



Reluctant Press presents:

Olivia Mackenzie

Briana Vermont



A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

Copyright © 2010, Reluctant Press - All Rights Reserved

Reluctant Press TG Publishers

This story is a work of fiction. Any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. All situations and events herein presented are fictional, and intended only for the enjoyment of the reader. Neither the author nor the publisher advocate engaging in or attempting to imitate any of the activities or behaviors portrayed.

Persons seeking gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy or any other medical and/or body-altering process should seek the counsel of a qualified therapist who follows the Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorder.

Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet!

We need *your* help! We want to keep providing our readers with low cost, professional quality fiction on the Internet. We spend thousands of dollars to edit, illustrate and typeset *each story*. It is important, therefore, that everyone works to help keep professional fiction alive on the Net.

This story is protected by US and International copyright law, and is owned exclusively by Reluctant Press, which retains exclusive rights to publish these materials. The civil penalties for copyright infringement can be severe, including substantial monetary damages, injunctive relief, and liability for attorneys' fees incurred in prosecuting a case. If a court determines that the infringement was committed willfully, statutory damages of up to \$100,000 for each copyright infringed can be awarded. Even if not found to be acting willfully, a defendant can still be held liable for statutory damages of \$500 to \$20,000 for each copyright infringed. **These penalties apply even if money was not charged.** In addition, criminal penalties may be imposed if someone willfully infringes a copyrighted work for commercial advantage or private financial gain. This crime is punishable by up to five years imprisonment, up to \$250,000 in fines, or both. State civil damages and criminal penalties vary from state to state and country to country, but are always severe.

The best way to keep professional illustrated fiction available on the Internet is to do **YOUR** part to protect the author's and publisher's copyright. *You can be part of the solution.* Encourage others to purchase our stories. Never share the access rights you've purchased. **You** make the continued availability of TG fiction on the Internet possible. Thank you for your cooperation!

The Last Will and Testament Of Olivia Mackenzie

By Briana Vermont

Illustrations by David McKinley

Chapter 1 The Reading of the Will

"This is the last will and testament of Olivia Rose Bennington, nee Mackenzie, dated this 18th day of May..."

The executor of the will finally began reading, after what had turned out to be a long, uncomfortable day for Leslie. The invitation to the reading had arrived two days earlier, requesting Leslie's presence. Leslie had no idea why, and hadn't the slightest idea who Olivia Bennington might be. Still, there was only one reason to be invited to the reading of a will that Leslie had ever heard of.

"Maybe she's some long lost relative, with a bundle of cash for me," thought Leslie. That would be some awfully good luck. Unfortunately, that was not the kind of luck Leslie had ever experienced.

It seemed rude to just show up for the will, and so Leslie had dressed in somber black and attended the funeral earlier that day. Leslie seldom attracted much attention, but for some reason today many strange glances had been turned in Leslie's direction, as if asking "Who is this odd person anyway?" Leslie was never very good at small talk, especially with total strangers, and so had stayed out of the conversation groups. The result was one very long, awkward day.

Leslie had tried to stay at the back of the room, but instead had been ushered to the very front row. Leslie sat with what must have been immediate family members. Correction - immediate family members and their lawyers. Everyone else in the room appeared to have arrived with legal representation. Leslie sat with arms and legs crossed, trying to shrink into non-existence, suffering the questioning glares in embarrassment. This was likely a huge mistake, and Leslie had never been intended to be invited. Leslie just wanted to stand and run.

The mood in the room was tense. Everyone listened to the reading of the will with an attentiveness that bordered on nerve-racking. The will listed various items and amounts, naming friends and relatives of the deceased who were destined to receive them. Some smiled when they learned of their new possessions, others frowned. One woman received £5,000 pounds and was ecstatic. A man who was told he would receive £100,000 pounds actually stood and stormed from the room. Leslie was a wreck, thinking, "Please let this end soon!"

Mr. Roberts, the executor, continued to read, "After distribution of these proceeds to the individuals so named, one half of my remaining estate is to go to Havisham Women's College."

The woman sitting next to Leslie let out a gasp, then barely restrained a gleeful laugh. "Obviously, she must be from the college," thought Leslie. The man sitting on her other side, likely her lawyer, attempted to restrain the woman's somewhat inappropriate delight.

"The remainder of the estate," continued Mr. Roberts once the woman was quiet "is to be divided equally between my granddaughter, Olivia Mackenzie Spencer, and Leslie Avery Scarlett..."

The room erupted at this. Everyone was standing, shouting. Everyone demanded to know, who was this woman! What right had she to any part of the estate, let alone a full quarter? Even the granddaughter had only received a quarter! Leslie remained seated, trying to look even smaller.

"Would you all, please, sit down and remain quiet!" shouted Mr. Roberts. "There is still more to the will!"

People eventually quieted, and returned to their seats. "As I was saying," Mr. Roberts continued. "The remainder of the estate is to be divided equally between my granddaughter, Olivia Mackenzie Spencer, and Leslie Avery Scarlett, on the condition that they attend and graduate from Havisham Women's College. Tuition and living expenses to be covered as per Appendix I."

Leslie sat in stunned silence. The young woman sitting to Leslie's right, however, felt no such restriction.

"There's a condition on my inheritance?" she yelled. "She was my grandmother, I'm her only heir! I'll fight this! I don't even know this Leslie person, what gives her any right? She isn't even here!" Leslie shrank into the seat even further, pretending to be invisible.

"There is one more item to be distributed," said Mr. Roberts. "It is a personal letter from Olivia Bennington to Leslie Scarlett. Before she died, Mrs. Bennington asked me to

read it to Leslie personally in the presence of her granddaughter and Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, the representative from Havisham, and so I must ask everyone else to leave the room."

"Are you deaf?" asked the young woman. "I said, she isn't even here! Is she here? She isn't even here!"

Everyone in the room stood, and slowly left the room by the rear doors. Finally there were only five people in the room with the executor – Olivia and her lawyer, Mrs. Gordon-Smythe and her lawyer, and Leslie, seated between the two. Remaining hidden really was no longer an option!

"My dearest Leslie," Mr. Roberts began reading from the letter. "It must be a bit of a surprise to you, finding yourself here at the reading of my will. Your grandmother died the year you were born, so it's entirely likely that you have never even heard my name. You were named after your grandmother, Leslie Dianne Avery, just as my granddaughter Olivia was named after me. Your grandmother and I met our first day at Havisham Women's College, and we became inseparable friends immediately. Those days at Havisham were so special to us both. Even after graduation, when Leslie went her way and I went mine, we remained in close contact. My biggest regret in life is that I haven't kept contact with you following her death. By now you are a full-grown woman, and I've missed an opportunity to see you grow in your grandmother's image.

"Leslie, my fondest wish is to see that you and my Olivia meet, and that you two girls attend Havisham together just as your grandmothers did. To know that the names "Olivia Mackenzie" and "Leslie Avery" will be heard again throughout those halls, your laughter echoing ours from so many years ago, would make my life complete.

"It's signed Olivia Mackenzie Bennington," he finished as he folded the letter.

"Just great, very sweet," said Olivia. "So where does that leave us, seeing as the girl didn't even show up?"

Mr. Roberts pointed the letter toward Leslie, seated between Mrs. Gordon-Smythe and Olivia, still attempting to burrow backward into the overstuffed chair. When Leslie refused to move he let out a small cough, and shook the paper in Leslie's direction. Leslie reluctantly stood, and accepted the letter.

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe and Olivia stared at Leslie. "Who are you?" asked Olivia. "Is this person with you?" she asked Mrs. Gordon-Smythe.

"No," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, astonished. "But I assumed... not with you either?"

"Ladies," said Mr. Roberts, then with a nod to their lawyers, "gentlemen, may I introduce you to Leslie Avery Scarlett."

Stunned silence filled the room. Then Olivia laughed. And laughed. And continued to laugh like she might never stop, as everyone else in the room remained silent. As quietly as everyone else remained silent, that was how loudly Olivia laughed. Leslie simply stood, holding the letter, feeling ridiculous.

Olivia's laughter eventually wound down, and she fanned herself as she regained her composure. "Oh, that was wonderful," she said. "What a good laugh. But now, if we can be serious for a moment, I hope you haven't been counting your good fortune, because there is no way in hell that you will be getting a dime of my grandmother's money."

Mr. Roberts spoke up. "Olivia, obviously we need to discuss this, but your grandmother's will specifically leaves a quarter of her estate to Leslie Avery Scarlett. This is Leslie Avery Scarlett!"

"*This*," replied Olivia with sarcastic emphasis on the word, "is a guy!" Leslie tried to make himself invisible, but this was no longer possible. He was the focus of all attention in the room.

"Miss Spencer is correct," her lawyer chimed in. "The deceased intended to leave a portion of her estate to a female Leslie Scarlett. As it is now obvious that this woman does not exist, the portion willed to Leslie Scarlett must go to my client."

"Not so," added the lawyer for Havisham. "Leslie Scarlett's inheritance must be divided proportionately according to the will between Miss Spencer, and Havisham Women's College. Havisham is entitled to two thirds, the remaining third to Miss Spencer."

"There's something wrong with your math, buddy," said Olivia. "It says you get half, not two thirds!"

"THE WILL," shouted the executor, trying to gain attention back from the argument that had filled the room, "says nothing about the deceased's expectation of Leslie Avery Scarlett's gender! It simply says the name, never anything about being female."

"Are you stupid?" yelled Olivia. "That letter you read has all kinds of crap in it about 'you are a woman' and 'you two girls'!"

"The letter does not form part of the will," the executor told her. "Within the will itself, Leslie Avery Scarlett is referred to by name only. I have checked closely, and there is nothing to indicate Leslie's gender. So if we can get past that, I would like to deal with the question of the conditions of the will."

"Yes," said Olivia. "There's no way I should have to meet any conditions! She was my grandmother! That is my money!"

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Roberts, "you must meet the conditions or you will not receive a thing. You therefore must attend Havisham, and will not receive the bulk of your inheritance until you graduate. There is no point in arguing this. What we need to decide is, what is to be done about the conditions placed on Mr. Scarlett. I would like to suggest that a suitable men's college be selected, where he can attend in order to fulfill his conditions. I would like to suggest Middenhale Men's College. Havisham and Middenhale have had a long association, and I feel this would dovetail with the deceased's wishes quite neatly."

"Yeah, whatever," said Olivia, but then her lawyer leaned toward her and whispered in her ear. Olivia immediately perked up. "Oh, wait! The will says we BOTH have to go to Havisham, and we BOTH have to graduate! If I have to go to Havisham Women's College, then so does HE! And if he doesn't, the money all goes to me."

"That is completely out of the question," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "We are a women's college. We have never accepted a male student, and never will. Our charter is very specific."

"You may want to consult with your lawyer on the legality of that position," said Mr. Roberts. "As you well know, Middenhale Men's College lost a court battle to exclude women a few years ago, and now has around 4% female enrollment. There is even talk of changing the name to simply Middenhale College."

"That was a case of discrimination against women," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe.

"And this is discrimination against men," Mr. Roberts replied.

"Hey, why are you helping him anyway?" Olivia questioned.

"I am not 'helping him'. I am representing the estate of your grandmother, and attempting to interpret her wishes. I spoke with her often over the past few months. She was very passionate about her old friend, and their days at Havisham. She wanted desperately for the two of you to have that same experience. Obviously she was mistaken, but I'm quite sure had she known Leslie was a man, she would still have wanted to help the grandson of a dear friend."

"Help, maybe," said Olivia. "But not give him a quarter of her estate!"

"Nevertheless," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, "Havisham will not accept a male student. We will fight it in the courts if we must."

"I must point out," said Mr. Roberts, "Mr. Scarlett must fulfill the requirements of the will in order to receive his inheritance. If Havisham Women's College interferes with his ability to do so through a prolonged court battle, then win or lose, they may just forfeit their portion of the estate. It is a well established point of law, that one heir cannot profit by interfering with another heir's lawful attempt to fulfill conditions placed upon them in a will. In addition, Mr. Scarlett would then have every right to sue you for his losses."

"That's blackmail!" declared Mrs. Gordon-Smythe.

"No, that's the law," Mr. Roberts told her.

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe squirmed in her chair. "Well, I have no problem with your earlier suggestion. He can attend Middenhale instead."

Olivia jumped up, offended at not having been listened to for at least a minute. "You may have no problem, but I still do! He attends Havisham Women's College with me, or else he's out of the will!"

"If he wishes to attend Havisham, we will take it to court. I'm sorry, but I'm sure the Board will back me on this. Havisham will maintain the appearance of a women's college."

"Only the appearance of a women's college?" asked Mr. Roberts, suddenly inspired.

"Just a figure of speech," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, slightly confused. "Why, what do you mean?"

"We may have the basis of a compromise," said Mr. Roberts. "What if he attends Havisham, as a female student? Havisham would maintain the appearance of a women's college, but Mr. Scarlett would have the opportunity to complete his degree requirements, and the conditions of the will, and the deceased's wishes."

"Don't be ridiculous," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe dismissively. Then when Mr. Roberts did not change his expression she continued, "You can't be serious! The idea is preposterous, and the very suggestion is in the worst of taste."

"But I am serious," said Mr. Roberts. "This idea has the potential to satisfy all parties. Stop just a minute, and give it some consideration."

"No really," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "I mean, just look at him. There's nothing feminine about him."

"You just let me worry about that," said Mr. Roberts. "All I'm suggesting is if, by September, we can have him appear female, that you allow him to attend Havisham."

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe looked at her lawyer, but all he did was shrug. Mrs. Gordon-Smythe rolled her eyes at his lack of assistance, shook her head as if to swirl and mix this new idea thoroughly throughout her mind, and then finally answered.

"Fine," she said. "He may attend Havisham as a female student, but if he is found out we would have no option but to expel him. That should avoid any legal argument that we unfairly interfered."

Olivia laughed. "Fine by me! I'll let everyone know who he is on the first day! He'll be out of there before the first class is over!"

"If you were to do so," Mr. Roberts informed her, "it would most definitely be interpreted as interfering in his attempt to fulfill the conditions of the will. In that case I would have no choice but to strike *you* from the will."

Olivia looked at her lawyer. He nodded in agreement with Mr. Roberts's statement.

"I have only one condition," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "All dormitory rooms at the college are double occupancy. Havisham will not stand for some innocent, unsuspecting young woman finding herself flatmate to Mr. Scarlett. As Miss Spencer is already aware of the situation, I see the best alternative to be that the two of them should be flatmates."

"I have no problem with that," replied Mr. Roberts. "That would be completely in keeping with the deceased's wishes."

"No!" said Olivia. "This is ridiculous. I am most certainly not going to be flatmates with him! I'm sorry, but you can't attend Havisham, you can't graduate, and you can't have any of my money!"

Olivia's lawyer leaned over, and whispered in her ear. Whatever he said obviously infuriated her, but she eventually said, "Fine. You can be my stupid flatmate."

"No!" cried out Leslie, finally finding his voice. "She's right, it is ridiculous. You expect me to dress like a girl, pass for a girl for, for, how long is the degree requirement?"

"Havisham is a four year program," Mrs. Gordon-Smythe informed him.

"For four years!? No, I can't do that!"

"It would only need to be during class," Mr. Roberts told him. "Evenings, weekends, holidays would all be your own, to dress as you wish."

"No! I'm sorry, but why should I suffer such humiliation, for a dead women I never even knew?" Leslie saw the shocked look on Olivia's face and added, "Oh, I'm sorry! Really, that was insensitive of me. I'm sure your grandmother was very nice."

Mr. Roberts waited for him to stop. "You don't have to do this. But the other parties have agreed, and if you refuse there is nothing I can do to help you. You can try to fight it in court, but it could take years. If they had continued to refuse to allow you entry the estate would have paid your legal expenses, but as they have agreed to accept you, on terms the estate agrees are reasonable, you will be on your own."

"Still," said Leslie, "no amount of money is worth that!"

"Your portion would be one quarter of the estate, approximately £40 million pounds."

* * *

Following Leslie's agreement to the conditions, everyone stood and the discussion broke into small groups, none of which actually contained Leslie.

"Stupid git," Olivia said to her lawyer. "Wants to be *my* flatmate, he won't last a day before his ugly face gives him away, but then what happens to my reputation? Stupid, ugly little troll. There is no way he'll get one cent of my money."

"Just remember," her lawyer reminded her, "You cannot be seen to be the one who outs him. I recommend you decide right now to help him, in any way possible in this deception. If it is in any way tied back to you when he is exposed, your inheritance could be forfeit."

"Help him? I don't think so," said Olivia. Grudgingly she added, "I won't give him away, though. I'll be good, play by the rules. But I sure don't have to like him."

"I wouldn't worry," her lawyer told her. "I doubt he'll even show up."

Olivia laughed. "You're right! Just look at him. There's no way he would ever have the nerve."

Nearby, the executor and Mrs. Gordon-Smythe were having a discussion as well.

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe was saying, "All I can say is, he had better not show up looking like a baboon in a dress! I don't want Havisham to become a laughing stock. I would say, in order to remain in school, he is going to need one hell of a makeover."

"That's a good idea," responded Mr. Roberts. "I'll look into that. I was actually surprised that you agreed to the proposal."

"Oh, I have no doubt it will end in disaster. Humiliating for him, but still, this seems the quickest way to a resolution, doesn't it? With an increased share for Havisham, of course. If the deception lasts a day I'll be shocked."

Leslie tried to join the various conversations, but decided he wouldn't enjoy them. Instead, he slipped out of the room and went home.

Chapter 2 Sixty Days to a New You

Two weeks had passed since the funeral, and the reading of the will. Leslie had barely thought about that day since. Whenever he did, it gave him an odd feeling as if it were not completely real. It was a freakish dream to be ignored, and possibly best forgotten. So he was surprised to find a Rolls waiting for him outside his South Kensington flat one morning, waiting to take him to a meeting with Mr. Roberts, the executor of Olivia Bennington's will. The Rolls took him far out into the countryside.

"What is this place?" asked Leslie, looking about the home's front entry with eyes wide.

"This is Mrs. Bennington's summer home," answered Mr. Roberts as he ushered Leslie from the front entry, through the grand home to a study overlooking the gardens. "She also owned apartments in London, but spent most of her later years here."

"She lived here alone?"

"Certainly not," answered Mr. Roberts, seating himself in a large leather chair after seeing Leslie seated in one of the same. "She had a full complement of staff. A cook and housekeeper, groundskeeper, butler and driver, and a fulltime nurse for the last few months of her life."

Leslie looked around the study, at the dark oak paneling and heavy furniture. "It doesn't look to have much feminine appeal."

"This was her late husband's study, and remains much as he left it," Mr. Roberts explained, then turned to business. "Leslie, I've brought you here to find out what progress you've made toward fulfilling the conditions of your inheritance."

"Oh," said Leslie. He likely should have expected this, but somehow had not. After a few moments he continued, "Well, nothing, really."

"What, nothing at all?" said Mr. Roberts in surprise.

"Oh, well, when I say nothing, I mean obviously I've done something." Leslie tried to think of anything he might have done, when he suddenly remembered. "Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, from the funeral? You know, from Havisham? She contacted me. She sent me a form, an application, for Havisham."

