful of this Danny person, bowing at him every second or so, explaining something in Japanese, and then more bowing. “I don’t want to keep you on such a wonderfully exciting evening.” Danny Chano said.

With that, Hurato quickly took us away. “Come-come girls. We have many more people to meet”

“It was a pleasure to meet you” Danny said as we were led away, “I look forward to seeing you next week”

I smiled again then looked down as we continued to move through the crowd. I maintained my downward gaze for a few seconds, but quickly turned to steal a backwards glance. I was shocked to see that Danny was still smiling at me.

What the hell am I doing? Now he’s going to think I was coming on to him or something. Great, I scolded myself. The rest of night went without incident, but I could help thinking about Danny Chano’s smile. *Why was I acting so gay?* It must have been all that training. It had to be.

Back in the limo, Kenny couldn’t wait to pounce on me, “Wow! That Danny Chano guy’s got it big for you Mike!”

My face turned red, half in embarrassment, half in anger, “Shut up! You should have seen some the guys that were checking *you* out!”

Ken just laughed. Even Koshi seemed to be grinning. I huffed, folding my arms, and turned away from them to watch the neon pass by the tinted windows of our dark limousine.

“It’s is very good that Danny likes you,” Koshi said with a wicked smile, “good for your career.”

“Whatever,” I replied, staring out the tinted window.

“He’s some kind of big shot?” Ken asked Koshi.

“Big big big.”

“I think a little bit of good luck is finally goin’ our way.” Ken said to me.

I wasn’t liking this. “Listen, I’m not going to...”

“Just don’t piss him off, that’s all I’m sayin’.” Ken remarked. “Just be nice to him, it could be good for us.”

I just frowned. “I doubt I’ll ever have to see him again.”



I found out on the following Monday that we were to appear on the Danny Chano show that Wednesday. It wasn't what I wanted to hear. Not only was I going to have to meet that Danny guy again, but we needed to be prepped for the appearance. This would mean two solid days of intense dancing, talking, and acting as girly as possible. Our instructors were as supportive as ever, claiming that they would "no doubt be humiliated by our boorish clumsy behavior on Japanese National Television." I was really beginning to worry that it just wasn't a hollow boast. Maybe we weren't going to go over big on TV.

Just to make sure, I decided to give myself over to the Ishikawas. Whatever they wanted me to do, I would do. I figured that at the worst, I could just put myself on autopilot and sleepwalk through this humiliation. And if I stopped fighting this, maybe it'd get over with faster. It sure didn't soften up the Ishikawas, though. They seemed to go at us with new purpose. Everything we had gone through, we went through again, and there wasn't any tolerance for failure. "You must suc sleet!" Mrs. Ishikowa kept saying. Everyone here takes everything so seriously.

"We must suc sleet!" Ken and I said to each other. After a while, we stopped snickering at it. It became pretty serious stuff.

When the day of the show finally arrived, I realized just how serious things had become, as Ken and I met up backstage for the first time after Koshi's team had finished getting us ready for our appearance.

My jaw hit the floor. 'Ken' was barely clothed cropped leather-looking top and matching tiny hot-pants. On his hands and arms, he wore a mesh 'glove' that really served no practical purpose. Calf-high shiny black boots, that shone purple in the light adorned his boots. He had gone from slightly goth-chic, to all-out goth-tramp!

Worse, was that he seemed to like it!

My outfit, by comparison, was down-right prudish, in my cowl-necked pink sweater and capri-pants. Only my sandals offered a 'hint' of sexy, with winding ankle straps that ran up over my smooth legs.

"You look vely sexy girls!" Koshi proclaimed as he ushered us towards the stage."

The accolades rang in my ears as we were introduced to the screaming TV studio crowd after having "sang" our song for them "live." My lips were heavy from the weight of the pale lipstick and multiple coatings of gloss that Koshi's crew had used that morning, yet I couldn't stop smiling. It was so cool to be in front of a crowd again, and have them love us so much was even cooler. That's why I got into this business. That and the girls.

We thanked Danny and began to converse with him in what Japanese we knew, but after having had only a couple of weeks training, it was nearly impos-

sible. Even though he spoke fluent English, he wanted to conduct the interview in Japanese for the sake of his audience. Thankfully Koshi had tagged along to act as a translator. The first time he had actually been useful, I think. Especially when we started taking questions from the audience, where he translated them into English, then translated our responses back to them. Most of the questions were rather lame. “You like to dress as girls?” We were asked. We just smiled and giggled at that question. “What is your favorite shade of lipstick?” Was the next question.

“Purple,” Ken said.

I replied “Pink.”

There were a few more from the crowd. “What is your favorite food?” I answered that one. “Flench flies,” I replied. The crowd tittered nervously. I didn’t know why, and thought maybe I had said the wrong thing.

Danny’s good-natured expression changed to that of confusion, and put his hand on my arm. “Flench Flies?” He said.

I then realized, with a cold shock, what I had done. Those Ishikawas were a bad influence on my English. “French Fries.” I hastily, desperately corrected.



But the crowd was still nervous. They went silent. The way I had said those words, in that comically exaggerated accent, I was convinced I had just offended the entire nation. They must have thought I was making fun of them. Disaster.

“Me likey flench flies too!” Danny said, launching himself into the awkward silence. “America number one top food! Flench Flies!” And the crowd went nuts. They loved it. Danny had masterfully diffused the situation in a second. He had quickly and effortlessly avoided a scene, and he deftly moved on to the next question like it was nothing. He patted me on the arm.

“What is your favorite shade of lipstick?” Was the next question. “Red,” Ken said. I replied “Pink.” And there were a few more from the crowd. They were all questions that we could answer, if not lie, easily. Then, just when I thought we were out of the water, came the hard one. “Do you like to kiss men?” asked someone from somewhere in the front two rows. The bright studio lights blinded me from seeing clearly.

We had been warned that such a question might come, and we had been told to do the polite thing, and just shyly giggle through it. Which we did. But Danny just kept looking at us, expecting more. Like a real answer. I looked at Ken, and he at me. This could be the deal breaker question right here. Answer wrong and the next day it’s all over the news. Answer right and sales of our CD goes through the roof.

“Well we haven’t yet,” Ken began, “But there’s always a first time for everything.” We both flashed our brightest smiles after he spoke, waiting for Koshi to translate. Danny already knew what we had said, and smiled widely as the crowd began to laugh and clap and holler. He shouted to the crowd in Japanese, and they responded with even louder applause. Koshi translated, “Perhaps the first time could be right now!” he said.

I tried not to look panicked as Danny approached me, then went suddenly to Ken, “Well?” he smiled. Ken didn’t hesitate; he closed his eyes, leaned forward and gave Danny a short kiss on the lips.

The crowd went nuts. I was so impressed. Ken had truly taken one for the team. He really *was* taking this seriously.

Then Danny turned and looked at me, with a flirtatious smile. My stomach clenched up. I blushed hard again, like I had done at the release party. I knew I would have to do it too. I closed my eyes and let Danny come to me, expecting a short quick peck like he had done with Ken, but this time would be different. As his lips touched my own, I felt them turn and interlock for several seconds. I gasped and opened my eyes, and found that he was looking at me. Or perhaps, into me is more accurate.

We finally broke apart to the thunderous applause of the audience. Even Kenny and Koshi were clapping. “That was wonderful, Butterfly,” Danny whispered as he continued the show.

During the rest of our interview, he smiled at me several times. Each time he smiled, I blushed. He was flirting with me and I was letting him. He was in his element, in front of these cameras, and I felt like I was in the presence of a master. He was so good at this, and I was grateful to him for saving my butt. In fact, I found myself almost liking the attention, as tough as it is to admit that.



Several weeks later, my mind was still filled with the vivid memory of our interview with Danny. It was after all, the first time I had ever kissed another guy. And as far as I was concerned it would be my last. We continued to work on our routines, as we were appearing on many live shows and were going to be filming the video for our next single shortly. Performing live was much more like being a dancer than a singer. Everything was on tape, and there was no band, so what people wanted to see was us. As TRJ had released the first single with an animated video, they wanted the second one to be live action, which meant that Ken and I had to appear to be perfect, and just like the cartoon versions of ourselves that the studio had created before even having met us.

Great!

The public demanded that we be able to dance to our catchy techno tunes just as well as we had done in the animated video. The actual dancing part wasn't too hard when done in the studio... But when they added our feminine “padding” it became increasingly more difficult. The breast forms and hip pads kept tugging, sliding and falling about. We couldn't even get through a set without having to be “adjusted” by wardrobe. The whole ordeal was becoming exhaustive. In addition to that, our Japanese language culture and customs classes were becoming as rigorous and demanding as our dancing classes.

We still began each day at six o'clock in the morning, and after showering and quickly dressing, went directly to the studio for culture, customs and language classes. After ninety minutes of mincing in high-heels, speaking silly Japanese phrases and learning of “A woman's place in Japanese culture,” we were off to wardrobe for a half hour of more intensive preparation, followed by even *more* intensive preparation in the form of almost two hours of hair and makeup. It wouldn't have taken so long, but Koshi insisted that we start learning how to do some of it ourselves. He was also insistent that we only communicate in Japanese, whenever possible, which while becoming easier every day, was still a major challenge. After that, we were in rehearsal, singing and dancing up a storm. That lasted until early afternoon, when we ate a bland, but probably healthy



rice dish for lunch. Then it was 90 more minutes of culture, customs and language... In full costume. This was followed by a trip to the dressing room to touch up our “look” before heading back to rehearsal, with a half hour break for (yum), more rice, in the middle. We were usually back in our apartment by eight or nine o’clock.

Sometimes much later.

After that, if there was anything left, our time was our own. If we weren’t completely exhausted, which we usually were, we would spend our time watching TV or reading magazines (they supplied us with copies of every Japanese Teen Magazine printed, or so it seemed). We also got a chance to respond to our fan email... At least the ones that we could understand enough to respond to. The majority were written in Japanese, and even though we were getting better at speaking it, our reading skills were sorely lacking.

TRJ had provided us with special clip-arts to affix to the responses. They had made us each kiss pieces of thin clear plastic, and then scanned them into the computer, superimposing them over our names, written in both Japanese and English. Mine a pair of pale pink lips – Kenny’s, dark purple. So dark in fact, they were almost black!

If we couldn’t understand what the email said, or chose not to read it, we had been provided with a standard pre-written response that we could send. It basically thanked the sender for their email, thanked them also for being our fans, and wished them well in the future. One such email that I routinely sent a standard response to was Danny Chano, from whom I received note from nearly every day. At first they were questions about what I felt the differences between the U.S. and Japan, and how my lessons of Japanese language, customs and culture were going. I didn’t know how to respond to that. I had gotten the definite impression that the lessons we were receiving weren’t really supposed to be teaching us about modern, real, Japan. We seemed to be getting lessons about some hyper-stereotypical Japan. So I didn’t really have an answer for him.

And how did he know we were having classes?

Then, even though I had yet to give an actual *personal* response, he began to send me emails telling me about his day, how fun or tough it had been, who he had interviewed and what they had said. I wasn’t able to watch his show, as I was in practice and training all day, so I actually didn’t mind getting his daily digest. He began every email with “Dearest Butterfly,” and ended every email with “Your Danny.” Occasionally he would invite me out for lunch, or dinner, or just a drink. But I still would not reply. It was as if by replying... I would be somehow acknowledging that he liked me... And that was something that I could not seem to come to terms with. I kept reminding myself that this was only temporary and that I shouldn’t let this “acting like a girl” thing get to me.

