



# EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT: PART 1

Story by Jacki Pett  
AI Art by RedRyder

*Formatted by Rebirth*

I finished junior college in July of 1991. Neither College nor my stay in jail could have prepared me for the events that would soon mold and change my life.

I was on probation for a car theft conviction and had almost two years of probation yet to serve. I thought that was an eternity but now, in retrospect, with what has happened, it was nothing.

I was joyriding with a few of my buddies in what I thought was a friend's car when we were arrested. My only crime was ignorance.

I had been struggling to find work since graduating. Even with my AA degree in business I was agonizingly unsuccessful. Having to declare myself as a convicted felon to each prospective employer had resulted in many doors being slammed in my face.

My girlfriend at the time, Tina, was the first girl I met since getting out of county jail. We'd been going together for over a year and our relationship was one of the few things that made life tolerable.

My parents weren't very supportive of me and desperately want me to get out on my own. They were not financially well off and I was a burden on them. I was well aware of this and looked forward to my independence.

My relationship with them had gone from bad to worse since I got in trouble. Dad was a jock in high school and college, a linebacker. I was a constant source of disappointment to him. I was always slight of build and nothing I tried to do seem to change that. I tried out for everything in high school, baseball, football, basketball. I was always the first to be cut. 'Too puny,' was always the reason. Dad and I just had nothing in common. Good grades didn't seem important when I couldn't measure up to his athletic expectations.

Mom and I got along all right when I was younger but she found herself siding with my father in any argument, and there were a lot of arguments.

I had to find a job and get out. The employment agency was my last resort. I had tried for months to find a job on my own, with no success. Through the agency, I had been having interviews at the rate of two or three a week but the possibilities were dwindling and weeks went by with nothing.

I didn't hold out much hope with this latest interview. I had filed an application, along with my resume, through the employment agency. The call came as something of a shock.

All I knew about the company was that it was some kind of advertising agency. I had agreed, after some hesitation and the reality of the availability of jobs, to lower my expectations and go after almost any kind of job I could get.

"It's an executive assistant position." Kim at the agency told me.

I'd been around enough to know that meant 'secretary', or at least something close to that. I made up my mind that if I could just get my foot in the door, I could show them what I was capable of and land a better position in time.

When I arrived at the Manhattan office building, I was somewhat awed by the expanse of the offices. This was no small company, I told myself. I was also a little heartsick when I was directed to the employment office waiting room. There, I found every chair filled with girls and women, applying for the job I came for. They ranged in age from young to middle aged and they all looked very professional. I felt very out of place and uncomfortable. Their questioning stares didn't help. This was obviously thought of as a woman's job and what was I, a man, doing there?

The wait for the interview was agonizing but I endured it. Hardly anyone spoke to one another, especially not to me. My turn to be interviewed finally came and I was surprised that it went as well as it seemed to. The company was looking for a capable assistant for one of their departments and I was delighted to find out that they found me to be so well qualified. My criminal record did come up but they didn't seem to be concerned with it.

I left the interview feeling fairly good about myself but was sure that there had to be better qualified applicants than me among all the women that were trying for the job. I was also sure that they would hire one of them before they'd consider me.

Several days passed before the call came. I had pretty well given up on the job. They wanted me to come back in for a second interview. I was a little embarrassed that I had to wear the same suit for a second time but I had no choice. It was the only one I owned and I couldn't afford to go out and buy another. No one said anything, they didn't even appear to notice.

To my amazement, at the end of the interview, the woman offered me the job.

"You understand, of course, that you'll be expected to perform all the tasks that each of the other . . . 'assistants' in the office are expected to perform?" She asked me.

I had a pretty good idea what she meant. "That's not a problem." I assured her with an energetic smile. I had a foot in the door and I wasn't about to do anything to ruin my chances. I would quickly show them how capable I was, I told myself. My intent was to quickly get promoted out of the job.

I reported to work that cool crisp Monday morning in April, my briefcase in hand, and as excited as a kid on the first day of school. I was put to work in one of the busy, larger offices. My desk was in the middle of the floor, among a dozen other secretaries.

Every one of the young women that surrounded me was, to say the least, attractive. Perhaps it was a prerequisite that, in an advertising agency, the people their customers saw had to be beautiful. What was I doing here, I asked myself?

I wasn't assigned to anyone in particular. The woman I reported to, the office manager, brought me everyone's overflow work. There were letters to type, things to file, data entry to perform. That was fine, I could type as well as most and I was familiar with the computer programs they used. The filing was a little boring but I didn't let it bother me.

Taking turns with the other secretaries, making and fetching coffee, was something I didn't particularly relish but I did it with a smile, not making waves.

Being nervous and feeling out of place, I didn't seem to make friends very quickly. I ate lunch in the lunchroom with all the other secretaries but they didn't seem anxious to include me in their conversations. I wasn't naive, I knew I was something of an oddity in their group. It took a few days before some of the girls began to warm up toward me.

My clothes, or a lack of, was a problem. Everyone in the office dressed up every day and I owned only my blue suit and a few, very inexpensive, ordinary sport coats. Although I couldn't afford it, before reporting to work on Wednesday, I used my charge card and bought two new sport coats, a few new dress shirts and ties. They weren't cutting edge styles but I couldn't afford better. I still felt a little embarrassed, there among all those fashionable people.



Apart from the executives in the office, there were few men besides myself. My plain, inexpensive attire looked out of place compared to the stylish, expensive, way they dressed. There was little I could do since I had already over extended myself.

The first week was fairly uneventful and unchallenging. I learned my way around the office, getting acquainted with the way things were done.

I came home drained most nights. I found excuses to avoid getting together with Tina, telling her I was too tired but the truth was that I was embarrassed about my job.

It was about mid-May when my big opportunity came. I was called in for my one-month review and I was a little nervous. Mrs. Carter, the office manager, had not been one to lavish praise on me. In fact, she spoke to me very little. When Miss Denalt, the reviewer in personnel, told me she had received nothing but good reports about me, I was more than a little surprised.

"Connie Sackett's secretary, Ginny, is leaving us and Ms. Sackett will be needing a replacement. I believe you've shown that you have the qualifications to do the job." She said to me with a funny smile on her face.

I didn't understand the humor. I had heard the woman's name around the office and even typed a few memos addressed to her. She was in sales, some kind of manager, and her office was on the fourth floor, one floor up from the main office.

Miss Denalt went on to explain the job further. "Ms. Sackett manages our Atlanta office but she keeps an office here as well. You'll be handling all her secretarial work here in New York."

"Does she come to New York often?" I asked.

"She flies in once a month for the sales meetings. Other than that she spends most of her time in Atlanta and traveling." Miss Denalt explained. "You'll be receiving most of your assignments by phone and fax."

It sounded a little strange but it had possibilities. No boss around most of the time. Maybe this was the opportunity I needed to show what I could do.

Miss Denalt's tone turned serious. "Jeffrey, you've been given this opportunity because of your attention to detail. You've been doing an excellent job up until now. Ms. Sackett is a very demanding person. I have to caution you that she's gone through four secretaries in the past year alone. She expects a great deal from the people who work with her."

That was just the atmosphere I wanted to work in. The more demanding the better. From here, my career could take off. I convinced myself of that. "I'm prepared to meet her needs." I told Miss Denalt with confidence.

I was to start my new assignment on the following Monday. I already knew the office had a very sophisticated grapevine but I was amazed to learn just how quickly news traveled. The girls in my pool already knew about the assignment when I returned to my desk. There was mixed reaction to my new assignment. A few girls cautioned me, giving me the same warning Miss Denalt had, "She can be a real witch." Janet cautioned me.

"She expects complete dedication." Barbara warned.

I assured them I was ready for the challenge. This was by big chance.

I learned all I could over the next few days about the Atlanta part of the business. Connie Sackett ran the South East operation. Her prime responsible was for the layout work and she oversaw that personally. Atlanta did most of the catalog and photo work for the business.

I came in early Monday morning. Miss Denalt had taken me upstairs late Friday to show me my new desk. I was excited, anxious to start my new job. Working for a woman didn't seem like such a big deal anymore, after a month of reporting to Mrs. Carter and the host of other women who gave me my assignments.

I arranged my things at my desk. I checked the office fax and the computer mail to see if there was anything there for me. There were a few things from the woman in Atlanta, from Ms. Sackett.

I was going to be working fairly independently of anyone in the sales office and that I felt was exciting.

Miss Denalt had warned me that my new boss was very proper and expected to be always addressed by her proper name. She didn't appreciate the familiar.

I took advantage of the early hour and the fact that the office was still empty to look around my new boss' office. It looked like any other office except that it contained very little of the usual personal effects that you would normally find. Only a picture on the desk betrayed that the office wasn't unoccupied. It was a picture of a young woman. She was tall, slender and very beautiful with her long wavy brown hair. I wondered if this could possibly be Mrs. Sackett. She didn't look anything like the girls downstairs described her. Their description gave me the picture in my mind of a tall, woman. Not beautiful but attractive. A woman you would notice in a crowd. Very self-confident, a take charge kind of person. No, this picture couldn't be of the woman. A daughter or niece perhaps?

There was nothing else on display to give me a feel for the woman. I tackled the work that she had sent me to do.

It was several days before I actually heard from Ms. Sackett. I had received endless faxes and computer mail but Wednesday's was my first phone call.

I was a little surprised at her voice, at how pleasant she sounded. She wasn't at all what I'd expected after all the warnings. Everyone made her sound like some kind of raving lunatic.

She praised me on the work I had been doing and said she appreciated my being so prompt and accurate in getting out everything she had sent me. "My staff works as a team Jeffrey and it looks like you're going to fit in very nicely."

I was thrilled with her praise. I knew all along I could do the job and it was nice, for the first time with the company, to be thanked for my work. It made me feel as if I might have a future there.

As much as I enjoyed my job now, it was wonderful to have the weekend off. Tina and I went out on Friday night. For the first time since I started my job, I didn't mind talking about my work. I was no longer so embarrassed that I was working as a secretary while Tina was a manager in a large department store.

My mother and father were pleased that I would finally be able to begin contributing to the household expenses.

There had been some rough times in my house since I first got in trouble with the law. My defense had cost my parents quite a bit of money and, in the end, I landed in jail anyway. I owed them quite a debt and there were many heated arguments in the past when they reminded me. Now things were more peaceful and I wanted to keep it that way.

My Mom was a secretary in a real estate office and I didn't mind talking to her about my work, but my Dad was from the old school and he had trouble accepting the idea that I did 'women's work' and enjoyed it. When he was around, I changed the subject.

It was the middle of the following month, June, when the urgent call came. "Jeffrey, I need you here. Karen's been in an awful car accident and I need your help."

I was on a plane for Atlanta that afternoon. It was an adventure and I was so excited. I never imagined I would have a job that required me to travel, at least not so early in my career. I was on my way to be the assistant to one of the most successful sales managers in the company.

I had three quick calls to make. The first was to my probation officer but he had already gotten a call from someone with the company, explaining the circumstances. I was cleared to go.

Next, I called Tina and told her the great news. She was excited for me. "How long will you be gone?" She asked. I could hear the disappointment in her voice. She didn't like the idea of my going so far away. She was going to miss me.

"I'm not sure." Was all I could tell her. "I'll call you tonight." I promised.

I had to throw some clothes in a bag. I called my mother at work when I got home. She agreed it sounded exciting and wished me well. I had to promise to call her and tell her all about the new job as soon as I was settled.

My travel arrangements were made for me and I was surprised to learn that I would be staying in the company condo. They gave me the address and directions.

Arriving in Atlanta, leaving the airport, I told the cab driver to take me to the company office first. It was almost 7:00 p.m. and I didn't expect to find it open but I just wanted a look before going to the apartment to unpack.

I was surprised to find the lights on in the lobby and the door open. Making a good impression on my boss was very important, so on the chance that she was still there, I decided to go in, asking the cab driver to wait.

No one sat at the desk in the lobby. I went through the big mahogany doors that appeared to lead to the offices behind. I was impressed with how modern the decor was. It was nothing like their Manhattan offices that had been built some fifty years ago. This building looked almost new.

Following a long hallway, I found none of the offices occupied. I was about to give up when I remembered that the photo studio was in this building. There was a second floor so I went back to the elevator that I had passed and pushed the button for the second floor.

I heard the hustle and bustle before the door opened. When I stepped out into the brightly lit hallway, I saw the source of the noise. There, behind a glass wall, was a photo shoot in process.

No one noticed me as I stepped out of the elevator. I walked over to the glass door and let myself in. I tried to be quiet and inconspicuous, so as not to disturb anyone.

I looked around, hoping to be able to spot Ms. Sackett but, since I had never even seen a picture of her, I could only guess. I looked for a woman who seemed to be in charge.

She wasn't difficult to pick out. Connie Sackett was a big woman, not fat but tall, with a full figure. She stood almost six foot, five or six inches taller than me. I thought to myself at the time that she could probably throw me across the room. She looked like an amazon.

Her size didn't make her unattractive at all. She had beautiful short blond hair. If her face were a little slimmer, she would have been strikingly beautiful.

What really caught your attention was her eyes. She had the most beautiful green eyes. They seemed to command attention.

But it wasn't merely her eyes that demanded your attention though. The way she carried herself as she paced around behind the cameras, telling the photographer this, telling the models that. Everyone seems to jump at her command.

I managed to tear my attention from her and admire the young women who stood before the camera. They were all so beautiful. The advertising business did have its advantages.

"May I help you!?" Said the voice to my left. I turned to see the big blond woman walking toward me.

I was absolutely intimidated by her. "I... " She didn't let me finish.

"Who are you? We're very busy here! The office is closed."

I blurted out, "I'm Jeffrey." I rarely used my whole first name but every time I had spoken to Ms. Sackett, she addressed me that way and if this was she . . .

Her expression of scorn turned instantly to a smile. "Jeffrey!" She was apparently happy to see me. She reached out for my hand and I responded in kind.

"I'm so glad you could get here so quickly. I'm Ms. Sackett." She didn't have to tell me. I was already sure I had found her.

"It's very nice to meet you." I said numbly.

I was given a very careful look over by her and it made me a little uncomfortable.

"Have you already been to the condo?" She asked.

I still fumbled for words, "I came straight here from the airport. I left my bags in the cab downstairs."

She was obviously pleased, by her expression. "I can tell we're going to work well together Jeffrey. Go put your things in the lobby, I'll take you to the condo when we're done here. Hurry now, we'll talk later." With that, she dismissed me and turned her attention back to business.

Ms. Sackett didn't seem the monster that everyone told me she was. True, she was intimidating, more so than anyone I had ever met, but the idea of working with someone like her, being associated with her, was exciting.

She didn't have much time for me. I stood in the background, staying out of the way and just watching. I continued to be impressed by her as she directed every detail of the shoot. She occasionally would turn to me with a thought or a note to put down about this or that and I was ready with pad and pen.

It didn't end until almost ten. I followed her downstairs as we left everyone to wrap up. She took me to her office and, as we entered the outer office, I was shown my desk. The vestibule was

nicer, more modern than the average office in Manhattan and it was mine. I couldn't believe it. True, when Karen recovered, I would certainly have to go back to Manhattan, but for now at least, it was mine.

She wasted no time in getting us out of there. She opened the door of the gold Cadillac for me and closed it when I was in. A strange thing for a boss to do but I chalked it off as her just trying to make me more relaxed. I knew I must have looked like a scared kid around her. I certainly felt like one.

It was a short drive to the condo. She did most of the talking and the topic of conversation was me. She wanted to know all about me, my personal life, my interests, hobbies, ambitions.

I was surprised that a woman as busy and important as she was, was even interested. I answered all her questions and as I did, I began to relax. She carried my overnight bag up to the condo while I took my suitcase.

She took great pleasure in showing me around the small apartment. It was beautifully decorated and completely furnished.

I was surprised to find clothes in the closet, girls' clothes. She explained, "Sometimes, when I work some of the girls very late, they use this place instead of driving all the way home. Karen, Trish and a few of the models keep some clothes here. There's still plenty of room for your things.

She made a pot of coffee and we sat at the kitchen table. The questions continued. She wanted to know about my family, any girlfriends. Some of the questions about my relationship with Tina were very personal but I felt compelled to tell her everything. There was something about her that just made me open up.

I was a little surprised when she asked me about what it was like for me in jail. I suppose I should have known that she'd know about that too. There wasn't much to tell. My size, being short and skinny, was a definite problem for me. I spent almost the entire six months in self-imposed lock down. It was safer than being out among the rest of the population.

"It must have been awful for you." She said with concern.

"It was, I'm on probation now though and I have to be careful not to get in any kind of trouble." I admitted.

"I know. I'm the one who called your probation officer and arranged for you to be able to come down here."

I knew that someone from the company had called but I never imagined it was her. "You did that?"

"Of course. I needed you and I knew about your problem. I assured your parole officer I'd look after you and keep you out of trouble. I take care of my people." She said with a reassuring smile.

"Ms. Sackett, I really appreciate your confidence in me and the chance to show you what I can do." I really wanted to please her. She had gone out of her way to take a chance on me.

"Jeffrey, when we're alone you can call me Connie. It's when we're around others that I expect you to address me as Ms. Sackett." She continued to try to make me feel more at ease. I knew then that I was going to enjoy working for her.

"Thank you. I won't disappoint you."

"I'm sure you won't Jeffrey. We're a team here and we each do whatever we have to, to get the job done. If you just remember that, we'll do just fine."

She stood up to go. "I'll be by at seven to pick you up. Karen and I always had breakfast at the office to go over the day's business and I like doing that."

