

Lingering Feelings



Alex Miller

A "Her TV" Novel

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“Cameras are on, girls. Everything’s a go.”

Bright lights flashed on all around me, half-blinding my vision.

I hoped it was so for everybody else too. There I stood, standing for multiple cameras. Watched by many pairs of eyes and I couldn’t have been more embarrassed of my life.

They were shooting a commercial, that’s what they said to me, and I seemed to be one of its main actors. Or should I say *actresses*. I was a guy, but I didn’t exactly look masculine and that wasn’t the worst of it. It was what I wore and that everybody could see me like that.

How did I ever end up in this situation? My mind started to look back to when everything seemed to go like it should for a man of my age.

I lay on the couch staring at the letters in a book. Much the same as I had done every day for the last few months. Something my mother obviously couldn’t appreciate.

“Will you please go look for a job? It has been months and you still have no new job.”

My mother was right. I should go look for a job, but I had given up.

The one I lost was my first job and I was lucky to have gotten that one. It only lasted a little more than a year. I got fired. Not that I didn't do my job right, I did. At the end, I just wasn't what they looked for. I was a timid man, not old, only 23, with black hair and no beard to hide my face.

Not unhandsome to women's standards, but not macho handsome. I never was and I never will be. That had his obvious reasons.

Just not having the characteristics of a macho man was the most important one. Another one was that I was too short, according to today's standard. I was only five-foot-four and therefore a lightweight. My stepsister was almost a head bigger than me, a lot of women were. Not by a head necessarily, but they were bigger. Sharon, my so-called stepsister, had no problem tossing me over like a feather and she did if she felt like it, no matter how hard I protested. I was stronger than I looked, but I was no Superman. The laws of nature just demanded that I could not win. My biggest handicap ever, was my shyness. I could not do anything about that, no matter how hard I ever tried. My mother and even my stepsister tried to help me on some rare occasions; my step-dad never bothered.

The day we met I saw in his eyes that he never would consider me as his stepson, feelings that never changed and his death made it impossible that they ever could. So I never felt myself comfortable in the presence of woman, not that of men. The men, those that didn't ignore me, treated me as a softie and the woman did the same. They liked my kind character but none of the women took me seriously as a candidate for more than friendship. That was the reason that I didn't have much experience.

There were the occasional contacts with a person of the female sex but they never lasted long. Mostly because they were blind dates and more than one of them didn't like having to look down. I blamed it on their high heels. Therefore it wasn't only a job I was looking for.

I was, as it turned out, more destined to have success in finding the right job than in finding the right woman. At that moment I had given up on both.

I had a good education, thanks to a scholarship I had won. It wasn't a lot, but I was smart. But even there I had bad luck. The scholarship was for an economic degree. Not my first choice, not even one of my top ten, but it was my only chance for a decent degree at a well-known university.

I only got the scholarship thanks to Step-dad. Which he made me know every day, over and again. He was a big shot at a big company, one that saw offering a scholarship more as a tax reduction than as helping to shape someone's future. So my step-dad decided what degree I should pursue. I had nothing to say in it. My majors and minors were chosen *for* me, not *by* me. My choices would have been totally different; history, art or literature, choices my step-dad would veto before they were spoken out loud.

The problem was that I was not the right material for the corporate world. Not that I was not capable of doing my job. I was not hard enough, not impressive enough. My job interviews always had the same beginning, the frowning of eyebrows. Whatever they expected, it was never someone like me. Luckily, this time I could convince them to give me a chance, but they clearly regretted that decision, as did I. It was not a job for me, but I had no other choice. It wasn't the years of economic prosperity. Those days were over. Now you had to take what you could get. But that didn't mean that you did.

There weren't many jobs I was fit to do. I could do some physical labor, but almost everybody was a better fit for such a job than me. A minimum wage job at a fast food restaurant wasn't the future I had in mind. So the only job I could look for was the same old thing and for now I had enough of it all. I needed a break, away from the world where I didn't fit in.

