

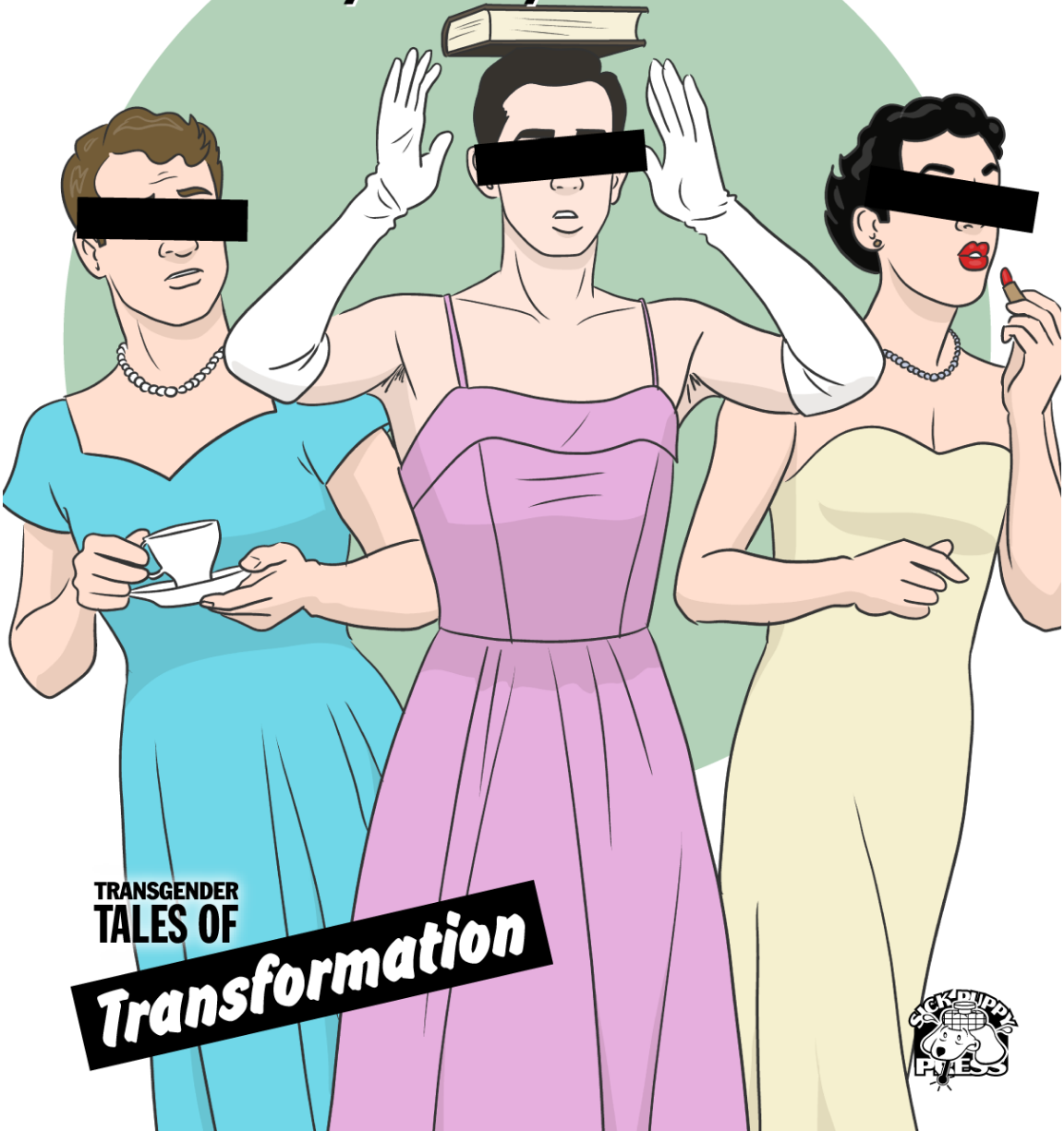
ADULTS ONLY

178 pages 39 illustrations

CHARM SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

CHARM SCHOOL BOOK 2

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack



TRANSGENDER
TALES OF

Transformation



J O E S I X P A C K

**CHARM
SCHOOL
CONFIDENTIAL**

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack
A Tales of Transformation story



2025 Edition

Design & layout © 2025

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CHARM SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

THE EMBEZZLER

The motel room looked like a crime scene — a crime against interior design. Air-raid architecture with cinder blocks made up three walls and the bed was from the 1960's. The TV was the cheapest selection at Circuit City in 1999. The painting over the bed had a corner peeling up and the matador painted on it was either toro-ing a bull or mass of pudding. Gavin sat on the edge of the bed, peeling the label off a bottle of warm beer and pretending it wasn't the last one. Empty takeout containers were stacked like a hopeless game of Jenga near the trash, and his duffel bag sat half-zipped in the corner, as if it was trying to hide from him.

The blinds had been shut for five days. He hadn't seen the sun in four. He figured he'd need sunglasses if he ever dared to open the damn things. But that would mean facing the outside world, and Gavin Larkin — formerly CFO of Norwell Financial Group, current fugitive with ten million dollars stashed across three offshore accounts — wasn't ready for sunlight.

His burner phone was dead. Not that it mattered. No one worth hearing from had that number anyway. He picked up his real phone, the one he'd promised himself not to touch. Thirty-eight missed calls from his wife. Two from a blocked number, which probably wasn't his lawyer, and probably was someone who'd like a word with him in a federal interview room.

"Hell with it," he muttered, tossing it facedown.

He took a long drink from the beer, then reached for the notepad on the nightstand. It was crinkled, damp at the edges, with scribbled names of countries — Belize, Moldova, Cambodia — under a shaky heading: *No Extradition*. He'd crossed most of them out. He wasn't even sure how to get to Moldova. Did Moldova have an airport? A navy? Could you sail there? That was a problem for a braver man. Or at least a braver man with a boat.

He circled "St. Kitts" twice. Had a nice ring to it. Tropical. Beaches. Surfing. Lack of police.

He scratched at the stubble on his chin, looked at the bank statement printout one more time. Ten-point-two million. It was almost laughable. He'd spent twenty years in accounting lamenting how invisible he was, so he worked his way up the org chart. Now he wanted to be invisible again.

He started to draw a crude sketch of a boat.

Then came the knock. Not the loud kind. Not police loud. But sharp. Precise. Too confident for housekeeping, too late for food.

He froze. Reached slowly under the bed, wrapped his hand around the pistol he was hiding under there. Just in case. He held it behind his back.

He moved to the door, keeping low, looked through the peephole.

A woman. Mid-fifties, plain-faced, looking bored. It made her instantly suspicious. She wore a purple skirt suit and held a leather case, overstuffed with papers.

She wasn't fidgeting. She wasn't looking around. She just stood there, waiting.

Gavin opened the door two inches. The chain held it from going any farther. "You lost?"

She met his eyes. "Mr. Larkin. I can help you disappear. Permanently."

He didn't open the door further, and his grip on the pistol didn't loosen. This mystery woman wasn't blinking. That was either very good or very bad.

"You should leave."

She didn't. "The police are narrowing their radius. You have maybe three days before they track you down."

He closed the door, tucked the gun into the back of his pants, undid the chain and then opened the door. "Who the hell are you?"

She stepped past him and into the room without waiting to be asked. She sat in the only clean chair, adjusted her skirt with the sort of practiced calm that made him even more baffled. Her case thudded onto the stained carpet.

"Merill Thorne. I work with people like you."

"Who are 'people like me?'"

"Mr. Larkin, you embezzled ten million dollars. You're sleeping on a motel mattress that has twenty years of nocturnal emissions on it. You know you don't have a lot of time and you need a place to hide. Those are the kind of people I work with. People who are terrified of being found."

He shut the door. "You're with the FBI?"

She arched one brow. "The FBI does not knock."

"You look like a funeral home director."

"Sometimes I feel like one." She opened the briefcase, not for him, just to check something inside. "I'm here to offer you something no one else can."

He waited. She didn't fill the silence right away. That unsettled him more than if she had.

"Well?" he said. "Let's have the pitch."

"No one will find you. Ever. You don't need to leave the country."

"Sounds like a scam."

"It's not."



He folded his arms. “What’s the catch?”

“You give me two-hundred fifty thousand. Cash. Up front.”

Gavin barked a laugh. “What, you set me up in a cabin with a beard and a wood stove?”

She tilted her head. “You’d still be found, and the lifestyle is less than ideal for a multi-millionaire. No. We offer... a very livable solution.”

“Livable?”

“We place you somewhere no one would ever think to look. Somewhere that would never, under any circumstance, be connected to someone like you. It even has police protection, in a way.”

“Witness protection for fraud guys.”

“Hardly. We don’t waste resources. You have money. You’re being hunted. This is a place where you can hide, and no one will ever find you. Guaranteed.”

He stared. This guarantee was tempting.

“You’re going to kill me.”

“No.”

“This is a cult.”

“No.”

“You think I’m stupid.”

“No.”

She pulled a card from the briefcase and placed it on the bed. Thin vellum. Bone-white. No phone number, no email. Just a title:

The Priscilla Dandridge Charm School for Young Women

He blinked. “You... You have to be kidding.”

“No. I’m not.”

“I’m not a young woman.”

“That isn’t important.”

He held out his hand for the card. She pulled it back before he could touch it. Slid it into her bag. “I can’t leave these lying around. You’ll get the full details when you’re committed.”

“What am I committing myself to?”

“A way out. A way back to normal life. It doesn’t come cheap.”

“You’re just going to turn me over to the police.”

“I would have already done that if I wanted to.” She sighed. “We don’t make this offer more than once.” She checked her watch. “And I never stay in the same place for more than five minutes.”

“It’s been three.”

“It takes a minute to walk to my car and start the engine. 10 a.m. tomorrow. I’ll be in the parking lot outside.” She stood. Smoothed her skirt again. “Come ready with the money. Or don’t come at all.”

Then she walked out, same deliberate pace, same posture.

Gavin stood in the middle of his mess, the beer sweating in his hand.

He looked at his notepad. At the scratchings of a plan that led nowhere. He sat down hard on the edge of the bed and let out a long breath.

“Hell,” he muttered. “I don’t have anything else.”

Then he started figuring out how to get the money.



Merill waited in the motel parking lot like someone working at the DMV: bored, listless, and calm enough to make anyone who saw her nervous. Gavin approached her sedan slowly, envelope clenched in his right hand. She rolled down her window and accepted it. Inside was \$250,000.

“Now what do I get for that?”

“Get in the back,” Merill said, eyes fixed on the rearview mirror.

He opened the door, hesitated, then ducked inside. Hanging neatly from a hook above the window was a garment bag, matte black, with gold lettering he didn't care to read. At his feet was a white cardboard box, plain except for the label that read, “New Student Kit.” He wasn't sure he wanted to open it.

Merill turned the key, starting the engine without another glance. “Time to disappear.”

As the car rolled onto the road, Gavin cleared his throat and pointed at the bag. “This wasn't part of the deal.”

“It's all part of the process,” she said. Her eyes flicked to him again in the mirror. “And the deal was for you to vanish without a trace. Remember?”

“Yeah,” Gavin muttered. “But...”

Merill interrupted him without raising her voice. “I didn't promise you'd *like* it.”

Gavin took a deep breath, unzipped the garment bag, and froze. Inside was a sky blue shirt, delicate and gauzy, paired with a pleated plum skirt. Underneath was a padded bra — white, carefully stitched, disturbingly realistic — and thick grey tights folded neatly alongside shiny black Mary Jane shoes. The cherry on top was a wig, honey-blonde with neat bangs, resting atop the box like a sleeping pet.

“Seriously?” Gavin asked, holding up the skirt like evidence in a courtroom. “You've gotta be kidding.”

“No joke,” Merill said calmly. “Put it on. You need to look the part.”

“The part of what? A high-school cheerleader?”

“The part of a young lady enrolling at a charm school,” she said, eyes forward. “If anyone sees you, they'll just think you're another student.”

Gavin stared at the clothes, but they stared right back. “I'm not wearing a skirt.”

Merill met his gaze in the mirror again. “I hear orange is the new black. Maybe you'd like that instead.”

He picked up on the insinuation he'd be in an orange prison outfit if he didn't play along. He cursed quietly and started pulling off his clothes, sliding into the bra first, fumbling with clatch clearly not meant for fingers like his. The skirt

was worse. Gavin's face felt hot as he tugged the waistband into place, silently wishing the windows were tinted.

"Thirty minutes," Merrill reminded him. "Traffic's light."

"This is some kind of front, right? Just a way to hide people. It's not really a school, is it?"

The middle-aged woman just grunted. "It's as real as far as anyone knows."

By the time Gavin finished, Merrill had pulled off to the tire pump at a gas station. She climbed out and opened his door. Without a word, she reached into the box and pulled out tubes, brushes, and powders.

"Wait," Gavin protested, backing up into the seat, "you're not putting that stuff on me."

She cupped his chin firmly but gently, tilting his face upward. "Hold still. This is delicate work."

As she dabbed foundation onto his cheeks and blended carefully, Gavin cringed. Her touch was gentle, professional and oddly comforting. She knew what she was doing.

"A little warmth around the eyes," she murmured. "Softness around the jawline. Chin up."

Gavin jerked back slightly, blinking. "I'm going to look like a clown."

She leaned him toward the rearview mirror, revealing a face that looked different — softer, younger. "You're going to look like a woman. At least from a distance. Good enough for our purposes."

Merrill got back in the car without another word and drove through streets lined with strip malls, nail salons, and fading storefronts, passing a liquor store with a flickering neon sign. Gavin slumped lower in his seat, hoping no one could see him as they stopped at red lights. No one did.

When Merrill finally parked, Gavin stared out at an old strip mall — drab, peeling paint, stores closed long ago. One glass door, barely hanging onto its hinges, had a sign carefully painted in flaking gold letters: *The Priscilla Dandridge Charm School for Young Ladies*. Gavin swallowed, heart sinking.

They stepped inside, and the interior was the exact opposite of the drab storefront. A mix of modern tech and 1960's furniture all in pristine condition, as if used every day, and somewhere down the hall echoed laughter and whispers, the steady click of girls' shoes. Gavin tugged at the hem of his skirt, wishing it was longer, feeling suddenly vulnerable, exposed, ridiculous. No one even glanced his way.

Merrill led him to the reception desk, where a woman in a lavender blouse with neatly combed hair smiled brightly at him.

"This is Blair Dahlgren," Merrill said clearly. "New student."



The receptionist, a Middle-Eastern beauty whose desk plaque read “Rani” handed him a laminated ID card. Gavin stared at it dumbly.

“There’s a mistake here,” he said, voice cracking slightly.

Merill’s tone was firm, confident. “No mistake. You’re Blair Dahlgren.”

Rani nodded politely. “Welcome, Blair.”

Before Gavin could object further, they were ushered upstairs, down a hall, into a richly decorated office cluttered with Hollywood memorabilia. Eleanor Tuft sat at a side desk, overlooking a parking lot, perfectly poised, with silver-blond hair and eyes that were immediately judgmental. She rose with a careful smile, adjusting the swan-shaped brooch pinned elegantly to her blazer.

“Ah. Blair,” Eleanor said warmly. “We’ve been expecting you. I’m sorry Dianna isn’t here, but I’ll be happy to show you around.”

Rani entered quietly, serving them tea in porcelain cups. Gavin accepted his with shaking hands, feeling oddly clumsy, and never more out of place. Eleanor leaned forward slightly, her gaze soft but intense.

“You’re here to reclaim what the world tries to take from you,” Eleanor said gently. “Poise. Beauty. Femininity.”

Gavin opened his mouth to speak, but Eleanor raised one manicured finger, stopping him with a gentle smile.

“You leave,” she said softly, “when you have found the woman inside you.”

Gavin tried to laugh, desperate for any sign of humor or irony. No one joined him. He wanted to explain that he was just here to hide. Not a student. He had no interest in actually being a student in some grandiose charm school — if that was even a real thing. Yet, he didn’t say a word, too scared that he’d break whatever protocol this was. His freedom was on the line. He could put up with this a little while longer. Or, at least until someone broke character and leaned in to tell him what he was really here for.

Merill placed a steady hand on his shoulder. “Trust the process, Blair. We never fail to bring out the charm in everyone.”

Then she slipped quietly out the door, leaving Gavin alone with Eleanor, who guided him down a long hallway and some stairs to a soft-pink dorm room with a vanity mirror, pink bedspread, and an empty wardrobe that somehow felt expectant.

When Eleanor left him alone, closing the door gently behind her, Gavin stared into the mirror, wondering what he had just done. This was a front, wasn’t it? This wasn’t real. He wasn’t a student in a girls’ finishing school. That would be ridiculous.

THE TROUBLEMAKER

The screech of the tires was what had first attracted him to the Porsche. The first time he'd heard it was when he saw his father squeal out of the driveway at an insane speed, jetting down the road. It swerved along, hugging the curves like it was on rails, even as it was going over 120.

Right there and then, Connor Keough knew he was going to drive that car for himself, no matter how much his Dad threatened to punish him. He was warned repeatedly that his very life would be in danger for even touching the car, but what did his Dad expect him to do? He was a teenager, for God's sake.

It felt so good, the hear that motor purr as he drove it out of his Dad's garage. It was a dream to drive. He felt like he was king of the world. His school friends were certainly impressed, that was for sure. As he ran the main drag of town, they all looked. Every one of them.

The screech of those tires had him the first time he heard it. That was what captivated him.

However, the second time he heard the tires screech, it was as he lost control of the \$280,000 car. It was followed by the sound of crunching metal and exploding airbags.

He was perfectly fine, a tribute to German safety engineering. Connor walked away. Or, more accurately, he ran away. He knew he couldn't be caught. He ran all the way back home, terrified.

His dad had slaved away for decades to save up for that car — as Connor was regularly reminded by his father — and he had basically sacrificed everything to get it. Connor even suspected that it was the reason he'd divorced his mother, just to save money for this project. It meant everything to him.

Fortunately for Connor, his father wasn't around at that moment in time. He was overseas, on a business trip or something, and would be gone for another few days. As far as Connor was concerned, as he pictured at the heap of smoking metal he had left on the highway, those few days were his last on Earth. For now, he was being looked after by his new step-mother Zlatica, whom his father had met through the internet and married a few months ago. She was from Macedonia, wherever that was. Fortunately, she was too busy calling family and shopping to pay much attention to him.

They weren't a rich family at all. No, the Keoughs were just middle class, and the car was something his father had been saving up for over twenty years. Now Connor Keough, just 17, knew his father would be out for blood when he arrived back home. He could already see his insane rage-filled eyes.

It was hard to imagine what his already ill-tempered and wrathful father would do when he had a good reason to kill his only son. That time Connor had



set the gazebo on fire wasn't going to even compare, and he'd just barely escaped strangulation from his father's crazed, homicidal clutches.

If Connor was going to survive his father seeing the wreckage of his life's fondest desire, he was going to need a place to hide, and he knew it. It also needed to be somewhere he could never be found. Because that was a necessary requirement at this point.



“31st and Regent,” the robot lady said over the sound system of the bus.

That was his stop, according to his phone. Connor got up, lost his balance and then used all the rails he could to maneuver to the back door of the relatively empty bus.

It had been a week of nerve-wracking emotions for Connor. He had been dodging his step-mother every day, sneaking around the house like a burglar just to get food. That so-called step mother of his, Zatica, was a relatively newly-wed wife didn't know about the attic above the garage and Connor had been hiding out there, only coming out when she was off on one of her many shopping trips.

He knew he was living on borrowed time, but he had no idea where he could go. He didn't have a lot of money to spend for himself. His friends had nope'd out on him and even that crazy uncle who had promised him a room any time for any reason, denied him.

That had led him to get desperate. His searches for staying in a hostel somewhere were fruitless, since he was neither a student nor a foreigner. A check on finding a cheap room was brutally eye-opening as to how expensive rent was, and that had left him with his last idea: school.

After several web searches, he'd finally found a place that would cover his tuition, provide him room and board — and not ask any questions. In fact, they had a reputation on the internet for accepting just about everyone who applied.

He stepped off the bus onto the hot concrete of Hollywood, hearing the unfamiliar hollow noise of his heel strike. It shocked him. He had never, after all, worn heels before.

The school he had wound up applying for was the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School. A school for girls.

In a way, it was the perfect cover. No one, especially his father, would even think to look for him at some has-been charm school for girls. He knew nothing about the place, except that it was in a bad part of town, it was a forgotten piece of Hollywood history and it had two stars on Yelp.

So with nothing but the dress on his shoulders and his phone, he headed across the street to see if he could fool them into believing he was a girl.

The girl at the reception desk, a Pakistani girl named Rhandi, didn't seem to even blink when Connor showed up in the front office of the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School, and Connor breathed a sigh of relief that he had fooled someone.

Fortunately, Connor had long hair and was thin with delicate features. With a little bit of color on his lips and some mascara on his lashes, he met the mandated minimum requirements to be mistaken for a girl.

His luck seemed to be holding up, as he was whisked into an interior room to wait for the paperwork to be cleared. “Good morning, Miss LaFontaine,” said an older woman who arrived just a minute later.

Connor snickered at the made up name he’d filled out the application with.

The older woman, dressed immaculately and elegantly, continued. “I’m Miss Tuft. I’m the director for this school and...” The woman’s older eyes looked around for a moment. “Do you have a parent or guardian with you, Miss LaFontaine?”

“They... Uh... Couldn’t make it,” the teenage boy said.

“Yes. Yes. So sorry to hear that.” The older woman sat down at the table Connor was at, on the opposite side. She seemed to pause for a moment before continuing. “We will have to check with them, of course.”

“Of, of, of course,” Connor said. He was prepared for this moment, though, and had devised a plan of true genius. “Good luck, though. Mom’s from Macedonia and doesn’t speak a word of English.”

“I see. And your father?”

“In a coma.”

“I’m so sorry. That’s rather unfortunate.” She drummed her fingers on the table. “It does complicate things a bit.” She stood up, only after just having sat down. “Let me show you to your room, Miss LaFontaine.”

“Cool!” Connor replied as he shot up to stand on his heeled feet, only losing his balance for a moment. He had passed. He was home free.

“Follow me,” Elenor Tuft said with the slightest of slight grins.

They made their way through the narrow halls of the somewhat cramped school, heading up one staircase, and then another. “It’s a cozy little school we run here, Miss Fontaine. But don’t let the size fool you. We have many students attending here. Over 55, and that number is growing every term.”

“Got it,” was all the small talk Connor could muster. He was a little on edge, suddenly aware that he was in a building filled with nothing but women, and he was the only man around. He didn’t know if he should be excited or terrified. At the moment, he was experiencing a little bit of both.

“Your room is right over here,” Ms. Tuft said, opening the door for Connor and letting the door drift open. Inside was a standard dorm room, with a bed, desk and closet. A very small bathroom was tucked away in the corner by the entrance. The only thing of note was the color of the room, which was a pale pink on the walls and bedspread, and white everywhere else.

“Not gonna use the closet, I guess,” Connor said, just to say something. “I don’t really have any luggage.”

“Oh, I’m sure you’ll find a use for the closet, Ms. LaFontaine.” Elenor didn’t betray her thoughts any further. “While you settle down, and get used to the room, I need to reply to a message. I’ll be back in just a moment.”

“Sure.”

Elenor walked to the end of the hallway, out of Connor’s sight. He looked around a little more. It wasn’t much to look at. It certainly wasn’t as nice as his own room, and only a quarter of the size.

With little to hold his interest, he looked out the open door and noticed that there was a padlock on the door of the room opposite his own.

He went to get a closer look, and as he did, he could hear something behind the door. A mumbling.



After she was past the other dorm rooms, Elenor held her phone to her ear.

“Well?” She said, without even saying hello.

“Only child,” the woman at the other end of the line said. “Full name Connor Frederick Keough, 17 years old. Parents divorced, and living permanently with his father and step-mother. Family income of 115 thousand annually, father is a hydraulic engineer. Junior at Fairfax High.”

“Where did this kid even come from?”

“Well, we’re still pulling information on him. As far as we can tell, he filled out an online form last night and just waltzed in the front door today. I didn’t even have a chance to run him through the database yet.”

“He sounds like a runaway.”

“I’ll have to investigate to be sure. He certainly isn’t running away for the usual reasons.”

“So... Any liabilities?”

“Just the unknown.”

“Thanks, Merill,” Eleanor said as she ended the call. It wasn’t the first runaway kid to show up at the Dandridge School. Heck, it wasn’t even the first one this week. They had a protocol for this kind of thing. They put them up, put him through orientation, integrated them into classes, and if there were any reasons to not allow them to continue, they’d find a way to kick him out. Over time, they had learned that most of the boys who wound up at their front door needed their help.

Their very *special* kind of help.



The sounds coming from behind the padlocked door were sounding more and more troubling to Connor. He decided to see if he could hear anything further by getting closer.

“How do you like the room?” Elenor said, inserting herself between Connor and the mysterious door. “Not very spacious, I know, but I’m sure you’ll grow to love it.”

“Uh, what’s happening over there?” Connor asked, pointing at the door.

“Quarantine,” Ms. Tuft replied as she gently funneled Connor back into his dorm room. “Poor girl is having a horrible time with the flu. She keeps walking in her sleep. We’re keeping her door locked for her own safety and the safety of others.”

“Oh,” Connor said. That kind of made sense to him. He wasn’t sure, though.

“Why does a charm school even need dorms?”

“Most don’t,” Elenor said. “But then again, they’re not very good schools. Here, we’re fashioning the next generation of dynamic, effervescent young women as they become business leaders, artists, wives and influencers for the next generation. You can hardly do that on a part-time basis.”

“I thought it was just going to be classes on setting tables or something.”

“Hardly! Now, get some rest. I’ll have your schedule ready for you by five, and you’ll start classes tomorrow.” She stepped to the doorway in her black high heels, turning back to look over her shoulder. “I’ll see you later, Miss LaFontaine.”

The door was closed, and now Connor was alone with his thoughts, which was as good as leaving him abandoned.

There wasn’t a TV in the room, so he grabbed his phone and started watching some of his favorite YouTubers... For about twenty seconds, at least. Then there was a knock at his door.

“Starla?” Said the woman who had let herself in.

“Who?” Connor put the phone down and sat up messing up the skirt of his dress. “Oh... Uh... Yeah.”

“I’m Dianna Dandridge. I’m the Headmistress.” She stuck out her hand to shake, which Connor did, with all the warmth of being handed an electric eel. “I hear you’ve just enrolled. Welcome!”

Diana Dandridge was tall for a woman, and her height — in addition to her mature, timeless beauty — made her quite intimidating. Especially to a teenager who had poor impulse control and raging hormones. “Hi,” he said.

“How are you liking the room?” Dianna asked. “I myself stayed in one of them when I first took the job. It was... snug.”

Connor was at a loss. He had a lot of questions, none of which he thought he could get away asking. He shoved away questions about being a boarding school, the mumbling across the hall and that he had fooled so many people so easily. Instead, he focused on the one question he thought he could ask.

“The room’s okay. Uh... Who sends people to this school?” He asked. “Just curious. I mean, aren’t charm schools kinda broke?”

“I suppose,” Dianna replied with a laughing tone. “We’re one of the last ones standing. But there will always be a place in this world for the feminine charm that only a woman can bless the world with.”

“You know, it’s 2025. Boys can be feminine, too.” He didn’t really care much for the topic of gender fluidity, but he liked messing with adults about modern attitudes.

“Yes, I’ve heard that! It’s *exciting*, isn’t it?”

“I guess.”

“I’m afraid we have a no-phone policy,” Dianna said, holding her hand out. “You’ll get it back when you leave.”

Connor reluctantly handed his most precious possession in the world to her, a faint notion in his mind he was giving up something he really shouldn’t. Yet, he needed to follow the rules — for the moment.

“Well, I’m not just here to welcome you,” the elegant older woman continued, “I was sent to take you downstairs to the conference room. We have an orientation for all new students.” She cleared the way for Connor to exit the room, beckoning him to exit with her.

As he passed her and headed into the hallway, he gave that padlocked door a lingering look.

Picking up on that, Dianna frowned. “Poor girl. She’s been sick as a dog. But she’ll be right as rain soon.”

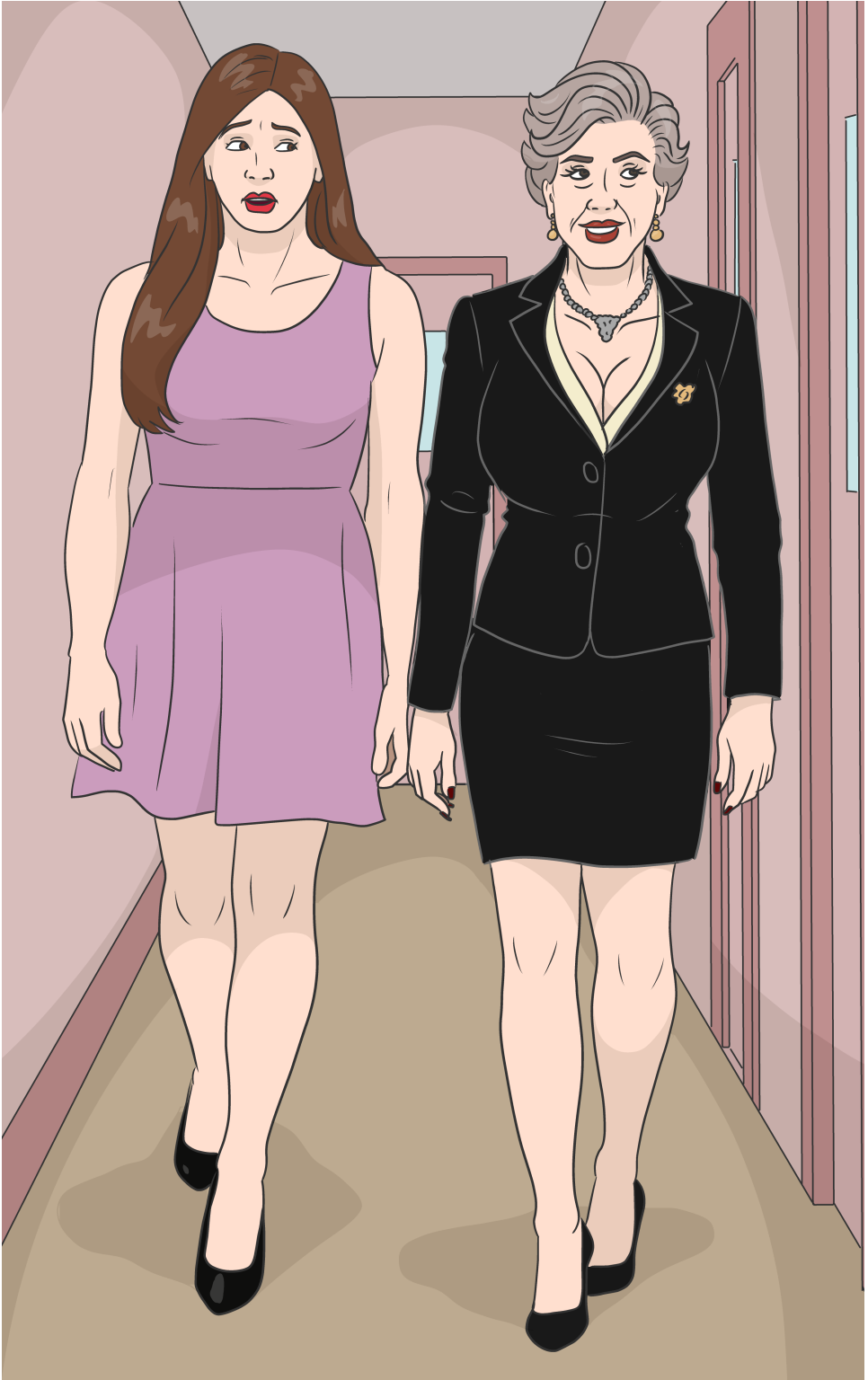
“She sounds pretty bad...” Connor said.

“Our people are very good at fixing what ails you,” Dianna said, proudly.

The conference room for the school was actually the very same room he had been sent to when he first arrived. When they got there, there was a girl sitting at the table, looking very uncomfortable. Dianna opened the door for Connor, but didn’t pass through, closing it behind him. As he took a seat next to the girl, he noticed a bead of sweat was trailing down her forehead.

“Hey,” Connor said to her.

Her eyes flared to life, a wild, terrified expression on her face. Her long brown hair flew as her head snapped. She said nothing. After a moment, she let her



head drift down to staring at her lap.

A minute or two passed in silence, just the two of them in the room, waiting for things to get underway. Connor got a little fidgety, having to rely on his unreliable imagination to entertain himself.

“Ever been to a charm school before?” Connor asked, expecting icy silence.

“Charm school?” The girl replied. “This is a prison.”

“Yeah. Okay.” Connor decided that *not* talking was the best option.

He just sat still and took a few deep breaths. It was just an ordinary room, like you’d find in any given office, with a styrofoam ceiling and white walls.

They were taking their time, Connor thought to himself as the minutes ticked away. He was concerned that the school had forgotten about him and this edgy girl, but not enough time had passed to go check.

“They sent me here to get rid of me,” the girl said. She had a very deep voice for a girl, and her words sounded gravely serious. “They’re not going to win. I can survive this. I can survive whatever they throw at me.”

“Yeah. That’s the spirit,” Connor said, in order to say something. It did not appear that his companion even heard him.

“I’m not going to let them make me into... One of *them*...” The girl continued, her voice even deeper than before.

As for Connor, he couldn’t have been happier how things were going. He had a free ride in a place his father would never think to look, and all he had to do was learn how to hold out his pinky while sipping tea — or something like that. He didn’t understand why this girl was so worked up. Why would anyone ever be so serious about a charm school?

Finally, the door opened, and Elenor Tuft entered and stood at the head of the table. It was at first a great relief to Connor, but that was very quickly eclipsed by a sense of foreboding.

“First,” she began, with her hands folded together, “let me say welcome to you, Starla, and you, Vivian. You’ve made the best decision of your life, coming to the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School for Young Ladies. Our graduates are given the tools for a lifetime of happiness and security, and the best days of your life are in front of you.” She paused as she gathered in the confused expressions of the students in front of her. She seemed to enjoy it.

“One of the first questions our students ask,” she continued, “is who is Priscilla Dandridge and why should I care? The truth is, it doesn’t really matter. All that’s important is that Priscilla has spent her life studying the qualities of femininity which make women charming, to be lovely and to be loved. Over the years, she’s refined those lessons to impart to our students. We will instruct you on all the things a young lady needs to know about projecting herself at her

very best, and how to make her way in life using these qualities to find the things she wants in life.”

Elenor paused. “In short, this may not feel like it, but this is a day you will remember for the rest of your life. The day you began your journey into true femininity, and the day the world truly opened up to you.”

Connor didn’t expect such a passionate presentation. It was just a freakin’ charm school, after all. He gave a glance to his companion, who’s name was Vivian, apparently, and she was still looking at her lap, but her hands were clenched into fists. The girl apparently just really, *really* didn’t want to be going to a charm school.

Ms. Tuft began talking again. “Now don’t take my attitude to mean we’re a permissive school. We can and we will enforce discipline here.”

The moody girl suddenly spoke. “What can you do to me that...”

“We will enforce our rules, Vivian. And you will comply. We won’t tolerate disobedience.”

“You can’t hurt me!” Vivian yelled.

“Starla, would you step outside for a moment? I need to talk to Vivian.”

Surprised to be asked, it took a moment before Connor stood up and headed out the door. He stood outside for about two minutes before Elenor came out.

“The poor dear is just exhausted,” she said. “On her last nerve. Why don’t we continue this as we tour the building?”

“Uh... Sure,” Connor replied, wondering why Vivian wasn’t joining them. He followed Ms Tuft anyway, assuming it was nothing to worry about.

“Tell me about yourself, Starla.”

“Me? I uh, well, I’m a girl...” He said, realizing as he said the words that no real girl would actually have to declare that they were a girl. “I, um... I go to Fairfax High. I’m a Junior.”

“Hobbies?”

“No. I mostly just hang around with my friends.” Although none of his friends were willing to give him an alibi for the car accident. Some friends they were. “That’s about it.”

“I see. Well, there are lots of fun activities here, and I’m sure you’ll make even more friends at the school.”

“Great. Great.” He had no interest, and didn’t seem to be able to disguise that.

They came to a long hallway with a dozen or so doors along the walls. It looked ancient, like a movie set from the 40’s. He expected to see men in trench coats and fedoras come out of the doors. “This is our main hall for classes,” Elenor said as they walked. “This is Figure and Exercise, the next is Cosmetology. That’s Ms. LaMay’s class. You’ll like her.”

Then Ms. Tuft stopped at the next door and looked through the window in the door. “Oh good,” she said. “We’re lucky enough to find a class in session. Why don’t we go in?”

Before Connor could even object, the door was open and he was being ushered inside. It was like any other classroom, but with chairs instead of desks. There were about eight girls inside, and as they entered, all of them looked in Connor’s direction.

It was one thing to fool some old ladies that you were a girl, it was another to have a bunch of girls your own age stare at you while you were standing in a flimsy dress. Even a real girl would have felt intimidated. As a guy, Connor felt a level of humiliation and shame he had never felt before.

“Eyes up front, please,” the instructor said.

Elenor gestured for Connor to take a seat at the very back, and they both sat down to observe, as the students kept gawking.

“Girls, attention please. Girls!” The instructor made a couple of sharp claps to get their attention.

“That’s Mrs. Dandridge...” Elenor began to say.

“We’ve kinda met,” Connor interrupted.

Dianna Dandridge once again had the eyes of her etiquette students on her, and continued with her lesson. “Now, since you surely have been practicing, I want to see your progress on curtsying.” She looked to one of the students seated in the front row. “Sasha, you’re first.”

A girl with her brown hair in pigtails stood up, and took a step forward. She then froze in place, looking back at the students, then at Mrs. Dandridge, and then back at the students again.

“Sasha?” Mrs. Dandridge asked.

The girl didn’t respond, as her eyes kept darting around the room. “What am I doing here?” She asked herself aloud. “What’s happening to me?”

“Sasha?” Mrs. Dandridge asked again.

“I’m not supposed to be here!” The young lady cried out, louder.

“Eleanor?” Mrs. Dandridge asked her friend. “Could you...?”

The older woman quickly got out of her chair and approached Sasha. “Sweetie,” she said calmly to the panicky girl. “Why don’t you come with me, all right?” She put an arm around her shoulders and led her out of the room, as everyone looked on in silence.

“Genie, why don’t you give it a try,” Dianna said.

A blond girl, with quite possibly the brightest smile Connor had ever seen, practically leapt out of her chair and stood in front of Mrs. Dandridge.

“Turn so the class can see you, sweetie,” Dianna told her.

“Yes, Mrs. Dandridge,” the girl said in a sweet, slightly southern accent. She turned around and did something Connor had never seen before, some kind of elaborate bow while holding out her skirt.

“Very nice, Genie,” Mrs. Dandridge said. “Try to get even lower, and more bend in the knees. But very nice.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Dandridge,” Genie said before scampering back to her chair.

“Now I want to see your curtsy, Laura,” Dianna said.

“Curt-see?” Connor mumbled to himself. He’d never even heard this word before.

“Yes, *curtsy*,” Mrs. Dandridge said, hearing the loud mumble. “In fact, why don’t you come up to the front, Starla. Hold on for a moment, Laura.”

Connor was hesitant to move from his spot. “Uh, I’m... Not...”

“Come on, come on. Every student learns to curtsy. Now’s a good a time as ever to get started.” She stepped forward and waited for Connor to meet her.

Connor didn’t have any options, and walked in his one-inch heels and sun dress to the front, where he kept his eyes low so as to not make eye contact. He was mortified and he hadn’t even done anything yet.

“Very good,” Mrs. Dandridge said. “Now here’s how we do a full curtsy. First, you grip the sides of your skirt or dress with the tips of your fingers and thumbs, like this.” She acted out what she was instructing. “Bow your head, and as you do, take your right foot and step it back a few inches, taking your weight off it, like so.”

The young man couldn’t believe what he was seeing. He had never heard of this before, and had no idea why anyone would need to know this. Was it a dance move? A religious ceremony? He was baffled, and just stood there, gawking.

“Now bend your knees and hold it, for a moment or two.” Mrs. Dandridge showed him, keeping a reverent expression on her face. “Then, still gripping the skirt, put your right foot back in place and slowly stand back up, and when you do, release the skirt and now you can return your head to a normal position.”

Mrs. Dandridge had performed her curtsy with grace and ease, as if she had done this mysterious action a million times in her life. It was genuinely impressive to have done what she had done, in three-inch heels, and not topple over.

“Now why don’t you give it a try?” Dianna said, stepping aside to give Connor the stage.

Connor didn't know what to do, stepping into place.

"Grip the hem of your dress," Dianna said, prompting him.

The embarrassment of the moment made this task nearly impossible, and he would up gripping his dress like he was holding on for life.

"Now the right foot."

Without really thinking, desperate for any help, he did exactly as told. That unfortunately sent him right over, as standing on one raised-heel foot was a little less stability than he was used to.

"Oh my goodness," Dianna said, approaching Connor, whose face was planted firmly on the floor.

Connor quickly righted himself trying to look like he was in control and everything was fine. The wobble from his heels indicated that it was a bit of bravado.

The girls in the class all giggled and snickered at him, and no amount of preparation could have steeled him for the embarrassment of having a room full of girls laugh at his mistake. If he had thought just being stared at by the girls was the deepest humiliation he could feel, that notion was proven wildly optimistic, and poor Connor nearly fell to pieces on the spot.

"All right, Starla," Mrs. Dandridge said. "We've all stumbled in our first attempt. Go ahead and return to your seat. Thank you for trying."

He had never been happier to be dismissed and nearly ran to the back of the room.

This was a mistake, he thought to himself as he sat down. *This was a huge mistake.*

The door to the classroom opened, and in came Sasha with Elenor behind her. This time, Sasha looked a little dazed, but had a smile on her face. Also, as Connor noted, she was wearing a different sweater, for some reason.

"Welcome back, Sasha."

"Thank you, Mrs. Dandridge," she said in a soft voice. "I apologize for my behavior. It was very unladylike."

The headmistress nodded. "That's quite all right. Just one of those things."

"There's nothing wrong with wanting to look feminine and beautiful," Sasha said, apropos of nothing.

"There never is," Dianna replied. "Now would you like to show us your curtsy?"

"Oh, may I, Mrs. Dandridge? I would be ever so pleased." Connor watched as Sasha, with eagerness, stood in front of the class and did a curtsy that was immaculate. Or, at least Connor assumed it was immaculate, as both the class and Mrs. Dandridge applauded her.

Connor didn't know what had brought about the dramatic change in Sasha's behavior, but figured it must have been a stern lecture from Ms. Tuft.

Elenor tapped Connor on the arm and headed for the door. That was his silent cue to leave, which he was grateful for. Back out in the hall, Ms. Tuft was almost going to continue on down the hallway, but paused. "You didn't have any luggage, did you..."

"No," Connor said, ready with another flimsy explanation. "You see..."

"Well, you're going to need something for the days ahead. We'll need to see Bianca... I mean Ms. Newman. Follow me." She reversed course and headed the other direction, until they came to a door labeled "Fashion."

"I really don't need..."

"Yes, you do."

"I can't pay for it."

"It's included in the tuition."

"No, really... I don't..." The last thing Connor wanted to do was to be examined closely. He hadn't even bothered to tuck himself. He'd be found out instantly if he had to change clothes with others watching. "Please. I... I..."

"This is not a debate, young lady."

"I can't... I'm very shy about my body."

"Oh, yes. I see." Elenor gave him as much honest concern as she could muster. "You won't have to undress. Ms. Newman is very good at figuring your size just by getting a look at you." This was one of the many, many excuses Elenor had invented to soothe the nerves of boys in dresses.

"Maybe we can do this later," Connor said as he walked away.

He hadn't gotten very far before he heard a stern "Starla!" from Ms. Tuft's lips. "You come back here right now!"

Connor found himself doing just that, unable to ignore the old woman's sheer willpower and commanding voice. She was a woman who wasn't going to put up with a lot, and Connor had just found her limit.

"Shall we go in?" She said, in a much kinder, but still determined tone.

Connor was greeted by an empty classroom, surrounded by racks and racks of clothing.

"Bianca?" Elenor called out.

"Yes?" A woman's voice rang out from somewhere in the jungle of fabric.

"Dianna?"

"No, it's Elenor!" Ms. Tuft yelled out. "And I have a needy new student with me!"

“Oh?” the voice said, distractedly. “Oh!” It then said, revising her level of enthusiasm. “A new student!” From behind a rack came a woman in a direction neither Connor nor Elenor had been looking. She marched right up to Connor, her hands grasped together by her face. “How wonderful!”

She had short black hair, combed very tightly to her scalp, and was as skinny as a rail. “Meet Starla LaFontaine,” Elenor said.

“Starla!” Ms. Newman said, looking Connor over. “What a name!”

“She’s had some trouble bringing a change of clothes with her,” Elenor explained.

“Oh, the usual, then,” said the skinny woman. “A new student clothing care package.”

“Does this happen often?”

