

IN TRAINING

By Sofronia Anne Strong



ILLUSTRATED BY ONNA LEE

TWO 'HER TV' STORIES

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UNCLE GWEN'S DIARY

By Sofronia Anne Strong

Introduction

I had known my Dear Aunt Gwendolyn my whole life. She is the dearest, sweetest lady you could hope to know. She was forever kind and good to me and always said I was her favorite nephew. What I didn't know until recently is that Aunt Gwendolyn was really my Uncle Glen.

That's fascinating because no one but me seems to know that Aunt Gwendolyn wasn't really a lady. In fact, I would defy anyone to figure that out because my Uncle was the most feminine, fashionable, stylish lady you could ever expect to meet. How this bizarre situation came about is something I discovered by accident when I stumbled upon Aunt Gwendolyn's diary.

Even she never knew that I had it. She had often complained that she was sorry to have lost her diary some years ago. I never told her that I found it in a secret cubby hole in her roll top desk. I suppose she forgot that was where she had put it. Once I got a look at it I didn't dare tell her that I had it, so I just let her continue to think it was lost.

Colonel Gwendolyn Sharps passed away and was buried in the military cemetery with full honors after a distinguished career that began as a lieutenant in the WAACS during World War II and ended as a consultant to the Army at the time women were integrated into it. The amazing truth about Aunt Gwen was that she blended so perfectly the efficiency, crispness and authoritative style of the military officer with the grace, charm and beauty of an accomplished lady. This amazing synthesis of styles was often commented upon in the family. Col. Gwen could command a regiment with perfect authority and then turn about and charm her way through a dinner dance or a tea with all the grace and feminine charm of a Southern Belle. The mystery of the art resolved for me only when I learned, from her youthful diary, about my Uncle Glen's unusual experiences as a boy at the Shadrack Academy.

My family will probably anathematize me for publishing this diary but my Aunt's career was so distinguished, she was so decorated and so highly esteemed that I do think her unusual life deserves an accounting, at least insofar as the forces that created her are concerned.

Her later life is well enough documented, but the Shadrack Academy years are long gone now, as is Gwendolyn and, I am sure, gone also are the methods they used to transform the unruly, ill-tempered, delinquent Glen Sharps into Col. Gwendolyn Sharps, U.S. Army; the stylish, charming, gracious, and loving Auntie whom I remember. I have copied the diary, which was written in pencil in a cheap notebook, faithfully, I think, insofar as I could make out the nearly illegible handwriting. I think Glen

was under a great deal of stress when he wrote much of it. I am sure, also, that for some reason he wanted to make a full record of what was happening in his life. It is clear that he was motivated to some degree by the desire to use that record to right wrongs which he felt were being done to him. It is also clear that he later chose to keep it all to himself for good reason.

I have never met any of the others who underwent the training that Glen did, although there were obviously many others over the period from 1869 to 1981, some of them presumably still alive. Other contemporary graduates of Shadrack Academy whom I have interviewed, or tried to interview, simply deny that the Academy ever operated an Auxiliary Corps.

With the School gone I suppose they find it convenient to disremember it, especially if they were ever assigned to it. Denial is a powerful tool and more widely practiced than we admit. I have been able to learn that the Auxiliary Corps at Shadrack was first organized shortly after the Civil War. It is clear that it was among the Academy's oldest traditions. Shadrack was mainly a military academy for the taming of the scions of wealthy families desperate to straighten out their arrogant and unruly boys. The worst of these usually wound up as Cadet Missys, at least for a while.

Here, then, is the story of my Uncle/Aunt's early life in military school.

Dr. James Sharps, Ph.D.

Dean, Wexlee College

Sharps Center, VA.

December, 1992.

September 10, 1938

Dear Diary:

I have been here for four days and this is the first chance I have had to start writing anything down, but I don't know how much chance I'll get to do this. They keep me tied up, really, almost all the time. If they catch me doing this I'm sure something awful will happen, but I want to make a record. I may need it. Anyway I can only write like this before the morning bell and I have to do it under the covers. Someday I'll get even when I can smuggle this record out of here.

I didn't want to come here at all. Mom was always nice about everything and said boys will be boys and I was just high-spirited. I like that, but when I smashed the chair over the high school principal's head and almost killed the S.O.B., Dad said he was washing his hands of me. It didn't help when I stole the car out of the school parking lot to make my getaway and racked it up against a tree. I guess I totaled it. If it weren't for Mom, I don't think Dad even would have bailed me out of jail and I'd still be there.

The county prosecutor had demanded a long prison sentence in Juvenile Hall when I went to the hearing in the Judge's chambers. He charged aggravated assault, attempted murder, destruction of school property, grand theft auto and damage to public property. I figured I was in for a long stay. It didn't seem to make any difference

when I told them the principal was wrong when he said I had to do detention for stealing books from the library when I hadn't.

I hate that, being accused of something I didn't do. I mean, sure, I lost my temper, but wouldn't anyone? Dad had always said my temper would get me in real trouble some time, and I guess he was right, but Mom said I'd grow out of my tantrums. I didn't outgrow them soon enough, I guess. It was all so dumb, and they all just wanted to give me a bad time. A guy has to defend himself, you know. I figured I was on my way to Juvenile Hall. That terrified me. I had heard horror stories about that place and the prosecutor demanded that I be sent there until I was eighteen. I knew a kid who spent some time there for stealing cars and he said they beat the kids all the time just for the fun of it.

The Judge was pretty good, though. She said she hated to see a boy of fourteen from a good family ruin his life so young. She said she would prefer that we find an alternative to Juvenile Hall, but insisted they put me somewhere safe.

After Dad agreed to pay the principal's medical bills, and for the chair, and the guy's car, and the tree in the park, the Judge said she respected his desire to make things right, but she wanted to know what he was going to do about me. At that point they took me back to Juvenile Detention and the next thing I knew I was back home, under house arrest, until September.

Dad's alternative was Shadrack Academy. That scared me too. I had heard of some guys who went there and I'd heard this place was rough. All the bad kids with money seemed to wind up in Shadrack, but the alternative was years in Juvenile Hall and that, the folks told me, was out of the question. They said they didn't want the stain on the family's reputation. I don't wonder. It looks like they just wanted me out of their hair and didn't want people to know I was in kiddy jail.

Sure, they told me I couldn't qualify for the regular Academy so I was being assigned to the Auxiliary Corps, but no one gave me a hint what that really meant. I didn't find out until I got here last Monday and saw the name on my admission papers.

There it was in print, "Auxiliary Cadet Missy Gwendolyn Sharps."

I found out fast what that meant when I was escorted from the Bursar's office right past the cadet barracks to the Commandant's house.

The two guys escorting me snapped to attention when Madame Headmistress came into her office. She's the Commandant's wife, but that's what I was told to call her. She sent them packing right away and I knew in a minute that there was going to be trouble because I felt the same rage I had in the principal's office when he said I stole the books. She stood behind her desk and called me Auxiliary Cadet Missy Gwendolyn.

That got me mad. Then she said that with my juvenile crime record it was apparent that I was no gentleman.

That made me madder. So, she tells me that Shadrack Academy is for the making of officers and gentlemen and only gentlemen can enroll, so I can't be admitted.

Now I'm confused and mad so she makes it worse.

She says there are only gentlemen and ladies at Shadrack and because I'm no gentleman I'm going to have to be a lady for a while to prove I can behave. That's what the Auxiliary Corps is all about, she says. When cadets aren't gentlemen they get sent to her so they can be ladies for a while. Me, she says, I get to go up to the Academy after I've shown her what a nice little lady I've become. Ladies, she says, never lose their tempers. It isn't ladylike.

That's when I got all the way mad and told her to shove it. My name was Glen and I was a boy and she could take her Auxiliary Corps and stick it. At least I didn't throw anything, like before at school.

Madame Headmistress just stood there, all cool, staring at me with a mean smile on her face and not saying a thing until this big, six foot woman, the Head Housekeeper, came in behind me and twisted my arm in a breakhold. I didn't see her coming. She turned me around and slammed me face first into the wall.

Then the Colonel's wife says, "You are Auxiliary Cadet Missy Gwendolyn Sharps and I am your Commanding Mistress. You will be in my charge until I recommend you to the Academy. While you are in my charge you will be docile, obedient and cooperative. You are to show me that you are a lovely girl and a charming little lady. You have your orders. Do you understand?"

The Head Housekeeper twisted my arm until I hollered and she whispered in my ear, "Say, 'Yes, Madame Headmistress,' or I break it."

I spoke the words, but I didn't mean them.

"I think you need to cool off a bit, Missy Gwendolyn. Astrid, you had better take our pretty Missy down to the Coal Hole until she can cool down and come to her senses."

That was four days ago. Four days in that dark hole down in the basement was pretty bad, but the Housekeeper said I was going to stay there until I was ready to apologize to the Madame Headmistress and start off on a better foot. They can call me Gwendolyn if they want, but I'm still going to be Glen. I don't know what they're going to do to me today, but I guess I'll have to tell the lady I'm sorry and then let them do whatever they like, or I'll be back in the Coal Hole again.

Astrid said if I go back it'll be worse the next time. Astrid said they'd keep me there until I behaved. I guess I could just stay there but I can't stand the dark all the time.

Sept. 11th

Dear Diary:

I'm not sure I shouldn't have stayed in the Coal Hole. It was so scary down there in the dark, alone. I couldn't see or hear anything except when the Housekeeper came with food and water and to take my bucket and empty it. I began to see things and thought I was going crazy. I couldn't really stand up in there and when I lay down I couldn't stretch out either, so I suppose I had to get out of there, but I'm not sure I haven't gone from bad to worse. This is pretty dreadful too.

Astrid (I'm not supposed to call her that. I'm supposed to call her "Madame Head Housekeeper," but you don't care what I call her, do you?), she said she'd let me out if

I understood what Madame Headmistress had told me and she said if I misbehaved she'd put me right back, so I said OK. So this morning she marches me into the Headmistress' office and holds one hand behind me and tells me if I don't behave she'll break my arm in an instant. What happened went pretty much like this:

"Who is this dirty, disheveled boy, Astrid?"

"This is Auxiliary Cadet Missy Gwendolyn Sharps, Madame."

"Oh, yes, it's that horrid new creature I sent to the Coal Hole, isn't it? I had almost forgotten. What have you to tell me, you Wretched Twit?"

Astrid gave my arm a slight twist. She had coached me on what to say to stay out of their dungeon.

"I'm sorry, Madame Headmistress. I lost my head and just didn't think." Astrid's slight twisting told me I had to go on. "I'll never be naughty again. I'll always be nice and I'll always do as you say. I apologize and I'll try to be good."

The tall, thin, angular Headmistress smiled at me and finally decreed. She lifted one, long, dark arched eyebrow.

"We'll see. Remember, obedience, docility, cooperation and compliance, always. I have to know that you know that."

"Yes, Madame Headmistress, obedience, docility, cooperation and compliance. Yes, Ma'am, I'll be sure to do that." Astrid gave my arm another little twist and I remembered what else she told me to say. "I know it is an honor to be a member of the Auxiliary Corps and it is for my own good, Ma'am. I really want to be Auxiliary Cadet Missy Gwendolyn, if it pleases you, Madame Headmistress."

She sat down and scowled at me.

"That's very nice, but I'm afraid your outburst on Monday makes that quite out of the question. You will have to begin at a lower level. I misjudged you when you came here. You are not fit to be even a little lady. You will have to earn that privilege now."

A long silence filled the room. I didn't know what she meant. She began to shuffle papers and make notes. I fidgeted and Astrid kept a firm grip on my wrist. I turned my head and looked up at her but she just glared down at me.

Finally the Headmistress looked up from her desk and addressed the Head Housekeeper.

"I haven't time to spend managing the servants, Astrid. They are your responsibility. This Twit is in your charge. Put it to work and don't bother me with it again. You can use it as an in-between-maid, I am sure."

"Certainly, Madame. Thank you, Madame." Astrid dropped a curtsey and steered me out the door and marched me back to a tiny room behind the kitchen. It contained an iron cot, some pegs on the wall and a small dresser and chair. On one wall was a washstand with a mirror.

"You're all I need. A damn Tweeny to keep track of. Now you've done it. I didn't expect to have you on my hands. Now I'll tell you something, Missy. The sooner you become the perfect Tweeny, the sooner I'm rid of you, so listen up good and get it right

the first time. Don't say anything to anyone but me and then you say, 'Yes, Madame Head Housekeeper,' and 'No, Madame Head Housekeeper,' and when I tell you to do something, you say, 'Thank you, Madame Head Housekeeper,' and you do it. And curtsy when you are spoken to. You'd better be the perfect Tweeny quick or I'll fix you so you'll wish you were back in the Coal Hole. Got it? Now strip! Get starkers, fast!"

"Yes, Madame Head Housekeeper, thank you, Madame Head Housekeeper," I said, weakly and started tearing my clothes off. Man, was I scared.

Astrid Bogner is at least six feet tall and blonde, and wears her hair coiled in two braids on the sides of her head. Her uniform is a black silk dress with a V-shaped lace collar and cuffs and she wears black oxfords with blocky high heels that make her even taller. She wears this chain around her waist with all the keys on it. She'd be very good looking if she weren't so scary. I am sure she can break me in two without trying very hard.

And I don't even know what a Tweeny is.

Sept. 12

Dear Diary:

I know what a Tweeny is now. She is a girl of all work, everybody's dog. A Tweeny is so low that I don't even have a name anymore. They all call me, "You, Girl," or "Twit," or just "Tweeny." The cook, the parlor and upstairs maids, the whole staff orders me around and I have to do everything all of them say, and curtsy and smile and do it and if I've done everything I've been told and haven't had another order I'm supposed to stand in the corner of the kitchen, facing the wall and wait to be told what to do.

If the cook drops a knife she tells me to pick it up. If the parlor maid wants her apron tied I am made to do it. I even have to tie their shoes for them, and they all think it's so damn amusing to order the Tweeny around. I do all the scullery work, the dishwashing and kitchen cleaning and anything else any of them don't want to do. They just order the Tweeny to do it. I don't have a moment's peace or rest from 5:00 AM when the cook comes in, until after they all go to bed. When the cook comes in I have to be in the kitchen, dressed and already standing in my corner waiting.

If they don't kill me with work they are going to drive me crazy. Astrid said that I have a bad temper and I'm supposed to learn to get over it, which is why I have to learn to obey and serve. I feel like a marionette, and I have to do it all in this ghastly uniform Astrid put me in.

After I had all my clothes off this morning Astrid ordered me out of my cubicle to fetch her switch, which she said was on the kitchen counter. Naked in front of the whole staff I had to walk out into the kitchen and fetch it and bring it to her. Then with the door open she beckoned to the parlor maid. She went out and came back carrying several boxes: The boxes contained my uniform which she laid out on the bed. I covered myself with my hands, but she switched them and told me to stand up straight.

"Thank you, Sylvia," she said, and turned to me handing me a white cotton ruffled undervest. "Get dressed, Twit. Start with your camisole. If you think being a Tweeny is comfortable, forget it. With the tip of her switch she picked up a strange canvas garment from which some strings dangled. "Put it around your waist and lace it up, Girl."

I tell you, it took some figuring out, but I finally got it straight. It was a stiff, coarse corset with vertical stays and laces up the front. I got the laces into all the eyes and tied it at the top. I felt really silly and embarrassed in the thing and realized I couldn't bend at the waist and when I leaned over to have the back laces tightened the point on its front poked me in my privates, so I have to stay erect all the time.

Astrid called Sylvia and the upstairs maid in and told me to raise my arms over my head and ordered the two maids to tighten the laces. When they were done and I lowered my arms my body jerked into an impossible posture with a compressed waist, a protruding rear end and huge breasts.

"A suitable S-curve, indeed," Astrid commented. "You will probably make a very good Tweeny quickly enough in that, just to get out of it."

The maids giggled and Astrid shooed them out, curtsying as they went.

"Now then, I should tell you that Tweenies have been off the domestic scene since the last century. Therefore there are no modern liveries for such an anachronism as you. The latest uniform for a Tweeny we could find dates from about 1890. We do want you appropriately dressed. It is one of Madame's rules, so into your uniform, you ill-tempered little brat."

I was pretty soon in it. There were black cotton lisle hose to garter to the corset and a white cotton corset cover to wear over it. A crotchless pair of white ruffled cotton drawers tied about my narrow waist. I had to put on high button shoes of black leather and narrow high heels and pointed toes. Then she put me in a wide, white, cotton petticoat with lace trimming. My uniform dress is black cotton and comes all the way to my ankles and covers me to a high collar of white lace and it has lace cuffs too. The bodice is fitted over my big bosom and has little buttons all down the front. A big white cotton cap with lace edge all around the bottom covers me almost down to my eyebrows and has a black ribbon around the middle of it that ties in a bow at the back. All this is very hot and stuffy and bulky and uncomfortable and I can't really get a full breath and my ankles are always turning because of the shoes.

Tonight when I was sent to bed I was told to leave on my camisole, corset and hose, and put on this big white cotton night dress with lace at the top and bottom. It's really awful.

I don't know how I can live in this wretched costume, much less do any work in it, but I did — all day they just ran me ragged and I hardly even got out of the kitchen.

Once when I was upstairs the Madame Headmistress saw me but looked right through me like I wasn't even there.

Astrid had me hang her willow switch on a nail in my bedroom and said I had better not give her a reason to make me fetch it. God, I'm scared. She says if I'm good I can have a bath next week and I can take my corset off for a while. I was so mad all

day today at what's happened, but I knew better than to let anyone know that. I don't know how things could get worse than they are. I don't see how I can live this way. I even have to wear this long, starched white cotton pinafore apron with ruffled edges over my dress. Yuck!

I never sat down all day. Astrid says Tweenies are too busy to sit down and she had better not catch me trying it.

Sept. 15th

Dear Diary,

This is the first chance I have had to write to you. Madame Head Housekeeper has had me all tied up for the last couple of days. On Friday I dropped a stack of dishes in the pantry and broke two plates because I was so tired I got dizzy and tipsy on my high heels. They are too narrow and my feet ache all the time. Just after Astrid came in I forgot myself and complained that my feet hurt. Then I realized I mustn't talk. Astrid took one of my black lisle socks out of my drawer and told me to open my mouth. Then she stuffed the sock in it and it was hard to breathe.

"Fetch my switch, Noisy Twit," she commanded me and I had to take it off its nail and hand it to her. She put the tip of it under my chin. "Impertinent, aren't you?" I knew enough to nod. "If you talk I'll fix you so you can't. Now get to work." I grunted my reply into the sock and curtsied as she tapped the side of my cheek with her switch. "And hang this up," she ordered as she strode off.

All the staff were laughing. I was pretty upset when I dropped the dishes. They had hardly hit the floor when Astrid ordered me to fetch her switch, and I really thought I was going to get a beating, but she took me by the arm and marched me, staggering and tottering, down to the Coal Hole. Once inside she made me sit on the floor with my skirts and petticoats in a heap and tied my thumbs to the heels of my shoes with some laces. At least she took the sock out of my mouth.



"You are the sorriest excuse for a Tweeny in history," she declared. "I'm never going to be rid of you. I can't think what Madame is going to say when I report your breakage to her. You might get out of here sometime if you're lucky. At least you can't get demoted again. There is nothing lower than a Tweeny. Tweenys don't have tempers. A Tweeny with a temper takes it to the Coal Hole. Now you and your temper can just stay in here until you lose it."

She put a black cloth bag over my head and tied it around my neck. I could hear the door close and the lock snap into place.

I don't really know how long I spent in the Coal Hole. Once in a while one of the maids would show up and untie me and leave some food and water. Then I could use the bucket to relieve myself, but one of them would be back in a little while to put the bag on my head again.

Sometimes my wrists were tied to my ankles with my arms behind me; sometimes my thumbs were attached to my heels and once my ankles were tied together and my wrists were tied to my neck. All this was made more wretched because the corset kept me from bending at the waist. I felt smothered and hot and wretched. I tried to sleep a lot but could only doze part of the time. It all hurt too much to really sleep.

I think it must have been morning when the two maids fetched me. With my thumbs tied to my heels and the bag over my head, they carried me upstairs and put me on the kitchen floor.

"Madame is very kind, Tweeny. She was very understanding about the breakage and is even concerned about your complaint that your feet hurt. Do you think you can keep your mouth shut and work without breaking anything more?"

"Yes, Madame. Head Housekeeper." My voice was muffled and my mouth dry.

"Very well then, I will return you to duty. Madame. asks that I make some additional penance for the breakage, however, but I am sure it will only inspire you to do better work. Sylvia, will you please remove the hood?"

The maid uncovered my head and I could see Astrid standing over me with her switch in her hand. My thumbs were freed and I was ordered to stand. I was so stiff and sore I could hardly move, but I stood. I had to. My Mistress bade me lift my skirts and petticoats aloft and the maid buckled a single elastic garter above my knees. It made me hobble about, because I could barely separate my knees. I felt so dumb.

"Madame thinks your accident may have been because you were hurrying. She wants you to move slowly and carefully. It should make your shoes more comfortable too." As she spoke Sylvia was wrapping a fine, light silver chain around my waist. From the front of it another chain dangled, to which were fastened two leather cuffs which she buckled around my wrists. I could only separate my hands about a foot and extend them forward another foot.

"These restrictions are Madame's suggestions to help you move in a more deliberate and careful fashion as you work. I am sure you are grateful to Madame for her helpfulness. Move slowly and work carefully and you may be a passable Tweeny yet. You

will have your opportunity to express your gratitude to Madame. later. Now, be about your work."

"Thank you, Madame. Head Housekeeper," I mumbled. She ordered me to hang up her switch. I minced slowly toward my cubicle, her switch in my hand and wondered how I was going to be able to do anything this way. I sure found out as she ordered me to wash up the luncheon dishes of all the little Cadet Missys upstairs. It took me twice as long and my big pinafore apron was soaked when I was done. I wonder how long I am going to have to teeter about in half steps trying to work with my hands tied like this?

September 29th

Dear Diary,

I had a bath today and it was Heavenly. It's the only time I get out of my corset. I haven't written for a while because I really can't do it very well with my hands manacled. Every day I am a perfect Tweeny, Astrid lengthens the little chains a little and it is easier to work.

