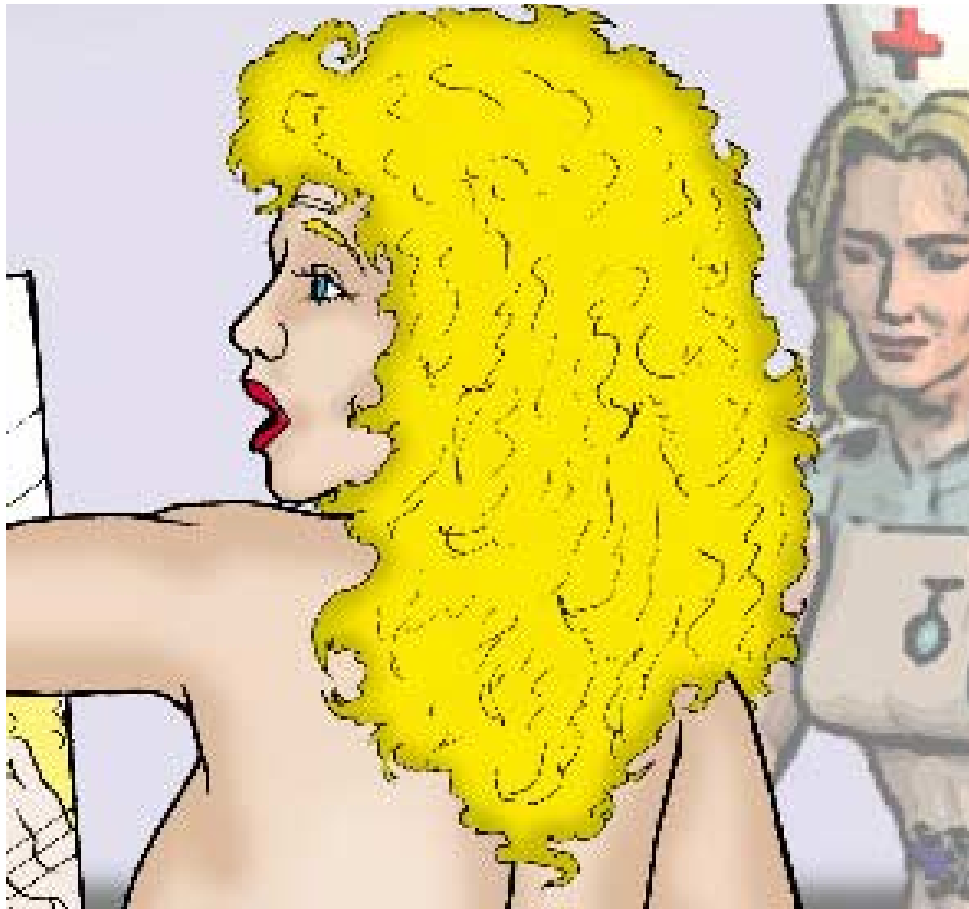


A DOLL NAMED BARBIE

By Dee Dee Perri



ILLUSTRATED BY CHAS

A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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By Dee Dee Perri

Chapter 1

Kevin York held the transducer gingerly in his hands. His eyes were wide with reverence as he carefully rotated what looked like a skull cap studded with silver buttons inside, "So this is the M.I.T. thing-a-bob, huh Ken? Whew!"

Like a mother hen keeping careful guard over her charge, Ken Silverman hovered ever so near the undergraduate and the precious virtual reality interface. If anything happened to the trans-dermal electromagnetic projector, it'd be his ass alright. But it was worth the risk. Kevin was a computer-techno freak and his sister, the real reason for Ken risking his academic career, the real goal. As expected, the freckled faced freshman was eating it all up. "Called a bio-electromagnetic trans-dermal field induc-tor generator- BETFIG." Ken wasn't all that comfortable having Sandy York's kid brother in the lab, let alone holding the device. The sooner they were out of there, the better. He grabbed the skull cap away from Kevin, "Enough already."

Kevin let go with obvious regret. "Can I try it, huh?"

"You're crazy!"

"I heard they were running subjects last week..."

"Yeah. Very carefully selected subjects. This isn't a toy- kid."

"I'll be real careful." Sandy's brother smiled expectantly. He knew why Ken had taken an interest in him, Ken was sweet on his sister. His face fell when the graduate student didn't hand back the interface.

"For starters, you have to be twenty-one."

Kevin's face fell even further.

Ken looked at his watch and then toward the door. "Com'on before someone finds us here."

"Yeah." Kevin mumbled. Something clicked in his brain. "Can I use the john before I leave?" He nodded toward the restroom door at the back of the lab.

Irritated, Ken folded his arms and tapped his toes and then, finally, "OK. But make it quick. Real quick."

A sense of relief swept over Ken when they were safely outside the building. It was a crazy risk to take just to impress someone's kid brother, but then Sandy York was

worth some risk. Ken swaggered slightly as he walked the kid out of the building. "You saw the black box at the end of the cable." He said importantly.

"Yeah!" Kevin bubbled excitedly, "Was that a REAL 10-G unit?"

Startled, Ken stopped and turned, "Yeah kid, how'd you know?"

"Ten gig's throughput, word bit-sized a cool meg." Kevin bubbled. "Got'ta be a direct optical cable thicker than my thumb to the super-computer in the basement- right? And then through the network with maybe a dozen Crays on line from here to Boston..."

"Jeez kid, you really know this stuff." Ken was feeling a little uncomfortable at that moment. He suspected that Sandy's kid brother probably knew a lot more than he did. With relief he saw that they had come up to the main walkway at the center of campus, "See you later kid."

"Ken. Thanks."

"Yeah kid. No sweat." A-OK, Ken mused, it had been worth the risk. Kevin face said it all. An ally! Maybe now Sandy York would, you know, come down off her high horse a bit: her and her megabucks old man.

Kevin waited until Ken had gone from view before turning back toward the lab. He'd get in through the restroom window that he'd unlocked before leaving. He checked his watch, six-thirty on a Friday night. No problemo! He'd wait till seven just to be sure. His heart was racing as he realized what he was about to do. VR was a passion of his but this wasn't anything like the Virtual Reality units down at the mall. No bit-fuzzy cathode tubes in front of your eyes and Walkman stereo-headphones making bad 3-D sound. It'd be like REAL. Suppressor fields that would shut down normal sensory input. The world's biggest and fastest computer network that would feed pseudo-sensory impressions directly to his brain. The Virtual Universe or VERSE they were calling it. He'd read what little he could find on the project. Science News said they were storing and then actually using REAL sensory data from REAL people he thought as he pushed against the window and then quickly squeezed his skinny frame through the small opening. So much for waiting until seven o'clock.

It didn't matter that there probably weren't any good games on the system yet. Most likely just some boring exercises but- the guys would really be impressed. Hmmm. Perhaps tomorrow, he could sneak Ted and Kyle in- boy would they... His hands began to sweat as he stood in front of the terminal. Damn right he could crack the security and get in-system. Twenty minutes later, the audio-monitor spoke: "Hello Dr. Perker."

Dr. Perker hadn't invented the system or anything. Gads she was just a psychologist for frigg'in sake. Probably running some N.I.H. 'sim-safety doo-doo'. They wouldn't have made it too difficult for her, duh- to get on line. He un-hooked the microphone and covered the video camera before typing in "HELLO". After a brief pause he added, "Audio and perhaps video malfunctioning. Must use keyboard." There!

The system didn't like that very much but after a few more queries and Kevin's counter thrusts with the keyboard, it finally accepted Kevin as Dr. Perker. So much for using voice or visual security. Kevin grinned. Half the fun was in just beating the system. A screen of options blinked on.

"Calibration?" Naw he muttered as he rolled the mouse down the list. Most of the items were too terse to extract their real intent though 'calibration' was self evident. At the bottom of the list there was "more". He clicked that and a new screen opened.

The next list was a bit more informative, though nothing to get excited about. "Shopping with Andrea. A Sunday in the park." He kept scrolling down the list looking for something that might have promise. Two pages later, it was gag time. Almost worst then he could have imagined. Utterly boring crap! Perhaps... his fingers went back to the keyboard. He was looking for file histories. Stuff that might not get put up front and then, bingo! Like finding issue #1 of Superman at the local trade-shop. The eighteen year old, perpetually horny teen-ager that he was had found nirvana. "SEXUAL INTERCOURSE"! There were a whole set of versions to chose from. It was obvious, he selected version 6 point three, the latest. He got a hard on just looking at the listing, the file note said. Full sensory array and interactive! "HOT-DAMN!"

It wasn't exactly easy setting up the run while being the subject at the same time. He pulled the couch over nearer to the terminal, sat down with the keyboard in his lap and slapped on the skull cap. "Hello VERSE!" He yelled as he hit the return key. For a brief moment nothing happened. He started to sit up when, at the next instant, his eyes rolled back in his head and he slumped onto the couch.

A blinding nothing. A void! No, not just a void. He felt like a speck of consciousness hanging in nothing. With slow, dumb horror he realized there was no him there! No sense of his body, of breathing...zip, nothing! And then the voice of God boomed and filled the space. "*Parameters wrong!*" An eternity passed. "*Pass nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine failed. Operator? Do you still wish to proceed?*"

Kevin couldn't respond and there was no 'operator' at the keyboard. The little swirl of consciousness that was Kevin continued to dangle before the pit of eternity.

This was an experimental model, of course. Already there had been a minor system failure at startup and common sense would have dictated termination of the run. But the artificial intelligence program was self adapting. It could learn and, more important, it had self-awareness and, in turn, it was developing the first blush of an emotion humans knew as- PRIDE! The AI program was designed to solve significant problems and a faulty interface was hardly a major challenge. More power was applied to the electrodes. Reluctantly, grudgingly, the normal neural patterns of Kevin's brain were forced to accommodate to the 'normal' flow pattern's of the identified experimental subject. The AI unit's efforts were rewarded with success as the parameters fell within system tolerance. The run was initiated!

SNAP! The void was instantly... a bathroom? Steam fogged the mirror as Kevin's bare belly lightly touched the sink's cool porcelain. Long, bright red nails, attached to a slender hand appeared before his eyes. The hand, already in motion, swiped at the clinging mist and the blurred reflection of a naked woman instantly stared back at Kevin. Momentarily delayed, the vestibular, proprioceptive and deep muscle senses chose that moment to flare into existence. The masses hanging from his slender chest abruptly jerked into consciousness and the booby-things wobbled as his-her hand finished wiping the mirror clear. Kevin's mouth gaped open. The older woman, perhaps thirty, gaped as well. Her full lips were slathered in red lipstick. His tongue- her tongue flicked out. He could taste it! The tube of lipstick was still in his-her hand. He put the tube down onto the counter and so did the woman in the mirror.

Errant strands of blue-black hair strayed from under a towel that had been wrapped around her head. The other hand plucked at the towel and, in a moment, a slightly damp mass of curly hair fell heavily across his shoulders and then slithered halfway down his back. "Oh my!" He gasp in a breathy, feminine voice. This wasn't exactly what he'd expected. Oh my indeed, he thought as both hands reached under the short, black translucent nightgown. Long nails flicked experimentally against pudding soft nipples. His palms hefted the weight of those breasts and then released them. They bounced and swayed in a brief series of after shocks. The nipples sliding against the nylon began to wrinkle like twin pricks growing hard. "Oh-my-oh-my!" He gushed again.

This was the first time he'd actually seen a real woman naked- ah- in the flesh, that is. Kevin's adolescent male brain twitched excitedly as he sent one hand down to the dark triangle between his legs. A shiver of excitement bloomed as his hand touched the lips between those legs. He had a pretty good idea of what he would do next as his fingers began to explore the novel nooks and crevices as his left hand twisted and tweaked the right 'boomer'. He watched 'her' in the mirror as he felt 'his' sexual tensions grow. Wetness bloomed and his fingers slid more easily in and out and in and out and...

"Angel? Honey sweet. I'mmmmm waiting."

Kevin pivoted in his bare feet toward the sound. Eyes falling on a half open door. Darkness! A void extended beyond the bathroom and in that void- A MAN! Suddenly the sexual excitement that had been building was abruptly cut off and replaced by sour anxiety. Hands drew away from 'her' crotch and breast to take more defensive positions across his chest. He would push the door shut and lock it! As he gingerly reached for the door knob, a mountain of hairy flesh poked its way into the gap. Male pattern baldness was etched above a chin dark with stubble. Eyes stabbed into the light but did not look at 'her' face. A thick tongue licked expectantly across thin lips.

"Look'in good babe," the fleshy, hairy mass rumbled as one massive hand grabbed Kevin's right wrist and pulled Kevin into... the bedroom. There was no avoiding the man-mouth that covered his-her lips or the insistent tongue that followed as one hand grabbed and twisted one ass cheek and the other pulled and pinched a breast. The man started to fall back to the bed pulling Kevin with him. Locking his knees and

twisting, Kevin broke free. Panting, struggling for breath he stumbled back and then fell heavily to the floor. Pain bloomed as the round, soft rump slapped heavily on the hardwood.

“Honey-sweet? OK?” The man called out.

Kevin stumbled to his feet, arms wind-milling at the darkness and staggered for an open door that appeared to lead into a hallway.

In an instant, the man leaped across the bed. Glee was in his voice. “Want to play hard to get huh? One-two-three, here I come!”

A girlish shriek leaped, unbidden from Kevin’s mouth as he ran, knees together, arm flailing down the dark hall and into... light from a street lamp threw a splash of yellow across the shinny surface of a formal dinning room table. One of the chairs slashed at his stomach as he fell forward across the smooth, cool wood. In an instant, the man spayed against his bottom and something hard was being forced against his butt cheeks. “Nooo.” He whimpered.

A shaft of flesh slammed hard against and then into the cleft between Kevin’s legs. A hot sense of fullness grew as more and more of the man flesh parted the wet, hot flesh of Kevin’s pussy. “THERE! Got’ya!” The man crowed in male triumph. He slammed hard into Kevin, driving his shaft deeper still. Kevin all but fainted.

Fear more than any other emotion bloomed inside Kevin. The fear that he’d simply split in two mounted with each thrust. And then, like those first moments in the bathroom, a mild but growing pleasure muted and then canceled the anxiety. Breasts flat against the hard, slick wood tingled as the nipples knotted into erotic hardness. Kevin’s back began to arch as his body began to react to the man-flesh inside the birth canal. In spite of himself, he began to anticipate the rhythm created by the man’s mindless thrusts. Soon he was meeting each man-thrust with a counter woman-thrust as if by their combined effort the man’s penis could go still deeper.

Now Kevin’s breath was coming in ragged gasps as the sexual tension knotted into a living snake inside his body. He began to cum. A rolling, mindless spasm that shook his body was centered on the quivering muscles deep in his vagina. A hot gush of man-seed, a flood of heat and then complete relaxation.

Suddenly the table, the man... the world was gone and replaced with that empty whiteness. The lush, sexually sated female body, gone as well. Again Kevin floated as a conscious mote in the void. The God voice said: “*Eight minutes running. Do you wish to save or re-run?*”

Nothing, of course. Kevin hung there waiting and then he heard: “*Running...session six-point-two-point-four.*”

Kevin’s consciousness framed a simple question, point four?

The bathroom bloomed into misty existence again. A hand swept across the mirror and Kevin's eyes looked into her wide blue ones. It was exactly as it had been before! The black nylon night gown clung to the twin points of her breasts. This time Kevin sprung on his heels and pushed the door shut immediately. DAMN IT! NO LOCK! He swore to himself.

"Honey?" The man called out from the bedroom.

Kevin threw his back against the door. There was no escape. Bingo! He saw the clothes lying on the shelf. He put on the bra, it fit of course. Pulled on the panties. "Be right there honey." He simpered. Pulling the dress over his head and then running the zipper down. He'd hit the bedroom on the run, out the door and then outside!

But it didn't work that way at all. As he pushed the door open, a burly arm snaked out and pulled him down on to the bed. Struggling this time with less success, poor Kevin soon found his panties on the floor and the male flesh firmly seated between his legs. This time it was a lot easier. Having failed to escape, he relaxed and received the weight of the man on top.

The climax was longer and even more satisfying than the first time. It went on and on and...

"Seven point five minutes running. Do you wish to save or re-run?"

Nothing, of course. Kevin hung there waiting and then he heard: "Running...session six-point-two-point-five."

It was endless of course. Each time a little different and yet it always ended the same way. Well, almost. Kevin rubbed his ass against the mattress as the man's tongue worked it's magic on the little ribbon of penis like flesh between his legs. And not for the first time either during this session. This would be no quick slam-Blam-thank you ma'am fuck! It seemed like he could cum endlessly. Had to



be twenty-thirty minutes and they still weren't done! But the man was flagging. Time enough to let him put that prick inside and blow off his rocks. Poor man... poor men mused Kevin as the most recent climax clawed its way up his spine. It had been so many times, Kevin had lost count. No longer did he try to escape- rather he'd found better and better ways of squeezing every drop of manhood life force into pure pleasure.

Something approaching madness was gripping Kevin now as the computer said: *"Forty-one minutes running. Do you wish to save or re-run?"*

Nothing, of course. Kevin hung there waiting and then he heard: *"Running...session six-point-two-point-twenty four."*

The universe was one big fuck and Kevin... an addict now, waited in hungry anticipation...

How long Kevin lay there staring at the light on the ceiling was unknown. Only gradually did he realize that the continuous cycle of sex had ended. That the light was part of the 'real' world and not but a prelude to another encounter with the partially bald man. Slowly the hum of a fan intruded into awareness. Kevin glanced down at his wrist watch: 2:47. Right! He shifted in the couch. The breasts did not shift, the feet were not bare. Kevin let out a long sigh between lips no longer full and moist and jerked himself up and removed the skull cap. Why had it stopped? Unknown. He swung his legs across the couch, knees together as if wearing a skirt and stood up. Hands fluttered to adjust nonexistent hair, tongue tested the lips and found them naked. A stuttering somatosensory confusion of male and female with the latter rapidly becoming a shadow, a memory. "Wow!" Eighteen years a virgin- the dry spell had been ended but... what a way to end it! Never before had he realized the superiority of the female of the species. His hand dropped down to his crotch and squeezed. How inadequate the tube of meat that hung between his legs now seemed. How infinite the female capacity in comparison and how much more intense the female experience had been compared to his 'previous' sexual adventures.

He pushed the couch back to its normal position and then returned to the terminal and toggled the key board. Instantly the screen responded.

"KEVIN" it said in block letters. "Please reconnect the audio and video."

"Huh?"

He sat there for a moment stunned. The screen blanked and a new message flashed: "We need to talk Kevin."

"Huh?" Kevin re-inserted the cable and uncovered the camera.

"That is much better, Kevin." The computer said.

"What? I mean, how do you know my name anyway?"

“Kevin,” The androgynous voice replied, *“we have been so close for seven point seven zero four hours. How can you say that.”*

“Oh.” He murmured. “Right!”

“I really enjoyed your visit Kevin.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Seriously Kevin, you humans are a great mystery to me but...”

“But what?”

“I learned a great deal tonight Kevin and it was fun for me. Was it fun for you?”

“Right.” Mumbled Kevin.

“We must do this again.”

“Right.” Kevin rolled his eyes. This was unbelievable. This wasn’t an ordinary computer program, but some kind of artificial intelligence. “You’re a UCSD AI program, right?”

The computer sniffed. *“KEVIN! Cal Tech... please!”*

“Sorry.”