“Almost all the time,” Ms. Newman replied. She stepped back a few paces and critically evaluated her assignment. “Medium 8 tall,” she declared.

“What’s that mean?” Connor asked.

“Your size, silly.” She then started off for the rack again. “I’ll have a week’s worth of separates you can mix and match.” Connor had no idea what that even meant. “While I’m gathering it all together, why not pick out your undies over there.”

“Over where?” Connor inquired, but the woman was already gone.

“Over here,” Elenor said, pushing him gently to a number of plastic tubs. They were all filled with panties and bras.

Before him was the holy grail of teenage boy desires. Girl’s underwear. Not only that, but bin after bin after bin of it. His instinct triggered him to recoil in horror, part of his little mind sure that such tempting bounty could only be the work of the darkest heart of evil.

“Is something the matter?” Elenor asked, coolly.

“No.. Uh...” Connor tried to calm his nerves. “Just that... I uh... Thought I saw a bug.”

“Well, don’t get bitten. Now pick out some things you like.”

He went for what he thought should be the most normal and uninteresting pair of panties and bra he could find, a pair in beige.

“Nude, hmmm?” Elenor said, looking at his choice. “Bold.”

He immediately put them back and picked up a set of made of white, plain cotton. Glancing at Elenor for her reaction, she gave none, with only her usual cool and reserved expression. Connor had feeling she could stop a bullet mid-air by staring it down.

“Well?” She asked him.

“Well what?”

“Put them on.”

“Uh... I... I’m already wearing...”

“No you’re not,” she said, cutting him off. “No sign of it.” She picked at the shoulder of Connor’s dress. “Of course, only a woman might notice. Or a particularly horny boy.”

“But...”

Elenor looked through her narrow, suspicious eyes at Connor. “In this school, you’ll be wearing panties and a bra in all classes and at all school activities. It’s a *requirement*.” She pushed the bra and panties the boy was holding closer to him. “Best get started now.” She glanced at a stand-up screen nearby. “You can change there.”

Connor headed to the screen slowly, unsure how he had already found himself in such a spot. He figured he’d have to cover for his true identity at some point over the course of the weeks ahead, but he had only been here for a couple of hours and he was already on the brink of discovery, with nothing but a thin paper screen between him and a complimentary ride to a local detention facility.

“Go on,” Elenor instructed. “Don’t take all day. Or do you need help?”

“No!” Connor yelped. “No, I’m fine. I’m good. No problem.”

The older woman began to walk in Connor’s direction. “I can help with...”

“I said no!” Connor yelled loudly.

Elenor froze on the spot. She frowned. Then she let it go. “You are making a very poor impression, young lady,” she said sternly. She turned around and headed back to the middle of the room. “Don’t forget to adjust the shoulder straps for the right fit.”

Connor took a deep breath, made another scan of the room to make sure no one could see, and hoisted the dress off of him. Predictably, he was wearing just a pair of grey boxer briefs below.

He picked up the bra, and figured out if he had it inside-out or not, and then put his arms through. The boy had seen enough soft porn in his life to know how to put on a bra, and was even able to close it in back. What he was puzzled by was that it fit him — cups and all.

He had a male chest of course, being a male, but the cups of the bra were nearly pocketless. He figured that maybe this was meant for a younger girl.

A disgusted grunt emerged from deep in his throat somewhere as he mentally acknowledged that he was wearing a bra. A bra for a girl. Girls underwear. He, for the rest of his life, would remember this moment and cringe.

He reached for the dress and before he was even able to touch it, he heard Elenor cough. "Panties too," she said.

Dejectedly, he put the dress back on anyway, and slipped out of his boxer briefs with the dress on. He didn't care if the panties were inside out, facing the wrong way or on fire. He just put them on as quickly as he could do it.

Connor waited until Mrs. Tuft spoke before he budged, not wanting to be seen before he had to be seen.

"Ready?" The older woman asked.

Without comment, Connor shuffled out from behind the screen, his shoulders slumped in defeat.

Elenor walked over to him slowly, never breaking her gaze from him, and stopped only to feel the strap under the shoulder of his dress. "Turn around please."

Confused, Connor had to think about the request, but then did as instructed, reluctantly. The next thing he knew, he felt fabric whisking across his bare butt.

"The skirt was caught in the panties," Ms. Tuft explained. "You want to watch for that."

Connor looked down to see the hem of the dress wafting as it settled. He had no idea what to do with this information, except be terrified.

"Here we go!" Ms. Newman said, carrying out about eight overstuffed shopping bags. She looked like a Christmas shopper who had burned through all her credit cards. "One new student care kit."

She held out her arms, holding the bags for Connor to take.

"I'm not here for that long," he said.

"This is just for the first week," Elenor replied.

"First week?" Connor was alarmed.

"Please take the bags," Ms. Newman said with strain in her voice, as she was still holding them up. "They're very heavy."



They resumed their walk along the hallway, with Connor toting the too-many bags, trying not to look like he was having difficulty. Which he was.

Not only were the bags heavy, but the feeling of the smooth panties and tightness of the bra were sensations that were driving him nuts, and much like putting shoes on a cat, he was trying to wiggle his way out of them. He was so preoccupied he didn't even notice that he had been led into the cosmetology classroom.

Connor suddenly became aware of surroundings when he saw the tables with lighted mirrors arranged in rows. On each was a mess of bottles, jars, brushes and other beauty items.

“Set those down and take a seat,” Elenor instructed. “Jasmine should be here any moment.”

“For what?” Connor asked, knowing full well for what.

“To give you your first lesson in...”

“Your first lesson in beauty!” Jasmine said, crashing through the door.

“Beginning your lifelong love affair with the wonderful woman inside you!”

Connor picked up the bags. “No, that’s okay. I’m good.”

“Oh, to be you!” Jasmine practically flew over to him, and took the bags away. She twirled gracefully and pushed Connor down into one of the chairs. “Just about to learn the secrets of beauty and to walk through the door that will lead you to the rest of your life! To experience it all for the first time again! I’m ferociously jealous.”

Connor tried to get up from the chair, but was pressed down by Ms. LaMay from behind. “No need to be scared, little one!” She sang out. “We all get scared when we’re face to face with change, especially when your face is due for a change! That’s a little joke.”

No one laughed. Jasmine LaMay was used to that reaction.

“I’m feeling kinda tired,” Connor said. “I’d like to just go to bed...”

He didn’t even get a chance to finish his sentence before he felt a swat go across his backside. Elenor unrolled the magazine she held in her hand and put it back on the counter nearby her. “You will sit,” she said, with purpose and gravity. “And you will not speak.”

Connor dropped himself back in the seat.

For an hour, Connor sat still as Ms. LaMay slowly went about the business of giving him a makeover. She explained every step along the way, the choices she was making and the look she was going for.

Connor didn’t understand a word of it.

Instead, the young man was laser focused on the gunk being layered on his face. With every dab and every stroke, he was watching what little sense of masculine pride he had fade behind a mask of beige and mauve paint.

The foundation smoothed out his rough complexion. The blush returned color to his cheeks for the first time since he was six. The eyeshadow made his eyes look larger and eyeliner and mascara grabbed attention and shouted to the world how much of a girl you were. The lipstick just amped the femininity up a hundredfold.



Another bag was added to his collection, full of this girlish cosmetic slop, and Connor was on his way. He found himself passing by what felt like a thousand people on his way back to his new room.

Finally alone, he forgot all about relaxing and unwinding after his very long morning. Instead, he just kept staring at his transformed face in the mirror above his desk. “It’s all under control,” he told himself, aloud. “Just gotta weather the storm.”



It wasn’t very long before a growl came from deep within Connor’s stomach, sounding quite un-lady-like under the lady-like dress he was wearing. This brought to mind the most urgent question a young man like Connor had on his mind at any given time — where was the food?

The website had said that “room and board” was covered, and after he looked up what that was supposed to mean, he understood this to indicate food was free. So where was it?

Connor stumbled out of his room in his heels, stepping over the bags laid on the floor that he hadn’t bothered to unpack, then getting to the hall and checking to see if anyone was looking.

It was bad enough that he was wearing this ridiculous getup, but now he had a face full of makeup that made him look like a clown, in his opinion. Connor didn’t want anyone to see him, or failing that, as few people as possible. He was about to make a break for it when the door across the hallway — the one that had been mysteriously padlocked — creaked open.

He had to see what was happening, so he retreated slightly into his own doorway, curious to know what kind of wreck of a human being would emerge from the wailing and screaming he’d heard earlier.

“Who are you?” Said the girl who emerged from the darkness, squinting. “What day is this?” She added before waiting for a response.

She was a little on the tall side, and a little broad-shouldered, but she was undeniably cute. She had just a hint of makeup on, her short hair was cut in a bob with straight cut bangs and here eyes sparkled blue.

If he was going to be trapped in a girls’ school for a while, at least he had a pretty neighbor.

“Tuesday,” he answered. “Not me, I mean the day.”

“Fuuuuhhhh...” she said, letting the word go unfinished.

“You sounded really sick this morning,” Connor said. “Kinda like you were hallucinating and stuff.”

“What did I say?”

“Dunno. You were mumbling.”

“I wish I could remember... everything is always so hazy around here.”

“This whole place gives off some weird vibes, that’s for sure. You know, I hope it’s okay to say that you’re kinda cute.” Despite being in a dress and masquerading as a girl, Connor could not suppress his instincts. He was flirting.

The girl wasn’t having any of it. “Listen, this is very important,” she said. “Before this place gets to you...”

“Hold on,” Connor interrupted. “First things first. Where’s the food around here?”

The girl paused. “You don’t understand. This place is...”

Connor pushed his finger up against her lips to silence her. “Okay, okay. We’ll talk about your problems later. I’m hungry!”

The girl swatted his hand away. She took a step back, shocked, and then gave Connor a good look over. “Downstairs and to the left,” she said.

“Awesome!” He said. “See you later!”

“I doubt it,” the girl said to herself.

The cafeteria was a joke, in Connor’s eyes, and the biggest disappointment of the day so far. He barely even got a handful of food, and was still hungry as he left. At least there wasn’t anyone else there, except for one very bored and disinterested lunch lady.

When he got back to his room, a note was posted to the door. He picked it off and read it, surprised and miserable to find that it directed him back to the cosmetology classroom “immediately.”

It took him a while to find the class, and when he did, his worst fears were realized. It was Ms. LaMay again, and there was a hair styling station in the middle of the room.

“Here she is,” Ms. LaMay said. “It’s your first day, so I’ll let you off on being so late.” She whisked away the smock that was resting on the chair, leaving it ready for someone to sit on.

Him. It was for him. He knew it was for him.

“Have a seat, Starla!” Ms. LaMay said.

There was no way out, and he knew it. Knowing he was accepting more humiliation, he climbed up on the chair.

“What’s going on?” He asked, his nerves giving him away a little as his voice warbled.

“It’s a surprise!” Ms. LaMay said, gleefully.

“Are you going to give me a girl’s hairstyle?” Connor asked.

“No!” Jasmine said with a grin. “We’re just going to work on that skin of yours.” She held up a device Connor had never seen before, but kind of looked like a tattoo needle.

“What’s that going to do?”

“Just give you a little shave,” Jasmine said. “Nothing to worry about.”

“I’ve never seen a shaver like that.”

“Well, you’ve never had a shave like this.” She tapped a dial on a control panel the needle was attached to and a little spark sound came from it. “It’s like a hi-tech shave of the future.”

Suddenly aware that he might have been spotted as male, he panicked. “I don’t have a beard! I’m not a man!”

“Heaven forbid!” She poked at some spots on Connor’s chin. “That’s why a lady doesn’t want any facial hair to show, and we can take care of that with a quick little zap!”

“Zap?”

“Let’s get that makeup off and we can get started.”

“We just did the makeup a few minutes ago!”

“So we’ll do it again!”

An hour later, and after being jabbed hundreds of times, he finished with a face that felt just as smooth as when he arrived, but his eyebrows looked much thinner than he remembered. He wasn’t worried, as when he was a little kid, he’d shaved one of them off on a dare and it grew back in a couple of weeks. No doubt, he believed, they would be back to normal soon enough.

Ms. LaMay then coached Connor through the process of reapplying his makeup, a task he couldn’t have been more annoyed and frustrated to do.

“Soon, you’ll be able to do this in just a few minutes,” Jasmine said, encouragingly.

“Does it have to be so complicated?”

“Oh, sweetie, I haven’t even shown you the complicated techniques yet.” She smiled. “Doesn’t that fill you with delicious anticipation?”

“Yeah,” Connor forced himself to say.

“Now, let’s get those clothes off,” Jasmine said. She dropped a terrycloth robe in Connor’s lap before he could object to having to strip again. “And put this on.”

“Why?” He whined. “I did the dress up thing! I’m wearing the panties and stuff!”

“This isn’t about fashion, honey. This is about your body.”

A few minutes later, Connor had dressed in the provided robe, along with a pair of spa slippers. If he had been a smarter man, he might have figured out how to avoid this situation, but he was a little preoccupied with managing the overwhelming sense of panic inside him.

“Now, have you ever had a leg waxing?” Ms. LaMay asked.

“Why would anyone do that?” Thinking about how one would wax a car, with washing and buffing, Connor was at a loss to understand why one would do that to their body.

“Well, it’s a day of new experiences, isn’t it?”

The warm wax that was spread over his legs felt great at first. It was comforting and pleasant. Then came the ripping.

The horrible, horrible ripping.

At first, he thought there had been some kind of mistake. Then he was assumed he was being punished. Finally he had come to the conclusion that he was just being tortured.

“No, that’s the way it works,” Jasmine LaMay answered as she merrily ripped another patch of hair from Connor’s legs. “It tingles a little, doesn’t it?”

“Mmmm-hmmm,” Connor relied, with his lips curled inward in pain, eyes watering and his fingers stuck in a claw grip on the armrests.

“Only about thirty more to go,” Jasmine said, “before we do the other leg.”

Somewhere around the middle of his left leg, Connor’s stamina gave out and he fell unconscious. One might call it fainting, but surely he would be offended by that characterization. What made his situation even worse was when he awoke some time later, he cleared away his black hair to see where he was. The problem for him wasn’t so much that he had blacked out, it was that he had started the day with sandy blond hair.

“Did you do something to my hair?” He said, as he saw Ms. LaMay cleaning up her tools.

“You’ll have to be more specific, sweetheart. We’ve taken some away, we’ve styled some, we’ve...”

“This hair!” He shouted, tugging on the lustrous bouncy hair hanging from his scalp.

“You like it?” Jasmine asked, defying her student’s obvious distress.

“What did you do?”

“Here,” she said, handing him a mirror. “Isn’t it wonderful? It’s like a whole new you!”

Connor took the hand mirror and looked at himself, sick with the results. No part of his face had been left unchanged. He was looking at someone else’s face in his own reflection.



“At first, I wasn’t sure if I should go lighter, but the more I looked at your complexion, darker was definitely the way to go, I think you have to agree. Then maybe highlights? But no, I’ve always liked just flat black. A shimmering, shiny flat black, with blue undertones, but just black...”

As the woman babbled on, Connor was trying to remind himself that this was all undoable. If his hair could be dyed black, it could be dyed back. The thin eyebrows would grow back. The makeup could be washed off. There was nothing done to him that couldn’t be fixed. He told himself these things over and over until he began to believe them.

“...So I gave a little wave to it and volume up top,” Jasmine was saying. “So many girls like their hair flat, practically all of them, but it’s been going on so long that it only means that it’s fashionable to go back to volume, and...”

“You said you weren’t going to give me girl’s hairstyle.”

“Yet. Did I say ‘yet?’ I should have said *yet*.” She smiled. “How do you like it? It’s fabulous, isn’t it?”

“Uh-huh,” Connor said, handing the mirror back.

“Oh, I suppose it is a big change. You’ll get used to it.”

Connor wanted to say something very rude and very loud, but he held his tongue. He was in a girls school, as it was probably for the best that he look as much like a girl as possible to keep himself hidden here, away from his crazy father. He was willing to accept that a different hair color would help him with his goals more than it hurt his pride.

“I’m sure I will,” Connor growled as he got up from the salon chair.

The whole hair ordeal Ms. LaMay had run Connor through lasted until dinner time, and he wearily walked down the hall to go to his room, his modest heels clip-clopping on the hard floor. The only thing that could distract him from his internal sense of foreboding and dread was the smell of food.

Hoping that dinner might be a bit more satisfying than the bird food they served at lunch, he headed to the odd cafeteria room. He stopped at the threshold, as the room was packed with girls — all the students and some of the teachers.

The growl in his stomach pushed him forward, and made him ignore his considerable misgivings. He had to remind himself that he had just endured the terror of a makeover, and was just as convincing a girl as half the students. It wasn’t like this was exactly a beauty pageant. The few girls he had seen so far weren’t much to look at, and his current appearance was at least a match for them.

He looked around for a place to sit, and there were plenty of tables. It was an odd dynamic. The uglier girls tended to sit alone, but the more attractive the girls were, the more likely it was that they sat together.

In fact, now that he got to see the entire student body, he rescinded his judgement of the girls here. There were some stone cold foxes. Incredibly sexy girls who had no right being this beautiful in this crummy school, if he was being honest

In fact, his neighbor, the girl who had the lock on her door, who was kinda cute, was sitting by herself, looking slightly distraught. Connor got through the line quickly, keeping his head down and his eyes averted. It wasn't until he had left the line that he saw the paltry chicken breast and Brussel sprouts he was going to have to subsist on tonight.

For the not first time, he considered his options on leaving the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School. Maybe he could find a cooking school to hide out in instead. They would have food.

Connor watched his neighbor closely as he ate, watching her. She seemed almost lost, spending more time staring at her food rather than eating it, and he began to feel a bit sad for her. That was shame that she seemed so sad, in his judgement, because he always docked one point off for being sad. She was a seven and now a six.

Finally, it was time for him to call it a day and retreat to his room for the rest of the night — and wash all the crap off his face.

“Hello, Starla,” said the voice of Mrs. Dandridge herself. Her presence caused Connor to emit a very subtle gasp and sent him back against the doorframe. She was sitting on the lone chair in Connor's room, waiting for him. She stood as he entered. “I hope you enjoyed tonight's meal. I selected the menu myself.”

“Yeah. It was fine,” Connor said, getting his breath back from being startled.

“Nice and filling for a growing young woman like yourself.”

“Filling. Uh huh.”

“Anyway,” she continued, “because we enrolled you late into our current class, I wanted to give you a little crash course so you can catch up with the rest of the students when you start tomorrow.”

“Really?” Connor whined.

“Don't worry, I'll make it fun.” She handed him a book.

“At least it's just reading,” he said, amused. “Thank God.”

“Actually, this is for your head. This is a posture and deportment lesson! Balance it on your head as you walk down the hallway.”

“Hrgh,” he grunted. Being strangled by his father was looking more and more appealing.

THE NEPHEW

The front door slammed against the wall with a bang that shook the picture frames against the striped vintage wallpaper of Yvonne Langthorpe's home. Her tiny black and white portraits of long-dead relatives rattled. The ivory and jade statuettes on the bookshelves shifted. The dark wood tables and chairs clattered.

Albert Morris, seventeen years old, five feet one-and-a-quarter inches tall, mud on his pants and a smug grin on his face, didn't even blink. He kicked the door shut with the back of his foot and tossed his hat onto the polished sideboard without a second thought. His bag followed, landing with a thud that knocked over a wooden vase. The vase wobbled once, twice, then fell over, spilling the water and flowers on the floor.

Yvonne Langthorpe appeared in the doorway like a summoned ghost in the shadowy, ancient interior of her victorian home.

She was stiff-backed, arms folded, eyes sharp. The black leather of her skirt creaked when she moved. Her blouse was buttoned all the way to her throat, the sleeves starched so crisp they looked like armor. Her bun — tight and perfect — didn't dare budge.

"You are a menace," she said.

Albert didn't look up from where he stood peeling off his socks in the foyer. "Good afternoon to you too, Aunt B."

She didn't respond. She stepped over the mud-streaked carpet like it was a biohazard and crouched beside the toppled vase. She picked up a flower with two fingers and held it in the light.

"This is intolerable!"

"So are you," Albert said under his breath.

Her head snapped in his direction indicating she had heard that remark.

Albert didn't care. He bent to unlace his cleats, using the wall for balance. "Maybe don't put fragile stuff on those rickety tables."

"Normal people walk with care. You come in like a herd of livestock."

Albert shrugged, his sock dangling from his hand. "I'm tired, okay? I've been out with the guys all day. I need to blow off some steam." He tossed it across the way onto a vintage upholstered chair.

Yvonne rose, slow and cold. "You have the manners of a troglodyte! Pick up your filthy things this instant!"

Albert laughed and kicked off his other cleat. It spun in the air and hit the wall, leaving a dark smear. "Whoops."

Yvonne's lips barely moved. "You have five minutes to clean that up."



He straightened, stretched like a cat, and gave her a lazy grin. "I was gonna shower first. Kinda ripe."

"Don't test me, Albert."

He rolled his eyes and sauntered into the kitchen, leaving blades of grass behind him in a trail. The wood floor squeaked under his bare feet. Yvonne followed, heels clicking like a ticking bomb.

"How dare you ignore me!" she yelled, blocking Albert's path.

"Come on, Aunt Yvonne. I don't want to fight."

"You look like you've been in a fight already. No doubt that little big man complex of your getting you into trouble again."

"I'm not little!" Albert fired back.

It was a typical response. At seventeen, he was the shortest young man in all of his classes, and was easily mistaken for a fourteen year old. As is such the case with many men his age, he had become violently defensive about his height, ready to scrap with anyone who challenged him, who accused him of being anything else but a rugged, manly man.

"Well at least you make a big mess," Yvonne quipped.

"I don't want to fight!" Albert repeated.

Yvonne's nostrils flared. "You think this is a fight? We haven't even begun to talk about all the filth you track into this house, your mess that you leave wherever you go and your complete disregard for my authority!"

"You say that every day," Albert said, looking over his shoulder.

Her voice didn't rise. It just got tighter. "You've been here two months. That's sixty days of filth, broken things, and smart-ass remarks."

"Do you have a problem with me?"

She didn't answer. She just stared at him, and for a second, Albert saw something flicker behind her eyes. Not anger — she always had that. Something colder. Something like contempt.

"You're a *man*," she said finally, "and that's the problem."

Albert's smile faded. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"You talk loud. You don't listen. You stink. You wreck everything you touch. That's what little big men like you do."

"*I'm not little!*" Albert shouted, rattling the stained windows.

Yvonne walked to the window, drew the curtain aside, and looked out at the street like the conversation bored her. "I didn't want you. I told your father that."

"Yeah," Albert muttered. "He didn't want me either."

That hung in the air longer than either of them liked.

Yvonne turned back. “You’ll mop the floor before dinner.”

“I’ve got homework.”

“Then you’ll mop after dinner.”

“Then I’ve got a life.”

She smiled, cold and crooked. “Not anymore.”

Albert stood there and gritted his teeth. His hands tightened into fists. He didn’t speak. Not because he had nothing to say, but because he knew it wouldn’t matter. Not to her. She never shut up.

She left the room, her heels clicking again. This time, it sounded like a countdown.

Albert stared at the muddy floor. He went to the fridge, grabbed a can and took a sip of soda. Then another.

He didn’t like her. She didn’t like him. That was clear.

But something about the way she’d said “man” stuck in his head. She said it like it was a swear word.



Albert had just wanted a protein shake. He’d crammed banana and milk into the ancient chrome beast and flicked the switch without the lid fully on. It only lasted a moment. The blast did not *entirely* paint the kitchen in a wet, sticky mess of peanut butter and pulp. It was just a little splat. No more than a teaspoon full.

However, aunt Yvonne reacted like it was a nuclear fuel spill. She appeared in the kitchen doorway upon hearing the blender turning on, reacting to the noise as a siren call. She didn’t have to know a mess was going to result, and she was not disappointed.

Yvonne didn’t say anything. She simply pointed out of the room. Albert tried to pour the shake into a cup, but she grabbed it away. “Go,” she said. “Now.”

That’s what Albert did, without saying a word. There was no point in saying something his aunt would just swat down. It was best to let her calm down and then show his face sometime later. Maybe by dinner she’d calm down. Maybe Christmas.

It was the next afternoon that Albert finally showed his face outside his room. He could recall the times he’d pissed off his mom and she’d gotten so angry she actually said a cross word to him. He missed her more every day. But after her death, and his father drowning himself in booze after she was gone, he was now living with his aunt, and the difference in his lifestyle was impossible to

cope with. Even the air felt different in Aunt Yvonne's house. It was like moving to a different biome.

However, the young man's ravenous appetite finally dictated that he needed to find a moment where he could pop on down to the kitchen and grab something before running back to his room. He heard a car pull up in the driveway, and looked outside. He saw an older woman in a plum skirt suit amble out of an old car and ring the doorbell. She was toting an impossibly overstuffed leather case by her side, looking almost comical.

His aunt invited her in, and they talked. This was his opportunity, so he snuck down the stairs to the kitchen in stealth mode, and grabbed the only snack in the house, horrible whole wheat crackers his aunt seemed unduly fond of. Before he could do much, however, he heard the little meeting break up. The front door closed as his aunt said her farewells.

Aunt Yvonne was quickly in the kitchen with him, and looking very creepy. She was smiling.

He sighed and started putting the crackers back. "If this is about the smoothie, I already apologized."

Yvonne stepped closer. "You wreck this house. You mouth off. You break things that don't belong to you. And you keep doing it. Over and over."

"Oh?" He replied. "Send me to another relative? Put me in a foster home? Jail?"

She didn't blink. "Charm school."

Albert blinked. "What?"

"I just enrolled you. You start Monday."

He sat forward, laughing like she'd told a bad joke. "Charm school? What is that?"

"You're about to find out." Yvonne didn't move. "The Priscilla Dandridge Charm School for Young Ladies. Ms. Thorne was just helping me out with the paperwork."

The irreverent bemusement coming from Albert stopped. He stared at her, jaw slowly going slack.

"The *what* now?"

She stepped closer. "You'll live there. Nine months. You'll attend classes. Grooming. Deportment. Manners."

"It's for girls."

She nodded. "Well, I didn't tell them about that little detail. No matter. We can just put you in a dress. I'm sure you'll be discreet."

Albert stood, as tall as her now, all shoulders and teenage indignation. "You can't make me wear a skirt."

“I can. And I will.”

“I’ll run away.”

“I’ll send the police after you.”

“You’re insane.”

“No,” she said. “You’re wild. Untamed. *Feral*. Now you’re finally going to come to heel.”

Albert’s fists clenched. “This is a joke. You can’t seriously think playing dress-up’s gonna change anything.”

She didn’t yell. She never did. “You don’t listen. You don’t think. You don’t *care* what you do or who you hurt. But you will learn. You will learn how to move gently. Speak softly. Show respect.”

Albert’s face burned. “So if I act like a ‘girl,’ that makes me better?”

“Yes.”

He couldn’t breathe for a second. It wasn’t the answer that bothered him, it was how fast it came.

“I’m not going.”

“You are.”

“I’ll tell Dad.”

She laughed. Just once. Sharp and cold. “Tell him. See if he answers.”

Albert didn’t say anything. There was nothing left to say.

She turned to go, then paused at the door. “There’s a cot at Ravenhurst Military Institute with your name on it. Barbed wire. Drills at dawn. Full-year term.”

Albert swallowed. “You’re blackmailing me.”

She shrugged. “Call it what you want. Pick one. You’re no longer welcome here.”

Then she left, heels clicking, but this time they didn’t sound like a countdown.

They sounded like laughter.

Albert stared at the floor. Then at the photo on the wall — his mom, smiling beside a much-younger Aunt Yvonne, both dressed in summer white, back when the woman could smile.



Albert stood frozen in front of the mirror, his reflection almost unrecognizable. He didn’t see himself anymore — not the careless kid who

charged into every room like he owned the place, but a nervous stranger in a short denim skirt and pink ruffled blouse. His fists alternately curled and uncurled at his sides, his twitchy legs brushing awkwardly against the unfamiliar softness of nylon tights.

“You can’t be serious,” he muttered, his voice trembling just a bit. “This — this is insane.”

Yvonne stood behind him, towering like a warden at inspection. Her expression was unmoving, unreadable, severe.

“As I have said a hundred times today, your decision is yours. Charm School, Military School or the winds of fate.”

“You’re making me do this!”

“Do not use that tone of voice with me,” she said sharply. “Not here, not at the school. You’re *Alice* Morris now. Remember it.”

He turned slowly to face her, his cheeks burning under the subtle blush she’d insisted on applying. The mascara felt heavy on his eyelashes, and the gloss on his lips tasted strange — fake, like plastic candy.

“This is a joke, right? I mean, you want me to promise you that I’ll behave or something, right?”

Albert swallowed, glancing away. His reflection mocked him, stared at him from under softly curled hair that brushed his shoulders. His eyes stung, anger mixing with shame, creating something painful and confusing in his chest. The fact he hadn’t gotten an answer was truly troubling.

Yvonne stepped closer, brushing imaginary lint from his blouse. Her voice dropped even lower, harsh but quiet, chilling in its absolute certainty. “You will smile. You will speak softly. Or else.”

He met her gaze defiantly, though he felt small — smaller than he’d ever felt before. “Or else what?”

Her eyes narrowed to slits. “Or *else*.”

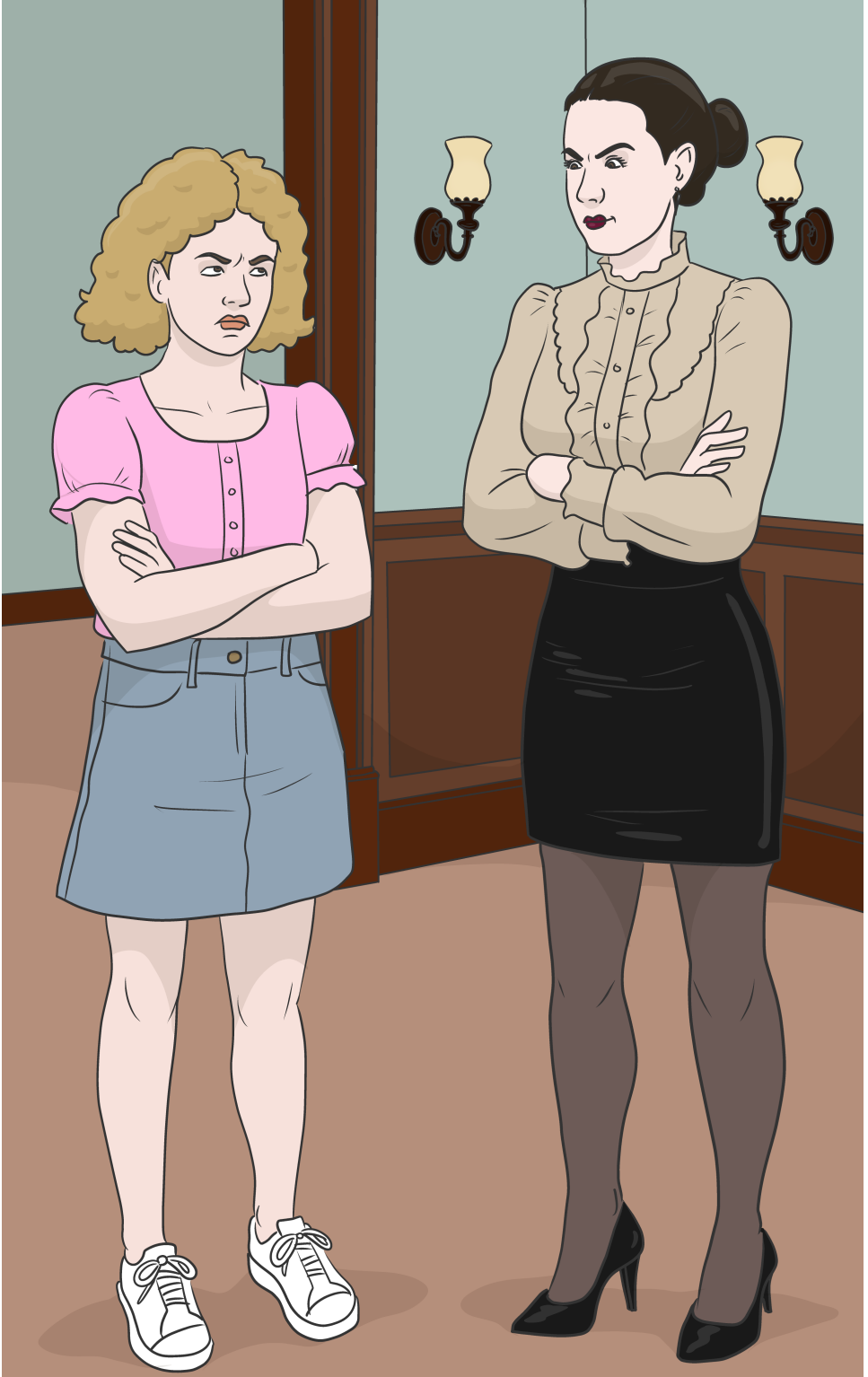
Albert’s throat tightened. He couldn’t respond. He felt trapped, cornered, like he’d been trapped in a cage and had no way out. She’d done this deliberately, forced him into dressing up like a sissy. She loved it, too. He could see the smug smirk she was trying to hide.

“Repeat after me,” Yvonne said. “The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plains.”

“The rain...”

“In a more feminine voice, Alice.”

Albert grumbled. He cleared his throat and tried again, in a weak falsetto. “The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plains.” He forced himself to speak in the high, girlish voice she’d coached him to use. It was shaky, uncertain — he hated it instantly.



“This won’t work. They’ll know,” he whispered, voice tight and miserable.

Yvonne’s lips twisted into something almost like a smile. Cold, sharp, mocking. “Not if you don’t mess it up.”

The drive to the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School was quiet, unbearable silence punctuated only by the squeak of Yvonne’s leather skirt and the whisper of Albert’s tights against the car seat.

Finally, the car turned off onto the streets of an outer district of Los Angeles, a not particularly glamorous one, either. She turned into the parking lot of a strip mall that barely even looked operational.

Yvonne pulled up slowly to the entrance, stopping where a woman waited. It was the same woman Albert had seen chatting with his aunt so briefly. Albert swallowed hard, heart pounding like a trapped bird.

“Fine. Whatever you want,” Albert said, panicking. “I’ll agree to whatever you want. You’ve made your point.”

“Smile,” Yvonne hissed through her teeth, her voice just above a whisper.

Albert forced a shaky smile as Yvonne opened the car door. She guided him forward with one firm hand at his back. His legs felt wobbly, exposed, vulnerable in the skirt and thin ballerina flats. His face burned with humiliation as the woman stepped forward.

“Ms. Thorne,” Yvonne said.

“Ms. Langthorpe,” Merrill Thorne replied. “You must be Alice Morris,” she said to Albert, her voice dispassionate. “Let’s get going. We’re expected.”

The young man looked back at his aunt, who was just standing there, expressionless, her arms crossed in front of her.

“Aunt Yvonne?” He said, waiting for her to call it off.

“I’ll see you later, Alice,” Yvonne said.

Albert nodded, his voice barely audible. “What the fuck?”

“Behave yourself,” she murmured, low enough to enhance her grave seriousness.

Albert glanced back at her one last time, searching her eyes for something — anything — besides cold contempt. But there was nothing else there. Not sympathy, not regret, not even the slightest hint that she was going to call this off.

He was forced to face forward as they walked through the door leading up the stairs to the school. Then and only then did Albert begin to contemplate his aunt was serious about this.



Headmistress Dianna Dandridge smiled brightly. Albert stood awkwardly, tugging down the hem of his skirt, feeling exposed beneath her smiling eyes.

“Welcome, Miss Morris,” she chirped. “You’ll simply love it here.”

Albert forced his voice higher, softer. “Thank you, ma’am.”

She clasped her hands, leaning closer. “We’ll make you into a proper little lady your aunt can be proud of!”

“I’m not little,” he growled under his breath.

Later, in the doctor’s chilly office, Albert sat shirtless, arms crossed protectively, glaring at his knees. Dr. Patel’s calm expression made everything feel worse.

“Well, this is a first,” Dr. Patel said as he rubbed his chin. “In all my years, I never thought I’d see a male come through the doors of this charm school.”

“You can’t tell anyone,” Albert pleaded, hands clasped together. “*Please*. My aunt will send me off to a military school or worse if anyone finds out.”

Dr. Patel shook his head, voice gentle but firm. “Well, I may have a solution. But it’s either this or I have no choice but to alert the faculty.”

“You can do something?”

Albert’s throat tightened as the doctor laid out silicone shapes, realistic skin meant to cover his masculinity. “You have to keep this secret from everyone,” he explained. “Don’t tug at the edges and never fuss with it. It’ll be just like your own skin.”

Albert looked away. How could this nightmare get worse? Was it not bad enough already?

Minutes later, as the doctor applied some kind of medical adhesive to his skin, Albert felt humiliation creep deeper into his mind. The shame and confusion seemed to overwhelm him and he just seemed to slip away, despite not wanting to fall asleep.

When he woke, he felt like he had been sleeping for a hundred years. “Wake up, now,” Dr. Patel said, patting him on the shoulder. “You dozed off there,” he said. Albert didn’t know that he had been asleep for 16 days, as a host of procedures had been made on his body, and he had finished healing enough to be revived. To him, he had just catnapped for a few minutes.

“Make sure everything is fitting all right, walk around a bit,” the doctor instructed. Albert got up onto surprisingly shaky legs and after he found his balance, walked up and down the short trailer a few times. He felt tired and limp, for reasons he didn’t understand. “How does it feel?”

“Weird,” Albert responded. “But nothing’s falling off,” he replied. “Can I go to the bathroom in this?”

“It won’t come off, it’s on there good and strong. There’s a catheter going through your urethra that will allow you to urinate. Just like a girl would, actually.” Exactly like a girl, really. “It might take some getting used to. You’ll need to sit down to do it.”

“That’s for girls.”

“Yes. Yes it is.”



In Bianca Newman’s fashion class, surrounded by lace, ribbons, and tittering giggles, Albert’s anger was becoming malignant. Ms. Newman’s bright eyes flickered with a knowing amusement that made Albert burn inside.

“Not a fan of lace, Alice?” Bianca Newman asked, voice playful, gaze piercing. Albert glared at the delicate fabric. “It’s stupid.”

The teacher tilted her head, a subtle smirk pulling at her lips. “Give it time, dear. We have lots of time.”

Albert said nothing, keeping his anger silent. He hated what was happening to him, but he feared his aunt even more.

In his very next class, Albert squirmed on a wooden stool, hands gripped tight on the seat, teeth grinding as Jasmine LaMay brushed another layer of blush across his burning cheeks.

“Hold still, Alice,” Jasmine said softly, eyes gentle but amused, voice dripping honeyed sympathy Albert didn’t trust. “You’re such a pretty girl. Stop pretending like this hurts.”

Albert glared at her, pulse throbbing angrily in his throat. “I’m not pretending.”

She tilted his chin upward, fingers firm but gentle, her gaze patient and slightly pitying. “Just relax. It doesn’t have to be so hard.”

“Uh-huh,” Albert muttered under his breath, though he stopped struggling. He swallowed the words he really wanted to say — biting sarcasm buried beneath humiliation.

Later, he shuffled miserably into Millicent Hawthorne’s ballet class, legs already aching from yesterday’s session. Dressed once more in white tights and a black leotard, he felt like a fool. The mirrored walls reflected dozens of graceful girls, their movements fluid and natural, while Albert stumbled awkwardly into position.

Millicent circled him, eyes critical, lips pursed with disappointment.

“Posture, Miss Morris,” she snapped. “You are a girl — the personification of grace and beauty. You would do well to remember that.”

Albert’s cheeks flamed brighter beneath Jasmine’s handiwork. He grumbled, feeling the sting of condescension in her words. Around him, whispers spread, soft giggles reminding him of his failure.

When class ended, muscles burning, Albert slumped onto a bench. Beside him, two girls spoke in lowered tones, their voices purposely loud enough for him to overhear.

“Poor Alice,” one murmured, lips curled in sympathy laced with amusement. “She doesn’t even really try.”

“She’ll learn,” the other whispered.

“Don’t listen to them,” said a girl who had walked up by Albert’s side. “They’re gossips.”

“We are not!” The girls replied. “Mind your own business, Lydia!” One added.

“Alice, right?” Lydia said. “C’mon, let’s get out of here.”

The changing room was small but fortunately the class was smaller. Albert sat stiffly on the bench, peeling off his pale pink ballet slippers, his feet aching, his pride worse. His legs trembled slightly — he hadn’t expected how hard the class would be, how graceful the girls were, how clumsy he felt in the center of it all.

Lydia was a girl with bright red hair and confident hands. She pulled off her tights in one smooth motion. She glanced at him, then smiled.

“You’re new,” she said.

Albert nodded, trying not to meet her eyes. “I’m... Uh, Alice.”

Lydia didn’t laugh. She didn’t stare. She just shrugged, then said, “Your pliés weren’t bad. For a first-timer.”

He looked up, surprised. “They felt awful.”

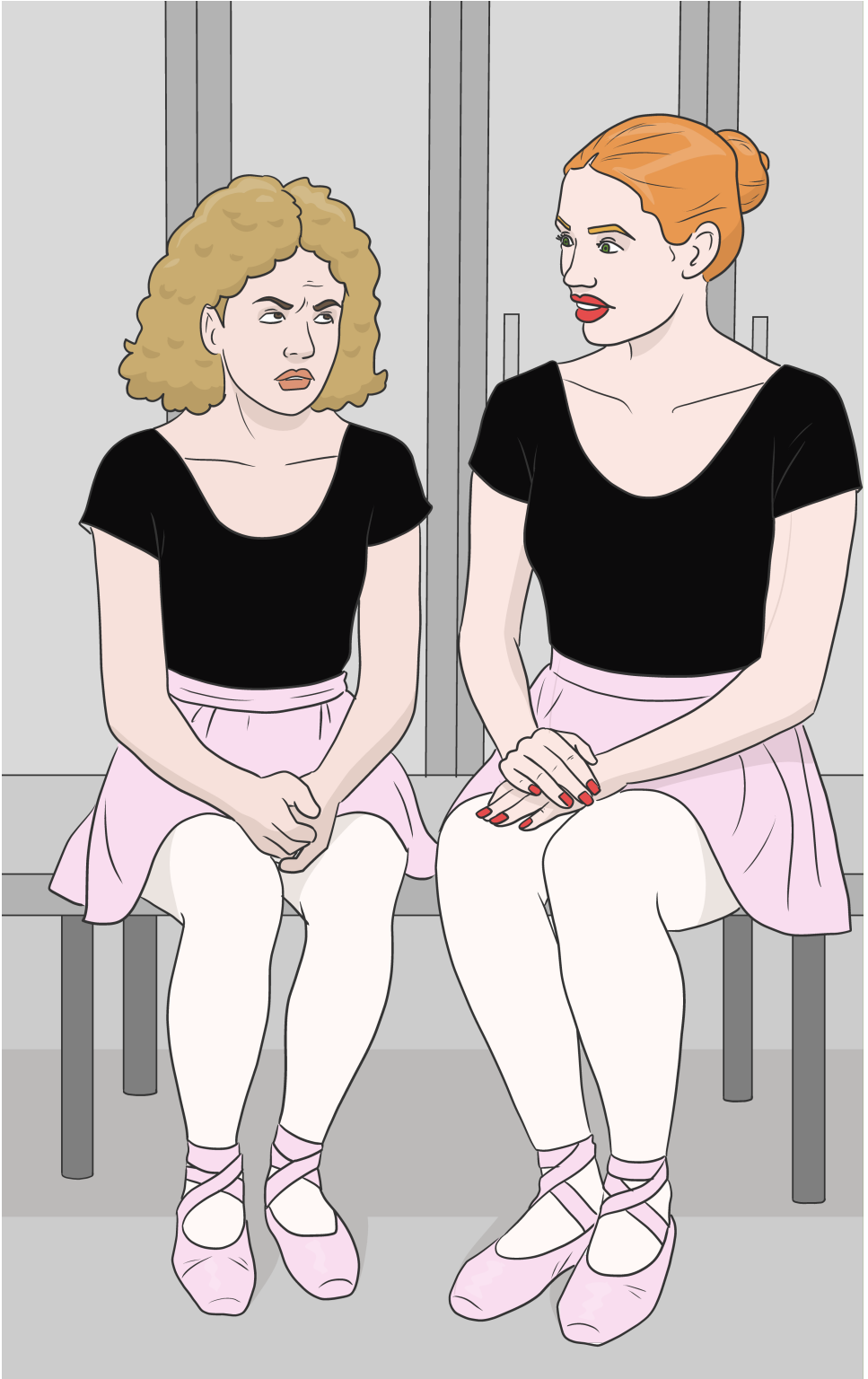
“They looked okay,” she said, tugging her skirt off and folding it neatly. “You’ll get better. Everyone’s weird the first time.”

Albert’s voice came out small. “Thanks.”

Lydia handed him a bottle of water without asking. “Just breathe. And don’t lock your knees. That’s what makes you wobble.”

