

Executive Assistant (part3 of 4)

by: [Jacki Pett](#) -

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EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

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Part 3

I didn't waste any time in the bathroom. As I slipped the nightie over my head I told myself that Connie had told me to put it on so it wasn't as if it was my idea to wear pretty lingerie. I could justify wearing it more easily that way.

I gathered my hair into the elastic tie. As I looked at myself in the mirror a little shiver went through me. It wasn't clear to me if it was delight or fear that I felt for just an instant.

Connie spread a towel on the couch and, as I watched tv, she painted my toe nails for me. I sat there with cotton balls stuffed between my toes while the polish dried.

My thoughts were on anything but the show on tv. Was the fear I had felt earlier in the evening, at the bar, just a taste of what was to come tomorrow?

When the eleven o'clock news went off, my toenails were dry and it was time for bed.

"Have you decided what to wear tomorrow?" Connie asked as we got up from the couch.

I had give that a lot of thought but couldn't bring myself to decide. "I'm not sure."

"Wear the blue dress. The print one. That looked so cute on you at the store."

The one she alluded to was a light blue dress with a bright, flowered print. It had short, full sleeves, a scooped neckline and a short swing skirt.

"It's so low cut." I traced the outline of the neck

"That's what makes it so adorable." She knew what worried me. "You don't have to worry, especially now."

I knew what she meant, now that I had breasts. "It just makes me nervous. What if someone sees."

Connie laughed, "It's not that low cut Honey."

Maybe I did exaggerate, just a little. It was just that I was scared. I had to trust Connie. "All right."

Connie didn't ask me to kiss her good night. Maybe that's why she seemed so pleased when I did kiss her on the cheek. "Good night Mom."

She put her hand on my left cheek as she kissed the other. "Good night Sweetheart. Sleep well."

"I hope I can." I said as I left her to go to my room. I was surprised when she came in a moment later, carrying a glass of water and something in her hand.

"Here Honey, take this." She handed me a small white pill. "It'll help you sleep." She held the glass of water out to me.

I did want to sleep. I didn't want to dream. "Thanks."

Bobbie did not beat us to work that Friday. I was actually disappointed, I was looking forward to her opinion of how I looked that morning. I had Connie's praise but she was prejudiced.

I had worried about how I'd look in the dress. When I was all ready to go, I took a long look at the girl in the mirror. She was really cute.



Connie had been wise to have me start dressing as Jennifer the day before Mr. Parks arrival. I was much more ready for him and the folks at work were more relaxed with me. The novelty of me dressing as Jennifer had certainly not worn off, but neither was it too new. The word had been passed early that morning that all would be normal. No one was to tease me or act as if I were anything but Jennifer, Ms Sackett's assistant.

Mr. Park's plane was due at ten and the limo would pick him up from the airport, bringing him first to the Marriott, wait while he checked in, then bring him to the office.

When the clock on my desk said it was ten thirty, I started to feel anxious. The driver called in to tell us he was at the hotel. Bobbie took the call and passed on the message.

"He said the people from Jansen had just gone into the hotel to check in."

"People?" I asked. "There's more than one?"

Bobbie seemed surprised. "How many is there supposed to be?"

"I thought from their fax that it was just Mr. Park. Who's with him?" I asked in almost a panic. I assumed the worst. I assumed that Robert must have come with him.

"The driver didn't say." Bobbie replied. "What's wrong?"

I tried to get hold of myself. "Did he say if it was a man or a woman?"

"He just said there were two of them."

"Call me as soon as you see the limo, please."

"I will." Bobbie assured me.

Connie had overheard me and came out to see what was wrong.

"Mr. Park isn't alone." I told her.

"Who's with him?" She asked calmly.

"Bobbie doesn't know. The driver didn't say. Do you think it's Mr. Niles?"

"I don't know but let's not panic. Just calm down. We'll handle them, no matter who it is."

She was right. "Ok, ok." I had to trust her.

It was about a quarter to twelve when Bobbie called back. "They're here."

"Who's with him?"

"They're just getting out of the car. The driver's opening the door. There's a man, it's Mike Park."

I held my breath.

"There's a woman with him." There was a pause. "It's just the two of them, Mr. Park and a woman. I Gotta go."

My first thought was thank God and that was all I had time for. It was my job to go up front and bring the people back to Connie's office. Bobbie's call, announcing them, came within seconds.

Connie nodded and smiled, indicating that I should go. I showed her my brave smile. I took a deep breath as I walked up the hallway to the lobby.

"Mr. Park, it's so nice to see you again." I instinctively extended my hand to him.

He took it then leaned over and kissed my cheek. "It's Mike, Jennifer. It hasn't been that long."

I was embarrassed enough, but Bobbie saw him kiss me.

He introduced the woman with him. "Jennifer, this is Miss Crawford."

I knew I was safe to give her my hand. "It's very nice to meet you." My smile was genuine.

"Please call me Pat." She said, returning my smile.

"Pat is my executive assistant."

His secretary. She was an attractive woman. I was beginning to realize that most women in the fashion business were attractive. Pat was certainly no exception. She was a blond, about my height. She reminded me of Cybil Sheppard, only younger. She couldn't have been over twenty five.

"It's a pleasure Pat."

I turned back to 'Mike'. "Ms Sackett's waiting for us. We took the liberty of ordering in lunch and it should be here any minute." That was one of Connie's brainstorms. It was one way to keep me from having to go out to lunch with the man.

I led them down the hall to our office.

His bringing his secretary along turned out to be a godsend. Connie occupied the man through lunch while I attempted to get to know Pat. This arrangement was, by far, preferable to my having to entertain Mike.

The catered lunch was served to us in the conference room. Pat and I sat next to each other, across the table from Connie and Mr. Park. Connie arranged the seating.

Pat had been Mike's secretary for only about six months. She liked her job and enjoyed the traveling. I confided in her that I would like to travel more but I had only been with Connie for a couple of months.

She was a very friendly person and it wasn't long before we started talking about our personal lives. Pat told me she was married, then surprised me, asking if I was? It felt funny telling her, "No, not yet."

"Oh, you're engaged?" She said, sounding excited for me.

"No," I answered, trying to sound sad. "There was someone up north but it never got a chance to develop into anything before I moved down here." She didn't have to know I was talking about Tina.

"That's too bad. You haven't met anyone here yet?"

"Well, there is someone but it's not serious." I couldn't picture anything serious developing with Christy. I wanted to change the subject. "What about you? What does your husband do? Do you have any children?"

I actually enjoyed talking with her and by the time lunch was over we were friends. It was a little awkward at times, making things up, but enjoyable. I was still nervous. I was afraid she might realize that I wasn't what I appeared to be but she gave no indication that she thought anything was wrong. I watched her every move, every gesture, glad that my friends and coworkers had taken the time to teach me act appropriately.

It was nice to find we worked so well together too. Pat's being there actually made the afternoon pleasant. The four of us tackled the tasks one at a time.

I don't remember when I forgot to feel self conscious about myself. It wasn't right, of course, my wearing a dress and pretending to be a woman but for a while I was just a person, comfortable to interact with other people. It had everything to do with enjoying being around Pat, how much I was beginning to like her and the reassurance I felt from Connie.

Locations for the shoots were the first order of business and it took us all afternoon to complete them. Connie allowed me to participate and I realized that I had learned a great deal from her in the past months.

Connie and I had made arrangements for dinner and when 6:00 rolled around, we quit work.

Pat and I took the back seat in Connie's big Cadillac. I didn't mind at all that Mr. Park joined Connie in the front. He was a gentleman and opened my door for me. I would have laughed if I wasn't so nervous.

I wasn't so lucky when Connie parked the car and we got out. Pat and I were walking side by side when he came up behind us. Coming between us, he put his arms around each of our waists.

"I feel so sorry for those guys that only get to go out to dinner with only one pretty girl. I get three." He pulled us close to him.

He caught me by surprise. I didn't know what to do. I took my cue from Pat and did nothing. He only released us so he could open the door.

There were a few people waiting for tables, when we got inside.

"You'll have to excuse me a moment." Pat said to us.

She reached over and gave my arm a gentle squeeze. I knew what she

wanted. She wanted me to go to the ladies' room with her. I wasn't particularly anxious to but thought I better. "I think I'll go with Pat. We'll be right back." I said to Connie.

Connie seemed to understand and gave me the slightest of nods.

The ladies' room was across the foyer. We were almost to it when Pat said under her breath to me, "I hate it when he does that."

Old habits are hard to break. I pushed the door open for her.

"He's always doing things like that." She sounded angry.

I didn't know what to say.

"He's got a wonderful wife at home and three beautiful children and he still just wants to fool around."

I had to say something. "I hate men like that."

"I'd like to just haul off and belt him."

I told her what he did the first time I met him. When he kissed me.

"It just burns me up that he can get away with stuff like that."

"Robert wasn't much better." She was appalled when I told her the way they competed over me.

"He's another one."

We stood in front of the mirror, putting on fresh lipstick and powder.

"Their ought to be something we could do about men like that. It's just so frustrating. I like my job, I really do, but Park just won't leave me alone. He's always telling off color jokes, making innuendos. He drives me crazy sometimes."

"There's no one you can go to about him?" I asked.

"You know what happens if you complain."

I wasn't naive. "I know."

"It was so rude of him to do that to you too. It's not fair. If you complain, you could blow the account for your company. You're no better off than I am."

I hadn't thought about that. She was right. Did this mean that he could get away with almost anything? How could I, a man, lodge a sexual harassment complaint against another man? That would be disastrous.

"If I told Jimmy about him, the way he treats me, he'd wring Park's neck."

And that would be the end of her career. "Let's see if we can help each other get through this."

She stopped pulling her brush through her hair and looked at me, smiling. "You're really sweet Jennifer, but I don't want you to get into any trouble with your boss. I've kept him at bay up till now, He's my problem."

I felt very close to Patty at that moment. I felt sorry for her and angry with Park, as she called him. "I still want to do what I can." Whatever that was.

"I'm glad you're here Jennifer." She squeezed my arm, affectionately.

It gave me a warm feeling. "So am I."

She zipped up her purse. "They'll be wondering what happened to us. We better get back."

Patty held the door for me as we walked out to rejoin Connie and Park. Connie took an opportunity to ask me, in a whisper, "Is everything alright?"

"We're fine." I told her. I really was. Having been accepted by Pat, sharing her confidence, went a long way toward bolstering my confidence. I did feel sorry for her with her dilemma.

Connie sat to his left. I was on his right. I suppose it might have been Connie's presence that kept Park's behavior in check. He made pleasant conversation, he told a few off color jokes but none seemed too offensive.

No one seemed to notice, during dessert, when, under the table, he reached out and took my hand that properly lay in my lap. He didn't say anything. He just squeezed it and smiled at me.

I was at a loss as to how to react. Should I have pulled my hand away? Everyone would have seen and Patty's earlier remark came to mind. How would he react to being shunned? I endured it for almost ten minutes as his hand rested on my leg, holding my hand.

Connie took care of the check. They were our guests.

As we drove them to their hotel I wondered if Patty would be all right? I couldn't help but think that there ought to be some way to insure he couldn't make advances toward her, once they were alone at the hotel.

I had an idea but it put me in a very awkward position. I couldn't make any suggestion without consulting with Connie first. I reached the conclusion that I would have to wait till after we left them.

We weren't out of the parking lot before Connie complimented me. "Honey, you were wonderful today."

I was rather proud of myself for carrying it off. "Thank you."

"You and Patty really seemed to hit it off."

We really did. "I like her. I felt comfortable around her."

"She's a sweetheart."

I was glad Connie liked her too. "She has a problem with Park."

"Is that what the two of you were talking about in the ladies room?"

"He's been coming on to her."

"He's married too." Connie remarked, sounding cold toward the man.

"And he's got two kids."

"Is Patty worried about being out of town with him?"

"We didn't get very long to talk." I was concerned.

"There's nothing we can do tonight," Connie read my mind. "but I suppose she could stay with us the rest of the time she's here. There is the

other bedroom?"

She was leaving it up to me. I had, by no means, forgotten the role I was playing. That would mean I would have to pretend to be Jennifer every moment they were here. That wouldn't be easy for me. I would have to be constantly aware of what I did or said. Short of Patty's moving to a different motel, I couldn't come up with another alternative and even that would raise questions with Park. Connie's and my solution wouldn't.

Then I thought about Patty and how much I liked her and how well we had gotten along all day. It wasn't very hard for me to imagine what might be going through Mike Park's mind, even at that moment.

"It doesn't seem right that she should have to put up with his harassment."

Connie took that as meaning I had decided. "We'll suggest our idea to her in the morning, at the office." Connie reached over and squeezed my hand. "I'm very proud of you. There's not many people who would be willing to put their own feelings and their fears aside to help someone the way you are."

It did make me feel good. I wasn't all that sure how brave I was.

They met us at the office in the morning. She was hardly in the door when I took her aside.

"That's a really cute top." I said commented. She dressed very well.

"Thanks. My Carolyn bought that for me for my birthday."

I remembered, Carolyn was her 2 year old daughter. "That's sweet."

"Jimmy's wonderful. He never forgets birthdays or anniversaries."

"How did last night go?" I was worried and took the first opportunity to ask. Park had gone into Connie's office with her.

"Last night was all right. I went straight to my room. I told Park that I was exhausted and wanted to go to bed early. He made a crack about what a shame I had to sleep alone. I didn't even respond to it."

"He said that!?"

"Yea, the jerk."

"At least he left you alone."

"Until breakfast. He started in at the restaurant."

What did she mean, 'started in'? "What did he do?"

"Oh, just his usual remarks about how great I looked and that he really liked women in short shirts."

Patty's skirt was short and she did look terrific in it. I was glad I wore what I did that day. We dressed alike in a skirt and blouse, only my skirt wasn't nearly as short. I could only wish I might look as good as she did. For some reason, it was important to look as attractive as I could. Maybe it was because I wanted to impress Pat. It mattered to me, what she thought of me.

I asked her the question, "Connie and I were wondering if you'd rather stay with us instead of at the hotel. We have room."

"You and Connie live together?"

I didn't realize that might sound odd, me living with the boss. "She offered to let me stay with her when I accepted the transfer from New York. I don't know the area very well and she offered, while I look around for a place of my own."

"You're really lucky to have a boss like her."

I was. "She's been really wonderful. I really like her."

"Are you sure that wouldn't be too much of an imposition?"

"No, really. There's plenty of room. Connie has an extra bedroom. It would get you away from 'him'. Besides, I'd enjoy having you stay with us." I admitted.

"You're sure?"

"Absolutely!" I was glad she accepted. "When we quit this afternoon, I'll drive you back to the hotel and we'll get your things."

She was a little nervous about what Park would say. "Let's not say

anything till we have to." Patty suggested.

Connie and I had already discussed how to tell the man. "Connie said she would handle Park. We'll let her bring it up to him later."

The morning went by like a shot, we got a lot done. We went out for lunch to one of the local places. It was over an hour before we got back to the office.

I couldn't help but feel more nervous, outside of the office. I had begun to develop confidence in myself around people that I knew. I wasn't threatened by them, but with strangers I was a wreck. I wanted so much to be accepted by Patty. I watched my every move and tried to emulate her mannerisms and those of the women around me.

When the three of us went to the ladies room Connie asked my new friend, "So Patty, what did you decide?"

"I'd really appreciate staying with you and Jennifer. You're sure I wouldn't be an imposition?"

"Not at all. We'd be happy to have you. Just let me take care of Park"

The issue was already settled as far as I was concerned.

I couldn't wait till work was over for the day. The afternoon seemed to drag as it got nearer and nearer to six o'clock.

Connie finally told Park about the arrangements we made with Patty. She waited until we were wrapping up for the day and offhandedly remarked about Patty staying with us while they were here. Park looked shocked for just a second but caught himself and dismissed the change in plans casually.

"That's nice." He couldn't object.

We had obviously ruined his plans. Good, I remember thinking to myself.

Connie suggested, "Why don't you girls take off? Mr. Park and I can wrap up here."

He looked a little surprised at Connie dismissing us. Patty was his secretary. His look was, just for an instant, disapproving, but he said nothing.

I had brought my car, in anticipation of driving Patty to the hotel so we could move her and her things back to the apartment. It seemed very odd, helping her pack up her things.

I thought I'd be nervous, off on my own with Patty, but it was nice. There was no question of her acceptance of me as Jennifer. It was a beautiful summer afternoon and that only added to my good mood.

It only took us a few minutes to get her things and check her out. We rolled down the windows in the car and let the wind blow our hair. I remember thinking how fresh the air smelled that afternoon.

Connie was home when we got back to the apartment. "That didn't take you two very long."

"I was anxious to be out of there before Park got back." Patty admitted.

"You didn't have to worry. He asked me where he could find a place to get a drink. I sent him to a place miles from the hotel." Connie said with a smile. "I offered to take him to dinner, just the two of us but he seemed to have other plans."