"Yes?" prompted Mr. Roberts.

"Well, I filled it in, and returned it."

"Very good," said Mr. Roberts encouragingly. "Did anything come of the application?"

"Apparently, Mrs. Gordon-Smythe expedited it. I received an acceptance letter the following day, by express post."

"Well that's excellent," said Mr. Roberts. "Excellent results. Accepted at Havisham Women's College. Congratulations."

"Um, thank you," replied Leslie in embarrassment.

"Now Leslie, have you given any thought to how you will need to appear as a female student?" asked Mr. Roberts bluntly.

"Yes, yes. Of course," Leslie replied with some hesitation. Mr. Roberts simply nodded, encouraging him to continue. Feeling ridiculous he continued, "I thought I could buy, you know, a, um, a dress?"

"Yes?" prompted Mr. Roberts.

"And," Leslie stopped to swallow. "And, I could wear a wig?"

Mr. Roberts started to frown.

"And... makeup." Leslie stopped.

Mr. Roberts took a deep breath, then closed his eyes and rubbed his forehead while letting it out before speaking.

"Leslie, I'm afraid you're not taking this at all seriously."

"I am," replied Leslie. "It's just... I mean, classes begin in September, and that's almost two months away. I need some time to think, that's all. I'll be ready."

"You've had two weeks already, and all you've come up with is a wig and a dress. Really, how much further do you think you'll be by September?"

"That's not fair," said Leslie. "This isn't easy. Why do you want this so much anyway? What's in it for you?"

"I'm not in it for myself," said Mr. Roberts. "It would be far easier for me to simply cut you from the will, and I doubt any court would fault me for doing so. Without a vast reservoir of funds for legal fees, there would be little you could do about it. However, as I explained at the reading of the will, I represent the estate, and therefore the late Mrs. Bennington. It is my job to see through her final wishes with respect to distribution of her property. Her greatest wish was that you and her granddaughter should attend Havisham together, so much so that she made it conditional on both your inheritances.

"I don't know how that might have changed if she had known you were a man. She may have dropped the conditions, or reduced your inheritance, or she may have dropped you entirely from the will. There is no way for us to know now. At this point, all that is important is that we have an agreement that you will be allowed to attend Havisham, as a female student, and so two months from now you need to be a female student."

"Mr. Roberts," Leslie said, overwhelmed, "I just don't think I can go through with this. I really can't do it!"

Mr. Roberts looked at Leslie with compassion. "Leslie, I know, this is not going to be easy, and I don't expect you to do it alone. I've brought you out here to meet someone who I believe can be of great assistance to you."

Mr. Roberts stood, and went to the door. He opened it and gestured, "Miss Clemens, could you come in now?"

A young woman entered, and smiled at Leslie. She may have been withholding a laugh, but Leslie wasn't sure. Leslie stood to greet her.

"Leslie, I would like you to meet April Clemens. April is a professional lifestyle coach. Leslie, I would like you to come live here for the rest of the summer, to work with April. She can be of tremendous help in your change."

"I'm not sure I know what you're saying," said Leslie. "What kind of change are you suggesting?"

April looked Leslie up and down. "I'd like to suggest a diet and exercise program. We can work on reducing your waist. I think we should try teeth whitening, and definitely laser eye surgery to eliminate the glasses."

"That's it? Just diet and exercise?" said Leslie incredulously.

"Don't forget the teeth whitening and laser eye surgery," April reminded him, nodding in agreement. "Those changes will make a big difference."

"I can't afford any of this," said Leslie.

"The will allows for the release of any funds deemed necessary to maintain the enrollment of both you and Miss Spencer at Havisham. I see this expenditure as absolutely necessary," explained Mr. Roberts.

Oh, okay," said Leslie.

"Well, if we're all in agreement," said Mr. Roberts. "Leslie, perhaps you would like a tour of the house and grounds? I have to head back to the city, but perhaps April will show you around. She can introduce you to the staff, and show you to your room. Right now, would you mind leaving us for just a moment? We need to discuss some details of her employment."

Leslie stepped into the hallway, leaving Mr. Roberts alone with April. April spoke first.

"It's going to take a lot more than just teeth whitening and laser eye surgery to turn him into a college girl!" she said as soon as the door was closed. "Why would you tell me to say that? There are at least twenty other things we'll need him to agree to!"

"One step at a time, Miss Clemens, one step at a time."

Day 1

"That... must... be... twenty minutes!" Leslie huffed. He had been on the stationary bicycle for, well, not quite twenty minutes.

"Almost there, stay strong!" April encouraged him. "Nineteen and forty-five, don't give up! Fifty... fifty-five... done!"

Leslie stopped peddling and slumped forward on the bike. After catching his breath he rolled off the bike, with April's help to support him on his now rubber-like legs.

"Aah, ha, that hurts," he complained.

"You did really well," April said positively. "Just don't stop moving, okay? Stand up, keep moving so you don't cramp up." April assisted Leslie to walk around the workout room for a couple of minutes, stopping to stretch his legs once in a while.

"Right, now I think you're ready to move on," April told him. "We're going to be doing some exercises to strengthen and taper your waist. Okay now, let your arms hang from

your shoulders, and rotate at the waist. Yes, that's right, arms loose, let them swing. Think about the muscles at the side, between your ribs and your hips. Feel them stretch."

Leslie continued the exercise as April watched, encouraging him and making suggestions.

"What did you mean when you said these exercises would taper my waist?" he asked as he continued his rotations.

"Okay enough rotations, let's try some crunches using the ball, okay?" April assisted Leslie to lie back on the big ball and begin the next exercise before answering his question.

"You may have noticed, a woman's waist is not like a man's," she explained, as she helped him to not slip off the ball. "We want your waist to be especially narrow, which is going to take some work. But just as important, a man's waist is just above his hips, where a woman's waist is actually a couple of inches higher, just below her ribs. We're going to selectively target the muscles we train, to narrow your body below the ribs, then taper out to your hips."

"You've got to be joking," said Leslie. "You're going to move my waist? You can do that?"

"Dunno," answered April. "I've never tried it before. But that's the theory. The bicycling will strengthen your legs, waist exercises will taper your middle, and hopefully we can avoid any effect at all on your bottom."

"Why is that? My bottom is already perfect?"

"Not really," replied April, perhaps with too much honesty. "But I'm hoping we can fatten it up."

"What?" said Leslie, coming to a complete stop in the middle of a crunch. "You want me to have a fat bum?"

"Don't stop," April told him. When he resumed crunches she continued, "Women have fat bums. Yours is too flat right now, but don't worry."

"I don't want a fat bum," Leslie complained. "Aren't all women always trying to get rid of their fat bum?"

"Yes. But that's because they all have one. If you didn't have one you would stick out. Or not stick out, I guess. Okay, enough crunches, stand up."

April helped Leslie to a standing position, then picked up two hula-hoops and handed him one.

"Have you ever tried one of these?" she asked, slipping the hoop over her head, then giving it a spin at her waist. April had no trouble keeping it spinning.

Leslie slipped the hoop around his waist, and tried to get it spinning. Twice around was all he could manage, then it would clatter to the floor.

"Don't give up," April said as her hoop continued to spin around her waist and hips in a slow, hypnotic curve. "You just need to get the rhythm. It's the same speed as perfect sex."

Leslie tried for another few minutes, almost getting the rhythm a couple of times but not quite.

"That's alright," said April, finally letting her hoop come to a stop. "We've got all summer, you'll get it. I think that's enough for today, why don't you go have a shower?"

"We're done?" asked Leslie.

"Sure," replied April. "We've been at this for over an hour, I'd say that's enough."

"Oh, okay," said Leslie hesitantly. "It's just, I thought we would do some upper body-work. I've been meaning to work on my arms a bit, and I thought this was the perfect opportunity."

"Oh, gosh," said April. "I'm sorry, but no, absolutely not. I forgot to tell you, we need to reduce your arms and shoulders. So, from now on, please try to use your arms as little as possible."

"Wait, you want to *reduce* my arms?" Leslie said, incredulous.

"And your shoulders," added April. "And even your fingers. Can you open a twist-top bottle?"

"Of course," said Leslie.

"We're going to have to reduce your fingers until you can't. So from now on, just let your arms hang at your sides, leave your hands open and loose. Try not to pick anything up, no lifting, got it?"

"April, this is getting to be too much," Leslie said, clearly becoming distraught. "You want me to have a narrow, tapered waist, a big bum, weak arms, useless fingers? You're trying to turn me into some kind of freak."

"Hey, welcome to the female species!" laughed April. "Seriously, just relax, Leslie! You are going to be in the best shape of your life when we're done. You'll have strong legs, amazing abs, not an ounce of flab on you. Except maybe your butt. And don't forget, later this morning we're getting your teeth whitened, and this afternoon is your laser eye surgery. You are going to look amazing, male or female!"

"But this is all so, weird. Reshaping my body, weakening my arms..."

"Hey, nothing we are doing here is permanent. You can opt out any time, go to the gym, build up massive biceps!"

Leslie started to feel better, but still...

"So this afternoon, when I go out, what do you expect me to wear?"

"Oh, I don't know. Jeans, I guess? And what do you usually wear? A T-shirt?"

"Really?" said Leslie. "I thought you would want me in a dress or something."

"Girls don't always wear dresses!" laughed April. "Sometimes we do just wear jeans, and yes, even T-shirts. But Leslie, you're not going out as a girl. Not until you feel ready. This whole process is up to you. I'm here to help you, but no one here is going to make you do something that you're not ready to do."

"You don't know what a relief it is to hear you talk this way!" said Leslie.

"Good, I'm glad," April told him. "Now, do you feel ready for a shower?"

"Definitely," said Leslie.

"Then scoot!" April chased him from the workout room. After Leslie had left, Mr. Roberts entered and approached April.

"One step at a time, Miss Clemens?" he asked.

"One step at a time, Mr. Roberts!"

Day 3

"Leslie, that session was brilliant!" April told him as she walked him back to his room. "I'm seeing such improvement in you, in just a few days!"

"I know, I really felt as if I was getting the idea of the hula hoop, too," he replied. "I really had it going for a while, didn't I?"

"You really did!" said April. "That's an important part of your waist strengthening, so maybe you can practice on your own, okay? It will also loosen up your hips, which will be important in disguising your walk."

The pair arrived at Leslie's room and Leslie entered, heading toward the shower. However, April did not remain outside but rather followed him into the room.

"Oh, April!" exclaimed Leslie when he realized he was not alone. "I didn't expect you to follow me. Sorry, the place is a bit of a mess."

"Yes, I noticed," said April, her arms folded in disapproval. "Leslie, you haven't even made your bed today!"

"Yes, well," Leslie said haltingly. "They do have a housekeeper here. She should get to that soon enough."

"Oh, isn't that nice," said April sarcastically. "And who will make your bed for you when you're away at Havisham?"

"Well, making the bed isn't something I've ever given much thought," he admitted. "I mean, it's only going to get messy again, isn't it?"

"Leslie, you know I'm not just your workout instructor and weight trainer. I'm supposed to be your lifestyle coach. There are just some things that you are going to have to change. Girls like things neat."

"Does it really matter if I'm not even here?"

"If a girl's bedroom was untidy, it would bother her all day, whether she was in it or not."

"Oh, come now," said Leslie with disbelief. "I know, not all girls are like that. Some girls are terrible slob, you know that's true!"

"Sure," admitted April. "There are lazy girls who don't mind a messy bed, or a stack of dirty dishes, or a thick layer of dust on every surface. Except, you aren't one of those! Leslie, when you're at Havisham you will find that girls talk about each other, and sometimes about the most trivial things. Believe me, you do not want to draw attention to yourself as the messy girl!"

"Okay, fine," agreed Leslie with reluctance. "So, how do I do this?"

"I'll help you this time," said April, grabbing the bed sheet and shaking it out. "Honestly, I can't believe you not only don't make your bed, but don't even know how!"

The pair worked on the bed, straightening the sheets and blankets, folding and tucking in the corners, fluffing the pillows. Then they quickly picked up the few items of clothing strewn about, hanging them in the closet or tossing them in the laundry basket as appropriate. The entire process took only a minute.

When they were finished April looked around the room and admired their work. "Nice!" she said with a satisfied grin. When Leslie said nothing, but simply stood there with an indifferent expression she chastised him, "Leslie, you have to look at the good job we did, and say 'nice'!"

"Why?" he had to ask.

April became exasperated. "Leslie! You need to modify your behavior. You need to take pride in being neat. Now look at what we've accomplished, and say 'nice'!"

Leslie still didn't quite get it, but he looked around the room. "Nice," he said with what conviction he could raise.

"Every morning from now on, as soon as you get up, you make the bed!" April told him. "Then you tidy the room, look at it, and say 'Nice'! Do you understand?!"

"Yes, yes, I understand!" said Leslie, realizing how serious April had become. Then hoping to pacify her he looked at the bed again and said, "Nice."

April calmed herself. She looked at the bed as well. "Yes, nice."

April thought for a while, and then spoke.

"Leslie," she said. "I think it would be good if you took up a hobby. A feminine hobby, which would help to ease you into your transition."

"Like what?" asked Leslie suspiciously.

"Nothing much. I was thinking, maybe you could take up painting your nails. Every night you could just remove the polish from the night before, then polish them again, maybe another color. Then look at the job you've done and say 'Nice'. I really think this would help you. Do you think you could do that?"

Leslie rolled his eyes. "I guess so."

"Come on, it'll be fun. I'll help you tonight, okay?"

Day 5

Leslie and April were sitting together in the conservatory. Leslie's daily workout usually took place around mid-morning and so was generally finished by noon. April hadn't been pushing him too hard, and so their afternoons had been free to wander the grounds. Unfortunately, though, today it was raining and so the pair had been trapped inside.

"Hey, Leslie," said April. "Did you remember to make your bed today?"

"Yes, yes I did," Leslie answered.

"So, how did it look?" asked April.

"Nice," replied Leslie with a satisfied nod.

"There's something else I've wanted to mention," April said. "Leslie, I notice that, since you arrived here, you haven't shaved."

"What?" replied Leslie. "What are you talking about? I shave every morning!"

"Oh, yes, of course," said April. "Of course, you shave your face. But girls, well, I mean, I wasn't thinking about shaving your face. As a girl, you should be shaving your legs."

"Oh," said Leslie. Then when he fully comprehended he added, "Oh! No, not that. I can't do that. I mean, not yet. You said, we would go at my pace, right? And if I'm not ready, then we should wait, right?"

The doorbell rang, far away at the front of the house. Neither stood to answer, however. They knew that the housekeeper would handle that.

"Leslie, you have to do this. You know that! There's no point in putting it off."

"Really, I can't. I'm not ready. I'm very uncomfortable with such permanent changes!"

April laughed. "Shaving your legs is not permanent! Believe me, you'll be doing it every week, maybe more. It grows back in no time."

"Well, maybe..."

The housekeeper interrupted their conversation. "Excuse me, ma'am, but a Miss Sarah Dempsey is at the door. She says she has an appointment."

"Thank you, Madeleine," said April. "Please tell her to set up in the grand bathroom."

The housekeeper bowed out of the room.

April turned back to Leslie. "Sarah is a beautician. I've asked her here to talk to you about shaving your legs, and help you with the first time. So, are we going to do this?"

Leslie centered himself. "It grows back, right?"

"Yes, it's only hair. It really does grow back."

"Okay then," he said reluctantly.

The two stood, and made their way to the grand bathroom. This was an enormous bathroom, more like a spa than anything else you might picture. By the time they arrived, Miss Dempsey had set up a table, and set out all her equipment.

"Hi, you must be Leslie! I'm Sarah. April told me what you're doing, how you want to look like a girl! I think it's so exciting! This is going to be fun. Okay, so strip down to your shorts, and hop up on the table."

Leslie began removing his shoes and socks, then his pants. "Just my pants, right?" he asked.

"No, everything! Nothing but shorts, keep going!"

When he was down to his underwear, Leslie got up on the table and sat with his legs over the side. Sarah plugged in her trimmer and tested it.

"Okay, here's what we're going to do. We'll take off all the long hair with the electric trimmer first. That will make it easier to get your skin perfectly smooth with a razor. Sounds great, doesn't it?"

"Sure," said Leslie, feeling slightly ill. Sarah ran the trimmer up and down his legs, great balls of fur falling away to the bathroom floor. April stood nearby, watching, trying not to snicker. It took Sarah about fifteen minutes, but finally she was done.

"So, now you'll shave them?" asked Leslie, trying to prepare himself.

"No, let's finish all the trimming first," answered Sarah.

"I thought you were done?" said Leslie, puzzled.

"Oh, no!" answered Sarah. "We need to do your armpits, and your chest! You have hair on your shoulders, and look here on your wrists. We'll get it all, don't you worry!"

"Wait, no!" said Leslie. Sarah was shocked by his outburst, and stepped back. "No, you said I should shave my legs! Not my chest, nothing else, just my legs! I can wear clothes that cover my chest, and arms!"

April stepped forward. "Leslie, you can't stay covered forever. You need to do this. Trust me, it's the best way. And remember, it's only hair. It grows back, really."

Leslie grudgingly gave in. Sarah finished trimming his chest, arms, back, and belly. Then she shaved every square inch of his body from the neck down. Leslie's entire body was hairless, and pink.

"There, you look so cute!" said Sarah. "Pretty, pink, and smooth, just like a real girl! Hey, I know, let's do your eyebrows while I've got all my equipment here!"

Day 8

"Just relax, Leslie. Everything is going to be just fine," April tried to reassure him. "We'll be there in ten minutes. Honestly, I don't know why you're being so jumpy."

April and Leslie were in the back of the Rolls, on their way to an appointment in London. Both April and Mr. Roberts had been rather evasive about the destination, simply assuring Leslie that they wanted him to meet someone for a discussion about his future.

The last time they had gone into the city had been for his teeth whitening and laser eye surgery, which had both gone well. So whatever the reason for this trip, Leslie was not terribly concerned. No, his concerns were of an entirely different nature.

"It's just," Leslie began, his face reddening just thinking about it. "It's just, I'm not ready to go out in public like this."

"Like what?" responded April. She had been expecting more questions about their destination, which she really didn't want to answer.

"Like this!" said Leslie. "Like a girl!"

April looked at him, completely baffled. "Leslie, you're not dressed like a girl. You look like any other guy on the street. You look like you."

Leslie didn't know how to express himself. Finally he tried, "I mean, with all these changes! My legs, my chest shaved! My arms!"

April laughed. "Leslie, you're wearing blue jeans! No one will see your legs. And no one will see your chest, or would care if they did!"

"They'll see my arms!"

"So?"

"So, all the hair is gone from them!"

"Leslie, you had hair on your wrists and shoulders. It was not anything to take pride in. Man or woman, you're far better off without it."

Leslie knew all this, of course. None of these things truly concerned him. The one real concern he had, the one he had to work up his nerve to even mention was, "My eyebrows! What about them? Sarah gave me thin, arched, girlish eyebrows! Everyone who sees me will see my eyebrows, and think..."