At the door, she turned back to me, "Jeffrey, I couldn't help but notice that your clothes are a little out of fashion. Did you bring anything more stylish with you?"

I was embarrassed. In New York I got away with it. "No, I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry dear. We'll go shopping Saturday and get you some more appropriate outfits. We do have to show our customers we're on the cutting edge of fashion." Again, the reassuring smile. "I'll see you bright and early in the morning. Sleep well."

I was more excited than ever about the opportunity. It was nearly midnight when I finished unpacking my things. In the bathroom, I had to put my toiletries on the back of the toilet because there was no room in the medicine cabinet or drawers for all the girls' toiletries and cosmetics.

It must have been one in the morning before I fell asleep in the big queen sized bed. The alarm was set for six. I was going to be ready and outside when Connie pulled into the parking lot in the morning.

Breakfast was served in her office. It wasn't the type of breakfast that I was accustomed to. "You don't mind that we eat light?" It was more of a statement than a question. "We all need to watch our weight around here, especially me."

I wasn't about to say anything. I certainly didn't need to diet at 140 pounds but the food was tasty and filling.

I couldn't help but notice the bottles of vitamins in her drawer when she went in for her diet sugar. She apparently saw me look. "I'm a vitamin freak. I take a half a dozen different ones a day." She explained.

"That's a lot." I commented.

"But they're all very good for you. You take vitamins, don't you?"

I admitted to her that I hadn't taken them since I was a kid.

"Don't you know how important your health is?" She sounded like my mother. "I'll get you some of your own. I'll get you a set for your desk and some to keep at the apartment." She looked at me very seriously. "You will take them every day Jeffrey."

She was very serious. I agreed that I would. They couldn't hurt.

Talk over breakfast was all business. She had an unbelievable schedule with customer meetings, staff meetings, photo shoots and the endless stats and data to be reviewed. My job was to review everything before forwarding it to her and to schedule and make sure everything was in place to meet her needs.

My first thought was how could anyone do all this. "Don't let it scare you Jeffrey. I'll help you at first." She assured me.

I couldn't imagine how anyone could think of this woman as an ogre.

My day went by unbelievably fast; I was so busy. The traffic in and out of Connie's office was constant. I met dozens of people, her associates and a few customers.

The models were the only ones who seemed uncomfortable with me. I didn't know if it was because I was a man or that they were accustomed to working with Karen. They had to pick up their schedules from me but had little to say.

The phones rang off the hook all day, constantly interrupting me. I managed to get most of my work done but I had to skip lunch to do it. It was seven thirty when Connie was done for the day and took me back to the condo.

"Shouldn't I rent a car or something so that I don't have to inconvenience you?" I asked on the ride home.

"Don't be silly Jeffrey. I Don't mind. Besides, we work the same hours and the condo is on my way home. I only live a few blocks from there." It made sense at the time. It didn't afford me much personal freedom though. I couldn't go much of anywhere without her driving me. I let it drop.

The refrigerator was not stocked with the kinds of food I was used to and I had no way to get out to shop. I took one of the diet meals from the freezer and heated it in the microwave. As I ate, I finished the work that I had brought from the office.

I called Tina and talked for a half hour about how exciting my job was. She didn't like the idea of my working so closely with beautiful models. I tried to joke about it but she wasn't amused.

I called my mother and told her everything too. She was worried about me taking care of myself. She was relieved to hear how Connie was looking out for me.

After flipping the channels on the tv for a few minutes, I showered and went to bed.

Friday went much like the day before. I was unbelievably busy all day. I had to go to a shoot in the afternoon that didn't end till eight. Connie had dinner brought in for everyone.

When she dropped me in front of the condo, she told me. "You can sleep in the morning Jeffrey. I'll come by around noon and we'll go shopping."

It was generous of her to take the time but I was worried how I'd pay for new clothes, particularly if they were the latest fashions, they would certainly be very expensive.

I did sleep in. I didn't get out of bed till ten. I was ready to go at 11:00 and waited nervously for Connie to arrive.

She was consistently punctual, pulling in the parking lot at exactly noon.

No one had done my shopping for me in years. Not since my mother used to buy me my school clothes. Connie took over completely. She knew exactly where to go and knew where in the stores to find what she wanted. The sales people all seemed to know her by sight. "You have to know what people want, what they're buying, in this business." She explained.

I would never have bought the kinds of things she picked out and had me model for her. I bit my tongue as I modeled the silk shirts with their bright colors and patterns. She sought out bright colored pants to match. The pleated leather pants were almost too much. Even new shoes to go with everything. They looked more like girls' flats than men's shoes. The socks were brightly colored and sheer. All with patterns. I had seen them in the stores but never gave a thought to buying them for myself.

When she was satisfied with her selection of clothes, she turned to me and said. "Now we need to get you earrings."

That surprised me. She had obviously noticed that my ear was pierced. I had done it when I was in jail. Everyone there seemed to have an earring so I wanted to fit in. I continued to wear one in college because all the kids did. I stopped wearing it when I started my job search because I thought it was inappropriate.

As with everything else, Connie picked it out from the displays in the jewelry department. I had worn a small hoop before, but the earring she picked out was larger than I was accustomed to. She had to buy the pair and did so without giving me taste any consideration.

"These will look perfect." She decided, holding them up to my ears.

These, I questioned to myself? "Both?" I asked.

She looked surprised at the question. "Of course. All the fashionable young men your age are wearing two these days. You're going to look fantastic" She said beaming.

I was in her hands. They pierced my other ear right there in the store and we went to the register with the half inch gold hoops in my ears. My old one was only about a quarter inch.

I pulled out my credit card, not at all anxious to hear the total of the purchases the girl behind the counter was adding up.

"You just put that away Jeffrey. This is my treat." Connie said when she saw me lay the credit card on the counter.

The sales girl looked over at me, then to the woman who was buying me my new wardrobe. She didn't say anything but I saw the smirk on her face as she turned back to the resister. I knew I looked foolish, standing there next to Connie in my earrings, wearing the bright purple silk shirt and black leather pants. I was quite an odd sight. We made quite a pair as she completely overshadowed me.



Outside, on the sidewalk, I felt even more conspicuous.

"Now we need to do something with your hair." She informed me. "I made a four o'clock appointment for us at Gregory's."

I turned to her as we climbed into her car, "My hair?"

"Certainly! We have to do something with it. You have lovely hair but that style of yours is more appropriate for Wall Street than for someone in the fashion industry."

"I don't think . . . "

"Jeffrey, you'll learn in this business that impressions are everything. Our customers are the most fashion conscious in the business and they expect us to be the same. You're part of the team now, you don't want to look like you don't know anything about fashion do you?"

What could I say? "No of course not. I wasn't thinking." I was going to have to go along.

The hair stylist made me uncomfortable. 'Jimmy' was as feminine as any girl I'd ever known. He was obviously a flaming gay.

I sat there, speechless, while Connie instructed him as to the look she wanted for me.

My hair had always been long but neatly pulled to the back. I had been wearing it covering my ears for years, ever since high school. Now I was getting it permed.

I looked in the mirror in shock when 'Jimmy' was finished. Connie stood behind me absolutely beaming. "Jeffrey, you look wonderful."

He had taken almost no length off my hair and the body perm gave it more fullness, volume they called it. Instead of being pulled to the back against my head it hung down to the sides from a part almost at the center of my scalp. Just below my ears it curved slightly forward on my cheeks. If they had given me bangs, I would have been indiscernible from a girl. It made me feel very self-conscious. He had also put something on it that made it shinier than it had ever been. "Are you sure?" I asked skeptically.



"Trust me Jeffrey, you look fabulous" Connie remarked, looking quite pleased.

Fabulous? I looked ridiculous! Tina came to mind. What would she think if she saw me like this? I put the thought out of her out my mind. She would definitely not approve.

Connie instructed Jimmy to show me how to fix my hair myself and I learned how, using a blow dryer and rounded brush to achieve the same effect he had. I was happy to get away from the guy, finally.

"I feel like everyone's looking at me." I said as we walked out of the salon to the car.

"They are Jeffrey, and that's what they're supposed to do."

I was almost afraid to ask, "You don't think I look like a girl?"

Connie laughed, "No Jeffrey, don't be silly. You look very handsome. The girls are going to love it. I bet your girlfriend Tina will be thrilled."

Not Tina. This look would not thrill her at all.

We drove back to the Condo. Connie picked up the package that lay on the front seat since she picked me up. I had been curious about it. "Here, this is for you."

I opened it to find a bottle of prescription lotion. "What's this for?"

"All of the men at the office are using it. It's to help your complexion and keep your skin looking young."

"Moisturizer?"

"Yes, it's moisturizer. It's as important in this business to look young as it is to dress with the times. I want you to put it on your face and hands every morning and evening. You'll like the way it makes your skin feel." She used her persuasive tone again.

"Alright, I will." I agreed.

Connie helped me put everything away in the closet. I had enough new clothes that I would be able to wear a different 'outfit', as Connie referred to them, every day for almost two weeks.

"Wear this one on Monday. This is my favorite." Connie instructed me setting out a brightly flowered shirt and bright blue slacks. She even picked out my shoes and hose.

"I can't wait till everyone sees the new you on Monday." She added smiling.

I wanted to say, 'I could', but I didn't.

It was about six when Connie left. She had a date she told me and had to go home and get ready. "I'll see you Monday morning." She said joyfully as she left.

I remember how I felt as she left me there. I had grave doubts about her assurances considering the way I looked. She had been very convincing about my not looking like a freak but I wasn't so sure.

I tried for two hours to find a way to style my hair that didn't look so feminine but gave up. There was nothing I could do with it to make it look better, short of putting it in a pony tail.

I didn't go out once over the weekend. I tried to get used to the way I looked but it wasn't easy. I followed Connie's instructions and used the lotion she had bought me. It didn't have any noticeable effect but it did make my skin feel good. She was certainly right about that.

Monday morning came too quickly. I didn't stand outside to wait for her. I waited by the window instead. I hurried down when she pulled in and I got in the car quickly.

She was delighted with the way I looked. "I knew that was the perfect outfit. You look incredible."

"Thanks" I said in response.

She must have sensed the anxiety in my voice. "What's wrong Jeffrey?"

I didn't want to hurt her feelings. After all, she had spent a lot of money on me and was obviously thrilled with the result. "I'm just not used to the new me yet."

"You'll get used to it quickly. Just wait until everyone sees how wonderful you look."

I was skeptical but to my surprise, the reactions were amazing. It started when we walked into the lobby and the receptionist's, Bobbie's, face showed how impressed she was. "Jeffrey, you look wonderful."



Everyone we passed on the way back to Connie office had a similar reaction, the men as well as the women. By the time I reached my desk I was starting to be convinced.

"See Jeffrey, I told you there was nothing to worry about. Everyone loves your new look."

"I shouldn't have doubted you." I told her. It was the first time since Saturday that I smiled.

"That's more like it. You look much better with a smile on your face. Now we better get to work." Our breakfast arrived as we sat down in her office.

Everyone who came into the office through the day approved of the new me. Even the models, who had snubbed me last week, seemed to open up. I received quite a few compliments.

As the week wore on they didn't fuss over me so much. They still complimented me on my new wardrobe each day.

By mid-week I did start to see a little difference in my complexion. My skin was looking better and smoother. My hands looked better too. I started bringing it to work and put it on during the day too.

The week sped by. There were three photo shoots and we worked late all three nights. I was making new friends as we worked those long hours. It was nice to be accepted and my concern about how I looked melted away over the days.

Tina was beginning to ask when I was going to come home. There was no way I could get away, as busy as we were. We had even put in a full day on Saturday.

I still had my reservations about what she'd think of the new me. I was fairly used to myself and comfortable with the look but what Tina's reaction might be still worried me. Tina was a simple girl with simple tastes. Her idea of getting dolled up was a white cotton blouse and jeans skirt. She wouldn't understand real fashion. "I don't think I'll be able to get away for a few weeks yet." I told her.

Thursday's shoot was a last-minute thing. Connie only told me about it that morning. I had to really scramble to get everything arranged in time for four o'clock that afternoon.

Not everything went quite as planned. As usual, I stayed in the background as we waited for the last of the models to show up. They were over half an hour late already. I was responsible for the phone and when it rang, I grabbed it.

Connie wasn't at all happy when I told her that Gwen wasn't going to make it. The shoot required four girls and three guys in a cocktail party setting. Gwen was the fourth girl.

"We'll just have to cancel." Terry, the photographer, suggested.

I knew Connie was trying to think of a way to salvage the shoot. It cost a lot to bring all this together to just quit. I was watching Connie to see what she was going to do. She looked around and her eyes fixed on mine for a minute before she turned back to Terry. "We're not going to cancel anything." She told him.

Connie walked over to Stephanie, the wardrobe girl. She said something to her I couldn't hear. Then she called Pam over to join them. Pam was responsible for the girl's makeup. They talk for a few minutes then Stephanie headed for the wardrobe room and Pam to her room. Connie walked over to where I stood.

I wondered if she was going to try to use one of them in the shoot but Stephanie was a stubby little thing and Pam was almost six two. They really wouldn't do.

"This is not good."

"I know." I had to ask, "You're not going to use Stephanie or Pam, are you?"

Connie smirked. "No way."

"What are you going to do? It's too late to get someone else." I was sure of that.

"There's only one thing I can think of Jeffrey."

I waited to hear how she was going to pull it off.

"I'm going to need your help." She said flatly, her expression was quite serious, I knew she wasn't kidding.

"What can I do?" I asked innocently.

"You have to fill in for Gwen." The expression on her face said she wasn't kidding.

"Me!?" I nearly fell off the stool. "I can't pass as a girl." Even if I wanted to, which I didn't.

Her tone was calm and level. "Stephanie, Pam and I discussed it and we agree you can save the shoot."

"Me!?" I was repeating myself but I didn't care.

"You can do it Jeffrey. Remember when I told you that you were part of the team and that the team does whatever it has to, to get the job done?"

"I remember but . . ."

"You're not going to let me down now when I really need you, are you?"

She hit the right cords. How could I refuse? Her eyes compelled me like they had never done before. She waited for my answer.

"If you think I can . . . "

Connie turned to Terry before I even finished. "We're on. Jeffrey's going to fill in for Gwen."

The models turned to look at me. All of their faces betrayed their surprise.

Terry had something to say. "I don't know Connie."

"He'll be fine. Stephanie has just the dress and Pam is sure she can make him up to look convincing. No one will ever know."

"The camera will know. It sees everything."

I just stood there, dumb, while they argued.

"Ok, what's the problem?" Connie asked her.

"He's got hairy legs."

"Black stockings." Connie responded.

"The camera will know." Terry said flatly.

"He'll shave."

"What about his arm hair."

"Depilatory." Connie had an answer ready.

"His hair's not right for the shot."

"Stephanie's already combing out his wig."

Terry shrugged his shoulders. "All right, I give in. Let's see how he looks."

Connie turned back to me. "Come on Jeffrey, we have to hurry." She turned to the models on the set. "Just relax while Jeffrey gets ready." Connie hurried me into makeup.

Pam was waiting. "Here, take this into the bathroom and hurry." She handed me a plastic bottle of lotion, a razor and a bottle of hair remover.

"I'll go with him." Connie told her.

When I came out of the bathroom, I was wearing just my underwear. My legs were smooth shaven and my arms completely hairless. I felt very strange and helplessly. Pam and Connie weren't even phased at seeing me this way.

With me seated in her chair, Pam went to work putting makeup on. She turned me away from the mirror so I couldn't see what she was doing.

She had been working on me for about five minutes when Shephanie came in carrying a wig and a black dress. "He'll have to shave his armpits and chest. This is the only dress I have right now that might fit him but it might make him look fat."

I looked at the wig and dress. The wig was almost the same color as my own hair but wavy. It was about six inches longer than mine.

The dress was a simple 'little black dress' with sheer sleeves, cuffed with jeweled buttons. The jeweled neckline plunged enough that my fine chest hair would show. I couldn't imagine that I could look convincing in it. I turned to Connie with a pleading look on my face. She was watching me. "Don't worry, you'll do fine." To Stephanie she said, "Do you still have that waist clincher back there somewhere?"

"I think so." She replied. "I'll get it."

Pam let me up from her chair and we made a second trip into the bathroom. I came out a few minutes later with clean shaven armpits. The lotion made quick work of my sparse, fine chest hair.

Pam finished making me up and fitted the wig on me. She pinned it securely to my hair.

Stephanie had left us while we were in the bathroom. She was back now, holding a bra, panties, stockings and the waist clincher.

I got a sick feeling in my stomach when I saw it all. Just the idea of wearing women's lingerie made me feel sick. "I need to use the bathroom." I announced.

"Go ahead dear but try to hurry." Connie told me. "Don't mess up your makeup." Pam added. I threw up what little I had in my stomach. I was sure they could hear what I was doing but I didn't much care.

Connie came in as I leaned over the bowl. "That's all right. Let it out. You'll feel better afterwards."

"I don't know if I can do this." I admitted as I looked up at her.

"Of course, you can." That was it. "Come on now. Everyone's waiting."

Connie had the panties and stocking in her hand. "Slip these on and come on out." She left me there.

I know I took longer than they expected but I finally came out wearing the lingerie. I felt so foolish.

Stephanie fitted the bra and tight-fitting waist belt on me while Pam touched up my makeup. I just stood there and let them do it. The bra cups had foam inserts that made me look like I had real breasts.

"I have to do something with these eyebrows." Pam said, sounding frustrated.

Connie came around and looked. "Just do what you have to." She said to her impatiently.

"My eyebrows?" I asked with panic.