"He was probably going to see if he could pick up some company for the night." Patty said with disdain.

She really was disgusted by him and I could see why.

I helped her unpack her things, using the empty dresser drawers in the guest room.

"Have you ever been to Atlanta before?" Connie asked Patty.

"No, this is the first time."

"Is there anything in particular you'd like to see or do?"

"To tell you the truth, it's just nice to get away from the normal household routine. I don't get a chance to get out alone at home. Not with Carolyn, Jimmy and the house to take care of. Most of my girlfriends are married and they're always too busy to spend any time alone, without kids and husbands around."

"What would you like to do?"

"Is there a big mall anywhere nearby?" She asked.

"There's one a few blocks away." I offered. It was where I shopped with Connie and Virginia on Wednesday.

"Do you suppose we could run over there so I could find a pair of jeans and just browse a little?" She asked. "I didn't bring any jeans with me and I'm lost without a pair to wear."

I wasn't anxious to go shopping but we wouldn't be shopping for me this time. I didn't have anything to be afraid of. "Sure." I told her.

"Why don't you two go ahead, Jennifer knows the way. I have some things I need to do."

When I was little, I endured shopping with my mother. She would think nothing of dragging me from one store to the other all day long. She loved to shop, even if she didn't buy anything. I remembered how I wished I was home, playing with my friends instead.

Shopping with Connie and Virginia had been a different experience. They were the ones who decided what I would try on. They picked my clothes, much like my mother had done.

As Patty and I wandered through the stores, searching through the racks of clothes, I found I developed a new interest in the things I saw.

I was taught, or learned through observing, that it was taboo for a guy to show an interest in shopping. My Dad would have cut off his arm before he would so much as touch a pretty blouse or dress in a store. The sheer fabrics that looked and felt so pretty on women were not supposed to interest a man. I found myself more than a little curious.

I began to discover, or I should say, Jennifer did, the fascination my mother had known for clothes. I didn't mind at all the hours we spent shopping, with Patty trying on clothes. I was having fun.

It was probably fortunate I had little money to spend. There were a dozen things I might have bought myself. I liked Patty's taste in clothes and I wanted to emulate this woman that I admired. Secretly, I told myself, if I had to play the role of a young woman, it was this woman that I wanted to be most like.

Patty was beautiful. If I looked like her, the role I played would have been easy. I even wished, for a while at least, that the changes my body was undergoing would eventually change me enough to look like her with her beautiful shape and full breasts. It started me thinking of ways I might look and act more convincing as Jennifer. We stopped and had dinner at the food court in the mall. It was very crowded wherever we went. It was a Friday night. I watched Patty and the hundreds of other women around me, learning.

We talked a lot. Patty had told me a lot about herself and her family. We compared our experiences at college, the classes we took. She talked about her experiences with men, I listened. I slanted the tale of my relationship with Tina to fit my role. It was difficult but I was very careful. I talked about my family, again being very careful to change things appropriately. For the most part, I listened, volunteering only what she asked me about. It was safer than making things up I knew nothing about.

Like men, girls develop their personalities from their experiences. I had so little to contribute and it bothered me. Patty was bubbly and outgoing, I wished I could be that way. I had to be content to be a good listener.

We got home a little before ten. Connie was there, curled up on the couch in front of the TV. "Did you find what you were looking for?" She asked Patty.

She had found more than the white jeans she showed Connie. She also brought two new blouses.

I wished then that I had jeans like them. She looked terrific in them in the store.

"I think I'll get comfortable too, if that's alright?" She said to Connie.

"Of course!" Connie insisted. "Do you like 'Love and War'?" She asked.

"I watch it all the time. I'll be right out." Patty went into her room to change.

"Did you have fun?" Connie asked when we were alone.

"I really did." I admitted. "I like Patty. She a delight." New words had been creeping into my vocabulary. "I had fun shopping with her."

"I like her too. Go ahead and slip on your nightie and come back and watch the show with us." She said urged.

It was one thing to sit around in a nightie with Connie in the privacy of the apartment but with Patty there, I was a little anxious about it. Still, I did want Patty to accept me as Jennifer.

She was already with Connie, on the couch, when I came out of my room. I curled up between them with my bare smooth legs tucked up underneath me. It didn't take long to lose that nervous feeling as we watched TV.

It was Connie's suggestion, at bedtime the night before, that we all dress casual. That was how we always dressed on a Saturday anyway. I wore my jeans, not the baggy ones that Connie bought me. I wore Christy's tight jeans, they fit a lot like Patty's new ones. With my peach colored vee neck top and my white flats Virginia bought me, I felt comfortable with how I looked.



I was excited about spending the day with Patty. I hardly gave a thought to Park. I spent a little more time than I usually would, getting ready for work on a Saturday. I fussed over my hair and makeup.

As we were heading out the door for the office, I nervously told Patty, "I hope you don't mind, but I have a date with some of my friends to go workout at the spa this afternoon. I'll only be about an hour."

"I'll go with you, if that's ok?" Patty suggested.

The idea worried me at first but what could it hurt? I would be pretending to be Jennifer anyway.

We did get a lot done at the office, but we always did on Saturdays. We were so busy, noon time came before we knew it.

"We better get going if we're going to make our tee off." Connie told Park.

"I'm very anxious to see how you girls play." He said in a provocative way to Patty and I.

"Oh, the girls have other plans." Connie informed him.

I recognized the playful tone in her voice, if he didn't.

He looked surprised. "You're not going with us?" He asked us.

"Jennifer and I are meeting some of her girlfriends at her spa." Patty told him. "We're going to work out."

He looked so disappointed. I loved it and I was sure Patty felt the same way, judging by the little look she gave me.

We were home well before Trish and Kim were expected to come by and pick me up. I was just beginning to wonder when they would arrive when the doorbell rang.

I wished I had called and warned them about Patty. The last thing I needed was for them to slip up and give away my secret.

Luckily, Pat was in the bedroom when the door bell rang. I opened the door, putting my finger to my lips to tell them to be quiet. "There's someone here from out of town. She thinks I'm Jennifer."

Trish and Kim smiled at each other. Kim whispered, "Ok"

Kim handed me the bag she carried. "Here's a leotard that will go with your pink leggings."

"You better hurry up or we'll be late." Trish urged.

I wasn't very excited about wearing a leotard. I was on my way to the bedroom when Pat came out.

"Pat, this is Trish and Kim. They model for the agency." To Trish and Kim, I explained, "Pat is with Jansen Sportswear. She's going to stay here while she's in town."

I saw the slightest exchange of grins between Trish and Kim. Pat didn't pick up on it.

"It's really nice to meet you." Pat said with a smile. She turned to me. "Jennifer, do you have an extra pair of sweats I could borrow. I didn't bring any. I figured, if I got the chance to work out, it would be at the hotel."

I was in a little bit of a bind. I had only the warm up suit that I wore to the spa. I didn't have any sweats and I couldn't very well say no. "Sure. You can use my warm ups." I would wear one of my big tee shirts. I wasn't anxious to go out that way but I'd have to. Trish and Kim were only wearing tees over their outfits. It wasn't as if I'd be the only one.

I dropped the bag on the bed and got the suit from my closet. I wished I had thought to buy myself sweats. I'd have to add it to the list of things I wanted to get.

After giving Pat the pants and jacket, I went back in to change. Pulling on my leggings, I checked to make sure nothing showed to give away my secret. I apparently had nothing to worry about.

I was more than a little apprehensive about putting on a leotard. Connie had shown me what bra to wear under it. It was the new exercise bra she bought me.

I worried what I would look like as I pulled up the leotard. When I looked in the mirror, I realized I looked no different from the hundreds of women I had seen in at the spa. The irony was that it was all me under the spandex, none of it was fake. Part of me was thrilled, the other didn't want to

think about it. I couldn't dwell on it. I pulled on my tee shirt. It was long enough to cover my ass, thank God.



Trish drove. Pat and I rode in the back. The three of them had apparently taken a liking to each other because conversation flowed freely. I learned that Pat had once been a model too. It didn't surprise me, considering how pretty she was.

I felt very self conscious as we walked from the car to the spa. The place was a lot busier than it normally was, later in the day. We passed four or five guys, leaving the building. I felt I would never get used to guys looking at me. Wearing what I was, I was extremely sensitive to their stares.

My spa ID identified me as Jeffrey Mitchell. I held my finger over my first name as I flashed it at the girl at the desk. Fortunately, she didn't ask me to see it.

We were running a little late and went straight to the aerobics room. It was in the back of the building and we had to walk around the track and past the exercise floor. More than one guy looked up. My friends, as usual, acted as if they didn't even notice. I certainly did but I did my best to hide my nervousness.

Everyone was warming up. I was a little reluctant to shed my tee shirt but when everyone else did, I had to.

I didn't see anyone I knew. That was a relief. I knew what I had to do and just concentrated on the workout. I did my best to ignore the guys that always seemed to gather at the huge windows to watch the girls work out. The few guys in the class didn't bother me. They were too busy to be distracted, watching the girls around them.

We didn't quit with the normal hour. We all waited as the men left and the instructor got into the part of the normal routine that was intended for just women. I had always left with them, but not today.

I remember how tough it was and I was running with sweat when we finished. I didn't quit, pushing myself to get through the entire routine. I was proud of myself.

We were standing there, toweling off and complaining about how tough the workout had been when Pat asked, "Jennifer, where's the locker room?"

"We usually shower at home." I explained.

"That's fine but I need to go to the bathroom before we go. Would you show me where it is?"

Kim saved me. "I need to go too Pat. Come on."

"I'm coming too." Trish announced. Kim and Pat turned to walk away. Trish whispered to me, "Come on." She took my hand for just a second and squeezed it.

Go in the women's locker room with them? Our class had just finished and it would be packed in there. I wasn't comfortable about that but I didn't relish standing out in the gym waiting, alone. "Alright." I followed them.

It was pretty well what I pictured. In the locker area they were undressing to shower. Walking past the long line of sinks, I saw them in their towels and underwear. I had been so aware of the way guys had stared at me. I had to be careful not to do the same thing. It wasn't easy.

The bathroom stalls had doors. When Trish, Kim and Pat all stepped into theirs, I decided I'd be less conspicuous doing the same instead of just standing there like a dummy. I didn't even try to go to the bathroom. It would have meant taking too much off. I only pretended to go.

They fixed their hair at the lavatories. I fixed mine. The girl behind us, at her locker, was changing and I got a look at her that any man would have been happy to pay for. I just felt very uneasy. I was relieved when we got out of there.

Pat and Trish walked ahead of Kim and I. "That had to be an experience." Kim said so the others didn't hear.

"It was." I admitted.

"You did very well. I was watching you."

I hadn't noticed. "I was nervous."

"It didn't show too much, you did fine."

As a girl, I thought it would have bothered her to bring a man into the woman's locker room. It didn't seem to phase Kim at all.

It was about three when we got back to the apartment. Trish and Kim had things to do. I didn't get a chance to thank Kim for loaning me her leotard. I didn't get to return it just then either.

A shower was the first order of business for both Pat and I. Since we had to share the bathroom, I told her to go first while I got out of my things

and slipped into my robe. If I had been alone, I wouldn't have bothered leaving my underwear on.

It didn't take Pat very long to shower and wash her hair. It felt good to have the hot water beat on my back.

I was toweling off when Pat, with a light tap on the door, walked in on me. Fortunately, I hadn't stepped out of the shower and the curtain hid me from full view. I didn't waste a second wrapping myself in the towel. I overcame my initial instinct to just put it around my waist and brought it up to my chest, tucking it in the front, over my small breasts, the way I had seen girls do. Fortunately for me, Connie bought big towels. It covered me well enough.



I peaked out and Pat was standing there in just her bra and panties.

She realized she startled me. "I'm sorry Jennifer, I just needed to get my things I left." She didn't pick them up right away. She had brought her hair brush and she started brushing the knots from her hair.

She knew I was done in the shower. I couldn't just stand there forever. I felt a little funny getting out of the shower with her there in just her underwear. I remembered one of my conversations with Judy about girls not being as hung up about seeing each other this way, in their underwear. If I was going to get away with pretending to be one, then I had to act more like a girl.

I took care, stepping from the tub, not to let the towel pull open and expose me. Pat turned to me and smiled.

"I feel so much better now that I'm clean."

"So do I." I admitted.

"What are you going to wear tonight?" She asked.

I had almost forgotten we were supposed to go out to dinner. I would have much preferred to just stay home. "I haven't given it much thought."

"Do we need to dress up?" She asked.

Connie had said she had made reservations at a fancy restaurant. She told me that I would need to wear one of my new dresses. "Connie said I was a nice restaurant."

"Thank God I thought to bring a nice dress." Pat remarked.

I didn't look forward to this at all. Connie and I had discussed this when she told me her plans for the weekend. She had explained that it was expected that we entertain them and we didn't have a choice. Having Pat there, instead of just Park, was making it a little easier.

"I don't know what I'm going to wear." I commented to Pat. Connie and Virginia had bought me several dresses and I thought some of them were too much for work, too dressy. While I was intrigued about how I might look, I didn't look forward to wearing any of them out to a fancy restaurant.

Pat finished her hair and gathered up her things. "Let me show you what I brought with me and you can tell me if it's ok for tonight."

I didn't want to go parading around in just a towel. "I'll just slip into something first. I'll be right there."

In my bedroom. I put on a bra and panties. I tied my robe closed tight. I could have gotten dressed but I didn't want Pat to think I was prudish. There was no danger of her seeing anything under the robe. My shriveled penis and almost nonexistent testicles were barely discernable, even if my robe came open and she saw me in my underwear. Just the same, I took care to arrange carefully what little I had between my legs.

My chest was just as feminine. It was a little disheartening but I was actually thankful, under the circumstances, for the changes my body had undergone.

Pat showed me her dress. It was very pretty, navy with a flower pattern.

"You have a great figure." I said. "You'd look good in anything."

"Me?" She said in surprise. "You would look better in it than I would. I wish my hips were as slender as yours Jennifer."

I actually appreciated the compliment. If for no other reason than to fool people, I wanted a nice figure. "Thanks."

"Why don't you show me what you're going to wear?" she asked.

There was certainly nothing in Jennifer's closet I needed to hide. Actually, there was nothing anywhere in my bedroom that Pat couldn't see. All trace of Jeffrey was gone and had been for quite a while.

"This one would be nice." Pat said taking down the red dress Virginia had given me.

"I wore that the first time Park was here." I explained.

"This one would be lovely too." Pat had one of the new dresses in her hand, the beige print. It's cut and material were so feminine. It was of very light material and had a wide bow in front. The bow bothered me and so did the short puffed sleeves. I remembered, thinking to myself when I tried it on at the store, that my shoulders looked too broad in it. Still, I remembered

what Virginia had said about my shoulders being so narrow and sloping but I still wasn't convinced. "I don't know why I bought that dress." I pointed to my shoulders. "I'm too broad across the shoulders."

"Don't be silly. Let me see it on you." Pat suggested.

I didn't relish taking my robe off in front of her but, turning my back to her, I did. She handed me the dress. She had already unzipped the back zipper. I stepped into it and pulled it up over my slender hips and waist. Pat zipped it for me. I looked at myself in the mirror as Pat looked me over.

"Oh, it looks perfect. Your shoulders are fine, you have nothing to worry about Jennifer. You look enchanting in that dress."

I looked 'enchanting'? That was hard for me to imagine. "You're sure?"



Pat's smile made me feel good. "Positive." She insisted. "I love dresses with long hemlines and rayon is so light and pretty. It feels so delicate."

It did make me feel . . . pretty.

"You know," Pat said, sitting on my bed. "Being here with you reminds me of having my little sisters around. I'll bet you didn't have any sisters." She said, sounding very sure of herself. "I'll bet you only had brothers."

Of course she could see how awkward I was. Telling her I had brothers could help to explain why I acted the way I did at times, why I exhibited some male traits. "Three, all older."

"That figures. I always wished I had an older brother, to look out for me."

I took it a step further. "They tried. My Mom died when I was little and my Dad and brothers raised me. Dad never remarried." I needed all the excuses I could make up for, what must have seemed at times, mannish behavior.

"Oh, you poor thing." She felt sorry for me.

"It wasn't so bad. We were pretty close. I did everything with them. They taught me to play ball and actually let me play with them when I got older. I guess I was a tomboy."

Pat only smiled. "It shows." She didn't mean it as an insult.

I took off the dress and hung it up. I didn't waste an instant, putting my robe back on.

I wished I had shorts to wear, like Pat's. I made do with my comfortable leggings and tee shirt. She had her long hair gathered in a banana clip. I remember wondering if my hair was long enough to wear one of them. Her hair looked so cute that way.

We relaxed on the couch, talking. I steered questions away from me, asking Pat about her. She told me the story about how she and Jimmy met in high school, their romance. The stories about Carolyn, her little girl, went on and on. I enjoyed listening to her.