But that was not what my mother had in mind. Every opportunity she had, she used to scold me. No son of hers would be a lazy bum while she was around. I lay down with a book and never looked up until it was evening.

It was to avoid my mother's eyes and the questions that were hidden behind them, questions that would repeat themselves so long as I didn't had a job. My mother had a Sixth Sense for it. The book wasn't yet down when out of the kitchen came her voice.

“Your step-dad would kick your ass if he saw what became of you.”

“My step-dad didn’t care what I became. He never believed in me anyway.”

Maybe he did in the beginning, but not after my graduation. Not after it was obvious to him that I would never be able to fill his shoes, in every way possible. He had hoped to bring me into his company to climb up the corporate ladder and one day replace him when he would go on his retirement. His disappointment was big, but lasted not long.

Sharon’s company was rapidly growing and started to make big ripples in the lingerie business. Even when he wasn’t crazy about the product she fabricated, he gladly spread the word about his daughter’s success. She was, after all, his flesh and blood. Her success was only natural. I was soon forgotten about as an potential heir for his throne.

But Mother was right. I would have gotten a speech from my step-dad after one day of unemployment. He always judged people, comparing them to him, which rarely had a positive result. Not many were as him, luckily for me and the world.

“Maybe my father never did, but Mother does and therefore so do I.”

I turned myself around in the direction of the sound and found an unexpected guest. Sharon did not live here anymore. She had her own place. The unexpected part was that it wasn’t Sunday, the day she reserved for Mom. There must have been something wrong for her to be her now.

“Hey, Sharon.”

“Hey, Ethan.”

Sharon was hot, beautiful and tall enough to be a model. Not thin enough, though, but that applies to almost everybody, even the models when they like to eat.

But most importantly, why would she event want to be a model? She had her own company. She had long black hair and a hard face. Sharon was my stepsister, but I didn’t consider her family. I never thought about

her as more than an acquaintance. It was not like I saw her a lot.

She went to boarding school. So during school years I only saw her at special occasions and holidays. She was twelve when she became part of my life and I was only seven. One thing I learned fast: the new member of the family always had the last word. I would get angry and wouldn't speak to her for days but in the end she always got what she wanted. She knew what a softie I really was.

What didn't help was that my mother took Sharon's side in almost every discussion. She called it a common female vision. I called it Not Fair. The relation between Sharon and my mother always was more intense, stronger, than her Mother's relationship with me. To her she was a real daughter.

To me, in essence, she was just an older girl who sometimes lived with us. After boarding school, there was higher education and life itself.

She started her company not long after graduating at the university.

After that she visited regularly but it was always my mother who kept her company. At those moments I just saw her face and heard her voice.

We barely spoke to each other, only to argue and I mostly gave that up when I was twelve. I couldn't say what she loved and who; those were things we never talked about. She was my mother's fake daughter, a girl I knew, but not really. A girl I neither liked nor disliked. Well, when she didn't boss me around, that is.

"What are you doing here? Not that I am not glad to see you."

She pinched me on the cheek. I hated that extremely and she knew that all too well.

"You better be."

She placed herself next to me on the couch. My mother had done the same. So there I was, surrounded by female determination and I would soon find out where it was aimed.

“I invited Sharon to talk about your situation.”

“What situation?”

I wasn't planning to make it easy for them. It was obvious what they wanted, but I would ignore it as long as possible, even if that was only minutes.

“Dinner is ready. We will talk about it at the table.”

It was Sharon's favorite, Coq au vin, whatever that was. I didn't care. It was not bad. So she would be busy for a while, eating. But it was my mother that was the first to speak.

“Sharon has a job for you.”

There they were, the words nobody wanted to say and I sure didn't want to hear. Sharon was offering me a job at her company.

Sharon nodded with her mouth full.

“Mom, I thought that we agreed this was a bad idea.”

