

# HERO: Joe's Story



*Biology is Destiny*

## Hero: Joe's Story

by

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Joe DiPetro, husband and father of three, lay back, and spread his legs, reaching his tiny white hands down between his legs, feeling his full, firm breasts press together between his arms as his slid his hands over his slit, his vagina, and began to gently massage his vulva, not slipping his fingers into himself, but just massaging, feeling himself getting a little hot and wet, making soft, purring noises as the pleasure started to spread through his body, and then he tentatively slipped a the fingers of one hand into his slit while reaching up with the other and grabbing his breasts, pinching his nipple and arching his back, making small, pretty noises now, like a chipmunk, and looking up at the mirrored ceiling he saw himself, a stunningly beautiful blonde woman with smooth, flawless, porcelain skin like a china doll, full white breast with little pink nipples, wide, soft hips and long, tone legs.

“I’m the most beautiful woman I ever fucked,” he thought, watching himself play with his breasts, one hand between his legs, his eyes wet and cheeks flush. “I’m my own hottest piece of ass.”

He flashed back to being a man, climbing on top of a woman, slipping a strong, calloused hand over her soft breast, and he listening to her sigh, and

he squeezed his own breast now, sighed, arched his back and whispered, “You’re such a sexy girl,” in his pretty little voice, a pretty little voice like a Barbie doll, and the sound of his own sexy voice in his ears made him hotter, wetter, and then he whispered, “fuck me.”

He remembered what it was like to feel himself, hard and stiff and eager to penetrate, but now the thought gave him a confusing rush of new feelings and emotions: a need to be penetrated, to have a man inside him.

He started to quicken his pace, his skin tingling, the need growing in his body, a wonderful and terrible new need, and one that he had finally decided he needed to explore, to surrender to, to experience, and he reached over to the table next to his bed and grabbed it—a dildo, and the feeling of it in his soft palm, the masculine shape alone gave his body a thrill that was impossible to ignore. The man in him, what was left, recoiled, but the needs of his body were too strong to ignore as much as he had tried, and rubbed the dildo against the soft inside of his thigh, feeling a shock of excitement and anticipation, and he pressed it against that soft flesh, loving the way it felt, and then he bit his lip and slid it up along the inside of his thigh, higher and higher until the tip of brushed against the lips of his vagina and sent a wave of pleasure through his body that curled his toes and forced a tiny scream from his soft lips.

He had to have it, needed it inside him, couldn’t fight it anymore, and

so grabbing the base of the dildo with both hands, he closed his eyes and slipped it into his vagina, pushing up inside himself, arching his back and gasping as he pushed it in, deeper and deeper, stunned and drowning in the waves of pleasure, and then he began to work it in and out, in out, at first slowly and then with more and more need, more and more urgency, and finally he felt a small, pretty explosion in his belly that rolled out and spread through him from his head to his toes to his tingling little fingers, and then another, and another, and he found himself crying as the last of the orgasms passed through him, and he rolled onto his side, curled up into a ball and cried with relief and a sense of total surrender as he hugged his knees to his chest and basked in the afterglow of his first female orgasm, and his first multiple orgasms, and he softly whispered, “Omigod... omigod...omigod... what have I done?” Because the man, the husband, the father, did not believe that he could ever go back to being a man, not after what he’d just done, not after how good it had felt, not after how much he had loved every minute of sex as a woman, and he knew right down to the core of his being that he needed a man, wanted a man, and with his body it would not be hard to find one.

As the afterglow faded, Joe thought back on how far he’d come, how much he’d changed since his body had been stolen, since he and his partner had been trapped in the bodies of beautiful strippers, he thought of all that

had happened since the change, and how he had come his decision to find out what it would be like to truly give in to the needs of this young body and live as a woman.

## II: Some weeks earlier

Joe DiPetro put his hands on his large, firm breasts and squeezed them, giving them a little lift, and then he just held them, feeling their soft weight in his hands, and wondering, did I want these? Did I manifest these breasts?

Joe sat on the old, weathered leather couch in his friend Tony Toricelli's apartment, his knees together, feet apart on the scuffed wooden floor. He wore a pair of his buddy's sweat pants, but had stripped off his top and sat there topless, his huge pale white breasts in his hands, feeling their weight, and at the same time feeling himself feeling them, feeling what it was like to have big, round breasts, to touch and hold those breasts, to feel his nipples getting hard inside his little palms, and a tingling between his legs where he now had a soft, wet slit.

Joe believed in The Secret. He'd read the book a bunch of times, and he'd practiced the ideas, preached them to the other guys down at the precinct

to the point they started calling him “Officer Secret” and asking him to manifest shutting the fuck up.

The universe is energy. Our thoughts create our reality. I am now a woman. I must have wanted to be a woman. I must have wanted these breasts.

Joe lifted those breasts again, squeezed them, squirmed uncomfortably at the alien pleasures that passed through him, that made him get a little wetter, and he remembered the first time he had seen a woman’s naked breasts—or a picture of them at least. He and his friend Zeke Sahl had gone to Central Park, found a rock off the path, and Zeke had gotten a little, conspiratorial smile on his face, and he unzipped his backpack and pulled out a tattered magazine and held it out to Joe, whispering “look.”

The magazine read Penthouse, and on the cover was a nearly naked woman—just a bra and panties, and Joe felt nervous and said, “Where’d you get it?”

“Stole it from my dad.” He opened it up, looking at the picture inside, grinning. “She’s hot as hell.”

And then he held the magazine out toward Joe, who took a breath and shook his head. “I’m not supposed to.”

“Who is?” Zeke said, still holding the magazine toward Joe.

Joe didn't have a father, or rather didn't remember him at all. He'd been raised by a single mother and had two sisters—the only boy in the house, and his old school Italian mother had warned him and warned him and warned him about- well, everything, but sex above all else as the surest path into the hands of the devil.

“Come on,” Zeke said. “Don't be a pussy.”

Joe had taken the magazine then, trying to look cool, like he'd seen ten thousand naked women before, but he'd never seen one, and then he'd looked at the picture, and his eyes had gone wide and it was like a bunch of wires in his brain had suddenly been connected because those boobs, big and round, with wide, pink nipples—those boobs were the most amazing things he had ever seen in his life. He still remembered them to this day, the first among all others, and the girl had tan lines, on her shoulders, and white triangles on those perfect round puppies of paradise, and there was a bikini top in one of her hands and a surprised look on her face, like he'd just walked in on her, and boobs. Yes. Joe decided right then and there that he did like boobs, and yet the excitement he felt at this new discovery twisted and melded in his brain with guilt, guilt because he knew his mother would think he was a dirty, filthy sinner and maybe god would, too, and maybe this was all wrong, but he couldn't take his eyes off of those boobs.

And now he had breasts of his own. He pushed them together,

looking down at his cleavage, and he thought—these are better. I have better boobs now than that girl did, I have the best pair of tits I have ever seen.

He finally took his hands away, letting the breasts settle and bob on his chest, rising and falling with every breath. He closed his eyes and just felt them there, jiggling and swaying and all soft and firm and heavier than he'd thought they could be, and thought about that woman in Penthouse, and his wife with her D cups, and all the girlfriends he'd ever had and how much he had always loved busty women, and now it had all come home to roost because it was inevitable that with all the time he spent thinking about tits he would manifest a pair of his own.

I'm being crazy, he thought, pulling a t-shirt on—one of Tony's. It was too big in most places and hung down to his waist, but it was tight across his breasts. Every guy on earth- every straight guy on earth would end up with tits and a vagina if thinking about them all the time caused you to get one, but still he did believe that our thoughts create our reality, and so he had to believe that for some reason, a reason he didn't fully understand, he had wanted this to happen, had made it happen.

He lay on his side on the leather couch, pulling the quilt Tony had given him over his long, slender body, and he closed his eyes. He'd been sleeping a lot since the change. Spending more time sleeping than he did awake. What else was he supposed to do?

He woke to the sound of the apartment door opening, the silhouette of a large man framed in the light coming in from the light in the hallway. He bolted upright, filled with terror, put his hands to his cheeks and screamed. The apartment light flipped on and Tony, his face stricken with concern, stood there and said, "It's okay, buddy. It's okay. It's just me."

Joe felt hot tears pour down his cheeks and turned away, hiding his face in shame. He pulled his knees to his chest, wrapping his arms around them. "I'm sorry," he said, still annoyed at the squeaky, cartoon mouse of a voice he now had. "It's just, I can't... I don't mean..." Joe stopped. He hated that tiny little voice: his tiny little voice.

"I understand," Tony said, giving Joe a wide berth as he kicked off his shoes and made his way to the kitchen. "I understand."

"I don't," Joe said. He'd become so jumpy and insecure since he'd entered this body, this 20 year old Russian girl, so skittish and frightened. He thought he knew and yet he didn't know. "I don't understand why I'm such a... such a chicken-shit."

"Maybe the shrink will help with that," Tony said.

"So you *do* think I'm chicken-shit."

"I didn't say that. I didn't mean that. I just meant the shrink might help. Maybe."

“Maybe,” Tony said. “Hopefully.”

“Take it easy on yourself, buddy. You’ve been through a lot. Any guy would be off his game.”

Joe covered his face and sighed, his weird body twisted in emotional knots.

Tony turned the knob on his gas stove. There was a hiss, and then a low “whump” as the burner ignited. “How about some burgers?”

“Okay.”

“Yeah. Burgers. Beers. That’ll fix you right up, you’ll see.”

“I’ll come help in just a minute,” Joe said, hurrying back to the bedroom, the bathroom, keeping his tear-stained face hidden from his friend. He wanted to wash his face, make sure he didn’t look like he’d been crying, man up a little before he faced his Tony. He may have somehow turned himself into a woman, but he didn’t like acting like one in front of another man.

Meanwhile, Tony watched the woman his friend had become hurrying to the bedroom. Tony got a nice view of some side boob straining against that old t-shirt, bouncing with each step, and got a glimpse of that round, high, dancer’s butt in the sweat pants wiggling away, and he took a deep breath as he felt a full on boner spring to life inside his pants, and his whole

body ached with a need to have Joe, to put him on his back and just take him right there on the kitchen floor. Am I turning gay? He thought, tearing open the package of ground beef and grabbing a handful of the sticky, raw meat. It isn't gay to have the hots for a woman like—a set of tits like that—but that's a dude inside there, a friend, so it's kind of like wanting to be with a man, and anyway, pushing down the boner in his pants while tossing the patty he'd formed onto the cast iron skillet, that was really the problem, because the fact that the hot chick with the big tits sleeping on his couch used to be a man? It just made Tony want her all the more.

Maybe I'm the one who needs the shrink, he thought. But what did it matter? Because Joe was a dude, with a wife and kids, and he wasn't about to spread his legs and let Tony fuck him.

Frack, Tony thought, using the word he'd picked up from his all-time favorite science fiction show, *Battlestar Gallactica*. Frack. I wonder what kind of friend Joe would think I am if he knew I wanted to get inside his pussy?

### III

Dr. Brinkman sat at her laptop and stared at a blonde, gray-eyed bombshell. Brinkman stared at her flat, tone belly, full soft breasts lifted and

pushed together into entrancing globes, her wide hips and tiny waist. Long, long, long dancer's legs perched on stiletto heels. He was licking her full lips, her big eyes hot and wet beneath damp, curly black lashes, and Brinkman shook her head and said, "oh dear" as she imagined the man, the cop, who now found himself in that body, a male fantasy girl in the flesh, and she thought, is he even hotter than Pete? Would I rather fuck him?

