



SUMMARY: Looking to increase their chance with a female volleyball team they have invested in, one company decides that if they can't find winning female athletes, they will make them using guys who couldn't quite cut it in sports.

## **GAME ON**

### **Part One**

**by Valerie Hope**

"WE'RE GONNA LOSE A FUCKING fortune on this deal," Adam Cassidy said angrily, slamming his fist against the deeply polished mahogany of his desk hard enough to make the framed pictures jump and the water in his crystal glass splatter. "How hard is it to just fucking win a game?"

"I warned you," William Summers replied smugly. "I told you about investing in sports."

"Shut up," Cassidy shot back hotly. "I don't wanna hear it."

"You're a victim of the Danica Patrick effect," Summers went on as if his colleague hadn't spoken at all. "Sure, she's got a great set of tits, but it's all for nothing if she can't win a fucking race. All her sponsors are taking a bath on the deal because all they can sell are stroke-off posters of her and little titty videos on GoDaddy.com."

"We've been over this," Cassidy said, digging in one of the capacious drawers of his desk for a bottle of 12-year-old scotch kept there for emergencies such as this one. The U.S. Women's Volleyball team had actually seemed like a sound investment on paper – a loyal following, an Olympic gold medal, and every one of them a great big sexy Amazon who would look great in a bikini on the front of a 12-pack of Coke or as a standie on a Miller Lite ad in a convenience store. Except that they'd lost in a walk to Poland and were now barely a blip on the radar, no one paid them the least bit of attention and all the hard-won sponsors Cassidy had lined up for them were disappearing like so many farts in the wind.

"Apparently we haven't been over it enough," Summers shot back. Cassidy ceased his search for the scotch bottle. As big an asshole as Summers was, Cassidy couldn't just sit there and ignore his boss with impunity. He had to listen at some point or run the serious risk of losing his job and Woerner-Stone, the pre-eminent sports management company on the West Coast.

"What do you suggest, Bill?" Cassidy said, defeated. "We can't get anybody interested in women's athletics, and we fucked up and got ourselves heavily invested. We can't get anyone to turn on the fucking television, for Chrissakes. What do you suggest we should do?"

"I've been thinking about that," Summers said. "A lot. I'm invested pretty heavily myself, you know – I put several million of my own personal assets into some of these teams. I fell for it as hard as you did. Now it's up to us to pry this thing out of the toilet."

"And we do that *how*?"

"Well, it seems to me that the biggest problem with women's athletics is all the goddamn women," Summers expounded, sitting back and puffing out his chest. "They don't have what it takes. Not like the men do, at any rate. Take the NFL, for instance. The reason they pull in all those ad dollars and all the corporate sponsors isn't because of their PR machine. It's because they have players who run the forty in three seconds flat and can catch a pass through triple coverage on their fucking fingertips and come down in bounds."

"The PR machine sure as shit doesn't hurt," Cassidy replied.

"You can build a fucking PR machine," Summers shot back airily. "But if these bitches had the skills and competitive nature of the men in sports, they'd easily be bringing down those kinds of dollars. More, probably, because you have the tits-and-ass factor to add to it."

"But we did that," Cassidy objected. "Every single one of them was at least an 8. It didn't do any good, it didn't increased the market share of a single event."

"An 8 is an 8," Summers laughed. "But an 8 who can hit a baseball out of Fenway, now *that* will get you market share."

"And you have some of these women who compete like men but still look like game show hostesses in your pocket, I presume?" Cassidy asked sarcastically.

"Of course not, they don't exist," Summers replied.

"Then we're back to Square One," Cassidy grumbled, finding the scotch at last and pouring himself a generous tumbler.

"I said they didn't exist," Summers said, lowering his voice and looking surreptitiously out the door of the office to check that no one eavesdropped. "I *didn't* say we couldn't make them."

"Make them?"

Summers eased the office door closed with a toe and helped himself to the scotch. "I own controlling interest in a company called BioLogic," he said. "Amazing shit they do over there, viruses and DNA and crazy geek shit I can barely understand. But let me tell you what I *do* know about them."

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Brian Madison towed sweat from his forehead, scraping the stubble of his freshly-shaven head, and blinked large drops of sweat from his eyes. He hoped that the other hopefuls – dozens of them, all slumped against the backstop of the low bench – didn't notice the one or two tears mixed in with the heavy perspiration.

The trainer paced back and forth in front of the long bench, giving the same old tired spiel: "You're all excellent competitors and athletes. There is no shame whatsoever in being cut at this level..."

Brian sighed and tuned him out – he'd heard it all before. One of the most promising attacking center midfielders in college soccer, Brian tried out for the U.S. Men's National Team six years ago and made the team, looking to play alongside the likes of Landon Donovan and Carlos Bocanegra and hopefully even start in the World Cup. Until the drunk driver ran the red light as Brian drove home, smashing into the driver's side door and tearing every ligament in Brian's left leg. The rehab had been long, arduous, painful as hell and most of all wrecked his speed

and accuracy, causing his four subsequent tryouts for the team to end on the same long, lonely bench.

Tossing his sodden towel into his bag, he shouldered the load and walked back towards the parking lot, his beaten-down Chevy and the long drive home where he could look forward to nothing more than his dead-end job at the State Board of Athletics and his little league coaching job. His girlfriend, Amelia, had left him a few weeks earlier citing interest in another man – *probably one with two good knees*, he thought bitterly – and left Brian's existence just this side of desolate. If not for his team of 8-to-12-year-olds that practiced on Tuesday and Thursday nights, he suspected he would have introduced a 9mm hollowpoint to the base of his brain years ago. But for now, he just tried not to think about anything more than the cold beer – or multiple cold beers, as the case may be – waiting in his refrigerator.

He was fishing in the end pocket of his bag for his car keys when he heard a very pointed clearing of a throat. He looked up to see a very slick-looking man lounging against his front fender, wearing a tailored silk suit that looked like a year's rent and utilities, carrying a leather briefcase and polishing off the end of a cigarette. He flicked the butt into the grass and favored Brian with an over-rehearsed, effortless smile that showed off several thousand dollars of porcelain veneers.

"Brian Madison," he said in a mellifluous baritone while extending a manicured hand. "Adam Cassidy, Woerner-Stone Management. How are you?"

"Sorry, you have me confused with someone else," Brian said. "I didn't make the cut this time."

"Or the last four times," Cassidy responded without hesitation. "Not since you got clipped by a drunk driver fresh out of college and ruined your career. No, Brian, it's you I'm looking for. Do you have a few minutes? I'd like to buy you a drink."

Brian laughed roughly. "Where the hell else am I gonna go? And you can buy me *lots* of drinks."

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Brian downed the last of his beer and made to stand. "You're joking. Look, mister, I appreciate the beer, but even though I was born at night I wasn't born *last* night," he said, reaching in his pocket to drop a tip for the waitress out of his scant cash reserve.

"Brian, trust me, here. I'm *not* joking. What I *am* doing is offering you one hell of a second chance."

"By turning me into a girl," Brian said flatly. "Mister, that shit isn't even possible."

"Neither was an MRI, or a man-made satellite, or flight, once," Cassidy replied. "I assure you, it's completely possible. Even quite easy, to hear the scientists tell it. And we're in a position to pay you an awful lot of money to go through with it."

"Why me?"

"Because you were one of the greats before you got hurt," Cassidy replied, a little bit of excitement leaking into his smooth voice. "Your senior year at State you scored 11 goals in one season, played two entire tournaments without a yellow card. Led the league in penalty kicks from over 30 yards and led your team to the state final three years in a row. You have the

potential – and the experience – to be a superstar, Brian, and we want to help make that happen."

"If you think I'm so fantastic, then why not use your science fiction to fix my knee instead of changing my whole gender?" Brian asked.

"Think about it," Cassidy said. "As a man, you have to compete against an established field of players, and you'll be facing an uphill struggle from minute one. Or, you can move into a field of relative unknowns and be a leader pretty much as soon as you sign the contract."

"Unknowns? Brandy Chastain, Mia Hamm, Julie Foudy – you call them unknowns?"

"You should know better than anyone how short this country's attention span runs," Cassidy said, signaling the cocktail waitress for another round. "Chastain and Hamm and Foudy were greats, and they put women's soccer on the map, but as far as the John Q. Public is concerned, that happened shortly after the Declaration of Independence was signed. We're talking about the here and now, Brian, and we want you to be a part of it."

"You're out of your fucking mind," Brian said.

"Maybe. Maybe not. But I do have a cashier's check in my breast pocket for fifty thousand dollars."

"You may not think so, but I actually consider my balls to be worth more than that," Brian said, "even if you *are* being serious."

"Where are you gonna go?" Cassidy accused. "Home to your little shit-box of an efficiency apartment and your nowhere job that barely pays your medical bills? Your shitty car and your pub trivia one night a week, and dreaming about all the other guys who weren't as talented as you going to the World Cup and the Olympics? What makes that so special?"

"It's special enough," Brian shot back.

"Kid, I'm in advertising. I know bullshit when I hear it."

"Good-bye, Mr. Cassidy. Thanks for the beer."

He left quickly, not looking back. Watching him walk with the trace of a limp left over from his injury, Adam Cassidy slipped his high-dollar cell phone from his pocket and dialed quickly.

"It's Cassidy," he said flatly, narrowing his eyes at the has-been soccer player's retreating back. "He didn't go for it. You have a green light. Make this bastard's life so miserable he'll be begging us to go ahead with our plans before we're done."

He hung up and sat back easily to enjoy the rest of his martini and try to get the cute cocktail waitress' phone number, not even wanting to know the extent of all the wheels he just set in motion.

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Brian slumped in the seat of the transit bus with a heavy, soul-deep sigh. He peered into the paper sack containing the quart of cheap whiskey he held, as if it held answers. He'd stumbled his way through another interview – this time to coach sixth-grade P.E. – without much hope of actually getting the job. Over the course of the last month, his apartment had been sold to a developer and he had only days remaining to vacate and no real hope of finding another place

for as cheap, forcing him to begin sorting through the morass of potential psychopaths to find a roommate, lost his job at the State Athletics Board due to cutbacks and had his car break down to the tune of a \$3000 repair (considerably more than the value of the car). His little league soccer team had finished last in the league and now rumors were beginning to circulate among the parents that Brian might have engaged in inappropriate behavior with some of the kids – an outrageous accusation, unfounded and unprovable, but enough to have him blackballed from the league and unable to coach anywhere else, taking away his only source of anything approaching happiness from his life. Now, out of money and with prospects now dwindled away to nothing, he took the long ride home on the public bus faced with only his fading hopes and a vast question-mark in place of a future.

He fumbled his keys into the deadbolt of his soon-to-be-vacant apartment and clicked on the light, dropping his everpresent gym bag next to the door and sagging near-lifeless into his dilapidated chair next to the window. Thoughts of cold leftover Chinese take-out and tap water held no charm, so he just stared out the window at the city lights and tried not to succumb to despair. He dug through the pile of past-due bills and junk mail on the small table beside his chair for the U.S. Army brochure he'd spent hours looking over throughout the past days, wondering if some insurgent would be kind enough to blow him into a million pieces in Fallujah or Anbar Province and end all his troubles.

His digging into the precarious pile caused all of his correspondence to topple and spray across his floor in a long cascade. Brian knelt out of his chair and began digging through, scooping it back into something manageable, when his eye fell on the small business card he inexplicably hadn't thrown away. He lifted it to eye level and studied it carefully.

Something in his mind found satisfaction. With a soft sigh of resignation, he lifted his phone and dialed the number, then pressed it to his ear.

"Let me talk to Adam Cassidy."

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Brian looked around the small barracks-style dwelling, dropping his bags on what appeared to be an unoccupied bunk and knuckling the small of his back. He'd just spent the last seven hours in cabs and airplanes, uprooted from everything familiar and transplanted to this small research facility on the West Coast, the overcast and rain of the approaching autumn now replaced with bright sunshine and cool ocean breezes through the palms.

There were four other bunks in the dorm besides his own, and the presence of bags and personal effects surrounding them showed Brian that he was the last to arrive. He peeked out the window at a small, pristine length of white-sand beach ringed with sharp, jagged rocks.

"Brian Madison," chimed a bright, cheerful voice from behind him, making him spin around startled. A rotund, happy-faced Buddha of a man with a receding hairline and thick Coke-bottle glasses stood behind him in a white lab coat, holding a clipboard. Brian found his genuine, open smile infectious and couldn't help but return it in kind.

"I'm Robert Savannah," he said, extending a pudgy hand. "I'm gonna be your doctor-slash-trainer throughout the process. I'm really glad to meet you."

"Sorry," Brian apologized. "I'm still a little overwhelmed, here."

"Understandable," Savannah said amiably. "You want the nickel tour?"

"Sure, doc," Brian replied.

"Oh, for God's sake call me Rob," the heavyset man said airily as he fell in beside Brian. "So, this is the dorm, as you can probably tell. You probably won't be spending an awful lot of time here, sad to say. We've got all of you scheduled pretty tight. Over here is the dining area – we'll have you on custom, specialized diets for the most part, so all your meals and snacks will be prepared for you – and there's the gym. There's a track and an Olympic-sized pool just through there, both indoor and heated. Then that room, there, leads to the medical facilities. That's the exam room, and there's an ICU room just in case – but you're never gonna need it. We've already tested the procedure on chimps and it's gone off without a hitch. The actual room where we're gonna do the procedure tomorrow is through there, too, and some of the research we need to conduct will happen back there as well.

"There's the door to the beach – there's a little patio out there and a cabana for when the Powers That Be actually allow you to relax, and the front drive is right through there. You can call a car to take you to town if you need to. Bathroom, communal shower, TV room are through there. There's an upstairs balcony and lounge there, a little privacy suite and the shrink's office – you'll meet her later today – and also a conference room for when corporate wants to video-conference. And that's pretty much it. We'll phase you all into private quarters in about six weeks, if all goes to plan. But for now, it's a pretty nice place, don't you think?"

"A lot nicer than my place," Brian had to agree. "So, you're gonna, like... *zap* us or whatever you're gonna do, tomorrow?"

"Yep," Robert said with a touch of pride.

"Why so quick?"

"Why not?" Robert asked. "All the papers are signed, all the personnel and material are in place, and you all had your physicals and health screenings before you left to come here. We don't see any reason to wait around. Unless you can think of one?"

"No, I guess not," Brian said. "I guess I just thought I'd have a little more time to, y'know... say goodbye. To being a guy."

Robert patted his shoulder companionably. "I did the same thing," he said. "I didn't think I would, but it was easier than I thought it would be. Maybe I had a little bit of an unfair advantage, I guess, but still. You seem a lot tougher than me."

"Waitaminnit," Brian said, "you're going through the procedure as well?"

"I was the first volunteer," Rob told him. "See, I have gender dysphoric disorder. Transgendered, y'know, the whole 'woman in a man's body' thing? So this is actually very close to a dream come true for me, it's one of the reasons I jumped at the chance to get in on this research in the first place."

"Wow," Brian said.

"We – and by 'we' I mean the research team – thought it might help you guys to have one of the geek squad, who really understands the procedure – go through it with you, kinda steer you around the curves if you needed it."

"Actually, that does sound kinda comforting," Brian admitted. "But you're not staying here?"

"Not in the dorm," he told Brian, "but in the facility. I'll be sleeping up in the research facility. I actually moved up there around three months ago, when we started the preliminary trials. It's kinda homey. You can come hang out there if you want sometime. I have a flat-screen."

"Cool," Brian said, deciding he liked the rotund doctor and offering him a genuine smile.

"So, you nervous?" Rob asked.

"Scared shitless," Brian amended.

"Don't be," he said. "It's going to go off without a hitch, and let me tell you that Dr. Scarsdale, your shrink, is *incredible*. She'll get you through this without a mark on you. She's a miracle worker."

Brian reserved comment as Rob led him into the dining area. A group of four men sat there, over trays of pretty appetizing-looking food, engaged in a subdued conversation which cut off abruptly when Rob and Brian entered the room.

"Guys, this is Brian, he's the last of your group," Rob announced. "Soccer player."

The first man he saw, a gawky-looking brunette man with a soul-patch and a sleeve tattoo up his left arm, stood and gave Brian a big, gap-toothed smile. "Brian Madison," he said, gripping Brian's hand heartily and clapping his shoulder. "I haven't seen you since the tryouts two years ago."

"What's up, Ellis?" Brian said companionably, recognizing his friend Ellis Kennedy, a freshman striker at State with him when Brian was a junior. The kid had an uncanny sense of the field and lightning speed and acceleration, great accuracy from outside the 18-yard box. Brian remembered that he'd popped positive for performance-enhancing drugs while playing for DC United and had been summarily banned from MLS before ever earning a professional start. Last Brian had heard, Ellis had been selling used cars somewhere in the Midwest.

"Oh, just waiting around to lose my balls, just like everybody else," Ellis chuckled with forced humor. "Brian, this is Lewis Jordan."

Brian shook the hand of the short-statured man with sandy blonde hair and a trucker's tan who stood up at his introduction. "You play soccer too?" Brian asked.

"Golfer," Lewis answered shyly. "Like everybody here, I guess, I'm a could've-been. Was down eight strokes at the close of the first round of the U.S. Open four years ago."

"What happened?" Brian asked.

"I have Crohn's disease, and I flared up because I couldn't take the steroids while I was on the tour," he replied. "Spent the whole second round on the toilet and got disqualified. Never could get back in, since every time I get stressed out I get the explosive runs."

"Dude, that sucks," Brian said.

"Oh, well," Lewis said with a sardonic shrug, "nothing giving my cock away can't cure, right?"

"Brian, this is Richard Lindsay. You race what, Rick, Grand Prix?"

"Formula One," he said. He scratched his salt-and-pepper goatee and then rubbed his hand over his bald-shaven head. "And before you ask, I was helping my brother re-bore a cylinder in his shop when the bit snapped. Blinded me in the left eye."

"So, we're all sob stories?" Brian asked.

"Apparently so," a tall, broad-shouldered boy with carrot-red hair and pasty-white skin spattered with orange freckles said, shaking Brian's hand brusquely. "I'm Henry Taylor. Was a minor-league pitcher with a shot at the majors about three years ago, then tore my rotator cuff throwing an inside fastball and the surgeon fucked up. Never threw again."

Brian slid into the seat on the bench next to Ellis while Rob, who'd been working silently behind-the-scenes during the introduction process, slid a tray of food in front of him along with a huge glass of iced tea. He took a bite of a quite excellent beef stroganoff before asking, "Do you guys actually think this crazy shit is gonna work?"

Henry Taylor shrugged. "Fucked if I know, partner, but I do know it's the only shot I have at a career in professional sports. Baseball was the only time I ever felt good at something, y'know? If it's a question of working at the lawnmower plant for the rest of my life or giving up my pecker and getting to play professional ball again, then I guess my pecker ain't all that big a deal."

"Yeah," Jordan chimed in. "I feel the same way. I sucked as a husband, as a student, and sure as hell suck at being a product tester. The only thing I was *ever* good at was golf. Hell, the only decent memories of my dad I have all happened on a course. And as far as my balls are concerned, well, shit – it's not like I was really using them, anyway."

Rick Lindsey chimed in. "Shit, I just don't wanna be blind no more," he said. "Getting to drive again, hell, that's just a bonus."

"C'mon, Brian, you have to feel the same way," Ellis said. "You wouldn't've kept trying out for the National Team all those years, even when you knew you wouldn't get it, if there wasn't something about running out on that pitch. I remember that equalizer you scored in the finals my sophomore year. You cut inside the midfielder on a twenty-yard solo run, chipped it off your heel around the back to draw the keeper off his line and threaded it in near-post to get us back in the game in the seventy-third minute. And you were twenty feet tall and bulletproof. Nothing could even touch you for the rest of the week. I've been chasing that high ever since they booted me, and I know you dream about it."

"Yeah, I do," Brian said. "I guess I just thought I should play the hand I was dealt."

"Who says you can't draw a new hand?" Rob asked. "Look, guys, I know this is scary, but you're going to advance medical research and you'll get a chance to get back to what you do best that you may have never had again. Believe me, I never used to believe in second chances. Until now."

"Do you really understand, though?" Brian asked gently. "Were you ever an athlete, do you know what it is we're really after, willing to sacrifice so much to get?"

"Just because I wanted to be a cheerleader more than anything doesn't mean I didn't play offensive tackle," Rob confessed. "So yeah, I have an idea. Boys like me – boys who are really girls – they tend to over-do the 'manly' thing so nobody catches on. I was all-State two years in a row and got a free ride to college on a football scholarship."

"Why did you quit?" Ellis asked.

"The high you get from playing football, or soccer, or whatever, is *nothing* compared to the high you get from helping save somebody's life or by curing a disease. I found something I just liked better."

"So what happens tomorrow, anyway, Rob?" Henry asked, changing the subject gracelessly.

"We'll get you up around six or so," Rob said, sipping iced tea. "No breakfast, unfortunately, you'll go straight to the facility and we'll get you prepped. Then we float you in an electrolytic bath and introduce the retrovirus which will rewrite your DNA. You'll all feel pretty sick after that, so we figured we'd just let you sleep it off. We don't start the actual therapy and training until the day after."

"So just a shot, then we sleep all day?" Lewis asked.

"Well, that's all that happens to you guys," Rob explained. "There's a lot of stuff that will be happening behind the scenes."

"Such as?"

"Constant medical monitoring, IV infusions to help the retrovirus along and keep you hydrated and your nutrition up – you're going to need a lot of bio-material for the reconstruction process, and we'll have to give you things like calcium and potassium and glucose," he said. "And then Dr. Scarsdale will probably start the first of the subliminal training while you're asleep to help the adjustment process."

"Waitaminnit, subliminal? Like hypnosis?" Rick Lindsey interjected.

"I guess you could call it that," Rob said. "But it's like calling the Sistine Chapel 'some paint on a church ceiling.' It's infinitely more delicate, more sophisticated and more complicated than that. You see, 'hypnosis' as most people understand it is just behavior modification. What Dr. Scarsdale does is actually generating memories and experiences to help you adjust to your new lives. It's really incredible stuff."

"Wow," Brian commented. "That's kind of scary, when you stop and think about it."

"I guess it is, actually," Rob said, "but if it's used responsibly, then it could massively benefit mankind. Everything here could."

"This hypnosis stuff, subliminal, whatever," Brian said, "is it gonna change who we are?"

"Not fundamentally," Rob explained. "You're all fantastic competitors, and we don't want to touch that, or your skills base. But it will help with some of the tougher obstacles, like thinking of yourselves in the feminine, remembering to go into the right public bathroom, that kind of thing."

"Is it going to make us, y'know... like *guys*?" Rick asked.