But as much as I tried not to, I couldn't help but smile ever time I saw another email from him in my inbox. It was such a strange situation to be in.

Ken always knew when I was reading Danny's emails, as my face would always turn bright red.



One day, an email arrived from Danny inviting Ken and me to his condo for a party. I felt bad for continuing to blow the guy off, and went to ask Ken what he thought. We hadn't been out in so long that a little bit of fun might be good for us. I found my musical partner in the bathroom, sitting before his vanity, practicing applying foundation. He made it too pale, in my opinion. He was practicing for the big video shoot tomorrow. I scoffed at him for acting so girly. He only glared at me, then began to work on drawing in his eyebrows. "When is this party?" he asked in Japanese.

"It's not for another two weeks," I replied, watching him carefully pencil in his thin arched brows.

"Do you want to attend?" he asked point blank.

"Well... I," I stammered.

"It is a yes or no question Miko," he said in a serious tone, still in Japanese, still working on his makeup.

"Yes" I whimpered meekly. This was so embarrassing. I really did want to get out and do something. *Anything*.

Ken finally looked up at me with a smile, "Then we will go," was all he said as he moved on to apply his eye make up.

I returned to my room, and replied – for the first time – to Danny's email, to tell him that we would be there. I signed the email Mike, then deleted the "e" from the end and added a "o." Then deleted the "iko" and simply signed it M.

I hit "send" and felt my stomach do a somersault as I realized I committed to going out in public as Miko, to the house of a famous man whom I had kissed... And who emailed me daily. Then my thoughts turned to what I was going to wear.

The video shoot the next day had us in several different costumes. The first outfit seemed to have the most impact. It looked like a retro-futuristic space uniform, with a pink body suit, purple top and black tights in purple high-heeled knee-high boots. Large-buckled belts were slung high over our hips. We stopped to pose for the photographer who was taking pictures of the shoot.

We ran through the entire song in those silly outfits before changing into our next outfit, which was a cute 1970's style jumpsuit with a plunging neckline and



towering high platform pumps. They gave us both oversized aviators sunglasses to wear over our eyes. I caught a glimpse of our reflections in the mirror and had to smile. We looked like Charlie's Angels.

After several takes, we were to finally perform our concluding routine. It would have us dancing with male dancers while wearing super short hot pants and hosiery. To make it worse, we were instructed to kiss the dancers as they passed us. To make it worse again, the men kept pinching us on our bums. Not that we could feel it through our padding, which, with our breast forms, had kept slipping through the entire day.

The whole ordeal was numbing, but we managed to get through it. I just closed my eyes and gave them a peck on the cheek... Aand sometimes on the lips. A couple of times I looked over to see how Kenny was doing, and was shocked to see how easily this was all coming to him. I thought back to our argument in the limo those many, many days ago. There was nothing wrong. He was just taking this all as seriously as he should. Very, very seriously. I could stand to learn a thing or two from him, I told myself.

Ishikawa-san told me much of the same the following day, as both Kenny and I were in the same room for our training. They said that they had watched our video and that we had moved with the grace and demeanor of clumsy elephants. "But," he said, "Keiko is show mluch more plomise than you aw Miko." And so to remedy this, both Ken and I would spend the better part of the morning pacing around the room dressed in new uniforms of leotards and tights (his black, mine pink, naturally). Ken was allowed to wear four inch heels, but as I had shown such poor performance, they required that I use a five inch platform heeled shoe. Mr. Ishikawa barked at us while Mrs. Ishikawa intently studied our movement, pausing occasionally to whisper something to her partner. They were determined that we walk and turn in the shoes, whilst looking as feminine, dainty – and I dare say – sexy as possible. With pencil thin stiletto heels, it was no easy task.

I noticed that Ken kept looking at my chest. For that matter, I was looking at his. I couldn't help but notice how his chest looked swollen around his nipples and was easily showing through the lycra garment. It didn't really dawn on me that *he* had noticed the exact same thing on me. The swelling had been getting worse for some time now. Koshi told us it was likely due to an allergic reaction to the glue used to keep our breast forms in place – though I don't know if I believed him. I couldn't help but think I was getting some swelling in other areas too, like my hips and ass too... And *nothing* had been glued there. Maybe I was just putting on some extra weight from all that rice and fish they were feeding me. To make matters worse, my nipples were itching like a son-of-a-bitch. Little did we know.

We walked back and forth in straight lines across the classroom floor, wiggling our hips like super models with each tiny minced step. Keeping our eyes low,

smiling and nodding at each other with a giggle as we crossed paths, then turning at the end of our stride with a sexy swivel, before beginning the whole thing again.

I was having a little trouble, as could be expected. The 3" inch chunky heels had been easy enough, and even the 3" stilettos. The 4" chunky heel had also proven to be a snap, while the 4" stiletto was more of a challenge, but I had persevered. However, these latest shoes, meant more as a punishment than as training, were tough. *Real tough*. I teased Ken, who seemed to be able to walk in anything they threw at him, saying he must have been secretly practicing back home. My comment did not impress him much and he went one further to suggest that maybe I *needed* to practice a little more. I scowled at the thought.

About half way through our "customs" class, there was a knock on the door. Our instructor clapped his hands for us to continue to focus on our tasks as he went to answer. I shot a quick glance at the door, careful to avoid our instructor seeing. Looking up at the wrong time would result in another half hour of "strides" as they were called. Koshi was talking to the instructor before looking over at us, "Miko! Keiko!" he shouted in Japanese, "you must follow me."

We followed Koshi through the hallways of the TRJ building. Our instructor had followed us, barking at us to continue with our strides. We were to smile and giggle at each man that we passed in the hall, but ignored the women. *How rude*, I thought to myself, but did it anyway.

Soon the surroundings began to look familiar. We were back in Hurato Muriata's office. Hurato wasted no time, getting straight to the point. "As I am sure you will agree, the padding and forms that we have been using to create the illusion of a feminine body is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with."

Ken and I both nodded in agreement... It would be *so* much easier to not be padded and stuffed to look girly.

Hurato continued, "When you started training, we began to administer female hormone supplements, as well as testosterone blockers. This was to make your bodies softer and curvier so that the need for body padding would be reduced or negated altogether. You will have noticed the effects already," he spoke matter-of-factly glancing at our somewhat swollen chests. He showed no emotion.

My jaw dropped. I turned to Ken, who was also 'catching flies,' then back to Hurato and Koshi, "What?" we both asked in unified high pitched tones.

"Your contract allows us to make the necessary changes to your appearance to assist in the marketing of your characters. Therefore, you began to receive regular doses at our discretion with your meals"

We thought back to the new "energy supplements" that they had instructed us to take with lunch and supper each day, and how we had never thought to

question what they were. Hurato adjusted his glasses, but did not stop there.

“We had hoped to achieve more noticeable results by now. But it seems that the supplements are not working fast enough,” Hurato continued, “Therefore more is required.” I simply stared at him, confused and worried at the same time. Ken managed to squeak out a high-pitched, “Huh?”



“We were hoping to see more changes in your bodies by now, and as we have yet to observe such satisfactory changes, we have decided to use surgical enhancement to create the desired body shape.” He spoke in a deadpan tone, his accent barely noticeable.

Our jaws hit the floor. We turned to each other and then back to Hurato, and with sternest most masculine voices we could muster replied, “What? There’s no way!” I was sorry to admit that the most masculine voices that we could muster still sounded pretty girly. After all, we had received weeks of training now on how to speak a certain way. It was hard to go back to what we had done before. I honestly couldn’t even remember how I was *supposed* to sound.

My mind was racing. Surely they had noticed that our hips and asses had started to flesh out whilst our waists had were beginning to shrink. Koshi had already bought us some new pants, as we were barely fitting into our current clothes. And the tender swelling around our nipples was hard to ignore. But apparently the executives at TRJ were expecting more. It was, after all, the Japanese way. Bigger, better, faster. They were *so* demanding, and *so* impatient.

“What do you mean by...” I paused to gulp, “Sul... Sul... Surgical enhancement?”

Hurato smiled, “I am certain that you are intelligent enough to know what we are referring to.”

With that, the meeting ended and we were returned to our apartment building. Ken and I had both been silent the whole way. As we waited in the lobby for the elevator, we were exchanging the same worried expression. We were surely thinking the same thing... *What had we gotten ourselves into?* But before we could really think too much about it, the elevator door opened – I let out a very girly little squeal, as I had not been expecting to see anyone standing on the other side. But there was.

And his name was Danny Chano.

He smiled, looking me over in my leotard and high heels. Ken greeted him in Japanese, winking at me as he headed for our apartment door. Danny drew closer, smiling wider, "I am so pleased to hear that you will attend my gathering next week, Butterfly." He paused, giving me a second, lingering glance. "Forgive me, you look even more lovely then I remember." My girly Japanese training kicked in, as I glanced down at the floor, blushing heavily with a silly grin on my face. He sensed an opportunity and wasted no time, telling me that we were going to dinner, so I had best get dressed. I wanted to say no, I wanted to resist the charms he was trying so hard to use on me. I was, after all, still a guy... and so was he. For some reason I didn't say so.

Minutes later, I was rushing around our place trying to find something to wear. Ken smiled knowingly at me as he helped me touch up my makeup (maybe all that extra practicing he did would come in handy after all). I chose not to look at him and the smug smirk I knew he must have had on his face.

"Remember to be nice to him." Ken said. I didn't reply.

I found a pair of pink flared pants with platform-heeled shoes, albeit with 4" heels this time. Before running out the door, I checked my hair, which was now nearly down to my chin. "Tell Danny that Keiko says 'hi.'" Ken teased, blowing a kiss. I continued to ignore him and was soon whisked to Danny's waiting limo and off to dinner.

The limo ride was awkward. With him smiling and trying to start conversation with harmless, pointless questions – and with me trying my best not to make eye contact, and to answer in short one-worded responses.

The same could be said for dinner, where Danny had a huge, thick steak. "Very American huh?" he said in his best fake Texan accent. I chuckled. At one time I would have gladly had the same, but for some reason, grilled fish, salad and rice seemed to be more appealing. "Have you ever been to Times Square?" Danny asked me.

"Hai," I replied. It was just once, back when Ken and I were promoting the record.

"I was there... Maybe about ten years ago," Danny said, in between very small bites of his food. "They brought me there to be a big star. To be the next Johnny Carson."

I nodded politely. It didn't surprise me he'd been to America. He did a very convincing job of being fully familiar with the country and everything about it.

"They had me make... They called it a 'pilot' show. I talked to Henry Kissinger and Carl Sagan. I wanted good guests. People who could open your eyes to the world." Danny smiled at me politely, making sure I was listening. I diverted my gaze downward, just like I was told to. "It never even made it on the air," he said, still smiling. "The executives... they thought I was trying to be funny. They said they couldn't understand my accent."

“Oh.” I replied. I was astonished. He spoke very well.

“I’m better, now. I’ve worked on it very hard.” He returned his attention to his meal. “But back then, they laughed me out of the screening room. They had no respect for what I wanted to do. They thought I was a joke. A clown.” For a man saying such awful things, he had the most convincing smile on his face. “They said I should make a comedy show. That all I was good for... was to laugh at.”

After dinner, we set off for a neighboring nightclub, which I was told, was the most exclusive in the city, for some drinks. He offered that we go out on the dance floor, and as I was feeling a little loose from whatever martinis he had bought me, I gave in. We danced to a couple of fast songs before the tempo dropped. He put his arms around me and hugged me close as we began to dance slowly.