"Down, doc," Brinkman whispered to herself. "Down." She glanced at time on the lower right hand corner of her laptop. Joe's appointment was scheduled to start in another seven minutes.

She'd met Pete the day before and had been shaken by her own feelings as the sight of the man trapped in such a feminine body had lit her up in ways that had frightened her to the point she's almost had asked to be taken off the case. Pete had swaggered in trying to play the man, lowering his voice, acting tough, but not realizing that game was over for him; everything he'd done had just seemed sexy and cute, and the baggy sweat pants and shirt, his attempt to hide his soft curvaceous body had seemed adorable. The juxtaposition of such a man's man trapped in a body with such delicate, birdlike shapes, with such small hands, had been intoxicating.

She glanced over the pictures of Joe, of Joe's new body, one more time: thighs wrapped around a stripper pole, bending over and looking back over her shoulders, a close-up of an exquisitely beautiful face, big eyes and

full, soft lips, a tiny little upturned nose. Then, she closed her laptop, sat back and, closing her eyes, meditated for a moment, let all the pent up sexual energy pass away, the images of Joe's breasts and ass and thighs to clear from her mind, and when the phone on her desk buzzed, she pressed the intercom button and the receptionist she shared with four other therapists said, "Your 10 is here."

"Send him in."

When the door opened a moment later, Dr. Brinkman met Joe's pretty eyes, smiled, stood and extended her hand, "Officer DiPetro." She took Joe in as he walked across the office, glancing around nervously. He wore an oversized pair of baggy jeans rolled up at the bottom, a baggy orange and green flannel shirt and an over-sized man's winter coat-vest over the top of that, also in green.

Joe reached out and offered a weak, tentative handshake, letting his eyes drop and then he walked over to the chair across from the doctor and sat down. He had his legs and knees together, his back straight, and he crossed his arms defensively across his chest, squirmed uncomfortably and then adjust, shifting his arms beneath his breasts. He sat there stiffly, looking down.

"Should we get started?" Brinkman asked, making mental notes

about his clothes, mannerisms.

Joe nodded.

“You want some water or coffee or anything?”

Joe shook his head, and Brinkman recognized it would take some work to get him talking.

“You know you are here for a fit to work assessment, correct?”

“Yes,” Joe said in a sweet, breathy girlish voice, cringing at the sound of it, the soft, feminine sound he didn’t seem to be able to get rid of, and he seethed at the realization that that his voice was higher and softer than this woman’s.

“Do you mind if I call you Joe?”

Joe cleared his throat and tried to put some balls into his answer, but when he opened his mouth a chirpy little Barbie doll voice said, “No.” He dug his fingers into his arms in frustration.

Brinkman adjusted her position, turning slightly sideways in what she hoped was a gesture that would help Joe relax, and then, deciding to follow protocol for a FTW, she said, “Do you know why your department might be concerned about your fitness to serve right now?”

Joe nodded.

“Any why do you think?”

Joe gestured down at his body, then quickly folded his arms under his breasts again.

“Because of your body?”

Joe nodded.

“You don’t want to talk about it?”

Joe shook his head, “no.”

“How about if you write your answers?”

Joe nodded.

Brinkman dug a tablet of paper out of her desk, handing that and a thick tipped marker to Joe. “Whatever you write stays between us. You can keep the tab or watch me shred the pages.”

Joe nodded.

“Write your answers, please. It will be good to get in the habit. Do you trust me?”

Joe wrote, “Not really.”

Brinkman laughed. “I appreciate your honesty.”

Joe made a small shrugging gesture.

“Why don’t you want to talk about it?”

Joe wrote, carefully choosing his words, then held up the tablet. It read: Not reluctant to talk about IT. Reluctant to talk.

“Why?”

Sound like girl.

Brinkman nodded. She would be embarrassed to have that little girl’s voice herself, and she was a woman. It had to be devastating to a man. Brinkman paused, wondering what to ask, what to say. It had been easier with Pete. He’d been trying to hide his shame behind bluster and bravado, but Joe had clearly gone the opposite direction, withdrawing into himself, becoming a shadow. So, at a loss, Brinkman went to standard protocol for a FTW review and said, “Do you want to continue to be a police officer?”

Joe narrowed his big, pretty eyes and pursed his lips. Wrote Don’t Know.

“You don’t know if you still want to be a cop?”

No.

“What would you do if you weren’t a cop?”

Don’t know.

“I’d like to get some family background. Are your parents still

alive.?”

“Mother.”

“And your father?”

Never knew him.

“Brothers and sisters?”

“Sisters. Two. I’m youngest.”

The baby of the family. The only boy. Yes, Brinkman thought.

“How do you get along with your mother?”

Now? Or before?

“Both.”

Before close. Now not sure.

“Your sisters?”

Complicated.

“In what way?”

Joe shifted uncomfortably, the images flooding into his mind, at first in the form of the pictures his sisters dragged out every family gathering: Joe as a little boy, dressed as a little girl. Make-up and bows in his hair, his skinny legs bare in his older sisters’ hand me down dresses. Strings of fake pearls draped around his neck, earrings clipped to his ears. A lot were from

when he was too young to remember, but he had always hated it when they brought them out and gushed over the pictures of him as a little boy with mascara and blush on his face, smiling in a flowery little dress with a Peter Pan collar. They'd had kept at it over the years, later than they should have, and he remembered times, so many times, he'd come home from school planning on playing some video games, and he'd been ambushed by his sisters, Maria and Bea, squealing: "Makeover!" He would run, hide, barricade himself in his room, but they would always find him and drag him to their room, and then he would sit there ashamed as they put lipstick on him, made him put on a slip and a dress, and chanted those words, those hated, terrible words: cute. Pretty. And worst of all, "You should have been a girl."

The last time came one year for Halloween when they had made him dress up as Josie from Josie and The Pussy Cats— Joseph, Josie, get it? He'd been 12, just into the sixth grade, and they had put him into one of their training bras and stuffed it full of toilet paper. Some of the girls had started to get their boobs, and he and the others boys had of course been teasing them, snapping their bra straps, and he flushed 12 shades of red as he felt those bra straps on his shoulders, saw the shapes of fake little boobs on his chest.

His giggling sisters forced him to put on a leopard print leotard, put a

pair of cat ears on his head, painted his face. He'd begged and pleaded with them, with his mother. "All the kids will make fun of me," he said, clutching his tail, looking up at his mom, his cheeks painted with whiskers.

"Oh, don't be silly," he mother had answered, her words slurred from a night of early drinking. "You're cute as a button. Adorable."

He'd been sick with shame and self-loathing as he'd trumped around the neighborhood with his sisters, dressed as a girl, and all his friends and neighbors had seen him, teasing and laughing, and that word, that goddamned word kept coming at him over and over again: cute. Everyone kept calling him cute. Oh my god, you're soooooo cute! You're outfit is so cute! Cute. Cute. Cute. Every house, every corner.

Cute.

And then a kid from his class had punched him in the face, called him a faggot. His sisters had wailed on the kid, sent him running, but it only made Joe feel more sick and humiliated as he stood there holding his tail, dressed as a girl and crying while his sisters defended him. He'd run home in years, hugging his bag of candy to his chest and vowing he would never leave his room again.

That had been the end of the dressing up. His mother had finally seen what it was doing to him, put her foot down. That Monday, Joe scrubbed his

face before school again and again and again. He was sure he could still see mascara on his eye lashes, blush on his cheeks. “What the hell are you doing in the bathroom so long?” His sister Maria had said, pounding on the door. “Get out.”

“I’m trying to get this stupid make-up off my face,” he yelled.

“There’s no makeup on your face,” Maria had said, poking her head in the bathroom door. Bea poked hers in as well, smirking. “Not a bit.”

But when he looked in the mirror he saw pink cheeks, long, curly dark lashes. He thought he looked like a girl, was sure that he had not been able to scrub his skin free of the makeup.

He went to school, and he was ready to send a message.

It didn’t take long. That morning in homeroom a kid called him “Josie,” and Joe had swung hard, a roundhouse punch with all his weight behind it, smashing the kid’s nose, sending him crashing to the floor, grabbing his bloody face. Joe had stood there, clenching both fists, looking around the room, and he’d said, “Anyone else?”

Never again, Joe had decided, would anyone call him cute.

Anyone, at least, other than his mother and sisters. They pulled those stupid photo albums out every year and giggled and gushed over all the pictures of him in his little outfits. He sat and held his peace, but each year

when it happened he was the small and weak and ashamed little Josie the Pussy Cat all over again.

Brinkman watched as Joe got a vacant look in his eyes, and then his eyes began to cloud and get misty. He wrote slashed at the pad with the marker, and then held it up to the doctor: They dressed me as a girl.

#### IV

When the session ended, Joe meekly shook Brinkman's hand and headed out the door, feeling nervous and vulnerable in his slender female body. Part of him wanted to rush back to Tony's apartment, to slip into a deep, forgetful sleep, but instead he caught a subway, made his way to the Upper Westside, found a spot on a bench across from PS 77 and waited. He pulled out his phone and checked his email. Nothing but SPAM. Saw a text from Tony: How's it go?  
Texted back: Whatever.

The bell rang. Laughing, yelling kids poured from the school, and Joe watched eagerly, finally seeing the three of them, his little girls coming out of the school together, hair glistening in the sun: Adriana, Camila, Rosa. His whispered their names as he watched them walk toward home. Camila and Rose laughing and smiling, chattering excitedly about something, while Adriana, the oldest, adjusted the straps on their backpacks, smoothed their

hair, her face stern and focused. He missed them so much. He thought about trying to get their mother to listen to him, to convince her he was who he said he was, to let him spend some time with his kids. He missed them, missed them so much, wanted to badly to hold them, hug them, kiss them on their cheeks and tell them how much he loved them. Because he hadn't done that enough, and now he might never have the chance.

His daughters disappeared into the city, into the crowds, and Joe found himself crying. He'd been working extra shifts. Hanging out with the guys. Bowling leagues and softball. His wife, Clarice, had been begging him to spend more time at home, had cried, yelled, called his mother and complained. His mother had called him, drunk, and screamed at him that he needed to be a better husband, a better father. "You're turning out just like you'd piece of shit dad," she'd said. "He never had time for you, either."

"I have to pay the bills. I have to spend time with the guys. It's department politics. The only way to get ahead."

Excuses. All bullshit. Because he'd been feeling smothered, trapped by his life, his wife, his kids, and he'd been wishing, more and more, that he could be free, regretting that he'd gotten married and had kids. How often had he thought—I wish I wasn't married? Wish I could start over?

And now he was in the body of a 20 year old woman, and as far as his

wife was concerned he wasn't married to her, and this stripper with hug tits wasn't the father of her children, and he was free, and he was starting over.

Our thought create our reality, Joe thought, again. I didn't want to be a husband or a father anymore. And now I am not even a man.

Joe held his breasts in his small, soft hands as he soaked in the bathtub. He'd filled it with hot water, almost scalding, and Epsom salts, and now he closed his eyes and felt his breasts. They were so big. So big. Soft and yet firm at the same time. And it felt strange to feel them and to feel himself feel them, to feel his own hands on his nipples. He'd lit a couple candles and put some meditation music on—Crystal Bowls humming hypnotically, creating the sounds of light.

Joe took deep breaths, filling his belly first and then his lungs. He had chosen a mantra and started to repeat it in his mind: Acceptance. Acceptance. Acceptance. At first, fragmented memories cluttered his conscience—trembling excitement the first time he'd kissed his future wife, horror and elation in the delivery room at the birth of his first daughter, graduation from the police academy. He acknowledged each and asked it to rest, repeating his mantra over and over again: acceptance. Acceptance. Acceptance.