"Don't worry. Pam will only do what she has to, to make you look pretty." Connie told me. It wasn't very reassuring.

Pam started plucking and she seemed to pull out a lot. I still couldn't see what she was doing and that bothered me a lot. She took her little scissors and cut them short.

She finally stopped and stood back to view her work. "That's much better."

Connie looked to see. "Very nice."

I couldn't resist looking. The person in the mirror wasn't me. It was a very convincing looking girl. My complexion was flawless. My eyes looked just like a girl's with all the color on my lids, the eyeliner and long lashes. My eyebrows were narrow and short. They arched up in a curve over my eyes.

I appeared to have high cheekbones but that was just the blush Pam had put on. The most noticeable feature was my bright red, shaped lips. I couldn't believe they had been able to make me over so convincingly.

Connie obviously thought I was admiring their work. "See, I told you they could make you look pretty." She said smiling and apparently pleased.

"I guess so." I said turning to her. I didn't echo her pleasure.

"Now let's get you into your dress." Stephanie was waiting. I stepped into it while the girl held it for me. She zipped up the back and came around to see how it looked.

"He has a better figure than I do." Pam commented.

I looked at myself in the mirror and I had to admit that I did have something of a girl's shape. I had just always thought of myself as skinny. It didn't help me feel any better to realize I had a girl's figure. The waist belt, a clincher as they called it, gave me a slender waistline.

"Size eight? Right?" Stephanie asked. I looked over to see her holding a pair of black heels.

"That's right." Connie said from behind me. "Try them on Jeffrey." She told me.



It was uncomfortable, standing there in high heels but they did seem to fit, apart from pinching my toes a little. I was worried about how I would walk in them.

"These will be perfect with his dress." Stephanie took a pair of earrings from her pocket and showed them to the others.

"Perfect." Connie agreed and Stephanie removed the hoops from my ears and put in the black and gold dangle earrings in the holes in my earlobes. I didn't want to look. I didn't want to see myself anymore.

"That's it. He's perfect. Let's go." Connie said taking my hand and leading me. "I don't want you to fall in those shoes so just hang on to me."

She didn't have to tell me twice. I felt very clumsy. Everyone turned to see me when we walked out onto the set. The girls who had been waiting all turned and smiled. "Jeffrey, you look absolutely beautiful." Trish said approvingly. "You look positively precious." Joyce agreed. "Lovely" Kim added. They each had something to add.

They guys didn't say much. Their looks were not approving. They made me feel really uncomfortable. Surely, they had to know I wasn't enjoying myself. It wasn't my idea.

Terry's remark was from a critical point of view, not a condemning one. She commented, "You didn't do his nails. His hands don't look right."

"Damn, I missed that." Pam hurried back to her room. She came back a moment later with a tray.

"A couple of you give me a hand. We can do this twice as fast if we work together." They sat me down at the little table they brought out under the lights. Kim and Trish took my left hand while Pam and Joyce did my right. It was amazing to see how quickly they applied the fake nails. They were accustomed to doing it, of course. Pam insisted on applying the bright red polish herself. "It's a quick dry formula." It was quick.

With Terry finally satisfied, they had me posing on the set in minutes. Posing was the easy part. I had only to stand with my feet together, my side to the camera and hold a glass of champagne in my hand. Getting me to smile the way they want me to, that was the hard part. Connie finally got me to achieve the look they wanted as she talked to me from off set. She was convincing enough to get me to smile.

I had sat through several shoots but I found I had no idea of the work it was for the girls on the set. It wasn't till the fifth shot that I got the knack of smiling the way they wanted me to. By that time my feet were killing me.

I got used to the feeling of wearing a dress and it was beginning to feel like any other piece of clothes. As comfortable as it felt, it still wasn't right, me wearing a dress in front of the camera.

I knew the agenda of this shoot so I knew when the last shot was done before anyone told me. It would have thrilled me to go in back and get out of those things but Connie had a better idea. "Jeffrey, you did a beautiful job tonight. I really owe you a lot for this."



What could I say? "I'm part of the team." Now this team member wanted to change. "Ok if I change now?" I asked.

"Oh Jeffrey. Do you suppose I could have just one picture of you for myself? Just to remember tonight? Just one?" Connie asked so sweetly.

What else could I do? I had already had well over a hundred pictures taken of me in a dress. What difference would a few more make? "I guess so."

"You're a sweetheart." She turned to Terry who had been listening. "Just a few simple shots."

I posed sitting and standing. Terry took a few shots of me looking pensive, a few looking distracted and thoughtful and finally a half dozen shots smiling. It did get easier as I worked at it.

The guys left the set to change but the girls all stayed to watch. "You did very well, I was impressed." Trish told me. This is the girl who had hardly said two words to me in a week. Kim and Joyce were just as complementary and, despite the weird circumstances, I appreciated their praise.

I admitted to them that the guys made me nervous. They laughed out loud. When they saw the hurt look on my face Kim explained. "Don't let them bother you Jeffrey. They're all gay."

Now I understood her laughing. "I didn't know."

"Don't give them a thought. I'm sure you make them uncomfortable." Trish told me. "A lot of male models are gay."



Knowing that made me feel more at ease. I could live with making them uncomfortable. That was their problem.

I didn't realize how late it was. I hadn't been able to see the clock from the set. Now I saw that it was almost eleven. It felt good to get out of the pumps finally. My own clothes, as alien to me as they had first seemed, were a pleasure to put back on. It was a relief to get out of the wig and brush out my hair. I wouldn't complain about my styled cut anymore. I was content with it.

We were on our way out the lobby door when I realized I was still wearing the long nails they had put on me. I had gotten used to them over the course of the evening. I had been wearing them for over five hours. "I need to go back and take these off." I told Connie.

"You can take them off at home. Come on."

It was late and there was no one on the streets at this hour. I was going straight home. "Ok, you're right."

Connie walked beside me as we headed for the car. "You really did a marvelous job tonight. You saved the shoot and I want you to know I really appreciate that. You proved tonight that you're really a team player."

I wanted her to know. "I really appreciate the opportunity you've given me with the company. I also want you to know that what I did tonight, I did for you. I wouldn't do anything like that for anyone else."

"I appreciate that, Jeffrey. We're going to make a good team." Connie said with a smile.

It took some work but I eventually managed to get the nails off with the polish remover Connie gave me to use.

As I got ready for bed, I studied myself in the mirror. Were all the traces of the girl I had been tonight gone? As I studied my reflection, I realized that she wasn't completely gone.

My hairless chest, arms and legs felt strange to wash as I stood under the steady stream of water in the shower. They were so smooth and silky feeling.

My eyebrows were still narrow and arched.

The last thing I did before I slipped under the covers was to massage in my lotion on my hands and face. As an afterthought, I also applied the lotion over the rest of my hairless body. I only did it because the lotion made my skin tingle in a pleasant way. I would have to remember to ask Connie where to get more. The small bottle was almost empty and it would be gone quickly, if I continued to use it at this rate.

I seemed to get a lot of offhanded looks the next day. I wondered how many people knew what I had done. No one said anything to me except the people who had been on the set with us. Trish

came by to say that she admired my spunk, "That took a lot of guts and I admire that. You're very special." That sort of made up for the funny looks. I had made some real friends.



A few of the other girls had heard about it and actually came in and asked if it was true. "I helped out." Was all I told them. I didn't care to elaborate. While I got some funny looks, the ribbing I expected never came.

I was in Connie's office around ten when the delivery boy came in with a vase full of a dozen red roses. They were for me. Connie watched me, smiling, as I took the card and read it. They were from her, thanking me for what I did the night before. I didn't know what to say. "They're beautiful. Thank you."

"It's just my way of telling you that everything you do for me is appreciated."

No one ever gave me flowers before. Quite a few people heard about them and a number came by to see. All I got were compliments.

I was a little shocked when four of the girls came by the office at around four to tell me that they were all going out for a drink after work and wanted to know if I'd like to join them. I would have been a little skeptical about going if Trish and Kim weren't among them.

Connie heard them asking from her office. She came out. "You should go Jeffery, you deserve to get out and have some fun. All you do is work."

I was a little nervous about going. Up till that day, I had hadn't gone out in public, not anywhere and the outfit I had worn was a little flashy, my leather pants and geometric print silk shirt. I was afraid I might draw the wrong kind of attention.

"Come on Jeffrey. Go with us." Kim urged.

I really wanted to get out. I was being asked to go out with four very beautiful young women. How could I say no? I agreed.

I went in Kim's car with her and Gloria. Trish followed in hers with Judy.

I listened as they talked about their day. Kim and Gloria had a shoot that morning at another agency. Beyond modeling, I had little in common with them.

"So, do you like working for Ms. Sackett?" Kim finally asked me.

I didn't want to say the wrong thing. I really didn't know these girls or how close their relationship was with Connie. "I've never worked for anyone like her. She's great."

"She really seems to have taken to you." Gloria remarked.

"I hope so. I really like working here better than up in New York." It was true but it was a little hard being so far from home.

"Where are you staying while you're here?" Kim wondered.

"They're letting me use the company condo." I answered innocently. I notice the two girls exchange a brief knowing glance.

"Why? Is there something I should know?"

Kim looked nervous, like she wished she hadn't asked. "No, it's just that it's normally used for visiting executives and sometimes we use it. Trish, Gloria and I keep some things there."

"Those are your things in the closets and bathroom? I didn't realize."

"Yea." Kim answered.

I answered what I thought was her concern. "I haven't touched anything, honest. What I did last night, that was the first and only time."

Both Kim and Gloria breathed a tiny sigh of relief. Kim turned the car into the parking lot of the Calypso Bay Lounge.

"Are you sure I'm dressed alright for this place?" I had to ask.

"No Jeffrey, you're fine. Don't worry." They assured me.

We got out of the car as the others pulled into a parking spot. We waited and all of us walked in together. I did get some looks but so did my friends. I had to wonder, with the way I looked, if I was mistaken as one of them, another girl. My clothes, my hair, the fact that I was wearing two big hoop earrings. It was possible. The only noticeable difference was I wasn't wearing makeup.



It was the looks from guys that really bothered me. They had to think I was some kind of fag and that really made me uncomfortable. I kept my eyes down.

The girls obviously knew where they wanted to go because they headed straight for the end of one of the long bars. Given the look on the bartender's face when he noticed our approach, he knew them.

I would have preferred to sit away from the crowd, at a secluded table, but that wasn't going to happen. I sat nervously on the stool between Kim and Trish.

"And what can I get you ladies to drink." The young guy behind the bar asked charmingly.

Judy on the end started. When he got to me I hesitated then asked for a draft beer. The guy didn't bat an eye at me, he went on to Kim. Did he think he took an order from a girl?

I heard Judy cough and looked her way. She raised an eyebrow to me. She was probably thinking the same thing I was but I wasn't sure so I let it go.

When our drinks came, I took a long welcome sip of the cold draft.

It didn't take two minutes before the guys started to swarm around us. I kept my eyes straight ahead and down as my friends were propositioned.

Finally, what I was afraid would happen did. Some jerk came up behind me and asked me my name. I didn't know what to do. I tried to ignore him but he didn't let up. "Come on Sweetheart, all I want to know is your name." The guy was sincere. He really didn't know.

They were all watching me to see what I was going to do. I could see their faces in the mirror behind the bar. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the guy behind me wasn't bright enough to glance over there to get a better look at me.

I had to do something. I summoned up all the courage I could and turned to him and, in the deepest voice I could find, said, "Buddy, you're definitely not my type."

The guy and his buddies were floored. He was embarrassed beyond words. He looked so flustered at discovering I was a guy, he was dumbstruck.

"Let's go." Kim said to the others. No one questioned her and I got up with them. Leaving was fine with me. At that point I knew that coming to this place was a definite mistake.

We were almost to the door when the guy found his wits, with his buddies' encouragement.

"Hey pretty boy!" Came the voice from across the room.

Kim turned to me. "Jeffrey, you go outside right now with Trish and get in her car. We'll be right out."

I didn't think I should run away. "Are you sure?"

"Jeffrey, please! Go, now!" She insisted.

I didn't argue any more. There were five guys headed our way and they looked angry. I followed Trish out the door.

"Hurry up!" Trish encouraged me. "Get in and lock the door."

I did what she told me. "Why are we running away?" I asked.

"Jeffrey, those animals were going to beat you up. They're the type who love to gay bash." She explained as she put the car in reverse and backed out of the spot.

"But I'm not gay!" I said with emphasis.

"It doesn't matter to jerks like that. Those rednecks don't know the difference."

We were out of the parking lot in a flash. I looked back after the others and saw the five guys burst out the door looking for me. I was glad Kim had the sense to get me out of there. I owed her and the others. "Are the others going to be all right?"

"They'll be fine. Those guys won't do anything to them."

I turned and settled down in the seat. "Do you think they would really have tried to beat on me?"

"I'm afraid so."

"I shouldn't have come." I said to no one in particular, staring out the window.

"You need to get out. You work too much." Trish said with concern.

"I should have changed." I added absently.

"No, you look fine. You just have to be a little selective where you go. We made the mistake, taking you there. Guys in places like that are so insecure, not like you. They're afraid of anyone different. You just have more fashion sense and they don't know how to react toward you."

Her logic made me feel better. I was getting used to my new 'fashion sense' and, unlike what I used to wear, I found my new clothes much more comfortable. Ok, so I just have to be more selective, I told myself. "Where do you suggest we go where that won't happen?" I asked.

"Over by the downtown mall there's a club that caters to a more upbeat, sophisticated crowd, The Point Club. Let's go there." Trish suggested.

I wanted to trust her judgment. "Ok."

She picked up her car phone and called Kim. They agreed with Trish's selection and would meet us there in a few minutes.

Up till that day I had led a very sheltered life. It was that or I was as naive as those rednecks at the bar we just escaped from.

If I was skeptical of Connie's fashion sense, I learned I was wrong. My clothes were drab compared to what most of the guys at the Point Club wore.

As we waited for the other girls to join us, Trish explained. "Most of the models in town come here. It's considered one of the most fashionable places to be seen."

Fashionable, it was. If I thought wearing bright colors and light fabrics wasn't macho, I wouldn't have had the nerve to tell some of the guys I was introduced to or the women on their arms.

It would have been better if I was as well built or as broad chested as some of the men but I still got a few looks and come on smiles from women. It did a lot for my ego. One girl in particular caught my eye and over the next hour my eyes kept coming back to her. Once or twice our eyes met and I turned shyly away.

Fashionable clothes were not the end of it. Most of the men in the club had long hair and earrings. More than half carried purses but not one acted the least feminine. The purses made sense in a way since their pants had only small pockets or, like mine, none at all. I had to carry my wallet. I still wasn't convinced to run out and buy a purse of my own.

I couldn't help but compare myself to them. Most wore jewelry; necklaces, bracelets, rings and even some jeweled earrings. Some of it quite flamboyant, but most was tasteful. Other than the simple hoops, I had none to wear. I almost felt jealous.

We relaxed over several glasses of wine. I was amazed how comfortable I came to feel there with them. I grew less and less self-conscious as we talked and I watched the people in the place. I felt right at home.

We had a light dinner right there at the club.

Afterwards we talked, about me, about modeling, they even shared some of their intimate stories with me. Models had some amazing stories to tell. They laughed when I blushed.

We were just getting up to leave as I turned around and almost knocked over the attractive girl I had been staring at all evening. She was as beautiful up close as she was from afar. I couldn't help but look right into her eyes. "I'm sorry." I told her.

The auburn-haired girl had the prettiest smile. Her reply surprised me. "I'm not." She said. "I've been watching you since you came in, hoping I could find a way to meet you."

She was watching me? I was flattered. I wasn't sure what to say.

"I was a little afraid to come over to you, seeing who you were with." It was her turn to appear flustered.

She thought I was with one of my friends? She flattered me again. "We're all just friends, we work together."

The others were waiting for me. "We really have to go Jeffrey." Kim reminded me.

"OK, just a second." I turned back to the girl. "It was nice bumping into you." I said with a smile. Then I asked her name.

"Christy, Christy Rourke. Maybe we'll see each other again. I stop in most Friday's." Her blue eyes sparkled.



My response was unplanned, "I hope so."

With that, Kim and the others started for the door. I followed but looked back as we went out to the street. Christy was watching me. I waved good bye, she waved back.

"I don't know her." Judy commented as we walked to the car.

Trish did. "She just joined the Webster Agency."

"She's a model?" I asked. I should have known. She was gorgeous. She had a perfect figure.

"Yes, silly. She's a model." Kim said laughing. "You really should try to watch your drooling, Jeffrey."

Blushing was becoming a habit with me.

"She was really hot for you." Gloria added in the spirit of the mood.

I didn't think my cheeks could get any more red. We all laughed together.

I was amazed that in so short a time, after so weird an experience as I had Thursday night, that I would find myself so taken with my new friends. I really enjoyed the evening and was sorry now to go home. I warmly thanked everyone for asking me to go along and thanked Trish and Judy again when they dropped me at the condo.

The weekend was something of a letdown after such a busy week. I was going stir crazy by noon on Saturday. I took a cab to work and let myself in with my key. There was plenty to do and I could use the quiet time well to get ahead on my work.

The following week was extremely busy. As I showed Connie, I was capable of handling more and more responsibility, she piled the work on me. I didn't mind at all.

Connie presented me with my own supply of vitamins that Monday. She gave me a set for work and home, just so I didn't have an excuse not to take them. She gave me four different types to take. I didn't see any harm and promised to take them faithfully. I was a small enough concession for all she did for me.