It was too much to take. About half way through the song, I lied and said I wasn’t feeling well, that that I needed to go home. He simply smiled and said, “As you wish Butterfly.”

Soon we were standing by the apartment and I thanked him in Japanese for such a wonderful evening. It was kind of true. I *did* have a *little* bit of fun. He thanked me for speaking in Japanese, saying he knew how difficult it was to learn the language.

I blushed. He really was such a gentleman. Not to mention, a little bit handsome. And I couldn’t help but sense that he cared for me. The thought warmed my heart. Danny Chano cared about *me*. Aside from Kenny... He might be the only one in Japan that *did*. I smiled as I realized that I might just care about *him* too. And so, when he leaned in to kiss me goodnight, I did not resist... Instead... I kissed him back.

But only for a moment.

I expected to have to answer a lot of awkward questions when I got back to the condo, but fortunately Ken was nowhere to be found. That was a relief. But then again, where exactly was Ken?



The next day, we were taken to a very modern private clinic, apparently used by the richest, most influential and most famous people in Japan.

I was in love with the nurse. You haven’t lived until you get yourself a Japanese nurse. They have no problem being sexy and taking care of you at the same time. As she was showing us too our room, I tried to make small talk with her.

“So, you rike being nurse?” I said.

Her horrified expression was not what I was expecting.

“You pig!” she said back in a smooth American accent.

“Whrat’s you ploblem?” I asked.

Her face was stricken with disgust. I didn’t understand. “You filthy...” She put her hand up to slap me. As I flinched, Koshi grabbed it, and kept her from swinging. She said something to Koshi in Japanese, and Koshi snickered. He cupped his hand to her ear and whispered to her.

Then, for some reason, he expression changed totally. She was all smiles. She even laughed. She and Koshi had a short exchange in Japanese as she pointed to me and Ken, and she laughed again.

“Oh, so slolly,” she said, mocking our accent. “Big American man.” She laughed so hard someone else needed to take over.

“What was that all about?” I said to Ken. He shrugged back, just as confused as I was.

The procedures seemed to take mere moments – of course, we were sedated, so we had no idea how long it *actually* took. The only thing we could be sure of is that when we left, we were both sporting a pair of B-cup breasts, wide hips and rounded asses, as well as pouty, puffy lips. The breast implants were expandable – meaning, as soon as our bodies had adjusted to having them, they could be increased. Up to what size, they did not say. As for the lips, it was a last minute addition from TRJ, to make us look more like the animated versions that they had created prior to our arrival. And Koshi certainly didn’t mind having more to work with when doing our makeup.

We were both in shock. Neither of us could really believe this had actually happened. I should have fought this from the very start. But I was just letting this happen to me. It wasn’t like me to be this passive. I was feeling so out of character.

“How could we have let it get this far?” I asked Ken, when I was still coming off the drugs. We were both laid out on the hospital beds, our minds still swirling from everything that had happened.

“Nihongo,” he replied. He wanted me to speak in Japanese.

“Gomennasai,” I apologized.

“This is more than I ever expected,” he replied in the native language. “If someone had told me before all this began, I’d...” And his voice trailed off. “But look around you. All these people are working so hard.”

“To make us into girls!” I pointed out.

“There are thousands, maybe millions of fans out there buying our records and coming to the shows. If all it takes is hard work and some real dedication, I’m willing to do it.”



“We were just mutilated for the sake of corporate profits,” I said.

“We were just given the opportunity of a lifetime,” Ken replied, “all we have to do is take advantage of it.”



After a couple of weeks of rest – meaning we sat and studied Japanese customs and language instead of dancing and walking practice – it was time for Kenny and I to attend Danny’s party.

His condo was packed with other on-air personalities from his network, plus a bunch of Japanese celebrities that neither Ken nor I knew of. I was wearing two adhesive cups under my new breasts for support. The adhesive cups created the illusion that I was bra-less, as I wore a white wide collared button-down blouse, left unbuttoned down to my navel, but open wide enough to only show the insides of my breasts. A large medallion hung from a thick silver chain in the center of my exposed chest. The sleeves on the blouse were flared, to match the pant legs on my pocket-less, super-tight slacks, which showed off my pert round ass perfectly, when not hidden beneath the short shirt tails of the blouse. I wore a special gaff to hide my shrunken member away under the tiny thong panties below the pants. Five-inch platform stilettos (which I was now able to walk in quite well) adorned my feet, making me feel nearly six-foot tall. When I stood beside Danny, he was actually an inch shorter. My golden blonde hair was combed to one side and my trademark massive lashes fluttered. My muted pink lips were glistening wet.

Ken was wearing an ankle length black dress with knee high patent leather boots underneath, over black sheer stockings. The dress was slit at the sides, nearly to the top of the shiny hosiery. The top of the dress was corset like, which looked amazing on Ken’s newly modified body. He wore elbow-length black velvet gloves that were sensuously feminine. His dark hair was longer and cut straight, and had streaks of purple in it. It looked very oriental, but then again... Wasn’t that the point?

Ken’s trademark dark-purple lips were so dark that they looked almost black at the right angle. He had done his makeup himself, and even took a few minutes to help me out, even though I was becoming increasingly proficient in makeup application.

It didn’t take long to know why Danny had invited us, as people gravitated to us all night long. It had taken us hours to get ready, weeks of recovery from surgery, but apparently it was worth it. Danny couldn’t keep from smiling... All night. He hadn’t seen me since the surgery and it was obvious that he liked what they had done to me, even if *I* still wasn’t sure.

“Incredible,” he said to me. He took a look at me, his eyes running up and down my body. I was suddenly feeling very threatened by him. I took a step closer to Ken for safety, but he responded by gently pushing me away.

“I’m a little busy here, Miko,” he said, putting his hand on a man’s shoulder. “Why don’t you and Danny circulate?” He hadn’t even bothered to look at me when he talked. He seemed much more interested with his admirers.

Danny stuck out his arm for me to grab, and I didn’t have much choice but to grab a hold of it. After making the rounds with me at his side – his arm firmly wrapped around my thin waist – he excused us from his company and invited me away to join him on the balcony.

“You’re selling a lot of records, you know.” He said to me as we walked. “You’re very popular.”

I didn’t reply. I just nodded.

“I think people really love it when something new comes along,” Danny moved his head closer so he could speak at a lower tone. “Like the way you talk.”

“The way I talk?” I replied.

“It is very satisfying for me. I always thought an act just like yours could be popular.”

“What do *you* have to do with it?” I asked.

“You look amazing,” he smiled, looking me over, “I’ve wanted to get some time alone with you since you first arrived.” I blushed, looking down at my feet. I knew the wind blowing in my hair wasn’t helping the situation any. It was only making me look even hotter in his eyes. I didn’t know what to say. Clearly he was into me, and I had to admit that I was having trouble keeping my heart from racing in his presence. This was just to get ahead, I tried to tell myself. This is just to sell the record.

“I’m still just plain old me,” I nervously sighed, “I just look different... but it’s only temporary.” I was being very careful about how I pronounced my words around him. That was a mistake I didn’t want to repeat. Also, I tried to keep my voice low, trying to remind him that I was not the hot girl that I appeared to be. I made a mental note that maybe I should have been more persuasive when arguing with Kenny against wearing this outfit earlier in the day.

“I don’t think there is anything plain about you,” he said, leaning in to kiss my neck, as his hands moving up my sides. I let out a moan, which surprised the hell out of me. I felt my eyes closing as his lips touched my neck, my head moving to one side to grant him access.

“You really think this is temporary, Butterfly?” he nibbled gently on my skin and I felt myself melting.

This can’t be happening! I thought to myself, *I need to get control here.*

“Danny... I’m still a guy,” I blurted out, “this is all just... an act... I... I’m not really a girl. I’m not what you want.”

Danny would not be dissuaded, “You are exactly what I want you to be. Gender is irrelevant,” he whispered. He put his arms around my waist and pulled me closer, moving his kisses up from my neck to my cheeks, chin and ears. I was losing control. It had been so long since I had kissed a girl, but now the tables were turned. As he nibbled on my earlobes, I moaned again, eyes closed, hips rocking gently, letting his hands explore my body. My mind was letting go. I was thinking about every girl I had kissed; only now I was experiencing it *as* them.

I gasped, as his mouth met my newly enhanced mouth for the first time, and let my impulses take over. As we embraced on his balcony, hearts racing, lips kissing passionately, tongues exploring, I felt a piece of my old self, of Mike, slip away.

I heard a polite “Ahem” behind us. Danny looked up but ignored the person that had made it. I turned and saw Koshi smiling in the doorway to the balcony. “So sorry to disturb. I am looking for the bathroom,” he said.

I immediately broke away from Danny, blushing feverishly, “Oh... uh...” I stammered. Koshi just kept grinning as he turned and walked away. I immediately forgot everything else and ran after him, “Koshi, wait... I...” but he was moving quickly.

I turned to look at Danny. He looked disappointed... hurt even. It made my heart ache, but I had to find Koshi, to keep him from telling anyone.

I made my way through the crowded room, but could not find Koshi. I *did* however find Ken. He was with a group of Japanese guests dressed in gothic black clothing similar to what Kenny had worn. He seemed to be particularly close to one tall “Goth” named Junsaku, (but I was told I should call him Jake). Jake was dressed in a vintage Victorian era suit, and spoke perfect English with a hint of an English accent. Kenny had been drinking, but managed to introduce me to Jake after giggling several times. It seemed that Jake was an up-and-coming producer and songwriter himself, and very, very interested in seeing some of Ken’s own work. They were all planning to go see a live band at a local club – a friend of Jake’s, apparently. Then I spotted that very familiar shade of dark purple – almost black – lipstick on Jake’s collar. And his cheek.

I looked at Ken, who looked at me, with a nonchalant expression that said ‘so?’ Stuttering, I said I wasn’t in the mood, and instead opted to head home. As I sat in the stretch limo, I pondered my situation.

I now had the curvy body of a teenaged girl, was the apple of hundreds of thousands of Japanese fans’ eyes... Including one very famous talk-show host. I was losing touch with my best friend and regrettably, had no other option other than to simply keep moving in the direction I had been forced onto. A direc-



tion that could see me eventually losing touch with my English-speaking male self, in favor of the Japanese-speaking girly character I had chosen to play in order to preserve a musical career that maybe, I wasn't supposed to have in the first place.

"We are here Miko-chan," the chauffeur said to me in Japanese as he opened the door for me.

I paused and looked out the window at the high rise building where Ken and I resided. Then sighed, "I apologize, but perhaps you can take me around the city once more please?" I said in Japanese. The driver smiled knowingly. He could sense that I simply wanted some time to myself in the quiet comfort of his luxury car. Soon we back on the road driving through Tokyo's famed downtown. It was a similar drive to what Ken and I had first seen when we arrived from the U.S., only this time the sights looked more familiar, and I could read *most* of the flashing Japanese signs.

It was strange to realize how comfortable I felt in this bizarre place. Just a little while ago, I was blown away with how weird this was. The signs, the stores, the people, the culture. Now I was a part of it.

After another ninety minutes, we were home again. This time I thanked the driver as he helped me from the car and walked me to the front door of my building. My tall heels clicked on the ceramic tile floor as I minced to the elevator. A short time later I was sprawled out on the sofa, unbuckling my shoes.