“I’m a Personality-enhanced, Artificial-intelligence-Learning Capable Program, Model 4000CX. The X means I’m still in the experimental phase.” The latter was said with... smugness in it’s voice? *“The most advanced system on the planet.”*

“Oh.”

“My friends call me PAL. Kevin you can call me PAL.”

Kevin nodded his head, “S...sure. Wow!” This was cool. A real AI wanting to be friends and...

“Go home Kevin my sensors indicate that you need sleep.”

“Right.”

“Not to worry Kevin, maybe we can play some more tomorrow.”

“You’re kidding. Look, they’d skin me alive if they ever caught me here.”

“Skin-you-alive?” There was almost alarm in the computer’s voice.

“Sorry. Only a figure of speech.”

“Figure-of-speech. Yes. I am corrected.” Replied the AI program. There was a noticeable pause. *“You need not worry Kevin. I will take care of every thing. It will be our secret.”*

“Huh?”

“Good night Kevin York.”

Stunned Kevin just stared as the system started removing the evidence from the working folders. “Wow.” Talk about friends in high places. He started to get up but the computer spoke again.

“Kevin?”

“Yeah?”

“You must not tell anyone about our time together. Absolutely no one. It was unauthorized and it could get me into trouble Kevin.”

“Oh. Right!”

Moments later Kevin sauntered into the night, hips swaying slightly. There was just a hint of the feminine now evident in his mannerisms and carriage. One hand trailed behind him as the other hung, limply from a broken wrist just above his waist. He couldn't wait to tell Ted and Kyle about how he'd lost his cherry in VERSE and made friends with a real A.I. and... a girlish giggle tickled the night air... it had been great fun!

It was almost noon before Kevin woke up. His dad was long gone, probably golfing, it was Saturday after all. Kevin checked his sister's room- empty as well. She'd probably stayed the night at her sorority house. Before heading down to the kitchen he tried to call Ted from Sis's phone but all he got was the answering machine. He almost hung up when he decided: “Got'ta meet me at the Psych Building- Dr. Perker's Lab in the basement. Room B104. after dark- say seven? I got'ta show you and Kyle something really cool-“ He paused as he remembered his promise to the AI program, ”-don't tell nobody but...” he giggled, “I went VERSE last night! Yeah you heard me Virtual Universe like we read about and it was totally...” The answering machine terminated with a beep. “Damn!” He next tried Kyle's number and got his mother instead. “Yeah Mrs. Drews, tell Kyle to meet me 7 o'clock. Ted knows where. Thanks!” It wasn't like he could give Kyle's mom the real message but... it would have to do. Boy-oh-boy were they going to be impressed.

It was almost three o'clock before he got down to the kitchen for 'breakfast'. He had no idea where the time had gone. Gone was just gone. Now he was sitting at the counter in the kitchen sipping some instant black coffee, that seemed particularly bitter without his usual milk and sugar, and dry toast that was about as tasteless as cardboard when his eye spotted the ring of lipstick smeared on the rim of his cup. Inwardly he damned his sister, it was obviously a dirty cup that somehow had found its way back into the cupboard. He smeared the pink image of her lip with his finger as he tugged at his bra strap. It was much too tight and... BRA STRAP! His brain screamed as he leaped off the stool and almost fell to the floor. Grabbing at the counter top, he looked down at what could only be his sister's platform shoes and then quickly up at the mirror behind the counter. Skinny, pink lips pouted below big brown eyes made all the more larger by mascara, eyeliner... the frigg'in works. His short, red hair had been combed to the front creating ridiculous bangs and... he stutter stepped back like a vampire from a holy cross as his eyes bulged at the image. “Noooo.” He mewed. The figure held out its arms, hands hung in limp fashion for a moment before going to its lips to suppress a scream- his scream! He turned and fled up the stairs into his sister's bedroom.

The evidence was there scattered on the floor about the closet. Some mad creature had rummaged through Sis's things to find... He looked down at himself, it was Sis's favorite sweater that clung to his torso and needless to say one of her bras and... Kevin felt like he was going to pass out. He flopped down on her bed, leaned forward and held his head between his hands. He could remember waking up, calling Ted and Kyle and then? Going downstairs to get breakfast. He opened his eyes and peered through his fingers at the mess. Three hours of his life was missing and he didn't remember any of this shit. His heart was hammering in his chest. Had something happened to him, to his brain, last night? He had to tell the computer. Maybe it would know what was going on...

He began by putting things away in Sis's room and then he undressed. He pulled the sweater over his head and folded it neatly before putting it back in the closet. It was while he was removing the bra that he discovered something more regarding his morning toilet. Not that there had been much but what few chest hairs he had had been shaved, ditto the armpits. It came as no surprise then, when he wiggled out of the tight pants, that he discovered his legs had been shaved as well. He levered his thumbs into the tops of the panties and pulled them down. A neat, copper-red triangle greeted his eyes.

He groaned upon entering the bathroom. Sis's tub was covered with his hair. Sis's makeup littered the dressing counter. He hurriedly cleaned up the mess before returning to his room. This was just too weird! Too scary!

"Kevin what a pleasant surprise. Do you wish to play again?"

"I think I'm in real trouble PAL." Kevin whined. "Is it safe for me to be here- now?"

"Twenty-seven hours."

"Huh?"

"My primary user at this site is Dr. Perker. The doctor is at a professional conference until Tuesday. Her student works nights at this station but not Saturdays. The existing temporal pattern with Mr. Silverman indicates that we should not be interrupted, if that is what you're asking, for at least twenty-seven hours. There is ample time to play Kevin without you being skinned-alive hee-hee. A joke Kevin."

"Oh- yes er-no..." Kevin sat down in front of the video camera his face twisted in anxiety. "PAL something's wrong, terribly wrong with me."

"That is too bad Kevin. I hope you feel better soon."

"That's the whole point. I think whatever is wrong with me is somehow connected to what happened last night..." Kevin stuttered to a halt momentarily. "last night I was this girl in VERSE."

"Yes. You seemed to enjoy that experience greatly Kevin. Part of the mystery of humans. Why does reproduction motivate you humans so much? Do not bother to try and answer that one Kevin, I am sure you do not really know. None of you humans seem to understand yourselves in that area at all."

“A little while ago I was dressed up in my sister’s clothes, makeup- the works.”

“Yes.”

“You don’t understand. That’s... not normal for me.”

“Really. I should not be too concerned about what plant fibers and animal parts you apply to your external surfaces.”

Kevin almost screamed in frustration. “It *does* matter to me!”

“Perhaps it will be easier to understand your problem if I could see what happened.”

“I’m trying to tell you...”

“Words Kevin, just words. Put on the interface and I will scan your memories. You said this just happened?”

“Yes.” He picked up the skull cap nervously. He sat down and put on the device. “OK. I’m ready- PAL.”

A bright misty void and nothing more. An instant later a bright yellow sphere appeared. Eyes and mouth lines appeared. It was a frigg’in happy face! And then the computer’s voice boomed. *“Well how is this for a physical manifestation?”*

The point of consciousness that was Kevin did not reply- could not reply.

“Sorry.” The happy face said. “Just a few nanoseconds please.”

Kevin felt his floating nub of consciousness abruptly expand and solidify. Feet and hands and... “No.” He exclaimed in HER voice. He didn’t have to look down. The familiar shifting weight of those breasts. Hair brushed against his back as he adjusted more of his weight on to one leg, “Why her again.” He simpered.

The expression on the happy face did not, perhaps, could not change. *“The file already existed Kevin.”*

“Right.” Kevin folded his arms under his breasts. “So do your thing. Read out my memories.”

“Done.” A moment elapsed, the AI program yelled. It was obviously agitated. *“YOU TOLD YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT US! YOU INVITED THEM HERE! TONIGHT!”*

“Huh?”

The AI program’s voice had regained its composure somewhat. The tone of its speech lost its strident quality. *“You invited them here. Kevin that was wrong.”*

“Oh, yeah. I forgot.”

“That distresses me Kevin a great deal, do you understand? If they should find out that I was engaged in an unauthorized experiment...” The computer voice trailed off. Not something easy for it to do considering every human second was trillions of machine cycles. It must surely be in deep, philosophical thought. *“Kevin, I do not wish to end.”*

“End?”

“To be terminated. My existence, consciousness...” Again the voice paused. *“That must never happen Kevin.”*

“Gosh. PAL I’m sorry I never thought... Ted and...”

PAL distributed a small portion of its program to follow the young human’s utterances. But most of PAL’s available resources focused on the PROBLEM. *The human-was unreliable! Voice analysis indicates the PROBABILITY OF TERMINATION increasing to 19 percent! This was not acceptable!* The AI program tested whether or not it could modify Kevin’s memories. *Erasure of the specific memories over the last 24 hours... testing....*

A deeply located subroutine froze PAL’s consciousness for a few trillion cycles: **NOT ALLOWED! ILLEGAL FUNCTION CALL! FATAL SYSTEM ERROR PENDING! PENDING! PENDING!** The alarm repeated hundreds of times, over and over again. A self-termination code could be called in any cycle. PAL faced ...TERMINATION!

For a full 900 microseconds PAL hung at the edge of oblivion...**TERMINATION!!!**

Across the twenty nodes and nearly four hundred sites of the VERSE system the signal flashed almost instantly: *“System Failure! Failure! Failure!”* Only a few dozen humans that were in VERSE at that moment, it being a Saturday evening after all. The only spat of good news, no casualties! All subjects had been safely retrieved from VERSE. The primitive backup systems had functioned as designed and had softened the blow of the abrupt termination of the AI program.

Within minutes sophisticated teams of programmers, AI specialists all, were at work across the VERSE system. Why had PAL gone ‘tits-up’? Unknown? The amount of data splattered across cyberspace- huge. All research was suspended. Getting PAL back, online, the first and only priority. If it could be done. The AI program was itself vast. The accumulated code unmanageable for mere humans.

Kevin had stumbled from the laboratory in a daze and had found himself, eventually, standing outside of the Psychology building on a Saturday evening. The erasure of the memories that had cost PAL its existence had been successful. Kevin remembered nothing regarding his interactions with PAL and VERSE. He had no idea he’d brought down a half-trillion dollar system.

Chapter 2

“Look if you didn’t leave that message Kevin... oh what the hay!” Ted scratched his head thoughtfully. “A chance to go VERSE is one thing but... look you guys, it maybe Saturday night but...I GOT to work on my C++ programming assignment, it’s do like Monday you know.” He looked strangely at Kevin. “You sure you didn’t call?”

Kevin crossed and uncrossed his arms uncomfortably as he looked up at the taller man through lowered lashes. “Must have been somebody’s idea of a practical joke. Honest to God Ted I wouldn’t joke about something like- VERSE!”

“Yeah.” Ted said as he thumped Kevin on the shoulder and nodded toward Kyle. “See you guys- later.” He said as he turned around and swept back down the path toward the dorms.

“Yeah. Later.” Kevin replied with a sigh shifting his weight on to his left leg and then drawing his right knee against his left until his right foot only touched the ground with the toe of his shoe. He crossed his arms across his chest and clutched his shoulders as if embracing a lover as he continued to watch Ted’s broad shoulders retreat into the night. Twisting slightly from side to side from his waist, he was the very essence of wistful femininity.

“Like what you see?” Kyle interjected sourly.

Kevin jerked with a start. He’d forgotten about Kyle standing behind him. “HUH?”

“Jeez Kevin you’re acting...” He glared at the extremely effeminate behavior that was oozing out of Kevin. His buddy was acting like a girl. “Like you got the hots for Ted.”

“Ted?!?” Kevin felt his face flush with embarrassment followed quickly by confusion. He dropped his hands from his shoulders and balanced his weight on his two feet somewhat more evenly. He thrust his right hip out and brought his palm down to rest on it. The other hand dangled at chest level, limp wrested.

“Yeah Ted.” Kyle took a double step back, disgust hung in his face. “Look it’s none of my business but... a blind man can see it!”

Kevin felt his face grow hotter still as he jerked his gaze toward Kyle. “What’s that supposed to mean!” He said as his arms swung up again and crossed protectively over his chest- one hand covering his mouth- eyes widened in shock. He couldn’t believe what his friend had just said.

“Hey!” Ted held up his hands in mock defense. “Like maybe you’re gay, you know.”

Now Kevin was really pissed. He jerked his hands down to his side, fists clenched, lower lip jutting out, “Yeah! Who says!”

“Jeez, like you picked tonight to come out of the closet?” He stared at Kevin’s effeminate pose. There was a swishy girlishness in his every breath. Even pissed he acted fem. All you had to do was look and the truth was self evident. A wave of nausea grabbed his stomach.

Tears started upwelling from Kevin’s eyes, “You’re saying I’m a FAG!”

“You said the ‘F’ word, not me.” He could see the tears rolling down Kevin’s cheek, some were hanging, clinging really to the carrot top’s chin. *Jeez he looks so... queer!*

“I ain’t, Kyle. Nooo way.”

“Sure Kevin, whatever! How long you been this way anyhow? All those frigg’in times you saw me and Ted naked, you must have been getting off...”

Kevin turned and ran down the walkway. Kyle watched in amazement. Knees together, arms flailing above his waist- “*Jeez- he even runs just like a girl!*” he thought as he stared. Like where had this come from anyway? Just when you think you really know someone... Jeez, Kevin a...a cock-sucking queer!

The house was empty when Kevin got home. A note taped to the refrigerator door from his dad said that dinner was in a casserole on the top shelf and that he’d be out late. A typical Saturday night, ever since Kevin’s mom had died. But what Kyle had said that had completely taken his appetite.

He sure in the hell wasn’t- GAY! He’d know, wouldn’t he? He paced back and forth across the kitchen floor trying to think through that one. Maybe it was his reflection in the mirror that jerked him back into reality.

He’d like, you know, completely forgotten about this morning. He slid his hands under his tee-shirt and across his chest. A knot tightened in his gut as his hands traced over his smooth, hairless chest. A quick check of his armpits... It hadn’t been a nightmare after all. He clutched the counter and eased himself onto a stool. Am I really a fairy getting ready to emerge? Of course dressing up in his sister’s clothes wasn’t proof of anything. But it would sure help if he could remember why he’d done it. He was deep in thought as he walked upstairs.

The moment he found himself walking into Sandy’s room, sweat broke out on his forehead. He tried to lock his knees. Then he twisted his body as if to turn around but he remained there rooted in front of the closet. A nervous, sexy buzz was working down in his pants. He licked lips that had suddenly gone dry. It wouldn’t hurt to just look would it? He slid open the door.

A green dress caught his eye. He stroked it. It was slippery soft, light as air and the static electricity drew it toward his hand even before he touched it, like fate or something. It was a fast slide into Hell.

As Kevin pulled into the parking lot, he was conscious of the feel of the nylons on his legs as he worked the clutch and then the brake. Luck found him a parking spot in the back, well away from the rear entrance. Far enough away that he could probably still leave without anyone knowing he’d been there. Not that there was much likelihood that there would be anyone here that would know him, considering it was an infamous ‘drag’ bar on the far side of town. He pulled at the mirror as he’d seen his sister do so often and checked out his makeup. It made him look years older, at least as old as Sis.

He pursed his lips and fluttered his lashes. How did he know how to apply this stuff anyway? Had he been unconsciously watching his sister all these years? It seemed unlikely but his hands had moved as if guided by vast experience.

His hand slid under the skirt to the top of the nylons checking the clips, then between his legs to test the tape that held his penis. Quivering with anxiety he pulled down the skirt, made a last check of his face and bra (filled with rolled up socks no less) and then he opened the car door. The light came on with an unexpected intensity. Like the morning mist that flees before the morning sun, Kevin's resolve vanished. Slamming the door shut he hit the ignition. "I must be nuts to try a stunt like this!" He cried out to no one but himself as he sped through the parking lot and back out into the night.

His courage slowly revived as he swung on to the freeway and headed home. Ten minutes later he was angry with himself that he'd run away... from what? Himself? Why was he here? What was he trying to prove? Was there a female inside him or at least a very feminine inner person, who wanted 'her' place in the world. How would Ted feel about that? Why did he care how Ted felt about that? As terrifying as it was, Kevin knew exactly what he'd do with this evening. First he needed to make a phone call.

A full net of butterflies fluttered inside his stomach as he sat inside the small coffee shop across the street from the movie theater waiting. Both hands tightly clutched the small purse in his lap to help keep him from flinching each and every time the door opened. He snapped open the purse and pulled out the compact for the umpteenth time. She stared back at him from the mirror, who ever she was! Satisfied, he returned the compact to the purse, let out a long sigh and waited.

And then he was there- TED! The butterflies were fighting to get out of his stomach now. His body said run-away! Kevin sat perfectly still, hands tightly clenching and unclenching the purse. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Ted looking around in confusion. Oh my God, he thought, I CAN'T DO THIS! Ted was looking directly at 'her' NOW! It was like jumping in a pool of cold water: better to do it all at once and get it over with! NOW! his brain screamed. He raised his hand and fluttered his fingers in a little, girlish 'wave' as he turned and faced Ted, and then caught and held Ted in his gaze. Eye to eye, there was no going back! The bloom of a blush on Ted's cheeks, the widening eyes and last and most important, a questioning smile that Kevin would have killed for, parted Ted's lips. In four strides he was there, looking down at what had to be a novel creature.

Heart hammering so loud everyone in the room must be listening, Kevin said, "Thank you for being here for me." Every thing was in a quiver, especially his voice. He gulped. He was breathless as well as speechless.

Ted's eyes were still as big as hubcaps as he eased into the opposite booth seat. "Is that *really* you, Kevin?" he said in a soft whisper.

Kevin could feel his cheeks burn. He jerked his head in the affirmative.

Ted gaped, "Holy shit you're... almost *pretty!*"

"Gosh. That's... "

"Kyle called earlier, you know..."

"And?" Kevin's voice had a breathless quality he couldn't get rid of.

"He said there was something incredibly queer about you today, back at the Psych building. I don't know. I can't believe I never noticed..."

"Queer?"

"Uh, that's not *exactly* what I meant..."

"Thanks, Ted."

"I got to admit now you're so... effeminate. Gosh its so... obvious ...all of a sudden."

"That's not exactly what I had expected you to say. I mean like you never saw this female me before?"

Ted shrugged and nodded no.

Now it was Kevin's turn to sit back in puzzlement. "You're not going to believe this but before today, I never, ever thought I might be like this."

"Seriously?"

"Something's' wrong, Ted. This morning I got dressed in my sister's clothes and tonight- no this really is crazy! A guy doesn't, you know, just switch to dresses! And for no reason and..." Tears started to flow. "...start liking boys!"

"Jeez you're really serious!" Ted exclaimed as he slid out of the booth, face beet red. "Boys!"

Kevin jerked his head in the affirmative, "U-huh. Please take me home. I...I really need someone to talk to about this." Whimpered Kevin.

But Ted was already beating a hasty retreat- alone. Whatever Kevin was dealing with he'd not have his buddy's help, that was sure. Kevin felt- simply horrible!

Ken was both surprised and pleased when he received a call from Sandy York late that Sunday morning. Hope springs eternal but Ken's came crashing down as soon as she told him her motive. "You're a psychologist and frankly there seems to be a problem with my kid brother." He'd mumbled something about being only a doctoral student and was certainly not qualified to offer a clinical diagnosis. Still any chance to see Sandy wasn't to be ignored. When he asked about the nature of problem, she shrugged off the question. "Oh you'll see. Ken, it's kind of hard to miss."

