



SUMMARY: Two high flying drug dealers meet their match when the devil comes to pay them a visit and transform them into bubble headed back up singers.

## JUST LIKE MUSIC

By Valerie Hope

The papers and the cops called us felons. Blights on society. Drug pushers and corruptors of America's youth.

We preferred to think of ourselves as entrepreneurs.

We were living the American dream, after all. We both owned our own homes, our own cars and our own very successful business. Just because that business was felony trafficking of Peruvian cocaine, well, that was not our fault. It beat hell out of six bucks an hour at McDonalds. And we didn't have to wash our hands when we got home.

My name is Eddie. "Mellow" Eddie Slater, nicknamed from the completely righteous chronic I used to sell to the frat boys on campus at State. I still sold a little weed - I lucked into two hippies who grew some *primo* hydroponic in their garages - but I was mostly a high-volume coke mover. I ran about seventeen corners through the local gangs, supplying them with product and the occasional gat to get their business tended to. I took a fifteen percent cut off the top before passing the profit back south to the people who supplied me. I ran a couple of chemists, too, but they were my little secret. You could find decent dealers in any low-rent housing project, but a good chemist was something you held on to and worked to keep very happy.

I couldn't have done it, though, without my best buddy from the neighborhood. He got out of the 'hood by enlisting in the Air Force when he was seventeen, and the service went ahead and taught him all the skills necessary to be a first-class smuggler. He made the runs into Peru in a private jet given to us by our sources in South America, twice a month. Harriman - Harry - Edwards was one of those guys that made it through life on sheer street smarts. He didn't have shit for education, no money and no real luck. I'm glad that he hooked up with me when he got out of the service. Couple of hard-luck kids without two nickels to rub together and now we were wearing Italian suits and driving Porsches. It wasn't a bad life. As a matter of fact, it kicked ass. No way were we going to let a little something like legality shut us down.

We'd had a few scrapes with the narcs, but nothing we couldn't keep underneath. We went to great lengths to keep our dealers from ever finding out who we are, anyway. We drop the dope anonymously and change the drop points every week. None of our dealers who got popped could ever give us up trying to plead out. The papers and the cops called that practice evasion. We liked to think of it as job security.

We kept our money out of banks and weren't stupid about flashing cash. Sure, we had the clothes and the houses and the flashy rides, but our money was squeaky clean. We sank our

cash into local music, paying bands with drug cash and then raking in the gate at the clubs that we had part ownership in. We even paid taxes on money that should have gotten us arrested.

It was a Tuesday in October, one of those days that hung undecidedly between cold and warm, like the weather couldn't make up its mind what season it was. The sun was shining and there wasn't a cloud to mar the perfect blue of the sky. A great day to toss the jacket in the back seat and let the top down on the Boxter. We'd just gotten a huge shipment past Customs and moved it to our distributors. No more danger for another two weeks. A good time to just kick back and party a little. We had lots of reasons to celebrate. A late breakfast at a four-star restaurant at our own private table, an afternoon in the sky-box at the baseball game, sipping margaritas and placing bets, and then on to one of our clubs to hear one of the latest bands we were using to launder our money.

The club was largely deserted - we arrived about a half-hour before opening, just to scope out the new band. We prided ourselves on finding only the best local talent for our clubs. Several of our discoveries had record deals now, and quite a few more were on their way. Tonight's attraction was a self-titled "grrl" band, a bunch of angry, stringy-haired, emaciated lesbians screaming at the tops of their lungs about injustice and misunderstanding. The lead singer needed to eat a sandwich in the worst way - I hated girls with their ribs poking through their skin - but her sound was edgy and the band was tight. Their demo had been worth listening to, and if the rest of their list was as good as "Drag Me Down," the single we'd heard, then they should serve to pack in the crowds.

They were just setting up by the time that me and Harry arrived. Amazing how even a bunch of angry, skinny dykes could be nice as Girl Scouts when the guys with the money arrived. Sure, I'd made a couple of girls from bands over the years drop to her knees and suck me dry to get the gig, but these girls so weren't my type. More likely to bite it off than blow it. Angry chicks and me didn't get along very good, and I knew that Harry was all about the big tits. None of these girls were even in his "honorable mention" category.

She toweled a light sheen of sweat from her forehead and jumped off of the stage.

"I'm Katie Wilcox," she said, extending a slim hand to me. "You must be Mellow Eddie Slater."

"That's me. My associate, Harriman Edwards," I said. "We're really happy that you're playing here at Skyline. How can I help you?"

"We're almost done," Katie told us. "We were wondering - this is a little embarrassing - if you wouldn't mind giving us your opinion on something."

"Eddie is good at that," Harry joked, poking me in the shoulder lightly. I laughed.

"We were thinking of opening our first set with a new song, but we're not sure if it would set the right tone for the show. We'd like to play it for you, see what you think," Katie said. "Would that be okay?"

I checked my watch. We had a couple hours, and besides - a private show wasn't a bad thing. I raised a finger to the bartender, my signal to set me up with a glass of single-malt, eighteen year old Scotch. We took a table next to the stage - not so close we had to crane our necks to see, though - and each lit a smoke as Katie climbed back up and started tuning our guitar.