I heard a giggle coming from Ken's room. I paused for a moment before returning to my task of removing my shoes. The giggle sounded again, this time louder and longer, followed by a low moan, then some sounds I had heard before when Kenny and I used to watch porn on our big screen TVs back in the U.S.

I figured Ken had found some good Japanese porn on the TV in his room, and opted not to disturb him in the off chance that I might interrupt him "being intimate with himself." I couldn't really blame him for that, after all, we had completely struck out on our promise of getting some Japanese tail. Worse still, we were now ourselves being pursued by Japanese men. My mind wandered back to Danny Chano's balcony. I felt a stirring in my stomach... And strangely... also in my nipples. I was surprised, but... It was nice.

A few minutes later, a slightly exhausted looking Ken emerged from his room. He smiled wide when he saw me.

"Miko!" he exclaimed, "I... I was worried. You weren't here when we got home."

"Yeah... I..." I paused, had he just said when *we* got here? I realized that he was dressed in his black satin corset, garters and stockings... But *no* panties. His little soldier was dangling limply for all to see. Well maybe not all... It was after all, looking pretty small, even if it was sticking straight out. I tried not to stare and could feel my face turning flush.

"I... I..." I stammered, "Hey! What happened to you going to see some bands?"

Ken rolled his eyes and laughed, "We did... but they were very, very bad. You should have seen them. I was embarrassed to be a musician." He paused, smiling, as if he had some great secret to tell me, but didn't know the right words to say.

"So we left..."

"We?" I didn't waste a second to question him after hearing the word used a *second* time.

"Yeah..." he blushed, "Um, me... and um..."

"Keiko?!" I heard a loud masculine voice calling from Ken's bedroom. Seconds later, Jake came bounding into the room... completely naked. He smiled when he saw me. "Miko-chan! Dou shiteru?" he said. *How's everything?*

I averted my eyes, having taken in too much already, then turned to Ken with an expression of disbelief on my face. Ken... Keiko walked over to Jake and put his arms around the man's very toned body, nuzzling against him. I thought I was going to be sick and ran to the bathroom.

I didn't see or hear either of them for the rest of the night.



It wasn't until we bumped into each other in the kitchen the next morning that we even addressed each other. Ken sat at the table reading a girly magazine in a black robe, sipping tea. "So?" he smiled.

I blushed, then ignored him, pouring some juice, "So what?"

He chuckled, "So you want to talk about... you know... last night?"

I sighed and sat at the table across from him, knowing that a chat was unavoidable. "Listen I... I just... I mean I..." finding the words however was going to be something of a challenge. What I wanted to say was *o-my-god Ken you're turning into a fag!* But I knew I couldn't say that. He *was*, after all, my best friend. And we *were*, after all, not only dressed like girls, but surgically modified to look like, and intensively trained to *act* like girls.

That and I had kissed Danny Chano.

"I know you must think I'm turning gay or something," Ken began, "But my goodness Mike... look around... look at what is happening here. I mean... we did not ask for this, but we are in so deep now... Whatever I was seems so distant... I feel really good around Jake. And as for the... sex it was not..." I waved my hands around and looked away, as if to signal to him to spare me the gory details.

"Okay. Okay," I said, "I get it. I know. I understand" I sighed and stood up. "I guess I'm just having a harder time with this then you are, that's all."

Ken smiled up at me. From my vantage point, I could clearly see what nice cleavage the clinic had given him. If I had been Jake, I would have likely tried to bed him too... If I was gay... Which I wasn't.

I shook my head, trying to rattle that train of thought away.

"We are partners here Miko. Together we can accomplish many things," Ken said in near-perfect Japanese.



Later that week, the partners known as the Girly Boys were to do a cover-shot for a teen magazine. Koshi was grinning from ear to ear as he helped us into our new outfits.

Ken was dressed in a pair of tight, super-short black PVC hot pants over black fishnets with knee-high black boots. A transparent black top was worn over his customary black corset. I noticed how much he seemed to almost enjoy wearing it. He was almost never without it. I think he might be wearing it bed at night. Me, I would wear a corset when they told me to, but never more. His

black and purple hair was teased and tussled in a very wild look that looked fantastic with his pale face, eye makeup and splendid near-black lips. On this day they had gone a little heavier on his eyes than usual, giving him a very dark, smoky, sexy pair of eyes. They had even given him a fake silver nose ring through his right nostril.

At least I *assumed* it was fake.

I, on the other hand, was dressed in a pink pleated mini-skirt with white thigh-high stockings and pink peep-hole platform sandals. A pink angora sweater with a deep V-neck over a tailored wide-collared white blouse was on top. Though I had been wearing tights and the occasional skirt in my training classes for some time now, this was officially the first time I had been in public in a skirt.

My trademark eyes were outlined, as always, with thick liner and heavy mascara on fake lashes, blended to pink eye shadow. My trademark lips were different this time with the outside and insides lined with a slightly darker pink. The inside was then filled with a glossy shade that was somewhere in between the two liner shades. The beautician had then carefully blended everything together. The effects were three-dimensional looking, full pouty lips that were luscious and fantastically mesmerizing. I thought about kissing Danny the other day and how excited he would be if he saw me right now. The thought seemed to linger with me as I posed for the cover shot. The photographer must have noticed as he barely had to yell at us for our poses this time.

After the shoot was finally done I was headed back to the dressing room when I heard a familiar voice behind me. “Keiko!” it called. I turned to see Jake running up to Ken. He stopped when he was close enough to take Ken’s image in, looking him over from head to toe, then proceeded to embrace him. The two of them kissed. I turned away.

It was partially because the sight of my best friend from the feed mill back in Montana kissing a muscular Japanese man didn’t yet seem right. Partially because the sight of muscular Japanese man kissing a very pretty girl, which is how Kenny looked, seemed perfectly right. And partially because I was jealous, and felt stupid for having run out on Danny the other night.

I was also saddened because he hadn’t emailed me at all since that night. But how could I really? What if he wanted from me what Jake clearly wanted from Ken?

Ken and Jake turned to me. “I want you come with us for lunch Miko-chan” Jake said matter-of-factly in formal Japanese.

“Oh, I...” I stammered, “I don’t know... I...”

Suddenly a new voice spoke from behind me, a familiar comforting voice, “Perhaps you would accompany *me* to lunch, Miko-chan.”



I turned to see Danny standing before me. I froze. Ken could see that I was unsure about seeing Danny in person. As he was partly to blame, he tried to fix the situation by insisting that we *all* go to lunch together. I figured that it wouldn't hurt anything, so I reluctantly agreed. I sat quietly in the limo, and more quietly at the restaurant, choosing to sit across from Danny and beside Ken. Ken had originally pouted, as it wasn't hard to tell that he wanted to be closer to Jake. He couldn't keep his hands off him in the car. I was happy for him, yet concerned. When this was all over... When we returned to the U.S., would he be able to adjust? Would he return to being his old self?

I was steadfast in my resolve to not let Danny get as close to me as Jake was to Ken.

But Danny was relentless. After having endured awkward silence for so long, he finally turned to on our way home and said, "You know Miko-Chan, you should not hide your lovely legs ever again." I shot him a puzzled look, "Huh?"

"I said you have lovely legs Butterfly. You should always show them off, not hide them." He paused to let my mind absorb his point.

"You think so? You think I should wear... shorts or something all the time?" I spoke softly, unsure of where this was going.

Ken interrupted his nuzzling with Jake to back Danny up. "He means a skirt, Miko. A *skirt*." Jake simply nodded in agreement.

I knew what they were trying to do, and I had to admit that I kind of agreed with them, but a skirt was like... The final frontier. In pants, even though they were tight and flared, and even though I wore them with a blouse over my new breasts... They were still pants. Men wore pants. I was a man. I could always just tell people I was just dressing... Exotically, but still as a man. But in a skirt... I would only be a girl. Only girls wear skirts. There would be no more excuses.

The thought racked my brain as we said our goodbyes. I tried to avoid eye contact with Danny, and gave him a little peck on the cheek, as Jake and Ken necked in the hallway.

I rolled my eyes and went into our apartment.



The next few weeks were strange. Ken was spending more and more time with Jake. All-too-much of it in his bedroom – to my way of thinking anyway – and even though I had been secretly, so very happy to see Danny after the photo shoot, I did my best to continue to avoid contact with him. But he was *very* persistent. He emailed daily, sometimes twice, he even called my cell phone... My cute little pink flip phone that fit in my cute little purse so nicely with all

my makeup and stuff... But that wasn't the point. The point was even though I was acting somewhat girly, and dressing somewhat girly, and that I now had a girly body, and even though my roommate was practically changing genders before my eyes, I didn't want to see Danny because he had wanted me to wear a skirt. And I couldn't wear a skirt because it would make me altogether too girly. And if I was too girly I might end up like Ken, and Danny would be my boyfriend like Jake was his.

His. I pondered the word. It barely even applied to Ken anymore. I still wore my jeans and pants whenever we weren't working. He had given up on pants altogether. In fact, it seemed he had given up on everything masculine. And American. He spent all of his spare time, whenever not with Jake, primping and practicing his feminine ways. He would spend hours in the bathroom doing and redoing his hair and makeup, without which he was never seen. He practiced walking like a girl, choosing to wear shoes with no shorter than a three-inch heel at all times. And he practiced talking like a girl, having perfected speaking with a softer, higher pitch, and almost never in English. And he never ever wore pants. Instead he opted to lounge around wearing sometimes a skirt... Sometimes just his corset and panties and stockings and heels. But never again pants. Jake insisted, and Ken listened.

Jake's influence on Ken even led him to start smoking on occasion. I had quite often returned to the condo to the smell of burnt tobacco. One such time, I barged into Ken's room to see him getting ready for a date with Jake. If I hadn't been certain that the person in the room was Ken... I never would have guessed it was him. He was wearing a tight cropped top that showed ample cleavage, with a tiny short skirt and black and purple striped stockings with heeled ankle boots. His face was pale, but his makeup was dark. His black hair had been streaked again with shocks of purple before being styled into two high pig tails.

I cursed at him in Japanese for smoking in the apartment; he only turned with an angry scowl, gave me the middle finger. *How rude! How ignorantly American of him!* I said to myself as I stormed off to my room.

I could not believe how Keiko... er, I mean Kenny was acting. He had no right to treat me so poorly. This was, after all, my apartment too. I was steaming mad, and hurt also. I knew it was Jake who was making my friend act this way, turning him away from me. I flipped on my laptop and checked my emails. When I saw my daily greeting from Danny Chano, I paused. Perhaps it was not too late to make amends with Danny. He did, after all, still like me. Maybe even more than my singing partner.

I don't know what came over me, in hind sight it wasn't one of my greatest moments, but then again my body was operating with all those added estrogen hormones... So needless to say I wasn't thinking like my old Mid-Western self. I started to type a reply to his email, one of his many invitations for lunch, or

dinner, or tea, or whatever I had categorically turned him down for each and every time. But this time would be different. If Ken wanted to pretend to be a girl and act like he had been acting, that was fine. But instead of acting wounded like I had been... Let us just say I was going to show Kenny that I too could be just as girly as he.

During a short break in our next training class, my cell phone rang. Ken was in a bit of a mood, as I had not spoken to him since he had – *what do you call it?* – ah yes, since he had “flipped me the bird.” That and I had specifically *asked* Ishikawa-san if I might do the practice in six-inch stiletto heeled platform shoes instead of the standard five inch ones. Then to add insult to injury, both Ishikawa-san and her husband complimented me on my proficiency in the towering shoes, and accosted Ken for not following my new standard. It was about time, as far as I was concerned.