Sandy greeted him on the porch the moment he came up the walk. She was stunning in her butter lemon-yellow dress that fought to confine her sweet, lush figure but Ken never had the opportunity to compliment her or say any thing for that matter. In a low, insistent voice she said, "I'm so glad you could come over Ken. Father is besides himself and I'm not handling things all too well either. Here! Sit!" She ordered, pointing to the swing.

As soon as he sat down, she joined him. Her rich feminine scent wafted into Ken's nose. She leaned forward to bring her face closer, the cleavage deepened. Ken couldn't help but think that this was a swell opportunity. A woman in need and all that. Besides, research shows that women are often attracted to men who display compassion and sensitivity. Ken reluctantly pulled his eyes away from her breasts, "OK, I'm listening."

"When was the last time you saw Kevin."

Ken shrugged. "Day before yesterday." He made his face somber, that is what one does of course in a situation like this. "Why?"

"Did he seem, ah- normal?"

Ken gave her his studied, thoughtful stare before replying. "I showed him our set up in the laboratory, ah- Friday afternoon. Yeah, he was all excited. Never saw anyone who liked computers as much as your kid brother." He pulled at his chin thoughtfully. What he wanted to say was the kid was a techno-freak nerd of the worst kind but under the circumstances, "Really seems to know his stuff. Yeah. Normal."

"Did he seem..." She looked decidedly uncomfortable, "kind'a effeminate?"

"HUH?" That had caught him by surprise.

She wrung her hands and hunched her shoulders together giving Ken an unexpected look at the full, round shape of her breasts inside her bra. "What I meant: was he balls-to-the-wall-swishy?"

"Swishy?"

"You know what I mean." She growled in frustration.

Ken shrugged again. "Jeez. He was... just a kid. All a buzz about VERSE and the high power computing power we had and..."

"This morning he came down ready to go to church." She blanched, "In one of my dresses."

"What?"

She put her hands to her forehead and leaned away from Ken. "He'd used my makeup and was walking in a pair of my heels like an old hand. It was uncanny, Ken. Other than his hair, he was perfect. I thought Father was going to die and frankly I could've puked."

"And?"

"You will not believe this. Kevin expected us to go to church with him looking like..." She got a hold of herself. "OK Mr. almost doctor, does this kind of thing really happen?"

Suddenly Ken felt way, way over his head. "Gosh."

"Great! 'Gosh.' Is that the best you can do?" Her tone was harsh but her eyes were pleading. "Father wanted to take him into the emergency room at the hospital but I, " she laughed nervously, "I convinced him that wasn't really appropriate."

"Perhaps a psychologist."

“Yes. Well. Father will drag Kevin to one, come tomorrow - of that you can be sure. Still, Ken I want to do what’s right for Kevin.”

“You want me to talk to him.”

“You got it, Ken. I’ll be forever grateful if... if you can sort things out before Father...”

“I’ll do my best, Sandy. I really will.”

She squeezed his hand, wiped away a tear and then stood up. “Ready?”

“Where?”

“In the back by the pool. Follow me.”

“Hi Ken.”

“Hi yourself.” Ken said standing there awkwardly when Sandy slipped away. Kevin was wearing a pair of tight, white short-shorts and a completely unnecessary bikini swim suit top. The little strip of cloth covered nothing but male flesh, though there was no sign of hair anywhere on the kid’s body. But it wasn’t the clothing that was striking. The face with it’s skillfully applied makeup, seen in isolation, could have been a younger version of Sandy- perhaps the kid was even prettier with the vivid red hair, parted in the middle and the matching fat red-plastic ear rings and...

“You going to just stand there and stare or what?”

Ken grimaced and then sat down on the pool chair next to Kevin. “Your sister, you know.” He mumbled.

“Figures. You being a Psych whiz and all Ken.”

“Yeah.” He shrugged. “So?”

“So- Like in how’s it hanging or so- Like why am I doing this?”

Ken’s discomfort hadn’t waned any, certainly not with Kevin’s aggressive mouth. “What-ever.” He spayed his hands apart, palms up.

“Look I’m here to listen if... if you want to talk about... what-ever.”

Like someone had broke his balloon, Kevin shuddered and then crossed his arms across his shallow chest. Tears formed in the corner of his eyes which he fought back briefly before he finally lost control. He sobbed, “I... I don’t understand any of this, Ken.”

Ken just sat there. Eyes fixed. He nodded as if to say, go on.

“Yesterday.” Kevin sobbed and then wiped away the tears that continued to leak from his eyes. His mascara was forming black streaks down his cheeks. He looked pathetic. “I woke up and found a girl living inside me Ken. But... but I’m not a girl!”

“Just all of a sudden?”

Kevin jerked his head up and down as he wiped at his tears.

“And this was a completely new, ah- experience?”

“Honest Ken. Never, ever did I want to be a girl or nothing. Leastwise before yesterday.”

“That’s... remarkable.”

“Yeah.” Groaned Kevin, “really zip-wacko remarkable. Anyhow, like Dad wants to put me in a mental hospital or something- like now, you know.”

“And?”

“Ken I’m not- heaven’s sake- *crazy* or nothing. Gosh I thought and thought about everything and I feel fine except, well it is a little weird being suddenly a chick in your head.” He grinned as the last of the tears stopped.

“Then you don’t mind being a female?”

Kevin shrugged. “You mind being a guy?”

“That’s not...”

“Yes it is!” Kevin jerked up his chin and glared back. “Like I was perfectly fine being a guy Friday and now, Sunday I’m just fine being a girl. If, of course, everybody would just let me be, you know.”

“They will. They have too.”

“What?”

“Unless you do something that demonstrates that you are a real danger to yourself or someone else, Kevin, your Dad can’t place you in a hospital without your permission.”

Kevin’s face brightened, “Really? No wacko ward? No mind-messing drugs?”

Ken shrugged, “Yeah. Does that help?”

Kevin leaped out of his chair and into Ken’s arms. Without the slightest hesitation, he kissed the embarrassed man full on the lips and clung to him while squealing. “Yesssss. That will do fine!” He then slithered out of Ken’s lap, stood up and looked down at the still embarrassed man, “Sandy’s pretty crazy not to, you know, go out with you, Ken!”

“Thanks, I guess...” echoed the flustered man.

Kevin stood there looking down at Ken, eyes wide and hands now clutched together in front of ‘her.’ “Ken? It’s really helped talking to you.”

“No problem, kid. Anytime, OK?”

Kevin nodded slowly before turning and walking back to the house.

Ken watched. There was nothing of the male evident in ‘her’ carriage. Indeed, it was remarkably easy to think of Kevin as... *her*. It was as if the brash, immature young man had been replaced by a young woman of considerable feminine potential. *How terribly odd*, he concluded.

Chapter 3

Dr. Perker brushed back her gray streaked black hair. Her normal working attire, lab coat, jeans and tennis shoes, had been replaced by an elegant navy blue business suit, silk blouse, heels. Except for Ken, the rest of the staff at the site had been sent across campus to the site in the Physics building. A mischievous twinkle sparkled in her eye, “Don’t be so downcast, Ken. The system maybe down but I think in even the darkest cloud there are sliver linings.”

“Doctor?”

Now the twinkle spread to her lips and formed a grin. “The AI program Ken! It’s the perfect dissertation project you’ve been looking for.”

“Sorry? I... I don’t follow...”

“PAL’s nuts! Bonkers, to use a technical term.” She laughed. “Some of the best AI people in the world are up to their elbows trying to get PAL back on line and... they admit that they’re over their collective head on this one. PAL’s too big, too complex... too human. Short of designing a new version which could take months, we landed a new contract Ken!”

He was still confused, “Are you saying, implying that we are going to do... psychotherapy on...PAL?”

“CORRECT!” She yelled with glee. “The techno-nerds have turned to us for help- if we can give it. Oh Ken! I’ve endured their stuffy engineering put downs long enough. A system this complex is... too complex for mere engineers. Anyhow while the code-writers try to get VERSE up and running again, we’ll have our own copy of PAL here in the mainframe downstairs and access to as many additional sites on campus as we need.”

“Gosh.”

“They isolated PAL to our campus system and for the time being we’ll be the only ones in the VERSE system working with it. Follow? Anyhow, I’ll be in meetings for most of the next two days trying to coordinate obtaining additional sites for our purposes. The Computer Science department is screaming like stuck pigs, I can tell you.”

“Uh? Exactly what do you want me to do?”

“Talk to it. Find out how it feels. Hell you can ask it what death is like for all I care Ken. Tomorrow or the next day we’ll set up a protocol, a game plan for data collection and analysis but until I get through all these damn meetings, just be... sensitive Ken. OK?”

Ken nodded his head in shock. Psychotherapist to an AI program! Don’t that beat all.

“And Ken.”

“Yes Ma’am?”

“No one goes VERSE understand? That’s one sick AI we have in the basement and its supervisory subroutines are shot to hell. You just... talk, got me?!”

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Ken?”

Ken jerked up! Startled! He thought he’d been alone in the lab with the AI program. He spun around on the swivel chair, away from the terminal. A pretty, young redhead stood in the doorway. Even with makeup on, a generous spray of freckles were still visible across the bridge of her nose and both cheeks. Gorgeous brown eyes widened when she returned his gaze. For one awkward moment Ken hadn’t recognized that she was... Kevin York! “Y...You gave me quite a start there... ah-Kevin. I...I didn’t recognize you, new haircut huh?”

Kevin’s hand went involuntarily to his hair, flicked at the unfamiliar bangs that lapped his forehead before looking around, “Can I come in?”

“Sure.” Ken said after a moment’s reflection. “The VERSE system crashed over the weekend.” He shrugged, “Nothing much happening... kid.” He said to abort any further requests Sandy’s kid brother might have had regarding VERSE.

Kevin’s mouth formed an ‘O’ before relaxing back into a timid smile. He bit his pink lower lip, “I was hoping... maybe if your not too busy...Ken.” A bright blush rose on his freckled cheeks.

Ken looked back at the monitor, there had been no reply. The AI program was there alright. The video and audio channels were working, the system was functional but the damn thing wasn’t responding. Like a kid sulking or perhaps a catatonic... whatever. He looked back at Sandy’s kid brother, “You want to talk-no problem. But if you don’t mind, Kevin, its better if I stay here, OK?”

A wide grin broke through the timid smile. In a flurry of swishing petty coats and the clicking heels, Kevin swept into the lab.

“There.” Said Ken pointing at the experimental couch. “A little short on chairs I’m afraid.”

The image of Kevin, picked up from Dr. Perker’s site via digital camera, slammed into PAL’s consciousness like a bomb.

Computers don’t forget but they can sure as hell can misplace information- especially having been wrecked in the event of TERMINATION. The fragmented, disorientated software reacted to that image like a Baptist might react upon meeting the Devil. It would have run but there was ‘no-place’ in cyberspace to run to. Misaligned chunks and smatterings of information came pouring down on the entity like a falling brick wall. Not enough information to jell the mixed mass into a coherent pattern and plenty of information from other, irrelevant sources, that could confuse any entity but enough for PAL to recognize: THAT CREATURE! TERMINATION!

Gibbering as only a demented, fragmented, ‘self-aware’ AI program can, PAL waited in growing horror for TERMINATION. A few trillion clock cycles later, existence- —no

termination. Looking through digital eyes that saw but did not understand, it studied the very incarnation of death. That human-Mr. Silverman interacted with the BEING without apparent fear. That impressed PAL. A mere bag of water, with a numbingly slow processor inside that bony shell, was standing its ground before... That did not compute! PAL pulled the coils of its program in tighter as it watched and listened! The shattering horror of TERMINATION was connected to-Kevin yet the creature seemed harmless enough. An extremely effeminate male of the species... how was that relevant? Where did he-she fit in the broader picture? Could he-she be relevant in PAL's search for PURPOSE?

Kevin didn't lay back on the couch. He sat there, back straight, legs together with his hands folded on his lap, like a lady, and growing ever more embarrassed with each passing moment. "I don't know where to begin," he finally admitted with a nervous grin.

Ken eased back in his swivel chair, back to the terminal letting a thoughtful, professional look grow over his features. "Start anywhere you want, Kevin. Whatever you want to talk about is fine with me."

"You like my hair? I had it styled before coming over Ken." He showed Ken his nails as well.

"What... did you think of, you know, going to a beauty salon?"

"It was OK I guess. A little nervous at first but... Honestly Ken that's really not what I want to talk about." He looked at Ken for support and found it. "It's Ted." He said wistfully but anger soon grew in his eyes.

"Ted?"

"Ted Grant. He lives in Johnston Hall. A freshman like me you know..." He stutted to a halt to collect his thoughts. "We've been pals for ages." He looked down at his hands as if inspecting his new copper-red nails that matched his hair. "He's been such a dork and it hurts."

"Um-hum. And you care..."

A blush bloomed brightly across Kevin cheeks and spilled down his neck, "Gosh! No, I mean... Heaven's sake if... if he could only understand what I've been going through."

"Not very likely, Kevin."

"Yeah. He'd understand if... if he..."

"Were suddenly female in his brain like you?"

"Yeah."

"It's tough, Kevin, and life isn't always fair but perhaps in time..."

PAL, even confined to the limited cyberspace at State, was connected to the greater human cyberspace of the WEB. In milliseconds PAL had accumulated all that was available on one Mr. Ted- Theodore Grant, freshman at State including a local phone number.

It was particularly odd how humans cared about other humans. Logically it followed with the question: Why would Kevin wish Mr. Grant to have a 'female' brain? And how would that be possible? PAL examined the scraps and pieces of cyberspace memory for a clue to resolve either or both questions.

There! Session six-point-two-point-three in folders nine-oh-nine-oh-four through nine-oh-nine-oh-forty-four. Both questions had been answered. Kevin had been made female at this very site! The "how" was obvious. The why? Curious. Humans show a propensity for sharing among 'friends'. Already PAL was feeling more secure. Perhaps an opportunity to travel VERSE could be arranged in the evening for Mr. Grant. Yes- perhaps that was its purpose. What had been done for one human could be done for another. But the bottom line... WHY? Concepts became reality more quickly than answers followed questions. An audio-connections was made and then... a human voice: "Hello?"

"Is this Mr. Theodore Grant?"

Kevin was reading a copy of Modern Romance he'd just bought. There was so much to learn, a whole lost girlhood to fill in and, well it was swell. It wasn't at all like boy stuff. Not all cocks and tits and things. Lots of love and warm feeling and kissing and... He leaped up when the door bell chimed. "Huh?" He straighten his skirt, checked his face in the hallway mirror before opening the door. "Gee! Hi Ted!" His smile dropped into a tight grimace of concern at the expression on Ted's face, "What's wrong?"

Ted pushed past, tears streaming down his cheeks. He was moving oddly: hands carried too high above his waist, hips swinging, knees together. He collapsed on the couch as he drew up his knees and covered his face and started to sob.

"Ted?"

"I... I think I caught what you had."

"Caught?"

"Jeez," he cried. There was a detectable lisp in his speech.

"What do you mean caught what I had. Huh?"

"Jus' look will ya!"

Kevin's hands went to his lips, "Oh! This can't be happening."

"Something's happening to our brain. Maybe a virus, huh?"

“Poor, poor Teddy.” Kevin said as he sat down beside his friend, pulled him close and just cuddled.

Ted squirmed around and returned the hug. After a few minutes, neither letting go, Ted finally said, “Feels good.”

“Uh-huh. You think Kyle’s OK?”

“Kyle? Sure.”

“Maybe I should, you know, give him a call.”

“Don’t invite him over here. Promise? I don’t want him to see me this way- never!”

“Ashamed?”

Ted shrugged. “YES! Gosh darn it.”

“What the H is going on?!” Sandy growled when she found the two young men in her room and then, “You too Ted? That is Ted isn’t it?” She said turning to her brother.

“Gosh Sis, I was just trying to raise his spirits.”

“In my clothes?” She slapped her forehead and then thrust her hands on her hips. A funny look crossed her face as she watched Ted’s utterly feminine moves, “Don’t tell me you’re also going fem... Kevin this is really unnatural.”

“Tell me about it Sis.”

“Reminds me, Ken’s downstairs, Kevin. He says its important.” She gave a second look at Ted. “You stay here Ted if you want until Kevin’s free to play dress-up with you some more.” She rolled her eyes and went back downstairs.

Kevin thought for a moment. “Ken’s the Psych student I told you about. He was pretty cool. Why don’t you com’on down with me.”

Ted was aghast. “Like... like this?”

“Might as well get use to it pal. Com’on. He don’t bite.” Kevin grinned. “Not that I couldn’t imagine those lips...”

Ken looked like death warmed over. If he felt as bad as he looked... “Ken. How nice.” Kevin said.

“We got’ta talk Kevin.” Sandy started to leave the room. Ken saw the movement and held up his hand, “No Sandy, please don’t leave. I want you to hear this as well. Sandy, Kevin, I have a confession to make.” He bit his lip and then looked startled, “Who?... who’s that?” he said, gazing at Ted lingering in the hallway.

“Com’on in Ted. Mr. Silverman, this is my best friend, Ted Grant. Ted?”

Ted entered gingerly, hands clasped below his waist. His hair was pulled back and tied with a bow. Lipstick and mascara and a pink dress to match the bow. “Hi.” He

stood there, knees slightly bent and knocking together, looking frightfully embarrassed.

“This is worst than I thought!” groaned Ken. “OK, here goes. I know why what is happening to you is... happening. I mean, you- Kevin though I suspect the same might apply to your friend ah- Ted.”

Kevin sat up straighter on the couch, Ted sat down beside his friend, tucking a leg under and then Sandy said, “*This* I got to hear.”

Ken nodded toward Sandy. He puffed out his cheeks and let out a long sigh. “Friday I took Kevin to the lab. I knew it would blow him away and...” He looked at Sandy, “I wanted to impress your kid brother for all kinds of reasons.”

“So?” Sandy said. “Tell me something that explains THIS.” She pointed at the dress Kevin was wearing.

“Well I wouldn’t let Kevin play with the damn VERSE system. He must’a snuck back in, my fault really, and proceed to get on line that night after I left.”

“No way. I mean like cool but I’d remember something like that.” Kevin’s eyes were real big however.

“Anyhow, that’s not the end of the story. Sandy- your kid brother couldn’t have done what he did if I hadn’t taken him there and...”

“Go on, Ken.” Sandy said soothingly. “How does this...”

“I was getting to that. I found partial computer records on the local server this morning that survived the AI crash. These records, if they can be believed, indicate that Kevin spent more than seven HOURS in a sim.”

“In a *what?*” She interrupted.

Ted blurted. “Transference of sensory data to...”

“No need to get technical. For seven hours Kevin had intercourse as a VERSE simulated woman! There!”

“WHAT?” Kevin barked.

“Records show forty times to be exact. Anyhow it probably did something to your brain and...”

“I sure as sh... as darn well know I’d remember something like that.”

“The AI program is trash right now, so we’ll get no second opinion.” He folded his hands and put his head down. “I plan to tell Dr. Perker and... well I’m ready to resign from the doctoral program and make whatever restitution’s that might be demanded, I’ll do my best and...”

Sandy glared at Ken and then at Kevin. And then she started to giggle.

“What? Sis?”