I finally was taken up to see the Madame Headmistress. Astrid took me up to her office, but when we got there she made me kneel in her coat closet and she shut the door and went out. I wondered what I had done wrong. I don't know how long I was in there. I heard someone come in and I thought it was Madame Headmistress but then I didn't hear anything more for a long time.

At last the closet door opened and there was the Madame Headmistress glowering down at me. She didn't say a word and closed the door again. I could hear her dial a phone and say, "Astrid, there's a Tweeny in my closet. Did you lose your Tweeny?" Pretty soon she hung up and the closet door opened again.

"Your Keeper says you want to tell me of your gratitude for my kindness. It's a good sign, I suppose, that someone in your station can feel gratitude. Speak your piece."

She was standing over me, towering. She wore a tailored suit of soft wool, in a mustard yellow color with a knee length skirt. The jacket had a long skirt that flared over her hips. Her face, with its dark, arched eyebrows, was a mask of color and her earrings, brooch and pin sparkled. I felt very small and insignificant at the feet of this imperious lady.

"I . . . I'm sorry about the plates. . . I mean, it was very kind of you Madame. Headmistress to show me how bad I was. You've been very good to me and I appreciate it. . ." She continued to stare down at me.

"I'm not your Madame Headmistress. You are under the Head Housekeeper's charge. Just call me Madame. You came here having abrogated your status as a gentleman and when I offered you a chance to become a little lady you were rude and impertinent.

"Look at me when you are fortunate enough to even have me speak to you. Madame Astrid tells me that you aren't even a very good Tweeny. I don't want you cluttering up my closet any more."

With that, she slammed the closet door shut and left me kneeling in the dark once again. After a while Astrid came with her switch and dragged me back downstairs and put me to scrubbing the kitchen floor. It took a long time with my hands in their short tether and my corset busk jabbing me in the privates.

October 18th

Dear Diary,

It's awfully hard to write because I'm too worn out by the time I get to crawl into my cubby hole at night. Things are pretty much the same except Astrid took the garter off my legs the other day and my chains are long enough now to let me work with almost full freedom. I must say I found it too hard to write with my chains so short earlier.

My Mistress says I am a pretty good Tweeny now and I like that.

This is the worst job in the world. I can't sit down and have to eat from a shelf I can barely reach because of my tethers. Everyone just orders me around and if I goof up Astrid makes me lie on my face under the kitchen table for a long time.

Sometimes she makes me kneel under the kitchen sink with my manacles around the drain, but most of the time I get it right and she ignores me.

I'm really glad it's finally over.

This morning she told me that I am being promoted from Tweeny to Serving Girl. That means that my hands will be free and I won't have to wear this huge starched white ruffled pinafore apron over my uniform anymore. The bad part is I still have to do the Tweeny work in addition to setting and clearing the table and serving all the meals in the Missys' dining room upstairs.

She said no one will call me "Tweeny" anymore, that my title is "Girl."

I guess that's OK, but she says if I mess up when serving I'll have to be a Tweeny again and wear restraints. I'll try real hard. It will be nice just to get out of the kitchen three times a day.

All the Cadet Missys are naughty boys from the Academy who have messed up. That's why they are serving in the Auxiliary Corps. I guess I was supposed to be one too, and now I would give anything to be up there in one of those pretty uniforms.

When I came here I thought that was the worst thing that could happen to me, but it wasn't. Being a Tweeny is worse than anything.

It helps to talk to you, diary. I can't say anything at all to anyone else.

December 20th

Dear Diary,

I'm still the Serving Girl and I haven't gotten in any trouble. I curtsy to all the Missys and serve them their meals and clear away and do my kitchen stuff and no one gives me a bad time anymore. I just don't know if there is anything for me beyond this. At least my uniform isn't so dumb and uncomfortable now. I don't have to wear the awful canvas corset, but have a sleek corselette. It's still tight and puts me in an S-curve, but at least I can bend in it. I wear just a silk panty and slip instead of a camisole, corset cover and petticoat. My uniform is long, all the way to the middle of

my calves and the skirt is straight and tight. I don't have a high collar but a V-collar edged with lace, long sleeves with lace cuffs and a dainty little white apron. My feet don't hurt because my shoes fit. They are black patent leather oxfords that lace up and have blocky high heels, so I can walk easier. I wear a lace cap with a black ribbon through it and my hair is growing out so I don't look too silly.

My Mistress rarely orders me to fetch her switch now. Funny, she has never hit me very hard with it, but I know she will if I get out of line. I have had to stand and watch on Thursday's when the Cadet Missys bend over a chair with their skirts up and she thrashes them. They cry a lot. She says if they don't they are not being little ladies and she thrashes them even harder. It's awful to watch. If a Missy isn't a good little girl, she really catches it.

I sometimes wish I had someone to talk to, but my Mistress would just kill me if I ever said anything to anyone, so I don't.

The Missys in the Auxiliary Corps pretty much act as though I weren't there. They don't say anything either. I guess they aren't allowed to talk. They say, "Yes," and "No," and "Thank you, Madame Headmistress" all the time like I do with Astrid. They look grand to me in their dress uniforms at dinner every night, but they sure seem to be miserable in their elegant clothes.

If they knew how I lived I wonder if they would feel so miserable?

It feels creepy when the Madame Headmistress is watching me. I never know what she is thinking, but mostly she acts as though I didn't exist. I just keep the dining room spotless and set the table perfectly and stand in the corner while they eat and curtsy when I get orders. Being the Serving Girl is sure better than being the Tweeny. Like the Madame Headmistress told me, it sure would be better to be a Cadet Missy than a Serving Girl or a Tweeny, but I don't think they'll ever let me get that far. I was sure dumb when I came here. I suppose in a couple of years I might get to be a maid, but I don't suppose they'll ever let me be a real Cadet Missy. I blew it.

The Cadets have all gone home for the holidays, so I don't have so much to do. There's just the other servants to serve now and Madame and the Colonel in their dining room and as Serving Girl I get to sit down in servants' hall and eat with the rest of the staff, if I'm perfectly quiet.

Next month things will be back to normal; obedience, silence and servitude. Gee I wish I hadn't blown it when I had a chance to be in the Auxiliary Corps. In four years I'll still be just a dumb maid when I get out and what will I do then? I wish I could ask Mom and Dad, but it's not allowed. Astrid says Serving Girls are usually orphans anyway.

I sure am.

June 10th, 1940

Dear Diary,

I haven't written to you for a long time because there hasn't been much to say and I don't get much chance to say it. Being the Serving Girl isn't really much better than

being the Tweeny, except the uniform isn't so dumb and uncomfortable. The long narrow skirt makes things difficult though.

Ever since the holidays they have kept me so busy being everybody's everything. Astrid keeps adding to my list of duties and I have to hustle from 5:00 AM until midnight to get it all done and then I am too tired to write.

I have been able to stay out of trouble most of the time.

Just this week Astrid heard me cursing under my breath and shut my mouth all day. She didn't use a sock but had a pear shaped leather thing she stuffed in my mouth and tied around the back of my head. It was awful because I kept drooling and they all laughed at that. When she tied it on I jerked my head and she said I was being disobedient so she made me kneel under the kitchen sink, manacled to the drain pipe all day.

She does that when I goof up. I suppose I've been under the sink maybe six or eight times this year. I don't get anything to eat when I'm under the sink unless the cook or one of the maids hand feeds me scraps.

This morning Madame Head Housekeeper said she was happy to finally be getting rid of me. I know she hasn't liked having me in her charge because she has a lot to do without having to watch over me too. She'll say, "I'm putting you under the sink today. I'm too busy to bother with you." Other times, when I do something dumb that annoys her she hands me my old Tweeny manacles and says, "Here, put these on and go lock yourself in the Coal Hole, you useless girl." Then I have to go down there and sit on the floor in the dark until she remembers to send someone down to let me out.

Mostly, I just work and try to be good and not goof up and I just get ignored. Now Astrid says she's happy to be getting rid of me. When the Cadets go home, pretty soon, she says I will become Madame Headmistress's problem. She said I would finally be promoted and become her Ninny. I'm pretty scared about that.

Sometimes when one of the Cadet Missys gets too many demerits and is losing ground in getting back to the Academy Corps, Madame H. will make her serve as her Personal Assistant, but they just call her "Madame's Ninny."

This is usually the last step before a Cadet gets kicked out of school. They say upstairs that some of the Missys try to get to be a "Madame's Ninny" so they can get expelled. Most of them live through it and stay around, though. It's pretty hard to get kicked out of here.

They just turn you into a girl.

I've seen these miserable Ninnies and I'm really scared of it. They have to wear this really silly, awful uniform with a mask. Astrid explained that to me one day. She said a Ninny is a nonentity whose sole function is to wait on Madame Headmistress. I don't know what that means — "wait on."

The Ninny's uniform is really another maid's uniform but the skirt is real short and has a pile of petticoats and rumba ruffled panties under it so it sticks out wide. The top is black satin too with a square neckline with little pleats around it and has capped sleeves. You have to wear long black stockings and black leather shoes with

these real high, narrow heels and a big lacy cap with a ribbon. You never see a Ninny's face because they tie on this black silk mask that has little eye holes and your nose sticks out through a slit and the mask is tied on in back and around the neck. It must be really uncomfortable and its got white lace stitched around its edges. I guess the Ninny has to follow Madame Headmistress around everywhere, even off campus, and he must feel really awful having people stare at him.

Astrid says I'm lucky being promoted to Madame Headmistress's Personal Assistant. But I think my life is going to get worse instead of better. I'll stop now and get some sleep or I'll goof up tomorrow and end up under the sink or in the Coal Hole.

June 16th

Dear Diary,

It gets harder to write to you all the time.

I became Madame Headmistress's Ninny the first of the week and it is worse even than I feared. Besides this idiotic uniform I'm in and this stuffy mask, I have even less time than before. What's worse I don't have anything to do most of the time. She just keeps me standing around holding her purse. If she goes out and doesn't want me then I get to clean her office, but even then its stupid, like shampooing the Oriental carpet with a tiny brush and a glass of soapy water, or waxing the furniture with a postage stamp size rag. Everything seems to be in slow motion.

Madame Head Housekeeper got me up Monday morning, made me put on my new uniform and tied the mask over my face. Then she sent me up to Madame Headmistress's office and told me to kneel in the coat closet.

Finally, my new Mistress opened the door and turned on the closet light. She handed me a little book with the title stamped on the front of it, "HOW TO BE A NINNY."

"Read it! Memorize it! Do it!" she ordered me and slammed the door again. I knew what I had to do. I read the little book several times, trying real hard to remember it all. Sometime in the afternoon she opened the door again and said, "Begin, now!"

I knew what to do. As she went over and sat down at her desk I stood behind the chair, two steps in back of her with my hands away from my uniform dress. The book said I was to avoid touching my clothes. There I stood while she worked. The book said a Ninny is supposed to stay two steps behind her Mistress and be quiet and wait for orders. After a while she got up and opened the closet door and motioned for me to kneel in the closet again.

"Read Section 2, Ninny. I want to hear what you forgot to do. Memorize it. You will recite it for me."

She slammed the door and I rummaged through Section 2, which is all my duties, and realized I was supposed to pick up her purse and hold it and hand her whatever she requested. I was awfully hungry by now but I have learned to ignore that. After a while one of the maids brought me some soup and I ate it while kneeling on the closet floor. It was late afternoon when Madame opened the door again. She made me stand

erect in front of her desk while she tapped me on the knees with the switch Astrid had made me bring her.

“Recite, Ninny!”

I had memorized the part about her purse as she tapped me gently with the switch. I got it all right so she told me to go stand in the corner with the book and read Section 2 aloud in a soft voice. From time to time she would say, “Remember that!” On some of the rules she would say, “Don't forget that. I love switching Ninnies for that one. You'll burn beneath those petticoats if you forget it.”

She went in and out several times and I kept reading.

Finally, late in the afternoon she stood me in front of her desk and elevated my head with the tip of the switch.

“How did you eat your lunch with your mask on, Ninny?” The question was rhetorical because I was only allowed to say yes and no, so she answered it herself. “You removed your mask to eat, didn't you?”

“Yes, Madame Headmistress.” My knees began to shake.

“Go tell the Head Housekeeper that you've lost your mouth, you dreadful, disobedient creature, and be thankful for my kindness that I don't thrash you.” She did give me one stinging switch with the willow wand as I curtsied my way out of the room.

I had to spend the rest of the day choking and gagging with that leather pear thing in my mouth, underneath my silk mask. I sure won't take it off again. I have to let someone else do it for me before I can eat or drink anything.

June 20th

Dear Diary,

Madame H. says that if I'm a perfect Ninny all summer that I have a chance to escape my servant status and become a Cadet, a Cadet Missy, that is.

I can't believe that I want to be a Sissy Cadet, but I do.

Anything would be better than this, living with my face covered in silk, seeing the world through little lace trimmed eye slits and mincing about in this tiny maid's uniform is just awful.

Madame H's bedroom adjoins her office and at night I take off just my apron, dress and petticoats and sleep in my corselette, hose and heels. I put on a long, black, silk charmeuse, nightgown that covers me from neck to the floor, but it hasn't any sleeves. I don't get to take the mask off either and if I have to do anything for her during the night I have to carry all this material around. I don't know if anyone ever felt dumber and less human than I do. Well, a Ninny is human enough, she says.

I have to take my meals in the office, sitting in the corner at a little kid's table and half the time all I get to eat is strained baby food. I eat on my knees and like when I was the Tweeny I'm not ever allowed to sit down. Madame H. makes me kneel a lot and that's a relief from standing all the time.

Until I got the book memorized Madame H. was always putting me back in her coat closet to memorize stuff I didn't know, but now that I've got it all cold I only go in the

closet when I goof up. Then, of course, she locks my wrists over my head to the clothes bar with my old leather cuffs. I can avoid that most of the time. I haven't lost my temper in months now. If I do it just makes things worse for me. I guess I was supposed to learn that, but they didn't give me much choice.

Last Saturday, the Colonel and Madame went to a concert in the city. It was the first time I had to attend her out of the house. I had to stand in the lobby of the theater holding her purse and her furs during the performance. I don't ever want to do something like that again, but Madame says I will be doing it a lot. Since then I had to go shopping with her and to the beauty shop.

Most people stare, some laugh or giggle and point, but Madame says I must ignore it all. I try, but it feels pretty awful. Sometimes I start to get mad, but I stop myself.

"Temper begets a thrashing," Madame Headmistress says, and I don't think I could stand that.

I walk behind her, carrying her purse, or anything else she wants, everywhere now. When she wants a cigarette I have to take one out of her purse and put it in her long, silver cigarette holder and then hand it to her and light it. Then I hold the ashtray. That's about the most important thing I have to do all day.

This week she started making me dress and undress her and take care of her clothes. At bedtime I have to brush her hair out, and put it up in the morning, and if she feels even one little jerk, I'm likely to wind up kneeling in the closet again.

The good part is that if I get a hundred merit points for perfect performance by the time the Academy opens in the fall I get to be a full-fledged Cadet Missy and a chance to earn my way into the real Academy. God, I hope I can make it.

I'd rather be a Sissy Cadet than a damned Ninny.

July 7th

Dear Diary,

Madame H. says that she thought my apology about being rude and recalcitrant when I first came was very nice, but I shouldn't think that it fully made amends. This week she said she thought I should clear it off my record and if I did so it would earn merit points for me.

I was standing in front of her desk again while she told me all this as she tapped on me with her switch.

She never hits me with it, really, but I know she will and if I cry out I'll lose my mouth again. Anyway, she said my curtsy wasn't delicate and smooth enough and my walk was getting sloppy so I should practice them. She called in Ruby, the Parlor Maid, and had her put the elastic garter on my thighs again and she dropped a silk cloth over my head that lay on my shoulders so I couldn't see through my mask.

"Now, little Ninny, I want you to apologize to everything you run into. When you walk into something you must back up and drop a smooth, delicate curtsy to it and say, 'I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to be rude.' Then you can proceed until the next obstacle. Remember, in curtsying you must lift the sides of your skirts between your thumb and middle finger and dip as far as your garter permits. Ruby, if the Ninny is

slow or clumsy in his apologies you are to thwack him sharply on the legs with your switch, in which case he must then turn and apologize to you. Proceed through each room in the house on all floors until you have apologized to all of them, Ninny. Ruby, a hundred apologies will suffice. When the Ninny is done you can put him in my coat closet."

We both had to curtsy and acknowledge all this and away I went.

It was pretty bad. I just bumped into everything and was bobbing and babbling all day. I fell on the stairs, twice, and thought I would break my neck and Ruby would whack me on the legs and that stung and burned. She was pretty good about it and didn't hit me too hard. All in all, she only hit me eleven times and I know she just ignored some of my mistakes. It was late afternoon before I was kneeling in the dark waiting for Madame H. to let me out. Boy, if you want to cure a boy of rudeness that will do it. If Mother had not been so indulgent when I was younger I probably wouldn't be in this predicament. If I ever get out of here I'm going to tell the world all these things, but I don't imagine anyone would believe my story about being a Tweeny and a Serving Girl, much less of my life as a Ninny.

Anyway I got the merit points and maybe this horrid life will come to an end, if I'm lucky. Madame H. says my walk still isn't delicate and refined enough so I'm still wearing the garter around my thighs. It makes curtsying very awkward, but that's what I'm supposed to overcome.

August 16th

Dear Diary,

Only two more weeks to go and maybe I won't be Madame's Ninny. I want so much to get out of this slutty uniform and into the nice clothes the Cadet Missys get to wear. I can't wait to get this awful cloth off my face. I have been in it for months. I think it's the worse part.

Madame H. has had me tagging along everywhere she goes now. She says being a perfect Ninny in public earns merit points and I need them. I don't know how many I have, or how many I need. She lets me know about my demerits for things like poor posture, slowness to obey, imperfect dress and stuff. She reads them off to me in the morning and says I had better go apologize to the furniture for awhile, and hands me the cloth to put over my head.

At least she doesn't send Ruby around with me anymore, so I just stumble and mumble and curtsy through the house. If anyone saw it, they'd die laughing.

The other servants think it's funny enough, and sometimes step in front of me so I will bump into them and have to apologize, especially the two stupid maids.

I still sleep on a pallet at the foot of Madame's bed and if she gets up I have to get up and curtsy and wait for orders.

I didn't wake up once the other night, but she woke me quickly enough with her switch. I was able to keep quiet, thank goodness, but she hit me five times, pretty hard, and it stung something terrible.

I spent the next day in the Coal Hole with my thumbs tied to my heels and I had to make up the demerits with another two hundred apologies. That worried me that maybe I wouldn't get out of this.

Sometimes I really wish they had let me go to Juvenile Hall. I don't even care about looking like a girl anymore. I just want to stop being a Ninny.

I wonder what that Lady Judge would do if she knew what they were doing to me. Not much, I suppose. I'll bet they don't have Ninny's in Juvenile Hall, though.

Sept. 6th

Dear Diary,

I did it! I got loose! I'm not a Ninny anymore and I am determined never to let it happen to me again. Madame Headmistress stood me up in her office this morning and said I was the worst Ninny that ever was but she couldn't stand to have me dogging after her anymore.

Then she handed me a packet with my name on it, the same one I had carried in a year ago, the one labeled "Auxiliary Cadet Missy Gwendolyn Sharps."

You can't imagine what it is like to not have a name for a whole year.

I can't imagine why I had been so rude and awful a year ago.

No one at home ever said that I was so awful. Dad wasn't really around much to criticize, and Mom thought I was OK even when I got in hot water. I never had to please anyone before, but just kind of did like I wanted all the time.

And now I hadn't done anything but try to please all year and it's really hard to do. I was just overjoyed and could hardly keep my eyes lowered and my back straight. I promised never to lose my temper, too.

"You could have been a Cadet Missy a year ago, Gwendolyn. I am sorry you have lost a year. If you are very diligent and obedient you will become a lovely little lady in the Auxiliary Corps. If you succeed at that you may earn the privilege of becoming a gentleman cadet. Do you think you can succeed in your endeavor to be a perfect Missy? Are you going to try?"

"Yes, Madame Headmistress. Thank you, Madame Headmistress," I was bobbing up and down like a fishing bob and the curtsies were as graceful and smooth as if I were a ballerina.

"Well, I certainly hope so. If I have to take you under my personal care again I'll put you in a uniform you couldn't imagine and lead you a life you would never cease to regret.

"You are assigned to room #2 at the head of the stairs. Go get into your tea dress. Memorize this!" and she handed me another little book entitled, "SHADRACK ACADEMY, CODE OF CONDUCT FOR AUXILIARY CADETS."

I nearly fainted with joy.

Sept. 7th

Dear Diary,

School opens in a week and Madame H. says I must memorize the code before then. I spend a lot of time getting it perfect. I mustn't mess up again. She's too scary.

Being a Cadet Missy is wonderful. The only remnant of my serving days is the long, S-shaped corset of silk satin, but all the Missys wear them and I'm used to it.

I had a bath and got dressed in my tea dress. As a Missy, I will wear it every afternoon after classes when I come back here to the Manse. It really is pretty and demure and not ugly or trashy like my old uniforms.

Under my corset is a silken camisole and over my lacy corset cover and silken drawers are petticoats over which I put a pretty dress of polished cotton with narrow vertical stripes in a brightly colored, little flower pattern that alternates with plain yellow stripes. It has a collar of pointed, white cotton edged with nice lace and puff sleeves. The skirt comes down to the middle of my calves. My hose are long white cotton and I have nice yellow, patent leather shoes with a strap across the top and the heels aren't thin but chunky.

Sometimes I wear a starchy, white, cotton, Dutch pinafore apron over my tea dress. It depends on what we are doing. I looked at myself in my mirror and I thought I looked kind of pretty, but my face is very pale from wearing the mask all summer. My dress is yellow with white, but each Cadet Missy wears her own color dress.

I was sitting on my bed, a real bed with a bright, pretty coverlet and a chiffon canopy and I was just thinking about what a relief this was when Madame Head Housekeeper came in.