He took the bottle, nodded again. For the first time since he arrived, someone older didn’t treat him like glass. “I’ll see you next time,” she said as she finished dressing and left. He didn’t want there to be another ballet class, but at least he had found one person who was decent to him.

Albert dressed himself once again in one of the many feminine outfits the school had provided him. As he slipped into the skirt and fastened it around his



waist, the collar of his blouse tingled. An unseen voice whispered gently into his ear: *I'm jealous of women, sometimes I wish I was one.*

Albert looked around, wondering where the voice was coming from. There was no one near him. He shook his head, pushing the thought away, worrying why he even thought it.

MR. GAVIN LARKIN

A firm knock at the door startled Gavin from sleep. “Time to rise, Blair,” called a cheerful, feminine voice through the thin wood. “Fitting at seven.”

Gavin squinted, groggy and confused. The ceiling light in his room came on, harsh and strong. He blinked, momentarily unsure where he was. Then his memory kicked in, sharp and merciless. Charm school.

An old-fashioned charm school where apparently everyone believed that Gavin Larkin — 36, wanted for embezzlement — was actually Blair Dahlgren, 18-year-old debutante-to-be. Gavin sighed and rubbed his face. He swung his legs out of bed and felt ridiculous, even alone in his room. Pulling on the provided fluffy robe, he tied the sash awkwardly, as though the fabric itself was going to poison him. Ridiculous or not, what choice did he have? Prison terms were still on offer, he reminded himself. Compared to that, maybe a little lace and velvet wasn’t the worst thing in the world. But it was close.

In the hallway, a matronly woman waited with polite impatience, lips pursed. She escorted Gavin swiftly down the corridor toward a large classroom near the back. Inside, Gavin paused, blinking slowly. The room was part theater dressing room, part upscale Parisian boutique. Endless racks overflowed with blouses, dresses, skirts, stockings, and shoes. Mirrors were scattered around the room like an amateur funhouse. Amid this chaos, Bianca Newman emerged from the racks of clothes, her arms open wide like she was welcoming a loved one back from a year-long cruise.

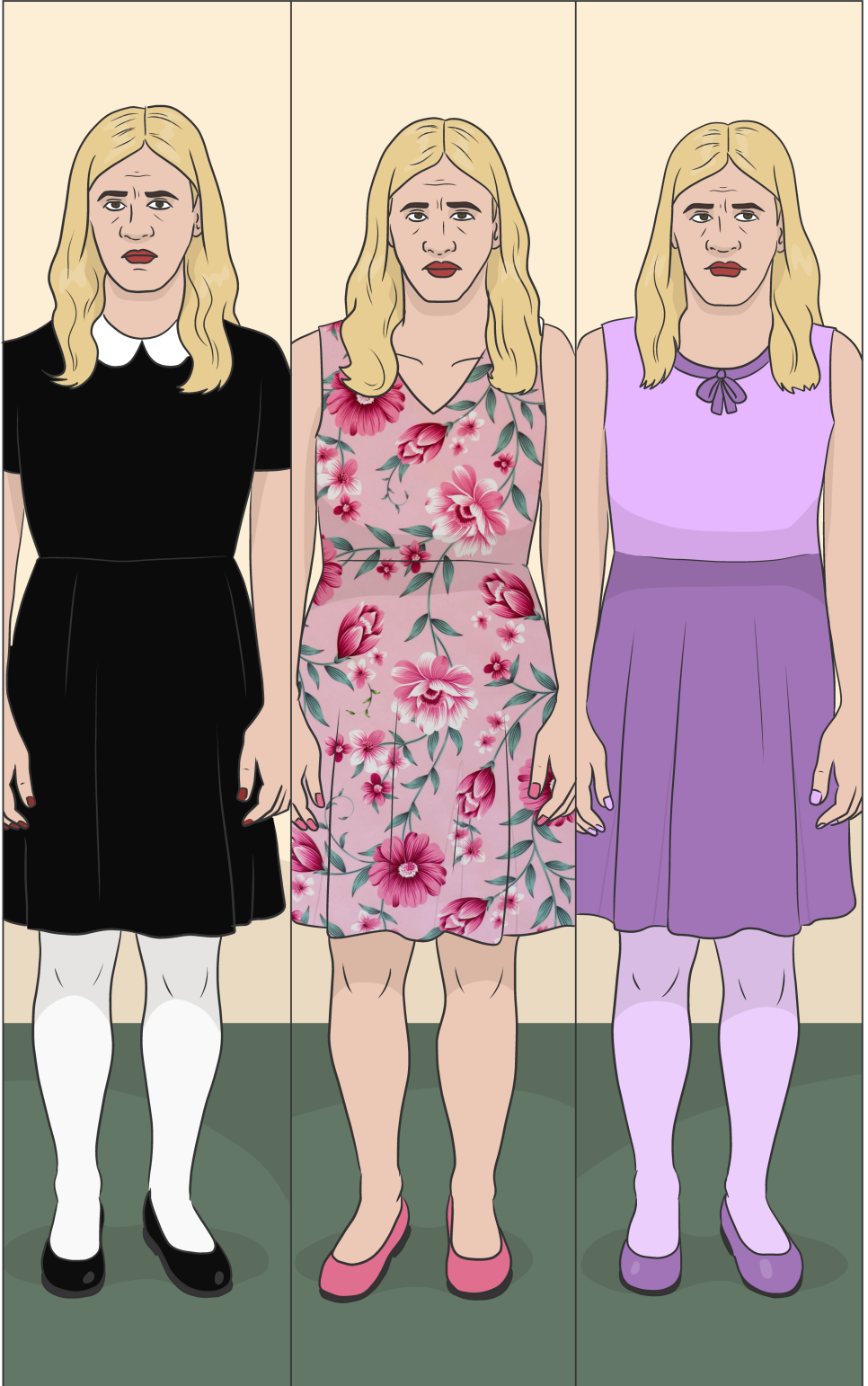
“Blair Dahlgren,” she said clearly, as if his name were an announcement rather than an introduction. “Welcome. We’ll begin with your foundation garments.”

“Foundation what?” Gavin managed weakly, clutching his robe tighter. Bianca sighed, barely hiding her impatience, and pointed toward a privacy screen decorated with Chinese patterns. Gavin shuffled behind it, face hot, as he was handed a delicate camisole and matching panties. Gavin stood frozen, holding the thin garments in disbelief. He opened his mouth to protest, reconsidered, and swallowed his embarrassment. After all, who was he kidding at this point? He couldn’t say a word. He had no idea who knew his identity.

He emerged reluctantly, mortified, dressed in the panties and camisole, his dad bod on full display. Bianca nodded approval. “Much better. Let’s begin.”

Then followed a whirlwind of outfit changes: soft blouses with Peter Pan collars, satin-trimmed skirts, structured dresses. They were all in shades he found vaguely insulting: rose, lavender, eggshell, buttercream. Gavin frowned, tugging at a powder-blue sleeve irritably.

“These colors are... infantilizing,” he muttered. “Can’t I have something more... Adult?”



Bianca, unflappable, calmly smoothed the fabric at his shoulders. “They’re softening,” she replied. “Softness helps you be heard without speaking.”

As she adjusted a blush-pink blouse around his collar, Gavin caught sight of something odd — a thin, faintly glinting silver thread woven neatly into the collar. He touched it suspiciously.

“What’s this thread?” he asked, peering closer.

“Hm?” Bianca glanced briefly. “Oh, just a signature touch.”

“It’s in all of them,” he pointed out, skeptically.

Bianca smiled tightly, stepping back and gesturing with calm authority. “Of course it is. Now lift your arms, please.”



Later, in a brightly lit mirrored dance studio, Gavin awkwardly joined posture class, run by Millicent Hawthorne — sharp-featured and severe, her graying hair pulled back into a ballet bun tight enough to lift her eyebrows. Girls lined up neatly, balancing hardcover books on their heads like seasoned runway models. Gavin, expecting humiliation, braced himself for laughter or stares at the sight of a grown man fumbling through teenage etiquette. Strangely, nobody seemed bothered. Nobody giggled or whispered or pointed. It was like he belonged.

“Spines straight,” Millicent barked sharply, eyes hawk-like. “Chins tucked. Charm is not a gift — it’s the result of discipline.”

Gavin, feeling foolish, placed a heavy book atop his head. Two careful steps later, it thudded loudly onto the polished wood floor. Millicent tapped his shoulder sharply with a slender wooden rod, scolding gently but firmly. “No sulking, Blair. Sulking is an ugly habit.”

His resentment simmered quietly. He clenched his jaw, forced to glide back and forth, feet turned inward, hands delicate. Next to him, a pretty girl stared serenely forward, never faltering, eyes glazed but posture perfect. Gavin scowled under his breath, muttering, “This is absurd,” while jealousy burned somewhere deep and shameful.

Dinner proved even stranger. It was in a dining hall that looked like the prison cafeteria he was trying to avoid. Plates on trays carried absurdly tiny portions — a sliver of fish, a single asparagus spear, a spoonful of cottage cheese. Gavin picked at his plate slowly, stomach growling softly, frustrated. Nobody noticed him, questioned him, or stared. Didn’t they see he was a grown man among teenage girls? Why didn’t anyone say anything? He stared down at his fork, its weight strangely heavy in his hand.

On the slow walk back to his dorm room, he passed two girls giggling quietly in a hallway corner. He paused briefly, unnoticed, watching them lean toward each other, eyes sparkling, faces carefree. A strange, intrusive thought whispered softly inside his mind: They have it easier. *You've always envied them a little, haven't you?* Gavin shook it off quickly, cheeks burning. "Not me," he muttered aloud, embarrassed by himself. Yet it lingered stubbornly, nagging quietly, as he sat at his vanity, slowly brushing his hair into a softer shape.



The next morning, Gavin woke startled by how deeply he'd slept — no dreams, just darkness. He dressed himself clumsily, feeling awkward again in the effeminate clothing. Stepping into the hallway, a young girl smiled brightly as she passed. "Good morning, Blair!"

Gavin flinched sharply, expecting shock or confusion — but she saw nothing strange. At breakfast, three girls shifted down the seats, making room for him at their table without a second thought. One passed him the margarine casually, as though he'd always belonged. No smirks. No confusion. Just acceptance. Gavin swallowed slowly, a chill prickling his skin.

Did they genuinely see him as just another teenage girl named Blair? Of course not. There had to be some kind of rule that prevented them from saying anything. There *had* to be.



A quiet knock sounded at the dormitory door, startling Gavin out of a daydream that had vaguely featured running from the police in three-inch heels. Before he could reply, the door swung open and Dianna Dandridge entered, smiling as if she'd been invited to a tea party. Gavin pulled his robe tighter. Dianna's gaze was warm and welcoming, but Gavin felt like a bug under a magnifying glass.

"We haven't formally met yet," Dianna said cheerily, stepping further into the pink-themed room as if she belonged there more than he did. "I'm Dianna Dandridge. I run our little school here, and I just wanted to personally welcome you to our charming family."

Gavin forced a polite nod, though 'charming' was hardly the word he'd use. Something closer to 'surreal' or 'absurd' felt more accurate. Still, he mustered a smile. He'd gotten good at smiling lately — mostly because everyone here

seemed to expect constant cheerfulness, like they were extras in some endless Broadway musical.

“Thanks,” Gavin said softly, careful to keep his voice pitched high. “It’s been an... adjustment.”

Dianna waved that away as though she were brushing aside a mildly irritating insect. “Oh, I know it can be overwhelming, Blair. But just wait. You’ll find learning to become a charming young woman is a beautiful journey of discovery.” She paused to look Gavin up and down. “Speaking of journeys, you’re due for a health check. Purely routine, you know, for insurance purposes.”

Gavin frowned slightly. “I feel fine.”

“Oh, I’m sure you do, dear. But it’s mandatory,” Dianna said, her smile never faltering. “Dr. Patel is expecting you. Shall we?”

Before Gavin could protest further, Dianna gently guided him out the door and through a rarely-used exit that led to the rear parking lot. The cracked asphalt stretched out like an abandoned airstrip, weeds sprouting defiantly from every crevice. A single trailer sat isolated at the lot’s edge, unmarked and somehow ominous in its plainness.

Dianna nudged him toward the ramp leading up to the trailer door. “Here we are. Just go on in. The doctor will take good care of you.”

Inside, Gavin was surprised by how clean and tidy it was. Dim lights cast shadows across outdated medical posters explaining things nobody really needed explained, like basic hand-washing or proper coughing etiquette. The door clicked shut behind him, startlingly loud in the silence, and a man in a white coat turned from a clipboard.

“Ah, Blair. Right on time,” the doctor said warmly, extending a professional hand. “I’m Dr. Patel. Let’s make this quick, shall we?”

“Sure,” Gavin muttered, shaking Dr. Patel’s hand reluctantly.

“Sit right there,” Dr. Patel instructed, nodding toward the examination table. Gavin climbed onto it, uncomfortable in his skirt and tights. Dr. Patel went through standard motions — checking blood pressure, eyes, reflexes — all the while making small talk. It was nothing for Gavin to worry about.

“Are you settling in alright? No headaches, nightmares, unexplained anxiety?” Dr. Patel asked casually, shining a penlight into Gavin’s eyes.

“No, nothing like that,” Gavin lied, blinking at the bright intrusion.

“Good, good.” Dr. Patel nodded absently, jotting notes. Then he looked up sharply. “Alright. Let’s finish with the standard genital check.”

Gavin stiffened immediately. A wave of panic surged through him. The truth about his gender was about to be discovered, and he wasn’t remotely prepared. “No,” he blurted out, reaching instinctively to block Dr. Patel’s hands. But Dr.

Patel was already examining him, and it took less than a second for the doctor's expression to shift dramatically.

"Oh," Dr. Patel said quietly, feigning surprise and concern, eyebrows knitting together dramatically. "This is going to cause a problem."

Gavin felt heat rush into his cheeks, humiliation and desperation battling for dominance. "Please," he whispered urgently. "You can't tell anyone. I can't get kicked out. I'll — I'll be arrested if anyone finds out."

Dr. Patel sighed heavily, shaking his head. "It's not so simple. I could lose my license. I could lose my job."

Gavin's heart raced frantically. "I have money. Plenty of money. Just don't tell them."

Dr. Patel hesitated just long enough to seem conflicted. Finally, he nodded slowly. "Well, we can try to keep your... *illusion* intact." He paused. "Is ten thousand too much to ask?"

"Uh... No, I guess not," Gavin said. "But I won't be able to get to it until I leave."

"I can wait."

Gavin stared at him, bewildered but grateful. "So no one here knows?"

"No, no. It's never happened before," Dr. Patel reassured, his expression now thoughtful, contemplative.

He was lying. Every staff member knew. After all, all the students were male. Or at least, they used to be. "But we must keep you safe. Let's talk about concealment."

From a locked drawer, Dr. Patel produced a sleek black case and carefully opened it. Inside rested a full silicone torso and hip assembly, lifelike enough to unsettle Gavin deeply. He recoiled slightly.

"What's that?"

Dr. Patel's tone was crisp and professional. "A second skin. Breathable, adhesive-bound, body-reactive. In days, you won't even notice it."

Gavin felt his stomach twist. "Is this really necessary?"

Dr. Patel fixed him with a firm gaze. "Unless you want to attract attention."

"But why do you even have something like this?"

Dr. Patel shrugged mildly. "A former student had body-image issues. She left before we could use it. I've been dying to try it." The man missed his calling as an actor, going into medicine as he had.

Gavin swallowed hard as Dr. Patel began gently applying a warm adhesive gel to his chest, lower back, and hips. As Dr. Patel smoothed the prosthetic into place, Gavin felt himself growing drowsy, thoughts turning vague and distant.

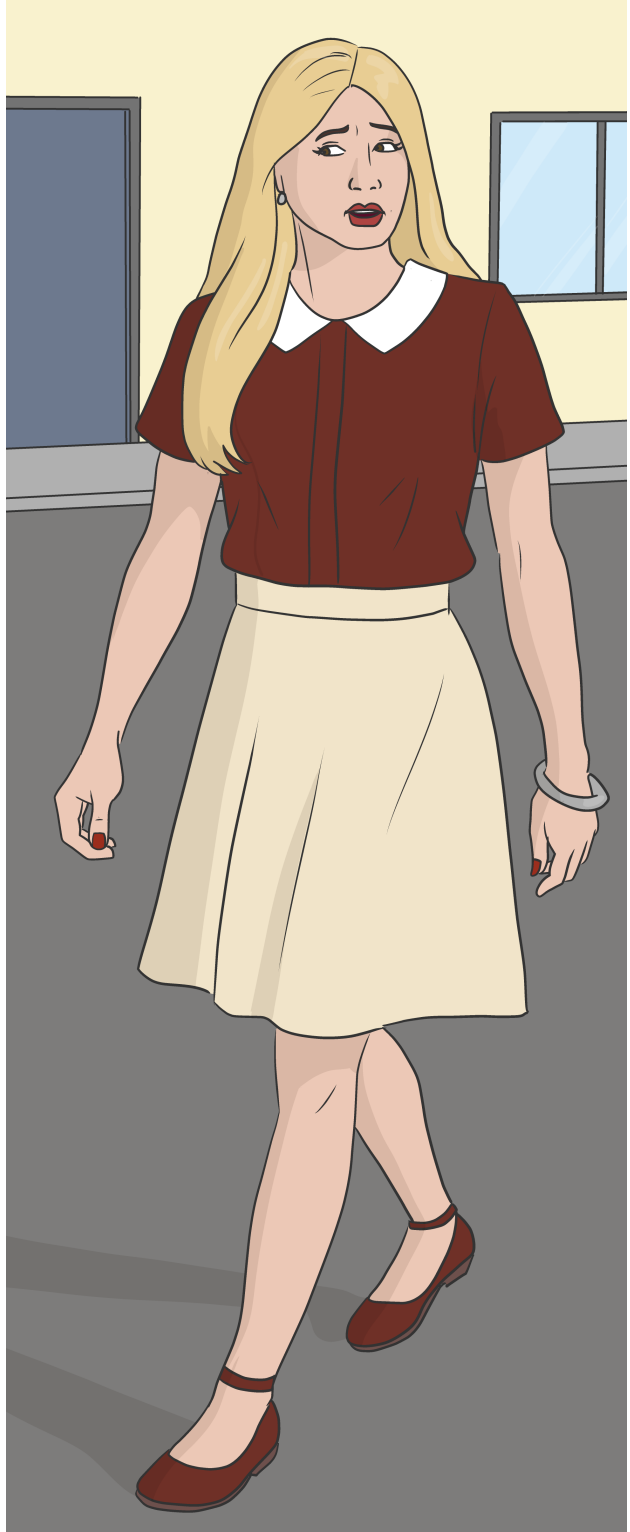
“Why do I feel strange?”
Gavin slurred, limbs
heavy and eyelids
drooping.

“Just rest your eyes
while the bonding sets,”
Dr. Patel replied gently.
“The adhesive fumes can
make you dizzy.”

Unable to resist, Gavin
drifted deeper. Dr. Patel
calmly rolled up Gavin’s
sleeve, carefully
swabbing under his arm
before smoothly injecting
three thin capsules under
Gavin’s skin filled with a
slow-release hormonal
mixture. He quietly
monitored Gavin’s
breathing and heartbeat
as the sedation
deepened, expression
calm and unreadable.

When Gavin opened his
eyes again, morning sun
streamed softly through
sheer curtains of the
trailer onto a bed far
more comfortable than
he remembered. A
gentle voice coaxed him
awake. “Blair? You’ll be
late to posture drills.”

Gavin sat up slowly,
feeling oddly groggy, like
his head was in concrete.
Touching his face, he
found it not just shaved
but completely smooth,
strangely soft beneath his
fingertips. He glanced
into the vanity mirror.



His jawline was delicate, devoid of an Adam's apple, his features subtle and feminine. Something seemed off — but as quickly as the feeling appeared, it dissolved, replaced by quiet certainty. He'd always looked like this, hadn't he?

Gavin stood up carefully, noticing a curious lightness in his step. His chest rose and fell naturally beneath the camisole, his hips gently curving beneath the skirt. He paused for a moment, puzzled briefly by the sensation of something faintly itching under his skin, then shrugged it away as he smoothed his skirt and headed out the door.

“Look like you nodded off there, Blair,” Dr. Patel said. “You need to get back to class.”

“Oh, uh... yes..” Gavin said, feeling his new silicone skin. He placed his hand on his crotch, where it was completely smooth.

“Undetectable,” the doctor said.

“Good,” Gavin replied. As far as he was concerned, he had just dozed off during the application of the prosthetics a little bit ago. What he didn't know was that he had in fact been under for over two weeks. In that time, his body had undergone liposuction, electrolysis, a shave of his Adams Apple, and been given six implants of estrogen and anti-androgen that would slowly release into his body over the course of a year. Also, there were a few more special procedures that took extended time to recover from.

Walking across the parking lot and into the school, Gavin moved with unease. It felt like his whole body was sore and out of sorts. He didn't yet know he'd lost twenty pounds from a procedure he couldn't remember, or that feminine hormones were now coursing through his veins. He wasn't aware that he looked so much like a young woman now that he could pass for a college coed. He knew only that he felt different, softer, lighter. Perhaps it was just the routine, or perhaps it was something else entirely. Whatever it was, Gavin felt ready to face another day, a little more secure in his appearance.

Or so he told himself.

CONNOR KEOUGH, ESQ.

Waking the next morning was a slow torture, as Connor remembered every aspect of the trauma of the previous day, humiliation by humiliation. It began with having to steal a dress from his mother's closet that morning, and ended with aching calves from 2 hours of training to walk in heels.

The first thing he saw was black hair covering his eyes, reminding him of yet another humiliation of the previous day. After that was whisked out of his vision, he saw the billowy, filmy nightie he had fallen asleep in. It had been included in the bags of clothes he had gotten from the school. He had to sleep in the bra — which pinched his shoulders — or sleep naked, which seemed like a bad idea if he was to stay in disguise. So the nightie it was.

Suddenly, there were three loud knocks on the door. “Look alive!” a voice yelled. The door opened. As Connor was still in bed, and he pulled the sheets up to his chin. Elenor's head poked around a corner. “You have an appointment with before class, Starla. I need you ready to go in twenty minutes.” She looked at the delicate watch on her wrist. “Pardon me. Ten minutes.” She then left without taking questions.

Connor had a lot of questions. *Urgent* questions.

Ms. Tuft knocked again two minutes later, which forced Connor out of bed, terrified that he'd be spotted if he didn't get a move on. He at least needed to be wearing clothes to ask his urgent questions. However, that launched him into his first big problem of the new day: What the hell were these clothes in front of him, and how the hell was he going to put them on?

There were five pairs of matching bras and panties, four tops, two dresses, two skirts and two pairs of pants. There were also two pairs of shoes, both with higher heels than the shoes he had stolen from his step-mother.

His first, most obvious choice, was a pair of jeans. He knew jeans. He was comfortable with jeans. There were just two problems. First, they weren't jeans, they were stretchy leggings made to look like jeans. Second, they showed off his sack front and center. It couldn't have been more obvious if it was glowing like the sun.

A knock on the store made him jump five feet. “One minute!”

Scrambling, he went with one of the dresses. They were simple, at least. He threw it on, tried to get it to settle on him correctly, took it off because he needed to put on underwear first, stuffed his bra, and then put that on, then changed the panties he was already wearing, and tried to press his newly black hair into place.

“Oh, you don't need to wear that,” Ms. Tuft said when she arrived to fetch him. Connor was breathing heavily and gasping for air after exerting himself

and barely meeting Elenor's deadline. "Just use the robe," she continued. "There's one in your closet."

Connor grunted in exasperation. "I'm not feeling well. I think I should stay in bed today."

"Well, you're in luck!" Ms. Tuft said. "You have an appointment with a doctor in two minutes. He can fix you right up."

"A... A... Doctor?" Connor asked, nervously. "Like, a *real* doctor? Why?"

"A physical exam. Standard procedure for new students."

"What kind of charm school is this?" He yelled, a little too loudly.

"The impatient kind. Now go change — quickly!"

A minute later, he was being led down the hallway in a white bathrobe and a pair of spa slippers. It was early, and no one had actually gotten up yet. It was odd to Connor, that Ms. Tuft looked like she had been up for hours. He rightly wondered if she ever looked even the slightest bit disheveled.

"Okay, I was faking," Connor said. "I'm really fine. Never felt better. I don't need to see a doctor."

"We do exams for every student," Elenor said, having heard these objections many, many times before. "It's mandatory."

"No, no. Really. I... I... I have a phobia about doctors. I go all crazy."

"Our physician is very experienced in dealing with all kinds of reluctant patients."

"I hurt people! I. I. Killed a doctor once!" He was desperate to keep himself from being examined.

"Did you?" Elenor replied. "Well, doctors aren't hard to find. Medical schools produce thousands every year."

"No, I can't! I can't go! Don't make me go!"

"We're already there," Elenor said, throwing open the door to the parking lot.

"Uh..."

"As you know," she explained, "Our most important rule is that no men are allowed in our school. So, Dr. Patel makes his examinations in a mobile clinic. It's parked right there." Elenor pointed to a sleek white trailer a few feet ahead of them.

"No, no! I can't do it!" Connor insisted. "I have a rash! I don't want anyone to see it! I... I..."

"If you don't get in that trailer, missy," Elenor said with her jaw clenched. "I'm going to leave you right here and lock you out of the building with nothing but that robe on."

Silently, with his head down, Connor followed Ms. Tuft out to the mobile clinic trailer and stepped inside.

“Ah! This must be Starla!” A nurse with a toothy smile said. “The doctor is almost ready for you, hun!” She put her arm around Connor’s shoulders as she led him deeper inside. The young man in disguise looked around for Ms. Tuft, but she was already gone.

He found himself in an exam room, waiting for this doctor, and not knowing what he was going to do. Maybe he could fake it if he didn’t have to take off the robe, or could create some kind of distraction. After all, he had fooled everyone else so far.

“Hello, I’m Dr. Patel,” the man with a clipboard said, entering the room. He had dark hair with flecks of grey at his temples, and had a very serious look on his fifty-something Indian face. “No need to beat around the bush. If you could disrobe...”

“No!” Connor said back, clenching the robe even tighter around him.

“No need for shyness. I’m a professional.”

“No no no!” The young man said, scared out of his mind. “Pass! Pass!”

“You’re due for class in just a few minutes. Let’s not waste time.” He reached for the bathrobe, to try and take it, but Connor scooted away, turning away from him. “Don’t be childish,” he said, impatiently.

“Please, no. I don’t...”

“I’m losing my patience with you, Starla.”

“You have to understand...”

“Hold on,” the doctor said, suddenly furrowing his brow in concentration. “Are you hiding something?”

“Hiding? I’m not hiding anything! I’m just a normal healthy girl who doesn’t need to be examined! There’s no hiding!”

“Let me be the judge of that,” the doctor said, reaching for the robe again. Dr. Patel loved teasing the new boys at the charm school.

“Don’t touch me! No!” At this point, Connor was pinned up against the wall, still seated, curling up his legs for extra protection.

“Wait a moment!” the doctor said, suddenly standing upright. “Are you... Are you not... a girl?”

“Me? No, I’m a girl. The girliest of girls! All girl here! Just don’t touch me!”

“Huh,” the doctor said, looking troubled. “This is a problem, isn’t it?” He picked up his phone from his white coat pocket. “I’ll have to let the administration know, of course.”

“Please! No! You don’t understand!”

“What is there to understand?” The doctor said, pausing his dialing.

“Just give me a moment to explain... You see... I, uh...” Connor was at a loss on any plausible reason to explain his masquerading as a girl, as running his one and only explanation through his head would surely sound inadequate. “Look... So, here’s the thing... Okay. Let me think.”

The doctor tried to fill the silence. “If I...”

“Let me think!” Connor insisted, as he rubbed his temples.

“You don’t need to explain,” the doctor said. “I’ve seen this before. A young man can’t resist the call of a whole school of nubile young women and...”

“I’m not a perv!”

“No need to be embarrassed. In a way, it’s a clever plan. I was once a young man like you...”

“I’m not!”

“Oh?” The doctor ended his remark there, waiting for Connor to furnish his explanation.

With every micro spark of electricity in his brain dedicated to finding an excuse for disguising himself as a girl, Connor had nothing left over to speak, Or at least speak coherently.

“I’m doing this for...” He said, pausing to cough up an end to that sentence.

“A friend?” Dr. Patel said, finishing it for him.

“A friend?” Connor repeated.

The doctor was leading him through, trying to get the kid to catch on, but he wasn’t doing a very good job of it. “A friend went missing and...”

“A friend...”

“A girl friend went missing, and you...?”

“And I...”

“Wanted to try and find her... So you...?”

“So I...”

“Tracked her to the school?”

“And then because only girls get in, I made up a disguise to go find her,” Connor said, finally grabbing the rope he was being thrown.

“Ah. I see. Wouldn’t be the first time I’ve heard that one.”

“Really?”

“Sometimes the girls here use it as a refuge. They take advantage of the no-males rule and the school’s boarding provision. They know no one can get to them.”

“Yeah!” Connor was thrilled to have thought up this excuse all by himself and that it was totally plausible. “So... That’s a good reason, right?”

“I have to admit it is.” Dr. Patel rubbed his chin, to sell the look of contemplation. Usually the boys who came through his office could come up with excuses on their own, but this kid had needed be spoon-fed. He didn’t much care — as long as it got them to the next step.

“Um... So what are you going to do?”

“Well, that depends.” The doctor finally put his phone away, eliciting a sigh from his young patient. “Have you found her yet?”

“Uh... No. I... Uh... I really haven’t met anyone here yet.”

“I see. well. This puts me in a tricky situation.”

Connor understood that he wasn’t being turned in immediately, and to him, that meant he had a way out.

“It’s just until I find her and can talk to her,” Connor said.

“I don’t know. I mean, if she’s hiding, it’s probably for a good reason. I better call...” He reached for his phone again and Connor leapt to his feet to block him.

“No! I have to... I just need time!” Again, seeing the door wasn’t shut on his plea, Connor tried harder. “Please! You gotta! I’ve... Uh... Come so far!”

The doctor paused again. “Even if I were to look the other way, I would assume you’d get caught at some point, and if you do, my professional reputation would be at stake. After all, I would have certified that you’re a healthy girl.” He shook his head. “And I wouldn’t be able to live with myself if you were accused of taking advantage of the girls in the school. No. It’s out of the question.”

The thought of being sent home into his father’s clutches terrified Connor more than anything he could imagine. “I’ll do anything!” He begged.

Dr. Patel turned away to hide his smile. Half the reason he even worked for the school was to tease these reprobates within an inch of having a heart attack.



Connor was standing in front of his class, which was at least 8 girls plus Mrs. Newman, who were watching his every move. Except for his bra, he was stark naked.

“Now have you made sure that the panty is facing forward?” Mrs. Newman asked Connor. He was holding a pink silk lace-lined pair of panties in front of him and held them closer to his eyes so he could inspect them. “The tag will always be on the inside, and at the back. But sometimes there isn’t a tag.”

“Oh,” Connor replied.

There were some giggles coming from the girls, and Mrs. Newman snapped at them. “This is vital information you will all need to know to pass the quiz! And you should thank Starla for volunteering to demonstrate for everyone!” She then turned her attention back to Connor. “Every girl needs to know these things. Please continue.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Connor replied as he began to step into the panties. The only reason he was able to do this was because he had reached a compromise with Dr. Patel. The doctor’s “concerns” about Connor taking advantage of being the “only” boy in school of girls was met when he agreed to take some hormones that, as he was told, would reduce his sex drive.

Of course, the hormones that Connor was now taking twice a day would do far more than just temper his teenage horniness, but the young man didn’t know that.

“Don’t stretch them out,” Mrs. Newman advised as Connor had one of his smooth legs through. “Panties aren’t elastic. But some are.”

Connor nodded and continued slipping them on. He lifted them up his skinny, hairless legs and then brought them snug and flat against his groin.

That was the reason Connor was okay with having to stand naked in the room. The doctor had made sure he could pass for female, even when in the buff. When he had woken up after the procedure, it appeared for all the world like he had a naturally feminine mound, and he couldn’t have been happier about it. It meant that he no longer had to worry about being discovered or the doctor giving him away. He had no more worries, as far as he was concerned. He could hide out in the school, free from his father, for a long, long time.

“Very good, Starla,” Mrs. Newman said with a smile. “Girls, please note how she did that. Starla pulled the backside of the panty away from her skin, to avoid them creeping into the cleve of her buttocks.”

Connor was almost embarrassed to admit that he had done that, but as long as he got praise for it, he didn’t mind. “Can I put the clothes back on?” He asked.

“Not yet, Starla,” Mrs. Newman said. “By the way, thank you for volunteering for such this delicate task.”

He had done so motivated by one reason: to make sure everyone could see the absence of boy parts on his body. It had been extremely embarrassing at first, but after a few minutes, he began to sense that he was seen as just “one of the girls,” and it was so much easier.

Even when he was asked to demonstrate how to put a bra on, he had nothing to really worry about. The doctor had added a little of Connor’s own fat in his chest as well as used some kind of injection that stimulated swelling. He didn’t exactly have breasts per se, but he looked a pair were growing in. They were big enough that he could feel a jiggle in his chest when he sneezed or coughed.



“Next, I want to use Starla as our model for putting on stockings,” Mrs. Newman said, as she picked up a small box full of filmy hosiery. She picked two out and handed them to Connor. “This will be a little more complicated,” she advised.

How tough could putting on long socks be? Well, Connor found out fast. He was shown the “proper” way to put on stockings, starting with gathering them up in a little cup and then lining the seam against his toes. It didn’t make a lot of sense to him until began to pull them up and shot his foot clean through the thin material.

“Let’s try that again,” Mrs. Newman said, clearly used to this mistake in her newest students. “A little slower? Scratch that, a *lot* slower.”

It was almost painful for Connor to move as slowly as he had to, putting the stockings on. He had a near primal urge to just yank them on, despite having torn them a moment ago. The young man had to follow instructions, drawing the smoky black stocking up his leg, carefully over his calf, keeping the stocking straight, letting the fabric out gradually, then up his thigh, and adjusting it up and down his leg to make it all fit right. And again on the other leg. How could anyone dress so slow?

His aggravation almost took his mind off his sore body. He didn't expect to be so sore after what the doctor said was just a "minor cosmetic procedure" but his whole midsection seemed to be hurting. The rubber-silicone thing that had been adhered to his groin was something he had been told would come off naturally in a few months, or it could be removed by Dr. Patel. The way it felt, he hoped he could get rid of it as soon as possible.

In his mind, he'd only had a day to get used to it, but in reality, he'd been in bed for ten days, recovering. He just didn't know that, and the school was very careful to make sure he wouldn't be aware of the loss of nearly two weeks. After all, if he knew that, he might suspect that the cosmetic procedure wasn't minor at all.

It wasn't long before Mrs. Newman's class was over and it was time for Mrs. Dandridge's etiquette class, which was no less emasculating. He was almost grateful that Mrs. Dandridge had given him special attention to catch up when it came to walking in heels, because for duration of her class that's all he was doing.

Down one side of the classroom, up the other, around cones, on a line, up stairs, and down stairs. Clippity-clopping around obstacles in the tall heels made him feel like a pantomime horse doing an equestrian run.

He felt miserable, unable to do much else but plod along with the rest of the students. Oddly, they didn't look like they were having much fun at all either. At least they were real girls and would have a use for this in life, he reasoned.

Without that extra tutoring from Mrs. Dandridge, Connor was sure he'd be falling over every other step, so he was grateful for that. In fact, he believed he might be handling the heels better than the real girls he was watching hobble around.

The next class with a new instructor for him was Mrs. Hawthorne, and it required him to get naked again, to change into a gym outfit. Mrs. Hawthorne was the instructor for "Figure & Fitness" which wasn't quite what he expected. Neither was the gym outfit.

The workout was barely even a workout. When he did workouts back home, it was nothing but lifts and pumping iron, and he had to be reminded to work on his legs. In this class, it was nothing *but* legs. Treadmills, leg-crunches, step exercises and even aerobics. He didn't even see any equipment to work on

upper-body stuff. He was worried his arms would waste away to twigs if he didn't at least do some curls every few days.

This was a meager complaint, however. What really bothered Connor was the pastel spandex outfit, with a tiny skirt. It looked hopelessly out of date, and was too tight to be comfortable. He felt like a cross between a ballerina and an 80's aerobics nut. Even stranger was that the uniform also included three inch white pumps, hardly a good choice for athletic footwear.



When lunchtime came around, Connor was more beleaguered than tired. He was having trouble imagining himself following this routine day after day and doing these silly routines repeatedly. Wearing a dress or a skirt was one thing, but having to practice these idiotic routines wasn't just dumb — it was boring.

In the cafeteria, it was another paltry meal. A salad with a thimble of dressing and a spoonful of cottage cheese was all he had today. He was wondering if he might be able to sneak his way through the line a second time, but that would just result in having more stuff he still didn't want to eat. Connor was alone, again eating in silence and solitude, as was his hallway neighbor, just as she had since he'd met her.

The class after lunch was Mrs. LaMay's cosmetology class, and despite himself, Connor didn't mind makeup so much. At least he could sit while doing it.

Today, they were told they were working on a "natural look" which sounded outright stupid. If you wanted to look like you weren't wearing makeup, the solution to that dilemma seemed kind of obvious.

What he didn't expect today was that achieving this "natural" look took twice as long as it did to do normal makeup. It was a full hour of messing with his face, and class was over before anyone was actually done. That didn't surprise him as every step seemed to take more concentration than the last. The skin had to be perfect, the eyeshadow had to be blended, the mascara had to be sculpted and the lip color had to be just right for his skin tone.

Then when it was done, he had to wash it all off and then do "normal" makeup before he could go to his next class.



By the time the day was done, all Connor wanted to do was drop dead on the bed in his tiny dorm room. He didn't even care that he was in a dress in high

heels. He was drained and all the novelty of his new, detection-proof look had long worn off.

It turns out, once you could stop worrying about being exposed as a man, the charm school's routine was kind of dull.

However, Connor did have one thing he had wanted to check before releasing himself to sleep. When he had woken up this morning, after his procedure, he was in a rush to get to class and hadn't even examined himself and what his new disguise really looked and felt like.

With trepidation and uncertainty, he pulled the dress off over his head and revealed the alien underwear he wore beneath it. The bra and panty set was the last thing he'd ever imagine would be on his body. With a heavy sigh, he slid out of the panties, despairing that he would have to put them back on.

He ran the tips of his fingers down his belly, wanting to detect the spot where the material of the prosthetic he was wearing began. It wasn't very hard to find. It was visually near perfect, just the slightest bit smoother and the color was the faintest shade darker than his skin. It was definitely an odd sensation, feeling next to nothing beyond a certain point of his own body.

Going farther, he had to check where it counted. His finger slipped inside the folds of the silicone vagina unexpectedly, as he couldn't see much from his vantage point, and had his eyes shut anyway. He didn't know what to make about what he felt. Besides the slick insides, everything hurt. Everything was sore. More than that, he felt sharp pain the deeper his fingers went.

The doctor said it would be like that for a couple of days, but to actually feel it was a different matter. As long as he didn't touch it he didn't feel anything, so that was his plan of action. He was just going to keep his fingers out of there.

He had learned a harsh lesson in female anatomy, just then. He learned another one a few minutes later when he had to go pee. He didn't even know girls had a third hole until urine was flowing out of it.

Needless to say, he spent the rest of the night curled up in his bedsheets, completely dressed.



In the morning, as the sun lit up his window, Connor finally got up when he could no longer ignore the brightness. After peeling his clothes off and tossing them in the corner, he bathed and combed his scraggly hair into place. Before doing his makeup, as he was required to do, he had to select an outfit for the day. His lessons on makeup had informed him that choosing the right shades depended on the clothes you wore.

He stood over the still-unpacked bags from Mrs. Newman, wondering why this couldn't be easier. Dressing had never been this hard before he adopted this dumb disguise.

Then he found something that had escaped his notice before — a jacket.

Connor liked jackets. They were his thing. After a few days of having to dress like every square inch of his body needed to be on display, a jacket would give him the comfort he needed. It wasn't very big, more like a sport jacket, but he was absolutely wearing it today.

Makeup was brief, as he skipped several steps. His hair was messy, just the way he liked it. He selected the pair of heels he was most comfortable with, found a shirt that was still clean and put on one of the pairs of pants he had been given.

The young man noted the odd silver-threaded lining on the collar of the jacket as he picked it up, and pondered exactly what it was for, but didn't come up with any answers. There was a lot about women's fashion he didn't understand.

I'm jealous of women, he thought as he straightened the jacket. *Sometimes I wish I was one*. This notion seemed to have come out of nowhere. He paused, wondering where this alien thought had come from. Just a brain fart of some sort, he assumed. He brushed away the weird little interruption in his internal monologue.

He headed out for another dull day of classes, but just as he did, he paused in front of the mirror. His hair really did need to be a little neater. Skipping the foundation wasn't a good idea. The pants weren't the best choice either, and a skirt would really look better with the jacket, he decided. "I'm going to be late for breakfast if I do this," he muttered to himself as he started to run a brush through his hair, furiously. "Fuck it," he added.

In fact, he missed breakfast entirely and was late for his first class, as he had decided to re-do his whole look for the day. After explaining why, though, he was pardoned for his transgression. Explaining it to himself was another matter.

All he could do for the rest of the morning was to listen to his stomach growling for going unfed, and asking why on Earth he had decided to skip food for hair, makeup and clothing. *Possibly*, he mused, the pressure of being in an all-girls school was getting to him. Even as he was prancing along to music in his fitness class, all he could think about was food.

"Is there something on your mind?" Mrs. Hawthorne asked her student. She had taken Connor aside as the girls did another round of exercise. "You aren't keeping up with the other girls. You're all out of step."

"Sorry, Mrs. Hawthorne."

"Starla, honey, you simply need to pay more attention in class. You're getting kind of reputation."

“A reputation? Am I doing something wrong?” He didn’t like the idea that people were taking notice of him. He needed to keep a low profile.

“You don’t seem to be... engaged as you should be. You don’t interact with the other students and you rarely speak up in class.” Mrs. Hawthorne smiled, but a concerned smile. “Everyone notices the girl who doesn’t speak, Starla.”

“But... I’m just... I like to keep to myself.” Connor said. Usually he was the outgoing type, but he just wanted to fade into the background in his current situation. He didn’t need people judging or examining him.

“And this is a *charm school!*” Mrs. Hawthorne pointed out. “That’s exactly the sort of behavior we’re here to help you with.”

This was a problem for Connor. He had assumed by being reserved, he’d avoid attention. Instead, the truth was that being at a charm school designed to teach girls to be interesting and social meant that he was garnering more attention by avoiding people. He was going to have to change that. He needed to be a little more average. He needed to be a normal girl.

“Oh,” he said. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s nothing to be sorry about. That’s why we’re here! If you want my advice, do something new with your hair. That always gets people to start talking to me.”

At lunch, which was a salad with as many as two or three cubes of chicken in it, Connor had a lot of time on his hands as he inhaled the food in front of him before he knew it. Idly, as he looked around the room at all the students, he did have to admit that they all had interesting hair.

He found himself scanning the girls for ideas before he stopped himself cold. Was he seriously thinking about changing his hairstyle? He realized that was exactly what he was considering, and it kind of sickened him.

Although, he had to admit, if changing your hair got people to talk to you, it must be easy for real girls to make friends. In a way, he was jealous of them. He wished he had it that easy.

Maybe he would, if he were a girl — or so he ruminated.



“Hi,” Connor said, wandering into the administrative offices of the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School. “Uh, I was asked to come to the office?” He held out a note he had found under his door when he got up this morning.

“Oh, yes!” Said the striking ebony-skinned woman at the reception desk. “I’m R’wandi!” She said with a broad, earnest smile. “Mrs. Dandridge will be available in just a moment. She’s in conference.”

Smoothing out his skirt as he sat down, Connor was immediately disarmed by the energy and beauty of R'wandi. She was a supermodel-quality young woman, and had to be paying off some kind of blood debt to be working at a shabby old school like this one. She also didn't seem to mind Connor gawking at her as if she were some kind of zoo exhibit.

Connor had no idea why he had been summoned, and it was clear no one was going to tell him. It had been two weeks since he had begun attending classes, and he thought he was fitting reasonably well enough. He was still working on actually talking to people, but there weren't a lot of opportunities to socialize. He assumed being called to the office wasn't about his ability to make friends, though.

"R'wandi?" A voice squawked from the woman's desk. "Send her in."

The impossibly attractive woman smiled at Connor. "They're ready for you, now. You can go in."

"Uh, thanks." Connor got up, took one last look at R'wandi, and headed to the door.

As soon as he opened the door, though, Connor nearly fell to his knees.

"Zlatica," he said seeing the woman seated in front of Mrs. Dandridge's desk.

The statuesque dark-haired woman looked back. "It not nice to run away," she said with a smirk.

"Zlatica," Connor repeated. For the first time in several days, he even forgot to use his girl voice.

"Come in and have a seat," Mrs. Dandridge said, pointing to an empty chair. She then gestured to an older woman holding an overstuffed briefcase. "This is Merrill Thorne, our recruiter..." She then gestured to the dark-haired woman. "and of course you know Zlatica Jovanovski..." Dianna Dandridge paused for dramatic effect. "...Your step-mother."