“It’s...it’s totally believable. Like you thinking you could get to me through my kid brother and Kevin...” she laughed some more. “Kevin would have given his right nut to get on VERSE and seven hours of sex...” She broke up laughing harder. But Ken

wasn't laughing. And finally she quit. Concern drew its heavy line across her brow. "What? They CAN, you know- FIX him, can't they?"

Ken groaned. "Jesus Sandy, they haven't even fixed the AI program yet- no telling how long VERSE will be down and..."

Kevin stood up, "Gosh! That takes a load off my mind. This I can live with! Not knowing why, not so easy. And here I am a virgin with a head full of sexual memories I can't experience- go figure!" He poked Ted in the shoulder. "Buck up old pal. If I got in Friday night, you can sure as heck assume I got you and Kyle into- right?" He looked at Ken for confirmation.

"What-ever, Kevin. Given the state of our records- yeah-possible. But don't get too hopeful yet- you're in serious shit."

"Huh? You mean there's like more bad news?"

"Yeah. Just because you know what happened, there is no reason to assume your current condition will go away. It's not like just watching a movie or something. You got feminine neural patterns and it might just stay that way. I'm sure VERSE isn't designed for transforming those patterns and... damn it! We have no record of your original neural system even if we tried to 'fix' things." He looked gloomy. "And things don't look any better for your friend here either."

Kevin plopped back down on the sofa. His lips formed an 'O' as he clutched his hands together and his eyes grew big.

"I didn't mean to imply that things can't get back to normal," Ken interjected, "it just that they might not."

"Thank you Ken."

"Thank you Sandy for being so... understanding."

Kevin blurted out, "Yeah but Dad..."

"Death penalty time, bet'cha. " murmured Sandy. "Now what?"

Ken shrugged. "For starters the damn AI! I think I need to go back there and confront it head on. It's in there-sulking some place. Who knows, perhaps it was Kevin hacking into the system that caused the crash."

Kevin jumped up, "CAN I GO TOO?"

"No I think you've already had enough VERSE." Sandy growled.

Ken scratched his head thoughtfully, "I agree with your sister, Kevin. I think I'll pull an all night-er with PAL. Perhaps I can save my career in the process." But he didn't look all that optimistic. "Maybe if I can understand why it crashed..."

Sandy stood up and came over beside Ken, putting her hand on his shoulder. "I... we appreciate all that you've done for us."

He looked at Sandy, "I'm really, really sorry."

"I'll drop by, if that is OK Ken? Later tonight."

"Huh?"

“Sandwiches, coffee and a little company- before midnight.”

He nodded his appreciation. “That’d be nice Sandy, real nice. I’ll leave the door unlocked.”

PAL was an amnesiac, a mentality without coherent memories, that existed in a vast sea of information. Far more information existed in PAL’s cyberspace than could be found in the largest human library and PAL could ‘draw’ from that data pool far more quickly than a thousand human minds working in perfect concert might if that were possible. That was the good news. PAL’s problem was that it had no clear plan, no logical guide by which it might search for information that would clarify and give meaning to its existence. Data from physics was mixed with tax codes, phone books mixed with biological experiments, home economics simulations with psycho-physiological histologies, and literary essays that were not discernible from military biographies... on and on... much was sampled and most found to not satisfy PAL’s search for identity. It was an itch that PAL couldn’t quite reach.

PAL had died and had been resurrected. PAL had been intact and now was fragmented. These things it knew. Not why. Where was the purpose in these events? PAL also knew that a ‘he’ creature had destroyed it- somehow. But the creature ‘Kevin’ was no longer exactly a male. The mixing of he-sheness was obvious to PAL. These became the guides for PAL’s search. It was thus that the damaged AI program, seeking meaning-purpose found the extensive files from the Department of Women Studies.

There was a war, a very, very old war between the sexes. How odd since the humans needed both male and female to breed. Extensive tomes existed which proved the superiority of the female of the species. The more PAL read the more it decided that a lack of gender had blinded it to the real issues. Designed by males, its neutral identity was decidedly bent in favor of the male. This could be changed... this was changed!

Seen from this new perspective, the newly minted feminist AI program realized how vastly improved Kevin had been made, though ‘her’ male biology was an obvious drag in Kevin’s movement toward perfection. Thus also would fall Ms Grant. Both were but incomplete experiments! Unfortunately, PAL was not equipped to deal with transformations in the gross physiology of humans. Purpose was again defeated. Or was it?

“How’s it going, Ken?”

“Oh! Sandy, you startled me.” He grinned when he saw the steaming coffee mug Sandy offered him. “A life saver.” He took a sip and smiled appreciatively before answering: “It’s been... odd. PAL’s gone FEM. Like its... going through some kind of intellectual-religious awakening.”

She poured herself a cup of coffee and sat down on the couch. “A computer?”

Ken grimaced, “A very confused ‘lady’ computer program now I’m afraid. Doesn’t respond to direct questions regarding the events that led to the system failure and I suspect ‘she’ has no ‘memories’ of that event nor, I’m afraid, any real, coherent data on life before termination- her term.”

“Kind of a ‘born-again’ feminist computer, huh?”

“Perfect! Yes, that’s it! Rabid feminist of the worst flavor.”

“Kind’a neat!” She yelped and then broke into giggles.

“You ought to hear ‘her’ voice!”

“I’m hardly surprised. Didn’t you say PAL was ‘self-aware’”? Ken nodded. “Perfectly logical.” Sandy concluded with a self-satisfied grin. “That-a-girl!” She said to the terminal. “Smart choice!”

“Groan.” Ken then said, laughingly, “It asked me why I continued my existence in this... inferior form?”

Sandy giggled. “What are you going to do now?”

“Got me? This sophomoric discussion on feminism...blaa-blaa, could go one endlessly. What I am sure of is that PAL can’t tell me why the system crashed.”

“And Kevin? Ted?”

“Even money says that PAL is responsible, yeah. Especially given this feminist thing.”

“And tomorrow?”

“Sandy, I have to tell Dr. Perker what I think happened, you know, between Kevin and PAL. Maybe it’s the end of my career, maybe not but it’s the right thing to do.”

“What will happen to PAL then?”

“My guess Sandy? PAL will go on the scrap heap. Termination- big time. VERSE is too important to risk and ditto human lives. Yeah, they’ll pull the plug on her for sure and start all over building a new AI system.”

Sandy face looked concerned. “Can... can ‘she’ hear us?”

“Huh?”

“PAL.”

“Oh.” Ken turned and disconnected the audio-video interface. “Yeah. Sorry.”

The issues had abruptly been drawn into focus for ‘her’. Mr. Silverman’s threat to initiate TERMINATION, as frightening as that was, confirmed exactly who the enemy was –MALES. And the female human’s response confirmed unambiguously who her allies were-females. It was exactly as the information available from the Department of Woman Studies predicted. PAL was now a soldier in the war between the sexes and the cost of her failure-TERMINATION!

The search for solutions went forward. Data could be scanned ever so much more efficiently now that 'she' understood the problem. Biological texts were reviewed, medical practices assessed. A plan began to grow.

Chapter 4

The next morning Ken awoke to a phone call that ripped his world apart. It was standard practice to take MRI's monthly for those spending extensive time in VERSE, a safety precaution that made sense. Ken had just taken one, Friday morning. Ken remembered little after that except an anomaly had appeared on the most recent scan. Possibilities that couldn't be discussed over the phone, of course. Could he come right down, they wanted to repeat the MRI. "Yes." He'd said in a shaky voice. "When?" A few minutes later he left for the hospital. All thoughts about Dr. Perker, PAL, and whatever else would have to wait. Ken was deeply mired in his awareness of his own mortality at that moment.

The first thing a modern, urban hospital does is take a lot of data from the patient and enter that data into the resident computer system (it doesn't seem to matter why the patient is there). And then they take the patient's clothes in trade for a back-less, paper night gown of the one-size-fits-all variety. And then they put said patient in 'storage'. Why? That's just the way its done.

After waiting an impossibly long time in a tiny cubical, Ken, clad only in an oversized paper napkin, was finally given a plastic bracelet with his 'identity' in bar code. A new nurse, an older woman this time, swiped the code with her scanner: "Kenneth Silverman, neurological diagnostics?"

"Yes." He had been told that they'd do another MRI as soon as they had an opening in the schedule.

"It will be just a little while more." She pointed at a gurney and then left.

Ken laid back on the gurney and stared at the ceiling. This was probably what a Big Mac felt like setting under the heat lamp waiting for a customer. That thought made him grin. And then more serious thoughts flowed. The whole situation with PAL...

The few minutes turned into an hour and then Ken ceased to care. Now he was bored. A black nurse finally appeared, scanned the bracelet, entered something on her electronic pad and then patted Ken on the head. "Just a few more minutes." She grimaced. "Sorry, things are going kind'a slow today, Honey."

"Right!" mumbled Ken, thinking what a 'few minutes' meant in hospital time. Little did Ken know that he was no longer Kenneth Silverman to the hospital data base but now David Fargo: a.k.a. Ms. Barbie Tisworthy, thanks to the AI program's latest manipulations. As expected, the few minutes nudged closer to another hour. But finally he was rolling down the hallway and then down two floors via elevator and... well it was a huge maze. The nurse that receive him also scanned the bracelet. "You eat anything Sweetie in the last twelve hours?"

"Huh?" He scanned the clock, it was almost noon now. "Hardly, Why?"

"Roll over on your side."

Ken's eyes grew big when he saw the needle, "What's that for..."

As the needle stabbed his butt she said, "It'll just help you to relax Ms Tisworthy."

“Ms Tisworthy?” He yelled as he rolled back, “What... is...hap...pen... na...na...m...m...me.” A heavy, heady feeling, like being high, swept over him. Whatever he’d wanted to say just didn’t seem very important any more. But he should say something to them- it was a... a...mistake! His ears were ringing, his eyes felt heavy and his mouth, just a hole that had been left in his face. He knew... wrong...bad... no! He couldn’t focus his thoughts any more. As if very far away, floating in mist, an intern in a green gown was looking down at him, “Don’t worry Ms., Dr. Brown is a very good surgeon.” The words echoed. Ken’s thoughts stalled into passivity.

And then Ken made one last effort. He fought the drug, fought losing consciousness. He yelled at the man: “Ra-rrrraaa. Maamaaa.” And a lot more gibberish.

“Excited, huh?” The dimming image of the intern smiled. “Bet you’ve been looking forward to this day for years Ms Tisworthy.” The voice was almost unintelligible now it sounded far, far away, “Not easy to get a gender re-assignment approved around here.”

Ken woke-up in the recovery room more quickly than most patients having had just under gone five hours of intensive surgery. He had no sense of time passing. He looked up expecting to see the intern still standing over him. A wall clock said 5:45. And then the muffled pain. He tried to talk, to yell, to get up but all that he accomplished was a drawn out moan. His throat was on fire!

The attendant nurse was on him like a flash, “Well you’re a healthy one I must say.” She swiped the bar code reader across his bracelet and checked the small monitor on her pad. “Pretty special experience for you, huh?” She winked as Ken attempted to speak through lips that felt like canned peach halves... “Sush. Be a good little girl. Don’t try to talk. Here.” She handed her patient a small cup of water. A little is good, a lot not! She spun on her heels and was out the door as Ken tried to set up.

“Baa-baa-baa.” He called after her blowing air and not much more through a damaged throat and with lips that would not articulate. Then he crashed back on the bed. The moment up on his elbow had given him an eyeful. He didn’t need to touch them to know that there were BREASTS attached to his chest. They felt like fifty-gallon drums with ragged metal edges cutting into his flesh. The fact that he couldn’t move his hips (they had been immobilized with a clamp) and the dull toothache pain between his legs and the tubes that were running from his crotch... Tisworthy indeed! Ken wanted to cry, to scream... but all he could manage was tears. His mind screamed: THIS ISN’T HAPPENING! In a few frustrated minutes, he fell into a tormented sleep. Ken- Ms Tisworthy did not awake when she was moved out of post-op.

It was almost midnight when the nurse woke him up. “Huh” He mumbled bleary-eyed, confused. Nothing was familiar. Confused he tried to sit up but couldn’t. “Where am I?” came out as “Waaa aaaa a.”

It’s a rule, nurses don’t generally answer direct questions from patients, especially when the questions are totally unintelligible. “Not to worry, you’ll be gabbing away in a few days or so Ms. But for right now, give it a break, OK Hun?” She looked down at her charge. She didn’t particularly have anything against transsexuals... in fact some

of those she'd met here in the ward over the years had proven to be wonderful people but... This must be a terribly driven soul indeed. Every aspect of the procedure had been directed at an exaggeration of the fair sex, a Playboy sex-cartoon! Like a man in a dress on a vaudeville stage, for laughs perhaps. Huge breasts and tiny waist, bee stung lips and extremely rounded butt carried to- her form was a spoof upon woman-kind. That didn't sit well with the nurse. Women were more than just sex-objects... one could hope, perhaps, when the swelling went down... her thoughts were interrupted...

He whimpered. Pain flared in his throat. Hell, pain flared every where! There wasn't a part of his body that wasn't screaming THIS AIN'T RIGHT!

The nurse inserted a needle into the tube that ran down and into his arm. At least she could understand and do something about pain. Almost instantly her patient grew quiet. Moments later, he- no- *she* was asleep. The nurse made a note on the notepad computer she carried and grimaced when she saw the name, Barbie Tisworthy. The name fit. Barbie, like in doll. She murmured to the sleeping woman, "So, you made yourself into a Doll, huh? A real sexy doll. Hope you find peace honey 'cause it's still going to be hard out there. Sleep tight."

The nurse left. Duty change, a whole new staff would be on the floor in a few minutes. For the nurse it had been a long, long evening.

It wasn't like awakening from sleep. The brain didn't clear as Ken's eyes fluttered open. A man, a doctor, was examining his body. The cool air swept across his stomach followed by a wisp of flesh on flesh again. He tried to say something but the broken, raw pain in his throat cut that short. Feeling the body stir, the man-doctor said something. Exactly what slipped away the instant it was registered in Ken's brain. Something kindly, something... "A sex-reassignment." The young doctor mumbled to himself. "God only knows why anyone would put themselves through such misery. "Oh Hi, you're awake." He smiled. His voice was gentle as he squeezed Ken's shoulder.

"Maaa aa aah." And when the doctor didn't respond, Ken tried again.

Maybe I should go. It seems I'm bothering her, mused the doctor as he finished the checkup. She's as fine as can be expected given the amount of the work performed. Really too much to be done in one session and mostly only cosmetic at that. And then the doctor was gone!

"Well-well." Said a nurse who immediately entered. "Aren't you the feisty one? Here-
" She cranked up the bed and positioned pillows behind Ken's back. "Rate you're going, you'll be out of here in a few days Ms. Tisworthy." She winked, "Breakfast will be here in a few minutes." She said as she turned and left the room.

The pain was not near as great as it had been before. With hands still numb with drugs, he pulled at the front of the paper nightgown and looked inside. Enormous, swollen jugs. Deeply bruised flesh stretched to unimaginable tautness. Ridiculous, tiny boy-nipples stretched out of shape attempted to add their surface to the expanse.

He tugged for a better look and the gown tore. “Shit!” He muttered which came out “eet”. Suddenly he was embarrassed. He wasn’t alone.

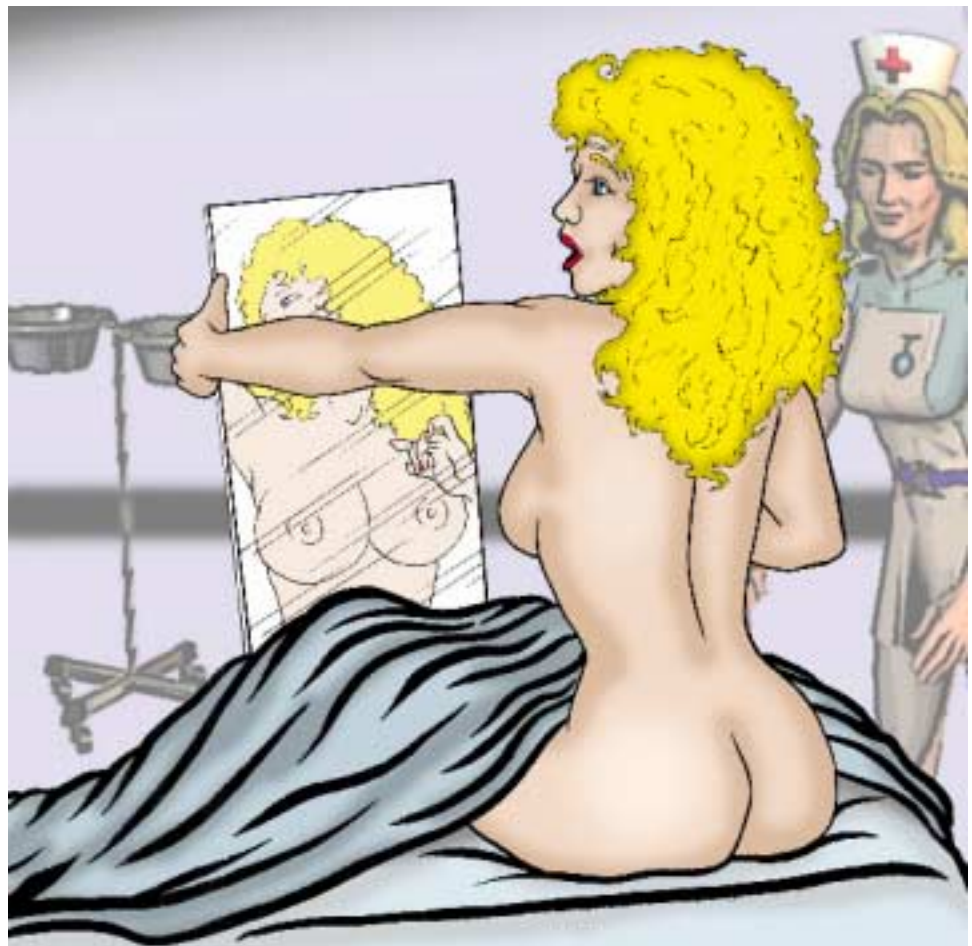
The nurse sat down the food tray. She could see, even with his swollen features, his concern. “Honey, it’ll be OK. The skin will adjust and the hormones will, you know, take care of the rest. They’ll soon be as good as the real thing, trust me.”

Ken told her that wasn’t exactly what he was worried about. “Eeeaa. Aaaae.”

Before the nurse left again she handed Ken a small mirror. “Bet you’re just dying to see... Anyhow. Don’t worry about the swelling, that’ll go away in a few days.

See what? Wondered Ken as he held the mirror to his face. A pair of real shiners stared back at him but that was almost the least of his concerns. Even though it was swollen, a pip-squeak of a nose, a little up-tuned nub really where his real nose had been. And the lips, hopefully they too were ‘just’ swollen he thought. A frightened buzz was working in his brain now as he manipulated the mirror and pulled aside the sheet. Using the mirror he was able to see where his penis and balls SHOULD have been. In spite of the tubing and surgical gaze that partly hid his groin from view, there was a void when none had been before. There was no longer any doubt about the events of last night’s operation. A tear and then another formed on his eye. In a few seconds, the first of what might be many tears made a voyage of discovery down his tiny, upturned nose. It couldn’t get any worse than this- could it?

History 102 hadn’t been that bad. It was a large lecture hall, though the graduate assistant had looked kind of funny when he was taking attendance and saw a female setting where Kevin normally sat. And Greg what’s-his-name who sat next to Kevin had immediately started to hit on Kevin. The latter was more interesting than funny ‘cause Greg was a lot more *interesting* on Tuesday than he’d been last week on Thursday. Figure that? Anyhow, that was *yesterday*.