I jumped to my feet and dropped my best curtsy, lowering my eyes demurely like the book says to do. When I was at home, which seemed a long time ago, I had my own bedroom and bed and stuff, and I never thought about it at all, but now it seems like Heaven to have a place of my own, even if it is so terribly effeminate. That's OK, I'm not living in a closet anymore.

"Cadet Missy Gwendolyn, eh? Well, you're still just a silly Tweeny to me. God, you look awful. Your hair is all grown out and you look like a ghost. Did you wash it?"

"Yes, Madame Head Housekeeper."

"Well, we'll have to do something with that hair and face, and you just call me 'Madame,' now that you're a Sissy Cadet."

"Thank you, Madame." I dropped another dipper.

She made me sit facing the mirror over my nice vanity and went to brushing, combing and smoothing until my long, unruly locks, which I had previously worn in a bun, were all smoothed back and were tied in a ponytail with a long, wide yellow satin ribbon. She picked up an atomizer and sprayed me with perfume, which made me blush. Even my clothes had never made me feel so feminine as smelling of perfume. I couldn't escape it.

"Did you ever notice that the Cadet Missys always wear make-up, Gwenny, Sweet?"

I acknowledged that I had noticed.

"And have you ever seen them wear white chiffon veils?"

I said that I had seen that too.

“Well, if your make-up isn't perfect from now on Miss Pretty-Face, you will be given the veil, so I had better show you how. If you don't wear a pretty face, you lose face.”

I had the funny thought that a layer of chiffon over my face wouldn't be so bad after a summer in a satin hood.

I had to sit still while my former Mistress in her black dress and waist chain with the keys smeared, daubed and brushed at my face until it was transformed into a shining portrait of a pretty girl in shades of pink and blue with long black lashes and bright red glossy lips. She also painted my nails.

“Servants are plain, but little ladies have fancy faces. Chapter 6 tells in detail how to make your fancy face. I'm not going to do it again for you. You'd better get it right hereafter, Gwenny. Practice it! Read, memorize and practice.

“Your Headmistress expects you for tea in the drawing room at 4:00. You'd better look good and know what you are doing or you'll wish you had. Good luck, and you're still a Twit!”

She walked out and I popped up and thanked her, curtsying. I really was happy for her help. My face was wonderful.

Sept. 17th

Dear Diary,

The Academy opened for the year today and I guess I was ready. I have had to take tea with Madame Headmistress every day and recite the manual for her. I have had to appear every morning at attention in her office in my Class Uniform and stand for inspection and recite the dress code. Then I have gone to my room to copy out more of the Missy Manual in my own hand so I have my own personal copy so I can't claim I don't know what's in it.

I've worn my tea dress every afternoon and recited another part of the manual, and been instructed in manners and postures for a while. Then I appear at dinner with Madame and the Colonel in my dinner dress.

The Colonel never speaks to me except to say, things like, “Good evening, Missy Gwendolyn, how pretty you are this evening,” and things like that. He is a very stern and commanding gentleman but treats me like I was a proper little miss, which is what I am, I guess. I sure hope so.

After dinner I am expected to change into my party gown and sit in the drawing room. Usually I am alone, but I have to just be there and pop up and curtsy if anyone comes in. It's kind of dumb but Madame says I must learn that just being appropriately attired and perfectly pretty is what a Missy does in the evening.

When Madame comes in I am supposed to say, “Good evening, Madame. How lovely you are this evening,” or “How gracious of you to come by.”

I am allowed to read magazines while I sit, but there isn't anything except fashion magazines. I'm supposed to be able to discuss their contents so I am very knowledge-

able about this year's styles. Madame says it helps if I know all about girl things. Oh, well, it's better than kneeling in a closet with my hands manacled to the clothes pole.

Right now I am the only Missy because no one up at the Academy has earned enough demerits to be demoted to the Auxiliary Corps. Ruby says it won't be long before some bawling brat gets hauled down here and laced into a corselette thinking he is going to be killed. I hope someone shows up soon so I won't be the only one at tea with Madame Headmistress.

Classes began today and I was escorted from the Manse to my Freshman classes by two upperclassmen in their smart gray uniforms. It was the first time out in my Missy Class Uniform. It is worn over my corselette, of course.

First, I put on my silk chemise, corset with garters attached, corset cover, long black silk stockings with perfectly straight seams in back, white silken drawers, and long white silk slip with its lace hem and V bodice and then I put on my blouse. It is white silk with a high collar and a lace jabot that hangs almost to my waist and is pinned to my bosom with a silver pin that spells out "Shadrack" in script.

Then I put on my gray wool skirt. It is very narrow and comes to my ankles and buttons with a lot of tiny buttons all down the front to the hem like a riding skirt and has a black satin stripe along the button line. It is vented a little at the sides near the hem, and it is hard to walk in and makes me take tiny little ladylike steps.

Over the blouse I wear a gray wool mess jacket with a single silver button and on the shoulders are two large epaulets with hanging fringes of silver. Then I put on my white cotton gloves which come just to my wrists with five buttons.

The blouse has French cuffs with silver cuff links and lace around the bottoms. My hair is in its ponytail and I wear a gray satin pillbox hat cocked to one side of my head and held in place with a strap across the point of my chin. It has silver braid in a cloverleaf pattern on the flat top. My ponytail is tied with a big, gray satin ribbon. I wear boots too. They come to my ankles and are of black leather which I have to shine until I can see my reflection in them. The heels are three inches high and are stacked. They have a thin strap across my instep and a silver buckle.

Each morning I have to be standing at attention in my class uniform when they come to get me. The two upperclassmen march me to the quad. One of them carries a swagger stick and pokes me with it if I break stride marching cadence, or let my stiff military posture slip. After they deliver me to my first class I have to make it to every other class on my own, but I have to stand aside and curtsy every time an upper-classman walks by so it takes a long time to get around. I carry my school stuff in a gray satin, shoulder bag with a strap.

At lunch it is my job to serve the Colonel at the head table and stand behind him until lunch is dismissed. Then I have to grab a bite in the kitchen and run to class.

Having not been allowed to attend the Academy last year I had never been in a classroom. I found out that the Cadet Missys aren't allowed to sit with the gentlemen, or even sit. So I stand at a lectern along the side of the room.

I am not allowed to speak to the gentlemen but must acknowledge whatever they say with, "Thank you, Sir."

They are always saying something about my being a Sissy or a Dumb Missy and things like that. They all do it.

Around the quad, upperclassmen are forever stopping me and making me curtsey. They like to make me describe my underwear or tell them my brassiere size or describe my nightgown and things like that. Sometimes they talk about how they are going to kiss me at the Founder's Day Ball, but it's all just supposed to make me want to get out of the Auxiliary Corps, which I do.

They all have orders to make life hard for the Cadet Missys. They're good at it. The gentlemen sure know how to make a Missy squirm. The upperclassmen march me back to the Manse after the last class.

They go to the drill field then and I have to get into my Tea dress fast, and fix my make-up and be sitting prettily when my afternoon orders are delivered. A lot of the time I am told to work on my sampler, doing cross stitching. Other times I have to make doll clothes. Every Cadet Missy has a big doll that she has to make uniforms and clothes for and I have to work at it until the clothes are perfect. Some days the order is to play at putting on a tea with a tiny play tea set. I have to work on keeping my uniforms perfect, of course. Any time I get demerits for imperfect dress I have to take off my uniform and appear in just my slip, which is a terrible disgrace for a Missy.

If I have demerits from class, such as imperfect preparation or performance, Madame Head Housekeeper ties my thumbs behind my back and puts manacles on my ankles with a short chain and orders some number of rounds of the house. On these rounds I have to walk in tiny steps through the rooms of the Manse kissing the furniture and curtsying in the doorways. I then miss tea and just have time to put on my dress uniform for dinner.

This afternoon on the way back from classes I stumbled on a crack in the sidewalk and broke cadence, so I had to sit on the floor at tea and hold my dolly, Penelope, while Madame Headmistress talked about the start of dancing lessons. As usual, she would mention parts of the Missy Code by number and I had to recite the whole section perfectly.

I seem to have learned it pretty well by now.

Sept. 29

Dear Diary,

Cadet Fourth classman Richard Fender arrived at the Manse today, marched in by two cadet guards in lock step and was ushered into the office of the Madame Headmistress. He came out with his ear firmly in the grasp of the Proctor with tears in his eyes. I could hear the swish of the Proctor's willow switch and the sound of it striking his rear until suddenly the screams and sobs began.

Cadets don't cry. Missys do, and Richard has joined our ranks. The Proctor hauled him into the office by his ear, tears streaking down his cheeks. At 4:00 P.M., he appeared at tea in his tea dress still shivering with stifled sobs. He introduced himself as Cadet Missy Rebecca. He really looked miserable in his striped pink and white tea dress. Ruby was right. They all start crying when they are laced into their first satin corselette.

The Proctor arrived yesterday. She is the wife of one of the staff officers. They are always used to manage us Missys. They have one Proctor for every four of us. We call her Madame Proctor. This one has a reputation for being all sweetness, and treats us as though she were a nice Aunty, but Ruby warned me not to get in her crosshairs. "She can really fix you good if you mess up," Ruby advised me. "She is a holy terror with the corsets."

The word in the kitchen is that Cadet Missy Rebecca flunked a Latin exam and got some demerits for it and got so mad he told off an upperclassman assigned to tutor him. It only takes twenty-five demerits to get sent down to the Manse. He had five for the flunk and got another twenty for telling off his tutor. I don't know how many merit points it will take for him to go back to the Corps and they don't tell us how we are doing. They just say, "Be a good girl and we'll tell you when you can go back."

After tea, when the Proctor tried to get Rebecca into her first dinner dress, the Twit lost it again and threw the dress on the floor and said she wouldn't wear it. Ruby told me that she's wearing it anyway, on her knees in Madame Headmistress's coat closet, her wrists manacled to the clothes pole. Missy Rebecca seems to have a problem with his temper. I know all about that and where it gets you — right into the Headmistress's closet!

Missy Rebecca finally quit bawling after a night in Madame H's closet.

We get one dinner dress as part of our standard uniform and are required to show up in it for dinner formation, lined up in the library when Madame Headmistress or the Proctor shows up to march us in to dinner. The one they gave me is pink silk satin and is very simple and feminine. It has a square bodice and no sleeves, but is held up with wide satin shoulder straps with flat satin bows on my shoulders. The skirt is floor length and in an A-line. I wear long white 26 button gloves with it and a pink ribbon to tie my ponytail. I get to wear pearl drop earrings and a single strand of pearls. I guess I look like a pretty girl going to a dinner-dance with my little, white, clutch purse. The shoes are pink too; pumps of slipper satin with four inch spike heels, so I have to watch my step.

Dinner is very formal. We curtsy to our Hostess and she greets us with kisses on the cheek. We march into the dining room single file and stand at attention behind our chairs. When we sit down, we have to sit on the front of our chairs, perfectly erect and place our napkins in our laps and then fold our hands in our laps. As we eat, the Hostess will speak to us one by one, about the weather, our clothes, school, or whatever and we must make polite, respectful conversation on the subject. During the course of the meal she will give each of us orders for our evening activities.

Sometimes we go to the library for drill on the Rules, but that usually takes place at tea. One of the favorite after-dinner drills is to have each of us tell all the others what we are learning as Cadet Missys, or describe the dinner dress we are making. Every Cadet Missy is always working at making another dinner dress and a ball gown.

The Proctor is a slave-driver as we bend over the sewing machine getting every seam perfect. Some evenings we all sit in silence and do embroidery or needlepoint or whatever needlework we have been given.

If the Proctor is put out with the lot of us we have Doll Night when we all bring our dolls down and dress them and play with them together. We all hate this one. It's so dumb and childish, but it only happens when we really screw up. My dolly's name is "Penelope."

October 11th

Dear Diary,

There are five of us now, me, Missy Rebecca, Missy Renee, Missy Susan and Missy Pauline. We make quite a display in our tea dresses and an elegant parade at dinner.

Madame Headmistress and Madame Proctor are after us every moment. We are all fourth classmen. Upperclassmen are too smart to get themselves down into the Auxiliary Corps. The new ones are busy turning their ankles on their high heels and stepping on their hems in dinner dress and getting whacked with the switch for their clumsiness. You can see them squirming in their corselettes and blushing behind their make-up. They are a dopey looking bunch of girls.

It's surprising how quickly the discipline here shapes them up. How soon they become genuinely dainty and refined even when they have bodies like halfbacks. Three of them were veiled in white chiffon veils with lace edges because they didn't get their make-up right. Two of them snuck in to my room asking me to help them get it right, which I was happy to do. It's weird having some big hulking guy in a tea gown and heels thanking me because I helped him get his lipstick on straight. The hard part is getting the eyes right.

We were only four at dinner last night because Missy Pauline was sitting in the stocks in the corner of the library. She came back from class with demerits for failing to curtsy to an upperclassman and Madame Proctor put her in the stocks at tea time and told her to think about it. The stocks remind all of us to do things right. You have to sit down on this round piano stool and put your ankles in the holes in a board. The board is polished mahogany and the holes are padded and upholstered in white satin. You just have to sit there with your hands folded in your lap and the Proctor drops this big square of silk over your head. It lies on your shoulders. Your fanny goes to sleep and if you squirm or make any noise or unfold your hands you get switched on the legs.

I had to sit in the stocks only once and not for too long, for dropping my dolly on her head. It was pretty embarrassing and uncomfortable. Some of the girls kind of go nuts and squirm and cry or fidget with their skirts. They sort of get out of control and go nutty but it only prolongs their stay in the stocks. Missy Susan lost it completely in the stocks one afternoon and wound up sitting in the Coal Hole with her thumbs tied to her heels. Sometimes when you are in the stocks, the Missys set your hair in some weird style festooning your tresses with eleventh-hundred ribbons. No one stops them either.

Most of the time we can avoid that sort of thing, especially after we've been here a while. Some Cadets are so shook up about being turned into girls it takes some tough stuff to gentle them down into nice little ladies. It's funny about how when you start being a girl, you want to get it right.

October 20th

Dear Diary,

Cadet Missy Susan got skirted today and Madame Headmistress announced at dinner that dancing classes would begin next week, so we all had to have our ball gowns completed before Monday.

The Proctors have us bent over our sewing machines full time now. Anyone who hasn't finished her gown will have to attend the Homecoming Dance in just her heels, hose and a corset. I got mine done, thank goodness, and it's really dumb, but I'll have to wear it.

Skirting is a form of hazing the upperclassmen do when they want to have some fun with us Missys. We all live in fear of being skirted. They get you in the quad, going to a class and unbutton the bottom of your long skirt and pull it, and your slip, up over your head with your hands in the air. Then they tie your wrists to the halyard on the flagpole and lift you up so that just your toes are on the ground and leave you dangling there with your skirt over your head and arms and in your heels and hose, standing on tiptoe. No one will let you loose until one of the faculty members sees you and lets you down. Then you get marched back to the Manse with a demerit for missing class. Madame Proctor bawls you out and tells you you must have done something to get skirted and into the stocks you go without your uniform, just in heels, hose and corselette. It goes on every year. I guess it's the Auxiliary Corps equivalent of the gentlemen pantsing each other, which happens every once in a while too.

October 24th

Dear Diary,

I've got just a few minutes here before we form for dancing class. There are eleven of us in the Auxiliary Corps now.

I'm in my dumb ball gown. I can't believe they picked out this dress for me. I've got the best merit record of all the Missys but Madame H. says my gown is sweet, so I had to thank her for it.

This gown is all yellow lace from the layers of lace forming its collar in three layers, to the tiered, wide lace skirts which also lie in overlapping layers all the way to the floor. Around my waist is a wide satin pleated cummerbund that ties in a monstrous yellow satin bow at the rear. Fitted see-through lace sleeves cover my arms and my ponytail is tied with another big yellow satin, lace trimmed bow that hangs way down my back.

The whole thing rustles against the faille underdress and the petticoats are more layers of lace. Even my hose are patterned in lace. You have no idea how many hours I stitched layers of lace on more layers of lace to make this monstrosity.

Oh, well, every time I think there's a limit to how feminine I can get, they come up with some way to make me look and feel like a pretty miss.

As I teetered on my backless spike heels and saw myself in this ball gown for the first time I felt I would have been better off in Juvenile Hall.

"Divine, lovely, so delicate and precious; you could win a beauty contest," were the words Madame H. used as we modeled our ball gowns at dinner. All of us looked like we were being devoured by our gowns. Madame H. sent us to our rooms after dinner and told us to think about twirling backwards in our higher heels.

We are going to have dancing class four nights a week until Homecoming and we have been warned that those who don't dance well and properly will begin ballet lessons after the dance.

I'll tell you one thing, they'll never get me into a tutu. I saw those wretchedly clumsy idiots prancing in tutus last year when I was a Tweeny, and they really are pitiful. If you wind up in Astrid's Corps de Ballet, you aren't likely to get out of the Auxiliary Corps all year. And if you don't dance at the Homecoming like a regular gazelle, you tiptoe around in a tutu until Founder's Day and then have to dance in a presentation for everyone. God forbid!

There will be dancing partners from the Academy, all Cadets in their dress uniforms who have been judged to dance too poorly for the Homecoming Dance. No one gets out of the Academy without being a good dancer. It's one mark of being a gentleman, or for some of us, a lady. The partners are all club-footed or they wouldn't be sent down to dance class.

The idea of dancing with a boy is really disgusting but it can't be helped. There's the knock at the door. I'll have to hoist up my skirts and show up for formation in the third floor ballroom now. This is going to be really awful. I feel like I'm being drowned in lace. Swish, rustle and twirl. This is going to be awful.

Dec. 20

Dear Diary,

This is the first chance I have had to write you. Everyone's gone home for the holidays except a few up at the Academy who lost their Christmas privilege, so they are spending the holidays marching off their demerits and playing dog soldier to the officers' families.

I'm the only one at the Manse, but that doesn't make it any better. Madame H. keeps me busy sewing and waiting on her and changing my clothes. I can't go home because Dad's deal with the Judge said I had to stay at the Academy all the time until I graduated, like I would if I were in Juvenile Hall. The Judge didn't know about the Auxiliary Corps or maybe she wouldn't have made me do it.

The Homecoming dance was pretty awful. There were all those real girls from Stanley Hall and they were pretty mean to us Missys. So were the Cadets in the special stag line who were ordered to dance with us only, as a way of working off demerits. They all had fifteen or more demerits and were close to being sent down to the Manse themselves.

Boy, were they ever scared. So were we.

Anyway, I got the Perpsichore Award as the best dancer in the Auxiliary Corps. At least I don't have to make another ball gown for Founder's Day, when the parents visit.

I get a new gown made by the losers. That's my reward. Madame H. picks it out though, so I'm sure it will be just too much.

After the holidays all the Missys will be scrambling and being perfect so as to get back to the Academy before their parents come. No one wants their families to see them in dresses and tresses and mincing about with a dolly. I don't know if my folks are coming. I hope not. My sister will just tease me until I lose my temper again, and that'll be the end of me. Madame Headmistress said I have a good merit record and if I keep it up I can go up to the Academy next year. I hoped I could be a gentleman sooner so it's good news and bad news.

I do a lot of sewing because I'm a long-term Missy. I have three lovely tea dresses and three class uniforms with five blouses. I'm up to a full complement of six dinner dresses and four nice nightgowns and peignoirs. With all the matching shoes, it is quite a wonderful wardrobe. I guess I've gotten so I'm kind of proud of my appearance. Being a Cadet Missy is a wretched life, but I guess one can learn to take pride in anything and Ruby says the word in the kitchen is that Madame Headmistress says I'm the prettiest and most demure and dainty Cadet Missy they've ever had.

It seems awful to be proud of that, but at least I'm the best at what I have to do.

Right now I'm working on another dress uniform. The skirt is the same as the School uniform but the torso is an imitation of the tailed coat the gentlemen wear, but without the tails and with silver silk braid going from the buttons on the left side to those on the right. It is made of gray silk satin and the epaulets are made of silver. We wear them for parade, but for us it's called "The Promenade," and we have to make a good show for Founder's Day.

Jan. 9, 1942

Dear Diary,

After the Pearl Harbor attack we are at war. Shadrack Academy has tightened up all around. This year's graduates will all enter the Army upon graduation and so, we assume, will all subsequent classes.

Suddenly, a Military Academy is a very important place. New enrollments are up and the Academy is jammed to the rafters with new Cadets.

So is the Manse. We have a full complement of sixteen Missys and four Proctors.

Even I have a roommate in my little boudoir. He's a rich kid jerk whose Dad decided that as long as there is a war on his kid should be an officer. Alexander McCartney doesn't like the idea of being a military cadet and wants out. He got into so much trouble up on the hill in his first three days he found himself on another bed in my room gasping in his new corselette, swearing a blue streak at the sight of his lavender tea gown.

After a sound switching and an afternoon in the stocks, he seemed to settle down. After Christmas Madame Headmistress called me into her office and announced that because of my long experience and the growth of the Auxiliary Corps she had promoted me to Auxiliary Cadet Captain, Missy Gwendolyn Sharps.

What this means is I have to oversee the new Missys and help the Proctors with them. I carry the switch now, and have to dress up the formation, march the ladies up the hill and report their errors to the Proctors. My fellow Missys don't like me much anymore because I am the one that locks them in the stocks or takes them to the Coal Hole.

I don't like it much either, but it will help me to get out of here, Madame H. says. I especially hate it when the Proctors say things like, "Watch Missy Gwendolyn. Her curtsey is perfect," or "Missy Gwendolyn dances so delicately. Learn from her," or the worst, just the other day at Dolly Night, "Ladies, notice how perfectly Dolly Penelope's costumes fit. Try to make doll clothes as well as Captain Missy Gwendolyn does."

I could have died. I don't like it when I'm reminded what a little lady I have really become.

Cadet Missy Alice McCartney did even less well with us than he did at the Academy. As Cadet Captain, I had to get him into his first tea dress and into make-up and a wig. You wouldn't have believed the string of verbal abuse that came out of him. I fetched the switch and laid a couple of swishers across his bottom and legs and he went nuts, coming after me with fists flying.

It took four of us to get him on the floor.

Astrid came up and had him manacled in a jiffy, squirming on the floor in his corselette, still muttering oaths and warning Astrid that when his father found out about this he would have the Academy closed.

"My father has friends in Washington," he shouted.