Around four, the door bell interrupted us. I was surprised to see Virginia standing there when I opened the door.

"Hello Sweetheart." She said as she kissed my cheek.

I returned the kiss. "Hi."

"I like that." She commented on my leggings and tee shirt. "It looks cute on you."

I knew Pat could hear us from the living room. I hadn't told Virginia about the latest turn of events. She didn't know Pat was staying there. "We have company." I whispered. "She doesn't know." That was enough to get an acknowledging nod from Virginia.

"Why don't you introduce me?" She asked pleasantly.

I took Virginia into the living room. "Pat, I think I told you about Virginia, my adopted aunt."

They exchanged pleasantries.

Virginia handed me the small package she carried. "I hope you like these."

"What did you buy me now?" I asked. I was, I had to admit, excited to see and I suppose it showed.

"Why don't you open it and find out?" she said smiling.

Pat stepped over next to me, curious to see what Virginia had brought.

As with all her other gifts, it was wrapped. The small flat box certainly did not contain clothes but that didn't minimize my anticipation.

"Ohhh, they're beautiful." Pat said with delight as I opened the jewelry box to discover my new pearl jewelry.

If anyone had ever told me I would be thrilled about receiving women's jewelry I would have told them they were crazy but I most definitely was excited. I echoed Pat's reaction, my smile and expression betrayed my delight. "They're beautiful Virginia."

The box contained a double strand necklace, a matching bracelet, earrings with three oval pearls hanging from a gold ornamental stud, a pearl pin set in the same style gold setting as the earrings and lastly, a pearl and diamond cocktail ring.

Each piece was gorgeous. I knew little of what was good jewelry and what wasn't but if it came from Virginia, it was safe to assume it was only the best. "I love them." I told her as I hugged her. Of course it was the appropriate thing to do but that wasn't my reason for doing it. I really appreciated her thoughtfulness.

"I'm glad you like them." Virginia said in my ear as we held each other.

"You should try them on." Pat insisted.

I held the necklace up to my neck. The strands weren't too long but it wasn't a choker either.

"They'd look beautiful with your beige dress tonight." Pat commented.

Virginia knew the dress she was talking about. It was one that she had picked out for me. "Oh definitely. You must take a picture for me." She insisted.

"I promise, we will." I assured her.

Seeing how well Pat and I got along and knowing she was our guest for the weekend, she suggested, "Pat, Jennifer and I usually spend our Sundays together. Why don't you join us tomorrow?"

I was thrilled with the idea. "Yes Pat, please do."

"I wouldn't be imposing?" She asked.

"Not at all." I insisted.

"We'd love to have you." Virginia assured her.

I was glad that Virginia had taken a liking to Pat.

"I was going to ask Jennifer if she'd like to go to the medieval arts

and craft's festival that just opened. You're welcome to join us Pat."

That was unexpected but not unwelcome.

"Sounds great." Patty gladly replied.

"Is that alright with you Jennifer?"

"Sure." I could handle that.

"Why don't you come over early, around ten o'clock, and we'll make a full day of it?"

"We'll be there." I told her. "Thank you so much for this." I hugged the large jewelry box. I still couldn't believe she had bought it all for me.

"I'm glad you like them. I was hoping you would." She said with a smile.

"Who wouldn't?" Pat commented.

I put the pearls away in my bedroom. I was almost tempted to put on the dress and try on the jewelry but decided I should wait till later.

We settled down to wait for Connie to get home. The old movie we watched was something of a tear jerker. Both of us had tears running down our cheeks in the final scenes. I never used to cry watching movies. Of course, there were lots of things I was doing that I'd never done before.

Connie finally got home around five thirty.

"Did you girls have a nice afternoon?" She asked as she set her things down at her bedroom door.

"We had a great time." I told her enthusiastically.

"It was delightful. The workout felt great and I haven't loafed around like this in so long. It was nice for a change not to have to do for people. I love Carolyn and Jimmy to death but it's so nice to just goof off. This is like a little vacation."

I was glad Pat was enjoying herself. "Who won?" I asked.

Connie looked at the two of us with an impish grin. "Well, Park, of

course."

We both laughed at the way she said it. I knew Connie had only an eight handicap. She was a very good golfer, so I'd been told. If that man won, he had to be either a terrific golfer or she let him win.

"He has this amazing hook and the fairways at the club are very tight. It wasn't an easy day for either of us."

"Do you play Jennifer?" Pat asked.

"I've played a little."

Pat acted as if she understood more than what I said, "Your Dad and brothers play?"

I winked at Connie's curious glance. Pat didn't see the exchange. "All the time." I would explain to Connie later, when we were alone. I had played a lot of golf and I wasn't too bad. Not good enough to make the team in high school but I tried. I tried anything to please my Dad. I just was never good enough.

"Jimmy's been trying to get me out to learn. Maybe I should get out with him."

"Anyone want a glass of wine?" Connie asked. We had two hours before we were to meet Park at the restaurant. Plenty of time to relax. Even for me. I was getting better at doing my hair and makeup.

I decided I better call Christy since I hadn't spoken to her since Thursday. My bedroom gave me the privacy I needed to talk openly with her.

"You're taking the client out again?" She sounded frustrated.

"We have to." I explained. "But I'd rather be with you." I wasn't as apprehensive as I had been about our relationship. How could I be? I was doing on my own, exactly what she wanted me to do for her.

"I wish we could be together too." There was a short pause. "Are you spending tomorrow with Virginia again?"

"Yes." I had promised Virginia her Sundays. That commitment I would keep,

I no sooner hung up the phone than Trish called. "Kim and I were wondering if you and Pat wanted to go out with us tonight?"

"We have that dinner engagement we have to go to. You remember, I told you."

"I meant afterwards. We could meet you and go out and have some fun."

If it were anyone else but Trish and Kim, I'd have worried. "I don't know."

"Well think about it. I'm sure Pat would enjoy getting out and I think it would be good for you too."

"I'm not sure." I was doing better but I could just picture the same thing happening that had taken place at the bar on Thursday evening.

"You're having dinner at Peter's. We'll drop by about nine and wait in the bar until nine thirty. If you change your mind, meet us there."

"Alright Trish." At least I didn't have to commit, then and there.

I had time to experiment with my hair a little. Using my curling iron, I gave it a little more curl than usual on the ends. I didn't over do the makeup, keeping my look soft. It just seemed more appropriate with the style of dress I was wearing.

When Connie came in to check on me, she helped me put the finishing touches. I took the opportunity while we were alone to tell her the story about my 'family' that I had told Pat. While she agreed that I would probably ease my predicament, she didn't like the fact that I made up stories. "Honey, you know what happens when you start lying."

"It's hard to stop?" I knew that. "But I'm already living a lie."

"I know Sweetheart, but don't make it worse by compounding it."

She was right. I shouldn't have told Pat my Mother was dead. Making up three brothers didn't seem so bad. I could live with that. "I'll be careful." I promised her.

She didn't press it.

"Very pretty." Connie said, as we both looked at my reflection in the mirror. "Your skin has really improved since you started taking care of yourself."

I really hadn't noticed much of a change but, like the other changes I had undergone lately, it was subtle.

I told Connie about Trish's call. I expected her to advise me not to go. Instead, she thought it was a good idea that Pat and I go out with them. "It'll give you another opportunity to watch and learn. The best way to learn is to spend time with other girls your age."

'Other girls my age' sounded so funny but I couldn't argue with her logic. I was constantly watching and mimicking others lately.

Short skirts and dresses made me feel only a little self-conscious now. The length of the beige print was below the knee. While the longer length of the dress helped, wearing something so strikingly feminine, didn't. Still, I felt that the way I looked that evening was the most convincing yet. I stepped into my matching heels, put on my new jewelry and my dabbed on my perfume.

Gazing into the mirror at the young woman before me, inhaling the scent of her perfume, I was excited with the image of myself. I felt I could appreciate how women feel when they work so hard to look attractive. I was anxious to hear Pat's reaction. It would be great to hear what Trish and Kim thought too. It could be worth it to go out with them. Maybe I could handle a scene similar to Thursday's, but I was sure Trish wouldn't do that to me, knowing how nervous it made me. The uneasiness I felt that night seemed to fade over time. I was still the last to be ready. I had to transfer my things from the black purse to the new white clutch bag. It barely held all Jennifer's things.

Pat looked wonderful and so did Connie. I wasn't disappointed when Patty and Connie saw me. It wasn't what Connie said so much, "You look divine." It was more in the look on Patty's face when I came out of the bedroom. Her face lit up with what I took to be praise. I was more than satisfied.

Connie noticed my pearls almost immediately. She rushed over to me for a closer look. "They're beautiful. Virginia?"

"She stopped by with them this afternoon." I said with delight.

"She has exquisite taste." Connie remarked, inspecting the necklace. "They look lovely with that dress. You make quite a picture tonight young lady."

"Didn't Virginia want a picture of you in your dress, with your new pearls on?" Patty reminded me.

Connie didn't have to be asked twice. She grabbed her camera and took several shots of me there in the living room. I was getting better at posing and my smile was more relaxed than ever. After all, as strange as it seemed, I did feel pretty.

The look from the doorman and the valet didn't hurt either. As we got into Connie's Cadillac, I tried to remember if Connie had ever introduced me to either of them as Jeffrey? The looks they gave us didn't suggest that they saw me as a guy. No, I couldn't recall ever giving myself away. They had seen me dozens of times without makeup but that didn't mean they didn't see me as a woman. Did they really know? The looks they gave me tonight certainly didn't betray my secret. I was glad.

The conversation on the way to the restaurant was pleasant. Pat and Connie did most of the talking. Pat loved talking about her family and I was quite content to just listen. I did tell Pat about Trish's invitation and she liked the idea of going out with my friends.

"I get out so little these days. It'd be nice to have a night out with just girls."

Connie, again, encouraged us to go.

I had spent enough time in heels by that evening to be confident in my walk. The click of my heels on the tile floor of the restaurant lobby was an interesting sound. It was a reminder of who I was and I liked the sound of it.

I walked into the restaurant, along side my friends, in high spirits. Even the looks we received didn't bother me. Most of the faces that rose at our passing quickly turned to Pat. She was a beautiful woman. Again, I did feel just a faint twinge of jealousy but that was silly and I got over it.

Mike Park was late and the maitre d' seated us. That was the second time a man pulled out a chair for me and I was nice to be treated that way. The smile I had for the man was genuine.

Peter's was, according to Connie, one of the nicest restaurants in

town. If you judged a restaurant by the way its patrons dressed, I had to agree. I was, if anything, underdressed. Many of the women were in evening wear, more elegantly dressed than any of us. The tables were adorned with linen table cloths and napkins. The dinnerware was real china with stainless place settings and crystal glassware. It did little to make me feel at ease.

When the waiter took drink orders, I asked for only water. Connie looked at me funny because she knew I would have liked a drink. She didn't realize why I didn't risk ordering anything. It was too big a chance to take. I would explain to her later.

Park showed up as they brought us our drinks. Pat and I had thought nothing of it when we took seats on either side of Connie at the small table. It wasn't till he arrived that I wished I had managed to take a different seat, away from the man.

I endured the kiss on the cheek, smiling the way I saw Pat do when he greeted her. That sort of thing I would never get used to.

He was his usual self. He loved to be the center of attention and didn't miss an opportunity to tell of his exploits, both business and personal. I had never heard a man brag about himself so much before and he sounded so ridiculous. I knew what he was doing, trying to impress us, but it was so obvious.

He tamed down the conversation a little when the meal came and I was relieved not to have to listen to him.

I did everything right, just the way I'd been shown. I sat properly, I ate like a lady. I watched Pat closely, smiling when it seemed appropriate, laughing at Park's jokes. It was one thing to act my part to the best of my ability but to do it for that man made it seem a farce.

I was just finishing my entre when he started touching my leg with his stockinged foot. I almost jumped out of my chair the first time I felt him. It only took an instant to figure out what was happening.

To cover my surprise, I said, "Excuse me." Pretending I only burped.

When he did it again, I tried to swing my legs away but the table leg was in my way and I couldn't move far enough to get away from him.

"So Jennifer. You're not married. What does your boyfriend think of

us stealing you away on a Saturday night?"

They all looked at me, even Connie. I had to think of something to say. I had told Pat that I had someone. "Chris is very understanding Mr. Park."

"Come on now Jennifer, it's Mike. We'll be working together very closely. We should be friends."

He ran his foot up the back of my calf.

I kept my composure, despite his playfulness. "Did I mention that Chris is a model? He's also a body builder and does a lot of modeling with exercise equipment." It sounded silly as soon as I said it. I wished I hadn't. It had no effect on Park. He just kept smiling and stroking my leg. He only stopped when the waiter came to take our dessert orders.

I glanced at my watch. It was almost nine. It seemed that I had been checking the time often and it dragged by.

"Just tea, I told the waiter." I had enough to eat and I didn't want to over do it. I remembered how trim Pat was when I saw her in the bathroom, how flat and firm her stomach and legs were. I bet that she never ate dessert.

Not tonight, at least. She ordered only coffee.

He didn't let up. When I reached for my fork he reached out his hand and took mine in his grip. Holding it firmly, he said, "You know Jennifer, that boyfriend of yours better watch out or someone might come along and try to steal you away from him." He actually kissed my hand, right there at the table. I felt my face turn red. He was too much.

Connie knew how awkward I felt. She spoke up, "You girls really need to watch the time. Aren't you supposed to be meeting Jennifer's friends soon?"

Mike turned to Pat and I in surprise. "You're leaving?" He obviously planned on spending the evening with us.

"We're meeting some friends." I told him, content to see his disappointment.

"And I'm afraid that I'm going to have to leave you too Mike." Connie said apologetically.

I knew Connie didn't have any other plans that evening. She was just not going to waste her evening with Park. It served him right.

I had enough tea and looked across the table to Pat. She nodded she was ready to go too. "Well, if you'll excuse us." I pushed my chair back. Park rose, like any gentleman should, helping me first with my chair then Pat with hers.

"You girls have a good time." Connie told us.

I almost called her Mom. "We won't be too late." I told her, returning her cute smile.

Pat led the way between the tables. I was quite aware of the heads that turned as we passed. Men, young and old, took notice of our leaving. As we neared the exit from the dining room she turned back to me and asked, "Ladies room?"

I had nervously sipped water throughout dinner. "Definitely." What was left to fear about going into those places?

I took a few minutes to freshen up my makeup and brush my hair. I wanted to look perfect when we met Trish and Kim. I wanted to make my best impression yet.

There were other women in there but their presence didn't phase me. I felt pretty confident about myself that night. I applied fresh lipstick, blush and powder.

Watching Pat, she seemed to do everything so easily and deftly. I wished I had the skill and confidence she possessed.

"He was his usual obnoxious self tonight."

It was obvious who she was referring to. "I couldn't believe some of the things he said."

"You haven't worked with men much, have you?"

I understood, or thought I did. "No."

"You might as well begin getting used to it. Most of them act that way. Especially around attractive women."

Her remark didn't go unnoticed. It was nice that she thought I was attractive. "There should be a way to shut him up."

"Sure, there should be. But there isn't. You just have to learn to ignore it."

"I thought I'd die when he started rubbing my leg with his foot."

"I figured that was what he was doing. Wouldn't you just love to slap him across the face?"

I would have preferred to run. I never thought about slapping him, as any girl would. "Nothing would have made me happier." I told Pat, trying to respond as expected.

I couldn't help but notice the low cut, strapless dress on the woman standing beside me. I wondered what I might look like in her dress. I dismissed the thought quickly. A few more days and this game would end. The thought almost saddened me.

I didn't think to freshen my perfume until I noticed Pat dab on hers. I felt a little silly, mimicking her actions, but it did seem the natural thing to do.

We made our way across the lobby to the cocktail lounge. Standing in the arched entrance, we looked around for Trish and Kim. It was just nine thirty and I was beginning to worry that we missed them.

"There they are." Pat announced as she waved to them.

I turned to where she looked and saw them seated at a small cocktail table. They weren't alone. Facing our way, seated next to Trish, was a face I recognized from pictures Trish had shown me, her boyfriend Craig.

Pat didn't hesitate for a second. I reluctantly followed her.

Trish introduced Pat and then me. "You remember Jennifer. I told you about her." She said to Craig and Allen. I had never seen a picture of Kim's boyfriend.

What did she mean, 'she told them all about me'? I felt panic start to rise up inside me. I looked to the two I thought were my friends. I certainly couldn't look at the two guys.

Trish must have recognized my apprehension because she quickly added, "She's Connie Sackett's new assistant."

As they had with Pat, they shook my hand. It felt strange, both were big men, almost six foot tall and well built, but their handshakes were gentle as they took my small hand in theirs. Had the circumstances been different, I would have felt compelled to give them a firm handshake but I remembered to return only a limp one. So strange. Pretending with Trish and Kim was fun. Doing the same around Pat was both exciting and scary somehow. With guys it was so different. Being around guys unnerved me.