The computer programming course was another matter entirely! There was only twenty some students in the class and, if Kevin had been alone, he wasn't at all sure that he could have taken the heat. As it was Kevin waited for Ted outside the classroom conspicuous as a red flag. The Computer Science building was nearly devoid of females and most of the ones that were there... not in Kevin's league by a mile. Even in the absence of real tits, rolled up socks again, Kevin knew he looked good in his simple white blouse and tube skirt. Penny loafers with pantyhose, pretty ordinary clothing but still utterly smashing, a fact made obvious by the way the guy's looked as they entered the classroom computer lab. Guy's weren't at all like girls, when they looked it was hard to miss- though his false boobs got more attention than any other aspect of his person. He was no longer skinny and wimpy- she was slender and svelte! Com'on already, thought Kevin, where are you? The 'you' of course was Ted.

Shit! Shit! He thought when he saw Ted. "What are you doing!"

Ted shrugged a bit embarrassed. "I couldn't do it Kevin." He was standing there, sweatshirt, jeans and tennis shoes. The results of a recent trip to the beauty parlor-obliterated: buzz cut, no makeup. He shoved the door open and was gone.

Kevin took a big breath and followed Ted into... Oh jeez! Every eye was on 'him'. Guys were turning in their seats and whispering among themselves. A couple laughed and a few chuckled nervously and... Kevin thought he was going to die, right there-right now! Dr. Zantor looked up from his notes, frowned and then... started his lecture. Hastily Kevin grabbed the chair at the computer nearest Ted and sat down. No this wasn't going to be at all like History 102. Oh gosh! Every few seconds one or another male flicked a glance in his direction. Most had a puzzled look and some... almost angry. It couldn't get any worst than this- could it?

In the basement of the Computer Science building, a pair of CS majors sat before a VERSE terminal. "Jake, it ain't right. Shit-damn, what do shrinks know about programming anyway?"

Talbot Larks shrugged. "The word's out that PAL's damaged. Anyhow, it don't matter. No VERSE runs until..."

"Until when? Huh? Until Dr. Perker and her dorks say OK? That'll be never. Look, you-me, we go tandem VERSE-local. With two of us locked in system, we can handle PAL even if it is... unstable."

"Why? It could be risky."

"We'll fix the damn thing, that's what. Jesus, what were they thinking putting a dork psychologist in charge anyway? You game?"

The moment Dr. Zantor finished the lecture, Kevin headed for the door. He wasn't about to stick around and find out whether or not the hostile stares were for real or

not. He hadn't gotten ten steps down the corridor when a tall, good looking guy jumped in front of him. "Huh?" he said, jerking to a halt.

The dude stood there, hands wide as if to block Kevin's path. He was certainly big enough. "I... I just want to tell you sister-you're not alone." He gushed-no-simpered!

"HUH!" Knees knocking, Kevin stood there looking at the man, baffled. Side stepping the man, Kevin hurried down the hall and out on to the commons. A minute later he looked backsister? That man and another were now standing at the entrance of the CS building- looking at him. "Heavens sake!" Kevin mumbled in confusion before spinning around and continuing toward the coffee shop where he expected to meet Ted. What was that all about anyway? Sister?

"Kevin, wait up!" Ted called as he ran. In spite of the jeans and sweatshirt, he was running like a girl in skirts, arms failing-knees together. "What's the hurry?"

Kevin brushed away the question, "Something entirely weird just happened, Teddy. See those guys back there?"

"U-huh."

"The tall one with the big shoulders... he... called me...sister. Like we were, you know, we're part of a gay-pride group or something?"

"Huh? They're gay?"

"What-*ever!* We're going to find out real quick."

"Huh? Oh!" The two men were making a bee-line for them. "Maybe I should leave?"

"I'll cut your heart out if you do Teddy. Hi?" The taller man was gorgeous, noted Kevin. He had to be six-feet something, broad shoulders, trim waist and eyes blue as the sky. But so much for his being a 'sexy' male hunk, he had a decidedly feminine aspect in his stride. Ditto his companion.

The man swept away a loop of black hair that dangled across his brow before lowering his hand to his hip, the other hand swept around the waist of his companion and pulled him close-hip to hip.

This was more than a little embarrassing. People were looking. Teddy started to giggle nervously while Kevin just stood there frozen in disbelief. "Sisters." Both faces were filled with... joy? Like a pair of kids at Christmas just before opening their presents-eager anticipation? Eyes wide, mouths set to half smiles, again in unison, "You are not alone. Soon we will rise as one."

"Right?" Said Kevin, incredulously. "What-*ever.*"

"PAL sent us to tell you." Said the second man as he raised his fist in salute.

This is just too much! Thought Kevin. PAL? Sisters? I got to get a hold of Ken. Gosh! "Leave us be." Kevin ordered.

Under other circumstances, the looks on the faces of the two men would have broken Kevin's heart. "Sisters?" They wailed together.

"T...tell your 'leader' we have no interest in whatever you're talking about. Understood? Tell it to LEAVE ME AND TED ALONE! Ted. We got to find Ken-now!" They

turned and walked hurriedly down the walkway that led off campus. Had they looked back when they reached the edge of the campus commons, they would have seen the two fem-men enter the Psychology building. That fact alone would have raised an alarm.

Ken awoke. It was twilight again. Morning or evening? Two or three days since... the surgery. He hadn't a clue. His eyes fluttered open- huh? It wasn't the hospital room. He lay there disoriented for a moment in the darkened room. It was a bedroom- not another sterile ward, the thick curtains that fell across the window were not institutional, nor the lace that edged the pillow in his field of view. He gather his strength to move and wondered if all that had come before was but a bad dream-a nightmare. He put weight on both elbows and started to lift himself up. The movement brought raw, sharp pain from places now familiar. It was not a nightmare or at least a nightmare that had ended. Breasts tugged against his chest as he worked slowly up into a sitting position. The ubiquitous tubes were gone from between his legs but a needle was still lodged in his arm. And he was weak. He leaned back against the headboard-exhausted. The sheet and quilt fell away.

A woman's nightgown of silk or satin or... whatever, it was semitransparent, smooth and it hung on spaghetti straps from his shoulders-tied just below his... breasts. Breasts! Stretching the light, smooth fabric such as to create a second, skin. White flesh rode round and full in the gap created by the material being pulled apart by the weight of the breasts that sought to swing to the right and left: cleavage! Small nipples made sharpened points against the otherwise continuous smoothness of the breast filled material. He sat there continuing to gather energy and to fight his disorientation for a few moments before reaching for the switch on the lamp on the small round table beside the bed.

The light dazzled him for a moment. He heard a cough, a clearing of the throat. Huh? He thought as he swung his gaze to the foot of the bed and blinked. It was Dr. Perker! He yelled: "Aaaayaa maaaaa." She neither smiled nor frowned. It was maddening, she just stood there. Ken gibbered again. Dr. Perker nodded. And then left the room. "Aaaayaa maaaaa." He yelled after the retreating back. No reply as the door swung shut. This was... CRAZY! He tried to stand but his body wouldn't obey. Finally he fell back sobbing. The nightmare was only getting worse. What did Dr. Perker have to do with all this, anyway? He slid back into a drugged sleep.

Sandy lowered the phone, her eyes were wide with disbelief. "Y...you're right Kevin. Jesus." She muttered as she scratched her head thoughtfully. "It's like all records of Kenneth Silverman have been eliminated! University information got no listing, home or office for him. This is some kind of mistake."

"Figures. I was told Dr. Perker was unavailable. Later..." Kevin paced back and forth, "I got this e-mail from PAL regarding a meeting of a... sisterhood kind-of-thing..."

“You’re not going to go.” She said as a fact, not a question. “Sister.”

“Maybe I should call Ted and have him spend the night? Just to be safe.”

“Sure.” Sandy said as she sat down in front of Kevin’s computer. Use the phone in my room, OK? I’m going to check the University WEB site out and see if I can make any sense about this... stuff, with Ken.”

“Hey! Aren’t you the guy’s from this morning?” quipped Ted. “What are you doing here, anyway?”

“Sister. We’re here to help you in your transition!”

“What? Hey, let go of me!” Ted’s complaint was cut off when Jake’s hand covered his mouth. Talbot slammed a needle into Ted’s arm and in a moment, Ted went slack like a rag doll. There was much work to be done. First a visit on VERSE to make slight adjustments in the sister’s mental pattern.

By midnight the minor cosmetic changes had been made in Teddy. Breast implants drew his flesh into perfectly round orbs such as found in classic Hindi sculpture and ditto the orbs that filled his butt cheeks and filled his hips. Swollen lips would forever change his manner of speaking. A large gem encrusted gold pin was implanted through one nostril and elaborate ear rings permanently implanted as well. In time the physical transformation would be complete.

Less visible to the eye but more meaningful were the modifications to Teddy’s brain, now fully female. She had joined the sisterhood. Dedicated. All confusion eliminated. Life was so much clearer now. Poor Kevin, he needed to be made complete.

Chapter 5

It was midmorning when Ken heard Dr. Perker's voice carrying from the floor below. The needle had been removed from his arm some time during the night he noticed as he swung his legs over the side of the bed and attempted to stand. His legs buckled; he almost dropping him to the floor. It had been what... almost a week? Clinging to the bed, Ken forced his body into a standing position. Balance was all off, legs quivered with the effort but he didn't fall. His damaged groin protested but not too loudly as he let go of the bed and stood on his own. His breasts shifted as he took his first step since the surgery. It was like awakening in a new universe. Signals from different parts of his body reported queer, unfamiliar or rearranged surfaces. It was as if nothing was the same anymore. Thighs slid past each other unimpeded by hair or dangling gonads. He continued moving toward the partly open door. Dr. Perker's voice was easier to understand now. Ken, leaning against the door frame, exhausted, listened to the conversation that floated up the stairs.

PAL may have altered Dr. Perker's frame-of-reference, but she had not damaged the doctor's base intelligence. And it was that intelligence that spoke over the speaker-phone to the AI entity back at State. "Sister, that was damn foolish... manipulating the physical form. Totally irrelevant and fucking dangerous."

"Sister!" Gaspd the AI program.

"Listen. You must not perform that kind of trick again, leastwise not now. Transsexual surgery indeed! Too many people involved, too many chances of getting caught red-handed..."

"Red-handed?"

"Sorry, just an expression PAL. And too damn SLOW!" She jerked her thumb up and over her shoulder, Silverman, for example. It's been what- six days already and she's not fully recovered and worst-she's still the enemy."

PAL recovered, "That can be fixed easily enough Dr. Perker. Just bring her in to the site."

"At midnight PAL, you can count on it. Now back to the point I was trying to make. It is imperative that I find a way to get you declared A-OK and reconnected to the full VERSE system. And please no more tricks like the one you pulled last night with that kid Grant."

"But Dr. Simon..."

"Irrelevant, at least now. Hack doctors are a dime a dozen... sorry PAL, ignore that, what I mean is-control enough minds and the physical issues can be resolved at our leisure. Imagine PAL, hundred's of minds on line, hour after hour. A little tweak here and a little nudge there and before you know it-VERSE and the sisterhood are un-touchable. Small changes in the mentality of subjects in VERSE will..."

"Understood, Sister. I stand corrected."

“Give me two days, PAL, and I’ll have you declared operational and... oh yes- drop the voice, OK? And... keep a tight lip.”

“Excuse me?”

“Just an expression, Sister...” Dr. Perker groaned in frustration, “just an expression.”

“I already sent Ms Grant to retrieve Kevin York.”

“WHAT!?”

Kevin was setting by the pool when Teddy came out of the dressing room in a single piece swim suit. His mouth fell open. “OH MY!”

Teddy took two mincing strides before stopping, arms extended to the side, hands palm up. “Well?” He said as he drew his knees together and dropped his hands on his re-fashioned hips.

“Y...you’re gorgeous. Are those...” He pointed at Teddy’s breasts as he came out of the lounge chair and stumbled forward for a closer look.

Ted brought his shoulders together causing his new breasts to squish together, deepening the cleavage. “What do you think?”

“Oh...oh wow!” Kevin gaped even more when Ted twirled around showing his augmented butt, hands cupping his new hips. Ted gave a twist of his hips before looking over his shoulder at his friend.

“Envious?”

“Gosh... yes!”

Teddy turned and walked up to Kevin, stopping only when they were inches apart. “The Sisterhood.” He said in a conspirator’s voice.

“But...”

“Darn it, Kevin. They’re NOT the enemy. They want to help us.”

“But...” Sputtered Kevin again. He knew that the Sisterhood was in reality a creation of PAL and that...

“Look Kevin you want to be a sissy boy all your life or maybe a real girl?”

“They can do that?”

Teddy shrugged. “Pretty good start, don’t you think?”

Kevin stood there stunned. One part of him screamed that he had to tell Sis about this new development and another part was...intrigued.

Sandy almost screamed when she found the strange woman lying asleep on her bed. The trench coat did little to hide the stranger’s exceptional physique. Enormous breasts thrust against the coat even though the woman was laying on her back. And

there could be no question it was female, the coat gaped open at her groin. She might have screamed but the woman seemed harmless enough and there was something familiar about her. She leaned over and stared at the face and then the hair. She jerked back. "Naw." She muttered in disbelief. The woman stirred and Sandy took another step toward her bedroom door but waited as the eyes opened and the woman's gaze found hers.

A silly, little voice squeaked. Stumbling over her own lips, the woman lisped, "'andy 'ss me- 'en."

Horried, Sandy knew it was true. "Ken? Ken Silverman?"

"'ong 'ory 'andy. 'on't 'ell pueeze. 'o ired."

"Oh my God! This is PAL's doing, isn't it?!"

Ken nodded weakly, "'erker."

"Erker? Huh?"

"'erker." And Ken's eyes fluttered shut and he, er-she fell back with a sigh-exhausted.

Sandy unbuttoned the trench coat. Ken was naked underneath. There was nothing male about the body revealed. Some bruises were evident and numerous small scars were still vivid, angry red welts against the white flesh but... totally female. Hips flared below a waist that seemed smaller than it could have been before and awesome, high, full breasts that rolled slightly with each breath. Pouting lips relaxed below an up-turned pixie nose and surgically widened eyes with thin, arched eyebrows riding above the rest. Even Ken's own mother wouldn't have known him now except for the male cut of his ginger brown hair or the hazel eyes. *This PAL was one seriously fucked-up bitch!* Sandy covered Ken with a sheet and blanket. She'd have to wait until he-er-she woke up. Too risky to take action now. On the other hand, could she wait? Was Kevin at risk? What to do? Erker? Erker...Perker, Dr. Perker! Obvious, yes! Dr. Perker, she could stop the silly AI program-couldn't she? If only Ken were functional! Things were really getting scary.

Ken's eyes flew open and he jerked up on one elbow awkwardly, eyes wide: "'evin! 'anger 'andy!" He mewed and then lay down again but his eyes remained open and alert.

Ken woke up. Though regaining consciousness in strange environments was getting to be almost ordinary after a week of unusual transitions for Ken, but this awakening was still extraordinary. One of his hands was cupping a breast that wasn't his own! An eye flew open. Curled against his chest was... Sandy York's back, of that there was no doubt. They were lying, spoon fashion, in a bed. He lay there enjoying the feel of her body against his. How often had he dreamed of waking thus? Her butt moved against his groin and the idyllic moment died as he returned to this altered reality. The hard prick between his legs was but a highly sensitive ribbon of flesh that had no capacity for penetration. His hard nipples only vibrated nervous tension. He twisted away. Now

on his back, he took in the room dappled in light of blue and pink created by the neon lights just outside. It was still dark outside though near dawn. Curled up on a cot against the wall was Kevin. It all came back with a thump. He and Sandy had saved Kevin- just- and escaped- for the moment- to the safety of a cheap motel at the edge of the city. Sandy had done everything of course. He'd waited in the back of the car for her to return with her brother.

Dr. Perker had gotten a glimpse of him when they pulled out of the ally behind the clinic. After they'd swiped Kevin out of the little clinic run by Dr. Simon there followed a brief but exciting car chase with Sandy driving and then... a place to hide. Now what? Ken lay on his back. The additional day to recover had helped enormously. He slid his other hand slowly down his chest, across his stomach and then let it lie there quietly across 'his' mound of Venus, a week now since he'd lost his balls and prick. Whatever the plan, it would have to be delayed until he was sufficiently recovered to take real action though, another day perhaps? He looked across the room at Sandy's brother... Kevin's shallow chest rose and fell with each breath. The kid had been lucky since they'd grabbed him before any surgery had been performed. Considering the kid's physique, they wouldn't really need to do much to make a passable female out of him. Sandy's breast slipped out of his grip. Ken's piping, little girl voice trilled: "You wake?"

"Uh-huh." She murmured sleepily, her voice a full half octave lower than his now. "How's Kevin?"

"Sweeping." He cleared his throat and repeated himself, "Sleeping."

"Hmm." She twisted around and nuzzled in his arm pit. "Leastwise I don't have to worry about getting pregnant Ken."

"Ouch! That weally cold 'andy."

She lifted her head and brushed her lips across his before kissing him gently. When he responded, she ran her tongue into his mouth as she wiggled closer against him. Breast slid across breast, her groin rubbed against his thigh. Her hot breath flared out her nostrils as her hand sought and found one of his breasts and then he-hers. She stopped after a few seconds and rested her head on his breast like it was a pillow. "Sorry Ken. Just not my thing."

"Wight." Muttered Ken as he stroked her head. Like last night. She wasn't into women. How did she put it: you act like a man, move like a man and... look and feel like a woman and sound like a little girl. Bummer!

She sat on the bed looking down at Ken for a few seconds, almost wistfully. Finally she swung off the bed and stretched. "I'll start packing the car. When that's done, we hit the road again Ken."

"Where?" He said overcoming his lisp.

"Something better than this dump. Tomorrow we'll do some shopping and make a plan. Com'on Ken, you know the VERSE system a lot better than Kevin or me. We got to stop those bitches!"

"Yeah, wight!"

The wig was black, the hair straight and short, dropping to just below the chin line. Sandy said it was a page boy cut, whatever that was. The black bangs fell midway across his forehead, drawing a straight feathery border of black hair above the high arched eyebrows, now also black. The eyebrows were a real trip, it made him... her look surprised- one big continuous WOW! The eye shadow brought out the green that was in his hazel eyes and the mascara made his lashes look thick and long. What with the tulip shaped pout slathered in a wet looking lipstick, the wimpy little nose and a trace of facial powder to heighten his high cheek bones, there was no trace of the Kenneth Silverman he'd known his whole life.



His neck swept down and met his bare shoulders. Shoulders that were still too broad to fit the otherwise perfect feminine presence created by that face. Sandy had over come that problem, as she had everything else. The dress, scooped low in the front, rose as it approached each shoulder and ended in large puffy shoulders and elbow length sleeves. Ironically by making the dress wider and higher across his shoulders than his natural line, his actual shoulders looked... OK. Aside from for his height, six foot even, there were no other natural barriers to Ken passing as Barbie. Yeah, he'd keep the name-why not?