All City Weight Lifting Championship back in high-school, a 380 pound clean and jerk, feeling the power as he thrust that weight over his head, the coach barking, “Hell, yeah!” Making varsity basketball his sophomore year, and getting laid: Tammie Goldberg, one of the hottest cheerleaders and a year older than him with long, kinky black hair and sandy brown skin.

Dressed as Josie the Pussycat, his bra stuffed with toilet paper, the little cones sticking out inside his leotard, looking just like the boobs the girls had been getting, that he’d been making fun of, his mother yelling at his sisters, telling them, “It’s over! Over! He’s too old!”

Him, sneaking into his sisters’ room after basketball practice, looking in their closet at their dresses and skirts, their blouses, and wishing that one day he’d come home and they’d be giggling and laughing and they’d dragged him into their room like they used to and force him to wear... yes, he thought, touching a flowery red dress, the material so thin and soft, force me to wear this dress.

If only they would force me to dress up again, he’d thought, he thought. He was sure he’d had that thought. It had surprised and scared him, and he’d angrily left the room, stormed into the garage and started pounding his fists into his punching bag, pounding and pounding and pounding: Faggot. Faggot. Faggot.

I acknowledge you, Joe said to the angry voice. Please rest now. The voice grew quiet, and Joe held his soft breasts in his small hands and he listened to his soft, pretty girl's voice repeat: Acceptance. Acceptance. Acceptance.

Tony came home, entering extra carefully so as not to scare Joe, but the living room was empty, no one on the couch, and the apartment filled with the smells of jasmine and coconut. The Ipod player was on, filling the dark apartment with mysterious sounds like a Tibetan monastery, and he could see flickering light coming from the partially opened bathroom door. "Hey. Joe," he said. "I'm back."

No answer, so he slipped off his shoes and walked over to the little kitchen, setting down the bags from Westside Market, opening the refrigerator and grabbing a beer, twisting the lid off and tossing back a drink. He found himself walking toward the bathroom, thinking about Joe in there, wondering what he was doing, his mind filling images of Joe's face—those full, soft lips and big eyes, his small, round shoulders and the breasts. Tony had seen the photo spread in the Post-- Joe and Pete's new bodies nearly naked, Joe so white and perfect, and now he glanced into the bathroom and saw Joe's soft shoulders and that long, slender neck, and he felt a sense of panic, thinking Joe had killed himself, and he hurried into the bathroom, but then looking at that perfect, long white body soaking in the tub, Joe's eyes

closed, he realized his friend was sleeping, and he stared down at the perfect female creature his friend had become—his delicate little hands on top of his breasts, as if he were protecting his maidenly modesty even in sleep, those big, white, perfect breasts gently rising and falling with each soft breath, and Tony let his eyes drift down from those perfect breasts along the line that ran down Joe's flat, soft belly and then to the triangle of curly brown hair covering his vagina, and Tony's mouth went dry as he looked at Joe's vagina, at the slit where his long, round legs met, and he felt himself getting hard and backed quickly from the bathroom, fighting back the hunger in the pit of his stomach, the need to climb in the tub and take that perfect woman and bring her to climax, hear her screaming with pleasure.

Holy shit, Tony thought, throwing back his beer and chugging it, going to the refrigerator and grabbing another, twisting off the cap, throwing it on the floor and guzzling it. Joe's soft body was in his mind now, the whole of it, and—Jesus!—it was going to be hard to live together now. I shouldn't have done it, Tony thought. Shouldn't have. Damn. Why did I have to look at her? Fuck.

She's not a she, he reminded himself. That's Joe in there. Damnit. He finished the beer, and then shaking his head, he left the apartment and just walked, walked, and walked some more, trying to tire himself out, to clear his mind, to keep himself away from that gorgeous woman in his apartment, the

woman who was a man and whose tits he wanted in his mouth. He stopped by the Galaxy Diner, got a burger and fries, a couple more beers, then some apple pie and coffee. Killing time. Not wanting to go back to the apartment. To be around Joe. Then, he walked some more, he didn't even know where, just about and down streets and avenues, zigzagging around Manhattan until his feet ached.

It was almost midnight when he finally let himself back into the apartment. Joe was sitting on the couch, his knees pulled up to his chest, arms wrapped around his knees, and he stared at the door with wide, frightened eyes but didn't scream.. "Hey," Tony said not meeting Joe's eyes, picturing him the tub, his hands covering his breasts. Tony headed right to the kitchen, started banging around in the refrigerator.

Joe muted the television and said, "Where have you been?"

"What?" Tony said.

"I just thought you would be home sooner?"

Joe's sounded just like a woman, and with Tony already struggling with his impure thoughts he suddenly felt angry and snapped, "What are you, my wife?"

"No, I just--"

"Just nothing. Christ. I can come and go as I want in my own

apartment.”

“Okay,” Joe said, confused.

Tony went into his bedroom and slammed the door. Joe sighed, looking back at the slammed door, wondering what the hell had just happened. He’s getting sick of me, Joe decided. I’ve been here a week. That’s all it is. Probably. He would need to get his own place, but all his bank accounts were joint accounts with his wife, and she didn’t believe he was her husband. There were legal issues with him getting his hands on his own paycheck. It direct deposited, and right now Joe DiPetro was classified as missing. He didn’t think the NYPD would be inclined to change the destination account on the word of a stripper.

Move back with mom?

He didn’t like the idea very much, but he might at least have to consider it.

The next morning, Joe got up early and decided to make breakfast, hoping it might ease the tension. He knew Tony’s schedule, so he got up a little bit before Tony and started the coffee, then got some maple bacon sizzling on the stove and mixed up some pancake batter. He felt happy for some reason, found himself humming, dancing a little as he cooked. He chalked it up to his time meditating, his mantra. It had turned his attitude

around, gotten him back where he liked to be-- full of faith in the future, in himself, in the belief that no matter what happened if he kept a good attitude and put one foot in front of another things would work out for the best.

Tony came out of the bedroom in his patrolman's uniform, his black hair slicked back, cleanly shaven. He looked at Joe and managed a smile before dropping his eyes in what struck Joe as an almost bashful way. He walked past Joe, trailing Irish Spring.

Joe felt his tummy do a little flip, his cheeks flush. He set a steaming plate full of bacon and pancakes in front of Tony and said, "I made breakfast."

"I can see that."

Joe frowned, making a plate for himself, then watched, trying to seem as if he wasn't watching, as Tony wolfed down his food, making an occasional grunting noise. A nod. Sipping his coffee. Joe could feel the tension between them, wanted to say something, but after last night he was a little nervous to do anything that might make Tony mad again. Tony, say something, he thought at Tony. Say something. The tension was so uncomfortable.

Finally, Tony pushed his plate away, wiped his mouth with the back of his arm. "Listen, last night?"

“Yeah?” Joe said.

“I was tired and stuff. Forget about it.”

They stood for a minute not looking at each other. They could each feel the energy between them, like electric current. Tony shifted, almost as if he were about to give Joe a hug, but then he glanced down and saw the big, firm breasts pushing out the front of Joe’s t-shirt and he shook his head and walked past. “See ya.”

Joe watched him go, filled with a confusing muddle of emotions and feelings. When Tony had seemed about to give him a hug, Joe had felt a thrill right through his whole body, had even gone up on his tiptoes in anticipation, and the Tony’s distance, his anger, his moody silence over breakfast, it all fell into place as Joe realized Tony was starting to crush on him.

And, Joe realized, he was crushing on Tony a little as well.

Or was it a lot?

Joe felt a kind of emptiness, deep, soulful disappointment that Tony had not hugged him goodbye, but he also felt ashamed and angry. Am I turning gay? He wondered. What would his mother and sisters think if they knew he was thinking about kissing a guy? What would the guys at the station think if they knew he wanted to kiss a fellow officer?

But they didn't need to know, did they? Maybe he and Tony could just have a secret little thing together? His nipples started to get hard at the thought, and he became hyper-aware of his new shape, his new body, and all of the new feelings he was having now toward Tony.

Fuck.

V

Joe walked into his next session with Brinkman, sat down and said, "I've decided to accept my voice." He felt an instant sense of relief, of freedom and pride. He was no longer hiding who he had become.

Brinkman looked at him with surprise. "I'm so happy to hear you say that, to hear you say anything."

"Oh my god," Joe said. "Wow. I can't tell you how great it feels to just--- speak. Talk. Be heard!" The words poured out of Joe, things he'd wanted to say, needed to say, to someone, anyone, and it wasn't the kind of thing he felt he could tell Tony. "I thought about it, and I decided that I needed to just accept the situation as it is, to just not fight it or be ashamed or think it was wrong or feel like a victim! I've never believed in that. Never! So, after our last session, I—meditated--- do you believe in meditation? I do. Anyway, this is my voice for now, my body, and I can sit around and

pout or hide or take a vow of silence, but I'm not going to. I'm going to make the best of my situation." He took a deep breath, collapsed back into the chair and said, "There!"

"Wow. You had a lot you needed to say."

"It's been building up for days," Joe said. "And I don't really have anyone to talk to. Not about this." He glanced down at his body.

"What about your partner? Pete?"

"Pete? He won't return my calls or texts."

"Keep trying. He's the only other man you can talk to about being a woman."

"I guess. Okay. Wait, does he talk about me?"

"I never discuss what other patients are telling me."

Joe looked at her, got no sense at all of whether Pete was or wasn't talking about him, nodded. It felt good to know doc was so good at keeping confidence.

"So, what else is happening? Have you given anymore thought to whether you want to be a cop?"

"Not really. No. I don't know. It's been, well, there is something else that kind of got my attention for a little while."

“What’s that?”

Joe took a deep breath. Looked at the ceiling, decided to go for it. “I think I’m starting to have feelings for another man.”

Brinkman did not show a reaction, though she was surprised. Not that Joe, in the healthy young body of what was likely a heterosexual female, would start to have the feelings of a heterosexual female, but that he had already come to the point that he was willing to talk about it. “How do you feel about having those feelings?”

“How do I feel about feelings? You really are a shrink, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t know. I mean, as a guy it feels wrong. Feels gay. I try to be tolerant, really I do, but I always kind of looked down on gay guys, and I—I’m just a regular guy, right? I always wanted to avoid anything that would even make me seem a little gay. So, I know I shouldn’t feel what I am feeling.”

“And what are you feeling?”

“Well, the other day, he was standing kind of close to me, and I started to get all tingly, and I thought he was going to give me a hug, and I got all—excited—and I even imagined myself in his arms, kissing him, and then he didn’t hug me, and I felt really empty for awhile. I wanted to be in

his arms so bad. So, what do you think?”

“About?”

“Am I going crazy?”

“No. I don’t think so. Have you ever heard the phrase that biology is destiny?”

“No.”

“It comes from, well, I don’t entirely believe in it, but there is a lot of evidence to suggest that sexual orientation is genetically determined. You now live inside the body of a female, and that body likes men.”

“So, am I going to start wanting guys more and more?”

“I think your body does, very much. The only question is whether you want to give in to that desire or not.”

“I can’t. It’s out of the question. It’s bad enough that I got turned into a stripper, and all those pictures in the paper, but if the guys down at the station find out I’m turning gay, wanting to sleep with other guys, I’m done. Destroyed.”

“Do you have to be cop? Do you have to care what everyone else thinks about you?”

“No.” Joe bit his lip. “But, you aren’t making this any easier.”