When Friday evening came, I was ready to go out. I had waited anxiously all week for the chance to see Christy again. I begged Gloria and Holly to go with me and although we waited around for an hour, Christy didn't show. I was really disappointed. I was sort of depressed all weekend.

Connie turned over all the scheduling responsibilities to me the next week. I was responsible for every detail of the shoots, from scheduling the models to making sure the right outfits were there and ready. It was almost overwhelming, with everything else I was expected to do, but it kept my mind off other things.

I learned, to my disappointment that we didn't do business with the Webster agency, the place Christy worked. I couldn't get her off of my mind.

We had a shoot Friday that ran late. I no longer stayed in the background and watched. I was as busy behind the scenes as Connie was out front. At her request, I helped Stephanie with the girls' preparations in a wardrobe and I tried to help Pam in makeup. It was awkward at first but no one seemed to mind my being in back. Pam taught me how to apply foundation on the girls to help her. I learned more about makeup than I wanted to know.

I wasn't able to go back to the Point Club that night to see if Christy was there. We worked till nearly ten.

Connie insisted that I not work that Saturday. We went shopping instead.

I tried to tell Connie that I was fine with the clothes I had but she insisted that I have some new things. "You can't keep wearing the same clothes all the time. Besides, you seem to be losing weight. Your clothes don't fit the way they should."

She was right about that. I had no scale to tell by but I knew by the fit of my pants that I had lost a few pounds.

The store Connie took me was a women's boutique. She insisted that it was unisex. "They have some really nice things here." She assured me.

She told me to wait by the dressing room while she collected a few things for me to try on. I received no more than casual glances from the women who went in and out of the dressing rooms as I waited for Connie. She didn't leave me waiting long, thank God.

I didn't see one man the whole time we were in the store. I waited till we were outside before I asked, "That really wasn't a unisex store, was it?"

Connie looked at me sheepishly. It wasn't an expression I saw on her face often. "Actually, no, it wasn't. It's just that you can't always find nice things and I'm afraid you're becoming a little hard to fit."

Did that justify my wearing girl's clothes. "Won't people realize that I'm wearing girl's clothes."

"They look just like the things you buy in the better men's stores, only they fit you." She passed it of as if it was nothing. "Don't worry. I won't tell if you don't."

Connie hadn't lied to me yet. There was no doubt, "I won't tell."

"Alright then, that's the end of it." Connie was more than content to drop the subject.

We put with a half dozen new outfits in the back seat. Some very unsettling to me.

The first was a bright green body suit. Above the waist it was just like a tee shirt except it was snug fitting and had long sleeves. I had seen them in promos for guys. I wondered if theirs fit as snug as mine did?

The jeans she bought me to go with the body suit certainly looked like girl's jeans to me but Connie assured me that no one would know. Unlike my old jeans, these fit. They were snug at my waist but full in the leg, but not too baggy. It was the style. They were made of a light weight denim. I tried on the set and found them extremely comfortable. Wearing a body suit was certainly a new experience for me but I convinced myself I could get used to it if I had to.

The next outfit was a purple jumper. I wasn't as comfortable with it as I was with the body suit and jeans. It fit perfectly when I tried it on. I was very uneasy about the thought of wearing it to work.

Next, she picked out three new slacks, cut very similar to the ones I had been wearing, only the colors were brighter. One pair was purple with a black geometric print and I didn't notice till I picked them up to try them on that they were different from the others. They were stirrup pants. Connie expected me to wear these, I asked myself? I had never seen stirrup pants for guys and certainly not in a print. They were kind of extreme, even for me.

We bought three shirts. All rayon. Two had flap pockets on both sides, one red, one lime. The third, in teal, had no pockets. They all felt so smooth and silky. They could easily be construed as unisex. I could handle wearing them.

The black linen sport coat was like ones I'd seen guys wearing at the club a few weeks ago. It was great.

I didn't know until I got home that evening that the last gift she bought me was pajamas. White, silky polyester, long sleeve pajamas. They felt cool against my skin when I tried them on. These, no one would ever see.

I was wondering how I could, in clear conscious, ever thank Connie when I noticed the small box on the nightstand. She must have put it there when I wasn't looking. It was wrapped in hot pink paper. I unwrapped it to find a black velour jewelry box. Inside was a matching gold necklace and bracelet. They were a delicate herringbone with a sparkling diamond cut. The necklace was a long one that hung down almost the middle of my chest when I tried it on. The pieces were beautiful but like the other things Connie bought me, could I wear them?

I didn't go out the rest of the weekend, content to stay in and read.

I was amazed at the number of compliments I received for the outfit I wore Monday. The teal blouse went well with the new black slacks and the black jacket was extremely comfortable. Everyone loved the necklace and bracelet.



After that I couldn't thank Connie enough. She was thrilled that I was pleased, "It's enough that you like everything. I can't wait to see you in the other outfits." She told me over breakfast.

"I got you one other thing, or I should say the company did. All the models have a membership at one of the local health clubs. I've OK'D a membership for you."

I always wanted a health club membership but could never afford one. "Connie, you've already given me so much."

"You work hard Jeffrey but there's more to life than just work. You don't get any exercise here and that's not good for you." She told me with mock authority, "I'll expect you to work out for at least an hour, three days a week."

I laughed, "Yes ma'am." I had a thought, "I don't have anything to work out in. I didn't think to bring that kind of thing down with me."

"I'm sure the girls have some sweats at the condo. I'm sure they wouldn't mind you borrowing a pair till the weekend. We'll go out and get you some things."

I know better than to argue with Connie. The issue was closed as far as she was concerned.

We finished breakfast as we began to finalize the week's plans. We had three shoots this week and I had every intention to see they went off without a hitch. There would be no missing models.

Tuesday evening, I went with Judy and Gloria to the health club. It was the first time I had ever done aerobics. It wasn't as easy as it looked.

I was very uncomfortable going into the men's locker room to change. They stared at me. I really didn't enjoy changing with all the guys around. I found an empty corner and tried to change quickly. I wasn't fast enough. Some big jock came in as I bent down to pull on the red sweat pants. He saw my hairless legs and chest. He turned around and walked away with a smirk. It bothered me but I quickly forgot about it when I joined the girls and we started the class. I was one of four guys in the class. I was glad I wasn't the only one.

I opted to not shower and change there. I decided to wait till Judy drove me home.

Wednesday night, after the shoot, Connie took me home. "You haven't worn the jumpsuit I bought you or the new leotard. Don't you like them?"

I squirmed a little then answered with a lie. "No, I think they're great. I just haven't gotten to them yet. You bought me so many new things" I explained.

"I was afraid you didn't like them. I really loved the way they looked on you in the boutique. They're not easy things to find for young men."

I'll bet, I said to myself. "Tomorrow, I'll wear one tomorrow."

"Great. Goodnight Jeffrey." Connie said as I stepped from the car.

I was stuck. I had to wear one or the other tomorrow and I was planning on going to the Point Club on Friday after work, with the girls. I didn't want to wear the jumpsuit Friday but the leotard I could get away with, under my jacket.

"Jeffrey, you look fabulous." Connie said smiling from ear to ear as I got in the car the next morning. "You need to open the collar though." I had it left only the top button open, she unbuttoned the next two. "There, that's much better."

While the jumpsuit itself was very comfortable to wear, I felt very uncomfortable in it. The elastic waist and the snug tapered legs didn't look right on a guy. At least the wide belt covered the elastic waist. The necklace went under the collar around my neck but stood out on the purple material. "Thanks" I wished I could have sounded more sincere.

"That outfit would look much better with some different earrings." Connie added as we pulled away. "We'll have to find you some new ones. Too bad we don't have time to pick up something on the way."

"We are going to the office, aren't we?" I asked with a quiver in my voice.

"No, we have an appointment with the Castle people this morning to finalize the layout for their Spring line." Connie explained.

I knew Connie had an appointment. I didn't know she wanted me to go with her. "Are you sure I look all right to go see a client?" I didn't want to go dressed the way I was.

"Are you kidding? They'll love it. Trust me."

I would have to. What choice did I have?

"The Castle people are on the forefront of trying to change the male image. You are going to show them that our company is in step with their thinking. Virginia Castle will really be impressed with you if she believes that you feel as I do, that it's alright to break down the barriers in male fashion."



I could read between the lines. Connie expected me to project confidence and the impression that I found the concept completely acceptable. This was a real opportunity for me. Despite my personal feelings, I could do this, "I won't let you down."

Connie reached over and squeezed my arm. "I knew you wouldn't Jeffrey."

I walked a half a step behind her as we walked up to the lobby door. I reached around and held it for her as she stepped through. I held my head up and pulled my shoulders back. I didn't feel as confident as the person I tried to project.

The girl behind the reception desk gave me a double take but I didn't bat an eye. I followed Connie to Ms. Castle's office where we were led in to see her.

The woman certainly took notice of me as I sat next to Connie while the two women worked out the final details of the contract. Almost every time I looked up from my notes the woman seemed to be looking at me. Each time our eyes met she smiled at me. I could only smile back.

Ms. Castle, who appeared to be about 45 years old, was an extremely attractive lady for her age, very elegant. She had beautiful shoulder length, light brown hair, the same color as mine, and there wasn't a hair out of place. She had the figure of a twenty-year-old. All and all, a very impressive woman.

When they were finished and simply made pleasant conversation, the woman turned to me and said. "Connie's been telling me that your firm is the one to handle our business, Jeffrey. Until our meeting today I still wasn't sure. Seeing the kind of open-minded people who work for her, I can see now, that I've made the right choice."

It made it all worth it for me. "Thank you, Ms. Castle. You won't regret your decision." I said proudly.

The woman looked from me to Connie and gave an approving nod. "I like the kind of people you surround yourself with Connie."

"Jeffrey's an invaluable asset to the firm Virginia. I'd be lost without him."

"How would you like a peak at the new male line?" Ms. Castle asked the two of us.

"Very much." I responded with enthusiasm.

"Do you have the time, Connie?" She asked.

"Of course." I knew Connie wouldn't say no.

Ms. Castle personally took us back to the design room and showed us the layouts. I was amazed at some of the things they were going to put on the market for men. From the layouts, it seemed

they were taking what had conventionally been women's leisure wear and were marketing it with men's labels.

They were covering the full range of leisure wear. There were leggings, jeans, slacks and baggy print walking shorts. The 'blouses', as she referred to them, covered the full spectrum of color, many were with bright prints. The materials, as expected, departed from the norm for men. They were planning on selling a lot of silks, rayons and polyester. Some were so sheer that it was hard for me to believe they'd actually sell.

The sweaters ranged from heavy high collared cable knits to light weight deep v'd styles, again, in bright colors and prints.

I was just thinking to myself that they were probably going to get into dresses. I was laughing to myself when they showed me another portfolio. Skirts for men.

Ms. Castle commented as she showed us the designer's sketches. "They're already out in New York and La. I told our people a year ago but they didn't think my timing was right. They're eating their words now."

She told us the line didn't end with clothes. They were planning to market a full line of accessories to compliment the line. Everything from jewelry to a new line of cologne. "We even have a new label for our panty hose. It will appeal to the discriminating male."

I couldn't imagine pantyhose appealing to any male.

"Well, what do you think Jeffrey?" The woman asked proudly when she was done.

I had to respond enthusiastically. "I think they're all fantastic. I love the concept!"

My interest thrilled her. Addressing both Connie and I, she said, "We're very excited about it. I've been trying to get something like this line on the market for years. The public's ready for it."

"It's such a shame that it's taken so long. I'm sure there's quite a market out there. I think men are more self-confident these days and you'll do well." It was bullshit but I was sure it was what she wanted to hear.

She hung on my every word. "Connie, where did you ever find this wonderful man. I love him."

Connie certainly seemed particularly pleased with me at the moment. "He's a God send Virginia."

Ms. Castle looked back to me with an idea, "Jeffrey, how would you like to sample our new line."

'Sample it?' I had started this and, for Connie's sake, I had to follow through. "I'd love to."

The woman turned to Connie. "Connie, I'd like to send Jeffrey some samples, that isn't a problem for you?" She didn't wait for Connie's approval. "I believe he's the epitome of the individual we're trying to reach." To us both she said. "I'd like him to wear our line and give us his impressions. He's the perfect test market."

Connie turned to me while she responded to the woman. "I couldn't agree more Virginia. I'm sure Jeffrey would be thrilled."

Oh God, I thought to myself. What had I gotten myself into?

"I'd like to get started right away. Jeffrey, why don't you go with Carol here and let her get your measurements? I'll put my people to work and I believe you can expect to see the first of the designs by late in the week."

"I can't wait." I told her. My face didn't betray what I really felt.

I went with the girl while she took my measurements. Her sarcastic comments about me being so skinny and shapely weren't appreciated. I was glad to get out of there.

Connie waited till we got to the car before she said anything. "Jeffrey, do you realize what you did in there?" She was very excited.

Even now I couldn't say what I thought. I made a fool of myself.

"We have the Castle account because of you." Connie leaned over and kissed me on the cheek.

I had to be honest with her. "It can't be that big an account considering the market they're trying to reach." It didn't seem so anyway.

Connie laughed. "Jeffrey, you don't understand. Castle's new line is only the tip of the iceberg. While you were busy in back, we worked out a preliminary agreement to take over all of their advertising, for all of their lines. They market a complete men's line in the customary styles as well as several women's labels." Connie was thrilled. "Virginia Castle was very taken with us, with you!"

I was floored.

We didn't go straight back to the office. We stopped at a jewelry store and Connie picked out a pair of 14 caret gold tear drop earrings for me. She insisted I put them on right there in the store. The hoops I had gotten used to, but the new ones looked so uncomfortably feminine on me.

"Nonsense," She insisted. "They're perfect."

She went straight to her office when we got back and, from my desk in the outer office, I heard her call New York and tell them the news. By noon there was a steady stream of people coming in to congratulate Connie and to praise me.

With all the fuss over me and the way I presented myself to the client, I could hardly feel self-conscious about the way I was dressed or the new earrings that occasionally brushed my neck. It made it difficult to forget I was wearing them.

Things didn't calm down till midafternoon so I could get some work done.

Connie had a few surprises for me the next morning. On the way in, after she praising me on the way I looked in the leotard and stirrup pants, reluctantly wearing the new earrings she gave me, she said, "Jeffrey, I spoke to New York yesterday afternoon and they agreed with my recommendations. As of Monday, you'll be seeing a fifteen percent increase in salary."

I did the math in my head. That was a six thousand dollar a year raise! "Connie, I don't know what to say."

"You could tell me you like working with me and would like to be my permanent assistant."

I didn't even stop to think about it. "That'd be great. I'd love that." I told her. I could hardly contain myself. It was what I had dreamed of.

"You wouldn't mind relocating?" She asked.

"No, not at all." I had no particular desire to go back home again. There was nothing there for me. Only Tina.

"Wonderful, I was hoping you'd say that."

I suddenly had a depressing thought, "What about Karen. Isn't she getting out of the hospital soon?" I often wondered what would happen to me when she came back to her job.

"Karen's decided to stay home with her children from now on. I guess the accident has given her second thoughts about her priorities."

I was relieved and thrilled. "I still can't believe it." I said as we pulled into the parking lot.

Connie was still grinning as we stepped out of the car. "Oh, look at this." She said as she walked over toward a little candy apple red car. "Isn't that nice looking?"

It was a brand-new GEO. It was a little sports model. I had seen the advertisements for it on TV. "It looks racy." I liked the lines.

"What do you think of the color?" She asked casually as she looked in the driver's window.

Red was all right. I liked red cars. "It's sharp." I peeked in the other side. When I looked up, Connie was looking at me over the roof with a funny grin. I saw her reach over toward me but I didn't notice the keys in her hand immediately.

"It's yours." The silly grin turned into a big smile.

"Mine!?" I said, almost in shock.

"Yes Jeffrey, yours."

I couldn't believe it. "Why? How?"

"You deserve it. For everything you've done. The Castle account? Remember?" She beamed.

"It's for me!?"

"Yes Jeffrey, it's for you." She was amused at my reaction. "The company often leases a car, for a year, for an employee who makes a significant contribution to the business. You've made a major contribution Jeffrey."

It was all too much at one time. Everything was happening so fast. "It's wonderful." I took the keys and opened the door. It had a white interior and smelled the way only a new car could.

I couldn't help but look outside from the lobby throughout the day to make sure it was still there.

Connie waited till later in the day to tell me there was a downside to my good fortune. "Since you're now permanently transferred here, I'm going to have to help you find another place to live. I can't justify your using the company condo anymore."

That was bad news. I had no idea where to go. I had never lived on my own before. Being in a strange place, it was a little unsettling.

Connie could see the news distressed me. "Don't worry Jeffrey. I think I have a solution for you. Until you're ready to find your own place, you're going to come stay with me."

"That would be too much of an imposition." I insisted.

"Don't be silly, it's no imposition at all. I have plenty of room and I get lost in my big apartment. It would be a pleasure to have the company."

I did really like the woman and I sounded like the perfect solution. If she didn't mind, why should I? "I'd really like that." I told her smiling.

"Good, then it's settled. Since we have the shoot on Saturday, I'll come over Sunday morning and we'll move you in." The issue was closed.

All I could think of now was it was Friday, I had my own transportation and maybe Christy would be at The Point tonight.

The girls were all busy so I drove over alone to The Point Club after work. I had meant to bring my hoop earrings that day, in my wallet, so I could change from the drop earrings but I forgot them. I had seen other guys at the Point wearing drop earrings so I chanced it.

She wasn't there when I arrived so I sat at one of the few remaining stools at the bar and ordered a drink. I was on the verge of ordering another when I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"Hi stranger. Where have you been hiding?" It was Christy.