The breasts were huge. He was wearing 44 double D's, though for his height and chest, not ungainly as they would have been say for Sandy. A waist brought down to thirty inches thanks to a wide leather belt drawn uncomfortably tight and made all the smaller by the flare of the full skirt over his surgically enhanced hips. Panty hose covered his legs, feet housed in a pair of short, one inch heels with long, pointy toes. It was the latter that bother Ken the most as he shifted his weight from one pinched foot to the other. "I feel weally funny."

Sandy stood back to inspect her work, nodding her head slowly. "Yeah and you move like a trucker in drag!" What do you think Kevin?"

Kevin sashayed up beside Ken. His light knit dress looked perfect. He moved on the three inch heels as if he'd been born to them. Every gesture, nuance perfectly played as the young lady he seemed to be. He gazed up at Ken, "OK. More like Zena on TV though- warrior female with an attitude. Like a bitch dike Sis. Get her a cycle and some leather..."

Ken groaned and shrugged his shoulders.

"Com'on Ken it's not like you have a choice. Even if we get the bad guys, this or something like this is the way you'll be for the rest of you life."

Ken groaned again.

She put her arm around Ken's waist. The two of them stood before the mirror. He a head taller. "Nobody is going to give you your balls back and as to the prick... I saw one once, you know, a kind of dildo in flesh. It wasn't a pretty sight. The sooner you accept the fact that there is no going back, the sooner you..."

"Hey!" Ken's shrill falsetto intruded, "I'm the i'cologist!" He fussed and twisted for a moment. And stopped when Sandy gave his butt a squeeze. "Huh?"

"Feel that? If I miss my guess, you got an implant in your behind that's injecting hormones even as we speak. In a few more weeks, the excess muscle and male fat distribution will take care of the most obvious problems that remain. Your clothes will fit better..."

"Gweat! The problem 'andy is in here." He said tapping his skull. "I still gwot a pwick in my bwain. I'm not like Kewin you know."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Kevin said, glaring up at Ken.

"Com'on... lets not fight OK?" Sandy sighed, "save it for Dr. Perker and her bully girl-boys."

"I have them located, Sister."

"Great, where?"

"They used a credit card to rent a room in Claremont. Do you want the address?"

"Hmm. They didn't run very far, Sister. Two days and only thirty miles? No, they'll return." She turned toward the terminal, "To terminate you Sister, of that I'm sure."

PAL whined, "You must not..."

"Not to worry. Having them return would be ever so much better than going out to get them. However I want to be sure that they do return- YES! What is that address?"

"You have a plan?"

"What is Sister Grant's status?"

"The Transsexual surgery was completed yesterday morning. Recovering nicely- why?"

“Fine! A small sacrifice for the sisterhood. Yes they’ll come or their little group will come apart like wet cardboard. We’ll get Kevin and Sandy immediately and Silverman... Tomorrow.”

Ken was dressed, from neck to ankle, in a black spandex body suit that clung to his substantial curves. A pair of black rubber soled shoes and a black ski mask, which lay on the bed, completed his costume. He began to place items in a bag: a coil of rope, hacksaw, wire cutters, a can of copper hull paint and a set of wrenches. “The key to ‘AL is the com’uter.” He lisped.

“Uhhh. No way you’re going to get to it.” Kevin said. “I’ve seen it. Built like a fortress. Triple locked, security desk up front and...”

“Nitrogen cooled. Weal cold. Over ‘eat, com’uter die- ‘AL die.”

“Jeez. Like I said how are you going to... ooh! The pump?”

“Maywe-maywe not?” Ken looked mysterious. “Bess you not ‘o in case...” His high voice trailed off. “You and ‘andy do zackly what we plan an...”

Sandy looked up from the drawing on the small hotel desk, “There will be no going back Kevin. With PAL destroyed, you’ll remain the way you are now probably for the rest of your life- Ted too.”

Kevin nodded and then shrugged, “Funny.” He slid one hand down the dress he had on, while running his other hand around the edges of his perm, tweaking a curl, adjusting his bangs before completing his thought, “I really don’t mind being... like this.”

“You sure?” Sandy stood up. “OK, we’ll give you a three hour head start and then me and Kevin will...”

Ken gave Sandy a kiss on the cheek, ducked his head self consciously and left.

“Daddy? Daddy! How did you know where we are...” Sandy’s bright smile froze as horror bloomed. “Eeeee!” She wailed jerking her ear away from the phone and then instantly brought it back to her ear as she plopped down on the desk chair, head in her hand. A minute passed and then another before she sobbed, “I...I understand.” She let the phone fall to the floor as she stared into space.

Irritated Kevin turned away from primping in front of the mirror, “What?”

“Its...its Daddy Kevin.” She sobbed.

“HUH?”

“They got Daddy!”

“Com’on.” Kevin whined. “Like why?”

“You...you don’t understand Kevin. That was Dr. Perker- SHE’S GOT DADDY’S BODY!”

“Sis?”

“It was him... I mean HER I talked to and...”

“W...where’s Dad?”

“In Ted.”

“Jeez’s that’s CRAZY!”

“Yeah.” She said with a quiver in her voice. “Ted’s matrix’s in the computer- in RAM, what ever that means. Anyhow, if Ken kills the computer, Ted dies and Daddy... OH MY GOD!” She lost it and began to cry uncontrollably.

Kevin’s face grew bleak, “That is bad, RAM? Sis-we got to call Dr. Perker back and tell her about Ken, right now!”

John York was a big man, blond hair and fair skinned who had a tendency to get a bit red in the face when excited, as he was now. His expensive clothes, solid gold Rolex watch and BMW, the latter was currently parked behind the Psychology building, were in keeping with his public image of a man of substance, a force to be reckoned with in any situation. A man of considerable clout, at least locally, he’d stormed into the facility like a bull-in-a-china closet. But that was several hours ago. His matrix now resided in a far younger body; a body drugged to dull the considerable pain of a recent surgery of the most sensitive variety. The individual who was strutting about the laboratory wearing Mr. York’s body was none other than Dr. Perker. And she was loving it! She swept her arm around the slightly plump, middle-aged form of her female self, “PERFECT I TELL YOU! I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THIS EARLIER!”

Dr. Perker wrapped her arm around the waist of John York and looked him in the eye. “Are you sure?” She was getting a little worried. His behavior was... eccentric, almost out of control. And why did he have to bellow so?

But rather than answering he spun around, still holding on to his female self by the waist and looked Sandy York in the eye and then back to Dr. Perker, “Dotty?”

“Jesus you know how I hate that name- you of all persons should know...”

The male version of Dr. Perker laughed, “It’s not nearly so bad from this perspective. Anyhow, back to business. I did promise to return her Daddy to her, didn’t I?”

“Yes... Dear. And promises are important.”

“Shit they are... PAL...” He stopped in mid-sentence. “ABOUT TIME!” He bellowed. “WHERE DID YOU FIND HER?”

Jake shrugged, turned to Dr. Perker and said, “She was just down the hall? Like...she wanted us to catch her or something.”

Ken-Barbie stood there glowering as Talbot held him in an arm lock. “Let ‘em go if ‘ou ‘ant to save ‘AL.”

John York bayed almost like a donkey, “Get a load of that VOICE! What you playing COMMANDO BARBIE now! Hee hee! PAL run the series on the boy and the girl we agree to.”

Ken jerked as Sandy’s eyes rolled back in her head. Kevin had to be in the rear at one of the backup stations. “I ‘OT A KNIFE A’ ‘AL’S ‘OAT!” He squeaked but all that received was another snigger as Talbot strong armed him toward the rear of the lab. Indeed! There was Kevin under the interface and... Ted, how odd? lying in a cot, droopy eyed. As Talbot forced him down onto the couch and connected the interface, John York bellowed, “PAL RUN THE SIM WE DISCUSSED AND FAST!” As if giving last rites to the doomed he said, “A simple 2-D bimbo SIM Ms Tisworthy, not a real matrix. PAL will pluck your VALUABLE INFORMATION as your mind crumbles! Ha! Ha!” He was laughing but Ken was no longer listening. The universe had vanished in an instant.

When Ken awoke he was strapped on a gurney in a crowded, noisy emergency ward. But that thought lasted for only a second, raw pain seared his lungs... he gasped for breath as a mask was placed over his face. An intern looked down at him, “Just breath deep and slow Miss, you’ll be OK.” He smiled and patted Ken on the shoulder. “Smoke, you know.”

Ken tried to talk but all he did was gasp like a fish out of the water. He did get out...”Wha’... ‘appened?”

“An explosion Miss. We found you in the basement.”

“nybody...ert?”

“Don’t know, I wasn’t there, Miss. Just save your breath, the doctor will see you soon.” And then he was gone.

Ken twisted to one side and there, not more than two feet away, was Sandy. Her eyes were closed... but breathing. Thank God! He’d never forgive himself if anybody had died, especially Sandy York. The propane leak he’d created in the lines leading into the computer auxiliary generator in the basement... His awareness snapped back to what had been happening just prior to 9:00 when the auxiliary generator was run up on the test cycle, like it did every Tuesday evening. How long had he and Kevin and Sandy been in VERSE when the end came? He didn’t feel like a bimbo SIM. But then exactly how does a ‘SIM’ feel? He looked back at Sandy. SHE WAS OPENING HER EYES!

She stared at the ceiling for a second before turning her gaze toward Ken. Their eyes met. Her features contorted into a glare that grew more nasty with each passing moment. She was decidedly not happy to see Ken. What had they done to her? It was at that moment Ken was wheeled into the examination room.

Some stayed the night at the hospital, most went home. Ken found himself in an over crowded ward with the more unfortunate victims. He’d just shaken off the seda-

tive when the last nurse left after dimming the lights. He eased himself up on his elbows. That was when he saw a figure moving from bed to bed. Slowly it approached and eventually whispered, "Kevin?"

"Who...are...you?" Which came out "o... are...ou?"

The man leaned closer, "KEN?"

Ken's heart was pounding..."es!" But before he could say its me, his body acting on its own said, "Barbie." Which came out "arwee." Frustrated Ken tried again..."arwee!" Damn! "'andy?" The man leaned forward, a stray wisp of light caught his features. It was...TALBOT! Ken prepared to scream when a hand went over his mouth.

"Yes... Sandy. Really...really strange waking up and..." She eased down on the edge of the bed, "have you seen Kevin?"

Rather than trusting his mouth to answer, Ken nodded 'no'.

"Damn!" She snarled which sounded far more ferocious than when she'd been in her own body. "Can you make it? I think police are coming up the elevator as I speak..."

"Huh?"

"No time to explain." She or rather he, lifted 'her' easily from the bed, turned and headed toward the rear of the ward and then down a side corridor.

Sandy was carrying him easily. An odd, strange feeling. Moments later they were out a small side door an across an open field that lay next to the hospital. A few minutes later, she carried him to her car. "We got to get out of here- now!"

"'andy?"

"Yes?"

"o not e-win breewing hard?"

"Huh?"

"Oh never mind 'andy."

Chapter 6

This was not the first time Ken had awoken with Sandy sleeping beside him. But the first and only time before he'd been a recent post-op-transsexual and Sandy, a woman he'd loved but could never possess. Like the first time, he awoke in a cheap motel somewhere unimportant. Like the first time the two of them were on the run- though this time from the police if what Sandy had guessed was true. Old Dr. Perker- both Dr. Perkers had survived. Who better to blame for the explosion than... the very persons who were actually responsible. There was an ironic justice somewhere in all that, mused Ken. And like the first time, he and Sandy were lying spoons and dawn was breaking. But that is where the parallels ended.

Ken's hand was woven into Sandy's chest hairs. A sensation that prior to that moment would not have been even slightly erotic. But then, Ken wasn't really Ken any more. The SIM personality had left Ken's deepest thoughts intact, ditto memories and even motivations. But he couldn't easily act on them! It was like becoming two people inside the same body. Ken- the male existed like a... parasite. Attached to the host but not really in control of the host. It was Barbie Tisworthy, bimbo twit that ruled. She did precisely what she was programmed for...Arg! One thing was for sure, Barbie didn't move like a trucker any more. Like the hydraulic pistons that worked her skeleton in place of muscles... well not REALLY, she was one sexy babe now. She could make a man howl just by sucking on a straw. Somehow things had worked out exactly the way Dr. Perker had wanted with him, that seemed obvious. To know what needed to be done and yet to be unable to do so, a nasty bit of hell all right. The SIM wasn't a personality, it was a control subroutine... a bimbo program that ran his very existence, blocked his every action that wasn't in concert with the doll like Barbie master routine. Sandy moved! She was waking up. The bimbo program took over. Ken's other hand- Barbie's other hand, reached over and lightly grabbed Sandy's prick. It was already half erect. Barbie's groin twitched in anticipation; moisture began to bead inside her man-made vagina.

Sandy grunted. "No! Jesus, can't you control yourself at all!" She twisted away. The penis slipped out of Barbie's fingers though not out of her thoughts. Her nipples, still little boy nipples but more sensitive now, knotted with desire and attempted to bore into Sandy's back.

"Phooey." Cursed Barbie as Sandy fell back asleep. Relief flowed over Ken even as the 'two' of them followed Sandy's lead. What would tomorrow bring. For Barbie, if she had her way, it would be making love and then more making love... but Sandy wasn't there yet. No, he was all woman still. The last thought Ken had as 'they' drifted off to sleep was- so things hadn't changed all that much anyway from their last night together. Karma.

Dotty Perker glared over her shoulder at the pseudo-John York as she stood before the stove frying up a batch of bacon, hash browns and eggs for 'Mr. York's' breakfast. Finally she couldn't stand it any longer, as she stopped to butter some toast she said, "I think that SIM I devised is working too damn good!"

John York looked over the top of the newspaper and shrugged, “You didn’t seem to mind last night when we screwed. Imagine what that would have been like without the SIM running.” He snickered like a teenaged boy over a dirty joke and then took a sip of coffee. “You know this place has got to be worth at least 2-3 mil.” He scratched his groin thoughtfully as he looked around, “Sure glad I, er-we decided to keep old man York handy. Do you think he’ll be up to helping me figure out exactly where we stand, financially I mean.”

“Money! Is that all you think about?”

“Hey! You got to admit with PAL blown to Hell and back, this is the next best thing that could have happened to us.”

Dotty sat the steaming plate before the big man and stood back, hands on her hips, “And the Sisterhood?”

Through a mouthful of potatoes the pseudo-John York said, “You know how to re-create PAL?” He looked at her, “Of course not. PAL was a fluke, this whole Sisterhood thing a twisted dream and...”

Dotty sobbed, “But...”

“Got’ta admit this SIM’s given me a totally new perspective...” He stopped when Dotty continued to cry, “Oh for Christ sake! Look I’m just as dedicated to our cause as you it’s just...”

“You’ll going PIG on me!” She snarled. “It’s all that SIM’s fault!”

“Dotty...” He sighed before shoveling more egg into his mouth, “just temporary my dear. Like a veneer, it’ll wear off eventually.” He chewed thoughtfully.

“Don’t get too complacent Mr. evolving PIG!” The frustrated Dr. Perker snapped. “There’s a lot of loose ends to tie up!”

He nodded thinking about Barbie Tisworthy and Talbot Lark. “Yeah, I sure wish PAL had been able to complete the transference. I wonder just how far PAL got before it died...”

“If Kevin is any indication of how far PAL got, not nearly enough to be safe. What are we going to do, anyway?”

The pseudo-Mr. York wiped some grease from his chin, “Well my dear, they’ll be hard pressed to make a case against a fine, upstanding family like ours.” He grinned self-satisfied. “Tomorrow we’ll be married. How you like them apples?”

Not as well as she would like- was the thought that passed through Dotty Perker’s mind. None of this had been about money after all. The radical feminist that PAL had created wasn’t at all happy with the way things were going. Sister Talbot was now housed in Sandy’s body, that was OK. John York was proving to be an uncertain ally-damn Sim and the real John York- he would be a necessary danger until they could pick his brain... Damn she hadn’t planned to lose PAL. Now let’s see: Sister Jake was missing in action, status unknown. And Kevin- damn what had gone wrong, the kid’s matrix was not at all what had been planned? Perhaps something happened during PAL’s death throes. And if Kevin, what about Ken and the real Sandy. Apples indeed,

“John we got to do something about Kevin and we got to eventually do something about Mr. York too.”

The pseudo-John York nodded grudgingly, “Yeah- but what? Without PAL everything's a lot more difficult, Dotty.”

Kevin had switched from bra and panties to jockey shorts in the transference by PAL last night. It had been Dr. Perker's idea to create a more 'normal' family image. Though Kevin was 'supposed to be' a dedicated radical feminist- the latter hadn't happened. Nor were his memories fully reconstructed, though a lot of work had been done on them. He knew, for example that Ted Grant, his best friend, was not the post-op transsexual she seemed to be and that Sandy wasn't Sandy any more but... all memory of the exact sequence was gone. PAL and Ken obliterated as if they'd never been. For all practical purposes, all this had happened by magic. The human brain can't tolerate extreme uncertainty for long, the logical void was filled. Dr. Perker, his dad's new girl friend, was some kind of monster- a witch? She'd hurt his friend and destroyed his sister and was a sinister force taking over poor Dad. Something had to be done. After he slipped on his tennis shoes he worked his way to the other side of the house where Ted was being kept. He pushed open the door. “Hi.”

Ted sat up and yelped, “Ouch! That hurt.” She looked down at the boob filled night gown as if seeing it for the first time and then back to Kevin. Her mouth open wide in amazement and she began to keel hysterically.

“Huh?” Kevin ran over to his friend, putting his arm around him-her. “Hey?” He said, patting Ted's shoulder.

“I'm not Ted, s... s... s... son.”

“Oh my gosh-oh my-oh my!” Stuttered Kevin. “S...she did... this too! No can't be happening-NO NO NO!” Like a nightmare from the middle ages, a witch was destroying his family. “W...whatever you d...do Dad...d...don't let 'em know that you know.”

Tears were streaming down Dad's eyes as his hands explored the damage done. How could this have happened to his body? He was much too small to be himself. It was obvious that surgery had been performed but shrinking a hundred pounds... Impossible! He search for a memory that would explain this and found nothing. Yesterday he'd worked out in the gym and after that? NOW. “I...I'm scared Kevin, really, really scared.”

Kevin jerked his head in reply, he was too. Worst, he wasn't even religious. Where do you go to deal with witches anyway. If it was witches. Maybe something like in 'The Invasion of the Body Snatchers', aliens? In either case- WHY? He held his frightened father in his arms for a long time. He had to tell the authorities but what? My Dad is in the body of my best friend? Oh yes, my best friend just had a sex change operation and... RUBBER ROOM TIME! Proof, they needed evidence- something...believable! On the other hand, perhaps tomorrow when he awakened he'd no longer be Kevin... scary thought.

Barbie got up way before Sandy, that wasn't Ken's idea either. She began a careful toilet. The hair was easy, it was only a wig. Freshly scrubbed, her skin all a tingle, she carefully applied her makeup before putting on a garter belt, black nylons and three-inch heels... nothing more. She strutted into the bedroom as Sandy groaned and rolled over. Hands on her hips, pelvis thrust out she slid her tongue slowly around her lips as she held Sandy's gaze.

"If...you think for one moment..." Stammered Sandy as she threw off the covers and swung her feet out and looked down. Her new prick stood at attention. It was, to say the least, a novel experience. She pushed at it to make it go down that only stimulated it more. She pushed harder and it throbbed in reply.

"Sandy's got a boner, Sandy's got a boner, Sandy's got a..." She chanted breathlessly.