"We wrote it about three months ago," Katie explained through the mike. "You'll be the first people to ever hear it. Listen close. One. two. one, two, three four."

The band started up. It was a slow number, not something I would recommend to open a set with, but it was intriguing. There was something about it that just climbed into you somehow, made you feel dark and heavy and comfortable. It was. invasive. Katie's voice was rough, raw - full of passion and sorrow, but something else. Something that got inside my head, somehow.

I don't know how I ever thought she wasn't attractive.

She was beautiful. Only beautiful could sing a song like that.

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It must have been a hell of a party, that's all I could say. I couldn't remember a damned thing about anything. Just a couple of drinks at the club, and that was it. I don't know how I got home, who I went home with, none of it.

I stumbled out of my room, scratching and farting, still wearing the same clothes from yesterday. Harriman was passed out on the sofa, snoring loudly. Half-asleep myself, I fumbled with the coffee maker in the kitchen, cursing inaudibly about picking a hell of a time to give the maid the day off.

I'd only just gotten the first tentative slurp in my system and turned around to make Harry's life as hellish as mine when I almost bumped into Katie, the singer from the band last night. She was staring at me with unblinking, hawk-like eyes and an unreadable expression.

"Mellow Eddie Slater," she said flatly. "Harriman Edwards. I can't believe I introduced myself to you last night and you didn't see the resemblance."

"Wh. what resemblance?" I stammered.

"The name is Katie Wilcox," she said. "You knew my brother. Mike Wilcox."

"Doesn't ring a bell," I started, automatically defensive. "I know a lot of people."

"C'mon, now, Mellow," she said scoldingly. "Mike Wilcox. He used to deal for you, on the corner of Ninth and Bigelow. Made you a lot of money."

"I told you, it don't ring a bell," I said.

"He died for you, Mellow. You and Harriman and your little 'business,'" she sneered at me. "Defended you until the end. When the Jamaicans moved into your area, he died in a gun battle - a nineteen year old kid in a gun battle - trying to defend your territory."

I remembered now, a pimple-faced kid with delusions of grandeur. But I wasn't telling *her* that. "Real shame, but I don't know what the hell you're talking about."

"Save it for the cops, Mellow," Katie spat. "You know damn well what I'm talking about. You didn't even spare a few hundred dollars for a funeral. You spend that much in an evening, you son of a bitch, and you couldn't cut loose one thin dime to help bury my brother, who died for you."

"Things are tough all over," I said.

Her eyes narrowed dangerously. I started to wish my 9mm Glock wasn't in the other room, in my bedside table.

"You're about to find out how tough things are," she hissed. "You and your partner both. I sold my soul for this, you bastard, but at least I'm going to get to watch every single second. You took away what mattered the most to me - my big brother - and so now I'm going to take away the things that matter the most to you."

"And what would those be?" I asked smugly. Like this little bitch could do anything to me, anyway. Let her talk all she wanted. I'd be calling DeRawn and Curtis to dispose of her body before lunch.

"Your freedom," she said simply. "Your pride, your self-respect and your manhood."

I chuckled. "And how do you intend to do that?"

"I already told you," she said. "I sold my soul for it."

"Like I'm supposed to believe that," I said, making a dismissive gesture.

"You don't believe me? Fine. Why don't you go and wake up your friend over there?"

"Whatever," I said, walking over with every intention of booting him in the ass to wake him up. He was a nasty drunk, Harriman, and he tended to wake up swinging. I didn't want to get too close on the off chance.

"Oh, but Mellow," Katie added. "Do it sweetly. The sweetest way you can think of to wake somebody up. That's what I want to see."

Somewhere between my brain ordering my middle finger to rise and my mouth to pronounce this woman out of her fucking mind, I seemed to have moved slowly across the carpet of the apartment and knelt down beside my snoring friend. The words choked off in my throat as my fingers deftly loosened Harriman's belt, unbuttoned his fly and slid his zipper down to expose the front of his boxers. Reaching gingerly between the flaps, my fingers closed around his musky, warm shaft and drew it out. My eyes must have registered only shock and confusion as I leaned forward and enclosed his shaft with my lips, slowly pistoning my head up and down until I felt him take on a length and a hardness against my tongue.

"So sweet," Katie whispered, obviously enjoying the scene. I barely heard. I just couldn't believe I was actually doing this. I'd threatened to shoot guys for even alleging I would ever do this. And I was at a loss as to why I couldn't stop myself, and even more afraid as I felt my own sex become hard and hot in my trousers.

Beneath me, Harry began to buck his hips a little, moaning deep in his throat. With a spasmodic arch of his back, I felt my mouth fill with a bitter, acrid taste which I swallowed reflexively. A strange, warm tingling sensation filled me as I felt his member deflate against my tongue until it escaped my lips with a soft, wet pop. I stared in horror at what I had done while I felt the lazy, warm tingles spread through my arms and legs. Harry's eyes opened slowly and with a self-satisfied half-grin. The grin melted to shock when he saw who knelt beside him.

"Eddie? What the fuck is going on?" he said groggily.

"He was kind enough to wake you up, sweetheart," Katie said. "Don't you think you should repay the favor? Sweetly, now, Harry."