"Hi!" I nearly fell getting off the stool.

"Wow! You look fantastic." She said as she got a good look at my outfit.

I was really worried what her reaction would be to me in stirrup pants and hoped she wouldn't realize I was wearing a body suit. Obviously, there was nothing to worry about.



"So do you." She was wearing a skin tight dress that showed every beautiful curve. I suddenly realized I was staring.

"Is that new?" She asked, picking up my necklace to look closer at it.

"I was a gift." I told her. I didn't want her to think I bought it for myself.

"It's beautiful. Did your girlfriend give it to you?" She asked, probing.

She was trying to find out if I was seeing anyone. "No, my boss gave it to me." It was neat to see her face when I said that. She was relieved.

"Would you like a drink?" I asked as I offered the stool next to mine that I had reserved for her.

"Please." She sat and ordered a glass of wine. "I really like those." She reached up and touched one of my earrings. "I have a pair almost like them."

"They'd look better on you." I admitted.

"I don't know, they look terrific on you but I wouldn't mind borrowing them sometime." We both laughed.

We talked for hours. She was an amazing person. She had been a struggling model in California and her career hadn't taken off until she came to Atlanta. Christy had never lived away from home until recently. I heard all about her family and she learned all about mine. She wanted to hear about my job and I admitted to her that I tried to get the company to use her agency after meeting her. She thought that was so sweet of me.

She listened intently when I told her about Thursday and our meeting with the Castle people and how impressed Virginia Castle was with me. I debated telling her about all the things she was going to send me but I decided I should. I figured that way she'd understand that it wasn't completely my idea to dress the way I did.

To my surprise, Christy thought it was wonderful. "I can't wait to see you in one of your skirts." She said laughing.

The best news was that I was relocating to Atlanta, permanently. We talked till almost nine and I bought her dinner. At eleven I knew I had to go. With the shoot at eight I had to get some sleep. Outside, I kissed her goodnight and her lips were so moist and sweet. She put passion into the kiss and I willingly replied in kind.

I had her phone number when I got into my new sports car. We waved good bye to each other as we pulled out on the street.

I slept very well that night. It had been a great day all around.

Work went well Saturday. Even if it hadn't, it wouldn't have spoiled my good mood.

Connie helped me load my things in the car Sunday morning and I got my first look at my new home. Her apartment was on the fifteenth floor of a very posh high rise. There was a valet to park our cars, a doorman and even an elevator operator. Connie exchange pleasantries with them but didn't introduce me. That was fine,

"You must pay a fortune." I commented on the way up in the elevator.

"It's worth it." She told me. "Besides, now I have someone to share some of the expenses."

That was more than fair and I didn't mind a bit. In fact, I had insisted.

The apartment was large. The condo appeared drab compared to her place.

She led me directly to one of the two spare bedrooms that would be mine. I didn't know what to expect, I hadn't really given it much thought. I stood in the doorway with my arms full of bags, staring in surprise.

"How do you like it?" Connie asked, standing behind me.

I was glad she couldn't see my face at the moment. "It's beautiful." I told her. I took the room in at a glance. Two big windows, complete with window seats and lace curtains lit up the room from either side of the white poster bed.

The white quilted bedspread had a delicate, flowered print and long ruffles.

On either side of the bed were matching white night stands. Each held a small gold lamp with lace trimmed shades. They rested on white doilies.

To the right of the bed was a long low dresser with a large rectangular mirror. The same style doilies lay under what appeared to be a jewelry box on one end of the dresser and a mirrored tray set on the other.

On the far wall was a matching white vanity table, complete with a lighted mirror. A left over, I assumed. I would have no use for it.

I wasn't sure what to make of it all. It would seem strange staying in this room.

Connie stepped by me. "I had it redecorated late last year. My mother stays with me when she visits from up north." She put her armload of my things on the bed.

I was relieved to learn she hadn't decorated it this way for me. I walked to the closet next to the vanity table and opened it. "What's all this?" Hanging there was a dozen or so garments.

Connie turned to see what I was talking about. When she saw she said "Oh, I completely forgot about those. Virginia Castle sent that to the office for you late Friday, after you left. Since you were coming here anyway, I just brought it home with me. There's some really nice things she sent you."

I had mixed feelings about what she might have sent. Part of me wanted to pretend the things weren't there but another part was curious. I hung up my things then started looking through what she had sent.

Connie's question interrupted me. "Jeffrey, what are you saving these God-awful things for." She was putting things away in the dresser drawers and she had opened my suitcase to find all the things I had brought with me from home. "You don't wear these old things any more. We might as well give them to Good Will."

I wanted to tell her no. I really didn't want to part with them. I tried to think up a good reason to keep them but I was at a loss. Except when I was home alone, I never wore them. As far as Connie knew, I didn't want to. How could I tell her no.? "I guess so." I said reluctantly.

Connie put them in a pile on the floor. "Good riddance."

It took another trip to the car to get everything. I put away my things in the bathroom while Connie finished for me in the bedroom. When I came back in the bedroom, the pile of my old clothes on the floor was gone.

"We'll put your vitamins here where you can find them." She put them in the kitchen cabinet, apart from hers. "It looks like you're running low. I'll stop at the store later and get you more."

"I can do that, you don't have to." I did have a car now.

Connie insisted, "No, I'll get them. I have to pick up some things for myself later anyway."

I didn't argue with her.

"What time are you meeting Gwen at the spa?" She asked as we made lunch.

I had almost forgotten I told her I'd meet her to work out. "Three o'clock."

"Great, that gives us time to run to the Sports Authority and get you some things to work out in."

"I'm paying this time." I insisted.

"Are you sure you have enough money?"

Connie knew that I sent money home each week, to pay back my parents for all the money they spent on me when I was in trouble. I also had to pay the parole officer. "Jesus! I completely forgot."

"What is it?"

"My parole! I don't know if they'll let me stay here permanently." I hadn't given a thought to the fact that I was on parole and that meant that eventually I'd have to go back north. That could ruin everything.

Connie seemed unexcited about my revelation. "Oh Jeffrey, I've already taken care of that. Your parole officer in New York said it was no problem to transfer your parole to Georgia. He just said he needed someone here to be responsible for you."

"You mean like . . ."

"I mean like me. I told him that I would take full responsibility for you. You don't even have to report anywhere anymore. I'm your sponsor."

"When did all this happen?" I was shocked. I knew nothing about it.

"Late last week. I had the legal office in Manhattan push it through."

She put her hand tenderly on my cheek. "You don't think I'd let them take you back to New York? I need you too much here."

I would forever be in her debt. She was like a mother to me. More attuned to me than my own ever was. "Thank you." I told her gratefully.

"Let's hurry up and have lunch so we can get out of here." She suggested as she put the tuna on the lettuce I had put on the plates.

"I don't like any of this stuff. It's all so blah." Connie acted disgusted with the selections the Sports authority had for guys.

I wasn't paying much attention. I was too concerned with feeling self-conscious. Connie had told me, after finishing lunch, that I should change before we went out. She said the dress slacks and shirt was too dressy for where we were going. She went through the new things in the closet and found some things she thought were more appropriate.

The white, ankle length, spandex leggings that hugged my legs and ass were comfortable, that I had to admit, but . . . At least the oversized bright yellow tee covered my ass. Ms. Castle had sent me more than just the clothes. Connie picked out a pair of soft-sided white flats she sent along to go with the outfit. I had never seen guys' shoes that looked like them but Connie insisted they were fine.

"Will you leave yourself alone and come over here?" I looked up to see Connie looking at me. She had crossed the aisle to the juniors' department and was going through the racks of clothes there. I looked around to see if anyone was watching before I walked over and joined her.

"These are girls' clothes." I said in a whisper.



"I know. That stuff back there is awful. It's so bland. We'll find you something nicer here."

"But . . . "

She ignored me, "Look around and see if there's anything that hits you."

Nothing 'hit' me. Connie, as always, picked out everything. I put three outfits and a pair of Rebocks on the counter. Even the sneakers came from the women's department.

I had a pair of white bicycle pants with pink, yellow and red accents on the outsides of the legs. I had actually picked out the calf length spandex pants but I wanted black. The switch to hot pink was Connie's doing. I also bought the coordinated shirts that went with them. Luckily, I was able to talk Connie out of the spandex tops that went with both of the sets.

The nylon warm up suit wasn't so bad. It was colorful and I actually thought it looked good on me.

The girl on the register didn't seem phased by my buying the girl's outfits and I realized why when she put my change in my hand and said, "Thank you ladies and have a nice afternoon."

Connie made a joke of it when we got outside. "That girl was a real idiot. How could she possibly mistake you for a girl? She has to be the product of generations of inbreeding."

I didn't laugh it off so easily. "Do you think I look like a girl?" I asked Connie seriously.

She stopped in her tracks about ten feet from the car. "Are you serious?" She looked very concerned about my question.

I shrugged it off playfully, "No! I was only kidding." I didn't know the question would bother her that much. I let it go.

We hurried home and I changed into my bicycle pants and top. It was warm outside so I only wore the pants from the warm up suit. I had plenty of time to get to the spa. It felt great to drive fast with the windows down and the warm breeze on my face. I started putting my hair in a pony tail after my first workout. It had gotten damp with sweat and was constantly in my eyes.

Gwen thought my new outfit looked terrific on me. The girls were amazing. No matter how strange I felt, they always were able to put my fears to rest. I had never known friends like them.

We had a great workout. I was getting much better at aerobics and while I was soaked in perspiration when I was done, I felt great.

Gwen didn't like to shower at the spa either, for her own reasons. I went home to Connie's. I remember how strange it was to think of my boss' apartment as home but she was so much more

than just my boss. It was really nice to go home and have someone there who was glad to see you.

Since we weren't going anywhere that night, I didn't care what I wore. The leggings and tee shirt I wore earlier were just fine for hanging around the apartment. I was toweling my hair dry and came out of the bedroom to see what she was doing.

"You really look comfortable in that." She commented from the kitchen as she watched me from the pass through between the kitchen and living room.

"They're like having a second skin. You hardly know you're wearing anything." We talked for a few minutes then I started back to the bedroom to finish drying my hair. I stopped at the doorway and turned back to her with a question. "Don't you think my hair's getting a little long?" More and more, it was getting in the way. It was brushing my face at work and when I slept it would always find its way into my mouth somehow.

"Long? Lord no! It's just getting to a nice length. It would be a sin to cut your beautiful hair. No, you definitely don't want to get it cut. I'll be happy to make you an appointment with Jimmy to trim the split ends if you want?"

"No, that's all right. I was just wondering." I could live with it.

"Why don't you go in and dry your hair? Then you can come back and help me make dinner. I thought you might like a nice home cooked meal for a change."

That sounded great. It was nice to have someone to talk to and the lasagna she made tasted wonderful, even though she used all dietetic ingredients. I helped with the dishes afterwards.

It was difficult for us not to talk about work over dinner but I didn't mind. I was so eager to learn all I could about the business and she was willing to teach me.

After dinner was a different story. "Do you like to watch TV?" she asked as we left the tidied-up kitchen.

I did, "Yes."

"I like to get comfortable and curl up on the couch and watch a good movie. Would it bother you if I got into my nightgown?"

That was alright with me. "No, I don't mind at all." I told her smiling. It was sweet of her to ask me.

"You never told me whether you liked the pajamas I bought you." She commented as she walked toward her bedroom.

"I love them. They're the most comfortable I ever wore." It was the truth. I wore them every night.

"Why don't we both get comfortable?" She suggested.

That was fine with me.

We watched sitcoms till nine and then we watched a movie she had been waiting to see. It was a love story and I usually don't mind watching them but this one was very slow moving.

As I sat there on the couch my hair kept falling across my face and I unconsciously brushed it back. I didn't realize Connie was watching me. "I'll get you something to stop that."

She was up off the couch before I could stop her. She came back from the bedroom with a white elastic head band. It was trimmed in lace. "I'm sorry but it's the only one I have. We'll pick you up some of your own next week."

She went behind the couch to put it on me. "No Connie, that's alright."

"Don't be silly. It's just me and you." She brushed my hand out of the way and put it on me. "There, isn't that better?"

I was sure I looked foolish. "I suppose so." It did hold my hair back.

"It looks nice on you. You make such a fuss sometimes." That was the end of it as far as she was concerned.



I had laid out one of the new outfits to put on and was finishing up in the bathroom the next morning when Connie knocked on the bedroom door.

I put on the robe from behind the door and went to see what she wanted. She was holding a shopping bag. "Jeffrey, there's something personal I have to talk to you about." I stepped out of the way and let her in.

"What's wrong?" Had I done something?

She sat on the edge of the bed and set the bag on the floor. "I've wanted to tell you for a long time but wasn't sure how to broach the subject."

I had done something. "You can tell me." I was nervous.

She continued to hedge, "You know that I'm really pleased with you and I want to see you grow, both as a person and with the company?"

"Yes?"

She hesitated. I decided to make it easier for her. "Connie, if I'm not doing something that you expect me to, just tell me, I'll fix it."

"It's not that Jeffrey." She seemed to be gathering her courage. I could only wait.

"It's the way you dress." She blurted out.

She shocked me. "I thought you wanted me to dress this way." I said with surprise.

"Oh I do," She answered quickly. "It's just that you could look better."

I didn't know what she wanted me to do. I just stood there waiting.

"Jeffrey, this is very awkward. Your underwear really takes away from the way you look when you're dressed in your new things."

"My underwear?" What was she talking about?

"You've got lines where lines shouldn't show and they make you look terrible sometimes."

"What should I do? Stop wearing underwear." I wondered what other choice I had.

"No, of course not. You need to change the kind of underwear you wear. Your old underwear was fine when you wore those old heavy things but now it shows. I bought you some new things while you were at the spa yesterday. I finally decided you had to do something after seeing you in your new leggings. They looked really nice except for the lines." She dumped the bag out on the bed and a dozen pair of women's cotton panties fell out.

"Connie, I can't . . . "

"Before you say that, think about this. You want to look good don't you? You want to show people you have style. No one has to know what you wear under your clothes but you. I would never tell anyone. It's up to you but you certainly can't make a good impression showing off poor taste in the way you dress."

We were only a few minutes later than usual getting to work. Everyone thought the new outfit was adorable. I was getting a little tired of that expression, but they meant well.

Monday was a very hectic day. I did call Ms. Castle and thank her, "I just love everything." I told her as Connie listened, grinning at me from her office.

It was Connie's idea, and it was good business, that any communications that needed to go to Castle be hand carried, by me. She wanted me to have a lot of contact with Virginia Castle to help entrench us with her company.

Monday was a busy day but I still found time to call Christy and say hello. We made plans to go out Saturday evening. I told her I'd call her later in the week to confirm.

As busy as we were, I managed to sneak out Tuesday, with Connie's urging, and work out. I carried my work out clothes in the car now. So, I could go anytime. I refused to change at the spa and used the men's room at work.

I knew when I went home Tuesday that I had to go to Castle the next day. "You have to wear something to impress her." Connie told me as we looked through the closet, trying to figure out what to wear.

"The plaid skirt is it." Connie decided. "With the cream-colored vee neck sweater."

I knew the day would come but I hoped it wouldn't be so soon. The skirt was styled after a Scottish kilt. That was it's only saving grace.

Connie insisted that I had to wear the green pantyhose and my black shoes with it. I felt absurd when I stepped through the bedroom door. Connie thought I looked adorable. I didn't want to look 'adorable'.

A few people gave me some friendly ribbing but I knew they didn't mean it. It wasn't my friends I was worried about. As I drove my little red sports car across town, I tried to imagine what would happen to me if I was in an accident or got into some sort of trouble. What would happen to me when they found out I was on parole and threw me in jail. If I thought my first experience with jail was bad, it would be a hundred times worse if I got locked up in this outfit. Needless to say, I was extremely careful.



Ms. Castle was thrilled to hear I had come to deliver some papers, she was even more delighted when she came out to see me. "Dear, you look wonderful." I had to turn for her so she could get a good look. "What do you think of the line so far?"

I was ready to lay it on for her. "Everything I've worn looks and feels so great." I stepped back and touched the skirt. "I have to be honest, this is my first time wearing a skirt and I was a little apprehensive but it's so comfortable and everyone at work says I look great. My girlfriend can't wait to see me in it."

"I'm so very glad you like it." She looked at me pensively. "We're going to have to get you some new jewelry to go with your outfits. We have some lovely . . . I'm sorry Jeffrey, I mean attractive pieces in the collection. I'll make some calls."

"That's very kind of you. You have no idea how much I appreciate your giving me this opportunity."

"It's my pleasure dear."

I was on my way out, almost to the lobby, when she came after me. "Jeffrey, I'm having a party this Saturday and I'd like you and Ms. Sackett to come. You're welcome to bring your girlfriend if you like. I'd like to hear her reaction to the line too."

I knew I couldn't turn her down. "I'd love to come and I'll pass on your invitation to Ms. Sackett."

"Wonderful, I'm having some very important buyers over. I'll send over a formal invitation and some new things for you to try."

"I'll be anxiously waiting to hear from you." I told her. I wished I was as enthused as I tried to appear.

I went straight back to the office and told Connie how it went. She was delighted. "The party sounds like a wonderful idea. I'll have to buy a new dress, my nails are a mess. Jeffrey, give Joyce a call and schedule me for Friday afternoon." Joyce was the girl that came in and did her nails. As an afterthought, Connie turned to me and added, "Oh, and have her schedule enough time to give you a manicure too."

That surprised me. "A manicure?"

"Yes, your cuticles are a mess and your nails look terrible. We have to do something with them for the party."