They were ready to leave. The guys followed the four of us outside to Allen's car. Pat got in back with Trish and Craig while Allen, Kim and I got in the front. I was glad Kim sat between us.

We made small talk. Pat told them of Park's disgusting behavior over dinner. I said little, feeling so awkward there with them.

I didn't feel any the more confident as we pulled into the parking lot for the Point Club, the place where I first met Christy.

It was more crowded than I had ever seen the place. We stood in a group near the bar, looking for a place to sit. There was one table near the door but it was small and wouldn't accommodate all of us comfortably. Near the door, where anyone could see us easily as they came and went, was not where I wanted to be.

I scanned the room as best I could, looking for Christy. I couldn't be sure, as crowded as the place was, that she wasn't there but I did feel some relief that I didn't spot her. I just happened to notice a group in the back of the room, near the dance floor, getting up to go. "There's a table." I announced to my friends.

We managed to reach it before anyone else could. From our table I could easily see anyone coming in and the couples on the dance floor prevented anyone from seeing us easily. I felt relatively safe from discovery there.

Everyone ordered a drink but me, despite Trish and Kim's urging me to have one. I couldn't risk getting carded.

It was difficult to feel comfortable and enjoy myself like my friends but as time passed I did begin to relax. Allen had quite a sense of humor and Kim encouraged him. As intimidated as I felt, being there with the two guys,

I found myself laughing at his jokes and sarcastic sense of humor.

Trish and Kim danced with the guys from time to time, leaving Pat and I there at the table alone.

"It's been years since I've done this." Pat told me. "I really want to thank you for inviting me Jennifer."

"I'm glad you're having fun." I was glad she liked Jennifer and gratified that, despite the circumstances, I could show her a good time.

We were probably there an hour before it happened. Trish, Kim and the guys had just come off the dance floor when the band played a slow song.

Craig turned to me and Allen asked Pat at the same time. "Would you like to dance?"

I wasn't ready for the question. "Oh, I don't . . ."

Pat accepted Allen's invitation. "Come on Jennifer. I'm sure Chris wouldn't mind." She got up and took my hand, urging me.

I looked up at Craig's handsome smiling face. I had spent a lot of time preparing myself for the possibility of having to dance with Park. I wasn't sure if dancing with this good looking guy was better or worse. It was a slow dance. "I suppose so."

He held my hand as we stepped out on the dance floor. I put my arm around his shoulder as they had taught me. With my head close to his chest, I closed my eyes, pretending that I was standing there with a girl. I remembered to let him lead as the music touched me and my feet began to move.

Had he held me any closer, he would surely have felt my heart racing from nervousness. Craig's arm, around my waist, held me to him and from time to time, we touched.



Connie's words came back to me. "Let him take command. Just let your body go with the music." Easier said than done.

The song seemed to go on forever. We had to have been out on the dance floor for ten minutes or longer. As I prayed that the music would end, I caught sight of a familiar face approaching our table. Brook. I had no idea that she and Kim knew each other until she stopped to say something to her.

I wished that Craig would turn me so that I wouldn't be facing their way but at the same time, I was dying to know what they were saying to each other.

I didn't remember telling Trish and Kim, Brook's or Debbie's name when I told them about that Friday night and Saturday I spent with them, maybe I had. If I did, would they put two and two together? Would they give me away? As much as I wanted Craig to turn us, I wanted to watch the exchange between my two friends. We were only about thirty feet away but I couldn't make out anything they were saying over the music.

Suddenly, the two girls looked over in our direction. Kim pointed toward us. Pat and Allen were dancing right beside us. She seemed to be pointing at them. Craig finally turned us and I breathed a sigh of relief. Brook couldn't have had a chance to recognize me, at least I prayed she didn't because she surely would tell Christy what she'd seen.

To my dismay, Craig didn't stop the turn. He brought me right back to the position I'd been. I tried to look natural, as if dancing with Craig was nothing special. I glanced back in the direction of the table. They were no longer looking over toward the dance floor but were engaged in conversation again. Now I prayed the song would go on until Brook left the table but my prayers weren't answered. The song wound down to its conclusion and the band started right into a fast dance.

Craig had said nothing since we stepped out on the floor. It was obvious that Trish had asked him and Allen to dance with Pat and I. "Thanks Jennifer." It was just as obvious that he had enough and was ready to go back to Trish because he started to escort me back to the table.

I didn't want to go. "Come on Craig. Just one more." I asked him. Dancing fast was preferable to confronting Brook.

He shied away. "I don't dance very well."

"I'll dance with you." Allen said from behind me.

I showed him the smile I had practiced so often in the past few days.
"Great."

Pat and Craig left, going back to the table, while Allen and I started moving to the music. Brook was still there when the pair sat down. All the faces at the table turned to look at Allen and I gyrating to the music. I maneuvered around so my back was to them.

I had not been particularly comfortable, learning to dance like a girl but I had paid attention. Now I mimicked the moves they had taught me. I understood why Trish and Kim watched us but so did Brook and that bothered me.

Allen seemed to be having a good time as we danced. He was very good and I felt I must have looked very awkward, dancing with him. I watched other girls dance and picked up on a few of the moves they made that I liked, imitating them.

Brook just wouldn't go away and when the song ended and another started, I convinced Allen easily to dance with me again. About half way through the song Brook finally left my friends and walked away. From the dance floor, I watched her walk toward the door. I thought she was leaving but instead, she went up the stairs to the balcony. I watched as she crossed the walkway along the wall and pass out of sight, above me. The balcony held more tables, over the back of the lounge, out of sight of our table.

I was both mentally and physically exhausted when the song finally ended. I was glad to let Allen take me back to the table, holding my hand.

"Who was that you were talking to?" I asked Kim as we sat.

"She's a friend, a model I've worked with occasionally." Kim answered. "You looked really good out there." She added in a whisper.

I had felt foolish. "Thanks" She at least confirmed that I hadn't mentioned Brook's name to Trish and Kim. Brook had no reason to suspect that it was me out on the dance floor. I was still curious about their watching me. "What were you and your friend pointing at?"

"Brook asked me where Allen was and I pointed him out, dancing with Pat. Funny, she thought she knew you but I convinced her she couldn't. I told her you were new to the area."

"Did you tell her my name?" I asked.

Kim's look was curious. "Sure, why?"

I couldn't explain then and there. "Oh, no reason."

I didn't feel completely safe, knowing Brook was still there but at least she was upstairs, out of sight. I had to assume her curiosity was satisfied and she hadn't put two and two together.

We talked. We laughed at Allen's jokes. I managed to somehow forget the charade for a while and just relax. We had a good time. The evening passed quickly.

Pat urged me back out on the dance floor again and Trish and Kim joined us. I still felt funny, dancing like a girl but at least I was with them and not Craig or Allen. I suppose I wasn't too bad a dancer, at least if I believed Trish's and Kim's compliments when Pat couldn't hear.

It was getting late when I just happened to glance over at the dance floor and was surprised to see Brook out there. She glanced my way too often and she made me uncomfortable. It was inevitable that our eyes would meet. I saw the recognition in hers. The smile confirmed that she knew.

Would she call Christy and tell her? Would Christy rush down there and confront me? I couldn't handle that. Certainly not in front of Pat and the guys.

I watched her, sneaking glances, waiting for her to go back upstairs. She finally finished her dance. I didn't know if she would come over to confront me. I decided that if she did start in our direction I would go to her before she got to us.

She didn't come our way. I watched and waited as she walked toward the stairs. She had to realize I was watching her. I had to turn in my chair to see her and she glanced over at me frequently, always with that smile.

Brook didn't immediately go upstairs. The bathrooms and phones were just out of sight near the base of the stairs and she was out of sight long enough to make a call. She might have just gone to the ladies room but I couldn't take the chance.

As soon as she finally appeared and started up the stairs, I turned to Kim. "I have to go to the ladies room." I could only pray that Pat didn't need

to. My luck was consistent and all four of us got up to go.

I waited until Pat went in one of the stalls. I corralled Kim and Trish to a corner of the crowded room. "I have to get out of here." I told them in an excited whisper.

"What's wrong?" Trish asked. "You're doing beautifully. Aren't you having a good time?"

"It's not that. You know your friend Brook?"

"What about her?" Kim asked. She didn't understand.

"She's a friend of Christy's. She's one of the girls that helped Christy dress me up and take me to that arts and crafts show a few weeks ago."

Now they understood. "I'm not positive, but I think she called Christy just now. I know she recognized me."

I kept an eye on Pat's stall door and saw it open. I couldn't say any more. I was nervous that I had to go to the bathroom too. Afterward, like my friends, I freshened my lipstick and makeup and we returned to the table.

Kim and Trish told their boyfriends they had enough and suggested they'd like to leave. It took forever to get the bill and pay it. I was as nervous as could be, so anxious to get out of there. I was sure Christy would show up any second.

Finally, we got up to go. As we walked toward the door I looked back over my shoulder to see if I could see Brook, upstairs. I couldn't see her.

We wound our way between the tables, making our way to the door. I was still sure that Christy had to be on her way but it looked like we were going to make it. My heart nearly stopped when Craig turned to us and said. "I'll just be a minute." Allen joined him and they left us standing by the door while they went to the men's room.

The panic that had just begun to subside was back. I stood with my friends, my back to the noisy room, afraid to look back for fear of seeing Brook. Had I been looking, I would have seen her hurrying down the stairs to confront me.

"Hi Brook." I heard Kim say.

"Hi."

The sweet sounding voice came from right behind me. I had been prepared to head her off if she came to our table but there, standing so close to Pat, I had to brave greeting her.

I turned to her and smiled but Trish spoke up before I had the chance. "I didn't know you and Jennifer knew each other Brook."

She was trying to cover for me. It would have been disastrous if Brook called me by my real name, in front of Pat. "It's great to see you again." I told her. The look on her face wasn't difficult to read. She had this adoring grin on her face. She was admiring how convincing I looked that night. I must have been quite a sight to her. I didn't know what to do when she kissed my cheek. I returned the gesture. It was the appropriate thing to do.

There was a musical tone in her voice. "It's wonderful to see you too." Brook replied. I couldn't help but wonder if Pat heard that odd inflection in her tone of voice. "You look especially pretty tonight."

All I could say was, "Thanks, so do you. I love your dress." I remembered my lessons, besides, she looked gorgeous.

"You're not leaving are you." Brook pressed, sounding very disappointed.

"Yes, I'm feeling a little tipsy and I have early plans tomorrow." Kim told her friend. It was a lie, Kim was fine.

"Can't you stay just a little while?" Brook asked me. "We haven't seen each other in a while and it would be great to have a chance to talk. Christy's coming and I know she'd love to see you."

So much for hunches. Christy was on her way. "We really have to get going." My palms were sweating.

She could see there was no point in pressing it. "We just have to get together again soon. I know Debbie and Christy have missed seeing you."

I was sure they did. "I'll call. We'll do something soon." I had to keep up the pretense, for Pat's sake.

The guys returned.

"We'll call." Brook assured me as we turned to leave. I had no doubt that I'd hear from them.

At least I missed meeting Christy. That would have been too much. This was exactly what she wanted of me and I believed she would have preferred me to be Jennifer all the time. While I was very attracted to her, that was too much. Soon, in a few days, I would go back to being myself.

Sitting in the car, as they drove Pat and I home, I had to stop and wonder. How easy was that going to be to do?

Connie was still up when we walked in. "Did you girls have a good time?"

"I haven't done that in years. It was great." Pat told her. "Jimmy's not much of a dancer so we don't do it often. I enjoyed it."

I was glad she had but I wouldn't have cared to repeat it, ever. I had to lie for her sake. "We really had fun."

It was late, we all said good night. I took my time getting ready for bed, waiting for Pat to finish in the bathroom. I carefully hung up my clothes and put everything away. I cleared out one of the small drawers in my jewelry box and placed my new pearls inside. The compliments I had received from Connie and the others made them feel like a prized possession. They were beautiful.

I was finished in the bathroom when Connie came into my bedroom.

"Are you OK Sweetheart?" She asked.

I had just finished moisturizing and was putting on my nightie. Connie sat on the bed. "I'm alright."

She could tell I had things on my mind. My major concern was how I would deal with Christy.

"You looked so pretty tonight at dinner."

I did appreciate her saying it but I had the feeling she would have told me that even if I looked horrible. "Did I?"

"Come here Honey." She patted the bed next to where she sat. I joined her.

"What's wrong?"

"It's just so hard sometimes, pretending." I admitted.

"You did beautifully at dinner Honey."

"There's just so many things to remember."

"You'll get used to it." She assured me. "You're doing so much better than you were. I see a big difference."

"But it's not just knowing how to walk and sit and the hundreds of other things. I feel like such an outsider. I don't know what to say most of the time. I just don't think like a girl. I don't know how." I admitted, frustrated.

She smiled that motherly smile of hers. She stroked my hair. "You have to be a little patient. It will all come in time. There's so much that seems to be almost second nature to you already. I've watched you."

Second nature. That was almost unsettling to hear but at the same time, reassuring.

"How did you feel tonight?"

I wasn't sure what she meant. "Nervous."

Connie smiled. "No, I meant did you feel attractive, pretty?"

I had felt so many things that night. There had been moments. "I guess so but when I see Pat or the others, I realize how plain and odd I really am." Strange how many times that thought occurred to me.

Connie put her arm around me. "Sweetheart, you're not odd and you're certainly not plain."

"Compared to them, I am."

"You're just as pretty as they are Jennifer." Connie said seriously.

I smirked. "No, they're beautiful."

"Just because you don't look as glamorous as your friends doesn't mean your not as pretty. You'll see, as you become more comfortable with Jennifer you'll gain confidence and with that confidence, your inner beauty will come out. Just be patient. You have a lovely figure and pretty features. Most girls would kill for your beautiful big green eyes Sweetheart. You're a lovely young woman."

That was gratifying to hear, in a way. "I don't think I could ever learn to be comfortable, being Jennifer." I told her.

"Of course you can. We'll help you. Just think of the people you've got to help and guide you. You have people who care about you. There's Virginia, she'd do anything for you. Trish, Kim and the others adore you. Don't you think they'll do everything they can to help you?"

It was true. "I suppose so."

"And you know how I feel about you, don't you?" Connie asked, looking thoughtfully into my eyes.

There was no question there. Whenever I felt down or unsure, she was there, encouraging, reassuring me. I put my arms around her. "Yes, I do Mom."

Hearing that word seemed to please her so. "So you see, there's nothing to be afraid of. With all of us that love you, helping you, you'll be fine."

I felt like I had to let it all out. "I wish I could share more with people. Like I had more in common with the others." I really felt out of place in their conversations. "They talk about things that I know nothing about."

"What, for example?" Connie asked.

"Guys, for one." That was the first thing to come to mind. "Pat naturally assumes I've had experiences, that I've had boyfriends. How can I keep lying about 'Chris', my imaginary boyfriend?"

"You've done beautifully so far." Connie explained. "It shouldn't be too hard to keep up the pretense. You hear how your friends talk about their boyfriends. Just talk the same way about 'Chris'."

She made it sound so easy. "I guess I can."

"Of course you can." She agreed.

"There's so many things that are different. I listen to them talk about little things like how beautiful a bouquet of flowers is or their excitement over someone's children."

"You think flowers are pretty and you like children, don't you?"

"Sure I do." That was true enough.

"Well then, the only difference between you and your friends is the way you express yourself, your feelings." Connie made it sound so simple. "All you have to do is to learn to express yourself more freely. You don't have to hide your feelings the way you used to, like most men do. Not anymore."

"We both know that men tend to hide their feelings. They're afraid to express themselves, afraid that to show the way they feel about things makes them weak in other men's eyes. We women don't have that fear. You'll learn in time and you'll be surprised how much better you'll feel when you don't have to bury those feelings."

"What about when it's time to be me again?" I almost regretted asking the question, knowing how Connie loved having Jennifer around. I wouldn't do anything to intentionally hurt or disappoint her. That woman was more of a mother to me than mine had ever been. All she asked of me was to be happy. It wasn't her fault that I was in the predicament I was in. She supported me completely and I felt I owed her something for that, even if she didn't act as if I did.

I had to consider too, with the way my body was changing, how was I going to be able to be myself. The restraint I had worn had become increasingly uncomfortable as I had to make it tighter and tighter to restrict my swelling breasts. What was I to do about them?

She didn't react with the disappointment I had expected. "We'll worry about that when the time comes Sweetheart." She assured me, passing off my concern casually.

I guessed that Connie could see that the subject depressed me. "Tell me about your evening? Where did you go? What did you do?"

I told her everything that happened after we left them, both the

pleasant and unpleasant parts. That was the first she learned of Christy's preferences and how she felt about my playing the role of Jennifer.