"Probably not at first," Rob said. "But it will make you not freak out thinking about the idea. What happens next is pretty much up to your hormones. Sexual orientation is a tough nut to crack. It's seven times redundant in the human brain. I don't know whether or not Dr. Scarsdale's techniques will even be able to touch it."

"I don't know why that makes me feel relieved," Ellis laughed nervously.

"Look, we're not taking control of you or anything crazy like that, it's not how the process works. It's just going to help smooth out the rough edges. The whole process was originally developed to change the behaviors of habitual criminals. It just makes certain concepts make more *sense*, that's how Dr. Scarsdale explained it to me. And it can help with your memories. For example, it won't make you forget that you went through the process, but when you remember your childhood, you'll probably remember yourself as a little girl instead of a little boy unless you concentrate really hard."

Brian downed the rest of his iced tea and pushed his tray away half-eaten. "Somehow the thought of somebody playing around in my head scares me worse than somebody messing with my body."

"Tell Dr. Scarsdale when you meet her," Rob said. "If anybody can set your mind at ease, it's her."

"Well, then, I guess I better get some sleep," Brian said, standing. "Got to get up early, turn myself into a girl and hopefully get in some cardio tomorrow."

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The lab where they gathered early the next morning was cold, particularly in the back-ventilated flimsy hospital gowns they'd been issued for the day. Brian shifted back and forth on bare feet on the chilly tiles, trying to ignore the draft going up his backside and concentrate on the white-coated lab techs who scurried around them, hooking up EKG and EEG electrodes, starting IV's and taking vital signs. After what seemed like an eternity of poking and prodding done in near-absolute silence or grunted monosyllabic answers to the muttered questions of the techs, a very tall and stylish woman wearing a black skirt and African-print top under her white coat and adjusting lightweight rimless eyeglasses on her adorable button nose entered the room followed by even more of the faceless, nameless techs.

"Hello, everybody," the woman said in a fuck-me husky alto. "I'm Dr. Melissa Scarsdale. I'm going to be the voice you hear through your earpieces while you undergo this historic procedure. I look forward to meeting each of you in turn, and having some in-depth discussions, but we're a bit pressed for time this morning, so if you'll bear with me, we're just going to get started and I'll talk you through it as we go. Now, if you gentlemen will be so kind as to follow me to the isolation lab, we'll get started."

Brian followed the *click-clack* of her high heels on the tile numbly through a series of doors into a huge vaulted room, filled almost completely with a huge above-ground tank filled with a softly bubbling clear fluid. Six high-tech chairs, complete with attached SCUBA gear, suspended above the tank waited for them, in a circle facing outwards, accessed by a metal gantry which ringed the tank like a gallery. Scarsdale and her entourage led them up a metal staircase to the gallery and the men were ushered by the lab techs to their own individual chairs. Brian was seated easily, the vinyl cold against his bare rear end, and was hooked into the intrinsic machinery until wires ran all across his body, attached to electrodes across his chest, forehead and on his arms and legs. They fitted an earpiece into his right ear and stuffed the hard rubber regulator of the oxygen hose into his mouth, hooked up his IV and then secured him loosely with a seatbelt to the chair.

Dr. Scarsdale's soft voice crackled to life in his ear. "Here we go, gentlemen. If each of you could give me a thumbs-up if you can hear me clearly."

Brian signaled, and dimly noticed his colleagues do the same in his peripheral vision.

"Now, then, we're going to introduce a mild sedative into your IV's in order to lower your heart rate. Once they've begun to take effect in each of you, you'll be lowered into the solution below you. Try and relax, think calm thoughts and take deep breaths."

Slowly Brian felt the warm ticklish level of the tank's liquid creep up his body, swallowing him from toes to scalp over a matter of minutes, accompanied by a hydraulic hiss as the chair's mechanisms adjusted. It slid him back, reclining a little, and Brian felt so light in the supersaturated solution that the seatbelt across his midsection was the only thing keeping him from floating away. It seeped into him, into his every pore and follicle, until Brian could not distinguish where the liquid stopped and he began. Scarsdale's voice in his ear soothed him, relaxed tensions he didn't know he carried.

"Next we are going to inject you with immunosuppressants," she said, purring the words as if they were sexual. "It will drastically lower your immune response, so that your bodies won't fight against the virus we're about to introduce."

Brian floated in the comfortable void for an unknown period, just concentrating on his breathing, until the psychologist's voice sounded in his ears once more.

"Now we are going to introduce the retrovirus. It is custom engineered to rewrite your DNA, transforming you for all intents and purposes into your own twin sisters. The process is completely painless and will take place over the course of days, very gradually. We will also introduce some genetic improvements, resistance to disease and so forth, which will help guarantee your health and even give you some natural advantages in your individual sports," she said. "Gentlemen, you are about to take your first steps into the wonderful, delightful world of womanhood. I am in awe of your courage. I can't wait to greet you all as sisters and get to know you."

Brian felt something cold run up his left arm, through the IV, and had an eerie, otherworldly sense of a door closing behind him. But something else blossomed in him, something he hadn't felt in a very long time. Hope. Hope for the future. He smiled a little around the rigid mouthpiece of the rebreather.

"Now, gentlemen – I mean *ladies* – you'll be immersed in the nutrient bath, which will stimulate your cells to divide and reproduce with your new, feminine genetic code, for several hours. To help you pass the time, I've constructed an "Introduction" regimen of subliminal training to help ease your transition to womanhood. Call it 'Girl 101.' You'll begin to hear music, and shortly afterwards you will all drift into a light but very restful sleep. When you wake up, you will find that you may 'know' things that you didn't know before. Don't be frightened. That is what is supposed to happen."

A very soft, almost tuneless music filtered through the earpiece, one that made Brian think of safe places and warmth and security. He felt his eyelids begin to drift closed and made no attempt to fight it, even as curious as he was about what he was being 'taught.'

The last conscious thought he had was a bit of shock upon hearing Scarsdale's final statement, "I'll see you in a few hours, girls," and realizing unequivocally that the good doctor meant *him*.

\* \* \*

"It doesn't seem all that fucking impressive, to be honest," Bill Summers said, watching the bodies of his forced recruits float motionless in the big fish-tank through the control room window. "Kinda boring, if you ask me."

"That's why you don't have a Nobel prize, and these guys do," Adam Cassidy shot back, chasing his lingering guilt at forcing these men into the program with a generous tumbler of scotch. "Just leave it, Bill. It's gonna work."

"I know it's gonna fucking work," he shot back impatiently. "But that shit about being their own twin sisters... I dunno about that. Some of these guys are kinda homely, and we're not gonna be able to sell any of them as a franchise unless they're fucking-A *hot*. We need these bitches to sizzle."

"I told you, we're making the requisite improvements," Dr. Scarsdale said irritably, making notes from her computer in a little leather-bound book. "That includes physical appearance, and there will be plastic surgeons available to make any further modifications if necessary. I think you'll be quite pleased with the results, Mr. Summers."

"And the next part, is it ready to go?" Summers asked. "If I want these girls to be superstars, then they're gonna need history. And up until now they don't exist. Are you actually gonna be able to zap a whole group of people into believing they knew or played with these girls?"

"I'm not involved with the people you have creating videos and photographs of their childhoods," Scarsdale said, "but I have completed the preliminary backgrounds for each of them. Anyone exposed to the subliminal signal will swear – and have the memories to back it up – that they've known these men their entire lives as females. Replacing every high school yearbook, though – that's someone else's problem, not mine."

"Fine, fine," Summers said dismissively. "What kind of pasts do they have, anyhow?"

"Standard stuff, nothing that invites too much scrutiny," she replied. "Quiet childhoods, nothing but athletics to really set them apart."

Summers snorted. "That's no fucking good at all."

"What do you mean?"

"We have to *sell* these girls," Summers said. "Turn them into brands and sell the shit out of them. And the brands that sell the best are the ones with gimmicks. We need to give these girls gimmicks, shit we can use to really pimp them out and create marketable brands out of them."

Scarsdale's delicate mouth twisted for a moment in what looked like disdain before she regained her smooth, clinical composure. "What did you have in mind?" she asked flatly.

Summers gestured to Adam, who pulled a file folder out of his briefcase wordlessly and handed it to the doctor. She leafed through it pensively, one eyebrow raised, before fixing Summers with a level, considering look.

"Absolutely not," she said.

"Absolutely not?" Summers asked with a smug smile. "Tell me, doctor, do you like your funding? Your nice office and your furnished condo? One phone call and you're back to Ramen noodles and a fourth-floor walk up, teaching Biology 101 at State. Now are you *sure* about that 'absolutely not?'"

Her teeth ground near-audibly before she lowered her eyes. "It will be difficult," she said quietly. "Some of these things, they run counter to the subjects' natural inclinations. We'll have to use force, which is always risky."

"Then use force," Summers snapped. "This little set-up of yours cost a mint. These bitches are your key to paying it back, and the more marketable they are, the greater the return. Just do it, and don't bother me with how. I just want results, understand me?"

"Perfectly," she said evenly.

It did not escape Adam Cassidy that his boss just made a very powerful enemy, judging from the look of purest hatred that she stabbed into his back as he walked away. He downed the rest of his drink and hurried away from her, hoping that he wouldn't wind up as collateral damage.

\* \* \*

Brian woke chilly and shivering, suspended above the solution tank being towed off by more of the faceless lab techs. They unhooked all the various monitoring cables in good time, however, and he was snuggled into a thick robe and shifting from foot to foot on the metal gantry in short order. Maybe it was imagination, but it seemed as though he'd lost a bit of bulk and some body hair while he was immersed, but Robert had said the process would take weeks, so he didn't truly expect to see any changes the moment the procedure ended. Still, he wondered if he should feel differently.

He allowed himself to be led downstairs and back to the communal area where the rest of the 'guinea pigs' congregated, all shivering and burrowed into thick robes like Brian's. Not a lot was being said, understandably – Brian couldn't think of anything profound or humorous to add to the gravity of what had just happened, wearing a hollow, shell-shocked look like the rest of them. The part of him that believed that this crazy stunt would never work dwindled smaller and smaller. Some part of him *knew*. Some part of him realized what had just happened.

"You'll all be very susceptible to infection for a few days," Robert was explaining quietly as Brian snapped himself loose from his thoughts. "That immunosuppressant is pretty powerful. So we won't be letting anybody outside for a while, just to minimize exposure to any bugs floating around. Last thing any of us want is a nice case of pneumonia right now. You see a lab tech without a gown and mask, make sure you avoid them, okay? We have to really take it easy."

"So I guess I'll ask it, 'cause somebody has to," Brian said. "When are we gonna start to see changes?"

Robert chuckled. "Yeah, I figured that was on everybody's mind," he said. "They'll be very subtle right at first – more like little tingles here and there, increased sensitivity in some places. Probably the first thing everyone will notice will be the loss of body hair and maybe your voices will start to change a little bit. Nothing to get too concerned about – we're not just suddenly

gonna sprout boobs overnight, if that's what you're thinking. No, this is going to be a very long, very gradual change. But it will give Dr. Scarsdale time to help ease everybody into it."

"When do we start sessions with her?" Lewis Jordan asked.

"Tomorrow, first thing," Robert said. "It'll have to be in full infection precautions, so she'll be on the other side of a glass wall, but still a session. And in the meantime, I'm your doctor. If anything feels really out of the ordinary, you tell me and I'll get it taken care of."

"Sounds good," Henry Taylor said. "But for now, it's just a shower and grub and then bed, right?"

"Right," Robert told them. "Your original toiletries have been replaced, though, with special ones we developed just for you. Skin care is going to play a big role for you guys, so we have special soap. Dr. Scarsdale thinks you should start getting used to feminine hygiene practices, too, so there will be exfoliants and conditioners and shampoo which we expect to become part of your regimen. They will also help your hair grow a little faster, which should give us all a head start when we actually undergo the rapid hair growth treatment in a week. She's also asked me to tell you that we should all start getting used to sitting down to urinate, even while we're still equipped to do otherwise."

"I guess that sounds reasonable," Rick Lindsey agreed. "Anything else?"

"We've provided clothes, in the little chest next to your bunks, which will help all of you start acclimating to feminine dress. Nothing pink or frilly right at first, but you can get use to being bare-legged and wearing crotchless garments, to get you used to the idea of skirts and dresses at some point. This will progress towards more and more feminine stuff as the process continues."

"Wow," Ellis said. "One day and you've already got us in skirts."

"Just long tee shirts right now," Robert explained. "It's to get you used to the idea."

"Well, I guess we better get started," Brian announced. "We have a whole lifetime of girly shit to learn and not a lot of time to do it."

"That's the spirit," Robert said.

"I just want to know when I can go play 18 holes," Lewis said. "That's kinda the point of the exercise, right? Being athletes again?"

"Yeah," Ellis said. "Me and Brian ought to start running, at the very least, and I know I could use some serious agility drills. It's been a while."

"We plan on starting your athletic training in a few days," Robert said. "One thing at a time, okay?"

"We don't have time for one thing at a time," Brian said. "International friendlies start in two months."

\* \* \*

"Excellent," Dr. Scarsdale commented from the surveillance booth which covered every square inch of the communal area. "Now I can see why he was a team captain. A natural-born leader."

She scowled at the folder that *repugnant* excuse for a man had left with her, with his "up-sell" modifications to each of the men detailed. She really had no choice in the matter – she had far too much riding on this process to risk losing funding and setting back a cure for cancer as well as God knew how many other genetic abnormalities and diseases for another decade – but she didn't have to like it. She respected these men, willing to sacrifice so much for another chance to compete in the sports they loved so much and lost so tragically. She truly didn't want to implement Summers' changes on them. It seemed disrespectful at the very least, cruel at the worst.

But she had no choice.

She sat in silence, tapping her bottom lip with her index finger for a long stretch, watching the men on the monitors go through the process of showering with their new, unfamiliar toiletries, then eat, then crawl into their beds and drift into exhausted but fitful sleep.

Silently, the subliminal delivery suites installed above the headboards of their beds slid into place above them, powering to life. Scarsdale's finger hovered indecisively over the 'Enter' key of her computer, the clicking answer to the question on her display: "Begin New Sublimiinal Sequence, OK/Cancel?"

If she pressed it, there was no going back. It would all start with a slight downward pressure of her index finger.

But she really had no choice.

She pressed, and the CD-drive next to her spun up with a rising whirr. She closed her eyes to keep the guilty tear gathered there from ever falling.

To be continued...



SUMMARY: Looking to increase their chance with a female volleyball team they have invested in, one company decides that if they can't find winning female athletes, they will make them using guys who couldn't quite cut it in sports.

## **GAME ON**

### **Part Two**

**by Valerie Hope**

BRIAN STIRRED, MOANING A LITTLE bit as the morning light stung his eyes. Considering what he'd put himself through the previous day, he was surprised to feel little more than a slight hangover and some aching in his joints. Slipping his feet over the edge of the bed, he ran himself through a few quick stretches to ease out the soreness and tried to ignore the rumbling of hunger in his belly.

"Good morning, Brian," a soft woman's voice said in his ear. He started, looking around, and heard a soft chuckle.

"I'm speaking to you through your ear-bud, Brian. I'm in the control room. I'm Suzanne – I'm one of your monitor techs. I'm keeping an eye on you for Dr. Scarsdale and Dr. Savannah."

"Oh," Brian said softly, noticing that his colleagues still lazed asleep in the bunks nearby. "Can you hear me when I talk?"

"Perfectly well," Suzanne said. "How do you feel this morning?"

"Surprisingly good," Brian answered honestly. "A little sore and kinda headachy, but other than that I feel fine. Hungry."

"Breakfast isn't for another hour," Suzanne told him. "But I could probably have them whip something up for you if you really wanted."

"No, that's okay. I was thinking about a little run, if the docs think it's a good idea."

"So soon?"

"I told you, I feel pretty good, and I'm not the type to just sit around doing nothing."

"Unfortunately, we have to keep you all under isolation for the time being," Suzanne explained. "I thought Dr. Savannah explained all that to you."

Brian smacked his forehead. "Oh. Right. Stupid. I completely forgot about that."

"But it's a good sign that you feel well enough to exercise."

"Old habits, y'know," he said. "Still, I can at least do a little calisthenics or something, burn off this extra energy. I can't just sit here." He started off towards the small gym near the dormitory.

"Brian, don't you think you're forgetting something?" Suzanne prodded.

He furrowed his brow. "Don't think so – I stretched, I don't really need to pee or anything..."

"You're naked, Brian."

He looked down and seemed to barely register his own nudity. "Oh. Shit. I guess I am."

He shrugged wordlessly into a loose-fitting pair of red workout shorts and a nondescript black tee he found next to the bed – Dr. Scarsdale had been true to her word, they were cut for women and he found the crotch of the shorts to be nearly uncomfortably tight, but other than that didn't mind the rest, and made his way into the tiny but well-provisioned gym. He did a little light resistance training with some kettle bells and a set of pull-ups and was just settling into a seated row when the rest of the 'experimental' men walked in, yawning and scratching and farting as men do when they just wake up.

"God, don't tell me you're one of those horrible morning people," Lewis Jordan grumped.

"I thought all you golfers were up at the crack of dawn for a tee time," Brian shot back, smiling.

Ellis had found a soccer ball somewhere and was juggling it lightly on his knees. Brian noticed he had very fluid footwork and excellent control. His ex-teammate bounced it lightly on his forehead a few times before feeding it across the short intervening distance to Brian, who took up the juggling without skipping a beat. Brian marveled for a moment at the lack of stiffness in his injured knee. It felt looser and more supple than it had in years, even with all the intensive stretching and yoga and steroid treatments he'd used in vain attempts to regain his mobility. Brian couldn't repress a smile.

"I know," Henry Taylor said when he saw Brian's smile. "I woke up this morning and the very first thing I noticed was that my shoulder didn't hurt as much. This shit might actually work."

"Of course it'll work," Rob Savannah said, sitting down on a weight bench. "Believe me, fellas, I wouldn't be a part of this if I wasn't 100% sure."

"There's just one thing that confuses me," Brian said, passing the ball back to the waiting Ellis Kennedy. "Why women? Why couldn't they just fix us as-is?"

Rob cleared his throat. "You all have histories, whether you like it or not," he said. "You couldn't just pop up at the next tryout for the National Team or MLS, Brian, and run out there like nothing had happened. There would have been way too many questions. And I don't know if they would have ever given Lewis or Ellis a second shot. Part of why we approached you was that your very identities were part of what held you back. And, I won't lie to you – we stand to turn a profit off your success. Your participation in the process and your potential to help us pay for all this wonderful technology did figure in very prominently."

"See, that's what I don't get," Ellis said, trapping the ball under one foot. "As male athletes, we would stand to make even more than we would as female. It would be an even greater return."

Rob shrugged. "That's true," he said. "Your guess is as good as mine, there. Nothing in your medical histories suggests that you're dodging any kind of a bullet by transitioning to female. Honestly, the best I can tell you right now is that decision was made on a level where I'm not invited. But I will try and find out for you. Can that be good enough for now?"

"It really doesn't matter any more, does it?" Brian asked. "I mean, it's done."

"I wonder why we didn't ask these questions before?" Ellis said, scratching his head. "I mean, you'd think this was something we should've asked up front, right?"

"I dunno – I don't guess I ever thought about this before now," Henry said.

"Me neither," Lewis added, and then let loose with a very unlikely sound which caused everyone to look at him curiously.

"Dude, did you just *giggle*?" Rick asked, eyes wide.

"Did I?"

"Yeah, you did," Brian said, suddenly suspicious. "Rob? You got answers for us?"

Rob looked as genuinely alarmed as the rest of the room. "No," he said, "but I'm damn sure gonna get them. For all of us. You guys just sit tight, I'm gonna talk to Dr. Scarsdale."

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Dr. Scarsdale, for her own part, sat in her car in the parking lot, wondering how she – an intelligent and capable woman – managed to be maneuvered and cornered so adroitly by a man she considered to be a Neanderthal. Anger and revulsion warred inside her, leaving only a desolate sense of self-loathing. She barely heard her pager go off, then with a sigh and movements like swimming through pudding, she got out of her car and walked the short distance back into the facility. Behind the glass of the isolation visitor room was a very concerned-looking Rob Savannah, who snatched the intercom phone from the wall briskly and waited for her to do the same.

"Rob? Everything okay?" Scarsdale asked.

"You know damn well everything's not okay," he said matter-of-factly. "Why didn't these guys ask questions about why they were to have their genders transformed? Basic questions, Melissa, that any reasonable person would have asked. But none of them did. Do you know why?"

"I do know why," she said, unable to raise her eyes from the countertop. "Because Summers told me to write a subliminal program that would keep them from questioning their motives."

"You did that? You tricked them into consenting to the procedure?" Rob asked in total disbelief.

"I had no choice," she said. "I'm sorry."

Rob stood. "I have to tell them. They have to know about this."

"Rob, you don't know what's at stake here," Scarsdale said. "You can't just..."

"You may not have any ethics left, *doctor*, but I do," Rob snapped. "You cannot do this to those men against their will, no matter what's at stake."

"I can't let you ruin this, Rob," she said. "You have to trust me. Everything will work out in the end, I promise you, but I *cannot* let you ruin this. Not now."

"And just how the hell do you propose to stop me?" Rob challenged.

Sighing and feeling her self-loathing even more keenly, Scarsdale pressed a button on a small remote control she kept in her pocket. The lights inside the isolation room changed

dramatically into lurid pinks and yellow, and the glass partition did little to mask the deep subsonic rumbles that carried her subliminal signals. Rob's eyes glassed over and he stood stock still as the minutes passed, until the storm of noise and light abated behind the partition and he blinked as if just now coming awake.

"Rob? You okay?" she asked.

"Yeah," he said distractedly. "I think... yeah."

"What were you saying?" Scarsdale said.

"Something about... I don't... it wasn't important, I guess," Rob said, rubbing his eyes. "What are you doing back here? I thought you'd gone home for the day."

"I forgot some work," she said smoothly. "I just wanted to check and make sure how everyone was feeling."

"Great," he said brightly. "Everyone's great."

"Good, I'm really glad to hear that," she said, standing. "Well, I'm home for a shower and some sleep. Be sure and call me if any of you needs anything, okay?"

"Okay," he said cheerfully. "I sure will."

He went back into the communal area as if nothing had happened – in his mind, of course, nothing *had* – and Melissa Scarsdale could only gaze at his retreating back, torn between amazement at the ability of her pioneering procedure and the sense of soul-deadening disgust at her own actions, and her inability to thwart the actions of William Summers.

Rob walked back into the day room happily, where his colleagues sat chatting amiably, with no sense of alarm or suspicion left in them. Only Brian seemed to act as if anything were amiss, a look on his face as if he tried to remember a dream. It passed a short time later, and he joined in the meaningless conversation with a smile on his face.