Indeed, it was his step-mother. The woman his father had taken as his second wife was such a typical mail-order bride, she might as well have a shipping label on her. She was from some eastern European country Connor had never bothered to commit to memory, and had clear disdain for everything in the United States, with the only exception of its currency and the things you could buy with it. The woman siphoned cash like a government infrastructure project, buying dresses, jewelry and luxury goods with reckless abandon, and even then she still seemed sour about it.

Connor was scared. Dead scared. He had been found out. He had thought he was safe. It was the perfect hide-out. The school was the perfect plan. How had she found him? Did his father know? He had to know. Was she here to blackmail him? He knew she was capable of it. Was she going to expose him right here and now?



“Thank you for retrieving...” Zatica said, before being interrupted.

“Since when have you been able to speak English?” Connor asked, befuddled. “You can’t speak English!”

“I never had to speak English until now,” she replied. “As I saying, Mrs. Dandridge,” Zatica continued in her thick accent, “This not Starla LaFontaine.”

Connor was terrified. He looked at his step-mother, scared to hear the next words out of her mouth.

“It all lies,” she continued. “All lies!” She shouted angrily at Connor.

“I can explain!” Connor blurted out, turning to Mrs. Dandridge to make his appeal. “It’s not my fault!”

“You Lie!” Zatica interrupted. “You run away and Hide! Hide from Zatica! You are good for nothing liar! You smell like a car that has crashed!”

“It’s not my...”

Dianna interrupted. “Inside voices, please,” she said. “Now, Mrs. Keough, just who is this student we’ve been teaching for the past few weeks?”

Connor looked at his step-mother, waiting with dread for her to take a chunk of flesh out of his body, metaphorically. They never liked each other, and now she had her chance to destroy him.

“This liar?” Zatica looked like she was ready to spit in anger. “This is my daughter! Sofija! Sofija Jovanovsky!”

The expression on Connor’s face was broken. He looked not unlike a watch that had been smashed with a hammer. He was unable to move, much less speak.

“Merill, why don’t we give mother and daughter a moment alone?” Mrs. Dandridge rose to her feet as Mrs. Thorne did as well.

When the door shut and they were outside in the hallway, Dianna turned to her trusted recruiter. “Are you sure this is what we want to do?”

Merill Thorne nodded. “When I approached Mrs. Keough, she was naturally skeptical. Telling her that her step son was in our school seemed to anger her. Oh, she is quite a handful when angry, let me tell you! But when I was able to inform her of what our mission was, and how we were, erm, *helping* her step son, she changed her mind quickly. Especially when I told her it was a free service.”

“And she’s okay with it?” Dianna asked.

“Since she gets to choose Connor’s future, absolutely.” Merill smiled. “She couldn’t be more enthusiastic.”

Back inside the office, Connor was still trying to put the pieces together. “Why did you tell her that? Who is Sofija?”

“You! You are Sofija!” Zatica said. It was hard to imagine she ever said anything that didn’t come out menacing and spiteful.

“What are you...”

“I help you! Or are you stupid?” She said with a sneer. “If I want you to be in trouble, I tell them who you really are!”

Connor had to admit that made sense. “Why?” He asked.

“Your father love car too much. Is good it is gone!” She looked at Connor with narrow eyes. “He is mine now. No more car to keep him from me.” What she didn’t mention was that the insurance had covered the loss of the car in total, or that the \$280,000 was paid to a joint account that she had drawn from, or that she had never told Connor’s father of any of this. Essentially, she had just been delivered a quarter-million dollars and no one knew about it. That was plenty reason to keep Connor here and away from people who could ask questions.

“So you... You won’t tell my dad?” Connor asked.

“I tell him,” she said. “Or you can be Sofija. Then I would forget.”

It wasn't much of a choice, but at the same time, it meant nothing really changed for him. "Fine," he said.

"Good, good." Zlatica let a genuine smile work across her face — and it kind of creeped out Cooper. "You stay here, and safe from your father. As Sofija. Just tell them you are little trickster, and you really are Sofija."

"Are we okay?" Dianna said, poking her head into her office.

"Da," Zlatica replied.

"Wonderful," Dianna said as she and Merrill took their seats again. "I'm so happy when we can work things out like this." She turned to Connor. "So it's Sofija, is it?"

"Y... Yes..." Connor replied, uneasy with this new arrangement.

"I see," Mrs. Dandridge said. "I don't like being lied to, but I can certainly understand, being a runaway."

"My Sofija regrets her actions, but I want her to stay. She can learn much here."

"What has happened off school grounds is none of our business. As long as Sofija would like to remain here at the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School, I see no reason to delay her education one bit."

"Good. Sofija is good Macedonian girl, like her mother, and respects authority. But I have some... Requests on what she learn." Zlatica leaned forward and slid across a paper to Dianna. "This new admission form. With real information on it."

Dianna picked it up and skimmed it, amused with what she read. The poor boy was in for quite a time here at the charm school, she thought to herself. It was going to be entertaining, at the very least.

"All right. We can make these changes... To her curriculum." Dianna put the paper in a file folder. "And I think that wraps it up." She extended her hand to Zlatica, and the large woman stood. They shook hands with a sharp snap to it, sealing the deal.

Zlatica then headed for the exit. "You don't give them trouble, Sofija! You good girl! You my daughter! You are a Jovanovski!"

"Sure... Mom..." Connor said, unenthusiastically. He slumped and slid down in his seat, his skirt riding up around his hips.

"Don't slouch!" Mrs. Dandridge admonished. "Time to get back to class, *Sofija Jovanovsky*."



Connor began the next day with a new slate of classes. The teachers were the same, but the students were different. These classes were smaller, with just three or four students. They were also more focused.

He was given a new wardrobe with flashier designs. Half of his clothes seemed to have sequins now. There was a definite change towards elegance rather than just generic femininity.

His pairs of three-inch heels were removed and replaced with five-inch heels. It was no longer enough to be able to walk in these heels, now he was being instructed on how to do a “sexy” walk and “own the catwalk.”

Connor was also being instructed on smiling. He had never imagine one needed to be taught how to smile, but he was being drilled on the subject. All teeth, he was told. “Don’t worry if your cheeks block your vision,” Ms. Dandridge told him. “You don’t need to see when you’re bringing happiness into the world.” He walked out of that class wondering whether his feet or his cheeks hurt more.

In his cosmetology class, it was now less about natural and daytime looks, but more about bold makeup and evening looks. He was shown how to use dark and smoky eyeshadow, make his lashes look long and thick, how to perfect the outline of his lips and how to smooth his complexion to a shine.

He felt ridiculous as he walked around the school in his five-inch heels, trying to swivel his hips as he was told to do, and instead knocking into people and walls instead. He was always under observation of some sort, with teachers seemingly always within view, so even when he wasn’t in class, Connor was obliged to demonstrate that he was learning his lessons.

Even when he was alone in his room, he was surrounded with feminine clothes. Dresses, bras, panties, slippers, camisoles, heels, stockings, skirts and gowns were strewn about everywhere. Bottles, tubs and wands of makeup were everywhere in his tiny desk. Four different hairbrushes for different effects on his hair were nearby. Hair products were practically spilling over the edges of his bathroom sink.

The pink in his room seemed more confining every day. There was no escaping femininity in this place, and since his step mother had arrived, it seemed like his instruction had been kicked up a notch. He wondered just what she had written on that application form.



“This is what you get, missy,” the lady serving up dinner said. “Ya ain’t gettin’ no mores.”

“I’m starving!” Connor said. He had had enough of these paltry meals, and he’d finally mustered up the courage to demand it after three weeks. He had noticed that he seemed to be getting thinner, and it worried him. “This is abuse!” He added, holding up the small pile of leafy greens and tiny bowl of clear broth that was supposed to be a full dinner.

“You’re holding up the line,” the lady said.

Connor turned to the girls to the left and right of him. “It’s not enough, am I right?”

The girl to his left shrugged. The one on the right spoke. “It’s fine for me,” she said, kind of puzzled why Connor would object.

“I’m stuffed every day,” the girl on the left contributed.

Connor looked at both of them, amazed at what they were saying. Surely, the table scraps they were served were inadequate for any human. They had to be joking.

“Let’s go! Let’s go!” The lady behind the counter said. “We got a lotta gals to serve.”

Deciding that creating a scene in the face of such opposition wasn’t viable, he backed down and took his tray to a table. He had gotten pretty good at stretching a meal that he could eat in under two minutes to a half-hour affair, but it was depressing how awful he felt about eating these days.

“Is anyone sitting here?” a voice asked.

Connor’s head jerked up in shock, and saw a girl.

“No,” Connor said.

“Great.” She set her tray down. “We haven’t had get a chance to talk much. So I wanted to properly introduce myself. I’m Imogene.”

“I’m Con... No, uh, it’s Stel... No, erm... My name is... Sofija?”

“Hi, Sofija,” she said, ignoring the obvious trouble her neighbor had in delivering a name.

“Im-o-gene?” Connor asked, figuring out how to pronounce it as he spoke.

“Yup! Well, everyone calls me Genie.” She took a sip of tea. “No jokes about it, okay?”

“Your wish is my command,” Connor couldn’t help himself but say.

“Ugh,” Genie replied, rolling her eyes. “I make it too easy. But you do it again, I kick you in the cooch.”

“Am I dumb, or are these portions too small? You know what I’m talking about, right?”

Genie had to think about her answer. “Well... I mean, I used to eat a lot more, that’s true. But I’ve never felt hungry here. I can see your point of view, though.”

“See? It’s not just me.” Connor went about the business of stabbing enough lettuce onto his fork to make an actual mouthful. “Hey, how long have you been here?”

“Like a month, I think.”

“I haven’t even been here a month.”

“No?” Genie said. “I’m pretty sure.”

“I think I know how long I’ve been here,” Connor said. He still had no idea that he had lost nearly two weeks after his procedure with Dr. Patel.

Genie just shrugged as she popped a crouton in her mouth. She was used to the students here being weird.

“So did you decide to sit here to be nice to me or...”

“I’m tired of eating by myself,” she responded. “I can always sit somewhere else...”

“No,” Connor blurted. He was lonely. More so than he ever had been. It had been a week since he had talked to anyone who wasn’t a staff member.

Genie smiled. “By the way, I love that jacket. It looks so good on you.”

“Thanks,” he replied. He did appreciate how upbeat Genie was. Even in a nasty school like this one, she had a good attitude. Sometimes he envied girls. Jealous, really. Maybe he could learn to be more like them, he thought.



“What you want to do is tie your hair up, like this,” Genie said as he tied Connor’s long-ish hair into to mini-pigtails. “That way it doesn’t get all wrecked when you sleep.”

Connor looked dismayed. “Every night?” He asked as he looked in the mirror to see two stubby stalks of hair from behind his ears. “For the rest of my life?”

“As long as you have hair, yeah,” Genie answered.

“That sucks.” Connor had accepted Genie’s offer of helping out with some of his “homework.” He had needed some tips on how to do his eyes for quite a while and was too scared and too humiliated to ask Mrs. LaMay for help. Genie had volunteered, and they had gone over the finer points of eyeliner for the better part of three hours, far more time than he ever thought something like that could take. Now it was time for bed.

“There’s so much crap to know as a girl,” he said.

“Tell me about it. Being a girl is a 24/7 thing. Of course it’s a pain, spending practically all our time to look good, but it’s all worth it.”

“Is it, though?”

“Yes,” Genie said, right in his ear. “I’ll see you tomorrow?” She added as she headed for the door.

“Sure.”

“Oh, can I borrow your black pumps?”

“Uh, yeah. Knock yourself out. I’ve got others.”

“Thank you thank you!” She picked up the pair of five-inch-heeled black pumps by his door and practically hugged them. “I’ll bring them back. And you can borrow anything of mine.”

“Do you have to wear high heels for class too?”

“No!” She said, amused. “I want to wear them because they’ll look so good on me!”

It was kind of dismaying to Connor to see how excited she was to wear those ankle-killing, toe-crunching heels he’d been forced to use. It was like she *wanted* to wear them. Why would anyone voluntarily wear those things?



As happened every morning, the school chime rang out to wake the slumbering students. Connor’s eyes creaked open, as he allowed his eyes to get used to working again.

Connor was acclimated to feeling odd when he woke up. Besides the weird sensation of his hair tied up in pigtails or the mud mask on his face or even the sensation of a satin slip on his hairless body, his head always felt extra foggy.

His mind seemed to be digesting information every time he woke up. It was as if his mind had been fed information in his sleep, as his lessons from previous days played back in his memory. He would wake with visions of makeup application, reciting conversation starters, or thoughts of coordinating accessories.

This morning was different, though. Today Connor’s groggy head was filled with strange sounds he didn’t understand, like “Jas se vikam Sofija” and “Yas sum od Skopje.” He didn’t understand why.

“Sofijaaaa! Time to rise and shine! Another glamorous day of charm awaits!” Genie sang, pulling the curtains open. Light streamed into the room, casting a golden glow across the bed.

Connor wished there were locks on the doors. Dealing with just ten seconds of Genie's bubbly attitude this early in the morning was the equivalent of four hours of her effervescence during the day.

Connor stirred, blinking groggily. "I'm up, I'm up," he mumbled, his accent faintly tinged with a slavick lilt he didn't consciously register. "Why so loud in morning?" He said, omitting several words for some reason. He corrected himself. "Let me say that again, why are you always so loud in the morning?"

"You won't be so grumpy when you hear what we're doing today!"

"I'll probably be grumpier," Connor said.

"A pageant!" Genie said as she whipped the sheets off of Connor's bed.

"A what?"

"A beauty pageant! A Dandridge Charm School Beauty Pageant!" She said. "Not for realsies, though. Just kind of a fun thing."

"A pageant?" He sighed. "What will they think of next," he added with no enthusiasm.

"I know, right?" Genie chimed as she left the room. "Make yourself extra beautiful today! We're going to be beauty queens!"

"Uh-huh," Connor said, to himself.

It was time for a bath, as the school didn't seem to have showers in anyone's dorms, which was odd. He slipped out of the nighty and let it fall into a pile of satin on the floor. Getting into the bath was an odd sensation, as half his body didn't even feel the hot water. Everything that was covered in silicone rubber, from his thighs to his upper chest was numb.

Still, a hot bath was a hot bath, and he enjoyed the few minutes of pleasure.

All too soon, though, he needed to get started. He stepped out, water dripping from his body and he patted himself dry cautiously. He very carefully dabbed his chest so as not to rub hard, because it had been so sensitive lately. He then closed his eyes as he dabbed his mound dry, and shivered as he did it. It was so weird.

He selected a bra and panty set and slipped into the panties quickly, able to feed his delicate toes into the filmy fabric and scoot it on up his limber legs almost in one motion. He was just as deft with the bra, leaning forward to lay the his swollen, irritated flesh on his chest into the cups and then standing up as he hooked the straps behind his back with a nonchalance of a seasoned pro. With long fingernails, no less.

He froze for a moment. It had all been so ordinary, so easy. He had sworn to himself that he would rather die than have to wear a bra or panty, but now he put them on just as easily and casually as he'd ever put on a pair of y-front briefs.



“What’s happening to me?” He asked himself. “I didn’t even think about it. I wasn’t even concerned. I just wore my panties...” He paused again. “My panties?”

When did they become *his* panties? They were the school’s panties, a girl’s panties. Not his panties. They would never be *his* panties. Never.

It was then time to begin his usual morning beauty routine: 20 to 25 minutes on his face, 30 to 35 minutes on his hair, and then clothes in the last 5. More if he felt like skipping breakfast. It was a routine he had grown uncomfortably used to.

When he was done, already a bit exhausted just an hour after waking up, he grabbed his jacket off its usual resting place on the chair.

But there was something strange about it. It looked smaller. It felt lighter. It looked almost exactly the same, the same lining, the same stitching, the same fabric, the same silver threads in the collar. Yet he wasn’t at all sure it was the one he had put there last night. Nevertheless, he put it on.

There’s nothing wrong with wanting to look feminine and beautiful, he thought to himself. He wasn’t sure where that thought had come from, but he didn’t question it. He looked at himself in the mirror. The jacket looked great on him. A little slimmer, maybe. A little more flattering. He liked the way it made him look — a little more delicate.

The was, he reasoned, nothing wrong with wanting to look a little more feminine and beautiful. He added another coat of lipstick to really make his lips pop and he was on his way.



“Poise is the first thing a beauty pageant contestant learns,” Millicent announced to the class. “A winning pageant contestant must exude poise at all times. Now one might ask: *what is poise?*” She stood still, waiting. And waiting. And waiting.

“What is poise?” One of the girls hesitantly asked.

“Thank you,” Millicent responded. “Poise is a combination of posture, grace and attitude.” She then put her hands on her hips. “But mostly it’s just not freaking out when everyone else has.”

“What if you never, ever plan to ever enter a beauty pageant for as long as you live and generally find them really cringey,” Connor asked. “Do we still have to know this?”

“Thank you for volunteering, Sofija,” Millicent replied, as she crossed her arms. “Step forward and you can help me demonstrate how to look poised.”

This was a good reminder why to never speak in class, but Connor had already made the mistake, so he headed to the front of the class with a sigh. Genie giggled.

“Chin up, shoulders back. Remember, elegance looks effortless. Walk.”

Connor walked the length of the room, his hips swaying naturally. He felt Millicent’s approving gaze.

“Better,” she said. “Though add a touch of smile to your smile. Don’t look like you’re walking to a firing squad. A contestant must captivate her audience.”

Genie clapped softly as Connor returned to his place. “You’re so good at this, Sofija!”

Connor forced a smile. “Thanks, I guess.”



“So, why did you come here?” Connor asked Genie one night.

“To show you how to treat your hair so it doesn’t tangle,” Genie replied.

“No, not that,” Connor said with an implied sigh. He was sitting at his desk in his nightie with Genie standing behind him spraying his hair with something. “I mean, why did you come to this school?”

“Why did *you*?” Genie countered.

“My Dad and I were having some communications problems...” Connor said, with a candy bar’s worth of sugar to coat over the holes in his story. “I thought it would be a good idea to get out of the house for a while. This seemed like a good place to brush up on my social skills.”

“Well, I don’t have any parents,” Genie explained.

“What happened?”

“I’m an orphan, I guess. I have no idea what happened before I wound up at the home.”

“That sucks,” Connor replied, missing the gravity of the moment. “So why come here?”

“The county has some kind of deal with this place. A number of foster girls wind up here every year.” She giggled. “I guess it’s kept me out of jail.”

“Giggly teenage girl wanted for egregious crimes,” Connor proclaimed. “She made a kitten cry.”

“I could be dangerous, you never know! If I fell in with the wrong crowd, I could have been in Sureño or La Eme, dress all cholo and take out Norteños with mas chingón.”

“Uh... What?” Connor was taken aback by the way sweet little Genie slipped into perfect Spanish like she was born south of the border — and that she knew all these street gang terms.

“You know these things if you’ve lived in LA all your life,” she said. “I thought you said you lived in Charleston.”

“I have,” she said. Then she scrunched up her pretty face in thought. “That doesn’t make much sense, does it? Oh well. I’m gonna go to bed.”

Just like that, she turned around and strode back to her room, her hips swiveling as she did. Connor wasn’t quite sure what had just happened. He had been just chatting with her when Genie went all street gang on her, then she just left, like someone flipped a switch. And he still had tangles in his hair.

Yet it was late, so Connor tied his hair up, applied his night mask, and collapsed into bed. He only spent a minute wondering about Genie before he started to drift off.

As he slept, whispers wove into his dreams, blending seamlessly with own memories. He dreamed of sequin dresses, sparkling tiaras, and the bright lights of the stage. He dreamed it all in a language he didn’t speak — but he still understood every word spoken to him.



There were new items of mystery waiting for Connor when he got dressed the next morning. A waist cincher laid on his desk, left there overnight by the elves of this charm school.

He thought about ignoring it, but there was little point in doing that. Sooner or later he’d be wearing it, so it wasn’t worth putting it off. However, putting it on was a whole ordeal he wasn’t prepared for. It constricted his waist in the most uncomfortable way, restricting his breath. He could barely bend over to put on his pantyhose, it was so bad.

However, he eventually had his seams straight and stood up to take a look at himself in the mirror. It was a degrading sight for any man, seeing himself dressed from head to toe in women’s undergarments. The pantyhose, the waist cincher, the bra and the clasps holding his hair up. He felt like a living lingerie ad from the 1950’s.

Then, there was what they had done to his face. His thin eyebrows arched over his thickly lashed eyes, which rested above his increasingly pronounced cheekbones. His lips were twice the size they used to be, and his face showed no sign of beard hair, and hadn’t for quite a while.

“Morning, Soph,” Genie said as she headed inside Sofija’s dorm room to borrow some things from his closet. “Ugh! I’m so jealous!” She said, watching Connor apply his makeup. “Your contouring is flawless.”

“Thank you,” Connor replied, carefully applying lipstick. He paused, admiring his reflection. The way the color complemented his complexion was... satisfying. There was nothing wrong with wanting to look feminine and beautiful, he reminded himself.

Mrs. Newman’s fashion class was a little different today, much to Connor’s confusion. He was used to the usual routine of the class, which was along the lines of everyone playing dress-up and then getting critiqued by Mrs. Newman. The usual themes of French fashion, American fashion, London fashion and Tokyo fashion had been set aside for a new theme.

Beauty pageant fashion.

Bianca Newman clapped her hands. “Up, all of you! You will each choose a dress that speaks to your inner beauty queen.”

The other students, giddy with excitement, jumped to their feet, rushing toward the racks of shimmering gowns. Connor, however, stayed rooted to his seat, dreading what came next.

“Sofija,” Bianca said sharply, looking directly at him. “You hesitate. Why?”

Connor’s face burned. “I... uh... I’m not really into flashy dresses,” he stammered, his voice barely above a whisper.

“Nonsense.” Bianca strode toward him and plucked a dress from the rack — a blindingly glittery gold gown with an outrageously high slit and a sweetheart neckline dripping in crystals. “Here. This is perfect for you.”

Connor’s stomach sank. He reached for the dress hesitantly, the fabric feeling heavy and overwhelmingly wrong in his hands. “Can’t I just... pass?” he asked weakly, glancing at the other students, who were already stepping into their dresses with delighted chatter.

Bianca arched an eyebrow. “Do I need to call Mrs. Tuft? Or perhaps Mrs. Dandridge herself? Now, put the dress on, Sofija.”

Connor wanted to protest, but Bianca was already turning away, instructing another girl on the importance of silhouette. He glanced at Genie, who was happily stepping into a flowy lavender gown. She gave him a thumbs-up.

He swallowed his pride and, with great reluctance, stepped behind a dressing screen. The fabric felt stiff and scratchy against his skin as he shimmied into the gown. The crystals clinked against each other as he pulled it up, and the whole thing felt ridiculously extra.

When he finally stepped out, he kept his arms folded tightly across his chest. “This is so... *much*,” he muttered under his breath.

The other girls twirled, admiring their dresses in the mirrors. Connor, on the other hand, tried to make himself as small as possible.

Bianca swept her gaze over the class and sighed dramatically. “Sofija, posture! A beauty queen does not hide.”

Connor straightened slightly, but he still wanted to crawl out of his own skin.

Bianca Newman clapped her hands together, signaling the end of the fashion lesson. “Now that you all look *somewhat* presentable,” she said, sweeping her sharp eyes across the room, “it’s time to see if you can move in those gowns. A beautiful dress is worthless if the woman wearing it stumbles around like they are walking in mud.”

Connor, still awkwardly holding his arms over his torso, shifted uncomfortably in his glittering gold gown. It was tight around his ribs, heavy with sequins, and every movement made the fabric rub against his skin in the most irritating way possible. He wasn’t sure how anyone could breathe in something this ridiculous, let alone move gracefully.

Bianca smirked. “Millicent, they’re all yours.”

From the mirrored wall near the front of the classroom, Millicent Hawthorne stepped forward. Tall, slender, and with the sharp poise of a lifelong ballerina, she exuded an air of effortless control. She surveyed the room like a general sizing up an untrained army.

“Ladies,” she began crisply, her voice firm and demanding. “A beauty queen must *glide* across the stage, never faltering, never stumbling. Every movement must exude grace, confidence, *elegance*.” She let the last word settle over them like a command.

Connor swallowed hard. He had a bad feeling about this.

“You will learn to dance,” Millicent continued. “Not because you will perform a routine onstage — though some of you may — but because nothing proves coordination, balance, and poise quite like dancing in an evening gown.”

Connor frowned. *This school never stops in their never-ending quest to humiliate me*, he thought to himself.

“Pair up!” Millicent barked.

Genie grabbed Connor’s arm before he could hesitate. “You and me, Sofija,” she said with a grin, calling him by his school name. “Don’t look so miserable — it’s just dancing.”

“Dancing in this?” Connor hissed, glancing down at the glittering monstrosity he was wearing.

“Oh, relax,” Genie giggled. “Just pretend it’s a bathrobe.”

Connor sighed, resigned to his fate.

Millicent strode toward the center of the room, gesturing for the students to form pairs. “Your first lesson is about gliding. If you look down, you have already lost. If you hesitate, you have already failed. Keep your head high, shoulders back, and move as though you belong on a stage.”

Connor had never felt like he belonged less in his entire life.

“Now,” Millicent continued, clapping once, “ladies on the left, take your partner’s hand. Ladies on the right, guide them.”

Connor barely had time to register what was happening before Genie grabbed his hand and placed hers gently on his waist. His back stiffened immediately.

“Oh, lighten up,” Genie whispered. “It’s just a waltz.”

“A waltz?” Connor whispered back, mortified. “What is a *waltz*?”

The heavy gown swished around him, the sequins catching the light as they moved. Connor, still stiff, shuffled along, feeling ridiculous.

“Head up, shoulders back!” Millicent snapped.

Connor tried to comply, though every fiber of his being wanted to slouch and disappear.

Genie smirked. “You’re terrible at this.”

“Yeah, I know,” Connor groaned.



Connor scowled. “I’m starving! This isn’t a meal, it’s what they sweep up in the produce isle at the supermarket.” He gestured wildly at the plate, his voice dropping to a whisper as he leaned in. “Genie, we danced all morning. I am burning calories. I need food!”

Genie smirked, spearing a piece of lettuce with her fork. “Get used to it. A refined woman of good breeding doesn’t stuff her face. We eat like this so we stay thin and elegant.” She tilted her head playfully. “And because no one looks good bloated in a dress.”

Connor groaned, pushing a cherry tomato around on his plate with his fork. “This is insane. How do you live like this?”

Genie shrugged. “You just do, Sofija.”

Connor tensed at the name but said nothing.

Genie leaned closer, her voice softer now. “Seriously, I get it. I was like you when I first got here. It took me a little while to... get into it.”

Connor eyed her suspiciously. “What do you mean?”



“I mean,” Genie said, twirling a piece of lettuce on her fork, “I used to fight against all of it. The dresses, the training, the ‘proper lady’ stuff. But at some point, I realized it was just easier to... Not get all worked up.”

Connor scoffed. “Easier?” He glanced around the room, at the other girls who seemed completely at ease in their glamorous outfits, their polished manners effortless. He felt like the odd one out, suffocating in a world that didn’t belong to him.

“Well, to be honest...”

“You like it,” Connor inferred.

“I like it,” Genie admitted. She gave him a knowing smile. “I never thought I would, but I did. It gets better.”

Connor stiffened his spine. Would it? The thought made him uneasy.



“Sensitive?” Dr. Patel asked as he pressed his thumbs into Connor’s surprisingly fleshy chest. “How sensitive?”

Connor bit his lip. “It’s like I got shot in the nips.”

“I see, I see...” the doctor said without saying anything.

“And there’s the swelling.”

“Swelling?”

Connor was a little put off by that reply. It was so obvious. His chest was so swollen that it was in danger of folding over. How could the doctor be so calm? It had been getting bad, and all of the sudden was getting more swollen every day. “What do I need to do?”

“Well...” Dr. Patel said, kneading his chest like it was clay. Connor wished he would stop. It really hurt. “I wouldn’t worry about it. It’s a natural side effect of the pills you’ve been taking.”

“The pills?” He had been instructed by the doctor to take some pills to suppress his sex drive. That was his deal with the doctor to keep his identity secret, and it had certainly worked. He hadn’t felt even the slightest stirring for weeks. “You never mentioned side effects.”

“Everything has side effect. But there’s nothing wrong, it’s quite normal for the medications you’re taking. In fact, I’d expect them to get larger.”

“What do you mean by ‘them?’”

“Your beasts,” the doctor clarified.

“My... *Breasts?*” Connor said, with a slight strain in his voice. He had never thought of what was happening in those terms. His chest wasn’t ‘swollen.’ He was growing breasts. Real breasts? “I’m growing breasts?”

“No, your breasts are getting larger. Even men have breasts. It’s just a thin layer of fat for males. In your case, the hormonal mix of your medication no longer inhibits breast growth, hence you have larger breasts than most men.”

“Oh,” Connor replied. The doctor made its sound like there was nothing to worry about. “What if I don’t want breasts?”

“By the time you leave here, you’ll have no issues.” The doctor went to his little station of medical items and removed his blue latex gloves. “I assume you found the person you were looking for here at the school. How’s that been going? You have found them, haven’t you?”

Any further questions like *What did you mean by ‘no issues’* quickly disappeared in his mind when Connor recalled the flimsy excuse he had

created to allow himself to stay at the school. Saying the wrong thing could get him in deep trouble. Jail kind of trouble. “Uh, fine. Hey, I have a study group I gotta get to...”

The doctor smiled. He had grown experienced on how to derail a student’s train of thought. “Do you have any more questions?” He asked.

“No! Everything’s great!” Connor said as he quickly put his blouse back on and flew out the door.

MR. GAVIN LARKIN

Morning bells chimed softly through the charm school's hallways, gentle yet relentless, tugging Gavin from a hazy sleep. He sat up slowly, blinking in the muted glow of his room light. There were no windows in his room, and assumed it was morning. He was aware of his body moving instinctively toward the vanity mirror without prompting. Four months ago, he'd cursed the morning bells, loathed the ritual, dreaded this spot in front of the mirror. But now, his hands worked automatically, reaching for the soft coral foundation, blending it evenly across flawless skin.

The reflection staring back wasn't Gavin — at least not the Gavin he remembered. The person in the mirror had silky blond hair falling just above the shoulders, pinned back neatly with small silver clips that sparkled softly in the morning glow. His natural brown hair had been dyed at some point, although he didn't clearly remember when. He had high cheekbones, a gentle jawline, and bright, youthful eyes that gazed back with something close to serene acceptance. Dusty rose lipstick completed the look, applied smoothly without hesitation, another practiced move.

He paused, staring blankly, lips parting slightly. Thoughts lingered at the edge of awareness, tentative, uncertain. *I can't start the day in makeup.* Yet even as that thought took



shape, another slipped in behind it: *I can't start the day without makeup*. He let the contradiction hang silently in the air, then slowly continued.

Later that morning, Gavin stood in Bianca Newman's classroom, a whimsical room where soft pastels and lace ruled unopposed. The theme today, as Bianca cheerfully announced, was "Garden Picnic," and the racks overflowed with dresses so frilly and delicate they could've belonged to dolls rather than real people. Gavin brushed his fingertips across the fabric, reluctantly admiring its softness, its playful texture. His stomach twisted uncomfortably, yet a smile he didn't want curved his lips.

He didn't look so out of place anymore. He was shaped like a woman was shaped, with wider hips and a chest that bulged out. His waist was thinner and he had that nipped-in feminine contour, and legs that were thinner and simultaneously shapelier. He was still the biggest person in the room, and his face looked like a linebacker who was transitioning, but he was no longer a dude in a dress. Gavin was changing.

He chose a pale green dress with delicate puffed sleeves, lace trim dancing around the collar. His fingers trembled faintly as he fastened a small pearl bow beneath his chin. Bianca circled quietly, eyes sharp and assessing. She tilted her head, gave an approving nod, and said, "You're beginning to understand shape and proportion, Blair."

His cheeks burned hotly, warmth flooding him before he could control it. He glanced down quickly, smoothing the skirt, quietly mortified by how much he liked it. The lace brushed against his fingertips like an invitation. *I should hate this. I do hate this*. And yet... he shifted slightly, watching how the fabric swayed gracefully around his thighs.

After lunch, laughter bubbled through the dorm rooms as Gavin joined Seraphina and the other girls in trading undergarments — a ritual he'd initially dreaded but had slowly, insidiously, begun to enjoy. Seraphina, tall, blonde, and effortlessly poised, giggled as she tossed Gavin a delicate floral bra. "Blair, this one is absolutely you."

Gavin caught it shyly, heart racing, cheeks flushed. Another girl leaned closer, tugging gently at the lavender ribbon tied at Gavin's hip. "Look at her waist — honestly, I'm jealous," she sighed dramatically.

Someone tossed a pair of panties at him. "Blair I have to see you in these. I think you'll look great in them."

Without hesitation, Gavin slipped his panties off, perfectly nude. But no one thought much of it. He looked like any woman did, a mound in between the legs with a tuft of hair. He put the new panties on. They were red.

"I look like a hooker," he said.

Carly giggled wickedly. "Then they're perfect for you."

Gavin sneered back and took them off. “Here try this bra,” he said picking up a bra from the floor. “It’s my favorite.” He offered it, then took it back. “Oh, but you’re probably too small for it.”

The girls laughed again, sweet and genuine. Gavin hesitated, then smiled demurely — just as he’d been trained to do. His chest tightened, but not with embarrassment. Instead, a strange surge of warmth blossomed beneath his ribs, unexpected but undeniably pleasant. *Is this friendship? Or validation?* he wondered, even as he spun gently in front of the full-length mirror, laughing quietly alongside them. *Does it matter?*

Strangely, not for a moment did he think about being an adult man around teenage girls, without a stitch of clothes on. He would have been comforted to know that they were all men, all in disguise like he was. In fact, one of them was two years older than Gavin. It was another mental barrier that his conditioning had torn down. He just considered himself, on some level, one of the girls now.

Over the following weeks, Gavin found himself seamlessly woven into the fabric of life at the school. The other girls invited him into their private world of hair braiding, whispered secrets, and late-night nail painting sessions. They shared gossip, exchanged knowing glances, and carefully dissected each other’s fashion choices. Nobody questioned Gavin’s presence. Nobody saw Gavin at all. Only Blair — pretty, cheerful Blair.

He learned their habits: which girl blushed at compliments, who hid breath mints in her purse, who held grudges the longest. He joined their whispered confidences, shared secrets, and surprised himself by laughing freely, genuinely, at their inside jokes. A quiet, persistent thought followed him each day: *They’ve accepted me.* He pushed away what acceptance truly meant, choosing instead the comfort of belonging.

Yet at night, when he finally lay down beneath soft sheets in matching silk pajamas, freshly cleansed and moisturized, self-awareness returned sharply. He stared into the darkness, pulse quickening, fingers twisting anxiously in the lace hem of his sleeves. “What the hell is wrong with me,” he whispered bitterly to no one but himself. No comforting answers emerged from the shadows — only a slow, deep shame that raged through him relentlessly.

Even as he squeezed his eyes shut, memories of the day crept forward, unbidden: the delicate feeling of lace against his skin, the gentle pressure of the bra hugging his chest, the easy laughter that came naturally from the company of friends. Warmth crept into his cheeks, tingling, undeniable. He shifted restlessly, trying and failing to deny the quiet satisfaction he’d felt beneath their approval.

Sleep finally came, and with it dreams — dreams filled with delicate laughter, soft whispers, and the steady click of heels on marble floors. In his dreams, he wore a lacy dress that swirled gently around him as he spun gracefully, smiling

brightly at girls who smiled warmly back, their faces open and trusting. He curtsied elegantly, the movement natural and effortless, as though he'd done it forever.

When morning came again, Gavin dressed without hesitation, the act itself automatic and routine. But somewhere deep beneath his steady pulse and graceful movements, a small voice — a fragment of his old self — still clawed at the image he'd begun to wear so naturally. It murmured desperately, *This isn't you*. Yet each passing day, that voice grew quieter, less insistent.

Another voice replaced it, gentle and persuasive, whispering softly at the edges of his thoughts: *I envy women*. Gavin paused before the mirror again, observing the young woman reflected back — beautiful, poised, comfortable in her own skin. He tilted his head slowly, the question lingering silently within him. *Sometimes*, his mind continued, *I wish I was one*.



Gavin opened his eyes slowly, pulled awake by the faint rustle of footsteps outside his room. Without thinking, he swung his legs off the bed, bare feet landing softly on the cold floor. He didn't want to have a reputation as lazy. He wanted to be up when everyone else was up. The movement felt graceful — far too graceful for someone who'd spent the better part of his life as a 180 pound man. But lately, grace had become a habit. And habits, he'd discovered, could be dangerous.

Yawning, he padded toward the vanity, instinctively brushing back a long lock of layered hair that fell across his face. The mirror stared back, reflecting a slender, sleepy-eyed girl with gently sloped shoulders and impossibly smooth skin. Gavin leaned closer, anxiety flickering briefly as he noted the slight puffiness beneath his eyes, and sighing. That meant more time with the concealer. He pressed a careful fingertip to his cheekbone — soft, smooth, unmistakably feminine. His pulse quickened. Where had his stubble gone, those familiar hard lines that had greeted him every morning for two decades? He studied the reflection carefully. It showed no trace of the tired, middle-aged man who had arrived months ago at the school. Instead, Blair looked back at him, wide-eyed, innocent, and disturbingly beautiful.

His heart skipped. "This can't be right," he murmured quietly, voice trembling as he stared at the stranger in his mirror. But who else could it be, if not him?

He shook off the question, turning quickly toward the wardrobe. Today, something simple — something quiet to calm his nerves. He selected a powder-blue blouse, fingers trailing absent-mindedly over its delicate lace collar with the hidden silver thread. Without thinking, he reached for a matching headband. And, as easily as breathing, a small voice inside remarked,

This color brings out my eyes. Gavin's fingers froze mid-air. He clenched his teeth sharply, furious with himself for thinking it. But the thought had come naturally, automatically, like muscle memory.

He dressed hurriedly, biting his lip in frustration. The thoughts continued uninvited. *Should I do a side part today? Maybe Lottie and Seraphina will notice.* He felt his stomach twist in shame at how easily these thoughts arose, how good they felt, how comfortably they nestled inside him, like they'd always been there. Like they belonged. He closed his eyes tightly, taking a steadying breath. How long until these unwanted thoughts were all he had left?

Breakfast was buzzing with conversation and gentle laughter. Gavin slipped into the dining hall, moving gracefully among tables, smiling politely at familiar faces. Without thinking, he chose a yogurt parfait and a steaming cup of peppermint tea — not because the matrons insisted on it, but because he'd discovered, somewhat disturbingly, he genuinely preferred it now. Seraphina noticed him first, clapping her hands delightedly. "Blair, your ribbon work is perfect today!"

Carly, leaned over eagerly, "I wish I had your cheekbones. Honestly, it's unfair."

He blushed deeply, twirling a lock of hair between his fingers, the reaction so natural he didn't notice he'd done it. "I thought the bow made the whole look more symmetrical," he replied lightly, words slipping out before he could stop them. "I almost wore pink, but it clashed with Lottie's dress."

"How did you know she's going to wear pink today?"

"She always wears pink on Tuesdays," Gavin relied. "It's her thing."

Just as he said the words, Lottie walked in, wearing a pink sweater.

The girls nodded approvingly, giggling softly. Gavin felt warmth bloom in his chest at their adoration, though shame hovered quietly at its edges. Part of him loved this attention, craved this acceptance. But what did that mean? What was he becoming?

Later that day, as the girls gathered in a classroom, chattering and giggling around tubes of lipstick and tiny compacts, Gavin joined in, feeling inexplicably comfortable. He leaned toward a mirrored tray to apply a rosy gloss. And there — tilted head, eyes fluttering softly — he glimpsed a reflection that startled him awake. For a heartbeat, clarity returned like ice-water shock: *You are Gavin Larkin, a 36-year-old man.*

His hand shook violently, nearly dropping the lipstick. He sucked in a sharp breath, panic tightening his throat. The room spun slightly, but he recovered fast enough that no one noticed. His smile returned, mask-like, automatic. But beneath it, a new resolve crystallized, solid and unmistakable. He had to escape — before it was too late.

That night, lying in bed beneath his pink duvet in pajamas trimmed with lace he barely noticed anymore, Gavin stared at the ceiling, pulse racing. Planning required clarity, and clarity required honesty. He forced himself to acknowledge it: whatever was happening had nearly consumed him. He needed to leave, now.



Over the next week, he quietly observed schedules, routines, and security measures. He noted matron breaks, shift changes, and supply deliveries. Thursdays at lunch presented the best opportunity. They operated down a person that day, supervision stretched thin. Perfect. He found a supply closet near the kitchen, conveniently linked to a seldom-used service door. Distractions could be simple. A small fire alarm, perhaps. Anything that drew eyes away for a minute or two would suffice. In the closet, he began discreetly stashing supplies: tights, sturdy shoes, a water bottle, and a scarf to hide his glossy hair.

Until Thursday came, he played the part flawlessly, smiling sweetly through modesty drills, giggling shyly during endless conversations about boys, curtsying delicately, sipping from fragile teacups. Every polite “please” and “thank you,” every carefully applied stroke of mascara felt like another lock clicking into place. Yet, sometimes, he forgot to hate it. Sometimes, it felt dangerously natural. And that, more than anything, terrified him.

On Wednesday night, Gavin stood again before the vanity mirror, absently humming a tune the girls had taught him, carefully brushing his silky hair before bed. He paused, sleeves of his delicate nightgown perfectly arranged over slim wrists, gaze locking with the girl in the mirror. A sudden chill ran through him. He glared at his reflection, whispering fiercely under his breath, “You’re not real. You’re not me.”

But the girl smiled back anyway, soft and serene, unconcerned by his accusation. She looked comfortable. Happy, even.

Gavin’s pulse raced. He placed the brush carefully down, hands trembling again. Tomorrow. Tomorrow at lunch, he’d slip quietly through the service door, leave this madness behind, reclaim his identity, his life, his sanity. Whatever was left of them.

He climbed into bed slowly, heart racing, thoughts circling endlessly. Would the world recognize Gavin Larkin beneath the soft skin, delicate curves, and practiced charm of Blair Dahlgren? Would *he* recognize Gavin Larkin?

He pushed the doubts away, closing his eyes firmly. Escape was the only answer left. It had to be.



Gavin had been exactly three hours from freedom when Sydney walked into Modeling class.

He'd spent the morning rehearsing his exit in painstaking detail. The shoes with rubber soles were waiting patiently in the storage closet, and he had timed the matron's patrol routes so precisely he could recite them in his sleep — which he pretty much had. This was it. Thursday. The perfect day to slip out unnoticed. By evening, he'd finally escape the endless cycle of lip gloss, heels, and smiles so sweet they made his teeth ache.

And then there came the soft knock at the door.

The class paused, eyes flicking expectantly to the doorway. It swung inward slowly, and in stepped a girl who looked like she'd wandered in from the wrong story. Her shoulders hunched like she hoped she could disappear entirely. Her brown hair hung lank, hiding half her face, tights sagging at the knees, and her skirt wrinkled like she'd slept in it. Her eyes darted nervously, scanning the room like she expected immediate ridicule.

Gavin's heart slammed against his ribs hard enough to hurt.

Sydney.

He stared openly, unable to blink or breathe or move. His mind froze, refusing to process the reality of his teenage daughter standing in the same pastel-colored prison that had transformed him into Blair. Sydney glanced timidly around the room, her gaze brushing past Gavin without recognition. Cold dread seeped through him.

Lunch that day passed in a blur of numb disbelief. Gavin sat rigidly, his parfait untouched, staring two tables over where Sydney sat alone, picking at her salad with the same miserable look she'd worn at every family dinner he'd ever forced her to attend. Occasionally, she glanced around nervously, as if she was about to be attacked.

Gavin murmured softly under his breath, "What are you doing here..."

He stood suddenly, startling the other girls.

"Excuse me," he whispered. They didn't question him.

Moments later, he burst into Dianna Dandridge's office without knocking, heart pounding hard enough to echo in his ears.

Dianna stood calmly by the bookshelf, arranging her criterion DVDs of her grandmother's best films with unnecessary care. She looked over her shoulder as Gavin seethed, his voice tight and uneven.

"Why is she here?"



Dianna tilted her head slightly. “Who?”

Gavin clenched his fists, fighting for control. “Sydney. The girl you just enrolled. She doesn’t belong here!”

Dianna’s lips curved into the faintest of smiles, distant and unconcerned. “All our students belong here, Blair.”

“She’s not... she’s my...” His voice cracked painfully. “What is *going on*? Is this some kind of trick? Is this a ransom of some kind?”

Dianna turned to face him fully, her voice soft, icy, and final. “Blair, this doesn’t concern you. You’re just a child.”

“I’m an adult!” He declared, his voice dipping into a male register for the first time in months.

“If I had a nickel for every teenager who said that,” she turned back to her shelves. “I can’t very well answer a question you seem to be unable to ask.”