My mother had brought this up back at the beginning of my quest for a job. It was a suggestion I always avoided taking seriously, until I had no other choice due to my continued unemployment. So we talked about it and I had a very good excuse not to consider it. Mother never gave up on the idea, though. I already explained that my sister had her own company, a successful one. But the fact was that it was a woman-oriented business and not a place where I would fit in. Creating and manufacturing lingerie wasn't something I had experience in, only in looking at it. I liked a woman in lingerie. It had the magical ability to make its contents more desirable. The problem was that I barely did anything more than looking.

The only times I had panties in my hands was when Sharon had been too hasty and threw hers in with my laundry. That happened more than once. Someone other than me would have started to doubt if it was just coincidence. So my knowledge about lingerie was limited, very limited.

But Sharon had the knowledge and the experience. She had exceeded the expectations my step-dad had of her. Even the fact that she wouldn't have had it so easy

without the business loan he got for her, hadn't changed his mind. The fact that she was successful was the only thing that counted to him. Her company had grown in a few years from a small business into a company that left its impression nationally.

"It is, but the alternative is worse."

Sharon's plate was empty and so also was her mind. That meant that there was room for something else.

"But, but there are only woman working at your company! For a good reason."

"Yes, that is true. Nevertheless I am offering you a job at my company."

"Doing what? There is nothing that I could do that somebody else can't do better. What do I know about lingerie?"

It was not that I didn't know anything about lingerie. I probably knew as much as most men. A woman in lingerie was a thing of beauty. But admiring a painting didn't make me a painter.

Sharon's company was successful in a market that was pure a woman's business, so I thought. I stood corrected in sooner than I could have imagined.

"Being my secretary."

"What? Your secretary? Why would that be a good choice for you, your company and, most importantly, for me?"

"It's the least damaging position."

For a moment I didn't know what to say. What *could* I say?

"Um!"

"I'll be your direct boss. The responsibility for your actions lies completely with me. You won't be able to frustrate my personnel with your incompetence. I know you. I know what you are capable of and what you are not. So it will be the best position for you to start in. Later we can see if there will be something that suits you better."

I jumped out of the couch and confronted the both of them.

“Forget it. I will never be your puppet, Sharon. I’ll work for minimum wage before that happens.”

I should not have said that. Now I couldn’t take it back anymore.

“OK, if that is your wish. You’ll get one more chance. But if you don’t find a job within a month, you know what will happen.”

The tone of my mother’s voice let no doubt. If I didn’t get a job in a month, I would be working for my sister, a prospect that made me shiver. Working for her would be of a whole other, scary, dimension. As a part of the family she was bossy, but as a boss, she would be impossible to deal with. I left the both of them behind without looking back. If I had looked back, their smiles would have given me a good indication of their lack of faith in the successfulness of my attempt. It was probably better that way. Looking for a job with that vision burned in my memory wouldn’t have been a good beginning. I would have given up much earlier.

Every day I was out, looking through the usual job search channels for something to throw in their face. But they knew me all too well. I would never take a minimum wage job above working for my sister. There simply were no other jobs just then. Well, not for me.

The competition was hard and, more important, bigger. They say that tall people have an advantage in getting a job over the short ones. I was the living proof that they were right.

Anyway, my chances were slim to find something before that looming Sunday. I was ready to admit defeat and I did a few days before the end of the month. The last few days I left the house like I had done every other day that month, but spent them in the park, a museum, or the zoo, places I could enjoy with an empty mind. My mother never said a word when she watched me go through the door those mornings, which surprised me. The only thing she said was, “Have a nice day, Honey.”

I knew what the future held for me and wanted to enjoy my last days of freedom in peace. Thinking about the job that awaited me was the last thing I wanted to do.

The best way to do was to avoid silent moments where my mind could not escape those thoughts. I made sure that my days were full and tiring. My mind was asleep for it could drift off.