“I’m just trying to help you see that you have choices, and it is up to you to make those choices, just like you did with your voice.”

“If I go down that path, if I decide to try it with a guy, what happens if I get my body back? My old body? Can I just go back to my old life, my wife, my kids, after I’ve kissed another man, had another man inside me?”

“It’s probably something you would need to talk to her about. How do you think she would take it?”

“Not well.” Joe wanted to change the subject, so he suddenly said, "Did I ever tell you about the day I got switched?"

"No. I would love to hear about it, though."

Brinkman nodded and chewed on the end of her pencil as Joe told her about The Switch.

“I was looking at her tits. She had really great tits, and she was running toward me, so her big tits were bouncing and swaying, and I remember kind of hoping they would bounce out of the corset she was wearing, bounce out and I would get to see them—they were so big and firm, so white. She was running toward, and it was a girly run, I mean really girly—her long, thin arms out to the sides, hips swaying, and she was looking right at me—RIGHT at me with those cool, grey eyes, and her cheeks were pink, her mouth was open, just a little bit of an over bite, those bright white

teeth showing beneath her upper lip, and her mouth was wet and pink like bubble gum, and I felt a surge, a hard, powerful surge in my pants at the sight of that tall, blonde beauty running toward me, those big boobs bouncing all around, that blonde hair, and thinking she was running from something, trying to get past me, I got ready to catch her, and I thought-- I want to fuck her. I wanted to take that body so badly.

“So, I’m getting ready to grab her, but then I realize she is actually running right at me, and our eyes meet, and she stares right into my eyes and runs right into me, practically knocking me over, and I braced myself and kept us both from falling, my arms wrapping around her body, and all that hair was in my face, I was buried in that thick, curly golden hair, and then her hands found my face, and she was clinging to me, and somehow I felt her lips on my mouth, hot and wet, and I felt a shock and a thrill and held her to me, my whole head filling with the smell of her perfume and I was for just one perfect moment in a state of pure bliss, a beautiful young woman in my arms, kissing me, wanting me, hungry for me...

“And then it was all... wrong. Wrong in a way that—I had never felt it before, never experienced it, but it was so terribly wrong. Everything went dark. I couldn’t see a thing. I felt myself spin around, like someone had spun me on a turntable and then, it was like I was being forced into a mold, pushed into a new shape, and I felt a body around me, and I was being lowered to the

ground, and I blinked my eyes, and blinked them again, shaking my head, struggling weakly against her, wondering how this little girl was suddenly so much stronger than me, and then I could see, and I was looking through a veil of blonde hair and into my own face.

“‘What the fuck?’ I said, and my voice sound small and squeaky, like a cartoon kitten, and the sound of it so small and ridiculous scared me.

“‘Shhhhh,’ she said, the woman who had taken my face, looking down at me. ‘Just relax.’ She brushed the blonde hair from my face, and sensation was coming back to me, to my new body, and I felt the air against my legs, my arms, my shoulders, and wondering what happened to my clothes I pushed myself up on my elbows and looked down at a pair of huge, soft white breasts on my chest. I looked up at her, shaking my head, confused, refusing to believe what I was seeing, feeling, and she smirked and nodded. ‘Yes,’ she said. ‘Yes. You’re a pretty girl.’

Joe stopped. Shrugged. “And then she left. Ran off in my body, leaving me there on the ground.”

“That’s it?” Brinkman said. “She just left?”

"Yes," Joe said looking away. "She just left me there as a woman, and I-- started to cry."

"Were you ashamed?"

"Yes. Of course. What guy wouldn't be ashamed?"

They say in silence for a few moments, and then Brinkman said, "Well, time's up, Joe. Maybe for the best. You have a lot to think about. Just remember, there is no wrong choice. Just choice and a willingness to accept the consequences of your choices. Text or call if you need anything."

Joe stood up and stretched. He was wearing men's clothes again, an almost identical outfit to the last one, and when he stretched Brinkman saw his delicate wrists and small arms. She had initially found him less attractive than Pete, but she had always preferred her woman dark and as pretty as Joe was, Brinkman had never been as into frosty blondes. But now, hearing him talk in his natural voice, a pretty, small, feminine voice, and knowing that was a man with that sexy little voice, she was starting to find him more... fascinating. It was fascinating to her that he seemed so much less in denial, so much more willing to work on accepting his new sex, new situation. She imagined him on his hands and knees in nothing but a bra and panties, looking back over his shoulder with a smile on his wet, red lips.

"Aren't we supposed to be figuring out if I am ready to work or not?"

Joe asked.

"We are," Brinkman said. "We just did."

"Oh," Joe said. "Okay. So, what do you think?"

“You need more time.”

“I can’t disagree.”

Joe sat on the bench outside the kid’s school. His wife had cut off all contact with him. She’d blocked his phone number. He couldn’t text or call, and emails bounced back as undeliverable. He’d gone by the house, and she had threatened to get a restraining order. He went to a lawyer, a guy he’d let slide on a prostitution bust a year back who owed him. The guy had nearly shit himself when the blonde had walked in, even with her body hidden under the men’s clothes, because Joe had a face that could stop traffic, and when Joe had explained who he was and what he’d needed he felt pretty sure the poor fool was struggling with a boner. Legally, for now, it turned out he was his body; as far as the law was concerned Joe was a 20 year old female named Anastasia Kasparov. It seemed biology was destiny in more ways than one.

“It could be years,” the lawyer had said in a gruff voice. “Or never. You might just have to be Anastasia. Sorry, um, buddy.”

Joe had thanked him and left in a hurry, feeling sure that if he lingered the guy was about to start hitting on him.

So, for now, he sat on the bench and watched his kids, waited for the legal system, the government to figure out who he was and what to do with

him. If he'd been a man sitting outside the school so frequently people probably would have thought he was a pedophile, but women were not suspected so much for those kinds of sordid things, so he could put one plus in the female column. His heart ached when the girls came out of the school building. Camilla had a band aide on her cheek, and Joe wondered what had happened, hoped it was something minor that wouldn't leave a scar. This time all three laughed about something, smiling, giddy, and they did a group hug and then suddenly Rose broke away with a playful shriek, running down the sidewalk and the other two girls ran laughing behind her.

Joe wanted to be with them, to hold them and kiss them and hear about their day at school and their friends and their lives. It hurt so much to be cut off from them like this, to know they were alone in the world now with no father. He had never felt such a powerful need to be with the children, to spend time with them, to hold them and love them, and he wondered if it was some kind of maternal instinct that had come with his new shape. Maybe it was all just biology, some mothering urge he had now, and if he got his old body back he would go right back to feeling trapped, bored, and frustrated with being a father and a husband.

Or maybe losing it all had made him realize how much he'd had, how much he'd lost.

Could it be both?

No money. No job. The tension with Tony would just get worse. I have to try, Joe said. I have to try and get through to Maria.

Fighting back tears, feeling lost and lonely, Joe walked to the Speigleman Building. Like most Manhattan office buildings, it had a security desk in the first floor lobby that controlled access to the stairs and elevator. “I’m here to see Maria DiPetro,” he said, forcing a smile. “She works at Turner, Freidman and Ashe.”

“What’s your name?”

“Joe DiPetro,” he answered with a chagrined shrug.

“Funny name for such a pretty girl,” the security officer said in an Eastern European accent Joe couldn’t quite place—maybe Polish.

“That’s what people keep telling me.”

The security guard started to pick up the phone, but Joe reached out and covered his hand. “I was hoping I could go up and surprise her,” he said. “We’re old friends from college.”

The guard eyed Joe, eyeing his unusual clothes, something seemed off, but then he said, “Go ahead. But, can I get phone number?”

Joe hesitated, then said, “Sure.” He gave the man his number, feeling self-conscious about it, feeling odd about being hit on by a guy, even feeling like all the people who’d started to line up behind him were staring at him,

thinking he was some kind of slut, or what if someone recognized him as “that guy?”

It didn't matter. He needed to see his wife.

Joe had hoped he would just walk right in and act like he belonged, head right to his wife's office, but the receptionist at the front desk at the law firm did not prove as easy to get past. As soon as Joe walked in she saw his shabby clothes and came out from behind her desk, blocking his pathway back down the hall where he knew he would find his wife's office. Juanita was a big, round, muscular woman, and she aggressively placed herself in front of Joe, daring him to try her. “Where do you think you're going?”

Joe felt every inch the slender young woman that he was, instantly finding himself intimidated by the big, strong, older woman, and he smiled and unconsciously found himself standing with one foot out to the side in a girlishly submissive pose. “Um, I was hoping to see Maria DiPetro?”

“And who are you?”

“I'm, and I know this will sound a little crazy, but I'm her, um, husband.”

Juanita's eyes went wide as she looked over the blonde woman again, taking in the big eyes and full, soft lips, the long slender neck, the suggestion of that bombshell body that had been splashed all over the pages of the Post.

Joe felt himself blushing in embarrassment as the woman looked him over and a look of pity came into her eyes. “That is you, isn’t it, honey?” Juanita said, reaching out and touching Joe’s smooth, soft, cheek.

“Yes,” Joe said, accepting the touch, feeling confused and ashamed and grateful all at the same time. He couldn’t help but notice how much higher and prettier his voice was than Juanita’s.

“Baby, I saw the pictures and read the story, but this” she looked him up and down, “well, this must be hard as hell. Especially for a guy like you.”

Joe nodded. “It hasn’t been easy.”

“Take a seat. I’ll tell Maria you’re here.”

Joe did as he was told, sitting down, knees together, hands in his lap. “Thanks.”

Juanita went back to her desk, putting a hand to her earpiece and murmuring into her headset. Then, she smiled at Joe and said, “She’ll be down in a minute.”

“Okay.”

Joe sat, feeling nervous. Juanita kept glancing at him. She seemed obsessed with him. Then, she finally said, “Can I get a selfie with you?”

“A selfie?”

“Yeah. You’re kind of the most famous person I know.”

“Me? Famous?”

“You been in the newspaper.”

“Okay,” Joe said, wanting to please Juanita. “But, that wasn’t me in the paper. Those pictures were of HER before I became her.”

But Juanita was already more focused on getting her phone in proper position and putting her face next to Joe’s for the picture, the phone flash blinding him, and then Juanita checked out her picture, smiled and held it out to Joe, saying, “You look like a movie star!”

Joe looked at the picture, at the stunningly beautiful young woman next to Juanita, who’d managed to smile, showing off her dimples and a row of perfect white teeth. She had big, grey eyes and a tiny little nose, and her skin was perfect porcelain, and he did look like a movie star, or a model.

“I told you to stay away from me,” Maria said in a low, cold voice, breaking Joe out of his reverie. Joe immediately felt self-conscious, sitting there in woman's body in front of his wife, both of them now female, and his cheeks flushed with shame at the thought that he was no longer the man in the relationship.

Juanita walked away, and Joe found himself sitting there, knees

together, hands in his lap like a school girl getting scolded by the principal. Maria looked great--- her dark, Italian eyes flashing, her own bleach blonde hair tied back in a bun, her blouse hugging her full breasts, and looking at them Joe was surprised his first thought was, “I have better breasts than she does.”

Joe pushed the female thought from his mind and said, “You look great, Maria.”

Maria marched to the glass doors and pushed one open, “Five minutes in the hall. Then, I never want to see you again.”

Joe stood and marched out into the hall. Maria folded her arms under her breasts and stared angrily down at him—in her heels she was now about two inches taller. “Maria, I want to see my kids.”

Maria shook her head, her mouth dropping open in shock. “Fuck you, you crazy bitch.”