\* \* \*

Rob set his blood pressure cuff to one side and made a few notes on his clipboard. They'd survived the isolation period without any complications other than a few cases of the sniffles, and now the restrictions had been lifted and the men could go outside. With the ease of pain and stiffness in his knee, Brian couldn't be restrained from the soccer pitch once he got outside. Dawn usually found him working agility and footwork drills and wishing he had a team to practice alongside so that he could start trying to get his timing back. Ellis joined him most days, but also enjoyed heading to the driving range with Lewis or going to the batting cages with Henry.

"You look great," Rob told Brian. "How do you feel?"

"Better than I have in years," Brian confessed.

"How's the diarrhea?"

All of them had long runs of diarrhea, as their excretory systems struggled to compensate for the shedding of biomass which they were all experiencing. Brian alone had shed nearly sixty pounds of bone and muscle, and had shrunk in height from his previous six foot one to five foot eight. Rick Lindsey's transformation had been by far the most dramatic, his former six foot

three, two-eighty frame now almost petite and waifish at five foot four and one hundred twenty pounds.

They'd noticed other slight changes, too – softening of facial features and skin, for one thing, and a few voices had started to crack in reverse. But the physical changes seemed to be centered around the large, puffy and hypersensitive nipples they'd all grown – areolae now easily the size of a nilla wafer and nipples about the size of jumbo pencil erasers, apt to harden to near-painful sensitivity at seemingly no provocation whatsoever. All of the men had taken to wearing camisoles to bed, soft and satiny against their new sensitive flesh, and Brian had begun wearing cotton jog-bras under his workout clothes just to keep himself from chafing.

The biggest changes, however, were the ones that the men noticed the least. Every night Dr. Scarsdale's subliminal programming played in their minds, subtly rewriting their thought processes and even their perceptions. All of them had begun hugging one another openly, and Brian had personally held Rick in his arms and smoothed his hair while he cried long and hard when he thought that his vision wasn't returning as fast as he'd originally suspected. Nor did any of them think it out of the ordinary to cluster around the television for *Jersey Shore* or *The Bachelorette* instead of just watching their own respective sports as they had before. And while waiting in the waiting-room outside Dr. Scarsdale's office for his daily check-up, Brian had picked up a copy of *Cosmopolitan* and had found himself rapidly engrossed in an article about skin care which made him look up, startled, when the receptionist called out his name.

"No, the diarrhea actually seems to be clearing up, thank God. It was a bitch to keep hydrated," Brian said. "I guess I'm just wondering when things are going to start happening. Y'know – the physical changes. Other than having big pink nipples and not much of a cock any more, I'm a little disappointed, to be honest. It's been a week now and I don't even have tits."

"You sound like you're a little disappointed."

Brian blushed – prettily, although he didn't know it – and lowered his eyes, showing off much longer and thicker eyelashes than he'd had before. "I never thought I'd say it, Rob, but I'm kinda looking forward to it. I keep wondering what they're gonna look like."

"I feel the same way. And if you don't like them, you can always get them done later," Rob laughed. "Anything else concerning you?"

"Umm, yeah," Brian said. "My stomach hurts. But I think it's not my stomach. The pain kinda floats around a little. It doesn't hurt real bad, but it's just annoying enough, y'know?"

"I'm not surprised," Rob said. "C'mere and take a look at this."

He pointed to a computer monitor to his side and brought up an MRI image of Brian's body, taken just a day or two prior. Rob pointed to the area of his midsection with the tip of a pen. "See that yellow area right there? That's a new formation, it hasn't shown up on any of your previous MRIs. I'm pretty sure it's your uterus."

"My... oh, wow, that feels weird to say. My *uterus*?" Brian stammered, pressing both hands to his emaciated midsection.

"Yep," Rob said, patting Brian's arm companionably. "So the pain you're feeling, it's probably something akin to menstrual cramps. We don't have a clear picture of how developed it is, but

it's developing fully mature – we won't get the puberty stage like natural-born females, so we have to get used to some things in a big fucking hurry."

"Do I have ovaries, too?" Brian whispered, needing the pieces of the puzzle so he could answer the unspoken question: *am I fertile?*

"Not likely," Rob said. "Your sex glands are producing estrogen and progesterone – that much we know from your blood work – but they're still testes so far as we can tell. I'm sure some of the cells are starting to change, so figure maybe 30% or so are now female tissue. The way this works, honey..."

"Honey?" Brian asked.

"Wow. Felt like the most natural thing in the world, I didn't even think about it. Dr. Scarsdale's imprinting program must really be working."

"No kidding, I'd be way more stressed out if it wasn't for her, I think," Brian said. "And the little things are definitely taking hold. I saw Rick pick his nose the other day and I actually thought, 'how gross.' I haven't ever thought that was gross. I always thought it was funny, y'know?"

"I know," Rob said. "All of us are starting to feel it. I'm having trouble recalling things from my past, and I think I'm remembering things that may not have happened. I know I went to my senior prom, for example. There are pictures, I'm sure I went. But I can't recall the name of the girl I took, and when I concentrate on it, I get the most vivid image of my dress being blue. As real as any memory."

Brian smiled shyly. "I guess this is really happening, then," he said. "Your dress was blue and I have a uterus. It didn't really hit me until now, y'know? Anyway, you were saying?"

"Oh," Rob said. "The way this works..."

"You can call me *honey* if you want... *baby*," Brian teased.

"Okay, then, *honey*, the way this works is that the more complicated the cell, the longer it takes the virus to rewrite it as female," Rob said. "So the simplest stuff – skin, bones, muscles – it gets redone pretty quickly. The uterus is a muscle structure, so it's to be expected. But endocrine tissue, like your pancreas or your thyroid or your gonads, that's gonna take longer."

"I guess I'm just wondering when it's all gonna be over with," Brian said. "Now that's it's 'game on,' I guess I'm just ready to go for it. This seems like it's taking forever."

"Just be patient," Rob said. "Nobody wants to be 100% girl more than I do, hon – I actually *like* calling you honey, isn't that strange? – and I'm as anxious as you are. But if the process goes any faster, it runs the risk of harming you. This is so not something you want to rush, believe me."

"I get that," Brian said. "But I'm afraid that spending this much time in-between won't give me time to be *good* at being a girl, if that makes any sense. I want to be good at it."

"That makes perfect sense."

"So I was thinking – being female, it's only barely about the body you have. It's about how you act, and interact, and how you feel and live your life, all the way down to how you dress and

what kind of things interest you," Brian said. "So I was thinking, if the body takes as long as it takes, maybe I could step up on the other stuff, get a head start?"

"What do you have in mind?"

Brian seemed abashed, but excited. He dug in a pocket and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper and smoothed it on the desk. "I made a list last night," he confessed. "I'm sure there's a lot more that I'm missing, but these things seemed to be stuff I could do right away."

Rob looked curious. "What all did you come up with?"

"Well, I thought maybe some more girly clothes, for starters. Getting my ears pierced. Finding some books that girls would read – not just the 'how to' books we have, but like, I dunno, pleasure reading. I'm hesitant to come out and say 'romance novels,' but you catch my drift," he said. "Maybe a wig or something so I can get used to wearing my hair longer – that helps me on the field, too, learning how to keep it out of my eyes while I play. A pair of high heels to practice in, maybe, and possibly getting my nails and toes done?"

"Those sound awesome," Rob said, drumming his fingers on the desktop excitedly. "I actually want to do them all with you, it sounds like so much fun. I'll run the list past Dr. Scarsdale right away, okay? Maybe we can even start doing some of this stuff today."

Brian smiled. "I'm glad you think it's cool," he said. "But the biggest thing, down at the bottom, I didn't mention it yet."

"And?"

"Well, I figure it's going to take forever to get used to being referred to with 'her' and 'she,'" Brian told him. "I was thinking of asking the others to start doing that for me, and calling me 'girl.' It has to happen sometime, and I don't think it's gonna take place overnight."

"Ooh. I didn't even think about that," Rob said. "We should all probably be doing that."

"There's more," Brian told him. "Because besides needing new cleats because my feet keep shrinking, the most pressing thing missing from this new life is a new name. I think I need a girl's name. I was up till almost midnight on a 'name your baby' website trying to pick one out I liked, but I don't know what kind of girl I'm gonna be. I'd like a name that suits me, y'know? So I thought maybe Dr. Scarsdale could help me choose?"

Rob squeezed his – *her* – forearm tightly in camaraderie and newfound respect, and picked up the phone on his desk, cradling it between his shoulder and his ear to keep his grip on Brian's arm.

He jabbed a line button and didn't wait long for an answer. "This is Rob, down in Observation," he said. "Get me Dr. Scarsdale, could you? She's gonna *love* this."

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Brian left the pitch winded and sweaty, but marveling at the new flexibility he'd gained from whatever magic the retrovirus inside him was working. He seemed to be running faster, too, without all the extra weight and bulk. Rob offered a lengthy explanation about muscle density and fast-twitch versus slow-twitch fibers that zoomed above Brian's head – the long and the short of it was that the retrovirus had given him the biological makeup of optimal muscles for his sport. Brian dreaded the change in center-of-gravity that would no doubt come, though,

since he would have to teach himself how to run again and his balance and footwork would suffer as if he were starting over. But ragged determination burned inside him – he'd had to relearn walking once, dammit, and he could do it again. Especially if it meant he would have another shot to play the Beautiful Game again.

Scarsdale – with her typical coterie of techs and note-takers – and Rob waited for him in the technical area with expectant faces. Just for the pure fun of it, Brian potted one into the goal from the centerline, watching the ball dip and duck and spin to corkscrew its way perfectly just under the top bar of the goal. The observers clapped appreciatively and Brian started to sketch a mocking bow, which he checks at the last minute and turned into a very clumsy and unpracticed curtsy which made Rob howl with laughter. Brian made the sideline at an easy lope.

"You look incredible out there," Scarsdale commented.

"Thanks," Brian said, accepting a towel and his aluminum water canteen. "What's up?"

Scarsdale handed him an iPod wound in a set of earphones. "We're going a new direction with generating your past," she said. "We're going to make you European, for the sake of international credibility in your sport. You'll be an American citizen, but we're going to have you born in Liverpool. I've created a series of special routines for you to run in the mornings and afternoons to help with your accent and usage, and other things."

Brian looked at the iPod suspiciously. "You can do that?"

"We're pretty sure," Scarsdale said. "It's entirely up to you whether or not you want to go through with it, but it's a very good idea. It removes you that much further from your former life, for one thing, and almost guarantees no one will associate you with your old male self. And it will add to your professional reputation on the pitch, as well."

Brian shrugged. "Fair enough," he said. "I can be British, I guess."

"The reason we're here," Dr. Scarsdale said breezily, "is that we took your suggestions to heart. I think you had some great ideas, so I wanted to thank you for one thing and give you this, for another."

She pointed to a duffel bag on the bench, which Brian zipped open quickly. Inside were several sets of clothing, both for workouts, running and daily wear. All of them were cute and small, some looked very tight and revealing, and were mostly in pinks, lavenders and baby blues. Brian checked a happy giggle. He hadn't expected the 'girly' clothing to make him feel so excited and thrilled. Although his erections had stopped on their own about five days prior, he knew that if his cock still functioned he would probably have wood.

"So, here goes with the girly stuff," Brian said. "Oh my God, these are soooo cute! Thank you so much, sweetheart!"

Scarsdale laughed. "Not too bad for a first try," she commented. "Gushing takes practice."

Brian laughed. "Gotta start someplace," he said.

"Keep digging, there's more," Rob told him.

Beneath the clothing were two sets of rather racy lingerie – a matching corselette/panties set in red with attached garters and some red silk lace-top stockings and a flirtatious pink frilly

'baby doll' nightie, and two pairs of classic spike-heeled pumps, in pink and red with three-inch heels. Brian blushed bright red as he held the nightie up across his chest to gauge the size.

"Feeling sexy may be an acquired taste," Scarsdale told him, "but once you get used to it, I guarantee it's one of the very best things about being a woman. I still get the same thrill now from sexy underwear that I did when I put on my very first push-up bra."

"They're gorgeous," Brian said. "But I'm having trouble picturing myself in them."

"Then don't even think about this," Rob said, reaching into the bag to hold up a 'Union Jack' bikini swimsuit which he dangled suggestively.

Brian laughed aloud. "God save the Queen, right?"

"We specifically picked out some revealing stuff, even for working out," Scarsdale said. "You're going to have to get used to having more of your body exposed than you're used to. So don't be put off by all the short-shorts and crop tops. You don't necessarily have to dress that way from now on, but for now it's to help you deal with the feeling of being exposed while you're fully dressed."

"Cool," Brian said. "Can't wait to try some of this stuff on."

"There's more," Rob said. Brian shoved the clothes to one side and found a few steamy-looking 'bodice ripper' romance novels and some classics, like *Our Bodies*, *Ourselves* and *The Feminine Mystique* for his bedside shelf. There was also a small little zipper bag containing a small but complete selection of makeup.

"We're moving up the subliminal training for skin-care and cosmetics," Scarsdale said. "You should all start practicing, soon, since no amount of my training can really let you have the touch you need unless you try it hands-on. We're going to start devoting an hour each morning on make-up and hair."

Brian ran a finger through his short masculine haircut. "Won't need that for a while."

"Not so," Rob said. "We're sending you in for the hair-growth treatments starting this afternoon, and there's a wig in your bathroom area for the meantime, along with some styling products and tools."

"I've actually been looking forward to that, a little," Brian confessed. "Something about long hair, well, it's so damn feminine. I've built it up in my mind, I guess. Feels like once my hair is long, then I can actually give in, y'know, and start feeling and thinking of myself as a girl."

"I know what you mean," Rob said. "For me, it's the walk. I won't feel like a girl until I feel myself walking like a girl."

"I think about that, too," Brian said. He rubbed the bridge of his nose. "There's so much."

"We'll get there," Rob said companionably, giving him a side-on hug. It was their first contact past handshakes and touches on the arms and it surprised Brian more than a little to feel how warm and close it made him feel.

"Now you need to go get showered and cleaned up, and put on something cute. We have a date," Rob said.

"A date?"

"We're going out *as girls*," he told Brian. "Dressed as girls and acting like girls. We're going to get our nails done, to get pedicures and get our ears pierced, just like you suggested. It's gonna be a blast. There's a girl waiting to help us with makeup and hair."

"Get ready to actually start caring about mascara," Rob joked.

Brian wavered between excitement, wonder and outright fear. "Just us?" he said.

"I didn't think some of the others were ready just yet," Scarsdale said. "A few more subliminal sessions and seeing how happy you and Rob are with it will go a long way. We're gonna let you two be our trailblazers and see what happens."

"I'm scared, a little," Brian said.

"Understandable," Scarsdale said. "You're between genders, and this world can be a cruel place for people like that. Your driver will double as a security guard just in case, but I doubt it will be necessary. You'll have the anonymity of a large city and a crowded mall, and with a wig and makeup, you'll pass easily if you don't draw too much attention."

"Oh, consider me way under the radar," Brian said. He gestured to the bag. "Not to sound like an ingrate, but is that everything? I should go get ready."

"There's one more thing," Scarsdale said. One of her flunkies handed over a thick envelope which Brian regarded with a raised eyebrow.

"Your new identity documents," Scarsdale said. "We still have to do some subliminal 'editing' on a few people to back up your story, but there's a passport and drivers' license, birth certificate, naturalization papers, Social Security card, those kinds of things. We should have a high-school diploma for you soon, and some 'doctored' yearbooks. There are also credit cards and some cash for your 'date' later, and a new purse waiting for you in your room to carry everything in."

"And they..." Brian said, a little choked.

"Every one of them shows your gender as female," Rob said gently. "And your new name."

Brian tore the envelope with numb fingers and spilled the papers to scatter in the duffel. With heavy trepidation in his heart, he picked up the drivers' license and looked at it.

"We decided to keep something approaching your old names," Scarsdale said. "You do have pasts, you know, and I don't want the brave souls who helped pioneer this important research to be completely forgotten. We wanted your names to live on. I hope you're not too upset. We used your suggestions for a second name."

Brian Madison looked at his drivers' license – a paper temporary, without a picture, since he wasn't finished changing his appearance and had no permanent address at the moment – and felt a slow smile spread across his narrowing face.

"Madison O'Brien," he said softly. "Madison Erica O'Brien."

"You like it," Scarsdale sighed. "I'm so relieved."

"I like it. I *love* it," Brian – Madison – said. "It's... shit, it's *perfect*."

"I'm so glad," Scarsdale said. "Like the poet says, 'the naming of things is a difficult matter.' I really thought about this long and hard."

"Can I go by 'Maddie?'" he asked.

"Maddie," Rob said. "Fantastic. You actually *look* like a Maddie."

"So, all the other guys – I mean *girls*, sorry – the other girls are going to get their names redone, too, once you help them out a little, subliminally?"

"Yes," Scarsdale said. "All except for one."

"That would be me," Rob said. "I liked the way yours turned out so much, I decided to use Michelle as my second name instead of my first and used the same pattern that Melissa used on you."

He stuck out his hand and said proudly, "Dr. Robert Savannah is no more. Pleased to meet you, Maddie, I'm Dr. Savannah Roberts."

It wasn't just the feminine programming that made Maddie O'Brien gently knock the offered hand to one side and gather her best friend into tight, loving and heartfelt hug.

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The stylist, a very cute young thing named Amber, waited for Maddie in the little salon near the communal bathroom. She wore a pair of loose overalls-shorts over a little pocket tee which Maddie couldn't help but think would look cute on herself – which made her feel happy and a little overwhelmed. Amber knew about the 'little secret' in Maddie's pants but very little else, so it was the footballer's first experience meeting a stranger *en femme*, so to speak. So she got her first taste of the rest of her life when she offered a slim hand and said "Hi, I'm Maddie."

"Hey, Maddie," Amber said. "They tell me you need help with the basics."

"I'm a clean slate," Maddie said, taking a seat in the salon chair where Amber gestured. "Never worn makeup in my life, and never had hair long enough to hold a part."

"Wow, a real newbie," Amber said. "What kind of look do you want to go for today?"

Maddie shrugged. "Going out with a friend to do some shopping. Just everyday stuff, y'know, nothing fancy."

"Okay, that's easy," Amber said. "They told me to teach as I go, is that okay?"

"Better than okay," Maddie said.

"This is foundation," she said, holding up a little bottle. "You want it to match your natural skin tone as closely as possible. Now, there are three types – liquid, which we have here, pressed powder, and the mineral powder foundation. Liquid covers really well, but it feels kinda heavy, so for just a daily outing like you're doing today, I'm gonna go with the mineral powder. It's super light, okay? So start off by washing your face really well..."

Maddie surprised herself by being incredibly interested in the whole process and even took a few notes in a little notebook for future reference. Amber stayed positive and happy throughout, commenting frequently about how pretty certain colors looked with Maddie's complexion and how flattering the flyaway style she'd put on the shoulder-length sandy-

blonde wig looked on her. The whole experience just reeked of girly and Maddie loved every second. She found herself looking forward to taking her makeup off that night just so she could put it all on again the next day. Maybe the subliminal programming predisposed her to this somehow, but right now Maddie just didn't care. Playing with colors and learning the meticulous skills appealed to her sense of whimsy and her sense of detail at the same time. She couldn't remember having more fun in recent memory.

Amber finally held up a mirror to Maddie's face about two hours later and she gasped audibly. The gawky, stubbled face Madison had grown used to seeing for her entire life no longer gazed roughly back at her. A very pretty girl looked back now, with a sweet shy smile and a very cute little button nose, with smooth unblemished skin with a sun-kissed glow, wide surprised eyes developing slowly from the soft brown of her birth into a sparkling blue, and now a very unique looking midnight color. Full lips, covered with a light gloss, that begged to be kissed and sprang willingly into a delighted, open smile or a devilishly sexy sneering pout at Maddie's whim. The breezy, straight style Amber chose for her was held away from her face by a simple wide pink band, leaving a few wispy strands to frame Maddie's face. All very clean and fresh, like a Noxema ad. Maddie brushed the synthetic hair away from her cheek softly.

"Wow," she said. "I look..."

"Gorgeous," Amber supplied. "I'd kill for cheekbones like yours, and your eyes are *huge*."

"Amber, I love it. I absolutely love it."

"I'm so glad. Can't wait to help you out with an evening look, something glamorous. That's more intensive, but the results are so much fun."

"I'll have to think up an excuse to go out soon, then. I didn't think that the pink would look this good on me," she said, straightening the hair-band with some gentle tugs.

"It's perfect for your skin tone," Amber said. "None of the other colors I brought looked anywhere near that good on you. Maybe you should make pink your 'signature color,' y'know, like Elle on *Legally Blonde*?"

"Never seen it," Maddie confessed.

Amber gasped. "You have to," she told her. "It's my favorite movie."

"Tell you what," Maddie said, seizing on an idea. "I'll rent it while I'm out today. Come over and watch it with me and my friends. We can play with makeup afterwards."

Amber clucked her tongue. "I wish I could, sweetie," she said, "but I have class tomorrow night. What about Thursday? Would it be okay if I brought my daughter along?"

Maddie softened – she'd thought she was being blown off when Amber had started – and nodded. "I'll cook some dinner and we can all hang out."

Amber left her number with Maddie and left with a hug and a kiss on her cheek – another strange new custom of womanhood that Maddie discovered she enjoyed immensely, making a mental note to start kissing Savannah's cheek for greets and good-byes from now on – and left in a bustle. Maddie stretched languorously after being in the salon chair for so long and went to her bedroom. She started by sliding a pair of cotton Jockey For Her panties up her bare legs and tucked her meager cock backwards to give the illusion of smoothness. She slipped into a small off-white athletic bra and regarded herself in the mirror for a moment before she added

two balled-up pairs of socks underneath to provide some *faux* breasts for her outing. She struggled a little to shoe-horn herself into a second-skin tight pair of "Daisy Duke" jean shorts which stopped just shy of baring her ass cheeks and a wide pink leather belt – *signature color, indeed*, she thought happily – through the loops. A pink baby-doll jersey tee with a white number double-zero on the chest that left her flat midriff bare finished the clothing, and Maddie selected a pair of low-heeled strappy sandals that felt like they didn't cover enough of her feet to complete the outfit. She turned this way and that in front of the full-length mirror, marveling at the fact that she looked more like a girl than a guy, and the transformation had barely begun. It made her laugh happily.

Maddie slipped the headphones from the new iPod Dr. Scarsdale gave her onto her ears – laughing as she had to brush her long wig hair behind her ears and start over – and pressed 'play' to pass the time while she transferred her belongings into the oversized gold lamé purse she found on her bed. Starting with the long, bulky 'ladies' wallet' she found, she opened the envelope with her new identity papers and began putting them in, along with the Visa Platinum card, a Texaco gas card and about \$200 in cash. She made mental notes to open a bank account soon, to get a debit card, and to petition Dr. Scarsdale for a pink iPod but it was the last thing she could do before the soothing soft music playing in her ears made it very difficult to concentrate on anything for very long.