We all giggled and that's when Astrid stuffed the leather pear into his mouth while I held his nose and three Missys sat on him.

Madame Headmistress has a Ninny again.

I saw him in Madame H's office this morning, standing there in that idiotic maid's uniform holding Madame's purse and sweating in the ruffled black satin face mask. I could tell by his breathing he still had the pear in his face and I noticed that she had



his wrists chained to his waist and manacles on his ankles so he can't take a step over four inches.

That way I know he can't do anything but stand there behind her chair and hold her purse.

Good, I've got my room all to myself again, as befits a Cadet Captain Missy!

March 3rd

Dear Diary,

Every morning I march fourteen uniformed, Prissy Cadet Missys in their crisp uniforms with their long, narrow skirts, up to the Academy quadrangle in close formation, mincing along to my cadence, form them up on the quad, and dismiss them to attend classes.

I have a set of Captain's bars on the flap of my purse and don't have to stand aside and curtsy to anyone but the faculty anymore.

Life gets a little better.

Every Wednesday afternoon I attend the Cadet Officers' meeting where the Cadet Officers are briefed for the week and Disciplines and Awards lists are handed out and we get the week's orders. Everyone treats me like an officer and a lady even though I carry the awful stigma of the Auxiliary Corps.

People are polite to me and I get saluted and return it with a curtsy, and that's kind of nice. The word is out that I'm the best Cadet Missy in history. The trouble with that is the word is also around that I like it, which I don't.

I'd give up my Captain's bars in a heartbeat just to be an ordinary fourth classman.

Anyway I won't get skirted now.

Missy Alice McCartney got her name back this week and returned to our room where she begged me to help her learn to be a nice little lady. There's something about being Madame Headmistress's Ninny that really alters a guy's attitude about being a good girl. It isn't so much that we want to be girls, we just don't ever want to be a Ninny again.

March 22nd

Dear Diary,

The Founder's Day affair was reasonably awful.

Mom and Dad came. I haven't seen them for over a year and a half and it was nice to know they still care about me. I don't think they fully realized how rigorously effeminate the Auxiliary Corps is. Mom stared openmouthed and Dad looked embarrassed when they saw me in my elegant, strapless, green taffeta, ball gown and long white gloves at the ball.

The worst of it was they brought my bratty sister, Peggy, with them and she just couldn't resist making fun of me. We drilled for the parents and dignitaries, we in our

satin dress uniforms with the long skirts and buttons, braid and big veiled hats, the regular Cadets in their smart dress uniforms.

Then there was the inspection by the Army people and the Founder's dinner, in our dinner gowns and, finally, the ball. That was all on Saturday and on Sunday we spent the day after chapel services with our families. Most went out off campus.

I had to make a special skirted suit of blue gabardine with a stylishly short skirt and a jacket to go out to dinner. I also had to wear my flower bedecked hat. It was my first time off campus as a girl, but it wasn't too bad. Everyone said I looked very smart.

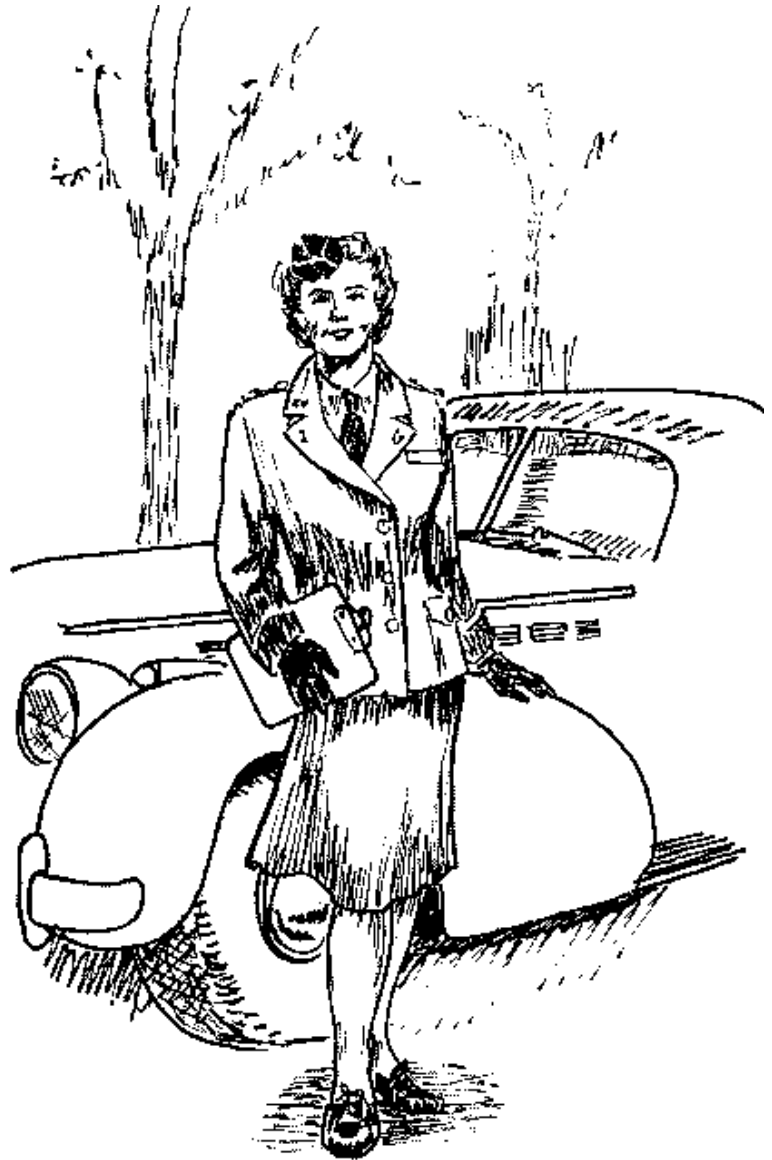
Only five months to go and I can try learning to be a gentleman. Madame Headmistress reminds me that those who can't seem to measure up as gentlemen seem to be able to do it easily after they have mastered the art of being little ladies. Boy, am I ever good at that! There is something about the challenge here at the Manse, something that makes me really want to be demure and genteel and ladylike, and all the lady's clothing seems to reinforce that. I wouldn't want to ever really be a girl, but there are some things I have come to like about it. All the politeness and etiquette and manners are so pleasing when we are all good girls. Still, I think I would rather play football.

Afterward

My Uncle Gwen's diary ends in March of 1942.

There are some torn out pages thereafter, but I have no way of knowing what they may have contained, presumably, later tribulations in the service of the Madame Headmistress. We do know that Glen went up to the Academy after his first two years in the Auxiliary.

I have interviewed some of the men with whom he matriculated and I gather that he struggled his way to graduation with a good academic record and a spotty disciplinary



record. He seems to have been returned to the Auxiliary Corps several times before he graduated.

He also spent his summers with the Colonel's wife at the Manse as her aide and secretary, undoubtedly in the persona of Gwendolyn.

As to his later life and career I have written Brig. General Olive Watson to whom he served as an aide and with whom he lived for years as they both served first, during World War II in the original WAACS, and later in the WACS until the general retired and my uncle served as a Colonel and consultant in the integration of women into the Regular Army before he retired.

My Father, Mike Sharps, Glen's older brother, served in the Army Air Corps in WW II and became an ace fighter pilot, flying Lockheed P-38's in Europe, was often decorated and retired at the end of the war with the rank of major. He then served in the Air National Guard for some years. After the war he took over the management of Sharps Mills while I was still very young.

The family was proud of Aunt Gwendolyn but kept her changed gender a carefully guarded secret. I saw my Aunt Gwen at holidays and occasional other times and never suspected that the stylish gracious lady officer was other than my real "Aunt." A boy could never have had a more delightful relative than I did in my Aunty Gwendolyn.

I was grown before I found her diary, and she was no longer in touch with the family. When I had read it, I became completely fascinated by his lifelong deception and wonder at the complete success of it. The most interesting question remains unanswered, of course,

"Why?"

Teaching in a college in the 1990's, I also wonder if some of the discipline and motivational techniques that Glen experienced might not be salutary today. It seems to me that some of the goings-on at the Manse were pretty dreadful, and we are told that such methods are damaging, but from the record my Aunt Gwendolyn seems to have emerged as a capable, charming and widely loved person.

I regret the loss of the concepts of ladies and gentlemen. There was something wonderful about gracious people, for all their other shortcomings, all of which young people today are so fond of criticizing. It seems to have done some considerable good for the Shadrack Academy to put rude and impertinent boys into dresses and tresses for a while. It seems to me that in teaching them to be little ladies they were motivated to become better gentlemen.

All records of the Auxiliary Corps seem to have been destroyed when the Shadrack Academy was closed in 1981.

From the granddaughter of a former commandant I have received a single photograph on the back of which is written, "The Missys at tea: The Ladies of the Auxiliary Corps — November, 1907."

I found a picture of Uncle Gwendolyn as a WAC driver in 1945.

I now know why Gwendolyn was so fond of quoting Don Marquis' famous cat "Mehitabel" in the "Archy and Mehitabel" books, "Once a lady, always a lady, Archie."

THE TRAINING BRA

by Sofronia Anne Strong

Chapter 1

I could feel Mom's bony fingers against the flesh below my shoulder blades. They felt chilly and raw as she slid the third finger of her left hand beneath the bandeau of my brassiere. The thimble on its tip was hard and cold.

"You are not going to take it off, I will see to that." She tugged and pulled at the elastic of the hooked closure as she slid her needle in and out of the material. "You are going to wear this until the cast comes off Kenneth's arm, you God-awful ruffian. That will be a minimum of six weeks, I am told, and I am going to have you show the whole world how we deal with our little Barbarian."

She snapped the spandex at the back of the satin bandeau against my bare skin and snipped the thread-end off neatly.

"I have told you repeatedly that I will not tolerate physical violence, you bully. This time you have gone too far and you will atone for it properly. Now, put your sweater on and prepare to live with your penance. Hopefully, by the time you are allowed to take off this brassiere, you will have learned how to be nice."

Sis let go of my hands and dangled my white knit V-necked sweater in front of me.

I took it from her disconsolately. I couldn't take my eyes off my torso. Upon my upper body I could see the black brassiere covering my chest, black silk-satin except for the lace filigree that made up the upper half of each breast. The satin straps cut into my shoulders. Below my breasts, it encircled me in a wide band that descended to just below my rib cage.

Mom had called it a long-line brassiere. She said it was made by someone called "Maidenform."

My big sister began to giggle as she parodied the current series of magazine ads for this company.

"I dreamed I beat up my buddy in my Maidenform Bra," she tittered. These ads always showed a gorgeous fashion model elegantly turned out in some stylish ensemble but naked from the waist up except for a Maidenform brassiere styled to be worn under the missing part of the outfit. They were quite daring at the time; certainly not by current standards. It was a time when women still didn't admit to wearing brassieres and still a couple of decades before they began burning them.

"Oh, Olivia, that's precious," Mom replied. "We should put him in a skirt and pose him in his brassiere and sell it to the Maidenform people. Wouldn't that be a sensation?"

The two of them broke into merry laughter and began hugging each other while I died of embarrassment.

I stared in horror and disbelief at the image of myself in the mirror. The image of myself, a sixteen-year-old boy, wearing a black satin, lace encrusted brassiere, appalled me. I shrank into myself, trying not to feel the terror and shame that infused me. Mom stepped behind me, still chuckling at my sister's joke although her voice began to take on the hard edge she had used earlier with me.

"Well, it really is a Maidenform, you know. It's called the 'Full-Rise Model.' Madame Edna at Lane's says it is the new mode for this fall. See how it lifts your breasts up fully and thrusts them out in two clearly defined points. It will look marvelous under your sweater. Everyone will be able to see that you have reached your full development. Look, Dear, see how the long line construction smoothes out the area below your lovely breasts and helps them stand out in all their fullness."

I squirmed at these words in the forlorn hope that hunching up my shoulders would somehow make the lace and satin mountains on my chest dissolve and shrivel. They remained firmly in place, of course. There was nothing that was going to make my new female bosom disappear from view.

"How about, 'I dreamed my Mommie turned me into a girl in my Maidenform falsies?'" Olivia was being vile. She cracked me up at her own horrid joke. I could have belted her, but only shouted at her uselessly.

"Shut up, dammit," I blurted. "Do I have to listen to this, Mom?" I blunted it with a question.

Mom never let me get after Sister Perfect. Olivia was her pet. The two of them were thicker than bees on nectar. Mom put her hand under my chin, something that always infuriates me. It was so demeaning. She lifted my head and lowered hers until she was looking directly into my eyes.

"I think you must be prepared to listen to a lot of this kind of thing, Sweetheart. Your sister is probably being gentle by comparison with what you will have to deal with. The next few weeks will undoubtedly be a series of nightmares in your Maidenform Bra. You had better not let me hear of your losing your temper over any of it either. If I do, you will find yourself wearing something bigger and more embarrassing than what you have on now."

"A corset, a real lace-up cage, with bones and everything. Oh, gee, Mom, let's do put him into a corset. Wow, I can't wait. How delicious." Olivia jumped up and down, clapping her manicured hands, gleefully anticipating what she had suggested.

"Now there's a thought," Mom mused, releasing my chin. "He's in a C-cup now. I'll tell you what, young savage, the first time I hear of you giving anyone a bad time, you'll go to a D-cup, and we'll make it a corselette so you can be a girl all the way up and down. Then, if you get smart after that, I'll start listening to Olivia."

"Wow! Lillian Russel! We'll truss him up in one of those hourglass jobs. This I gotta see." My sister could be absolutely intolerable.

I could imagine what she was suggesting and it scared me so badly, I momentarily forgot about the black satin shaming device that covered my chest already.

“And keep this in mind, my bosomy boy, if I have to change your brassiere, you will go back to square one and start the whole six weeks of your penance over again. Understand?”

I nodded disconsolately. These words took the fire out of me. I was about to belt my sister, and that would, absolutely, have been the end of my manhood, I was sure.

“I think you had better leave him alone, now, Olivia. He will have enough trouble living with this without your tormenting him. Mr. Tuffy here might just lose it and I hate to think what retribution we would have to think up in that contingency.”

I didn't want to think about it either.

“Now, put your sweater on, Mr. C-Cup. This isn't a dream, so you get to wear a sweater over your bra.”

Slowly, I pulled my white knit sweater over my head and adjusted the sleeves. The tightness of the brassiere felt strangely cumbersome as I pulled down the bottom of the sweater. My chest fairly sprung up and out as I did so.

“Look, Olivia, it's just as I thought. The black lace on the cups shows through. You can see the shadow of the whole brassiere through the sweater.”

I had been taking quiet solace in the idea that once I had the sweater on, it would at least conceal the brassiere, if not my new effeminate shape. I despaired as I looked in the mirror and saw the delicate tracery of the lace and satin beneath the sweater. The V-neck stopped short of actually showing the brassiere itself, but an embarrassing cleavage was apparent. Worse yet, the tiny black satin bow on the front of the bra, right at the bottom of my cleavage, tended to reveal itself.

Olivia, of course, had to make comment. She always had to make comment.

“Oooh, but the bow is really cute. It's just precious.”

Olivia never missed a chance, not one.

“We'll need more sweaters, I'm sure, but for now, go clean up your room. Then we can go downtown to lunch. We can find you a pink angora, perhaps, something with a high collar to hide that cleavage. You will need another brassiere too, one to sleep in so you can wash that one out every evening.”

Olivia resumed her little dance of satisfaction at my degradation as Mom turned me around and examined me from every angle. She finally slapped me on the fanny and sent me off to my room to do my Saturday chores.

Kenny Miller absolutely had it coming. He had been bullying me for weeks, trying to goad me into a fight. I don't think he really thought he could beat me up. He was like any bully. If I called his bluff, he would fold, but that would have meant actually confronting him, and that made the possibility of blows pretty high. I knew from long experience that any kind of fighting would land me in big trouble with Mom, so I had tried all through the fall to avoid getting into it with Kenny. That avoidance only encouraged him, of course, and with each passing week, his taunts and challenges be-

came more outrageous. The whole football team was just waiting for it to happen. His buddies were really egging him on.

Kenny finally snapped at my loins with a wet towel in the locker room once too often. Calling me a candy-assed brown nosier, he caught me across the butt with the wet towel as I spun away to avoid taking the blow in the groin. That's when I lost it.

As he stooped over to get something out of his locker, I planted my foot against his rear and propelled him head first into its recesses. When he recoiled and came up to face me, I plowed my right into his breadbasket. As he doubled over, I brought a left uppercut squarely into his nose. His head snapped back and I nailed him with a right cross that sent him to la-la-land. He staggered back into his locker, sideways. His right arm was broken both above and below the elbow when he smashed it into the hook on the inside of the locker and then cracked the arm on the concrete floor edge of the platform on which the lockers rested.

When he returned to school three days later, he had his whole arm in one of those full casts that rested on a crutch belted around his waist.

I didn't see his return. I was sitting out a one week suspension while the school officials argued about expelling me altogether.

I was grounded, of course. I pretty much kept to my room while Mom and Dad argued about it. Mom was all for just "throwing me away," whatever that meant. Dad argued that there was an element of self-defense involved, or at least I was provoked. He believed me when I said Kenny had it coming.

Mom said there was never any justification for fighting, ever, period. She was really rigid on this point of view, totally nonnegotiable. Even I didn't say he deserved a broken arm, but I did argue that I didn't actually break it, that part was accidental. Mom said I caused the damage, and that was that.

The Principal, Mrs. Nevlin, took the view that the fight was unprovoked, which made me the villain. Either she didn't know, or chose to ignore, what had led up to it.

Things finally calmed down as she discovered, after a few days, what had led up to the fight and the matter was closed with the week's suspension.

Mom was still not mollified. I heard her downstairs hollering at Dad for letting me play football. She said that it only encouraged me to be crude and brutish. She kept at him, insisting that he make me quit the team and take some initiative in finding ways to refine my ruffian-like actions.

I guess she finally wore him out. I heard him shout at her in exasperation that he didn't see what was so wrong in my attitudes and behavior.

"Boys will be boys," he said, and told her that if she didn't like my rough and ready style, she was free to figure out what to do about it on her own.

She did!

He washed his hands of the whole affair. Even after my penance began and I turned to him for help, he told me that it wasn't his affair any longer, that Mom was in charge. He was through with it.

The suspension ended on Friday. Saturday morning, Mom beckoned me into her room.

Olivia was sitting on her bed, wearing a smirk.

"Mom's got a present for you, Mr. Linebacker," she cooed. "You've got a new set of pads."

This remark went right by me. I told Olivia to shut up. Mom waved her to be quiet and thrust a small box, tied with a pink ribbon, into my hands.

"Some new school uniforms for you," she remarked, dryly. "You are too dangerous to be let loose in a civilized school without some means of keeping you under control. This is intended to help you change your attitude. Open it!"

Befuddled, but now on my guard, I untied the ribbon, slid the contents out of the end of the plain box and held the black silk garment, still folded, in my hand. I stared at it dumfounded, unsure, at first, of what it was.

Olivia snatched it out of my hand, held it up by its straps and dangled it in front of me.

I stared at it, dumfounded, unable to think of anything to say.

"You will wear this while poor Kenneth wears his cast. It will make your life as awkward for you as you have made his for him. Now put on your brassiere, Honey. The sooner you begin, the sooner you will become accustomed to wearing it."

I was frozen to the spot, transfixed.

Olivia kept dangling the horrid garment in front of my face.

"Lacy, lacy, lord, but it's dainty," she sang. "Come on, put it on. Hurry up, I can't wait to see this.

"Off with the shirt, James," Mom commanded. She seized the bottom of my T-shirt at the sides, jerking it upwards.

Instinctively, I bent over, threw my arms over my head and slipped backwards out of the shirt.

"You're frigging nuts! What the Hell is this? Forget it!" I shouted at them, I bolted out the door and into the hall. I was running for my life. I had no intention of stopping until I was somewhere else entirely. As I turned the corner in the hall, bounding for the stairs and freedom, the floor went out from under me.

Mom took me off my feet with one swipe of the wet mop that had been standing in its pail just outside the bathroom door.

I hit the floor with a loud thud, swearing. As I struggled to my knees, the mop hit me squarely in the back, flattening me. As I sprawled helplessly on the floor, the mop descended a third time. Water was flying everywhere. The wet mop weighed several pounds and it felt like being hit with a pile driver.

"Flat! Don't move an inch, Mister, or I'll break a few bones for you. Not a word! Face down, hands on your head!" Mom put the sole of her shoe on my neck. "You are

going to cooperate and do as you are told, or I will take your hide right off of you. Do you want some more?"

I managed to say I didn't want any more of her punishment, rather weakly. I was actually starting to cry. I had never experienced anything like this before. We were not a crude bunch, not with Mom's prohibition against violence. Mom didn't even go in for spanking. The fight just drained out of me.

"On your feet, Mr. Tough-Guy. You need to get dressed, don't you?"

I struggled to my feet and leaned weakly against the bathroom door jamb.

Mom jerked me by the arm and propelled me back toward her bedroom. She lay the mop on my bare shoulder and jammed the end of the handle into the base of my neck. She marched me back into the room and pushed me up against the wall, face first. I was terrified and unwilling to defend myself as she twisted my left arm behind my back in a breakhold. As she handed her mop to Olivia, she put her mouth up to my ear and spoke softly, but with a hard edge in her voice.

"Will you ever defy me again?" It dripped with menace.

"No." My answer came out mostly like a squeak.

"Will you ever use that kind of language in front of ladies again?"

Again I squeaked.

Mom turned me to face her. Olivia held the mop aloft, prepared to strike. Obviously, she was just waiting for a chance to get in her licks. Mom picked the dreadful brassiere off the vanity and thrust it in my face.

"Tell me that you are going to wear this brassiere. Ask me nicely for it, and sound like you mean it!"

"Please. . . Mom. . . uh, can I wear it?"

"Oh, no! I told you to tell me that you want to wear your lovely brassiere. Tell me that you want to put it on. Promise me that you won't take it off, either. I want to hear some enthusiasm here."

I squeezed out the terrible words. It was eerie hearing my own voice begging to be allowed to wear the ghastly thing and promising to do so.

