

## **Circumstance by Design - (or Damn the Cliche's, Full Speed Ahead) by Joe Six-Pack**

### **AI art by Redryder**

"Come on Derek!" she said. "What could go wrong?"

"What could go wrong? What could go wrong!?" Derek replied. "My... butt in a sling, that's what could go wrong!"

"Derek!" she said, stretching out his name as long as she held breath. "Please?" she said with a pout. Her large, moist, blue eyes squinted and pleaded. Her beautiful red shiny lips frowned. Her head dipped atop her pencil-thin neck. Blonde hair, held high on her head in a pony tail, swayed and shook. The features on her face were small and delicate, and her skin was so smooth and new that just the graze of a feather might ruin its' perfection. No man alive could look upon this girl's face and not cave into her requests.



Derek would resist, but eventually he would give in. And it would feel so good.

Although for now, Derek was standing as firm as his will would allow. "No, Becky!" He grabbed her by the shoulders, and gently as a young man his size could. "I step one foot inside, and I lose everything! My scholarship, my place on the Dean's list, my spot on the football team! Everything!"

"No one's gonna know," Becky said, not letting her disappointment be obscured in any way. She shuffled her feet. "It's just that..."

Derek's ears pricked up. It could be the first part of a sentence he had long wanted to hear. "...I wanted tonight..." That was the second part of the sentence. "...to be..." Third part. "...special." Jackpot! Cash all chips!

"B... B... But. Um. Oh," Derek bumbled. Any words would have done. It gave him a vital pause. He wanted to at least look like he was using his brain in making this decision. Truthfully, his brain was not involved. "Okay, I guess," he said. The poor boy was way far gone now. All Becky had to do was gently tug at his arm, and he would follow. And he did. Becky led him by the hand out of his dorm, down across campus, through the dark night and under the dim street lamps all the way to Sykes Hall.



Sykes Hall struck an imposing silhouette against the sky of the full moon. It was one of those old red-brick ivy-covered buildings, built like a castle and as permanent as the pyramids of Egypt. Most importantly, it was the forbidden fruit of the college campus, the holy grail of many young men who attended the school. It was the girl's dorm. No men allowed. It was only right when he was face to face with the sign on the side of the building that Derek's wits were brought back to him.

"Hold it, hold it, hold it!" Derek said, reclaiming his hand. "There's no way I'm getting past security, Becky! And there's no way I can climb these walls!"

"Shhh!!!" Becky admonished. She placed her hand over his mouth to stop

any further noise. Derek was tempted to keep talking just to make her touch him like that again. "I got it covered!" Becky looked around and found a small nutshell discarded by a nearby tree. She tossed the shell at a third-story window in what could only be described as the epitome of a 'girlie' throw. The shell hit its mark, however. Derek hoped it was a lucky throw. He was uncomfortable with the idea that she had learned to do it by practice.

A few moments after it hit, a window opened up and a large bundle was tossed out the window. It hit Derek squarely in the head, knocking him to the ground. Becky tried to muffle her laughter.

"What the!?!..." Derek tried to ask.

"Shhh!!!" Becky protested. "Just do what I say." Catching another look at the girl's beautiful face in the moonlight made it easy for Derek to go along with her wishes. Becky removed a few items from the bundle. A long coat, a hat. "Take your shoes off. And socks," she commanded. "Stand up."

She fed his arms through the sleeves of the coat and slapped the large floppy hat on his head. In the dark, it was very tough to see what was happening. And he didn't much care, with her hands swirling all over his body. "Lift your left foot," Becky said. Derek complied, enjoying the feeling of his bare feet in this girl's hands. She slipped a shoe on his foot. With a heel! A high one!

"Wait a minute," Derek said, "just wait a darn minute here." He immediately figured the plan out right there. He was in the middle of a bad B film all the sudden: Boy dresses as girl to sneak into girl's dorm, mix-ups occur, wackiness ensues.

Not missing a beat, Becky stood up straight, balancing on her toes and planted a long, deep kiss on Derek's lips as she caressed his face with her fingers. Derek knew it was just to keep him quiet. Still, he let nothing in this moment go unfelt. He probably had then let Becky put his right foot in the remaining shoe. He wasn't sure, because he was mentally somewhere south of Bermuda. Becky placed a pair of cats-eye sunglasses on his head and brought him to the front door. She buzzed the intercom and waited for the reply.

Behind the glass door Becky and Derek saw the unimposing figure of the 300-pound five-foot nothing security guard, Wayne. He slowly approached the door, grasping his belt to look like he held some authority. Becky

gave him her brightest smile and cutest little wave. Wayne recognized the young girl, as he had often spent a good many evenings and afternoons in his bedroom working the ol' butter churn while imagining her face.

She was a longtime resident of the hall. He would let her in after he could get a good look at her. Becky's taut little body was the sort that you didn't believe until you saw it. And once you had seen it, you had to keep checking to see if was real. Her waist was just thin enough for a big man to place both his hands around so they almost touch. From the waist down, the two and a half feet to her ankles went on for miles. Her legs were slim, but still shapely.

Wayne's favorite part was the gap in between her thighs that was at least an inch, maybe two. One of his many fetishes! The waist up, though, was the best part. From the thin waist, her torso seemed to expand out like an inverted cone, curving until it reached her breasts. Beside the fact that her breasts appeared to make up a third of her body weight, they also hung in midair, suspended at the tip by invisible threads from above. Unreal beauty!

Wayne pretended to not recognize her for another minute, before he broke his gaze. As for the football player in drag next to her, he had a tough time trying to figure that one out. Was she trying to sneak this guy in? Sometimes these kids must have thought he was a moron. The guy was six-five, 280 pounds, all muscle. There was at least three days' beard on his lantern-like jaw. His forearms were as big as hams, and they made mink coats with less hair on them. He was a gorilla in a trench coat.

Becky gave him the sign. Wayne saw it. He shook his head in disgust, he felt so dumb. The sign indicated it was one of those 'special' cases. He quickly remembered it was indeed the fifteenth already, and this had all been arranged long ago. It meant another easy six hundred in his paycheck for looking the other way. He buzzed open the door.

"Good evening, ladies," Wayne said, making way for them to pass. Derek was tempted to swat the guy in the head for being so blind. Thank god this rent-a-cop wasn't guarding Fort Knox. But Derek kept his mouth shut and eyes forward. Once they got to Becky's floor, Becky went over to one of her neighbor's rooms and gently rapped on the door. It opened a crack as the occupant peeked through.

"Thanks, Dee!" Becky whispered. A single eye was visible in the crack.

Presumably, it was one of a pair that belonged to 'Dee'. It gave Derek a look.

"Ugh. So much for that hat. You owe me!" Dee whispered back. The door closed silently. Becky then made a show of quietly opening the door to her room and ushering in Derek. Once inside, Derek flipped the light switch on and Becky quickly flipped it back off.

"No need for that," Becky said.

In the darkness, Derek scrambled to get out of the coat. Once he had discarded it, somebody was helping him with his shirt. Once Derek's hands had found Becky, he started to tug at her top. The scramble of clawing limbs got faster and more desperate in just a few seconds. Derek heard fabric tear, but wasn't sure at all who did it. In record time, he was pretty sure he was naked, and feeling Becky's arms locked around his neck indicated she was nude enough to get to the good stuff. She slowly drew him down to her.

Derek, with the greatest hesitation and overwhelming temptation, started to run his hands along her body. He felt the incredible, luscious contours. He then felt her hands run up his torso and grip his chest hair, as she brought him closer to her. Once he was close enough, her hands let go and she brought them around to grip his ass. Derek grunted in surprise. Since she had set the tone, he grabbed her breasts. She giggled.



That was enough to start sending sensations racing up and down Derek's body. Becky had just surpassed everything he had ever thought of as sexy. All buttons pushed, his dick now started to respond in full force. He felt sirens go off in his head. Opening his eyes he was surprised to see red flashing lights in his vision. Having actual sex with a girl was sure different than masturbating, he thought. Becky then pushed Derek away. He squirmed and pawed for her, like a newborn baby denied milk in mid-meal. But as he opened his eyes, he realized the sound of sirens and the flashing red light were not limited to his imagination. It was actually happening.

"Shit!" Becky said. "Fire drill!"

"What the...." Derek asked himself. "Fire drill?"

"Fire drill!!!" Becky confirmed. She leapt off the bed, taking a sheet with her, as she started to look around in panic. She turned on the lights and started to go into a minor fit. In reflex, Derek covered himself with a pillow. He looked down on the floor for his clothes, and grabbed his pants, only to find out exactly what had gotten ripped a minute ago.

Becky started hopping in place. "They'll search the rooms in five minutes, we've got to get out of here!"

Derek tried to think. "Calm down, Beck! I'll just..." Jump out the third floor window? "I can..." Hide? "If I... " Reason with them? Damn it, he had no ideas. Just then, out down the hall, Derek and Becky could hear the heavy pounding that the dorm's Head Resident was making on each room.

"Let's go girls, let's move!" The pounding got nearer and nearer. When it got to Becky's door, the noise sent Derek scrambling under the covers of the bed. "Get a move on, people!" the woman called. But the door didn't open.

"Here!" Becky said, tossing something at Derek. He turned his head back at Becky to notice that she had discarded her sheet, and was now standing stark naked as she dug through her dresser. Deep in the recesses of his mind, he wolf-whistled. Becky found a giant night shirt and covered herself with it. Now that the show was over, Derek

looked at the item she had tossed him a minute ago. It was another night shirt. Pink. With bunnies on it.

"Well?" Becky asked.

"What about pants?" Derek replied.

"We college girls don't sleep in pants." Becky said, hoping Derek would catch on.

"But I don't see..." Derek blinked. "Oh, come on!"

"We've got two minutes!" Becky grabbed the shirt and pulled it over Derek's head. On Becky, it would have been loose and flowing. On Derek, it stretched tight. She grabbed a giant polka-dot handkerchief and placed it over Derek's head, tying two corners under his chin. That way, Derek looked like "she" had her hair up for bed. She then grabbed a handful of socks and stuffed them down the front of his shirt, sculpting them into a pair of malformed boobs.

Becky examined him closely. If someone were legally blind, drunk and five miles away, Derek could get away with it. But it was the best anyone could do. Which was pretty sad. She opened up the door and shoved Derek out into the hall. She then banged on Dee's door, her other neighbor Carolyn's door and a couple of other friends. Of course her friends were all laughing at Derek, but Becky's determination to not get caught got the girls to calm down. They formed a tight convoy around Derek, as he bent down a bit to try and blend in.

They shuffled out, went down to the ground floor, left the building, and gathered next to a nearby sculpture. It was what they were supposed to do, in the event of a fire. Derek peered over the heads of the girls to see what was going on. He was scared to death that the building was actually on fire, and that he was stuck out here. That would be a nightmare. Correction. More of a nightmare. But every time he stuck his head up, Becky would grab it and push it back down, trying to hide him. He had to check for smoke though. Visions of his scholarship going up in flames were drifting through his mind. Finally, Becky spied the Head Resident coming, and pushed Derek's head down as firmly as she could.

"And stay down!" she added.

"All right. Pretty sloppy, girls," the Head Resident said. "We're gonna

need to do that many more times! I'm going to go over safety procedures again!" She let out a deep sigh of disapproval. "Roll call!" The crowd of a hundred girls groaned. If one listened carefully, they could hear a deep baritone voice amongst them. Two and a half hours later, Becky's entourage of girls dropped her and Derek off at her room. "Whew!" Derek said. "That was lucky.

"L-U-C-K-Y. I tell you. I don't want to go through that again. Boy oh boy. So when do you think I can get out of here? I think we wait a couple of hours and..."

He then noticed Becky had passed out face-first on her bed. Derek checked the clock. It was three A.M. Realizing how tired he felt, he decided enough was enough.

"Move over," he said.

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"Just hold still," Becky said to Derek, "hold still!" She grabbed his face and brought it back facing her. It was a little past noon, and the two students had blown off classes for the day. They had slept in a little, fooled around a bit and then decided on a plan of escape from the dorm. Really, Derek had to admit, it was Becky's plan and he was just a helpless pawn in her scheme at this point.

The plan was that Derek had to exit the building in broad daylight and make his way to a safe place to change. He was gonna have to get past all the residents of the girls' dorm, past the security. He had planned to find a bathroom nearby and change, but there simply wasn't that sort of privacy at any of the bathrooms on this side of campus. Not to mention that he didn't have much to wear right now. He had lost his sneakers at some point, and his pants were torn right up the inseam. This meant that he was going to have to walk the half-mile back to his dorm unit in disguise.

Derek had rationalized it by taking the approach that he could look as ridiculous as he thought he did and not worry. As long as no one could identify him as Derek Richards, football star, he was going to be okay. If people thought it was just some poor frat pledge or whatever, great. As long as he didn't look like himself, everything was going to be fine.