Savannah knocked on her door a short time later, entering the communal bedroom as the sun crested its zenith. Maddie blinked in consternation – it had been only ten o'clock when she'd sat down and now it was well past noon. Dr. Scarsdale's music track kept her tranced out for more than two hours and Maddie hadn't even felt it go by. Her purse was stocked, though – the wallet filled and the pockets holding her cellphone, keys to the front door, a small supply of touch-up makeup, Kleenex, a mirrored compact, a bottle of vitamins, a hairbrush and even a few 'emergency' tampons not because she could use them yet but more because they made her feel so feminine to carry them. A pink Susan Komen water bottle sat filled beside the purse as well.

"You ready?" she asked, and Maddie got her first real look at the soon-to-be woman who'd become her best friend. Savannah wore a simple floral print dress which showed off a remarkably nice set of legs, strappy sandals with a cork wedge heel and big plastic sunflowers on the uppers. She, too, had light everyday makeup but had put on a set of false lashes which made her dark brown eyes impossible to ignore. She'd stuffed a bra as well to fill out the low-cut neckline a little and wore a clattering assortment of yellow and white bracelets on both wrists. Her wig was a slightly curly sable brunette just above her shoulders and flattered her round face very well. The bangs were held back out of her eyes by oversized 'bug-eye' sunglasses with white plastic frames.

"Holy shit, Savannah – you're... you're *beautiful*. I can't believe it's you!" Maddie said.

Savannah blushed crimson and smiled. "You're too sweet."

"I'm fucking honest," she continued. "A month ago, I *totally* would've hit that."

"Likewise, baby," she said. "Don't take this the wrong way, but you have an amazing ass. I always had a thing for the bubble butt."

Maddie craned her neck to try and take a look. "You sure it isn't the shorts? I debated over wearing a skirt..."

"Don't you dare," Savannah cautioned. "You look *adorable*. So, you ready? I'm really looking forward to this, have been ever since I thought it up last night."

"I am," Maddie said, slinging her purse over her shoulder in a motion that almost looked practiced.

"You sound different," Savannah commented as she took her by the arm and led her out the side door into the parking lot. "Your voice, I mean."

"Already? I thought that cartilage was one of the last things the virus changed," Maddie said.

"It is, no blood supply, it's why sprains take longer to heal than broken bones. But it's not that," Savannah said. "It's... oh my God, sweetie, do you have an accent? Is that it?"

Maddie put her hand to her throat in alarm. "It can't be. I only listened to the first track on the iPod Dr. Scarsdale gave me, it can't have started already, can it? I thought it took days."

"The deep stuff does," Savannah told her. "Things like thinking of yourself as a woman, going into the woman's bathroom instead of the men's, stuff that has been reinforced by a lifetime of doing just the opposite, that stuff takes time and requires a gentle touch. But for something relatively superficial, like changing the way you talk, that process can be a lot more straightforward and take only a few short sessions before it becomes second nature."

Maddie looked at the iPod in unadorned amazement. "That's absolutely incredible."

"No kidding," Savannah said. "I've already asked her to give me a Southern belle accent."

Savannah led her to a nondescript maroon Toyota sedan and clicked the remote to unlock the doors. Maddie piled into the passenger seat – careful to try and keep her knees together, which was a lot harder than it looked – and dropped her cavernous purse between her feet on the floorboard. She buckled her belt and snuggled down a little bit into the upholstery, pulling on a pair of pink wraparound glasses against the bright sunshine.

Savannah got herself situated behind the wheel – Maddie noticed she had to slide the seat forward a little bit – and started the car. The music – something 'pop princess' sounding – blared to life for a deafening second before she could turn the sound down and they both laughed.

"Got anything you want to listen to? It's about an hour to town," Savannah said.

"Actually, would you mind terribly if I listened to the next track?" Maddie said with a guilty grin. "I'm really curious to hear what I'm gonna sound like."

Savannah chuckled richly. "Just promise me we can talk girl talk on the drive home," she said with a glimmer of playfulness in her eye. "But no, I don't mind. I'm curious to hear what you sound like, too. Did I ever tell you that I think British accents are sexy?"

To Be Continued...



SUMMARY: Looking to increase their chance with a female volleyball team they have invested in, one company decides that if they can't find winning female athletes, they will make them using guys who couldn't quite cut it in sports.

## **GAME ON**

### **Part Three**

**by Valerie Hope**

THE TRIP OUT-OF-TOWN PASSED quickly when one spent it in the throes of subliminal programming, Madison O'Brien thought to herself as she blinked her eyes to clear the somnolence remaining from the iPod track she'd begun listening to an hour ago.

"Bloody hell," she groaned, and her eyes widened in shock. Savannah Roberts, her best friend, performed a quick double-take and laughed aloud.

"Holy *shit*, girl! Listen to you! Oh my God!" she said breathlessly.

"How can I not?" Maddie said. "I sound like I was bloody well born there, don't I?"

"For all intents and purposes, you *were*," Savannah said. "That's how the programming works, doll-face. It's designed to be indistinguishable from normal naturally-formed memories or behaviors."

"It's a bit disconcerting," she said in a broad Liverpool accent which should have felt strange coming off her tongue but somehow didn't. "But it feels so sodding *natural*."

"That's how it works," Savannah reiterated. "Now come on, sweetheart. You and me have a whole lot of girl stuff to make our way through today before we go home."

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"The best way to describe it is a confluence of several positive tendencies all working together," Dr. Melissa Scarsdale said on the phone to one of her assistants. "Her natural leadership tendencies make her need to be involved and in control of the process, and I think we're dealing with latent transgender characteristics which give her excitement and satisfaction over each little change. Add to that a natural predilection to impatience and you get the breakthrough behavior Brian – excuse me, *Madison*, exhibits so readily."

"No, far from it," she replied after a pause. "I'm ecstatic. I never could have predicted this kind of progress, nor could I have hoped that one of the subjects would take the initiative regarding her own transformation so early in the process. I couldn't be more thrilled."

*Which is why I feel so damn guilty about what I have to do to her, all in the name of the Almighty Buck*, she thought bitterly. She'd forestalled the darker side of the process, despite all the prodding from William Fucking Summers, stating (not untruthfully) that if he wanted the kind of woman he'd detailed in his dossier, then it would take time to build the sort of personality which would carry it off. She could generate the history to back it up in a matter of weeks, she

explained, but building the personality was a painstaking process with no margin for error. But the simple fact of the matter was that Madison O'Brien, her prize subject, had been ready to begin the move to Summer's plan for a few days now. Scarsdale just didn't want to do it.

But as humiliated as she felt over being so easily forced by the chauvinist bastard holding the checkbook, as desperately as she tried to undermine his plans, she really was out of excuses. Summers or his flunkie, Adam Cassidy, called her office at least three times per day, now. If Scarsdale didn't show some results soon, her funding would be yanked and they would find someone less scrupulous to go through with it. Scarsdale didn't own the rights to her own work outright, either, so it could easily be taken from her and given to someone else, to boot. As much as it pained her, the time for results had come. She keyed up the programs which would lead to the transformed personalities that Summers desired to increase their marketability, finished nearly a week ago and mothballed since then as Scarsdale had tried to figure out a way around it, and sighed. She dug in the side drawer of her desk and came up with a bottle of vodka and a highball glass. She poured herself a generous measure and downed it in a single gulp, then uploaded the programs into the night-time protocols each of the transforming women underwent in her sleep.

To make herself feel better, she also opened a file from a portable thumb drive entitled "Served Cold." A bitter and mirthless smile spread across her face as she perused the contents. Someday soon, William Summers and his cronies would hear it, and although it wouldn't absolve the sins of what she was doing to the women in the next room, at least it might give some measure of justice to the situation.

She poured herself another drink and closed her eyes, rubbing her temples and wishing – neither for the first nor the last time – that none of this had ever happened.

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"I can't believe you went through with all of this," Savannah laughed as she leaned into the massage chair. They'd found a little outdoor café for a light supper and then booked massages and mani/peddies in the little day spa as the sun went down. This, after a long day spent trolling around a great little outdoor outlet mall and a stop at an honest-to-goodness historically accurate soda fountain on the downtown square, restored lovingly and full of amazing 1950's kitsch, and a long stretch at the piercing and tattoo studio.

Maddie laughed around her thickening tongue. "I did get a bit wild," she slurred, "but you said today was all about being a girl. You went through everything I did."

"All except the tongue stud," Savannah said. "I had to draw the line someplace."

"I suppose you did," Maddie said. Her British accent had begun to fade a bit as the day wore on, but a quick 'refresher' session while she sat in the tattoo chair had buffed it back to its original 'new-car shine.' "But you did talk me into quite a bit more than I thought while we were 'round the shops."

Girliness they'd wanted and it was girliness they'd found. No one had even noticed that they weren't actually women and they'd spent the day amazed and enjoying the treatment – being called "ma'am" and having doors opened for them, the little bits of special treatment they received just for being attractive young women, and even the second (and third and fourth) looks they got from some of the young men they'd encountered. Not that either of them wanted to even consider dating or sex with men right now, but getting ogled a bit thrilled;

something about looking cute and being noticed like that certainly appealed. As they became more and more comfortable with their new gender role, they'd entered into an unspoken pact, daring one another to go further and further into their gender. Strangely, even though they'd laughed themselves hoarse trying on the frilliest dresses, the highest heels and the raciest lingerie they could find, it never wore thin or got old to them.

Which explained why Maddie lay there beneath the masseuse's hands sporting eleven earrings – three in each lobe, three in the cartilage of her left ear and two in the cartilage of her right – a little stud in her nose, one in her bellybutton and one through her tongue, and a stylized tattoo of a spread-winged butterfly across the base of her spine in the classic 'tramp stamp' location. Savannah followed suit – earrings now glinted on her ears as well, nine in total, one in her navel and her own back stung from getting a tramp stamp of her own, a little tribal design that had caught her eye on the wall of the shop. They both wore falsies under the lacy underwire bras they'd bought, too, full B-cups that gave them the definite illusion of a womanly hourglass. Maddie spent the day tottering around in platform wedge sandals with a 5" heel until she learned to manage a sexy sway by walking 'round and 'round the parking lot and hadn't taken them off since, calling them her 'Fiona shoes' after the preferred footwear of the character on *Burn Notice*, Maddie's favorite show before the change and after. Of course, that meant Savannah had to follow suit to stay 'in the game' with her friend, and even though the arches of her feet and her ankles throbbed with soreness, the way she looked in the little platform clogs she'd found with the chunky 5" heel looked so adorable she didn't foresee taking them off any time soon. They'd been her first purchase of real girl shoes and would hold a special place in her heart – for a young man who'd always dreamed of being a girl, being able to march straight in to a woman's shoe store and try on heels and walk out with a cute pair that went with her purse fulfilled a very secret dream that she'd resigned herself to never coming true. In fact, she'd needed to go into the ladies' room shortly after and have a brief and very happy cry in private.

"I can't believe how much pink you bought," Savannah commented.

"I told you," Maddie chuckled, "it looks amazing on me and Amber said it should be my signature color. I'm tempted to agree with her."

"I agree with her, too, sweetie, but your closet is gonna look like the Barbie Dream House if you keep it up," she laughed.

"I bought a little black dress, and blue jeans," she complained. She held up the oversized lucite cocktail ring she wore on her index finger in the shape of a bulbous heart. "And this. This is clear, right, not pink. Stop criticizing me."

"Okay, okay," Savannah laughed. "Touchy."

"You shouldn't tease about my signature color," Maddie said *faux-smugly*. "That's personal, bitch."

Savannah grinned. They'd overheard a group of twentysomething young women in the café chatting happily, at the height of their sexual lives and plugged into the very heart of the American mainstream, and they called one another *bitch* as a matter of course. Savannah and Maddie had taken up the habit wholeheartedly and both found it made them feel both feminine and closer as friends. British-isms such as *cow* and *slag* still found their way into

Maddie's usage, as well, which Savannah tried to emulate in a put-on accent that left them both rolling with laughter.

"You know, my face hurts from all the smiling and laughing we've done today," she commented.

Maddie gave her a searching look, suddenly and quietly serious. "You know you're my best friend, Savannah. You know that, right?"

"Of course I do," she replied.

"I just needed to say it aloud," Maddie confessed. "I've not ever had a best friend before."

"Really?"

"Bit of a loner as a child," she said. "Never really connected except on the pitch, and those blokes were teammates, not friends. We played football together and it was all we really had in common. But you – I've never felt this way about another human being, love. Not ever, not even people I've slept with. I just wanted you to know that and to say 'thanks.' Never really knew how much I bloody needed a best friend until now. Now I can't imagine a life without one."

"Shut up or you're gonna make me cry," Savannah said. "I love you, baby."

"I love you, too, mate," Maddie said around the sudden lump in her throat. "Now, can we go back to the laughing and smiling? I don't really want to cry either."

\* \* \*

They'd seized on a whim and stopped for ice cream, both for the sinful nature of the act and to soothe Maddie's swollen tongue a bit, and were late getting back to the facility, well after lights-out. They crept into the communal bedroom on tiptoe, having left their shopping bags, purses and shoes in the front room to decrease the noise, and made a quick change and a wash. They entered the room dressed for bed – neither one of them had wanted to take off the wigs, they discovered – and found their companions asleep under the subliminal hoods, the eerie blue lights playing across their sleeping faces. Maddie slipped into her new pink baby-doll nightie, not wanting the girly feeling to end, and Savannah shimmied into an oversize football jersey that hung down to her shapely bare thighs, they kissed one another fondly good-night and slid under the hoods themselves.

The device above Maddie's face booted up as soon as her head hit the pillow and a soft electronic-sounding voice sounded out at whisper-level. "Hey, Maddie, I'm Karyn. I'm your tech tonight."

"Hi, Karyn," Maddie whispered back. "Hope we didn't muck things up coming back late."

"No, you're fine," she said. "Did you have a good time?"

"I had a wonderful time," Maddie said.

"Anyway, I wanted to let you know to expect to sleep a little late tomorrow. We have a very long program to get through this evening and we can't stop it once it's started, okay? It may put you working out during the heat of the day, and you may feel a little headache or some residual drowsiness tomorrow. Like a hangover. I'm sorry to say, don't expect a restful sleep tonight. We're gonna have your brain working overtime."

"Anything I should know?"

"Nope, but the next batch of protocols have to be done all at once. It's a ten-and-a-half hour program."

"Okay, you're the boss. I'm ready when you are."

"Dr. Scarsdale asked me to tell you how proud she is of what you've accomplished," Karyn said. "Just passing it along. By the time you wake up your tech will be Steven. Hope you can manage some rest."

The first of the soft tones sounded through the earpiece and Maddie was asleep before she heard the second.

\* \* \*

Maddie awoke slowly, by increments, and the first thing she noticed was a distinct feeling like she'd been punched all over her body. The piercings and tattoo were sore and swollen and her muscles ached like she'd run a marathon or two and then gone ten rounds with the heavyweight champ at the end of it. She clutched her head, rubbing her temples softly, and squeezed her eyes shut against the light as she swung her legs over the edge of the bed.

Muffled groans and moaning reached her sore ears, announcing the recent wakefulness of her companions and their own sorry states. Maddie tried to tune it out as she rubbed gummy residue from the corners of her eyes and forced them open with a muted groan.

"Rough night?" one of her companions asked. Maddie looked at him askance, confused. She knew that the ex-soccer player was male, had been male from the moment they'd met, but could not force herself to think of the person in the bunk alongside her own as anything other than female, another footballer named...

Named...

Now why would Maddie be remembering her name backwards? Not Ellis Kennedy. Kennedy Ellis. She'd *always* been Kennedy Ellis. Just like the golfer was Jordan Lewis, and the baseball player was Taylor Henry. The racer, on the end bunk, had never been anyone other than Lindsey Richards.

Maddie shook her head. Was that right? It *had* to be. It's all she knew.

But she knew other things. She knew, for example, that there was something about Kennedy and Taylor. And that Jordan was special somehow. But it wasn't anything she could put her finger on. She just *knew*.

Savannah brought her a steaming cup of tea – *didn't I used to have coffee in the mornings? I can't remember* – and sat on her bedside with a weak smile. They didn't speak for a while, just held hands companionably.

"How do you feel?" she asked at length.

"Rough," Maddie replied. "Yourself?"

"About the same," she said. "But the good news is, today is Hair Day. Everybody's getting new hair after breakfast."

"Ugh, breakfast," Maddie said, sticking out her freshly pierced and swollen tongue. "Dunno if I can handle that, love. But I suppose I should try."

"It won't be that bad," Jordan said from two bunks away. "It actually smells all right."

"Ta very much, Highness," Maddie said, and jumped a little. It had seemed so natural to say it and Jordan didn't bat an eye. She even bobbed a little curtsy to go along with her friendly wink. With a head feeling stuffed with cotton wool, Maddie shrugged and took a sip of tea, then set it by the bedside table and slipped into her morning workout gear – black sweats, little ankle socks and some weatherbeaten crosstrainers. She wanted to get at least a few miles in before it was time for the hair lab, but Savannah stopped her short.

"Are you feeling okay, sweetheart?"

"Of course, love, why wouldn't I be?"

"Don't you think you should wear something up top, there?"

Maddie looked down in alarm at her bare chest, with its puffy nipples and small, budding lumps of breast tissue high on the emaciated, slatted ribcage. With a flush of embarrassment, she shrugged a pink cotton jog-bra over her head and stuffed a pink Nike baseball cap on backwards over her tousled hair.

"I'm not sure how I know this, but... I think that's just the way you are," Savannah said. "I get the feeling that you do that all the time. How would I know that?"

"The bloody subliminals," Maddie grunted. "They're changing how we see each other. Like, I shouldn't bloody well feel like I should be leaving Kennedy and Taylor alone for a while, but I *know* I should, somehow, even though I don't know why."

"I get the same feeling," Savannah said. "These changes, they weren't in any of the briefings I received about the process, Maddie. Dr. Scarsdale is adding things in. I have to go, I have to see her so I can figure out what she's doing to us."

"No bloody good," Maddie hissed. "She'll just make you forget it afterward, love. Best to try on our own. Listen, we need to get out of here. The walls have ears."

"Right," Savannah said. "Gimme five minutes. I feel like going for a run, myself."

\* \* \*

Savannah ran seldom in her past life and did little to contain her delight at the effortlessness of jogging the mile-and-a-half alongside her best friend. She didn't feel the slightest bit sore or winded, and chose to intentionally ignore the obvious signs that her athletic friend was holding back to allow her to keep pace. Maddie's easy lope betrayed not the slightest hint of strain or exertion, and Savannah got the distinct impression that her friend could keep it up for the rest of the day without ever becoming fatigued.

"God, you're in unbelievable shape," she mentioned to Maddie.

"I'm so sodding *skinny*," Maddie complained. "I haven't the foggiest where I get all this energy."

"Dietary, mostly," Savannah said. "Until your body starts building up its own reserves, we supplement it pretty heavily. But seriously – how the hell fast can you run, girl?"

Maddie gave her a sideways, mischievous grin and said loudly, "It's Cole to Terry, Terry across the midfield to Drogba, Drogba's looking for an opening, he finds O'Brien on the cross... she's onside, the flag is down..."

With only a little bob of her head to signal it, Maddie lengthened her stride and took off, leaving the running Savannah behind as if she stood still. Within a few seconds about thirty or forty yards separated them across the crushed-gravel running track and Savannah could barely hear the crowd, "she beats the defender and taps it in near post. Brilliant goal, and Chelsea are up one-nil!"

It took Savannah the better part of a minute to catch up to her friend, who trotted in place happily and waited for her. "That was incredible," Savannah said. "I've never seen anyone move like that."

"Well, I used to be pretty speedy before you and your minions rebuilt me," she chuckled. "With your improvements and losing about seventy pounds of body mass, I'm faster than I've ever been."

"Glad to hear it," Savannah said.

"I should teach you to play football," Maddie mused. "We could go for a kick-about in the park sometime. It's brilliant fun."

"That would be great," Savannah replied. "Now that I can actually run, that is."

She adopted a somewhat darker, more conspiratorial tone. "So what do you think Dr. Scarsdale is doing to us, Mads?"

"I don't know," Maddie said. "I've been marinating it while we ran. It was only subtle things, at first, but now I have the strangest things popping 'round my mind now. She's tinkering with our relationships, I know that much. As close as I feel to you, 'Vannah, I've not known you long enough to know that your favorite dessert is strawberry cheesecake and that you always pay for the first round of drinks when you're out with friends because you think it's bad luck otherwise."

"But my favorite dessert isn't... is it? Wait. No, it couldn't be... but it *is*. You're right."

"I know," Maddie said. "Apparently, when I rack my brain for it, we've been friends for nearly ten years. I seem to remember that you're the first girl my own age I met when I moved to the 'States."

"And you were really homesick, so I took you for fish and chips and you cried," Savannah said. "You said it wasn't the same..."

"...but I was so grateful for the gesture," Maddie finished.

"You love cosmopolitans since before *Sex and the City* made them cool and your favorite movies are *Victory* and *The Shawshank Redemption*."

"This is uncanny," Maddie said. "The harder I think about it, the more I remember."

"You're pulling it out of subconscious recall and into conscious recall," Savannah said. "It's part of the process. Once you remember it in 'real time,' so to speak, then you create it as a

new memory and set it in stone. Those things I know – I *really* know them, now. I'm certain of them."

"Same here," Maddie said.

"I think we're supposed to be wracking our brains like this," Savannah suggested. "I think that's what Scarsdale wants, for us to be so certain of our memories that we don't question them any more, and we'd never be the wiser for what she's done to us."

"So how do we counteract it?" Maddie asked.

"We can't, Mads. It's brain chemistry. These memories, they're fully formed, they're just waiting to be processed. You'd be hard-pressed to go a whole day without encountering something that triggers a memory, if it's a smell or a sound or a pattern, everything triggers memories somehow, and once they're triggered they're real for us."

"Not that I hate having a lifelong relationship with you," Maddie said, "but isn't there to be any part of the old us left? Or does Scarsdale intend to replace us completely?"

"She always told me she wanted to keep us as close to our original personalities as she could," Savannah told her friend. "This is completely different from what she told me her original plan was."

"We have to stop it somehow," Maddie told her. "'Vannah, I can remember a little spruce tree outside the flat where I grew up in Bristol, and it's a wonderful memory. But I don't want to forget the tire swing my father hung up for me in my back yard in San Antonio, either. It's not the new memories that distress me, love, it's the loss of the old ones."

"I agree," Savannah said. "Is it the same, I wonder, for all the people in the group, or just us?"

"We'd have to ask, I suppose," Maddie said. "But I have no doubt that I know Taylor likes to mix ketchup and mustard together for dipping French fries and Lindsey dreams of visiting Florence."