"Was it so terrible when you and Christy were together?" Connie asked. She seemed both interested and concerned. "Did she tease or make fun of you?"

Connie was glad to hear Christy wasn't like that. "I would have been really upset if she was mean to you." Now she was really serious. I could only imagine how Connie would have taken out her anger on Christy. I wouldn't want to be the person that got her angry. I felt that, as loving as she was toward me, her wrath toward someone who hurt me would be awesome.

She held me again and I enjoyed the feeling it gave me. "You make a great Mom. I wish my real mother was more like you." I opened my heart to her.

I saw her eyes glisten with tears. "And you're the daughter I always wished I had Jennifer. But don't be too hard on your mother. I'm sure she loves you very much. How could she help but love you?"

Ours was an odd relationship at best but I still cherished her love and affection.

It was after two and we were both tired. Connie got up to go. She reached the door and turned back to me with a question.

"I was surprised you didn't order anything to drink before dinner. I thought surely you would have something to calm your nerves."

Connie wasn't thinking. "I was afraid someone would ask me for my ID. Even you said I don't look much older than eighteen or nineteen."

"I didn't even think about that." She admitted. "We have to do something about that." She thought for a moment.

"Didn't you say you brought your birth certificate down with you?"

"Yes, just in case I might need it." It was in the dresser.

"I think I can help you. Let me borrow it for a while. I have an idea."

I didn't ask what it was. I got it and gave it to her. I figured she

probably knew of someone who could get me an ID that I could use.

"Good night Sweetheart." Connie said again.

"Good night Mom." It felt right calling her that.

I laid there in bed, waiting for sleep to overtake me.

I awoke Sunday morning with thoughts of what I should wear, how I might do my hair differently. There was no question that having Pat there with us was the reason that I cared so much how I looked. She was so pretty and I wanted to try to look as convincing as I could. Connie hadn't suggested, in our conversation the night before that I was jealous, but in my heart, I knew that's what I was.

We didn't get dressed right away. I had breakfast, still in my nightie and robe. I wanted to simply ask Pat what she was wearing but I wasn't sure if the question was proper. Connie, unknowingly, solved my dilemma for me.

"What are you girls wearing today?"

"I was listening to the weatherman, in the bedroom. He said it's supposed to be warm. I thought I'd wear shorts."

I had hoped she'd say she would wear jeans. I had no shorts.
"Jeans." I told Connie, a little disappointed.

I actually had to wonder if Connie could read my thoughts, if she could tell I was disappointed. She announced. "I'm going to wear jeans too."

I didn't know she planned on joining us and was delighted with the news. "You're coming along?"

"I thought I might. Virginia and I talked for a while yesterday and she asked me if I'd like to join you today."

"Wonderful." I told her. Having Connie along would make me feel so much more at ease.

I decided to wear my tight jeans. At least they looked like the ones Pat had worn the other day. Connie suggested my white blouse when she came in the bedroom as I dressed.

"My bra straps show through that blouse."

"That's nothing to worry about." She assured me. "As long as you're wearing one of your white bras."

I still felt a little funny, knowing it showed, but agreed to wear it. My locket, the one from Virginia, looked nice over the blouse. I wore my rings and my delicate gold bracelet. My small jeweled stud earrings looked nice with the outfit.

I kept my makeup light, at Connie's suggestion. I was so easy for me to overdo it, trying to make myself look as pretty as I could.

We finally got on our way to Virginia's at noon, about a half hour late. It was my fault because I asked Connie to help me do something different with my hair. I thought my hair was too short for the white bow she put in the back but Connie insisted it wasn't. "It looks really pretty like that." She said, admiring her work in the mirror.



I certainly was different than I was used to. Wearing a bow in my hair tickled that growing part of me that wanted to be accepted as Jennifer, wanted to look pretty. I liked it, a lot.

Virginia was waiting for us but she didn't seem annoyed that we were late. We had a great time. Unlike the first time I went to an arts and crafts show, I wasn't pretending for the sake of my friends and I was a lot more relaxed.

I kept in mind the things Conne said to me, about letting go of my male inhibitions. I tried to look at things in a different light and admire the beauty in the things we saw. The ability to comfortably express my reaction to those things would take me time but I tried to leave my inhibitions behind.

We spent most of the afternoon there, returning to Virginia's at dinnertime.

Dinner was light and we dined casually. We all worked together to cook the meal ourselves. Virginia had apparently given her cook the night off. It was fun.



Pat and Connie were given the tour of the house and grounds that Virginia had given me that first Sunday I spent with her.

We settled into comfortable chairs on the veranda afterwards and talked till dark. It was pleasant to pass the time with the people I had come to call my friends.

I rarely forgot myself and slipped out of character. Connie was right about many of my actions becoming second nature. I felt comfortable with them.

I had never stayed so late at Virginia's. It was after ten when we got home. Sunday was probably the most enjoyable, the most relaxed day I ever spent as Jennifer. I was almost sad to see it end.

I had been looking forward to Monday. It was chaos. Amidst everything else the week before, Connie and I had laid out the shoot to be done Monday. I would spend half the day with Pat, Park and Connie. The other half was my first shoot that would be my sole responsibility.

If that wasn't enough, a new client was due in late in the morning. I guess I hadn't given the meeting much thought. Connie and I, the I that was Jennifer, met with the client through lunch. I was hardly even nervous, feeling pretty confident about myself. I had dressed smartly that morning, in a skirt and blouse, and I felt good about the way I looked. Pat had also worn a skirt and blouse and I thought I was at least dressed as nicely as her.

The new clients were both men, from a men's wear manufacturer. They had no idea they were dealing with another man and I got a lot of satisfaction with the way they acted toward me.

The only thing I didn't like that day was that I didn't get to spend as much time with Pat as I would have liked.

Everyone in the office was getting used to Jennifer. I hardly heard any remarks from anyone, apart from the compliments they gave me on how nice I looked. No one slipped up and called me Jeffrey, thank God.

Another thing I hadn't given much thought to was having to answer all my calls as Jennifer. I knew a number of people in our accounts and had to make up a story about Jeffrey being gone and Jennifer taking over. I had no choice, considering Patty and Park could overhear. Somehow I would have to explain to those people on the phone, at another time.

Only a few of the models in the shoot knew Jeffrey and they had been cautioned about giving me away. I had picked who to hire for the shoot and I was very selective.

It was harried, remembering all the details, getting everyone to cooperate but no one gave me too much trouble. There was so much that went into orchestrating a successful session, I really enjoyed it and was actually disappointed when it was wrapped up.

Although we finished up at about five thirty, my day wasn't over. I still had all my paperwork to do before I could quit for the day. Connie was to take Pat and Park out to dinner around five so I was surprised when Pat appeared in the office door at about six.

"I managed to get out of going to dinner." She explained. "I thought you might like some company. I bought us some dinner." She held up a bag. "Do you like Chinese?"

Having her there didn't help me get finished any faster but it made the time pass more pleasantly.

We were just about to leave when the phone rang. It was Christy.

"Hi Sweetie."

"Hi." I was suddenly very apprehensive.

"I really felt terrible that I missed you Saturday night. Brook said you looked fantastic."

I wasn't sure if she was kidding or being sarcastic. I wasn't sure how to respond. She sounded sincere. "I'm sorry too."

"I've really missed you. When can I see you?"

As Jeffrey or Jennifer, I asked myself. I had been putting her off for so long. "I'm not sure."

She didn't seem put off. "Why don't we go out for lunch tomorrow?" She suggested.

"Lunch? Tomorrow?" I replied in surprise. That would be terrible. Pat would still be there and I still had to pretend. "I don't think so."

Pat couldn't help but overhear the conversation. She whispered, "Chris?"

I didn't think, I just nodded, yes.

"I can't tomorrow. The Jansen people are still here and I can't get away."

Pat injected, still whispering. "Our flight's at noon. We'll have to be out of here by ten thirty. Go to lunch with him." She encouraged me.

Christy knew about me already. There was no doubt that Brook described me to a tee. What was the point of pretending? She wouldn't be satisfied until she saw me as Jennifer, even if she dressed me up herself. Tomorrow was the last day I would have to carry on the charade anyway. I might as well. "Alright, where do you want to meet?"

She wanted to pick me up. "I'll be there at noon." She sounded so excited.

I suppose I didn't look too thrilled as I hung up the phone.

"He must be anxious to see you, with you being tied up with me all weekend. You two didn't have a disagreement or something did you?"

Was that what it sounded like to Pat? "No"

"Good."

If she only knew, I thought to myself. I tried to put the thoughts of Christy out of my mind. I was very unsure what my encounter with her the next day would bring.

It was about nine thirty when we got home and I was beat from the long day. Connie was already home and the three of us talked for a while before getting ready for bed. Pat told Connie about my lunch invitation and Connie thought it was nice that I was going out to lunch with Chris. She knew that it was really Christy I would be going out with. She didn't give the secret away.

I was going to miss Pat. She was really a sweet person and I had learned so much from being around her. If a young girl were to seek a role model, I imagined it would be someone like her. She was certainly mine.

Tuesday morning was almost as hectic as Monday. Again, fortunately, no one came into the office that knew Jeffrey. My secret was still safe. Still, Jennifer, did have to meet several clients and that probably would cause confusion, if not complications, in the future.

We wrapped up the final details with Pat and Park. He was a lot different from he had been Saturday night. I supposed he felt put out. The weekend certainly didn't turn out the way he had expected. He was pretty quiet and businesslike.

I didn't get away without a kiss from the man as they prepared to leave. I endured having him put his arms around me. Strange, I had been so terrified at his coming to visit. It hadn't turned out at all the way I expected.

I welcomed Pat's hug. She was so grateful for Connie's and my hospitality. I kissed her cheek, she kissed mine. It seemed so natural, so nice.

"I'll repay the favor when you come out our way." She assured us. As much as I liked her and really enjoyed the short time we spent together, there wasn't much chance of that. I was actually sad at the thought.

I watched her and Park as they climbed into the limo for the airport. I waved as it pulled away.

"I really liked her." Connie said, standing behind me.

"Me too." I said in a melancholy tone.

Christy was right on time. I waited in the lobby for her to pull up. The last thing I want was for her to come in and accidentally say the wrong thing in front of anyone.

Pat had put on a dress that morning. I wore one of mine, my jade gaberdine. The hem was not too high but still flattering. My gold link necklace and bracelet looked perfect with it.



Christy's eyes sparkled when I came out the door to meet her. I walk toward her car with a self assure ladylike stride, in my heels, with my purse slung over my shoulder. I didn't even let her park her car, meeting her in the driveway.

"Wow." She said as I walked up to the car. "You look fabulous."

She didn't sound the least bit sarcastic. "Thanks" I said, walking around the car. I gracefully settled into the passenger seat.

Christy just stared at me in apparent disbelief.

"So, where are you taking me for lunch?" I asked as if I nothing was out of the ordinary.

It took Christy a second to find her voice. "You look beautiful." She hadn't even heard my question.

"I thought you were going to feed me?" I didn't need her gawking at me.

She gathered her wits enough to ask, "Where would you like to go?"

"It doesn't matter, you pick it." I was feeling pretty confident. It seemed to have thrown her off guard.

Christy could hardly take her eyes off me long enough to drive. I got comfortable and lithely crossed my smooth stockinged legs.



She drove us to a restaurant I had passed often on the way to work. It was an Italian restaurant and it was one of those that was always busy at lunchtime.

I retained my poise and composure as the two of us walked into the restaurant. Christy was still in shock and was amazed at how cool and confident I appeared.

I wasn't about to tell her that it was all show. I was as nervous as ever, inside. We had to wait only a short while for a table and were escorted by a handsome young waiter to our table. I did everything right, waiting as the young man pulled out my chair and seated me, then Christy. With my napkin and hands in my lap, I waited for the meal to be served.

In the busy surroundings Christy couldn't have the conversation she probably wanted to have with me. She asked about work, I told her. She asked about the weekend, I told her what we did; the spa, dinner, dancing, the craft show and dinner at Virginia's.

Most of the time she just stared. I just waited for her mouth to drop open but she disappointed me.

I didn't let up. A pair of attractive young women walked by our table. I made the comment. "Oh, isn't her dress just to die for." I really did like it.

"It's lovely." Christy said looking at me instead of at the woman.

Our lunch was served and I ate like the lady I had been taught to be. I caught Christy watching me, smiling, often. I was delighted with her reaction. It wasn't until she had paid the check and we left the restaurant that we could talk freely again.

"How did I do?" I asked as we walked to her car.

"Fantastic." She said beaming. "No one would ever know."

"I should hope not!" I said matter-of-factly.

"Have you ever changed Jeffrey." She said as we got into the car.

"Jennifer." I corrected her.

The smile returned. "Jennifer." She agreed.

Christy wanted to make plans to go out with me again, soon. She wanted me to come to her place after work. "We could invite Brook and Debbie over for dinner. Debbie's dying to see you."

I was sure she was. As much as I liked Debbie and Brook, I didn't think it was a good idea. "I can't tonight. I have so much work to catch up on." That was the truth.

"Tomorrow night?"

"I'm going to the spa after work." I had made plans with Trish and Judy. I didn't want to break the date.

"Thursday?" Christy pressed.

"All right, Thursday." I agreed. I didn't tell her that it wouldn't be Jennifer that would be coming, but Jeffrey. She would certainly have been disappointed.

Christy dropped me off out in front. I promised to call her that evening.

"Did you have a nice lunch?" Bobbie asked as I came toward her desk.

"Lovely." I told her. Bobbie really enjoyed it when I played the game.

"Connie's waiting for you in the studio." She informed me.

"Thanks. Any calls while I was gone?" I asked.

Bobbie thumbed through my messages before handing them to me. "Baxter, from Avon called and Joyce Irwin wants you to call her."

"Thanks." I went to find Connie.

"There you are." She said when I found her. "How did it go? Did you have a nice lunch?"

I told her, with delight, about Christy's stunned reaction. "She couldn't get over how convincing I looked. It was fun."

"I'm glad."

There was something strange about the way Connie acted. She seemed sad somehow. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine."

"Is something wrong?"

She pretended that nothing was bothering her. "No."

It wasn't my imagination. There was something wrong but she didn't want to talk about it. I didn't press her. "I better get to work." I didn't like seeing her down but I left Connie there and went back to the office to get busy.

I no longer felt so nervous about parading around work dressed as a girl. Everyone seemed to have gotten used to seeing me dressed as Jennifer. They weren't totally complacent about me pretending to be a woman. The girls in the office would look up and smile as I walked by. I couldn't help but smile back. The men weren't quite as at ease with me but I avoided them whenever possible. They had as little to do with me.

We didn't work late and were home by six. I hadn't called my mother or Tina over the weekend as I normally did. I only spoke to my mother briefly, my calling seemed to be a nuisance. Tina was glad to hear from me. We talked for half an hour. I had told her about the client visit we were expecting and she wanted to know how it went. I told her, carefully altering the story to leave Jennifer out of it and the part about Pat staying with us. Tina certainly wouldn't have understood that.

As she did, each time we talked, Tina wanted to know when I'd be home to visit. I honestly didn't know and that bothered her. How could I go home until the hormonal imbalance that had so changed me was cured? No, no way.

She was disappointed. "Not even for your birthday?" She asked.

My birthday was the farthest thing from my mind. September 20th was weeks away. "I don't know right now. We're awfully busy."

How could I go see her?

I went to change after saying good bye to Tina. I stood in front of the mirror, looking at myself, at Jennifer. I looked at my carefully set hair and the way my makeup made my eyes look so attractive. I looked at the way my

lipstick highlighted my full lips. My hands ran down over my shapely figure, nicely defined by my flattering dress. I had done my nails only that morning and my hands looked so nice with my rings on my slender fingers.

I was with a sense of reluctance that I undressed. I stepped out of my heels, putting them in their place in the row of shoes that lined the floor of my closet. I carefully hung up my dress, put away my slip in the dresser. I rinsed out my pantyhose and hung them to dry on the back of the bathroom door, as I had done each night. I should have felt relief that it was over, but I didn't.

I hesitated to take off the pretty bra that had come to feel so natural on me. Again I stood at the mirror. This time in just my underwear and jewelry.

I filled out the small A cups of my bra. I remembered wishing, looking at Pat's full bosom, that mine were larger, more natural looking for my size. They were nice enough, as nicely defined as lots of women I knew, but they weren't as nice as Pat's. All I could think of was how the horrible rib belt was going to feel, binding my chest again.

I put each piece of my jewelry away carefully in the drawers of my jewelry box. I left on only my locket. I didn't have to put on the awful rib belt yet and I wasn't about to until I had to.

I pulled my spandex leggings on over my comfortable satin panties. I found my tee shirt in the drawer. My hair was fine for now. Connie and I weren't going anywhere so there was no need for me to undo what I had painstakingly done to make it look pretty.