Almost like we were puppets on strings, I slid onto the couch and shimmied out of my pants while Harry slipped onto the carpet and enfolded my throbbing cock in his waiting mouth. He blew like a pro - I didn't know whether it was because that was already in us, somehow, or a product of whatever was making us act this way - and I soon shot my own hot, sticky load into my friend's mouth. He sighed and sat back as I had done, obviously infused with the same tingling warmth that still flowed up and down my arms and legs.

"Now, come on, fellas, up and at 'em," Katie said, almost sing-song. "We have a lot of work to do today."

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We stood at sort of a semi-rigid attention, our faces schooled to smoothness by some unseen force but our eyes windows into the terror we were feeling. Somehow it was all the more terrifying because our fear didn't reach our bodies, didn't cause our hearts to race or our skin to pebble. Not a single tremble or shake, not even a quickness in our breathing. Just the warm, strange tingles spreading from our bellies into our limbs.

Katie came into the room slowly, looking around as if appraising our taste. "This won't do," she said at length, running a fingertip across the frame of a \$15,000 painting. "You're going to have to adapt your tastes quite a bit for your new lives."

"What are you doing to us?" Harry managed in a soft voice.

"Getting even," Katie said. "Oh, I probably won't be around long to enjoy it. The emissary that Hell sent was very clear on that. But maybe some small part of me will get to remember what happened to you two and take it with me when I'm gone."

"What the hell are you talking about?" I rasped.

"You still don't get it, do you, Mellow?" she said acidly, tickling me gently under the chin. "You two were my brother's heroes. He idolized you. You spit on his memory and you act like you don't even care. So I'm going to make you care. A day won't go by when you don't feel the loss, the betrayal and the pain that we all felt."

She sat on the bed. "Now, then, I think it's time to make the call."

Her body stiffened and the bitter, hateful eyes rolled back so far that only the whites of showed beneath her spasming lids. The veins on her neck stood out as her slight body twitched violently. A harsh, acrid smell filled the room. Sulfur, I knew from being around chemists for so long. Or, as the Bible called it, brimstone.

With a flash of heat and a pop of air rushing out of what had once been empty space, three figures appeared in the room. They were human at first glance, but closer inspection showed the shimmering bronze scales on their necks and shoulders and the feline slit of their eyes. Two females and a male, looking at us and smiling eagerly. The points of fangs just dimpled their bottom lips as they grinned.

One of the females brushed long, coppery hair away from her face, exposing the buds of two tiny horns in her forehead. They flowed into motion - too much like snakes to be of any comfort to me - and their semblance to humanity ended abruptly. Long, sinuous tails uncoiled behind them to brush on the floor and translucent wings unfolded behind their shoulders, the membranes filtering the light into a mildly nauseating blue. They all wore form-fitting clothing

made of some pale leather. As they moved closer, I saw that some of the clothes sported freckles and pinkish, shiny scars in the finish, telling me unequivocally just what sort of hide had been used to make the clothes. I tried to close my eyes in revulsion but my body wouldn't obey the command.

"You are ready for us?" the male asked Katie, his voice raspy and a little hissing, like paper tearing.

"You've been informed of what I wish?" Katie responded.

"We have," the taller of the females, with long black-blue hair, said. The blonde next to her nodded her affirmation as well. "And you agree to the price?"

"On the condition that I get to watch the entire process," Katie responded.

The male grinned, a bone-chilling expression. "Then have a seat and be comfortable, mortal," he instructed. "We will give you quite the spectacle."

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The two females had been walking slowly around Harry and me, looking us up and down, for what seemed like hours. Sometimes a mirthless, cold smile would play across the succulent lips of the raven-haired demon-thing circling me, or the golden-tressed one circling Harriman. We stood rooted to the spot like statues.

"They contain each other's essence," the male commented, tapping a taloned finger against his chin.

"I made them blow each other this morning," Katie said. "For fun. Is that a problem?"

"No," the male said. "It presents. possibilities."

"What kind of possibilities?" I croaked.

"Once we begin, the powers we will unleash on you will react with the essence that you contain of one another," the male said. "You will be forever linked. How, I do not know. But I have a feeling that it will be very interesting."

"We are ready, my lord," the blonde female said with a hint of a giggle.

The male turned to Katie, as if in deference. "Shall we begin?"

Katie smiled and nodded.

"The first thing will be to adjust their minds," the male said, stepping towards Harry and me. "Torture, you see, is an art of emotion, not of physical pain. And make no mistake - it is an art. Your Marquis de Sade knew this. He is a valued advisor to the Master in Hell. You mortals, it seems, have a real capacity for it.

"The trick here will be to divide their minds," he went on. "To simply have them aware of what is happening to them, well, that's amateurish. How much sweeter it will be to have a part of them aware of what is happening, but to have another, larger part of them that enjoys what is happening. That *craves* it. Oh, to hear them scream would be lovely. But to know they are screaming behind their smiles? Delicious."

Katie's grin was almost feral. "I agree. You are the expert at this. I leave it all up to your discretion. Do whatever you want to them."