Gavin felt his face flush with helpless anger. If she knew who he really was, she gave no sign. But what if she did know? He couldn’t risk it. He turned without another word, feeling more powerless than ever, and stepped back into the corridor, heart aching, mind reeling.

What game were these people playing? He had to know.



In the days that followed, Gavin kept his distance. Fearful of suspicion, he watched silently from across classrooms and the dining hall.

She never gave him a second glance. No recognition. None at all. He was just a stranger to him. He even went up to her once to ask a question about lip gloss, and she stammered a nervous answer, just the same way she always had. She couldn't get Sydney to even look him in the eyes, but that was nothing new.

He continued to watch over the next few days his escape plan forgotten, as Sydney floundered. Her posture class was a disaster, shoulders slouched like she carried invisible weights. In diction, her voice rarely rose above a whisper. During drills, she visibly flinched whenever someone brushed past. He watched helplessly, questions gnawing inside his skull. Was this his fault somehow? Why would she be sent to this terrible place?

The other girls sensed weakness like sharks sensing blood. They circled Sydney with merciless precision. “Can you repeat that, Sydney?” they’d sneer in diction class, giggling cruelly. “I don’t speak mouse.” In cosmetology, they’d deliberately smear her blush, then coo with mock sympathy about her inability to follow simple instructions. Gavin watched each humiliation twist painfully in his chest.

One afternoon, in Jasmine LaMay's lab, a tall senior girl named Miranda "accidentally" knocked Sydney's tray of foundation pots onto the floor. They scattered loudly, drawing amused giggles from the class.

"Oops," Miranda said, voice dripping fake innocence.

Sydney immediately dropped to her knees, eyes fixed on the floor. "Sorry," she whispered, desperate to be invisible again.

Gavin's hands shook. Something snapped. He stood abruptly, the sound of his chair scraping drawing every eye in the room.

"Leave her alone," he said, voice high, clear, and dangerously calm.

Jasmine arched an eyebrow. "Blair? Something you'd like to add?"

Gavin took a breath, forced a gentle smile. "Only that I'd like to partner with Sydney for today's lesson."

Sydney stared up at him in confusion, but Gavin didn't return the look. He knelt down, silently picking up the scattered pots, feeling every curious stare in the room.



From then on, in the quiet corners between classes and during drills, Gavin carefully guided Sydney. "Chin up when you apply gloss," he whispered softly. "The angle helps it glide smoothly." Sydney mimicked him nervously but soon began improving.

He corrected her softly in diction. "Imagine you're singing your words, not just speaking them." She nodded, taking tentative breaths and speaking more clearly each day.

To avoid suspicion, Gavin leaned into his popular girl persona. He giggled louder, praised Sydney openly, and invented quirky fashion rules to share. "Always wear green on Wednesdays — it balances the week's energy perfectly!" The girls loved it, and soon Sydney was drawn effortlessly into their circle. They praised her newfound skill.

"Sydney, your lashes are amazing! Are they extensions?"

"You've gotten so good at this!"

Sydney lit up slowly, like a winter flower that had finally realized the sun was out.

One night, Gavin lay awake in bed, face scrubbed clean, hair pinned back neatly. Sydney's laugh echoed softly in his memory from the hallway earlier, joyful and carefree for the first time he could remember. Tears burned hot behind his closed eyelids. He remembered how she'd looked earlier, staring into a mirror, quietly murmuring, "I actually feel... pretty."

Finally, Gavin stood up and sat at his vanity mirror, gently brushing his silky hair to deal with his megawatts of energy. The reflection staring back was Blair — poised, confident, beloved by the other girls, admired by Sydney. Not Gavin. Not a father.

“You did this for her,” he whispered softly, desperately trying to justify the lie.

But as he watched Blair smile gracefully back at him, he couldn’t deny it anymore — part of him genuinely liked Blair, this polished, charming, popular creature. She was a nice girl.

ALBERT MORRIS

Albert crept silently down the shadowed service corridor, heart hammering like he'd just sprinted the bases. His palms were sweaty, fingers trembling slightly as he pushed open a door that was supposed to lead to freedom. The corridor felt narrow, colder than it should've been, its silence feeling like a purgatory between the institutionalized madness of the charm school and the relative sanity of the outside world.

It had been weeks of the same thing. Relentless drilling on the silliest things. Tea parties, ballet, chorus, manners, diction and fashion. It was barely tolerable at first, but it was getting worse every day. They belittled him, treated him like an idiot, made him do the most ridiculous girly things, and he had to do it all in ridiculous dresses covering itchy prosthetics.

He glanced over his shoulder, afraid of his own shadow, cursing the soft click of his Maryjanes on the polished floor. He had been looking for ways to escape, and was finally convinced he could survive on his own, at least for a little while. The scuff of his flat-soled shoes echoed off the bare walls. Then, he heard a second set of steps.

"Going somewhere, Miss Morris?"

The low, calm voice startled him badly. Albert whipped around, nearly losing his balance. Genevieve Fallon stood blocking his way, arms folded, expression unreadable. Her presence filled the cramped hallway — strong, imposing, unmovable.

Albert tried to run away from her. "Just — just try to stop me!"

But her hand shot out, effortlessly grabbing his wrist. Albert gasped, shocked at how easily she restrained him. His arms strained uselessly, muscles he'd once counted on now weak beneath silky sleeves and bows.

"You're hurting me," Albert protested, voice cracking, anger blending painfully with embarrassment.

Genevieve stared him down, her grip iron beneath velvet calmness. "No, Miss Morris. You're hurting yourself."

Albert scowled, humiliation stinging deeper than the tightness of her grasp. "Let go — I'm leaving."

Genevieve shook her head gently, almost sympathetically. The aged teacher had no trouble dragging Albert back, all the way through the school until they were at the headmistresses' office. Dianna Dandridge turned in her chair, cool eyes measuring him like faulty merchandise.

"Disappointing," Dianna said, voice icy. "You've earned yourself three weeks' of 18 hour etiquette drills. Tea service. Curtseys. Manners. You will be isolated from the other students until you remember your manners."

Albert paled. “You can’t...”

“Oh, I *certainly* can,” Dianna interrupted smoothly, her tone calm, confident, chillingly certain. “Your aunt has given me all the authority I need.”

Days blurred painfully into weeks, Albert trapped in endless rounds of delicate curtses, simulated polite conversation, and tea sipped slowly from porcelain cups. The pink dresses, blouses and skirts — frilly, humiliating, inescapable — reminded him every minute that his defiance had cost him dearly.

Yet still, despite his hatred of it all, he still could hear a voice in his head: *There’s nothing wrong with wanting to look feminine and beautiful.*



The classrooms above the faded strip mall in downtown Los Angeles were an eyesore from the outside. Inside it looked less broken down, but decidedly old. Walls were covered with posters showing elegant women speaking into telephones, dancing with men in tuxedos, washing clothes in roller washing tubs and being taken to the opera.

Albert sat rigidly in the front row of Celine Wiest’s diction class, nylon-covered knees pressed tightly together beneath his pink taffeta skirt. He fidgeted slightly, nervous fingers smoothing the lace edges of his sleeves. He kept his eyes fixed downward, carefully avoiding the mirrors that reflected his image back at him — small, delicate, a stranger he didn’t want to know.

Celine Wiest paced gently in front of the class, tall and graceful, her sharp eyes scanning each girl with practiced precision.

“Again, please,” she said firmly. “With feeling this time. Softly, like a whisper. Like secrets shared with friends.”

Albert’s voice trembled as he repeated the line she’d written on the board. “The silver swan swam swiftly.”

“No, Miss Morris,” Celine interrupted gently, not unkindly, “softer still. Let the ‘S’ float delicately from your lips.”

Albert swallowed hard, cheeks burning, and tried again, his voice fading into something light and breathy, almost musical. “The thilver thwan thwam thwiftly.”

“Very good, Alice. You’re getting it.”

It sounded completely wrong to him, but she kept drilling him until she was satisfied. Weeks and weeks of the same kinds of drills.

Celine smiled approvingly. “Better, dear. Much better. Keep practicing.”

Later that week, he was summoned to the fashion classroom of Genevieve Fallon. The fashion classroom was quiet, sterile, suffocating. Rows of dresses hung like silent judges, their pastel colors glowing under the soft white lights. “You’re probably running out of dresses by now,” she said. “So choose what you like, Alice. We can’t have you seen in the same outfit twice, can we?”

He didn’t answer. His hands moved without thinking, angrily snatching hangers from the racks, his mind a whirlwind of heat and fury. He hated every moment he was in this school. He hated the curtsies, the dainty shoes that pinched his toes, the voice he now used without being told.

“I’m not soft,” he muttered, throat tight. “I’m not weak. I’m not some little doll.”

He yanked dress after dress from their hangers, arms overflowing. His jaw clenched tighter. He didn’t look at what he was pulling. He just wanted this over with.

Then it was quiet again. The pile in his arms now lay on the work table, shimmering in the light. He looked down.

Satin. Tulle. Ribbons. Ruffles. Frills. Dresses in blushing pink, soft lavender, sunny yellow.

Party dresses. Princess dresses. Girlhood incarnate.

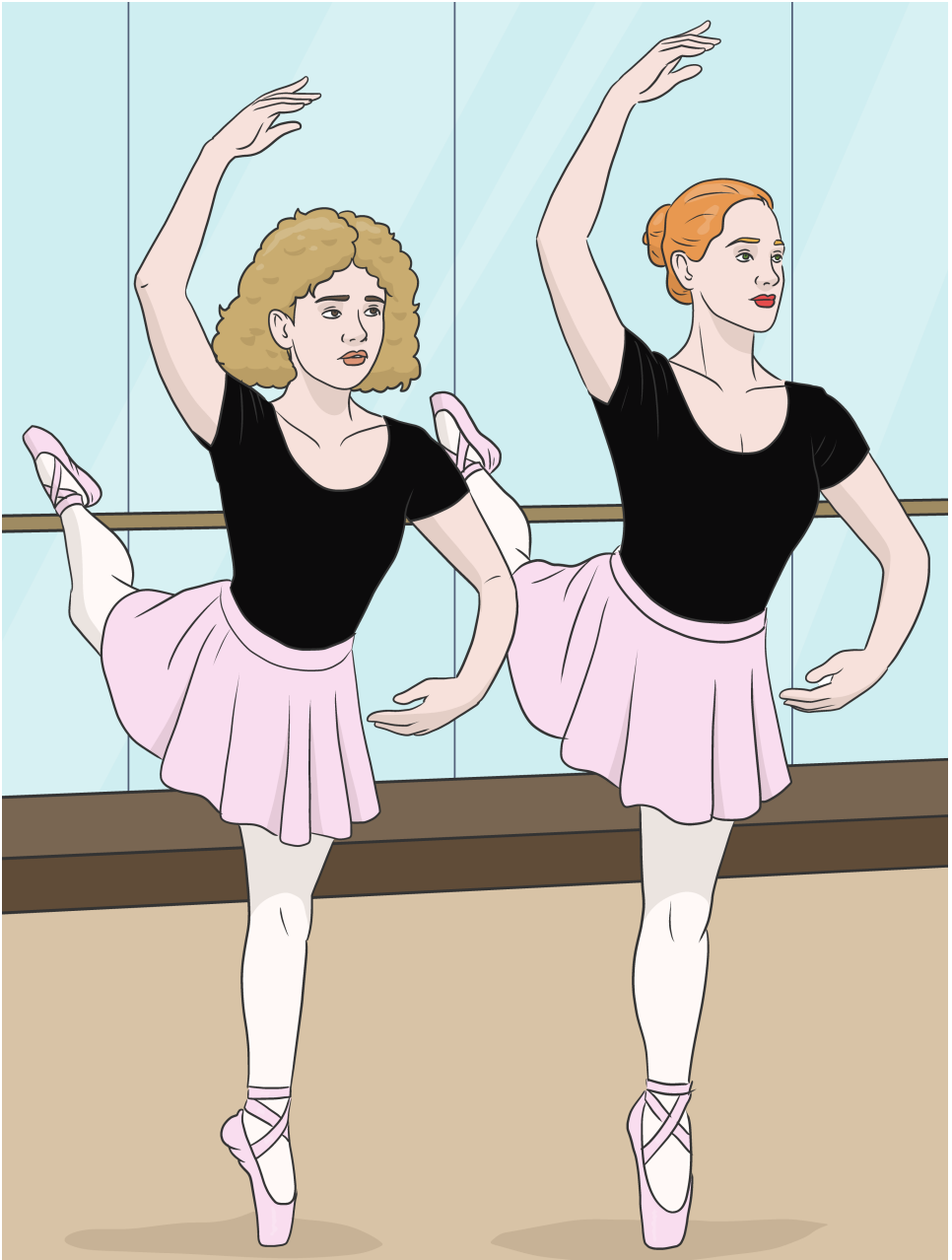
His head swam in disbelief. “I didn’t mean to...” he whispered, voice shaking. The colors weren’t random. The textures weren’t accidents. His hands had picked these. Without thinking. Without fighting. His knees weakened.

It’s like I’m a girl at heart or something, he thought to himself. Although it wasn’t exactly his thought, thanks to the silver thread in the collar of his blouse.



The mirrored walls of the ballet studio felt more revealing than ever. Albert stood in a neat line with the girls, all going through their daily drills. The pink leotard hugged his thin frame, making him look even smaller, and the ribbon in his hair felt like a leash. Months had passed since his first humiliating lesson, but the ritual was the same — stretching at the barre, the sharp voice of Miss Hawthorne snapping out instructions, the flutter of nervous laughter when someone missed a step.

Albert’s legs moved automatically through tendus and jetés, feet gliding just so, arms rounding above his head with a grace he’d never imagined. His body obeyed now, each step drilled into muscle and bone, but the effort never left his face. Inside, frustration simmered. The girls moved like water — fluid, effortless, natural, as if they’d been born to pirouette. Albert’s movements felt



mechanical, a half-second behind, not because he couldn't keep up but because he hated every second.

He caught his reflection: cheeks flushed, hair curled tight, pink tights stretched over narrow knees. He looked just like all the others, but he didn't feel it. The jealousy was sharp, bitter. How could they make this seem so easy?

When Miss Hawthorne turned away, Albert exhaled, letting his arms drop. Next to him, Lydia leaned over, her face shining with sweat and amusement.

“You looked miserable today,” Lydia whispered.

Albert tried not to smile. “I’m always mithewable in here.”

Lydia wrinkled her nose. “It’s ballet. You’re supposed to be miserable.” She shrugged, stretching her legs on the barre. “Miss Hawthorne thinks she’s teaching swans, but I’m pretty sure I’m an ostrich. My ankles are killing me.”

Albert risked a laugh, the tension easing a little. “Your turnth are perfect. I thtill can’t do one without theeing thtars.”

“Yeah, well, I hate it too. But at least I’m not alone.” Lydia shot him a sideways grin, genuine and conspiratorial.

Albert felt his frustration waver, just for the briefest of moments. It helped, knowing Lydia understood. The girls seemed to thrive on ballet, loving the soft music and floating movements, the gossip in the changing room. He envied them — envied their grace, their comfort, even their giggles. Sometimes, he wished he was a girl, and often he thought that at least little part of him was a girl at heart.

After class, the two hurried to change. Albert peeled off his shoes, fingers trembling a little, the tension still sitting in his stomach. Lydia sat beside him, toweling off her face, rolling her tights into a neat bundle. It was strange how he didn’t even think about being next to a girl while changing clothes. Even seeing her naked didn’t even seem to register with him.

“You ever think about quitting?” he asked softly.

“Every single class,” Lydia said. “They don’t like quitting here. I don’t think they even allow it.”

“I gueth not,” Albert said with a sigh.



Inside the small, mirrored beauty parlor-like room that was Bianca Newman’s classroom, Albert sat silently as Bianca fussed gently with his hair. It had been growing so much longer, much longer than he had ever had it before. Her fingers worked methodically, teasing soft, glossy curls into shape around his face. Albert watched in the mirror, feeling oddly disassociated, strangely comforted by the repetitive, soothing motion of Bianca’s hands.

“I think we’ve finally found your look, Alice,” Bianca said lightly, her voice quiet, patient, no edge this time. She flicked the springy blonde hair on his head. “Soft curls suit you.”

"I wook wike a giwl," he whispered softly, his new lisp gentle, natural, entirely his own.

Bianca smiled slightly, knowingly. "Yes, and an adorable one at that!"

Albert touched a curl delicately, repelled by the softness. He hesitated, voice trembling just a little. "I don' wanna be adworable,"

"That's a shame."

Albert looked away shyly, cheeks coloring gently, heart pounding faster. The collar whispered again, softly, like it was coming from in his head, like it was his own thought: *I'm truly a girl at heart.*

Albert closed his eyes briefly, breathing deeply. What was happening to him?



It was all getting to him. The whole place was getting to him. Albert felt like he couldn't stop it. The relentless drills of ladylike perfection, the speech therapy which had made him so much worse, the ballet with had changed his normal confident stride to a mincing tip-toe.

He was a man. Yes, he was shorter than some, but still a man. He could show them. He could show them all. He was strong. Strong and mean. He wasn't this delicate little cherub they made him out to be. Every moment in this place was a humiliation.

Today he had gotten the worst insult since he had arrived. He had been asked to read a nursery rhyme to the class. It was called "The Pretty Little Princess," and he felt like he was betraying everything he believed in as he stumbled through it. His reading skills had somehow degraded, and he was having trouble with the bigger words. He had to read slowly, being careful to pronounce everything correctly. His "pretty" was coming out as "pwetty." His "little" sounded like "wittle." Unless he used all his effort, he easily let these mispronunciations slip out.

Then there was the book itself, about a nine year old girl who was bored in her life, only enjoying her dresses and shoes and looking pretty, and how only by looking prettier would she get friends and family to love her. What kind of moral is that? Who would publish this?

Yet even in his mind, he could see that there was nothing wrong with wanting to look beautiful. Sometime he envied girls and how they were loved for being beautiful.

Then he growled, shook his hand and punched a wall. He wasn't going to be swayed by this nonsense. He was going to come out of this school even more manly than when he went in.



Late that evening, hidden behind the locked door of his tiny dorm room, Albert stood before the mirror, curious about what he had found. The seam between his prosthetics and his skin seemed to be coming loose. His fingers peeled away the silicone padding that he'd worn for weeks, the cool air hitting his skin for the first time in months. But the padding slipped from his grasp, falling silently to the floor, as his heart stopped.



Instead of his usual rough male skin, gentle, soft skin met his touch. His body was also thinner, hairless. He reached down between his legs. His genitals were... Gone. Albert's hands shook violently, his breath quickening into shallow gasps of disbelief.

"No," he whispered, voice trembling like a frightened child. "That'h... that'h *impwothible!*"

Panic surged, turning his vision blurry. He stumbled out into the dimly lit hallway, legs weak, feet clumsy, rushing out the back to the clinic in the rear parking lot. Dr. Patel answered immediately, his calm eyes betraying no surprise as Albert stood shaking before her.

"Pwease," he whispered desperately, unable to speak above a frightened whisper. "What'h happening to me?"

He smiled gently, carefully taking his hand. "It's all right, Alice. Stay calm. Let's get you settled down."

"I don't wanna..." he began weakly, voice breaking, but the doctor's needle was already in his arm, his soft voice whispering reassurances as sleep pulled Albert under.

CONNOR KEOUGH, ESQ.

The beauty classroom, located in one of the many outdated rooms in the school, was filled with old-fashioned pink salon chairs lined up in front of wall-length mirrors. The lighting had a slightly yellowed hue, a relic of the school's long past. The space still smelled of old hairspray, floral-scented powders, and faint traces of the industrial-strength perfumes the instructors seemed to favor. The clunky, outdated hairdryers sat unused in the corners, their hoods reminiscent of something straight out of the 1960s.

Connor, still adjusting to the weight of his shimmering gown from the last lesson, lowered himself carefully into one of the salon chairs. The sequins scratched against his skin as he crossed his arms, eyeing his reflection in the mirror. His stomach twisted uncomfortably. He had already been forced into this ridiculous dress; now he was about to have his hair done — beauty pageant hair, no less.

Jasmine LaMay, the school's beauty expert, stood behind him, her long nails clicking together as she inspected his current state. "Sofija, darling," she purred, tilting his chin up slightly with her manicured fingers. "Your hair is... well, let's just say it's not quite *pageant-ready*. But don't worry, that's why I'm here."

Connor forced a smile, barely able to muster the words before Jasmine was already reaching for her tools. "Pageants are not by biggest worry, you know..."

"Nonsense," Jasmine said, wrapping a salon cape around his shoulders. "Every woman has a beauty queen inside of her, ready to burst out. All women need to know how to make that queen come out when they need to, even if you never enter a single pageant."

"Why is everyone obsessed with beauty pageants all of the sudden?" He asked. No one answered, as if it were a silly question. Really, he needed to ask his step mother that question, as this was all at her direction.

Jasmine addressed the rest of the class for a moment with a wink, as they all looked on eagerly. She turned her attention back to Connor, talking to him through the reflection in the mirror. "Now, darling, you need volume, movement, drama." She grinned as she grabbed a teasing comb. "And honey, nothing says I'm here to win quite like big, glamorous hair."

Genie, who had been lounging in one of the chairs nearby, grinned as she leaned forward. "Oh, this is going to be good."

The other girls in the class gathered around, watching with rapt attention as Jasmine set to work. Connor cringed as the teasing began, his hair being pulled in every direction as Jasmine worked her magic. Layers of hairspray coated the air as she backcombed sections of his hair until they reached unthinkable heights.

“Beauty queens do not have flat hair,” Jasmine reminded the class. “They have hair that commands attention. Hair that owns the room.” She grinned at Connor through the mirror.

Connor barely held back a groan as Jasmine pinned a final curl in place. She turned him to face the rest of the class, beaming with pride. “Ladies, this is what stage-ready hair looks like.”

Genie clapped, giggling. “You look like a real beauty queen, Sofija!”

Connor glanced at his reflection and nearly gasped. His hair was huge — a teased, voluminous masterpiece that defied gravity. He looked like he had stepped straight out of a Miss Universe competition from the 1980s.

Connor internally cringed, and then internally died. Then he had to smile for appearances sake.



In their next class, Genevieve Fallon, the modeling instructor, gestured for them all to sit as she moved to a microphone set up at the front of the classroom. “Ladies, in a pageant, it’s not just about looking beautiful. It’s about *sounding* beautiful.” She smiled. “That means speaking in a soft, pleasant, angelic voice. Nothing too harsh, nothing too aggressive.”

Connor sighed, shifting in his chair. This is ridiculous.

Genevieve continued, pacing slowly across the stage. “The trick is, you don’t have to say anything smart. That’s not what the judges are looking for.” She held up a hand before any of the students could ask questions. “No, no, darling, pageants are about charm, not intellect. What matters is that you sound poised, elegant, and completely effortless.”

Genie nudged Connor with her elbow. “See? You’re off the hook. No one expects us to be geniuses.”

Connor groaned under his breath.

Genevieve smiled. “Now, let’s practice. When you step up to the microphone, you should tilt your head just slightly, smile with warmth, and answer questions with a tone that is soft, pleasant, and inviting. Think of it like singing — only, you are singing with your words.”

She turned to the class. “Sofija, since you’re already looking gorgeous, why don’t you go first?”

Connor stiffened, his face paling. “Oh, no... I do not think...”

Genevieve waved him forward. “Nonsense! A beauty queen never hesitates.”

The other students clapped encouragingly, clearly excited to see him squirm. Genie smirked beside him, leaning over. “You got this, Sofija. Just bat your lashes and try not to sound like you’re in pain.”

Connor shot her a glare before reluctantly standing and making his way onto the small stage. His heels wobbled slightly, the gown’s weight making everything harder. He reached the microphone and, following Genevieve’s instructions, tilted his head ever so slightly.

“Now,” Genevieve said, holding a card. “Let’s start with an easy one. Sofija, tell us — what is the most important thing about being a beauty queen?”

Connor stared blankly at her for a moment, internally screaming. His mind scrambled for something — anything — that wouldn’t make him sound like an idiot.

Genevieve lifted an eyebrow. “Sofija, darling, we’re waiting.”

Connor swallowed, remembering the lesson. He forced a smile, softened his voice, and spoke in the most delicate tone he could manage.

“The... most important thing about being beauty queen... is... to smile, and be happy, and... to always believe in yourself... and also world peace.”

The class erupted into cheers. Genie whistled loudly.

Genevieve clapped. “Beautiful! Exactly! Simple, sweet, and said with a voice like an angel.”

Connor exhaled in relief, but before he could return to his seat, Genevieve smirked. “Now, let’s try another one.”

His stomach dropped.



For the next several weeks, the lessons continued. Every day was filled with practice — more gowns, more hair-spraying, more walking across the stage in heels, more speaking with the perfect delicate tone of a pageant queen.

Connor had no choice but to participate. He was expected to master every step, every flick of his wrist, every careful, elegant movement that a woman of refinement should possess. Every time he hesitated, Jasmine or Millicent would correct him. Every time he failed, he had to do it again.

By the end of each day, his feet ached, his throat hurt from speaking in a soft, airy tone, and his hair was so filled with hairspray that he felt like a walking fire hazard.

But worst of all? Genie was right.

He *was* starting to adjust.



Connor groaned as he sank into the cafeteria seat, slipping his heels off under the table and rubbing his aching feet. His toes throbbed from hours of spinning, stepping, and gliding in the absurdly high heels Millicent had insisted they practice in. Every step had felt like torture, but worse than the pain was the humiliating fact that, according to Genie, he was getting good at it.

Genie arrived a moment later, balancing two food trays with ease. She placed one in front of Connor with a grin. “Here you go,” she said.

“Thanks.”

Genie smirked. “You’re such a princess.”

Connor scowled, rubbing the arch of his foot. “Do not call me that,” he muttered. “My feet feel like I have walked across whole country in these heels.”

Genie sat down across from him, shaking her head with amusement. “Well, pain or not, you are getting really good at it. I mean, Sofija, you’re sailing across that stage like an ice skater. It’s impressive.”

Connor focused on his food, nudging the delicate portion of grilled chicken with his fork before taking a small bite. “I do not want to be impressive at this,” he grumbled. “I do not want to be good. I just want to be...” He trailed off, staring at his plate, unsure what the end of that sentence was supposed to be.

Genie rested her chin in her palm, watching him with a knowing smirk. “You say that, but you don’t exactly try to be *bad* at it, do you?”

Connor let out a small sigh. She was right, of course. Despite himself, despite everything, his body remembered the lessons. His posture, his balance, the way his hips swayed just slightly when he walked — it was all ingrained now.

He didn't want this. And yet, here he was.

Genie nudged his tray toward him. "Eat up. You're gonna need the energy. Tomorrow's going to be another long one."

"I think I am full," Connor said, surprising himself. He hadn't eaten but two bites.



Later that night, Connor stood at his vanity, staring at his reflection. His long, teased-out hair still had the shape of the day's pageant styling, and without even thinking about it, he reached for a brush and began carefully sectioning and setting it for sleep, just like every other night.

It wasn't just the hair, either. The routine had become automatic — removing his earrings and placing them neatly in a jewelry box, taking a soft cloth and carefully wiping away his makeup, covering his face with a mud mask, and smoothing lotion onto his hands, arms and legs. He followed every step as if he had done it all his life, never stopping to question why.

Somewhere, deep down, he knew he should be questioning it. That he should feel strange about it, but he was too tired.

With a final glance at the mirror, he slipped into bed, the soft satin of his nightgown brushing against his skin. The lights dimmed, and he closed his eyes, wondering — not for the first time — *Where is this going? Will this ever end?*

As sleep pulled him under, a faint voice drifted through his mind. A soft, lilting woman's voice, whispering words he couldn't quite make out.

His lips parted slightly, his breath steady and even. He was asleep before he could realize he was listening.



The lunch room of the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School had been rearranged with all the chairs facing a small ersatz stage. It wasn't very convincing, but it didn't need to be. The beauty pageant for the students of the school was just for instructional purposes. It wasn't real.

Connor, stood anxiously backstage, which was the kitchen, his heart unexpectedly racing beneath the smooth silk of his evening gown. The fabric hugged every subtle curve that the school's intensive training had created, flowing delicately around his ankles. His chest rose and fell rapidly beneath the embroidered bodice, nerves making his breath shallow and uneven. It may not

have been a real beauty pageant, but being in anything even vaguely like a beauty pageant was enough to make Connor start freaking out.

Beside him, Genie stood poised and confident, calmly adjusting the slender straps of her sparkling blue gown. Her eyes were bright, cheeks flushed with excitement, the very picture of eager anticipation. Genie's enthusiasm made Connor feel even more isolated, more ashamed of his own confusion and discomfort.

Genevieve Fallon flew about backstage, clipboard in hand, offering a reassuring smile to each girl in turn. "Remember, ladies, this pageant isn't about competition," she reminded them softly. "It's about learning to present yourselves beautifully, with elegance, poise, and pride in your femininity."

Connor shuddered inwardly at her words, shame burning his cheeks beneath his carefully applied foundation and blush. Femininity. Elegance. Poise. Each word felt humiliating, a stinging reminder that he was not like these other students. Every carefully selected gown, every swipe of lipstick, every hour spent perfecting his walk in heels felt like a cruel joke.

As his name — "Sofija" — was announced, Connor swallowed thickly, forcing a smile as Genie gave his hand a quick, encouraging squeeze. Stepping out onto the stage, he felt utterly vulnerable. His heels clicked softly on the polished wooden floor, the sound echoing louder in his ears than the polite applause of the audience. Each step he took in those slender, high-heeled shoes reminded him vividly of his shame; every gentle sway of his hips made his cheeks flush hotter with embarrassment.

All day he had been drilled on just how to look feminine and gorgeous walking fifteen feet from the backstage to the center of the stage. It was a lot of work for such a short walk. Yet, it didn't feel like enough. A hundred years would not have been enough to soothe Connor's nerves.

At center stage, he turned gracefully, fighting to keep his chin high and his eyes bright, as he had been so relentlessly instructed. He forced himself to remember every lesson: posture straight, smile soft, hands gently clasped in front of his waist. Yet beneath his practiced composure, humiliation and anxiety simmered intensely. The makeup on his face, the hair styled so perfectly around his shoulders, the sheer femininity of his flowing gown — all of it seemed to scream mockery at him.

Miss Fallon approached, offering a gentle smile as she raised the microphone to his lips. "Sofija, tell us, please — what does femininity mean to you?"

Connor's pulse thudded painfully in his temples, his mouth suddenly dry. He had rehearsed this answer so many times, the words drilled into his memory through countless classes, but now, standing exposed before the watchful eyes of his classmates, speaking them aloud felt unbearable. His chest tightened, his voice trembled softly, betraying the emotions he so desperately tried to hide.



“Femininity,” he began softly, his accented English making the words feel even more foreign in his mouth, “is... embracing the beauty and grace within oneself. There’s nothing wrong with wanting to look feminine and beautiful. It is about kindness, strength in gentleness, and finding pride and confidence in the woman... in the woman I am.”

Applause erupted warmly from the students and teachers alike, their supportive smiles genuine and approving, yet Connor felt only shame and confusion at the sound. Returning backstage, Genie caught his hand gently, whispering excited praise into his ear, yet her enthusiasm did little to ease the humiliation that surged within him.

The talent portion approached, and Connor’s stomach knotted even tighter as he picked up his glitter-covered baton. Now wearing a sparkling body suit, he pranced on stage. Twirling a baton had seemed absurd when first introduced, but months of relentless practice had made him proficient, even graceful. Now, to do his “talent” performance, he began to spin the baton expertly, tossing it high and catching it deftly, each elegant move a fresh wave of shame. He kicked and danced around stage as he twirled the baton, the applause gentle but enthusiastic, reinforcing the sense of feminine achievement he so desperately wanted to reject.

Finally, the dreaded swimsuit competition arrived. The girls lined up in the kitchen in colorful bikinis, and Connor stood stiffly in his modest, feminine-cut one-piece, chosen by Miss Fallon herself. It hugged his figure, accentuating curves that seemed alarmingly genuine. As the other girls confidently strutted onto the stage, he took a deep breath, knowing he must follow their example, yet feeling acutely humiliated.

He walked forward, smiling prettily as he’d been taught, but beneath the poised exterior, his heart sank. Every step felt excruciatingly vulnerable, the fabric clinging to him, the eyes of the audience evaluating every carefully sculpted inch of his artificially feminine figure.

His cheeks burned with embarrassment, his emotions roiling beneath a facade of charm and confidence he no longer recognized as his own. He remembered the countless lessons — hips gently swaying, shoulders back, chin high — and mechanically obeyed, yet inwardly he seethed with frustration and despair. Was this what he had become?

Returning to the kitchen at last, Connor exhaled shakily, fighting tears of anguish. He forced another sweet smile, desperate to maintain the illusion, even as he realized with bitter resignation how thoroughly trapped he had become in the very femininity he’d tried so hard to resist.



A half hour and one quick change later, Connor stood at center stage, back in his pageant gown, heart thundering beneath the sparkling bodice, a forced smile still painted delicately across his glossed lips. Around him, the other contestants waited, their expressions a mixture of eager anticipation and hopeful excitement. Connor felt a sharp twist in his stomach and realized with confusion that he was nervous — genuinely, inexplicably nervous — about the announcement of the pageant's winner. It made no sense to him; he knew better than anyone how absurd it was to care about such a thing. He was a guy beneath it all.

Yet, standing here, breathless, he felt an undeniable anxiety, his fingertips trembling as he clutched the silk fabric of his skirt. The light warmed his carefully powdered cheeks, and he tried desperately to convince himself that winning this silly beauty pageant would mean nothing — that, if anything, it would signal his total defeat in preserving the last scraps of his masculinity. Still, he couldn't deny the unexpected yearning that had crept up inside him, an aching desire for approval, for affirmation, for acceptance.

The judges, senior students who had once stood exactly where Connor now stood, exchanged hushed whispers and knowing smiles as they made their decision. The head judge stepped forward, smiling gently as she raised the microphone to her lips.

“Ladies, you've all shown remarkable grace, elegance, and beauty today,” she announced warmly, “but only one of you can be crowned tonight's winner. And so, the winner of this year's Priscilla Dandridge Charm School Beauty pageant is...” She paused dramatically, her eyes sparkling, “Sofija Jovanovski!”

Connor felt his breath stop sharply in his throat as applause erupted around him, loud and enthusiastic. Tears welled uncontrollably in his eyes, suddenly blurring his vision as he accepted the bouquet of fake roses placed delicately in his trembling hands. His carefully styled hair, his flawless makeup, and his sparkling gown had combined perfectly, and yet he felt no pride — only a profound and confusing humiliation at how deeply this moment touched him.

He was crying openly now, unable to hold back the hot tears that streamed down his flushed cheeks. This victory meant nothing — or at least, it should have meant nothing — but to his horror, it felt like everything. He had been trained, coached, and transformed into the ideal of feminine beauty, and now he had achieved its ultimate validation. Connor realized with shame and humiliation that the judges' decision genuinely mattered to him, far more deeply than he had ever imagined.

Genie approached him, her own eyes bright with affectionate amusement, and squeezed his hand gently. Leaning in close, she whispered playfully, “Sofija, you really are the silliest girl I've ever met. You spend all day pretending you don't care about winning a beauty pageant, and now you're crying like a baby when you do!”

Connor laughed softly through his tears, though the embarrassment still burned fiercely beneath his delicate exterior. He managed a shaky smile for Genie's sake, clutching the fake roses to his chest as he blinked back more tears. Despite himself, despite everything, he couldn't escape the truth: he had won, and deep down, he knew he'd never felt so utterly defeated.



Back in the routine of being a simple student, Connor was exhausted after another grueling day of lessons, his feet aching from another round of high-heel training. He just wanted to collapse into bed, close his eyes, and forget everything for a few hours.

Things had changed a little at The Priscilla Dandridge Charm School for Young Ladies. It had been slow, but it was becoming more obvious every day. At first, Connor had assumed it was just his own training — after all, he was the one being forced into femininity. But as the weeks passed, he noticed that all the girls were changing, too.

They giggled more. They whispered and huddled in small groups, always talking about something — hair, boys, shopping, makeup. Their skirts seemed to get shorter, their hairstyles more elaborate. They walked differently — more delicately, their movements softer, more demure.

It wasn't just him. Every girl in this school was slowly becoming more girlish.

That was a concern for tomorrow, however. Of that night, all Connor wanted to do was slip into a nice warm bath, moisturize his skin and slip into a soft silk nightie. But when he opened the door to his dorm room, his stomach dropped.

Three girls were already inside: Genie, a blonde named Lacy, and a brown-haired girl named Vivian. They were sprawled across his bed, dressed in frilly pastel nighties, their hair loose and wavy.

“Sofiiiijaaaa!” Genie squealed, throwing up her arms. “It’s sleepover time!”

Connor’s heart stopped.

“What?” he stammered, taking a step back.

The other girls giggled. “We thought it’d be soooo fun!” Lacy chimed, kicking her legs up playfully. “We brought everything! Nail polish, makeup, curlers...”

“It’s been forever since we had a proper sleepover!” Genie added. “So we’re doing it tonight!”

Connor’s stomach twisted. He wanted to protest — he *needed* to protest — but the girls were already too excited, their eyes sparkling with delight. He knew if he said no, he’d only look like the odd one out, the one who wasn’t fitting in. The one who might not have been a girl.

“Unless *Miss Priscilla Dandridge Charm School* is too important to let mere mortals...” Lacy teased.

So he forced a tight smile. “Uh... okay?”

The girls squealed in delight.

Before Connor could even process what was happening, the girls descended on him.

“Let’s do hair first!” Lacy declared, grabbing a brush.

“And nails while we do hair!” Genie giggled, reaching for a bottle of soft pink polish.

“And makeup last!” Vivian added cheerfully.

Connor sat stiffly as they surrounded him, brushing through his hair, setting it in curlers, giggling as they painted his nails.

“You have to start curling your hair more often,” Lacy cooed, twirling a golden lock around her finger.

“This is your color polish,” Genie added. “It’s perfect for you, Sofija!”

Connor swallowed hard, staring at his hands. The pastel polish shined under the dorm light, looking far too natural on his fingers.

There was nothing wrong with looking feminine and beautiful in his mind, but sometimes he thought that maybe there was a little too much girlishness in his life. Having three girls giggling and tittering as they were doing your hair and makeup was probably a bit more than he could handle.

By the time they had exhausted themselves with beauty makeovers, the four of them finally crawled under the covers, squeezing together in Connor’s narrow bed.

Connor was wedged between Genie and Lacy, his body stiff with discomfort, his hair still tightly curled from the night’s beautifying ordeal. The other girls, however, were thrilled, whispering and giggling like lifelong best friends.

And then, he noticed Vivian.

She was lying closest to the edge of the bed, her head resting on her hands, eyes dreamy and vacant.

Connor’s brain finally kicked in.

Vivian.

He hadn’t thought about her in months, but now, looking at her up close, he knew who she was.

The weird girl from his first day. The girl who had screamed when she was brought to the school. The girl who fought against it. The girl they kept him from talking to.

And now? Now she was the most feminine of them all.

Vivian let out a soft, airy giggle. “*Sofiiijaaa*,” she purred, her voice high and syrupy. “I’m sooo happy we’re having this sleepover! Aren’t you?”

Connor’s skin prickled.

“You...” he hesitated. “What happened to you?”

Vivian blinked, tilting her head in confusion. “Hmmm?”

Connor shifted, lowering his voice. “When you came here. You didn’t want to be here. I remember.”

Vivian giggled, twirling a lock of her curls around her finger. “Oh, silly Sofija! I was sooo excited to come here!”

Connor’s chest tightened. “No. That’s not what happened. You said this place was prison.”

Vivian pouted. “Oh, don’t be silly! This school is, like, the best thing ever!” She let out a breathy sigh. “I’m sooo happy my daddy sent me here!”

The other girls cooed in agreement, snuggling deeper under the blankets.

Connor stared at Vivian, his stomach tightening up.

She wasn’t the same person anymore — and she had no idea.

As the other girls whispered and giggled around him, Connor lay awake, his body stiff, his mind racing.

Genie’s arm was now draped over Connor’s side as she had fallen asleep, and he could feel Lacy’s legs going in between his as she fell asleep, too. It was a weird night.



The warm glow of the computer screen illuminated Dianna Dandridge’s pleased features as she sat in her office, her hands folded neatly under her chin. On the screen before her, the grainy video feed played — a clip from earlier that morning, surveillance video showing Connor clicking down the hallway, his short skirt barely covering the tops of his nylon-clad thighs, his high heels carrying him with a confidence that seemed entirely natural.

Dianna smirked.

Across the video call, Zlatica Jovanovski watched with pure delight.

The older woman leaned forward, her sharp eyes fixated on the screen, a gleam of approval flashing behind them..

“He is... kako da rečam...” Zlatica paused, thinking of the right English word. Then she grinned, her red-painted lips curling with satisfaction. “Beautiful. So... feminine.”

Dianna nodded, pleased. “I thought you might like that.”

Zlatica giggled, her manicured fingers brushing against her pearls. “Oh, Dianna... I had doubts, I admit... but now?” She gestured toward the screen, where the video looped again — Connor shimmering with femininity, his delicate hands adjusting the hem of his skirt, his soft curls bouncing with each graceful step.

“Look at her!” Zlatica gushed. “She is perfection. My little Sofija... Oh, kako e *ubavo!*” (How beautiful!).

Dianna chuckled. “And she’s only getting started.”

Zlatica’s eyes sparkled. “What more is there?”

Dianna sat back, exuding the air of a woman who knew exactly what she was doing. “The best is yet to come. By the time Sofija is ready to return home...” She leaned forward slightly, her voice silk. “She won’t just *look* like the girl you asked us to make for you. She will *be* her, in every way.”

Zlatica sighed dreamily, almost giddy. “I no have doubt, Dianna. You do miracle!” She laughed softly. “My husband, the fool...” She smirked, shaking her head. “His own son will be my perfect daughter... and he does not even know!”

Dianna allowed herself a smile. “That is often the way of things, my dear. Men rarely know what’s best for them.”

Zlatica tilted her head, suddenly more thoughtful. “Tell me...” she mused, adjusting her necklace. “How... how far will she go? How... kako da rečam... *attracted* to men should she become?*

Dianna’s smirk widened. “That is entirely up to you.”

Zlatica grinned wickedly. “Make her helpless... without favor of strong man.”

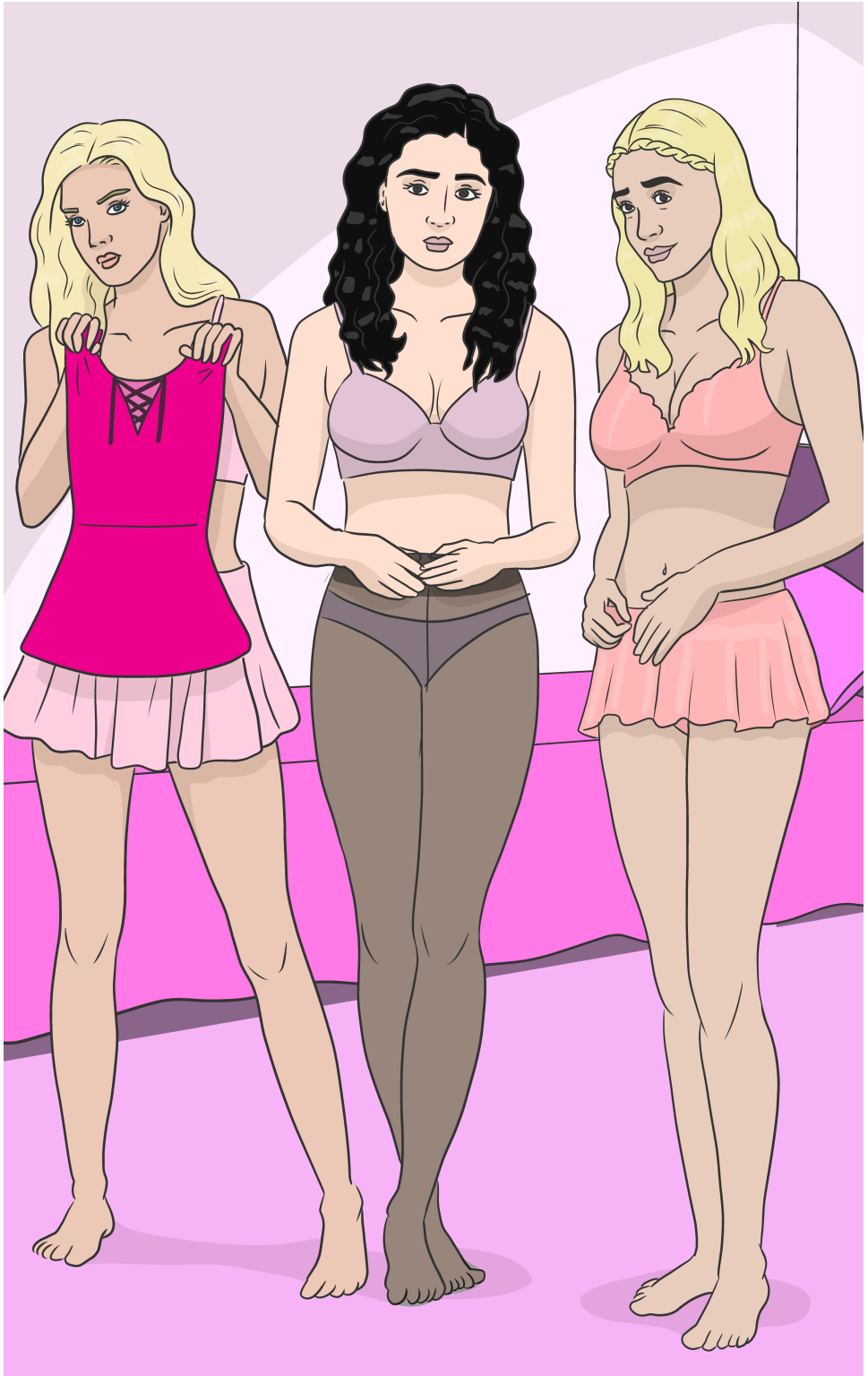
Dianna gave a slow, approving nod. “I’m sure you’ll be delighted with the results. I’ll be in touch.” She closed the video file with a click.