There was plenty of time to do something about my nails. I could wait to remove the polish and cut them back. They had grown so long that I didn't really need the nail tips anymore to make my nails look long and pretty.

I helped Connie make dinner. She was still strangely quiet and sullen. Inside, I was sure I knew what was bothering her but neither of us wanted to talk about it.

After we ate and cleaned up we curled up on the couch. Watching TV meant that we didn't have to talk and that was easier on both of us. I had gotten so used to seeing my toenails with polish on them I had almost forgotten about them. It would have to go too, but there was time enough later.

I really hated seeing Connie so quiet and depressed. I couldn't stand it

any longer. "Please talk to me."

Connie looked over at me with sad eyes. "I don't want to lose Jennifer." She admitted touchingly. "I know it's not fair to you to feel that way but I'm going to miss her terribly."

I knew it. I didn't know how to respond to her. How could I admit, even to myself, that I was growing accustomed to the role. No, I couldn't. The silence was so awkward. Connie turned her attention back to the TV but I could still see the haze of tears that glazed over her eyes.

"I'm sort of tired. I think I'll get ready for bed." I leaned over and kissed her cheek. Who had earned the right to call her "Mom"? Was it Jeffrey or Jennifer? "Good night . . ." I just couldn't say it.

"Good night Sweetheart." Connie didn't even turn to look at me when she spoke. She was hurting and I was the cause of her disappointment. I felt terrible.

Jeffrey or Jennifer, I would still moisturize each day. When I was done in the bathroom, I went to the drawer that held both my pajamas and my nighties. I started to take out the pajamas but put them back. What difference did it make what I slept in? There was no one there but Connie and I. I slipped the nightie over my head. In the same light, I left my same underwear on too.

My nail polish came off none too easily. It took me a few minutes to get it all off my fingers and toes. They looked so bare and strange without it.

I was very hesitant, sitting there on the edge of the bed with the nail clippers in my hand. It had taken so long for them to grow out to a nice length. I had taken such pains, shaping them to make them look pretty. I took a deep breath and clipped my thumbnail. I didn't cut it too short though. Once one was gone, the others had to go too. I trimmed them just a little beyond my finger tips. I took great pains to shape them afterwards. So they still looked a little like girls' fingernails, so what. I'd seen lots of guys who wore their nails long. Well, maybe not lots of them and maybe they weren't shaped quite like mine were.

Then it occurred to me that guys also got manicures and wore clear nail polish. I felt a little better after doing my fingers and toes with my clear top coat. I convinced myself that they didn't look feminine.

I sat at my dressing table and, looking in the mirror at my reflection. I

took stock of myself. I should get my hair cut, I told myself. No, I couldn't. That would be too much. I would just wear it in a pony tail. I couldn't bear the thought of cutting off my beautiful hair. Besides, there was still the Sundays I would spend with Virginia, as Jennifer. I didn't want to give them up. I looked forward to them now.

I knew that Virginia would be almost as hurt as Connie if I gave up Jennifer altogether. How could I hurt the two people in my life who cared so much for me. No, it went beyond caring. They loved me and I loved them. I just couldn't hurt them so.

At home, with Connie, I would be Jennifer. On Sundays, with Virginia, I would be Jennifer. I loved them too much to deny them the joy they felt from me living that role. Who was I kidding? I wasn't just them I would be denying.

There was Christy to consider too. She was so thrilled with me pretending to be Jennifer that I was sure she wouldn't let me depart too far from that role. Our relationship was certainly a strange one but I cherished it just the same. Christy accepted, no, accepted wasn't the right word. She seemed to want me all the more as I became more and more like a woman. I couldn't imagine any woman, especially one so beautiful, feeling the way she did toward me. Christy was definitely another factor to consider.

I was only kidding myself, I admitted in the safety and seclusion of my room. I was beginning to enjoy being Jennifer. Never in my life had I felt so loved and accepted by my friends. As Jeffrey, except my relationship with Tina, I never felt so close to people.

I waited for a little while for Connie to come in and say good night, as she did every night, but she never came. That bothered me. I finally turned off the light to go to sleep but I could only lay there in the dark, wrestling with my troubled thoughts.

Sleep did little to ease my troubled heart. Despite a restless night, I awoke early. I laid there in my bed, struggling with the dilemma that was tearing me apart.

I had two choices. I could continue to pretend to be Jennifer or go back to being Jeffrey again.

The latter was the easiest to address. I should go back to normal, but what was normal. I was no longer the Jeffrey of six months ago. I was changed, both physically and emotionally. I wasn't the same person

anymore. Going back, at this point, was almost impossible.

I still had to think about my family, about Tina. I was a long way from home and my life, my work was here now. I wouldn't miss my family and I convinced myself that my relationship with Tina was fizzling. She was nice enough but my world had expanded and she was of the old.

On the other side of the coin were all the reasons to continue to play the role of Jennifer.

Connie was the most important reason. She gave Jennifer all her support and she made me feel so loved. Never in my life did I care so much for someone. With all she'd done for me, both personally and professionally, didn't I owe her?

Then there was Virginia. Her motives still escaped me but her love for Jennifer didn't. She had done so much to make me see another side of me, a side of me that I liked. She asked nothing in return but my friendship. Just thinking of her and Connie made my heart swell with love.

I thought about the delight I had seen in Christy's face. The passion we had shared. Would I ever find another woman like her, willing to share her love with me? Hardly.

There were the people at work to consider. These were the only people who were aware of my past and yet they had accepted, even encouraged, Jennifer. There was no reason to fear them.

When I weighed the pros and cons there was no doubt. Until my physical problems could be cured, there was only one sensible thing to do. For now, work and home, with the occasional discreet interlude with Christy, would fill my life. It was a relief to come to the conclusion logically, the same conclusion that my heart told me was the right one, for now.

The decision made, I couldn't wait to get ready for work and surprise Connie. I felt relieved. Like a weight was off my shoulder. It was the right thing to do, both for me and for the people I cared so much for. I couldn't wait to see her face when I came out of the bedroom.

I was sorry now that I had cut my nails and stripped them of polish. It felt so strange, having them so short but they would grow again. Quickly, I hoped. It was too late to put on fresh polish at that point.

I showered quickly and did my hair. With the decision I had made,

other thoughts came to mind. Trish had commented how much nicer my hair would look if I had it highlighted. I could do that now. I had also wondered what I'd look like with bangs. Most of my friends had them and it seemed to soften their looks. Why shouldn't I try it too?

I didn't want to over do it. My navy slacks had always looked like girls' slacks to me anyway. They'd do fine with my white blouse. I laid them out on the bed. Maybe the next day I would wear a skirt or one of my pretty dresses. After I saw how things went.

From my lingerie draw I took out clean pair of my sexy underwear. I debated about pantyhose, but not for long.

It was only a bra that made me feel a little uneasy. There would be no doubt in anyone's mind that I was wearing one. Only the people at the office might question my wearing it and I had decided already that I didn't have to worry about them. Still . . .

Once dressed, I put on my fine gold necklace and matching bracelet. I selected small jeweled stud earrings, nothing too gaudy or flashy.

My navy shoes were the ones that went with the outfit, they had only a low heel. They also had bows on the toes. I had worn them only in the store when we bought them. They were very comfortable. I liked the way they looked with my slacks.

I put on my makeup sparingly. Then decided I was silly to worry about it. It was already obvious that I chose to dress as Jennifer. It wasn't as if my wearing makeup, light or otherwise, would make a difference. I went back to my dressing table and put on my eyeliner and blush. When I finished, I was pleased with the way I looked. I put on my favorite perfume. I loved the way it smelled.

I heard Connie out in the kitchen, moving around. I peaked out around my bedroom door. Her back was to me. I came out quietly and walked toward the kitchen. I stopped in the doorway.

"Good morning Mom." I said.

She responded as she turned around. "Good morn....."

The look on her face changed to the look I hoped to see. I had done the right thing. Her whole face lit up.



"Oh Jennifer." Her hand went to her mouth. "Oh Jennifer." She hurried to me and hugged me. "I was so afraid I had lost my little girl." She kissed my cheek. "You don't know how happy you've made me."

If her tears were an indicator, I knew. I didn't want her to think the entire burden for my doing it was on her shoulders. I didn't want her to feel guilty, as if she pressured me into it.

"I'm glad you're pleased. I was a little afraid you'd think me strange for wanting to keep pretending to be Jennifer." That should do it, I thought to my self. Connie had to think it was my decision, not hers.

"Oh Sweetheart, not at all. I think it's wonderful. I'm so happy."

Hers weren't the only eyes that glazed over with tears. After hugging me again she held me by the shoulders, at arms length. Smiling at me, she said, "You look very pretty today."

It was gratifying to hear. "Thank you." All I wanted to do was please her and I had succeeded.

We were running late. We only had time to pour a glass of juice and take our vitamins. We would have something to eat at work.

Since I was going to the spa later, I gathered my things into my gym bag and put it in the trunk of my car. Sooner or later I would have to return Kim's leotard, after I bought my own.

Connie would be working late and I would have to drive myself. I planned on meeting Judy at the spa.

The girls had already convinced me that since so few guys did aerobics, no one would recognize me. Especially since I wouldn't be using the men's locker room. We'd just go work out and leave. I trusted them and agreed.

Bobbie was a little surprised to see me still dressing as Jennifer but she didn't seem to object. Her greeting was as cheerful as ever. Not everyone reacted the same way. I received a few questioning looks but I just acted as if everything was normal.

It was a very busy morning and I hardly got up from my desk except to go to the bathroom. I tactfully continued to use the ladies' room in the studio, instead of one of the others on the first floor. There was no point in

making the women uncomfortable by using theirs. Frankly, it would have made me more uncomfortable than them. It was one thing when I was out in public, around people who didn't know my secret, but around my coworkers was another thing.

I had promised to call Virginia when Pat had left. She wanted to hear every detail of her stay. I called her around ten but couldn't spend as much time on the phone with her as I would have liked. She was delighted and extremely supportive, as always, when I told her my decision to continue to dress and live as Jennifer. She was amazingly supportive of anything I wanted to do. She had played such a large part in my choice.

I almost told her about my wish to go shopping for a few things and about my thoughts about my hair but decided not to. She had done so much for me already and if I told her about my plans she would certainly have insisted on helping me. I wanted to do those things myself.

I was relieved that my morning went by uneventfully. It wasn't till lunchtime that I had a problem. Connie was tied up on the phone and said she'd meet me in the conference room in few minutes. A few of the girls from accounting were sitting around a table and since I got along so well with them, I asked if it was alright if I joined them. They welcomed me and we had a pleasant lunch together.

We were just about ready to leave when a few of the people from the layout department came in to have their lunch. Among them was Ginny. Ginny was never particularly friendly toward me. It wasn't just that she objected to the role I played, she didn't seem to care for me from the first day I arrived in Atlanta. We rarely said two words to each other, even though I'd tried more than once to make friends with her. She had grown even colder in the past week. I just didn't bother with her any more.

Her remark, in front of everyone, surprised me.

"Well, if it isn't our own little drag queen. How's the little faggot today?"

I didn't know what to say, I was so embarrassed. I decided it was probably best to ignore her. I didn't want her to know how much her remark hurt. Just that kind of reaction toward me had been one of my greatest fears.

Carol, one of the girls at the table with me didn't let it pass. "Why don't you leave Jennifer alone? She's not hurting you."

"She!?" Ginny blurted out laughing. "'She's a he, or have you forgotten?".

Another of my friends spoke up. "What Jennifer chooses to do is up to her. Why don't you just mind your own business Ginny?"

Several of the others came to my defense too. Ginny backed off and didn't say anything else. The incident left me feeling very uncomfortable. I just wanted to get out of there. I excused myself from the table. "Thanks for trying to defend me." I told the others. "I think I better get back to work."

I felt very self-conscious, walking back to my desk. I had very serious doubts about my decision to continue as Jennifer. It wasn't too far fetched to imagine the same embarrassing thing happening, day after day. Just knowing how Ginny felt led me to wonder how many others felt the same way? I even thought about quitting. All this ran through my mind as I made my way back to the office.

I hadn't been back to my desk for a minute when Carol and four of the other girls who had been in the lunch room came in.

"Don't let Ginny bother you Jennifer." Pam told me.

"She's a narrow-minded little bitch who doesn't care about anyone but herself." Linda added. "How you choose to live your life is your business."

I was a little overwhelmed with their open support.

"It doesn't matter how a person chooses to dress," Gwen said. "What matters is how they act. You're a very sweet person Jennifer. Forget about Ginny and her problem."

Their words touched me and I told them so. I never imagined I would get that kind of support. Connie came out of her office to hear what was going on. Carol told her what Ginny had said to me.

"I'll have a talk with Ginny." Connie assured me when the others had left. "Don't give her another thought."

That was easier said than done. Her comment had left me with a sick feeling in my stomach and I didn't feel as if would get over it easily. Looking up at Connie, I recognized a slight hint of the fire in Connie's eyes that I had seen only one time before.

I didn't leave the office the rest of the afternoon. Connie and I worked in her office, on the Falmouth presentation that was scheduled for early the next week. I didn't become so engrossed in work that I forgot Ginny's remarks.

I was chased out of the office at five. Connie wouldn't hear of it when I told her I thought I would just go home and forget about working out. She made me promise to go.

I met Judy in the parking lot. I was especially sensitive to even the most casual glances from the people in the spa. No one in the class seemed to give me more than a second look. I'd seemed worry for nothing.

Judy's reaction to seeing me, when we stripped out of our warm up suits in the aerobics room, was very similar to Christy's the day before. It was the first time she saw me wearing Kim's leotard and she seemed surprised. I thought I looked pretty good in it despite the fact that I didn't fill it out the way she would.

"Jennifer, you look fantastic!"

I had to hush her up. She was a little loud.

"Thanks Judy."

If it hadn't been for the class starting, Judy probably would have kept fussing over me.

I felt better about myself by the time I got home later. Working out had a way of relaxing me, helping me take my mind off the things that bothered me.

"How do you think I'd look if I had highlights in my hair?" I asked Judy as we stood by her car outside the spa. Her hair was the same color as mine but compared to hers, my hair was lack luster, kind of mousy.

"You'd look great."

"I was wondering how I'd look with bangs too."

"Oh, you should. Definitely."

I had told Judy about my decision to continue as Jennifer for a while.

I didn't detail all the reasons for doing it. She didn't need to know about my hormonal problem. She already knew how Connie and Virginia adored Jennifer so she wasn't surprised.

"You'd look fantastic with a new do. When are you going to do it?"

"I haven't decided yet." I admitted. I was still a little nervous about it.

"If you want someone to go with you just give me a call." She offered.

With all the support I received from my friends it wasn't so traumatic to plunge ahead with the transition to Jennifer, full time.

Connie wasn't home yet. I showered and started dinner. With Connie's help, I had been learning to cook and I wanted to make her a nice meal. I was well on my way when she walked in.

I'd chilled a bottle of wine and I poured us each a glass while she put her things away.

"How sweet of you. Thanks." She said, accepting the glass from my hand.

"It's the least I can do. It's fun."

"So you don't mind cooking so much anymore?"

Back in the condo I never cooked. I hardly ever cooked back home. "It's more worthwhile when you're not just cooking for yourself. I don't mind." Cooking for Connie gave me a lot of satisfaction. There was little else I could do for her to show my appreciation for all she'd done for me.

"I've got some great recipes I could teach you." Connie opened the oven door and sniffed the stuffed pork chops I was cooking. "It smells delicious."

"I'd like that." Funny, my mother could never get me to cook, I remembered. I hated to cook at home. The role reversal that I was playing had nothing to do with my new interest. The interest Connie showed in me had everything to do with it.

I wasn't so anxious to settle down in front of the TV that night. I had something else to do. At the kitchen table I stripped off the clear polish from

my nails and painstakingly applied my pale rose color. I was quite content to carefully thumb through Mademoiselle and Glamor while they dried. Of all the magazines Connie had lying around, I enjoyed reading the articles and ads in those the most.

I told Connie my thoughts about redoing my hair. She thought it was a wonderful idea.

"Why don't we make you an appointment with Jimmy for Saturday?"

I remembered the first time I sat in Jimmy's chair in the salon. How strange I felt with the sissified man styling my hair. I had been so uncomfortable having the gay work on me. Now I couldn't wait to get back into his chair.

I went to sleep wishing Saturday wasn't so far away. I had other plans for Saturday as well. If I could get someone to go with me, I wanted to do a little shopping. I didn't want Connie to go because I wanted what I bought to be a surprise.

On Tuesday, I wore my black skirt with the pale pink blouse Virginia had bought me. It was the first time I wore any of the sheer silky pantyhose they picked out. They felt luxurious. I felt a little guilty for enjoying the way they felt on me. A guy shouldn't feel the way I did, wearing them. But I loved the sensation.