Using this logic, he had let his girlfriend pluck his eyebrows, which

is what she was doing right now. This way, his eyes would be looking very much not his own. He had shaved his trademark beard stubble as close as he could, and Becky had covered it with half a tube of foundation. Becky had then pushed the envelope of what make-up could achieve in trying to make Derek's face appear as feminine as possible. It didn't really do much to make him look attractive, but it did make him look completely unlike his usual self. In fact, he would have made a fairly passable East German female weightlifter.



Becky had packed him into some clothes she said she had borrowed from one of her larger neighbors. A pale blue tank top covered a frilly-edged white T-shirt. Over that, a denim jacket. A gargantuan pair of drawstring cargo pants seemed to be baggy enough to cover Derek's quite masculine legs. Somewhere in the dorm, Becky had wrangled up a large poofy wig, long and dark brown. All the better to cover Derek's face as much as possible. With a pair of white tennis shoes, Derek was ready to go. As Becky got herself together, Derek hesitantly examined himself in the mirror. He was a bona-fide heifer, but the most important thing was that he didn't look anything like himself.

He panicked for a brief moment as he remembered that the number of six-foot five people on campus was a very limited group, and some budding Sherlock Holmes might deduce his identity. But he had to calm down and not worry about it. He had to look cool, calm and collected. More than his pride was at stake. Becky stuck a couple of strands of hair behind her ear and proclaimed herself ready. She had done the right thing, dressing way down, so as not to attract attention. But on her, it was wasted effort. No fabric known to mankind could have hid her beauty. But Derek hoped for the best.

They made it outside the building with only some passing snickers from those in on the joke. When they passed security, Becky flashed the sign behind Derek's back at the guard on duty. He nodded compliance, and got one the phone.

Stage two was to begin. Derek noticed nothing, and the two started to make their way across campus. Derek kept telling himself: Cool, calm and collected. Nothing wrong here. Just a couple of girls going to glass. No reason to look twice. Just walking along. And it seemed to be working. Derek just kept on his way, not making any false moves. He was worried about people staring, but so far nobody had even looked at him with any suspicion.

Of course, it was a different story behind Derek. Out of sight, there were plenty of caveman imitations and goofy faces being made by the many class clowns who attended this university. But at the very least, no one suspected the true depth of strangeness they were witnessing.

"Smile!" Becky admonished, jamming her elbow into Derek. He complied. Everything normal here. No problems! To his great relief, Derek could now see his dorm building above the treetops. He had seen no sight sweeter since... well, Becky last night actually.

"Beck!" Derek heard from behind. He grabbed Becky's arm firmly, to send the unspoken message that if she dared to turn around she would lose that limb. "Becky! Where ya goin'?" the voice persisted.

Alongside the two "girls" a car then pulled up and parked. Out came a guy Derek didn't recognize. But Becky apparently did. She quickly took the initiative and steered Derek to cross the street before this guy could catch up to them. Traffic, unfortunately, was not going to let them escape.

"Hey, didn't you hear me?" the guy said, placing himself squarely in front of Becky. Faced with no way out, she suddenly seemed to recognize the existence of the person addressing her.

"Oh, hi, Gordy!" Becky said, smiling brightly and tilting her head. "Good to see you!" She then tried to get past him again. He simply moved a step.

"You forgot, didn't you?" Gordy said. "I can't believe you forgot!" A low groan detectable only by Derek came from Becky's throat. "The art show," she said, trying to sound whimsically aloof. Gordy feigned a look of good-natured bemusement.

"Yeah, I came to pick you up and..."

Derek's head filled with the sound of his eardrums rumbling in fear. He had made some unsubtle attempts to free himself from Becky's grip, but she refused to let go. Derek realized that she was under the twisted delusion that this could still work. Derek then considered the possibility of picking up this Gordy character and tossing him into a hedge. His brain vetoed the idea only after many stages of debate.

"...I said hi. Hello?" Gordy was still taking. Derek realized Gordy was talking to him. Derek looked at Becky with desperation in his eyes.

Becky bumped herself into Derek, to prompt a reply. "Gordy Drake, this is... Bree... Sa..." Becky was floundering. "Sabrina Peterson. Sabrina, this is Gordy."

"Once again, hi Sabrina." Gordy said.

"Hi" Derek squeaked.

"So," Gordy continued, trying to rescue a very uncomfortable pause.

"What do you say we get to the art show?"

Becky was delivering her best turn-down. "Uh, well, gee, Gordy, the thing is I've got to do this paper. Due tomorrow. Today. In an hour. Paper due in an hour," she smiled, magically bypassing the reality of her obvious lie.

"You said that the last time, Becky," Gordy countered, "and the time before that you had a science project."

"I did, huh?"

"Yeah. I'm beginning to think you don't like me," Gordy said, with insincere sadness.

She doesn't! Derek thought to himself. You're a jerk! Go away! Becky was a trooper.

"Well, Gordy, the truth is... You see... I've got to.." Then she found a valid point. "Well, I can't desert my friend Sabrina here, can I?"

Gordy had an answer. "No problem, she can come along!" Check.

Becky moved to block. "I wouldn't want Sabrina to feel like a third wheel."

Gordy sprung the trap. "No problem, we can double." He turned to his car. "Hey Mack!"

Derek was familiar with that name. He knew a 'Mack'. But it couldn't be that same 'Mack', could it? Out of the car stepped Mack Wilson, starting right tackle for the football team Derek was on. He stood up tall, displaying his six-ten height and three hundred pound frame.

"See?" Gordy said through a beaming smile, "They were practically made for each other!"

Check and mate. Derek thought that surely, even if this idiot Gordy hadn't seen through his disguise, Mack would. They had known each other for three years now. Heck, they even showered together. Derek started to sweat and breathe rapidly, and was going to start hyperventilating very soon. He was going to be discovered. Derek's mind then got a shot of the adrenaline usually only produced under conditions of imminent

death. But it did the trick. He suddenly had an idea.

"Hey great!" Derek said. Becky twisted her head around so fast, you could hear her neck crack. Her eyes jumped out of their sockets in shock.

"Umm..." Derek continued, trying to find the right tone for a 'female' voice. It actually sounded somewhere in between a drunken chipmunk and the voice of a gay children's puppet, but it was good enough. "Sounds great, Gordy. What do you think, Becky?"

Becky's face seemed to indicate that reality had dropped away from her for a moment, but Derek hoped she would trust him. She followed his lead. "Yeah. Okay. If you're up for it, Sabrina."

"Cool!" Derek bubbled.

"But we've got to get our acts together." Becky saw the light. "Yeah! Yeah, we're not dressed for an art show. We gotta change. Why don't we go... home... and change?"

Derek nodded his head. Yes. Good girl. She was on the right track.

"Home," Derek repeated for emphasis. He was going to get out of this after all.

"Oh, you look fine," Gordy said, flippantly. "Let's go!" Derek cussed himself out, mentally. Damn. Damn. Damn. Why didn't his brain ever think things out before he spoke? Stupid brain!

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The show was an slothful afternoon of walking three feet at a time and looking at some abstract paint accident on the wall for five minutes. For Becky, it was a bore beyond bores, a fate worse than death or attending a lecture series. She seemed to have the hardest time trying to sound interested and art-literate at the same time. For Derek, however, it was an afternoon of electric excitement. Not a dull moment for him. He tried to maintain a distance from Mack, and move the procession along without coming off as nervous. All of the time there, Derek was trying as hard as he could to behave like a girl on a casual date. He was referencing TV shows he had long forgotten so he could mimic the actresses. He was coming up with entirely new things to do with his pocket-less hands, plastering his face with a smile, and

occasional attempts at batting eyelashes. He had almost perfected a polite laugh that was the best he could do when it came to a giggle. He was acting like a bit of a loon, but unfortunately for Derek, Mack seemed to be more and more interested in him. Derek had seriously misjudged how much a man of Mack's size would excuse in strange behavior, just to date a "girl" close to his own size. Those attempts to act more girlishly had backfired.

And now, when Derek was trying even harder to get Mack to back off, the opposite was happening. As they exited the show, it was about five o'clock, and Derek had realized that four hours had passed at the show. He was sure he had been inside there for a fortnight. The sun was setting, and Derek was watching the daylight fade as he was feeling every ounce of energy slipping away from him. It had been a tough day. Gordy and Mack escorted Derek and Becky out to the parking lot. Derek stared a 'this is your fault, you know' look at Becky. She had a look of 'don't look at me, pal' on her face.

Derek countered with a strong 'we'll continue this later' expression. They shuffled into Gordy's car. As they got underway, Derek's butt was working overtime, slowly inching it's way to the very farthest distance away from Mack. The back seat of Gordy's Honda was unfortunately not wide enough to accommodate the size of the the two people on it, and Derek was powerless but to remain in contact with Mack every single moment.

Derek could also see that up front, Gordy was using his free hand like a tentacle, trying to wrap up Becky in an embrace she wanted no part of. Houdini didn't have the escapability Becky was demonstrating, getting out of every attempt Gordy was making. But Derek had little time for sympathy. He had his own problems.

"So," Mack said to Derek, "you like to party?"

Derek swallowed his tongue. At that moment, the car screeched to a halt. Derek said a silent prayer to God. This nightmare was finally over.

"Everybody out!" Gordy said. As the group extricated themselves from the car - and each other - Derek was horrified to find themselves on the outskirts of town, at a roadside bar far from the lights of the city. Had Derek been not otherwise occupied, he probably would have noticed the route Gordy was taking.

Becky and Derek then turned on their heels and made for the car door handles. Ka-chunk went the locks. Buh-Beep! Went Gordy's remote key alarm.

"Hey, drinks are on us!" Gordy beamed with pride. "It's ladies night!" Derek hated cosmic irony.

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It had started out nicely enough, in a terror-stricken-eternity sort of way, and Derek had started to loosen up a bit, finding himself more relaxed and at ease with himself. The four vodka-tonics helped, too. The interior of the bar was dark and smoke-filled, obviously the sort of place where just about any sort of behavior was tolerated, and just the sort of place where a college boy could easily take advantage of a college girl. Gordy must have calculated that no one would be brave enough to stop him from making some very overt moves on Becky, as the two giants in his company would easily take anyone in the place.

Gordy was using this advantage, practically humping the poor girl in the small booth the group shared. Derek wasn't worried too much about Becky, as she had whispered in his ear earlier that she could handle the 'little weasel' by herself. She really was putting up with a lot for his benefit.

Derek and Mack both had become quite plastered, and were now chatting about the 4-3 defense's advantages to the 3-4, along with other such matters of heaven and earth. But Becky's protests and body language became increasingly more adamant, and had lost any tinge of politeness. When she shrieked at the top of her lungs, Derek took notice.

"Hey!" was all he said - at first. But now, sitting in the county jail, Derek had begun to reconsider the chain of events that brought him here. Truthfully, he regretted little of it.

Gordy had wound up being hoisted into an ambulance, with splints and bandages on every square inch of his body. No regrets there. He had clocked Mack over the head with a chair, when Mack had tried to defend his friend. Again, no regrets. When the bartender and bouncer both tried to subdue him, he had tossed them clear across the room, like pitching horseshoes. Not an iota of regret for that.

The cop he had punched in the mouth - that he regretted. When he had been booked at the police station, he was drunk, ranting and dangerous.

They used tazers to control him, and then locked him in the drunk tank for the rest of the night. Early that morning, he went through fingerprinting, mug shots, and had a full body cavity search. Well, not exactly. When Derek was dragged into the examination room, all the attendant there said was, "Your girlfriend must want you to herself."

Derek didn't get it. "Five hundred dollars to keep it that way, at least."

They just continued to look at each other for a minute, before she removed her unused rubber gloves and rang a buzzer. Derek was led out again. Later, he found out that Becky had bribed the woman to avoid discovering anything that would have made things tougher on him. But quite the opposite had occurred.

When he was arraigned as "Sabrina Peterson" Derek fully realized that the ruse was still in effect. Since he had no ID on him, the cops must have assumed that the name that Gordy had given them was real. And now, he was legally obligated to carry on as such. His trial had been arranged quickly, as Derek had insisted on the quickest trial possible - in fact, he never even posted bail. But this left little time for his public defender to work up a competent defense. And now, here he was sitting in jail, sentenced to eight months for four counts of assault, assaulting an officer of the peace, disorderly conduct in public, resisting arrest and destruction of private property.

Soon, he was trying to get used to the idea of prison, as well as the ridiculous and terrifying problem of doing it in the women's wing. He had pulled a trick early on, shedding his wig and getting a slight trim from the prison's barber, and then telling the prison guards he had a 'buzz cut'. This also identified him as a "possible lesbian" and he was given a private cell and allowed to shower by himself. It was all Becky's idea, God bless her, and she had been by to visit every day she could.



He felt a jab in his ribs from a baton, bringing him back to the present. "Hey, Princess, I don't see you listening to your tapes." Princess was Derek's prison nickname, given to him for his special treatment and a joke on his enormous size. Prison humor really is the funniest kind of humor. The person who had jabbed him in the ribs was Flat-top, a prison guard who had taken a 'special interest' in Derek. She had good reason to. She knew the truth about Derek.