The demon-male's eyes narrowed. "Then we begin by making them walk happily towards their own executioners. My dears, I should think the personalities you give them need to be something pliable. Gullible, perhaps, and lacking the intellect to suspect we wish them ill. And something that will feel a requisite amount of joy at our ministrations to make the souls within them writhe and beg for death."

"We have just what you need, Master," the black-haired demoness purred. In perfect unison, the blonde and the brunette hellspawn reached towards our foreheads, their cold and razor-sharp talons almost caressing the taut, sweaty skin there. And with gentle, almost loving pressure, they pushed in. I felt their hands part the skin and bone - the pain was almost unbearable, but I couldn't react to it. And then her hand was inside my skull, pulling and shaping and molding the brain. I tried to scream but my jaw was beyond my control. All I could see was the hysterically rolling, terrified eyes of Harry standing across from me, begging me for help, for anything. And I could only watch as he could, seeing my eyes screaming for the same from him.

The demons withdrew their hands and stepped away from us, their eyes hungry and excited with almost a sexual craving. The male demon clapped his hands in delight.

"The most skilled touches in all the Underworld," he commented. "But, alas, you cannot see their handiwork as I am able. Perhaps a demonstration?"

Katie nodded eagerly. The male demon snapped his fingers and suddenly our bodies were ours to command again. Our brains could tell our bodies to move and to speak. It was only that now our selves weren't able to tell our brains what to do.

Harriman leaned his weight onto one leg and put a hand on his hip in a surreal impersonation of a runway model, down to the guileless, almost brainless "Miss America" smile on his face, showing his crooked and yellowish teeth. His eyes were opened preternaturally wide, as if surprised or shocked. It was a grotesque caricature of the way a beautiful woman might stand. I would have been even more shocked if I didn't take that time to realize I was standing the same way exactly.

"Well, my unfortunates? Are you ready to continue on?" the male demon asked brightly.

"Oh, totally," Harriman bubbled in a perky, very upbeat voice.

"We're, like, ready when you are, baby," I added, my own voice nasal and chipper.

"Then let's continue, by all means," the male said, gesturing to his female demons.

Katie giggled like a child at a birthday party. "Oh, this is fun," she said, bouncing.

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Katie was ensconced like royalty, sipping a tall flute of our Dom Perignon and reclining in one of our Italian leather chairs, watching the female devils sit Harry and me in two straight-backed dining chairs in the front room. The male devil was lounging across the back of our sofa, his clawed forefinger idly tracing designs on the leather which left little trails of wispy smoke in their wake.

"Their names, like mine, are unpronounceable by the human tongue," the male demon was explaining to Katie. "but I am the only true demon here. These lovely creatures are called erinyes. The tormentors of the damned. I call them Raven and Shimmer, after the color of their hair. You may simply call me Faust."

"Faust?" Katie asked, intrigued.

"I took a liking to the little morality play you mortals concocted and decided to pay it homage," Faust told her. "Since I handle the bulk of the transactions mortals make with my Master in exchange for their souls, I thought it fitting."

The erinyes, Shimmer and Raven, were pacing around us slowly again. We had taken off our clothes at Raven's command, sitting in our boxers with our legs crossed at the knee and our hands folded primly in our laps. Although all I felt was soul-deep terror, my face was stretched into a warm, inviting, toothy smile.

"What's next for these two?" Katie asked.

"They've been designed to suffer, now," Faust told her. "Virtually anything we do to them now will cause torment. Theirs will be a special hell. The only thing remaining is the humiliation you desire."

"I can't wait," Katie told them.

Faust gestured and the erinyes moved forward. With wide, gleeful grins, they lifted us to our feet. Shimmer stood in front of me, Raven in front of Harriman. They stretched their mouths open wide, wider than should have been possible, like a snake unhinging its jaw for a meal. A noisome-smelling yellowish liquid shot from their mouths - like cobras spitting venom - in a thick stream onto our bodies. Steam and the stench of burning flesh filled our nostrils, but no screaming. Even though the pain was nearly enough to make the part of me that was still Mellow Eddie Slater pass out, my face remained in that vapid smile as the acidic spittle hit my body. I even turned around and raised my arms, letting the acid reach every inch of my skin. Harriman did the same.

After a terrible eternity, the flow of acid stopped. The steam cleared and we stood, our skin pink and raw, not a trace of body hair anywhere and all the excess fat melted from our now-lanky frames.

"I'd like it better if I could hear them scream," Katie commented, sipping champagne.

"It can be arranged, of course," Shimmer said silkily. "But are you sure you don't enjoy the looks of abject horror in their eyes?"

"I do, I do," Katie said. "I just want to hear them scream. Just once."

Faust nodded his assent. Raven gestured, and suddenly my tongue was mine to command again, filtered through the numb haze that was the 'adjustments' that the erinyes had made to my brain and personality.

"You total bitch," I hissed. "Look what they, like, did to us 'n' stuff! I so can't believe you did this!"

"Yah," Harriman echoed. "Like, only a total cunt would, like, sit by and let this happen, y'know? I'm over here, all, like, ohmyGawd, she is *such* a total fucking whore!"

"Proceed, my lovelies," Faust said to the erinyes.