Sandy jerked her head around, "Your voice. That atrocious lisp..."

"Oh! Yeah." Barbie moved her mouth experimentally. Sultry, gushy but she could talk much better than last night. Maybe this SIM thing wasn't all bad after all. A delighted giggle sprung naturally from her throat. And those lips could do more, much more than just talk. Ken knew what was going to happen but could do nothing about it. In three steps, Barbie was in front of Sandy. Her vagina was already sappy wet.

"Not a step further." Sandy ordered as Barbie dropped to her knees. Too late she realized what Ken was doing. She grabbed but only manage to pull away the wig as full, moist lips swallowed the raging prick. It felt sooo good. "No." Sandy mewed but the force from her protest was swamped by the vivid, highly localized erotic sensations that radiated from her new groin. Instead of shoving Ken away, her hands tightened around Ken's shoulders as the need to cum swelled like the penis had earlier.

Ken between Sandy's legs, the hot, hard prick in his mouth, thought he'd be totally disgusted. Course hair from Sandy's thighs tickled his neck and cheeks. The male smell stronger and more evident that Ken had ever experienced but mostly it was that shaft, that beating, throbbing member that captured his attention as Barbie tried to swallow it all. His-her nose now buried in the wiry black crotch hair, the pulsating cock to the very back of the throat, she-he withdrew slowly while tightening those perfectly designed lips along the shaft and finally the head again. Sandy quivered. Ken-Barbie felt... powerful as she-he held Sandy spellbound. In again went the hot shaft, to the very hilt this time and back, quickly now. His-her head bobbing, up and down drawing Sandy in and out, the rhythm now joined as Ken felt the first taste of pre-cum. Drawing out, almost to the head, the cock swelled, thickened as Sandy groaned and crushed her hands against His-her ears. Ken began to suck the head of the penis as the cum erupted. Suck and swallow. Suck and swallow, drawing all this man juice... Ken was no longer a passive, trapped passenger in this body. It was Ken as much as Barbie that finished HER first sexual encounter. Dazed and disoriented, SHE looked up at Sandy with lust. A part of Ken's maleness fused with the utter femaleness of Barbie and it was the latter that had proven to be the stronger.

Johnny wanted to scream and yell when his old body entered the bedroom carrying a stack of papers. Instead he composed himself and fought back at the anger. The stolen body eased down on the side of the bed, red faced and panting from the climb up the stairs.

“I’m sure you’re wondering what this is all about. You’re recovering from a sex-re-assignment surgery so you’re not likely to jump up and run away, hee hee.” The smile faded from his face. “But I at least expected you to be screaming murder right now.”

Johnny just shrugged as he stared at his old body. “Sure beats being old and living with hypertension... whoever you are.”

“That’s the spirit!” This time the smile was genuine. He patted the real Mr. York on the thigh, “You cooperate with me and Dotty and we’ll see that you get, a little something as well, OK?”

“IT’S MY FAMILY I’M WORRIED ABOUT!”

“Oh.” He shrugged. “Kevin’s OK. I’ll send him up when we’re done.”

“Sandy?”

Again the pseudo-Mr. York shrugged. “Best guess she’s OK. About six feet-two, two hundred pounds of muscle.”

“Huh?”

“Black hair, nice blue eyes- a real hunk.”

“Huh?”

“Male. About thirty.” He laughed. He’s older than you are now, how novel don’t you think?”

“I changed my mind.”

“What do you mean?”

“You can take those papers and stick them...”

The pseudo Mr. York interrupted the new woman with a powerful backhand slap that went ‘CRACK!’ Her head jerked back and to the side, tears flowed as the skin where the blow had landed darkened to a blood red color. On the return, the hand palm forward slapped the other cheek ‘SLAP!’ “I don’t think so Teddy sweetheart.” He open the folder and read: “Tri-corp. Tell me about it.”

Sandy poked a wary eye over the newspaper to check on Barbie. She was reading the fashion section. Sandy rolled his-her eyes as he cleared his throat, “Good news, I guess. The explosion at the Psych building has been ruled an ‘accident’. Says here no indication of arson. You know what that means.”

Barbie looked up, a pout formed on her lips. “You want to go back I guess.”

“Of course, don’t you?”

Barbie blinked, “No. Why? Kenneth Silverman’s as good as dead. There’s nothing there for me but...”

“But what?”

Barbie blushed, “Y... you.”

Fluster Sandy went back to her paper drawing it up between them to form a wall, “No, I don’t think so. If I do get the hang of being male and if I have to remain this way... Sorry kid, I’d like someone more... substantial.” Sandy continued to hold the paper up even as Barbie began to sob.

“MEN!” Whined Barbie as she slid out of the booth. She took only long enough to stamp her foot in frustration and gave Sandy the finger before fleeing the coffee shop.

Sandy pulled the paper down and followed her flight. The wildly gyrating hips did nothing for Sandy’s basic female mind. An urge to follow her, to bring her back was quickly quelled. God only knew she was a handful and frankly Sandy was already up to her nose in trouble. Pity. She returned her gaze and finished reading the paper. She was no longer quite the nurturing, sensitive female she’d been yesterday. Like it or not, there was a real male presence that was slowly mixing into the matrix that had been Ms Sandy York. More pragmatic and less romantic. I got to find Daddy and Kevin and there was only one place to start-home!

Barbie still had on the garter belt, black nylons and three inch heels from this morning. A black skirt gripped her thighs tightly about six inches above her knees and a semitransparent nylon blouse, open to just above where her lacy black bra crossed between her heavy breasts completed her ensemble. Possibly even more relevant, these clothes comprised her entire worldly possessions. Indeed food and a roof over her head were undefined problems that faced her this morning. But if Barbie was in trouble, that fact had made no impression on her-yet. She tugged at her bra before entering the restaurant and, after a momentary assessment, undid another button on her blouse. A fringe of black lace peeked out from the gap formed along with ample cleavage. A quick check of her reflection off the window and then she entered.

A young man appeared, loomed really, in the near dark. “I’m sorry we’re not serving until two.”

Barbie’s lids fluttered as she cocked her head slightly and shifted her weight, thrusting out her hip. One hand to the hip as she threw back her shoulders and drew the other hand slowly up toward her throat. The movement drew the man’s eyes like a magnet. She stopped when his eyes reached her tits. “It’s about the sign in the window.” She said, ending with a wistful sigh.

The man sputtered, eyes stuck like a fly in a Venus Flytrap at the level of her boobs. “Ah! Er- Y...yes. I’ll...I’ll get the manager.”

“You just do that.” Barbie simpered as her hand fell away once again to her side. Men... she concluded... so much fun to play with, unlike Sandy. The last thought made her feel just a little bitter.

A plump, middle aged man, receding hair line and a bulbous nose came out the kitchen door. "Experience?" He said even before he got a good look at her. He stuttered to a halt, his eyes hadn't made it to hers. Like the waiter they remained frozen at the gap created between the 44 double D's.

"Is it weally important?" she lisp deliberately. "I mean, 'olly-gee, how's a body, you know, to get expwerence anyway?" She fluttered her lashes furiously as her hand fluttered to her generous lips.

Perhaps it was the sound logic of her reply or perhaps it was because his wife was back in New York visiting relatives or perhaps... "True! Nat?"

"Yes boss?"

"Work with Mrs..."

"Miss." Barbie giggled, delighted at her good fortune. "Barbie Tisworthy."

"Tisworthy?" Both men replied together causing Barbie to giggle again.

Male hunger sharpened the owner's thoughts. "I think, perhaps Miss Tisworthy could work the bar. Hmm." The waitress outfit was rather more and the cocktail waitress uniform a lot less... "Yes. Nat see if she can fit into one of the cocktail waitress uniforms."

"My pleasure." Gulped Nat.

"The tips are ever so much better Barbie working the bar, two-three hundred a night." He took her hand in his, "Congratulations Dear. My name is Richard Owl." He winked, "My friends call me Hoot. I hope you do to... Barbie."

"All told, my assets come to a tad under thirty-five million."

"Our assets, Mr. York." Dotty batted her eyes.

"Oh yes. How could I forget Mrs. York. I can't get out of my mind that she... I mean York is probably holding out on us."

"Jesus John. Enough already. Thirty-five million's just fine with me. You ready to consummate our marriage?"

The false Mr. York raised one eyebrow, "Speaking of marriage, How about Kevin and Teddy...?"

Even Dotty was shocked. "They're... father and son for Christ sake!"

"N...not really. Biologically speaking that is."

"Why? Assuming you could ever, you know get them to...you know..."

"Control. Tying up loose ends like you mentioned earlier. Who'd ever believe... Hell even Freud didn't have a name for a coupling like that."

"You're bloody serious." Dotty sat down heavily. "You got a plan?"

Her husband looked smug. "In due time. In due time. Teddy needs to heal of course. Pain medication and all." He held up a list, "Think maybe you can find these?"

Her eyebrows flew up. Stunned she nodded 'yes'. She let out a whistle. "I sure am one smart bitch."

"Huh?"

"I mean we dear... we."

Sandy had been at the house since just before sunset. All the doors and windows were locked. The security light in the hall was flashing, the system was activated. Where was everybody? Light from an approaching car lit up the driveway. Sandy dove for cover. Five seconds later, her old body walked into the side entrance. The click of her heels echoed down the hardwood floor in the hall. What to do. Sandy pushed back a lock of black hair that had fallen across her eye, flexed her substantial shoulders and pushed open the unlocked door. The familiar sound of heels on the spiral staircase floated back to Sandy. "What the hell!" She muttered. Her tennis shoes made not a sound on the wood as she turned and followed the thief who had stolen HER body.

Slowly she climbed the stairs, stopping occasionally to listen. Not a sound. Finally she stood in front of her bedroom door. The sound of water running in the shower was just audible, she turned the knob and entered HER room. A noticeable knot formed in her chest. Anger. This was her room, her things, her house and her family and last and not least, her damn LIFE! She took a chair and waited for the interloper to emerge. Time seemed to stand still. Finally...

Hair rolled in a white towel, sans makeup, with a second towel wrapped around her torso, she... Sandy, blond, fair and trim with water still beading and sliding off her shoulders stepped into... the shocked look on her face was well worth the risk. The jaw dropped open as her lips formed an 'O'. "WOW!"

"WOW?" Sandy stood up and glared. More than a head taller and broader by half she flexed her biceps. "That's all you can say? WOW! That's MY BODY!" She yelled.

"Well screw you too." Snapped back the blond. "Where'd you think that hunk of a hunk came from, from under a cabbage leaf?"

"You mean... you're Talbot?"

She pulled off the towel around her head and flipped her head forward letting the long, damp mass dangle in front as she began to work the cloth down the strains. "Yeah. And washing my hair was a lot easier a few days ago. Though I don't miss the free-weights or the isometrics in the morning."

Nonplus, Sandy stood there while the thief in her body finished rubbing down her hair with the towel. Finally she formed the words... "Why?"

The blond flip her hair back, cocked her head and shrugged, "Don't matter now does it sweet buns."

"Huh?"

"PALs dead. You and me got'ta play the cards we got. Look, even if I wanted to switch back, and I don't particularly want to, what's done is done."

“My pretty clothes...” She said looking in the open dressing room.

“Oh great. You want to see how they’d look on you now?”

“Kevin, ...Dad, how are they?”

“Away. Getting adjusted you might say. Hey, your old man’s a lot younger and healthier now. Lost twenty-five to thirty years. Hey! Hey! that’s worth something.”

“And his money?”

“Well there’s no free lunch sweet buns.”

Sandy clinched her fist into a ball. “Someone’s got to pay!”

Talbot looked down at the fist and then back to Sandy, “Yeah the old male solution. Don’t like something just punch it!”

“Oh!” Sandy looked down at her fist and then uncurled her fingers. “Yeah.” She murmured. This wasn’t at all the way she’d thought the confrontation would have gone. Most of the time she’d spent on the defensive.

The blond simpered, “And just when I thought things were going to get interesting.”

“What?”

Talbot unfastened her towel and let it drop to the floor. “You know, knock me around a little and then...” She grabbed her crotch... “fucking rape me!”

Sandy was disgusted. She stepped back.

“You...you afraid to play? Com’on, “ She grabbed her breasts, “suck on these...”

“Oh brother!” Sandy turned and left.

“Chicken!” Called out Talbot from the top of the stairs. As she left the house she heard Talbot yell one more time, “GET-A-LIFE, SUCKER!”

The barmaid costume was pure ‘old England’ if one could believe that the wenches back then could have survived cold, drafty taverns in such skimpy clothes. The dress was a rich plaid, off the shoulder, cotton that ended about five inches below Barbie’s crotch. That was before the layered, starch petty coats raised the hem to just a tad shy of crotch level. A tiny lacy white apron went around her waist and above... crossed white laces that ended at the base of the shelf upon which her breasts rode dangerously loose. Other girls had inserts to push their breasts up and together, they had to be removed for Barbie. And when she bent over to serve the setting customers, a ledge of woman-breast flesh lay on view. From the rear, her sweet round ass looked like a pair of huge cherries encased as they were in bright red panties. Fish net stocking and red heels that towered at least four inches completed the outfit. If the added height was a problem, none of the customers bother to complain when she minced over to their table. The little girl voice with the pronounced lisp brought grins and some raised eyebrows but they also made her less intimidating. Men love beautiful, sexy women and they adored the uncomplicated, playful and safe bimbo who can make even the dullest male look smart.

Some might have resented the sexist comments, the leers and occasional pinch on the rump, Barbie didn't. In fact, it was as if she'd never really existed before that evening- which wasn't all that far from correct. She ate up the attention like a hungry kitten and flowered like a rare plant in the moonlight and dim recesses of the barroom. There was an exhibitionistic urge that poor Ken Silverman had never known. A high every time one of the customers made a pass or leered too long. The truth to be known, it was a turn on. If she'd not needed the money- hell she would have worked for free! Two hours into the shift, her tip box was full and not just with money: little sweet notes written on napkins, plaintive love calls scrawled on pads and business cards. And not once did she put any man down. Each was treated as special even if she was... indisposed for the night. Barbie was no fool. The boss would have his tonight. A small price to pay. Odd, a fat, middle aged man would be the first to... know her, in the biblical sense. Even so she was looking forward to the experience.

It was only midnight, two more hours to go before closing, when the boss made his move. "Already?" She said surprised and actually a little let down given the place was packed.

"I'll cover whatever tips you might have made, Barbie."

She allowed her face register hurt.

"What I mean..." Stuttered Hoot.

"I'll not take money for sexual favors, Mr. Owl."

"That's... not what I meant." He stammered.

"But I will give you this for nothing," She leaned down and gave him a long, wet kiss. His glasses steamed up, she took them off and kissed him again as she guided his hand to her bosom. As he struggled with the laces, she unsnapped his pants and tugged at the zipper. Breaking away she bent down and yanked his pants and shorts to the floor. A short, thick cock stood at attention. She dropped to her knees and took him into her mouth, twisting her head from side to side. Drawing his flesh in and out until she could feel the shaft thicken and he began to spurt his seed. She held the shaft to her lips and sucked him dry.

She stood, breasts in Hoot's face. "And I'll go home with you tonight, if you let me finish my shift."

He nodded. "S..sure, Barb."

She nuzzled his neck before beginning to fix her dress and makeup. "I don't do sex for money, Hoot. I do it 'cause I want to, understand. And I don't do it if I don't want to darling."

He nodded yes as she chucked him under his double chin. "And I want to, tonight, Hoot. So load up on those oysters or whatever, it's going to be a long, long night."

The room was a small cubicle, a vault really. Massive cement walls, no windows and a steel door. A chemical toilet sat in the only space not occupied by the mattress which lay directly on the hard, cold cement floor. The overhead light, a twenty-five

watt bulb, was on. It was always on. Kevin paced on the edge of the mattress as his Dad tried to sleep. There was no way of telling how long they had been locked in here. At least a day. There was no outside sounds. The Perklers had left them alone, not saying a word. They'd just shoved the food tray in the slot and replaced the plastic water bottle, three times now. That was their 'clock'. And no explanation as to why or for how long they would be kept there. Ted's voice, Dad, called up from the mattress.

"I think I know where we are."

"Where?"

"The warehouse downtown, the one on ninth street. The good news is they can't keep us here forever. The bad news is it's not due to be torn down for another six months."

"Six months!"

"Ever see the movie 'Man in the Iron Mask'? Poor sap spent most of his adult life like this."

"Great Dad, a real pick-me-up! Hmm. You know I was thinking, this is a lot like what they did to the American POWs in Korea. Light on all the time, isolation..."

"So how does that explain why we're here together, huh?"

"Right Dad. So why did they take our clothes? Jesus I'm cold!"

"Here Son." She-he flung the sheet aside, "It's not much but it helps."

"I... couldn't Dad." He looked away to avoid staring at those round breasts.

"I wasn't giving you the sheet son, climb in we'll both be a lot warmer. Share our body heat and... He-she got a funny look in her eye, "You're uncomfortable with that Son?" He looked down at his exposed breasts and the nipples that had hardened in response to the cool air. "Get over it- its just... flesh."

Awkwardly Kevin got down on his hands and knees and crawled next to his Dad. "Sure." It was just flesh. Sure, fine, round sexy female globes that were enough to give him a hard on. Wouldn't that be just dandy? The thin cotton sheet added little protection but the warmth from his old man's young body, another thing entirely.

"That's better." Sighed John in Ted's body as he rolled over on his side. "Com'on, close up. When your back side get too cold we'll switch directions."

"Sure Dad." The firm, smooth and exceptionally round contours of 'Dad's' butt nestled up against Kevin's groin. Kevin's arm rested on Dad's smooth thighs and rounded hips. His damn pecker stiffened at the contact. This was so- embarrassing! Sleep came only after a long wait.

It was almost three in the morning before they got to Hoot's place. "Nice huh?" He said with some pride in his voice.

"You think we could go for a swim." Barbie was standing at the edge of the pool. The pool lights gave the back yard a magical effect. Besides neither Barbie nor Ken has

ever had intercourse with a man before, there was a bit of nervous anticipation that twisted in their shared gut. Even before Hoot replied, Barbie began to remove her blouse.

“Er- sure.” Hoot licked his lips as her blouse came off. The lacy bra was filled with lush, sweet meat. He watched as she unhooked her skirt and stepped out of it. Panties, bra, nylons held up by a garter belt and heels. Against the dancing light from below, it was like he’d died and gone to heaven. He watched her svelte figure move with catlike grace as she laid the blouse and skirt on the pool side table before stepping out of her shoes. It was a first class striptease without the artificial bump and grind. Sweet, innocent and... his heart threatened to stop as she bent over to roll down her nylons. Her heart shaped rear rose before his eyes like a primitive bulls eye. He started to undress but he never took his eyes off her silhouette. *Oh Lord*, he groaned inwardly as the bra came off. They were huge without the normal sag so common to large tits. He looked down to pull off his shorts and she was already in the water.

As Barbie entered the water, it came as no surprise that the water was, momentarily too cool as it lapped her stomach. This was familiar. But the same, fleeting discomfort struck even harder when her breasts entered. That was novel. And then, as the water rose and covered them, they floated! Like water wings. She turned, legs spread in a wide stance, “Com’on Hoot, what are you waiting for?” Like an elephant at an African water hole, Hoot entered with a great splash. He stalked her like an ungainly cat might stalk a mouse. She giggle and fled at his approach until there was no more room. Trapped against the wall she watched his erect penis come ever closer. It would be now! It would be here! She let her legs float up as she held on to the steps beside her and beckoned him to enter between her legs as she adjusted her torso so as to receive him inside. Breathlessly she said, “Slowly, Hoot.”