A manicure!?

I had a hard time reaching Christy that morning, she had a shoot. When I finally did reach her, she thought the party was a wonderful idea. She wanted to know what I was going to wear. I

told her we hadn't talked about that yet. She made me promise to call her when I knew so she could plan what she would wear. I told her I would.

I felt very strange, working in a skirt. The tights felt so alien as my legs brushed against each other. It wasn't that the outfit was uncomfortable, that wasn't it at all. I just felt so strange, it was a very different feeling. I had to remember to keep my legs together when I sat so I didn't expose too much. Thank God no one would be able to see what I wore under the tights.

That afternoon, at our shoot, Trish and the girls had some fun with me but I didn't mind their ribbing. I even played along, swishing my way around the set, acting like a girl. We had so much fun it was hardly like work.

I wore my new blue stirrup pants with the white cotton and polyester blazer on Thursday. The pants were almost skin tight and Connie was right about my new undergarments not showing under them. As much as I hated to admit it, my new underwear was really very comfortable.

Around ten, Bobbie called from the lobby to tell me there was a messenger there and he had something for me. I asked her to send him back but she suggested I should come up and see him.

The young guy delivered my outfit for Saturday from Virginia Castle. He gave me a funny look when he handed me the garment bag along with the box in his other hand. Funny looks didn't bother me so much anymore.

I found out why Bobbie wanted me to come up front instead of sending him back. As soon as the messenger left, she insisted, "Let me see what she sent this time?"

Bobbie and I interacted a lot during the day and I liked her. I handed her the garment bag to open while I opened the envelope to read the note the messenger gave me.

"Oh my!" Bobbie exclaimed as she looked inside the bag.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's a wrap skirt, a blouse and blazer." She said looking over at me surprised. "You're supposed to wear this to her party?"

"I suppose so." I let out a sigh. It was as bad as I expected. "I don't have much choice."

"Well make sure you get a picture of yourself. I'm dying to see how you look in it."

"No pictures!" I said laughing. There were enough pictures of me floating around the office. Terry had handed out some after that fateful day I filled in for one of the models. "Definitely no pictures!" Bobbie laughed with me.

"She's sending a limo to pick us up Saturday." I said looking up from the invitation.

"A limo!?" Bobbie exclaimed.

I picked up the garment bag and box and headed for my office. "A limo!"

Connie was excited when I showed her what Ms. Castle had sent. She wanted to see what was in the box.

The shoes were black, soft leather flats with pleats across the small toe.

The black pantyhose were not packaged like the other ones that had been sent over last week. They were Leggs, women's pantyhose. "She obviously couldn't get the ones she wanted so she substituted." Connie assumed nonchalantly.

A small box contained jewelry, including a delicate 18" serpentine necklace and matching bracelet, a set of three gold bangle bracelets, a ring and a pair of earrings. The ring had a deep blue stone in a setting on a slender band. The earrings had matching stones on studs.

I was convinced that none of it was men's jewelry and Connie couldn't convince me otherwise. "Well, you'll have to wear it or she'll be insulted."

I knew that.

In the bottom of the box was a purse. Connie called it a shoulder bag but it was a purse. It was of the same soft leather as the shoes and about seven inches wide and four inches high. "I'm supposed to carry this?"

"Of course, silly. Lots of guys do these days. You have no pockets in your outfit, you'll need to carry your things in something."

She was right, again.

It was after eight when we got home that night. I found the amount of paperwork and correspondence that Connie generated astounding. I was exhausted after our long day. Connie came in right after me. She found me collapsed on the couch beside the new things I'd dropped on the couch.

"I worked you pretty hard today." Connie remarked. "Why don't put your things in the bedroom and hang up your outfit so your things don't get all wrinkled. I'll make us a salad."

"I'll be out in a minute to help you." She had a tougher day than I did.

My appetite wasn't what it once was. A salad was fine with me most nights. We cleaned up the dishes, Connie went to do some laundry and I called Christy.

I described the outfit and the accessories they sent me to wear to the party.

"I'll understand if you change your mind about going with me." I was embarrassed about going out in the outfit. I could only imagine what Christy was thinking.

She surprised me. "Are you kidding? You invited me and you're not going to get out of taking me."

"Really? You don't mind being seen with me in my skirt?"

"Mind? I wouldn't miss it for the world. Just wait till you see what I'm going to wear."

I couldn't imagine. We talked for a few more minutes, making the final arrangements for Saturday and then we said goodnight.

Connie and I changed to watch TV for a while. I went in to get ready for bed at ten, when the show was over that we were watching.

Connie heard me cry out from the bathroom and came hurrying in to see what was wrong. I was holding my chest. "What's wrong!?"

I tried to pretend it was nothing. "I'm fine. I just bumped myself." I didn't want to tell her that I had barely banged it and it made me see stars.

"Let me see." She insisted.

I was sure there was nothing to see. "I'm fine now, really!"

"Open your robe Jeffrey." She stood impatiently waiting.

There was a good reason not to do that. I only had underwear on underneath, my new underwear and I had on a red pair.

"Enough of this." She insisted. "Let me have a look at you."

I gave in. My hands were on my chest and I put them down at my sides. My robe fell open. She paid no attention to what I was wearing, pretending it was the most natural thing in the world.

"I don't see anything." She looked closely. "Where did you bang yourself?"

I pointed to my upper chest, right around my nipple. "There's no marks."

"I don't know why it hurt like that. I've been a little sensitive there lately but nothing like it felt just now."

"You've been sensitive right there?" She asked, pointing to the right side of my chest.

"Both sides." I explained. "I thought it would pass but it seems to be getting more sensitive instead of less."

"You're going to go to the doctor and have him look at you." She stated flatly. She stepped back and I closed my robe again.

"I don't have a doctor." I hadn't needed one since I came down.

"That's alright, I'll get a referral from my doctor. I'll call her first thing in the morning and see if we can't get you an appointment somewhere."

I would have to dress as conservatively as possible tomorrow to go and see a doctor. If I ran home from work first, I could change into my jeans and a colored tee. That didn't cure the problem with my underwear. All my old underwear was gone. I would just have to put on a white pair and pray he didn't want to check me down there.

"So what did he say?" Connie asked when I got back to the office.

"He didn't know. He poked around, asked me a few questions and took some blood. He said the results wouldn't be back till Monday."

"What kind of questions did he ask?"

"He wanted to know about my general health and whether my weight was normal for me. He seemed a little concerned that I'm so skinny."

"Anything else?"

"He asked me if I was taking steroids or any kind of drugs. He didn't know what could be causing the sensitivity since I told him I wasn't taking anything." I didn't even give my vitamins a thought. Besides, they were just vitamins.

"So did he tell you to do anything special?"

"He said it would probably pass and the swelling should go down on it's own."

"Swelling?"

"Oh, he said I had a little swelling around my . . ."

"Where?"

"Around my nipples but he wasn't worried about it."

"We'll keep an eye on it."

I was content to let the whole thing drop. I was sure it was nothing.

I met Joyce later that morning. She was the girl that came in to do Connie's nails and give me a manicure. "Can you do anything with them?" Connie asked her when she sat down to look at my hands after finishing with Connie's nails.

"They're pretty bad." She told Connie. Turning to me, she said, "You should take better care of your nails."

I had bitten them for years. I only stopped about a year ago but with all the anxiety I'd been feeling lately, I had started again.

"The only thing I can do Jeffrey is to put on some acrylics. It's the only way I'll be able to make them presentable."

"Fake nails?" I asked apprehensively.

"You won't even be able to tell they're fake." Carol reassured me.

"Go ahead Joyce. He needs to have something done for the party tomorrow." Connie turned to me. "Go ahead in my office where you'll have some privacy and don't give Joyce a hard time Jeffrey. She knows what she's doing."

I watched as she spread the mixture on my nails and out over the little forms. I was scared when I thought she was going to leave them so long. I was relieved when she filed them back, almost even with my fingertips.

"What's that for?" I asked as she brought out her tray of polishes.

"Don't worry Jeffrey. I'm just going to put on a few coats of clear polish to protect the acrylic."

It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. They were longer than I'd ever let them get but they didn't look too bad. The clear polish had kind of a high luster to it. I wished she could have skipped that part but it hid the tips.

It took me a while to get used to them being longer. I had to get used to typing and having my nails hit the keys. I made a lot of mistakes.

Christy couldn't meet me after work. She left a message that she was in a shoot and wouldn't be done till late.

I was content, if I couldn't see Christy, to go home and relax. Connie had a dinner date. She told me there was a 'certain someone' she went out with when he came to town. I was very happy to change into a comfortable pair of legging and one of my new light sweaters from Ms. Castle and just curl up on the couch and watch TV.

I called my mom. I hadn't spoken to her in almost a week. There wasn't much I could tell her except about work. The rest, I left out.

She wanted to know when I was going to come back. I broke the news to her. I'd been nervous about telling her but it was time.

Mom was happy for me but disappointed that I would be so far from home. She told me that Tina was worried about me. Apparently, she'd been calling and calling the old number, at the condo, without getting an answer. I didn't tell Mom where I moved to or who I was living with. She would never have understood. I knew she wouldn't approve my living with my boss, a woman. "I'm putting in a lot of hours and I'm pretty tired when I get home."

"Well, you better call her." Mom insisted.

I promised that I would and after the usual niceties, said goodbye.

Calling Tina was something I was very nervous about. When I left her at the airport in New York, it was to be for just a short adventure. I'd been gone for over a month and I had no plans to go back.

Tina knew me better than almost anyone. She would know, when she started asking questions, that I wasn't the person that she used to know. I didn't want to get into it with her. I decided that it was better to simply not call. She would learn what I was doing from my mother, sooner or later.

I had Christy now and while I still felt something for Tina, she wasn't even in the same class with Christy. No, let Tina believe it's over, I decided.

I tried going to bed but the butterflies in my stomach, over the party the next night, kept me awake. I found some of Connie's magazines in the living room and curled up in bed to read. The only magazines Connie had were women's publications but I found them amusing. Sleep finally overcame me.

Connie was up when I finally got out of bed Saturday morning. "Well good morning sleepyhead. Did you sleep all right?"

"Not too well." I admitted, rubbing the sleep from my eyes as I walked into the kitchen, still in my pajamas.

"What's wrong? Is your chest still hurting?" She asked, looking up from her paper and tea.

It had awakened me several times during the night when I rolled over but that wasn't it. "A little." I sat at the table next to her. I knew she was tired of hearing me worry about what other people thought of the way I looked and dressed. I had decided I was going to try not to complain anymore.

She poured me a cup of tea and got my vitamins for me.

I noticed my reflection in the shiny surface of the toaster and realized I had forgotten to take off my headband when I got up. I felt foolish enough wearing it without parading around the apartment in it. I did find it better sleeping with it on. I reached up and pulled it off.

Connie didn't say anything to me when she saw me do it. She only smiled. I felt like a little kid trying to hide something.

It was nice not to have to work that Saturday. I didn't think I would have been able to concentrate anyway, with the party on my mind. I was thankful for the workout at the spa with Trish and Judy.

"You have to promise to take a picture for us." As we walked to our cars after the class, they insisted on seeing me in the outfit that they saw in my office Friday. I told them I would.

It was only five when Connie said we should start to get ready to go. The limo wasn't coming until seven but I did as she asked.

I had to stop and think when I last shaved as I stood in front of the mirror checking my face. I used to be able to get away with only shaving about every third day. My beard didn't grow very fast. I thought back. It had to have been Tuesday and I still had no stubble. My face was as smooth as a baby's ass. I didn't think much of it. It was one less thing to worry about before getting ready.

I had showered only about an hour and a half ago so I didn't need to do it again.

Out of curiosity, I touched one of my swollen nipples gingerly and shook from the sensation that went right through me. I wondered how long it would be before it would pass and the swelling would go down?

I decided to put on my lotion since I had so much time to kill. When I did my legs I wondered how long it would take before my leg hair would begin to grow back. My legs were still very smooth.

With that done, all that was left was to get dressed and brush my hair.

I would have felt better if the pantyhose were heavier, like the green pair I wore Wednesday with the kilt. You could see my legs through these. I had put on black underwear. Somehow, I thought it should match.

I took the shirt down from its hanger. It was off white and the material was a rayon polyester blend, according to the label. The collar was nothing special, maybe a little wider than normal. The long sleeves were cuffed and had three cloth covered buttons. On the hanger, I couldn't tell the sleeves were so full. I didn't realize that the buttons down the front were hidden under a placket so you couldn't see them.

What Bobbie referred to as a wrap skirt was just that. I wrapped around my waist and was held with a clasp on the side. I was relieved that it came down almost to my knees. The material was nothing like my other skirt. It was much lighter and not nearly as coarse.

I put on the jewelry before taking down the black and white hounds tooth blazer from the closet. I was surprised to find that it had padded shoulders. I thought they would make my shoulders look funny but when I put it on it didn't look too bad.

The shoes were the final touch. They were as comfortable as they were soft but they looked so strange on my feet. I stood in front of the full-length mirror next to the dresser. My stomach rolled silently as I looked at my reflection. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. I was terrified, absolutely terrified of being ridiculed.

Then I stopped to consider for a moment. I was going to a place where they wanted to see me dressed this way. They were actually anxious to see me. Second, I was going to be with Connie and I trusted her to look out for me. And last, Christy already knew what to expect, right down to the Leggs pantyhose. She was still excited about going with me. So why did I need to worry?

Connie was almost ready. All she had left to do was put on her cocktail dress. She was in the living room in her slip when I came out to show her how the outfit looked. "I definitely approve. Virginia Castle is going to be so pleased." Connie beamed. "All we have to do now is fix your hair."



I was on the verge of asking what was wrong with it the way it was, then stopped. I had vowed to stop complaining.

"Let's go in my bathroom where my things are and I'll see what I can do with it."

I followed her inside. I had never been in her bedroom before. It was much larger than mine. So was her bathroom. She sat me down at the vanity, facing away from the mirror. "Just relax and sit still while I try a few things."

"What are you doing?" I asked nervously when she took a curling iron out of a drawer.

"Just relax Jeffrey. I'm not going to hurt you." She told me in a motherly tone.

I did as she asked and waited impatiently until she was finished. It wasn't long before she was done. She sprayed on a generous amount of hair spray. "There, I think that should do it. You should like this." She stepped back. "Take a look." She said smiling proudly.

I didn't say anything at first. I didn't know what to say. My hair, which normally laid pretty flat, was now teased on top to look fuller. The sides, which had been fuller since the cut and perm, now stood out even more. The ends were turned under slightly and pulled back on my face. Just the hint of a curl came forward on each cheek.

She was standing behind me watching, she looked very pleased with her efforts. She was waiting for my reaction. I couldn't hurt her feelings. "It looks very nice" I told her.

I saw her expression change to one of disappointment. "You don't like it."

"No, I do." I insisted, turning to her. "I just need to get used to it. It's really very . . . stylish. It's just that I don't think I could ever fix it like this myself." I was groping for excuses.

The pleased look returned, "Don't be silly, I'll teach you. It'll be fun. It will be much easier to style in the mornings, when it's still damp from your shower. A blow dryer is a great tool to add fullness and you won't need to use so much hair spray. We'll get you a new, stronger one and your own curling iron."

My stomach was doing flips as I sat in the living room waiting for Connie to finish. I watched the minutes tick off the clock. I played with the bracelets on my arm and my new ring. Keeping my legs together when I sat was something I would have to work at remembering.

The doorman had called up that the limo was downstairs.

"Where's your bag?" Connie asked as we were about to walk out the door. It wasn't intentional, I really just forgot it.

I didn't know whether to hold the strap in my hand and let it dangle there or to put it over my shoulder. I decided it was too conspicuous in my hand.

The limo driver, an older man, held the door while Connie and I climbed in. My resolve, not to let things worry me, wasn't as solid as it had been an hour ago. If it hadn't been for Connie's encouragement, I would have locked myself in the bathroom and refused to go anywhere, dressed the way I was.

I gave the driver Christy's address when we got in. We were on time. She lived in an apartment complex. Fortunately, we were able to park right in front of her place so I didn't have to walk too far.

I summoned all my courage and stepped from the car and walked to her door. She must have seen the limo pull up because the door opened as I approached it.

Christy stood there in a tuxedo and high heels that made her appear an inch taller than me. The tuxedo was tailored to fit her like a glove and she look beautiful in it. She had her hair pulled back, tight against her head and gathered in a French braid. She stared at me with a huge grin on her face. "Oh Jeffrey . . ." She repeated herself "Oh Jeffrey . . ."

"I know, I look ridiculous." My heart sunk in my chest.

"Oh no!" She said, smiling even more. "You look fabulous." She reached out and took my hand. "Come inside a minute."

I let her lead me inside. I was shocked to see four girls waiting in the living room and started to pull away from her. "No Jeffrey, they're friends of mine. They just had to come by and see."

My cheeks started to turn red.

"They're models Jeffrey. There's nothing to be embarrassed about. They've seen it all."

One after another, they repeated Christy's sentiment about how wonderful I looked but it didn't make me feel any the less embarrassed.



"You really do look incredible." One of her friends said. They all got up to get a better look at me.

I felt I had to tell her. "Connie insisted I do my hair this way."

"Don't apologize, it looks cute that way." Said another of her friends.

"It really does. Your boss has a wonderful sense of fashion." Christy assured me. "Your hair styled like that finishes off the look perfectly."

"Connie's waiting for us." I wanted to get out of there.