Behind us, the devil-women lunged forward, sinking their incorporeal hands into us again, this time into our bodies. I spasmed, yelping, as I felt Shimmer's ghostly talons moving around inside my body, pulling and twisting and breaking. My mouth flew open and a scouring scream ripped from deep inside me. So total, so confining was my pain that I didn't even register Harriman's voice rising beside mine, in a chorus of agony.

My body pretzeled into shapes I didn't think possible, jerking this way and that like a marionette with an epileptic puppeteer. The soft cackles of the erinyes occasionally broke through the screaming and whimpering and the creaking and snapping of bones and gristle from our bodies. The demon women apparently enjoyed their work very much. Piece by piece, tiny little chunks of bloody bone and other tissue were thrown into a pile between Harriman and I. Shimmer and Raven worked methodically, like surgeons, from our feet and ankles all the way up to our faces. By the time they stepped back, we were broken and moaning on the floor, too overwhelmed by agony and hoarse from screaming to do much more than whimper.

"That should do nicely," Shimmer concluded. "Master, if you would?"

Faust stood up and stretched languidly, the tips of his membranous wings brushing our ceiling. He stood between us, kneeling down, and placed a warm hand on each of our foreheads.

"What are you doing?" Katie asked.

"The erinyes were kind enough to remove the excess pieces from our friends," Faust said, "but they will shortly die without a touch of healing from my hands."

"You can heal?" Katie said, a little shocked.

"Of course he can," Shimmer said. "He was once an angel, you know."

"Like you?" Katie pressed on.

"No," Raven answered. "We are erinyes, the punishers. Souls of women who were beaten during their lives and traded their souls for a chance at vengeance."

"I wish you could go without healing them," Katie commented. "I like them like this."

"You would make an excellent erinyes," Faust responded. "But never fear, my dear, you will like them even better as our work progresses. But you needn't worry. Angelic healing is a joyful, euphoric thing. Unfortunately for these two, however - "

Flames erupted from our bodies as Harriman and I arched our backs in one prolonged, fiery moment of hell. It seemed like molten lava leaked from our pores and searing steam erupted from our nostrils and mouths. I could only pant wildly when it was over.

"- I am no longer an angel," Faust concluded.

He rose smoothly, dragging us both to our feet by the roots of the hair. The agonizing broken feeling in our bodies was gone. We were whole again, somehow. We stood, striking our catwalk poses beside him, smiling widely and caressing his muscular shoulders.

"Now, I think we should adjourn to someplace a little more private while we get a little work done on your house," Faust told us. "Mr. Slater, would you be so kind as to make the arrangements?"

I sashayed across the carpet, my butt wiggling with my little mincing steps, and picked up the phone next to the sofa. I dialed a number I'd never known before and waited for a response on the other end. In my former, powerful and direct voice, I heard myself give orders to a decorator, charge the work to an account of mine, and hang up. Faust then led the erinyes, Katie, Harry and me out into the solarium. With a gesture over his shoulder, the doorway filled with smoke and fire briefly and then cleared, leaving only tendrils of blue-white fire playing along the lintel and doorposts every few moments.

"That should ensure our privacy," he told Katie. "We'll be able to see out, but no one will be able to see in. That way we can keep an eye on the progress but remain undisturbed here, while we finish our work."

I stood at silent, fashionably-posed attention and got my first real look at Harry and myself in the reflection in the window. The erinyes had pulled pieces out of our bodies and we had been healed into entirely new shapes. Our torsos seemed to have collapsed in on themselves, leaving us shallow-chested and high-waisted. Our arms and legs seemed longer in proportion to our bodies - sinuously long, in fact - but they were much shorter and spindlier than our former limbs, tapering and flowing now to delicate joints. Ribs pushed through our skin and the previous layers of thick, hard muscle had been denuded and softened into graceful little valleys and swells. With the hairless skin, it made us look undeniably feminine. Added to the tiny little bits of bone and meat that had been rearranged in our faces and along our smaller skulls, raising our cheekbones and the arches of our eyebrows, widening our eyes and narrowing our chins, it soon became grossly apparent what was happening to us.

I tried to flinch away in revulsion from my reflection, but I couldn't. I couldn't command my muscles, for one thing, but the more horrible part was that a huge part of my brain - the part that I could no longer fully control but the one that fully controlled me - was delighted at my new appearance.

Behind us, movers were entering the house. They were covering all our possessions with plastic, all the trappings of our earthly power were being carted out one by one into a waiting truck outside. The leather furniture, the flat-panel television, the chrome-and-lacquer tables and lamps, all of it - out the door and out of our lives.

Shimmer had walked behind me and grabbed me by my hair. With a loud cackle, the devil put the sole of her clawed foot into the small of my back and pushed me forward while pulling back hard against my scalp. Instead of the hair ripping out, like I thought it would, however, it stretched painfully out of my scalp. Shimmer let the handful of hair go and it floated down over my shoulders, hanging down almost three feet to tickle the small of my back. Beside me, Harriman's short crew-cut was now a long mane as well.