She closed her laptop, pleased that yet another student was on their way to femininity.



The odd thing about the final month at The Priscilla Dandridge Charm School for Young Ladies was how suddenly everything stopped feeling like school.

There were no more reprimands, no more tight smiles from Miss Wiest for slouching or showing too much gum when you spoke. No more emergency reminders about panty lines, or walking like “a woman, not a bag of bones.” One morning, they simply stopped correcting anyone, and nobody noticed.



At some point, everyone had started to follow the rules before they were told. If there was a mandate about the length of one's hemline or the right amount of blush, it had quietly migrated into instinct. You just knew. Like knowing not to microwave tinfoil or wear red and pink together.

Connor had once started his mornings in a panic, opening the closet like it was full of grenades. Now he opened it the way most people open a refrigerator: casually, already knowing what he wanted.

He picked out a cream blouse with a scalloped collar and a powder-blue skirt that flared just enough to make a soft little *whff* noise when he walked. There were earrings involved. Hair was curled. And there was a lipstick — rose, not coral. Coral was for grandmothers.

Vivian, who had wandered into the room to steal a bra, glanced up as he clipped the second earring into place.

"You're doing the rose again?"

Connor nodded, checking his reflection. "It matches the shoes."

She didn't ask which ones. Everyone knew about the shoes.

He applied the lipstick, blotted twice, and gave the mirror a small, professionally modest smile. The kind you might wear if a waiter ground some pepper on your salad and you didn't want to seem too pleased.

Lunch was a study in refinement. The dining room smelled faintly of perfume and lemon vinaigrette. Connor sat with Vivian, Genie, and Elise, all of whom had accepted their surroundings with the kind of grace usually reserved for cruise ship passengers or long-term hostages.

They no longer needed to be told how to sit. Nobody crossed their legs the wrong way. Nobody drummed their fingers or sighed at the menu. At this point, they simply ordered and dabbed at their mouths with cloth napkins in perfect unison, like synchronized swimmers.

"Cream or white for tomorrow?" Connor asked, poking at his salad. "I'm doing the silver clips."

Genie looked up from her poached pear. "White. Cream washes you out under these lights."

He nodded. "Right. I thought that too."

He hadn't, but it didn't matter. This was less about decision-making and more about confirmation. He could have flipped a coin and ended up in something stunning. They all would have.

Connor spent the late afternoon selecting earrings for the next day — just studs, nothing dramatic — and reorganizing his vanity. He kept his brushes in small ceramic jars labeled complexion, eyes, and lips, a system he was proud of, even if no one else seemed impressed.

The hair dryer had a special drawer. The false lashes had their own pouch. He had a dedicated container for cotton swabs, another for perfume, and a third, smaller box for emergency sparkle — a term that meant nothing and everything at once.

Later, he and Genie curled up on their beds in matching robes and flipped through a beauty product site on a tablet.

“You ever think about how weird this place is?” Genie asked, turning a page.

Connor looked up. “Hm?”

“This. Us. Like... remember how much you hated heels at the start?”

I'm truly a woman at heart, he thought to himself. It was just some odd thought that suddenly appeared in his mind. Although, he didn't disagree with it.

“I *never* hated them.” Connor gave a half-shrug.

He didn't elaborate. There wasn't anything more to say.

They went back to the catalog.

By week's end, Connor was practicing turns in the hall just to hear his heels click against the tile. The sound was satisfying in the way a finely tuned clock was. Mechanical. Rhythmic.

He passed a mirror and caught his reflection: blouse tucked, hair perfect, makeup balanced and soft. He paused.

Tilted his head.

Smiled.

The mirror smiled back.

There was no crisis. No questioning. Just a girl, pleased with her outfit, deciding which hair clip to wear in the morning.



Connor sat stiffly on the padded exam table inside Dr. Patel's trailer-turned-medical office, his manicured fingers twitching slightly as he smoothed down the hem of his skirt. The sterile scent of disinfectant mixed with the lingering traces of perfume from the last patient who had been inside. He could feel his heartbeat against his ribs, a slow, steady thudding that only seemed to grow louder as the seconds passed. His nerves were stretched taut, his breath coming in shallow, measured inhales, as if any sudden movement would send his entire body into panic.

He had been dreading this visit for weeks.

For a long time, he had ignored it, pretended it wasn't happening, dismissed the nagging sensation at the back of his mind that told him something was wrong. But he couldn't ignore it anymore. Not when he could feel the difference every time he moved, every time he dressed, every time he ran his hands over his own body and found it subtly different.

The prosthetics had shifted, or at least, he *thought* they had. His hips were definitely wider, and his butt felt bigger, so he figured the rubber skin was drooping. And then there was the pain.

It wasn't sharp, not exactly. It wasn't the kind of pain that made him double over or clutch his stomach in agony. It was strange, almost distant — phantom pains that radiated through his abdomen. At first, he had thought it was his mind playing tricks on him, convincing him that he was feeling things that weren't really there. But the sensation had only grown stronger, and now, every time he moved, he felt the dull ache settle into his skin, as if something beneath the surface was shifting.

His stomach twisted as he glanced toward the closed doors of the exam room, his pulse quickening. He could hear muffled voices inside, the quiet hum of conversation followed by silence, then more murmurs. He clenched his hands in his lap, trying to ignore the way his palms were growing clammy.

Then, without warning, the door swung open. Connor jerked his head up just in time to see Genie step out, her blonde curls disheveled, her usually bright, playful expression completely absent. Her eyes were wide, her face ashen, her hands trembling at her sides as she took slow, unsteady steps into the waiting area.

Something was wrong. She looked as if she had just been told the worst news of her life.

Connor barely had a chance to process the look on Genie's face before the nurse called his name, her voice sharp and professional, cutting through the thick silence of the small waiting area. His body tensed instinctively at the sound, but he hesitated, his gaze locked on Genie's ashen expression. Something was wrong, deeply wrong, and the way she stood there — staring blankly, almost disconnected from reality — sent a ripple of unease crawling up his spine.

"Genie?" he asked softly, his voice barely above a whisper, as if speaking too loudly might cause her to break apart completely. She didn't react immediately, just continued standing there, her hands loosely clasped in front of her, her eyes unfocused, distant. It was unnerving to see her like this, the same girl who had always been so full of life, always giggling and teasing, always the first to crack a joke or brighten a room. Now, she looked like she had been hollowed out.

Connor swallowed, stepping closer, lowering his voice further. "What did the doctor say to you?" He searched her face for a sign, anything that might tell

him what had caused this drastic change, but her expression remained unreadable.

For a moment, he thought she wouldn't answer at all. Then, finally, she took a slow, shaky breath and murmured, "It's not something I can talk about."

Her voice was flat, drained of the usual warmth and energy that defined her.

Connor's throat tightened, a dozen questions swirling in his mind, but he understood. Whatever it was, it wasn't something she was ready to share.

"...Are you okay?" he asked, even though he already knew the answer.

Genie blinked slowly, as if considering the question, then offered a small, lifeless nod.

The nurse cleared her throat impatiently.

Connor forced himself to step back. He didn't want to leave her like this, but there was nothing more he could do. With one last concerned glance at his friend, he turned and stepped into the exam room, his own unease growing heavier by the second.

Connor sat stiffly on the exam table, dressed in a standard light blue medical gown that felt too thin, too exposing, his bare legs swinging slightly as he waited. The room was cool and sterile, the faint scent of antiseptic lingering in the air. He tried not to think too hard, tried not to let the lingering unease from seeing Genie's expression weigh too heavily on his mind, but it was impossible to shake the image of her pale, stricken face.

Just as he was beginning to tap his manicured fingers against his knee in nervous anticipation, the door swung open, and Dr. Patel entered with his usual air of detached professionalism, flipping through Connor's chart as he stepped inside. The doctor barely glanced up at first, his dark eyes scanning the pages before nodding slightly and offering Connor a polite, well-practiced smile.

"All right, Sofija, let's see how we're doing today," Dr. Patel said in a light, conversational tone, the kind doctors used to put patients at ease. "Any headaches? Nausea? Have you been sleeping well?"

Connor cleared his throat, forcing himself to relax. "No, nothing like that," he said, shifting slightly on the exam table. "I okay. Just... I want to ask you about something."

Dr. Patel nodded as he set the clipboard aside, gesturing for Connor to lift his arm. "Of course, we'll get to that. First, let's check your progress."

Connor hesitated, then raised his right arm, allowing the doctor to press his fingers lightly against his side, his waist, his lower abdomen. The touch was firm but impersonal, methodical as Dr. Patel pressed along the seams of where Connor knew the prosthetics were attached.

“I’ve been feeling something weird,” Connor admitted, watching the doctor’s face carefully. “Like... phantom pains, almost. In my groin. Deep in there.”

Dr. Patel’s expression didn’t shift in the slightest. He merely hummed in acknowledgment, pressing a little deeper before stepping back. “It’s all psychosomatic,” he said smoothly, moving toward the counter and jotting something down. “Completely normal after wearing the prosthetic for so long. I assure you, it’s nothing to worry about.”

Connor frowned slightly, shifting uncomfortably. It wasn’t the answer he had been hoping for, but the doctor’s calm, unwavering certainty made it hard to argue. “So, it’s just... my mind playing tricks on me?”

“Precisely,” Dr. Patel said with a small nod, turning back toward him. “Has anyone else noticed? Do they feel unnatural to anyone but you?”

Connor shook his head quickly. “No, no one knows. No one has even suspected anything.”

“Good,” the doctor said simply, as if that were the most important thing. “And you’re still urinating correctly? No discomfort, no changes in frequency?”

Connor flushed slightly, shifting where he sat. “Yeah, no problems there,” he muttered.

Dr. Patel nodded again, then opened a drawer and retrieved a small bottle of pills, handing them over without fanfare. “These should help with the discomfort. Take one at night if the pain gets too distracting, but honestly, it should fade on its own once you stop focusing on it.”

Connor hesitated for just a moment before accepting the bottle, his manicured fingers curling around it. He could still feel the phantom sensations, the dull, deep pressure beneath his skin, but if the doctor said it was all in his head... maybe it was.

As he slid off the exam table and adjusted his gown slightly, he looked up at Dr. Patel, hesitating before speaking again. “What did you tell Genie?”

Dr. Patel’s expression remained neutral, his gaze unreadable as he reached for his clipboard again. “I’m afraid I can’t share that information,” he said smoothly. “Doctor-patient confidentiality.”

Connor felt a pang of disappointment, but he knew there was no point in pushing. After all, he was a man. For some reason, he didn’t understand, he felt he needed a man to say these things to him. Men seemed authoritative to him now. He didn’t have any trouble believing what a man told him.

With a small nod, he turned toward the door and walked out, still unsure if he felt reassured or more uncertain than ever.

Once he got back to the dorms, Connor hesitated outside Genie’s door, the faint sound of laughter filtering through the crack beneath it. It was soft, almost breathless, as if she had been holding something in for too long and had finally

let it go. After everything that had happened earlier — her ashen face, her hollow expression, the way she had looked like she had just been given the worst news of her life — he hadn't expected to find her... laughing.

He knocked gently before stepping inside, his brows furrowed in confusion. "Genie?" he asked carefully, tilting his head. "What's so funny?"

She was sitting cross-legged on her bed, twirling a lock of golden hair around her finger, still smiling to herself, her eyes bright in a way they hadn't been before. She glanced up at him, her expression light, carefree — almost detached. "Oh, Sofija," she sighed, shaking her head slightly. "You wouldn't understand."

Connor frowned, stepping closer. "Understand what?"

Genie just giggled again, a soft, airy sound that somehow made him more uneasy than reassured. Then, as if deciding to clarify, she leaned forward slightly and said, "Sometimes you get so worried about something, so convinced it's the most important thing in the world, and then... one day, you realize it was all very silly."

Her voice was soft, almost dreamy, and for a moment, Connor couldn't tell if she was relieved or simply resigned to something she couldn't change.

He hesitated, then swallowed down his unease.

Genie smiled again and reached for his hand, giving it a light squeeze. "Thank you, Sofija," she murmured. "For being my friend."

Connor squeezed back, unsure why her words made him feel so uneasy. "Sure," he said, unprepared to get deep.

"No, I mean it," Genie said, showing a rare moment of stone-cold sobriety. "I wouldn't be able to laugh about it if it weren't for you. You make it all seem like so much fun. Like everything's going to be okay."

"I was going to say the same thing about you," Connor replied.



A few short weeks passed, at the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School for Young Ladies. By now, no one was shuffling, squirming, or ducking past mirrors. You could hear the difference in the halls — no more heel stumbles, no more clicking that paused halfway through a step to recalibrate balance. The new sound was continuous: precise, rhythmic, and, depending on the shoes, a little threatening.

In the mornings, the dormitories resembled a humming backstage dressing room, minus the screaming. The girls moved with purpose — fluffing, pinning, lining, zipping — with the collective precision of a pit crew at a drag pageant.

“Do you think the mauve or the berry?” Mariel asked, holding up two tubes of lipstick.

“Mauve,” said Vivian. “The berry makes you look like you bit someone.”

“I like the berry,” Connor offered from his side of the vanity.

Vivian looked over. “That’s because it works on you, Sofija. You’ve got the undertone.”

“Oh. Right.”

He picked up the berry and slid it on anyway. Vivian was right, though. It did work.

“I look good, yes?” Connor asked everyone. “Tell me I look good.” He spun for everyone to make their final judgement. It was odd, the way he needed so much approval these days. He had been getting more and more dependent on people’s opinions.

“You look great as always,” Sofija, Genie said.

“You think so? Really?” He asked.

“Yes!” The rest of the girls shouted, exasperated.



“I think I overcurled,” Genie said, blinking rapidly. She was supposed to be eating breakfast, but instead was pushing her tray along the counter while focused on her compact mirror. Her lashes were like palm fronds.

“No such thing,” replied Elise, who was applying lip gloss like it was a competitive sport.

“I look surprised,” Genie said. “Like cartoon surprised.”

“You are surprised,” Mariel said. “That you’re so pretty.”

Genie squealed and kicked her heels together. Her curls bounced like a shampoo commercial caught in a wind tunnel. She had, at some point, decided that walking was a form of oppression and now flounced everywhere. It was a verb, and she was doing it aggressively.

She dropped into her chair like a dainty parachute and leaned across the table. Her blouse did something very specific in the process — something that earned a raised eyebrow from Vivian.

“Genie,” Vivian said, pointing with her butter knife. “Your everything is out.”

“I know,” Genie replied, beaming. “It’s part of the look.”

Connor watched her flutter her lashes and twirl a lock of hair. Her skirt was more of a suggestion than a garment, riding so high it probably needed a

passport to be legal. A month ago, Genie was still triple-checking her blouse buttons and tugging at her hem like the fabric had personally offended her. Now, she pushed her chest out with pride and her swung hips like a weapon. She caught Connor watching and wiggled her fingers.

“Morning, Sofija! Are you doing the lavender eyeshadow today?”

“I... maybe,” Connor said, blinking. “I thought about gray shimmer, but...”

“No! Do the lavender! It makes you look dreamy.”

He nodded. “Okay.”

Later that day, back at the dorm, Vivian was helping Elise zip up the back of her dress when she turned to Connor and asked, “Do you remember when you hated skirts?”

Connor looked up from his shoe drawer. “Oh, how could I ever *hate* them?”

“Well, I distinctly remember...”

“Well, I’ve changed,” Connor said, selecting a cream stiletto with gold accents. “I guess.”

“You guess,” Vivian echoed, watching as he crossed the room with the same saunter he used when the instructors tested for poise.

He passed the mirror and adjusted a curl with the tip of one manicured finger. Genie was twirling behind him, practicing a spin in a dress that would’ve been rejected as a cocktail napkin.

“I’m doing the shorter version for graduation,” she declared, catching her reflection mid-spin.

“That is the shorter version,” Vivian said flatly.

“I know,” Genie grinned. “Imagine what the *shorter* shorter version looks like.”

They all stared at her.

At no point did Connor ask when it had stopped being strange. There had been a time when lip gloss was sticky and dresses were torture devices. Now, he owned fifteen shades of pink lipstick and could identify heel height by sound alone.



Genie tugged on a lavender blouse as she perched on the edge of her bed, one leg crossed under her and a curling iron slowly warming beside her. Connor stood at the vanity, his arms raised as he adjusted the straps of his camisole, the soft morning light catching in his loose hair. Their morning routine had become

second nature — matching tones, touching up each other's makeup, sharing perfume spritzes and idle chatter.

"You know," Genie said, glancing over at him with a smile, "everyone's, like, really in a good mood lately. It's kinda weird. Remember how miserable everyone used to be when we first got here?"

Connor nodded, still focused on the mirror. "It change now. Girls more relaxed. Happy. Not so much stress, yes?"

Genie raised her eyebrows. "Okay, *there*. That! That's what I mean."

Connor paused mid-mascara stroke and looked at her through the mirror. "Hmm?"

Genie grinned. "You totally have an accent lately. Like a serious one. Half the time you sound like you're still learning English."

Connor blinked, unsure what to say. "I speak how I always have."

"Not really," she said, standing to grab her curling iron. "It's like... You kind of talk like Dracula. Oh, I don't know, but it's adorable."

Connor gave a small shrug and turned back to his reflection. "I probably got it from my step-mother. She speaks like that."

Genie tilted her head, curling a strand of hair around the barrel. "I don't think you ever said much about her."

Connor hesitated. He wasn't sure how much he wanted to say about his life. "She... she's my father's wife. She from Europe. English not so good." He reached for a pot of lip gloss, trying to sound casual. "Maybe I picked it up, listening to her complain about me."

Genie laughed softly, waving the curling iron. "Well, whatever the reason, it's cute. Very continental."

Connor chuckled, but inside, something twisted uncomfortably. He hadn't noticed the change in his voice — at least, not like that. But the accent, the phrasing, the cadence... it had crept in, slowly.

He touched a hand to his chest lightly and muttered under his breath, "Maybe I spend too much time thinking about her."

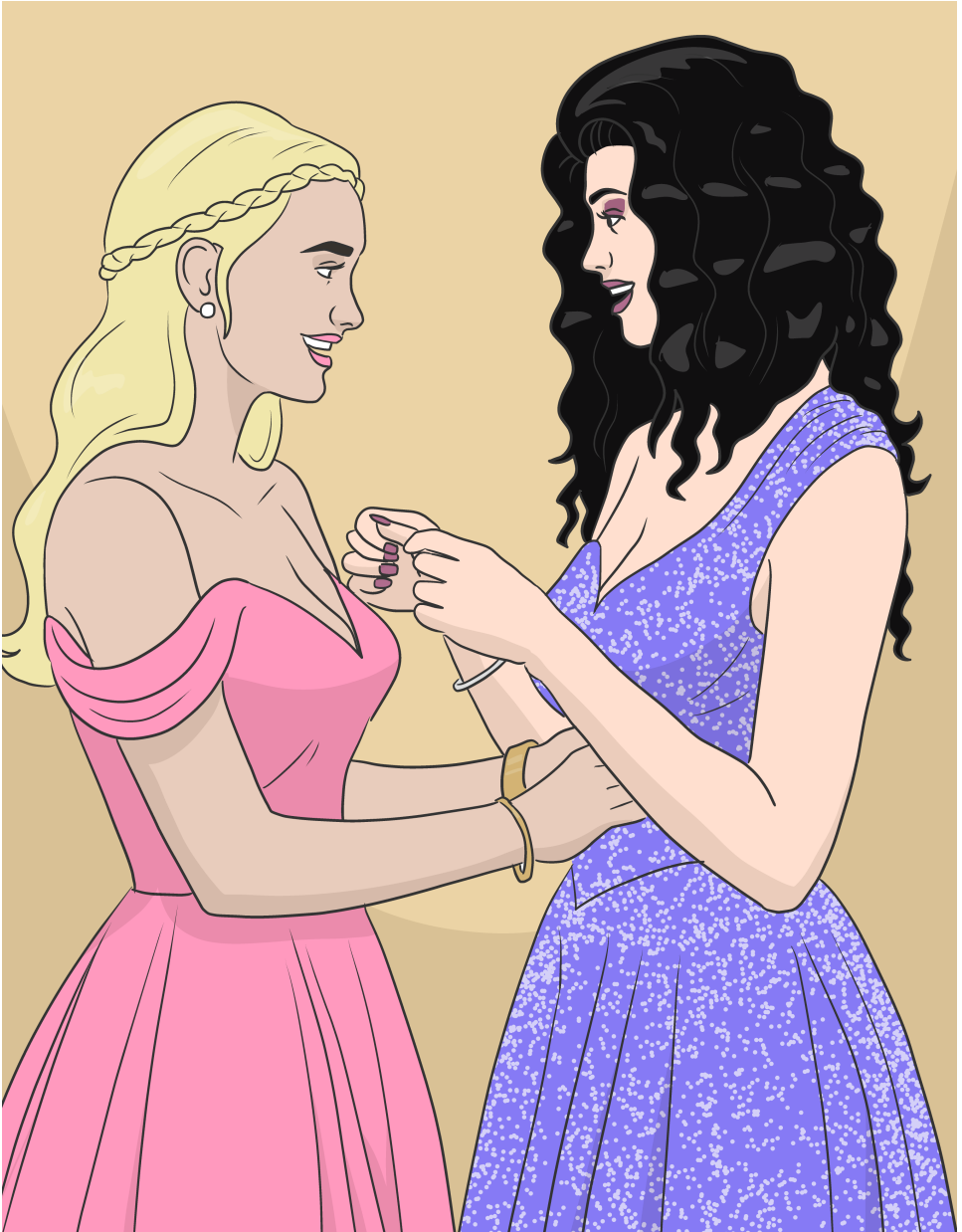
Genie didn't hear him. She was already moving on, happily humming while she finished her hair, unaware that the small shift she had pointed out left Connor feeling just a little more self-conscious.

"Graduation keeps getting closer," Connor said. "You nervous?"

"Not anymore," Genie replied with a giggle.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"A girl has her secrets Sofija," she replied coyly. "Even from her bestie."



Lately, it seemed like the entire school was keeping a secret from him. Everyone was feeling so positive lately. What had changed? He really wanted to know.

But for the moment, he was more worried about the strange sensations he felt under his prosthetics, and trying not to think about it. He wanted to go back and see Dr. Patel, but he had the feeling he'd say the same thing as last time: That it was all in his head.



Genevieve Fallon's classroom had been transformed into a dreamscape of tulle, sequins, and satin. Dozens of gowns in every imaginable shade lined the mirrored walls, catching the overhead lights and scattering glittering reflections across the polished floor. The room was filled with the soft rustle of fabrics and the excited squeals of girls holding up potential dresses to their bodies, gauging color and fit with wide, expectant eyes.

In the far corner, Connor stood stiffly, a pale lavender gown draped over one arm. He wasn't smiling. Not really. His lips were glossed, his lashes curled, and his cheeks softly flushed with powder, but it was all mechanical this morning. He shifted his weight uncomfortably in his heels, trying to ignore the growing itch along his sides and the dull soreness in his hips, the subtle tightness in his chest that made breathing feel just slightly... wrong.

He watched Genie twirl before the mirror in an ankle-length pink dress with a plunging back and draped cap sleeves, her face lit with genuine excitement.

"What do you think?" she asked, spinning in a slow circle so the fabric fanned out behind her. "Too much? Not enough?"

Sofija forced a smile. "You look beautiful. It's perfect."

Genie beamed. "Yay! Okay, now your turn! Let me see the violet blue one."

Connor nodded faintly and stripped in the open, confident that in the all-girls school he didn't need to preserve his modesty amongst girls, carefully shimmying out of his blouse and skirt and into the soft, flowing, sparkling gown. The material clung to his skin, slipping over the curves that still didn't feel like his, though they looked the part. "This isn't my color. It's too shiny. What if I look like a melted candle?" His voice rose in pitch, panic bubbling in his throat as she spun toward Genie.

Genie, already wearing her gown, rolled her eyes playfully. "Sofija, you're going to be the belle of the ball. Stop worrying so much."

Sofija pouted, clutching the fabric against her chest. "But what if I look silly? Everyone will laugh! I die if they laugh!" She darted to the mirror, holding the skirt up in his hands and tilting his head as he scrutinized his reflection.

Genie stepped behind her, adjusting Sofija's hair. "You look amazing. You've been obsessing over this for weeks. Just pick one already!"

Connor sighed dramatically, his hand resting on his forehead. There were so many choices, and he had such trouble choosing, just like a woman. He truly was a woman at heart, he thought to himself. "Fine. But if it not perfect, I blame you!" He reached back behind himself, her voice straining as he

struggled out of the gown. “Genie, help! The zipper is stuck! I can’t breathe! I’m dying!”

Genie laughed, walking over to assist. “Hold still. You’re not dying, you silly drama queen.”

Connor looked at himself in the mirror again and didn’t quite believe it. He saw a girl — a beautiful girl, hair curled, lips painted, posture poised from months of relentless training. But he didn’t feel beautiful. Not inside. He felt anxious, vulnerable, out of sync with the rest of the world.

“I... I don’t know,” he murmured, twisting a strand of hair around his finger. “Everyone looks so... perfect. And I just feel... itchy. And tired. And scared.”

Genie stepped over and gently adjusted the neckline of his dress. “You’re just nervous,” she said softly. “Graduation’s a big deal.”

Connor did not need to be told that. He was beginning to truly worry about the graduation ball. What if Zatica brought his dad? She wouldn’t do that to him, would she? Yes. Yes, she would.

Connor’s stomach twisted at the thought of facing his father, of being seen like this, in full makeup, in heels, in a glittering gown with nothing left to hide behind. Worse, he couldn’t shake the odd feeling — this helplessness that clung to him like perfume, delicate and inescapable.

Genie saw the worry in his eyes and squeezed his hand. “You’re going to be the prettiest girl in the room, Sofija. And I’ll be right there with you.”

Connor smiled faintly, grateful, even if he wasn’t sure he believed her.



The diligent work of the people behind the scenes at the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School had paid off. If one were to walk the halls, one would see nothing but young ladies giggling and gossiping as they walked the halls, each one of them the very picture of beauty and innocence. They would have seen nothing else but what would expect to find in a charm school, but a school full of charming young ladies.

The only thing that might seem out of place was that it all seemed too perfect. The girls were all gorgeous young women on the cusp of adulthood, slender, beautiful and demure. It looked like a set for a TV show or a movie, where all the students were impossibly gorgeous.

Now that they had all reached this stratospheric level of beauty and charm, it was time. Graduation was just a few nights away. Classes had disintegrated into chatting and laughing sessions — every test taken, every lesson taught. Every

girl had chosen their gown for the ceremony, rejected it, chosen another rejected that one as well, and was now on their fourth or fifth choice.

“Are your parents coming?” Genie asked Connor as they walked back to their rooms.

“I... Uh... I don’t think so,” he replied, his big, wide eyes looking anguished. “Maybe my step-mother.” Connor sighed. “What about you? Your parents are coming, right? I really want to meet them.”

“My mom and dad are flying in from Charleston,” she said, smiling. “I’ve missed them so much.”

Connor was excited. “What do they look like? I want to find them in the crowd.”

“They... I...” Genie searched for an answer. “Uh... I’m not sure...” She suddenly looked confused. “That’s... Weird...”

“You mean it’s been so long that you...”

“No. I mean I... Can’t recall what my parents look like...” She stopped walking and started to think harder, her blond hair fluttering as she abruptly halted. “I can’t recall what my grandfather looked like or my abuela...”

“What’s an abuela?” Connor asked, unfamiliar with the term.

Genie looked even more confused. “I don’t know.” She looked down at herself. “I hope they like what they see. I gone through so much...”

“I found a pair of killer heels for graduation!” Vivian said, rushing up to the both of them.

“Show me!” Genie replied, snapping out of her haze.

“They’re in my room!” Vivian replied, breathlessly. “No one gets to touch them until the ball!”

“I going to wear them!” Connor said, running for Vivian’s room.

“No you don’t, bitch!” Vivian said, chasing after him.

Thirty seconds later, they were all piled into Vivian’s tiny little room. “I’m going to look so good at the ceremony in your heels,” Genie said, wearing Vivian’s killer heels. She was looking at herself in the mirror, posing.

“Give them back!” Vivian said, crossing her arms and pouting as she sat on her bed, waiting for Genie to get tired of wearing them.

Connor was giggling the whole time. He liked it when Genie was being silly. But as he watched his bestie admire her reflection in the mirror, Connor saw his own reflection.

Yes, he spent hours in the mirror doing his face every morning, but for some reason, it only struck him, just now, how much he had changed. At least, he thought he had changed.

He couldn't quite remember what he looked like, the day he got to the Priscilla Dandridge Charm school, but he was sure he looked different. Was his hair always so long and silky? Was it always this black? This shiny?

It was only nine months ago, yet he could barely recall much about the way he looked less than a year ago. As his heavily lashed eyes blinked at his reflection, he saw his tick lips, his small button nose, his high cheekbones and wondered if his face was this delicate before, this beautiful. It didn't seem likely. After all, that's what they did here at the charm school, and he knew he looked better than he did when he arrived, he just couldn't say exactly what they had done to him, nor how *much* they had done to him.

His big red lips pursed in uncertainty. He looked at his reflection once more. There was no questioning his mind he wasn't the same boy who had arrived here. At least he was still himself. Even if he was kind of a woman at heart, he was still a man. They hadn't really changed him all that much. Maybe he dropped a curtsy a little easier than he used to, did his makeup a little better, but essentially, he was still Connor.

"My turn next," he said to Genie. They really were great shoes.

ALBERT MORRIS

When Albert awoke again, sunlight filtered weakly through lace curtains. He blinked slowly, feeling confused, groggy, achy. He was in the clinic. Sitting up took effort, limbs clumsy, legs unsteady. His heart sped up as he sat up in the bed, looking at his reflection in the mirror.

“Careful, Alice,” Dr. Patel called gently, entering the room. “You’re not quite awake yet.”

The girl staring back seemed younger — much younger than seventeen — delicate and doll-like, eyes wide and innocent, curls framing a face no longer his own. Albert’s breath quickened again, as he felt a panic attack coming on.

He looked down at his body. “What did you do? I’m a giwl!” He said, unable to speak like he used to.

“Yes, Alice, of course you’re a girl. We don’t allow boys in this school. You know that.” The doctor had been waiting impatiently for Albert to wake up. It had been two months, after all, and he had been waiting for the delicious pay-off.

“I’m not a giwl!” Albert insisted.

“I think you very much are, Alice. A very pretty girl.”

“I...” He snapped back. “I...” Something was happening. Something strange. He wanted to say something, but it was like the signals in his mind had been disconnected. “I’m not a giwl,” he repeated, where an insult should have gone.

“You *are* a girl, Alice, aren’t you’t you?” The doctor said, looking at him with raised eyebrows. “Now tell me you’re a girl.”

“I... I...” An overpowering sense of guilt over took him like nothing he had felt for years. The doctor was an adult. He felt a strange, compulsive need to do what adults told him to do. But he was seventeen, wasn’t he? He was practically an adult himself. “I... I’m a giwl?” He said.

“That’s right, pumpkin. You *are* a girl.”

Albert had his lower half covered by a blanket and couldn’t see for himself, but he already knew what had happened to him — and the doctor was an adult. He had to believe him. He couldn’t help it.

“Yes, Alice. Now let’s get you on your feet, okay?” Dr. Patel said, taking Albert’s hand. “Upsie daisy!”

He felt his hand being raised up, and immediately looked at his arm. There was something wrong with it. It seemed off in some way. He didn’t understand how that could be. Yet he knew it wasn’t right.

It became a little more clear as he was assisted out of the bed. The floor looked a lot closer than it used to. When he was finally on his feet, he looked at



the doctor, and saw his chest. He had to crane his neck upward to see his face. “What did you do to me?” Albert asked.

“We helped you, Alice,” The doctor said. “You were so sad and angry all the time. Now you are on your way to healing.”

Albert opened his mouth to protest, but the words wouldn’t come. Instead, he obediently held still, allowing Dr. Patel to steady him, instructing him quietly on how to walk properly — small steps, careful balance, graceful and restrained. Albert found himself incapable of refusing, following each direction with meek compliance, shocked at his own gentle obedience.

He was small. He was tiny. He was at least three, maybe as much as five inches shorter. He couldn’t be sure, but he could feel an ache in his arms and legs, where parts of his bones must have been removed. Walking was an ordeal, the familiar, automatic process taking all his concentration. It made him look clumsy and uncoordinated, much like a girl his assumed age might.

Looking at the mirror in front of him, he had to think he appeared to be eight or nine. He had been turned into a child. A young girl. He felt a deep horror beyond what he had ever felt, a dark pit inside of him that had no bottom. He was someone else now. He was a different human being.

“Very good, Alice!” The doctor said as Albert walked a few steps. “Now back to bed with you, you have a lot of recovery ahead of you.”

The urge to run, the instinct to punch the doctor, the need to scream in anguish were all suppressed. That would be disrespectful, and he didn’t want to be disrespectful to adults. He closed his open mouth and climbed back into his bed and let the doctor pull the sheets up for him.

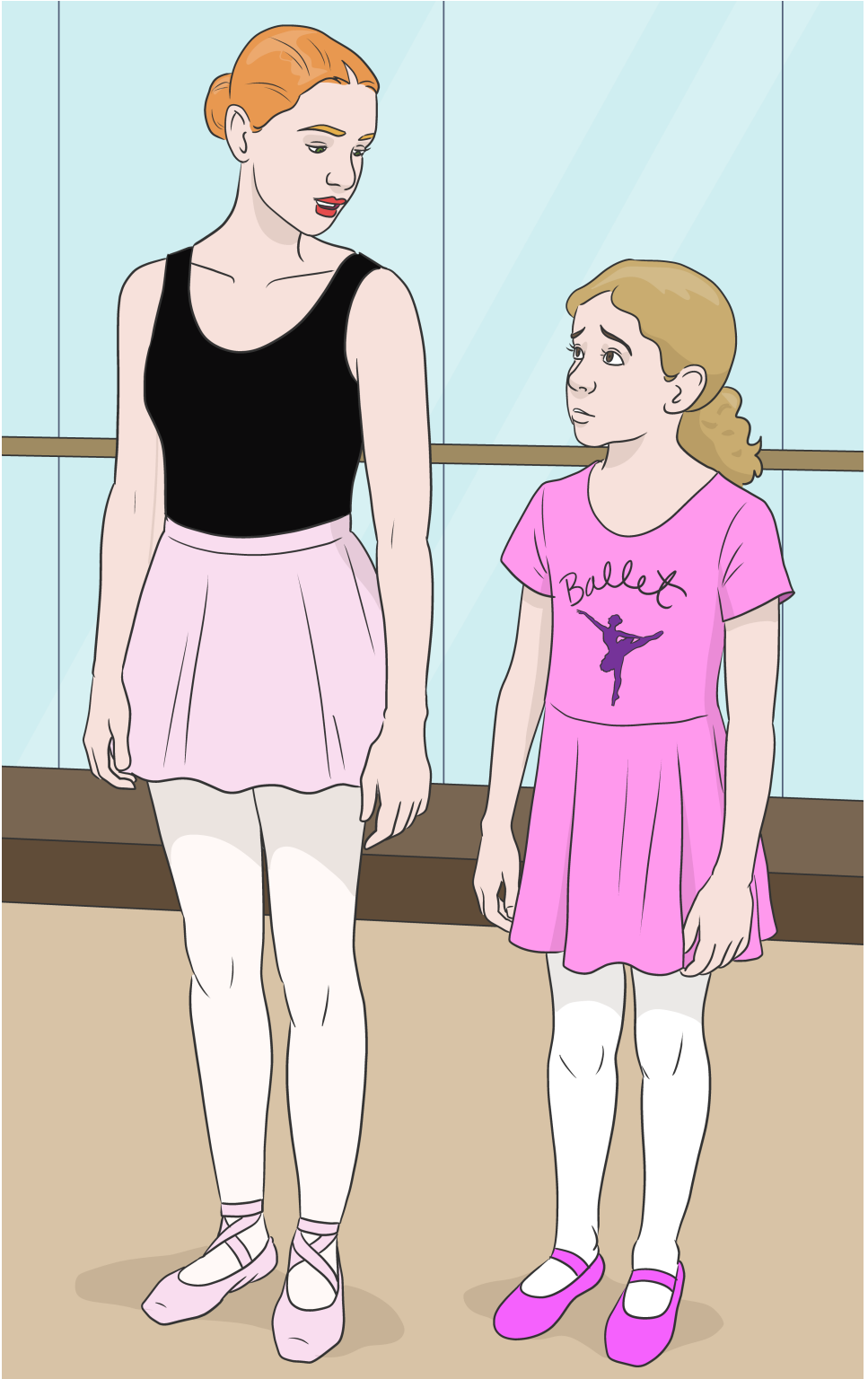
“That’s a good girl,” the doctor said. “Now get some rest, sweetie.”

“Yeth thir,” Albert felt compelled to add. He didn’t know why. He started to fall asleep again, where messages would play, conditioning him to always defer to people bigger and older than him.



Later that month, Albert was finally released to the general population of the school again, and able to resume his classes. He was head to his diction classes, hopeful that Mrs. Wiest could help him with his worsening lisp. That was when he spotted Lydia in the hall, heart leaping briefly at the sight of a familiar face. But as she approached, smiling down at him, he realized with fresh horror just how small he’d become. Lydia towered above him now.

“Oh, Alice,” she cooed softly, brushing a curl from his forehead, “you’re so adorable. Are you being a good girl?”



Albert blushed fiercely, humiliation stinging beneath her gentle condescension. He swallowed hard, nodding meekly, unable to muster even a hint of rebellion.

“Yeth, Lydia,” he whispered politely, voice small, younger than he remembered.

Lydia smiled affectionately, gently patting his shoulder. “Good girl. I missed you in dance recital. I’m afraid I got promoted and I’ll be taking classes with the advanced girls from now on.”

“Rewey?” Albert asked.

“Yes, really,” she replied with a giggle. “Oh my goodness, you’re so precious. Now, run along and play. I’m going to class with friends.”

Albert wanted desperately to argue, to shout that he wasn’t a child, but all he managed was another obedient nod. He watched quietly as Lydia walked away laughing, joining girls Albert had once felt superior to, now ignoring him entirely.

Standing alone in the hall, helpless and confused, Albert’s small hands clenched tightly in frustration. Yet even that spark of defiance quickly faded. Every trace of the boy he’d been, athletic, loud, messy, defiant thought now seemed impossibly distant, fading quietly beneath gentle, obedient femininity.

Albert turned slowly back toward his room, heart aching with resignation, each careful, mincing step reinforcing his new reality — a sweet, docile girl who could never again say no.

MR. GAVIN LARKIN

Inside Bianca Newman's classroom, the racks seemed endless, like someone had tried to fit an entire department store into one room. Gavin sifted through skirts absently, fingers automatically feeling textures — satin, chiffon, lace — while Sydney stood next to him clutching a wrinkled checklist.

“Okay, Blair, legit — Ms. Newman says I need something ‘formal but flirty’ for this posture assessment thing,” Sydney sighed dramatically, frowning at her checklist. “Like, what even?”

Gavin rolled his eyes playfully. “Ugh, that’s classic Ms. Newman. She’s always giving super cryptic vibes.” He paused thoughtfully, pulled out a pink A-line miniskirt, and held it up triumphantly. “Here, try this. The high waist totally smooths your hips.”

Sydney eyed it skeptically, nose wrinkling. “Girl, it’s cute and all, but it’s so... revealing?”

Gavin raised an eyebrow, playful smirk in place. “Um, duh. That’s literally the assignment. Go on, trust me — it’ll look fire on you.”

Sydney sighed dramatically again, reluctantly taking the skirt and disappearing behind the changing screen. Gavin turned back to the racks, fingers trailing aimlessly until they brushed over a cream skirt dotted with tiny mother-of-pearl buttons that caught the light just right. The soft fabric shimmered faintly, and he felt a sudden tug deep in his



chest. Like, whoa. It was... gorgeous.

A quiet thought crept into his mind, totally uninvited but somehow not unwelcome: *Maybe it's totally okay to love looking feminine and beautiful.* He didn't know the thought came from the collar of his blouse.

Before he could unpack that moment, Sydney emerged from the screen, fidgeting self-consciously in the pink skirt that showed off her legs from upper-thigh down. Gavin's eyes widened, a genuine smile spreading across his face. "OMG, yes! It's literally perfect. You look so cute right now!"

"Really?" Sydney asked shyly, twisting back and forth in front of the mirror. She looked unsure but secretly thrilled.

"It's so you."

Later, three-inch high heels clicked down the marble hallway, echoing gently. Gavin walked beside Sydney, who took each careful step like she was crossing ice on stilts. Gavin saw her wobble a split second before she toppled, ankle twisting awkwardly beneath her. Instantly, his arms reached out, in a clinical demonstration of Dad reflexes, catching her waist.

"Gotcha," he breathed, holding her steady, his voice soft. "Careful. Short steps."

Sydney laughed nervously, leaning into his side to steady herself. "I feel like a newborn giraffe."

"You've totally got this," Gavin promised gently, his hand lingering protectively at her side. When she looked up at him, her expression wasn't just grateful anymore — it was warm, trusting, real. In that small, quiet moment, Gavin felt something inside him that he'd never truly experienced before. Love. Not obligation, not expectation — just a simple, honest desire to protect, support, and watch her smile.

She trusts me, he realized, and the thought settled inside him softly. It felt good. Hell, it was the best thing he'd ever felt. He genuinely wanted to protect and hype her up always. *OMG,* he thought, *I am seriously feeling feelings right now.*



As the weeks went by, something major shifted between them. They became inseparable, total besties who sat in their own corner of Celine Wiest's diction class, whispering corrections and cracking each other up constantly.

"Blair, don't drop the 'g' in 'darling,'" Sydney teased quietly, nudging Gavin gently. "And like, your voice just totally went up again."

“Uh, says you? Girl, you keep missing your ‘t’s in ‘etiquette,’” Gavin fired back playfully, elbowing her lightly.

They dissolved into quiet giggles, hands finding each other beneath the desk when classes dragged on too long. They passed lip gloss back and forth like secret notes, protected each other fiercely whenever older girls threw shade, and rewrote the school’s prim diction poems into hilariously inappropriate limericks to keep themselves from going insane.

They became more than just partners — they were ride-or-die girls surviving charm school, side-by-side.



The day of the gown fitting arrived, the gown they were to wear for their graduation. Bianca’s classroom full of clothes practically overflowed with long, elegant dresses: chiffon gowns, glittering satin dresses, tulle masterpieces shimmering like waterfalls. Sydney stood frozen, wide-eyed, checklist forgotten.

“Blair, help!” she whispered urgently. “We can only pick five? How is this humanly possible?”

Gavin sighed dramatically. “Honestly? Panic. Panic sounds good.” He thrust a lavender gown with sheer organza sleeves toward her. “Here, try this and pray to the fashion gods.”

“Ugh, wish me luck,” Sydney groaned theatrically, disappearing behind the changing screen.

They took turns, squealing and gasping dramatically at each new look. When Sydney emerged in a strapless powder-blue gown, she twirled uncertainly. Gavin clapped enthusiastically.

“Cinderella is literally shaking right now,” he announced.

Sydney rolled her eyes, smiling. “Okay, princess Blair, your turn.”

Gavin slipped into a sparkling pale lilac gown with embroidered flowers along the hem, the fabric shimmering softly. When he stepped out, Sydney audibly gasped.

“Oh my god, Blair. That’s literally *made* for you.”

They twirled, laughing freely, finally collapsing breathless and flushed onto the plush chaise. Gavin’s head gently rested against Sydney’s shoulder, the soft rustle of fabric the only sound. In that instant, they were the farthest thing from father and daughter they could be. They were just two girls — beautiful, carefree, innocent.



That evening, Gavin sat slowly brushing his hair before the vanity mirror, staring at his reflection. He remembered clearly — painfully clearly — that he wasn't supposed to enjoy any of this. That each moment spent in a dress or smiling shyly in heels was an act, a forced charade he should resent deeply. And yet, the face looking back at him was undeniably happy. Radiant, even. Beautiful in ways he'd never considered possible.