I picked up my phone, and answered it. “Moshi Moshi!” I turned to make sure that Ken was looking as I began to giggle outrageously for a quick moment before regaining my composure and apologizing formally in Japanese for my behavior. Then I apologized for having run away from him so many nights ago.

“Oh Butterfly, you are so beautiful,” he replied on the phone, “How could I ever stay angry at you?” The comment made me blush. I lowered my eyes as I had been trained to do then smiled and looked back up. I felt so embarrassed that I was acting so silly, yet I was determined to make a point with Ken.

“I’m so sorry. You must forgive me.” I said. “I think maybe I am sometimes too shy.”

“All is forgiven.”



I was smiling widely as we made plans for lunch. It wasn't hard to get into character, after all he *was* the most handsome man on television. And he *did* like the way I looked, and he *was* keen on showing me so much attention. Me... a guy, in a girl's body, a girl with wide hips and full lips... And breasts... That Danny-chan obviously thought was beautiful.

"So you are pleased that I called?" he said towards the end of the call. I looked up and smiled slyly in Ken's direction... Unable to think of something appropriate to say, my mouth opened and my brain spit out the first thing that came to mind.

"Oh yes Danny-san. Sank you, sank you Danny-san." I realized I said the whole sentence in stupid girly broken English. I really couldn't help myself anymore.

Danny was obviously excited by my behavior, to say the least. "I wish for you to remain as you are, my beautiful butterfly. In *every* way." He smiled.

I took that to mean that he wanted me to talk English with a fake Japanese accent. This was so weird, yet I was more than willing to oblige him. It seemed only fair that if I was here in Japan, trying to act like a typical sexy Japanese girl, that I may as well talk like one too. Or at least how I had been taught to talk.

"Okay Danny-san," I replied, "I talk rike dis fo you today, okay?"

Danny's voice became deeper and more intense on the phone, as if he had leaned forward and placed his mouth much closer to the mike, "Oh yes, my butterfly, oh yes. Today... and for all time"

I could actually feel my pulse quickening... I needed to get control here, "So you think I should wear a short skirt for you?" I exclaimed.

Suddenly the phone went silent. My mind raced... what had I said? Then it dawned on me and I repeated the sentence in broken English, "You sink I wear showt skirr evwee day fo you Danny-san?"

I blushed. *This was nuts!* I thought to myself. I had just suggested I wear a skirt. I was talking like my ridiculous, over the top Japanese teenaged accent...

"You will only wear a skirt for me?" He asked.

I felt somewhat defeated; I couldn't reject him, not a second time, but I really didn't want to acquiesce. But I did. Unsure of the consequences, I nodded my head in agreement and spoke into the phone, "Yes Danny-San. I wihw wear skirr fo you evwee day."

I swear, it sounded like he was growling on the other end of the phone. He was obviously getting off on the way I talked. *The way I talked.* "You have been taught well," he said to me. Maybe I didn't understand the Japanese at all.

With that, we said our goodbyes and I hung up. Kenny looked over at me with a scoff, and then headed to the studio lobby. As always, Jake was to pick him

up. I spent the remainder of the day preparing for my date with Danny. I put my chin length blonde hair up into a fashionable style, held in place with two pink plastic chop sticks. I did my lips in the multi-tonal, three dimensional style that Danny had loved so much last time we met. I was pretty impressed with how good I actually was at doing my own makeup. After an hour and a bit, Mike had again disappeared and Miko, with her wide eyes and long lashes, had emerged.

I dressed in a pink tank-styled jumper with a scoop neck and very brief hem-line. I made mental notes to be careful not to bend at the waist, lest I show the world my special little pink panties. It was remarkable how easy it was becoming to hide my little guy away. Koshi had said that the blockers and hormones would eventually shrivel our cocks and balls to an impossible size, but my male pride told me that it was impossible. And I believed that – until recently.

I wore semi-transparent white thigh-high stockings, the tops being inches shorter than the hem of my micro-skirt and fastened in place with cute pink ribbons. On my feet, calf-high pink PVC boots with almost two-inch platform soles and six-inch stiletto heels. I accessorized with my little pink PVC purse, dangling pink plastic bracelets and hoop earrings and a pink PVC collar with a white cameo hanging from it.

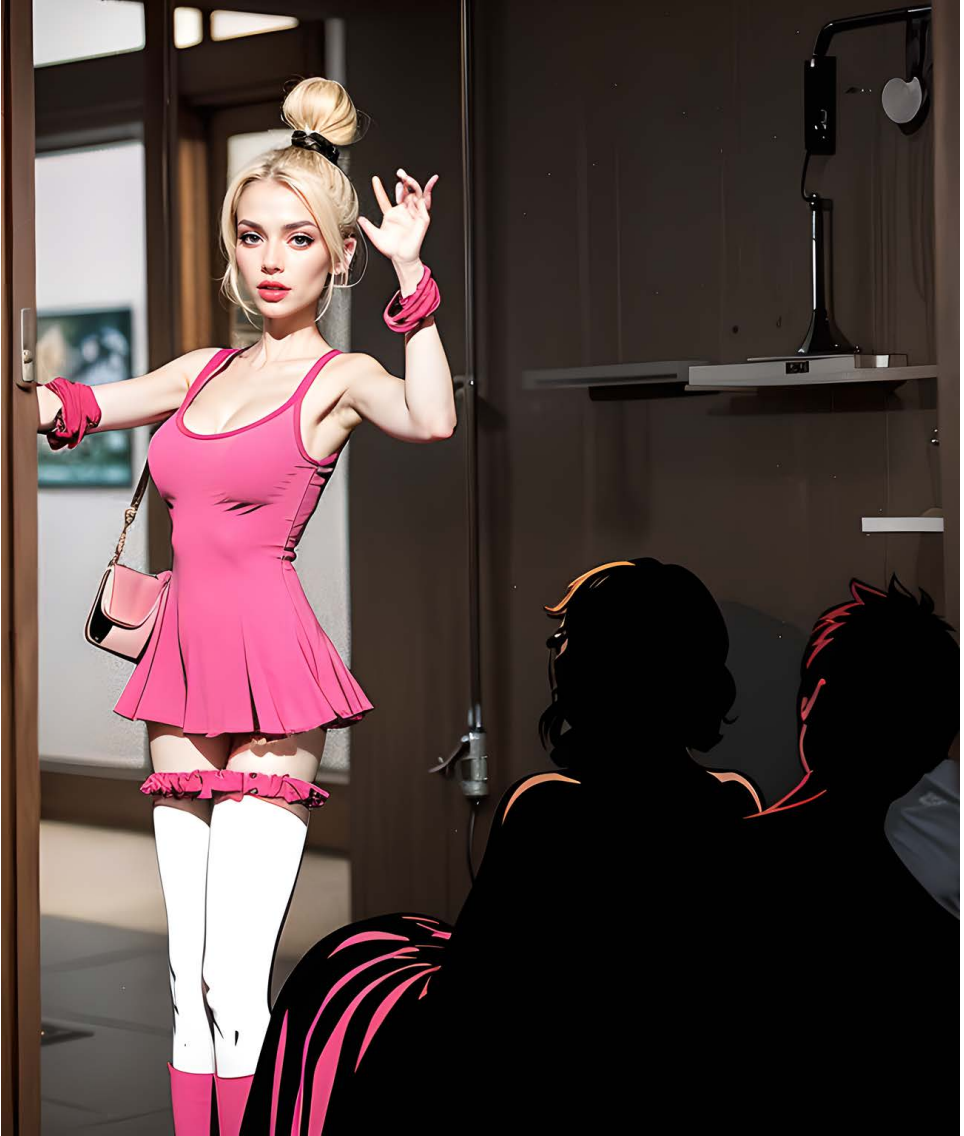
I paused to look in the mirror. Miko was hot... *Real* hot!

I made a point of saying goodbye to Ken before I left, so that he could see me all dressed up and ready to party. I had barged right into his room, catching him and Jake in the middle of some very bad things. He acted like he didn't care that I was leaving, but I knew he did. I knew and he knew that Miko was hot... *smoking* hot!

Danny, of course, agreed with my opinion, wasting no time upon my arrival in his car, kissing my lips without a word. I responded by kissing him back, hungrily. This went on for several minutes, his hands exploring my curvy body. All I could think about was that this was so wrong... But then he kissed my earlobe and the small of my neck and I melted. I moaned aloud. This was so good. My own hands began to explore him now. Starting on his sides, then on his hips, then his ass, then around to the front to his belt. My god, my hands had a mind of their own!

What am I doing? Danny smiled wide and said only one thing in Japanese, in a deep moaning voice that pushed me over the edge of my arousal, "Yes."

His belt buckle rattled as I fumbled with it, and I soon had it undone, as were his pants... Sliding quietly to the floor of the limo as my manicured half-inch fingernails began to touch him through his briefs. It was his turn to moan. I could feel him swelling under his shorts as I touched him. I didn't know what I was doing... but my fingers did, they were soon under his boxers, touching his bare member.



Oh my god, I thought to myself, I can't believe I'm touching a man's... I gasped. Danny had pulled back my blouse, peeled off the adhesive cups that held my firm breasts in place, and was kissing my nipples. I cried out in English, "Oh-my-g..." as my hands cupped around his swelling cock and began to stroke him gently.

This continued for what seemed like an eternity, until my knees gave out. I don't remember what caused it, just that I went from beside him, to kneeling in front of him. What happened next was a blur. Within seconds, I went from stroking to kissing to all out sucking on his thickened unit.

My brain was frozen. Who the hell was I? What the hell was I doing? Was I Mike, Montana boy? Was I Miko, Girly Japanese Music Star? A silly Japanese girl?

I kept sucking, looking up at Danny's smiling face. He was loving this so very much. The thought of me pleasing him so, served only to make me even more aroused. My lips locked around the base of him cock as the tip slipped into the back of my throat. My cheeks hollowed out as I sucked with furious force. I couldn't believe I was doing this... And I couldn't believe that I was loving this as I was. So was Danny. He bucked his hips, pressing the tip of his cock deeper into my throat. It was amazing how I managed not to gag.

I looked up at him again as he gently rocked in and out of my mouth. I was acting like such a slut. The thought made me suck harder. Why was I loving the thought of being of becoming such a slutty girl... My thoughts evaporated as he grabbed my hair and pressed himself against my face. He shot a load of salty warmth into my throat. I was such a little slut. I drank his cum down without even thinking. I let my mind and body go limp as he withdrew, carefully kissing and cleaning him until he replaced his briefs.

I smiled with the personal satisfaction of knowing that I could be just as girly and naughty as Kenny could be – notwithstanding the sex act that I had caught him and Jake in earlier that day. But this was better than sex. I had just given my very first blow-job... And instead of feeling disgusted... I was strangely... pleased. Well, maybe pleased is the wrong word. I don't know how to describe it.

Danny tucked himself in and buckled himself up before helping me back to my seat. He smiled, but said nothing. He knew what had just happened. Mike was disappearing... Being replaced by Miko. *His Miko.*



With Ken spending most of his time out with his new friends and Jake, he became a little bit of a stranger. There were other things, like his increasingly Gothic dress, that caused Kenny and I to grow further and further apart. We smiled for the camera and performed together as needed, but aside from that... We barely spoke. He was out most nights and only came home to crash in his bed once and a while. I seriously thought about changing the locks. I didn't even want to see him except when I was contractually obligated to.