But Shimmer wasn't done with me. Tiny licks of fire played across the palms of her hands as she raked her fingers through my hair. I could feel the horrible burning as if each strand of my hair was a raw nerve - God, how I wished I could scream - as the fire leached all the pigment out of my hair, leaving it a glistening near-white, a Marilyn-esque platinum blonde from root to

tip. Beside me, Harriman's body jerked as mine had, although Raven wasn't touching him. His russet-brown mane of hair turned a deep, glossy black.

"Interesting," Raven said, delighted.

"Connected, as we believed," Faust agreed. "Not mirror images, as I supposed, but rather each the negative of the other. Try something else, Raven, I find myself curious."

Raven looked at me speculatively, eyeing me up and down. Nodding to herself, she inhaled deeply and leaned towards me, exhaling a huge gout of vitriolic green flame at my feet, which seared and burned its way up my body to my scalp. Behind the flame, the skin was left with a healthy, glowing amber tan, broken only by triangular patches of pale white over my nipples and pubes. As Faust suspected, Harriman's skin became pale and creamy in response even though he obviously felt the same pain I did. We fully supported Faust's theory of what had happened to us, borne out by a horrible eternity of pain which left me with eyes so deeply brown as to appear black while Harriman now looked at the world through shimmery, crystalline blue.

In the house behind us, the workers were moving in furniture of pale wood with golden filigree, overstuffed chairs and sofas upholstered in white. The art on the walls were old *Vogue* reproductions and Patrick Nagel lithos, brass-framed mirrors. Vases with tasteful yet extravagant arrangements of flowers replaced our solid, art-deco sculptures. Voluminous, cream-colored silken curtains took the place of our brushed-aluminum blinds. The wallpaper over the dark paint was now alternating pink and cream vertical stripes.

It was difficult not to watch, sitting as we were in front of two small tables with mirrors which the erinyes had conjured up from nowhere. We were both busy with curling wands, which neither of us had ever touched before, moussing, spraying and gelling our long, lustrous hair into an elaborate arrangement of curls, teased out and up until it was nearly as wide as our shoulders and our bangs high above our foreheads. I tried to ignore the perfumy, cloying smell of the foundation and lipstick I was wearing, artfully applied by hands which had never touched cosmetics before this terrible day. My eyes were dramatically, almost trashily overdone with whites and blues, thick eyeliner and several coats of mascara on lashes that were long enough to brush my cheeks when I closed my eyes. Pink blush powder highlighted high cheekbones and bubblegum pink, glossy wet lipstick adorned lips that were swollen and puffy in a perpetual bee-stung pout. It was as if the cosmetics had subtly changed my features as I applied them, taking me from mildly striking over the line into slutty beautiful. The whitish concealer under my eyes and on my chin and nose had reshaped me into a wide-eyed nymphet with a cute little 'Pam Anderson' button nose. Beside me, the same had happened to Harriman, only with darker greens and yellows around his pale eyes and glossy red lips to my soft pink.

To amuse Katie, the erinyes had reached into our mouths with their clawed hands and pulled out some portion of our voice boxes, leaving our necks smooth and our voices high-pitched and bubbly. The devils then made us gossip endlessly as we did our hair, talking ceaselessly about men and women we didn't even know - or perhaps we did, now - and clubs we'd never been to, who was sleeping with whom, all of it. The humiliation of it - and the sinking interest I felt in these goings-on, the enthusiasm which bubbled in my brain over all these inane tidbits of information - was almost more than I could bear. Were my body my own, tears would have leaked from my heavily made-up eyes.

"Um, so, like, Faust?" Harriman asked turning around with a bottle of hairspray in one hand. "When are we, like, gonna get finished 'n' stuff?"

"I assume you're referring to your bodies?" the devil replied smugly.

"Well, duh," I giggled, winding a strand of my thick, glossy hair around the hot barrel of the styling wand. "Like, we so need titties 'n' stuff, y'know?"

"Of course, of course. How insensitive of me," he said. With a clawed finger, he drew aside the flap of his loincloth and reclined, exposing a bronze, serpentine penis at least a foot long which stiffened and throbbed.

I clapped my hands eagerly while Harriman bounded up, minced across the floor and sat next to him on the wicker love-seat where he reclined. He lowered his wet red lips to the huge member and engulfed it deeply in his throat with a long, practiced stroke, his delicate hand wrapped low around the shaft, stroking it rapidly.

After a few moments, Faust's back arched a little and he gasped slightly as Harriman began to swallow reflexively, choking a little. As I watched, his chest began to swell into soft curves which ballooned out into impressive mounds crowned with proud pink nipples the size of mini-marshmallows. Harriman looked down with a gleeful expression marred only by the soul-deep horror in his eyes.

"You like?" Faust asked.

"Oh, yeah, baby," Harriman purred in a simulated *Austin Powers* growl. "But, like, I totally wanted 'em bigger 'n' stuff, y'know? Pretty please?"

Faust gestured towards his still-erect cock. "Then continue."

"Ooh," I commented as Harry's head sank again into Faust's lap. "Girlfriend gonna get some *big* titties now."