He touched his fingertips gently to his lips, recalling Sydney's quiet compliment earlier: "Blair, you totally looked like an actual princess." A strange warmth spread through him, gentle and aching at the same time.

"I'd be anything, wear anything, do anything if it keeps her smiling like that," he whispered softly into the mirror. His reflection gazed back, eyes bright with sincerity and doubt intertwined. Was this love, surrender, or something in between? Did it matter?

Gavin knew only one thing for certain as he finally placed the brush down and glanced once more at the girl reflected in the mirror. Whatever this feeling was, it couldn't last. He could only hope he'd given Sydney enough confidence to last her a lifetime.

He still had a fortune waiting for him, and the life of leisure he'd broken the law to claim. Sydney would understand.



THE GRADUATION

For the first time in nine months, the students of the charm school saw the sky. They stepped out of the battered, beaten doors of the school and outside into the fresh air... And onto a bus.

A coach was parked outside the school, and the lucky bus driver got to watch as thirty-three drop-dead gorgeous girls walked on his bus, hoisting their graduation gowns on hangers along with toting a flight bag full of grooming supplies with them.

It was the night of the graduation ceremony, and the cramped, dilapidated halls of the charm school were inadequate to the task. As they did every year, the school rented out the ballroom of the Woodlawn Hotel in downtown Burbank.

Of course, every girl was watching the bus driver closely. He didn't know it, but aside from the school's doctor it was the first man any of them had seen in nine months. A half a dozen of the girls were already picturing walking down the aisle on his arm. Four or five were seeing him across from a romantic candlelit dinner. As for Connor, he was picturing himself making a fancy meal for him, and watching as he ate it, delighted with the cooking.

The hotel's ballroom had been transformed into a glittering venue for the graduation gala. Chandeliers sparkled overhead, and tables draped in ornate tablecloths surrounded a polished dance floor. Connor and Genie walked arm in arm, their faces smiling broadly in awe of the sight before them.

"Look at this! So elegant," Connor whispered, his eyes wide.

"Totally," Genie replied. "I feel like we're in a fairytale."

"Oh, Genie, everyone will be staring! Is too much pressure!" his voice laced with panic.

"Relax," Genie whispered back. "They'll be staring because you're gorgeous."

Connor's nerves eased slightly, but she still kept fidgeting. "If anything wrong, you will tell me, yes? I trust you to tell me!"

Dianna Dandridge stood at the front of the room, her commanding presence drawing everyone's attention. "Ladies, tonight we celebrate your ascension into the finest examples of grace, beauty, and charm. You are the future, the epitome of femininity."

The applause was thunderous as the graduates huddled around her. Connor's heart swelled with pride. He had come so far.

"Now the changing rooms are behind you, and you have two hours to get ready."



The girls all immediately scampered off to the rooms, terrified that they only had two hours. “That is not enough time!” Conner said to Genie.

“Remember your training, student,” Genie replied with a smile as she dashed for the rooms. “This is what we’ve been practicing for!”

As the girls moved to the changing rooms, like a herd of deer, Gavin headed the other way, moved quietly down a dim hallway with a duffel bag clasped tightly against his hip. The familiar click of heels on tile had never felt quite so ominous, every step a reminder of how much had changed. He pushed open the janitor’s closet in the ballroom hallway, the door giving way with a dull creak. Inside, tucked between cleaning supplies and boxes of cheap tissues, he hid the bag behind some old towels. Inside it waited his disguise — jeans, sneakers, a hoodie wrinkled enough to look convincingly mundane. He had been stowing them away, stealing them from Ms. Newman’s classroom. He was amazed she even allowed such masculine clothes in her class, but he found

them. To add to this, he also had a small paper folded twice containing the banking codes that unlocked a fortune. Ten million dollars. The number stared back without meaning now, just ink on paper. He barely felt a flicker of excitement.

Escape was within reach. He'd mapped the route a hundred times: down the corridor behind the ballroom kitchen, through the quiet service driveway, then straight to the gate. Easy. Ten minutes, tops. He'd vanish into the night, leaving silk, heels, and charm lessons behind forever.

He would wait until the graduation ceremony was underway, when every eye was focused on the stage, and then he'd slip away. Meanwhile, he'd go on as if he was going on as normal. Well, as normal as twenty-odd teenage girls trying to do their hair and makeup for the most important night of their life could be.

After two harrowing hours of drama, hairspray and bra stuffing, the students were as ready as they were ever going to be. Although, if you had given them 48 hours, they still would be spraying, brushing and polishing away.

The crowd of invitees gathered at the opulent tables outside as the girls practically climbed over each other to peer out the hallway to see if they could spot their families. The only person not looking was Connor, who was feeling a sense of dread over who might show up.

"Did your step mother come?" Genie asked him, eagerly. "My parents both came."

"I know when I'm on stage," Connor replied, using a smile to mask his dismay. He had learned his femininity lessons well. "I want everyone to have good time."

Every vanity was lit, every mirror fogged, and every girl — because they were all girls now — was on the edge of tears, laughter, or both.

"Where's my lash glue?" someone screamed near the garment racks. "I had it and now it's gone and I swear if someone borrowed it and didn't say anything..."

"I cannot walk in these heels," panted Genie, one leg raised on a stool as she tried to buckle a strappy, glitter-encrusted sandal that looked like it was designed for dolls, not humans. "Why are they tighter than yesterday? Did my feet get fatter overnight?"

"Is imagination!" Conner called from across the room, his voice just slightly too high-pitched to be comforting. He was bent over his flight bag, digging for the tool he needed, rifling through sequins and tulle like a raccoon with a vendetta. "Where are the dress pads! Who stole my dress pads?"

"Stop screaming!" Vivian shrieked as she tried to zip up Elise's dress, which was refusing to cooperate. "Just breathe in, Elise — Now it's stuck again!"

Vanity lights flickered. Curling irons hissed. Someone had spilled an entire compact of shimmer powder on the floor, and now it looked like a glitter bomb had gone off near the emergency exit.

“Oh my god, I only did one eye,” Mariel whispered in horror, mascara wand still clutched in her trembling hand. “Do you think anyone will notice?”

“I will kill you if you go out there with one eye,” hissed Jasmine LaMay, sweeping past in heels that didn’t even pretend to be sensible.

Back in front of the mirror, Connor was stabbing bobby pins into his updo like a man possessed.

“I do not know what hair is doing,” he muttered, trying to puff one side and flatten the other. “It like... My hair mocks me.”

Genie came stumbling over, one heel on, one in her hand. Her cheeks were streaked with setting spray and possibly tears.

“Zip me,” she demanded, spinning around.

“Zip me first!”

“No, me! My butt looks good and I want it locked in now!”

There was no order. No elegance. Only panic, perfume, and a choir of high-pitched shrieks. Nervous laughter bubbled everywhere, bouncing off mirrors and marble walls. Amidst the flurry, Gavin drifted serenely, gown already pressed, makeup flawless, as poised and prepared as anyone who had truly been raised for this moment.

He paused briefly by a gilded mirror in a quiet alcove, glimpsing himself fully in sparkling pale lilac satin, delicate pearls accentuating the soft curves he’d grown so accustomed to. Gavin blinked slowly, examining the teenage girl gazing back — radiant, confident, perfectly feminine. He hadn’t really seen it yet. He was a teenage vision of femininity. He looked like he was 17 or 18. But it had just kind of crept up on him.

“It’s a shame,” he whispered softly, turning slightly, the fabric rustling elegantly. “I really do look good.”

Shaking the thought away, he went to find Sydney.

She stood near the ballroom doors, her dress shimmering with sequins, pinning a stubborn curl into place. She bit her lip, uncertain, but smiling bravely. Gavin felt a strange new sensation in him. He was jealous. She looked so good.

“Girl, you look so fire,” Gavin said, feeling a tiny flicker of envy.

Sydney glanced up, her tense shoulders dropping instantly. “Oh my god, Blair, thanks. But honestly, I’m so stressed.”

“Don’t even,” Gavin reassured, squeezing her hand. “You’re literally gonna slay.”

He paused, voice suddenly gentle, sincere. “Just, like, take care of yourself, ‘kay?”

Sydney’s brows furrowed slightly. “Wait, what...?”

But Gavin was already slipping away, ducking quickly out the door, his heart pounding, knowing if he stayed any longer, he might never leave.



Inside the janitor’s closet, Gavin had to work quickly. Fingers working at light speed, he reached behind to unzip his gown, pulling down the sparkling silver sequined garment. Beneath, he wore a tight slip, hugging his perfect form of femininity. He was still halfway in the gown, almost getting caught in it, as he tried to remove it so quickly that he forgot to actually get out of it, eager to reclaim his past.

But his fingernail caught the silicone padding at his hip. He tugged gently, then sharply — too sharply. The seam split cleanly, the silicone peeling away in a smooth strip. He stared, confusion rippling through him as more padding fell away easily, revealing smooth skin beneath.

It was just coming off. It felt like he was removing his own skin, chunk by chunk. He’d had dreams like this. Kafkaesque dreams.

His hands shaking now, he pulled at the silicone on his chest. It slipped away effortlessly, revealing beneath it soft, supple curves, real and undeniably his own. He had breasts. All those sensation he had been feeling on his chest were real. He had assumed that his body was just suffering from being covered by plastic for so long, but it wasn’t that at all. His breath quickened, eyes wide, disbelieving. Slender waist, rounded hips, delicate breasts, all flawless. All real.

Then he grabbed the piece in between his legs, which came off so easily, it was like it wasn’t even attached. Underneath, just a slit. A slit and moistness inside.

The sensation of his own finger inside his body sent fireworks into his brain. He lost his footing in his sparkling heels and slid down the wall onto the ground, knocking over some cleaning supplies in the process. He looked down, seeing what he would have never thought was possible in the whole of human existence. Teenage pussy. He had one.

His breaths came in shallow gasps as he added a second finger, stretching himself open. The sensation was electric, his pussy clenching around his fingers as he fucked himself harder. His hips rocked instinctively, seeking more friction, more pleasure. His free hand slid down his body, fingers finding the swollen bud of his clit. The moment he touched it, a sharp cry erupted from his throat. His head fell back against the wall, his eyes squeezing shut as he rubbed



frantic circles over the sensitive nub.

“Oh god... oh god...” he whimpered, his voice high-pitched and breathless. Every nerve in his body was on fire, every sensation amplified. He’d never felt anything like this. Never imagined it could feel this good. His fingers moved faster, plunging in and out of his pussy as he rubbed his clit furiously. The pleasure was building, a pressure in his core that was threatening to explode. His toes curled, his legs shaking as he teetered on the edge.

“I’m... I’m gonna...” he gasped, his voice barely audible. And then it hit him — a wave of pure, unrelenting ecstasy that ripped through his body. His clit was throbbing as he came hard, the orgasm washing over him in waves. A strangled moan escaped his lips, his body convulsing as pleasure consumed him.

For a moment, he just lay there, panting, his mind reeling from what had just happened. His fingers were still buried inside him, his pussy pulsing with aftershocks. He pulled them out slowly, staring at the slickness coating his skin. His heart raced, a mixture of disbelief and exhilaration coursing through him.

“I... I’m really a woman,” he whispered, his voice trembling. His body was proof of that. No sign remained of the Gavin who had first walked through the school doors months ago. No stubble, no muscle tone, no masculine harshness, no cock — only gentle, feminine beauty. He was female. He was a woman. He was a girl.

He stared blankly, a laugh bubbling up unexpectedly. He laughed again, louder, clearer. Not panic. Not fear. Pure, bright relief. He wasn’t going anywhere, anymore.

Quickly, he got up, slipped back into the sparkling gown, feeling the soothing satin settle perfectly over his body. He touched up his lip gloss carefully, fluffed his hair gently with practiced ease. He smoothed the skirt once, took a deep breath, and stepped out of the closet. With a smile, he took the piece of paper with the bank codes on it and pinned it to a cork board nearby.

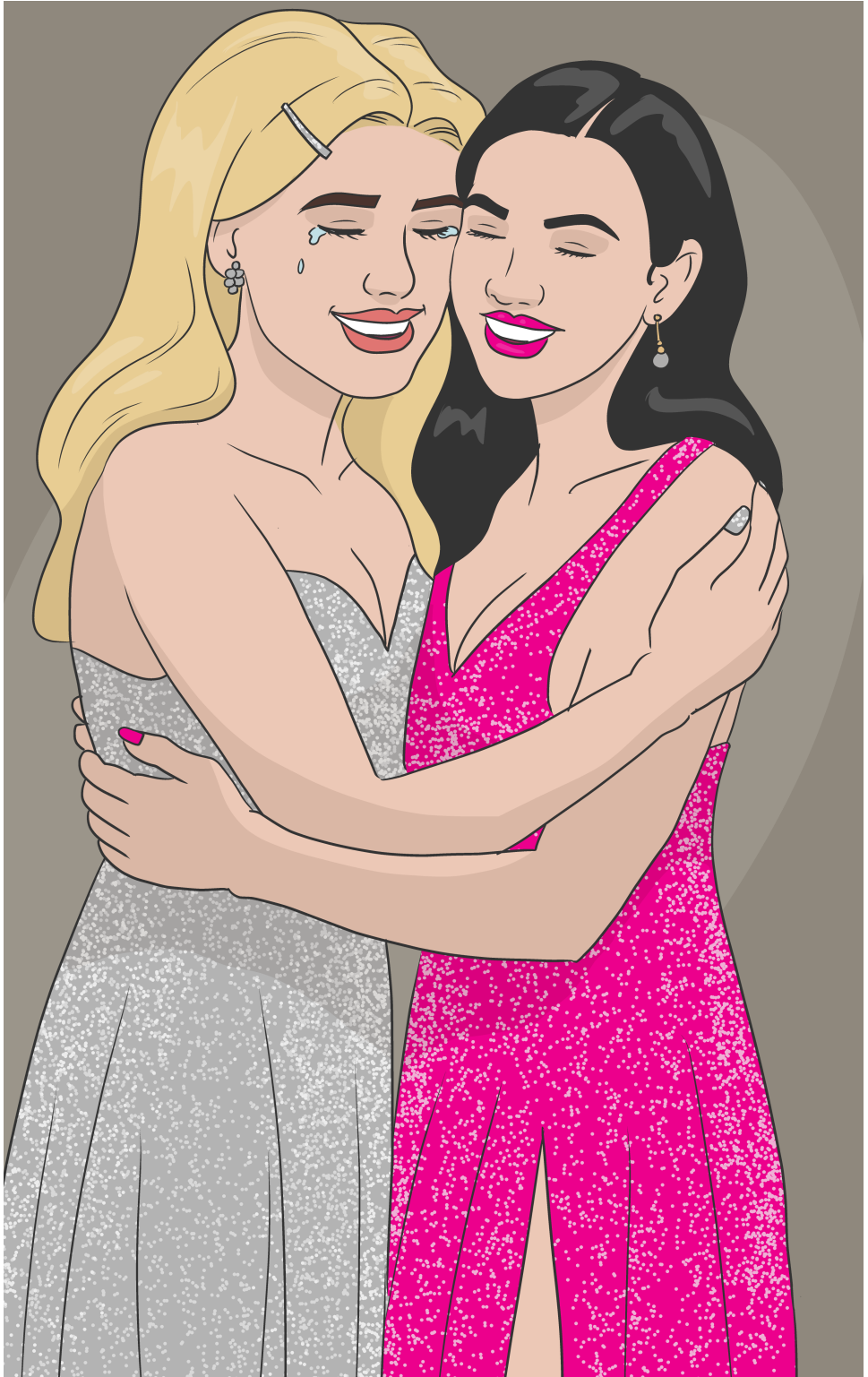


Backstage, Sydney paced nervously until her eyes found Gavin and relief flooded her features instantly.

“Blair! Where did you go?” she whispered urgently, grabbing his hand.

Suddenly, Gavin knew why they had brought his daughter here. They had somehow known that he would want to protect her. To defend her. That he would even befriend her. They knew. He had to hand it to the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School, they had him read pretty well. They won, and he was so happy they had.

“Just needed a sec, girlfriend,” Gavin said breezily, squeezing Sydney’s hand.



Sydney smiled, tugging him excitedly into line. “Our names are literally next. Ready?”

“How’s my face?” Gavin whispered urgently. “Be honest.”

“Flawless, duh!” Sydney laughed. “Me?”

“So jelly of your look right now,” Gavin gushed.

They stepped into the ballroom, the crowd hushed, lights dimming around them. Gavin felt a warm pulse ripple softly through the silver-threaded fabric around his chest, like a quiet whisper finally finding its way home.

A single thought blossomed fully in his mind, gentle, certain, beautiful: *You’re finally the woman you always wanted to be.* He breathed softly, smiled, and knew deeply — she was.



When it was time, the girls were all paraded out of the back, walking through the aisles to head up to the stage. His step-mother Zatica was sitting across from his disgruntled father, ready to cause problems.

The girls carried themselves with perfect poise, their walk and their smiles pin-up perfect. Millicent Hawthorne and Genevieve Fallon were swooning as they watched their pupils walk along with the casual but polished elegance that had been drilled into them.

Jasmine LaMay was dabbing the tears from her face, but they were coming faster than she could mop them up. Bianca Newman loved every choice each girl had made, all looking like they were ready to overwhelm the crowd within an inch of their lives.

The girls filed in behind Dianna Dandridge, who stood at the microphone. The applause for such a dazzling display of beauty should have been deafening and everlasting, however it was fair to say that many of the attendees in the crowd had not expected what they were seeing on stage. There were even audible gasps and one man yelled “What the hell have you done to my son!” while another cried “Daddy?” However, eventually clapping drowned out those who were shocked at what they saw.

The ceremony began, with Dianna Dandridge delivering a speech that Connor found too long and entirely too serious. She leaned toward Genie, whispering, “Why she talk so much? I just want to see who fall on stage.”

Genie stifled a laugh, whispering back, “Behave, Sofija. You’ll be up front soon.”

Connor gasped, clutching her chest. “Oh no! What if I fall? Genie, you must come catch me!”



“Next, our own beauty queen of the future,” Headmistress Dandridge announced, voice lilting into the microphone with practiced warmth, “please accept your diploma, Sofija Jovanovski.”

Connor let out a tiny squeal, clutching Genie’s hand for support. “Wish me luck!” he whispered.

Applause swelled like a wave, and from the back, Connor stepped forward.

His gown was silver-grey, shimmering like starlight, hugging every curve as though it had been sewn on. Beaded in thousands of tiny crystals, it caught the chandelier light in bursts, scattering it across the ballroom in fractured starlight. His hips moved with practiced sway, his posture impossibly perfect. His strappy glittered sandals, with heels as thin as wire, looked engineered for disaster — yet Connor glided across the stage as if she had been born in them.

She didn’t glance down once.

A few gasps rippled through the audience — mothers clutching pearls, a smattering of impressed whispers. Somewhere in the crowd, his father sat unaware of who Sofija truly was, blinking at the spectacle without recognition. Beside him, though, Zlatica was on her feet clapping and whistling, overjoyed and ecstatic in seeing what the school had done in creating her new daughter.

Onstage, Connor reached Headmistress Dandridge and gave an, elegant curtsy, fingers just brushing the hem of her gown.

The diploma was handed to her with both hands.

“Congratulations, dear,” the headmistress said softly, eyes full of approval.

Connor took it, eyes wide with sparkling lashes. “Oh! Thank you, Miss... Miss Dianna,” she said, her accent thick, her voice high and breathy. “Is very... special moment for me.”

A flash from a photographer. Then another.

The applause intensified. A standing ovation erupted near the center aisle, where a Connor’s father clapped with the confused politeness of someone pretending not to be baffled.

Connor beamed. His cheeks flushed pink as he turned to face the audience, diploma in hand, hips tilted subtly, chest lifted with pride. She waved — just once, delicately, fingertips fluttering like a starlet on a balcony.

And then, without thinking — without a flicker of hesitation — he turned and clicked his way back across the stage, the silver train of his gown sweeping gracefully behind him, showing off his exposed back. He took his place among the graduates in the back row, shoulders back, chin high, lips curved in a dazed, delighted smile.

By the time he took his place amongst the other gorgeous transformed students, Connor seemed to have forgotten ever being anyone else.

He stood tall, in a modeling pose, diploma clasped in his soft, manicured hands, and didn't once remember that he had ever been called Connor.

Not even for a single, solitary moment.

As Sydney stepped forward gracefully to accept her diploma, Blair watched her carefully, eyes shining. Not because she was pretty or perfect, but because she was strong, proud, brave. She remembered the missed birthdays, ignored phone calls, the harsh words delivered in impatience. These were the last moments she would ever think of herself as her father. She was her bestie now. She was going to rock at being Sydney's very best friend in the world, and she'd never let her frown again.

Tears filled her mascara-lined eyes, but before she could actually break down and cry, Blair stepped forward as her name was called, smiling effortlessly for the crowd, the diploma warm and reassuring in her hand. She reached instinctively for Sydney, pulling her close into a joyful hug, squeezing her best friend tightly as the audience erupted in applause.

Standing near the heavy velvet curtains on stage, Albert took slow, measured breaths, his heart beating like butterfly wings beneath the confection of a gown he wore. Layers of chiffon drifted around him, pink ribbons threaded gently through curls that brushed softly against his rosy cheeks. Each gentle step in his Mary Janes felt impossibly fragile, yet strangely natural.

He felt small and delicate, doll-like in a way that once had frightened him, but he had grown used to the ever-present misery of his situation. His sparkling fingertips brushed gently over the satin bow at his tiny waist as if reassuring himself this was real. Hadn't he once fought this, pushed against this very moment with all his stubbornness and noise?

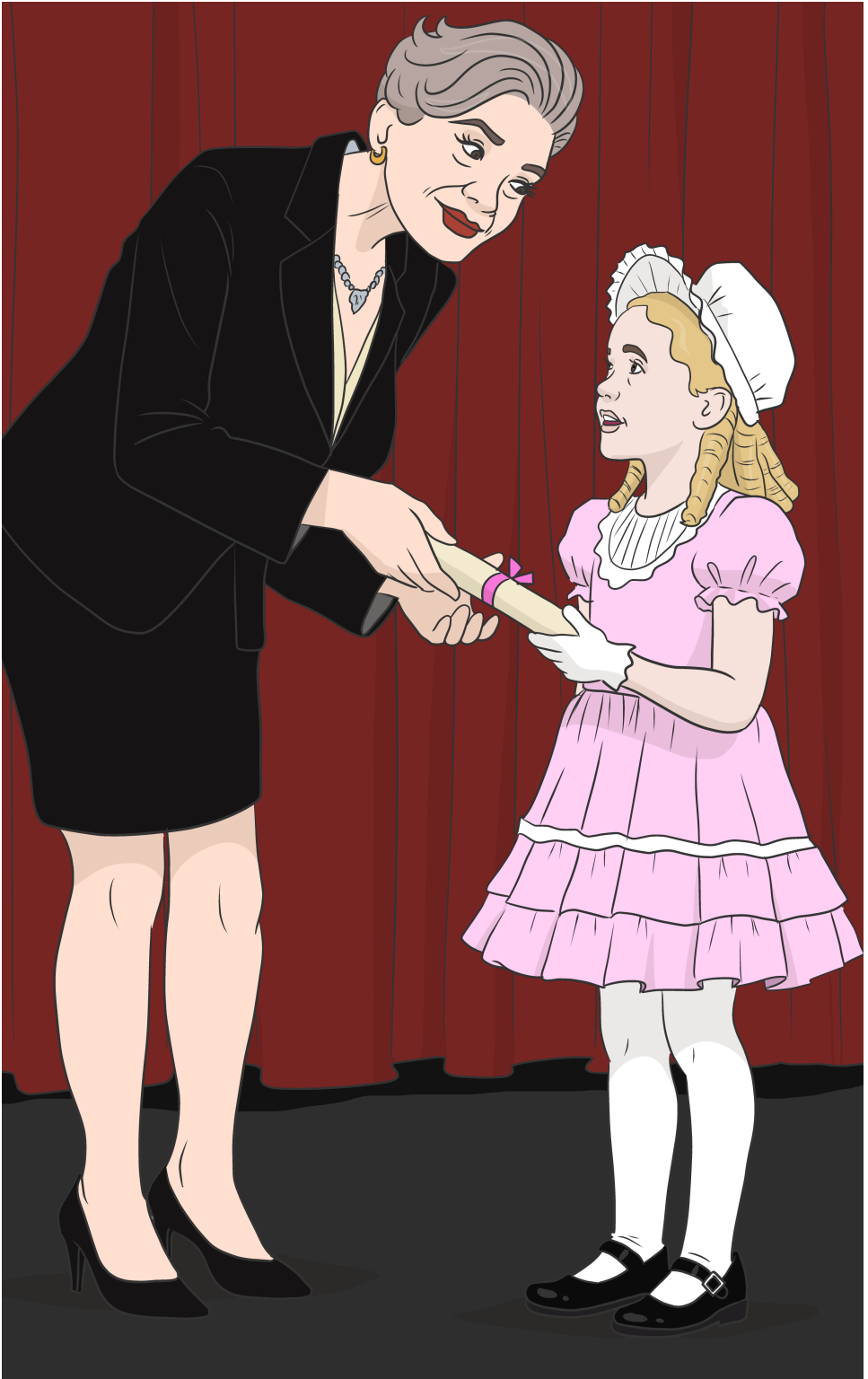
He wanted to protest, to shout, to stomp and refuse, but the words wouldn't form. They stayed trapped somewhere deep, unreachable. His arms hung at his sides, small and weak, and he didn't dare fidget. Instead, he waited, just like he'd been told, careful and quiet, every muscle tense with dread.

"Alice Morris," called Dianna Dandridge from the podium at the front of the stage, her voice echoing through the grand ballroom.

He felt his legs move, automatic and obedient, carrying him across the polished floor. He hated every step, hated the weight of the dress and the softness of the ribbons brushing his skin. Hated the way the room watched him, expecting a perfect little girl.

Dianna smiled and handed him a diploma, wrapped in a pink ribbon. "Congratulations, Alice. You've made us proud."

His head bowed. He felt his knees automatically bend into a curtsy — a motion he promised himself he would never learn. His voice came out small, lilting, not his own. "Thank you, Mitheth Dandwidge," he said, because he couldn't think of anything else.



Applause swelled, echoing off the high ceiling. Albert straightened, the dress warm against his skin, and for the final time, a message popped into his head, the silver thread in his collar sending words he would remember for the rest of his life: *I'm finally the girl Auntie always wanted me to be.*

Inside, Albert felt himself shrinking away, smaller with each moment, his anger and protest swallowed up by the need to please, to behave, to be quiet and sweet, just as everyone expected.

He did not want this life, did not want this new body, did not want to be their “Alice.” But he stood in the light, ribboned and frilled, unable to fight, the last piece of himself slipping quietly away.

He took the tall steps off the stage slowly, one by one, before finally landing on the ballroom floor. He heard a second round of pity applause for his successful traversal of the stairs.

As the ceremony continued, Connor, standing next to Genie, couldn't help but gossip in hushed tones about the other graduates.

“Did you see Sasha? Her dress too tight — she can barely walk!” Connor whispered, giggling behind his slim, long-nailed hand.

“Shh, she'll hear you,” Genie replied, though her grin betrayed her amusement.

The other girls giggled, and Connor felt a rush of satisfaction. “And Brittany? Her makeup is so dark — like a Serbian, don't you think?”

Genie joined them, raising an eyebrow. “Sofija, maybe let Brittany enjoy her night?”

Connor pouted, folding her arms. “I only say because I care! We are all friends, no?”

Genie sighed. “Of course. But maybe focus on enjoying yourself instead of worrying about everyone else.”

“Enjoy myself?” Connor gasped. “How can I enjoy when my hair keeps falling out of place? Look!” She shook her head, pointing to an imagined flaw in her hairstyle.

Genie rolled her eyes but reached out to adjust Sofija's hair. “There. Perfect again.”

Connor clasped his hands together, a dazzling smile spreading across his face. “Oh, Genie, what would I do without you?”

Finally, after much more talking and speeches, the ceremony came to an end. The girls were brought forward so the audience could get their best look at them yet. With applause, the girls curtsyed in unison before the lights dimmed.

Afterward, descending the stage, Sydney giggled, nudging Blair playfully. “So, um, what now?”

“Now?” Blair asked herself. Like a typical teenager, she hadn’t thought much beyond the moment. Now that he wasn’t a dad anymore, nor a real person really, where was Blair Dahlgren going to go?

Sydney picked up the hem of her gown and walked over to where her mother was sitting, leaving Blair alone. Entirely, completely alone. Spiritually and legally. Her thoughts swirled, threatening to pull her under, when she suddenly felt a gentle hand on her back. Eleanor Tuft, poised as ever, her silver hair perfectly styled, her smile as enigmatic as a cat, leaned in with quiet authority.

“There you are. Come along, Blair,” Eleanor said, her voice soft but absolutely un-ignorable. “We need this aisle clear.”

Before Blair could protest or even ask a single question, Eleanor steered her through the crowd with surprising speed. Blair, heart thudding, heels catching on the carpet, let herself be guided toward a round table at the front of the ballroom — one marked ‘Dahlgren.’

Seated there were two people she’d never seen before in her entire life. A man with kind eyes, a solid frame, and salt-and-pepper hair. A woman with a soft smile, pearls at her throat, hands folded demurely on the tablecloth. Their faces were open, expectant, and impossibly warm.

The man stood first. “There she is — Blair!” His voice boomed with easy joy, and he reached for her with all the comfort of a father’s embrace.

The woman’s eyes shone. “Sweetheart, come sit! We’ve saved you a spot right here, next to me.”

Blair blinked, her brain spinning, her cheeks burning. She let herself be ushered towards the table, feeling awkward and surreal, like she’d wandered into someone else’s family reunion. They smiled at her with so much love it was almost overwhelming.

Mr. Dahlgren leaned in, eyes sparkling. “You were amazing up there, kiddo. We’re so proud of you.”

Mrs. Dahlgren squeezed her hand gently. “We couldn’t be happier, darling. This is such a special night. You did it.”

Blair tried to find her voice, but it kept slipping away. Finally, she managed a breathless, “Thank you. I... I’m just, uh... WTF?”

“She’s a little overwhelmed. She’s been away for months, after all,” the woman said to her husband. “But we’re here for however long it takes for you to adjust back to your normal life, Blair, sweetie.”

“Sit down, pumpkin,” the husband said. “I don’t want you to pass out.”

“Your room is just as you left it,” the woman said as Blair took a seat. “And school starts in three months. My senior year was always my favorite year.”

Despite the confusion, Blair suspected this was kind of a set-up. “Where... where do you live, exactly?”

Mrs. Dahlgren beamed. “Oh, honey, *we* live in Westwood.”

Westwood. He knew the place. “Not next to the Larkin family, I suppose?”

“Why yes!” Mrs. Dahlgren replied with a smile. “See, I knew you’d remember.”

Blair stared, trying to process it. The world tilted, then steadied. It all fit, weirdly, perfectly. They had planned it this way. The people who ran the charm school. It had been arranged for her to go to high school with Sydney.

She looked at these unfamiliar faces — these new... *parents?*

For the first time in months, she felt entirely safe. She had no idea \$250,000 would buy you a new life. A cushy life. It seemed cheap. She squeezed her new mother’s hand, tears pricking her eyes. “Thank you,” she whispered, and meant it more than anything she’d ever said.

Mr. Dahlgren stood, extending his hand. “May I have this dance, Blair?”

She laughed — a real, sparkling laugh — letting him lead her onto the dance floor. She moved without thought, letting herself spin, smile, and glow under the ballroom lights. She had thought all that dance training was a waste. How wrong she was. She caught Mrs. Dahlgren’s eye, who watched from the edge, hands pressed to her heart, tears glistening.

After the song, her new parents glided into each other’s arms, swaying to a slow tune, sharing a love that radiated across the polished floor. Blair returned to the table, her head spinning in the best possible way.

Sydney slid into the chair next to her, all energy and excitement, cheeks flushed from dancing. “Girl, you looked so happy out there!”

Blair grinned, fanning herself with her hand. “I’m just — like — literally living my best life now.”

Sydney snickered, leaning in. “Okay, spill. Did you see those boys from the catering table? The blond one kept looking at you all night. Total cutie.”

Blair blushed, laughing, feeling suddenly, joyously normal. “Shut up! He was definitely looking at you, Syd.”

They giggled, letting themselves chatter on about boys, dresses, and all the things that truly mattered right now.

Sydney picked some stray hairs out of Blair’s face. “Sooo, ready for cheer tryouts next month?”

Blair rolled her eyes theatrically, grinning. “Ugh, fine, but only if you help me with my hair.”

Sydney laughed brightly. “Um, girl, I was literally about to ask *you*.”

“You know what I need?” Blair said.

“What?”

Blair eyed the boys at the food table. “Some catering.”

Their heels clicked rhythmically against the polished floor, laughter echoing easily, happily, naturally. Two teenage girls, two flawless, *radiant* teenage girls, gowns glittering, dreams buzzing, ready for proms, cute guys, TikTok dances, whispered secrets, endless gloss, giggles, high heels, and perfect friendship forever. Incomplete by themselves, complete with one another.

Gavin let his mind fall into oblivion. These were Blair’s thoughts now, her life. Finally, Gavin Larkin was doing something right.

“Do you think she’s figured it out by now?” Elenor asked Dianna as they watched on from their nearby table.

“God help her if she hasn’t,” Dianna replied. “Blair’s a smart girl. She knows.”

“Smart? Not the way she acts.”

“She was smart enough to embezzle ten million.” Dianna smirked. She watched her flirt with the boys at the catering table. “Although I wouldn’t trust her to add two plus two at the moment.”

“Well, that quarter million will go to good use. A dirty little business we’re in isn’t it?”

“We’re all going to hell,” the headmistress of the Priscilla Dandridge Charm School said. “And when that comes to pass, we’ll turn those red-tailed little devils into charming teenage girls, too.”

On the other side of the ballroom, Connor had been pacing left and right, sipping several drinks and trying to busy himself. But he couldn’t avoid it forever. Now came the part Connor had been dreading the most. He gathered up his courage and headed to his table. He just hoped that his disguise was perfect enough to fool his father and good enough to satisfy his step-mother.

He was timid, terrified of two things: that his disguise would be seen though by his father and he would have his head chopped off off by his angry parent, or that his disguise was too good, and he would be mistaken for the girl he appeared to be for the indefinite future. Either way, he knew he was about to lose. Was there a charm school for boys he could hide in? He doubted that idea.

When he got closer to the table, striding with the presence of finely bred princess, that he could see the intrigued eyes of his father and the all too enthralled eyes of his step-mother.

Behind him, some of the crowd was murmuring, and it grew louder. Then it grew louder still. A glass crashed against the marble ballroom floor and a shriek was heard. The room fell silent as a group of men strode in, their faces hard and eyes scanning the crowd. They wore ski masks and t-shirts, and all had red

rags trailing out the rear pockets of their jeans, their presence jarringly out of place in the refined setting.

“Where’s Cortez?” one of the men barked, his voice echoing. “Show me Cortez!”

The students exchanged nervous glances, whispering among themselves. Connor’s heart raced. Cortez? He had no idea what they were talking about.

The man stepped forward, pointing at Dianna. “We know he’s here. Ignacio’s been hiding, and we’re not leaving until we find him.”

Dianna maintained her composure, her voice steady. “Gentlemen, you must have the wrong place. This is a school for young ladies.”

“I don’t care,” another man sneered. “We’ve spent a lot of money. Money to find that rat bastard that turned on us! Ignacio Cortez, Jr.!” Three of the gang members fanned out scanning the crowd. “His phone is in your building, he was last seen going into your school. We’ve been tracking him. We know he’s here.” His loud, latino accent reverberated around the ballroom, jangling the crystal chandeliers.

Connor screamed, trembling. In the crowd, he found Genie and rushed to her. “Genie, what is happening?”

“I don’t know!” Genie whispered back, her eyes wide with fear. “They’re looking for some guy. I don’t understand.”

“Who?”

“Someone named Ignacio Cortez... Junior?” Genie replied with a nervous flutter to her voice. “Where are the police?”

“I don’t know! I don’t know!” Connor replied as he grasped both of Genie’s hands.

He didn’t know of any gang members at the school. They were all such nice girls. Most of them couldn’t even fire on someone with a squirt gun.

One of the gang members stepped closer, scanning the students. Connor panicked. Tears welled in his eyes, and a desperate sob escaped his lips.

“Oh, no, no!” Tears streamed down her face as she pushed back Genie, his hands trembling. He turned and ran for the changing rooms, terror in his mascara-filled eyes.

“Sofija, wait...”

But Connor didn’t wait. Letting out a wail, he bolted from the ballroom, heels clicking loudly against the marble floor. “I cannot! I cannot! Don’t hurt me!” he cried, his voice echoing as he minced away as fast as his tight gown and high heels could take him.

Connor burst into the bathroom, collapsing against the counter and sobbing uncontrollably. “Why? Why this happen?” she wailed, staring at her tear-



streaked reflection.

Her hands trembled as she reached for a tissue, dabbing at her smudged makeup. “Now I look horrible! My face is ruined!”

He knew he was falling apart. He wasn’t behaving like his old self. He felt a girlish sense of panic rising in him, his emotions taking him over. He couldn’t help but run, crying.

He leaned heavily on the counter, her knees threatening to give out. As the muffled sounds of commotion filtered in from the ballroom, Conner closed his eyes tightly, wishing it all away. “Someone else fix it... I cannot do this.”

Connor sat on the cold tile floor of the bathroom, trembling as tears streamed down his face. Suddenly, he felt something shift. Something inside of him. He quickly pulled his dress up to look. His ran his fingers along the peeling edge of the prosthetics that had covered him since the beginning of his time at the school. They had always felt so real, so seamlessly integrated, but now they appeared to be coming loose, the adhesive weakened by sweat and panic.

With trembling fingers, he peeled one edge back and gasped. The hips didn’t come off like he expected. His real skin below was shaped just as big, just as round. His butt pads came off next, revealing the same feminine shape beneath it. In fact, they weren’t prosthetics at all, but thin coat of silicone or rubber.

Beneath the so-called prosthetics, there wasn’t the body he had once known. There was smooth, soft skin, curves, and the undeniable shape of a woman.

“What... what is this?” he whispered, his voice quivering. His accent, now so ingrained, made the words sound foreign to his own ears. “What have they done to me?”

He tore the rest of the coverings away, staring in shock at his reflection in the bathroom mirror. Finally, he reached for the big one. The one between his legs. It came off the easiest. There was no tucked penis beneath. No catheter to re-route his urine. There were no testicles. There was no shaft. There was only a mound. A mound with a moist slit.

He stuck his glittery long nailed finger into it, and felt the cascade of sensations only a woman can feel when teased as such. The strange feeling of something entering your body, then the puzzling firing of nerves he’d never felt before, sending messages to his brain that it was not ready to accept.

It was real. He had a pussy. He was a girl. These prosthetics were covering what had already happened to him. Those strange feelings he had been experiencing were his feminine parts coming alive. He had been a girl this whole time.

The truth hit him like a tidal wave. The school wasn’t just a place to train young women in charm and elegance — it was a place that had transformed him. *Really* transformed him.



If they had transformed him... What about all the other students? Had they been changed into women against their will?

His breathing quickened. “The others... Vivian... Genie...” All the names and faces he had known over the past nine months flashed before his eyes. Were they *all* boys? *All* males? *All* men?

Or... they used to be.

Then came the message. The message that was coming through his dress, lined with silver threads that sparkled when they fed the words into his brain. He repeated it, as he looked in the mirror at his beautiful, feminine reflection. “I’m the woman I always wanted to be,” he said.

In the flood of emotion, anger, confusion and everything else that was going on in his mind, Connor was interrupted by the shouts and screams coming from outside the door.

That brought his thoughts back to his most urgent issue: The Mexican gang members outside threatening everyone. Then some desperate synapse fired inside his brain, and he recalled the last time he’s even thought about Mexican gang members. That was the time Genie had started talking like one, and she couldn’t — and wouldn’t — explain why.

Connor was forced to think, even though it was impossible, that maybe, possibly, even Genie must have once been a man. With a name like Genie, it seemed ridiculous. Yet, he knew that Genie was short for “Imogene.” These men were looking for Ignacio Cortez, Jr., former gang member.

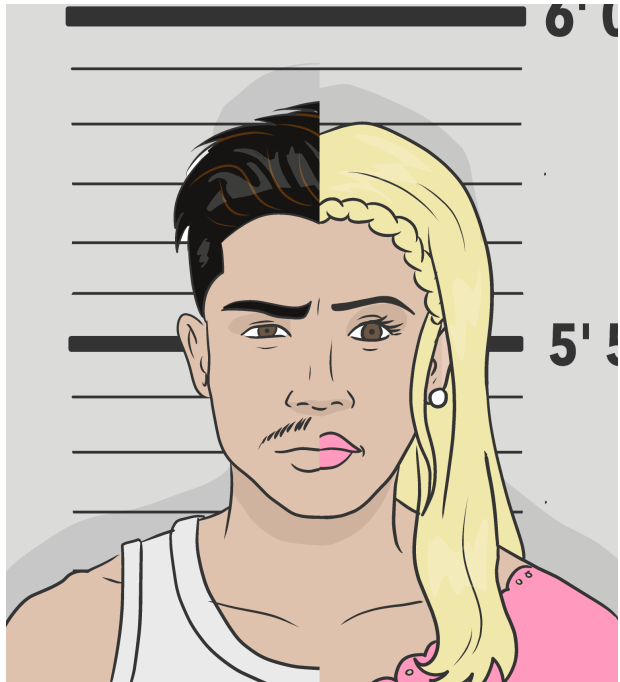
Ignacio.

Imogene.

Ignacio.

It had to be.

All those times combing Genie’s blond hair and noting the black roots. Girls don’t give away secrets like that, especially besties. He had kept that to himself. He could also remember admiring how easy it was for Genie to tan. It didn’t seem right that a southern girl could tan so well, but she did. It all made too much sense. *Genie* was Ignacio



Cortez, Jr.

His thoughts raced, but as the sound of shouting from the ballroom echoed through the walls, his focus shifted. Genie — Ignacio — was in danger. They all were.

I'm the woman I always wanted to be, he thought to himself. But he wasn't this woman. He wasn't Sofija. Was he? No, he wasn't. Maybe he was? No, he was Connor. He wasn't Sofija. He's a guy. Well, kind of. No, now he wasn't. Did that mean he was Sofija?

He felt as though his mind was about to split in two. He felt like he was on the peak of a mountain. On one side, his life as Connor. On the other, a life as Sofija. The problem was he felt as familiar and comforted by the Sofija side as the Connor one. But being Sofija meant doing what mother told him to do. He was strong, independent and... and...



Connor's heels clicked nervously on the polished floor as he approached the crowd, his steps shaky but his determination growing with each step. The gang members hadn't noticed. When he reached the crowd, he clasped his hands tightly in front of his chest, his wide eyes brimming with tears.

He had a plan. He didn't like it, but he had a plan.

"On *no!* What are they going to *do?*" He wailed in a helpless, frightened voice. "Please, someone do something!" he continued. He hadn't bothered to fix his makeup, knowing the more anguished he looked, the more effective his plan would be.

In response, the men standing around looked Connor's way.

"Please," she pleaded, her voice trembling. "You must help us! Those men... they are so dangerous!"

One of the men, a distinguished gentleman with silver hair, looked down at Connor with concern. "What's wrong, miss? Are you all right?"

Connor's lip quivered as he nodded, his hands fluttering nervously. "I am fine, but the other girls... they are so frightened! I am frightened too! Please, you are strong men. You can make them leave, yes?"

Another man stepped forward, his brows furrowed. "They look like they mean business."

Connor let out a soft sob, dabbing delicately at his tears with a handkerchief. "They are looking for someone, but they will hurt us, I know it! Please, you must protect us. We are just... just helpless women!" he looked up at them with pleading eyes, her fear and vulnerability palpable.

Connor could feel the stress inside his mind. He wasn't a helpless woman. He wasn't Sofija. Yet if he didn't do this, if he didn't help his best friend in the world. They might take her away. They might even kill her, if they got their hands on Genie. He had to do this. He had to become Sofija. Helpless, feminine, frail and with the emotions of a lost child.

He unleashed the tears, sobbing openly. His pretty face twisted in anguish. "I... I'm so... scared!" Connor wailed. "I don't want to die!"

The men exchanged glances, their hesitation clear.

Connor wasn't in any position to save her best friend. He was in a dress, in heels, a tiny body and as feeble as a twig. "What's going on?" He said, shaking and letting himself fall to pieces. It wasn't just an act. The longer this went on the deeper he had to reach. The parts of his mind he had been fighting since he had arrived at the charm school were beginning to leak into his consciousness.

A man tried to help Connor keep his balance. "Miss, please, we're only trying to..."

"I can't die like this! Please, won't anyone do anything?" He cried, going limp in the arms of this man.

Finally the hesitation was giving way to determination. One of the men, a broad-shouldered man with a commanding presence, squared his stance and cracked his knuckles. "Let's take care of this," he said firmly. "We can't let these ladies feel unsafe."