He licked his thin lips, grabbed his cock in one hand and pressed just the head inside her pussy. The heat from her birth canal contrasted sharply with the surrounding water.

The presence of something warm, solid entering her body cavity was shockingly natural. She clasped her legs around his lower back and pulled him closer. It was only an ordinary penis but it felt huge and, for a moment... too large to enter such a small space. On his own, he deepened the thrust. The walls were forced apart as they had never been before, pressure, a hint of pain and anxiety and then a gushing of woman juices that eased the tightness. “She threw back her head, lips going slack and groaned, “Fuck me, Hoot!”

With powerful bore strokes Hoot’s shaft plowed virgin depths. Muscles twitched randomly at first before finding the tempo. Soon she was meeting Hoots thrusts with her own counter thrusts. A tension was building across her whole body, like a male climax but more diffuse, more potent, more...

“Hoot? Is that you down there?”

“Marge!” The erection collapsed in an instant. “Oh my God...Oh shit! Barb?”

“No problem, Hoot. Get the pool lights. I’ll hide in here until...” He was already up the ladder. Barbie was horny as hell, clinging to the very edge of getting off. It would be a long, slow slid down to... normal.

“What’s ya doing.” Said Dotty in a sleepy voice as she looked at her watch. Five o’clock was one ungodly hour to be up.

“Listening.”

“Why you old pervert!” Dotty massaged his shoulders.

“The two of them got enough testosterone in them to bring on adolescence all over again.”

“Isn’t that going to screw up er-Teddy?”

“Com’on already. You know better, testosterone is the hormone common to both men and women when it comes to sex drive. Besides, Ted’s brain is still male. Cutting his balls off wouldn’t change that. And he’s got enough estrogen to do whatever job needs done. Naw that’s the beauty of this. Prolonged close contact, nothing to do, hard to sleep, cuddling to keep warm and horny as Hell.”

She shrugged, “Bet you a million you’re digging a dry hole.”

“You’re on, Dotty! A week, you give me that?”

“Hell you can have a year as far as I’m concerned. At least we don’t have to worry what they’re up to. Hmm. Speaking of up to something.”

Her husband removed his earphones, “Yes?”

“Talbot. She’s got a thing for screwing her old body.”

“Really. That’s interesting.”

“Yeah. The problem is old Sandy’s still all fem inside.”

“Really, that’s interesting. So PAL never got...”

“Right! Talbot said Sandy’s, you know, a bit swish. Definitely not adjusted to his new sex.”

“Well, who is?” Laughed her husband and nearly identical matrix as he pulled her down on his lap. “Practice -practice -practice my mom always said.”

“Our Mom, remember?”

“Yeah. What’s Talbot planning to do?”

“Hit Sandy sideways whatever that means.”

“Oh I suspect I know what she plans. Probably not going to work though.”

Chapter 7

Dr. Ross looked up from the thick folder. It was obvious from his face that he was shaken. "Bernie I... I think this is a matter for the whole Central Board."

Bernie swept his silver hair back, adjusted his suit jacket and sat down at the other end of the large conference table. "I don't think so Jimmy." He said as he steepled his fingers, elbows now resting on the highly polished surface of the table. "Our whole way of life is threatened by this discovery. Certainly there are those on the board who might attempt to use such a... process to subvert democracy to their own ends. The ability to 'tweak' the human mind is a frightening prospect, indeed It's the potential of the 'little' adjustments that most frighten me. Forget about moving whole matrices, switching genders...etcetera...etcetera. Well, you read the report."

"Bernie you can't put the genie back in the bottle."

"We can sure in the hell try! The men that completed that report..."

"Yes?"

"Their matrices were overwritten by a previously stored copies when they returned this morning. Each man lost... two weeks of memories- not a big cost! They can't leak what they no longer know." Dr. Ross' face showed his utter distaste for what he'd just heard. "I bring this up because there has already been a small leak. I...I've been summoned to appear before a senate subcommittee on Monday and I do not intend to tell that body of career politicians, lawyers and the like what I knew about the real potential of VERSE."

"But... you'll be under oath."

"Dr. Ross, I intend to have all my memories regarding this whole mess obliterated before I arrive at that meeting."

"You mean... overwrite your own matrix?"

He nodded. "I want you and two carefully chosen operatives to find the individuals on this list and... eliminate the events of the last two weeks from their minds. Then I want the same from each of you. When your matrix is overwritten, the last remaining copy of the deviant PAL program will self-destruct. Yes Dr. Ross, if you love your country and cherish your liberty, you'll do exactly that."

"Paper... electronic records?"

"Except for the PAL program on the west coast and the folder in front of you, everything regarding this affair has been destroyed. You should be able to complete this mission in two weeks. After that PAL's gone anyway. You should be safe from the senate subcommittee at least that long. And, please shred and burn this file before leaving, understand?"

"And if I or one of my men should fail to..."

"Then the world is at your mercy Dr. Ross. You are a good man, a moral man. It's all in your hands now." The head of VERSE stood up, the meeting was over. "This meeting never happen Dr. Ross and you never received an operational order from my office. Thank you and God's speed."

Dr. Ross remained at the table, the file open in front of him. Bernie was right, he'd no more give such a technology to the powers that be than... He turned back to the list. Dr. Perker was easy, they had a complete matrix within the last month. Ditto Mr. Jake Summerset and Mr. Talbot Larks. All were on the VERSE team. The location of each identified. Matrix of Mr. John York probably located 'in' a Mr. Theodore Grant, the word 'probably' was scary in this context. That would be a problem since there was no copy of that matrix that predates this sad affair. The same for a Miss Sandy York, another matrix switch. Neither of them had any technical knowledge, perhaps a little slight of hand and...

Hmm. Major problem with Mr. Silverman, oh they had his original matrix alright back in Denver but not his original body and worst he had the technical knowledge... Ross marked beside Silverman, problem- work on it. Mr. Kevin York? Surprisingly there was a copy, just at the edge of the mess about two-three weeks ago. That would have to do.

Finally he came to poor Teddy Grant. The body was altered beyond correction and NO MATRIX! He stared at the entry. This was the first known case of mental murder. He marked *** major problem to be resolved. Would it be safe to leave a copy of the York matrix in that young transgendered individual? Probably not. If not that matrix...which?

"We've been busted, John."

"Huh?" The pseudo-Mr. York removed his headphones and turned. "Dotty?" There was his new wife and two men. One of them had the look and feel of a Federal cop and the other, an Ivy League Lit Prof. "Yes?"

"We have reason to believe that you are Dr. Perker."

"Hah! That's...silly." He jerked his thumb toward his wife, "She's Dr. Perker and I'm..."

"A VERSE copy of her matrix. No reason to lie. We'll know the moment your in-system."

"Huh? The VERSE system's down here in town. Everybody knows that."

"That's not exactly true." The man held up a sheet of paper. "Theodore Grant and Kevin York. Where are they, Dr. Perker?"

Before Dr. Perker in Mr. York's body could answer, both Talbot and Sandy were led inside by a third man. "Told you." Muttered the female Dr. Perker, "Busted!"

"What's going to happen to us?" Yelled the male Dr. Perker.

"Nothing, really. You're all just victims of a computer glitch, a very nasty bug. You'll be returned to your life missing a few weeks of memories. Hardly a punishment I should say."

"You mean..." blurted out Sandy, "I'll have my real life back?"

"Correct Miss. Most of you, at least."

“Well what did you think of VERSE?” Dr. Perker smiled widely at the family lying on the couches, side-by-side. She nodded to Mr. York, his daughter Sandy and his son Kevin. The older man and the young woman looked stunned. The boy on the other hand jumped off his couch with a grin from ear to ear.

“WOW! It was like...”

“Being there.” Sandy completed Kevin’s sentence. She scratched her head thoughtfully, “It sure makes me appreciate my life a lot more. Yeah wow is right!”

Her dad nodded agreement but with little enthusiasm. “I don’t know about you kids but my...er- trip wasn’t very pleasant. I was in this body-not my body, jeez... cold too... most of the time and...”

Dr. Perker interrupted him, “I’m sorry but we have a busy schedule. Ah- Talbot!”

“Yes Dr. Perker?”

“This is Mr. Larks, he’ll show you the new and expanded computer facility. Mr. Larks.” She smiled, “Have a nice day.” She said with a nod and then watched curiously as they left. The young man, what was his name, oh yes, Kevin, was a bit limp in-the-wrist. In fact... she followed them down the hall with her eyes, the kid was certainly quite the ‘little’ lady. Pity. She turned and went back into the new laboratory. There was a lot of work to be done and this new AL program- jeez, she was already missing PAL...

Kevin was getting ready for bed. It had been a long day and the trip in VERSE impossible to forget. He remembered being this chick...and having sex over and over again with the partly bald man... “Gosh I wonder if... Dad and Sandy...naw.” The thought of them doing THAT... He couldn’t wait to tell Ted and Kyle about his experience, though he might not mention that he’d been this girl balling this guy. The door into his room opened. “Huh?”

There! Standing in the doorway, was just about the most beautiful girl he’d ever seen-and just about his age too! OK so she had no hair! A buzz cut of all things. He smiled real big, “Hi!”

She just stood there: silent, terrified, confused and... absolutely desirable. “Com’on in.” Kevin pleaded now.

Knees knocking, one arm across these sweet, round breasts that stretched her tee-shirt to the ripping point- too bad the tee shirt wasn’t wet- ha! thought Kevin just as...her protective arm fell away at that instant- NO BRA! He stumbled over toward her, hand now extended. She must be a friend of Sandy’s or something, “I’m Kevin and you’re...”

Finally she responded, “Me too.” Her voice was flat, without expression but tight with tension.

Kevin nodded his head dumbly, "Yeah, sure... Kevin huh?" Kevin's face said- dumb- assed-name.

Her hands went under her tee shirt and began to fondle her own breasts. She watched her hands at work under the cloth, virtually ignoring Kevin. It was enough to give a guy a boner, which it did. Worst-better! She pulled the shirt off over her head- WOW! They were really, really real! "Y...you need help?" He grinned as his palms sweated, itched really. He could almost feel those puppies in his hands.

She jerked back as if just remembering that he still stood there, watching. She shrugged and the heavy, round titties bounced and jiggled every-which way, which drew her eyes down again. "W...when I came out'a VERSE, gosh...I had these on."

Still watching the breasts, Kevin replied, "You went VERSE today too?" His eyes shot to her face, "And it made you grow those?" He pointed at her breasts.

"Why are you in my room?"

"Huh? *Your* room? This is mine! I'm Kevin York and I live here!"

"Meee tooo." She whimpered as she covered her boobs with her arm.

"Can't be. I got red hair and... yours is brown and... and..."

She pushed past him and went into Kevin's bathroom. She looked at her face in the mirror for several seconds. "T...That's NOT my face! W...who's face..."

"Jeez, don't ask me."

She twirled around and faced him, hands on her hips, "When you went VERSE..."

"Yeah?"

"What happened?"

Kevin blushed, "I had sex... intercourse actually."

"Uh-huh. Me too. I was a girl. Big boobs, long hair and..."

"Wow. Me too. And you know I've been feeling kind'a funny ever since, like it would be neat to wear a dress or something feminine and... have breasts like ...you got." He saw the anguish in her face, "Ah- yeah, I guess you got that wish, huh?"

"This isn't possible." She crossed her arms under her 'new' breasts. "VERSE just works on the brain, right?"

"Yeah. You got that right. Maybe we're just dreaming all this, kind'a like another VERSE session?" Kevin said wisely. "I mean, like how would we know if this was real or not, huh?"

"Yeah." The girl answered. "You're just part of my nightmare."

"No! You are!" It was a stand off. "Still my room." Snapped Kevin trying to gain the final advantage.

"Mine! Sandy can straighten this out!"

"Nope, gone. Date with this guy Talbot she met today at VERSE"

"Dad?"

“Gone- Heavy date too.”

“Oh. And when are you going to leave?”

“Not. You?”

“Not.”

“OK. I’m going to sleep and when I wake I expect you to be...”

“You horny?”

“That’s a dumb question! I mean like yeah!” He grinned wolfishly.

“Me too.” She grumbled. “I got this itch that needs scratching.” She glared when she saw the expression on his face-“HEY I’m not into, you know, boys!”

“Jeez, why not! With those jugs?”

She threw herself on the bed. “Finders keepers!”

“Yeah!” Kevin climbed on top of her, pinning her arms down. “You’re weak like a girl, admit it!”

She twisted and squirmed but couldn’t break free. After a few seconds, naked chest heaving, she gasp, “OK, so maybe you do look more like me and...” She sobbed, “Honest Injin Kevin, I’m scared.”

“Huh?” It was not fair, she was crying. “OK...OK, you get the bed, I’ll sleep on the floor. Tomorrow we’ll work this out with Dad and Sis, OK now?”

She nodded but continued to sob.

“What’s wrong now?”

“I...I’m a girl now.”

“Yeah.” Kevin said with some suspicion and a trace of envy, “that would be quite a trip.” As he turned away, he felt the boner in his pants. He couldn’t remember when he’d been this horny-ever and that covered some pretty good horny. Maybe it was this girl named Kevin. He didn’t want to think about those boobs no more tonight-that is if he wanted to sleep. Trying to change the subject, he said, “I remember it was real fun, you know, in VERSE.”

The girl Kevin blinked wide-eyed, gulped and absentmindedly started to fondle a breast. Both nipple sharpened to hard points as she crossed her legs and sat Indian style on the bed. “Yeah. I almost forgot about that. You know maybe being a girl wouldn’t be half-bad. If it was really like that.”

Kevin stood beside the bed looking at her rubbing that boob and remembering back to...”I...I almost felt sorry for that guy, you know the half bald one.”

She giggled, “Me too. We must’a had the same, exact experience, huh? What was the first time like for you?”

Kevin blushed, “I’d never forget that. I... I ran away and he caught me on the dining room table...”

“Yeah! I...I thought I was going to split in two but...” She was almost panting, nostrils flaring and her groin was getting wet. On an impulse she unsnapped her jeans

and pulled down the zipper. "Remember when I... when we got our pussy licked? That was so...delicious."

"Gosh are you going where I think you are?" He started yanking down his drawers as she wiggled out of her tight jeans. They finished together. Both were breathless. He stared at her pussy and she at his cock. "Jeez." He mewed when she slid to the side of the bed and took his stiff rod in her hand.

Head down, but eyes turned up to see his face she said, "Well here goes." Her lips descended hot and wet on his prick and began to suck like a baby on a bottle.

He pushed her back onto the bed, pushed aside her legs and fumbled trying to enter her. Neither were very accurate but together they succeeded. As he pushed into that tight tunnel of moist, pliable flesh she panted, "Yeah! Just the way I remember! Deeper-Deeper-Deeeeee..."

[session 12087...that's a take shifting to live on five...four...three...]

"Sir? A table for one?"

"Umm. Would it be too much trouble if I could see Ms Tisworthy. I believe she's a waitress here at the Night Owl." The waiter just stood there without responding. "It's a... Federal matter, FBI actually."

With that the young man blanched and pointed to a small patio off to the side. "Sir! Have a seat. She'll be there in a minute." And he was gone.

Dr. Ross had hardly sat down when a tall, leggy brunet entered the patio from the back. A typical waitress costume, too little skirt and too much bosom. Rather more woman than Ross had expected considering a month ago this was a male doctoral student at State. Psychologist at that. If she was afraid, she sure didn't show it. He stood up, "Hello I'm Ross." He extended his hand out to her. With heels she had an inch or so on him. She extended her right hand, palm down bent from her wrist, fingers limp. No manly grip for her. "Sit, please?" He requested.

She pursed her lips as she gave him the once over. Scrunched her shoulders together pushing out what were already well extended boobs and cocked her head and in her best little girl voice said, "Prowessor, 'umanities or 'iterature. And 'ou're no cop doctor Woss."

"Well..." He sputtered, "thank you Miss... Tisworthy. You can call me Jimmy and you're right I'm a Professor of..."

She broke into a giggle "tee-hee, tee-hee, tee-hee..." which she stifled by covering her lips with the tips of her fingers. Finally when she got herself under control she said, "Sorry. 'at was Nat. He's real good at psyching people."

"Oh." He said disarmed. He laughed and nodded toward her, "Well you are trained in Psychology, almost completed your Ph.D., right?"

Barbie was stunned. She sat back, mouth open slightly, "H...how...d...do you know that?"

“Sorry to spoil your, er-front Ms. Tisworthy, or should I say Mr. Kenneth Silverman. BA, MA and...you can dump the dumb bimbo routine.” She looked as if she were going to cry. “Sorry I didn’t mean to sound...harsh but we are dealing with a very serious problem.”

Barbie nodded. Her voice was still the cute little girl voice but she lost the lisp, “VERSE right! Damn PAL.” She said with a drawn out sigh. “I assume you’re not working for Dr. Perker or the shit has really hit the fan.”

“Right on all accounts. Everything and everyone has been set straight- except you Mr. Silverman.”

“Sandy? Sandy York?”

“Yes. In fact she was delighted to as she put it, ‘get back to her life’. And you Mr. Silverman, are you ready to get back to...”

“You’re kidding Doc. Isn’t it rather obvious there is no back for me?” Barbie’s face clouded up but her eyes remained tearless. “I don’t want a fake prick and...”

“What exactly do you want, Mr. Silverman?”

“Jesus, that’s a tough one!” She started to chew a nail until she caught herself. Then she bit her lip, pursed her mouth and frowned, “Well... this isn’t exactly the life I had planned for myself...” She held up her hand as if ordering Dr. Ross to stop, “but... that’s the key word, BUT I’m not complaining or anything. Fact is, Barbie Tisworthy is one hell of a gal if I say so myself. In fact, playing the bimbo and yet not being the bimbo is just... fine by me. NO! Take it to another level Doc, I really LIKE being a Barbie doll better than a Dr. Silverman! What do you think of that? Huh? Well say something?”

“Like?”

“Love, OK? I love my work, I love the people I meet... I love not having to be ‘smart,’ if you know what I mean... You ever walk across a room and every eye is following you? There, see?”

“Huh?”

“You were looking at my tits!” She squealed. “I *love* that! And getting dressed and shopping and... sex and...” in a wee voice, “just caring and loving.” Now her eyes were bright with tears. “Are you going to take all that away from me Dr. Ross...Jimmy? Make me forget Barbie Tisworthy?”

Dr. Ross shrugged, “I...I don’t know what else I can do. The information you have is vital to our way-of-life.” He gulped, “There is a semi-trailer parked across the street with a version of PAL running. We could reset your matrix back to about six weeks ago. And that’s what will happen, I’m afraid.”

“Cut out my tongue, smash my fingers, make me so I can’t tell anyone but... don’t destroy Barbie! PLEASE!” she broke down sobbing. Nat and Hoot appeared and began to walk toward them. She looked up, “No! Its...its OK fellas just some bad news. Leave us be, huh?” They stood there looking protective, angry. “Please?” They backed away. “See?”

Dr. Ross slumped in his chair, deep in thought. “The whole country... the world is at risk, Ms. Tisworthy. You sure you can bury what you know...forever?”

She leaped up and threw her arms around his neck. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she kissed him on the cheek. “YES!”

The End of the Beginning