"I need to think about this. Neurobiology was never my strongest subject, but maybe I can think of a way to slow this process, somehow. Jesus, I need my books."

"There's only a mile to go before we're back," Maddie said. "Do you think we should tell the others?"

"We have to," Savannah said. "It's the right thing to do."

"You're right, of course," Maddie said. "I'll leave you to your thoughts, then."

"And what will you be doing for the rest of the run?" Savannah said.

"Trying desperately to figure out *why* the hell I forget to wear a top and everybody knows it about me," Maddie said, picking up the pace a little.

\* \* \*

"Ever figure it out?" Savannah whispered to Maddie as they shifted from foot to foot on the cold tile floor of one of the downstairs laboratory areas. Several imposing-looking machines stood silently by, lights blinking and little fans whirring. It had a distinctly Frankenstein look to it.

"Why I can't remember to wear shirts?" Maddie whispered back. "No, but I'm reasonably confident that I've always been a bit of a nudist. I remember posing in the bathtub with the bubbles when I was only six and streaking around the house without a stitch on into my teenage years."

"You blushed," Savannah said. "Did you remember something else?"

"No," Maddie said, "more of a feeling than a memory."

"What feeling?"

"That I'm absolutely positive that I *like* it when people see me naked," she said. "And if this damn thing between my legs still worked, love, you could see how much the idea turns me on."

"Wow," Savannah said. "So, do you, like, wish you weren't wearing clothes right now?"

"A bit chilly for that, mate," Maddie chuckled, "but yes. I wish I was naked right now."

"What do you think that means, Mads?"

Maddie lost her opportunity to reply when the lab's double doors opened on well-oiled hinges and three white-coated men came through, followed by Amber the stylist who waved coquettishly to Maddie as she passed.

"Good morning," the tallest and most confident of the white coats said. "I trust everyone feels all right? Good. I'm Dr. Hergenrader, I'm one of the team that developed the process you're about to undergo. I'm confident that you're going to be thrilled with the results, and Amber here has agreed to help us pick out lengths and colors that will suit you. Of course, it's no problem at all to change anything you don't like.

"This process will actually remove all your natural hair," he continued, "and cause it to never regrow. We'll kill your natural follicles with a miniscule amount of radiation and laser. After that we will use our process to graft new, synthetic hair into your scalp. The synthetic hair looks and feels completely natural – its chemical composition is extremely close to the proteins that make up natural hair – and will take the natural oils from your scalp just as well as hair you'd grown yourself. The upside of the synthetics, however, mean that it's unbreakable and you'll never have a single split end. The polymer melts and reforms very easily, too, so it holds style better than natural hair, as well. In order to change its length or color, however, you'll have to visit us, since it can't be cut or dyed."

"The process is quite painless," a slender young man in thick glasses said to Dr. Hergenrader's left. "We've all allowed it to be done on ourselves during the testing phases. The only reason we waited so long was to give you all time for the immune suppressants to work out of your systems, since there is a very slight risk of infection to the skin of the scalp. Are there any questions?"

No hands raised, so Hergenrader chivvied them briskly into motion. They all wound up standing, shivering, in open stalls while the techs depilated them completely with a device that looked like a clipper but instead of a blade emanated an eerie green light. The hair it passed over fell out to pool at their feet and left behind only shiny, pale skin. Maddie fought back alarm as they rendered her as bald as a hard-boiled egg, even removing her eyebrows and pubic hair as well as taking the hair from her legs and armpits (which she didn't mind at all). It tingled her skin where the light passed, leaving behind only pink, silk smoothness.

Maddie couldn't help but run her fingertips across it, enjoying the sensual softness and hypersensitivity there.

The techs issued them flimsy hospital gowns which did little to offset the chill in the lab, and they stood in a ragged line, hairless and pink, shifting from foot to foot with arms hugged tight across their bodies. Hergenrader explained that the cold was for the machinery and passed out some itchy woolen blankets which the half-men/half-women received gratefully. Then one of the techs stepped up and spoke quietly to Kennedy, who nodded and followed the tech to a salon-style reclining chair. The other companions stepped quietly forward to get a better look at the process.

"It tickles, but it doesn't hurt. We need you to sit as still as you can," the tech explained as he stretched a skull-cap of silvery wire over Kennedy's head and shaped the "hairline" with a wooden tongue-depressor. He then connected several leads that looked thicker than wires but thinner than tubes to adapters on the skull-cap. After that came smaller, wire-mesh eyebrows, again hooked up to the thick wires, and then a small wire-mesh pubic hair patch nestled just above Kennedy's meager little baby-penis. Kennedy settled back into the chair with a sigh – the vinyl seat must have been as chilly as the rest of the room, judging from the incremental way she relaxed – and closed her eyes. Several of the lights on the machine above her head began to blink faster and a few monitor screens along the wall lit up with displays.

"We picked something to get you noticed," Amber said over the PA. "Kind of a 'signature' look for you, something to make you stand out on the soccer field. If you don't like it, honey, then you can always change it later, but I hope you'll give it a day or two to get used to it."

"Okay," Kennedy said with the strange strained voice indicative of sitting very still and trying not to move one's head.

"Here we go," Hergenrader said on the PA. The machines hummed, Kennedy gasped a little, and the tubes – they *were* tubes, after all – filled with a whitish fluid.

"Oooh, wow," Kennedy said with a barely-suppressed giggle. "That *does* tickle."

"Almost done," Hergenrader assured her.

Some of the indicator lights on the machinery changed from green to blinking red and the whirring and buzzing of the internal mechanisms quieted. The lines connected to the skullcap cleared, and the tech helped Kennedy sit up a little. They peeled back the eyebrows and pubic appliances first, revealing a downy patch of dark brown curls shaped into a narrow, exquisitely-manicured "landing strip" and two high, delicate arches that made her eyes look big and surprised. Then the tech loosened and removed the skullcap and a short, spiky "pixie" cut bleached a shocking white-blonde. The tech teased it up with his fingers before presenting a mirror to Kennedy, who gazed into it in utter fascination.

"Holy shit," she breathed. "Look at it! You can't even tell it's not mine!"

"You like it?" Amber asked over the PA.

"Oh, *hellz* yeah, I like it!" Kennedy said happily. "It looks *incredible*. I love it!"

"I'll show you a bunch of things you can do with it," Amber said. "I'm so glad you like it."

The tech turned to Lindsey next. "You're our next one," he said evenly. "Ready?"

The lanky, leggy race-car driver jumped forward, almost knocking the transfixed Kennedy from the chair in her hurry.

\* \* \*

Maddie drew the last lot for hair, enjoying the ample time to admire the hair given to the other participants while letting her own anticipation build to fidgeting levels in the process. Lindsey, the second in the chair, could not refrain from brushing her fingers through the thick cascade of midnight-black dense curls that spilled over her shoulders and down to nearly the center of her back. Jordan, the golfer, lost any and all ability to stop moving her head, sending luminous shining waves down her straight, sable-auburn hair which hung past her shoulderblades. Kennedy habitually tousled her spiky blonde hair while Taylor twirled strands of her thick, coppery-red mop top around an index finger and swung her own head so that the dense, kinky curls tickled her back.

Savannah Roberts fought valiantly to keep from crying tears of absolute joy as she turned this way and that in the wall mirror, touching her wavy honey-blonde hair and finger-combing it into the beginnings of any multitude of styles. With her big brown eyes and slender face, matched with the shining gold of her hair, she bore a striking resemblance to Carrie Underwood, which every single person present commented on, bringing a smile of such pure, shining delight to her pretty face that they felt as much pleasure from saying so as the transgendered doctor received from hearing it.

The tech, looking tired and a little bit bored, held out his hand to Maddie and offered her a weak but seemingly genuine smile, saying "You ready, ma'am?"

"You bet I am," Maddie replied, settling into the vinyl seat with a satisfied little shimmy and waiting patiently while the tech attached the cold wire meshes to her pubis, her eyebrows and finally the skullcap over her bald head. Amber's voice clicked on in her ear over a little personal speaker set into the headrest while the tech attached the little hoses.

"Okay, Maddie, when the machine engages, sweetie, you're going to feel anywhere the wires touch skin start to sting. It only lasts a second, 'kay?" she said.

"Got it."

A soft whirring sounded and Maddie felt as though hundreds of ants bit her scalp, forehead and crotch. It would have been torturous had it lasted longer than about a second, but it abated quickly and Maddie distinctly realized that the wires had bonded themselves to her skin somehow.

"Now, when we start the process, honey, you're going to feel pressure but not pain. Should last about ten or fifteen seconds, and it might get a bit uncomfortable before it's all done," Amber said.

"Ready when you are," Maddie said.

A strange, tingling sensation preceded the unsettling feeling of having something the consistency of pudding forced under her skin, making her squirm a little in the chair. The sensation lasted only a few short seconds on her brows and between her legs, but it seemed to go on and on forever on her scalp. Images of the Play-Doh Fun Factory danced disturbingly in her mind as she felt inch after inch of substance worm its way from the irritated flesh of her

bald head. It seemed an eternity before the sensation petered out and the whirring of the machine drew to a close.

The tech stepped up and began unfastening the appliances on her body, biding her quietly, "Just sit still for a second, I'll have these right off, okay?"

He fussed with the wire mesh for a few seconds, and Maddie grimaced at the pulls and tugs she felt as he drew them away. At last, she felt a soft, feathery mass of weight settle across her slender shoulders and tug gently at her head.

"Oh, wow," Savannah said. "I wouldn't have thought it, honey, but that so suits you."

Maddie turned slowly towards the large wall mirror to see her head crowned with a huge, unruly cascade of vanilla blonde curls, kinky and tight, which tumbled down her back to rest just a few inches shy of the small of her back. The volume of hair made her face and head appear small in comparison, nestled in the wild blonde mane as they were. High, delicately arched brows framed large oblique eyes and a downy little thatch, trimmed into neat little "landing strip" like all the others drew her pubic triangle into a slender little delta between creamy, smooth thighs.

Maddie slid her hands into unbelievable softness, digging in to massage her scalp, which seemed none the worse for wear from the grafting process. It tangled a little around her fingers, causing a few ungentle tugs, but for the most part it separated around her finger-combing as if brushed carefully and making her windblown look appear carefully orchestrated.

Savannah reached her side first by seconds, running her fingers through the soft tumble of curls as they had all done every time one of them rose from the chair, cooing comments about how shiny, soft and beautiful it looked.

"Amber, honey, it's *perfect*," Savannah said happily. "She was so meant to be a blonde."

"I thought it would suit her color," Amber's proud voice said over the PA. "D'you like it, babe?"

Maddie couldn't take her eyes off the vision in the mirror as she replied, "I love it, Amber. It's absolutely brilliant."

"Gonna be hard to play football, though, don't you think?" Kennedy asked sadly, looking heartbroken. "I hope it doesn't get in your eyes."

"I can help you style it to keep it under control while you play," Amber said. "But you're gonna have a life off the soccer field, and hair like that will get you noticed."

The thought of being *noticed* thrilled Maddie more than she expected, causing her to smile. She still couldn't take her eyes off the woman in the mirror, though. *Is that really me?*

*God, she thought. I'm actually pretty. I can't believe that they made me pretty!*

"Portrait of a young woman who loves her hair," Savannah giggled next to her, squeezing her arm.

"I'm not the one who's been humming *Before He Cheats* under her breath for the last hour," Maddie teased back, making her friend blush adorably.

The tech passed out a few hair-bands and scrunchie type appliances to restrain hair for those of the women who still desired a work out – Maddie's own made an impossibly thick, curly

ponytail which hung down her back and tickled the tops of her exposed nether cheeks when she walked – and Amber promised to come to the dorm after dinner and help the women learn to style and manage their new tresses. The happy, contented group broke apart shortly afterward and they dispersed to their individual schedules – Maddie and Kennedy to the pitch for agility drills, Jordan to the putting green, Lindsey and Savannah to the gym for cardio and Taylor to the batting cages – but still didn't restrain the almost nagging impulse to touch and play and fuss with their shiny, silken new additions.

"How do you feel?" Savannah asked Maddie in the hallway before they separated.

"Incredible," Maddie replied. "Amazing. Like a *girl*."

"Me, too," Savannah said, hugging herself happily.

"Just think how it'll be when they finally get 'round to tacking on some bloody breasts," Maddie laughed as she ducked through the door to the outside training facilities.

"Yeah," Savannah mused, digging through the pocket of the jeans she carried over one arm for her cellphone to press painfully to her freshly-pierced ear. "About that."

\* \* \*

"Admittedly, with everything that's been going on, I haven't had a lot of time to think about it," Maddie said to Kennedy as they rounded their starting point and dug into their third mile of the run. "But Savannah and I both think that something's going on that we're not being told about."

"Taylor and I think the same thing," Kennedy said.

"I've noticed you've been spending an awful lot of time with Taylor," Maddie commented.

"I don't know, it's strange," Kennedy mused. "It's like I can't seem to spend enough time with her. And when I'm not, I'm thinking about her. She's always right at the top of my thoughts."

"That sounds nice," Maddie said with a half-smile. "Does she feel that way about you?"

"She says she does," Kennedy said. "The other day, as a matter of fact, when we finished lunch, I needed to practice outside and she needed to go to the gym, and right before we parted ways, she kissed me – on the lips – and told me she loved me, like it was the most natural thing in the world."

"Really?"

"What's weird is that I said it right back," Kennedy said. "Maddie, I've never said that to *anyone* before, not in my whole life, but it didn't freak me out or make me think or anything. It just rolled right out of me. And – and this is the part I can't seem to understand – I think I *meant* it."

"That *is* strange," Maddie commented. "Considering you've only known one another for, what... three weeks? Seems a terribly short time for two people to fall in love."

"That's what I thought," Kennedy said. "What kinds of things have been happening to you?"

"Like you," Maddie said. "Little things that just seem to make sense at the time but only get odd if I think about them. I've always been shy, for example, since I was little, but now I can't seem

to stop trying to get people to notice me. And I have *never*, in my living memory, liked to dance, but now – if I hear music, I start moving around. It's almost like I can't help it."

"And then you tend to forget to wear clothes," Kennedy chuckled. "We've *all* noticed that."

Maddie laughed. "But it's just that – I actually *do* forget that I'm not wearing anything. Like it doesn't even occur to me. I've had to adopt the habit of checking myself before I leave my room to make sure I'm covered."

"I've noticed that I'm starting to become vain, too," Kennedy continued, changing the subject. "Especially since the hair. The thought of leaving the bathroom without my hair fixed or wearing makeup makes me cringe. I actually changed clothes the other morning because I realized I didn't have shoes to go with the outfit I picked. Stuff like that never even entered my mind before."

"Can you believe that I've asked Dr. Scarsdale if I can visit the tanning salon in town?" Maddie added. "I see how uneven I'm getting in the mirror and I can barely stand it. It actually makes me want to cry."

"What is happening to us?"

"Don't know, love," Maddie said. "'Vannah is trying to find out, but it's difficult. And in the meantime we just keep getting more and more absorbed in being girls. I'm so easily bloody distracted now. I can concentrate on football, and my appearance, and our lessons, but anything outside of that and it seems I have to force myself to pay attention. It's quite alarming."

"It's hard, because I can honestly say I'm happier than I've ever been," Kennedy said.

Maddie nodded. "Me, too, love."

"So what do you think we should do about it?"

"I think we should try to find a way for all of us to get together outside of the eyes and ears of the facility, maybe try to arrange an outing in town. I feel as though we simply *must* make a chance to talk amongst ourselves and come to a conclusion as a group, don't you?"

"I think you're right," Kennedy said. "Hopefully before Thursday."

"Thursday?"

"That's our next big ten-hour overnight subliminal session," Kennedy reminded her. "Who knows what we'll have rattling around in our heads after that happens."

"I seem to have the most influence with Dr. Scarsdale and the Powers That Be," Maddie said. "I think it's time for all us girls to head into town and have a bit of an outing."

"Do you think she'll go for it?" Kennedy asked.

"All I can do is ask," Maddie said, her smooth brow furrowed with worry.

To Be Continued...



SUMMARY: Looking to increase their chance with a female volleyball team they have invested in, one company decides that if they can't find winning female athletes, they will make them using guys who couldn't quite cut it in sports.

## GAME ON

### Part Four

by Valerie Hope

"I SUPPOSE I SHOULD START," Maddie said to the group clustered around the large table at the large chain eatery they'd chosen for lunch. Dr. Scarsdale jumped at the chance for all her transformees to have the opportunity to act as women in public, and they'd managed an excursion into town for facials, pedicures and shopping – the girliest activities they could imagine, which they all thoroughly enjoyed. Maddie, herself, felt particular pride over her new, *café-au-lait* airbrush tan which had been her very first stop of the morning.

"As you all know, I've apparently turned into a nudist," she chuckled, then gestured to the cluster of shopping bags near her chair, "despite my new avocation as a clotheshorse. We've all noticed these subtle but very real changes in our personalities, and we can all agree that they were *not* discussed with us beforehand as a part of the overall process."

Kennedy, who held Taylor's hand on the tabletop without seeming to notice, nodded emphatically. "We all knew we were going to be changed into women," she said. "But I think we're being changed into very *specific* women, and it may or may not be against our will."

"I don't think it's particularly necessary to make laundry-lists of all the changes we've noticed," Savannah interjected over the rim of her margarita glass. "I'm confident each of us has a fairly thorough mental inventory. The question is: *what* are we being changed into, and more importantly, *why*?"

"Have you gotten any more information from Dr. Scarsdale?" Lindsey asked.

"She's clammed up completely over the last few days," Savannah said with a frustrated pout. "I can't even get her to return my calls lately. No, I think it's safe to say we're on our own."

"Is this even worth worrying about?" Jordan asked in the strange, broad accent she'd developed over the last few days. "Even if they are changing us into something we didn't agree to, is there anything at all we can actually do about it? Is there a way to combat the subliminal process?"

"I don't know enough about it to answer that," Savannah answered. "Only Dr. Scarsdale has those kinds of explanations."

"And she's not talking," Lindsey grumped.

"I think it *is* worthwhile to at least have some kind of a plan in place," Kennedy offered. "If you stop and consider a moment, we *can* overcome the subliminal programming if we concentrate. That means it can't be foolproof. I believe we can fight the subliminal suggestions we're receiving if we simply make up our minds, collectively, to fight against them. And to support one another in the meantime."

"I consider all of you to be my friends, now," Jordan slurred. "I can't envision a stronger group of individuals. If anyone can overcome this process, we can."

"Agreed," Savannah seconded.

"There's only one potential pitfall," Maddie said. "If we all collectively resist Scarsdale's influence, then she may take it upon herself to try and break our wills. Possibly even set us against one another. By and large, though, the changes seem to be quirky but benign, overall. Nothing she's done to me is the slightest bit unpleasant to me – inconvenient, at worst. I cast my vote in favor of not spending our energy fighting the changes themselves but to trying to ferret out this secret, hidden agenda."

"I'm with Maddie," Taylor said. "I might possibly be okay with the changes if I only knew *why*."

"You're not outraged at losing control of who we're becoming?" Kennedy asked.

"Surprisingly, no," Taylor continued. "I never liked myself much before we started this. Now, I'm learning to really appreciate myself. I have confidence, and self-esteem, and pride that I've never had before. Dr. Scarsdale is in no small part the architect of that. I don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater."

"Fair enough," Savannah said. "As for me, I'm in the unique position of living a dream come true. I wouldn't change a thing about what's happening to me. I'm so happy I find myself crying for pure joy several times a day. I'm only in this because my very best friends are in this. If it was left up to me, I'd tell Scarsdale to do whatever the hell she thought was best, just so long as she didn't stop until I was 100% female."

"I never thought of that," Maddie said softly. "Savannah, darling, thank you. For everything you've done on our behalf. It must've been quite difficult for you."

She waved a manicured hand dismissively, long French-manicured nails catching the light. "Whatever, sweetie. You know I'd lie down in traffic for you. This is nothing in the relative scheme of things."

"Still and all, love," Maddie said. "I'm grateful."

"Buy me that Gucci purse we saw and I'm willing to call it square."

"I'll have to sell a kidney," Maddie chuckled.

"Do you really need two?" Savannah riposted, and the whole table laughed. Not the raucous belly-laugh which drew every eye to its explosive, brash noise as it had when they were men, but now a tinkling, musical affair which set a round of infectious smiles around the room.

"I think the questions we're asking are all going to answer themselves," Jordan said, sipping white wine. "It seems as though I'm just right on the verge of remembering things. Of finding out who and what I am. It tickles, just at the back of my mind, every day. Soon, I think, we will have everything made clear to us."

"I resent not being told beforehand," Kennedy grumped. "It's not Scarsdale's life. It's *mine*."

"Right on," Taylor agreed.

"What if Jordan's right, though?" Savannah opined. "What if once the process is over, and we're all sure we know what and who we are, we won't be happy? I've known Dr. Scarsdale for several years, girls, and she's a good person. I trust her."

"But she didn't *ask*," Jordan pressed. "That doesn't exactly help her trustworthiness. Unfortunately, *liebchen*, I haven't known her as long as you have. She hasn't earned my trust."

No one even blinked at the recent intrusion of German sayings creeping into Jordan's speech. Their own subliminal training precluded alarm – it seemed to all the man-girls present to be perfectly natural. None of them recalled a time when their friend Jordan *didn't* pepper her speech with German phrases.

"So, what did we decide here?" Maddie asked, tearing off a tiny corner of a piece of chocolate cake and nibbling it. She could dimly remember taking huge bites and mouthfuls of food, but a haze surrounded those memories. To her knowledge, she always picked at her food this way.

"Nothing," Taylor said. "I still have no idea what to do."

Realization dawned on Maddie that they'd spent the entire afternoon trying to make one another feel better, to assuage any negative feelings, instead of trying to solve a problem. *Just like girls do*, she thought with a hint of a smile.

"I think we should just grit our teeth and try to resist the process," she said at last. "Some of what we get subliminally is very necessary and will continue to be. Do you ladies actually want to have to learn how to use a tampon by trial and error, when the time comes? I wouldn't know how to wipe myself without that bloody music we listen to. I couldn't begin to master all the things I need to know. Actually trying to stop the training – I think it's mental to even consider it."

"I didn't even think of that," Taylor said, playing idly with a strand of her wild carrot-top curls.

"We should find a place where we can communicate openly," Lindsey said. "I'd feel a lot better if we could meet like this every day or two, y'know, just, like, touch base 'n' stuff."

"I know a place," Savannah said. "There's a storage shed the groundskeepers use. It's by the putting range and only a little way away from the running path and the soccer field. We all have excuses to go there every day and there's no surveillance out there."

"So, does that solve the problem for now?" Maddie asked, receiving nods and smiles in response.