Mother was only too quick to grant my wish. She parked me on the stool in front of her skirted vanity and ordered Olivia to fetch a washcloth and towel to clean up the mop debris that covered my shoulders.

As I reluctantly held my arms out in front of myself, Olivia slipped the shiny shoulder straps up my arms and Mom hooked it in back. I was allowed to lay my hands in my lap as Mom slipped a pair of molded breast forms into the cups of the brassiere. My new bosoms swelled and rose into pointed fullness.

"You are not going to get into any more trouble, now," Mom ordered. "Wearing this for the next six weeks will cause you some problems. That is my intention. Despite your promise to wear it, I don't feel you are to be trusted to keep it on. You don't want to know what I will do to you if you do take it off, so I will remove the temptation."

My heart sank as she put on her thimble and began to stitch the hooks in back. As she did so, she lectured me on the nature of boys, “all roughness and crudeness, snips and snails,” she said. She told me that she hoped this trial would remind me to think of being sugar and spice instead. She said she was sorry to have to take such strong measures, but she was convinced that a little dose of femininity would take the edge off my rudeness.

I struggled to hold back the tears. They came anyway, but they were more of rage and helplessness than shame. I was terrified by visions of what the coming weeks would hold for me.

I was packed off to clean up my room, trying to avoid my image in the mirror on the closet door, but I caught a few awful glimpses of myself anyway. I was appalled at the new shape of my torso and of the black, lacy shadows beneath my white sweater. I could avoid looking at myself but I couldn't escape the tactile sensations, the pressure around my ribs and the touch of the girl's garment on my skin. These sensations kept superimposing themselves on my consciousness with each motion I made.

Chapter 2

I was just stuffing the last of my laundry in the hamper when my precious sister stuck her head in the door.

“Come on, Billy-Boobs. It's lunch time. Mom says it's time for your public debut. We're going to The Rooftop at Dunham's. All us girls do lunch at Dunham's. Then we go shopping.”

“Shut up, Bitch! I'll belt you from here to the rooftops.” I held my voice down so Mom wouldn't hear me.

“Touch me, and your boobs will swell like Pinnochio's nose.” Then she stuck her tongue out at me. She was forever doing that. It was so dumb for a really pretty girl of eighteen. She didn't do it to anyone else anymore. She did it to me because it annoyed me so. She was right, of course. If I laid a hand on her, things would get worse and I knew it. “Mom isn't going to wait. Let's go. You might as well face it.”

I slammed down the lid of the hamper and resigned myself to my fate.

I followed Olivia meekly down to the car. I slumped in the backseat, filled with dread, convinced that the next hour would begin the process that would utterly destroy me.

In the Dunham's Department Store parking ramp Mom jabbed a knuckle between my shoulder blades and admonished me to stand up straight and not to slouch. She said she expected to see my chest precede me wherever I went. She said that if I didn't present a proud front, there were devices available right here in Dunham's Department Store that could be used to guarantee my proper posture.

As we walked through the store and rode up to the Rooftop, I was convinced that all and everyone was staring at the boy in the brassiere. They weren't, of course, but it didn't seem that way to me. There were no titters or pointed fingers, but I suspected there to be at any moment. I wanted to be invisible and had the feeling that I was, except for my chest.

The hostess, who seated us quite visibly, raised her eyebrows and concealed a smile on getting sight of me in the doorway of the dining room; but, she said nothing and seated us by the window.

I thoughtlessly slumped in my chair, hunching my shoulders forward and crossing my arms in front of me as though all this would somehow conceal my chest. I kept my head toward the window, looking out across the city so as to be unaware of what anyone else in the dining room was doing.

Mom and Olivia chatted over the menu. Mom asked me what I wanted.

I told her I wanted a hamburger, but Mom ordered me a brocolli quiche. They both know how much I hate brocolli..

“Sit up! Shoulders back. I'll buy you a back brace on the way out, if you like. Put your hands in your lap. Now you might as well start presenting them to the world, or I will fix you so that you do. They aren't going to go away and you can't hide them. The more you try to hide your bosom, the bigger I will make it.” She spoke calmly and firmly.

With a sigh, I dropped my arms and threw my shoulders back. My bosoms rose proudly before me, the satin and lace of the brassiere rubbing against my sweater with a rustle

. Olivia leaned over her shrimp salad and smiled.

Our waitress was visibly amused but gave me a sympathetic look.

“Haven't you heard of Double-D Cups?” The glee in Olivia's voice was maddening.

I could feel myself reddening.

“He blushes so easily too, Mom. Isn't that neat?”

I could kill this girl!

Mother backed her off with a scowl and I finished the meal in misery, being made to choke down every morsel of the brocolli.

My great fear was the shopping that had been planned after lunch. We made a stop at the sweater counter and I had to stand still while Mom held several sweaters up to my torso. Two more V-necked sweaters were selected, both white, one cashmere and the other a fluffy angora number that I really detested.

The saleslady's amusement was too apparent when Olivia told her that I just loved wearing lingerie. Olivia told her that they just couldn't keep me out of it. The saleslady said she understood and then told Mom how nice I looked. Mom was no help as she pawed through piles of sweaters, soliciting Olivia's opinion about them.

As we left the department, Mom jabbed her knuckle into my back again. “Straight and erect, or else.”

Olivia started singing a little tune, punctuating it with the non-lyric “Dee-dee dee-dee.”

Our next stop was foundations. It was really scary to watch the sales lady hold up ribbed black satin plates with shoulder straps and hear her explain to Mom how they

were fitted between the shoulder blades and would force the shoulders back in a locked position to correct poor posture.

Mom bought one and made me carry the package as we walked out of the store.

I kept myself perfectly erect, my chest thrust fully up and out as Olivia sang her little “Dee-dee dee-dee” song.

“If I have to put that brace on you to correct your posture you will wear it the whole six weeks. Slump just once and it's on you. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, Ma'am.”

Once home the awful device went into a drawer in Mom's room for safekeeping, she said.

I wondered just how long I could keep my chest up and avoid it.

Olivia's little song became her way of reminding me about my posture, but it drove me wild to have her so easily remind me that my chest could grow like Pinnochio's nose.

Somewhere, somehow, I vowed I would find a way of reckoning things with my perky, brightly attractive little sis.

Chapter 3

By the time I sat at the breakfast table on Monday morning, I had schooled myself to maintain the required erect posture without having to think about it all the time. Olivia's singing and the awareness of the device in Mom's drawer had helped me get into the desired habit. Mom had jabbed me in the back a few times as Olivia started up her ditty, but my lacy chest now rose fully without effort. As I worked at my cereal, Mom pronounced the rest of my penance.

“Poor Kenneth can't even carry his own books, you know. He needs, and deserves, your help. How better to make amends than tending to his needs when you are the one who hurt him so badly?” She didn't need to say more, but she did.

“You will want to open doors for him, I should think. As he is unable to write, I think it would be nice if you typed up your class notes and shared them with him. And, of course, you will want to type his class papers for him as well. You will be his good right arm for the next six weeks, won't you?”

As all this sunk in, I went into my dumfounded, or stupid, act. I stared down at the table and shook my head. Unfortunately, as I did so, I let my shoulders slump. That was part of the act. The “Dee-dee” song instantly reminded me to snap them back.

“I have asked Olivia to keep an eye on you, Dear. She will let me know if you have assisted your friend properly. In fact, I have asked her to report everything at school to me.”

“I have a thousand eyes, me and all my girlfriends,” Olivia was gloating now as the implications of Mom's directives dawned on me.

“Of course, you will maintain your good posture and be as polite and courteous with everyone as is proper for someone who's task is to learn to be sugar and spice.

Remember, if I have to correct you further, your six weeks penance will begin all over again. Your brassiere is to remind you that you must not be rude or rough in any way. Olivia will walk you to school now. Wait for her this afternoon. She will walk you home, also. I don't want you disappearing anywhere, not that I think you would try it, looking like that."

I walked to school amidst a growing gaggle of Olivia's tittering friends who couldn't talk about anything but my new figure. As the school day wore on, it became the only thing anyone else could talk about.

I trailed Kenny from classroom to classroom amidst endless titters, guffaws, jeers and taunts. By midmorning, I had been called "Boulder Boobs," "Man Mountain Jim," "Jiggles," "Chesty" and other less humorous allusions to my sexual orientation.

Kenny, when I took his books before the first class and held the door to the room open for him, scowled at me and told me that as inconvenient as his huge cast was, he would rather be wearing it than what I was wearing.

I didn't disagree.

"I'm going to enjoy every minute of this, Jiggling Jim," he remarked as we sat down. "Don't expect any help from me. I will enjoy seeing you squirm in that bra every minute. Your sis tells me that if you aren't a perfect sweetheart, that it gets bigger and stiffer. I want to see that. I mean, I really do. Believe me, I'll do my best to make it happen, Pussy-Chest. Call me, 'Sir'!!"

"Yes, Sir," I mumbled as the teacher rapped for order. She was a few minutes getting it. There was a kind of constant uproar surrounding me all the time.

About midmorning, I was summoned to the Office via the classroom intercom. A hushed stir swept through the classroom as my name was announced.

The secretaries and clerks in the Office had trouble hiding their giggles as they whispered to one another behind their hands. In the Principal's Office, I found her with the football coach. Mrs. Nevlin sat behind her desk, smiling. Coach Bramson wasn't smiling.

"Think you can get your shoulder pads on over those boulders?" he asked, not altogether straight-faced.

I muttered something about wanting to try.

"Sorry," he rejoined, "regulations don't allow anyone to play with more than a 'Double-A Cup.' A full 'C-Cup' disqualifies you. Clean out your locker."

In a way, I was relieved. Thoughts of what could happen on the football field had been bothering me.

The coach stood up and patted me on the head.

"Try the cheer-leading squad. I don't know what their regs are, but you should qualify." He left, smiling.

The Principal scowled at him disapprovingly. She resumed her soft smile almost immediately and leaned forward at her desk, looking directly at me.

My stomach sank.

"I know this is a terrible ordeal for you, James," she began. "Your Mother's mode of punishment is unorthodox, at the very least. I was facing a move by some here to expel you permanently. When your Mother suggested this penance to me and the faculty, we all agreed to it because it seemed to be a way to guarantee your future conduct. It was by this means that we were able to keep you in school. I hope you understand."

"Yes, Mrs. Nevlin. . . I guess I do."

"I hoped you would. I want to help you get through this, James. I want to make it as easy as I can for you."

It was the first time since Saturday that anyone had said anything conciliatory to me. It made me feel better immediately.

"As difficult as this is for you, I think you must try your best to make a go of it. I will know pretty much what is going on and I will try to keep things from getting too bad. I have asked the faculty to ignore your appearance and not to comment on it or otherwise add to your embarrassment, Mr. Bramson, notwithstanding. Coaches are like that. It's part of coaching. If you can ignore the taunts and the ragging, try to get along with Kenneth and help him out, I think you can get through this ordeal. You may even find you have a new perspective, that you have learned something from the experience, if you try. I'll watch out for you as much as I can, but don't do anything to get yourself in more trouble. If you do, I shan't be able to protect you. Is that OK?"

It really did sound pretty good. I had never thought of the Principal as my friend, but I needed her now. I thanked her and promised to be good.

As we parted, she took both my hands in hers.

"I am sure you will do just fine," she reassured me. "You are not the first boy to be put into a girl's garment. Did that ever occur to you?"

It hadn't, and the suggestion was pretty frightening. I couldn't imagine what she was getting at and I didn't want to ask. I guess I really didn't want to know, so I let it pass.

"I'm sure you'll stay out of trouble. Now, run along." She put her arm around my shoulder and gave it a squeeze. She was smiling in a most kindly way as she spoke.

Things did settle down a little as time went by. I had to steel myself against a steady onslaught of mean tricks and nasty remarks. I was more scared of Mom's threats than I was of the taunts of my peers.

Olivia contrived to drag me to an interview with the cheerleader's squad.

I didn't dare deny her. I had to pose for the whole squad and was told that my torso was acceptable but my legs were bad.

The girls were much amused.

There was a lot of this sort of thing. Kenny's pals contrived to get my locker open and stuff it with panties and sheer hose, a panty girdle and a couple of dresses.

I ignored it.

They told it around as though it was my stuff. Rumors abounded about me.

At home, I was left alone for the most part. Mom and sis didn't contrive a lot of pretexts to drag me out in public, just occasionally when Mom was annoyed with me. She would tell Olivia to fetch me so we could go to tea at the Rose Tea Room, or drag me along while they went shopping.

I think Dad helped me out on this. I heard him once or twice tell Mom to cool it and give me a break. When Mom was annoyed, however, she still dragged me out and put me on parade. I was getting so that it didn't bother me much.

The bra came off every evening and I had to wash it out by hand after Mom had stitched the alternate in place. I looked forward to my showers. I could get braless for up to half an hour. I was terribly focused on my chest. The thing wore me and I couldn't shake a constant awareness of my shameful appearance.

Chapter 4

It was about halfway to freedom, three weeks to go until Kenny's cast would come off, and mine too.

The day began poorly.

Mom was annoyed because I hadn't brought my laundry hamper down in time and I had made my bed sloppily. She had already put in the fluffy angora sweater because she knew I really disliked it.

At breakfast, she said the Rose Sisters had asked about me. She said she thought we should go to tea after school. Mom was usually pretty pleasant, but she did expect compliance with her expectations.

I went to school in a foul mood.

Kenny was forever doing his best to coax me into a blunder. He kept threatening to feel up my boobs and making passes at me. It became a regular dodging match as I avoided those harassment's in order to stay out of trouble with Mom.

We were entering a classroom when he reached around from behind me and got hold of my left breast. My reaction was reflexive. I came back with my right elbow and connected with his stomach. Then I made a mistake. I lost my temper and slammed the classroom door shut. His cast was immediately caught between the door and the jamb. Kenny let out a howl, louder than was really necessary, and began to shout and curse.

"My arm, you sonofabitch. You've broken my arm again, you asshole." He carried on in this vein until Miss Hoglund, the English teacher, intervened. It seems that I had been leaning against the door, keeping Kenny's arm pinned in the jamb. Kenny was dispatched to the nurse's office, I to the Principal's.

I was thence sent home with a note explaining the event.

Madame Edna was fiftyish, stylish and imposing. She wore the traditional black dress of the shopkeeper. She and her sister, Mona, had worked for years for their Mother, and upon her demise, had inherited the Lane Corset Shop. They were expert corsetieres. As Madame Edna tugged at the bottom of my long corset, stretching its sides down over my thighs, Madame Mona tugged and pulled at the breast forms she had inserted through the lace cups of the brassiere portion.

"Fitting boys and men is always a challenge, Mrs. O'Dell. Their waists are always in the wrong relation to the rest of them. However, this seems to fit James quite nicely. He actually has quite a decent figure. We have pushed things about a bit, but I think he has a fairly feminine shape now."

The pushing about had been fairly uncomfortable. As Madame Mona hooked the back of the black foundation garment up past my shoulder blades I was told to inhale and then to hold my breath. After the corset had finally been zipped closed, I found I was unable to take a really deep breath anymore. Madame Edna smoothed the satin panels and her sister adjusted the shoulder straps and everyone stood back to take in my new shape.

My waist was nipped in, my hips curved out smoothly, my breasts jutted out monstrously. I was encased from my cleavage to the middle of my thighs.

Madame Mona smiled as she carefully hooked the crotch of the snug corset close. "Just leave the garters there, Edna. Just let them dangle. They will remind him of the possibility of wearing hose."

I shivered at the thought. Without further comment, Mom picked up a needle and thread and stitched the talon on the zipper on the back of the corselette closed.

The Lane Sisters took an amused interest in this procedure. Madame Mona checked the inserts in my cups once more and lifted my new breasts into a higher posture.

"I think you are right, Mrs. O'Dell. He does have the shoulders to carry a Double-D development. With the four inch reduction at his waist, the effect is still quite proportional."

Mom smiled with satisfaction.

"I told you so," chirped my bratty sister. "Dee-dee dee-dee and double D too." she crooned. As she sang, she was holding up an even ghastlier contraption of blue satin and black lace. "Have you ever fitted a boy into one of these?" she asked, smirking.

"Some of the men do buy them," Madame Mona acknowledged. "They can be quite uncomfortable unless they are properly fitted, you know."

"I'll bet!" Olivia was on a roll. She held up the rigid, boned model called, 'The Victorian



Mode,' and dangled it in front of me. "Next time! Right, Mom? What a cage. That I gotta see. Tell him it's gonna be one of these next time, Mom."

"Shall I get one for you too, Dear?" Mom cooed.

I nearly fainted, but the question was directed at Olivia. My sister's face fell in surprise. She lowered the lace encrusted device and backed off a step. She quickly turned to Madame Edna and deflected Mom's question.

"I mean. . . did women ever really wear these things, Madame?"

"Oh, yes, Dear. In fact, they were considered obligatory for all young ladies in the last century. Girls such as yourself were laced into them at puberty and thereafter always wore one."

Olivia looked cowed.

The Lane Sisters were clearly amused and now it was Mom who smirked.

I was much relieved, but Mom wasn't going to let me off easily either.

"The Victorian Mode is something we might consider if you get out of line again, James. I think a six week visit to the fin de siecle might be salutary if you give me reason to bring you here again."

As my jaw dropped, Olivia recovered her composure.

Mona Lane smiled at me knowingly as she folded tissue paper over the mate to my corselette.

My white sweaters were stretched even tighter over my enlarged bosom now. Mom didn't seem to care. I didn't get new sweaters. My cleavage was even more noticeable now. The black satin bow at the bottom of the V peeked out noticeably. My pants didn't quite set right either. The waistline was too small, and the hips and rear seemed huge like my bosom. The long grip of the corselette on my thighs restricted my gait and I came distressingly close to mincing. The shameful tracery of my lace cups shimmered through my sweaters glaringly. Each time I dared to take a good look at myself in the mirror, I broke down sobbing and that didn't help me with my struggle to retain my masculine self-image.

We had lunch at the Rooftop again as a sort of inaugural to my new, more feminized image.

As I sat on the front of my chair, properly erect, toying with a tuna salad, I felt like a statue in the park warily eyeing the pigeons. The restaurant was filled with ladies who, it seemed to me, were eyeing me with great curiosity. I suspected that all of them had just come to see the boy in the oversized bra. Too many people now knew what was going on with me, and why. Word of my vicious attack on Kenny's broken arm was all over town and I had lost everyone's sympathy. There was a consensus that whatever I got, I deserved. To confirm this, two of Mom's lady friends stopped by the table to chat.

"James is so well. . . developed, Maude. Let me congratulate you on your good taste."

“You have such a lovely figure, Dear. How proud your Mother must be of you. You must be the envy of every girl.”

“I imagine your foundation must be uncomfortable, James, but it is a worthwhile inconvenience to put up with for such a fine figure.”

Mom made me thank them for each one of these remarks. Mom reminded me that I was fortunate that I hadn't really hurt Kenny's arm in the door jamb. She said that had I done so, she would have confined me to a fate so bizarre that I would never live it down.

Olivia took every opportunity to taunt me with the spectra of the blue satin corset. As we left the restaurant, she asked me if I were aware that I wouldn't be able to bend over in one of those cages.

I told her that she couldn't either and she should shut her mouth or I would complain to Mom.

“Cut it out, you two,” Mom ordered. She jabbed a knuckle into my back to straighten me out, but it was unnecessary. My new foundation didn't allow me to relax my torso very much. My new front preceded me like a pair of trucks. I really was having trouble getting used to these monstrous protuberances. I had always had the feeling that the old brassiere wore me. This new chest utterly defined me. It seemed to be all there was to me now.

Olivia hummed her little tune.

School on Monday was hellish. Kenny grinned at me menacingly.

“Gotcha! I love it! Where did you get them knockers? I'm gonna get ya again, too. Watch! Open this door for me, Chesty. I hear you're starting all over in that rig. In three weeks, my cast is history, but you're in a kind of body cast, I see. That thing goes all the way down, doesn't it? What do you wear under it, lace panties?”

I opened the door. I didn't give him an answer. The fact was that Mom didn't let me wear anything under the corset. I was pretty uncomfortable most of the time. Using the boys' room was a particular ordeal with the hooking and unhooking of the corset crotch.

At the Rose Tea Room after school, the Rose Sisters tittered and fussed as they served us. Mom had told nearly everyone she knew that we would be there for tea. The Tea Room was jammed with ladies come for the spectacle. Not one of them missed the opportunity to comment on my condition.

I had to thank them all.

Chapter 5

I learned later that the thing with Olivia is called “sibling rivalry.” The trouble with Olivia is that she is so damn bright and so awfully pretty. She really is a doll, but her smart mouth drove me nuts.

I had been in the corselette for about a week. I was lying on my back, reading. My back was the only thing I could lie on comfortably. Double-D boobs really get in your way.

Olivia bounced into my room. She had on a high necked angora sweater and her own "C's" were sticking up perkily. She had on a round felt skirt, petticoats peeking beneath, pink, woolly bobby socks and her ubiquitous saddle shoes. As usual, her long blonde pony tail switched and bounced behind her.

"What do you want, Pain?" I asked.

She flopped in my big, comfy chair and pulled her legs up underneath her. She thrust a bottle of coke at me and grinned, tossing her curls.

"For me? What's up? You bringing me goodies? You must want something. I don't like it when you want something. I get nervous when you play nice to me."

"Sure, but relax this time. Little O just wants to talk. You wanna talk to me?"

"Depends. Whadda ya wanna talk about? Don't talk about you-know-what. I don't wanna talk about them."

"Oh, well, yeah. I just thought you might want to talk about it. You're having a pretty bad time and I know I haven't been much help. Golly, I haven't even been very nice, have I?"

This was not the Olivia I knew. I wondered where she was coming from. With my sister, you could get blindsided very quickly.

"I think you ought to talk about it, to somebody, anyway. I'll listen, really I will!"

I still couldn't believe that the Goddess of Good Conscience had bewitched my smarty sister. She did have a point. I didn't get any sympathy anywhere. I was pretty well mired in the shame of my penance. I had lay down because it took the pressure off my hips and waist and eased the discomfort some. I had been mostly feeling sorry for myself, so I was vulnerable enough to trust my sis, at least a little.