“I miss them, and I’m their father...”

“Father?” Maria shrieked. “Jesus. You need help. Listen. You are not my husband, and you are most certainly not anyone’s father. Don’t you know how crazy you are?”

“I know it seems crazy, but ask me anything. I can prove I’m your husband, Maria. I can...”

Maria slapped Joe across the face. Hard. He jerked backward in surprise and fell backward, landing on his butt, his knees together, feet apart. Tears sprang from his eyes, and he shook his head in frustration. “Maria,” he whispered.

“I am getting a restraining order. You stay away from me and my kids you crazy bitch!”

Maria turned and hurried back into the law firm, shouting, “Call security!”

Joe got to his feet, weeping freely, watching Maria storm out of the lobby and out of sight, and he stood at the door, looking at Juanita, who came out and pushed the door open. “You better get out of here,” she said.

“Security is coming. Take the stairs down one floor and then the elevator the rest of the way.”

“Okay,” Joe said, wiping his tears.

“I’m sorry, Joe,” Juanita said, giving his hand a sisterly squeeze.

“Now, go!”

Joe turned and hurried down the hall, pushing through the steel door and out into the stairwell, but as soon as he was in the murky quiet of the hall, his was overtaken with sobbing so powerful he stopped, sank into the corner and hugged his knees to his chest. His face still stung from where Maria had slapped him, and he words did as well: you crazy bitch. The phrase had

stung as much as the slap. Crazy bitch.

Biology is destiny.

I am a crazy bitch, Joe thought, squeezing his knees together, feeling the weight of his breasts. How could I have thought it was a good idea to come here, to confront Maria? And now his wife had seen him cry, seen him fall to the ground and cry just like the scared little girl that his body told him he was, and she was right: he was no one's father. Not anymore. He was a young woman named Anastasia.

Joe started to take deep breaths, and he started to focus on his mantra, mentally chanting the word over and over again, just as he had before: Acceptance. Acceptance. Acceptance. The tears dried. He felt a sense of calm come over him, and opened his eyes and looking up at the ceiling he nodded, stood and started down the stairs. I manifested this body and this life, he repeated. I was tired of being a man, a father, and so I turned myself into a woman. What had Brinkman said? He had to accept the consequences of his actions. It's time, Joe decided, to stop acting like a little boy, and to start being a grown woman.

When he pushed out the doors to the building and stepped out onto the sidewalk, colors seemed sharper, the world seemed more clear, more defined. A fall wind sharp with the edge of winter gusted down the street,

carrying with it the small of charcoal from a sidewalk grill, and once again he confronted his situation: no job, no money.

What would Anastasia do? He asked himself.

Find a job. Make some money. Be a big a girl, he thought. Go out and face the world you created for yourself. He could work somewhere, undocumented, a pretty girl like him. Waitress. Hostess. But, it would be better if he go identification and documents. He thought about calling his lawyer friend, but then a different idea occurred to him, and it scared him and kind of excited him at the same time, and so he went back to the strip club where he'd lost his manhood, where he'd been turned into a woman. And he resisted the urge to call Tony, or his mother or sister, or anyone else because he was scared and he wanted someone to go with him and hold his hand, but it was time for Joe to be a big girl and do take care of things on his own.

## VI

The sun was setting as Joe reached the strip club. He stood in a warm ray of golden sunlight and stared down into the shadowy alleyway, his eyes resting on the spot where he'd been standing when he last walked the world as a man. He remembered her, the beautiful blonde girl with the white skin and huge breasts, running toward him, throwing her arms around him, her thick blonde hair in his face, her slender little body in her arms, the small

of her perfume making him light headed, and then she'd kissed him, and then suddenly he was the blonde girl, and she was looking down at him, and he was no longer tired of being a man.

He had no idea what he was getting into, whether they would be here, or whether there were more of them. What if he ran into himself now? The thought scared him. He remembered the look in those eyes, the girl inside the man he'd been: anger, gloating, hate, and hunger. The last time he'd been here Joe had lost everything, and yet somehow he felt they could make it worse for him. She could make it worse for him.

Then, he remembered one of his favorite quotes from Joseph Campbell: The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure that you seek.

Joe clenched his little fists and walked down the alley, went to the rust old metal door, grabbed the handle and pulled, surprised that the door opened. The door opened into a dark hallway, but he could see light down the hall, could hear women talking in harsh, bitter voices. He came to the curtained entrance where he heard the voices, pushed the curtain aside and stepped into the stripper's dressing room. Two women with tired, aging faces sat at lighted mirrors, one doing her mascara, the other her lipstick. They looked at Joe through the mirror and the brunette said, "Look who's back."

“You work this night?” A red-head asked.

Joe was a little surprised at the reaction, paused, realized they were talking to him like he was Anastasia. “I just came to grab some stuff,” Joe said. “I think I left it here after my last shift.”

“You think?” Brunette asked, going back to her mascara.

“Wouldn’t you fucking know?”

What would Anastasia say? Joe wondered, and then said, “I’m such a blonde.”

“You again can say that,” Red said.

Brunette laughed, a harsh, smoker’s laugh that turned into a cough.

“Check your locker.”

She glanced toward a dilapidated shelf in the corner that had been divided into slanting cubes, and Joe went right to the one where he thought she had looked at, saw that someone had put a piece of tape with the name Assastasia on it, rolled his eyes. In the cube there was a purse sitting on top of a pile of neatly folded clothes. Joe reached for the purse, glancing back over his shoulder, but the women had gone back to their faces and seemed disinterested. Joe opened the purse, releasing a little cloud of perfume, the same perfume she’d worn the day she’d taken his body, and he dug around, found the wallet and snapped it open, to find a NY driver’s license with his

name: Anastasia Kasparov next to the picture of a smiling blonde girl.

Also, he saw her address on the license. A place in Harlem, not far from the club. Curiously, he looked in the billfold and saw it was crammed with 100s and 50s. Joe searched a little further, and he found her keys.

Joe put the wallet back in the purse—HIS purse, he reminded himself, then gathered up his pile of clothes-- lacey pink bra and panties, jeans and a thin little t-shirt. He thought about changing, putting on Anastasia's clothes, his clothes, walking out of the club as the woman he was determined to become, but decided against it instead heading toward the door, and—

A burly guy—six foot 4 at least and probably 300 pounds, stepped through the curtain and filled the doorway. Marko. The bouncer. Joe remembered him. They'd crossed paths a few times during Joe's days as a cop, and though Marko did a little dealing on the side he wasn't a real bad seed, but now he gave Joe the once over, and Joe immediately felt small and weak and pretty and most especially female.

Marko grunted, eyed the purse on Joe's shoulder. "Surprised to see ya here."

Joe, with his purse slung over his shoulder, his arms full of clothes, felt like he'd been caught stealing, and he flushed nervously under the big

man's gaze. What would Anastasia do? "Hi, Marko," he said, smiling as bright as he could manage. "Just came to get, um, my stuff."

"Yer stuff?"

"Yeah. You know. A girl needs her purse!"

"Post says you ain't you, Annie. Or is it Joe now?"

"Joe? Haha." Joe giggled, feeling trapped, wanting to run, but the only door was blocked by a 300 pound giant who looked like he could break Joe's little body in two with one arm. "Who believes what they read in the papers?"

"Come wit me," Marko said. "Just the same."

Joe didn't feel like he had any choice, so he just nodded and said, "Okay."

Marko wrapped one of his huge, calloused hands around Joe's slender forearm and led him down the hall. Joe felt tiny, small, weak and feminine next to the big man, helpless. "Where are we going?"

"Gonna see the boss."

Joe stopped, but Marko just dragged him along like he was made out of air. "Please," Joe said. "Just let me go. Please? I'm sorry I tried to steal Anastasia's purse, and I just really want to go and can't you please just let me

run out of here? Say I got away somehow.”

“No trouble,” Marko said. “Keep purse.”

They came to a cheap wooden door. Marko knocked. “Yeah,” a voice called, and Marko pushed open the door, dragging Joe in behind him then plopping Joe down into a chair across from Giraldi Libretto, a hood who run a string of strip clubs Harlem and The Bronx. Giraldi was a dark skinned, balding and bloated sausage of a man with a gold earring and a spotty goatee. His face lit up when he saw Joe.

“Hey, hey, hey, it’s my lucky day!”

“We just talk about you,” Marko said to Joe.

Joe clutched his purse to his chest, looking back and forth between the two men in confusion. “What? Me, me? Or Anastasia?”

Marko laughed. “You’re the girl the papers say was a guy, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Listen, I think we could make a killing, babe. I mean, serious money. People have been asking about you. You come back and strip, we can get all kinds of publicity, people coming up town to see the dude who got turned into a chick dance? I mean—real money, babe. So, let’s do it, right?”

“Me? Strip?” Joe clung to his purse, started to shake his head, but

then he thought-- I manifested this. My thought created this reality. I told the universe I was tired of being a husband and father, and now I am a woman. I just told the universe I needed a job, money, and now I get a job offer. It makes no sense, but it all makes sense. Do what Anastasia would do. And yet, he thought about all the guys down at the precinct, about them hearing he was shaking his tits and ass in a strip joint, having sweaty losers stuff money into his garters. He thought about his wife and how much she would love it knowing that he was there in a bra and panties, working the pole, and about Tony and what it would probably mean for them, of there even was a them. "No," he said. "No."

'Come on, honey. You can't believe how much money we'll make. Maybe it could be fun. You don't have to be afraid.'

Afraid. The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure that you seek.

Joe was afraid. Terrified. The thought of strutting out onto that stage, slipping out of his bra and standing in front of a room full of men, shaking his huge, soft white breasts, showing them his legs and ass and his gorgeous, female shape consumed him with terror and shame. I have to face this fear, he realized. I have to become the thing I fear. I am a woman, and I need to be a stripper.

Giraldi could see that girl was thinking about it, weakening, so he

softened his voice and said, “It’ll be classy. First rate. Nothing trashy.”

“Yes,” Joe said, feeling a sense of relief as he made the decision to do it, a feeling that told him this was the right path. “It would have to be.”

“So, you in?”

I am a strong, confident woman, Joe said to himself. I am a strong, confident woman. Joe crossed his legs, smiled, looked Giraldi right in the eyes and said, “Let’s talk about the money.”

Giraldi sat back, surprised, but a little impressed as well. “How about 2000 dollars?”

“How about I just walk out the door right now and offer my services to another club?”

“Okay. Okay. Well, well. You know how to negotiate.”

“Yes,” Joe said in his soft, pretty little voice. “Yes, I do.”

Joe found the address on Anastasia’s license, stood in front of the apartment door: 4E. He’d slung his purse over his shoulder and had her keys in his hand. Did she live alone? He knocked on the door. Nervous. Rang the bell. Waited. Slipped the key into the lock. It wouldn’t budge, so he jiggled it until the tumbler loosened, the deadbolt slid open with a dull thunk and he pushed open the door, reached in and felt around for the light switch, finding it and flipping on the lights.

Joe stood at the threshold to Anastasia's apartment, and his new life. It was a woman's apartment, feminine but he smiled with relief to see that it was not cute at all, but rather the apartment of a confident and—sexual—woman. On pedestals in the corners there were statues of male and female bodies passionately entwined. On the walls hung flat screen displays with glowing, shifting images of abstract art. The predominant colors were crimson and ivory, and the whole apartment celebrated soft, inviting curves and sophistication. A glassy little bar area filled most of one wall—glasses lined up on shelves above rows of bottles.