Her real title was Corrections Officer Rydell, but her military haircut earned her the nickname. She seemed to enjoy it. She was a cruel woman, who had found her calling in life. It's much easier to find your place in this world if you have an unpleasant personality, because there is always a market demand for jerks. It was in the shower, when Flat-top wanted to get a 'good look' at the new inmate, that she got an eye full of something she'd never forget. She seemed angry and ready to bust Derek's ass. But instead, she wanted to make a deal. So every month, a fresh check was sent to Flat-top's mailbox for 'security services rendered'.

Derek asked Becky to take what little money he has stashed away and take charge of mailing the checks. In exchange, Flat-top looked the other way. But unfortunately for Derek, this woman wanted 'guarantees' that his true identity would never be found out. If he was, Flat-top said she would lose her job. She demanded that Derek work hard to maintain the disguise.

Therefore, his "tapes" - or actually audio books on CD - were a selection of instructional and motivational messages on how to be more feminine. Titles like "Your Feminine Power", "10 Ways to a Successful Relationship", "The Five Things Every Woman Should Know", and the one he was required to listen to three times a day, "A More Ladylike You for the Man You Love".

And he was a quick study, thanks to the polite raps on his back from a truncheon every so often. Flat-top was going to make sure that Princess was in every obvious way a woman. Derek didn't even look at Flat-top after his ribcage-bruising reminder. He put his headphones on and pushed play. He didn't want any more trouble. Although the words on the CD were loud and clear, Derek was so used to it now that he could certainly recite the entire set of books from memory. His mind drifted, and he found himself looking down the hall at the clock. He had a couple of hours before his daily "appointment".

Later, a rap of a baton on the cell bars woke Derek. A guard motioned

it was time to go. He went through the delicate and choreographed dance of exiting the cell, and proceeding through various gates, before Derek arrived at his destination. It was the prison health ward, where Derek was led into the pharmacy area. He was dispensed his pills and a small cup of water. He took the pills under tight observation, and drank the water. He then opened his mouth, and his teeth and cheeks were checked for any unswallowed items.

The pills were under prescription, after Becky had alerted the prison staff that her friend was under hormone treatment for her "advanced hirsutism". Derek had personally okayed the idea, as Becky had slowly convinced him that the hormones were for his survival at prison. They would control his hair growth and smooth his skin, and give him a 'superficial' feminine appearance, as Becky put it.

Derek grudgingly agreed. The more female he looked, the better. When he was back in his cell, he heard the bell for the afternoon exercise period to begin, and he settled in further to his seat. He wasn't allowed to participate, as the exercise period was largely organized weight lifting and conditioning.

Given his size, the prison officials had determined that "Sabrina" was a threat to "misuse" the equipment for "disruptive purposes". The restriction made life duller than it had to be, and it led to other problems as well. With no exercise and a supply of estrogen in his system, Derek had started to fatten up a bit. So he had cut back on his eating. Way back. He was down to two hundred and ten pounds, and yet he felt sluggish and tired. But he was going to keep on the diet, so he didn't leave prison a butter ball. Derek watched - at foot level - the other prisoners shuffle by. In prison, you avoid eye contact. Once everybody had left, Derek checked the time and decided that another nap was the only thing he was really interested in. It would be another three hours until dinner. He put his head down to rest, and tried not to think about how alone and miserable he felt.

Even deeper inside, he was afraid. Deathly afraid of his little secret. Before he could let those thoughts fester in his brain, he popped his latest CD in the player: "Sleep Yourself Thin, Subliminal Empowerment To Achieve Your Ideal Body."

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Derek was buzzed into the visitor's reception area, and seated across a

plexiglass window before his one remaining hope in this world. Becky. She smiled politely, with tears in her eyes. Derek had seen the same thing every time she had visited over the past seven months. For a one night fling, he was impressed that this girl had remained so loyal to him. And apparently, she was in love. Or if she was pretending, it was one hell of a ruse.



Becky adjusted the microphone in front of her. "Hey, Bree," she said, her voice breaking. "They treating you good?"

Both Becky and Derek knew that these conversations were monitored, so they had to carry on as if Derek were who he pretended to be. She had gotten into the habit of shortening "Sabrina" to "Bree" over the months. Derek desperately wanted to just talk to her and tell her how much he deeply appreciated everything she had done for him, he wanted to reach through the glass and stop her crying, he wanted to tell her how much he truly loved her.

"Yeah. I'm hanging in there... babe," Derek said. The two had adopted the pretense of being lesbian lovers, and Derek could at least express some of his affection that way. But it didn't even begin to communicate what he wanted to say.

"How's school?" Derek asked.

Becky swallowed hard. "Same old junk. Skipping classes, spending Daddy's money." She tried to smile. "I miss you... baby." She sniffled.

Derek wanted to hold her tight. Instead all he could do was think of something dumb to cheer her up. "It won't be long now. Thirty-five days. Maybe even less." Becky couldn't even lift her head to look at him.

"Hey," Derek said, desperately trying to make her laugh. "In no time at all, we'll be out with friends at our favorite lezzie bars, gettin' tattoos and shopping for combat boots."

Derek finally got her to smile. It was well worth the effort to see it. It made him feel like this was going to all work out. Flat-top tapped her baton on the table. "Time's up, Princess." Derek got up.

"I'll see you in couple of days, honey-pie," Becky said. "Don't worry, every..." The microphone was switched off, and all Derek could see was her pantomiming the rest of her sentence. She gave him a thumbs up, and wiped away a tear.

When Derek turned away to face the exit, Becky flashed Flat-top the sign. Flat-top nodded back. Phase four was ready to begin. The automatic door slammed shut and locked, and Flat-top and Derek proceeded on back to the cell.

"Hey, honey-pie," Flat-top said. "Some kinda sweet little girl you got there."

"Yup. She sure is," Derek said.

"Uh. Yeah. Sweet. I've been lookin forward to her visits as much as you have, I bet. What a looker. You know what I'd like to do to her?"

"No, what?" Derek replied. Flat-top wasn't having any luck trying to goad him. She changed the subject.

"Hey, you know what they put on checks?" she asked rhetorically.

Derek thought for a second. "Numbers, codes, what bank issued the checks..."

Flat-top interrupted him. "Addresses." She slowed her speech down to give it as much menace as she could. "Sykes Hall. Room 375," Flat-top said nonchalantly.

"Mean anything to you, Princess?"

Derek tried to recall what that was. He had heard of Sykes Hall, maybe. But where?

"You know, a badge can get you into a lot of places," continued the guard. "A lot of places. People don't even question it."

"I would think so," Derek said. This conversation is all over the place, he thought to himself. Was there a point to this?

"You can get into houses, apartments, dorm rooms." She checked to see if she was getting to him. "Wherever you want to go." She went on, "You know what I saw on TV the other day? They were advertising for one of those spy cameras. So small you can put 'em anywhere. Really cool little things. You've seen those ads, haven't you?" She smiled wickedly.

"Oh, yeah, I've seen those! They've got these pinhole lenses and..."

"You'd be surprised at the quality of the image you get off those. Here." She removed a number of pictures from her shirt pocket, and held them before Derek. "Take a look for yourself."

Derek recognized the images. It looked like the inside of Becky's dorm room, just as he remembered it many months ago. His hands started to tremble. His legs felt like lead. Flat-top flipped to another photo. "I like this one, good contrast, rich color."

It was Becky. Changing clothes. Naked. Derek's full rage came alive right there and then. He had snapped. He took his cuffed hands and swung them into Flat-top's jaw. Derek heard the bone crack. Flat-top reached for her tazer. Derek swung his hands back to punch her in the stomach. She fell back and hit her head on the cement floor. She was out cold.

Derek bent down and grabbed her keys to undo his chains and cuffs. He had no idea what he was doing anymore. He could only think of escape. It was all his brain could process at this moment. Once free of the restraints, he made for the nearest gate. He unlocked it, but he was still many doors away from getting out. An access door to Derek's left led to a stairwell, and he found that one of the keys worked the lock. As soon as he was through, alarms sounded throughout the cell block. He decided to go up, rather than down, to work back against where the guards would assume he was headed. Two floors up, he found himself on an administrative level.

It had been evacuated, as was the procedure during an alert like this one. Looking around, he saw nothing. No options. No way out.

"Hey!" he heard from behind. It sounded like... Becky? Derek turned around to find no one. But there was a door open that he hadn't seen before. It led into a hall. There, he found a janitor's closet, complete with a change of clothes. He discarded his bright orange corrections outfit for the drab blues of a janitorial uniform. Derek pulled a baseball cap low over his head and made his way down the hall. He found an elevator with the doors open, ready to go. When he arrived at the ground floor, a guard was waiting for him.

"C'mon! You're supposed to be evacuated by now!" the guard yelled at him. He waved Derek through to the main hall. "Get your ass in gear, lady!" With that, Derek exited the prison right through the front door. It was almost too easy.

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She tapped a few keys on her keyboard, and found what she was looking

for. "Okay, yes, if Carolyn can push her subject up to phase three by December, I think we can get Dee's guy into phase two in about five to six days from now."

Becky adjusted her headset and sat back in her chair to think deeper. "Well, I know it's slow, but it's all we can do with the funding we have. If we could expand..."

She slumped her head in exasperation. "I know you're doing your best..." She turned to her friend Dee who was leafing through a copy of 'Covert Operations Quarterly'. Becky made a gagging motion at her neck. Dee snickered back.

"Okay, Bill, I'll give you a ring when we can get more specific on dates and times." Becky pretended to ram her head against the desk. "Talk to you later! Bye!" She struck the hang-up button on the phone. Becky waited a moment to collect her breath, and then grabbed her Headset and pretended to be breaking it in half. "Arrrrrrggh!" "Bill giving you the usual run-around, chief?" Dee said, not breaking her attention from the 'Reexamining Iranian Intelligence Gathering 1979-1984' article she was engrossed in.

"He's in one of his poopy moods," Becky said, releasing the anger in a deep breath. "Wanna get something to eat?"

"Yeah, sure." Dee flipped shut her magazine. "Just how many Ayatollahs are there anyway? Like, a million?"

"Tell me about it." Becky then felt her pager go off. "Hold on," she said, checking it. "Yes!"

Dee was curious. "What?"

"Yes!!" Becky yelled. She pumped her fist in celebration.

"What!?" Dee repeated.

"Bree.. I mean Derek." She started to hop in place. "He's outside!" Dee scrambled to her feet. "Here? Jeez, it's been long enough."

"Ten days isn't that long really - about average. He must be waiting to see if I stop by." Becky rushed to a mirror and checked herself. "Okay, I'm gonna go out and let him find me. You do surveillance." Becky took off her sweatshirt and pulled a tight t-shirt with 'strawberry

shortcake' on the front. "If he talks to me, and we leave together, make the calls for phase five."

"But I'm hungry!" Dee protested. Becky spun her hand like a clock. Time was being wasted.

"Wish me luck!" she said, leaving the room. Dee waited a moment and then dug through Becky's desk until she found a powerbar. She then walked over to the desk, pressed a hidden button, and a bank of eight video screens revealed themselves along the wall. Derek was on most of them.

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The car's wheels screeched as Derek stepped on the accelerator. "Anyone following us?" Derek asked.

Becky looked out the back window. "No. No one I can see," she said, lying. She turned back around to look at Derek. Derek had missed her so much. Her support, her humor, her friendship. It meant the world to him, and he knew that even if everything went against him for the rest of his life on, he would never regret coming back to see her. Becky hugged his arm.

"What are we gonna do, Bree?"

Derek kissed her on the head. He then refocussed his attention on the road. "I don't want you to get mixed up in this, Beck."

"No!" Becky insisted. "No, don't get all... mister protective on me!"

"Beck.."

"No! You never would have gotten into all this if it weren't for... I just feel responsible, somehow." Becky released her grip on Derek.

He ignored the other cars for a moment and addressed her. "Don't be stupid. This isn't your fault. These have been all my decisions. I'm the one who's responsible for this mess." Derek turned back to traffic. "You've been incredible. You've been there for everything. I don't deserve you. And I'm not going to get you in any more trouble."

Becky screwed up her face in disbelief. "Are you done?"

Derek's look of heroism evaporated. "Yeah."

"Good, turn here."

---

The first stop they had made was at the pharmacy. Becky bought hair dye and some clippers. Next, the mall. She bought Derek a mini-wardrobe of jeans and t-shirts. After that, she had rented a motel room and snuck Derek inside. Derek was looking forward to shedding the effeminate look he had been maintaining for so long. He thought that it was to his advantage that the police were looking for a woman. When he was officially Derek again, who would suspect him? When they had settled, Becky took to the task of making over Derek. She mixed together the chemicals of the dye and worked it through his hair.

"Blonde?" he asked.

Becky wagged her finger under his nose. "Well, turning your brown hair black doesn't really make you look all that different. This way, it's like you'll be a totally different person."

"Next, cut it," Derek said, "short." His hair was almost down to his jaw, having let it grow in prison for a while.