That Saturday, I was just home after a busy day out trying to avoid the looming confrontation when she and my mother came in the room. They had been out for cake and an ice-cream at their favorite coffeehouse, something they did almost every weekend. They always invited me and I always said no and Sharon always gave the same reaction.

“Still afraid to be seen with two beautiful woman at your side?”

I was afraid indeed, afraid of being laughed at, the story of my life and height. I was an easy and well-known target of bullying. In high school one didn't need more than one reason to bully and with me there were more than enough.

It stopped when I went to university. Not because the people were more mature, which they were, but because the bullies had other priorities. After university I still was an easy target for someone who wanted a cheap laugh. Going out with my sister and mother would inspire a lot of would-be comedians. It would have been impossible for me to walk down a street without the chance of meeting old schoolmates and associates. Most of them knew me and my mother and sister. It was a very small town we lived in and my family is well-known. That's the disadvantage of having more money than the average family.

My step-dad liked to brag, one of his many not-so-positive qualities. We were lucky that the town was so small that the police had no trouble keep the crime numbers low, which was the main reason my mother wanted to stay here after remarrying. The other reason was the high quality of education offered here. My step-dad and his daughter were more acquainted with the city life. But my step-dad didn't mind living in a small town. He only was there during the weekends, anyway. The rest of the week he stayed in an apartment in the better part of the city. When my step-dad died, I realized theirs was more a marriage of convenience. He was looking for a mother for his daughter and my mother was looking for a way to survive. At the moment they met each other, we were living off the hush money

my mother had gotten. My father was killed in an accident at work.

The company blamed him, but knew they were really the ones to blame. So they offered Mother a bribe. It was for her silence on the matter. It would be never enough money to live on, but she had no other choice. Go to court and make only the lawyers rich or take what she could get, those were her choices. It wasn't the company's first accident and everybody in town knew that none of his coworkers would dare to testify against their employer. There was more to lose than to gain. We lost my father and we would lose a lot more if my mother sued. Mother had no degree and low-paying jobs were the only alternative.

A mortgage and a kid would mean scraping by, which meant living in poverty, a future my mother did not look forward to. She was, and still is, a beautiful woman. The result was that there was male interest in her enough, but not to replace a father.

A dating service was the connecting factor between my step-dad and my mom. Not long after they met, there was the wedding, a contract and a new family. A new family that I didn't ask for.

"Maybe he doesn't want to be seen in the company of his mother." A remark I couldn't let pass by.

"Of course I do, but I don't want to spoil your women's day out with the presence of a man."

"If you say so. However that excuse will not work forever. You know, your presence can change."

Now I was a little confused. Everybody's presence changes but that had nothing to do with the problem. Sharon was sometimes a mystery to me. I never knew what she really meant by things she said. Surely not when she made strange statements like this one and she loved making them.

She knew they would always leave me in a state of confusion. I didn't know what to think anymore. Sharon saw the surprised expression on my face and could not do anything else than laugh. That made me mad and also made me forget the reason for my confusion.

"Stop it!"

“Make me.”

“Aaaah.”

That was the only thing I could say and do. Trying to pinch her as I had many years ago wasn't possible anymore. She wasn't dressed for it and I was too old to lose such a game. My ego couldn't take the blow so easily anymore. It always ended up with me being the one that was pinched, or worse.

I turned around to seek shelter at my room. My feet had already passed the first steps of the stairs. Before I could escape, Sharon reeled me back in.

“How's the job hunting been?”

My shoulders lowered themselves as a sign of defeat. I didn't dare to look she or Mother in the face.

“Not so well. If you'll give more time, I'm sure I will find a job.”

This time it was Mother putting an end to my escape.

“Hold it, young man. You know what we agreed. Come back here so that we can talk about your future.”