Joe walked in, set his purse down and did a little twirl in the middle of the living room, feeling excited. He'd come home. He went into the bedroom and found a queen-sized bed smothered in pillows, a silk quilt, a large painting in the manner of the Dutch Masters, all shadows and rich colors, hung above the bed: a man and woman spooning, their faces hidden in darkness, their pale skin glowing. Impossible, he thought, spotting a familiar looking red book on Anastasia's nightstand, and walking over he traced his fingers along the cover of *The Secret*, nodding. Of course. Anastasia had manifested the change as well. They had found each other and switched bodies, maybe even lives.

The apartment seemed musty, dusty, like no one had been here in a week or so, and looking around Joe saw no evidence of a roommate. So,

what does a girl like me do when she decides to spend a night in? He wondered. Probably watch television, right? He wanted to start living as her, and that meant dressing as her, and so Joe unbuttoned his flannel shirt— Tony's flannel shirt, and then pulled the t-shirt over his head. Then, he undid his belt, unbuttoned his jeans and let them fall to the ground, stepping daintily out of them, and then shedding the jockey shorts he'd been wearing. He stood nude in Anastasia's apartment, goose bumps on his soft skin, his nipples getting hard both from the cool air and the thrill of excitement and shame he felt, all of the old guilt and pleasure he'd once experienced as a boy at the thought of dressing as a girl, and actually found himself tip-toeing to the dresser nervously, as if he might be caught, and then sliding the top drawer open as quietly as he could, his eyes growing wide with excitement at the drawer full of dainty, candy colored panties. He reached in and touched them—so soft and smooth, so silky, just like his skin, and he started to dig through, picking up one pair after another, holding up the tiny little scraps of pretty fabric, until finally he found a pair in a pale, ice blue color with black lace trim that caused him to gasp with excitement and he knew he had to see himself in them, these would have to be his first panties. He stepped excitedly into them, pulling them up his legs and then wiggling his hips as he pulled them up, his breasts swaying, feeling the soft, cool fabric against his round behind and tight against his sex, and he felt a rush of excitement and

embarrassment at how right they felt.

He found Anastasia's—no HIS—bra drawer and began to sort through them, all so sexy and soft and SMALL! How could his boobs fit in such little things? He found a bra that seemed to match his panties and wiggled and jiggled and contorted himself into it, blushing and smiling like a goof as he scampered over to the mirror to see what he looked like, and he covered his mouth with his hands as he looked at his plush white body: his huge, soft breasts lifted and pressed together in that cold blue bra, and the little panties celebrating his wide, round hips and showing off every inch of his long, tone, dancer's legs. He saw the hint of the light blonde hair that had grown back on his white legs, and it actually looked kind of sexy to him, though he knew he would have to take of it before he got on stage and danced.

Mostly, Joe felt scared as he looked at his smooth round shoulders, slender little arms, tiny waist and round hips. I am hot, he thought. I am smoking hot. Guys are going to want to fuck me. It terrified him, the thought of being this woman, this gorgeous, sexy young woman, and he knew, again, that he had to face that fear, embrace this body and this reality and be the girl he'd made of himself.

He turned and looked at himself in profile—his round, firm dancer's ass, the little swerve leading up to his impossibly narrow waist and then the

generous swell of his breasts. He turned and looked back over his shoulder, at that perfect heart-shaped ass, the notch between his long legs, and he thought, “I look coming and going.” He adjusted his bra straps, his panties, then went back to the dresser. A girl like him probably had some comfortable clothes just to wear around the house—his wife had yoga pants and that kind of stuff. He opened a drawer and found nearly folded pairs of jeans, another and found t-shirts, and another drawer held sweat pants and sports bras and gym clothes.

Wondering what was in the long bottom drawer, he pulled it open and saw neatly folded sweaters, and then his mouth dropped open as he saw THEM. The bottom drawer had a divider. On the left were sweaters. On the right were dildos. “Oh lord,” he whispered in his soft voice, feeling a little thrill of excitement and also revulsion as he let his eyes play over the devices. Some were futuristic, looking like 1950s space ships, but two were, well, anatomically correct, right down to the veins along their rubber shafts.

“I’m a dirty girl,” Joe said, half wanting to just slam the drawer shut and try to forget what he’d just seen, but at the same time wanting to touch one. He’d always been a little grossed out by the thought of female self-service, as he liked to call it. It seemed crude to him, mannish and most of all had kind of offended him that women could make do with a chunk of plastic. Slitting his eyes, Joe reached out and touched one of the high-tech sex toys,

feeling a tingle in his fingers and breasts that scared him, and then he ran his fingers along the shaft of one of the more realistic looking—objects—and the giddy pleasure his body felt terrified him and he pushed the door shut and turned away as his nipples got hard and started poking through the soft material of his silk bra.

“Stop it!” He said to his boobs, holding them with his hands, trying to press his nipples down, flatten them, but the effort just made them hardened all the more, and now he felt himself getting a little wet, and the image of all those toys flashed in his mind and Joe shook his head and said looking down at his body said, “Ugh! Is all you ever think about sex?”

Joe was scared of these feelings, scared and grossed out, and his manhood railed against the thoughts and feelings as was furious that as the images of those things kept popping into his brain he started salivating, and he knew what he body wanted to do with his mouth right now, and he shook his head and said, “No. No. No.”

The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure that you seek?

The cave he feared to enter was between his legs, and for now, he decided, it was just going to have to hold onto its treasure because Joe DiPetro was not ready for THAT. Not yet. Maybe not ever.

Sitting down on his bed, knees together, still cupping his breasts, Joe

thought—this is going to be hard. So hard. He remembered back to before the change, how annoyed he'd been with band concerts and dance recitals, and parent teacher conferences and his wife, and he pictured her in her bra and panties, and seeing the need in her eyes, and he didn't feel attracted to her anymore, and love-making had become a chore, and he had been tired of being a man.

And now here he was sitting in his bra and panties, horny, female, lonely, and he thought back at that old self, the one who'd been tired of being a man and he said, "You dumbass. You had no idea how good you had it."

He pulled on pair of sweat pants and a soft track suit top—both Victoria's Secret, and then went out to the bar, fixed himself a drink and sipped himself into oblivion, his legs tucked under him, curled up in a corner of the couch watching a Walking Dead Marathon a TNT.

Joe woke, confused, waking up in a strange place for the first time. He panicked for a moment, then remembered finding Anastasia's ID, coming to live in her apartment, to live her life. His body ached. His head ached. His mouth tasted like rancid cotton. He saw the empty rocks glass on the table in front of the couch and his stomach lurched. He stumbled to the bathroom, pulled down his panties, sat down on the toilet and relieved himself, squirming uncomfortably as he ran his thumbs underneath his bra straps, lifting them and then trying to reposition his boobs in the little cups,

still feeling awkward and uncomfortable with that feminine contraption wrapped around his upper body.

He would have to get used to it, he reminded himself as he ran a wadded up piece of toilet paper between his legs. He had boobs, really big boobs, and he should have been wearing a bra the whole time. He had agreed to meet with someone back at the club and start working on a routine for his debut, so in the meantime, now what? He'd come here, decided to live his life as woman, but what was he supposed to do about that now? What did it even mean? Right now, he was hungry, and so he took a quick shower, dressed himself in pair of Anastasia's jeans and a sweater, both of which hugged his full, womanly curves unlike anything he'd worn since he'd become her. He was too hungry and hung-over to even think about heels, so he slipped into a pair of soft, warm UGGs and then found a form fitting jacket, grabbed his purse and headed out into the city, a young woman at last.

In the elevator, his phone buzzed. He'd tossed it into his purse, and now he dug through the stuff in there, Anastasia's old life, his new life—some interesting items including condoms, panties, makeup and tampons. Pulling out his phone, he swiped it on and saw that Tony had sent him a half dozen texts starting last night. You okay? You coming home? I'm getting worried. Joe felt touched until he got to the last few: You're being a bitch. CALL ME. Then, are you on the rag or something?

Asshole. Joe texted back: What, are you my wife? Can't I come and go as I please? There were other text messages from his mom, his sister, everyone asking where he was, was he okay. Crap. What the hell? He would text them all back when he got to a diner and had some food. His head pounded, and he didn't want to deal with the shit.

The elevator got to the last floor and the doors opened. A tall, handsome man gave Joe the once over, giving Joe chills, and then the man said, "I hope you don't mind me saying, but you are stunning."

Joe smiled, flushed and said, "Thanks." The man stood to the side to let Joe pass, but the hall was narrow and their bodies brushed against one another. Joe glanced back over his shoulder and caught the man checking out his ass. The man gave Joe a wink, then boldly let his eyes drift back to Joe's perfect little butt, and Joe walked out of the building feeling excited and confused and very conscious of his curves and the effect he was having on the men he passed on the street as he got glances and smiles and caught guy after guy checking him out. It was a little creepy having guys look him over, strange and wrong, and yet it also gave Joe a tingly new feeling of pleasure and pride.

## VII

Tony got the message from Joe. Asshole, he thought, seeing Joe

throw his words right back in his face. He almost texted back something nasty, but he set the phone down and decided to wait ten minutes, take some time to think it through. He had dark circles under his eyes. Hadn't slept all night. Had called Joe's mother looking for him, his ex-wife—Jesus, that had not gone well. He'd tried to sleep in his room, in his bed, but after tossing and turning for a couple hours, he'd gone out looking for Joe, finally getting home around 3am cold, tired, hoping, praying he'd find Joe curled up on the couch, pretty and safe and he'd thought that if Joe were there maybe he would just wake him up, take his hand and admit what had now become clear to him; he had fallen in the love with the woman Joe had become.

But when he'd gotten home—nothing. And so he'd lain down on the couch, closed his eyes and smelled Joe's scent, his new scent, and he'd felt angry and sad and lost at the thought that he'd lost the woman he'd loved, that Joe had been killed, or killed himself, or had been kidnapped and chained to the wall in some creepy psycho's basement.

Tony was worried, but picked up his phone, got ready to text, but then he saw the message from Joe: What, are you my wife? And he set the phone down. Hell, no. He decided, his ego getting the better of him. Let Joe make the next move. He wasn't going to let the little bitch get away with that shit.

Walking down Malcolm X Avenue, just a few steps from the Soul Food Diner, Joe felt his phone buzz. He'd shoved it in the pocket of his coat. Probably Tony, he thought. I should let the asshole stew. He went into the diner, got a table, ordered an Everything Omelet, and when the waitress, Shaniqua, according to her nametag, brought him a steaming cup of coffee, she'd smiled and said, "You cut your hair."

"Oh," Joe said, realizing the girl recognized him as Anastasia.  
"Yeah. Decided to go short."

"It looks really sexy," the girl said.

"Thanks, Shaniqua," he answered, surprised at how good it made him feel to get a compliment from another female. "Your smile is as bright as ever."

Shaniqua smiled even brighter at the compliment and went to see to another customer. Joe decided to see what stupid Tony had to say, pulled out his phone, but the message was actually another nervous message from his mother. He didn't feel like talking to her, but texted her back, told her he was fine, not to worry.

Shaniqua came back with his food, set it down and then lingered.  
"So, all that stuff in the papers?"

Joe thought about saying it was all a bunch of bull, that he was

Anastasia, but it seemed wrong, not part of being a strong girl at all, so he said, “All true. I used to be a man.”

“You don’t have her accent,” Shaniqua said, “but it just seems so impossible.”

“I feel the same way just about every morning when I wake up like this.”

“It’s like you are her, and you’re not her at the same time.”

“You said it.”

“Sometimes I wish I were a man,” Shaniqua confessed. “Which do you think is better?”