"Yeah," Becky agreed, "it just kinda 'blah' the way it is."

"Sure is," Derek agreed.

"Okay, now we wash it... and then I'll wait an hour to cut it," Becky instructed. After the gunk was washed out, Derek got into his new duds. His standard-issue men's uniform of Levi's and T-shirt felt good in his hands. On his body, though, it was a different story. They hung like drapes on his thinner frame. He had dropped loads of weight, and was now a skinny shadow of his former self at 180 pounds. But the distracting part for Derek wasn't the way the clothes were too large, it was the way they "tented" on him. To be blunt, he had breasts. They weren't big on his large frame, but still large enough to be very noticeable. The estrogen he had been taking had more of an effect than he had been prepared to admit to himself. With the women's corrections clothes on, it looked all right. Now, in his preferred clothes, his chest looked bizarre on him. He tried to press them in, he tried to slouch a bit. They would not go away.



Derek tore a length of cloth from the bed sheet and wrapped it around his chest, trying to bind himself down. That helped, but it also revealed another problem. His butt. It was about the same size it always had been - unfortunately the rest of him had shrunken considerably. Without his breasts to set it off, his ass was looking

large enough to sell advertising space on. And there was nothing he could do about it.

Becky was trying to look the other way, but finally she had to say something. "It's not working."

"No, it's fine," Derek said. He was not ignorant, he just thought fibbing might bend reality a bit in his favor.

"I don't think so, Bree."

"Derek."

"Right, Sorry."

Derek tugged at the shirt. "Well, so I look strange. At least I'm not 'Sabrina' anymore."

"Um," Becky said. "Yeah."

"What?"

"Well... Don't take this the wrong way..." Becky got up from the bed and wrapped her arms around Derek to try and soften the emotional blow. "But you don't look like Derek, either."

For the just a quick instant, he was very angry with Becky. He hadn't gone through eight months of hell to hear this. It took some willpower, but he held his emotions in check. Reluctantly, Derek looked long and hard in the mirror. It wasn't him. He had to agree.

"First thing we do," Becky said, "is pick a spot on the map and go there." She snuggled up to Derek again. "And never look back."

Derek thought about what Becky said, and then came to an hard conclusion. "You're not coming with me."

"Haven't we been over this?" Becky groaned. She flopped down on the bed again.

"I'm not putting you in danger," Derek insisted, "they find me, they arrest you."

"Arrrgh!" Becky yelled into the air. "Who do you think you are, Clint

Eastwood?" She sat up and got direct with Derek. "I only feel alive when I'm with you. End of discussion."

Derek really didn't think he deserved such loyalty. It truly touched him that this girl was going to stay by his side. He had no idea what he had done to inspire this kind of loyalty and trust. But it warmed his heart to know that he had it. She was right - he wasn't going anywhere without Becky. Still, he wasn't going to ask her to give up college and her future for a life on the lamb. The only way to move on would be to stay. And the only way to keep living would be to do it as someone else. And the way he looked right now, that 'someone else' wasn't going to be someone he wanted to be.

He looked at his face. There wasn't much of a beard there anymore, a small tuft at his chin, peach fuzz for a mustache, and wisps of hair where his sideburns should be. Along with the weight loss, he looked like he was fourteen again. No. That wasn't right. It wasn't just youth. He looked like a woman.

"I look like a woman," Derek said, abruptly.

"No you don't," Becky assured him.

Derek knew the truth. "Yes I do."

"It's those pants. They make you look fat."

"I didn't say I looked fat, I said I looked like a woman." Derek twisted in the mirror. "You think I look fat?"

"No, no. You're not fat at all," Becky reassured him. "It's just that your butt could use some... toning."

"Toning? You mean I'm fat."

"You're beautiful." Becky suddenly realized how stupid this conversation was. "So what do we do now? Where do we go?"

"We stay. You go to school, and I'll.. I don't know. I'll figure something out." Derek scratched his head. He glanced at Becky who was looking less than impressed.

"So what do you think we should do?" Derek asked. What followed was five hours of deep thought and long conversations. A few things

in the motel room were broken in anger. There was a lot of crying, some nervous laughter and quite a bit of staring into space. What Derek had to decide on was nothing less than his future. Becky told him that when 'Derek' had gone missing eight months ago. His one remaining parent - his stepmother - had sold most of his personal items and filed to have Derek declared legally dead. And what friends he had probably wouldn't have even recognized him anymore. Really, he didn't want them to. The career in playing football he had wanted to pursue was gone. He no longer had the pedigree it took to play in college or the pros, and he certainly didn't have the body either.

And there was a chance that the police were looking for both 'Sabrina' as well as Derek. As Becky pointed out to Derek, they certainly were looking for 'Sabrina', but if ol' Flat-top had told them the truth, then it was a matter of time before they would figure out who 'Sabrina' really was. So neither identity was safe.

And what about the future? Besides just escaping the police, how was he going to make his way in life? He had nowhere to run to, and no skills to get a job. Suddenly, what was once just a frightening future became a horrific fate.

"I know this doctor lady," Becky said quietly.

"Uh huh," Derek said, knowing this was going to be something didn't want to hear.

"She taught my health 101 class my freshman year. She and I used to talk some, and she's got this medical... project she's working on." Becky cleared her throat a little. "She's looking for paid volunteers."

"Yeeeeeah." Derek was waiting for the bad part.

"It'd be really great! She's paying \$5,000 for one day, and a couple of follow-up exams, you could have all the money you need to get a place and..."

"What limb does she want to amputate?" Derek said, not entirely kidding.

"No! It's not like that," Becky tried to reassure him. "It's this bone regenerative thing." She gave Derek a look to see if she was still being listened to. She was. "This stuff is supposed to rebuild bone marrow for cancer patients! It'd be so, like, important to humanity and

stuff!" Derek still hadn't heard the catch.

"And?"

"And..." Becky led into the bad news. "It might shrink you an inch or two in height."

"A-ha! I knew that there was..." Derek suddenly felt his brain shift from fifth gear into third. "Wait a minute." He wagged his finger indicating he had a point. "That would help."

Becky didn't seem to understand. "If I lost a couple of inches, then the police wouldn't believe that I could have been Sabrina or Derek!" Derek was getting excited. "That would solve everything! Who ever heard of someone losing height? I'd be in the clear! And I'd have \$5,000!" Derek had only one question. "How soon can we do it?"

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It was a squat little building in the maze of nondescript offices that made up the west side of campus. Few students ever went to this part of the school, as no classes were held here. These were the labs and studios that housed professors who were shooting for federal grant money.

Becky rapped on the door of 671-D and waited. The intercom burst out static with the startlingly loud voice of the occupant. "Yes!?" It said.

"Uh, hi," Becky said, nervously. "It's me. I called." Silence.

"Becky?" More silence.

"Beck-kee?" she said, insisting that the listener recognize her name. The door buzzed open. The interior of 671-D was brightly lit and decorated with plants and old furniture, a stark contrast to the dreary exterior of the building. Derek's nerves were still on edge though. A woman in her mid-thirties rounded a corner and gave a cheery wave.

"Hyee!" she said to Becky. She then turned to Derek. "Wow. You're a tall one, aren't you?" She seemed dazzled by Derek's height. "You must be Nicole." Derek nodded his head slowly. "Well, come on! Let's get you all ready!" She motioned for Derek to follow her. She led him to a small changing room, and left him alone. Derek stripped himself

down and fit himself into the paper gown one finds at doctor's offices, and gingerly entered what looked like an examining room. The woman was waiting there, preparing a set of instruments on a metal tray.

The woman patted an exam chair for Derek to rest on. "By the way, my name is Doctor Marilyn Whitaker, Nicole. And I really have to thank you for volunteering for this treatment. It could help a lot of people, and..."

"Are those syringes?" Derek abruptly asked. He pointed at the tray with a trembling finger. "Those huge things? Are they syringes?"

"Hmm?" Doctor Whitaker said. "Oh, those. Yes. I had to get those from the zoo. Normally they only use those on elephants."

She turned to Derek. "But they'll do just fine for us." Derek got a little woozy.

"Becky, would you be a dear and roll in the next tray?" the doctor called out. Becky then brought in a tray with fifty or so of those syringes on it. Derek blacked out.

"Finally!" Becky said.

"Normally, when they see the first one they go out like a light."

"Well, he's a strong one." The doctor then injected Derek with an anesthetic that would keep him under for a while. "Okay, you know the deal, let's get to it." The doctor used a cotton pad to swab and disinfect a spot on Derek's arm, and then took one of the larger syringes and stuck it into his arm. She then grabbed a mallet and struck the syringe to get it into the bone. Only then did she proceed with the injection. Becky did the same to his other side.

"Hey, did you get that whole problem with the marrow depletion ironed out?" Becky asked. Swab. Stick. Whack.

"Oh, yeah. Didn't Bill tell you?" Swab. Stick. Whack. "That's all history. You shouldn't have any problems with that anymore. No more calcium supplements."

"Cool." Swab. Stick. Whack. "These are bigger than I remember them." Becky said, referring a syringe marked 'Left Humerous'.

"Oh! Well, he's a big guy." The doctor shrugged. "I figure in about five to six weeks, we'll see a three or four inch overall decrease in height, and a little less in the wingspan. It'll pick up quite a bit after that." Swab. Stick. Whack. "When you're done there with the arms, do the hand, ribs, leg and foot on your side. I'll do my side and the skull, spine and pelvis afterwards. Then we'll do the sub dermal hormone implants."

"Okey dokey, Doc." Swab. Stick. Whack. "Six down, two hundred to go." Becky worked out a kink in her neck. "Coffee on?"

"Yup." Swab. Stick. Whack.

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When Derek woke, he was feeling a little sore. He spent the next day or two or five in bed at the motel, and they worked out the rest of the plan. Derek let Becky take him to a place where he got a fake I.D. and a birth certificate. Becky told Derek she had used this service to "enhance" her age from eighteen to drinking-age back in high school. Soon after, they established Derek in a cheap apartment. Derek was hoping for better - he really didn't want to make his home in the meager red-light district - but he had no choice.

Rent was insane these days. The one good thing for Derek was that the apartment was located near a gym, and Derek gravitated quickly to it. It also seemed the ideal place to get together without suspicion. They both signed up for membership, Becky under the name of Carrie Peters and Derek as Nicole Jansen, his latest alias. The two arranged to meet there regularly each day.

Derek had a ball at the gym, taking to the equipment like a kid to a playground. He had practically grown up on weights and resistance machines, and he started right away on his plan to mercilessly abuse his body. Or building back up his muscles, as he thought of it. Before you knew it, he'd be back to being the real Derek. With all the time he put in on the machines, it wasn't long before the manager approached Derek.

"Hi there, I'm Drake Davis," the manager, a large, spectacularly sculpted man said.

Derek quickly sat up straight, letting his weights fall, and looked around for the cops. There were none. He then realized he was going to

have to respond. Derek was a little hesitant to use his voice. It had seemed to be breaking lately, working it's way up an octave or two. But it seemed to be okay if he just tried to speak in the higher register.

"Hi," he said.

"You like workin' out, huh?" Drake said.

Derek returned to the weights. "Yeah," Drake pressed.

"You really seem to know what you're doing there."

"Been doin' it long enough." Leave me alone, Derek added in his head.

"I'm looking to hire some good people around here," the manager insisted on continuing, "and you've got some... unique talents you usually don't find in girls." He was expecting a reply to his compliment, but didn't get one. "Any chance I could interest you in a job?"

Derek finally finished fighting with the nautilus machine and decided he was going to have to get rid of this guy with more direct language.

"That's nice of you, but..."

"Hi, Nick!" Becky chirped.

Derek was always amazed at how quickly she took to using his new names. She had just arrived for their rendezvous. "What's up?"

"The manager guy here was saying something or other about working," Derek said, piecing together bits of a conversation he had been ignoring.

"A job!" Becky piped up.

"That'd be fantastic! You'd be able to get some stuff for your place and pay your rent! Great! When do you start?"

"No, I wasn't gonna..." Derek interjected.

Drake interrupted him. "She can start tomorrow."

"Congratulations, Nick! A real job! Let's go out and celebrate!"

Becky said, in her impossibly bubbly way. She hugged Derek, shutting him up and distracting him. She then flashed the manager the sign. He nodded. Time for phase seven. And so began the fictitious life of Nicole Jansen, fitness trainer. Hopefully a short life, if you asked Derek.

Over the first few days at work, Derek had to reluctantly admit to himself, that this was a damn near perfect job he'd fallen into. Lifting weights all day, hanging around other lifters and 'motivating' poor schmucks by yelling at them. It was a lot of fun. The only thing in his way from making the perfect job - besides the whole guy in drag thing - was the jazz aerobics class he had to 'teach' every day for an hour. To get through that, he just found someone in the class who knew what she was doing and followed her moves. He could practically sleep through the class that way. Which was good for Derek, as Becky had insisted on purchasing the most annoying little radio alarm clock for Derek to violently waken him from bed every morning.