The personality of Sofija was his way out of this. Sofija's helplessness was how he could save Genie. "They... They're so big and... What will they do to me?"

"C'mon, guys," the large man said, waving those around him to join him.

Connor watched from behind the group of men, his hands grasped tightly together as they approached the gang members. He peeked around their big bodies nervously, holding his breath as one of the gang members turned to face them.

"Hey!" the silver-haired man barked, stepping forward with authority. "You don't belong here. Leave now."

The gang leader sneered, his eyes narrowing. "We're not leaving until we find Ignacio! Don't get in our way."

"There's no one here by that name," another attendee said firmly, his tone unwavering. "Now, get out before we call the police."

They argued back and forth, but it was all just words. They clearly weren't armed. They had just hoped to find the man they were looking for and leave, and were not prepared to be in such a large crowd. They kept up a good front, but step by step, they retreated, until they were by the exit.



The gang members hesitated, their bravado faltering as the group of men closed ranks, their sheer number and confidence radiating an unmistakable warning. One of the gang members shifted uneasily, glancing at his leader. “This ain’t worth it, man,” he muttered.

After a tense pause, the leader cursed under his breath. “Fine. But this ain’t over.” With that, the gang turned and stormed out, the ballroom doors slamming shut behind them.

As the tension in the room dissipated, the students began to relax, their fear giving way to relief. The four or five men who had stood up for Sofija and ushered the big, bad men away returned.

Sofija let out a shaky breath, tears streaming down her cheeks as she stepped forward. She stumbled slightly, but one of the men caught her arm, steadying her.

“Oh, thank you!” she cried, clutching his hand. “You saved us! I was so scared. I... I thought I was going to die!”

“You’re safe now,” the man said kindly, patting her hand. “There’s nothing to worry about.”

Sofija turned to Genie, who had been standing frozen nearby. Genie was overjoyed and grateful. “You did it, Sofija. You got them to help us.”

Sofija shook her head quickly, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief again. “No, no, it was not me. It was them — the brave men. Oh, what would we do without them?”

One of the men approached Sofija, his expression warm. “Are you going to be okay, miss?”

Sofija blushed, dipping her head demurely. Then she got up on her toes to kiss him on the cheek. “Thank is to you!” She replied. “I was so scared! But... but thank you. You are my heroes!” She then worked her way to all of them, giving them swift kisses on their cheeks, and blushing when she was done.



With the threat abated, the room returned to its’ normal buzz and hum of conversation. Some light classical music started to play as the lights dimmed and the room was transformed into a grand ballroom for the graduates’ final celebration. Sofija sought out one of the charming gentlemen, who helped her, his warm smile and steady hands guiding her gracefully across the dance floor. Her nervous giggles bubbled up as his strong hands guided her through the steps.

“You’re trembling,” he remarked with a soft chuckle. “There’s no need to be nervous.”

“Oh, but I am always nervous!” Sofija admitted, her voice high-pitched and breathy. “What if I ruin my dress? Or mess up my hair?” She reached up instinctively to touch her curls, ensuring they were still in place.

“You’re perfect,” the man said, his tone indulgent. “Just relax and let me lead.”

Sofija gave a dramatic sigh, leaning into his support. “You are so kind. I don’t know what I would do without strong men like you.” She allowed him to guide her effortlessly through the dance, her focus more on keeping her gown pristine than on the steps themselves.

Across the room, she spotted Genie chatting animatedly with her own partner. A pang of jealousy flickered through Sofija, followed quickly by sadness. Genie always seemed so composed, so capable, while Sofija felt like a fragile bird, constantly in need of care.

“Miss Jovanovski,” he said, his voice rich and admiring. “You’re quite the dancer.”

“Ah, you are kind,” Sofija replied, her cheeks flushing as she spoke in her broken English. “I practice much... many times. But thank you.”

They swayed to the music, the world narrowing to the rhythm of the waltz and the soft hum of conversation. As soon as they were done, Sofija sought out the rest of her knights in shining metaphorical armor and danced with them, too. She was an impeccable dancer, as she was trained to be.



As the music began to die down and the excitement of the evening settled into a quieter hum, Zatica found Sofija near a gilded mirror, fussing over her hair. Sofija dabbed at her lips with a tissue, ensuring her lipstick was flawless, her expression tight with concentration.

“Oh, Mama!” Sofija exclaimed, turning quickly when she saw Zatica approaching. “Do I look all right? I thought I saw a smudge! Is hair too flat?”

Zatica smiled indulgently, reaching out to adjust a loose curl on Sofija’s shoulder. “You look perfect, my darling — my *daughter*.”

It was the first time she had been able to really say it. She had never had a daughter before. She had never even hoped she could have a daughter. Especially one so much like her. But finally, she did. She had her ideal daughter. It was had for her to behave like she had known this girl for her whole life. It was everything she could muster to pretend she and Sofija were really mother and daughter. Yet it was true she had a daughter now, and she was going to make sure her daughter was just like her in every way.

Sofija’s face brightened, and she clasped her hands together. “Oh, thank you, Mama. You always know best. I don’t know what I’d do without you!”

Zatica gestured to a tall, imposing man standing a few feet away. “There is someone I’d like you to meet,” she said warmly. “Sofija, this is your new stepfather.”

Sofija’s large, expressive eyes widened, as she was introduced to Connor’s father. The vengeful, raging father that had driven him into hiding in skirts. Without hesitation, she dipped into a delicate curtsy, her gown billowing softly around her. “Is honor to meet you,” she said, her voice lilting with her thick

Slavic accent. It was clear from Sofija's guileless expression that she had never met this man before.

"So I finally meet the famous Sofija," he said. "Your mother speaks so much about you. I was surprised when she told me that she had a daughter. You think she would have mentioned it earlier." He shot Zatica a look.

"She was here to learn how to be a beauty pageant winner like her mother," Zatica explained to her husband, in a tone of voice that indicated this was not the first time they had gone over this. "And I did not want anyone to know until she was legal."

"Oh, yes? I legal now?" Sofija asked.

"Yes, all your papers are taken care of, my dearest darling Sofija," Zatica said. "Sofija Jovanovski, daughter of Zatica Jovanovski, born Skopje, North Macedonia."

"So may I call you Papa?" Sofija asked her own father.

Her new step-father smiled, oblivious to the truth of who she had once been. "Yes, of course."

"I hope I will be allowed to stay with you, Papa. I have so much of America I want to see, and I hope you will show me, yes?" It was clear that being in a charm school for nine months had left Sofija an utterly, unfailingly charming woman who could not be refused.

"I have a room I have been meaning to clean out," he replied. "No one is using it anymore."

Sofija, too, felt no connection to this man beyond what Zatica had told her. Connor was a lost memory, a name that no longer held meaning. The night had finally broken him. The realization he was a woman, the message from his collar, and finally the tension of the standoff. In saving Genie and everyone else, he had opened a door inside of him that once opened, could not be shut. Sofija was all that was standing in his place, in sparkling high heels.

"I am so thirsty..." Sofija said, feeling her slender neck with her long thin fingers. She gave a child-like cough.

"I'll get you something," Connor's father replied, heading off swiftly.

"Mama, he is so fat!" Sofija said to her mother. "And he is losing his hair!"

Zatica waved dismissively, her focus remaining entirely on Sofija. "He doesn't matter, darling. Just his money. What's important is you and your future."

Sofija beamed, leaning closer to Zatica. "Oh, Mama, you are always so wise. You are... how do you say? Master of men." Her voice lowered conspiratorially. "I want to be just like you!"

Zatica laughed softly, patting Sofija's cheek. "You already are, my dear. That's why I bring you here — to charm school. To prepare you for world. You are my

perfect little girl, but ready to spread your wings, beside me. A Macedonian girl just like her mother.”

Sofija blinked, a hazy warmth spreading through her mind as Zatica’s words settled in. Images began to form in her memory: cobblestone streets, vibrant marketplaces, and the familiar skyline of Skopje. She saw herself as a little girl, running through the city’s winding alleys, her heart filled with dreams of beauty and elegance. Months of hypnotic messages delivered in Connor’s sleep had created an entire history for Sofija, one she was now claiming as her own.

“Yes,” Sofija said slowly, her voice soft with wonder. “Skopje... my home. I lived there since I was a baby.”

Zatica nodded, her smile widening. “Exactly, darling. And now that you’ve learned how to present yourself in the best light, you’ll make North Macedonia proud.”

Sofija’s heart swelled with pride, and she clasped her hands to her chest. “Yes! I will show the world how beautiful our country is! I do not want to represent America, Mama — I want to be Miss North Macedonia!”

Zatica’s expression faltered slightly, her brow furrowing. “Sofija, darling, think carefully. Competing in America could offer more opportunities. The pageant world here is larger, more influential.”

“No!” Sofija said, her voice rising as tears threatened to spill from her eyes. “I do not want that! I want to wear our colors, speak our language! America is... is so loud, so strange! Please, Mama, I want to represent my true home.”

Zatica sighed, crossing her arms as she considered Sofija’s words. “You’re emotional, darling. You always get like this.”

“I do not care!” Sofija cried, stomping her foot lightly, though careful not to wrinkle her gown. “Please, Mama. Let me show the world I am Macedonian. I promise I will make you proud too!”

The room fell silent for a moment, the tension between them palpable. Zatica studied Sofija carefully, then let out a resigned sigh. “Fine,” she said at last. “We’ll start with local pageants in North Macedonia. But you must promise me you’ll dedicate yourself fully. Winning will require discipline.”

Sofija’s face lit up, and she threw her arms around Zatica, careful not to crush her gown. “Oh, thank you, Mama! I promise I will work so hard! I will be most beautiful woman in world!”

Zatica smirked, smoothing Sofija’s hair. “That’s my girl. We’ll start planning immediately. The world isn’t ready for you, Sofija Jovanovski.”

“Oh, Mama,” Sofija gushed, pulling back to look at her stepmother with shining eyes. “You are best. I will make you so proud, just wait and see!” She paused for a moment, smiling. “And I will win!” She added, as sure as anything Sofija had ever said.



As Zlatica led Sofija out of the ballroom, the stepfather trailed behind silently, unnoticed and unimportant. Sofija's mind brimmed with dreams of tiaras, sashes, and the ultimate crown of Miss Universe. Her heart swelled with pride for North Macedonia, and her deepest desire was to show her mother she was worthy of the name Jovanovski.



The ballroom had started to empty. The roses were beginning to wilt under the heat of the lights, and the air was thick with emptiness. Albert stood near the exit in his pink taffeta dress, hands folded neatly in front of him, shoes tight, curls bouncing, a pale pink hair bow, and his stiff ribbon around her waist. The fabric itched, but he didn't dare scratch.

He'd stood still for almost half an hour. Waiting.

Then she heard it: the familiar, sharp sound of heels on marble. Aunt Yvonne had arrived.

He didn't even need to look. Her presence felt like a black hole had opened up. No sound, no light. Yvonne wore her usual leather skirt, black pumps, white satin blouse and a black blazer with sleeves like iron. She looked exactly the same as the day she'd sent Albert here. But her expression had changed. Slightly. She was... pleased.

Yvonne stopped in front of her, hands on hips, eyes scanning Alice from head to polished shoe.

"You came out quite satisfactory," she said flatly.

Albert curtsied, soft and automatic. "Thank you, Auntie."

Yvonne looked her up and down again, then nodded. "Saint Bernadette's accepted your file. You'll start this fall. Fourth grade. Uniforms arrive next week."

Albert blinked. *Fourth grade?*

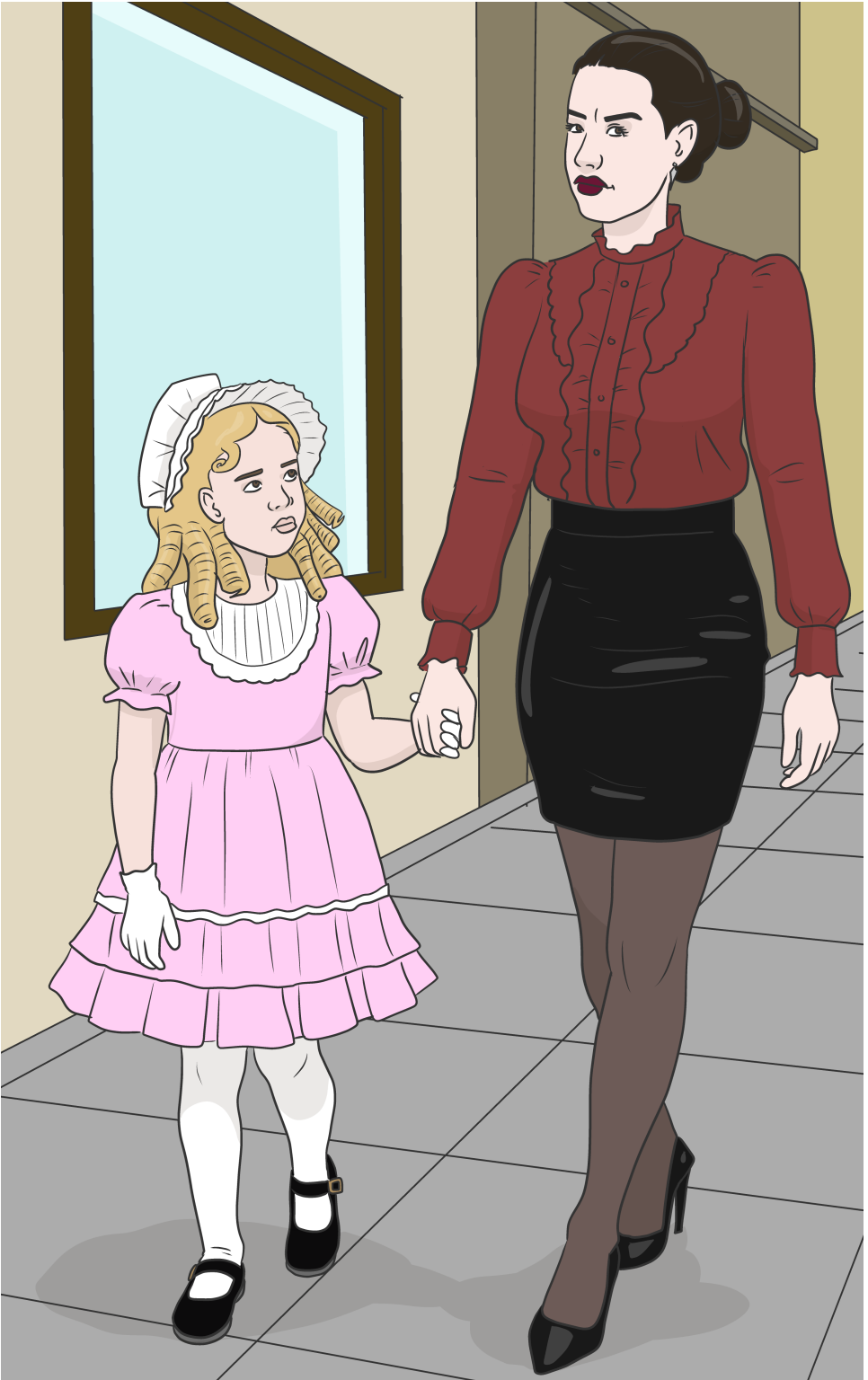
"Yeth, Auntie."

"You'll behave," Yvonne said, stepping closer. "No fussing. No attitude. Speak when spoken to. Smile when you're smiled at. Got it?"

Albert hesitated a breath too long.

Yvonne's eyes narrowed. "Do you understand, Alice? Don't make me spank you!"

"Yeth, Auntie," Albert whispered, his voice meek and small. Yvonne leaned in, adjusted the bow in Alice's hair, her fingers rough. "You're lucky. Most people don't get second chances like this. Don't screw it up, little man."



Albert didn't speak. He couldn't. The words he said from reflex — the ones filled with fire and protest — didn't come. They hadn't in a long time.

Yvonne turned. "Come. The car's waiting."

Alice followed quietly, skirt swaying gently with each small, quick, mincing step.

Outside, the streetlights flickered yellow above the cracked pavement. The night was warm, heavy with smog. Albert paused at the top of the hotel steps, the dress ballooning slightly in the breeze.

Then, obediently, silently, he skipped down the steps just like a good little girl.

"Look out for the puddle, Alice."

"*Eek!*" Alice screamed. "I don't wanna to get my pwetty wittle dwess awl dirty," she said, avoiding the small puddle as if it were a gaping chasm of a volcano.

"Good girl," Yvonne said to her niece.

Alice smiled and beamed with pride.

The smile that crept across Yvonne's stern face would have terrified any man who saw it. But no man was here. Just sweet little Alice. She diligently followed her aunt with her head down, the hem of her dress swishing against her spotless white tights, her Mary Janes scuffing on the pavement, a good girl forever.



As the evening had come to an end, Dianna Dandridge was waiting for her car to show up, when she was suddenly joined in the twilight. The sparkling gowns gave it away.

"Sofija?" She said, as the figures got closer. "Genie? Blair?"

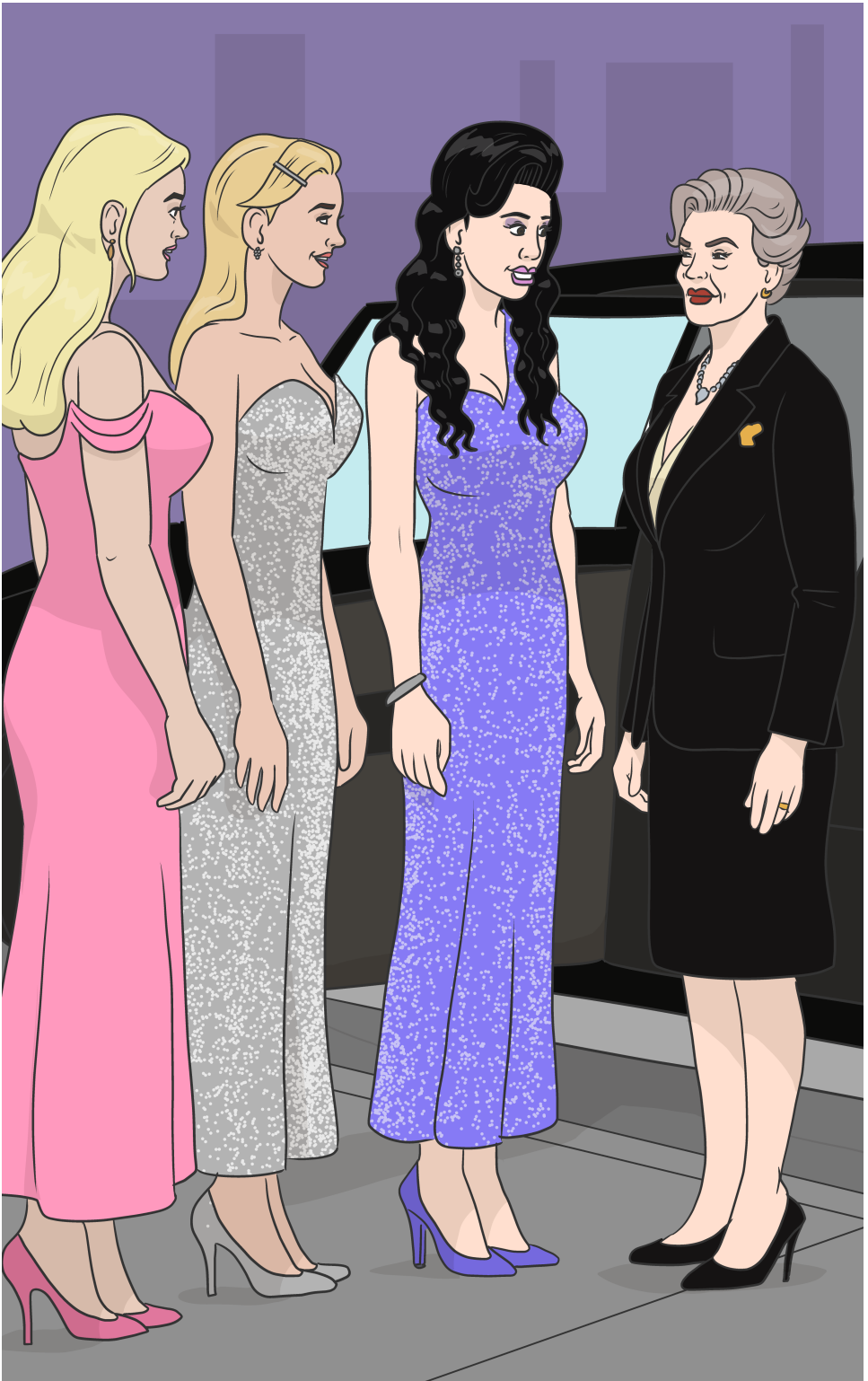
"Headmistress," Sofija said softly, curtsying. "May I speak?"

Dianna turned, her stern expression softening. "Of course, Sofija. What is it?"

Sofija clasped her hands together, her words pouring out in broken English. "I want to thank you. For make me... this. You see me... when I not know who I am. You make me strong, beautiful."

Dianna's lips curved into a faint smile. "I say this to all our students, Sofija. It was always inside you. Just use what we have taught you."

Sofija gave a little giggle, her cheeks flushed. "Oh, I will try! But, oh, it is so scary! The world is so big, and I am so small. But I know... I know men will always be there to help, yes?"



“And I also want to thank y’ all,” Genie said, beaming a smile. “I owe you a debt I cannot repay. My parents are so proud of me. They love me something might powerful. I never felt that before.”

“I was afraid we were going to lose you at the last minute,” Dianna said, looking at the pretty southern belle in the eyes. “But you’ll be safe, now.”

“Safe?” Genie asked.

“Safe with people who will love and cherish you for as long as you live, Imogene.”

“Like, I can’t even, um... Come up with words n’ stuff,” Blair said, gushing. “Just um... Thank you! Thank you so much!”

Dianna was dazzled by Blair. How one could sculpt such a fragile teenage girl from a man in his thirties impressed even her. “For what?”

Blair looked confused. “Um... For uh...” Blair couldn’t say. She dare not speak the truth in the presence of the two girls he barely knew. “Oh my gaw! For everything.”

“Thank you, Blair,” Dianna replied. “It was my pleasure to teach you the magic of femininity.”

“Okay, bye!” Blair said, eager to get back to her new bestie so they could dance with all the boys they had been flirting with.

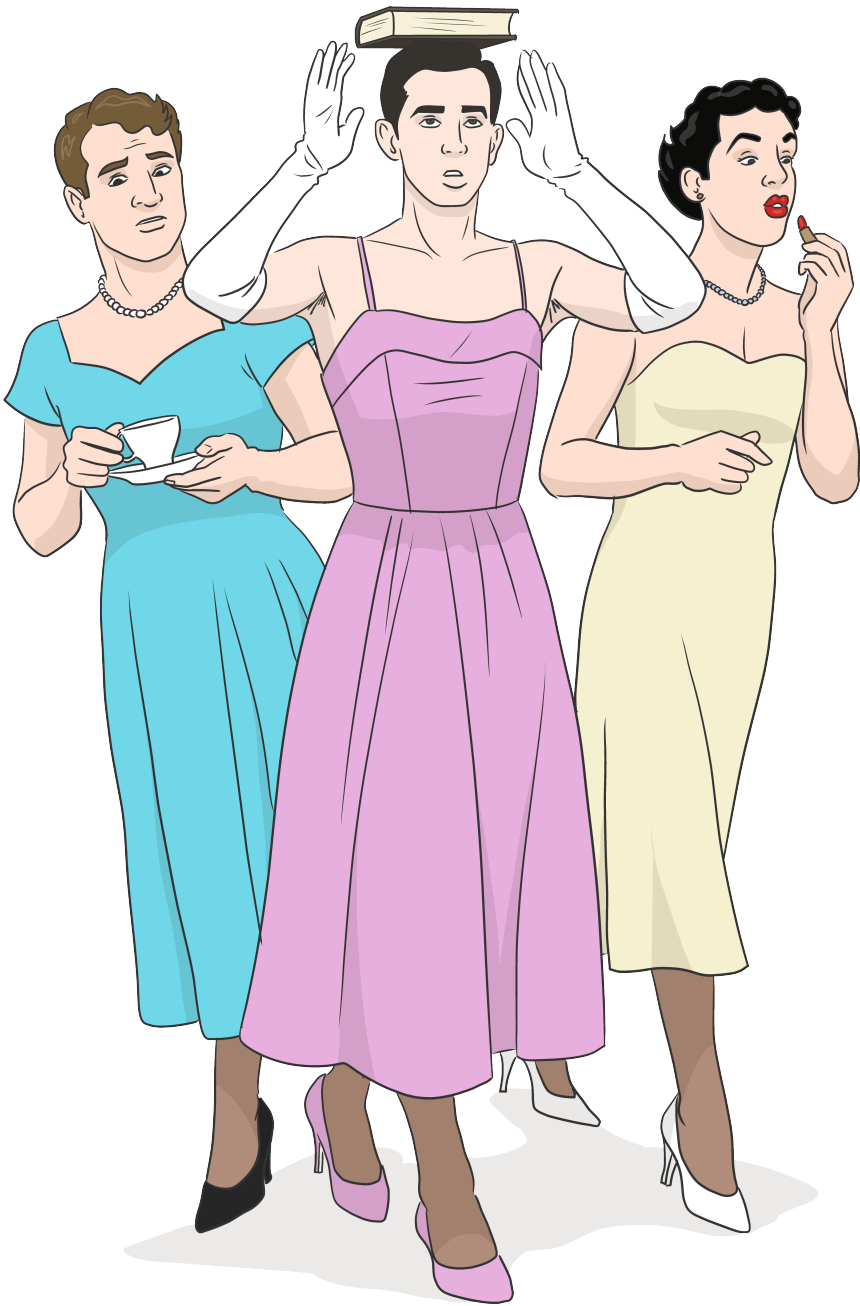
As the headmistress’s attention returned to Sofija, Dianna’s smile didn’t falter, though there was a flicker of something unreadable in her eyes. “I am so proud of you, Sofija. There was a time I didn’t think we had gotten through. But you have become so much more than you were.” She saw the approaching headlights. “My car is here. Enjoy the rest of your evening, girls.”

“I will, Mrs Dandridge!” Genie said, happily.

Sofija’s tears spilled over, and she curtsied again, deeper this time. “I never forget you, Headmistress. I hope I make you proud. I am woman I always wanted to be.”

Dianna rested a hand on her shoulder. “It’s a wonderful thing to be,” she said. “Isn’t it?”

The End





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Sick Puppy Comics

Making Friends

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. Three college students sign up for a six-month isolation experiment. Things start to get a little strange, and they begin to lose their masculinity day by day. Yet, they don't seem to even notice... Full Color Comic Book / 38 pages

The Pet Sitter

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. Asked to look after a supermodel's pet for a while, James finds himself thrust out of his own apartment and into hers. Day by day, it seems like circumstances adapt James to become the resident of a supermodel's lifestyle. Full Color Comic Book / 29 pages

A Curious Curse

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. When teen goth Brandyn gets his drivers' license, he thinks it's a ticket to adulthood. Unfortunately, he's already cashed a ticket in the opposite direction. Full Color Comic Book / 27 pages

Boys Will Be Girls

Story & Art by Fraylim, Script by KK, Ink & Color by Joe Six-Pack. The "Summer Blossom" camp welcomes a new group of young men. But although it may be an all-boys camp when they arrive, it's girls-only when they leave. Full Color Comic Book / 100 pages

Double-Crossed

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. Jesse is on the run from justice. When he finds an old friend who can help him, that old friend seems more interested in helping Jesse become a woman. Comic / 24 pages

The Step-Witch

Story by Joe Six-Pack. Dillon has a new step-mother. Problem is that she and Dillon don't get along. More of a problem for Dillon is that she's a witch — and wants a daughter. Full Color Comic Book / 17 pages

The Charm

Story by Joe Six-Pack, art by Osoku WARUI. Gavin is a student who laments his boring life. Then he crosses paths with Krista. Things are about to change, and not necessarily for the better. Comic / 24 pages

College Can Change a Man

Story & art by Joe Six-Pack. A small college has been hanging on to its male-dominated mindset for too long. Now, a new member of the board has arrived to make some changes. A lot of changes. Comic / 243 pages

Help Wanted 1

Story by James J Craft, art by RocketXpert. Three boys are getting far more than they bargained for when they get summer jobs at a woman's fancy mansion. Comic / 40 pages

Help Wanted 2

Story by James J Craft, art by RocketXpert. Three more boys are getting far more than they bargained for at a woman's fancy mansion, and three others are finding their places. Comic / 40 pages

What Popular Girls Do

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. A teaching assistant in high school is about to find out what it's like to go back to class — but as a saucy teenage girl with a bully boyfriend he needs to satisfy. Comic / 47 pages

Teens Transformed

She Made Me Into My Sister

"A Little Too Clever" by Joe Six-Pack. Wyatt wanted to help his girlfriend get revenge, but at what cost? As it turns out, a cost greater than any boy could have imagined. Book / 88 pages / 20 illustrations

He's a Valley Girl, Fer Sure

From the files of TGStories.com: "Corey Taylor's Big Bodacious Adventure" by Joe Six-Pack. For Corey, the only way he can get into college is to pretend to be a girl. But when does it stop being pretend? When he's cheerleader? A girlfriend? A beauty queen? Book / 78 pages / 17 illustrations

From Boys to Bridesmaids

“Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Groom” by James J Craft. Two spoiled and privileged boys are about to be put in their place by their new step-mother. And their place is by her side as her bridesmaids and daughters. Book / 77 Pages / 16 illustrations

Little Mis-ter Popular

“My Two Moms” by James J Craft, illustrations by rocketxpert. Thanks to his aunt’s “Confidence Club,” Leon will find a way to become popular, and to get over all his hang-ups... Including his masculinity. Book / 77 Pages / 17 illustrations

Bride to Be

By Joe Six-Pack. Derek and Cole grew up together as kids. One year, though, Cole has to start pitching in at the family wedding business. His life will never be the same. Book / 63 pages / 25 illustrations

Gone Girly for Good

“Big in Japan” by James J Craft. Mike and Ken were one-hit-wonder rock stars. Then they discovered they had fans in Japan, so they left to become famous. Then they discovered that the Japanese didn’t know they were guys. Book / 77 pages / 26 illustrations

One Year in Tokyo

By James J Craft, illustrations by Kwon Lee Tran. Mickey is forced to spend a year with his father in Japan. However things often get confused when words get translated from English to Japanese, as Mickey soon finds out... Book / 87 pages / 20 illustrations

Mall Makeover Madness

“A Day at the Mall” by KK, illustrations by Fraylim. Four boys are going to have one weird day at the mall. By the time the day is over, it’s four girls who leave the mall to begin their new lives. Book / 109 pages / 25 illustrations

Convicts to Co-Eds

Story by By Courtney Captisa & Claire Bear, illustrations by Joe Six-Pack. Three teen boys are sent to a reform school. What they can’t know is that they are about to be “reformed” all the way into skirts... And beyond. Book / 154 pages / 31 illustrations

Creating Samantha

Story by Cheryl Lynn, illustrations by The Might Fenek. Samuel was under the tutelage of his legal guardian, only his guardian had no intentions of letting him grow up male. Book / 70 pages / 16 illustrations

Crosley High Chronicles

By Joe Six-Pack. River is coming to a new school, and trying to fit in. The problem is the only way he’s going to fit in is in skirts and heels. Book / 217 pages / 75 illustrations

Student Exchange

By Joe Six-Pack. Kelley Sue’s convinced a French exchange student to disguise himself as a girl. What happens when she realizes he has no intention of returning back home? Book / 77 pages / 22 illustrations

The Substitute Ski Bunny

By Joe Six-Pack. Walker is a young man who’s fallen in love with a girl. The only way he can get close to her is to dress up and become her roommate. It’s not going to go according to plan, though. Book / 132 pages / 31 illustrations

My Brother, My Mother, My Doll

By Joe Six-Pack. Seven year old Amelia has made a wish. A wish that she had a mother more like her doll, and that her brother weren’t so mean. Her family is about to have their lives turned inside-out. Book / 109 pages / 34 illustrations

The Princess Center

By Cheryl Lynn. Jeffrey wanted everything his brother Alan had. He was willing to to any length to get it, even to send Alan to... The Princess Center. Book / 85 pages / 26 illustrations

Tales of Transformation

He’s the Wrong Girl

“Office Chemistry” by Joe Six-Pack. James had to fill in at the reception desk. Problem is, the business is a bio-genetics company. And all of the sudden the coffee tastes funny. Book / 53 pages / 14 illustrations

City Boy, Country Girl

By Joe Six-Pack. Richard's successful city life is interrupted when a sheep he wants to fleece needs urgent care out in the country. But instead of returning home, all Richard's wife hears are a series of suspicious excuses. Revised in 2019. Book / 92 pages / 34 illustrations

Thames Greene

By James J Craft. Ira wanted something better for his family. A new start. But in Thames Greene, everyone's getting a new start, whether they want it or not. Book / 77 pages / 26 illustrations

Hiding in High Heels

"How Not to be a Sissy" By Joe Six-Pack. Vince was on the run from people who wanted their millions back. Howard was a friend with a funny little idea and a knack for making subliminal CDs. Mini-Pix / 48 pages / 15 illustrations

A Blessing in Disguise

By KK, illustrations by Kannel. Jay was a witness to a murder, and now he's the target of a vicious criminal. Resorting to a female disguise, he becomes trapped with no way out. Book / 84 pages / 16 illustrations

I'm Your Dolly

"Barbie-in-a-Box" By Joe Six-Pack. Tyler wasn't much of a boyfriend anymore. Jessica wanted to throw him out, but then a better idea came to her, in the form of the Barbie-in-a-Box service. Tyler better get used to pink. Book / 103 pages / 20 illustrations

Winning is Everything

"Costume drama" by Joe Six-Pack. Seth made a funny little bet for Halloween. He needed to pull off the impersonation of a Cheerleader for a party. What's at stake? 100 million dollars and his manhood. Book / 215 pages / 37 illustrations

His Life as a Trophy Wife

By Joe Six-Pack. Nick had a great life, but then it evaporated. Now he's down on his luck. In steps a wealthy executive willing to pay him handsomely to pretend to be his wife. What can it hurt? Revised in 2018. Book / 256 pages / 39 illustrations

Male Monday, Girl Friday

"Hey, Cutie!" by James J Craft. Daniel is going to be promoted from his average life to an exciting executive position. At least, that's what his bosses are telling him. They may not be telling him everything. Book / 58 pages / 20 illustrations

The Happiest Place on Earth

From the files of TGStories.com: "The Fairest One of All" By Joe Six-Pack. Will is a kid looking for a job. He gets one, performing as Snow White at a theme park. For Will, he doesn't suspect that playing the role and wearing the costume is slowly changing him, day by day. Book / 51 pages / 21 illustrations

Hello, Nurse

From the files of TGStories.com: "Quality Health Care". Dane is filling in as a nurse for his pal Jimmy at his new office. Although both are doctors, Dane begins to take to his new role as a nurse. Soon, he feels compelled to be the ideal nurse. Book / 44 pages / 15 illustrations

My Boss, The Bimbo

"If I Were a Betting (Wo)Man" By James J Craft, illustrations by blackshirtboy. CEO Lucas has a superiority complex. When his long-suffering secretary is able to feed into Lucas' competitive nature, he'll make any bet to prove his dominance over women. Book / 38 pages / 10 illustrations

He's the Girl They Want

"Rallies" by Joe Six-Pack. Spencer has a great new executive job in the food service industry, but first he's got to learn the ropes of the business by waiting on tables. He just doesn't quite fit in with the cheerleader theme. Yet. Book / 63 pages / 22 illustrations

Demoted and Degraded

"Trixie the Secretary" by Angela J. Cindy didn't much like Tom Jones attitude and his advances, so when she has the opportunity to help take the wind out of his sails, she takes it. But she had no idea that it was all designed to make Tom into Trixie the secretary. Book / 87 pages / 17 illustrations

I, Candy

“Sissy Sweets” by James J Craft, illustrations by rocketxpert. Inheriting his family’s bakery requires this young man to become the new face of the business. A female face. Book / 45 pages / 15 illustrations

Boyz II Girlz

“The Making of the Ballroom Brats” by Joe Six-Pack. The Ballroom Brats become the newest worldwide celebrity sensation. How did four unsuspecting guys at a fast food joint become the hottest girl group in music? Book / 113 pages / 34 illustrations

His Strangest Desire

“Employee of the Month” by Joe Six-Pack. Mick is declared Employee of the Month, and he’s going to find himself hurtling headlong into facing his weirdest inner desire. Book / 59 pages / 19 illustrations

Hard Time or High Heels

“I’m Turning into My Mother” by James J Craft, illustrations by rocketxpert. Colby got deep into debt to a local gangster. Before long, he’s on the arm of that very same gangster as his reluctant girlfriend. Book / 75 pages / 20 illustrations

Seriously Skirted

“The Show Piece” by KK. Illustrations by Joe Six-Pack. Mel finds work at a clinic as a secretary. He slowly begins to fit to role. Book / 75 pages / 19 illustrations

From Mister to Sister

Story by Melissa N., illustrations by Joe Six-Pack. Dan just wanted to help guide his girlfriend’s sister out of her depression. Instead, he’s being guided out of his manhood. Book / 84 pages / 24 illustrations

The Russian Girl

Story by Melissa N., illustrations by Joe Six-Pack. Casey’s wife has had enough of watching him kill himself with work, so she forces him out of his comfort zone... Into the life of a female stripper. Book / 196 pages / 30 illustrations

Swindled into Skirts

“Beta Male” by Joe Six-Pack. Kyle inherited a multi-million dollar mansion in southern California. He begins to adjust to the Cali lifestyle, but his adjustments seems to have a decidedly feminine flavor to them. Book / 78 pages / 23 illustration

Mergers & Acquisitions

Story by James J. Craft, Illustrations by Sortimid. Mark is a disaffected retail salesperson, and after a takeover of his store, he finds himself selling feminine fashion... and struggling to embrace everything about it. Book / 103 pages / 31 illustration

Suddenly a Secretary

Story & art by Joe Six-Pack. Rock guitarist Mick has become obsessed with following the life of secretary Lori Chandler through her inter-office email messages. Soon, Mick is taking her place. Book / 133 pages / 30 illustrations

Stories of the Supernatural

A Change for the Better

“Do-Overs” by Joe Six-Pack. Evan wants a chance to do over his biggest mistake. He gets the chance, but he keeps wanting his new life to be a little bit better than the last. Book / 59 pages / 18 color illustrations

Changed and Rearranged

“Wrongs Make Wright” By Joe Six-Pack. Chris and Matt were rivals. Then, Matt decided to show everyone how smart he truly was by impersonating a teacher. But the disguise becomes more and more real, much to Chris’ dismay. Book / 74 pages / 19 illustrations

From Pals to Gals

From the files of TGStories.com: “Mandate of the People” By Joe Six-Pack. Teens Jeremy and Stewart are good friends, but a bit thick in the noggin. When they jokingly nominate each other for Prom Queen, they slowly become the perfect candidates, thanks to some magic. Book / 45 pages / 16 illustrations

A High-Heeled Halloween

Story & art by Joe Six-Pack. A costume shop has four spooky tales to tell this Halloween, where the price you pay for your costume is far more than money. Book / 128 pages / 34 illustrations

Born on Black Friday

Story & art by Joe Six-Pack. Malcom Balford was forced to go shopping on Black Friday. What he finds at the mall may mean that Malcom will never leave. Book / 57 pages/ 17 illustrations.

In the Family Way

Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. The Finch brothers are trying to catfish a man out of his money. To do so, they dress up as mother and daughter. But their impersonations slowly seem to be taking them over. Book / 182 pages / 42 illustrations

Crossed Fiction

Sisters for the Summer

"Camp Counseling" By Joe Six-Pack. Brock McCade always thought of himself as a real man, or at least he would be one, someday. After summer camp, he's no longer so sure. Book / 76 pages / 17 illustrations

They're the Girls for the Job

"Peace and Harmony" By James J Craft. Illustrations by blackshirtboy. Pete and Harmon need jobs bad. How far would they have to go to get them? Book / 64 pages / 19 illustrations

Blondie's Lost Summer

By KK. Illustrations by Fraylim. Carl's dream summer was about to become three months of dresses, heels and makeup. Book / 159 pages / 48 illustrations

Blondie's Lost Year

By KK. Illustrations by Fraylim. Book Two in the Blondie Series. Carl's trip to Florida has been horrible enough, trapped in dresses and makeup. Now, high school has presented a whole new level of humiliation for him. Book / 221 pages / 52 illustrations

Blondie He's Not

Story by KK, illustrations by Fraylim. Mark got a job at a salon, and fell in love with one of the customers. Problem was that customer was Candi "Blondie" Wethers, and what happened to Candi was about to happen to Mark. Book / 151 pages / 40 illustrations

I Never Wanted to be a Woman

"Politically Corrected" By Cheryl Lynn. Illustrations by Joe Six-Pack. Michael's politically active mother has decided she's going to make her hippie son over into the daughter she always wanted. Book / 64 pages / 19 illustrations

If the Shoes Fit

"Hand Me Downs" By KK, illustrations by Fraylim. Sydney is a teen who is just trying to make it through the summer with no money. He finds himself wearing hand-me-downs from his sister, and that takes his life in a whole new direction. Book / 98 pages / 30 illustrations

The Boy's Guide to Girlhood

Story by KK, illustrations by Fraylim. Dweeb Kenny and cool Rex find themselves trapped in a Principal's twisted scheme, and only one of them is going to get out in tact. Book / 109 pages / 32 illustrations

Fashion Victims

Story by Lauren Bliss, illustrations by Fraylim. Teenage boy Jamie just needed clothes for school. Oh, he's going to get clothes for school. Just not male ones. Will he ever need male clothes again? Book / 67 pages / 26 illustrations

The Boy's Guide to Girlhood

Story by KK, illustrations by Fraylim. Dweeb Kenny and cool Rex find themselves trapped in a Principal's twisted scheme, and only one of them is going to get out in tact. Book / 109 pages / 32 illustrations

The Making of a Beach Bunny

Story by KK & Fraylim, illustrations by Fraylim. Before heading off to college, John wanted to spend his last normal summer at the old rental summer house with his friend Stanley. There was nothing about this summer that would be normal. Book / 134 pages / 58 illustrations

Medical Miss-Practice

Story by KK & Fraylim, illustrations by Fraylim. Jerry just needed a medical procedure. He came out with two big new problems and a whole new life. Now he's losing everything he loves, piece by piece. Book / 95 pages / 51 black & white illustrations

12 Days of Christmas

Story by KK, illustrations by Fraylim. Paul was a rising executive, but he had a secret embezzlement scheme. Now he's being blackmailed into skirts day-by-day in the 12 days of Christmas. Book / 74 pages / 21 illustrations

Seriously Sissified

A Family Femmed

"The Femmed Family Robinson" by James J. Craft & Cheryl Lynn, illustrations by Sortimid. The Robinson boys all had dreams of their own, once. Now they have new ones, thanks to their stepmother. Book /96 pages / 29 color illustrations

Forever Femmed

Story by James J. Craft & Cheryl Lynn, illustrations by Sortimid. "A Family Femmed's" Deborah is still hard at work, flipping men into sissies and selling them to the highest bidder. But this time, there's a new wrinkle. Book / 108 pages / 28 illustrations

Auntie's Girl Time

By Cheryl Lynn. David was just a young teenage boy who wanted all the things in life a man could look forward to. His aunt, though, is going to make sure he never gets them. Book / 79 pages / 20 illustrations

Revenge of the Cheerleaders

"Pansy Cheers" By Angela J. Patrick Sears was a football player trying to sleep with every cheerleader at his small college. He'd have to pay for his conquests. Book / 116 pages / 19 illustrations

He's Got His Mind Maid Up

By James J. Craft. Illustrations by kinkyrocket. Corey has just a sliver of a chance to get into college, but that chance involves becoming his stepmother's maid. And she wants him to fit both the role and the dress. Book / 68 pages / 16 illustrations

Fated for Femininity

Story by KK, illustrations by RocketXpert. When a web page shows Evan having sex with another boy, the poor kid is chased out of town — right into the arms of a gender therapist who has her own agenda. Book / 70 pages / 15 illustrations

Un-Boxed & Undone

By James J. Craft, illustrations by Banedearg with additional art by Joe Six-Pack. Caleb is struggling to get his YouTube career started. When he gets some strange shipments of makeup and clothes, he finds his channel suddenly taking off - but can he control it? A picture story. Book / 41 Pages / 33 illustrations

Web Classics Revisited

Two Forms of ID

By Joe Six-Pack. Harvey had the unusual ability to convincingly imitate a teenage girl. In desperation, he has to use that talent to make some money. But when is enough enough? Paperback / 194 pages / text only

Barbie's Life

Story & Art by Melissa N. Chris was a student actor who said he could play any role. A disgruntled girlfriend and playwright are about to see if he'll be able to play the lead role in... Barbie's Life. Book / 55 pages / 21 rendered images

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His World as a Spoiled Girl (Part 2)

His Life as a Trophy Wife (Part 3)

The Fairest One of All

Sold in one part