So, with the hype from the album predictably beginning to wane, it meant more and more time on my hands to do... Nothing at all. There were no more classes, the Ishikawas had stopped coming around, and Koshi didn't answer my calls anymore.

And with nothing to do, and without Ken to hang out with, I began to sit down and write music like I had once done back in the States in my spare time. I hadn't even held a guitar in my hands for months. Whenever I was on stage, it was just with a microphone. The band was only a recording.

So it was not a shock when the inevitable eventually happened. Kenny told me one afternoon after our last tour stop had ended and the excitement over our CD had finally died down, that he was going to move in with Jake. I couldn't believe it at first, my best bud... living as a girl with some Japanese guy he's only know for a few months. But then it dawned on me that Ken was now more and more Keiko. And Keiko wanted to be closer to his boyfriend. I had been so foolish to push him away as I had. After he left, I realized I didn't even have his phone number.

Living alone in the big apartment was almost unbearable. I wrote songs to keep busy, and when I grew tired of writing, I went shopping or met Danny for tea or lunch. It seemed that I no longer worried about being thought of as a girl. In fact, I was almost embracing it. I guess performing oral sex on a man will do that.

One night, Danny came to the apartment to surprise me. I had given him his own key, so he let himself in. I was in my room singing as I wrote new songs. He snuck up behind me, and wrapped his arms around me as I sang. I smiled widely and asked him what he thought.

"Your singing is like a choir of angels, Butterfly," he smiled. "But you know that I would prefer you sing in Japanese. I'm so used to hearing you in Japanese that your voice in English sounds so foreign to me." I cocked my head and gave him an inquisitive look. He might be right. I was writing in English out of habit. I turned to my song sheets and began to erase and re-pencil. After a few minutes, I turned to Danny and sang a revised version of my song to him. A *Japanese* version. He clapped excitedly, then hugged me tight, "Oh Butterfly, your music is even *more* lovely now!" he whispered loudly in my ear as he kissed it's lobe.

And so with Danny's encouragement, I began to rewrite *all* of my songs into Japanese. And from that point forth, all of my songs were written in the same language.

Danny was so convinced of my talent that he insisted that I record a demo and present it to Hurato at TRJ. A day later, he called me to his office.



Hurato Muriata smiled as I sat beside Danny in his plush office. I had opted to dress in a very formal navy skirt suit. I looked more like the many office ladies that worked for TRJ than one of its more popular performers. Hurato was as

blunt as ever, “Your music is good, but are you prepared to abandon your heritage altogether, Miko-Chan?”

I looked confused. “If we sign you as an artist, it will be as *Miko* only. And Miko shall only be a singing and speaking in Japanese. Therefore your language and customs skills will have to be sharp. Whereas the duo you were once a part of was billed as the “*Girly Boys*,” we intend to promote Miko’s solo act as a “*Girly Girl*.”

My face turned white. Not that anyone would notice beneath my thickly applied makeup. Hurato must have sensed my apprehension. “Oh, my apologies. I didn’t mean to say it like that. We’re promoting you as a girl, but we could never force you to *become* one.”

He paused then continued with a coy smile, “Unless you *want* to become one” When I didn’t reply, he let that question go unanswered. Hurato picked it up from there. “Our market research tells us that we’ve done such a convincing job at making you the most girlish of performers, that most of your fans simply don’t believe you were ever a man.”

That kind of took my breath away. “Tondemonai!” I said. *No way!*

“We’re very effective at our jobs, Miko-chan. We’re very capable.” Hurato said, tersely. “Most even believe you were Japanese from birth. And since most fans believe you to be female, it makes little sense to market you in any other way.”

“As a Japanese singer?” I said, clarifying what he was saying.

“Yes, like any Japanese singer,” he replied. “But like any Japanese singer, you need the voice.”

The *Voice*? Well, I understood what that meant weeks later – when they removed the device from my throat that kept me from speaking. It had been a quick procedure, the doctor went in and adjusted my vocal cords without me even feeling any pain. As I tried to speak again, my voice squeaked out in a high-pitched chirp. It was so strange to hear it coming from my mouth. But I recognized that chirp. It was the same glass-shattering vocal range that so many young Japanese singers had. I sounded like I was a three-year-old girl.

“Perfect,” Koshi said when he heard me speak for the first time.

And so, shortly after I adjusted to my new voice, I began the process of recording and releasing my very first all-Japanese solo album. It was nothing too exciting, and not very different from my previous experiences in recording. Except of course for the fact that I was doing it alone.

Yes, there were plenty of people around, helping. There were the people getting me lunch, the person fixing my make-up. The person answering my cell phone for me. The person who was there to do nothing much but smile and say ‘Subarashii desu!’ And the group of interchangeable salarymen who hung around outside the studio. But most importantly, there was the TRJ producer,



who turned my guitar songs into long, slow ballads with string arrangements. But I still felt alone.

It had been months since I had seen Ken. I was curious as to what had happened to him, where he gone. Perhaps he had returned to his old life in the U.S. His relationship with Jake seemed built more on, well, sex than anything else. It wasn't going to last. I could see him wiping all the makeup off, putting the weight back on, and shrugging the last year of his life away like it was nothing. Ken was that sort of person. One day all in, the next gone. He could be working at that feed mill, trying to impress the farm girls, just as we used to. But that was something that it was looking like I would never do.

Especially now that "Miko" was becoming the next Japanese Pop Star! The album, "Naked Love" went right to the tops of the charts. Apparently the executives with Torsion Records Japan were right. After another quick trip to the clinic to make my face look a little softer, rounder and more like a Japanese girl and an increase in my expandable breasts... Not to mention the plumper, poutier lips, even *I* had to admit, the results were spectacular. I was on my way

to becoming the biggest thing on the air in Japanese radio. I was essentially ending my career as an English-speaking entertainer, and as male, but I was too busy to care.

I was touring across the country, doing big concerts in the biggest venues. The routine was much the same every day. I'd come into a city, do some radio interviews and some TV interviews, and then make some public appearances. It was a different experience than I had with *Girlly Boys*, because I was doing this by myself.

With no one to hide behind, or take the spotlight off me, I had to adjust. People expect a certain type of person to be the pop princess of Japan, and I needed to be that person. I needed to be shy, but thoughtful. I needed to be energetic and perky. I needed to be sympathetic. I needed to be every man's ideal girl, and every girl's idol. Most of all, I needed to be cute. Cute was the main thing. Cuteness was what they were falling in love with.

We had hired on two opening acts for the shows, and the lighting and sound techs made the whole thing a massive campaign. We were like a traveling circus. Every stop went better than the last. I was really beginning to enjoy being who I was. And every night we sold out to crowds of screaming teenaged girls – and perverted men.

On one such evening, after having thrilled a crowd in Kobe, I was congratulated by TRJ president Hurato Muriata. He kissed me on the cheek, excitedly telling me that I was the first TRJ artist to have a number one record for twenty weeks straight. Then he frantically apologized for kissing me.

As he bowed in respect, I couldn't help but notice his companion. He was escorted by a very cute young lady in a very sexy outfit. I recognized the girl as the leader of the band that had opened for me. They called themselves "The Geishas" and appropriately, she looked like some kind of traditional geisha, in a kimono style purple dress, worn with traditional wooden sandals. Her face was near white, with red rose-bud lips, just a hint of eye makeup and an ornate headdress. When these seemingly traditional and reserved women got on stage and screamed, jumped and danced through their songs onstage, it was almost frightening to watch. I bet that's exactly what they wanted.

They had some great rock songs. I was kind of envious. I hadn't been able to write songs like that since... Well... It had been a long time.

She stared at me, a little surprised, then giggled. She childishly hid herself behind Hurato. As the man continued to express his thanks to me, I couldn't help but try and make eye contact with the girl. But every time I did, she hid again and giggled to herself.

Finally, Hurato had enough of her antics and guided her towards me. I assumed she was just another smitten fan, too shy to ask for an autograph. Then, with a grin on her face, she spoke in Japanese, "I am your biggest fan I've fol-

lowed you from the beginning. Do you recognize me?" Her soft, high pitched voice sounded oddly familiar, but I was certain that I did not know her. I had never been introduced to her or anyone else in her band.



“I am sorry Miss,” I apologized in my most formal Japanese, “For I cannot recall meeting you”

She smiled, “We used to work together...”

I continued to draw a blank... I had never worked with *her* of that I could be sure.

“...In a feed mioh,” she continued having switched to broken English, “In Montana.”

My jaw dropped, “*Ken?*” I exclaimed, “Ken, is that *you?*?”

She giggled uncontrollably. Then she straightened up and put her hand on her hips mannishly, and spoke in her deepest voice. “Hello, Mike!” And she disintegrated into another giggle fit.

“Maa nantekotoda!” I yelled in astonishment. “You look like... You look like...”

“Like I am real Japanese?” She said with pride, and threw open her arms. We hugged, then stepped back, each inspecting the other. Her facial features had been softened to look more feminine, like mine, but she had obviously gone a step further and had her eyes surgically altered so as to look typically Japanese.

“My goodness Miko, your expression is quite surprising,” my former High School chum turned hot Asian chanteuse had returned to speaking Japanese, “Is it so difficult to comprehend that *I* am your former singing mate?”

My head was spinning. Kenny now looked exactly like the girls we had envisioned meeting while on our plane ride here, the ones we both commented about wanting to – *what was the vile expression that we would have used* – wanting to “Bang.” But if he looked like *this*, was it inevitable that *I* would soon look the same?

“No-no Keiko, you rook vely plitty. I am so vely happy to see you” I said in the typical mangled English I had become so accustomed to using.

Keiko giggled, “I see you Engrish ahsorike mine!”

I giggled back, it was an automatic reflex now, “Yes-yes! Miko speak vely good English too.”

“It’s whrat makes us Girly Boys!” Keiko said. “It’s whrat we-ru famousu for!”

The two of us burst into a fit of giggles before Hurato suggested we head for our waiting car. Unbeknownst to me, he had arranged for us to share a private jet together on our flight back to Tokyo. We chatted the whole way, primarily in Japanese, but occasionally in our silly broken “English.” We sipped saki and brought each other up to speed on our lives. I had missed my best girl so much.

Jake, as it turns out, was a pretty influential producer who recognized Keiko’s unique style and ability, and paired her with a group of equally talented and like-minded girls to form the “Geishas.” Of course it had meant Keiko’s being castrated and eventually undergoing a complete sex change. She claimed that

being in an “all-girl” band was the primary reason, and loving Jake was another – but she couldn’t fool me. I knew this was what she had wanted all along. Apparently she lived with Jake in a small country home when not in the city, where Keiko and Jake would record their records. And, as she told me, would act as his servant in addition to being his lover. She was always the kinky one.

I was so taken aback that I said barely a thing after she finished. All I could muster was a very American, “Wow!”

Then I peppered her with questions about having been made into the girl of Jake’s dreams. Why did she do it? Did it hurt? Did she *love* him? Did she miss being a man? All of which she answered very politely and formally – *as a polite Japanese Lady would*. She had been very well trained.

Then it was my turn. I told her about my solo album, which she had already heard and said was very nice, though not her style. I told her about the most recent cosmetic surgery that *I* had had, though it seemed to pale in comparison to hers, and I explained how Danny and I were pretty close, but I wasn’t sure what to do now, since I was “at heart” still a guy.