The gym was where Derek spent almost all of his waking hours. Under the new arrangement, the gym was the only place that Derek could see Becky, as they didn't want to risk being too closely associated. To make the best use of their time, Becky had asked for special one-on-one sessions with the 'new girl' for 'intense' workouts. The other members had no idea how intense they were.

Life settled into a pretty regular routine after that. Just your normal gender-challenged fitness trainer and his co-ed girlfriend evading the law.

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As Derek slept, he twisted and turned, trying to let sleep have its way with him. But he couldn't quite go under. He wasn't restless at all. He was in fact very, very tired. He desperately wanted to sleep. But he would drift off and then wake up only minutes later. Like something was silently buzzing in his ears, interrupting his slumber. He'd feel consciousness slip, then abruptly return. In that instant as he was awakened he could picture things in his mind, hear a voice in his head. But it would quickly waft away and he couldn't recall it. It happened repeatedly, for hours. Finally he would drift off after a long night of torture. And in the morning, he would wake to the clock radio, feeling sluggish and wiped out. But he remembered nothing.

---

Derek had been mopping himself off with a towel when he saw Becky's car pull up alongside the gym. Derek bought it for her using a couple of thousand he had earned at his job. It took him two months to save up, but it was the least he could do. He felt he owed her so much more. He slid into the front seat, making a zipping noise as the vinyl seat rubbed his track suit. Derek gave Becky a quick peck on the cheek. It was a lunch date, and as is customary with such things, both Derek and Becky were in a rush to get back in time. They had decided on an Italian place that was in a slightly nicer part of town, and the quick trip there shaved off even more precious time.

"Look at you!" Becky said to Derek, as they got out of the car.

"Hmm?" he replied.

"I hadn't noticed it before - you're shorter!"

"Oh."

Derek was a little shy about that. "Yeah. I'm now about 6-1. Or thereabouts."

Becky knew that was a slight lie. If he was 6-1, he must be standing on his tip-tops. She thought it was more like 5-11. "Have you seen Doctor Whitaker?"

"Yes," Derek shook his head. "She's happy about the regeneration, but she said that the shrinkage was a little more than she expected, thank-you-very-much." Derek didn't like it. "I asked her if I was going to shrink any more and she said 'probably not'. I mean, 'probably not?' I need more info than that, I don't want to wind up a munchkin! I mean, my god, it's just my health we're taking about here." Derek gestured to the heavens in exasperation.

"But now, no one will mistake you for our old friend 'Sabrina' anymore, will they?" Becky tried to cut off any more venting.

"No," Derek said, pouting. Once they were seated at the restaurant, Becky was surprised to note that Derek's lunch was no more than a salad - dressing on the side - and a diet soda. Becky was surprised, but not disappointed. Derek picked at his raddichio rather than eat it. "Beck... I mean Carrie." Derek rolled his eyes at having to use the 'alias' in public. "I've been wondering lately where all this is leading."

Becky had a mouthful of ravioli. She sped up her chewing to answer. "The..."

"I'm not feeling all that comfortable with the whole plan thing." Derek bunched up his long blonde hair, removed a scrunchie from his wrist and put it into a pony tail. "I mean, how long is this all gonna go on? I don't want to be like this for the rest of my life, you know. I thought this would only be for a few months, and then we could get back to normal and stuff. This is really starting to worry me. I have trouble sleeping, I'm irritable, I get these headaches. I just can't keep living like this!"

Becky reflected on what a chatty kathy Derek was becoming. "Just a couple of months, Nick. You can do it. You're the toughest person I know."

Derek speared a tomato with his fork. "Well... maybe, but... I still would like to be normal again."

Becky reached over and patted Derek's hand. "It will get better. I promise."

Derek looked around to see if anyone was watching or listening. He whispered as quietly as he could. "But will I ever be... you know... a man again?"

Becky then realized what exactly was on his mind. "Oh, honey... don't worry about that. Everything's going to be all right, you know that. In no time at all you'll be the..." She lowered her voice as well. "You'll be yourself. And even better." Becky flashed her biggest and best megawatt smile.

"Hokay," Derek said quietly. Of course if you don't eat something, Becky thought, you'll just keep getting thinner and shaplier. Derek unwrapped a cracker and nibbled on it.



When Becky dropped Derek off back at the gym, she realized she and her team had some work to do tonight.

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"Oof," Dee said, collapsing on Becky's bed. She was dressed head to toe in black - complete with ski cap - and had just returned exhausted and sleepy. "Why did you have to get him an apartment on the third freakin'

floor?"

Becky was on her headset. She spoke slowly and sensually into the mouth piece. "Listen to the voice. The voice is your voice. The voice is all you want to listen to. The voice knows what you want. You want to do what the voice tells you to."

Becky tapped a button to pause her recording. "How'd it go, catgirl?" she asked Dee.

"Shut up," Dee grumbled. "You know how I hate special ops. Why do you make me do these things?"

"Cause I can," Becky teased. "Here."

She tossed a lollipop onto Dee's stomach, as she unwrapped one for herself. "Green apple. On sale."

"Thanks," Dee said, letting her mood evaporate.

"So, everything go okay?" Becky asked.

"Everything went fine, the stuff is all planted in his apartment, and the triggers are set." Dee rolled the candy around in her mouth for a moment. "How'z it goin' here at HQ, chief?"

Becky used her lollipop as a pointing device. "I've got the sleep-hypnosis messages pretty much done, and I'll download those to Nick's place as soon as I get this last part right."

"Ooh! What are you gonna do to him tonight?" Dee said, excitedly.

Becky opened her mouth to answer, then stopped herself and put the candy in. "Not gonna tell you."

Dee pleaded. "C'mon!"

"It's a surprise!" Becky grinned.

---

Dee drew the short straw that night, and she had to be up at six A.M. sharp to monitor Derek's morning routine. She fired up the surveillance cameras and picked a nice angle. The clock radio was set to go off at

6:45, so Dee terminated the hypnotic messages at 6:15 to be safe. When the buzzer went off, Dee was pulling her hair out, watching him hit the bar and then sleep for five more minutes. He did it seven times.

Finally he swung his legs out from under the sheets and stumbled to the bathroom. Dee watched the electrifying action, as Derek took ten minutes to find the right temperature of the shower, and then another five to put toothpaste on the toothbrush. She wanted to just reach through the monitor and shake him to life. "Move!" Dee yelled at the screen. Derek dried his hair with a towel and checked his face, looking for something to shave. He picked up his razor, but his face was already bare. Derek glanced at the razor, surprised that his blue disposable was now pink. But then he took his razor to the shower, turned it on and lathered up his legs.



Dee giggled at that. The razor was hypnotic trigger number one. Derek got his armpits too, then toweled his legs off. He went into the bedroom to pick his clothes. Dee was looking forward to this one. He picked up one of his super-tight tank-tops he used to contain his ever present beasts, but then something caught his attention in his dresser drawer. He dropped the shirt on the floor and picked up a women's training bra instead. He put it on with ease, and went on with his usual tracksuit outfit.



Dee checked off hypnotic trigger number two, the training bra. Derek then began to get ready for his morning jog. He bent over, touched his toes, did some sit-ups, then spread his legs while seated and alternated hands while he swiveled at the waist touching his toes. It was his usual routine. But Dee was anticipating trigger three. On cue, Derek then adjusted his position to do the splits. He didn't get very far, but as a new permanent part of his exercise routine, he would be able to do it soon enough.

Dee checked off the last trigger. Derek then exited the room, locking

the door behind him. Dee sat back in her chair, kind of disappointed. That was pretty tame stuff. She was hoping for something really juicy as Becky had promised her a 'surprise'.

Just when she was ready to turn over monitoring to the mobile unit, she could hear the door lock jostling in her headset. Derek was coming back into the room. He went into the bedroom, removed his loose track pants and boxers. He fiddled with his genitals for a minute, as he tucked them away. He then put on a pair of briefs and tight lycra bike shorts. Dee went into a giggle fit. Derek looked so precious. As he left the room again, Dee called up the mobile unit and logged off.

---

Becky had been waiting outside the aerobics room for well over fifteen minutes now. The class finally ended, and the club members filed out. Derek quickly bounded out to greet Becky, having seen her arrive earlier.

"Hey, hi!" Derek tried to give Becky a hug, but stopped himself. "Oh, don't touch me, I'm all sweaty and yucky."

Becky smiled. "I didn't want to rush you."

Derek smiled back. He blotted off his sweat with the towel around his slim neck. "No, no. No problem. That's my last class of the day. I only teach two on Thursday."

"Cool," Becky said. "My car's outside."

"All right. I guess there's no getting out of this. Gimme a sec. I'll change," Derek said, and trotted off to the women's locker room. Twenty minutes later, he appeared at the rear door of the gym, hiding himself from public viewing. Derek dashed out, as if under heavy enemy fire, and dove into the car. He adjusted the seat so he wasn't too visible from outside, and settled in. "So, there's no way I can talk you into letting me out of this, is there?"

Becky said, "Nope. A bet's a bet, Nick."

Derek had come out on the bad side a small wager he had placed with Becky on the opening game of the college football season. He had bet on his old team winning, but came up short. In overtime! By a field goal! It was an irresistible bet, in which Derek would have been allowed to

buzz his long, annoying haircut short - had he won. But since he lost, the reverse of the bet was now underway.

"How do you want your nails, square tip? Glamour length?" Becky taunted.

"Urgh," Derek replied. It was a trip to the salon - with the works - for losing the bet, and now he was dreading every single second of this day.

"Cheer up, Nick. It'll be fun," Becky reassured Derek.

"For me."

"Really, do we have to do this? It seems so... girlie," Derek said, smoothing his skirt.

Derek had dressed himself 'all-girl' for the first time, including a long skirt, a loose blouse and even a dingy little pair of women's flats. He reasoned that he was in a lot less danger if he tried to blend in with the women at the salon. Danger being a relative term. In no time at all, they were there, at the "Art du Ciseaux" salon, possibly the cleanest place Derek had ever been in. He wondered where all the hair clippings went. It was immaculate.

Like he was being led into the throne room of Louis the XVI, Derek was practically waltzed into the interior of the salon and seated in a giant room of the most ostentatious artsy furnishings ever crafted by man. There, he was left to stew in his own fears for a few minutes. He was then told what the staff were going to do to him.

"All right then," said an extremely fruity man, clapping his hands together as began to talk. "Let's rinse out your hair, we'll take it up a few shades. Then we'll send you off for dermal hydration - a long session there, I think - then hands and face, oh goodness goodness, then back here for the styling. Sound good?"

Derek's turn. "B.."

"Fantastic!" the man exclaimed. "Let's get started." Before he could even figure out what was happening, Derek found his hair being coated with several layers of yellow goo. He then remembered seeing himself with a head full of foil and something green all over his face. There was also a memory dealing with a mud bath but it was all a kind of

blur. The hustle and bustle of the salon was too much for Derek to comprehend. And since he wasn't much for remembering the experience anyway, he had decided to let the whole day fall into the background.

He tried to think of other things. More manly things. But when he was dropped off at the nail station, he found himself acutely interested in what was going on. He was absolutely fascinated with the whole affair, the cuticles, the fake nails, the shaping, the buffing, the polish. He had never even considered how much work had gone into these things. When he was shown the results, the shiny pinkish perfection of his long nails, he was stunned. He was so dazzled by the little show the nail 'artist' was putting on for him, he consented to having his toes done just to see the spectacle continue.

Little did Derek suspect that his keen interest was part of the conditioning he had received the past few nights. He had been told to watch closely and to become enraptured with the experience. An experience he would be compelled to repeat. The conditioning also forced him to memorize every single move the cosmetician was to make on his face. When he was brought to the cosmetics station, his eyebrows were plucked and facial hair waxed. He watched as the foundation was applied in a rolling motion, down the neck and blending into the skin. Powder - start at the eyes. Blush. Penciling the eyebrows, eye shadow - more blending. Eyeliner, widening the eyes. Curving and separating the lashes, mascara.

Lining the lips dark, blend, lighter lipstick. Derek had the entire procedure permanently engraved in the inside of his skull by the time they were finished. After all that, they had kept him from seeing the results until the hair had been finished. Derek was seated back with the fruity guy, who clipped, spritzed and fluffed until he proclaimed himself done.

As Derek was turned around in the chair to face the mirror, he caught the full blow of what had been done to him. His face had been softened like it was aglow with light. His eyes - large, wide and dark - were perfection. His lips were puffy, red and wet, as if they had nothing to do all day but kiss. His hair had gone from ho-hum blondish to California blonde, almost flaxen. It was large, poofy and long. The waves that started somewhere around his temple flowed down his face, framing it in the rays of the sun. At the top, the hair went up, up and up. Only when it seemed impossible that it could go higher, only then it then curved back down onto his head.

The overall effect was heart-stoppingly amazing, a testament to the skills and craft of the salon. Derek traced his fingers through some of the hair that floated around his shoulders.