Joe chewed his food, swallowed. Shook his head. “I’m not sure yet.”

Joe ate, felt a little better, went home and took a nap. He woke up, muddled and feeling a little better still, but he only had an hour before he needed to be at the club, so he made some coffee, drank it down, checked his phone to see if Tony had sent any more messages about ten times, and each time he saw nothing he felt something turn in his stomach, but kept telling himself he didn’t care.

He had other things to worry about. Joe had always believed in doing his best, committing fully to whatever he decided to do, and now more

than ever he wanted to commit all in to making his show the best it could possibly be. If he was going to own this soft, curvy body, dive into this decision to be an “exotic dancer” and walk the path the universe had lay out for him, he was going to go all in and be the best the city had ever seen. So, grabbing a bunch of his gym clothes into a bag, grabbing his purse, he headed off to his first lesson nervous and scared but also determined to WORK!

The dance lesson did not go well. The woman Giraldi had hired was old and tired, an over the hill stripper who had no back-up plan. Tony walked in, giddy with excitement and nerves at his first lesson, and the woman had sat there on the edge of the stage, a cigarette dangling from her wrinkly lips, looked him up and down and frowned. “You the new bitch?”

“Excuse me?” Joe said, setting down his purse.

“You heard me.”

“Don’t ever call me a bitch.”

The woman laughed-- a hissing, serpent-like laugh. “What the fuck? Are you a princess or something?”

“Call me Joe.”

The woman’s face was wreathed in smoke, and she stared into Joe’s eyes, surprised this pretty little thing had so much steel in her. The two stared. Neither looked away. Finally, the woman said, “Joe?”

“Yes. Joe. You have a problem with that?”

“Weird name for someone with such big tits. That’s all.”

“Well, I used to be a man. What’s your name?”

“Jeanie.”

“Okay, Jeanie. Let’s start again?”

“Sure. Fine. Get on stage. I’ll tell you what to do for the show. You’ve never danced before?”

“No, the thing is, I was---“

“Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Beginner. Great. Like I don’t have other things to do. So, they’ll call your name. You come out from behind the curtain.”

“Should I change? I brought—“

“No. Just get on stage and get behind curtain.”

Joe stood there, nodding. “Okay.”

“Go. Do it.”

Joe went up on stage on got behind the curtain, and Jeanie called out, “Gentleman. Making her debut here at the – whatever this place is-- the sexy new girl, Joe!”

Joe walked out from behind the curtain.

“Now, walk around the edge of the stage.”

Joe did.

“Then, show them your ass. Grab pole. Take off your top and shake the tits. Done.”

“What?”

“Done.”

“That’s it?”

“It’s a strip show, not Dancing with the Stars.”

“Okay, well, you’re fired.”

“Fired?”

“Yes. Fired.”

“You can’t fire me. You’re just a stripper.”

“Oh, really.” Joe put his hands on his hips, made a decision and marched to Giraldi’s office, pushed it open without knocking and walked in as Giraldi looked up in surprise. “Jeanie’s out,” he said.

“What?”

“I’ll get my own choreographer.”

“Kid, this is just a strip show.”

“This is my strip show, and it’s going to be the best this club has ever seen or it won’t be at all.” Joe crossed his arms under his breasts and got ready for another confrontation. It was obvious he was going to have to let people know that just because he was a young woman they couldn’t push him around.

Giraldi shrugged. “Okay.”

“Okay? Wait. That’s it?”

“Yeah. Do what you want to do. I just want to make some money is all.”

“Well, good, then.”

“Anything else?”

Joe actually felt lost. He’d been so ready for a fight he wasn’t sure what to do, but he just shrugged and said, “I guess not.”

“You okay with me running some ads?”

“Sure,” Joe said, turning to leave. “More money for both of us, right?”

“That’s what makes the world go round, baby.” Giraldi smiled, watching Joe’s perfect ass as he walked out of the office. What a woman, he thought, thinking of the fire in his sexy gray eyes when he’d stormed into the

room. It's hard to believe she used to be a guy.

Things moved quickly, so quickly Joe couldn't doubt he was following the right path, because the universe just kept opening doors and pushing him forward into his new life. He found the perfect choreographer: Hailey Kind. She worked at Broadway Dance Center and had experience working with beginners, had done some work with the Pussycat Dolls and knew burlesque. She didn't read the Post, hadn't heard about the Switch, so it took some convincing, but Joe talked her into it and soon found himself spending every afternoon in tights and a sports bra spinning on his toes, pirouetting, slipping down into a perfect split, learning all about his strong, lean, flexible new body. He went in for a bikini waxing, knowing that a woman like him would want to stay smooth, and he spent his nights practicing dancing and walking in heels, feeling stronger and more confident with each step and stride perched up on one, two, three inches, getting used to all the looks and glances from guys.

Day by day, Hailey pushed and praised him. His body had been trained, the muscle memory was there, but a lot of what she had to do was work on his attitude and confidence. "You're an amazing girl," she would say. "An incredible woman." Joe had wanted to close the curtain in the rehearsal room, cover the mirror so he wouldn't have to look at himself, but Hailey had refused, forcing him to look at himself as he warmed up at the

barre, and practiced his routine, and so he watched himself, his slender white arms and full breasts, his long legs, his smiling, pretty face, and the lingering man in him would get turned on seeing how hot he was, and the female that he had become felt a growing sense of pride as her moves became more graceful, and she saw how beautiful she was, and strong, and she was pleased she was becoming such an incredible dancer.

"We're knocking the boy right out of you," Hailey said at the end of the first week of practice, hugging Joe's sweat slick body, giving him a little kiss on the cheek.

"Really?" Joe asked.

"Don't play modest, sweetheart. I know you can see it."

"Yeah," Joe agreed. "I can see it."

"And how does it make you feel to know you are moving less and less like a boy every day?"

"Awesome," Joe said, smiling brightly. "Because I'm not one anymore."

"Are you ready to start rehearsals with the rest of the dancers for you big finale?"

"I can't wait," Joe said with a smile. "It'll be my first time dancing with guys."

## IX

Still nothing from Tony. And the more Joe missed him the more determined he became to move on, forget about him. I have a new life now, Joe thought, and I could get almost any guy I want. Why settle for a beat cop?

He'd found himself thinking about men more and more. Checking them out. His body had ideas. Urges. Needs. He couldn't deny the feelings, but he didn't feel ready to walk that path just yet. He wanted to get through his first show, face that fear, see what that life felt like, and then maybe he would see what it was like to have a man. Sometimes he had to seek relief with his dildos, but that wasn't even enough. More and more, when he slept, he dreamt of men, kissing him, holding him, thrusting into him. The day was going to come, he knew, when he would have to let it happen.

Then one day as he was leaving his dance rehearsal, his gym bag over his shoulder, a slick but kind of sketchy guy was waiting outside. "Joe? Joe DiPetro?"

"Yeah?" Joe shifted his bag. He was wearing high-heeled knee boots that hugged his perfect calves, a tight pair jeans, a little leather jacket that hugged his breasts and showed off his tiny waist.

The man held out a card. “You are a hard – person—to get ahold of. Do you have a minute to talk business?”

It was cold. There were snow flurries. Joe started to shake his head. “Why don’t you give me a card, and I’ll be in touch?”

A card seemed to appear in the guy’s hand, like a magician’s trick, and Joe looked down and saw the words “Hustler Magazine,” even as the guy said, “There’s a great coffee shop right around the corner.”

Joe took the card and looked at the word Hustler, remember that long ago day when as a young boy he’d seen his first naked breasts in the pages of Hustler Magazine. He remembered how excited he’d been, seeing that smiling girl with those perfect boobs and hard nipples, and he imagined her now with his new face, and he saw himself in the pages of that magazine, and he felt the same shock of fear and he knew that this, too, was meant to be, so he took the card, smiled and said, “Let’s talk.”

Life seemed to accelerate. He signed a contract for the photo shoot; he would be posing the day after his first show at the club, and the word got out, there were reports about it on the TMZ website. Giraldi bought ad space in the Post, put up a billboard with pictures of Joe in a corset—pictures of before this was his body—and then Giraldi called Joe one day on the phone and said, “We gotta move the show.”

“What?”

“Too much demand, kid. I’m getting get the Hammerstein Ballroom. We put two thousand people in there.”

“Two thousand?” That’ll be, what? 100,000 dollars?”

“Per night, plus booze. I can sell out three nights if you’ll do it.”

“You’re sure you can sell out three nights?”

“All I need is for you to say yes, kid.”

“Then, yes,” Joe said. “I can’t think of a reason to say no.”

“That’s what I was hoping to hear.”

## X

The woman who walked into Brinkman’s office did not seem like the same man. She, he, was wearing tight clothes that showed off her curves, earrings, light make-up. She slid a purse of her shoulder and sat down smoothly, crossing her long legs and then looking at Brinkman with a playful smile on her stunningly beautiful face. Delicate bracelets flashed at her slender wrists. “Hey, doc,” she said in that small, sexy voice. “Surprised?”

“Yes,” Brinkman admitted. “Wow. Surprised, and impressed. So, what’s happened to you?”

Joe crossed his arms under his breasts and said, “I decided to become a stripper.”

“A stripper? That’s a good thing?”

Joe told her about his trip to the strip club. The job offer. His belief in The Secret and manifesting realities and the fact that he’d been tired of being a man, that he believed he had secretly wanted this body and this life, and that from the moment he’d decided to embrace his existence as a woman things had started to just come to him—the shows at the Hammerstein, the photo shoot for Hustler. “This is who I needed to be,” he said. “A strong, powerful, sexual woman.”

“Do you feel at all strange about letting men exploit you as a sex object?”

“They aren’t exploiting me,” Joe said. “I’m exploiting them.”

“How does NYPD feel about all this? What about your wife?”

“Who cares? I’m not a cop anymore. I’m not her husband. I’m not even a man. I’m a 20 year old woman. Biology is destiny, right? I’m not going to dwell in the past. I’m not going to be a victim. I’m living in the now.” He glanced down at his breasts. “I’ve become my own fantasy woman, Doctor Brinkman, and I love it.”

“So why are you here? The fit to work report is meaningless if you

don't want to be a cop anymore.”

“I just wanted to say goodbye, doc, and to thank you for helping me accept my new life and body.”

“Well,” Brinkman answered, totally caught off guard by what was happening. “My door is always open, Joe. If you want to talk about anything.”

“I appreciate that.” Joe stood, strode confidently over and shook Brinkman’s hand. “If you want to see the show I can comp you a ticket.”

Brinkman looked into Joe's big, pretty gray eyes, let her eyes drop to his full breasts, proudly displayed in a tight, white angora sweater, looked back up into his smiling face. His flowery perfume filled her head and made her a little woozy. “Yes. I would love to see your, um, show.”

Joe smiled. “I’ll leave a ticket for you at Will Call.”

Brinkman felt herself trembling when Joe left. He had started to move and talk more like a woman, but at the same time there were lots of lingering masculine traits to his mannerisms. He did not seem like a man trapped in a woman's body anymore, but much more like a woman who was just a little butch, and yet knowing that he had been a man, and that he was now slipping into a bra and a tight little angora sweater, strutting about in heels, it was her fantasy come true: Salmacis, man and woman fused into one

form.