There it was, “young man.” I knew I was in trouble when my mother used that phrase to address me. She would not let me go back on my given word. I had no other choice than to submit myself to their will. If I broke my promise, I knew I would pay the price. My mother wouldn't kick me out of the house, but she would cut me off financially. I would have room and board, but nothing more. Even going to the movies would be impossible without begging my mother for some money. My savings could keep me comfortable for a few months, but not longer. Spending money on books and other enjoyments was way too easy for me. She knew that all too well. Money was no issue anymore for my mother. My stepfather had left her a nice sum of money, all thanks to his life insurance. The rest of his money, savings, and investments went to Sharon, which she didn't need, so she gave it to my mother.

All that meant she could miss it to give me a little financial support just until I found the job that I wanted. But that seemed to be out of the question now. When it had been only my mother, I could have convinced her to

give me another chance. With Sharon involved, I stood no chance. I would be a secretary for my sister. That sounded worse than being unemployed.

“OK, you’ve got me. What now?”

They both were waiting until I dropped my butt in the couch where it had been living for a long time. Not the best place for me to discuss the terms of my surrender. So I set myself down at the table for a serious talk.

My mother smiled at Sharon.

“Our little man is getting big.”

Damn, she knew perfectly well how I hated it when she called me that.

The little self-confidence I had gathered was already vanishing like snow in spring. The emotionless face my sister brought to the discussion raised the temperature even more. When Sharon set herself down next to my mother, both facing me, there was no trace left of any confidence. Suddenly it felt like Doomsday.

“Well, I will fulfill my promise, but...”

Before I could say anything more, Sharon interrupted me.

“No buts, but one. This is what will happen. I talked it over with Mother and you can take it, but not leave it.”

“You can’t just make me do whatever you want. Mother has the last word in this. And I don’t believe she sees it just the way you do.”

My mother’s answer came immediately.

“Oh but I do, even more. I have given her complete control over this little experiment. So you know what to expect.”

Her answer made me swallow. An experiment she called it. Being a secretary for Sharon would be much more than just an experiment for here and surely for me.

“Sharon knows you almost as well as I do and she loves you.”

She will always have your best interest in mind. I know that and you should know that too.”

Her smile disappeared and her face looked as serious as Sharon’s.

I hadn’t seen it like that. OK, so it was Sharon. Maybe I was too negative.

In the end, it beats working for a boss who only sees me as a number. Sharon would at least see me as a person who happens to be familiar to her. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. With every thought that passed, I slowly started to believe in this experiment. Now I only had to listen to what it was she had in mind.

“You’ll start as soon as possible. It can be days or weeks, I will be the one to determine this. It all depends on you. In the meantime you have the opportunity to get everything in order.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You’ll be living with me in the city. There is more than enough space and the city is too far for you to travel back and forth to every day.”

“I can’t leave Mother behind. What would she do without me?”

“Isn’t it more the other way around?”

That was a typical reaction from Sharon, but before this could turn into a war my mother intervened.

“We already talked about this. Sharon only agreed to give you this job after I made it clear that it was fine with me. You should have more faith in her. She’s only thinking about your welfare.”

“Yeah, little man, you should.”

For an instant my defiance was gone. For an instant only, just until the moment when she had to tease me.

“Are you really going to live here on your own?”

“Yes, but not for long.”

“What? Have you met someone? Is it that?”

“No, idiot. Mother is coming to the city too. Not immediately, in four or five months maybe. She doesn’t know yet.”

“I always thought you didn’t want to live in the city, Mom.”

“I’m not fond of it, but I think it’s time to give it a chance. If it doesn’t work out, I can always come back.”

“What about the house?”

“I’ll just rent it out, furnished. There is already a lot of interest from the girls in my club. Some of them are looking for a better place. So I won’t have any difficulty with finding a decent tenant.”

“What would you do in the city? It will be a whole other life.”

“Find you a new step-dad maybe, or visit a museum with my daughter.”

“Not with your son?”

I wasn’t offended, only curious.

“Not when he doesn’t change a lot.”