"Not bad at all," Derek said. He look at himself critically, and concluded that he might have come out looking a lot more extreme. Overall, he thought the makeover had been pretty subtle. Of course, it was the voices in the night that told him to think that way. No matter how different he looked, Derek had been told to see subdued, sublime changes in his appearance.

He thanked the people at the salon and left quickly with Becky, thankful that he had gotten out of the bet so easy. "I think they did a nice job," Becky said. She was severely understating the obvious. Derek was gloating.

"Yeah. Ha-ha. Like they could do anything to make me look like an actual girl." He crossed his arms in superiority. "You tried, and this was the best they could do. Admit defeat." They got to the car, and Becky unlocked the doors. Derek was standing with his hips askew and legs in a wide stance, demanding concession. She then noticed that Derek was only about three inches taller than her.



Becky smirked, "Okay. I admit it."

Derek smiled in satisfaction.

---

Dee had finally figured out how Becky had been cheating at 'drawing straws' for surveillance duty, so Becky was pretty much glued to her seat for the day. And for much of the next week. She had just finished popping some popcorn in the microwave when the show began. Then she put Derek on the main monitor.

Derek had finished a day's work at the gym, and had just dropped his stuff at the door as he collapsed on the sofa in his living room. He was flipping through the channels, finally leaving it on the news, before he got up to change out of his 'work clothes'. He kicked off his tennis shoes and went into the bedroom, stripping himself of his grey cropped t-shirt. He then stepped out of his black body suit and pulled off his light blue spandex tights.

Once naked, he un-tucked himself, put his hair up, and grabbed the Mr. Bubble to start a bath. He soaked for a while. No too long - he didn't want to prune up. Becky decided that now was a good a time as any to test some more of her psychological triggers and suggestions. She started up the 'wrong number' routine on her computer.

She then saw Derek's head jolt, as his phone started to ring. "Crap!" he yelled out. He stood up, grabbed a towel and wrapped himself in it. Becky noted that it was where it was supposed to be, covering his breasts. Derek wobbled out to the phone in the living room and picked it up.

"Becky?" he said, as no one else ever seemed to call.

"Um.. no. Is Angela there?" a deep, warm voice said from the other end of the line.

Derek was angry. This jerk ruined a perfectly good bath. "There's no Angela here." A pause on the other end of the line. "Are you sure?" the voice said.

"Yes. Very."

"Is this you, Angela? Don't kid around," said the voice. Becky was impressed with the voice recognition and synthesis of the program. It really sounded like an actual person.

"No, this is not Angela. You've got the wrong number," a testy Derek said.

"You sure sound like Angela."

Derek wanted to end this quickly. "That may be, but I am not Angela. This is 650-1201."

Becky was happy to see that sounding like a girl didn't seem to bother Derek at all. Another triumph for the programming.

"Oh, I'm sorry," the voice continued. "What's your name?" it asked, sounding a little mischievous.

"This is Nick. I mean Nicole. Nicole Jansen," Derek said with determination.

Becky was even happier with that response. Derek hadn't even skipped a beat in using his female name. And as a bonus, he didn't even realize that giving the last name was a subtle form of flirting.

The voice continued. "My name's Trevor. You sound like a sexy young girl, Nicole."

"Look, just please hang up and pay attention to your dialing, okay?" Derek got feisty.

"Why don't you hang up first?" said 'Trevor'.

"It's your fault, so you hang up," Derek insisted.

Becky was loving this. He couldn't break off the conversation - he didn't want to be rude. Derek was definitely responding well. And he didn't seem to get that angry at being called 'sexy', either.

"It's a free world, baby," 'Trevor' replied.

"I asked you nicely to hang up," Derek restated.

The voice of Trevor got more daring. "I like listening to your voice. It makes me hot. What makes you hot?"

"Why... I..." Derek finally slammed the phone down. "Pervert!"

Becky was very pleased with that whole exchange. She'd have to run to program again in a few weeks to note more changes. Derek made his way

back to the bath. He tested the water and found it cold, so he let out the water and got on with life. Derek then went into the bedroom again and picked out some loose, comfy jeans and a sweatshirt to lounge around the house in.



Becky didn't like the looks of that. His old jeans should have been history by now. But she had just the thing. She clicked a button on the computer marked 'sleep'. Derek had started up a microwave dinner when suddenly, he felt a bit drowsy. He was normally a little tired after work anyway. He figured it had been an unusually tiring day. He stopped the microwave and decided to stretch out on the bed for a while. Becky got to work on the computer, and on Derek.

Derek's alarm clock went off a few hours later giving him a start. He didn't remember setting it, actually. It was dusk, and he mumbled at himself for sleeping so long. Now he'd be up all night. He took off his jeans and sweatshirt and stripped himself nude. Yawning, he snatched a black lacy underwear and bra set out of his dresser and put them on. He selected a nice black feather-trimmed sweater and a sherry-colored skirt with black lace trim out of his closet. He put it all on, and liked the look - as far as it went - and then went into the bathroom to check his face.

His face 'checked', after applying full make-up, he twisted around his hair and clipped it at the side of his head. He liked the high-fashion style. Derek then returned to the kitchen, where he finished zapping his dinner. He parked himself on the sofa, tucked his legs under him, and waited for the microwave. Meanwhile, he turned on the TV and filed his nails. There was a football game on.



Back in her dorm, Becky wiped her brow, satisfied with a good night's work.

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"Okay, to the left! One, two, three, four! And to the right! One, two, three, four! Touch your toes! One, two, three, four!" The perky,

breathless voice was amplified throughout the aerobics room, where the class was straining and wheezing to keep up with the boundless energy of the instructor. The bass-heavy pounding of the techno beat did not ease their pain.

"Big finish now!" she chirped. The class let out a collective sigh of relief. It was almost over. "Arms to the side! Keep jogging! Now let's wind those arms! First the left! Wind them round, to the music! Now the right!"

Becky had been watching from just outside, watching her little toy closely. She was impressed with the white full-body leotard with a tiny pale pink dancer's skirt Derek had worn today. His bright blonde hair was in a ponytail, which emphasized every movement of his body with a spray of hair. She noted that the roots were also blonde, meaning he was keeping it maintained.

Even though he was clearly tired, Derek was barely sweating, and never stopped smiling. His attitude - at least here on the job - was that of an insufferable bubble head teenage girl. Becky was satisfied that everything was just as it should be. Derek ended his class, and the poor victims filed out sore and exhausted. Derek stayed and lingered with some of the few girls who had been able to keep up. He eventually spotted Becky, and then excused himself.

"Becks!" Derek said, putting his hands over his mouth as soon as he said it. "Oops! I mean Carrie."

"Hey, Nick," Becky said. That little indiscretion of Derek's reminded Becky of something she'd have to attend to tonight. "You okay to take a break?"

Derek looked around for a minute to see if anybody needed him. He then shouted back at the girls he had been talking to. "Hey! I'll see you guys tomorrow, okay!?"

"Okay!" two said in unison. "See ya, Nicky!" another added.

Derek waved 'bye' and then he and Becky left for one of their 'intense private workouts'. "They friends?" Becky asked.

"Who, the guys?" said Derek. "Oh, they're some of my regulars. The tall one is Clover and the blonde is Kiki. The one with glasses is Petra. They take the advanced classes." Derek cupped his hand over his mouth

to whisper. "They all work down at the strip club."

"Ohhhh." Becky said, knowingly. "How many classes do you teach now?" Becky asked, knowing full well the answer.

"I teach the jazz aerobics, lite aerobics, the advanced dance, step, power step and hip hop/funk," Derek said proudly.

"Any weights?" Becky wanted to know.

"Oh, God, no! Weights are so..." Derek twirled his tiny hands in the air as he searched for the perfect word. "Dull."

The two stepped into the small private room they reserved every day, and Derek locked the door behind them. Becky started massaging Derek's shoulders. Derek let himself enjoy it. He slowly turned around to face Becky, and nuzzled her ear. Becky brought her hands to cradle Derek's face. She felt the small earrings that Becky had coerced him into wearing. Derek moaned inaudibly, and moved his head forward to give Becky a kiss. Then suddenly he dropped out of Becky's sight. The boy had been standing on his toes to just get his head as high as Becky's.

"Ow!" he said, massaging a calf. "I can't get up that high. Bend down a little, okay?" Derek was whining. Becky was glad to note that Derek seemed unconcerned with the circumstances of his loss of height. He was no taller than 4-11 now, and all that work with Dr. Whitaker had paid off brilliantly. His hands were tiny and delicate, his ribcage had shrunk and tapered in a very feminine way, and he was now wearing size four shoes on his dainty little feet. Even the bones in his face had re-formed in a nice feminine shape.



Constant exercise and Derek's severe diet had reduced him to about 90 pounds. Becky had worked very hard, re-enforcing night after night that his new size was perfectly ordinary.

"Why don't you wear heels?" Becky asked with a straight face. "Girls

wear heels and get a few inches taller. You could try that."

"I don't know Becky," Derek looked at his feet, considering the problem. "That's a pretty big deal."

Becky had an answer. "You could try some high-heeled boots. That would do the same thing, and they wouldn't be as big a deal."

"Really?" Derek queried. "I guess."

"Sure. Everybody wears boots." Becky gave Derek a peck on the top of his head.

"I'll think about it," Derek said.

You most certainly will, Becky thought. Another thing to take care of tonight. A new idea fluttered into Derek's head. He was certainly getting flighty lately. "Oh, I was gonna ask you something."

"Yeah?" Becky couldn't wait to know.

"Um, yeah." Derek lowered his voice, even in the soundproof room. "It's my-" Derek made a lifting motion with his hands at his chest. "Things."

"Derek, you can call them what they are," Becky pretended to be a little affronted. "I'm a girl you know, nothing I haven't heard of before."

Derek laughed a quiet little laugh. "Sorry. It's my titties."

Becky kept herself from laughing. It was the 'word of the day' she had implanted in him the night before. "What about them?"

"They get hard," Derek said, not even noting for a moment how bizarre the situation was. "When I rub them, like this." He started to rub his breasts slowly through the light, taught fabric of his white leotard. "Mmmm," he muttered.

Derek shook himself out of it and then projected his sizable chest forward, presenting the evidence to Becky. His face was adorably confused. "Can you see? The little nubby things are hard."

One didn't have to look to long to see the thimble-sized bumps on his breasts. Becky reassured him. "That'll go away in time. Just keep

rubbing them and they'll be fine."

Derek sighed relief. "Oh good."

"Well, I gotta go," Becky said, cutting the visit short. Derek was almost ignorant of the fact that these midday trysts that had started so long ago with crazy, mad sex were now down to polite five-minute make-out sessions. He still thought of them as his highlight of the day, and his reason for living.

"Kay," Derek said, straightening his unmolested clothes and hair. "Call me!"

"Sure, Nicky." Becky gave him another peck on the head, and left the room. Derek waited a few minutes and left. He wanted to avoid the appearance of anything suspicious.

---

It was going to be a big night for Becky, and she turned down the lights in her dorm room. She flipped a few dozen toggle switches, turning on all the monitors and surveillance equipment in the room. She then trained her cameras on the figure of Derek, asleep in bed. She was glad to see that he had worn a virginal white negligee to sleep. It looked so cute on him.

The cameras zoomed in, and Becky then brought up his vital signs on a nearby monitor. She set some alarms to go off if any of them started to exceed safe limits. She was especially interested in the brain wave indicator scope. Becky decided to start with something simple, a few suggestions about Derek's new shoe buying habits. It took ten minutes, but Becky had been hoping for more time. Once the messages had been successfully implanted in Derek's mind, she took a moment to catch her breath.

She delayed herself for a minute, giving a silent moment of respect. Then she tapped the key to execute 'program L14', one of the last programs she would run for Derek. But was definitely not a minor procedure. It would largely decide if Derek were a success, or if it had all been for nothing.

Becky watched the brain waves as they fluttered and spiked.

---

A knock came from outside the apartment door. A peek through the eye hole, and Becky was let inside.

"Hi," Becky said. "Hi, Nikki."

"Oh, sorry for the mess, Becks!" Derek called as he strode away into the bedroom. His towels wrapped tightly. "I'll be out in a sec!"

Becky saw that the room was in fact very clean. A magazine was on a chair, the only thing she could identify as out of place.

"Help yourself to the fridge!" added Derek.

"You wanna do the mall first, or eat?" Becky called back.

"Eat, of course!" was the reply. A hairdryer started up.

Becky casually toured the room, examining it carefully. She remembered first seeing it after Derek moved in, with the patio furniture he had decorated the place with. Now, there was a large orange futon sofa in the room, and in front of it a glass coffee table. A vase of fresh flowers was on it. Plants were strategically placed around the room, along with a lamp or two.

Previously, the shades on the windows were always shut, keeping out the world. Now, gauzy drapes were atop the windows, letting the bright sun illuminate the room. The frayed rock and football posters that had been put up were now framed reproductions of paintings. In the fridge were bushels of carrots and celery, some lite beer, a box of white wine and two six-packs of slim-fast strawberry shakes.