"And think what?" April challenged him. "No one will think anything. Lots of guys are experimenting now, with tattoos and piercings and shaving and yes, even with shaping their eyebrows. If anything, people will think you're at the forefront of the next trend."

"I'm really not ready."

"Look, Leslie. We're going to be let out in front of the building, and walk straight in. The only person who might see you is the receptionist. Believe me, everything will be fine."

April sat quietly for a while, then said, "Honestly, I thought you'd be more concerned about your painted fingernails."

Leslie looked at April, taken aback. "What's wrong with my painted fingernails?" he asked her. He held one hand out where they both could see and said, "I think they look nice."

April and Leslie sat in silence for the remainder of the trip. A few minutes later the car pulled up in front of a modern, glass and steel office tower. The driver got out, and held the door for April and Leslie to step out. April went into the building, and so Leslie followed. He soon found himself on the third floor, at a receptionist's desk.

"Leslie Scarlett to see Dr. Bernard," April told the receptionist. Leslie stood with his back to the girl, hiding his eyebrows. "I'm April Clemens, I set up the appointment."

The girl knew who she was immediately. "Dr. Bernard is expecting you. Can you please go to room three, down this hall, and have Mr. Scarlett change into this."

April accepted a thin cotton gown, then led Leslie down the hall to room three.

"Doctor?" said Leslie. "You didn't say anything about seeing a doctor! The way you talked about it, I assumed we were seeing a tax accountant or something! What kind of doctor is this?"

April sidestepped the question, instead handing Leslie the gown. Once he began stripping down and changing, she explained.

"It's no big thing. Except, you get upset so easily, we didn't want you worrying unnecessarily. We're going to talk to Dr. Bernard about your overall health, your weight and

diet, and our exercise program. We want her opinion on alternative approaches to trimming your waistline."

Leslie was satisfied, and so they waited quietly for the doctor to arrive. Five minutes later, the door opened and a young woman entered.

"Hi, I'm Dr. Bernard. You must be Leslie. I've spoken to Mr. Roberts and Miss Clemens, and they've filled me in on what you're doing. Let's just do a few tests, okay? Jump up on this table for me."

Dr. Bernard performed the usual tests – blood pressure, reflexes, examining the eyes, the ears, the throat, measuring weight and height. All the time she kept up a reassuring patter that everything was good, everything was normal.

"Everything looks great!" she finally told them. "You are in perfect health. Was there anything in particular that you wanted me to talk to you about?"

"You've seen the information we forwarded, Leslie's diet, weight training, and exercise program, right?" asked April. When Dr. Bernard nodded she continued, "We're trying to sculpt his body, give him a narrow, tapered, feminine waistline, widen his hips, reduce his arms and shoulders. We just wanted to discuss the possibility of alternative approaches. We wondered if, as a plastic surgeon, you might recommend a surgical procedure, something like liposuction."

Leslie immediately stopped observing passively, and leapt to his feet. "Plastic surgery? No one ever said anything about plastic surgery! No, I'm not going to do it!"

"Leslie, please, don't make a scene," April tried to calm him. "We're only here to talk. We want Dr. Bernard's advice only, to see if we can save you from a lot of trouble with exercise and diet. We want her opinion on the healthiest way to achieve your goals."

"Take off the gown, please," the doctor requested. "I'd like to get a good look at you."

Leslie took off the gown, then stood in his underwear, turning as requested so the doctor could see him from all angles.

"His legs are amazing," she eventually said. "I wish I had legs so long. And his waist, how long have you been working with him?"

"About a week," April told her.

"His waist seems high for a man, I assume that's from your exercise program. I would say you're doing an excellent job. The diet you described is good, the exercises are working well. His waistline looks as good, maybe better than many of my patients after surgery. We have some radical procedures that could reduce him to a size four overnight, but I truly believe the natural way is best. Since he's reluctant to have surgery anyway, I suggest you keep up with the diet and exercise. You'll get to your goal without any need for assistance from me."

"Thank you, Dr. Bernard," said Leslie with relief. "You don't know how much that reassures me."

"Sit back on the table please. There are a couple of things I'd like to go over with you," suggested the doctor. Leslie sat, and she continued. "I'm a little concerned about this whole process, that you may not be ready."

"That's what I keep saying!" said Leslie.

"Throughout the entire examination, you were unable to look me in the eyes. I'm concerned about that."

"Oh, he's just self-conscious about his eyebrows!" said April. "He explained it to me this morning. He's afraid people will think they're feminine."

"Well, they are feminine," said Dr. Bernard. "They're very pretty, very nicely shaped. Isn't that what you wanted?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so," admitted Leslie. "Except, like you said, I'm not ready. I'm still a guy, but I have these eyebrows. It looks odd."

"Oh, so the problem is, you feel self-conscious because you're in such an in-between state? People see you as a man with feminine eyebrows, and that makes you uncomfortable. Tell me, would it be better if they saw a woman with feminine eyebrows? That way they wouldn't be confused, and wouldn't stare."

"Well, yes, I guess so," Leslie had to admit.

"And you agree, eventually, when you're ready, you will be dressing as a woman. Appearing in public, expecting others to accept you as a woman?"

"Um," Leslie stalled. He'd been trying to avoid the idea but he knew it was true. "Yes."

"Come over to my desk. Here, look into this camera, smile!" Leslie's picture appeared on the desktop computer screen. "See, this is your problem. Your face is very masculine, except for the eyebrows. So, let's try a few simple changes." Dr. Bernard moved the mouse around the application, skillfully manipulating the picture of Leslie. "Raise your cheekbones, trim your nose, give it a perfect, perky upturn like this, make your thin lips more full. I wouldn't touch your chin, it's a bit masculine but I think it works well as a strong feminine jawline, don't you? Okay, a few tweaks, color adjustment, and voila! Your face matches your eyebrows, completely feminine."

"Wow," said April. "That is really cute. You are going to look amazing. You should have no more concerns over people staring at your eyebrows."

"Okay, but we were going to stick with diet and exercise," objected Leslie.

Dr. Bernard laughed. "Not for your face, silly!"

"I'm really not ready for anything permanent."

"He's really concerned about permanent changes," April told the doctor.

"Oh, none of this needs to be permanent," the doctor reassured him. "Cheek implants can come out, a nose can as easily be built up as trimmed down."

"April!" Leslie pleaded. "Don't do this to me. I don't want to be ... cute!"

"Here, look at the pictures side by side. The way you look now, how long would it take for someone to see through any disguise? With your new face, you'll fit in perfectly! Isn't that what you really want?"

"Let's make an appointment to get it done, and we can always cancel if you decide not to go through with it," April suggested.

"Okay, yes, make the appointment and I'll think about it," said Leslie, just wanting to get out of that office.

"Okay, I'll enter the appointment request and see what's available," said the doctor as she turned to her computer. After a few keystrokes she remarked with surprise, "Oh! It just so happens I have an opening this afternoon. I'm booking you in, Leslie. Believe me, none of this is complicated, and you'll be back home by tea."

Dr. Bernard tapped the computer keyboard once, then stood and grabbed Leslie's arm. She guided him out of room three and down the hall, with April following close behind.

"This is too sudden! Not today, please, I just need time to make up my mind," said Leslie as he was dragged forward by Dr. Bernard.

"But you already agreed! You're so lucky that there's an opening. You wanted to make the appointment and there's no time like the present," said the Doctor.

"It's like pulling off a band aid, Leslie," added April. "You just need to grit your teeth, and do it."

Leslie was guided into a surgery, where an anaesthetist waited. Leslie was helped up onto the surgery table, and various people began strapping various things to his arms, head and chest.

"Oh! I almost forgot," said Dr. Bernard. "I was wondering how long you will need to be a girl."

"Oh, um, about four years," replied Leslie, overwhelmed by all the activity around him.

The anaesthetist placed a plastic breathing mask over his nose and mouth. "Just breathe normally, this won't take long," Leslie was told.

"Four years!" said the doctor. "Then you'll definitely want breast implants."

"What?! No, no breast implants!"

"Oh come now! In four years, you think you'll never want to cool off in a bikini at the beach? What size did you want? B? C? D?"

A bikini at the beach? Breast implants?! Struggling to remain conscious Leslie managed to say, "Doctor, please, see..."

* * *

"Leslie? Hey, wakey, wakey, sleepy head! You did so well, time to wake up!"

Leslie opened his eyes – he was lying on a bed in a recovery room. Although he could barely see the blur hovering over him he could tell that it was April, leaning over him, smiling.

"Where am I?" he managed to say. He felt weak, and sore all over. "Was I in an accident?" His voice was little more than a mumbled whisper.

"No!" laughed April. "You're fine. Everything is great. You had a nose job, remember?"

Everything came into sharp focus as Leslie remembered. He tried to sit up, but found this only introduced him to more pains, in more areas of his body. Lying back gently he said, "My nose! My face! What did you do? Bring me a mirror!"

"Uh, trust me, you don't want to see yourself right now," April recommended. "But I'm told, everything is normal, it's supposed to look like this, and you'll be fine in a week or so."

"A week?" said Leslie. He went cross-eyed, trying to see his own nose. Bringing his hands to his face, he gingerly touched his battered and bruised cheeks and nose. "What is all this?"

"You need to wear this nose splint for about a week," April told him. "But the swelling and bruising should be gone in a couple of days."

"Why are my lips sore and puffy?" Leslie asked, pushing his lips around with his fingers.

"They're not puffy!" April laughed. "That's what they're supposed to be like. Remember, we talked about this. Dr. Bernard gave you collagen injections to give your lips a sexy, pouty look. She usually does that while the patient is awake, but she figured it was best, since you were already out, that she do it without any more pain or inconvenience to you. Your lips are beautiful, by the way. I can tell, even with the nose splint and the black eyes, and the bloody bandages. Very, very full, red, and lovely."

"Right. Thanks," said Leslie, mortified at the thought of his pouty, red lips.

"I see our patient is awake," said Dr. Bernard, entering the recovery room from the hallway. "You see? Barely three o'clock. I told you that you could be home by tea! April maybe you could step aside, I need to check him over, then you can take him home."

April moved away from the bed, allowing the doctor full access to Leslie. In spite of everything, Leslie was glad to have a medical professional look at his battered and bruised face. Instead of looking at his face, though, she pulled down the sheets and seemed to be looking at his...

"Breasts look great," the doctor told him. Nicely done if I do say so myself!"

"Breasts?!" Leslie had completely forgotten.

"The incisions should take about a week to heal," she said. "Be careful not to get them wet in the shower, or it could cause infection. April has a prescription for antibiotics. April, be sure he takes them as instructed, until the bottle is finished."

"I didn't want breasts," Leslie managed to say.

"What? Of course you did. We discussed it."

"Don't I have to sign something before you operate on me?" he asked.

"Mr. Roberts took care of all the paperwork," April informed him. "Perfectly legal, since you gave him power of attorney yesterday."

"I gave him what?"

"Aren't they nice?" Dr. Bernard asked April, still admiring Leslie's breasts. April nodded as the doctor continued her thoughts, "He's got perfect, perky, upturned breasts!"

"Like my nose?" asked Leslie. When April and Dr. Bernard just stared uncomprehendingly he explained, "You said you would give me a perfect, perky, up-turned nose."

She took a moment, but then April laughed. "Yes, of course! A matched set!"

"Hey, my ears!" said Leslie, feeling his earlobes in an effort to explore every last painful point on his body. "What's this?"

"Oh, we pierced your ears," said the doctor. "No charge! Those are the studs you're feeling. April will tell you how to care for them."

"They're really pretty," said April. "Little pearl studs. I picked them out for you."

"I never told anyone they could pierce my ears!" yelled Leslie. "We never discussed this!"

"Oh come on, Leslie," said April "You just got breasts, and now you're upset about having your ears pierced? Be reasonable!"

"Okay, ready to go." said Dr. Bernard. "April, maybe you can help him in getting out of bed and getting dressed."

"Oh!" cried April in delight as she helped Leslie to a sitting position. "Speaking of getting dressed, I had a few hours to kill, so I went shopping and I bought you a present!"

April handed Leslie a party bag. Curious, Leslie took the bag, pulled out the tissue paper, and at the bottom found...

"A fluorescent pink bra?" Leslie stared, not understanding.

"Most girls get boring white for their first bra," April told him. "I wanted your first to be something special!"

Suddenly Leslie understood. "Wait, no! No, not for me. I am NOT going to wear a bra! Not ever!"

"I'm afraid you have to," said Dr. Bernard. "With the size of breasts you chose, you could easily tear your stitches unless you have proper support. So, Doctor's orders! April, help him into his bra."

Leslie looked down at his breasts for the first time, as April slipped them into their pretty pink cups and did up the hooks behind his back.

"What size did I choose?" he asked.

"Here, take a look at the tag," said April, handing him the tag after ripping it from the brassier.

"38C," said Leslie. "Terrific."

Day 15

A week had passed, and Leslie found himself back in Dr. Bernard's Examination Room, waiting anxiously, wearing nothing but a hospital gown. April was reading him bits from an article she had found in one of the waiting room magazines, trying to keep his mind occupied. Leslie pretended to listen, but just couldn't focus. He sat on the examination table, his arms folded under his breasts, dreading what would happen next.

"And then, she fed the rest of it to the dog!" laughed April.

"Hmm? What? Sorry, fed what, to... who?" asked Leslie. He really hadn't been paying attention.

"Don't you get it? All that work, and expense, and... oh, never mind. I can see you're not paying the least bit of attention. Well, it was a very funny story."

Leslie used his crossed arms to lift and help support the weight of his breasts. He really wasn't comfortable not wearing a bra. To say that the weight of the world was on his shoulders might have been an exaggeration, but they *were* rather large breasts. He just wanted this examination to be over. April turned the page in her magazine, barely managing to stifle a giggle at what she found there, then continued reading.

"Hello, ladies," said Dr. Bernard as she hurried into the room. Leslie sat up straight, and April set aside her magazine "Sorry to keep you waiting. Goodness, has it been a week already? I'll bet you're anxious to have the stitches out, and to see what's under that nose splint, aren't you? How about you remove the gown and lie back?"

Leslie ignored the "Ladies" comment. He let the gown slide off his arms, but held it over himself as he lay on the table.

Here, drop the gown!" laughed Dr. Bernard. "No need to be shy, we're all girls here!"

"I'm not," said Leslie, trying to retain some last shred of his masculine identity.

"Yes, well, we all look like girls, don't we?" said the doctor. "We certainly all have breasts. Let's see, oh aren't they lovely? April, what do you think?"

"I think they're fantastic," replied April.

"Here, Leslie, lift them one at a time, and I'll take out the stitches, okay?"

Leslie lifted his left breast. Dr. Bernard took what looked like ordinary wire snips, and cut through the tough wire stitches that had held the incision closed for the last week while it healed. Leslie felt a tug through his tender skin as the wires were pulled through. The doctor dabbed some ointment on the tiny holes remaining. Leslie lifted his right breast, and they repeated the procedure.

"Okay, and now for your face!" said Dr. Bernard. She bent over Leslie, untied the bandages, loosened the splint, and finally removed it. There was one tiny stitch to be removed from under Leslie's nose, right through the thin central part. Dr. Bernard had some difficulty getting a hold of it with the wire snips, but eventually managed. Once again, Leslie felt the stitch tugged through his tender skin.

"Okay, let's get a good look at you," said the doctor. "Stand up, let's see how you've turned out!"

Leslie blinked a few times. The sting of the stitch removal from his sensitive nose had brought tears to his eyes. When he was ready, he stood for Dr. Bernard and April to get a good look.

"Oh, my gosh!" laughed April with delight. "Oh, Doctor, she's *so* pretty! Leslie, you are really pretty! Oh my gosh, I just can't stop looking at you!"

"I'm very impressed with the body sculpting you've been able to achieve," Dr. Bernard told April. "The way her waist narrows at the ribs, and widens out into such feminine hips. You've made a lot of progress, just in the past week."

"Thanks, part of that is due to you," April told her. "With the breasts, she's finally gotten the hang of the hula hoop. She really couldn't work it at all until last week. I think the breasts act as a counter-balance, allowing her to really work those hips."

"Well, whatever you're doing, she looks amazing. Let's get her measurements." The doctor pulled a tape from her pocket, and wrapped it around Leslie's chest, waist, and hips.

"37-27-36," Dr. Bernard read from the tape.

"I thought my chest was 38?" said Leslie. Then, with some hope in his voice asked, "Are my breasts reducing?"

"No, don't worry about that," replied Dr. Bernard. "They'll stay like this forever. No, I expect the exercise and weight loss is reducing you all over, including through the chest. In fact, I'd say that the more you reduce through your chest, the bigger your breasts will look in comparison! April, what's your goal for her waist?"

"I was hoping to get to 26 inches, but since we've made such progress I now think we can get her down to 24 inches by the end of the summer."

"That should be possible. She should be a perfect size four! I'm going to recommend a vitamin supplement, though. Her diet is going to be rather severe, so the supplement will ensure she gets her proper nutritional requirements."

Leslie crossed the room to where he could see himself in a mirror, while the two women continued discussing him. He inspected his new face. He really did have a perfect, perky, upturned nose. He had pouty red lips, arched eyebrows, high cheekbones. He was cute. He was really, really cute. He laughed at himself, because he didn't want to cry. Wow, was he cute when he smiled.

"Leslie, come over and sit down on the table, there are a couple of things I'd like to discuss."

Leslie was happy to leave the mirror behind. Joining the two women, he sat up on the examination table. He was suddenly, acutely aware that he was wearing nothing except his underpants, and attempted to cover his chest with his arms. Finding this near impossible, he settled for folding his arms once more under his chest.

"Leslie, I've noticed you haven't been shaving," said Dr. Bernard.

"My legs?" he asked. "What are you talking about? I shaved them just a couple of days ago!"

"No, not your legs. Your breasts," said Dr. Bernard.

"My..." said Leslie, then suddenly turned red. "Oh."

"Yes," said Dr. Bernard, nodding at his sudden understanding. "Your breasts, look at them! You have such a perfect, feminine form, but it's covered with tiny, prickly hairs. Honestly, they look like porcupine boobs. Leslie, you can't continue this way."

"I know. I'm sorry. I'll try to do better," he said.

"It's not just your breasts," said April. "Leslie, you are a mess of dark, prickly hairs. You not only have to shave your breasts, but you're going to have to shave your arms, and your stomach, and your back regularly. Probably every two or three days and your legs nearly as often."

"Every two or three days?" said Leslie incredulously. "That's ridiculous! How can I shave my entire body that often? How can I shave my back at all?"

"Maybe you could go for body waxing," suggested April. "You would only have to do that every couple of weeks. Maybe every week," she added, looking again at Leslie's hairy breasts.

"That would work," said the doctor. "But waxing can be painful, especially a full body wax, including sensitive areas like her breasts. And it would take hours. But it would work." Leslie got a sick look on his face.

"But what else can she do?" asked April, sounding more like an infomercial conspirator than any kind of normal conversation.

"I'd like to recommend laser hair removal," said the doctor.

"Laser hair removal?" said April. "Sounds painful, and time consuming."

"Not at all!" replied Dr. Bernard. "This modern method of hair removal is completely painless, and can even be completed in a single session. I have two technicians standing by, and if you act now we can have the process finished and have you home by tea!"