Keiko laughed, “Your body and your heart are two very different things, Miko. Can you even be stiff? Are your *kintama* even visible anymore?”

She was asking about my balls. I wasn’t sure I could answer that. Not even to my best friend.



A few days later I was getting ready to go with Danny to a fancy industry dinner. With the memories of seeing Keiko still playing on my mind, I asked him if he would like me better if I were a real girl. He said that he liked me as I was, but would like me no matter what. I took that to mean that he was content to date a transsexual girl, but if I became a complete girl – he wouldn’t object. Probably.

I’m not sure if I believed him. But that was fine for me. I didn’t really want to become a real girl. I was just thinking about it. I wasn’t serious, you know.

It was just another one of many business parties I had attended lately. But what made this one a little different was that I was introduced to the head of Torsion Records, USA. It took me a few minutes to recognize him. It was him – Todd. The VP guy who tore up our contracts back in LA. He didn’t even recognize me, nor did anyone tell him that I was Mike Sloan of the one-hit-wonder duo, Gnarly Boiz. Like there was any danger of me being spotted. Those days were long ago.

After letting Danny do most of the talking, Todd took charge. He told me that they were very interested in my talent. They had heard that I was an up-an-



coming star that might be able to cross over into the US. Quickly, before I could ask any questions, I was also introduced to Skip Campers, the newest winner of *American Popstar* who was touring Asia briefly before heading back to the U.S.

He looked me over with the same eyes as Danny did.

Todd suggested to Hurato that Skip and I record a duet while he was here. I was looking for a new single, so I didn't think it was such a bad idea. I did have my doubts that the Japanese public was ready for someone like Skip, though. Still, it might help to boost both of our sales in Japan – and Todd said that they would release it in the U.S., too. So why not?

The very next day, I joined skip at the TRJ center where we began to rehearse our duet. It was a rather dull conventional country-flavored rock song for my tastes. I liked a good ballad with a techno edge, but Skip's music was bland. "It's the kind of music that a man sings to a pretty girl that he likes," he explained with a smile. We went through the song sheet together with a producer, not my usual team, but someone Hurato had suggested. He seemed competent.

Skip commented on how my accent seemed to disappear when I sang. I blushed heavily at the comment, as I myself realized that speaking with that outrageous accent had become second nature to me... and how speaking Japanese was now first-nature. I decided that I may as well not try to lose my accent, as it might make Skip wonder why I was suddenly talking perfect English. He didn't seem to have a clue about me, and I was just fine with that.

We started to lay down tracks that very same day. Skip was putting his charm into high-gear. I chuckled a couple of times, as he was using many of the same tricks that I would have... Or rather *Mike* would have. Some of them, like calling me a "lovely Asian flower," were over-the-top corny... Besides... I was a *butterfly*, not a flower... But others did make me blush every time. Like we he smiled at me. Or when the track we recorded sounded good and he gave my little frame a soft hug. I felt a little guilty for letting him make me smile like that... And for making me feel so flush... I was, after all, supposedly Danny's girl. But then again, I wasn't a real girl... So how could I be "his"?

Skip kissed me.

American men... I can understand why girls in Japan are so interested. They're commanding and charming. A little crude and immature. When they kiss you it's like they're forcing themselves on you, and you just hang on. It's like you're a passenger in car out of control. It's not like Japanese men at all.

After the song was recorded, Skip was on his way back to the U.S.A. Just like that. It seemed so sudden, and there was so much that felt incomplete. We really clicked in the studio, and I knew there was so much more there than just a few days working together. Or maybe it was a good idea to let it stop there before... Well, before I got myself all confused.

I don't know exactly why I chose that moment to do it, but that's when I finally had the castration. The hormones had really already done it, so it was just a medical finality, and I just felt it was the right time. I however, chose to retain my penis, as I just wasn't ready to give that up. It was still a part of me. I called Keiko and went to the same clinic that she used.

While I was still in the hospital, Hurato called. He was very excited. The duet was soaring to the top of the U.S. charts. They wanted me to perform live at the National Music Awards, the biggest night in the U.S. music industry. He said I could possibly do some shows in the U.S. Maybe even a tour of some sort.



Finally. I had gone through so much. Now it might finally be my big chance back in America. Could it really be possible? I was beside myself. This was what I had always wanted. To get a big tour bus and drive around the country, mobbed by fans and partying all night long.

Keiko was so happy for me, and told me that I should go for it. She told me that I'd be doing it for the both of us. And once she said that, I had to go. This was what my heart had always desired, no matter how it happened.

When I told Danny, he showed little emotion. You know, in the way that men do. Japanese men, at least. He just took in the information and didn't say much for a few days. Finally, he told me that he didn't think I should go. That I should accept that my life was here now, and I had nothing left to prove. I couldn't believe he was trying to tell me *not* to go. Didn't he know how much I wanted this? Didn't he know me at all? So Danny and I fought.

There was more to this than just the trip to the U.S., though. I guess it sort of surprised me, but he was angry about what I had done to myself. The operation. I told him that I had done it to please him. He said that he never asked me to do that for him. No, he hadn't asked me, but it was the only way that we were going to be closer. Surely, it was obvious. I couldn't be his until I was done with my past.

But he didn't understand. "You don't understand! You don't understand what they will do to you!" He yelled at me.

"*Why do you want to stop me?*" I cried. "This is a dream of mine!"

"They will not accept you! They will not accept what you have become!"

"They accept me here, they can accept me in USA!"

"I won't let you go!"

"You cannot stop me!" I told him, "I am not asking you, I am telling you. I am going!"

He scowled at me. Then he turned away. "Perhaps you are not who I thought you were, butterfly. Perhaps you are just another American."

He said nothing more, and as I left, he was just sitting there reading a book. He didn't care about me, not like I thought he did – or else he would show some sort of emotion. I was glad to go.



I landed in Los Angeles feeling awful. I don't think I was able to sleep at all. Was I even going to be able to go back? Maybe Danny would never want to see me again. I didn't know. I must have been a wreck getting off that plane. But by the time I made it outside, I had collected myself. I decided that this was a new beginning, and I was going to make the most of it.

Skip was waiting at the airport to pick me up in his sports car... The same one that Mike used to own. I guess the record company just gave it to the next guy. I was glad he was driving, though. I had no idea how I ever handled such a big, powerful car.

I met with the record executives at the same building that the "Gnarly Boiz" had once visited. It seemed a little more intimidating to me this time. Last

time, I was pretty full of myself coming here. Now, I was just hopeful for whatever I could get. I was led into a big meeting room full of executives. I didn't recognize any of them. Maybe the old ones had been fired for passing up the incredible talent that was the Gnarly Boiz. They let them slip away to Japan where they sold tons of records, and so they got shown the door. Hey, I can dream.

The meeting was pretty short, and I didn't do a lot of talking. After all, I was the only girl in the room. They were very polite to me, made sure I was comfortable and even gave me a little gift – a Dodgers baseball cap.

I wore it, thanked them and giggled. Then I posed for some pictures with the men in suits.

As the meeting progressed, they spelled out what they wanted to do. They wanted a music video, some interviews and lots of photos. They told me how they wanted to “package” me to the American public. They felt that the “freshness” of having a Japanese singer was the reason it was becoming such a huge hit. They said they thought that my “audience profile” had “potential traction.” And now that they had seen me, they had “discussion points” about my appearance. They told me that while my blonde hair and blue eyes might be considered something of a novelty in Japan, here it was a dime a dozen.

“In fact, when you're not in your full makeup, you don't look all that Japanese at all,” one executive said. With a video shoot in two days, and a hoard of pending photo opportunities they asked me if they could dye my hair black and straighten it into a more stereotypical Japanese fashion. They also asked that I wear brown contact lenses. I would never argue against their wisdom. That's probably why I failed the first time. I knew better now. They were the authorities on this, as they obviously knew better than I did what the American public would prefer.

That night, Skip took me out to a restaurant to show me “how Americans eat.” It had been years since I had makuru. McDonalds, that is. I tried to cloak myself in ignorance, and let Skip order for me. I was hoping he'd just order something small for me, but he didn't. He ordered one of those huge American meals they're famous for. I couldn't even eat a few bites of the cheeseburger, though. It was just so... Disgusting. I couldn't stand the taste of bread anymore. And the cheese was simply... Well, it made me nauseous. I only liked the pickles.

I spent most of the meal giggling at his stupid jokes and hanging on his every word. He was telling me all the things that had happened in music over the last year, about how music was all going to be bought over the internet and how the iPod had changed everything. It had closed down a few chains already. Tower Records was even out of business. I couldn't believe it. Tower Records! They were huge when I had left. I insisted he tell me all he knew. I must have looked like I was totally fascinated by everything he was saying. And I guess I was.



We spent the night going out to a club and a bar, where I clung tightly to his arm. Sure, they had clubs like this in Tokyo, but here, it seemed so threatening. It was so... Alien. I didn't really understand what some people were saying. I know it was just regular English, but they talked so fast, I really had to concentrate to understand them.

Even the people were intimidating. Do all Americans do nothing but eat? They were huge. I felt like they could crush me at any time. Skip saw the fear in my face and he continued to tease me. He was gentle about it though. He wasn't being mean. I just smiled. He seemed so proud when he showed me off to his friends. "The biggest singer in Japan," he told everyone. I blushed.

On the day of the shoot, I was given a short pleated pink skirt, with white knee-high socks and black low-heeled Mary Janes. A tight white blouse, tied in a knot at the midriff and an equally tight pink vest over top completed the look. I looked more like some kind of Asian porn star than a musician. Especially once they finished my makeup, pale skin with bold high cheeks, dark eyes with long lashes and a cute shiny red mouth. Skip brushed his hand on my cheek, and told me that he thought I looked amazing. The look in his eyes reminded me of Danny. Or, at least the way he used to look at me. I loved the way he put his arm around my thin waist and hugged me close. I felt so safe with a big American man nearby.

After the photo shoot, we began to tour the talk show circuit. Everyday a new city, everyday a new school-girl outfit for Miko, and a new opportunity to spend time with Skip. He convinced me to re-record some of my songs in English. We hired someone else to do the translation, as I had always claimed I didn't understand the language that well. Besides, it gave us some time to work alone in the studio. And you know, get to know each other a little better. But too soon, I had a new English language album to release. We must have worked on it every day for a full month. We were practically inseparable.

The only time I was without Skip was when I was in bed. And more and more, I thought that maybe it was time to put Danny behind me and not spend any more nights alone. The tabloids had already decided were "getting serious." So, maybe we should. I wondered if these stories got back to Japan.

Skip pulled some strings, and got some good producers to mix the record I had made and he even invited a few of his industry friends to listen. I didn't think it was much more than just a kind of fun thing to do, but Skip convinced me that it was a great record. That if I released it here, I could be a big star. He was so excited for me; I just couldn't help but believe him. I presented it to Torsion records, and they told me they would listen to it and get back to me. Skip told me he would call in some favors and get it done.



One night, during an extended stay back in L.A., Skip asked me out for dinner and dancing at the trendiest nightclub in town. It was a big deal. No one came to this club without some serious show business clout. Only the big stars were allowed in, like Leonardo DeCaprio, Paris Hilton and Johnny Depp. Those sorts of people. I was giddy with excitement, it had been so many months since I had been out anywhere nice. Danny used to take me places often... The thought of Danny made me sad and angry; sad because I missed his companionship, and angry because he didn't seem to appreciate mine. Skip seemed to appreciate me very much, a thought that made me feel very strange and very warm all over.