Like most days, it was hectic. I was hesitant, at lunchtime, to join the girls for lunch but Connie encouraged me. "There won't be a repeat of yesterday." She assured me.

She was right. No one had an unkind word. My friends were wonderful toward me, as always. Ginny's friend, Jackie, came in, saying nothing. Ginny never came in while I was there. I thought nothing of it. I didn't ask the girls if they heard what might have been said between Connie and Ginny. I wanted to just forget about the incident. I would have done anything I could to win over Ginny as my friend but, I learned later, I wouldn't have to. Ginny apparently quit the firm shortly after her conversation with Connie. At least I assumed she quit. I didn't ask and no one brought up the subject.

Christy called around three, to confirm that I was still coming for dinner. She sounded excited on the phone. I was still a little apprehensive about seeing her. I knew we would end up in bed and she would discover the changes in me since we were last intimate with each other. I wasn't sure

what her reaction would be.

I had been my intention to go home and change before going to her place but we ran late at work and there wasn't time.

"Don't worry Sweetheart. You look fine." Connie told me as we walked out through the lobby. "If she was as delighted with you on Tuesday, as you said, in your dress, you have nothing to worry about."

Connie was right. Still, on the drive to her place, I worried.

Getting gas bothered me. "Use full service if it makes you more comfortable." Connie had told me when I first got the car. It was better than pumping it myself and having to go inside the station to pay. Still, the guys tended to stare and that made me uncomfortable.

Christy must have been watching out the window for me because she came out the minute I pulled into the parking space out front.

There was the same delight I had seen on her face on Tuesday. "Jennifer, you look fantastic."

She did exactly what I expected, and dreaded she might. She hugged me right there on the sidewalk. Out in plain sight.

"Can we go inside?" I pleaded.

Brook and Debbie were inside, watching out the window. They both beamed at me when we walked through the door.

"You're pretty as can be." Debbie gushed.

Brook's reaction was the same. They both had to hug me. That wasn't so bad, inside the apartment.

I was definitely the center of attention. My concern about their reaction toward me, voluntarily dressing up as a girl, was unfounded. They were absolutely thrilled. They were a little more curious about me than I would have liked.

When it came to Debbie asking, "What are you wearing under your skirt?" it stopped being fun, even though I knew she was only teasing me.

Christy was the first to realize the questions were starting to

embarrass me and she forced a change in the subject.

Debbie hadn't lost her sense of humor and as we sat down to dinner she took over the conversation with her jokes. A few of her sarcastic barbs were still directed toward me but they weren't cruel or demeaning so I took them the way they were intended.

All in all, I had a good time. I did enjoy their company.

We had no sooner finished cleaning up from dinner than Debbie and Brook announced that they had to go. I was suddenly worried again. Their leaving meant that Christy would have me all to herself and that meant only one thing.

At the door, the three of them wanted to make plans to get together on Saturday. They knew I spent my Sundays with Virginia.

I didn't want to tell them the plans I had for the morning. I had an early appointment with Jimmy. I would surprise them all.

"I have plans for the morning." I told them. "Would you care to help me do a little shopping in the afternoon?" I could go shopping with Christy and them as easily as anyone. Why not?

That was more than alright with them. They loved the idea.

With our plans made, Debbie and Brook said goodnight and left.

Christy brought out a bottle of Amaretto and we sipped and talked for a little while. Christy edged closer and closer to me, on the couch. It wasn't difficult to see that I excited her. She stared slowly, caressing my arm through the silky material of my blouse. Her passion heated up as she stroked my stocking leg.

I was too nervous. Christy took the initiative and kissed me tenderly on the lips. Soon our contact was not so tender and we were locked in a long passionate embrace, her lips pressed hard against mine.



I was not totally immune to her touch. The hormones had not completely robbed me of my ability to feel aroused. I just wished that I could have mastered an erection but the rest of me wanted her desperately. When we eventually parted we both laughed. We had smeared our lipstick on each other.

Christy was definitely the aggressor. She led me to her bed. We undressed each other slowly, caressing each other's soft smooth skin.

She opened the button on the back of my blouse and pulled it over my head. That was the moment I had dreaded. The moment when she discovered how much I had changed. I expected her to be repulsed but, to my delight, she was delighted.

She said nothing. The look on her face said it all. She was thrilled. Christy took my breasts in her hands and gently, skillfully kneaded my soft flesh. Her tongue caressed my tender nipples. Waves of excitement washed over me. It was like no sensation I had ever known. I didn't want her to stop.



I was so turned on. I found myself anxious to please her in the ways she had taught me. She was inexhaustible.

I continued until she begged me to stop. She surprised me when, after she finally calmed down. She pulled me over onto my back and pulled my panties down. She had, up until then, never wanted to see me out of them. I didn't argue with her. Modesty was a lost virtue after what she had discovered of me. Besides, there was hardly anything there to see, it had shriveled up to the point that it was hardly more than a soft fold of skin. My testicles were no bigger than small peas floating inside of their tiny skin sacks.

I didn't know what she planned to do to me. "Just lay back and enjoy." She told me. I didn't object. She began caressing my chest, kissing me again. Soon she was kneading and sucking on my nipples. The waves of sensation returned and I was lost in a sea of excitement. I was hardly aware when she began probing inside me with her finger. It hurt a little at first but not enough to stop her. The motion of her finger rhythmically going into me again and again, along with her fondling my nipples was almost too much to bear.

There was no explosion of passion as I had known in the past. It came upon me slowly, building to the point I thought I'd go insane. Then, with her smooth, firm body rubbing against me, it was over. I was spent and every muscle in my body was limp. It was wonderful.

How long we lay there, holding each other, I didn't know. I completely lost track of time. We eventually got up and I got dressed. If I hadn't had work the next morning, I would have stayed with her that night.

I did what I could with my hair and put on fresh makeup. Christy simply put on her robe. She waited for me in the living room, having poured herself another glass of Amaretto.

"You were wonderful." I kissed her tenderly.

"So were you."

"I never felt anything like that before." I admitted.

She smiled at me and just said just, "Saturday."

Now I had another reason to be anxious for that day to arrive quickly.

"You be careful driving home. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you."

"I will." I told her.

All I could think of as I drove home was the experience we'd just shared. It was all consuming.

For some reason I wasn't comfortable with the idea of telling Connie what had happened. It would have been like going home and telling my mother the details of making love with someone. I did tell her I had a wonderful time and that Christy and her friends totally accepted me as I was. That pleased her.

Friday seemed to drag by. We were busy enough but my mind was on Saturday. I felt a little worried, going to eat lunch with the girls. I was just waiting for one of Ginny's friends to pick up where she left off. It was only a matter of time.

Friday wasn't the day. Everyone was very nice to me. For the second day I didn't hear on unkind remark.

Connie and I left work on time for a change. We had dinner out and went to a movie.

I was getting used to having men look at me when we were out. I had learned not to acknowledge their looks. Having older men stare at me didn't bother me as much as the younger ones but they didn't feel the least inhibited about being obvious about it.

In the theater lobby, as we bought sodas to take into the movie, I was acutely aware of a group of four young guys watching me. It was still a weird sensation to know exactly what they were thinking. I could play the role of a girl but I knew I couldn't imagine ever accepting the affections of another man. It was too absurd to even consider. My experiences with Park had been bad enough.

Connie had noticed them watching me too. "Does it bother you?" She asked when we were seated in the theater.

"Does what bother me?" I didn't know what she meant.

"Having guys find you attractive." She explained.

"No, it doesn't bother me. It's not something I think about." That was essentially true. "It would bother me if they knew I was really one of them." No one was near enough to hear our whispered conversation.

"Have you ever wondered what it's like to be with one?"

"One what?"

"A man, silly."

She had to be kidding. I actually laughed. "No! Never." The truth was, for one fleeting instant while I was in Christy's hands, while she was driving me to distraction, I did wonder. The thought passed quickly though.

Connie dropped the subject as the movie started. She had picked the movie. It was a love story and as it drew to its heart wrenching end I felt the tears on my cheek. I was surprised how much I enjoyed it. I never used to like that kind of movie but I had a slightly different perspective than I use to.

As Saturday came nearer and nearer I began to loose some of the conviction I had about changing my hair. By morning I was actually a little scared about going but after telling Connie how much I wanted to do it I couldn't very well let my fear show.

There was still a nagging thought in the back of my mind that I ignored. Sooner or later I would go home and see my family and Tina. Something told me I could just deal with that when the time came. After all, I could just cut it. I wouldn't look that different. For now I just wanted to look the best I could.

Any negative thoughts just disappeared as Jimmy sat me in his chair.

"I want a new look." I told him, showing him the picture from the book Connie and I had been looking at while we sat waiting for our appointment. It really was a pretty style. "And can you add some highlights?" I asked.

Some meant a little to me. What it meant to Jimmy, I didn't think to ask.

"Sure we can." He said with delight. He apparently remembered me but didn't seem to mind at all that I was the guy he had in his chair months

ago.

I sat patiently, feeling just a little nervous, after he washed my hair and started highlighting it. I watched as he added the coloring and wrapped my hair in the narrow strips of foil. It seemed there was a lot of foil on my head when he finished.

Did I do the right thing? I asked myself as Connie and I sat and waited for the coloring to take. I was more nervous as he put his scissors to my hair. I thought he cut a lot.

"I'm only trimming your split ends." He assured me with a smile. The young man's sissified mannerisms made me nervous the first time I met him. Now I felt compassion for him. He really wasn't so bad. I found myself wondering if he ever crossed over and dressed as a girl. He had the hair and he was sort of pretty. No, a little too manly and chunky to be convincing, I decided.

It took him only a minute to give me the bangs I asked for. I watched in the mirror as I underwent the transition. Wet, my hair looked terrible but as he dried and styled it I became ever more excited with the outcome.

Jimmy did a fantastic job. No more was my hair a mousy brown. It shined with highlights and the style had done what I had hoped. The look was soft and pretty. My hair lay softly over my shoulders. No one could doubt now that I was the girl I pretended to be. I loved it.

I had watched Jimmy closely as he dried and styled my hair. I was different from what I was used to but the techniques I had been taught were the same he used. I would be able to do the new style myself, easily.

In the mirror, I could see that Connie thought it looked great too. She had approved of the style I picked from the book earlier. I could see her smile of delight in our reflections in the mirror.



"You look wonderful!" She told me.

My doubts were completely gone. "Oh, thank you Jimmy." I said with joy. I couldn't wait for all my friends to see me. Christy, Trish and the others were going to be really surprised. I only wished I had done it sooner. It would have been great to have Pat see me the way I looked now.

I didn't even mind taking out my purse and paying the seventy dollars it cost. That day, my purse held several hundred dollars of my savings and I was prepared to spend a good part of it that afternoon. There were so many things I wanted to buy.

"You're sure you don't need me to come along?" Connie asked as we walked to our cars.

"I'll be fine. I'm going to drive over to Christy's and meet them then we're going shopping." It was sweet of her to worry but I felt completely at ease with the girls.

"Just promise you'll call me and let me know what you're doing. I will worry."

It didn't matter that we were out in public. I hugged her. "I promise Mom, really."



I was so anxious and excited as I drove to Christy's. I had dressed as casually as I could, wearing Christy's jeans. My others were just too baggy and didn't look right. It was the first time I'd felt brave enough, or rather confident enough to wear my cropped knit tee. I felt good about my figure and didn't mind letting my bare waist show. Nothing could ruin my good mood. That morning I was truly Jennifer and loved the feeling.

The sky was cloudy overhead as I wound my way through Atlanta's busy streets. The way I felt, if it had been pouring down rain, I couldn't have been any more lighthearted. I didn't mind that people glanced my way as I drove by them. Even the looks from guys next to me at stop lights didn't bother me. I didn't feel as if I had the slightest worry of anyone taking me for anything but a happy young woman. I blasted the radio and enjoyed the music.

Brook and Debbie were already there. I recognized Debbie's car and parked a few apartments down from Christy's. I wanted to surprise them, kind of make an entrance, so to speak.

Their reaction, especially Christy's, was as great as I had hoped for. They had to touch my hair to make sure it was real and not a wig. I was thrilled.

"It's gorgeous!" Christy marveled then hugged and kissed me. I knew she really meant it by the look on her face. "See, I didn't even mess up our lipstick."

I felt a little funny kissing her in front of Debbie and Brook but they didn't seem phased by our show of affection. I was a guy After all and they knew it.

No one wanted to hang around the apartment. Debbie drove. Her car was bigger than mine and Christy's little cars. Going out with them, in their pleasant company, I felt great.

I was excited about shopping. I remembered the time with Connie and Virginia, how nervous I felt. I didn't feel that way as we headed for the stores that Saturday.

"So, what are we shopping for?" Debbie asked.

"Shorts, some blouses, you know, casual clothes." I had plenty of clothes for work and going out. "I think I need some new jeans so I can return these." I told her.

"Oh don't worry about them. Keep them. I have plenty." Christy told me.

"Thanks." That was nice of her.

"How much money do you have to spend?" Brook asked.

"About two hundred." That's about how much I allotted myself that day.

"I know just the place." Brook announced.

It wasn't a fancy store but she carried a lot of brand name labels. The store was pretty busy. As good as the prices were, a lot of young girls were there, picking through the racks.

Christy had a pretty definite idea of the kinds of clothes she wanted me to buy and wear and her taste wasn't far from what I had in mind. I wasn't overly thrilled with the tight blouses and tank tops she grabbed off the racks for me to try on. I took them anyway. She knew better than I did, what would look best on me I decided.

The dressing rooms didn't intimidate me the way they had in the past. As long as I could keep my panties on, no one would ever know. I didn't look any different from the other girls in the stalls around me. It was still a little odd, being surrounded by almost naked young girls.

Debbie and Brook continued to search for bargains for me while Christy kept me company in the dressing room. She wouldn't let me get away without trying on everything. She was having as much fun as I was.

There were a few tops I wouldn't have considered buying but Christy talked me into them. She was so much fun to be with, I couldn't argue with her. The things she picked out were simply what girls my age wore. While some of the tops were a little intimidating, I knew it was just a matter of my getting used to the idea that I could wear them. Shopping was so much fun.

After about an hour there, we left with a dozen new things for me and I had only spent about sixty dollars.

"You need to get some jewelry." Brook suggested.

"I have plenty." I told her and described a lot of the jewelry that

Connie and Virginia had bought me.

"Wow, I'm impressed." Debbie said with a raised eyebrow.

"What about shoes?" Christy asked.

"I've got seven or eight pairs of flats and six or seven pairs of heels."

"Sneakers?"

"Just my aerobic sneakers."

"You need a pair of white Keds and maybe some black sneakers."

Lots of the girls I saw had shoes like that. I wanted some too.

"How's your lingerie?" Debbie asked.

I could see the grin on her face in the rear view mirror. She was a character.

"The only thing I need is some crotchless panties and some teddies." I said, kidding. It got a reaction out of them. Christy turned to me in mild shock. Debbie and Brook laughed.

Lunch was our next stop. They took me to a fast food place and we had burgers. The place was pretty busy and the four of us drew a lot of attention from men, young and old. I was glad to get out of there even though I was flattered by it.

I knew the expression, 'Shop till you drop', but I hadn't grasped the full meaning of it till that day. Before we were done, I found the shorts, like Pat's, and most of the other things that I had set out to buy. With my friends' help, I had a ball.

I was exhausted when we got back to Christy's. We dropped the bags off clothes on the chair in the living room. I was thrilled that I was able to buy so much and couldn't wait to try it all on at home.

Debbie and Brook only stayed long enough to have a drink with us and they left. I eagerly thanked them for their help. It was almost too bad they had to leave so early but being alone with Christy was all right too. I hoped for a repeat of Friday night's experience.

I wasn't prepared for the surprise. "I really had fun today." Christy told me. "It's too bad I made plans for tonight."

It came as something of a shock. I didn't know what to say. I had just assumed we would spend the evening together, maybe the whole night. I felt really hurt. "I guess I better be going."

Christy continued to be her same bubbly self. She acted as if nothing was wrong and I suppose, for her, there wasn't. "Why don't you call me if you get back early from Virginia's tomorrow?"

"Ok" I agreed, half heartedly. She kissed me good night. I gathered up my things and left. I'd lost the lighthearted feeling I had carried around with me all day. I felt betrayed somehow. I wanted her to myself. She had not admitted that she was going out with someone that night but what else could it have been.

I wondered, who was she going out with? Was it a guy, or maybe another girl? Was Christy gay like Debbie and Brook? Was I even right about them? I didn't know what to think. I had been let down and I felt rejected. I didn't want to share Christy with anyone.

Connie was surprised to see me home so early. I came in lugging my packages. "What are you doing home so early?" She asked.

"Christy had other plans tonight." I answered glumly.

Connie could see I was upset. "Don't let it get you down Honey. They'll be other nights."

"I suppose."

"What was she doing that you couldn't come along?"

"She didn't say."