"Vannah, love, keep trying to reach Dr. Scarsdale," Maddie continued. "It *would* help to know just what the hell is going on upstairs."

"I'll do what I can," the doctor agreed. "Now, who wants to join me for a chair massage?"

\* \* \*

"It's progressing too slowly," Adam Cassidy said to Dr. Scarsdale over the polished conference table outside her office. "The Powers That Be are getting a little restive."

"I can't help that," Scarsdale replied. "This is not a thing that can be rushed."

Cassidy sighed. "I know. I'm just the messenger," he said forlornly.

She offered him a probing look. "Something on your mind, Mr. Cassidy?"

"Adam, please," he said, holding up a hand. "I'm... I'm not sure I'm okay with this."

"Okay with what?"

"Doing this to them," he said. "This isn't what they signed up for. Look, I'm as big a profiteer as anyone. I understand we need a return on the investment here, and the investment is pretty staggering. But this feels like taking advantage. They're decent folks. They deserve better."

She paused a long time, tapping an index finger on the polished hardwood, considering. "So you lay it all at Summers' feet?" she asked.

"No, I played my part in it as well," Adam said. "I'm as culpable as anyone else, regardless of whose idea it was in the first place. But Summers seems to think it's his due, that he deserves the rewards of forcing these people into this niche he created. And the agent who's going to handle them – Hank Brooks, you haven't met him yet – he just feeds into it all. I overheard a conversation yesterday where they were doing a cost-benefit analysis of doing this forced-transformation schtick on a larger scale, moving into politics, for instance."

"Wow," Scarsdale said. "I don't care how much money he's given me. I wouldn't let that happen."

"He owns the tech, Dr. Scarsdale," Adam reminded her darkly. "You can't stop him."

"Not if I play by the rules," she said. "But if you're willing to make a few sacrifices – I think I might have a proposition for you."

"A proposition?" Adam said, eyebrows raised. "I'm listening."

"I researched your background a little," Scarsdale said. "Single, no kids, parents both dead and no real attachments. So tell me, Adam, what are your thoughts on being a girl?"

\* \* \*

Scarsdale worked far into the night, putting together the seemingly disparate pieces of her elaborate plan and waiting for the results of her first outside test of the subliminal programming regimen she'd spent most of her adult life creating. The "bomb" they'd devised – implanted in the music chip of a musical birthday card – had been delivered this morning and she got a visual that the target received it around two o'clock that afternoon. Her paid observer reported that he'd stood motionless in the hallway of his house for nearly twenty minutes, expressionless, and listened to the little microchip play her subliminal instructions all the way through. Then he had carried the card in to his wife and played it for her as well. Whether or not the test had been a success remained to be seen, but Scarsdale held out hope.

She eyed the monitor, long since bored with trying to divert her mind away from what she had to do with Spider Solitaire and randomly surfing the Internet. All of the women slept in their beds, dolled up in their frilly, girly nightgowns, completely unaware of what awaited them within the electronic guts of Scarsdale's computer. Her finger hovered indecisively over the "Enter" key.

She'd been up many sleepless nights over this, and had finally boiled the problem down to its most basic question – *would they be happier or not if I do this* – and came up with 'yes' for an answer. Instead of dooming them to a life stuck between genders, this paved the way into a new, fulfilled happiness without destroying the fundamental selves of the people involved. In the very long term, Scarsdale convinced herself, this was the right thing to do.

She closed her eyes and forced down regret, then swiped the key.

The subliminal modules over the half-men-half-women's sleeping faces hummed to life, limning each face in a bluish-green, flickering glow.

*Heaven help me*, Scarsdale said. *I hope I didn't just fuck up.*

The women under the spell of her high-tech magic would never know they needed to forgive her. But Scarsdale intended to make up more than the difference there by never truly forgiving herself.

She snapped roughly from her introspection by the ringing of her phone. She dug it irritably from a pocket of her lab coat and pressed it to her ear.

"Scarsdale," she barked.

"Melissa, it's Adam. I had some time to think," the voice said on the other end. "I'm in."

\* \* \*

"They'll be pretty out of it for most of the day, the doc says," one of the legion of techs assigned to the project told his colleague as they helped the sleepy, zombie-like transgenders out of their beds and into hospital gowns. "We're supposed to make sure they're fed and bathed and then taken to Lab 2-C by eleven o'clock."

"What's Lab 2-C?" the other asked.

"Not sure, it's pretty hush-hush in that end of the complex," the original one said, helping the tall redhead out of bed and holding out a hospital gown for her, which she directed her long, well-muscled arms into mechanically. Her eyes never really even opened during the process. "I think it has something to do with some kind of foam."

"Foam? That's weird," the second said, trying to negotiate the ties of the gown under the lush fall of thick, curly blonde hair on the patient he'd woken up, one of the soccer players.

"Shit, as long as they pay me I'll take 'em anywhere they want me to," he said, patting the semi-conscious redhead on her firm rump. "Isn't that right, sweetheart?"

She made no reply.

The bi-gendered creatures finally were gowned, sponged down, fed and led in a group down a long tiled hallway to a large laboratory at the end. A very lanky, goateed scientist waited for them with an expectant smile and fussed over them as the techs lined them up on a bench near a large and very imposing-looking lab table surrounded by robotic appendages and monitors.

"Excellent, excellent," the scientist mused happily as he made notes on a small tablet computer, flitting from one subject to the next in a happy, fidgeting haze.

"What goes on in here, doc?" one of the techs asked, eyeing the coffee pot bubbling happily away on a nearby counter and wondering if he could help himself.

"These brave souls will be the first people in the world to receive this new process," he said. "We've developed a foam that responds to laser stimulation to become any consistency we like to a very high degree of accuracy. But that's not what's special about it. Its real innovation comes from the fact that it is completely immune neutral in the human body."

"Immune neutral?"

"Means it won't ever be rejected," the other tech said.

"Correct," the scientist said excitedly. "The body's immune response completely overlooks it. Which means we can put it in anyone and they're in no danger. The potential benefits in the field of reconstructive surgery are staggering."

"And these folks are getting the very first batch?"

"That's right," the scientist said. "We're going whole hog, too. Facial restructuring, skeletal modification, and finally getting some subcutaneous – well, not fat, but something just like it – to smooth them out. Poor little bony things. They could use a little meat on their bones."

"No kidding," the first tech commented, pulling a face at the sight of the emaciated skin-and-bones creatures defined only by the hard edges of their hard, sculpted muscles.

"If this goes according to plan," the scientist explained, "we could be the great shining hope for burn victims and amputees the world over. It could change the face of medicine."

"Wow," the second tech said, whistling softly. "Who knew we worked someplace this high-tech?"

"Would you gentlemen care to stay and watch the procedure?" the scientist asked.

"Sure, why not?" the first tech answered.

They took seats behind the computer monitor after helping the scientist – who introduced himself as Dr. Schreiber – assist the other soccer player, with the spiky bleach-blonde hair onto the table and restrain her arms and legs. Dr. Schreiber activated a few controls on his station and the machinery surrounding the blonde whirred and pinged loudly as several of the robotic 'arms' sprang smoothly to life around her.

"Okay, here we go," Schreiber said, looking over a scan of the patient's body and marking several points with a click of his mouse. When he touched another control, the girl-boy's body lifted gently by supports which extended from the table at her ankles, wrists, knees, small of her back and neck. Then the robotic arms spun into place around her, pressing tight against her skin.

"Those contact points contain thousands of small needles," Schreiber explained to his unexpected audience. "That's how the foam will be introduced. Beginning the initial injection now."

With a hiss of pressure, pumps sprang to life and the he-she's body bloated as several thick pockets of something the consistency of pudding was forced beneath her skin, concentrating

at the buttocks, thighs and upper chest. The grotesque bubbling made the techs look away in disgust, reminding them of horrible tumors.

"I know it's not pretty," Schreiber said sympathetically. "But that's just the initial injection. The second pass is what makes the difference. Just be patient, please."

Once the body swelled and stretched to accommodate the new arrival, the arms retracted and different arms spiraled in to replace them. Schrieber whistled under his breath as they finally settled on their final destinations and he brought up a computer model which he checked carefully on his monitor.

"Everything looks good here," he commented. "Starting the recontouring process. You'll want to watch this, gentlemen. This is the interesting part."

With a whine, the newest set of robotic arms began to pulse with bright, greenish light against the hermaphrodite's smooth skin. With each pulse, the bulbous jelly under the skin began to re-form, slowly creeping along bones and muscles to the eerie rhythm of the pulses, until the body suspended above the table shaped into a nearly perfect physical female specimen, smooth and hard-muscled like before but softened a bit by graceful, feminine curves. A delicious bubble-butt topped long, sinewy legs with smooth, creamy thighs, the pelvis widened into a shape just right for childbearing. The wide hips tapered into a tiny, firm waist with a tight abdominal 'six-pack' and then flared up to a slender ribcage crowned with firm, gravity-defying breasts somewhere in the 36B range. The severe but pretty face succumbed to softer, smoother curves and now ventured well beyond pretty to beautiful, with high cheekbones and a soft, dimpled chin and a narrow, softly angled jaw. The lightshow stopped as suddenly as it had begun and the supports retracted, lowering the girl – no doubt of gender now, even with the tiny penis nestled in the downy pubic hair – gently to the table with a soft sigh of pneumatics. The whole process took around ten minutes.

The two techs clapped appreciatively and the lanky scientist took a happy bow.

"She'll be very stiff and sore," Schreiber explained, "so treat her very gently for the next day or so. Poor thing has been through quite a lot. If you two wouldn't mind helping me get her up and the next one placed on the table?"

They released her wrists and ankles and even through the semi-coma she floated through any movement elicited a soft groan from full, kissable lips sculpted by Schrieber's fantastic foam. They led her very gingerly to the bench and helped her sit, where she perched motionlessly on her new, flawless butt and crossed her legs demurely at the ankle.

"Unbelievable," the second tech commented. "I'd never know she wasn't a girl."

"Touch," Schreiber bade him. "Feel the inserts."

The tech stroked the blonde's face tenderly and smiled. "Soft," he said.

"Does it feel at all unnatural?" Schreiber asked.

"Not a bit," the tech replied. "Just like a normal, healthy girl. It's amazing."

"Who's next?" the first tech asked, already anxious to see another transformation.

Schreiber consulted a clipboard. "Let's see, that would be Jordan Lewis, the golfer," he said. He pointed at a very tall and slender she-male with glossy, straight brownish-auburn hair. "That would be her, I believe."

The techs stood her up without resistance and led her to the table while Schreiber recalibrated his system for its next transformation. The techs ran back to their seats on the observation deck when they were done, not wanting to miss a second of the uncanny transformation process.

Another pulsing lightshow came and went and they helped the statuesque, high-chested 34C beauty with the Audrey Hepburn face and the perfect firm-but-jiggly teardrop butt to the bench to rest beside her out-of-it 'sisters.' They moved Lindsey with her curly black mane onto the table next, turning her into a gorgeous dusky-skinned beauty with the lushest lips either tech had ever seen, and then the coppery redhead Taylor Henry into a *va-va-voom* bombshell with a wasp-waist and some lovely 34B upturned boobs. Savannah Roberts got her turn and walked away sporting some mouth-watering 36D boobs, a flat-as-a-plank stomach and a firm athletic bubble of a butt and a face now even more similar in looks to the country star Carrie Underwood, close enough now to possibly be mistaken for her while out and about. Still amazed and looking forward to the process, the techs led the slack-jawed Maddie O'Brien with her wild tumble of curly blonde hair from the bench to the table before scurrying up to the observation platform to find Dr. Schreiber puzzling over the monitor, his brow furrowed.

"This doesn't seem right," he said. "Not for an athlete. But the math has been checked and re-checked at least two dozen times."

"Problem?"

"Her body proportions seem a bit off for an athlete," Schreiber commented. "Maybe I should call it in. Once the gel sets up underneath the skin it's all but impossible to remove. I'd hate to make a mistake."

He reached for the phone and dialed a four-digit in-house number, waiting for an answer. "Hi, this is Dr. Schreiber in Recontouring. I wanted to double-check the dimensions sent down for O'Brien. They seem a bit off."

He paused, listening, then read off a string of random numbers from the neatly tabulated columns showing on the monitor. His brow furrowed even further. "You're sure that's correct?"

"Okay, if you say it's the correct algorithm, I believe you. I'll start the process," he said. "She's the last in line, so if you could send some people down to collect them, I can start analyzing the data."

Shrugging, he stabbed at the activation key on his console and the machinery hummed back to life, spinning and attaching itself to the skin-and-bones emaciated body. The tech watched in undiluted wonder as the gel forced its way under the smooth, tanned skin and then the pulsing lasers went to work. And work they *did*.

"Oh, wow," the first tech breathed. "Holy *shit*."

The lanky, bony soccer player's body seemed to liquefy and flow beneath the strobing laser lights and reform itself into a lush, ripe collection of incredible curves. A softly-muscl'd trunk over a bubble-butt which any man would deem perfection, long softly curved legs with delicious muscle definition, a narrow face with soft cheeks and an amazing set of puffy, pouty,

Angelina-Jolie style dicksucking lips. But most noticeable – almost impossible *not* to notice – were the prominent, spherical 36DD knockers that pointed straight at the ceiling in utter defiance of gravity. They had the too-perky, too-perfect look of being 'done' and jiggled deliciously as the robotic arms retracted away from her body and she lowered towards the table. All the men present took a quick, private second to readjust themselves, since the very sight of Maddie's curves stiffened their cocks in their pants and turned their thoughts inexorably towards fantasies of seeing her bucking atop them, sweating and panting like an animal, watching her magnificent breasts bounce and jiggle with every thrust. A porn-star dream body, to be sure. They watched her as she lay motionless, utterly amazed at the specimen of buxom perfection laying out on the table below them.

"My *goodness*," Schreiber breathed, breaking the fragile spell her body had cast over the room.

"She looks like a fuckin' porn star," the first tech breathed.

"How the fuck is she s'posed to *run* with those bazooms? They're gonna smack her in the chin and knock her out cold," the second one opined.

"It wasn't our decision," Schreiber sad. "Apparently this was all decided upstairs a long time ago."

"I ain't complaining," the second tech said with a smirk.

"Damn right," echoed the first. "Good job, upstairs."

"They need to go straight to Lab 4-A," Schreiber said. "Can I assume that you two gentlemen want to be the ones who take them?"

The first tech threaded his fingers through the porn-star blonde's and began leading her towards the door without another word spoken.

\* \* \*

The men-turned-girls followed meekly behind the two techs, their minds in a hazy fog and nothing less than complete obedience to the impulses planted deep within their minds even conceivable. Maddie O'Brien dimly noticed the way she had to sway her hips to keep her balance and the heavy bounce on her chest with every step. Her best friend followed behind her, hand-in-hand, but as much as Maddie wished she could embrace her friend and be reassured about the massive changes they underwent, but there was no way. The force guiding her mind and body right now brooked no room for interpretation. It said 'go,' so Maddie went. She never even considered she might have a choice in the matter.

They followed mindlessly through the double doors at the end of the hall and allowed the leering techs to place each of them in a type of crèche where they reclined on plastic-like cushions that conformed to their every new, luscious curve.

*Savannah looks so beautiful*, she thought as she watched her friend be led to the open capsule where she was meant to lie down. *She must be so happy*.

Maddie allowed herself to be led to the capsule next to Savannah's and pushed gently down into the cushioning inside. Some strange kind of ribbing under the softness hooked her around the knees and pulled her legs apart a little, making room for a small machine to slide upwards

from the bottom of the capsule and take a place over her crotch. A hood slid into place over her face, blocking her vision and covering both of her ears.

Warm, soft lights sprang to life in the depths of the hood and Maddie heard familiar music play in her ears. "Hello, Maddie," a gentle, warm female voice said.

"Hello," Maddie replied, her voice hoarse and scratchy as if it hadn't been used in a while.

"How do you feel?"

"Strange," she replied.

"You're beautiful," the voice told her.

"Am I?"

"Breathtaking," the voice replied. "I could just sit and look at you for hours."

"Sweet," Maddie said.

"You think so? You like being looked at?" the voice said, suddenly excited.

"I'm not... I don't..."

"It was a simple question, Madison. Do you like being looked at?"

"Yes," she said, feeling tensions release inside her she hadn't known she held. "I do."

"How do you like being looked at?" the voice asked.

"I like being noticed," she said. "I like it when people pay attention."

"How much attention?"

"All of it," Maddie said with a happy giggle. "I like all the attention."

"Do you think you deserve all the attention?"

"Of course I do," Maddie said with certainty. More tensions released.

"Why?"

"Because... I'm not sure... I think... Because..."

"Go ahead, Madison," the voice urged, "tell me why you deserve all the attention. You know the answer, you're just frightened to say it out loud. Why should we all pay attention?"

"Because..."

"Don't be scared, dear," the voice urged her, "just say it. We all know it. You just have to say it."

"Because I have big tits," Madison spat, and more tensions released. "Because I'm fucking *hot*."

"I'm glad you finally admit that," the voice said. "Because it's true. You *are* hot."

A flush of almost uncomfortable warmth suffused Maddie's crotch, and she tried to squirm but the form-fitting cushions prevented it. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"Don't be frightened, dear," the voice soothed. "We're finishing the job. What you feel is ultrasonic waves, set at a very distinct frequency that cause your cells to replicate very rapidly."

Outside in the lab, the techs leaned forward to watch the monitors. In high-definition clarity, they watched the tiny little penis and scrotum between Maddie's legs start to change – the scrotum's contents, two heavy glands now more ovary than testicle, retreated rapidly into the body as the scrotum lengthened and thinned, separating into two lushly pouting, pinkish lips split by a deep furrow. The penis shrunk further, pointing downwards as the urinary meatus moved physically down the penis and into the deep valley of tissue between the new labia. The penis, shrinking further, retreated into the sensitive, moist pink tissues and under a little nub of a hood to form a big but perfect clitoris. The last of the fat resettled itself to form a delectable little bump of a mons and a soft, inviting cleft around Maddie's new, perfect pussy.

Maddie only felt the gentle, tingling tugs of the rearrangement and the expansion of a profound and very comfortable hollowness in her midsection. It seemed to settle into place like a warm blanket over cold flesh, and she sighed in total satisfaction.

"It's finished, Madison," the voice told her. "You're finally a girl."

Maddie felt wet warmth on her cheeks and realized she was crying.

"Only one thing left to do, dear," the voice said. "You're a girl now. We need to make you a woman."

"How will you do that?" Maddie asked.

"Why, by fucking you, of course," the voice said brightly. "Taking your virginity."

"So soon?" Maddie said. "I've only been a girl for a few minutes."

"A few seconds, actually, dear," the voice corrected. "But we'd rather you were a woman. Don't you want to be fucked?"

"I'm not sure I'm ready," Madison said.

"Of course you are," said the voice. "You were born for it. Why else do you want people to notice you so badly? Why else do you crave that attention? Not so they'll be your friends, certainly. You want people to notice you...."

"...because I want them to want to fuck me?" Madison finished.

"Of course you do," the voice said. The music in Maddie's ears changed subtly. "Just imagine it, Madison. A room full of people – attractive women, tall and muscular men – standing around chatting and you walk in. Naked and beautiful, like you are right now. Imagine all the heads turning. All the conversations stopping, and imagine the looks in their eyes."

"Oh. Oh, *God*," Maddie moaned.

"Feel that? That's you getting wet, Madison. You're getting wet just thinking about it, aren't you?"

"Yes," Maddie panted. "I'm so fucking wet."

"There's only one cure for a wet pussy, Madison," the voice said. "Just ask me and I'll do it."

"Fuck me," Maddie breathed. "I need it so badly."

She felt something warm and firm nudge its way inquisitively against the soft, impossibly sensitive flesh between her thighs. She moaned and bit her bottom lip, trying to worm her way down onto it, but the chair prevented her movement. "Please," she begged. "Fuck me."

The soft blunt head of the synthetic penis pushed a little deeper, slipping inside her brand-new vagina just a few millimeters and making her gasp and moan deep in her throat. Subconsciously, Maddie's overtaxed mind constructed a fantasy lover to go with these new sensations – a tall, bald black man with intense eyes and muscled like a panther, with strong hands and a gentle touch, a deep voice that melted her and an intoxicating smell. She imagined him strong and controlling, masterful, making her feel helpless against him and completely *his*. Her pussy flared open of its own accord, taking even more of the delicious rigidity into herself.

"You see him, don't you," the voice whispered.

"He's *gorgeous*," Maddie moaned.

"Talk to him," the voice said. "Tell him exactly what you want."

"Deeper," Maddie pleaded, and the slick length sunk a little more.

"All the way," Maddie demanded, and with a firm push she felt something tear inside her, a flash of very acute pain and then a feeling of being completely filled inside. *My hymen*, Maddie dimly registered. *He broke my cherry. I'm not a virgin.*

Nerve endings mere minutes old responded to the stimulation afforded by this new invader and Maddie's breath caught in her throat. She'd never felt *anything* like this, being impaled in place on a giant spear of flesh, pinning her and driving her to heights of ecstasy no male body could have ever handled unaided. Her hips jerked spasmodically, bucking a little, as the cock inside her set an easy, slow rhythm. Maddie felt something building inside her, like a bizarre static charge, but more liquid. She wanted more of it almost as soon as she identified it, and understood instinctually that it would take speed and force of thrust to achieve it.

"Faster," she panted. "Harder."

She heard the grunts of her fantasy lover in her ears as he started to pound away on her, making the taut flesh of her ass jiggle and slap in time. The charge began to build more quickly and Maddie discovered she didn't want it to build too fast – she wanted the feeling to last forever. She asked her lover to slow down.

"What's happening to you?" the voice asked.

"I'm fucking," Maddie replied between muffled squeals of pleasure.

"No," the voice said. "That's not what's happening. Tell the truth."

More hidden tensions melted out of Maddie's mind as she said, "I'm *getting* fucked. Getting nailed. I'm giving up the pussy and getting pounded. Shagged. Banged."

"Yes, you are," the voice said. "I want to hear you *want*, Madison. To say out loud what you want from him. Not just telling him how you want to be fucked. I want to hear you tell him something only a woman would want. Something only *you* would want."

Maddie's mind seemed to fracture a little around the word *woman* as she searched her entire psyche for the most feminine fantasy she could imagine, something she *wanted* more than she'd ever wanted anything in her life, something that would make her a woman instead of a girl, make her a woman so utterly and so completely that no one would ever mistake her for a girl again.

"Fuck me, baby," she purred, bucking against the cock impaling her as much as she could against her restraints. "Shoot that cum in my belly, baby. Knock me up. I want it so much, love. Stretch out my belly with your babies. Twins, triplets, shoot them inside me. Over and over. As soon as I squeeze one out come fuck me again and plant another one. Turn me into your little baby factory, keep me barefoot and pregnant. Flip me on my side and fuck me while I'm pregnant with your babies, use me up until my pussy's stretched out and loose. I want it. I want to have your babies. Give me your babies, honey, put your babies inside me, oh... oh.... oh, God.... oh, *shit*.... I want... *I want*... *Oh, Jesus*..."