"I don't know what's gotten into you, but I'll chance it. What I'd like to know is why you are so darn mean about all this. You haven't missed a single opportunity to rub it in, or take another opportunity to scare me. . . and the gloating, all your pleasure in my embarrassment. Like that corset thing and dragging me in front of the cheerleader squad. I know we don't like each other much, but I am. . . or was. . . your brother. How come you never give me a break?"

Olivia sat down in the big chair looking like a fluffy doll. She was pensive for a moment as though my accusation had scored. She looked up, at last, and laid her cards on the table.

"You're a great one to talk about brothers and sisters. Little brothers are a girl's terror. Why do I rub it in? Why am I getting my jollies off on you? You've a mighty short memory, Jimbo. . . oops, sorry." (Jimbo-Bimbo had become one of the commonest epithets at school.) "You really have forgotten the holy terrors you used to pull on me? You just don't know anymore do you?"

"You mean like the pigtails and stuff? Yeah, I remember. Golly, Sis, that was long ago and far away."

"Oh, no you don't. Far away for you, but not so long ago in my mind. A girl doesn't forget having her braids hacked off by her brother and his buddy. How about the

shellac in my dancing slippers? Am I supposed to forget that? And the frogs in my bed or the spider in my corsage? Karma, Little Brother. No one escapes Karma forever. How long did you call me 'Sister-Pister' to your pals? I remember 'Olivia Oddball' was pretty popular too. How's your memory doing? Refreshed is it?"

"Come on, that was kid stuff. We got past that, I thought."

"I never ever heard you say you were sorry for any of it. You just got by with it all. Even when Mom sent you to your room, you never regretted it. What about all the stuff you pulled and got me blamed for? You laughed all the way when Mom grounded me for your stunts, Little Brother. I can't believe you asked why I was getting back at you. I guess it's just my turn to get my jollies." I turned my back on her, putting up with the pressure of my huge left breast form pushing into me.

"Well, I'm glad you're enjoying it. Remember, what goes around, comes around, for you too, someday, Sis."

"Yeah, I guess. That's why I thought we ought to talk."

"Well, if you really want to help, why don't you try to talk Mom out of this, shorten up the weeks or something? This thing is a drag. . . I mean, it's starting to kill me, physically that is. I can't do anything in it and it's really uncomfortable. I'm really discouraged in this thing."

"That's better. See, at least you have someone to complain to. I did talk to Mom, but she's adamant. Besides, she says everyone expects her to make you finish it out now and she'll lose face if she relents. She's gonna keep you sewn in."

"OK, how about if she just lets me go back to the other bra, a compromise, maybe? C-Cups and my jockey shorts would be a relief."

"Unh-unh. Tried that too. I even tried Dad, but he says he's out of it. Mom will really let him have it if he gets his oar into it. Sorry, no help, Little Brother."

I couldn't help it. I began to cry a little. I kept my back to Olivia, wishing she would just go away, but not wanting to say so.

"Look," she continued, "I really came in here because Mom got on my case. When I tried to get her to ease off on you, she said I should butt out, and then she said I should get off your back. I figure what you're going through is pay-back for all the crap you pulled on me. So, be nice, and I'll be nice. OK?"

"Fair enough, I suppose. Hey, Mom's downtown. How about you unzip this thing for a while and give me some time off?"

Olivia giggled.

"Why not? You might even get to like your sister."

I pulled up my sweater.

Olivia snipped the thread off the talon and unhooked me down to the waist. It felt heavenly. By the time Mom got home, I was latched and sewn in again. Mom never suspected, I was sure. I promised not to circulate any more nasty nicknames for Olivia. From time to time, when it was safe, Olivia repeated the favor. I guess sisters aren't all bad.

Kenny was insufferable. I couldn't do anything, so I stayed pretty much at home, bored and inactive, but typing up his papers, going to his house for dictating and such really grated on me. He had been told to leave my boobs alone, but that didn't mean his remarks improved. The trouble was that as the weeks went by, his witticisms became stale as well as nasty.

I gritted my teeth and suffered in silence. If I goofed up again, I was a dead boy.

Mom had assured me of that.

I did tell Kenny off once.

Walking home from school, he had a couple of his buddies ragging me unusually hard. The game was a new one. Kenny would egg his pals on to have one of them pin me down while the others stripped me of my sweater. Then they played keep-away with the sweater and commented on my bouncing boobs as I tried to get it back. It always ended with me in tears, the Kenny crowd in gales of laughter, and Sis dragging me home, my corselette still uncovered from the waist up.

Olivia really did help on those occasions, admonishing me not to do anything I would regret. Sometimes she got the sweater back.

One day, Kenny began to holler that they should take my pants too.

I panicked and kneed Roger Weston in the groin. I made my escape, sweaterless again, of course. I asked Olivia to keep it quiet, which she did, and I thought it was forgotten. I should have known better.

Mom walked into my room while I was reading an English assignment. She dropped a small package on the bed and reached into it. She extracted a tiny packet and dropped it into my lap.

"Here, Bully Boy, if they get your pants next time, I don't want you out on the street bare-legged."

I sat, stunned.

Mom pulled a long pair of black nylon, seamed hose from the packet, straightened them out in front of my wide eyes and ran her hands into each stocking.

"Take off your pants. I'll show you how to roll them on and then I can stitch them to your garters. Did you really think you could start fighting again and not suffer more consequences? I'm going to get you to quit brawling if I have to send you to school in a dress."

I was too stunned to say anything. Her last remark was a new twist. I had the thought that it might be easier to just wear a dress. At least that way I wouldn't just look like a guy in a brassiere anymore.

Mom produced a net wash bag and promised a tutorial on washing out hose as she dropped several more of the hosiery packets in my dresser drawer.

The new hose had a strange, kind of cool feeling on my legs. Strangely, it felt kind of nice. I didn't like that either.

I asked Sis if she had told on me.

She said I was being stupid to think Mom wouldn't find out.

I was stupid enough to think she would let me keep my socks so the nylons wouldn't show. Mother warned me about keeping my seams straight as she left.

"Watch it! I'll bet she comes up with a pair of heels next," Olivia warned.

"She wouldn't," I sneered.

"Don't count on it." Olivia flounced out of my room as I smoothed out my sheer new leg coverings.

I tried to get my mind back to the English assignment, but the silky smooth feeling of the nylon on my legs kept intruding on my consciousness.

Kenny finally got his cast off, but I was still working out my lengthened sentence. He and his pals got my pants soon thereafter. I put up a pretty good fight and got in a few telling punches, but I was outnumbered.

Olivia intervened before it got too nasty. She retrieved my pants for me, but not until I had been seen by the school yard crowd in nothing but my corselette and sheer hose.

This event revealed my nylons for the first time and a new round of jeering and ragging began at school. It became harder and harder to contain myself. I was often on the ragged edge. With Kenny's cast off, I was relieved of my service duties to the ugly bully. I could now avoid him and that eased off a lot of the pressure. Still, I was taking a lot of heat. As time wore on, it was the girls who teased me the most. The guys had pretty well written me off. They just didn't want to be seen with me. Girls kept inviting me over.

Mom showed up with a laundry list. She had extracted a blow by blow account from Olivia and she read it off to me; Tom Thorsen's blow to the stomach; how I had laid a hook on Will Mason's jaw; and Teddy Glanville's black eye.

"Of course you were embarrassed. You're supposed to be embarrassed. Is there no amount of embarrassment that will teach you that you may not, must not, give in to fighting? Is it not better to come home without your pants and your sweater than to give way to your temper and start hitting people. When are you going to learn? I am beginning to despair that you will ever be nice."

"But, you keep making a public spectacle of me, Mom. I have to defend myself, don't I? I mean. . . can't I even fight back? You keep getting me in trouble with your way of trying to make me behave. How come you're so surprised that I get picked on?"

"Oh, no! No. . . no. . . no! You seem to forget that this all began with your brutish attack on Kenneth. Don't try that one. The cause of your suffering is your barbarity, not the consequences of it. I am going to teach you to be nice, gentle, refined and docile if I have to strip every rude appearance of masculinity off of you. Now you just march yourself out to the car. We are having lunch downtown. You have a little shopping to do at Dunham's."

Lunch at the Rooftop of Dunham's hardly terrified me anymore. It was just embarrassing. After lunch, retribution arrived at Dunham's Shoe Salon where I was fitted

with a pair of heels, shiny black patent pumps with T-straps that locked them onto my feet with tiny silver buckles at my ankles.

Mom said she thought just a single stitch on the buckle would ensure that I kept them on. She also said that I could hardly get by with only one pair, so I was fitted with another pair as well. These were of similar design, but were of glistening black slipper satin and had faille bows on the top of the shoe.

The clerk told Mom that both pairs had thirty eighths heels.

Olivia whispered to me that meant they were three and seven-eighths inches high. Olivia remarked about the way my now elevated heels gave my posture a curvier look.

Mom scowled at her and told her she was next. Neither of us knew what that alluded to.

I half staggered and half stumbled through the store as we headed for the car. My feet and legs ached long before I reached it. I thought we were headed home, but Mom had still more shopping to do, for us, of course.

On the way, she pulled Olivia into her ring of retribution.

"You have no idea how disappointed I am in you, Dear," she began. "You not only failed to tell me of James's fight with Roger, but in this most recent escapade, you actually allowed yourself to become involved on behalf of Gognar the Goth here."

Olivia turned in the front seat and I watched her face cloud over. "Of course, Mother! They were beating him up, Mother. You just don't realize how bad it is for Jim." Olivia spat the word "Mother" out as an epithet each time she used it.

I was amazed to hear my snotty sister defend me.

Mom stared out the windshield as she drove.

Olivia turned back to face the front and folded her arms defiantly.

I trembled.

Olivia sulked.

Mother drove.

"I am afraid you forgot that you are a lady, and furthermore, overlooked the fact that my prohibition against fighting applied equally to both of you."

The car turned the corner and we pulled up in front of Lane's Corset Shop.

That could mean only one thing. I would be stiffer, slimmer and chestier before we left. I stared at the slim, pointed, shining shoes I wore and trembled at the thought of what kind of wretched garment I would be wearing when I came out.

Once in the shop, surrounded by every variety of foundation garment openly displayed, I went numb. I didn't seem to care anymore.

Madame Elsa greeted Mom and Sis as I hovered near the door, steadying myself on the jamb, teetering.

"Did you want the 'Victorian Mode' in the lavender or the pink satin, Mrs. O'Dell?"

My heart sank. I know it missed a beat. This was my worse fear, ever since Olivia had suggested it to Mom several weeks ago.

“One of each, I think, Elsa. That way you can decide later which you prefer, Olivia.”

“Oh, I really liked the lavender one,” Olivia brightened. “But don't you think you should ask Jimmy? He's the one who's got to live in it. I really think they're ghastly. I can't wait to see what it does to his waist.”

“I'm glad to hear that, Dear. It's for you. It seems to me that you need to be reminded that you are a little lady too. You forgot yourself last week, didn't you? From what I hear, you were quite the little fishwife in that school yard scuffle. Fisticuffs are even less acceptable from my daughter than from my son. Girls are presumed to know better. Living full time in one of these Victorian Modes will help you to remember that you are a girl. If you prefer the lavender satin, then we'll buy two in that color. Now run along with Madame Elsa and let her fit you. There's a good girl, now.”

“But. . . but. . . but. . .” Olivia sounded like a motorboat.

I leaned against the doorjamb and took as deep a breath as my corselette would permit.

Madame Elsa lifted the rigid garment from the drawer behind the showcase and handed it to Olivia who threw it across the shop, screaming,

“No. . . I'm not wearing that. It's for him. . . I'm not wearing that thing! Make Jimmy wear it.”

“Not this time, Dear. This time it's your turn to learn to be more ladylike. Maybe later, if he doesn't shape up. For now, he has his new shoes to show off. I had thought in terms of two weeks, but now it will be three. Now run along and be fitted.”

Madame Elsa had retrieved the lavender satin, boned and ruched corset from the floor and had handed it to Mom. She, in turn, held it out to Olivia who snatched it angrily from her hand.

Olivia's eyes were wild. She boiled with rage.

“How could you? How could you do this to me? One little mistake. . . I try to defend my brother and this is what I get. I won't do it. It's not fair. What do you want? I suppose next you'll be putting me in a bustle too?”

“That can be arranged, Dear. If you can't show me that you are a perfect little lady, we can take a little excursion into the fin de siecle, when women were elegant and refined and knew how to dress and comport themselves as gentlewomen. Don't tempt me. I'm sure Madame Mona can find you a bustle if she tries.”

“You wouldn't!”

“Madame Elsa, can you show me something with a longer, narrower waist than this 'Victorian Mode,' something more 'Pariesienne,' perhaps. . .”

Madame Mona began opening drawers and pulling out a variety of torturous foundations.

Olivia stared in disbelief and finally stalked off toward the fitting room, clutching her antique corset. “Damn!” I heard her muttering as she went.

"You have just stretched two weeks into a month, Darling," Mother shouted after her.

Madame Elsa stepped into the fitting room behind her and I could hear Olivia sobbing. Mom turned to me.

"Stand up! Just thank your lucky stars it isn't you in there. You are perilously close to wearing one of those yourself. Now go back with Madame Mona and let her check the fit of your corselette. It seems to me that your left breast is larger than the right. Perhaps she can adjust your insert for you."

I did feel lucky, but that didn't mean I liked having this big, assertive, black clad corsetier pawing and tugging at my underpinnings. She did, in fact, equalize the size of my two huge artificial breasts and was kind enough to ask if I had grown more comfortable in my shroud of satin and lace.

Olivia eventually emerged, tear stained and complaining. On her slender, feminine torso, the lavender corset was stunning. Her saddle shoes and bobby socks made a striking contrast to the black lace that was sewn along each of the corset's vertical stays. There was a band of black ruching around the base of the corset and the lace over the cups of the brassiere that made a striking contrast to the shining lavender satin of the body of the garment. Olivia was gasping on top of her stifled sobs.

"I can't breathe, Mother! It's too tight! I can't bend over in it. It's monstrous! You don't want me to breathe, do you? Don't ladies get to breathe? God, I can't stand this thing."

"Just teensy breaths, Dear. How tight is it, Elsa?"

"I have taken her down to twenty-four inches, Madame, just as you asked."

"Mother!" Olivia gasped. "I have a twenty-eight inch waist."

"Not any more, Precious. I think your new waist is very becoming. Figure training used to be obligatory for all young ladies. You will be much more attractive now." Mother took a needle and thread from Madame Elsa and began stitching the bow on the back laces shut. "I hope you can be as ladylike as you appear in your new foundation, Dear. You have a month to show me. With your new D-Cups, you should feel very mature." She snipped off the thread and told my re contoured and remodeled sister to put the rest of her clothes back on.

Madame Mona proffered a handkerchief and the transformed and reformed Olivia withdrew.

It took a little heat off me at school. Olivia went about looking sour and angry. She had her round of ragging now. I really did think it was unfair, but Mom said that real life has nothing to do with fair. She said our fighting had been unfair to our victims, so we had no complaint coming. I minced along on my heels. Olivia acquired a stilted walk, her back and hips forced into a constricted posture by the cage she wore. We both behaved ourselves. I had only four weeks to go, along with Olivia. We made a pact to get through it without any additions to our wardrobes.

We got within a week of freedom. I was counting days as I washed out my nylons and corselettes. Olivia was let out of her cage daily for her showers, but I got only three a week. Olivia took to whining at Mom from time to time.

Mom would start talking about a twenty-two inch waist and take to describing the kinds of things that Grandma had in the trunk in her attic. That usually shut my sister up. She was pretty spectacular when I would see her in just the corset. Mom would put her in hose and heels with just her corset sometimes when she whined too long. I would tell her she looked like a saloon girl and Mom would just smile and tell us both to be more ladylike. That would shut us both up.

Olivia complained to me about being unable to bend at the waist and I would complain to her about wearing heels. We commiserated a lot. At last the end was in sight.

I can't say that I had grown to like my underdressing, but I suppose I got used to it. There was something about the sleekness of the nylon on my legs that disturbed me though, almost as if I liked the feeling of them on me. As the corselettes went through repeated washings, the spandex loosened up a bit so I was a little less uncomfortable in them. There was something about being encased that was like that of the nylons, somehow pleasurable. My horror of my huge breasts abated as I grew used to them and everyone ran out of fun teasing me. All the guys avoided me and the girls wouldn't let me near them so I spent a lot of time alone thinking about my predicament. I guess that's just what Mom had in mind in the first place.

Even the high heels became manageable after a while. My foot and ankle had a certain attractive curve, I noticed. If I hadn't been so embarrassed and so angry about what was happening to me, I might have been able to admit, at least to myself, that there was something sort of comforting and exciting about my bizarre attire.

Sis and I grew closer together, actually. Misery loves company. At every opportunity, whenever we thought it was perfectly safe, we would get out the scissors and let each other out. Olivia was ecstatic whenever I loosened the heavy laces and let her waist out and I was equally relieved as she unzipped me from my long black tormentor. We always had each other locked in, laced, zipped and re-sewn in plenty of time to avoid getting caught.

Chapter 6

Maggie Connel was to Olivia what Kenny Miller had been to me — a nemesis.

It had started in Olivia's junior year when she beat Maggie out for the last slot on the cheer-leading squad. As a result, Maggie was forever pulling stunts on Olivia. It was no mystery why Olivia had beaten her out. Maggie was big, rawboned and not especially feminine. In a choice for a cheerleader, it was Olivia in an instant, but Maggie couldn't see that. She thought she was cute and petite.

In my own way, I had been amused when Sis came home with ink spilled on her book report, or with her hair hanging loose because Maggie had swiped the ribbon off her pony tail, but that was back in the days of our sibling rivalry.

The tables were turned now. When I came past the cheerleaders' room after school on Wednesday, mincing along in my heels, during the last week that we were living our shame, I heard Olivia screaming and cursing.

Two of Maggie's minions had Olivia pinned down on her stomach on a table while Maggie attacked my sister's ponytail with a huge pair of scissors.

My Sis is not exactly my favorite person, but this clearly had to be stopped. Forgetting, unaware, automatic and without thought, I swung into action and sent Maggie Connel sprawling with a body block. That action, on my spikes, also sent me to the floor unexpectedly.

Maggie's cronies fled.

"I got it! I've got Little Miss Goody's ponytail." Maggie held Olivia's glorious blonde tresses aloft as she struggled to her feet. Olivia's attackers had stripped her to her lavender corset. They had also run off with her clothes as they fled.

"I've scalped her. I really did it. This is going in my trophy case, Bitch." The gloating haridan edged her way around the table and fled the room, holding Olivia's blonde tresses aloft.

Olivia started after her but I restrained her. She was crying hysterically, shaking and sobbing. I put my arms around her and held her tightly. The whole back of her head was virtually bald, just a short stubble left where her long ponytail had been.

We both ended up on a bench in the Principal's outer Office. Olivia was alternately cursing and swearing revenge between sessions in which she was racked with sobs. I really did sympathize with my rotten sister. No one should have to be violated the way Maggie had violated her, I felt.

"I didn't fight her, really I didn't. I couldn't! Mom would never let me take off this wretched thing if I had. I just had to lie back and let them strip me down. I didn't think the Bitch would actually take my hair though. . . Jesus. . . I'll kill her. I don't care anymore what Mom does to me, I'll just kill her. . ."

I tried to talk reason to Olivia until she calmed down a little. Then she asked what I thought Mom might do to me for coming to her rescue. Then it was my turn to feel hysterical. I said I couldn't see how Mom could fault me for rescuing my own sister. Olivia soulfully reminded me that her lavender cage was her reward for coming to my rescue.

We both gave way to despair. We both realized that now we had really done ourselves in. It seemed to be only a matter of when, where, and how the executioner's axe was to descend on our necks.

We were, by now, pretty well into autumn. The days were a lot shorter, the evenings a lot cooler and the trees were shedding their blaze of Autumn's haute couture. The slanted light filtered through the grim monochrome of purples as my spirits dimmed with the monotony of the dark autumn afternoon. The bareness of the trees matched my spirits. It seemed to me that my life was threatening to slip into an early winter, which like all autumn, seemed to deny the possibility of another spring.

The Office help drifted away with various looks of pity or compassion or amusement at the sight of the strange duo shivering on the wooden bench in front of their counter. The light fell and the shadows deepened over us as we huddled together.

I sat dejectedly staring down at the tracery of lace showing vaguely through my white cashmere sweater. I was unable to stop staring at the little black satin bow that peeked insistently out of my cleavage.

Olivia sat like a disrobed waif, her bare shoulders standing above her cage of lavender satin, the black ruching in stark contrast to her milky skin. Her bobby socks and brown loafers made an inane contrast to her antiquated corset.

Olivia sulked! We both awaited certain social execution. My sister shivered and hugged her torso as though she could somehow warm herself with her bare arms. I wanted to hug her and hold her, but was somehow uneasy with that idea. Neither of us knew what to do anymore.

Mom stormed through the door carrying an armload of clothes for Olivia. She dropped them in Olivia's lap as she stormed in.

"You two are finished. This is the bitter end for you people. And don't think I don't know about your letting each other loose either. You'll pay for that too." She stormed into Mrs. Nevlin's Office and left us staring at each other in dismay.

Olivia slowly pulled on a sweater and a pair of slacks. The sweater only emphasized the stunning curves enforced by her outdated corsetry. More time passed.

"What now?" Olivia looked up at me imploringly.

"God, I don't know. I suppose we're as good as dead. What do you think?"

"What does that mean. . . good as dead? Nobody's going to really kill us, I suppose. I don't know what anything means now. It can't get any worse, can it?" Olivia looked hopeless to me.

"I suppose Mom will have something up her sleeve. Mrs. Nevlin is going to have something to say, you can count on that."

Olivia wrapped her arms around my right arm and nuzzled her head into my shoulder. She shuddered and began a quiet sobbing.

I realized that my tears were only a moment behind hers and shortly I was hugging her tightly as my own tears trickled down my cheeks. I was trying to be strong for her, but I wasn't strong anymore.

Both of were simply terrified.