For a moment my mother and sister looked at each other with a sparkle in their eyes and a smile on their lips, something I didn’t see. My mind was occupied with the most suitable explanation. I was, after all, the one who didn’t want to go with them to the coffee house. So why would she take me to a museum? Not until I changed my attitude about it, certainly. That they both had other changes in mind was something I still had to discover.

“OK, I’ll take the job. But does it really have to be the position of secretary? Isn’t there something else that’s more fitting for a man?”

Sharon saw this as an opportunity to mock me.

“Why? Is the job not macho enough for you? Is it that you have to use your brain and not your muscles? And I thought you never used the latter.”

That was not what I wanted to hear and she knew it. But it was my own fault. I should have known that

Sharon would react that way after such a stupid remark. She accepted that women and men were different, but thought they never should be treated that way. And they surely shouldn't behave that way when there wasn't a very, very, very good reason for it. In this case there wasn't.

“You know that everything my company sells is made for us, not by us. These companies have an exclusive contract with us and are very glad for the cooperation. It's a win-win for both of us. They wouldn't consider you a win. You can't seam and lifting boxes isn't one of the majors at the university and they have no need for more management. Besides, the nearest contractor is more than five hundred miles away. Some aren't even on this continent. But if you wish I can put in a good word for you?”

She said it without meaning it, because my answer was no surprise.

“No, that's not necessary. I give in. I'll be your dammed secretary. Whatever that means.”

“You will find out very soon. Pack your coat, we're leaving after we have say goodbye to Mom. You are coming with me.”

“What? Now? What about all my things? I can't leave them. Besides, packing my clothes will take me hours.”

“Yes now. You don't need to pack. You will have everything you'll need and more, a lot more.”

“How's that? I need at least fresh underwear for tomorrow. Or do you want me to go commando?”

My mother looked determined. She didn't react, whatever I said. She left it all to Sharon.

“You're right. You'll need your stuff, but Mother already anticipated that. All your clothes are packed and already on their way to my address. It cost mother extra money to have it all delivered by tomorrow. So you have no excuse.”

“When and how is this all done?”

“Mother and I have been packing since this morning. Well, 'packing' isn't the right word. You'll have a lot of

work sorting everything out. But tomorrow you'll have time enough. For the first few days I'll leave you be."

Her last word wasn't said before my mother put a bag next to me on the ground. The noise it made caused me to turn my head.

"What's that?"

"Your favorite books. Now you have no excuse anymore. You always said that your books would be all you need when the world came to an end."

"And the rest. I can't leave without the rest. It will take days to pack."

"It will and I am the one who shall do it, not you. The first batch is already packed. You will have everything you need within a week. Then you have everything you need to start a new job and a new future."

I finally started to calm down.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I should have known that you had everything under control. I'm an idiot. I'll just buy some new stuff. In the city there are shops and choices enough."

"There are, but you won't be able to."

My reaction was aimed straight my mother.

"What do you mean? I'm not rich, but my savings are sufficient to buy more than a few new things. That reminds me. What do I get paid?"

I looked straight at Sharon and she answered without even blinking.

"Nothing for the first six months."

"What! Do you expect me to work for free? No wonder you want me to be your secretary."

"You really are an idiot. Do you think you get paid for learning the business? You should be glad you only have to pay for rent and food."

I suddenly stood up, pushing my stool backwards. My frustration started to turn into anger and my voice made that very clear.

“Can someone please give me an answer instead of spouting nonsense? Mom, you first. What do you mean about not being able to buy stuff?”

“You better sit back down, dear, because you won’t like it. But it was necessary for a clean start.”

This time I sat myself down in the couch, lay back, and looked up, hoping this all was just a joke. My anger was gone. Like all my angers, it had a short life.

“I withdrew all your money yesterday and gave it to Sharon.”

Before I had a new fit, my mother continued.

“It is an advanced payment for the rent you will owe here. She’s letting you stay at her house for an amount that wouldn’t allow you to rent a one -bedroom apartment in a bad neighborhood.”

Damn, I had nothing to say as an argument against it, but I tried anyway.