"That sounds amazing!" said April. "Where do we sign?"

"Wait, wait, wait!" shouted Leslie. "You can't push me into anything this time. Laser hair removal is permanent, isn't it?"

"Not always," said Dr. Bernard hesitantly. "For some people, it can grow back. But another session usually fixes that."

"I don't want it to be permanent!" cried Leslie. "After this is over, I want to be a man again."

"No one is going to make you do anything," said April. "If you like, we can set up an appointment for a full body wax this afternoon. It is painful, and lasts about two hours, but the hair will grow back. Every week, for the next four years. We can set up a regular Saturday afternoon appointment, for a full body waxing, every week for four years. After four years, you won't ever need another painful full body wax, and you can keep your back hair forever."

"Leslie," said Dr. Bernard sympathetically. "I know, this is permanent. But lots of guys have no chest hair, or arm hair, or back hair. Women refer to them as 'those good looking guys who thank god have no chest, back, or arm hair'. Lots of guys come to me for this procedure. Believe me, it will save you so much time, and effort, and expense, and pain. And really, you'll never miss it."

"You're going to be a girl for four years," April reminded him. "You don't want to be found out one day because you forgot to shave your back."

Leslie looked down at himself. He did have coarse, prickly dark hairs on his arms, his stomach, his shoulders, his breasts. And it had been incredibly itchy for days after shaving. He had heard about waxing, and sure didn't like the thought of having a full body treatment every week for four years. He closed his eyes, because he was crying, and didn't want to see the tiny splashes the tears made as they hit his perfect, perky, upturned breasts.

"Okay," he said.

Without another word, Leslie and Dr. Bernard assisted him to another room, where two technicians waited. For the next hour, they ran their laser wands up and down his body, covering every square inch from his neck to his hips. The wands emitted a pulse of laser light that felt warm, but caused no serious pain. Leslie resigned himself to the fact that he would never have another hair on his chest for the rest of his life. He consoled himself that, for the next four years, he would be a better woman for it.

"Almost done?" said Dr. Bernard as she entered the room.

"Yes, ready to move on to the face," said one of the technicians.

"No, not my face," said Leslie, but without much fight left in him.

"Leslie," began Dr. Bernard. "In order to appear as a girl, with your beard, you will have to shave at least twice a day, maybe even three or more times. Then you will have to apply heavy makeup to cover the beard shadow. Do you want to keep that up for four years?"

"No, I guess not, but..."

"Good girl. You just relax, they'll finish your face and neck in no time."

The technicians worked on his face, working their wands over his neck, beard, and moustache. Before he could say anything they had treated his eyebrows as well, making those fine, feminine lines a permanent feature of his face. Some day he might have his own nose, and cheeks, and lips again, but he would never again have facial hair, and those thin, girlish eyebrows were his forever.

His face only took about five minutes. When they were done, one of the technicians suggested, "The only body hair you have left is on your legs, and your bikini line. There's not much point in keeping that, is there? Why don't we finish the job?"

"Fine," agreed Leslie miserably.

When he was done, April and Dr. Bernard took Leslie back to examination room three. There he found his clothes, and so began getting dressed. As he was hooking his bra, Dr. Bernard spoke.

"Leslie, there's one more thing I can do for you, if you're interested."

"I think I've had enough for today," he replied.

"I think you'll be very interested," she suggested. "Even though you're so pretty now, the perfect woman really, you still sound like a man. I don't know if you've thought about disguising your voice, but I'm not sure you'll be able to. But I have the perfect solution!"

When Leslie said nothing, April jumped in. "What's the solution? How does it work?"

"We have a very simple process now," Dr. Bernard explained. "Your vocal cords are just muscles, and yours are about twice the length of a typical girl's. We now have a solution, which, when injected into the vocal cords can paralyze a section of them, just like freezing a muscle. By deadening the bottom half of your vocal cords, they will vibrate at double the frequency, raising your voice to sound exactly like a girl."

"An injection, into my throat?" said Leslie. "Is it safe?"

"Of course. The procedure has been around for a couple of years. I've performed it myself on a dozen patients. And the best part is, it only ever has to be done once."

"And it's reversible?" he asked.

"Well, sort of," she told him. "With injections of muscle relaxants, your original voice can be restored for a few hours. But they're working on other methods, more permanent methods, and four years from now, who knows what will be possible?"

Leslie looked to April for help, but she said, "Leslie, I have no other options for you. You've come so far, with body molding and your pretty, pretty face and eyebrows, and your breasts, and total body hair removal. It would be a shame to stop now. Leslie, I'm sorry, but I really think you have to do this."

Leslie looked defeated. "Who knows what might be possible in four years?" he said as he climbed on the examination table one more time, then lay down, eyes closed as if maybe he was asleep and only dreaming.

Dr. Bernard prepared the shot. She swabbed Leslie's throat with a local anesthetic to numb the area, then pierced his throat with the needle and injected the paralyzing solution into the muscle of his vocal cords. Four shots were required in total.

"All done, what a good girl!" she told him. "It will take a few hours to notice any difference. There should be no pain, but some people experience hoarseness for a day or so. I would recommend you not speak unless necessary for the next twenty-four hours."

"That's okay," said Leslie. "I really wouldn't know what to say anyway."

Day 16

Leslie closed the door to his room and sat on the bed as he undressed. He removed his running shoes, setting them down against the wall. His socks, T-shirt, shorts and underwear each went into the laundry basket as they were removed. He unhooked his bra, and set it on the dresser. The mirror over the dresser allowed him to see himself from the waist up. He tried not to look. Instead he turned, and made his way to the bathroom for his shower.

Leslie had thrown himself into his workout this morning. April had been there, of course, giving him instructions and encouragement. But with Leslie still under his twenty-four hours of enforced silence, he had nothing to say in return, and much of April's usual cheeriness appeared as if forced.

Entering the bathroom, Leslie again saw himself from the waist up in a large mirror over the sink. This time he didn't look away. He watched as the naked girl approached. He watched her, and she watched him, looking his body up and down, and finally looking straight into his eyes. She was beautiful, there was no doubt about that. But what did she

see when she looked at him? Did she see through this false exterior? Could she see him as he really was?

Leslie looked away from the mirror when he noticed, the girl had started crying. "She deserves her privacy," he thought to himself. She had walked naked into his bathroom, but still, she must have her reasons. Leslie left the girl behind and stepped into the shower.

It felt good to finally be able to wash himself properly again. No bandages to keep dry, no splint preventing him from getting to his nose and cheeks, no healing incisions to keep dry. No stitches poking out, catching on everything. Leslie just let the water hit him full in the face, then run down his body. He could no longer make out the figure in the mirror across the room, the mirror now obscured by fog.

Leslie thought about the water, running down his face, tracing the cheeks which weren't his, a nose that didn't belong to him, lips that should never have been. If he could stop time, he thought, he could step away from the water and see the perfect mask it made, floating in the air, shimmering and almost invisible, the face of a woman who never truly existed.

Leslie reached out, touched the mask that floated in front of him. It was so fragile, but he turned it to face him. It was a woman's visage, but his own face was there, too, if he could only find it. If only he could manipulate the drops of water it would be his face again. He tried to smooth down the cheeks, to push out the nose from the other side, to mold the lips back to what they should have been. But instead of finding himself, the mask looked less and less like a face at all.

Frantic now, Leslie tried to reshape the drops of water, but it wasn't possible. Droplets ran together, the face rippled and melted and flowed through his fingers. In his final frustration Leslie smashed the fragile mask against the tiles, sending water droplets flying in all directions.

How could he have been so stupid? Why didn't he stand up to them? He could have stopped them at any time, but he allowed this to happen. His face was gone, his body was gone, his voice was gone! He didn't know what he was any more. He wanted to scream, to lash out, to hit something!

* * *

Leslie came to on the floor of the shower. The warm water poured over him, it ran down the drain in front of him. The cold tile felt good against his cheek. He watched for a while, as drops became rivulets which collected and emptied down the drain.

Eventually Leslie stood, and washed himself thoroughly. He turned off the water and stepped out of the shower. Then he used a big, fluffy pink towel to dry himself, starting with his soft, smooth, hairless face.

Day 18

"Come on!" laughed April. "Please, say something else! I know, say, 'What-EVer'!"

Leslie moved as far from April as he could get in the back seat of the Rolls. He crossed his arms in defiance as he said to her, "Now you're just making fun of me!" in his high, girlish voice.

"Oh, Leslie. No, I'm not! Really, you just need to get used to your new voice. Try it out! I know, say, 'He-llo-o?! Hel-LO?!'"

"I sound ridiculous. I sound like a twelve-year-old girl. I sound like the weather girl on channel four."

"No, really, Leslie. That's not true. You just sound so sweet, so cute. It suits you, it really does. A pretty voice for a pretty girl. You'll get used to it, I know you will."

Leslie pouted. "What-EVer!"

April laughed. "I KNEW you could do it! Now say, 'Oh my gosh, like, what's your damage?!'"

Leslie couldn't help it, he laughed at himself. "Like, what IS your damage?" he said to April playfully. Leslie and April laughed and talked for the rest of the ride, Leslie's foul mood finally broken.

* * *

"I know, I know! Say, 'Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?'"

"You are so twisted," replied Leslie. "Where do you keep coming up with these?"

"Pardon the interruption, Ladies," said the driver. "We have arrived at the salon."

"Thank you Jenkins," said April. "Let us out anywhere convenient."

Jenkins pulled the Rolls into a side street and stopped. He opened the rear door, and assisted both April and Leslie to the sidewalk.

"Was it really necessary that I wear high heels?" asked Leslie as they walked the short distance back to the salon. "I'm really not comfortable wearing them in public." At least he was still wearing his own jeans and shirt!

"You look good in heels," April told him. "You've been learning very quickly in practice. In fact, we need to work on your regular walk now. You look very feminine in heels, but you clomp like an old horse in anything else."

"That's not true!" said Leslie as the two entered the salon.

"Good afternoon, Ladies," welcomed the receptionist. "Do you have an appointment?"

"Yes," said April. "The appointment is for Miss Leslie Scarlett."

The receptionist hadn't even found the name when they were interrupted by a squeal of delight.

"April, Leslie!" called Sarah as she bounced to the front of the salon. "Hi, oh, it's so nice to see you! Leslie, wow, you look great! What have you done to yourself?"

Leslie laughed. "What haven't I done to myself?"

Sarah stopped dead and stared when she heard Leslie's voice. "No way! No freaking way, I don't believe it! Leslie, your voice is so cute!"

"Yes, well, it's taking a little getting used to," said Leslie.

"Well I love it," Sarah told him. "It really suits you."

The three girls chatted a while at Sarah's salon station before getting down to business.

"Sarah," said April. "We were hoping that you could help Leslie with her makeup. She's never worn makeup before, and so needs a good lesson as well as a complete makeover."



"Sure, we can do that," said Sarah. "Candy usually works with the little girls getting their first makeovers. We'll get her to teach you. But what are we going to do with your hair?"

"We've been letting it grow, but of course it's not nearly long enough," April said. "I've suggested a couple of times that we should look at wigs, but Leslie has been reluctant."

"Well of course she's reluctant!" said Sarah. "Who wants to wear a wig all day long, every day?"

"Yes, well, unfortunately I really feel she needs long hair, and the only way I know of is a wig."

"Well that's why you should come to a hair expert," said Sarah, looking closely at Leslie. "She has nice long hair in front, lots to work with there. Not bad length at the sides, it covers her ears at least. And it's wavy, so if we straighten it we get another inch or two, down to

her jaw line. I think with extensions, she could have a full head of luxurious hair! It could be expensive, but we could give her hair that will billow over her shoulders and down her back!"

"Fantastic!" said April.

"What about color?" asked Sarah.

"I want a bright, vivid red," answered April.

Leslie felt as if he was being left out of the conversation. "Red?" he asked. "Why red?"

"Red, because every time you see those red locks swinging over your shoulders and brush them from your eyes, they will remind you that you are someone different than you were before. They will be a constant reminder that you are a girl."

"I'm not sure we can do red anyway," said Sarah. "Her hair is very dark, so we would need to bleach it first. But with the straightening solution, then bleach, then color, it could be too much." Sarah thought for a moment, then suggested, "I know! How about a rich auburn?"

"Perfect, let's get started!" said April.

Leslie was in for a very long afternoon. His hair was straightened with a chemical relaxant. Then it was washed, then colored, then washed again, then trimmed. His hair at this point was a cute pageboy style, not too different than the cuts he might have received as a child (except for the auburn coloring). He suggested that maybe that was enough for today, however Sarah informed him that he wasn't half finished.

Sarah brought out a box filled with pre-colored hair extensions, treated to be the same auburn shade as he had just received. Each extension was a tiny bundle of hairs, two feet long, held together with a drop of glue at one end. Sarah spent what must have been about two hours, taking each shank of hair from the box, selecting a similar-sized shank of hair from Leslie's head, heating the drop of glue till it melted, and then gluing the hair to Leslie's head!

Leslie watched in amazement as his hair grew in both length and volume, starting at the left side, working around the back, then all the way around to his right. When she was finally done, long auburn hair flowed over his shoulders and down his back, just as Sarah had said it would. Finally his hair was rinsed, then cut and styled beautifully.

With his hair finished, he was turned over to Candy for his makeup lesson and makeover. Candy was an older woman, obviously used to dealing with children younger than Leslie for their first makeup lesson. Candy would demonstrate a technique, with eyeliner or lipstick or foundation or powder or blush or concealer or mascara or eyeshadow or pencils or brushes or cotton swabs or who knows what else, then wipe it off and get Leslie to repeat the process. Then she would continue to wipe off his failed attempts and make him repeat until he got it right. When she was finally satisfied that he knew what he was doing she would say,

"What a good girl! Very nice, what a sweet little lady she is. Won't Mommy be so proud of her baby girl?" Obviously, no one had told her that Leslie was a guy. Or that he was not ten years old. Or that that kind of condescension to children went out in the 1980s.

Leslie worked very hard, to get the humiliating process over as quickly as possible. When he was done he thought she might offer him a lollipop.

When the long day was finally over Leslie was returned to April, who had gone shopping rather than sit through the whole process. Sarah could hardly contain her excitement as she presented Leslie to April. For once, April was completely speechless.

"Well, nothing to say?" said Leslie as he shook his long, flowing auburn mane back over his shoulder. "I did my makeup myself, aren't you proud of me Mommy?"

"Um, yes," said April. Then she asked "Mommy?"

"I'll tell you on the ride home," said Leslie.

Day 23

April knocked softly on Leslie's door. "Leslie? It's April. Can I come in?"

"Sure, come on in," Leslie replied. April entered Leslie's room to find him sitting at his makeup table, wearing his bathrobe and placing the final touches on his makeup.

April crossed the room and sat on Leslie's bed, with a concerned look on her face. She brought with her a shopping bag which she set aside for the moment.

"Leslie, I'm concerned about your lack of progress since you've arrived here."

Leslie looked startled (although that had a lot to do with his arched eyebrows. He always seemed to look startled these days). He looked at himself in the mirror and said, "Lack of progress? How can you say that? I've been here three weeks, and look at me!"

"I'm not saying you've made no progress. Obviously you look great. But there's more to being a woman than just long hair, a pretty face and makeup, breasts and shaved legs."

Leslie thought about this. "No, I think that covers just about everything. Unless you want to include my soprano voice," he said with just a hint of annoyance.

"I know it's a lot," said April. "But there's still more. You're still wearing your own clothes, but you have at least as much to learn about women's clothes as you needed to learn about makeup. And then there's still more beyond that. I said we could go at your pace, but I'd like to speed things up a bit."

Leslie crossed his legs and turned to face April. "Okay, so what do you have in mind?"

"Today, I thought we could concentrate on underwear." April picked up the shopping bag, and pulled out a gift-wrapped box. "I bought you this."

There's something about a gift-wrapped present. It could be anything. Leslie looked at the box, and smiled. He knew it was unlikely to be anything he would want. In fact it was almost definitely something feminine and humiliating. But still, it could be anything. Excited, he untied the ribbon, lifted the top off the box, pushed aside the tissue paper, and found a...

"What is this?" he asked.

"It's a corset, silly," April told him.

Leslie lifted the garment and looked at it. "Women don't actually wear these, do they? I mean, not any more."

"Of course we do! Nothing makes you feel more feminine than sexy underwear. And this is going to make you look and feel feminine, and very sexy! Keep looking, there's more."

Leslie set the corset aside, and looked in the box. Wrapped in the next layer of tissue paper he discovered a pair of stockings and black panties. Finally on the bottom layer he found... something. It was made of flesh-tone satin and strings, and he couldn't imagine what it was for. Leslie held it up and let his puzzled expression ask the question.

"Oh, that!" exclaimed April, taking it from his outstretched hand. "You are going to love this. See this tube, you stick your man-bits in here, then with these strings you pull it down between your legs. Then this flat piece goes over, making it perfectly flat. Then you tie the strings around to the front!"

"And why would I want to do this?" asked Leslie with some degree of horror.

"Well, so no one can see it, obviously. I mean, if you're in a tight skirt, or shorts, or pants, you're going to show unless you wear this. But if you have this on, why, you could be completely naked and no one would guess!"

"I'll only wear loose clothes," Leslie suggested.

"All women's clothing is tight," April told him. "Come on, let's try it out!"

After some negotiation, April agreed to turn around while Leslie tried on the... thing. It took him a few tries to get it right, but when it was finally tied up and strapped down, he asked April to turn around and look.

"Oh, my goodness!" laughed April. She clapped her hands in delight. "You really are all girl now! No sign of it at all, and the straps are almost invisible! You're a beautiful, naked girl!"

"Yeah, right," said Leslie in disgrace, his face burning as red as his lipstick. "So, can I put on some clothes now? Any clothes, please?"

"Oh yes, of course," said April, handing Leslie the black panties.

Leslie stepped into the panties, pulling them up snugly over his hips and smoothing them down through the crotch. Then April showed him how to put on the stockings, rolling them to the toe, placing his toe at the end so they wouldn't snag, then rolling and stretching them up his leg. The slight elastic at the top held them at his thigh.

"Now for your corset!" April said with excitement. "Wrap it around from the back, and settle your breasts in the cups, that's right. Now see these metal hooks down the front? Hook them all, like this, here, all of them, yes! Now you tighten it with the strings at the back. Here, I'll help you!"

April took hold of the strings that crisscrossed the back of the corset, pulling them until the two panels of the corset met with no gap. Leslie felt his ribs crush, his breasts rise, his back straighten, and his remaining tummy fat shoved down onto his hips!

"This is what you will look like, if we can get you down to a size three!" said April with delight. "Now we hook the garters to your stockings, to make sure they won't fall down. Here now, step into your heels. Oh wow, you're amazing!"

Leslie looked at himself in the full length mirror. There was no doubt, he was a beautiful woman. The corset was designed to force a woman into the perfect, feminine form. His body now conformed to the ideals of feminine perfection.

"I'm a girl," Leslie said, barely a whisper. Seeing himself like this, feminine and sexy, his auburn hair glistening in the afternoon sun coming in through the window, it finally hit him. He really was a girl.