By the time Harriman sat up and wiped his bottom lip, the swellings on his chest were firm double-D volleyballs which stood proudly from his shrunken chest with no need of support, giving the unmistakable look of implants. Not the more natural-looking saline of the modern day, but the gravity-defying silicone of earlier times. Harriman fondled them happily, teasing the erect nipples and squeezing the pale flesh happily. He hopped up and jiggled deliciously across the tiles back to his seat to repair his lipstick while I took his place beside Faust. My own oral ministrations soon had my throat filled with a burning, sticky fluid which I could feel flowing under my skin, into my chest, causing the tanned orbs to swell. I swallowed and swallowed, milking his member with my tiny hand, causing more and more of the fluid to pump hotly down my throat. I sat up and shook my double-D silicone masterpieces from side to side happily. I noticed as I stood that my ass had filled out as well, giving me a perfect Jayne Mansfield hourglass - wide hips, a perfect rounded bubble of a butt, a wasp-thin waist and flat stomach and enormous, mouth-watering breasts whose jiggle and bounce perfectly complimented my swaying, swiveling walk.

The bubblegum pink nail polish that I applied to match my freshly-repaired lipstick had made my nails grow and thicken, jutting out a good half-inch over my fingertips until they were almost as long as the claws on Shimmer or Raven. I blew on them to dry them while Harriman covered his own long, square-cut fuck-me red nails with another coat of clear polish to protect them. The erinyes paced, appraising. Behind us, the workers were moving out box after box of

stuff from our private rooms while others moved boxes in. I tried to keep from panicking as I felt my new mind carefully cataloguing which delivery man had the nicest butt.

"My dears, it is almost completed," Faust said. "There is only one thing left to do."

"Pussies!" Harriman chirped. "I've so been waiting for this!"

"Totally," I added.

Faust smiled like a patient father. "You've been waiting? My lovelies, it is we who have been waiting on you. Didn't you know?"

"Like, know what?" I asked.

Shimmer stepped forward and held out her hands, one to me and one to Harry. "Just give them to me. You don't want them any more, after all, do you?"

I spread my smooth thighs slightly and wrapped my hand around the flaccid dick which hung there. I was screaming at myself in my mind, desperate to keep from doing this final, irrevocable act. With a twist and a sharp jerk, the cock and balls which had been the symbols of my power and gender for so long snapped off with a painful tearing, leaving only a pink, soft cleft. I put my cock in Shimmer's hand and she hung it from her belt, where I noticed the shriveled and dried penises of several others. Harry's went right beside a row of others on Raven's belt.

"You look lovely," Faust said. "Perfect for what our Master desires. You both know what you're supposed to do, yes?"

I nodded eagerly. "We're, like, supposed to fuck married men," I said.

"And, like, encourage little girls to be slutty," Harry added. "Y'know, like make them think it's okay to, like, fuck around and get drunk 'n' stuff."

"And totally cheat on their boyfriends," I added.

"We were, like, planning to get with a bunch of totally cool college girls, y'know, like, with good grades 'n' stuff, and get 'em all, like, totally drunk 'n' stuff, on Friday," Harriman said. "The *Girls Gone Wild* party is happening on the strip, and we were totally going to talk 'em into taking off their clothes with us, y'know? D'you, like, think the Master will like that? It would totally ruin their reputations 'n' stuff, maybe, like, even their lives!" His - *her* - titanic breasts jiggled deliciously as she bounced up and down with excitement.

"I think he'll be ecstatic," Faust said. He gestured, and the erinyes draped us with sheer silk robes - black for me and white for Harry. "Now, my dears, you should get dressed. We'll accompany you out where you may begin your work."

Behind us, a delivery man poked his head through the now-unfrozen doorway.

"Mr. Faust?" he asked politely, checking a clipboard. "If you're all finished in here, sir, I'll have the boys bring in the stuff for this room."

"We're just finishing up, George," Faust said smoothly. "Have your men begin."

George whistled shrilly and men began moving in partially assembled exercise equipment - two Stairmasters, two treadmills, two Bowflex home gyms. There was even a mini-fridge full of

bottled water and fruit juice. Another team of men began putting down the framework for the plastic basin of the Jacuzzi which waited just outside.

"We thought you'd enjoy your workouts more in the solarium," Raven told us.

"Oh, like, sure!" Harry bubbled. "But, like, there's no curtains in there."

"And we totally exercise in the nude," I confessed.

"Such is life," Faust said, steering us towards our bedrooms. "I have a feeling that telescope sales will be up drastically in the next few weeks."

\* \* \*

The erinyes had gone - back to Hell, I suppose, but it didn't matter anymore - and only Katie and Faust remained. Harriman's bedroom was now a giant walk-in closet, filled with garment racks and shelves of shoes, and my room - decorated in eggshell and lavender - was for both of us - twin vanities and makeup tables and one huge, satin-sheeted king-size under a huge bay window. Faust had been right about telescopes. Harry and I had definitely done some voyeur-worthy things before getting dressed, licking each other's new breasts and pussies for nearly an hour before pawing through our racks of clothes. We stood to have some very happy neighbors.