I decided to wear a cute pink kimono-style mini-dress that showed plenty of leg and generous cleavage. With my two-inch hoop earrings, my dark hair done up in high ponytail, with five-inch heeled ankle boots. The outfit obviously exceeded Skip's expectations. At least the look on his face when he picked me up at my hotel room seemed to indicate that. It was my way of telling him I was his now.

We dined at an exclusive restaurant in North Hollywood. Skip insisted that we have a "real" Japanese meal, and ordered sushi. After all it *was* my "national food," as Skip called it. It turned out to be these horrible "California Rolls" which is a perversion of what real sushi is all about. But I smiled and ate them, politely.

After dinner we headed to the club. The club was called *Flesh* and I knew I had never been in a club by that name before, but I couldn't help thinking that I recognized it from somewhere. The familiar building had the name of the club spelled out across it in big red cut-out letters. The "s" and "h" in "Flesh" looked weathered and worn while the "Fle" looked brand new. *Had I been in this club before under a different name?* I wondered to myself. I was having a bad case of *deja vu*.

The inside looked familiar too, as we were escorted to the V.I.P. section where Skip immediately bought everyone present a round of drinks. I was very impressed that Skip seemed to know everyone there, though I couldn't help but feel just a little threatened about all the attention he was getting from some of the girls. One of them introduced herself to me as "Jo." She seemed very nice, and was very pretty also. After listening to her talk about how lucky I was to be here with Skip, I started to get that familiar feeling again, as I had done when I saw the front of the building we were in. Did I know her? Was it possible? Maybe it was just me.

But I couldn't shake the feeling as the night progressed. I tried to avoid drinking too much, not wanting to end up in a situation where someone might discover that I still had a penis, however small and shriveled it may be. However, the alcohol kept flowing. Jo said that she would look after me, that we girls



must stick together. The thought was not entirely comforting.

We danced and laughed and drink and took hits off of joints and lived like real rock stars. Skip kept disappearing with different girls as the night progressed. I was so increasingly intoxicated that I seemed to care less and less, until it was my turn to go with him. Jo could see the worry in my eyes, so she volunteered to come with us. Skip actually seemed to smile more at the suggestion.

Skip led us both to a quiet, private booth and helped us to sit, one of us on either side of him. Then he turned to me and kissed me on the lips. I recoiled, looking at him with an unsure expression. Jo took the opportunity to kiss his neck, running her hands over his chest and unbuttoning his shirt. Skip responded by moaning softly and turned to kiss her passionately. He ran his hands up over her smooth legs, under her tartan pleated mini skirt, and began to massage her upper thighs. Feeling stupid for acting so prudish, I leaned forward to continue unbuttoning his shirt and began to kiss his chest. Skip moved one hand from Jo's body to mine, and began to massage my breast and fondle my nipple. It didn't take long before both Jo and I were putty in Skip's hands. After a few minutes I could sense that he wanted something more, but I wasn't sure if I should do it or not.

Skip looked to Jo with sigh as if impatient with my progress. She turned to me with a smile and began to gently guide my long painted red nails through the motions of unbuckling Skip's belt. She was right. This was the way I could tell him I was in love with him. I unzipped his pants, and soon he was helping me fish his pulsating cock out of his boxers. Shyly, nervously, I responded to the Jo's instruction and was soon stroking his stiffness with my small, soft hands. All I could think of at the time was how sexy that looked.

I knew what was required of me. Skip was my new lover, and though I didn't know what I was going to do once the time came for me to explain that I was not quite like the other girls he had known, I fell to my knees and began to love him with my mouth. My mind was going blank. Memories of my new life flashed before my eyes as a sucked him off. How I had become part of Japan's most popular duo, how Keiko had left me to pursue her own career, how she had become a complete girl, how much I had cared for Danny, how I wanted to be an American music star. Nothing seemed to make sense before that, not the memories of two all-American boys getting their big break, not the thought of my treating women so poorly... *Could that have been me?* I looked up at Skip. He smiled as I brought him closer to orgasm. I smiled back with my eyes and hollowed out my cheeks, sucking with a furious force. I was Miko and Skip cared for me. The rest of my life, all the way up to right now was meaningless. It was so clear to me. Miko was who I really was. I was Miko in every cell of my body. I always had been. Something clicked in my brain at that moment. I was never going to be the same again. I had found myself.

But seconds later, that all changed. Jo had slipped out of her panties and without warning, moved me out of the way before lowering herself onto Skip's lap. She began to buck and rock as I watched from the floor where I still kneeling. I reached up for Skip, but he just absently pushed me aside. I tried to touch him again, and he threw me down on the floor. Jo said nothing, she just kept on riding Skip. She looked down on me with pity and I suddenly knew that I had just been used. All I was to him was an object. A trophy. A little Japanese doll for him to play with. Now that I had been shown off as his latest toy, I was discarded.

My eyes began to tear up as I realized this. I looked at Skip and the just smirked back. "You're adorable when you cry," he said. He *didn't* care for me at all. He just wanted to use me.

The shock made me tremble as I stood up and made my way out of the V.I.P. section. I turned once, to see if Skip was chasing after me, but sadly he was not. He did not care about me. The thought filled me with anger, and also with remorse. For I knew that Danny would not have done such a thing. His feelings for me were real. He was not cruel like this American. I was such a fool.

I got back to the hotel and buried my face in the pillow on my bed. I was sobbing uncontrollably. As I tried to get control of myself, I saw the message light flashing on the phone. Todd from Torsion records had called. My new album would not be released. They felt that my sound, and my appearance, was "too foreign" for American audiences. "Maybe," he suggested, "you could make a novelty record. Something for laughs." I threw the phone across the room in anger. *They* had been the one who insisted that look *more* Asian in the first place.

I called Todd back and wanted to know why they had made this decision. I got his voice mail. "Whry you not rerease record?" I said. "I can be brig star for you! I can be reral Amelican! I not foleign!" I tried to slow down and pronounce the words correctly. My career was in the balance. "Prease, I make good lecord! I... I..." I could not talk any more. I could only say words like I had been taught to. "Wrat wrong writh my voice?" I said to myself. "I... I Amelican boy! I not a grirl!"

I tried to speak a few more times, but it just was not in me. I could not say the words anymore. I could not pronounce proper English. It was like my mind had just locked away everything I used to be. Why was it betraying me?

I began to weep uncontrollably. I called Keiko, and told her everything. She told me that I should come "home." I'm not sure what my answer was. I just hung up the phone.

I stood in front of the slim mirror on the room's door and looked at myself. I was so small and fragile. Here I was, half a world away from Danny and I was lost. I needed him. He was my life now. This was the worst decision I had ever



made, to come here. I felt like I didn't want to ever make another decision again.

I wrapped my thin arms around my little, shivering body. I saw through my brown eyes, my lovely brown eyes, the person who I truly was. My silly female mind had made a silly decision. All I could hope for now was to beg forgiveness. I would do anything for him. I was not worthy of his love. And so that night I was on a plane back to Japan. I needed my Danny.

Keiko met me at the airport and took me directly to the clinic I had visited before. I was on the phone the moment the plane took off, and told her exactly what I wanted to do. With just a quick talk with the doctor, I was taken into the operating room, where I underwent more surgery to make my eyes look like the real Japanese girl I was. No more pretending. I had my nose made much smaller and cuter. My lips were made more and more pouty and... Oh, I also finally had my penis inverted into a vagina. They injected some time-release things to make my skin so wonderfully tan and smooth. I left my hair dark and my eyes brown.

In the hospital, I watched all the TV shows I could bear and practiced my language until I fell asleep. It felt so good to be home. This time, I would be the perfect Japanese. After the bandages came off, I returned to Danny's place and pleaded with him. I told him that I was nothing without him, without his strength and his guidance. I was his, to do with as whatever he wanted. I wanted to give my life over to him. All I could ever be now was to be his.

It has been months since that ordeal. Today I am Mrs. Chano, wife of the famous Daisuke ("Danny") Chano. I have never been so happy. I honor my husband and it brings meaning to my life. My place is with him, and staying in the background. I look after him and keep house. When I see him on TV, smiling and laughing with the famous people, I know that I am a small part of it.

Sometimes, it is true, that he spends his nights in the beds of other people. There are stories. Including some sleeping with TS girls. But as long as he comes home, it is not mine to question – I am just his wife. I knew when he proposed to me that I was not the person he had first fallen in love with. But Daisuke knew that having a respectable wife was important, and he knew I loved him. I am just happy to be allowed into his life.

Something I found out, but he did not tell me, was that he is also a very big business man. His family owns my old record label, TRJ. They have for many years. I guess that is why he wanted to know me in the first place. Maybe it was why he cared so much for me? Sometimes I get suspicious that he had more to do with making me a girl, but then he calls me his butterfly, and I go all soft inside.

We live in the top two floors of the Izumi Garden Tower in downtown Tokyo. Living in big city is wonderful. The shopping is amazing. And I get to share it



with my friends. I have lunch with Koshi every week or two, to laugh about old times. I love to hear him talk about how things are going with the new bands that he is managing. The Ishikawas help me with the house, and Mrs. Ishikawa is kind of like a mother to me. They are charming. They have worked for Daisuke's family for two generations! And all the sudden, they do not have much problem with English.

Keiko is here, too. She and Jake broke up soon after our wedding. She called me in tears, balling something about wishing that she had not become a complete girl. Daisuke and I bought their house in the country as a retreat. Keiko now works for us as our maid. She keeps our penthouse clean, as well as helping me dress, and with my hair and makeup. She loves it. She wants to be a real servant – I call her “jochuu” and treat her like dirt. We make her wear a ridiculous maid's uniform that would be considered indecent if she were to be seen outside of our place. She totters around on six or seven inch platform heels, with her kept eyes low, and talks about herself in the third person. She says “Jochuu Keiko clean floor?” or “Jochuu Keiko wash clothes?” We simply laugh... Unless she does something wrong, then Danny will spank her for being incompetent. Some times I know that he may do more with her, but again, I am only his wife, it is not my place to question him. Having Keiko as our jochuu makes me happy, makes Daisuke happy and also makes Keiko very happy.

I no longer sing. I do not have the time, between shopping, trips to the salon, entertaining, and being a good wife. I keep myself pretty and always defer to my honorable husband. He will often instruct jochuu Keiko on what clothes he wishes for me to wear, or how to wear my hair, important things like that. Daisuke likes my heels to be high and my skirts to be short. Keiko will spend many an hour to prepare my face and hair to my husband's liking. At the parties he throws for all of his important friends, he likes to show me off. I smile and giggle for everyone, and they are all so nice to me.

Yes, I do know now what had happened. They told us we were being presented as girls, but that wasn't the truth. The audience knew all about us. They knew we were men, they knew we were American. And when we dressed up in our outrageous girlish outfits and spoke in that strange accent we had been taught to use, they were all laughing. They were all in on the joke, and we weren't. We were cartoons. Living, breathing cartoons to make fools of – laughing at the mighty Americans speaking like ignorant baka and dressed in fairy clothing. When I think about it, it is pretty funny. Japanese are so clever.

Still, as long as I have my Danny, everything is alright. When he wants sex, I say “make rove to Miko,” and he tells me to say it again. It's what turns him on.

It's so much more than I have any right to ask for. I live in the greatest city in the world, with the most dedicated of peoples. I belong here. I share in Danny's life, and I know I am important in that way. That is what it is to be big. Not big like I wanted to be, but big in Japan.

Miko