"Come on," said April. "I want you to walk through the house."

Leslie recovered from his hypnotic trance and looked at April. "No, are you mad? I'm not walking through the house, where everyone can see me dressed like this!"

"I gave all the staff the day off," April told him. "None of them are here. So you can move freely through the house. Come on, I want you to walk like a girl, experience being a girl!"

"Okay, just," said Leslie, having a panic attack and finding his breathing difficult, "give me a minute, just to get used to the idea."

"Alright," agreed April, leaving through the bedroom door. "I'll be in the library. Meet me there in a few minutes, okay? Don't make me have to come back and drag you!"

"I won't I promise. Just a couple of minutes," Leslie told her.

After April left, Leslie looked at himself in the mirror again. He really had nothing to worry about. He was a girl – no one could ever tell otherwise. And the house was empty – all the staff had the day off. Summoning his courage, he set out for the library.

Leslie opened his door, and looked out into the hall-



way. Just as April had said, there was no one there. He stepped into the hall, and walked cautiously toward the stairway leading down to the main entry. He was very conscious of the fact that he was dressed in a woman's corset, garters and stockings, high heels and makeup. At the top of the steps he again halted, listening for any activity, not wanting to meet any of the staff.

The stairway swept down from the upstairs to the main entryway. In another time, a woman would have made a grand entrance to a party on this stairway. Leslie pictured himself, descending this grand staircase, in a beautiful ball gown, to the delight of the partygoers.

Once he reached the entry hall he turned toward the library at the back of the house. His high heels click-clacked down the hall, his hips swaying as he maintained his balance as April had taught him.

Click-clack, click-clack. The quiet in the house was unnerving. Click-clack, click-clack. Leslie reached the library. April had wanted to meet him inside. He slid aside the translucent glass doors.

"There she is! (*Flash!*) April, she's fantastic! (*Flash!*) Everything you led me to believe. (*Flash!*) Come in, come in, Doll Face. (*Flash!*) Yes, show me surprise! (*Flash!*) What's that? What's that? (*Flash!*) Yes, fear, you're trembling! (*Flash!*) Please, no, don't do it! (*Flash!*) Fantastic. Oh, shame! (*Flash!*) You're ashamed of your body, your flesh (*Flash!*). You're..."

The photographer stopped, dropping his camera so that it swung from the strap around his neck. "No, no, Doll Face. Don't cover yourself! We want to shoot the goods, don't we? That's why we're here, right? Here, let me show you."

The man set his camera on a table, then grabbed Leslie, lifting him from where he crouched in the corner. Swinging him around, the man grabbed Leslie by the hips, forcing him to bend as the man leaned over him from behind, pulling Leslie's rounded, fleshy hips into his own.

"See, force yur buns out, that's right, that's what you want in a photo. And don't cover yurself with yur hands, see, one hand on yur inner thigh, one just under yur chest, looks like yur tryin' to cover, but yur not, see Doll Face? Now hold that and give us that 'shame' look again."

"Get your hands off me!" cried Leslie, as he managed to disentangle himself from the photographer and scrambled across the library floor.

"What's the matter, Dolly? This is what we're here for, am I right? A girl with yur looks, you got potential, right? This goes good, I could get you into some real modeling." The man reached for his camera, and Leslie leapt behind a chair.

"April, who is this?" he demanded as he cowered behind the chair. "You said there was no one in the house!"

"No, I think I said the staff were all gone," April explained. "This is Mr. Edwards. He's a photographer I've hired for you."

"For me?" said Leslie, anger tinged with sarcasm.

"Listen," said the photographer, picking up his camera equipment and generally ignoring the ongoing conversation. "I'm not liking the setting here. Not the right ambience, know what I mean? Let's try some shots in the garden."

"You go and set up, we'll be right there," said April. After he had left the room she turned to look at Leslie. Leslie stared right back.

"Just what are you trying to pull?" he asked.

"I'm not trying to 'pull' anything," April replied. "Part of being a girl, is being admired while being a girl. Anywhere you go, anything you wear, anything you do, there are going to be men looking at you, judging you, admiring you. You need to be ready to deal with that fact."



"What does any of that have to do with a photographer?"

"Mr. Edwards is here to make sure you realize what it is to be a woman, all the time. This afternoon you will be under constant surveillance. There won't be a minute when he's not looking at you, photographing you, making a permanent record of each and every moment. Just like each and every time you're out for the next four years, there will always be someone watching you. Even under his constant scrutiny, you need to always be a girl, to make sure he believes you're a girl."

"You mean he doesn't know?" asked Leslie in surprise.

"Of course he doesn't know! He's already hitting on you, if you hadn't noticed!"

"Can I at least put some clothes on before I go out in the garden?" Leslie pleaded.

"No," April said bluntly. "I told you before, you need to learn about women's underwear. This afternoon Mr. Ed-

wards is going to photograph you in everything imaginable! Half slips, full slips, camisoles, crinolines, garters, fishnet stockings, nighties, bustiers! And so many styles of bras and panties, wait till you see! I had such fun shopping for you yesterday, you can't imagine."

April guided Leslie toward the door, then out the back door to the garden. "I'm not getting out of this, am I?" said Leslie.

"Of course not," said April as they stepped out into the large, open, garden. "Let's take a few more shots in your corset, till you feel comfortable again. Then I have the cutest, stretch-mesh teddy I've been dying to see you try on!"

Day 35

Leslie sat at his makeup table, painting his fingernails and watching a movie on the telly in his room. He was wearing a sky blue dress, with loose sleeves that belled out to his elbows but was tight through his chest, waist, and hips. Everything April bought for him was tight, it seemed. It wasn't a dress most women could wear at all, let alone at 2:00 in the afternoon. However with his feminine curves, and especially with his graceful arms, delicate hands, and long legs, Leslie could wear anything, any time.

Afternoons were generally his own to do as he pleased, unless of course April showed up with other ideas. These generally involved going down to the shops, sometimes to find something specific like a new outfit or clutch purse, but more often just to wander about aimlessly, picking up anything and everything and trying it on. She seemed to think he should enjoy shopping, like it was something to do just for fun. Leslie just didn't understand this at all.

"Knock, knock," said April, entering Leslie's room. Leslie paused his film, crossed his legs and turned toward her. "Wow, Leslie! That dress is so gorgeous on you. I'm so glad I finally talked you into buying it yesterday!"

"Uh, sure," replied Leslie.

April looked disappointed with his reaction. She crossed the room and sat on Leslie's bed, facing him. "Leslie, you have to learn to take a compliment! You are such a beautiful girl. I tell you how pretty that dress looks on you, and all you can say is, 'Uh, sure'! Even in the mall yesterday. All the salesgirls, and other girls shopping, they all wanted to speak to you, to say how really cute you looked! Would it be so difficult when another girl compliments your dress, to give her a pretty smile and say thank you? Then maybe say what rack you found it on, and there's something you saw that would look darling on her? It's just polite conversation."

"For two girls, maybe," said Leslie, his voice higher than usual with his frustration. "You keep forgetting, I'm not a girl! I'm a guy, no matter how much lipstick and perfume and jewelry I have to wear. No matter how long my hair is, no matter how much cleavage or leg I show, I'm still a guy!"

April looked at Leslie with a mixture of frustration and pity. Not wanting to pursue this any further she looked at the telly instead. It was frozen on a picture of a muscular marine in a jungle, firing an enormous gun of some sort.

"What's the movie?" she asked.

"Maneater 2," Leslie replied, happy to be talking about something normal. "They're surrounded by the mutant panthers, with no way out. Normal weapons have no effect, they don't even pierce their mutant skin."

"That's not a film most girls would like. There are lots of nice films downstairs, stories about love, or friendship."

Leslie just shrugged, and looked at the frozen image on the screen. April resumed her stare. After a few moments she reached a conclusion and stood.

"Come with me," she said.

Leslie stopped the movie, and followed April out of his room. "We're not going shopping again, are we?" he complained as he caught up to April in his heels. "I already have five dresses, three skirts, four blouses, and three pair of shoes!"

"No girl can get by with just three pair of shoes," April responded without turning her head. "You need more clothes, more shoes, a couple new purses, and no amount of stockings is ever enough. But no, we are not going shopping today."

Leslie was relieved, but now curious as to where April was leading him. His heels click-clacked on the hall tiles, until April eventually turned into the study. She preceded Leslie to the desk, where she sat and turned on the computer. After a moment she had an application up, and had Leslie sit before she spoke to him.

"Leslie, do you make your bed every day?" she asked.

"What?" replied Leslie, not expecting the conversation to take this unexpected direction. "Um, yes, I guess so."

"Why do you make your bed?" April asked.

"I don't know," Leslie replied. "I guess, it just looks nice. Yes, I like it that way."

"Do you know, every day when you make your bed you say 'Nice' when you're done?"

"Do I?" Leslie asked. "No, I don't think so. Do I?"

"I asked you a month ago to make your bed every day and say 'nice', and you have done it ever since. Just by saying that one word, you were able to change your attitude toward making the bed," Leslie told him. She tapped the compute mouse, starting the application. "It's so automatic now, you don't even notice. Here, look at the screen, and tell me the first word that comes into your head."

Leslie looked at the screen. There was a picture of a playful kitten with a ball of string. "Uh, cat," he said.

"Wrong," April told him.

Leslie looked at her, puzzled. "How can it be wrong? That was the first word that I thought of."

"It's the wrong word for a girl," April informed him. "First of all, a girl would call it a kitten, not a cat. But more important, boys will simply say what they see, where a girl will describe it, or say how it makes her feel."

"It's a cat. I don't know what else to say."

"Leslie," April said to him. "You look like a girl, you talk like a girl, you walk like a girl, you dress like a girl, but your attitude screams, 'I am a guy!' to anyone you meet. Today we will change that. We are going to train you to think like a girl. We need to give you a new attitude, a feminine attitude. We need to train you to like shopping, and pretty things."

Leslie thought about this, and instantly rebelled. Calmly and with self-assurance he told her, "No, April, not this time. I'm a guy. I like being a guy. I like guy things. I like liking guy things. You've changed me to look like a girl in every way, but my thoughts are my own. I'll look like a girl, I'll dress like a girl, I'll act like a girl, but I need to remain true to who I really am."

It was a moving speech. Leslie considered for a moment how to respond. Finally she said, "Rubbish. You've been trained to like mutants, guns, and aliens; you will now be re-trained to like dresses, shoes, and flowers. Now here is how it works. I've got a list of words on this sheet. These are the only responses allowed, as you view the images on the screen. As a picture appears on the screen, say the first word that comes to your mind *from this sheet*."

Leslie looked at the sheet that was handed to him. Cute, sweet, lovely, pretty, gorgeous, nice, the list continued with about sixty words, most of which Leslie knew but had never actually used before.

"Now look at the kitten, and say the first word you think of from the sheet," April instructed.

Leslie looked at the screen and pulled a face. "Uh, cute?"

"Good. Although, adorable would be even better. Now without saying 'Uh', and with an exclamation mark rather than a question mark, look at the kitten and say, 'Adorable!' the way a girl would."

Leslie looked at the screen. "Adorable," he said sweetly.

"That's good. That's a good start. Let's begin the program." Leslie clicked the mouse, and the picture on the screen began changing at about five second intervals. The next picture was a pair of pink high heeled shoes, with white polka dots and bows.

Leslie checked the page of words one more time. "Cute."

A gold ball gown...

"Beautiful."

A little girl laughing while a puppy licked her face...

"Sweet!"

April left the study, while Leslie trained.

Chapter 3

College Days

Leslie finished putting his things away, then began tidying the room. He wanted everything to be nice when Olivia arrived! It had been two months since the girls had met at



Olivia's grandmother's funeral. That seemed like such a long time ago – he hoped Olivia was as excited as he was.

There were two beds and two dressers in the room. Leslie had selected the ones nearest the door for himself, assuming Olivia would prefer the window. He also figured that it would be easiest for him to leave the room quietly from the bed nearest the door, whenever Olivia was asleep.

The closet was divided into two halves. Leslie hung his dresses, blouses and skirts on the left, then placed all his shoes on the floor beneath his clothes. "I hope that leaves enough room for all of Olivia's things," he thought to himself. "She's liable to have a lot more clothes than I have. I suppose if she needs extra space, I can let her put some things on my side."

Leslie stacked his carrying cases at the back of the closet. He straightened out the bedding where he had set some things, saying "nice" with a

satisfied smile before moving into the bathroom to straightened things there. There wasn't much shelf space for two girls, but they would manage.

Back in the bedroom, he jabbed the 'On' button of his stereo repeatedly. It had always worked before, but for some reason it simply refused to play today. With a frustrated pout, he finally had to give up.

Leslie waited anxiously. It wasn't long before Olivia finally arrived, announcing herself with a knock at the door. Leslie answered, giddy with anticipation.

"Hi!" he said with excitement, throwing open the door. Olivia stood in the hall, four cases lined up against the wall beside her. "Come on in! Check out this room, isn't it great?"

Did you have to travel far? Oh, I love your blouse, where did you get it? Do you know, I saw some shops just off campus? We should go check them out, what do you think?"

Olivia followed the irrepressible Leslie into the room, a look of confusion on her face. "Excuse me," she said, "but, is this your room? It's just that, well, I was expecting... someone else."

"Olivia!" said Leslie in his excitement. "This is our room! I left you the bed by the window. I hope you like it, or we could switch if you prefer. Look at this room! Isn't it a great room? That is a really cute skirt. You have such great taste!"

Olivia still looked confused. "Wait, are you saying, that *you're* my flatmate?" Leslie smiled, holding back a giggle, and nodded his head.

Olivia looked confused for just a moment longer, then pure relief flooded her face. "Oh, thank heaven," she said. "I was expecting... well, never mind what I was expecting. A nightmare, anyway. You just wouldn't believe. But it's over, obviously not a problem any more."

"Oh, I'm so glad," replied Leslie as the new flatmates embraced. "Do you need some help unpacking? We have three drawers in the dressers, and some shelf space in the closet and bathroom. Do you have a stereo? I have one, but I think it's broken. Let's get these cases into the room at least. Can you lift this? Let's move it together."

The two girls dragged the cases into their room and began unpacking, while Leslie continued to talk. "So, I put my bras and panties and stockings in the top drawer, then nighties and camisoles and such in the second, then jumpers and other things I won't need until winter at the bottom. I think that makes sense, don't you? You have such beautiful clothes! I love this dress, it's so pretty!"

"Thank you," said Olivia. "Yes, I really liked it when I first bought it, but it's old now. You can try it on if you want."

"Really? Right now?" asked Leslie. He caressed the pale pink, satiny material.

"Sure, why not?" said Olivia, who had busied herself filling the closet with items from one of her cases.

Leslie removed his own top and skirt, then pulled Olivia's dress over his head. It was a halter-style, and so he removed his bra after straightening the dress. It gathered at his waist, just under his breasts, then flowed to mid-thigh.

"It looks great on you," Olivia told him.

"Do you really think so?" Leslie asked, turning to feel the skirt swirl about his hips.

"Of course," Olivia told him. "Leave it on, you can wear it when we go out later."

"Thank you, Olivia!" Leslie exclaimed. "You can wear anything of mine that you like, any time. This is going to be such fun! I never had any sisters, or anyone to share clothes with."

Olivia had a stack of folded blouses in her hands, and was looking for a place to set them down. She wanted to use the desk, except she was surprised to find a vase of flowers in the center of it.

"Where did this come from?" she asked, curious.

Leslie was still playing, swirling his skirt, and watching himself in the mirror. "Oh, the flowers!" he said. "I bought those on my way here this morning. I thought they would look pretty, and would brighten up the room. They do, don't they?"

"Yes, they're very nice," said Olivia, unsatisfied with the answer. "I was wondering about the vase, though. It looks familiar. I can't help thinking I've seen it somewhere before."

"I expect you have," replied Leslie. He had returned to work, pulling Olivia's panties from a case and laying them flat in the dresser drawer. "It was in the main hall of your grandmother's home, sitting on a little side table?"

"My grandmother's home?" Olivia asked, her attention to the stack of blouses fully diverted. "What do you know about my grandmother's home?"

"Oh, didn't you know?" replied Leslie as he sorted and organized Olivia's bras and panties. "I stayed there over the summer. It's really beautiful, don't you think? I loved the garden, such pretty flowers. I asked Mr. Roberts, and he said it would be all right to take the vase. It's not expensive, but it's so pretty and I really wanted to have flowers in the room."

Olivia's mouth dropped open, as a horrible, sinking feeling took over her stomach. She braced herself against the wall, then asked, "What did you say your name was?"

Leslie looked at her and laughed. "Have you forgotten my name? That's all right, I suppose it was over two months ago. It's Leslie. Leslie Avery Scarlett! Did you want your camisoles in a drawer, or hanging in the closet?"

Olivia ignored the question but continued to stare, not believing what she was seeing. "You, are not... him," she managed to say. "You are not him!"

"It takes a little getting used to, believe me!" laughed Leslie. "I'm just going to fold these camisoles and place them in a drawer, okay? That's what I did with mine."

Olivia forgot about unpacking, and turned her full attention to Leslie. "Your... hair. It's not a wig," she said, inspecting Leslie closely, looking for proof he was lying. "There's no way he could grow his hair this fast! You have narrow shoulders, and, no guy ever had such tiny arms and hands. I don't know why you're lying to me, but you are not Leslie Scarlett! You're a girl, completely a girl."

Leslie laughed again. "Well, not completely. I never agreed to that! But as far as anyone is concerned, for the next four years we're just two girls at school together! I'm so glad we're getting off to such a good start. I can't tell you how nervous I was about seeing you again!"

Olivia looked closely at the contents of her halter dress, filled out so magnificently by Leslie's breasts. She gave them a tentative poke and exclaimed, "You have breasts! Real breasts. Holy crap, they're bigger than mine."

"Yes, well," explained Leslie, still not realizing there was any problem. "That was a bit of a misunderstanding. Believe me, if I'd had any idea what I was getting into, I never would have asked for size C! But I'm stuck with them now, and to tell the truth I'm quite

used to them. I actually like the way they fill out my figure. I have fairly wide hips that need to be balanced by a bit more on top, don't you think? At least, that's what it says in Vogue."

"But, I just saw you in June!" exclaimed Olivia. "You weren't a girl. There was nothing girlish about you! You were a short, lumpy, near-sighted, furry troll! How could you look like this now? It's not possible! What the hell are you?"

"Well," explained Leslie, slightly offended. "First of all, I really don't think I was that bad as a guy. But Mr. Roberts hired April, my life-coach, and arranged everything I needed. He was really very helpful."

"Roberts?" scoffed Olivia. "Yes, he would be very 'helpful' to you! I should have watched him, but I had no idea what he was capable of. He's worked for my family for as long as I can remember, and it's well known that he's an old queen from way back. I bet he enjoyed every minute of it." A thought suddenly occurred to Olivia, "Who paid for all of this?"

"Well, your grandmother's estate, of course," replied Leslie.

Olivia finally passed through her shock, now having something specific to focus her anger upon. "That's my money! How much did this cost? It must have been thousands of pounds! And for what? To turn you into some kind of freaky little sideshow?"