"Well there's no reason to think that she had another date. She hasn't said she was seeing anyone else, has she?"

"No, not in so many words."

"Well, maybe she just had things to do?"

"On a Saturday night? No, I'm sure she was going out." I really

wasn't sure of anything.

Connie tried to cheer me up. "That's alright Honey. We'll do something together." She suggested. "What would you like to do?"

It was sweet of her. I thought to myself, it was something a mother would say to her child. How in the world had I been so fortunate to find Connie and have her adopt me the way she had?"I don't know."

"We could go to the spa and work out?" She suggested.

I didn't feel like working out. I wasn't in the mood.

"We could go to the movies?"

We had just gone the night before. "I think I'll just put my things away and relax tonight." I said feeling down.

"Why don't we call Virginia and see what she's doing? I bet she'd be thrilled to see what you've done to yourself."

I had been anxious to surprise her with my new hair do. I was excited about seeing her on Sunday. That thought cheered me up a little. "Ok." I didn't mention to Virginia that I'd been sort of 'stood up' by Christy. I didn't want her to feel I called her because I had nothing else to do. "Connie and I wondered what you were doing tonight. We thought you might like to do something with us." I couldn't resist. "I have a surprise for you." I told her.

She was delighted that I called. "I have a surprise for you too. Why don't you and Connie come over?"

I wondered what her surprise was. I looked to Connie and she nodded her approval. "Alright. We'll be over in a little while."

"Wear something nice in case we decide to go out." She suggested. "I see you in a little while."

I set the phone down. "Virginia said to wear something nice in case we go out. What should I wear?" I asked Connie.

"I think a nice skirt and blouse should do. That ought to be dressy enough for almost anything we decide to do."

That was fine with me. My dilemma was, which skirt and what

blouse should I wear?

I felt better now we were going to do something. I didn't bother to put all my new things away.

One of the blouses Virginia had picked out for me that night we all went shopping together was really colorful. It had sort of an abstract print. At the time, I told myself I could never wear it. I took it out of the closet and tried it on with my short, ruby wrap skirt, another item I had never worn. I'd left it hang in the closet because I wasn't all that comfortable about wearing it. I wanted to experiment with all sorts of things now, I decided. It actually looked really nice when I put the outfit together.

It didn't take me long to touch up my makeup and get ready.



The pearls that Virginia had gotten me looked perfect with the outfit. I wanted to show them off for her. I really liked them a lot.

"Oh, don't you look nice." Connie remarked with approval. "Virginia's going to be impressed. You should wear your jacket though. It's supposed to get cool tonight."

I had forgotten about the blazer that went with the skirt. I went back in the bedroom and got it.

"Very pretty." Connie said with a smile.

"Thank you." I agreed. I felt pretty too. It was a nice feeling.

I think I blushed when the doorman opened the door for us. "You ladies look lovely this evening." I appreciated the compliment.

It was still light out when we reached Virginia's. The late summer evening was beautiful with all the colors in the sky. The clouds were taking on a pinkish tint as the sun started to set. It was cooling off and I was glad I wore the jacket.

"Oh, look at you!" Virginia touched my hair. "And that outfit looks so cute on you. I just fell in love with it in the store. The pearls set it off beautifully."

"I really love these." I told her, stroking my pearl necklace.

"I'm so glad." A hug seemed appropriate.

"Doesn't she look so much better with her hair that way?" Connie asked Virginia when we sat in the sitting room.

"She looks absolutely stunning." Virginia agreed.

I enjoyed the compliments but those two would go on forever if left alone. "So what should we do tonight?" I asked them.

Virginia had apparently been giving it some thought. "Have you two eaten?"

"No, we didn't." Connie told her.

"Well we should go get something to eat and then I thought it might be nice to go to the theater."

"We went to the movies last night." I explained.

"No dear, I didn't mean the movies?" Virginia's tone wasn't condescending. "I thought we might go see 'Cats'."

"I haven't seen that in years. That's a great idea but can we get tickets so late?" Connie remarked.

I had never seen the stage play. I heard it was good.

"I have a box." Virginia told us. "It doesn't start till nine thirty. That would give us time to eat."

I was experiencing all kinds of new things. Connie picked the restaurant and we had a wonderful meal. In their company, I was the one to draw attention from younger men. It was very satisfying to know they were looking at me and not my companions. It was amazing, the confidence I had gained in myself.

A glass of wine with dinner would have been nice but I didn't dare. I made myself a mental note to ask Connie what she was doing with my birth certificate. I wondered how she was going to be able to get me some identification so I could pass for Jennifer.

I was told, "Absolutely not!" When I started to open my purse and suggested that I pay my own way at dinner.

"You're my guests tonight." Virginia insisted.

Arguing with the dear woman with her was pointless. I was learning that.

Not only had I never seen 'Cats' but I hadn't been to a stage show since I was little. The view from Virginia's box seats was wonderful and I really enjoyed the play.

I found myself looking at the women and their clothes, comparing myself to them. I looked much nicer than most. There were a few women I thought were overdressed, in evening gowns. I found myself wondering how I'd look in a few of the beautiful dresses I saw. I even commented to

Connie and Virginia how beautiful I thought a few of the dresses were.

I'd thought the evening was going to be a disaster after my disappointment over Christy but I really turned out to be fun. I was out with my 'mother' and 'aunt'. They were more like family to me than my own.

Virginia made a suggestion when we returned to her house after midnight. "Stay here tonight. You can go to church with me in the morning." She asked both Connie and I.

"I'm afraid I can't." Connie said sadly.

I knew why. She was expecting her out of town friend on Sunday morning.

"You'll stay won't you?" Virginia asked me hopefully.

I hadn't stepped foot into a church in years, besides, "I don't have anything to wear to church."

"Oh, I haven't shown you the surprise!" Virginia remembered. "Connie, you come too."

We followed her upstairs. I thought she would take us to her bedroom. That was the only room I had seen up on the second floor. Instead, we passed her door and we stopped at the next door down the hall.

"I know I'm being silly." She told us, "but I wanted you to have a place of your own when you came over to visit." She looked so excited as she opened the door and stood back for us to see.

I couldn't believe that Virginia had set aside a room in her home for me. The woman was so sweet and thoughtful. I still hadn't figured out what I could possibly have done to deserve the love and affection she bestowed on me?

It was beautiful. Any girl in her right mind would have fallen in love with it. I was impressed.

The walls were covered with pink paper with white and yellow flowers. The bed was a large white canopy bed and the bedspread matched the wallpaper. White lace framed the canopy. The thick carpeting was almost stark white.

Pink and white nightstands stood on either side of the bed. They held gold lamps with white shades. There was a large low dresser that matched the nightstands. A huge mirror arched over behind the big piece of furniture.

Lastly, adored by ornate chairs on either side, was a dressing table with a lighted mirror.

"It's gorgeous." Connie remarked.

I saw something other than pleasure on Connie's face. I did have to agree with her opinion of the room. "It's beautiful."

Virginia beamed with joy. "I'm so glad you like it Jennifer. You should go look in the closet."

There was more? I did as she asked and pulled aside the mirrored doors of the big walk in closet.

I just stood there, amazed. One wall, about eight feet long, was full of new clothes, dresses, blouses, skirts, dozens of beautiful new outfits.

Virginia came up beside me and put her arm around me. "I could give it to you a piece at a time but I thought you might want a little more variety than you have, for work or whatever."

"You shouldn't have." I told her. On the floor were at least twenty pairs of shoes, All colors and styles.

"It makes me happy. I enjoy seeing you in pretty things. I just want you to be happy."

That was obvious. "But it must have cost you . . . "

"Money's not important if you don't enjoy it." She told me. "I'm just thrilled that you're pleased."

I looked back over my shoulder for Connie. I wanted her to see it all. Connie seemed to be lingering in the background. I knew something was bothering her but I wanted to show her. "Can you believe all this?"

She smiled but I thought it looked forced. "It's wonderful." She said. "You're a very lucky girl Sweetheart."

Her referring to me as a girl hardly bothered me at all. What did, was

seeing her that way.

Virginia went to the rack of clothes and took down a dress. "You could wear this to church in the morning. It's so pretty and delicate. It will look precious on you."

It was white and trimmed in lace. The short sleeves were puffed at the shoulder and trimmed with the same lace that decorated the neckline. I could see that the waist was fitted. It looked so narrow that I couldn't imagine it fitting me. The dress flared below the waist with a conservative, just above the knee hemline. It really was a pretty dress and I couldn't wait to see if it fit. I decided it wasn't the time to fuss over it. There would be time enough later since I didn't have a reason for going home anymore.

I was worried about Connie. We walked her downstairs. I hugged her and gave her the kiss goodnight that had become our ritual. "Good night Mom." I told her at the door.

"Good night Sweetheart." She hugged me a little longer than usual. Was she feeling insecure? Was she afraid I would prefer to stay with Virginia instead of her? That wasn't going to happen but I couldn't tell her that with Virginia standing beside us. No, Sunday, when I got home, I would reassure her.

I watched as she got in her car and drove away alone. I felt terrible, like I had abandoned her somehow. I watched from the front door till her car disappeared out the end of the driveway.

"It's late. We ought to get to bed if we're going to get up and go to church in the morning." Virginia suggested. "I'll just lock up. Why don't you go up and start getting ready for bed?"

"I could help you close up?" I offered.

Virginia smiled. "No, that's all right Honey. I'm used to it. I'll be up in a minute."

"Ok."

I had hardly been in the room a minute when she joined me. "The bathroom's though here." Virginia opened the door next to the dressing table.

The bathroom was huge compared to mine at home. It had a long vanity with two sinks, a tile shower and a big contoured tub. There were jets

set around the sides.

"It's a jacuzzi." Virginia explained, seeing my interest in the jets.

What I didn't see was a toilet. Virginia anticipated my question. "The toilet and bidet are in there." She pointed to a door across from the vanity.

I had seen bidets in the movies but I had never seen one in real life. I knew what they were for but I couldn't imagine using it. I just had to peek at it.

"There's fresh towels in the closet and I think you'll find everything you need under the vanity. I didn't know what you'd want for makeup. I figured you'd probably have everything you'd need with you. You can borrow anything of mine you don't have."

That pretty well covered it. "Thanks."

She led the way back into the bedroom. "There are nighties in the dresser and I bought you some new underwear."

She had planned ahead. I had just assumed the dresser was empty. "Virginia, you shouldn't have."

Smiling, she lightly stroked my cheek. "I told you, it makes me happy. I'll see you in the morning Honey."

"Good night . . . Would it bother you if I called you 'Aunt Virginia?'" I felt so strange calling her Virginia. We had only joked about her acting like my Aunt in the past.

"I'd like that Jennifer. Of course you may."

I kissed her on the cheek. "Good night Aunt Virginia."

"Good night Honey. Sleep well." She closed the door behind her.

It was late and I was tired but I was more curious. I looked at everything in the closet. I even tried a few things on. I was shapelier than I realized, the white dress fit perfectly. The shoes were all the right size too. I shouldn't have bothered wondering. She knew all my sizes from our shopping spree.

There was hardly anything in the closet I would have called casual

wear. There were one or two pairs of slacks but they were definitely dressy. All the blouses were the same way. There wasn't anything like the clothes I had bought that day.

One by one, I opened the dresser drawers. One held slips, both long and half slips. The next, panties, a dozen pairs in different colors. One drawer was just for bras and it held five or six pretty ones. Another contained pantyhose, the nice silky kind that I liked, at least two dozen pairs in assorted colors. I found the nighties, fancy ones of nylon with pretty lace trim. Had she forgotten anything, I wondered in amazement?

The bathroom was equally well stocked. Shampoo, conditioner, lotion. I wished I had my own but the big bottle wasn't something I could carry around in my purse. I would have to get a little travel size bottle, so I could have it with me wherever I went. Maybe I would get a bottle to leave at Virginia's.

There was deodorant, hair spray, neither were the brands I normally used but I would make do.

There were disposable razors so I could shave my legs if I needed to. Virginia didn't know I hadn't shaved my legs in months. From time to time I did need to share my armpits but that was the only place hair seemed to grow. It would have been disastrous if I had to shave my face but from what I had read about the hormones in my body, that wasn't likely to be necessary.

In one of the drawers I found a curling iron. In the next were electric hot rollers. They excited me. I wanted to play with when there was time, but not that night.

I decided I better get ready for bed. It was after two and Virginia did say that we had to leave for church by nine thirty.

I slid under the cool covers in my new pink chemise nightie. The lace detailed spaghetti straps were something new and unfamiliar but oh so comfortable. The chemise felt so nice against my skin under the new sheets. I had no trouble getting comfortable and drifted off to sleep easily.

There was no alarm to awaken me and I would not have awakened on my own. Virginia woke me and I opened my eyes to see the morning sun shining in through the sheer curtains over the big bay window.

"Time to wake up Honey."

My eyes adjusted to the light. Virginia stood at the side of the bed in her nightgown and robe. "Good morning." I said sleepily.

"Good morning Honey." She answered with a smile. "Did you sleep alright?"

"Oh yes. I love this bed." It was much softer than mine at home.

"I'm glad. It's time to start getting ready for church. I wasn't sure how long it took you to get ready in the morning. We have an hour and a half till we have to leave. Is that enough, I hope?"

"Plenty." I assured her.

I was showered, my hair done, makeup on and dressed in an hour. I didn't need to borrow any jewelry from her, my pearls looked just fine with the white dress. The white heels I found in the closet looked wonderful with the dress. They had bows on the toes that were so pretty.



I was staring at myself in the mirror when Virginia came in to see how I was doing. "You're ready already?" She looked me over from head to toe. "I love that on you." She said smiling at me from the door.

"It fits perfectly. I just love it." If I was starting to sound like a girl, it was because I was beginning to feel like one. The expressions and mannerisms I so natural used were becoming second nature to me. Like walking and sitting and the hundred other little things I had learned and practiced every day.

I wasn't conscious of it at the time but I was also becoming more flamboyant in expressing myself, using my hands more and flipping my hair. The role I was playing was becoming less and less of a role and more a natural part of my everyday life. Had I realized I was changing so much I might have been worried, but I was oblivious of it.

She approved of the pearls with the dress. "I'm so glad you like them."

"They're the most beautiful jewelry I have." I knew that would please her to hear.

"We'll have to buy you some more nice things."

I started to say that wasn't necessary.

"Now don't you start that again." She told me smiling.

She was going to do exactly as she pleased and there was nothing I, or anyone else, was going to do about it.

"We better get going. We don't want to be late. Come on down to my room and I'll loan you a little white clutch bag. You can't carry your black purse with that dress."

I had the white bag she had bought me at home but that didn't do me much good here.

She had made coffee but I preferred just orange juice. I hadn't had coffee in months, I'd lost my taste for it. I realized I didn't have my vitamins with me. I had grown so accustomed to taking them that I felt guilty. Connie was religious about our taking them.

I was a little nervous about going to church but not too.

We were early. There was plenty of time for her to introduce her 'niece' to all her friends, and she had quite a few. I was introduced to men and women alike. Almost all complimented me on my lovely dress and told me how pretty I was.

I was pleased with the way I looked and the compliments I received. Who would have ever thought that I could feel the way I did about wearing women's clothes? I felt . . . pretty.

"So this is the young woman you've been telling us about." I heard the same comment a dozen times. I shouldn't have been surprised. Virginia looked very pleased with the way they accepted me. I had no trouble remembering how to behave.

I hadn't given a thought to what kind of church we were going to. I was raised as a Lutheran. The Baptists worshiped much differently than I remembered the services at my old church in New York. The singing was something I hadn't even thought about but I did all right. My singing voice was not so different from my speaking voice and I got away without sounding like a guy. I was lucky.

There were more introductions to people afterwards. I found myself in the middle of a dozen women all sharing the week's news and gossip. The women's husbands formed their own little coffee clutch. I wondered what they were talking about? I certainly didn't have much to add to the conversation the women were having. They talked about their children and grandchildren and a myriad of other topics that wouldn't have interested their husbands.

One of the younger women in the group asked Virginia if we wanted to join them for golf that afternoon. I would have enjoyed playing, I wasn't aware Virginia played. There was a lot about Virginia I didn't know.

Virginia must have felt I wasn't too comfortable in that situation, surrounded by women gossiping, because she excused us and we left for home.

In the car, I commented. "They wanted you to play golf with them. You could have gone. I would have been alright."

"Don't be silly. I finally get to spend the whole day with you, you don't think I'd run off and play golf and leave you alone?"

"We could both play." I suggested. "I wouldn't mind."

She acted surprised. "You play?"

"I used to have a fifteen handicap." Nothing to be too proud of.

Seemingly impressed, she said, "I'll give Gwen a call when we get home and see if we can join them."

"I'll need to rent clubs." That was no big deal.

"No need, I have an extra set. We can run by Virginia's and you can get a change of clothes. I don't think you'd fit in any of my things."

(continued in part 4)