Joe might have struggled more, but he'd found a way to avoid the struggle: Keeping busy. It prevented Joe from thinking about any of the strands of the past that he sometimes felt tugging at him—his mother and sisters, who'd become very interested in seeing him when they'd seen the report in TMZ, which shitty gossip site they lived for and the fact that it was now reporting that he was a woman and that it was making him famous seemed to have erased all resistance they had to the idea. Plus, he figured they probably wanted to borrow money. He didn't miss the precinct much, didn't feel like he belonged in that world, and though the aching need to hold his kids sometimes overcame him, and he sometimes missed them to the point of tears, he found that throwing himself into his work—practicing his dance routine, or reading up on and learning more about make-up, took his mind off them, one of only two things he'd lost that he really missed.

The other was Tony. Tony still nagged at him. He couldn't believe that Tony hadn't called. Still. How the hell could he have the nerve? And Joe wanted to call him, see him, tell him all about his routine and how great the show was going to be, and his new life and he wanted to kiss him and hug him and...

But no. Tony would have to make the first move. There was no way Joe was going to do it. He was a strong, powerful woman, and he wasn't

going to go crawling on his knees to some asshole who called him a bitch and accused him of being on the rag just because he stood up for himself.

I can get a guy anytime I want, Joe said. I can get a guy way better than Tony. It was true, too. Joe had seen many beautiful women during his time in New York, and so he knew what it was like for a man in the presence of one, but now he was finding out what it was like to be a gorgeous female and the way men reacted-- some got a little shy, some stared, some got aggressive, but no one ignored him. No one. And he quickly found that he liked it that way. The creepy uncomfortable feeling he'd gotten at first when he caught a guy looking him over, mentally undressing him, had now been replaced by a feeling of strutting pride and power.

And yet he didn't.

He kept exploring his body, using his collection of sex toys to release tension, watching videos, getting ideas, learning all about what turned him on, the pleasure he could get playing with his clit, and of course the impossible glory of that shaft inside him. He played with his breasts, sometimes Googled Hugh Jackman and looked at his hard, muscular body while he reached down between his own legs and touched himself. He was a woman now, and he loved and needed the things a straight woman needed, but he just wasn't ready to go all the way with a man just yet.

And then, suddenly, it was the day of the show. His big debut. He'd worked very hard putting together and learning his routine, and Giraldi had lined up a bunch of top strippers from around the city to fill out the evening, and Joe woke up and felt scared, terrified, worried that he would screw up, that people would hate the show, or that they would love the show, would love seeing his slender white body, his big tits and tight ass, his long legs, that they would want more and he would be forever drawn into this new life.

What if I hate it? What if I love it?

Part of him, of course, wanted to back out, to run back to Brinkman crying and tell her it had all been a mistake, that he was a husband and father, a man, and that he had been out of his mind to even consider dancing. But that was all just fear talking, and it wasn't true. Joe didn't feel like a man anymore or a father. Didn't want to go back to that life. He was a young woman, and he wanted to dance and show the world that he was a brave girl who would never let fear stop her from doing anything.

Joe stood behind the curtain running through his routine in his mind. The act before him was just finishing up, and the two girls came through the curtain as the audience cheered politely, smiles still plastered on their pretty faces. "You guys were awesome!" Just gushed, and the girls smiled and wished him luck. Joe slipped on his sunglasses and adjusted his costume, a leather police uniform that hugged his curves, and stiletto heeled boots on his

feet. and then the music stopped and all the lights in the arena went dark.

“And now,” the MC called out in a deep, syrupy voice, “the moment you’ve all been waiting for. Officer Joseph DiPetro!” The crowd started clapping, whistling. “A six year veteran of the NYPD, he is now the sexiest, the hottest, the sluttiest little dancer in the city, and if you don’t believe it, let him know you want to see him take it off!” Joe felt sick with nerves, wanted to run out, but they had planned a big entrance, and as lasers started to light and flash around the room, the crowd started clapping and stomping, shouting, “Take! It! Off! Take! It! Off!”

“He want you to bring it louder!” The MC screamed. “Harder! Harder!”

The first, deep dark chords of the Black Sabbath song "Iron Man" blasted over the system. It was a nod to Joe's old life, his time as a boy, and he felt chills now at the sound of on the system, the energy in his slender shape as he prepared to display himself to the world as a woman.

The audience got louder, louder, rising into even more of a frenzy, and then Joe took a deep breath, whispered, “I manifested this. I am a strong, powerful woman, and this is my moment.” As the first power chords of the song hit, Joe burst through the curtain and strutted to the center of the stage, twirling a billy club and a pair of handcuffs that caught the lights and flashed

in the darkness. He felt the roar of the audience, the gritty masculine howl of sex-starved males, and his whole body flashed with heat, his skin tingling as he basked in the attention, the thrill of being a young woman so desired and so powerful, and he thought, just wait until I start to strip, boys! He was frowning, grim, strutting around the stage like a dominatrix, and the audience raved, and then Joe slipped the Billy Club between his legs and began to thrust his hips back and forth, and the men howled even louder.

It wasn't just men. Brinkman was on her feet, cheering, and she was not alone. The crowd was at a quarter female, and they were cheering Joe on just as loudly, some of them making high-pitched squealing noises. Joe was sheathed in a skin tight, leather cop outfit that hugged his full, round ass and the swell of his breasts, and he was strutting around as confident and bold as a lioness, and then when he started to work the billy club Brinkman heard the crowd roar and she clapped and thought-- I can't believe he'd doing this. As the heavy metal music continued to shake the room, Joe dropped the club and the handcuffs, turned his back to the audience and reaching down ripped off his pants, showing everyone his perfect, heart shaped ass, the tiny scrap of a ice blue g-string rising up from between those perfect cheeks. Then he started to shake it side to side in rhythm with the music, spun effortlessly in his heels and then dropped into a split most of the women couldn't do on their best day.

Tony was also in the audience. He had a baseball cap on and the collar on his coat turned up, and he'd had a few too many drinks, and now as he watched Joe up there, that perfect, round, white ass, he felt himself sick with desire and regret. Seeing Joe up there in that stunning body, boldly showing off to the world what a perfect specimen of woman he'd become, it drove him crazy in ways he'd never expected, and when Joe finally ripped off his top and stood up there shaking his breasts in that little blue bra, Tony had gulped down the rest of his drink and shook his head, stunned. Joe was so white, so slender, and yet his full, white breasts so big, so firm, it was too much. Too much. He had some kind of glitter on his skin that periodically caught the light and flashed, and his soft skin jiggled and bounced as lifted those tiny, delicate arms above his head and spun and shook his hips and breasts and the crowd went insane, insane with desire for this female his friend had become.

Joe suddenly wrapped his long legs around the brass stripper pole as "Iron Man" ended and he clung to the pole as a new song started to play, techno beats and a woman singing:

Nice to meet you

Where you been?

I could show you incredible things

Magic, madness, heaven, sin

Saw you there and I thought oh my god

Look at that face, you look like my next mistake

A group of buff, shirtless men strode out onto the stage and behind them all the girls who'd danced earlier, and two of the guys lifted a smiling Joe up onto their shoulders and carried him to the edge of the stage, setting him down, and they started to wrap their arms around him, writhing in time to the music, while Joe ran his hands over their hard, glistening bodies.

Tony and Brinkman both shook their heads, both felt their mouths go dry as the man they both knew as Tony found himself sandwiched between two studs, one grinding against his ass while the other rubbed up against his breasts, making him seem small and vulnerable, and yet it was obvious this gorgeous female was the one calling the shots, and then Joe pushed them away and suddenly he was gathering one of the girls into his arms and they were dancing together, twirling across the floor before Joe pulled her in, bent her backwards and kissed her hard on the mouth:

You can tell me when it's over

If the high was worth the pain

Got a long list of ex-lovers

They'll tell you I'm insane

Cause you know I love the players

And you love the game

And now Joe was dancing, twirling, going from guy to girl to guy, and the other dancers were starting to dance together, grind and kiss, and Joe was their queen, rising up on the pole, wrapping those long white legs around the pole and holding court as the dancers on the stage danced out a mock orgy, and now some of the guys were wearing bras and some of the girls had strap-ons and then some of the guys emerged from the mass of bodies with long, flowing hair and hoop earrings and some of the female dancers seemed to have suddenly gotten short, boyish hair, and who was a he or she blurred and mixed and the whole stage was just a writhing mass of unbridled confused and glorious sexual passion.

Screaming, crying, perfect storms

I could make all the tables turn

Rose garden filled with thorns

Keep you second guessing like oh my god

Who is she? I get drunk on jealousy

But you'll come back each time you leave

Cause darling I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream

The song ended. The stage went black. The crowd cheered and cheered, and then a single spotlight came on, at first focused on an empty spot on the stage, and then it seemed to search until it finally fell on a tall,

white goddess. She was standing there now, Joe was standing there now, with one slender arm across his breasts, and one hand covering his vagina, his knees together in mock modesty, and he had a wreath of flowers in his hair, all a homage to the Venus de Milo. He had his head down, and he stood there posing as cameras flashed in the audience like a thousand stars, and the crowd cheered for the woman he had become.

## XI

Tony picked up his phone, and he typed out a text, then paused, reading it again and again, his heart pounding in his chest. Was it too much? Would it scare Joe off? Creep him out? Maybe, Tony decided. But if he didn't send it, he risked losing Joe forever, and he couldn't let that happen without at least making an effort. Then, he remembered an old saying: A picture is worth a thousand words, so he took a selfie and pushed SEND.

Joe saw the text and immediately started crying. It was a picture of Tony, a selfie, and his face was haggard, unshaven, his eyes glassy and red, like he'd been crying, and at the sight of the man, obviously so heartbroken, and the courage he'd shown in revealing himself like this, letting Joe see this

sensitive and vulnerable side of him, just pushed all kinds of Joe female buttons, and he found himself crying uncontrollably, his tears pouring down his cheeks and landing in his coffee.

“Oh my God,” Shaniqua said, hurrying over. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Joe managed through the tears. “It’s just... I got in a fight with my... boyfriend? And he sent me this: he held up the picture of Tony’s desperate face and Shaniqua practically swooned.

“Girl,” Shaniqua said, handing Joe some napkins to dry his tears. “That boy loves you.”

“I think that’s why I’m crying,” Joe answered, dabbing his tears. “I didn’t know till just now. What should I do?”

"Go to him."

"Maybe I should..."

"Now."

"Okay." Joe stood, smiled, hugged Shaniqua. The thought of loving Tony scared him more than anything, more than being a woman, stripping, posing for Hustler. More than death. And so he knew he had to do it.

He raced to the subway, hurried down the steps, just managed to leap through the closing doors as the 1 train was leaving the station. Too soon, he found himself standing at the threshold of Tony's apartment,

touching up his lipstick, shoving his compact back into his purse, adjusting his boobs, and then he reached out with one small hand and knocked.

The door opened. Tony saw Joe, and his face opened up into the most beautiful smile, and his eyes filled with joy, and Joe threw himself into the man's arms, pressing his breasts against him, and without even asking Joe put a hand behind Tony's head and pulled him in for a long, sensual, and perfect kiss.

The clung there in each other's arms, looking into each other's eyes, enjoying the feeling of being together, holding their bodies against one another, and they felt like they had finally found love, that everything was as it was meant to be, and that they would be together forever. Neither could know what was about to happen, that their time would be so limited. Joe giggled, took Tony by the hand, and led him into the bedroom. The two young lovers stripped down and Joe climbed on top of Tony, put his soft hands on Tony's hard chest and then lowered himself down onto Tony's stiff member, feeling his whole body, from his swaying breasts all the way to his curled toes, sing with pleasure as he took the man he loved inside of himself. No, neither knew that their love was doomed, would end before it really ever could get started, and that was not the beginning, but the end.