Leslie was hurt. "But, it was necessary," he attempted to explain. "So that I could attend Havisham, so we could be flatmates, and best friends. Like our grandmothers! It's what your grandmother wanted."

"My grandmother was a senile old woman, with no better sense than to give total control of her money to a pervert lawyer with a cross-dressing fetish. Believe me, I will speak to my lawyer and we will get Roberts on a short leash from now on. I hope you enjoy your boobs, because they represent the last of my money that you'll ever see! I would sue you to get that back, if I thought you had anything worth taking."

Leslie was mortified. "But, that's not fair!" he said through the tears that started flowing down his perfect cheeks. "I've done everything you asked. What more can I do? This is what we wanted, what we all agreed!"

"I agreed that you would show up looking like a circus chimp in a dress and then get laughed out of Havisham the same day! I certainly didn't agree to... you! You, with your soft hair and cute face, and... perfect figure, and long legs and high heels! I didn't agree to any of this!"

Leslie sniffled, and looked at Olivia. "Do you really think I'm cute?" he asked hopefully.

"Oh my god, what is wrong with you? I think you're grotesque! You're an unnatural aberration! I would sooner have a yak for a flatmate!"

"But," said Leslie quietly, his eyes downcast. "We have to be flatmates. It was in your grandmother's will. Please, Olivia. We were getting on so well. Can't you just see me as a girl, so we can be girlfriends?"

"I may have to live with you for now, but we will never be 'girlfriends'! I'm going to find some way to get you out of my life, permanently. You will never receive any more of my money!" Olivia stormed toward the door.

"Please Olivia!" Leslie called after her. "You won't tell anyone, will you?"

Olivia had the door open to leave, but closed it and returned to Leslie, pinning him to the wall with her stare. Later, Leslie would swear that he had seen flames shooting from Olivia's nostrils. "No one must ever know, have you got that? I will not be made a fool. To everyone else you are pretty little Leslie Scarlett, all girl, understood? You can make little friends, and wear pretty dresses, and go shopping for purses and darling little shoes, but no one, absolutely no one, will ever know what you really are!"

"That's all I want, too," said Leslie from where he cowered. As Olivia made to leave he said as a peace offering, "I'll finish unpacking your things for you."

Olivia turned from the door again. "Don't touch my things."

Leslie nodded. "I'll take off your dress, and hang it up."

"Keep it," Olivia told him. "I could never wear it again, and would just have to burn it. Keep it on, it looks good on you." As she left, Olivia turned from the open door. "And don't touch my panties, ever again."

* * *

"I recall my first days at Havisham," Mrs. Gordon-Smythe said to the packed auditorium of first-year girls. "The corridors seemed so long, they wound and interconnected and it seemed so complex I thought I would never be able to learn where my classes were.

"Corridors became a metaphor for life to me. Each of you, by coming to Havisham, has entered a new and unknown corridor. It may seem long, and straight, and narrow, but believe me, walking this corridor you will find so many doors opening for you, you'll want to see what is behind every one of them.

"And when you graduate, there will be corridors branching in every direction for you to choose from. Any one of them can lead to a lifetime of fulfillment. All you have to do is choose."

The young girls seated in the auditorium applauded politely, Leslie among them. Mrs. Gordon-Smythe sat, and another woman on the raised stage stood. She approached the lectern and began her prepared speech.

"Life at Havisham is not just about lectures, classes, and assignments. It is, fundamentally, about becoming a complete woman. That is why, in addition to your regular classes, Havisham has additional requirements to be met by each and every student. Among these is a requirement that each year, you must earn at least two athletic credits. Havisham offers you many opportunities, and in your first-year student information packet you should find a list..."

Leslie listened to the speakers attentively, anxious to learn all the ways Havisham would help to fulfill him in his life as a real woman.

* * *

The auditorium slowly cleared as the first year students exited, talking excitedly about everything they had heard. Leslie made his way slowly, walking against the flow of skirts, long hair and perfume, until he stood at the edge of the stage. Mrs. Gordon-Smythe was speaking to one of the other presenters, but when they parted Leslie quickly caught up with her.

"Mrs. Gordon-Smythe," he began, running up behind her. "Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, may I speak with you a moment?"

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe looked back to see who was speaking, and slowed almost imperceptibly to allow Leslie to catch her. "If it's about your classes, my dear, you will have to speak to your faculty advisor. Believe me, I wish I could speak to every new girl personally, but your faculty advisor is really the person who can help you most quickly."

Leslie's high heels clacked down the corridor alongside Mrs. Gordon-Smythe's as he said, "Oh, no it's nothing like that. I really just wanted to speak with you, to thank you for this wonderful opportunity. I really hadn't planned on attending university, but so many things have changed for me this summer, and I wanted to express my appreciation for your expediting my application to Havisham."

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe stopped short, just outside her own office. "I did that, for you?"

"Yes, of course!" said Leslie enthusiastically. "And I simply had to tell you how much I appreciate the opportunity Havisham presents. Also, Mr. Roberts suggested that I should see you, to let you know I had arrived."

"Mr. Roberts?" said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. Then all the pieces came together for her. "You're not... you can't be Leslie Scarlett?"

"Yes, we met at Olivia's grandmother's funeral earlier this summer!"

"Of course, of course we did," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe as she unlocked her office door and ushered Leslie inside. She closed the door, and the two women sat at a side table. "My goodness, things really have changed for you this summer. Leslie, you've become such a lovely young woman."

"Thank you," replied Leslie with a shy smile, his cheeks turning a feminine shade of pink.

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe couldn't help looking at Leslie's cleavage. He was still wearing Olivia's halter dress, with no bra. "That's a nice... a pretty... dress you're wearing today," she finally managed to say.

"Yes, isn't it nice?" replied Leslie distractedly. "It's Olivia's... Mine now, I guess. She gave it to me this morning."

"So the two of you have moved in together, then. Well, it sounds like you girls are off to a good start."

"Not really," replied Leslie. "I really tried to make everything perfect, but Olivia became very angry and left."

"Well, these things can take time," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "Being roommates is never easy. I remember my first roommate. Everything she said and did began to annoy me. Finally we had a huge row over a piece of toast!"

"I think ours was over forty million pounds," Leslie said quietly.

"Just give her time. She's used to a different way of doing things. But, there's nothing that two reasonable women can't work out. Just remember, if you both make 75% of the effort, you'll meet in the middle."

"Thank you for your advice," said Leslie. "Well, I've probably taken enough of your time..."

"Before you go there is one thing I need to discuss with you," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, stopping Leslie as he began to stand. "One of the things discussed in the presentations this morning was Havisham's athletic requirements."

"Yes, I recall that," said Leslie, looking up and pouting his lower lip as he thought back to the morning's presentation. "They gave us a list of activities, and there are any number that I would enjoy. I was a good swimmer at one time, and thought maybe I could join the swim team."

"The swim team?" said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe incredulously. "Could you do that? I mean, could you wear a woman's bathing costume?"

"Well of course, I would have to," said Leslie. "But I'm afraid I'm not really built for swimming any more," he said, gesturing at his chest. "Plus April, she's my life coach, she would not want me to do anything that might strengthen my arms."

"Your arms?"

"Yes, it took a lot of non-effort to weaken them over the summer. I'll have to take up a sport where I don't use my arms much. Maybe the running team? Or soccer!"

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe shook her head. "I'm afraid I can't allow you to join those teams. I can't allow you to participate in any competitive sport. It wouldn't be fair to allow a man to compete against women. It would be considered cheating."

"But you have to!" argued Leslie. "I need two athletic credits to earn my degree! Mr. Roberts told me, you couldn't interfere and couldn't do anything to prevent me from earning my degree."

"That's true, Leslie. And I will do everything I can to help you. But there is nothing I can do in this case. I don't have to do something if it is illegal or unethical, and I won't. I hope you understand that."

"Yes, of course," agreed Leslie. "I didn't think of it that way, but of course you're right. Except, that means I can't get my degree." The sorrowful look on Leslie's face would have broken your heart.

"It means no such thing," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "It only means you can't participate in competitive sports. There must be some non-competitive athletic options. Here now, get out the list from your student information packet and let's take a look."

Leslie opened the packet and sorted through the various brochures and pages until he found the list of athletic options. He placed it on the table, and he and Mrs. Gordon-Smythe went through the items.

"Now see, here's something for you," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "Modern dance, that should be fun, and non-competitive. And if you did end up in a competition, being a man would definitely not be considered an advantage."

"Dance?" questioned Leslie. "I've never danced before. I was kind of hoping to play a sport, on a team."

"We've already ruled that out, Leslie. Besides, dancing is like a team. There will be lots of young girls, just like yourself. Come now, try to focus."

They looked through the list, but nothing suitable presented itself as a second option. Leslie was discouraged.

"Now, don't be down, Leslie. Cheer up, there's a good girl. You can join your dance group, that's one athletic activity taken care of. And you have the entire year to find something else. I'll keep my eyes open, and let you know if I come across anything suitable. Come now, where's that pretty smile you walked in with?"

Leslie smiled, then giggled. He stood to leave. "Thank you so much, Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, for all your help."

"Not at all, it's my pleasure to see a young girl getting a good start in life. But one thing, Leslie. Outside the University, in social situations, I often go by the name Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. However, within the University I must insist that you call me Dr. Gordon-Smythe."

"Oh, yes! Of course, I didn't realize. I'm so sorry."

"Not at all, Leslie. It's my fault for not telling you straight away."

Leslie was out the door, when she turned and asked, "Mrs. ... I mean, Dr. Gordon-Smythe. May I ask, what kind of doctor are you?"

"Certainly," she replied. "I'm a Doctor of Music."

"Oh," said Leslie, thinking. Then her eyes lit up as she said, "Oh! What a wonderful coincidence! I could really use a Doctor of Music!"

"Really?" asked Dr. Gordon-Smythe. "Well, what is it I can do for you?"

"I was wondering if you could fix my broken stereo?" he asked.

Chapter 4

Educational Requirements

Leslie stood with the other girls, awaiting further instruction in their first dance class. They were all dressed similarly, in brightly colored leotards, tights, and slippers. The other girls all seemed fine with this, however Leslie felt highly exposed!

Leslie's leotard was a one-piece, halter-style, like a swim suit. He purchased it in town, at a specialty dancewear shop that was recommended on the dance class website. Every-

thing they offered seemed to have little or no back, deep cleavage, and rode high on his hips. In effect, his leotard was little more than a few strategically placed strips of cloth, held in place by tightly stretched rubber bands. He had eventually chosen the one he currently wore because of the red, orange, and yellow flame pattern, which was more masculine than the others he had seen. His tights were called 'Nude', and his slippers matched the flaming pattern of his leotard.

The other girls apparently knew somewhere else to shop, as their leotards applied, in general, more coverage, and did so in more muted tones. Leslie would have to ask someone. Except so far, everyone had been excited to see his outfit, and all wanted to get one just like it! He wasn't just sure how to turn the conversation around, to suggest he would rather be a bit more modest. He wore his 'restraint' under the leotard, tied as tight as it would go, holding him firmly between his legs. He was used to wearing it with tight clothing, but this was different. This was practically no clothing!

"Ladies, attention please," called out Miss Sansgras, the dance instructor. "Maintenant, how many of you girls have some experience with dance? Some of you? Some have no experience? This is fine, I enjoy a good mix of the beginner, with the more experience student. We will try many style, even the experience will find something new. And the experience, she will help to teach the beginner. Non? Okay!

"So now, you must know what dance means. The dance, she is the most feminine form of expression. I dance, because I wish to be seen as a woman. Every turn of the hip, every gesture of the hand, every extension of the arm or the leg, every tilt of the head, it is as a woman will do these things. No man would ever rotate the hips like so, or gesture with his hand so..." Here she punctuated her speech by pushing her hips backward, slowly rotating them in circles toward the right. Her hands crossed over her body, one arm dropping to point down and back with an open palm while the other pointed up and out, all the time a sultry smile of satisfaction on her face. Leslie felt a twinge from his restraint as he contemplated performing this move.

"So," said Miss Sangras, quickly halting her movement and standing to address the girls. "Every one here is a woman, oui?" Everyone shook their heads and agreed, including Leslie. "So as we are women, we might as well be the best women possible! Everything I teach you, you will use not just in dance class. You will use it every time you sit, every time you stand, every time you pick up a pencil, every step you take, every breath you take. Dance is simply the grace of femininity. Once you know dance, you know grace, you know what it is to be lovely, and it will rule your life. So, we begin now, oui?"

"Oui!" called out the girls, Leslie included, although somewhat reluctantly.

"Then let us begin. First, let us try the movement of hips. Everyone, please spread out so you all have room, then show me how you rotate your hips so..."

Leslie stood toward the back of the room, imitating the instructor's hip rotations. The other girls did the same, some giggling at their own attempts. Miss Sangras looked at them all, some with approval, but more often than not with reproach.

"Ladies, ladies!" she cried out. "You are to be feminine, move the hips gracefully, sexually!" then she spotted Leslie. "Everyone, please stop! You, please come forward. What is your name?"

Leslie couldn't believe she was addressing him. He stepped forward, saying "Leslie, Miss."

"Well, Leslie Miss, you have wonderful, fluid hip movement. You dance already, non?"

"No, Miss. Never. Although, I do hula hoop a lot."

The other girls laughed, but Miss Sangras stopped them. "The hula hoop is very good exercise, to loosen stiff hips. Tres bien, Leslie! Please, demonstrate for the others."

Leslie blushed as red as his leotard, but he rotated his hips in a rhythmic motion.

"Now, you see?" said the instructor. "Now, you become self-conscious! Now your hips, they become stiff. Do not feel ashamed! You are a beautiful woman. Make your movement as beautiful as the rest of you. You are a four-dimensional woman, and the fourth dimension is movement! You must be as lovely in this dimension, as you are in the other three, do you see?"

As the instructor spoke, Leslie's inhibitions fell away. He moved his hips in rhythmic, feminine circles, and the other girls applauded for him.

"Beautiful, Leslie!" said Miss Sangras. "Lovely hip action. Now we must work on your legs, which are still very stiff. Please, how far can you go in the splits?"

Leslie went into the splits, his legs forming the shape of a capital letter A.

"Now, you see? Here, she has no flexibility at all! But you have such promise, we must help you."

Miss Sangras called over one of the other girls, and in-



structed her to place her arms around Leslie's neck, allowing her weight to drag Leslie downward.

"Now Leslie, let your feet slide, how far can she go?"

Leslie let his feet slide slightly further into the splits, but part of him was holding back! The added weight of the second girl was dragging him down, but only slightly, until...

"Voila!" said Miss Sangras, as she lifted Leslie's left foot off the ground. The weight around his neck brought Leslie crashing to the floor, into a full splits position. He tried to scramble out of it, except Miss Sangras and the other girl held him tight where he was!

"Just wait, Leslie!" Miss Sangras said reassuringly. "All girls can do this, do not fight it. You simply need to stretch the muscles. Now, slowly we let you up, oui?"

Miss Sangras slowly released Leslie, allowing him to stand, the pain in his groin substantial.

"Now, you try again, oui? Continue, until you do splits with ease!"

Leslie practiced going into full splits for the next half hour, finding it easier, although equally painful, each time. The other girls worked on their hip rotations.

* * *

"You're not much of a man, are you?"

"Not much, lately," Leslie replied without looking up from his book. It was another typical night in their room. Just Leslie and Olivia. Leslie was trying to study on his bed, while Olivia worked at maintaining her usual state of pique.

"You can say that again," snipped Olivia. "Look at you, in your pink, polka dot, shorty pajama set! What man would ever allow himself to be seen like that?"

"They're pretty," Leslie said, still not looking up from his studies.

"And you paint your nails, every night! Not even a girl would ever do that."

"It only takes a few minutes," Leslie said, looking up finally, but only to admire his fingers and toes. "It keeps them nice. No chipping, no fading."

"I don't believe it," said Olivia, disgusted. "You really are a total girl, aren't you?"

Leslie tried to go back to his book, but it was difficult. "This was your choice. Everyone else agreed, I could go to Middenhale Men's College, but you had to have your way. So now, yes, I am a total girl."

"Hey, don't try to blame me," replied Olivia. "You might have been a man before, but you weren't much of one! You even had a girl's name, Leslie! Even your middle name is a girl's name, Avery!"

"They're both boys' names as well. But I was named after my grandmother."

"You see? What kind of man is named after his grandmother?"

"She was named after her grandfather, so technically I was named after him," Leslie replied, gritting his teeth at being drawn into this conversation.



"Well, that just shows your whole family is messed up. You were destined to be a silly little girl your whole life, weren't you? Even your last name is a girl's name, Miss Scarlett!"

"Leslie finally put the book aside. "And what about your name?" he asked.

Olivia shrugged. "I was named after my grandmother. So? I'm a girl. A real girl, see the difference?"

"Oh yes, there's nothing wrong with your first name, Olivia. But your middle name is Mackenzie! That's not a girl's name. It's not even a boy's name. It's a last name!"

"Lots of girls are named Mackenzie these days," Olivia defended herself.

"Just because other people do something ridiculous, doesn't make it any less ridiculous when you do it! Mackenzie isn't a name for a little baby girl, it's a name for an old, hairy Scotsman! They might just

as well have named you Smith or Jones. But no matter how you explain it, taking someone else's family name as your own personal name is just wrong."

"Well in my case, it's not someone else's family name. It's my grandmother's family name," Olivia replied.

"Oh," said Leslie sheepishly. "Well, I guess that's alright, then. Still, other people shouldn't use it."

The conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door. Leslie crossed the room, stepping barefoot across the floor in his pink polka dot pajama set to answer it.

"Dr. Gordon-Smythe!" he said, astonished to find the Dean of the entire College at his door. "Whatever are you doing here?"

"Hello, Leslie dear. And Olivia, so nice to see you again. I was working late and just about to leave for home, when something came across my desk I knew would be of interest to you. I'm not interrupting anything, am I?"

"Just some girl talk," replied Leslie. "Would you like to step in?"

"Yes, thank you," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe as she entered the room and closed the door behind her. She crossed over to Leslie's desk and sat in the chair. Leslie sat next to Olivia on Olivia's bed, as this made the best arrangement for a conversation.

"I don't suppose you've found a second athletic activity in which to participate?" asked Dr. Gordon-Smythe.

"No, no I haven't," Leslie told her.

"Well, earlier today I had a wonderful idea for you. It occurred to me, there are activities at Middenhale that we never looked at."

"Oh, of course!" agreed Leslie. "I could participate on any team at Middenhale Men's College!"

"No, I'm afraid not," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe. "You see, they will not accept a female on any of their teams."

Leslie pouted, his pretty features contorted into a look of confusion. "But I'm not a girl."

"It's probably best not to tell them that," Dr. Gordon-Smythe reminded him.

"Oh, right. But then, this doesn't help me at all!"

"Ah, but they do have one team, made up entirely of girls. They don't enter any competitions, and so there is no objection to your joining. With a very low population of women at Middenhale, they have a good deal of difficulty maintaining a full roster. I've just spoken to their athletics director, and he tells me there are two openings this year. He says you are welcome to attend a practice tomorrow at two p.m., and try out for the team!"