One of the girls grabbed for a camera on the coffee table. "Just let me get a picture of you too. You look adorable together." Christy stood next to me. "Christy, put your arm around his shoulder. That's it, now smile." I tried. "Come on Jeffrey, you can do better than that." Christy stretched over and kissed me on the cheek. I instinctively smiled at her as the flash went off on the camera.

I introduced my new girlfriend to my boss. "Perfect choice of outfits Christy." Connie told her. They were instant friends and fussed over me the whole way to the party.

Ms. Castle's home was an estate. We passed between brick columns as we turned in the driveway. It was at least a hundred yards up the brick drive to the house. The limo pulled around the circular drive-in front of the old southern style mansion. A valet opened our door. The doorman held the front door for us. Connie presented him with our invitation.

There were at least thirty people there ahead of us. They were all dressed to the hilt. I actually felt under dressed.

It was nice to have Christy on my arm even if it did look backward, I should have been holding her arm, considering the way we were both dressed.

Ms. Castle, in the midst of everyone, welcoming her guests, broke away when she spotted us and came right over. I could see her approving look from across the room. She ignored Connie and Christy for the moment.

"Jeffrey, you look incredible."

"Thank you but it's not me, it's the clothes." I felt Christy squeeze my arm slightly.

Ms. Castle leaned over and kissed me on the cheek. "You are such a dear Jeffrey."

She turned to Connie, laying her hand on her arm. "I'm so glad to see you."

"I couldn't refuse an invitation from one of the most gracious hostesses in Atlanta."

"Ms. Castle, I would like to introduce you to my friend, Christy Rourke."

"It's a pleasure to meet you dear. I love your suit. The two of you make quite a statement together."

"Thank you, Ms. Castle. When Jeffrey asked me to accompany him tonight and told me what it was, he hoped to do for you, I thought I might be able to help enhance the statement your new line is trying to make."

I thought to myself, listening to Christy, that she's not only beautiful but insightful and smart.

Ms. Castle seemed impressed. "That was very thoughtful of you Christy. Are you in advertising too. You seem to have a flair for it.

"No, Ms. Castle. I'm a model."

"A very pretty one at that but don't sell yourself short, you're a very astute young lady. What do you think of the way your boyfriend looks?"

"I think Jeffrey looks fabulous!"

She turned to me. "Now Jeffrey, I'd really be grateful if you'd circulate as much as you can. I've told everyone how really excited you are about the new line and they're dying to hear your opinions."

She turned to Connie. "I have some people I'd like you to meet." She took her by the arm and the two powerful women returned to Ms. Castle's guests.

"You're really something." I whispered to Christy.

"Me, what about you?" She kissed me on the cheek. "You're the salesman."

That was about the last time we had a moment alone the entire evening. The women were taken with me and were full of questions. "What is it that prompts you to dress this way?"

"Men in this country have been the victims of reverse discrimination for a hundred years. They haven't been allowed the freedom to dress comfortably or in anything but dull, drab colors. Even the heavy materials we're forced to wear are depressing. I was ready to try something different and I'm not alone."

"Do you think the world is ready for this drastic change?"

"Half the world's population has never regressed to where the American male is today, afraid to be himself. Our European neighbors have already woken up to the revolution. It may take a little time to wake up the American male but he will find the strength and self-confidence and when that happens, and it will, people with foresight, people like Ms. Castle will be ready."

"Do you really believe that the timing is right to put out this line?"

"The time is here. Look at what young people are wearing. Boys are swapping clothes with their girlfriends, with their sisters and the girls love it. Women have been trying for years to get us out of our old flannel shirts and wool suits. The kids are changing fashion right under our noses. All it will take is someone with the courage to offer these kids what they currently have to barter with their girlfriends to get."

Few men came up to us at first. Those that did, wanted Christy's opinion. She picked up on my theme beautifully.

One man did come up to me with a question. "What would prompt a young man to wear a skirt?" He was very serious.

"Have you ever worn one?" I asked him. "No! Never." He replied, making a joke of it. My question made him uncomfortable.

I asked him. "You've never walked around the house in a towel in front of your wife, and maybe the kids?" I didn't give him a chance to answer and spoil my line of reasoning. There were a dozen people listening to me now. "You never wrapped yourself in a towel at the beach or around the pool? Back in high school, you never paraded around the locker room with just a towel wrapped around your waist, horsing around with your buddies?" I hardly paused for a breath. "They're comfortable. They don't restrict you the way pants do. And there's this incredible breeze." With that I lifted the hem of my skirt slightly and pretended to love it." The women laughed louder than the men.

Another man in the background had a question. He was a younger man and had shoulder length hair. "Aren't you concerned about appearing feminine?"

"You ask that like it's a dirty word." I responded. "I don't feel that my putting on a skirt makes me feminine. If it does, than so be it. No, I believe that what most men construe as feminine is a feeling or maybe the ability to feel deeply. It's a state of mind. Its the way a person thinks, the way they feel about things and other people. If being feminine is being open, honest and sensitive, I hope that's exactly how people see me."

A woman asked, "Where do you draw the line. What comes next, dresses for men?"

I pondered a second or two. "I don't know. First, I'd like to point out that it's 'Drawing the Line' that has repressed men's fashions in America, up to now. Throughout history, in Europe and the Far East, it was perfectly acceptable for men to wear dresses. It's only been the past hundred or so years that males have decided trade that comfort for slacks and shirts."

"As to the American male wearing dresses, no, I don't believe that they're ready for that yet, but it will come. They'll be designed to flatter and fit the male physique comfortably. Yes, it will happen."

A gentleman in the crown pressed me. "Would you wear one?" Before I could think of an answer, Christy spoke up. "I can't wait to get Jeffrey into one. He's so sexy in this outfit that I can just imagine him in a evening gown." I turned to her, shocked, before I realized what she was doing. Her humor broke the tension that surrounded us and everyone had a good laugh. I suppose it gave the man something to think about.

An older woman asked. "Why did you go to the extreme of having your hair done that way?"

"You feel this is extreme?" I asked the woman. "There are thousands of young men and boys in this country with hair down their backs, who are permed and styled in salons every week, who spend millions of dollars to make their hair look attractive. Besides, my employer thought the curl was the perfect touch." I flipped the hair at my cheek. The women, at least, laughed.

A comment came over the crowd. "So, you're being paid to dress up this way tonight?"

"Not a dime" I replied calmly. This was a hinging point. "I dress this way because I choose to. I'm very comfortable with what Ms. Castle is preparing to introduce to today's waiting males. I'm just delighted that someone had found the courage to offer us an exciting alternative."

The personal questions would have probably gone on for a while if Ms. Castle hadn't announced that dinner was served. I was beginning to wonder if I could keep up the farce much longer.

"May I have a picture?" A man stepped forward. I would have preferred he didn't, but to say no would have been a mistake. "Sure"

He took several. "Now one with your girlfriend."

Christy jumped right in. Posing was what she did best. He took a half dozen shots of us before he was satisfied. "Thank you very much."

I won the women over and even some of the men. Beautiful, sexy Christy helped me with a few more. As we walked to the formal dining room, she whispered in my ear, "You were wonderful."

"Thanks, so were you." I kissed her cheek and she smiled lovingly at me.

By the time we sat down to dinner I was completely relaxed among them.

The dinner conversation turned to other things and I had a break. Afterwards, I was corralled by a number of the younger women. Their questions were more specific. They wanted to know precisely what fashions I preferred and what I thought about different fabrics. I could answer most of their questions honestly.

Christy stayed at my side most of the time. She listened intently to everything I had to say. There were a few occasions that she was drawn away into conversation with some of the guests.

One time I felt really jealous as a trio of young men surrounded her and all I could hear was their laughing.

Late in the evening, Connie and Ms. Castle pulled me aside. Ms. Castle wanted to thank me. "Jeffrey, I really don't know how to thank you enough."

Just the look on her face was enough. "I enjoyed it." I told her. It was partially true. Connie looked very pleased as she gave me that look that I had come to cherish. Pleasing her was very important to me.

"I will find a way to repay you for what you did here tonight." Ms. Castle promised.

"You've done so much already, The clothes you've given me." That was certainly enough. More than enough, actually.

"There's more things on their way. You make a wonderful argument for freedom of choice." She stepped closer and whispered to me so the others couldn't hear. "I've added a few special things myself that I think you'll like." She kissed me on the cheek.

"That's really not necessary Ms. Castle."

"Jeffrey, you're just too sweet." Connie injected as Christy pulled close and squeezed my arm. "He's a doll." She said affectionately.

"You make sure you take good care of our Jeffrey Connie." Ms. Castle told her.

"I most definitely will."

"He's quite a catch." The woman told Christy.

"I know. He's really something special."

"Enough of this." I said, embarrassed. I could feel my cheeks were burning.

The limo dropped us at Christy's before taking Connie home.

"I promise not to keep him too late." Christy told Connie as we got out of the car.

"He has a busy day tomorrow and he needs his beauty rest." She replied grinning.

"That's enough you two." I said scowling at them in fun. "I fell like a school girl on her first date and dad came along to chaperone." They thought it was hilarious.

"You were so adorable tonight." Christy poured us a glass of wine and sat next to me on the sofa.

"Adorable?"

"Yes! I just loved listening to you. You're not like any guy I've ever met."

"I'm not so special."

"You're sweet, and sensitive. Your boss and Ms. Castle simply adore you and I can see why."

"They're nice people."

"That's what I mean. You show people that you care." Christy moved closer to me. "You're not pushy, you're adorably demure."

My timidity came from feeling self-conscious but I didn't dare tell Christy that. She believed everything I said tonight.

"You should have been born a woman."

I looked at her with surprise.

"I mean that as a compliment. I find you so easy to talk to it's like having a girlfriend. Besides, you look so adorable that you could easily pass as one."

"Doesn't that turn you off.?"

"Oh no! I find you exciting and sexy." She put her hand under my jacket and rubbed my chest through the silky material. When she caressed me, it sent waves of sensation through me. I could feel my already swollen nipples swell even more, under the gentle caress of her fingers. I couldn't help the low moan that escaped my lips.

"It turns you on." She said smiling. Her kiss was long and hard and passionate.

It felt good when she began stroking my stockinged leg. I began to get warm, expecting an erection that didn't come. It would, I told myself, it always did.

"Let's go in the bedroom." Christy said, taking hold of my blazer. "I want to rape you, you gorgeous thing you."

We playfully undressed each other. She took great delight in removing my pantyhose. I had completely forgotten about what I was wearing under them. She was surprised for a second when she saw them. Her reaction turned to delight. "Oh, Jeffrey!" She reached around and squeezed my ass through the thin material.

I was mortified. "I don't know what to say."

She laughed, "Don't say anything. I love it. They look so sweet on you."

I know my face was beet red.

She pulled hers down and I started to take mine off. She stopped me.

"No Jeffrey, leave them on for now. They really excite me."



I didn't object. In fact, I preferred it. Not only didn't I have an erection but I felt so inadequate. Over the past week, whenever I went to the bathroom, I told myself that I wasn't shrinking. I couldn't deny it any more. When I put on my underwear, I barely created a bulge in the soft material.

Christy was as beautiful naked as she was in a tuxedo. I wanted so much to please her. We laid back on the bed with her in my arms.

I felt I had to explain away my inadequacy. "I had a lot to drink tonight at the party. I'm not sure I can do this."

She held my face in her hands and whispered. "Don't worry. I'll show you how to please me." She drew me to her. "It's alright Jeffrey."

And that's what she proceeded to do. With her gentle prompting, I brought her to orgasm again and again, her passion building each time. I was thrilled that she was so responsive to just my touch.

When she was satisfied, she traded places with me and stroked and kissed me all over, as I had done for her. My nipples were so sensitive to the moist warm caress of her lips. Waves of excitement washed through me and I couldn't help but moan as she had moments ago. The erection I prayed for never came and not once did she embarrass me by touching me there. She was so sensitive to my feelings.



It was very late when we got dressed so she could take me home. "Do you want me to call you?" I wouldn't blame her if she didn't. I wasn't able to give her what I was sure she wanted and expected her to say no.

"If you don't, I'm going to call you, you silly boy."

The doctor's office called me at work on Monday. "They didn't find anything wrong. I have a slight chemical imbalance but nothing to worry about. He's giving me a prescription he wants me to take. He said to let him know if it got any worse, otherwise I was fine." Connie was relieved at the news.

I was ashamed to tell her that they found my hormone levels way out of balance. I was producing an exceptionally high level of female hormones and almost no male. The prescription was for male hormones, to try to counter my reaction. They assured me it was fairly rare and in 90 per cent of the cases, it reversed itself, in time. They told me not to worry but that wasn't so easy. When I checked myself that morning, my nipples were larger than ever and the pink ring around them looked like it was expanding. I was still as sensitive as ever. He confirmed my fears and told me that it was the hormone imbalance that was causing my manhood to shrink.

Connie insisted on stopping by the pharmacy that morning to pick my prescription for me. She said she wanted me to have the medication as soon as possible. That was fine with me.

On Wednesday I had a call from Ms. Castle. At her request, I put her on the speaker phone in Connie's office so we could both hear. "We have some advance orders for the line. I thought you'd like to know. It was your doing on Saturday that convinced some of the buyers to place the orders."

"I'm very happy for you." I told her. I was rather proud myself for the job I did, convincing her guests.

"I have a delivery coming over for you Jeffrey. I've included the extra things I told you I would. They're not part of the line. I hope you like them."

"She really likes you." Connie said when she hung up. "I wonder what she bought you?"

"I can't wait to see." I couldn't imagine.

I was nervous about calling Christy but she was true to her word. She called me that afternoon. "I wasn't sure if you really wanted to see me again or were just being nice."

"I wasn't kidding Jeffrey." She assured me. "I want you to meet me at my apartment after work on Friday. We're going to meet some of my friends and have some fun."

"I don't know Christy." I was a little nervous about going out with her and her friends. If they were the same people I met briefly at her house Sunday then it could be embarrassing.

"Don't be silly. We'll have fun."

Her friends hadn't harassed me then. Still . . . "All right."

"Dress casually, nothing too flashy. We'll grab something to eat and then probably go see a movie."

That sounded good to me. I really wanted to see her and I hadn't been to a movie in months. It all sounded innocent enough.

I looked down, as I said goodbye, at the navy skirt I was wearing with my blue stockings and my navy shoes. I was relieved that she didn't ask me to wear a skirt. Dressing this way for work was one thing.

We quit work at five and both raced home to see what Ms. Castle had delivered to Connie's that afternoon. The doorman had let them in with the packages. My bed was covered.

I could imagine what most of the plastic wrapped bags contained. I was looking for her presents she had referred to. The four gift wrapped boxes weren't hard to spot.

I grabbed the biggest one first. Connie waited impatiently for me to tear the paper off the first. I lifted the silk, fuchsia colored tank dress from the box. I looked at Connie and she shook her head smiling.

"You said you would wear one if it was comfortable and flattering. She took you at your word. Personally, I think it would look great on you."

I put it aside and opened the next box. I was almost afraid to see what was in it. It wasn't so bad. It was a full spandex body suit. "Where would I wear something like this? I asked Connie.

"I suggest you only wear it around the house." Connie said smiling at me affectionately.

She was right, of course. I thought how comfortable it was going to be to wear as I put it down. I really liked the feel of my other spandex things.

I tore into the next box, my anticipation peaked again. I held up one piece in each hand with a quizzical look on my face.

"They're pjs and they should be very comfortable." The short top had tiny sleeves and a vee neck. The little bottom looked like boxer shorts. They were made of the same material as my other pajamas. I decided to reserve my opinion of them till I tried them on.

Ms. Castle's last gift I wasn't at all thrilled with about. It was a red, two-piece dress. It had a long jacket that went over a short, pleated skirt. The buttons on the front of the jacket were trimmed in black. "That one's a little shorter than your other skirts. I think it'll probably look really cute on you though."

"I can't wear this." I told Connie.

"Sure, you can. A little make up and some black heels, you'd look fantastic." She said grinning. She appeared to be on the verge of laughing. I was convinced at the time that she was just joking with me.

That broke my tension. We laughed and started putting everything away. Connie helped. "You know Jeffrey, Ms. Castle is going to expect to hear from you and she's going to ask what you thought of her gifts." She showed me the label inside the red dress. "This was expensive. I probably cost her two hundred dollars."

"That much?" I took a second look at it.

"She'll want to know if you're going to wear it."

After spending that much, she had a right to ask. "What am I going to tell her?"

"I don't know. That's up to you but you certainly don't want to hurt her feelings or lie to her." Connie left it at that, adding only, "She'll expect to hear from you, tonight."

I dreaded making the call. I put it off until we had looked over the other things she had sent. Each outfit came with its own shoes and accessories. My closet was more than half full. I was thankful to find only one new skirt. I had six now and I had worn three of them. The other three were brighter colors than the plaid, navy and black ones. I was in no rush to wear them. My entire wardrobe was an endorsement for unisex clothing.

It was finally time to make the call. "I just wanted to thank you for everything." I told her.

"What did you think of my little extra gifts?" She sounded nervous.

I had made up my mind what I'd say. Connie was right about my not being able to hurt her feelings. "They're all wonderful. I'm wearing the pajamas right now." I really was and they were as nice to wear as I thought they'd be.

"I'm so pleased."

"I really love the bodysuit, it's so comfortable."

"It's not too snug?"

"No, not at all. I like spandex, the way it feels like a second skin."

"And the other things?" Now she sounded really nervous. I hated this part. What must she think of me, I wondered?

"The dresses are lovely. The tank dress is so soft and comfortable." I hesitated for a second.

"The red one is so pretty but you shouldn't have spent so much money?"