The Office door opened, finally, and Mrs. Nevlin stood silhouetted in it. Her form was both imposing and commanding. Backlighting by the light in her Office, her shape intimidated both of us. We shuffled into her Office, where in the clear light I could see the Principal clearly. She was dressed in a stylish suit of wine colored ribbed faille with a cream colored satin blouse. Her glasses lay on her bosom suspended from a gold chain around her neck. The lapels of her jacket were trimmed in an edging of the same cream colored satin as her blouse.

I trembled at the awareness that this intimidating educational functionary would be conspiring with Mom to determine our fates. I had a brief flashback reminiscent of the thing that I once had thought lurked in the recesses of my nursery toy box.

“Come in, you two. It's time to face the music.”

Olivia and I slithered into her Office where she motioned us to sit on the settee opposite her desk.

Olivia pulled up her knees and huddled into herself. There was nothing of her smartness left in her demeanor.

Remembering, I tried to sit erect, but the low, soft settee was poor support and I wound up with my knees at face level, my arms unnaturally straight at my sides and my huge artificial bosoms almost resting on my knees. This pose was so awkward and unnatural that I felt even more vulnerable. I waited for the executioner to lift my hair and expose my neck to the axe.

Poor Olivia didn't even have any hair left to protect her neck.

Mom was stony faced, her vision one of barely controlled rage. Her lips were a thin crimson line and her eyes blue stones of fury. As she opened her mouth for the first verbal onslaught, Mrs. Nevlin held up a hand to silence her.

“Please, Mrs. O'Dell, I think the children first need to be apprised of the facts.”

Mom scowled at both of us and choked back her words. Her face remained an animated display of rage and indignation.

“The fact is that Margaret Connel has three broken ribs. She seems to have sustained this injury when her body hit the cast iron radiator. Her parents are threatening to file charges of felonious assault upon James. I think we may be able to defuse that prospect, but only if we all cooperate. The School is anxious to avoid implication in such an action.”

“Have you seen Olivia's hair? Have you looked at her scalp, Madame? I will match that Connel woman action for action. My daughter is the victim of felonious assault. She is scalped! How dare this Connel girl attack Olivia this way? These trash had better figure out who is the victim here; who injured who in the first instance.”

Olivia looked up hopefully, imploringly at Mom.

At this point, I realized who was going to be the sacrificial goat again.

“That is another fact we can lay on the table. There is no question that Olivia is an injured party in this. I am sure that when the Connells are made aware of all the facts, you can iron out any criminal charges with them. I should think it will be tit for tat. I doubt that anyone will want to go to court over this little contretemps once we have all calmed down.”

It was the first time I had ever seen anyone take the wind out of Mom's sails. It was clear that Mrs. Nevlin was in charge.

That relieved me some. Mrs. Nevlin had been reasonable with me when I had first appeared in my brassiere. I put my hope in her, suddenly. She would remain in command in ways I had no way of anticipating at this point.

"Olivia's hair will grow out again, although I do extend her my heartfelt sympathies, Mrs. O'Dell. I see she is nearly bald in back. I'm sure that a nice wig will spare her any embarrassment in the meantime. She certainly is a victim here, but her culpability in this fracas, if any, is yet to be determined." Mrs. Nevlin smiled at Mom who seemed unnerved.

"What am I going to do with 'The King Of The Visigoths' here? He isn't safe to be let loose. This is his third brawl in as many months. As usual, his temper and his rowdiness have got us all into great difficulty."

"I think we can work something out," Mrs. Nevlin reassured her. "The problem for us now is to work out what the School can do. The sad fact is that it will be impossible for either James or Olivia to remain enrolled here. I can assure you that the review board will insist on their removal. I regret that. I feel that both of them are actually decent children, but they find themselves in an impossible situation which is partly of their own making and partially circumstantial. You should bear in mind, Mrs. O'Dell, that you have placed them both in an awkward situation, albeit with the best of intentions."

Mother gasped and looked quite deflated.

"Expulsion. Oh, dear, isn't there some other way. . ."

"I'm afraid not, Mrs. O'Dell. The threat of legal action compromises the integrity of the School."

Mom had a hopeless look of defeat about her. She looked cowed, something I never thought to see. Mom tried to fight back.

"What about Maggie Connel? I suppose you're going to let her back in here?"

Mrs. Nevlin gave Mom the same hard look she uses in the lunchroom when the kids start throwing food.

"The Connells reassure me that Margaret will matriculate at The Convent School next week. I really do think that will be best for everyone, especially Margaret. I think, in the meantime, we agreed earlier that I should take James out of harm's way." Mrs. Nevlin turned to me and looked over the top of her glasses with a sweet smile.

"We think it is best for you to come and stay with me for a while, James. We are agreed that you need to take a new approach to your problems and I have agreed to make that opportunity available to you. As for Olivia, we think that some time at home with your Mom is best for her. She, too, needs to learn to take responsibility for her actions."

Whatever had been decided during the conference that took place as we sat on the bench in the outer Office was all cut and dried before we were admitted. I couldn't imagine what was implied by Mrs. Nevlin's announcement concerning me.

Olivia looked at me with relief in her eyes. My stomach went into its sinking act again. Clearly, we were both in for something.

"I don't want James to get the idea that he can escape the consequences of his rowdiness, Mrs. Nevlin. I want your promise that he will pay dearly for today's outrage."

“But, Mom. . . he did it for me. I thought they were going to kill me and I was afraid to fight. Don't do anything to Jimmy, please. He doesn't deserve. . .,” Olivia pleaded.

Mom cut her off.

“You were quite right to avoid violence, Dear. And James was very good to defend you, but both of you must learn to deal with these conflicts in a genteel and refined way without shows of temper. I doubt that anyone would really have hurt you, Olivia. Those rude girls just wanted to annoy you. James could have handled it like a gentleman, without hurting anyone. Now you can come home with me. You both need comforting after all this. I will provide that for you and Mrs. Nevlin has been kind enough to agree to provide the same for James. He has lessons to learn and we will work them out together.”

Mom took Olivia by the hand as she spoke. Olivia looked like a helpless doll, all be-draggled. Mrs. Nevlin decreed the new rules for both of us as though no one had any say in these things except she.

“I think it best if we proceed as quietly as possible with these matters. I am sure we can find a new School for Olivia in the near future. No one needs make a fuss about all this. I am certain that private tutelage will prove best for James and he can thus ameliorate his crude ways.” Her calm, authoritative words brought the conference to a close. Mother and Olivia left. Mrs. Nevlin put on her hat and gloves and turned off the Office lights.

“Come along, James,” she urged. “Let's get you to my place and get you out of that ridiculous corselette you have been wearing.”

My heart recovered its steady beat beneath my great artificial bosoms. My high heels clacked on the terrazzo floor as I followed her tremulously out into the parking lot.

Chapter 7

I sat, flat chested, at last, at the dinner table, eating a wonderful potato soup, sneaking glances at my bulgeless sweater. My pants and sweater were all that I was wearing.

The same maid who had served our dinner had relieved me of my corselette, hose and heels. Mrs. Nevlin had remarked that they would find me something suitable to wear in the morning. I was euphoric as I went over the details of the afternoon's altercation with her. She nodded and said she understood what had happened. I felt a lot better after that. She said that all schools have to deal with these things from time to time and the important thing is to remember that educating the children is always the goal. She wasn't judgmental with me, nor did she scold me. I couldn't believe my good fortune. In the library, after dinner, over coffee, she asked me a strange question.

“I can imagine how humiliating your costume had to have been for you these past few weeks. I am aware of how much abuse you had to take because of it. I am sure you that you didn't like being made to wear it. You must realize that the discomfort and the embarrassment were the very reasons your Mother put you in it. As I watched

you, and you really were very good, I sometimes had the feeling that you found some pleasure in wearing your effeminate underthings. Is that correct?"

"Oh, God, no, Mrs. Nevlin," I protested. "It was really awful. . ."

She waved me to be quiet.

"Of course it was awful for you, Dear. I wouldn't deny that for a moment, but as I watched you, I had a sense that you derived some kind of comfort, some kind of unadmitted pleasure from it. There was, I thought, something in it that pleased you, however undefined and vague that may have been."

I stared at her ingenuously. I didn't want to have her know how right she was. Her insights unnerved me. How could she know?

"Some boys do, you know, Dear. Are you sure that there wasn't something about your brassiere, however awkward and difficult it may have been to have to wear it, that felt nice, sometimes? Can you deny that?"

I was only too aware of the sensation of coolness and pleasure that the feel of the satin, the lace and the nylon gave me when I was alone and could let myself admit it. I knew that rolling up and gartering my sheer nylon hose gave me a certain sensuous feeling of delight. I had never quite wanted to admit it even to myself and I certainly didn't want to admit it to her.

She seemed to know something which I thought was my own very private secret.

"Gee, I don't know. . . not really. I mean, the corset was always so uncomfortable and the breasts were so big and all."

"I think you do know, James. I think you just don't want to admit it." This woman was uncanny. How had she figured it out?

I was suddenly aware of the hot feeling which meant I was blushing.

Did Mrs. Nevlin somehow know things about me that I didn't?

"Mmm-hm. I'm right about it, aren't I? Well, James, Darling, your Mother wants you gentled. I am afraid she is right about that. You do seem to get out of hand rather readily. She wants you to grow up to be a gentleman, but I am not sure you are capable of that. There seems to be a bit too much of the barbarian in you. Perhaps, in time, you may be able to see your way to that. But, in the meantime, I think we must work with the clay we have at hand. Sometimes the solution to a problem lies in approaching it backwards."

All of this confused me thoroughly. I didn't understand what she was getting at, at all, but it was clear that whatever happened hereafter, it was going to be what Mrs. Nevlin decided upon. I felt helpless in her hands.

"I think your Mother was well-intentioned. She certainly was on the right track with you. Her mistake, I suspect, was one of method. In embarrassing you by making you masquerade as a kind of boy/girl, in female underpinnings, she was onto the right idea, but misguided. I think we can make her a gentler, more civilized James if we abandon such half-measures and just transform you altogether."

This speech left me speechless. Mrs. Nevlin leaned back in her wingback chair and crossed her shapely legs, her eyes twinkling. I could think of nothing to say. I was at once terrified and fascinated. I couldn't imagine that she meant what I thought she did.

"Tomorrow we shall see what kind of pretty girl you will make, although I am sure it does not seem so to you now. I think you will find that quite pleasant, even though it may take some getting used to. Yes, we shall do a complete transformation. I think you will make a very pretty girl, indeed."

I spilled my coffee. Mrs. Nevlin rang and the maid appeared to wipe it up. I sat, transfixed.

The grandfather clock ticked. It sounded like a series of gunshots. Myriad questions raced through my mind. *What did she mean? Why would whole measures be better?* It sounded ghastly to me. *Transform? Me, a pretty girl? How was that possible?* My head was a whirl. I choked back tears of dismay. I was glued to the chair.

"I . . . I . . . I don't. . . I can't. . . I won't. . . I mean, I really. . . oh, God. . . What do you mean. . . a pretty girl? Please don't say things like that, Ma'am. I'm so scared. Do I have to? I mean. . . is like this my punishment. . ." I trailed off, feeling silly.

Mrs. Nevlin continued to stare at me with her indulgent smile. She leaned out and patted me on the hand.

"You have had a very difficult day, James," her voice was a soft, dulcet melody. "I am sure you will see things more clearly in the morning. We can talk it over then. Why don't you let Nancy put you to bed now? We'll put you in my daughter's old room. You will find it very soothing, all delicate whites and blues. In the morning, you will be less confused and frightened, and, I am sure, ready for a new approach to life."

"Yes, Ma'am. Thank you, Ma'am," I mumbled. I was just glad to be out of there. She was right. I was passing out from a combination of fatigue and confusion. I did — I just wanted to go to bed.

"I am sorry we haven't any pajamas for you, Nancy will find something for you to sleep in," she crooned, "something of Angelica's. Run along now. There's a dear."

I didn't care. I was so glad to slip between the sheets and hide away from my terrible day, putting an end to it. Without the corset gripping me for the first time in weeks, I was so euphoric that I let Nancy drop the blue satin nightgown over my head without a thought. I hardly noticed the lacy white bodice of the garment as it slithered into place.

The blue satin sheets were cool and smooth as Nancy fluffed the lace trimmed pillows beneath my head. She folded the white lace counterpane beneath my chin and kissed me sweetly on the forehead as she switched out the light. The last thing I noticed was a huge doll sitting perkily on the chair across the room. It looked like Olivia.

"Good night, Miss," she said as she walked to the door.

I was so nearly asleep already that I nearly missed the remark. Still, it gave me pause.

Mrs. Nevlin, Maggie Connel, Olivia in her outlandish lavender corset, Mom and Nancy all drifted in and out of my dreams, but I don't remember the dreams.

I was vaguely aware, from time to time of the cool blue satin of my nightgown sliding between the sheets, and the soft abrasion of my lace bodice against my naked chest and the counterpane against my cheeks.

I dozed off, halfway between worlds.

I was not fully aware when Nancy delivered me to the breakfast table.

The breakfast table faced the garden and was brilliantly lighted by the morning sun. The garden outside had become withered, but the light poured brightly through the windows.

I blinked uncertainly, not yet remembering what had been said the night before.

Mrs. Nevlin was crisp and stylish in a fuchsia blazer worn over a tight skirt of deep purple wool.

Nancy had wakened me by washing my face with a warm, nubby wet towel while I was still in bed and then hustled me into a voluminous blue satin peignoir. It was covered with layers of white lace. It descended to the floor in yards of icy satin and was a companion piece to the nightgown I wore. Nancy had pushed satin mules with very high heels and rosettes on the toes onto my feet and hustled me downstairs, chattering at me as we went.

"Until we can buy something of your own, Miss, I am afraid this will have to do. Madame has to leave for School, but she wants to talk with you before she goes. There isn't much time. Careful now, don't trip. Pick up your skirts. There's a good girl."

I was sleepy and befuddled. Mrs. Nevlin poured me a welcome cup of tea as Nancy set breakfast before me. I sipped at my tea as Mrs. Nevlin studied the morning paper.

"Nancy is not my maid, Dear," she began. "She is actually a teacher, just like me. She was good enough to dash over yesterday when I called her. She is trained in teaching special boys, you know."

All I could think of to ask was what that meant.

"Nancy teaches at 'The Nevlin Academy.' My Grandparents founded it, but then you wouldn't know about that, would you? The Academy is what used to be called a Finishing School where young ladies used to be prepared for acceptance into polite society. Oh, Dear, I am running on a bit, aren't I? I must be off to The School. Do be a lamb and cooperate with Nancy today. I'll explain everything this evening. Nancy will be your tutor now. You must cooperate with her or I shall be displeased. She's very good, you know. Eat your breakfast, Dear." Mrs. Nevlin stood up and dabbed at her face with a dainty napkin. She left as I stared at my oatmeal.

Nancy was imposing, but not because of her stature. I doubt that she was much over five feet. It was her costume of a black, wool, sheathe skirt, white silk blouse and sensible shoes that had led me to think, the night before, that she must have been the maid. She seemed then to have functioned as one, but now she looked altogether different to me. I was confused. Nancy sat down in Mrs. Nevlin's chair at the head of the table and motioned at my cereal bowl.

“Do you like oatmeal, Dear?”

“Yes, Ma'am,” I mumbled. It was swimming in butter and brown sugar and I really do like it that way.

Nancy smiled maternally at me.

I ate, but not with much vigor.

“Did Aunt Melissa tell you that you are going to become a pretty girl today? How do you feel about that? Is that OK?” Her words were softly spoken and I had the feeling that she really wanted my honest answer.

The questions jarred me awake, though, the way in which she asked seemed no more alarming than a weather report.

“Do I have to?” Somehow I knew it was a dumb answer. “I mean. . . I don't see how that's possible. I'm not a girl and I don't see how I could ever be pretty. How could that be?”

“I'm afraid that you do, Dear. You see, that's what I do. I am a specialist in it, making pretty girls out of nasty boys. Once I have finished my work with you, it will be up to the Nevlin Academy to teach you to be a perfect little lady.”

“Oh, God! Have I been that bad? I've been half a girl for weeks already. How are you going to do this? You won't hurt me, will you, Ma'am? I don't want to be a girl. I'm a boy. What are you going to do to me?”

Nancy's laughter was like the tinkling of crystal.

“Yes, you really have been that bad, and no, I'm not going to change you from a male to a female, Silly. I said I am a specialist in transforming boys into pretty girls. I'm not here to alter your sex. My job is to teach you how to look like a pretty girl, Sweetheart.”

She poured me another cup of tea. I couldn't see the distinction.

Sex and gender were all the same to me. I told her so and she laughed again, shaking her head.

“Gender is about sugar and spice and sweet, silky things, about snips and snails, Silly. Sex is about your equipment. Gender is about how you live. You'll see. Now, eat your breakfast, Precious. We have fun and fancy things to do today. A little color, some hair and the right clothes and you'll see what I mean. By the time Aunt Melissa comes home from School, no one would guess you were the neighborhood ruffian. If you just make your mind up to that, we'll have a magical day of fun.” She rose and began to clear the table.

I was not very reassured.

“Of course, you can fight me if you like, but I wouldn't advise it. I don't like it when my job gets difficult. But then, I suspect you know better, don't you?”

I really didn't want to get myself into more trouble. Yesterday had been enough to last me. I was already sitting engulfed in yards of satin and lace. *It did feel good against my skin*, I thought.

“Yes, Ma'am,” I muttered. “I’ll try to be a pretty girl, if you want. I don’t think I’ll like it though. I mean, I don’t really want to. . . I guess it’s all right. Why do I have to?”

“I think you already know that.” She stood, arms full of dishes and answered me. “Of course, it’s all right. It’s already what you are. The sooner you realize that and the sooner you reconcile yourself to it, the more you are going to like it. Aunt Melissa knows boys, and when she figures one for a pretty girl, down beneath all that bluff and bravado, she is always right about it. Now, enough hemming and hawing, Darling, it’s into dresses and tresses for you. Now skedaddle upstairs.”

So there it was. This is where it came down. According to Nancy, I already was a pretty girl, even though I was still really a boy. I could see that it was going to happen to me so, like it or not, I might as well reconcile myself to my new condition. As for my really becoming a pretty girl, I reckoned that was up to Nancy.

I put down my spoon, finished my orange juice and hiked up the long skirts of the satin nightgown and peignoir that engulfed me. I teetered on the precarious satin mules I had on my feet and ascended the stairs to my new boudoir. I walked willingly into my new life and my new skirted, intricately tressed, delicate persona.

Chapter 8

Sitting erect had become second nature as a result of Mom’s strictures in the weeks I had worn the training bra. It was actually Olivia, glib, smart, Olivia, who had dubbed the huge Double-D bosoms that I had been sewn into my “Training Bra.” I hated that because it was true.

Mom really was “training” me in it, even if, in the end, the effort had failed. Mom’s stratagem of embarrassing me into docility and gentility hadn’t worked. Nancy was right, I guess. More clever, subtle and refined measures were going to be applied.

I was back at The Rooftop at Dunham’s Department Store, not for lunch this time, but for dinner.

It really was strange. In the softer lighting, looking out on the lights of the city with mellow music in the background, I wasn’t squirming with the intense embarrassment that had crushed me when Mom had brought me in here in those dreadful brassieres with their black, lace, trceries, shimmering through the soft wool of my sweaters.

This evening I was no longer terrified of being seen as a boy in a brassiere. If I were afraid at all, it was that someone might not think I really was a pretty girl.

There is a world of difference between those two fears.

When Mom dragged me to The Rooftop, I just knew that people would stare at me and ask each other, or even Mom, “Why is your boy wearing a brassiere?”

I also knew that her answer was that I wanted to and they couldn’t stop me. I was going to have to take the full blame for my weird appearance while knowing that Mom had imposed it on me.

Now it was altogether different.

Before, no one really knew how to talk to me and they didn't even want to. I was too bizarre. But tonight, after we had paraded through the dining room to our window table, the few who took notice of us had merely smiled unconcernedly.

As we were seated, the Maitre d' had bowed to me and said, "Enjoy your meal, Miss."

This was a lot easier. What a great relief it was. Everyone was taking me for a pretty girl, just as Nancy had promised. I didn't particularly feel like a pretty girl, but it was obvious that everyone thought I looked like one. I was in some anxiety that someone would see through my masquerade. That, I thought, would humiliate me more than my earlier appearances here. I was caught between the embarrassment of the most feared questions, "Why is that boy wearing a brassiere?" and "Why is that boy dressed like a girl?"

I had told Nancy about this, how nervous I was.

She just laughed and said, "Not likely, Darling. You're just too precious. Take another look in the mirror. What do you think?"

I had to admit she was right. I really did look the precious little princess. I still couldn't understand how that could have happened. The mirror was reassuring in one way, but in another way, not very.

I toyed with my *fois gras*. I couldn't seem to stop blushing.

Mrs. Nevlin sat opposite me in a black dinner dress with a princess neckline set off by a pearl choker with a jewel in the center of it. Her long wide dress was fitted at the bodice and the skirt was wide and full. The dress sparkled in the light from the reflection of its myriad tiny sequins. She chatted with her niece about School matters and acted as if my presence there was the most natural thing in the world. Her hair scintillated in the soft light of the room, highlights of black and silver shimmering from her neat cap of waved locks, perky and crisp with its curled ends. She seemed to have transformed the crisp, efficient elegance of her professional attire into a stunning look of classical elegance.

I was in awe of her.

Nancy, too, had transformed herself. Her simple black and white working garb had been set aside for an attractive deep blue cocktail dress of silk faille with an open V-neck with draped lapels and mid-calf length, sheath skirt. She wore refined jewelry of lapis and her hair was now swept back in a French roll. My Mistress was a symphony of elegance and refined femininity.

My loins stirred uselessly as I watched them. I really was lusting for the two of them, but in my delicate effeminate masquerade, all I could do was blush at my presumption.

Mrs. Nevlin saw my repeated blushes and said they were very becoming on me.

I felt engulfed by my own new delicate, effeminate attire. I felt deliciously safe in it, which was very comforting, but I was also embarrassed by it, which was not. I felt trapped between a no-man's or no-woman's land of genders and was unable yet to know what to make of it.

Getting to this point had not been half, or even part, of the fun.