Her voice trailed away into a moaning screech as every nerve in Maddie's body fired at once, washing her mind clean in a storm of overwhelming, nearly painful ecstasy. She couldn't see, she couldn't breathe, she couldn't do anything but shiver and ride the mind-erasing wave of pleasure as far as it wished to take her, leaving her breathless and sagging against her restraints.

But the cock in her pussy never stopped pounding away, and Maddie could feel the charge building again as if it had never stopped. Within seconds, she was screaming again, clutching the soft interior of the crèche with her fingers and thrashing her head back and forth under the hood as much as her restraints allowed. Then again, and again, and again. Five times in two minutes.

"Stop, stop," she begged. "I can't take any more."

"You can, and you will," the voice said. "You haven't done your job, yet, Madison. There's a very hard cock in your pussy right now, and it hasn't cum yet. It's your job to make it cum."

"Let my legs go," she demanded.

"Why?"

"So I can ride him," Madison panted. "So I can milk every drop of that spunk out of him."

The soft grip on her buttocks and thighs eased a bit and Maddie's body turned slightly liquid, undulating and worming this way and that as she experimented with different angles and rhythms to excite both the huge cock inside her pussy and herself. She drove herself to two more shuddering, moaning orgasms before the cock began to slam into her mercilessly, making her gasp with every thrust. She squeezed with her new, internal muscles as hard as she could and her efforts gained a hot flood of squishing liquid bathing her insides, dripping from her gaping hole and running down the insides of her thighs in a sticky, hot mudslide.

"Oh, God," Maddie moaned as the cock retreated, slipping out of her with a wet *pop* and leaving her feeling empty and incomplete but utterly satisfied. "That was *brilliant*."

"How do you feel, Madison?"

"Incredible," she moaned. "Like I'm glowing."

"That feeling you have," the voice explained, "it's a feeling of being a *woman*, dear."

"I never want to feel any other way," Maddie breathed.

"Nor should you," the voice told her. "Have you figured out why?"

"Because I'm a woman," Maddie said. "One hundred percent woman."

"I'm relieved to hear you say that," the voice said. "It means the hard part is over. I'm going to wake you the rest of the way up, darling, and you have some things to do before the day is through."

"What kinds of things?"

"Most important would probably be to get cleaned up," the voice said with a hint of amusement. "You're a mess. But equally as important will be to review and sign off on the press release that's been prepared about you. It's time for you and your friends to make a public debut."

"Sounds fun," Maddie said. "But..."

"But what?"

"Can I have the cock again before we do?" Maddie asked, blushing a little. The voice didn't answer, but the machinery whirred softly and Maddie let herself moan at the touch of her phantom lover a second time.

\* \* \*

"It worked?" Bill Summers asked.

"See for yourself," Adam Cassidy said, clicking the remote in his hand. A pre-recorded interview with David Beckham played on the television set in the wall.

"I remember seeing her coming up through the youth leagues several years ago," he told the interviewer, "and was completely amazed. She was raw talent back then and she's only improved with experience and time. I'm looking forward to seeing her play, she definitely deserves the opportunity."

"We've heard that she's been over to your house several times," the interviewer said.

"Yeah, she and Victoria really took to one another," he chuckled. "Maddie's been over to dinner several times and I think even babysat for us once. She's a friend."

The camera turned back to the silicone-and-hair-dye cookie-cutter female sports correspondent, who brushed windblown hair from her face and put the microphone below her mouth. "Superstar David Beckham's comments on the announcement of Madison O'Brien as the women's national soccer team captain today by Coach Jennifer Lowery, a controversial move considering O'Brien's dual citizenship with the United States and Great Britain..."

Cassidy clicked the "pause" button on the remote. "He swears up and down he's known Maddie for years," Cassidy explained. "ESPN.com reports nearly twenty thousand hits on the story and about the same for the national team site. And they haven't even seen her yet."

"When do the press releases come out?" the too-slick baritone of Hank Brooks, the sleazy but smooth agent hired to represent the new women said from the leather couch where he lounged. "Jesus, I can *smell* the dollar signs coming off these bitches."

"Tomorrow or the next day," Summers told him. "We want to spread them out, make sure the women don't show too much of a connection to one another. Maddie's the headliner because of the body she has – have you seen the fuckin' pictures yet? My God. Cassidy, what the hell? The meeting's over, why are you getting out your laptop?"

Adam Cassidy turned from the program he launched on his expensive laptop and toyed with what looked like a can of energy drink he'd taken from his pocket. "Consider it a present," he said. "From me and Dr. Scarsdale. Just a little token of our regard."

"What are you..." Brooks started, but Adam had already swiped the 'Enter' key and the room filled with light and complex tones and rhythms which made them all stare blank-faced into nothingness as Dr. Scarsdale's subliminal commands began to fill their brains.

With his last conscious thought, Adam popped the top on the 'energy drink' he'd brought, filling the luxurious office with a greenish, stale-smelling gas which the hypnotized men made no effort to avoid.

*It doesn't fix it, Adam thought as consciousness slipped from him. But it helps.*

**SUMMARY:** Looking to increase their chance with a female volleyball team they have invested in, one company decides that if they can't find winning female athletes, they will make them using guys who couldn't quite cut it in sports.

**GAME ON,**

**Part Five**

**by Valerie Hope**

MADDIE STRETCHED SORE MUSCLES, UNCONSCIOUSLY sexy as she knuckled the small of her back and made her magnificent breasts stick out tantalizingly through the thin, sweat-soaked fabric of the little cotton tank top she wore to work out. She didn't quite know why she was so sore from just doing what she considered an 'average' workout, but something in the back of her mind tickled, saying that she'd been through a lot that day and the day before, and she didn't question it. Besides, she still had a three-mile run and some footwork drills to complete. Down the pitch, Kennedy weaved through the cones, her feet an absolute blur, as she took a cross from an assistant on her knee and booted it cleanly through the posts of the goal before running back to the start of the little course to do it again.

Neither of them, of course, retained the faintest idea that they were anything other than what they were, or that their muscles and eyes and hindbrains had been custom-tuned and spliced with the DNA of animals and sports legends to give them flawless, near-superhuman speed, endurance, hand-eye coordination, spatial perception and accuracy. The scientists designed the two women, quite literally, to be the perfect footballers, but they never suspected they had anything more in their backgrounds than just natural talent and tens of thousands of hours of practice.

Maddie towed the glistening perspiration from her flawless face and shook her head, making the twin French braids, beginning at her temples and tracing their webwork path behind each ear, to flop heavily against her shoulders. A part of her realized that was the first time she'd ever worn her thick, curly blonde hair in such a way, but the larger part of her knew the double French braids were her trademark, keeping her long hair out of her face while playing and making her easily identifiable on the pitch. She slugged a mouthful of water, barely tasting her strawberry lip gloss as she swallowed, and moved back onto the pitch to take up the drill behind Kennedy, when her companion pulled up short and pointed back behind her.

"What the hell is that?" she asked.

Maddie turned. Far up the hill, on the circular drive in front of the facility, a black van had pulled up and disgorged men in surgical scrubs, who fussed around and led three people into the building.

"No idea," Maddie answered. "Savannah hasn't mentioned visitors."

"Well, we've been busy, I guess," Kennedy said.

"Not busy enough, love," Maddie said. "I've posted three rubbish times on my speed drills this morning and even that pales behind my crap footwork. I don't know what the bleeding hell's wrong with me."

"I've been having trouble, too," Kennedy confessed. "I feel like I've been through the wringer, y'know? But for the life of me I can't figure out why."

"I'm not sure if I should keep pushing or just call it done," Maddie said. "My whole body is crying out for a hot shower and breakfast."

"I think you can stand a day of light training," Kennedy said with a flirtatious smile. "It's not like you're the most incredible soccer player I've ever seen or anything."

"Rubbish," Maddie said, blushing prettily.

"Think whatever you want, babe," Kennedy chided, playfully booting the ball at her feet between the posts, an easy lob any goalkeeper could have blocked but accurate nonetheless. "I'm just real fuckin' glad you're on my team."

Maddie laughed and began gathering up the sack of soccer balls they'd used for practice while Kennedy scooped up the cones and tossed them unceremoniously into the plastic tub where they stored their gear. Wordlessly they stuffed their towels and water into their gym bags, threw back some vitamin supplements and started the long walk back to the facility together as a chilly drizzle began to fall. They stopped briefly to help Jordan finish gathering up her own gear from the putting green and sling the heavy golf bag over her slender shoulder. Effortlessly, Maddie bobbed a little curtsy that made all her most interesting topography jiggle and felt not a twinge of self-consciousness, as if such an action were second nature to her.

"Good morning, Your Highness," Maddie said brightly.

"For the last time, please, call me Jordan," she laughed lightly in her soft, slurring Germanic accent. Maddie noticed her American counterpart did not bend the knee, which upset the Princess not a bit but alarmed Maddie's good British sensibilities.

"Sorry, old habits," Maddie said. "These Yanks, you know, they don't know how to treat royalty."

"I'm not royalty here," Jordan said. "Here, I'm just a professional golfer. When I'm home, then I'm the Princess. Here I'd rather just be Jordan, you understand?"

"I'll try," Maddie said.

*Strange*, Maddie thought as they wended their way up the crushed-gravel path towards the building, *how everything felt so up-in-the-air before we signed those press releases yesterday. It felt like I barely knew my friends at all until they got signed, and then they seemed to just pop into my head like people I'd known for years and years.*

Kennedy, the lanky blonde next to her, for instance, had been a freshman at State when Maddie had been a sophomore. They'd known one another for a long time, spent many long hours practicing together on the college women's team and were members of the same sorority, Phi Kappa Gamma. Maddie knew all about Kennedy's open homosexuality – Kennedy had been gay throughout college, had survived a few disastrous relationships before finally settling into a long-term, monogamous relationship with the red-headed Taylor Henry which made both participants deliriously happy. Maddie didn't know the fire-haired pitcher very well, only through Kennedy, but she felt confident about their being good for one another. Taylor worked as a ring-card girl for the local MMA gym near college for beer money and worked on and off as a car-show bikini model and a Hooters Girl before – and briefly after – graduation. Kennedy's own scholarships and family provided for her college education at State.

Lindsey Richards met them after college while working as a tennis pro at the country club where Kennedy taught youth soccer. The black-haired free spirit fit right in with their wild party-girl

lifestyle and they spent many late nights in the clubs and subsequently recuperating in their two-bedroom apartment near a salvage yard. Lindsey's rather Homeric tolerance for alcohol coupled with an ability to get anything she wanted from the owner of the yard if she wore a short skirt or bikini allowed her to rise early after their late nights and gather the parts she needed for her first car and had her first race only a few weeks later. She came in ninth, then in sixth in her next amateur race, and then dead last after a spectacular crash that left her in traction for six months. The wreck deterred her not at all, however – she used the insurance money to lay the chassis for her next car and never stopped.

But the country club where they'd been employed brought another benefit they hadn't expected – a meeting and friendship with Her Highness Princess Jordan Lewis, fourth in line to the throne of Liechtenstein. The nineteen-year-old princess held no clear line of succession and would never take the throne, but rebelled at the typical role of royal daughters – as marriage fodder – and left for the United States on her own dime to pursue her education. The Princess showed a knack for two things – getting into trouble and golf. Her association with Maddie, Kennedy and Lindsey fueled both passions admirably, and the tabloids made a darling of her and her wild excesses in short time.

Maddie met the woman who was to become her best friend, Dr. Savannah Roberts, after a sprained right knee in a match her junior year in college. Savannah, just out of medical school, recently returned from a stint in Kenya for Doctors Without Borders and took a job at the University to pay the bills while she searched for a more permanent billet somewhere. The two became instant friends and Maddie undertook to help the young doctor 'catch up for lost time,' giving her a chance to be young, wild and attractive in the United States after her two years in Kenya.

Maddie's story differed from those of her friends, however, but they loved and accepted her nonetheless. Madison emigrated to the United States from England at the age of fourteen after the loss of her parents in an automobile accident. Her aunt and uncle did not know what to do with the precocious teenager and breathed a sigh of relief when she turned eighteen and left home. She enrolled in State University with a soccer scholarship that only partially covered her tuition. With only a student visa that didn't allow her to work and substandard grades, Maddie had taken the only job she could in order to pay for tuition, room and board and books. The young woman made enough money as a stripper to graduate and remained in the job for two years after just to stay at the party. Her wild exhibitionist streak remained, however, and any future publicist involved with her would have no end of nightmares coping with the volume of softcore pornography she'd generated during her time as an exotic dancer that still floated around the Internet.

The three beauties walked in companionable silence towards the facility as the rain began to fall in heavy pattering drops on the foliage edging the path. Stowing their gear, they slipped through the side door into the bedroom and changed out of their wet and sweaty workout gear into some casual daywear – Jordan into a simple black halter dress with a wide white vinyl belt and big door-knocker earrings in glossy white plastic, Kennedy into a pair of low-rise jeans with sandblasted patches on the thighs and rhinestones along the seams, platform leather clogs and a pink Nike spaghetti-strap tank over a white tank and a pink fedora with white pinstripes perched on her spiked bleach-blonde hair and huge rhinestone hoop earrings dangling from her earlobes, and Maddie into a short pink pleated 'schoolgirl' skirt and knee socks with a tight belly-baring white blouse that set her tits off to amazing effect and pink crystal chandelier earrings that brushed the tops of her shoulders before letting her huge volume of curls loose from her

trademark braids to trap them in place. Chatting gaily like the 'old friends' they believed they were, they moved out of the bedroom and into the communal area where Savannah, wearing a daringly fuck-me red backless halter dress and red Jimmy Choos with a four-inch spike heel, directed a crew of people regarding the disposition of three emaciated, semi-conscious men into the medical monitoring room.

"What's going on, 'Vannah?" Maddie asked, giving her friend a fond hug and a kiss on the cheek which left behind a trace of bubblegum pink lipstick that Maddie scraped away quickly with a manicured thumb.

"New arrivals," Savannah said somberly. "There was an accident."

"Oh, God," Kennedy said. "What kind of accident?"

"Dr. Scarsdale said they were examining the lab where they make the retrovirus and it got out," Savannah said. "They got infected with a super high dose. There's nothing anyone can do, so Dr. Scarsdale had them moved here so she can help them with her subliminal training before they know what's happened to them."

"Who are they?" Jordan asked.

"Adam Cassidy, your manager, was one of them, and Hank Brooks, your new agent. Also, their boss William Summers got caught in it, too – I think he got the worst of it," Savannah explained. "I'll have a lot more to tell y'all in a few hours, 'kay? Right now I need to get in there and examine them, plus get their immune systems suppressed and make sure everything's gonna be all right."

"Course, love, you're busy," Maddie said, taking her other companions by the shoulders and leading them out of the room. "Ring us when you have some time."

The curvaceous doctor hustled away to attend to the new arrivals, leaving the three women standing in the middle of the common room wondering what to do next. Finally, Maddie shrugged and slung her capacious purse over one shoulder.

"I don't know about you girls, but I'm going to pop 'round the shops," she announced. "Savannah won't be back in touch for a while and I feel like stressing my credit a bit."

"*Sehr gut*," Jordan said with a smile. "I could use a fill." She showed her flawless manicure as if to display the flaws she imagined she'd seen.

"I can't," Kennedy said. "I have a lunch date with Taylor. I'll catch you bitches later, though."

They kissed good-bye and headed their separate ways. Maddie was just piling into the passenger seat of Jordan's lipstick-red convertible Mercedes – knees together as if she'd sat down like that her entire life – when the thought crossed her mind, dimly:

*Is this how it's supposed to be?*

The drive down the winding mountain road towards the town below passed in silence – conversation proved difficult since Jordan refused to lower the volume of the blasting house music she preferred – and left Maddie alone with her thoughts. She struggled with the growing sense of being *misplaced* in her own life which plagued her since waking that morning. Everything she did, everything she said and thought *seemed* to fit her, *seemed* to come from the same place inside her where they usually found voice and shape and form, but they struck a very wrong chord in her brain. She underwent a thorough mental inventory and found nothing missing

– everything she should know and feel, she did – but the overwhelming sense of something not fitting, not making sense, pervaded her every conscious act.

"Jordan, sweetheart, how do you *feel*?" she asked at length in a lull in the thumping dance music.

"Feel? All right, I suppose. A bit hungry," she said.

"No, I mean – how do you *feel*."

"Ah," she said. "You mean am I happy?"

"I'm not even sure if that's what I'm asking, love," she said. "I mean, of course I care if you're happy, but that's not it – I suppose I mean do you feel all right. Like everything's all right."

"What could be wrong?" she asked. "I'm young, I'm happy, I'm hot..."

"You don't feel as though something's amiss? Something isn't right?" Maddie pressed.

Jordan giggled. "I'm sure I don't know what you mean, *liebschen*."

"Maybe not," Maddie replied with a heavy sigh. "Maybe I'm just going mental."

"Your period is coming?" Jordan asked.

"No, I had it last week," Maddie replied. *Talking about periods shouldn't seem so commonplace*, she thought as soon as the words left her mouth. *There's that strange feeling again*.

"You should get yourself laid," Jordan suggested with no hint of sarcasm. "Whenever I feel out of sorts like you describe, I go out and get some good hard cock for myself and I feel better."

"Maybe you're right," Maddie said consideringly. "I hope that's all it is."

"Trust me," Jordan assured her as she whipped into a parking space at the north end of the outdoor shopping district in a screech of abused tires. "You'll feel better once you get that pussy stretched a little. And if you don't, then here I am, yes? You come and talk with me and I'll help sort you out."

Maddie kissed her cheek as she exited the hey-everybody-look-at-me car and got some very appreciative looks from random male passersby. The attention fed something deep inside her, driving her to put a little extra wiggle in her already sexy sway of a walk and to toss her hair seductively. It made her smile in spite of herself and her strange mood. That part of her that felt so new, the part that craved attention like a starving woman craved food, responded by opening up inside her and making her feel light on her feet and began a flow of creeping wetness inside her pussy, a prelude to the aching emptiness that would come later, the one that would drive her to almost any length to be filled. She hoped it didn't get that far – even though she mistrusted her memories and feelings, she knew enough to know how she *got* when she didn't scratch her occasional itch.

The allure of searching out new shoes – something else that didn't quite fit, but seemed as natural to her as breathing – warred inside her with the draw of hitting one of the after-work happy hours springing into existence in the myriad small pubs and eateries along the shopping district and searching out a temporary companion for a little slap-and-grope in an out-of-the-way place. She decided to err on the side of footwear, letting the magnetic draw of the DSL Footwear outlet on the nearby corner pull her in. Her purse – another one of those natural minutae that shouldn't have sparked a moment's consternation but somehow did – seemed

magically stocked with cash and plastic, so she pulled open the glass door and stepped in, not fully knowing where to look first. Deciding that she had plenty of casual and workout gear, she spun a hard left turn and headed towards the wall stocked high with dressy heels and began to browse in earnest.

The acquisition of five new pairs of shoes – an adorable pair of black patent peep-toe pumps, some sexy spike-heeled gladiator sandals in gold-tone leather, some platform wedges with red leather uppers and a pair of slinky pink-and-white checked slingback mules – activated the landslide of carefully-designed marketing which led to so many sprees. The new shoes, of course, demanded new purses, which demanded new outfits which, in turn, demanded jewelry and hats and belts and scarves to accessorize them. Even though a part of her brain *insisted* that she should see through this elaborate Madison Avenue trap, Maddie gleefully flitted from boutique to boutique, picking up the perfect little hobo bag to go with her new wedges and the most adorable pink leather belt with a heart-shaped rhinestone buckle to bring it all together, a pair of earrings which would look great with the slinky white halter dress she'd bought just to go with the gladiator sandals she'd picked up on a whim at the very first store. Some rational, *boring* part of her mind kept clamoring on and on inside about conspicuous consumption and wasting money, but Maddie finally chose to ignore it. And in the process, digging through racks and shelves and bins for the better part of six hours, Maddie realized that she'd had the time of her life.

She checked the chic Tag Heuer watch she'd found on her bedside table that morning – one of her new endorsement deals, no doubt – and saw with a bit of a shock that the dinner hour had come and passed while she sailed through the retail ocean like a hungry shark. She hustled back towards the Princess' car, hoping she hadn't kept her dear friend waiting very long (one *didn't* keep royalty waiting, her sensibilities shouted at her). But when Maddie returned to the lipstick-red Mercedes, no sign of her friend could be seen.

Maddie dug in her purse for her mobile phone, hoping to contact Jordan and figure out where the hell she was when she noticed soft noises coming from a small alley behind a nearby electronics store. Smiling to herself, the footballer crept around the corner and found her friend spread-eagled and leaning against a wall, moaning and biting her bottom lip, while a tall Middle-Eastern man with a meticulously trimmed goatee sawed into her from behind with a very plump and nice-looking cock.

Memories flooded Maddie's mind of their college days together – *that can't be right* – and the sexual proclivities of her friend, particularly her fetish for sex in public places. Even though a part of her knew with absolute certainty she'd witnessed no such thing, she could clearly remember keeping a lookout while Jordan fucked a fellow golfer in a public fountain, a cute guy she'd met in a dance club on the hood of his BMW in the parking lot, and an ex-boyfriend from prep school on the fifty yardline of the State football stadium.

The man satisfying Jordan began to grunt softly, a rising arpeggio that Maddie somehow knew well, signaling his quick approach to orgasm. Maddie licked her lips subconsciously and a ghost of recollection of a heavy, hot, salty and musky taste flitted across her tongue. She blinked in surprise. She was remembering the taste of cum, and remembering how much she enjoyed feeling it in her mouth and on her tongue. Memories warred with memories, of being *certain* that she'd never sucked a cock in her entire life and being *just* as certain that she'd sucked dozens, ever since her teenage years.

Shopping bags slipped from suddenly nerveless fingers, and she somehow found her phone in a daze of confusion and near-panic, her eyes never wavering from the spectacle of the tall man ecstatically thrusting into her friend, pumping the reservoir tip of the condom he wore full of sperm in hot, happy jets.

The phone rang in her ear and she dimly registered a familiar voice on the other end of the line.

"Savannah, something's wrong," she said dully. "Something's terribly wrong."

"I'll get Dr. Scarsdale right away," Savannah said, and hung up, leaving Maddie alone in her fog.

\* \* \*

"Intriguing," Dr. Scarsdale said, looking at the paper full of squiggly lines that the ECG machine spat out and seeing something there that Maddie couldn't fathom. The electrodes on her forehead itched and pulled, and something in her brain *knew* she would have to exfoliate and moisturize that evening, even though she remained certain that no such knowledge should exist there.