It certainly was different around here. A clip-clopping noise started to get nearer.

"Okay, you ready to go?"

Before Becky stood a young girl dressed to please. Her white, high-heeled platform boots were shiny vinyl, and ended just above the knee. White fishnet stockings were encasing her slim thighs briefly, before the pink garter clips that held them up disappeared under a flouncy white skirt. The skirt challenged you, dared you and compelled you to look under its breezy hem. A bare midriff exposed a tiny bellybutton, in the middle of carefully maintained and toned tummy, as narrow and

slim as the human body would allow. The form flared out upwards, curving an arched back in the rear. In the front it stretched up, out and over the sort of luscious mounds of flesh that men dreamed of, but rarely saw. They were constrained by a pink short-sleeved angora sweater that began an inch below the bosom and ended only a few more inches above it. The low neckline revealed the narrow slit in the generous cleavage. A gold heart-shaped locket rested precariously above it, threatening to fall in, never to be seen again.

Thin, graceful fingers inside small white gloves fluffed the long, bouncy, swishing hair that spilled around the narrow shoulders. The shoulders led you along to a thin, fragile neck. A pointed chin and shapely jaw interrupted the trip. The head of an doll floated there, sparkling gold earrings dangled at each side.



Two glossy red lips were broken into an infectious, magical smile. Dark, thick eyelashes fluttered under thin arched brows, as they brought attention upwards still. And the bright, large, shining eyes of instant friendship and eternal comfort stared back at Becky.

"On second thought, mall first," Nikki said.

"Yeah. We can always eat later," Becky agreed.

Nikki slung her purse strap over her shoulder and plucked her keys from the bowl next to the door. She then stopped to primp in the small

mirror that had been placed nearby just for that reason.

Becky joined in. "I'm thinking shoes."

"You read my mind!" squealed Nikki.

---

Nikki swished her way along the promenade level of the mall. She stopped to look in each window, drink in its' contents and then go inside the store. Becky had been trailing for hours, and had finally had enough.

"Nikki, let's take a break, okay?" Becky pleaded.

Nikki turned her head with concern. "You tired? I could go all day!"

"You exercise a little, don't you?" Becky pointed out.

"Once and a while," Nikki giggled. "You wanna get a snack?" Becky had already started in the direction of the food court.

"We'll get a snack, then."

For all the shopping the two had done, they hadn't actually done any purchasing, so the two had no bags to worry about. Becky had grabbed a frozen yogurt cone, and Nikki had procured a box full of cinnamon buns with coffee.

"Right on your thighs," Becky said, looking at the buns.

"Umf," Nikki had already started eating them. "I don't know what it is, but lately I seem to be able to eat anything and not gain a pound!" She then reached for another bun.

"No kidding?" Becky said. Of course, it was because the diet restrictions had been lifted in Nikki's programming. At her current weight, Nikki no longer needed to lose another ounce. And with her constant workouts, she'd easily burn off anything she ate. As Becky watched her devour the poor little buns, she gave this new girl a long look over. Derek, the original Derek, was always a bit of a lunk-head, but a very sweet and well-meaning guy. He'd never know why this had been done to him, and he'd never know who. He didn't deserve this.

Becky reminded herself that it wasn't as if he was dead. It really was Derek there - spilling powdered sugar onto her sweater - it really was the same guy she'd led down this path. He had been heavily modified inside and out, but it was still him. Somewhere. A long career of doing this sort of thing had taught Becky one thing. The human spirit was stronger than anything. As clich'd as it was, a person's true nature was absolutely unchangeable. It made doing this work easier to live with.

"What do you want to do next?" Nikki asked.

Becky thought for a second. "Go to a lezzie bar, get tattoos and shop for combat boots."

"Hmm?" Nikki said. "What?"

"Nothing," Becky mumbled to herself. She twirled her cone and studied it. It provided no answers.

Nikki's eyes suddenly lit up. She snickered. Then she burst out in guffaws of laughter.

"Oh yeah, oh yeah!" She choked a little on coffee. "We said we were gonna do it, didn't we?" Becky held her breath. Nikki chortled. "Gawd, you're not going to hold me to that, are you?"

It was a tense moment for Becky. She had taken a bit of a risk with this little test. Nikki brushed some sugar off her sweater and picked out another bun. Becky took a tentative lick of her cone. Nikki snickered to herself again. She kept eating. Becky took a big mouthful of yogurt. It worked. The test was very simply to see if Nikki could 'disassociate' her old memories from being Derek. She did. And passing that test meant that the final phase could begin. It also meant that the psychosis that developed in some of the people undergoing this treatment wasn't going to get Derek. Becky was happy to know that. She had to admit to herself that it was totally unprofessional, but she did care for the big lug.

"You know what, Nikki?" Becky said.

"Hmm?" Nikki was living in cinnamon bun land, not paying attention.

"I think maybe it's time," Becky cryptically remarked.

"Time?"

"Yes, I think we can end the whole deception. The police aren't looking for us anymore. I think we can let things become normal." Becky was curious how Nikki would react.

"Reeaally?" Nikki said in a tone of voice that would make glass shatter. "Really, really, really? You're not joking?" She was bouncing in her seat.

"Nope. Everything can be normal for us." Becky grinned.

"All right! Oh my god, I can't believe it! It's over! All the deception, all the sneaking around!" She took hold of Becky's two hands in happiness and glee. "Yes! Yes! Yes! Eeeeeee!"

"And I've got another surprise," Becky talked over Nikki's yipping. She brought out an airline ticket sleeve. Nikki's look of anticipation was priceless.

"Tickets!"

"Tickets?" Nikki asked, breathlessly.

"A six-week cruise to South America."

Nikki covered her mouth in shock and delight. "Oh... my... God! I don't... How did?..."

"We go on the cruise, and when we return, all the deception - gone," Becky said with confidence.

"Oh god, I've wanted this for so long! It's over! Really over!" Nikki was suddenly concerned. "But where did you get the money for the cruise? That's like, thousands of dollars!"

Becky smiled with Nikki. "My folks are giving me it as a graduation present, and I can bring a friend."

"Becky," Nikki stood up with her arms wide. Becky stood up as well, and the two embraced. "This is so great. I can finally be normal. Finally." Nikki started to weep a bit. Then she suddenly released Becky and backed away. With despair in her voice and anguish in her eyes, she

asked: "But what type of swimsuit do I bring?"

---

Becky and Nikki's vacation was six weeks of fun and frolic aboard an enormous cruise liner. They spent their nights dancing, eating and drinking. They spent their days sunbathing, swimming and playing volleyball. And the scenery was fantastic. Nikki and Becky saw all of the coast lines of Mexico, Central America and South America, and when they got down the to Straits of Magellan, they went back up the other side. It was beautiful and awe-inspiring.

At every stop, the two hit the shopping district and made off with the most peculiar and interesting nicknacks they could find. Becky's broken Spanish got them into a lot places the tourists couldn't go, and into a little bit of trouble now and then. They missed the boat in Buenos Aires and had to take a local bus full of families and livestock to Montevideo to get back on. It was the time of their lives.

Which is what Nikki remembered, at least. The real truth was that Nikki had been drugged and taken to a secret clinic in Colorado. There, surgeons sculpted her face, creating a cuter, sexier, younger version of Nikki. The nose needed the most work, down from its Derek size to the new button-nose size. They puffed up her lips with a little fat, and opened up her eyes a little more. They made the pupils blue, and then performed electrolysis where it was needed. Most important of all was the vaginal transplant. It was a Chinese surgeon who defected years ago that performed the surgery, following experiments he had carried out in his homeland. But now, the procedure was relatively routine for him. It was his service was his repayment for refuge in the U.S.

The operation went without complication, but the surgery was not any guarantee that it was capable of impregnation. That only worked in 15-20 percent of the surgeries, and one would never know for certain until someone tried it.

But other than that, it was perfectly real. After long weeks of bed rest, Nikki was moved into the final stages of her transformation. The Mental changes needed at this point were relatively simple, but vital to making sure that Nikki would fulfill her place in life.

In the end, it was the long quest for normality that was used to make 'Derek' accept what had been done to him. His definition of 'normal' was changed: from being Derek, to being a girl. So in a twisted way, he

would be normal after all.

And after the six weeks were up, and Nikki had finished healing, it was time to start upon a new life.

---

"Ah! Rebecca, how nice to see you here! Come in, come in!"

Becky took a few tentative steps inside, grateful to get out of the cold.

"Here, let me take your coat. It looks nippy out there tonight," the man at the door said. She removed her coat and handed it over to the man, who neatly folded it over his arm. She kept her backpack. The man brought the activity to a standstill, silently evaluating the girl. He gave Becky a good long look-over. His thin, glassy eyes focused in her face.

"Doing well. Yes, quite well." He traced the cheek of Becky's face with the back of his wrinkled hand. "Such beauty." Satisfied, he called out into the air. "Kitten!" He turned around, addressing an unknown presence. His voice echoed off the marble that made up the immense receiving hall. "Kitten, come here, girl!"

The echoing sound of a pair of high heel shoes approached, and the young maid who was wearing them skittered around a corner. She approached and presented herself, curtsying. Her maid's outfit was entirely of a man's design, a French maid style in latex, abbreviated to show as much of its wearer without being technically obscene. The man handed Becky's coat to the girl. "We'll be in the library, Kitten. We'll be wanting something to drink." He then turned her around and spanked her as she got moving. Becky watched with great interest as she minced her way out of sight.



"So," the man directed Becky to join him as they walked. He kept his hand on the small of her back. "I hear you have another set of candidates for me to look at."

"Yes, sir. A good group I think," Becky said. "Bill's very excited about them."

"Bill gets excited every time, Rebecca. He really enjoys his work, I do think." Despite the man's rickety frame, he still managed to carry himself with an air of authority. He had been involved in this project for many decades, and had profited handsomely from its' dividends.

Time had been both good and bad to him, slowly stealing his life away, but at the same time rewarding him with the power, money and influence that few believe any person would be allowed to have. Chersterton A. Pierce, however, would have told you that he had fought long and hard for every cent, and for every seat of power he had corrupted. To him it was no reward to have all that he did. The money and power meant little, unless he could do exactly what he wanted to do with it. Which is what he was certainly doing.

"Here we are, Rebecca. Why don't you sit on the sofa." Mr. Pierce led Becky to her seat in the lusciously appointed library. "Now, what would you like? I believe you enjoy a Bloody Mary this time of night?" Becky smiled agreement.

"Good," Mr. Pierce reciprocated with a thin smile. "Kitten!" Through the doorway came the maid, who immediately positioned herself at the small bar in the corner of the room. "A Bloody Mary for the young lady, and my usual," Mr. Pierce told the girl.

"I'm not so young, you know," Becky said with a knowing grin.

"Ah, no, but I suppose it's my habit to dote on someone who looks as exquisite as you do." Mr. Pierce checked on the maid's progress. "Even if we both know different."

The quiet but efficient servant girl offered a tray to Becky with her drink on it. She avoided eye contact as she took the drink. The tray was then placed before the old man as he picked up the remaining glass. "Please remain outside, Kitten," he said. As the maid exited, Mr. Pierce took a slow sip of his drink. The clinking of the ice in his glass was the only sound in the room. Becky stirred her drink with the celery stalk.

"Remembering?" Mr. Pierce said. "Don't be a prisoner of the past, Rebecca. Only a fool would try and wind back the hands of the clock."

"Ha," Becky said, without humor. "It's hard to think like that when

you're forty-five and in college for your tenth year."

"Hmm." Mr. Pierce grinned again. "Yes. I suppose you have a different perspective from where you sit."

He refocused on Becky's face again. "What science can do these days. Incredible." The old man looked at his drink in introspection. "Absolutely incredible."

Becky took a sip of her drink, hoping it would prompt a change in subject. It seemed to work.

"Before we get to the candidates, I don't think you've had a chance to see how well your latest subject turned out."

Mr. Pierce turned his head towards the doorway. "Kitten!" The young maid rushed back into the room and presented herself to the old man.

"Sir," she said meekly.

"What's the capital of California, dear?" Mr. Pierce asked the girl.

"Uh!" She looked left and right, hoping it was written on a wall nearby. Her knees knocked together and she began to retract her head into her shoulders.

"It's a state, Kitten," the old man tried to help. This girl momentarily looked hopeful, getting this clue, then her look of worry returned. Mr. Pierce came to her rescue. "That's all right, I was just teasing you, Kitten. Forgive me?"

The girl's expression turned into instant happiness and delight. She tittered, "You're always playing tricks on Kitty!" She gave into a giggle fit, and then she stopped and started to bite on one of her long fingernails with a smile. She was the very personification of Coquettishness.

"Yes. I do have fun with you, don't I?" the old man said. The maid giggled again. Becky tried to focus on her drink. More than that, she tried to put any and every ounce of concentration into it. She had seen this test before. She never much liked seeing it, and for some reason today's display was hitting her especially hard.