"Oh, Dr. Gordon-Smythe, this is fantastic news!" effused Leslie, clapping her hands together gleefully. "What sport is it?"

"Cheerleading," said the Doctor.

Olivia laughed, but stopped herself quickly. Leslie simply looked confused. "Cheerleading? I can't be a cheerleader!"

"Nonsense," said Olivia. "You'll be so cute, in a short skirt and tight sweater. It takes a girl who is really confident in her femininity to be a cheerleader. And of everyone I know on campus, you are the most effeminate!"

"Thank you, Olivia," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe. "Although I believe you meant to say 'feminine'. It's so good to know that you are supportive of Leslie! I know you girls didn't get off to the best start."

"Oh, that's all behind us now, isn't it Leslie?" said Olivia, placing an arm around her flatmate. "We're the best of girlfriends now, aren't we?"

"Are we?" said Leslie. "I mean, oh, yes we are!"

"I'm so glad to hear that," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe, rising to excuse herself. "I'll be leaving, then. So you'll be expected at the Middenhale football pitch, tomorrow at two."

"I'll be there," said Olivia, seeing Dr. Gordon-Smythe to the door.

Olivia lay back on her bed. She smiled, enjoying her inner thoughts as she plotted.

* * *

Leslie stood on the football pitch, waiting to try out for the cheerleading team. All the girls from the team were there in their uniforms.

Leslie had thought long and hard about what he would wear for the tryout. None of his dresses or skirts seemed appropriate. He went to the campus shop to see what he might buy. They had an actual cheerleading outfit, but it was £85 pounds and far out of his price range. All their exercise clothing was too expensive as well. Finally he found a one-piece pair of pink bloomers that was only five pounds.

Leslie watched the other girls, in their skirts and sweaters, looking like cheerleaders. They watched him, in his one-piece bloomers, looking like a pathetic wretch freezing in the fall air.

No one else had shown up for the tryout. Tryouts for Middenhale girls had been held the week before, but there had been little response. Cheerleading is more of an American activity, without much interest in Britain. Cheerleading at Middenhale was something of an experiment, to see if it might increase interest in sporting events. Everyone who had tried out got on the team, and there were still two spots left.

The tryouts had not even been advertised at Havisham, having been accidentally left off the official list of athletic activities. So Leslie was feeling good about his chances of getting one of the two openings on the team. He just really wasn't sure he wanted to!

The other girls finally approached. "Hi, I'm Alison! Are you here to try out for the cheerleaders?"

Leslie looked around, wondering what else they might think he was there for! "Yes, I am. Hi, I'm Leslie. Leslie Scarlett."

"Hi Leslie!" said the other girls simultaneously. Alison said, "Okay then, show us what you've got!"

"Um, what should I do?" asked Leslie.

"Just do a cheer! Any cheer that you know."

"I don't really know any cheers," admitted Leslie.

"Just do anything, then. Make something up. It doesn't really matter. Go ahead, you'll be great!"

So for the next few minutes, Leslie spun about. He jumped in the air. He shouted, "Yeah, team!" and "Go, go, go!" He kicked his legs, and waved his arms. In short, his tryout was a ridiculous, humiliating disaster.

Leslie finished with a somersault, then stood, awkwardly. When the other girls realized he was done, they applauded and cheered for him.

"That was great," said Alison.

"Really?" said Leslie. "I wasn't sure. It didn't seem very good to me."

"Really, you were really good," said Alison, and all the other girls nodded. "We all practice together, and we all get better. You had some good ideas we might try. Like, when you jumped and said, 'Go, team!' We can use someone with good ideas like that." All the girls smiled and agreed.

"It's not too late to try out, is it?"

All the cheerleaders turned, and saw Olivia walking toward them. She was wearing one of the expensive Middenhale cheerleader outfits, one of the ones Leslie couldn't possibly afford, and looked great in it.

Leslie ran up to her. "Olivia, you want to be a cheerleader?"

"Of course," she responded. "When I heard you wanted to be a cheerleader, I knew I had to try out."

"Olivia, thank you! This is so unexpected, but I'm really glad you're supporting me. This is so brilliant! We can be cheerleaders together!"

"Hi, Olivia? This is so great that you're going to try out," said Alison. "Do you have a routine to show us?"

Everyone backed away to give Olivia room. Olivia proceeded to dazzle them with an amazing gymnastics routine. She spun, she danced, she did forward and back flips! When she finished everyone applauded.



"Olivia, that was fantastic!" said Leslie. "I had no idea you could do that!"

"I took gymnastics for four years," Olivia told him.

"This is so amazing! Thank you, Olivia, for joining with me! This is going to be so great, the two of us together as cheerleaders!"

"Okay," said Alison. "So there's only one more applicant."

"One more?" said Leslie, confused. As he was the only girl in bloomers, he hadn't noticed that another girl, also dressed in a Middenhale cheerleading uniform, had joined the group.

"This is Stephanie," said Olivia, introducing the new girl. "She's here from America to study at Havisham. She told me last week that she's an experienced cheerleader, and was sorry to hear there was no cheerleading at Havisham."

"Experienced cheerleader?" said Leslie.

"My school was seventh in the California State finals," Stephanie told him.

"Seventh?" said Leslie cheerlessly. Then, not really believing himself, he added, "That... doesn't sound so great."

"It's a hell of a lot better than you," Olivia told him.

The girls spread out to give Stephanie room. She had brought her own music, apparently the music they used for the State finals. Stephanie danced, leapt, did cartwheels and leaps and splits, and shouted rhythmic cheers the likes of which had never before been seen or heard on British shores. When she finished, the girls all screamed and cheered.

Stephanie went to stand with Olivia and Leslie, while the cheerleaders talked and decided amongst themselves. Once again, Leslie felt totally awkward, in his pink bloomers. It didn't take long for a decision.

"You were all so brilliant," said Alison. "It wasn't easy to decide. But, Stephanie and Olivia, you made it!"

All the girls screamed with delight, and embraced the two winners. Then they walked away together, leaving Leslie alone. Completely forgotten, except for one last smirk over Olivia's shoulder. Leslie walked back to the women's change room alone, and changed into his dress.

* * *

Miss Sangras approached the girls. Some were still warming up, but most were talking in groups.

"Class, class?" she said. "Please, we need to be quiet. We are all warmed up now, yes? All girls are ready to learn dance?"

"Yes, Miss Sangras!" responded Leslie, along with all the other girls.

"Tres bien!" said Miss Sangras. "Such wonderful enthusiasm! Our last class, I have ask that you watch the YouTube videos, of Asian girl dance groups. Do we all see these videos? Bon! This modern style of dance highlights the femininity, oui? Every turn of the hip,

every roll of the wrist, all is very sexy! And we see the expression of the face, so important in dance. We will all learn this style of dance, every one of you to be this sexy, yes?"

Leslie cringed inwardly. How much sexier did he have to be?

"So, we are ready to learn the first steps! All girls, pose like so, now shake hips left-right, left-right. Left arm raised, wrist bent, so feminine. Bend low, step forward, as far as you can, pointing the foot and draw a big circle with the toe, bring your foot back and pose. Now try!"



All the girls tried the steps, some falling off balance from the unusual movements expected of them. Leslie completed the entire sequence a couple of times before Miss Sangras stopped the class.

"Non, non!" called out Miss Sangras. "You do the move, but not as women! You must think how feminine you are. Do the move and think how soft, how perfect your body! Leslie, my lovely angel, please come to me."

Leslie was shocked to be singled out, again! Worried what Miss Sangras might want, he stepped forward.

"You see, Leslie, she is the perfect woman! Every move, so naturally feminine. Leslie, please do the dance step, show the other girls!"

Leslie tried to do the steps, but it was always so much more difficult with everyone else watching!

"Now, you are so stiff, always when others are watching! Not like this, like before! Do not be self-con-

scious. Here, stand, close your eyes, gather your thoughts," said Miss Sangras. Then she continued slowly, almost hypnotically, saying "You are all alone on stage. Touch your body. It is beautiful, so feminine. You are the perfect woman, you smile, and dance!"

Leslie closed his eyes. He imagined himself alone, on stage in an empty auditorium. He ran his hands over his curves, from his narrow shoulders to his full breasts, his narrow waist, his round hips. He was perfect, a beautiful woman, so vital, so sexy. The perfect features of his feminine face curved into a radiant smile, and he danced.

Leslie stopped and smiled. He opened his eyes, and was surprised to find he was not alone. As he faced the class, all the other girls cheered for him.

"You see?" said Miss Sangras. "To dance, is to feel the woman inside you. Be confident in that woman, let her be free. Leslie, you are such a sexy woman!"

"Um, thank you," replied Leslie shyly, his perfect cheekbones turning a very feminine pink.

"Miss Sangras," said a voice from the back of the room. Everyone turned, and Leslie was surprised to see Dr. Gordon-Smythe had entered the room with a young man.

"I hate to interrupt," she continued. "Could we borrow Miss Scarlett, for just a few minutes?"

"Oui, certainment," replied Miss Sangras. "Mais, she is my model student, so please bring her back!"

"Of course, we'll just be a few minutes." Dr. Gordon-Smythe led Leslie out of the dance studio, and into the hallway. "Leslie, this is Mr. Jameson."

"William, please," the young man said.

"William, um, nice to meet you," said Leslie shyly, not sure how to react to being so formally introduced to a young man. Leslie was wearing nothing but his fiery leotard and 'Nude' tights. What would this man think?

"William is a student at Middenhale," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe. "He is the manager of the cheerleading team. Leslie, I was so sorry to hear what happened at the tryouts."

"Oh, well, that's alright I suppose," said Leslie in his tiny voice. "There were only two positions open, and the other auditions were so much better than mine."

"I find that hard to believe, after the dance I just saw you perform," said William.

"Um, thank you," said Leslie, trying to look away from William. "But the tryouts were fair. Olivia and Stephanie were much better than me, and deserve to be on the team."

"Nevertheless," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe. "It was wrong of Olivia to block you from entry. I contacted Mr. Jameson, and we have been discussing options to get you on the team."

Leslie turned to Dr. Gordon-Smythe, shaking his head, his long auburn hair swinging with each motion. "No, Dr. Gordon-Smythe, please, the tryouts really were fair. I don't want you to cut Olivia so that I can be on the team. That would just make everyone angry at me."

"Oh, I wouldn't do that if I could," replied William.

"Then... what?" said Leslie, slightly confused.

"When I told Mr. Jameson about you, he was quite firm," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe. "The team had a full roster of cheerleaders, and could accept no more. But there was one position on the team that had not been filled."

"I still don't understand," said Leslie. "You won't accept another cheerleader, so what other position is there on the cheerleading team?"

"We're looking for someone to wear our mascot costume," William explained.

Suddenly it all made sense to Leslie! "Oh, I see! I could be the mascot! Oh, I would like that a lot. Much better than wearing a cheerleading skirt," he said, relieved that something he would be involved in would not require him to show off his feminine charms.

"In the past, we've never found a girl willing to wear the costume," William told him.

"Oh, I don't care how silly it looks!" Leslie enthused. "Your team is the Falcons, right? So I get to dress like a big stuffed bird, and run around flapping my arms. I love it, it's perfect for me!"

"Well, that's not exactly right," William tried to explain. "Our team is the Falcons, but our mascot is not a falcon. The mascot is based on a local legend. You see, the woods near Middenhale are supposed to be inhabited by pixies."

"So the mascot is..." said Leslie, afraid to complete the sentence.

"A pixie!" William exclaimed.

"And remind me, what does a pixie look like, exactly?" Leslie wondered.

"I have the costume right here," said William, holding out a small bag. Leslie accepted the bag, pulling out its contents. There wasn't much.

"This is what a pixie wears?" said Leslie, horrified by the costume. "This leather top, it's not big enough! It will never go all the way around!"

"It's not supposed to," William explained. "You see, it has leather straps to tie it closed across your chest."

"Nice," said Leslie, not really feeling it was nice at all. "And this leather skirt is so short!"

"It's about the same length as the cheerleaders wear," William explained. "Maybe a couple of inches shorter."

"A couple of very important inches," Leslie said.

"If the ankle boots don't fit, we can find you another pair," William said.

"What do I do with this?" Leslie asked, holding up an elasticized band covered with plastic flowers.

"Oh, you wear that on your wrist," he was told.

"My wrist isn't what needs to be covered! This can't be the entire outfit!" Leslie said, wanting to cry.

"Oh no, of course not!" laughed William. Leslie looked up with a faint hope in his eyes, and was told "The wings are too awkward to carry about. You can pick them up before the games at Middenhale."

"Wings?" said Leslie.

"Well," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe. "I'm so glad we were able to work that out! Leslie, did you want to try on the costume? You'll want to get used to performing in it. Perhaps we could watch you wear it in dance class!"

* * *

Leslie looked around the wide, empty space. There was no one but him, for as far as he could see. Just miles and miles of English countryside, rolling hills, blue sky and soft clouds. A cool autumn breeze blew against his body, but the bright sun kept him warm. Then, as he had been taught, he reached deep within himself to find all that was soft and tender and feminine, and he danced.

Leslie spun, he twirled, he raised his hands to the sky and leapt with joy in his tribute to the season, to the sun and the wind, to the colored leaves. Leslie danced until he thought his heart would burst, then gently slowed, once again feeling the wind, the sun. He thanked them for their strength, he curtsied to his unseen audience. He opened his eyes.

The people in the football stands whistled and applauded. Leslie ran off to the side, while the cheerleaders came out to do a routine.



Miss Sangras had helped him with the dance, had choreographed it especially for him, for the Middenhale Pixie. He had worked on the dance, had practiced it all week. This was his first performance, and Miss Sangras' visualization techniques had helped him to get through it. He didn't know how we would have gotten through the experience otherwise.

From what he was told, no girl had ever been willing to appear in this costume. So how was he supposed to feel, in high-heeled ankle boots, a bra held together by leather straps exposing his ample bosom, and a skirt that barely existed? And pixie wings, we must never forget the pixie wings.

One more job to do before the game starts. Leslie stood at the side of the field, where the home team would soon appear. He was supposed to greet each player as he emerged on the field and wish him luck. Then all he had to do was stand at the sideline and watch the game. Leslie adjusted his skirt and top, hoping to show the players as little as possible!

The team came out of their locker room, and ran past Leslie. The first few ignored him, probably too involved in thinking about the game to notice the half-dressed young girl yelling good wishes at them.

Some stopped a moment to stare. They hadn't been told about the Pixie who would greet them. This had never happened before. Leslie shyly called out "Good luck," and the players proceeded onto the field.

By the time the last few players arrived, word had come down the line. After one of the guys went over to Leslie and high-fived him, no one wanted to miss his chance to interact. The last player approached Leslie, stopped, took Leslie's face in his hands, and kissed him before running onto the field!

"Number 7," said Leslie, noting the player's number. "Stay away from number 7." Leslie wiped his mouth, then walked to the side where he would stand with the cheerleaders to watch the rest of the game.

The game began. Middenhale took the ball, passed the opposition defenses, a quick pass to the side, and they put it in the net!

Leslie looked to see who the team was congratulating, who had scored such a quick first goal. He was able to make out the number on the back of his shirt – number 7.

"Just great," said Leslie. "Now they'll all want a kiss for luck."

Chapter 5

College Nights

"Try this on first," said Olivia, laying the dress across Leslie's arms. "And whether it fits or not, you come straight back here where we can see, understand? We need to check the color, fit and style."

Leslie looked at the dress, held it up against himself. "Olivia, I can't wear this. It's too..."

"Just get it on!" insisted Olivia, guiding Leslie to the change room at the back of the store. "We'll tell you if it's right for you or not." Olivia shoved Leslie and the dress into the

change room, pulled the curtain closed, then returned to the store to continue searching for the perfect outfit.

Stephanie watched as Olivia scanned the racks of clothes. "I think this is really nice, what you're doing for Leslie," she said.

Olivia looked up, her intense concentration broken momentarily. "Hmm? What do you mean?"

Stephanie explained, "It's just, I thought you didn't like her much. But now you're helping her. I'm glad – she's really not all that bad. She's so pretty, and with a little help she could be popular. With the right dress, she should attract a lot of attention at the athletic banquet tonight."

Olivia smiled as she thought about Leslie at the athletic banquet. "Not just the right dress," she told Stephanie. "After this, she's getting her hair styled, and her makeup done. She's going to attract a lot of attention tonight. But it has nothing to do with liking her."

"She's so pretty, but all she ever does is go to class, and the soccer matches, then back to your room. I think she'll enjoy getting out, meeting some boys."

"Yes, meeting some boys!" said Olivia with a sinister laugh. "She's going to meet lots of boys tonight, with her high heels and sexy mini-dress and gorgeous hair and makeup! No more hiding, little Miss Invisible! You've lasted almost a year at Havisham, as the quiet little girl who always manages to disappear. Well, I've figured you out! Let's see how long you last, once you're the hottest date on campus!"

Stephanie looked confused for a moment, but shook off the feeling. "Well, it seems like a nice thing to do for her anyway," she said, then returned to looking through the racks of clothing.

"You see," said Leslie as he appeared from the change area. "I just don't think I can wear a size 4." He tugged the dress down to cover more leg, then up again to cover more chest.

"I don't like the red," said Olivia. "Not hot enough. Maybe silver. Stephanie, did you find this dress in silver?"

Stephanie looked through the racks. "No, not that style. What about this?"

Leslie looked in horror at the tiny strip of silver cloth Stephanie had pulled from the rack. He turned to Olivia and said, "No, Olivia! I can't, you know I can't wear that!"

"This is hot," said Stephanie.

"It's perfect," agreed Olivia with an evil grin. "Find it in a size 3."

* * *

"Our next award (*cough*), is for strategic thinking (*cough*). Um, uh, Pixie, would you please tell everyone about our next award recipient (*cough, cough*)?"

Leslie cringed, but accepted the cards passed to him. The Athletic Director for Middenhale was an elderly man, who couldn't seem to remember Leslie's name and so constantly referred to him as Pixie. Leslie did not want this nickname to stick.

The athletic banquet was held at a local place called The Mayfair Chinese Restaurant, just outside the Middenhale campus grounds. Leslie had been seated at a table with the cheerleaders and the few female athletes from Middenhale, and dinner had been quite pleasant. Seated, his low-cut dress merely looked scandalous, which was quite acceptable to the other girls. It wasn't until he stood, and the hemline revealed the dress to be positively indecent that he felt completely out of place.



After dinner the Athletic Director, Mr. Frederickson, stood at a podium set up next to the head table to present awards to the athletes. Some awards were real, others were meant to be humorous. Mr. Frederickson had been presenting the awards in this manner for possibly as long as a century. There may have been a time in his life when he was a fabulous after-dinner speaker, but no one present could remember it. This wasn't necessarily his fault, though, as his sense of comic timing was thrown off by his need to cough every time he spoke more than three words.

Before he could speak, Mr. Frederickson was unexpectedly joined at the podium by one of the athletes. James Pinkerton had been attending these banquets for four years now, and realized that he was in store for an hour of speeches more tedious than any lecture he had

endured in his college career. However, he had a plan.