"You see something?" Maddie asked.

"I see plenty," Scarsdale replied, looking askance at Savannah, who sat nearby, worried and anxious over her friend's condition. "Tell me, Madison, how have you been feeling lately?"

"Confused, mostly," she replied. "Bloody *conflicted*, when you come right down to it. I *know* all these things, but I *know* I shouldn't know them. I feel a certain way, and I bloody well know I shouldn't. Things seem familiar and comfortable and natural that I'm absolutely sodding certain I've never done before. And I want things. Really want them. And I know they've never been important to me, not ever in my whole life, but I somehow feel that I can't live without them any more."

"That sounds terrible," Scarsdale said. "How are you holding up?"

"By my fingernails," Maddie told her honestly. "For dear life, actually. Half the time I want to drink myself into a bloody stupor, and the other half I just want to run screaming into the night. But there's this *sense* I have, that I could be happy and well-adjusted if I only gave in, and I *want* to, desperately. But I can't get rid of this doubt. It's driving me completely barking mad."

"You're not crazy," Scarsdale told her softly with a ghost of a smile. "I can promise you that."

"So what the hell is wrong?" Savannah broke in.

"I need to talk with you both," Scarsdale said, "but we shouldn't speak here. Meet me tonight, at Luigi's. I'll explain everything, I promise. It's time you both knew the whole truth."

"The truth about what?" Maddie whispered.

"About everything," Scarsdale replied. "Luigi's, at seven."

\* \* \*

The dark, romantic interior of the little Italian eatery suited the clandestine nature of the meeting perfectly, Maddie found herself thinking as she stepped in and allowed the young swarthy waiter to lead her through the small, quiet dinner crowd to the back. Dr. Scarsdale – harder to recognize with her hair down and absent the ubiquitous white lab coat – sat at a table tucked into an out-

of-the-way alcove, sipping a glass of wine. She smiled and gestured for Savannah and Maddie to sit and bade the waiter to pour two more glasses.

"What's all this about?" Savannah demanded before her lovely *derrière* even touched the seat.

"It's about money, unfortunately," Scarsdale replied. "And about owing you a very heartfelt apology."

"Go on," Maddie said.

The next hour passed in a quick, *sotto voce* recounting by the svelte doctor of the misuse of her cutting-edge subliminal training technology by the corrupt William Summers, the man who had masterminded their transformations and had carefully constructed personas for each of them designed specifically to guarantee a quick and lucrative return on his investment with little regard for each woman's personal wants or desires. Discovering that she'd been brainwashed brought out a cold, hard knot of anger inside Maddie's mind, and even though Scarsdale offered them a teary-eyed, heartfelt apology for her complicity in their programming, Maddie felt it very difficult to muster enough compassion to forgive.

"So he *made* you make Maddie a stripper," Savannah said, trying to wrap her mind around the story that Scarsdale had offered. "And Kennedy into a lesbian. Whether we wanted it or not."

"Not at gunpoint," Scarsdale said, dabbing her eyes with a napkin. "I could have said no. But he did threaten to pull my funding. I was thinking of all the good my research can do, Savannah, I promise you – effective rehabilitation of career criminals, intensive non-pharmaceutical therapy for mental illness, the applications are literally endless. I got... *caught up*. I forgot that I was dealing with human beings, and the process was nearly complete by the time my conscience caught up to me."

"I'm still not sure how this explains what's been happening to me," Maddie said.

"The man you were must have been exceptionally strong-willed," Savannah explained. "You're rebelling against the programming. You know it's unnatural, somehow, and you're fighting it."

"Can the programming be removed?" Maddie asked.

"Over time, yes," Scarsdale explained. "But there's a great deal of it that's beneficial and altruistic. Having certain knowledge about your body and how to conduct yourself as a woman, I'm not sure you want to lose that. Extracting any programming and leaving those things intact might be the work of years, and I'm not certain I could guarantee a result."

"So what do I do?"

"You have two choices, as I see it," Scarsdale said. "One is to quit fighting. Let yourself become the woman you've been programmed to be. The subliminal process ensures happiness and fulfillment – I saw to that. I wouldn't have allowed your life to make any of you miserable."

"And the other option?" Savannah asked.

"Keep fighting it, and risk mental illness and breakdown but hope that some kind of *status quo* can be reached where Maddie can be a functioning human being," Scarsdale said.

"Not much of a bloody choice," Maddie grumped.

"No, it isn't," Scarsdale agreed.

"What do you think I should do?" Maddie asked Savannah.

"I don't know what's best for you, honey," Savannah said. "The only thing I can offer you is a very selfish reason, and I don't know if it's appropriate."

"Just tell me," Maddie urged.

"The programming we both got," Savannah said, "it made us best friends. I've never in my life had a best friend before, and I never knew I could feel as close to anyone as I do to you, Maddie. So, from a very selfish place, I hope you decide to quit fighting and surrender to the programming – because I don't want to lose my best friend."

"That's not selfish at all," Maddie said. "It's very sweet, to be honest."

"Promise me you won't make a decision based on that alone," Savannah said. "Honey, you have to do what's best for you. I couldn't live with myself knowing you'd sacrificed everything you used to be just so that I could have someone to go out to clubs with."

Maddie laughed. "You seem to forget, though, love – I never had a friend like you either. Keeping you is a very attractive proposition to me. And the life that I've been given, it's not that bad. I think I'm a little bit of a slut, and even though I'm not sure about the stripper thing, I don't feel ashamed of it."

"You shouldn't," Scarsdale said. "The programming prevents it, for one thing."

"Sod the bleeding programming," Maddie said. "I don't want to lay awake nights wondering what's me and what's the programming. The doubt has been killing me. I just want to feel like myself."

"So you want to just give in?" Savannah asked.

"How do I do that?"

"I can't give you a step-by-step," Scarsdale said. "You have to figure that out for yourself."

"There's only one thing stopping me," Maddie said. "I don't want to sink into being a happy, ditzzy blonde bimbo and forget about getting even with Summers and his cronies."

"Oh, don't worry about that," Scarsdale said with a feral smile. "That's already been taken care of."

\* \* \*

"I have a few introductions to make," Savannah announced to the assembled beauties the next morning, one hand on Maddie's shoulder. Maddie looked small and shaken to the other girls, and her red-rimmed eyes offered testament to a night spent in tears. But she looked stronger, too, and more determined than ever. No doubt about it – something had changed inside her. A thick gleaming coat of sweat and dampened ends to her trademark French-braid pigtailed showed that she had taken some of her worries out on the pitch that morning.

"Our staffing has changed a bit," Savannah went on, touching up her immaculate hair with one long-nailed hand subconsciously. "It's time you met your new manager."

A very tall, leggy blonde with trim, athletic curves stepped into the room from the small hallway outside. She wore a tailored business suit and smoky hose, four-inch Manolo Blahnik pumps and dripped with gold and diamonds. Lush, kissable 'Angelina Jolie' lips parted into a smooth but

genuine smile and she pulled a set of rimless designer glasses off of her pert, button nose and tucked them away in a pocket.

"Good morning, ladies," she said in a practiced public-speaking contralto with the barest hint of a Carolina drawl attached. "I've been very excited to meet you."

"I thought Adam Cassidy was our manager," Kennedy said.

"He is," the woman replied. "That is, I am. I was. Adam Cassidy, I mean. I decided that I wouldn't allow my clients to undergo this process unless I was willing to undergo the same process. So I had myself changed like you. I'm still your agent, however, even though I go by Cassidy Adams, now."

"You were one of the ones that got brought in the other day," Taylor said.

"Yes," Cassidy replied. "Unfortunately, when I underwent the virus therapy, some other people were exposed at the same time. I'm not the only one who was changed, I'm just the only one who did it willingly. The other women you're going to meet, they've been very heavily programmed to adjust to their new identities. It had to be done, for their own safety. They'll be very much unlike the men you used to know."

"Who got changed?" Jordan purred.

"Your agent and publicist – Hank Brooks and Douglas Morgan. And the CEO of the company that funded this research, William Summers," Cassidy said. "So meet your new agent."

The woman who stepped in next oozed confidence and haughty sex appeal, a tall brunette with her shiny hair in a casual up-do, heavy-lidded sleepy eyes with the longest eyelashes any of them had ever seen, and a mouth pursed in a perpetual sexy pout. Everything about her seemed tailored to perfection – the designer clothes, the four-inch stiletto pumps, the jewelry, the slender laptop case over one arm, the \$300 manicure, the salon-quality camera-ready makeup – as if she'd been specifically manufactured to cause people to warm to her. Add to that the slender height and slinky strut of a runway model and the pushed-together, 'done' boobs that peeked deliciously from the plunging neckline of her silk blouse, the sleek polish of the professional go-getter, there weren't many people who could willingly say 'no' to this woman. The ultimate agent, to be sure.

"I'm Brooke Hanks," she announced in a melodious mezzo that almost seemed to caress them with smoothness. "I'm looking forward to representing each of you."

Behind Brooke, a short woman in a grey pinstriped dress sashayed in, perched on four-inch heels and exploding with lush bombshell curves. She had a pretty, open 'Katy Perry' face and long, silky auburn hair, but the long valley of cleavage between her mouth-watering 36DD's dominated the visual field to the extent that the collected women could not have told anyone what color her eyes were. She nearly bounced, with a resilient, peppy stride with just the right amount of sexy wiggle, and offered the women a very bright and warm smile that showed almost all of her chalk-white teeth.

"I'm Morgan Douglas," she chirped in a little-girl soprano. "I'm your publicist. I'm gonna make you girls look as amazing in the press as you do in real life." She seemed thrilled just to be in the room with celebrities, exuding an infectious cheer and enthusiasm. Her positivity couldn't be denied – a perfect quality in a publicist. All the women could tell she would be great at her job.

The last one into the room entered backwards, confused and wondering if she'd gone through the correct door. She tottered on platform wedge sandals and tugged a little at the hem of her scandalously tight white tank dress which barely covered her panties. Legs that glowed with a deep amber 'beach bunny' tan regained balance quickly and she spun around with a vapid smile, ignoring the gasp of envious shock that erupted *en masse* from the gathered athletes. Enormous, 40FF breasts barely restrained by the bra underneath the low-cut dress bounced and jiggled in an attempt to escape, nearly taking the young woman off-balance from her quick spin in place. Not even the thick cups of the support bra could disguise the prominence of her erect nipples.

She put dainty hands on wide, curvaceous hips, the nails easily two inches long and painted a gaudy pink and studded with rhinestone nail art. Her shoulders disappeared under a lustrous fall of thick, bunny-soft blonde hair volumized and teased out to huge proportions, falling down her slender back to just over the top of her delectable bubble butt. Nestled in the thick frame of natural blonde blinked a guileless, vapid face with pouty 'cocksucking' lips, a slender nose and wide, permanently-surprised looking blue eyes and high, arched brows.

The sapphire eyes did merit a second look, however. At first glance, they appeared to be glazed over with happy bimbo stupidity, but with a bit more searching there appeared a core of shocked, bone-deep terror behind them. Like she was trapped in some kind of horrible nightmare. But if one blinked, that perception shattered and the empty-headed, happy little bimbo with the enormous knockers was back, smiling brainlessly and giggling at everything she didn't quite understand – which covered a lot.

She twirled a lock of whitish-blonde hair around one finger and smacked her gum loudly. "So, um... I'm, like, Summer. Summer Williams," she said in a high little-girl lilting chirp. "I'm, um... s'posed to be, like, your new hair 'n' makeup girl, I think... right, Brooke? *giggle* Okay, yeah. Hair 'n' makeup, y'know, for public stuff. If, like, Amber can't make it 'n' junk, else I'm, like, s'posed to help her out. Y'all're, like, my only clients, though, so I'll, like, always be here."

"She's William Summers?" Maddie whispered.

"Wow," Savannah replied under her breath. "Dr. Scarsdale said she'd get revenge. But I didn't think she'd take it *that* far. What a bimbo."

"She deserves it," Maddie hissed. "For what she did to us, she deserves every bit of it."

"I just hope she can control the programming technology from now on," Savannah said. "That stuff is *way* too powerful for just one person to control. She reduced a high-powered business tycoon to a brainless little nymphet who can barely finish a sentence, for Chrissakes."

"Not to mention convincing an entire country that they had an extra member of their royal family who now has a spot on the LPGA tour," Maddie added, "or convincing David and Victoria Beckham that they'd known me since childhood by using a musical birthday card."

The new women made the rounds, shaking hands and exchanging hugs, until Cassidy Adams came around the room to stand in front of Maddie.

"Are you okay?" she asked.

"I am, now," Maddie answered. "You did this voluntarily?"

"It was worth it to get Summers and Hank Brooks to quit exploiting you," she replied. "A very small price to pay. Besides, *look* at me. I'm gorgeous."

"You certainly are," Savannah said flirtatiously.

"I hear that you've been having a few problems," Cassidy said to Maddie.

"A few," she said, looking at the giggling and jiggling form of Summer Williams as she forgot Kennedy's name and accidentally called her Jordan, then bending over to pick up a dropped business card and flashing her pink panties to the entire room. "But I'm better, now."

"Is there anything I can do to help?" Cassidy asked. "I feel partially responsible."

"I have to do the heavy lifting," Maddie replied. "But in the meantime, if you wouldn't mind giving me the most incredible professional football career in human history, that would go a long way towards making it up to me."

Cassidy smiled. "Done," she said, shaking Maddie's hand firmly. "Now, let's talk endorsements."

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"Number one on our Top Ten Plays of the Week, the very real princess on the LPGA Tour – Jordan Lewis. Here she is on the 11th tee at the Blue Monster, a long par 5 that even good golfers have trouble making the green in two and... *BAM!* The Princess bombs one, three hundred and seventy yards to take the longest drive course record away from John Daly by *twenty* yards and also to take this round of the tournament, coming in at a walloping *fourteen* under par. All that and easy on the eyes, too – just look at that smile, she knows she whacked it – all eyes will be on this European phenom in the weeks to come..."

\* \* \*

"And in sports – you're gonna love this, Anne – today women's softball star Taylor Henry, best known for her very public relationship with partner Kennedy Ellis of the U.S. Women's Soccer Team, made a huge splash tonight at the ballpark... even after pitching a 9-0 shutout in an international friendly match with the Mexican Women's Olympic Team, then stepped out onto a Major League mound in front of a capacity crowd to throw out the first pitch, and *wham!* Look at that! That was a 97 mile-per-hour fastball right over the plate, a good five miles faster than the pitcher! And just in case you thought it might be a fluke, once the crowd dies down, she takes the ball back from the catcher and *wow!* Another one, this time ninety-eight! This young woman can *really* toss that ball, and what's more can look incredible doing it. Spokesmen for Major League Baseball have said, since seeing this performance, that although women have not traditionally played in the majors, but there is no clear-cut rule against it..."

\* \* \*

"Next, on TMZ... we bumped into Formula One racer Lindsey Richards outside one of Hollywood's hottest nightclubs, hear what she has to say about racing, partying and her new beau Josh Hartnett."

Lindsey, dressed to thrill in a sequined tube dress that displayed a shocking amount of milky cleavage and her hair teased out large and shiny, walked quickly past a jittery camera.

The paparazzo called out, "Lindsey! Lindsey! You look great tonight!"

"Thanks," she said with a long-suffering smile.

"Are you here with anybody?"

"Josh is meeting me," she said as she sped by. "He doesn't like to ride with me and I don't like other people to drive. He says I take curves too fast."

\* \* \*

...Cosmo met Kennedy at home, with her friend and publicist Morgan Douglas. A portrait in perpetual motion, Kennedy rarely sat still for longer than about ten seconds, and I came away with a severe neckache from watching her bustle around her chic apartment. But I did manage to get a few questions fired off at the leggy soccer star with the trademark platinum blonde spiky hair, and her answers might surprise you:

Cosmo: You're a career athlete. What would you like to do if you couldn't play soccer?

Kennedy: I can't imagine not playing soccer. But if I had to choose, I'd like it to be something that could make a difference in other people's lives, y'know? Maybe a doctor or a nurse, maybe a prosecutor or a police officer. I haven't thought about it much.

Cosmo: Soccer's that important to you?

Kennedy: I started playing when I was six. Everybody I know and care about is associated with the sport in some way or another. It's been my whole life for as long as I can remember. I guess that might make me sound a little one-dimensional, but there it is. It's my whole life.

Cosmo: Everyone you know and care about except Taylor, that is.

Kennedy: (giggling) She's at every game, and she's a pretty mean center midfielder. I'd say she's associated with the sport.

Cosmo: She's a fan?

Kennedy: She wasn't, right at first. But once we started dating, she came around. It took a few months, but hanging out with me and Maddie, it's hard not to get bitten by the bug, you know?

Cosmo: You're talking about Maddie O'Brien.

Kennedy: Yeah. She's my very best friend. I'm so glad she decided to play on the U.S. Women's team instead of the English. For one thing, I get to hang out with her a lot more. And for another, I really don't like the idea of having to play against her. Have you seen her play? Jesus.

\* \* \*

This Month's *Sports Illustrated* Cover: "Mad about Maddie," go behind the scenes with international soccer's rising superstar and her quest for equal rights for women's sports in the public eye. Admittedly, she's doing a lot towards that goal – the website featuring her spectacular bicycle-kick stoppage time goal against Germany's Nadine Angerer to take the 2011 Women's World Cup and the details of her daily workout have finally succeeded in receiving as many hits on the Internet as the sites featuring topless pictures of her from the days when she worked as a pole dancer to pay her way through college.

"I'm not ashamed in the slightest," Maddie O'Brien said as she sat with *SI* on the bus from Berlin to Calais, where she planned to take the Chunnel across to her native England after the championship. "Nor should any woman be. Stripping paid the bills, it allowed me a flexible schedule, and I had loads of fun as a dancer. I made some of the best friends of my life working

in the clubs. Everyone seems to think it's so bloody sleazy or something, like I was just shy of being a whore. If that's what people want to think of me, then so be it. I'm not out to change minds, I'm out to score goals. The rest of it is all bollocks, anyway. And if men are only coming to the games or watching on telly so they can look at my tits, then that's okay, too. At least they're coming and buying tickets."

\* \* \*

This Month's Cover: *Shape* magazine talks to Her Highness Jordan Lewis about life, love and staying in shape despite the demands of the road. The current LPGA champion swears by yoga: "I do twenty minutes every morning, just to get ready for my day. Some people have to have their coffee, I have to have my Warrior series."

\* \* \*

"I'm actually a little sorry that it got out into the press," Taylor said, absentmindedly touching up her kinky carrot-top curls and flashing the camera a toothy, sparkling smile. She interlaced her fingers with Kennedy's and her lover pressed soft lips into the back of her hand.

"You were embarrassed?" Ellen deGeneres asked, frowning a little.

"Oh, *God* no," Taylor replied. "But it got us both a bit off-message. Kennedy wasn't the leading U.S. goal-scorer any more, I wasn't the record-breaking strikeout leader. We were the gay women's athletes. I'm not embarrassed at all."

"When somebody says the word 'gay,' it's all anyone in the press can think about," Kennedy said.

\* \* \*

This month in *Playboy* – voluptuous vixen Madison O'Brien takes off her cleats (and everything else!) for our readers and scores more than goals in our hearts!

\* \* \*

Profiles in leadership: Not just another pretty face – no one can take a look at the Atlanta Falcons Cheerleaders and say they don't look great. No one will say they're not incredible dancers. But amidst the fake eyelashes and big smiles, who really sees cutting-edge medical research? Dr. Savannah Roberts does – this two-year veteran of the squad hangs up her pom-poms after the game and goes to work curing cancer at the Roberts Institute for Medical Research in Atlanta.

"I don't think the two things are mutually exclusive," she told *Newsweek*. "We're not dumb. Our squad has nurses, veterinarians, teachers, executives... I think I'm the only doctor, but that doesn't mean anything. I love dancing, I love cheerleading – I've done it since I was eight – and I love football, and none of that would change if I wasn't a doctor. Why not be both?"

Dr. Roberts received her medical degree from Johns Hopkins University six years ago and worked in private practice for three years before reconnecting with the woman who would change her life forever, whose fundraising efforts on her behalf led to the opening of the research lab nine months ago – soccer superstar Madison 'Maddie' O'Brien.

"She's my very best friend," Savannah told us with her toothy, trademark cheerleader smile. "I never asked her to raise all that money for me, but when she found out that we could end the

treat of breast and ovarian cancer within ten years, she couldn't work hard enough. That's Maddie for you, though. She cares about everything that much."

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"Well, it's certainly worked so far," Cassidy Adams said, smiling and tapping a manicured nail against her lush bottom lip. "The U.S. Women's team is about to square off against the Spanish Men's team – and they're going to win. Taylor has a very real shot at the Majors, Lindsey is launching a race around the world to raise money for African AIDS relief, Jordan won a charity best ball tournament yesterday against Tiger Woods and Kennedy and Taylor are getting married very publicly at the end of this month. It's all happened bigger and faster than we ever dreamed it would."

"Good," Maddie said. "I'm glad that it's all worked out."

Cassidy snapped her fingers, and the huge-breasted secretary jolted to life from where she'd been busily texting in the corner. "Summer, bring us some coffee, would you?"

"Huh? Oh, okay. Sure!" she chirped, bouncing away in a jiggling, swaying bustle.

"Why do you keep her around?" Maddie asked.

"She can barely function on her own, and all her friends are as ditzy as she is," Cassidy said. "The least I can do is give her a steady income."

"I thought her porn site was making crazy money," Maddie commented.

"It is, but she can't manage it," Cassidy said. "We make sure it gets to the places it needs to go, like rent and utilities and groceries, and not just signing the check over to Bloomingdale's wholesale."

"If you think she deserves it," Maddie grumped, then forced her mind onto more pleasant topics.

"You have an appointment with the President of FIFA this week," Cassidy said. "They're starting to talk about publicizing the Women's World Cup along with the Men's."

"I think there should just be one tournament," Maddie said.

"One thing at a time," Cassidy chuckled. "And Cristiano Ronaldo keeps bugging us to meet you."

"Don't want to date anybody prettier than I am," Maddie said. "Anything else?"

"Yeah," Cassidy said. "Maddie, you had it rougher than any of us. Are you happy?"

Maddie looked at her strangely for a moment before she could convince herself that her manager was serious. She thought about Savannah and how much fun they had together, playing with Kennedy and hanging out with Jordan and Lindsey, of how happy Taylor and Kennedy were together, the parties she'd attended and the men she'd fucked, the money and the attention and the fun. None of which she'd ever experienced as a man, and none of which she ever intended to give up.

"Yeah," she said. "Yeah, I really am."

"Good," Cassidy said. "That's what we were going for."