The old man stood up. "Kitten." He placed his drink at his lips. "Why don't you suck my cock?" Mr. Pierce took a sip from his glass. The maid dropped to her knees, emitting a gleeful noise from her throat. She dug at the old man's trousers like a kid opening her bag of Halloween candy.

Becky tried not to look. But she couldn't ignore it. She had to look. The girl had undone the man's belt and fly and had started to stroke the hardened flesh inside. Mr. Pierce took another sip of his drink. The maid then yanked down the old man's shorts. His rigid, engorged dick sprang into the air.

"Ooooh!" the girl purred at the sight. "Yummy!" She looked up at the face of Mr. Pierce, beaming with expectation. She seemed to be drooling.

Becky held her cool drink to her forehead. She felt something she hadn't felt in a long while. She felt an emotion that was as good as death to someone in her business. She felt remorse.

As the maid got the signal to proceed, she started to twirl her tongue around the purplish tip of Mr. Pierce's straining, swollen phallus. She brought her hands up to stroke the exposed shaft. Becky was sick to her stomach. She was no stranger to this, she had been present when Mr. Pierce had taken many of his girls. Many, many times. But it was so much different now, watching the young girl she had first known as Derek shove her face deeper and deeper into the old man's cock.



He grabbed the sides of the girl's ears and started to rhythmically fuck her mouth. With each shove, she got deeper and deeper. She used the long red nails on her hands to tickle the underside of his scrotum.

"Uhhh," Mr. Pierce faintly moaned, the noise wheezing out of his ancient body. As he did, the gyrations came fast and hard. With every pump, with every suck, the high-pitched squeak of a teenage girl in the depths of passion came from Derek's throat. The motions became so fast that the girl was starting to lose control. When it looked like she had used every ounce of strength, Derek's eyes lit up, her eyes practically popping out of her head, as hot cum shot into her mouth.

Becky convulsed, repulsed and disgusted. With herself. She closed her

eyes, trying to hide from her feelings, but the muffled moanings and slurping noises of Derek tore through her consciousness. She opened her eyes again, to see Derek's throat pump as she swallowed the hot jism.

Mr. Pierce put one hand on her forehead and shoved her violently away. A trail of cum flew through the air, out of her mouth, as she sprang back. Derek fell back and folded up on the floor. She then started spreading the warm liquid down her mouth and onto her breasts. Derek started to squirm in her own private ecstasy. The old man zipped his pants back up and sat back down on the sofa, careful not to spill his drink.



"An impressive set of talents, this one," he said. Mr. Pierce then turned to Becky and continued on with the conversation. "But to business."

Becky straightened and tried to compose herself. She took a swig of her Bloody Mary. "The candidates." She reached into her backpack and retrieved a file.

"One other small bit of business I'd like to get out of the way before we continue," Mr. Pierce interrupted. "I had received a distressing report a few months ago, that seemed to indicate that you were taking a... personal interest in your work." He retrieved a small pair of half-lensed spectacles from his vest pocket. Reaching behind himself, to a small pile on the table next to him, he picked up a short stack of photos. He gave them a glance, checked through them and showed one to Becky.

"While sexual relations with one of our subjects is perfectly normal in the early part of our program..."

Becky held the photo in her hand. It was of her and Derek, in each other's arms. Judging from Derek's appearance, it was only a few months before his final surgery. Becky's heart seized up in fear.

Mr. Pierce continued. "It certainly isn't a part of the final stages." He glared at Becky, and took the photo back. "Once I had seen this evidence I had taken special notice of this case and found many... inconsistencies in your work." He removed his glasses from his nose and returned them to his vest.

Becky felt anger fuming around inside of her, being spied on after so many years of faithful service. But her anger didn't last long, as her terror built up faster and stronger.

"Your subliminal and hypnotic suggestions when looked at individually, seem normal. But when you look at them as a whole, I have found some distressing patterns." Mr. Pierce uncrossed his legs and leaned back on the sofa. He now peered at Becky, looking down through his nose at her. "The sexual fetish directives are tellingly mild. The intelligence quotient remained virtually unchanged from the beginning of the program. It should have dipped well below ninety after the first nine months. And there was a remarkably strong will and sense of self left in Kitten. Why I wouldn't be surprised if one day she began an argument

or even talked back. Completely unacceptable."

Mr. Pierce closed his eyes, as if he was contemplating a decision. Rebecca had known him too long. She knew very well that whatever was going to happen had been decided long before she had arrived.

"You may not even be aware of it, Rebecca," Mr. Pierce said. "But I think you might have feelings for Kitten, there."

Becky looked at Derek, now yelping in waves of pleasure as she fingered herself. Becky thought it wasn't possible. She had been doing this too long.

"The people who get these girls are too powerful and important to get anything less than the perfect sex toy. That is something I've always demanded." He folded his hands across his belly. Becky started to tremble. "And if there's one thing that could put this program in jeopardy, it's self-interest. Mine is the only will that is important here. When one of my people starts to think for themselves, it's a danger to me. And I won't let it stand."

Mr. Pierce called into the hall again. "Sandy!" From the hall stepped Dee, armed with a small pistol trained on Becky. She said nothing, her eyes as cold as ice, her face emotionless. Her movement was slow, careful and confident. It only made sense. She had been in the program for almost as long as Becky, waiting for a chance to advance. For years and years she was biding her time. Once she spotted a weakness in Becky, she took advantage of it. She had sent these reports to Pierce. Becky sprang to her feet, ready to go down fighting.

"Protocol Zeus!" Mr. Pierce shouted at Becky. She immediately slumped, her energy gone, feeling like a puppet whose strings had been cut. She fell back onto the sofa, limp. Mr. Pierce got to his feet, and straightened his sportcoat. "I never thought I'd have to use my override code on you, Rebecca. You served me well for so long." He paused only for a moment. "But all good things must end." Mr. Pierce turned away.

"It would be wasteful and improper to dispose of so many years worth of maintenance," he said. "So much money has been spent on you." He looked over his shoulder back at Dee.

Mr. Pierce stood still, letting Becky's mind flail helplessly inside her motionless body. Her eyes darted back and forth in panic, expecting

the next flinch from Dee or Mr. Pierce to be the last thing on Earth she would ever witness. Becky saw Mr. Pierce straighten himself.

"I'll give you a choice, Rebecca. Bite the bullet." He looked over at Derek, who was still making quiet yelps. "Or be the bimbo." He turned to face Becky once again, his arms folded. "Protocol Jupiter."

Becky felt control come back to her. She cried out briefly, in fear and in pain. She didn't respond to the question. It was an impossible decision.

"Rebecca?" Mr. Pierce said, sounding impatient.

She tried to think. Becky had undergone years of combat training to deal with situations like this. But now she could only think of what she'd do. She was helpless, powerless. Completely at the mercy of unmerciful people. There was no way out of this, she knew.

"Yaaagh!" Dee yelled out at the top of her lungs. Her arms had been grasped and pulled backwards over her head. Another hand swiped the gun. She was then picked up and tossed onto a nearby table, snapping her neck. The gun was then pointed at Pierce. "Don't move!" The maid cocked the pistol.

The vacuous look in the servant girl's eyes had vanished. The look of unbridled ecstasy in her eyes had disappeared. Now her two eyes projected anger and intent.

Mr. Pierce was surprised, then angry and irate with the girl. He couldn't stand this inconvenience. Such arrogance from one of his toys. "Protocol Poseidon!" he yelled at Derek.

"No!" Becky cried.

"What's that?" Derek said. "I couldn't hear you over the gunshot."

Pierce grasped the hole in his chest, falling dead on the spot. Derek's wrathful eyes met Becky's astonished, fearful expression. She had done all this to him. It was her hands that pushed him off this cliff. Derek tucked the gun into her apron. Becky wasn't able to think anymore. Logic was gone from her mind. With only instinct left, she leapt from the sofa. To embrace Derek. She clung to her like a life preserver. Which in fact, Derek was.

She squeeze to the point where Derek felt like her head was going to pop off. "Hey, Ouch! Hey!" She didn't stop.

Becky was full of questions, like "Where, how, did you..? I mean, When did..." Derek grasped her by the waist, and started to get her to move.

"We've gotta get outta here."

---

High in the slopes of Sweden, a ski lodge stood alone against a blizzard. The storm was whipping walls of snow against the windows, one after another. A dazzling sight for the occupants. But two of the lodge's residents had claimed desirable space in front of the fireplace, ignoring the show.

The two girls were obviously locals, their blonde hair and blue eyes a dead giveaway to their ancestry. When spoken to, they were talking in perfect Swedish, which set them apart from the other residents of the lodge who were mostly Europeans and Americans who did not know the obscure language. They chatted on and on, like the two teenage girls they appeared for all the world to be. But when no one was listening, they reverted to a more familiar mode of conversation.

"So, it was because I'm a Buckeye?"

"Yup," Becky confirmed.

Nicole let the concept rattle around in her head for a moment. "You've got to be joking."

"Nope," Becky reaffirmed.

"The whole reason you... they did all this was because I chose to play football at Ohio State?"

"Yup," Becky re-reaffirmed. "He had this thing against Ohio State. Mr. Pierce went to Michigan, so he always wanted Ohio State to lose the big game."

"That is the stupidest thing I ever heard."

"You have no idea how deep some college rivalries go."

"So he could have chosen anyone in the world, even real girls, and instead he chose nothing but Ohio State football players?"

"And basketball," Becky added.

"They'd get transformed, then given away and he'd use them to control other people," Becky stated matter-of-factly. "He'd simply ask for their unquestioning loyalty in turn for a living sex toy. You'd be surprised to the lengths men can go for a little bit of love."

"Ahem," Nicole said.

"Oh, Sorry."

Nicole stretched herself out, putting her feet up on the ottoman, and taking another sip of hot coco. She let her feet toast in the heat of the fire from the fireplace. Becky put her feet up too, and the two battled each other for space on the ottoman.

"Don't hog the heat!" she complained.

"I was here first!"

They kept their voices low, because they didn't want to attract too much attention. But such civility does not win battles for vital tootsie-toasting space.

"Mine!" Becky growled.

"Mine!" Nicole insisted.

They started to kick each other, fencing with their stocking feet.

"Ow!"

Becky got one of Nicole's shins in a lock with her two legs. She applied pressure.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"So you gonna tell me the truth this time?" Becky asked.

"Ow, yes! Ow!" Nicole's voice was begging for mercy.

"Spill it!" Becky demanded.

Nicole was howling in mock pain. "Arrgh! When I started at the gym!"

"Lie!" Becky kept up the pressure.

"Aaaa! When I went to the mall with you!"

Becky clamped down. "Lies! All lies!"

"Yaaaalp!"

Nicole shouted. "Okay, okay!"

Becky let up a little. "Talk."

"Okay, I first realized I was being controlled when..." Nicole tried to get her leg out. It didn't move. Becky clenched again. "Ow!!"

"Keep talking!"

"I first realized I was being controlled when I was being fed information on the fake cruise."

Becky released her lock. "How?"

Nicole repositioned herself in her seat, getting ready to tell her tale. "Okay. So. It's like this, Pierce had these 'override codes', right? And he liked to use the Greek gods for these code words, right?"

Becky was trying to follow. "Yeeeeeah...?"

"So mine was Poseidon." Nicole suddenly froze up.

Becky kicked her. "Knock it off."

"Sorry. Anyway, mine were based on gods of water and stuff. And it figures that if there were codes to make us freeze, there were codes to reactivate and deactivate our programming. So there'd be a code to reset me back to being Derek."

Becky agreed with that. "Following you so far."

Nicole sipped more coco. "So. We're on this nonexistent cruise to South America aboard the... get ready for it... the Triton sea liner."

Becky slapped her head in disbelief. "And Triton is an ancient god of the sea." She slapped her head a couple more times. "So you hear that, and you're back to the original Derek. Of all the dumb luck! I guess I'm glad we didn't pick another cruise ship. Unless the words 'Alaskan Princess' trigger anything."

Nicole went back to the coco. "Whatever. It's all good."

Becky wanted to know more. "But you kept going along with it. In fact you had to suck that guy's..."

"Don't say it! I'm still not fully in control there yet." Nicole waved her hand in front of her face to cool off. She threw her head back and reflected. "Well, I probably should have bolted right when I 'woke up', but I figured that I was probably just going to get hunted down."

"For all I knew, I had a homing device in my skull or something." She looked over at Becky expectantly.

"You don't," Becky said.

"Right," Nicole continued, "so I hung around, waiting for a really good chance to escape. But only after a couple of days, I hear all this stuff about how Pierce is going to kill you and..."

Becky got a little anxious. "And even though I destroyed your life and we-wired your mind into a sex-starved bimbo, you wanted to save..."

Nicole held Becky's hand. "We both know the rest."

Becky closed her eyes and enjoyed the warmth she felt. "And you're okay with everything?"

"It's not so bad." Nicole wriggled her toes, getting more warmth to them. She snuggled deeper into her chair. Becky had so many more questions. "But what about..." Nicole whispered in her ear. "I only feel alive when I'm with you. End of discussion."