"Gentlemen, and ladies," said James, nodding to the girls' table. "Mr. Frederickson will now be announcing this year's athletic awards. To assist him in handing out the awards, could I ask for one of our lovely female athletes to join us?"

This caused a stir at the girls' table, but it didn't take long for Olivia to see her chance to offer Leslie's services. Before he even realized what was happening, Leslie found himself beside the podium in full view of the entire banquet, a room of men laughing and cheering for him – and his dress!

"Mr. Frederickson," said James, pulling the elderly man aside from the podium for a moment. "Hand the awards to Leslie, and she can give them out just like the big awards shows. Oh, and if you have a coughing spell, maybe she could read your cards for you."

Then he disappeared, back into the crowd. Leaving Leslie to run the awards ceremony for the next hour!

"Strategic Thinking," said Leslie, reading from the top card. "This athlete rows on Middenhale's straight four team. After failing to properly secure his oar for a race, the oar was ripped from his hands after only five strokes. Not wishing to burden his team with his own dead weight, he leapt into the river, helping to propel his boat to a fifth-place finish. The award goes to Richard Gibben."

Everyone roared with laughter as Richard received his award. He shook Mr. Frederickson's hand, then hugged Leslie as he was handed the tiny cup.

Leslie's slow, careful reading style, as he struggled to decipher Mr. Frederickson's handwriting, was perfect for the occasion. As was his dress. Even Mr. Frederickson looked pleased, as his jokes were receiving the reception he always pictured.

"And our final award (*cough*), is for literal interpretation of the rules (*cough*). Pixie, could you read again (*cough, cough*)?"

"Literal Interpretation of the Rules," Leslie read from the cards he was handed. "Only the goal tender is allowed to use his hands. However, the actual rule states the goal tender can use any part of his body. This athlete blocked a shot on goal in the final minutes of play against Oxbridge, using his... Um, I'm not going to say this word. I'm going to say, groin. He was carried from the field, but his sacrifice salvaged a 2-0 loss for Middenhale. The award goes to Dirk Patterson."

Everyone laughed as Dirk hobbled to the podium to accept his award.

Mr. Frederickson began reading a final card, but instead had another coughing fit. He handed the card to Leslie.

"This concludes this year's award ceremony," he read. "Please feel free to join me across the road at the Horse and Feather pub, for a few pints and perhaps a dance with... with, one of our lovely lady athletes."

The room quickly filled with the sound of scraping chairs and animated voices as everyone stood, discussed their plans, and headed for the exits. Olivia and Stephanie ran up to Leslie to congratulate him.

"Leslie, you were so cute up there!" said Stephanie.

"Ha, ha, so cute!" laughed Olivia. "Come on, let's get over to the pub!"

"For drinking and dancing?" said Leslie. "No, I don't think so."

"But you just told everyone in the room that you were going," said Stephanie. "All the cheerleaders are going, mostly because you said you were going."

"I was just reading a card!" said Leslie. "And I think Olivia had enough to drink already. Olivia, let's go home, okay?"

"You need a drink to loosen up, girl!" said Olivia. "That's a waste of a really great dress, if no one buys you a drink or dances with you. Nothing to argue about, let's go!"

* * *

"From the gentleman at the end of the bar," the bartender said to Leslie, placing a high-ball glass filled with some unidentified, colorful liquid in front of him.

"What is this?" asked Leslie, but the bartender was already gone. He turned to Olivia. "What is this? What do I do with it?"

"It's a drink, silly," Olivia explained. "From that guy down there. You drink it."

Leslie looked down to the other end of the bar, where a group of Middenhale rowers were seated. One of them lifted his drink and nodded. Leslie tried hard not to run screaming from the pub as he smiled and nodded in return.

"Of course it's a drink," he said, turning back to face Olivia. "It's a drink, from a guy, in a pub! There's no way I can accept this and you know why! Who knows what he expects from... oh, hi!"

"Dance?" said the guy from the other end of the bar, now standing over Leslie.

Leslie looked up into his face. "No, thank you, I'm... with friends."

"That's okay," said Stephanie unhelpfully. "You go and have fun. We'll watch your drink and your purse for you."

The guy offered his hand, and after a long pause Leslie accepted. He stood and they walked to the dance floor, already filled with couples gyrating to the loud music.

Olivia turned to the bar, and picked up Leslie's drink. Stephanie said to her, "I thought we were going to watch that for Leslie."

"Watch, drink, it makes no difference," laughed Olivia as she sipped from the glass. "It won't be the last drink she gets tonight."

"She really is so uptight," said Stephanie. "I don't know why. She looks fantastic tonight. Do you think that maybe she's never had a boyfriend?"

Olivia laughed. "I know for a fact she's never had a boyfriend. You're right, that's exactly what she needs! Let's make sure that by the end of the night, Leslie has dates every night till this time next year!"

Stephanie and Olivia raised their glasses, and toasted Leslie's impending social life.

Leslie spun on the dance floor. He stepped, he slid, he twisted. He was a well-trained dancer, and was easily able to forget that he was on the dance floor with another guy as he closed his eyes and slipped into his dance training. Then the music ended, and a slow, romantic song played.

"Thanks for the dance, I have to get back to my friends n-nnngh!" Leslie was unable to finish the sentence as he was grabbed into a close hold, the guy's arms circling his body, holding him close as they swayed to the music. Leslie had no choice except to hold on.

The guy's hands slowly explored Leslie's back. Then he whispered into his ear, "So you do have shoulder blades. I was sure they would be wings."

And then, Leslie laughed. He laughed, and the horrible, awkward tension he had been feeling fell away.

What did you say?" he asked, looking at the guy who held him so close on the dance floor. "Wings? Oh, that's so funny! I never heard that before."

Leslie rested his head on the guy's shoulder, and continued to laugh softly for the rest of the song. When it ended they stepped apart, Leslie thanked him with a smile, then skipped back to rejoin Olivia and Stephanie at the bar.

"Did you have fun?" asked Stephanie.

"Yes, yes I did," Leslie answered as he sat. "I can't believe I'm saying it, but yes. He said the funniest thing, something about I'm an angel, or I have wings, I forget exactly. But then I realized, all these guys, they really do think I'm a girl!"

"Because you *are* a girl," said Stephanie, trying to make sense out of any of this.

"Oh, right," said Leslie, suddenly remembering that Stephanie had no idea. "Yes, I am a girl. But I suddenly realized, if I would just relax, I don't need to worry what anyone else thinks. All these guys see me without a doubt as a girl, so if I would just stop fighting and be a girl, everything else would be so simple!"

"Because you **ARE** a girl," repeated Stephanie.

"Right," replied Leslie, only slightly awkwardly. Then suddenly there was a drink in his hand. Leslie looked up to see another guy, looking down into his eyes.

"This is definitely going to be dangerous. You with those curves, and me with no brakes," he said.

Leslie laughed, and set down his drink. "What did you just say? Say it again, that was so funny! Do you want to dance?" he asked, standing. He led the guy to the dance floor.

"Well, it looks like our little girl is growing up," Stephanie said to Olivia.

"Yes, yes she is," said Olivia, lifting Leslie's drink and sipping it.

The rest of the night, Leslie had more fun than he could remember ever having had before...

"That's a great dress. Of course, it would look even better on the floor beside my bed."

"I've lost my phone number. Could I borrow yours?"

"Have you always been this cute, or did you have to work at it?"

"Is it hot in here, or is it just you?"

"You know what I like about you? My arms."

"Baby, if you were a flower I'd pick you!"

"Nice dress. Could I talk you out of it?"

After hours of dancing with every guy in the room, Leslie finally sat with his friends at the bar.

"These guys are so funny!" he said, leaning onto the bar. "I'm having an amazing time! I'm so glad you talked me into coming out tonight. Was there a drink here for me? I'm so thirsty."

"There were lots of drinks here for you, at various times throughout the evening," Stephanie told him. "I'm afraid Olivia drank them all, though."

"Did she? That's okay. I'm just going to rest here a minute before I go out on the dance floor again."

"I can't believe you're actually having fun! You are supposed to be ridiculed, humiliated, devastated! You are supposed to be destroyed and leave school, out of my life forever, you slutty nightmare! Instead you think you're homecoming queen, and why the hell didn't even one guy ask me to dance all night?" said Olivia.

Or rather, she thought that was what she said. Even if any of the words had been intelligible, it would have been impossible to hear her in the noisy pub, as she was lying with her face down on the bar.

"Is Olivia okay?" asked Leslie, seeing his friend muttering into a puddle of beer.

"She's been resting like that for the past little while," Stephanie told him.

"Her hair is all wet," said Leslie, lifting Olivia's face from the puddle. Stephanie just shrugged, not knowing what to say.

"Let's get her to the washroom, and clean her up a little," Leslie suggested.

"It's really small, and crowded," Stephanie told him. "And there's a line. I don't think that's going to work."

"Come on, Olivia, stand up," Leslie encouraged her. Then to Stephanie he suggested, "Let's take her across the road to the university. The Student Center will be empty. It's right across the road, and it has beautiful washrooms."

Working together the two girls guided Olivia through the crowded pub, out the door, into the street, and across the road to the Middenhale Student Center.

* * *

Leslie stumbled under the weight of Olivia as he and Stephanie helped her into the Student Center women's room. Olivia had managed to walk much of the way on her own, but at this point she was little more than dead weight. The women's room was big, and clean, and completely empty.

"Olivia? Hi, sweetie, are you in there?" asked Stephanie.

"Let's lean her against the wall, here," suggested Leslie. "Olivia, can you stand for just a minute? Stephanie, hold onto her and I'll run some water."

Stephanie kept Olivia from sliding down the wall, while Leslie filled a sink with some warm water. By the time he returned, Olivia's eyes were open. She looked at him, and tried to speak.

"Do you want something?" asked Leslie. "What are you trying to say?" he asked as he moved closer to Olivia.

Olivia placed her hands on Leslie's shoulders for support. She looked him in the eyes and said, "You stupid bitch. I hate you, I hate you, I hate you so much."

Or rather, she thought that was what she said. What she actually said was, "Huh, Huh, Brl-GRaaRgh!" as she threw up down Leslie's dress.

Stephanie couldn't help laughing. Leslie looked at the mess of his beautiful dress and said, "Hey, it's not funny! This dress cost £300 pounds, and I don't know if I can get it cleaned."

"I'm sorry," apologized Stephanie. "I'm not really laughing at you. I'll take Olivia into the stall, while you try to clean yourself, okay?"

Leslie saw Stephanie and Olivia safely into a stall, where Stephanie held Olivia's hair as Olivia leaned over the porcelain. Then he returned to the sink, where he carefully stripped off his dress. Wearing only his panties and high heels, he cleaned himself off with paper towels and warm water from the sink. Then he refilled the sink with clean, warm water, and worked on his dress.

"How is Olivia?" Leslie asked as he let the water out of the sink, then held up the dress to assess the damage.

"Empty, I think," said Stephanie from her post in the stall. "How's it going out there?"

Leslie opened the door and looked in. He held up his dress and said, "I think I ruined it. It's dry-clean only, but I had to do something, didn't I?"

"It'll look better when it dries," Stephanie told him. "We'll get it properly cleaned tomorrow. But what are you going to do now? You can't wear it home."

"Can you go to my locker in the Physical Activities Building? I have a pair of pink bloomers there that I could wear."

"That's all the way across campus. It will take me at least twenty minutes to get there and back," Stephanie told him.

"Well, we'll be right here waiting for you," said Leslie, gesturing at Olivia on the floor, and his naked self. "Here, please take my dress, and leave it in the locker. We can pick it up and deal with it tomorrow morning. The combination is 7-27-17, okay?"

"Seven, 27, 17. That's easy," said Stephanie, accepting the nasty bundle. She left, and Leslie was alone.

"Are you okay?" he asked Olivia.

Olivia looked up at him from where she sat on the floor in the stall. Her face was gray as she muttered something unpleasant, but fortunately unintelligible.

Leslie went back to the sink. He got some more paper towels, and ran some more warm water. Dabbing at his breasts, he was thinking how he might never feel clean again. He slipped off a shoe and rubbed one of his tired feet, which were quite sore from a night of dancing in high heels. Then a loud crash spun him around. Leslie ran back to the stall, as quickly as he could in one bare foot and one high heel.

"Olivia?" he said to the figure lying curled in the bathroom stall. Olivia was on the tile floor, her eyes open but vacant, seeing nothing.

"Olivia, please, wake up!" Leslie cried as he threw himself on the tiles beside her.

"Oh my gosh, please, are you breathing? I can't tell. Please Olivia, don't be dead." Leslie cradled Olivia's head in his hands, trying to lift her into a sitting position. He nearly dropped her when he realized, there was blood on his hands.

"Stephanie!" he called out while gently placing Olivia's bleeding head back on the tile. He stood, backed out of the stall, and ran to the bathroom door. Opening it wide enough to put his head into the hall he called as loud as he could, "Stephanie, come back!"

His voice echoed through the building, but there was no response. Stephanie was gone. Leslie looked across to the administration desk. There had been a girl there when they came in, but she was gone now. He checked the clock – 11:05. Her shift must have ended, and she had gone home. He was alone in the building.

There would be no one to help him until Stephanie returned. He couldn't go for help. He looked back at the stall, where Olivia's feet projected under the door. She might be dead already.

* * *

The people on the dance floor stopped and applauded as the song ended. As usually happens at a pub dance, the noise level in the room increased as the music ended and everyone tried to get in some words of conversation before the music started up again. Except this time it was different.

There was an unnatural silence at one end of the pub. It slowly spread, as more and more people took notice, turning to the silence, ceasing all conversation as they saw what was happening.

Within seconds, there was not a sound in the entire pub. Everyone stared at the front door. When the last voice had been silenced, the girl who stood there in her high heels, panties, and hands covering her breasts said,

"Someone, please help me!"

Chapter 6 Graduation

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have been given the great honor of introducing our main speaker of the evening. Four years ago, she and I were assigned to be flatmates, and as with most flatmates it was the beginning of a long and enduring hatred."

Olivia waited for the laughter to quiet down, then continued.

"Looking back we can see how irrelevant our differences were, and we laugh about them now, but when you're young everything seems so very serious. The mundane, minor annoyances of everyday life are blown out of proportion and become huge obstacles, preventing you from seeing a truly beautiful person. Fortunately for me, she never gave up trying. And when she had to make a choice between her own personal safety and being a true friend to a mean and spiteful flatmate, she exposed herself..."

Here, everyone in the room laughed, as there was no one who didn't know the story!

"... to great personal risk, in order to save my life. I will always be grateful to her. Ladies and gentlemen, your valedictorian, as well as the first and forever best Middenhale Pixie for the past four years, Leslie Scarlett!"

Everyone applauded as Leslie stood and crossed to the podium. He wore a simple white dress, knee length with long sleeves that gathered at the wrist, with a traditional Havisham graduation cape in blue with gold trim over his shoulders. The two girls hugged for a long time, until Olivia finally let go, crossed to her seat and sat.

Leslie faced her audience. "Excuse me a moment," he said as he fumbled in his clutch purse for a tissue. After dabbing at his eyes and nose he continued.

"Oh, I'm sorry. This is so emotional. Okay, I think I'm ready now," he said, giving his nose one last wipe before tucking the tissue back into his purse.

"Ladies and gentlemen, fellow students, faculty and staff, parents, friends and relatives. What a long and crazy journey this has been! Four years ago I was given an amazing opportunity, to attend Havisham Women's College. But to be honest, I didn't know if I wanted it.

"I had no idea what it meant to be a woman. Oh, I thought I did. I mean, being a woman was all about hair, and makeup, and dresses, right? So what was the point of a women's college? Did I really need four years to learn something so obvious?

"As with most things in life, the truth in this case was far from obvious. But living in this community of women, studying with them and playing with them, working with them and growing together has been such an amazing experience. I feel that when I arrived at Havisham, I was only pretending to be a woman. It took this experience to truly understand, to truly become a woman.

"And of course, it helped to have Middenhale right down the road, just to remind us about boys" he added, followed by laughter from his audience.

"So fellow graduates, we now have to move forward to the next step in life. But whatever that next step takes us, our high heels will not waver. We will take that step with confidence, secure in the knowledge that as women, there is nothing we can't do!"

* * *

Leslie grabbed a pork skewer from a tray as the waiter rushed past. The crowded room seemed to have a number of waiters with amazing items on trays, but they all rushed past as if they had somewhere else to be. He slid a piece of peanut butter-covered pork into his mouth, and immediately regretted it as Dr. Gordon-Smythe approached and spoke to him.

"Leslie, that was a wonderful speech," she said. "Truly inspirational. Your grandmother would be proud, I'm sure."

Leslie chewed as fast as he could, finally swallowing the huge piece of meat. Covering his mouth he managed to say, "Thank you, Dr. Gordon-Smythe. I hope so."

"I know so!" laughed Olivia as she and Stephanie joined the small conversation group. Stephanie wrapped her arms around Leslie in agreement. Leslie held the stick with its drippy hot peanut butter as far away from everyone as he could.

"Olivia," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe, turning to speak to her. "I know, one of your grandmother's greatest regrets was that she became very wealthy, while her best friend lived a more humble life. As such, they lived very separate lives after graduation."

"Well, that's really not a problem for us," explained Olivia. "Together with four years' interest, both Leslie and I stand to inherit a little over £50 million pounds. But even still, we have different plans for the near future."

"Yes," said Leslie, his mouth finally clear of peanut butter. "Olivia is getting married!"

Olivia held up her left hand, displaying the diamond for all to see. "His name is Mark Graham. He graduated from Middenhale last year. Olivia and Stephanie are going to be my bridesmaids!"

"And after the wedding, Leslie and I plan to travel," Stephanie said. "See the world together, two girls on the open road!"

"Oh," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe, clearly disturbed. "Leslie, is that wise? I mean, two GIRLS, traveling together?"

Stephanie laughed. "It's okay, Doctor. I know all about Leslie!" she hugged him tighter and smiled at him, then wiped a little peanut butter from his lip with her thumb.

"She found out last year," Leslie admitted. I suppose it was inevitable. It was nearly impossible to keep it a secret from everyone, what with all the sleepovers, shared change rooms and showers..."

"Of course," said Dr. Gordon-Smythe, interrupting Leslie before he could tell her any more.

"It was a shock, but kind of a relief," said Stephanie. "I mean, she's so cute and I wondered why I was so attracted..."

"Of course!" said Dr. Gordon-Smythe again, slightly louder. "So Leslie, I suppose this means you will be reversing the... procedures... you had done, prior to coming to Havisham? I mean, after you are Olivia's bridesmaid, of course."

"No," said Leslie quite frankly. "I meant what I said in my speech. I'm confident in the woman I've become. There's nothing I need from the life I led before."

"And she has everything I'm looking for as well," said Stephanie with a kiss on his cheek.

Leslie wiped his fingers on a napkin and smiled. "Do I need to touch up my makeup?" he asked Stephanie, as he wondered what warm peanut butter might have done to his lipstick.

Stephanie looked into his eyes. "No, not at all. Girl, you are perfect!"