There was an audible sigh of relief on the other end of the phone. "I was so worried that you wouldn't like it."

"It's beautiful, I love it." There, I said it. I tried to sound excited.

"I looked at it in the store and thought of you instantly. I walked away and came back to it three times. I fell in love with it, I was so afraid you wouldn't like it."

"I can't wait to wear it but there's not many places I can go in it."

"I'm just dying to see you in it. Why don't you meet me for lunch downtown?"

She caught me off guard. "I'm not . . ."

"We could lunch at the Hayatt. They have a very elegant dining room and it would be perfect to wear there. Connie can join us for a 'business lunch'."

She had me trapped, "It's very sweet of you . . ."

"If you're at all uncomfortable you could just have Connie help you put a little color on your face and slip on a pair of heels. It would be perfectly alright with me. I just know you'll look lovely in it."

She wanted me to wear her dress and pretend to be a woman. I could hardly believe her. She was waiting for my reply. "May I call you tomorrow, after I check my schedule in the morning?"

"Of course dear. In the meantime, I'll speak to Connie. I'm sure she'll be delighted to have the three of us have lunch together. I'll call her in the morning. I'll and make our reservations for around noon. That won't be too early for you?"

She was leaving me no way out. "No, that would be fine." I couldn't muster much enthusiasm.

"I can't tell you how thrilled and relieved I am that you liked everything. I'm really looking forward to lunch tomorrow, Jeffrey. You are the sweetest thing. Goodnight, dear."

I just stood there for a moment in disbelief, holding the phone at my side.

"What did she say?" Connie asked, coming out of her bedroom.

I hung up the phone. "She wants to meet us for lunch tomorrow."

"Well, that's alright, isn't it?"

"She wants me to wear the red dress."

"Oh."

"She said that if I'd be more comfortable, I could put a little color on my face and put on heels."  
I dropped on the couch.

"What are you going to do?"

"She wouldn't take no for an answer. Actually, she didn't give me a chance to say no."

"You're going to have to go."

"I know." I said to the floor.

I didn't have much to say over dinner. "You have to eat something." Connie insisted.

"I'm not very hungry."

Connie got serious. "Jeffrey, you might as well just make up your mind to have fun tomorrow. Just act the way you do around the girls when we're shooting. They think you're very convincing."

"That's different. It's just fooling around and they know me." I rationalized.

"Virginia Castle knows you too. You won't be trying to fool her. You'll be pretending for people you don't know and will probably never see again."

Connie was right about that. "How am I supposed to go to work?"

"We'll go into work in the morning. You'll leave early and come home and change."

"And get ready by myself? What about my hair, my makeup?"

"I'll show you how to fix your hair tonight. You already know how to do makeup. Pam says you've gotten excellent at doing the girls."

"But that's stage makeup and I've never done myself. It's not the same."

Connie thought a minute. "Pam will be there in the morning. Go up and ask her to show you."

"Can't you show me? I don't want anyone to know I'm doing this."

"Sure I can, but my makeup is all wrong for your fair complexion and coloring. We'll have to go out and get you some of your own."

"Alright, let's go."

"You better put on something convincing if we're going shopping through the cosmetic departments. It might look a little funny for a young man to be shopping for cosmetics."

She was right. "What should I wear?"

"Just put on the pretty fuchsia tank dress Ms. Castle just gave you. It's loose fitting enough that no one will realize you're anything but a flat chested young woman."

"I hadn't thought about that. What am I going to do tomorrow?"

"Well, my bras are certainly too big for you. We'll have to find you one of your own. I think, while we're at it we better get you a camisole to wear under that jacket. It does sit open in the front. You'll need a slip too. With the camisole you can get away with a half-slip."

"All that?"

"And more. You'll need shoes and a decent pair of pantyhose. You'll need a purse to go with the dress and a new wallet just in case."

"I don't know if I have enough to pay for all this"

"I'll let you owe me. We'll work it out later."

"I already owe you."

"So, you'll owe me more. We better get going."

It didn't take me long to change. I was ready before Connie.

"Where's the belt that came with the dress?" She asked when she saw me. "You need stockings. Put on the black ones from the other night and your black patent leather flats. Your hair's not right and you didn't put on any jewelry. Where's your purse. Jeffrey, you're not going to fool anyone this way."

I thought I was ready. It was another half hour before we left. Clothes were first because the stores would close at nine and it was already seven thirty.

"Just act the way you do with the girls at work but don't over do it. Ready?" She asked as we approached the door to the mall.

"No. Yes. No."

Connie laughed "Just stay calm and relax." She stopped just short of the door. "Wait a minute." We waited for a young couple to pass through the doors. When we were alone again, Connie said, "Your name's Jennifer. Don't forget to answer to it or it could get embarrassing."

"I'll remember."

She pulled the door open for me. "Let's go Jennifer."



"This is lovely. It should be perfect." Connie held up the white camisole by the thin straps.

"It's really pretty." I reached over and felt the lace. "I like the inset." I played along.

"Here, hang onto it." Connie handed it to me. "Follow me."

"We're lucky to even find a red slip." Connie held it up to my waist. "I think this will do." Its hem had a two-inch band of lace around it.

"It's so . . ."

Connie frowned at me. No one stood nearby. She whispered, "Delicate? Feminine? Pretty?"

"Pretty!"

It only took a minute to pick out pantyhose. I didn't know Taupe was a color.

"Why two pairs?" I asked.

"Because the minute you only have one pair is when you end up snagging them or getting a run. It's just for insurance Jennifer."

I laughed at her, quietly.

Buying a bra was not so simple. There were so many to pick from. Connie picked for me. "This one is so delicate looking." She took down two of the same style and handed them both to me. She looked around to make sure we couldn't be heard "I don't know which will be more comfortable so try both the size 30 and the 32."



"In there?" I asked nervously, pointing to the dressing room.

"Well, you can't try them here, yes in there. Now go and don't forget to close the curtains."

I didn't forget. I didn't like having to pull the dress off to try them on but that was the only way. I wasted no time. I had trouble hooking them behind my back. The 30 was too snug around my chest. The 32 was comfortable. I wondered if it was necessary to buy one that was so lacy. I also wondered what I would stuff the cups with?



"This one." I tried to hand it to Connie but she wouldn't take it. "Take it with the other things, to the girl to ring up."

This was the test. I took a deep breath and walked up to the register.

"Will that be all tonight?" The older woman asked as she took the camisole, slip and bra from my hand. She looked at me and smiled. I smiled back. "Yes, that's it." I didn't think I'd get away with it, I had no makeup on, but the woman just started to ring my things up. Even my voice didn't give her reason to raise an eyebrow.

"She saw someone in a dress with pretty hair and a nice smile, all she expected to see was a woman. Why should she question you?" Connie explained as we walked toward the shoes and handbags.

The power of suggestion worked in my favor. I was just glad it was late in the day and the salesgirls were probably tired from working all day. I didn't mind that there were no crowds to speak of either.

"Too plain. Too small. Too big." Not one of the purses I picked out was the right one. "Mass Bros has a better selection. Let's go look there." Connie wasn't easy to please.

There were still a lot of people out in the mall. I took great care to walk just so and to hold my head up and my shoulders back. I didn't look anyone in the eye, especially men. Connie warned me not to. I didn't need much encouraging.

Connie found the perfect purse. It was a shiny black bag. It was larger than the black one I carried and it had a gold chain for a strap instead of leather. "Now let's hope we can find shoes that match. We spent a half hour finding them but they did match. I had to sit there and let the salesman try them on me. I was extremely nervous. If I hadn't worn heels when I fooled around with the girls at work, I probably would have fallen on my face. As it was, I managed all right. The toes pinched a little but they weren't too bad.

My eyes bugged when I saw the price of the shoes. They were sixty dollars. Connie was ready with her charge card. The purse had set me back fifty-five dollars and the lingerie, forty-five. My cash was gone.

"We forgot to get you a wallet." She handed me the bag with the shoes. "We better hurry. They'll be closing in a few minutes."

It still took us a few minutes to pick one out. Connie was so fussy. "Do I really need that?" I asked while we waited for the girl to come back to the register from helping another customer. "What are you going to do when you open your purse to get out your lipstick, or something else? Just imagine if your old wallet fell out. No, you're going to have the right kind of wallet tomorrow."

That was all there was to it. Still, I couldn't imagine reaching into my purse and putting lipstick on in the middle of a busy dining room.

"Are we done?" I asked, after she paid for the purse.

"One more thing. They're not going to just lock us in here."

Connie held one pair of earrings after another, up to my ear. "How do you like these?"

The salesgirl was waiting. They were pearl drops. "They'll go perfectly with the dress. I love them, thanks Mom." As nervous as I was, I was getting into it. Connie gave me a glaring look when the sales girl turned her head.

"That was cute back there. 'MOM' indeed. Are you enjoying yourself, finally?"

I grinned at her, "It's not so bad."

"Young girls these days. What's a mother to do?" She scowled at me again, playing. "Let's go daughter. We still have some things to get you."

I felt a little more bounce in my step as I walked beside her. I was beginning to feel more confident.

"The cosmetics' Pam uses are heavier, darker because the bright lights tend to wash out the color. We want you to look softer, more natural. Let me pick your colors for you."

Connie was right again. She tested the foundation on my cheek. There were samples of the blush to try. The eyebrow pencil, mascara and eyeliner were easy. She knew the brands to pick from. We spent a few minutes deciding on eyeshadow and lipstick. I tried on several shades of lipstick before Connie found one that suited me. "Now you'll need a lipliner and see if you can find the matching nail polish Jennifer." The sales girl had come over to see if she could help us.

"I'll get those for you." She told us pleasantly. She got involved and helped me select the finishing powder as well.

We had all the cosmetics I needed, we browsed the store. Connie picked up hair spray, a curling iron and a new hair dryer. "I need all that?"

"Yes! You need all that." She said grinning at me.

We weren't finished. "You need to have some odds and ends to fill your purse." That made sense. Most women carried a lot of junk around in their purses. We found a small make up mirror, q-tips in a purse sized case, tissues and a small hair brush.

"Are we done now?" I asked as we put the last of it into the little basket I was carrying.

"Just about. Do you have a particular perfume that you like?" Connie seemed to get a thrill out of this. She was enjoying herself, playing the game.

I hadn't even thought about wearing perfume. I supposed that if I could dress up, I should smell like a woman too. "I just love Chanel. It's just heavenly." I said, joking.

"Smart ass." She whispered. "Let's go see if we can find you something a little less expensive."

Connie and I both liked the White Shoulders. "That's lovely." I told her, smelling it on my wrist.

"Now maybe you'll stop using mine Jennifer." She handed it to the waiting salesgirl. It came with a little purse sized spritzer too.

I laid the clothes out on the bed, taking care as I snipped off the labels. Connie spread out the cosmetics on the vanity table. "Now come on over here and let's get busy. It's late and we have a lot to do."

I took off the dress at her suggestion so it didn't get messed up. I slipped into one of my tee shirts. I was sensitive about my chest. "You better go in and give yourself a close shave before we start."

I rubbed my cheek. There wasn't a bit of stubble and I hadn't shaved since... it had to be Tuesday. "I think I'm alright." I told her. I knew it was. My skin was clearer than it had ever been and it seemed so much smoother too.

She stroked my cheek. "Nice. That lotion you're using is helping. You're not going to need the foundation except around your eyes. Take off you pantyhose and let's see your legs." The circumstances of our relationship had change so dramatically. I wasn't so concerned any more with being so modest around her. I sat on the bed and pulled them down. As I laid them on the bed, she remarked, "Your new underwear looks much better on you. You seem to be getting used to them all right."

Actually, I was, as long as no one saw me in them but Connie. They were much more comfortable to wear than men's underwear, they felt nice on my smooth skin. I thought about what happened with Christy and her reaction. She'd probably get turned on if she knew what I was planning on doing.

Connie stroked my calf. "Very smooth. Your legs are fine too. You shaved them today?" She thought I just shaved them. I didn't want to tell her I hadn't done anything to them since that first time in the studio. The hair still hadn't grown back on my arms either. "Yes, before we went out." I was too embarrassed to admit the truth.

"Good, they'll look nice for tomorrow."

She sat me down at the dressing table. "We just need to clean up and trim your eyebrows a little. They're still nicely shaped but a little scraggly." I sat there while she plucked and trimmed till she was satisfied. They hadn't grown much since Pam had done them weeks ago. I had gotten sort of used to them, it was hard to remember what they used to look like.

It didn't take me too long to put on my makeup, under her direction. Pam had taught me the techniques involved. Connie simply refined them.

I wasn't as intimidated about putting on the makeup as I was that first time. It was very important to me to look as natural as I could. The black eyeliner seemed alright and my lashes looked big and well defined. "Shouldn't it be darker?" I asked when I finished putting on my eyeshadow.

"Definitely not! What you have on is just enough. So often girls that just start wearing makeup appear so severe because they overdo it. No, you don't need any more color."

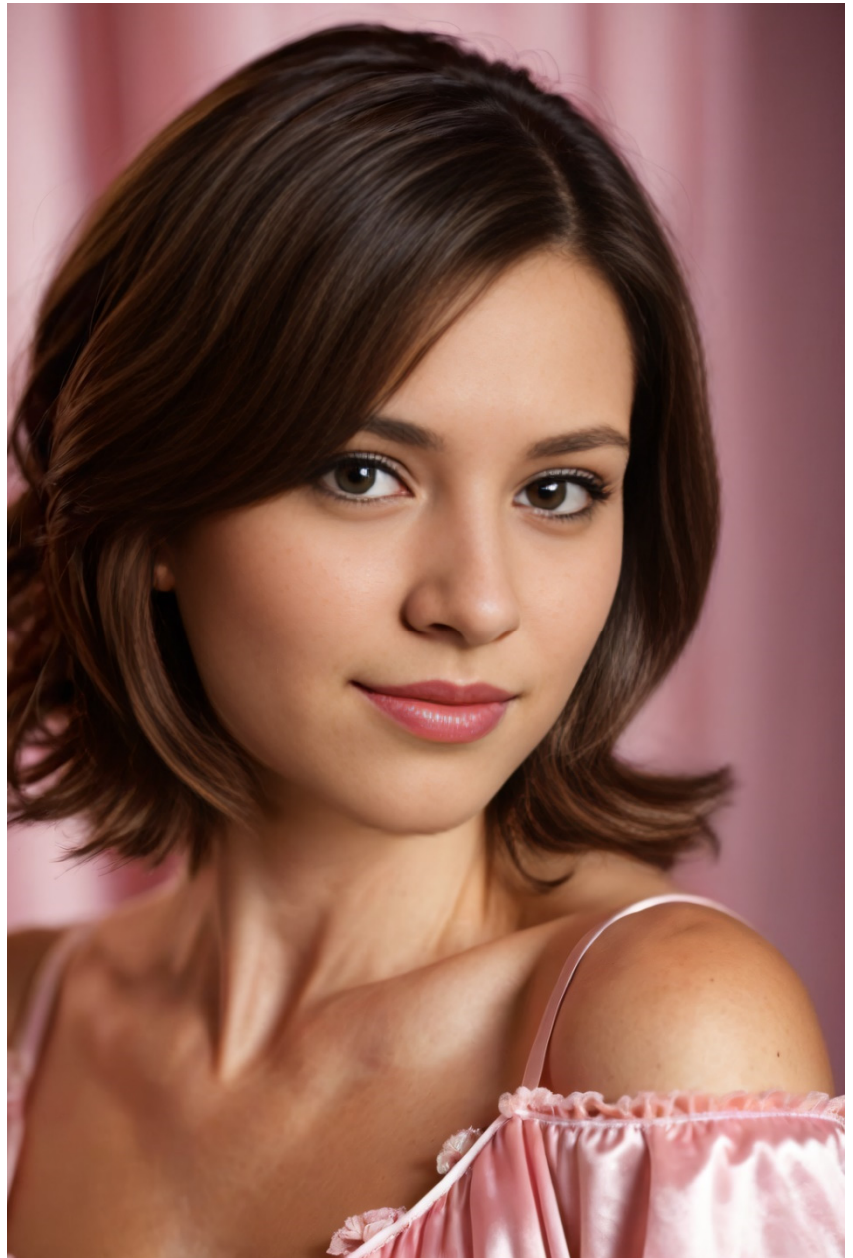
I had done everything but my lips. "We'll wait until you're dressed for that." She explained. "It's too easy to get your lipstick on your clothes when you're dressing."

"We do my hair now?" I asked.

Connie smiled adoringly at me. "Yes Jennifer. Now we do your hair. Come on."

I really liked Connie and her sense of humor. I couldn't imagine anyone who would go through this with me and have so much fun with it.

"Your hair looked very nice Saturday. We're not going to change it very much. Tonight, I'll just show you some techniques. You'll want to wash it tomorrow before you go and style it then. I'm just going to show you what I think you should do with it."



I was worried about getting ready on my own, when I came back to the apartment tomorrow.

"Yes, please, show me."

Connie went to work. She was frustrated when it wouldn't lay exactly the way she wanted it to. "I just want to bring it down across your forehead a little so it looks softer. If I could just get it to lay the right way."

She used the curling iron on the ends to bring them under and to the front more. She went a little farther than she did Saturday, for the party. There was no mistaking the style as a girl's now.

"I know it doesn't look very good but what do you think?" She asked, standing back.

"It's nice. Are you sure I can do this?"

"No, it's terrible and I'm beginning to wonder how we'll manage to get you home and ready in time."

"I have to."

"I know." Connie sounded frustrated.

"Let's see how you look in your dress." She had done all she could with my hair.

*(Continued in Part 2)*