Back in the delicate boudoir to which I had been assigned, I had sat down on the fine, small, wire vanity stool and waited nervously in my nightgown and peignoir for Nancy. For the first time I was fully aware of the overwhelming effeminacy of my sleepwear. I wanted to take it all off, but didn't think I ought to.

These thoughts preoccupied me until I looked about at the garments which Nancy had laid out. My nervous gaze took in a long white corselette, not unlike the one I had worn at home. It was elaborately engineered in satin panels, stretch fabric and lace. Lying beside it on the bed was a pair of white silk panties and a white silk slip with narrow shoulder straps and a bodice and hem of open lace. To my horror, piled beside these underthings lay a petticoat with three overlapping layers of white lace descending from its wide, satin waistband. The sight of it really rattled me. It seemed to scream at me its utter effeminate character.

Hanging from the top of the closet door was a black silk faille skirt, flared and descending in wide, undulating folds. Hanging beside it was a cream silk blouse with voluminous poet sleeves which ended in lace trimmed French cuffs. It had a high neckline of pleated satin from which descended a stock tie edged with the same lace. As I began to visualize how all these garments would come together into an ensemble and realized that it was meant for me to wear, I was appalled. I had never imagined anything so thoroughly feminine on any girl, even Olivia.

I saw nylon hose lying on the vanity in front of me and at the foot of the bed was a pair of patent leather pumps with square toes and silver buckles. The heels were blocky, but about two and one-half inches high.

It slowly dawned on me that Nancy meant to put me in this costume and that made me very nervous. I felt like crying, but the ragged shreds of my "Big Jim" persona resisted that. Nancy came in carrying a round white case which she set on the vanity. I put my arms around my torso and scrunched down on the stool, trying to disappear, but the smooth satin of my nightgown against my skin made me aware that I already was a girl of sorts.

"Aunt Melissa says we must call you 'Jennifer' now. Do you like that name? I think it's awfully pretty, don't you?"

I mumbled a kind of acquiescence. It hadn't occurred to me that they would give me a girl's name too.

"Can I call you 'Jennifer'? A pretty girl needs a pretty name, don't you think?"

"Unh hunh," I grunted in a most unfeminine way.

"Now our pretty girl with the pretty girl's name needs a pretty face. This won't be difficult at all. You have a lovely peaches and cream complexion and a wonderful bow shaped mouth. Shall I give you a pretty face, Jennifer?" She put her hands on my shoulders and turned me on the vanity stool until I faced the mirror.

What I saw there was a sullen boy in a blue satin and lace peignoir.

Nancy picked up a brush and brushed my unruly hair straight back into a pompadour. She then drew an elastic band over my forehead and drew it back over my hair.

She opened a jar of some cosmetic preparation and began dabbing patches of it on my face. Reflexivity, I drew my head back and raised a hand to block hers.

"No, no, Jennifer, Dear. Oh, my, you mustn't interfere. Apparently you don't realize that you already are a pretty girl and I'm only going to help you look it. A pretty girl always presents a pretty face. I can't let Jimmy get in the way, can I?" She put the jar down and opened a drawer beneath the pink skirts of the vanity. She drew out a length of blue satin ribbon and seized me by the offending wrist.

"Cooperation, Jennifer, docile, ladylike compliance, if you please. This hand got in the way. We must not let that happen again." Her voice had an icy edge.

Deftly she tied the ribbon around my thumb.. I was so dumfounded, I made no resistance. She then drew the thumb down and tied the ribbon to the wire leg of the stool.

I looked down openmouthed.

"Resistance is very unladylike. We have something wonderful to do here together. I want you to participate fully in your transformation." She took another ribbon from the drawer and secured the big toe of my opposite foot to the leg of the chair. I felt more awkward and ridiculous than uncomfortable. She picked up the jar of foundation and proceeded deftly to transform my face into that of a delicate maiden.

"A pretty girl is never without her make-up, Dear. You must promise to wear yours all the time now, won't you?" When I didn't answer, she seized my chin in her hand and elevated it. I unconsciously began to raise my free hand to stop her, but had the wits to drop it again. She shook her head, making a taking sound and withdrew another blue ribbon. She tied it around my other thumb. My heart sank, but she lowered the hand into the piled satin in my lap. Holding my chin, she stared closely into my face. Her eyes sparkled like blue diamonds.

"Jennifer, Darling, I want to hear you promise that you will never again be without your make-up, ever, at any time."

Weakly, I said, "Yes, Ma'am, I promise." I felt like I had promised to kill myself. I certainly had promised to "kill" James. As I spoke, it felt as though I could sense James fleeing. Jennifer was taking over and it panicked me.

"I'm going to hold you to that, Dear," Nancy reassured me.

In the mirror, Jennifer stared back, colored, tinted, blushed, in delicate shades of pinks and blues, lovely browns in every shaded delicacy of feminine artifice. Her mouth was a brilliant bow of deep plum, bright and shining.

"Pretty, pretty Jennifer. What a charming, sweet girl face. Do you like it?"

I felt the ribbon on my free thumb and agreed that I just loved my new face. I hoped Nancy would now free my arm and leg, but she merely smiled and opened the wig case. She lifted out a huge pile of chestnut brown tresses styled in a long pageboy with bangs at the forehead and the long hair rolled under at the rear.

"A girl's crowning glory is her hair. Yours will grow out eventually so we can style it, but in the meantime, you will wear this."

I resisted raising my free hand and allowed her to pull the wig onto my head.

She teased, brushed and fussed with my new coiffure until every hair was shining in perfect place.

"Meet Jennifer," she commanded. "Do you see it now, Darling? Will you always keep your coiffure so perfect, Dear?"

I swallowed hard and promised. The figure in the mirror was stunning. It was a stranger who I didn't know and didn't want to know, but it was me, nevertheless. I tried to hold my head still because of the swishing sound the tresses made on the lace collar of my peignoir. I didn't want to hear it. The sight of myself was more than I could quite deal with as yet.

"Aren't you going to be lovely today? Heels and hose, petticoats to make your skirt stand out saucily. Shall we dress now and see how really lovely Jennifer is?"

I didn't answer. I couldn't. The huge lump in my throat choked me into silence. I was on the edge of crying. There was a kind of finality in her suggestion that I finish dressing, even though Jennifer was fully apparent in her nightclothes. I felt that once dressed there would be no turning back. I swallowed hard and shook my head. The tresses swished. Nancy read the refusal.

"Oh, my, dear, dear." She shook her head disapprovingly. "I'm afraid you haven't understood me. You can't just live in nightclothes, Precious. Our Jennifer must always be appropriately dressed. That is what it means to be a pretty girl. I think you need time to be fully aware of your new self. I will just let you think about it for a while."

Nancy lifted my free hand and tied its thumb ribbon to the other leg of the vanity stool. That snapped me out of my dumb state of withdrawal.

"Oh, please, Nancy. Please let me loose," I pleaded. This forced immobility really frightened me now. "How long do I have to sit here?"

"Just long enough to fully realize that you are Jennifer now. I don't want to rush you, have you confused. When you have made up your mind who and what you are now, we can proceed. I don't want you to have any doubts about being Jennifer. Now, have a long look at yourself and at your pretty clothes and see if you don't realize how nice it all is. Aunt Melissa knows a pretty girl when she sees one. Now you just take a long look at yourself and see if you don't agree. I am sure you will feel very nice in your new things. Now, there's a dear."

She smiled sweetly, fluffed up and brushed out the ends of my tresses and kissed me on the cheek.

"When I come back, you can tell me you want to get dressed. You can tell me that you don't ever want to look like a nasty boy again. I am sure you don't. You just aren't ready to say so yet. . . but you will."

She walked to the door and departed, leaving me with my confusion, my fears and the image of the pretty girl in the long chestnut, tresses surrounded by her new feminine finery.

I fought back tears. I thought that if I cried it would be the ultimate end of James. It would mean letting Jennifer take me over forever.

Chapter 9

As the waitress set my dinner in front of me, something Mrs. Nevlin had ordered called "Palace Court Salad," I wondered why I had been so frightened.

Here, staring out at the city lights in the company of these two lovely women, soft music in the background, I was so overcome with a feeling of self-satisfaction, I suddenly felt cozy and secure in my cocoon of cream colored satin and black fraile. My skirts were lofted on a fluffy bed of lace petticoats in my lap; my tresses swishing softly on my satin shoulders. I felt secure but not uncomfortably, cocooned in my corselette. A shudder of joy passed through me.

Mrs. Nevlin noticed it and kindly asked if I were all right.

I assured her that I was.

"Are you having a nice time, Dear?" She reached across the table and squeezed my brightly manicured hand. This woman always seemed to know me better than I knew myself.

"Yes, Ma'am." The remark came easily and I was surprised to hear myself say so with so much feeling, in such a refined voice.

"I know, Dear. Once you have come to understand your true nature, and give up fighting against it, you feel so much better. I am delighted that you feel so good about your new self. Enjoy your dinner now."

I sank into a kind of euphoria. I still felt awkward in my new finery, but now there was a kind of joyousness to the whole thing.

When Nancy had come back into the boudoir about noon, I was still helpless on my tiny vanity stool.

I had cried off and on, grieving the loss of James. I had stared at the lace encrusted, made-up doll in the mirror. I had stared disconsolately at the items of female dress arrayed about me. My mood had swung from anger to despair to rage. I had alternately tugged at my pinioned thumbs and toe in a rage of frustration and then slumped helplessly on the stool. Finally I had just given up thinking about it all. Pride, useless masculine pride, had caused me to swear that I would never give in. Then another glance in the mirror made me realize how stupid such vows were, how useless. Then I would cry about it some more.

By the time Nancy returned, I was staring at the feminine array around me trying to figure out just what I really would look like after I had put it all on. I even caught myself wishing I could put it all on. I realized I missed the reassuring pressure of wearing my corselette and the sight of my breasts preceding me. Somehow I had gotten used to both and now realized that I missed them. I was so confused by these feelings.

"Oh, dear, our tears have spoiled our pretty face, haven't they?" Nancy held up my chin and clucked her tongue. I was afraid I might be punished for that.

"I'm sorry, Nancy, I didn't mean to. . ."

"Oh, it's all right, Sweetheart. A girl needs a good cry now and again. Here, let me pretty you up again." She washed my face and began repairing my delicate make-up.

This time I watched with fascination and she quietly lectured me on what she was doing, telling me that I would soon be doing it for myself. Her dabbing and brushing made me feel wanted and cared for.

"Now then, Sweet Jennifer, would you like to get dressed?" As she spoke, she brushed out my long tresses once more. I felt pampered. I blushed, swallowed hard and slightly lowered my head.

"Yes, Ma'am." My voice was soft, barely above a whisper.

"Really?"

I remembered what she had said before she left em.

"Yes. . . please. I want to get dressed and I don't ever want to look like a boy again." There, it was out! I was sure they would see to it that I never did, but it was over and done now.

"Oh, good! That is just so very good. I knew you would figure it out. You will be ever so happy in your lovely new things, won't you?"

"Yes, Ma'am. . . I. . . I'm sure I will."

"Reassure me, Dear. Tell me all about how much you like being Jennifer and never want to be otherwise." Silence reigned. Nancy waited patiently.

I plunged in. . .

"I really want to, Nancy. . . I mean, everything is so pretty and nice. It's just like you said, the whole outfit is really neat. I really want to wear it. . . May I. . . please?"

"Of course you may. We can find as many charming ensembles as your heart desires, Dear Heart." Nancy soon had me standing in the gleaming white corselette as my breasts reappeared and my waist diminished. The panties, slip, petticoat, hose and heels followed.

I watched in wonderment as each item of female attire was piled on me. I was still confused about feeling such pleasure in becoming Jennifer, but it became more delicious with each added garment.

Nancy was chatty and complimentary and made the whole process fun, until I finally twirled before the full length mirror in my big satin blouse, my black, silk skirt lying heavily on the lace of the petticoat. The sight of lace ruffles beneath the hem sent a thrill through me.

"Lovely. . . stunning," she cooed. "The full-fledged Jennifer! You wouldn't want to ever be anything but Jennifer now, would you, Darling?"

"No, Nancy, I guess I wouldn't." I said it not with resignation but with determination.

We went down to the kitchen and lunched like two schoolgirls, giggling and smiling as Nancy described some lovely outfits she thought would flatter me. Oddly I liked the sound of all of them.

My first afternoon as Jennifer was remarkably busy as Nancy schooled me patiently in walking, standing, posing, sitting, curtsying and otherwise acting in my new persona. She made it fun. I felt silly some of the time. After she told me that we would be joining Mrs. Nevlin at The Rooftop for dinner,

I realized that I had to get it all right.

I didn't want to have anyone take me for anything but Jennifer. It would be too awful to have anyone see through my masquerade. I didn't want to embarrass anyone anymore. James seemed to have made so much trouble for everyone all the time. Jennifer seemed to make my two lady mentors so happy and then they made me happy. I still felt awkward but I was determined to make Jennifer perfect.

"Now that you really look like a pretty girl, we have to teach you to be a perfect little lady, don't we?" Nancy spoke as we walked down the length of the front hall.

I was taking careful, short steps, holding my hands aloft, a small book on top of my coiffure.

"You do want to always be a perfect little lady, don't you?"

"Yes, Ma'am," I replied enthusiastically as the book slid off my head.

Nancy giggled and put it back.

"And so you shall," she promised.

Chapter 10

I stood in my new school uniform in front of the Headmistress of The Nevlin Academy.

Maude Harbaugh was Mrs. Nevlin's sister. She was a slender, handsome woman with black hair swept back at the sides. She wore a black sheathe skirt and a double breasted coat of yellow silk. The edges of the wide lapels were finished in black satin. Beneath the coat she wore a yellow and black silk print blouse. She had an imposing but kindly manner, and I had admired her instantly. She seemed more amused than stern which struck me as strange for a Headmistress.

I was a little frightened of her, but I felt I would like her. I thought, also, that I would be wise to try to please her.

"Welcome to 'The Nevlin Academy,' Jennifer," she said, smiling broadly. "Are you happy to be here?"

"Oh, yes'm. . . uh, Madame Headmistress. Yes, I am."

"Oh, good. We're happy to have you. In just eighteen months, you can graduate a fully finished young lady. Are you looking forward to that?"

"Yes, Madame Headmistress." I really was. I dropped a curtsy.

Mrs. Harbaugh nodded her approval.

"She's a perfect little lady, Maude," Mrs. Nevlin advised her sister.

"I'm sure she is, Melissa. You wouldn't bring us anything else, would you?" The two of them exchanged amused glances as the Headmistress pushed a button on her intercom.

In a moment, a maid in a black uniform dress with a starched apron and lace cap entered and dropped a deep curtsy. Mrs. Harbaugh turned to me as I gaped stupidly at the prissy looking maid with the hourglass figure.

"Olivia will escort you to your new home, Jennifer. There you will meet your house-mother and get settled in."

"Thank you, Ma'am," I stammered, curtsy-ing. The sight of my sister had stunned me. It was altogether unexpected. I had never imagined Olivia in service.

As we started down the long hall headed for the quad and my new home, I pelted Olivia with a hundred questions.

She told me to shut up. What she actually said was, "Please be quiet, Miss Jennifer." That in itself was another shock. This was not the Olivia I had known! *Polite? My sister? Give me a break!*

"Yes, I'm in maid service, dammit," she shot back. "Your Mrs. Nevlin convinced Mother to send me here. Our sweet Headmistress got one look at my file and decreed that I needed to learn some humility before I could be taught to be a perfect lady. Dammit, you come waltzing in here, all taffeta and petticoats, a regular Little Miss Prissy-Ass Jennifer Sweetheart, and I'm waiting on tables." She was really angry, so I decided I had better try to sympathize.

"Come on, Olivia, do you think I like this, being made to mince about in this get-up?"

"I know damn well you do! Mrs. Nevlin had you spotted from the first day. Mom told me all about it. So they turn you into a pretty girl and teach you to be a little lady and I'm their damn maidservant. You like being Jennifer. I hate this. They told me they are going to keep me like this until I shape up. Then I can be a prissy-ass Missy like my little brother. Well, I won't!"

We had arrived at my new residence, a lovely Georgian colonial house of red brick and white trim with columns either side of the door.

Olivia stuck her tongue out at me, her old trick.

"You're such a wimp! I'll never let them brainwash me like they have you. At least I'm a real girl. I hope you just die of shame in there." She turned on her heel and stalked off.

I could see the shape of the Victorian Mode Corset beneath her uniform. I rang the bell. Another maid answered the door and I stepped into my new life.

Two weeks earlier, between Christmas and New Year's, I had made a last trip to The Rooftop for dinner. I had seen and heard nothing of my family once Mrs. Nevlin had taken me in and turned me into Jennifer.

Nancy had mentioned that Mom still had Olivia wearing her lavender corset, that the two of them had had a fight about it. Nancy had ventured that she didn't think

that would last long. After that, no one seemed to know what was going on at the O'Dells'. I was preoccupied at my sewing machine anyway.

The dinner was ostensibly a farewell dinner for Olivia. Nancy said she was being sent away to School. I knew that I was destined for "The Nevlin Academy" after the holidays, but no one seemed to know anything about Olivia's situation except that Mom was at wits end with Sister Smarty and was determined to straighten her out.

I wore a wonderful new party dress to The Rooftop.

The top of it was of black velvet and it had three-quarter sleeves that were puffed at the top. It had a sweetheart neckline. The velvet swooped in a diagonal line just below my hips, and the skirt which was of loosely pleated crimson silk satin, descended to an uneven hemline. Just below my left hip was a huge red satin rose with a black velvet center. I was overjoyed with my new three inch heels; very slender, in black slipper satin. I also wore pearl drop earrings and an elegant coiffure of cascading curls.

I had never felt so grown-up and attractive.

Nancy said so.

I looked forward to this debut, but I was nervous about seeing Mom and Dad.

Mom gushed over me and acted as though I had always been Jennifer. Somehow, that annoyed me. I was happy that she was pleased though.

Dad didn't have a lot to say, as usual, but he too seemed pleased with my appearance.

That surprised me.

Olivia, who could have been impressive in her marvelous white gown, tiered in layers of lace, spoiled the whole effect with her sullenness.

I could see that she was still wearing her dreaded Victorian Mode corset. I would have taken it in an instant, had I been allowed. I hoped that everyone in the room had taken notice of me. I felt so grown up and proud of myself in my modish dress of black velvet and crimson satin.

Mrs. Nevlin tried to engage Olivia in a conversation, but polite monosyllables were all she could get out of her. It was clear that while things had gone well for me since the brawl at School, they had not gone well for my grumpy sister.

As we were leaving, Dad put his arm around my shoulder and finally talked to me.

"It's OK, isn't it? I mean becoming Jennifer and all?"

I assured him that it was. I told him I was sorry if he was disappointed in me because I had become a girl, but I insisted that I really did like it better this way.

"No, it's fine with me," he replied, giving me a squeeze. "I always knew it was coming. You know, we always told you kids that I met your Mom in College, and we did go to College together, but we first met at The Nevlin School when I was finishing there. I thought you'd like to know that."

I suppose that this was his last surprise. As my eyes widened, he smiled down at me. His eyes twinkled and were filled with love and kindness. I was sure I could see a faint tracery of black lace beneath the broadcloth of his white shirt.

Since October, when I had moved to Mrs. Nevlin's and fell in love with Nancy, we had been busy. We worked on my lady-training, as she called it. I was kept busy sewing, cooking and learning how to embroider. Nancy was endlessly patient with me so long as I was a good girl. I sewed clothes for the big doll that sat on the chair in my room. Then I started making things for my own wardrobe. I quickly became an accomplished little seamstress. It was fun matching shapeless bolts of fine fabrics and making them form up into lovely dresses, skirts and lingerie. I could barely wait to finish them so I could try them on. Mrs. Nevlin was forever kind and complimentary as I learned step by step how to always be a pretty girl and all the polite nuances of becoming a perfect little lady.

It was with real regret that I let Nancy help me into the new school uniform I had made. I didn't want to leave them.

I loved the uniform. It was a yellow, taffeta, shirtwaist with a peter pan collar. It had long sleeves and white cuffs. Its full skirt lay on a single petticoat and I had yellow patent leather shoes with straps over the insteps. I had packed my pinafores which I would wear over the dress at school, and I had several bags of lovely ensembles to take with me.

Nancy had drummed her motto into me, "Fashion and Femininity First!"

The only disconcerting thing about my new school clothes was the device that Nancy had produced that evening. It was shaped like an athletic supporter, but it was of white satin and its straps were edged in lace. Embroidered on its smooth front was my name. As Nancy fitted it onto my groin, it drew my male parts up between my legs.

"School regulations, Dear," she purred, as she sewed it closed at the rear. "Don't worry, your housemother or the maid will remove it when need be."

Nancy zipped me into my corselette as I stared at myself in the mirror. I saw nothing there but the image of Jennifer, and I was so glad.

EPILOGUE

I finished at the Nevlin School on time, just as they promised me. In fact, I have never left. I stayed right there in Sherman House where Olivia had left me on the steps that day. All the naughty boys in their charming dresses and tresses at Sherman House call me “Madame Jennifer” now. I am their housemother. I love the job. I am the Assistant Headmistress and all the hard cases, the ruffians and the little vandals, despaired of by their parents, become my little charges. I tie down a lot of thumbs from time to time. I am quite adept at converting defiance into feminine delicacy.

Nancy Nevlin succeeded Mrs. Harbaugh as Headmistress a while back. We are husband and wife, although no one knows that. It wouldn't do. Mrs. Nevlin does, of course, but we have her blessing. She is still at Central High looking out there, and elsewhere, for those boys who don't know what they are yet.

Olivia didn't ever finish at Nevlin. At age twenty-one, she threw her black and white uniform in the trash and walked away.

We are quite reconciled and fond of one another these days. She got a job with the Lane Sisters and it looks like she will be a partner there one day. I take a lot of my charges to her for fittings. We have a lot of fun. Olivia, Mona, Elsa and I, watching the faces of my boys as they are fitted into their new lives. Some of them catch on easily, others are more difficult.

We don't see much of Mom and Dad anymore. They are forever the same. Nothing ever seems to change much, really.

The food at Dunham's Rooftop is as good as it ever was.