Our 'grand entrance' must have been something, given the wide-eyed look of shock on Katie's face. We both towered well above our now-usual five-foot-eight heights on four-inch clear Lucite platforms with an eight-inch spike heel. Mine had white vinyl uppers and an ankle strap while my partner's had black. I wore a skin-tight Lycra tube dress, snowy white with black polka dots and a three-inch wide black vinyl belt cinched across my narrow waist, displaying a luscious valley of pressed-together-and-pushed-up cleavage. My friend was once again my photonegative, with a black tube-dress with white polka dots and a white vinyl belt. Our heads were topped by floppy, wide-brimmed straw glamour hats, mine white with a black band and my girlfriend's black with a white band. My ears - now mysteriously pierced, as was my navel - dangled with huge black plastic earrings which matched my friend's white. Completing the look was the white, wrist-length gloves I wore, one hand grasping a white sequined clutch purse and the other holding a smoldering, brown More cigarette, long and pencil-thin. My partner held a black purse in her black-gloved left hand while her right held a long, thin white Virginia Slims 120 to release a thin plume of blue smoke. I wore sunglasses with white rims, she with black.

"You're visions," Faust said. "I am very impressed."

"I can't believe that's Harriman and Mellow Eddie," Katie breathed.

"Not Harriman and Mellow Eddie," I said playfully, giggling. "Not anymore. Now it's , like, Harmony and Melody. It even, like, says so on our drivers' licenses! And, like, we're only 22 now. I was, like, ohmyGawd, he totally made us, like, eight years younger!"

"Melody and Harmony," Faust smiled widely. "Just like music."

Katie rose from her seat, self-satisfied in the extreme. "I can't wait to see them in public."

"One moment," Faust said. "There is the matter of your bargain with my Master."

"Of course," Katie said. "He claims my soul when I die."

Faust shook his head sadly. "The contract stipulated nothing about when you die, my dear. You should have read more carefully."

"What? What do you mean -" Katie began.

Faust gripped her tightly by the shoulders. "The Master wants his due, my dear."

He leaned closer, stifling Katie's scream with a hard kiss. Over his scaly, winged shoulders, Harmony and me could see Katie's hands beating fruitlessly on Faust's shoulders. As we watched, her hands went from the calloused fingers of the lifelong guitar player to the slender, expensively-manicured fingers of a beauty queen.

He released her and stepped back, revealing her to our sight. Gone were the simple black thrift-store clothes she'd been wearing, replaced by a midriff-baring halter which exposed most of her C-cup 'done' breasts, taut belly, smooth skin and little Playboy Bunny navel ring. She wore low-rise, hip hugger jeans with flared legs and clunky platform heels in pink vinyl. Her face was heavily made-up, and a pair of expensive sunglasses nestled in her tousled hair, looking unkempt to the inexperienced - us girls knew very well how much work had gone into the flyaway, windblown mop of loose curls.

"What did you do to me?" she asked in a husky, breathy voice.

"Took your soul, of course," Faust said happily. "The soul of your music. Never again will you be able to sing of anything meaningful, my dear. Katie Wilcox is no more, and now the world will only hear the songs of Kaylee Cox, the singular Top 40 teen pop sensation. You're the next Britney Spears or Christina Aguilera, didn't you know?"

"You're totally on the cover of *Spin* this month," Harmony said, holding up the magazine for proof. "Girlfriend look fuckin' *hot*, too."

"But - I thought." she nearly cried.

"I know exactly what you thought," Faust interrupted. "But that is not - and never was - the reality, my dear Ms. Cox. You will serve the Master as we all do, singing your mindless songs about sex and parties and promiscuity. You will encourage a generation of young women to sin and tempt and cause great rejoicing in my Master's halls. The driving, sexual beats of your music will urge young men to lust and to fight. You will be a perfect tool. And you must live knowing the price you paid. You will never again write your own songs, or play an instrument. Yours will be a world of trite lyrics, sampled beats and choreographed dance routines. I could think of no Hell more fitting for you."

Me and Harmony clapped our hands and bounced a little. We'd come a long way from being just strippers on the main drag. Imagine, us dancing backup for Kaylee Cox!

"Now, my dear, what do you think about the new arrangement?" Faust asked.

The terror in the eyes never changed, but the face brightened into an open but very sultry smile as the new teen sensation said, "Oh, like - I totally love it!"

She ran forward, hooking her arms into mine and Harmony's. "OhmyGawd, now, c'mon, baby girls, I totally know this new café down on Eighth that has the *cutest* waiters. Melody, can you call for the limo?"

"Totally, honey," I said, digging in my purse for my cute little cell-phone.

"Is the food good?" Harmony asked, sucking on her cigarette.

"Oh, baby, like, who cares?" Kaylee said. "The food can suck for all I care, it's the dessert that's great."

I waved the smell of brimstone out of my nose and took a drag off my cigarette to clear the stink. I was totally going to have to get after the maid about the smell. I turned around, thinking to see that totally cute guy who'd hung out with us all day, but there was nobody there. I thought I heard laughing, but I guess I was just dreaming.

"So, Kaylee, are we, like, clubbing tonight?" I asked, putting it all out of my mind.

"Melody, we go clubbing, like, every night," Harmony scolded.

"So, like, you wanna do something else 'n' stuff, then?" I countered.

"Like what?" Kaylee asked.

Harmony's face screwed up briefly in difficult thought - she always had trouble making up her mind - and then she shrugged and broke into a wide smile. "Oh, like, I dunno. Clubbing's cool. Never mind me."