“Why do I have to pay rent if she doesn’t pay me for six months? How difficult can it be just being a secretary? I went to University, damn it.”

“Ethan!” Watch your tongue and don’t be such a fool. Do you intend to stay a freeloader of will you finally take responsibility and act accordingly?”

I shriveled. My mother made it clear to me that she was playing hardball this time. This couldn’t be just about a job. It wasn’t the first time I was looking for one. There had to be something more. But what?

“Besides, I know that you have enough money in you wallet for little things and there’s always your credit card for emergencies. You have plenty. So stop whining over money. You’ll survive.”

My mother put her arms out.

“Now both of you give me a hug. It’s time to leave.”

Ten minutes later, we were on our way.

Hours later, Sharon drove the car into an underground garage. It was so quick, that I didn’t saw what the building looked like. I had seen a picture, but I had

never been on the inside. Sharon never felt the need to show me the place, until now. A stair brought us to the lobby.

“Hello, Jack. I see you’re doing the nightshift today.”

“Good evening, Miss Hannigan. You have a guest?”

“I do and you will be seeing him more than once.”

“Does he need a key, for the elevator and the apartment?”

“Not yet.”

There were two elevators, opposite of each other. We took the left one. A moment later in the elevator, I had to ask her.

“How come I don’t get a key and why didn’t you say I was family?”

“You’ll need to earn both.”

“Now he’ll think I’m a gigolo or something.”

Sharon laughed out loud.

“No he won’t. To be precise, that will be the last thing he’ll think.”

The elevator opened into a little hallway.

“The elevator only goes this high with a key. It’s because this is the highest floor and on it is the place where I live.”

She unlocked the door and opened it while she waved to something behind her. It took me a moment to realize that she waved to Jack, via a camera. We entered the main room which was a mixture of kitchen, dining room, and living room.

“It’s late and it’s going to be an early morning. Your room isn’t ready yet. You better sleep on the couch. You’ll find that it is a lot more comfortable than the one you’re used to.”

She was right. It only took me a few seconds to fall asleep. No dream disturbed me until the morning. Then I was woken by a noise. It was Sharon in her kitchen.

“Hey sleepyhead, what do you want for breakfast, eggs and bacon or just some cereal?”

“Eggs and bacon please.”

“The frying pan is in the bottom drawer and you’ll find the rest in the fridge. Just make sure you don’t burn them.”

I should have known that it wouldn’t be so easy. It was, after all, Sharon’s place. So I started to make breakfast barefooted. She had floor heating, carpet and mostly wooden floors so that wouldn’t be a problem. Not that it was necessary. The days and nights were warm.

“Make mine well done.”

I wanted to protest but I swallowed my frustration. She was the boss from now on. I knew that before I left my home, just as well as I knew Sharon. While I was baking, she was looking over my shoulder.

“Well, it looks edible.”

“Beat it before I accidentally drop it on your head.”

“Touchy! How come you aren’t this self-confident with other woman or is it all just an act?”

I sighed. I expected to be hearing this question some day, so I had an answer ready.

“Because I already know you. I know what to expect of you. It is the first step that scares me. I’m not the man many woman look for. I know I am too soft. That will never change and neither will I.”

I was afraid. Afraid to be looked at as a loser, a fool, a sissy. Scared of failure, unintentionally avoiding the pain and embarrassment a first step can bring. It wasn’t a good excuse but it was the only one I had.”

“You are no fool. But yeah, you are a softie. I’ve known that since I saw you years ago crying during a movie and it wasn’t Bambi.”

“So what? Even the hardest men cry sometimes.”

“Yes, but not during a chick flick.”

A weird silence fell. Sharon was waiting for my reaction and I just wanted her to shut up.

“I’m going to buy a newspaper. I probably won’t be back before you go to work wherever that is.”

Me alone in the big city, I expected a storm of protest. What I got was disappointing. She was surprisingly friendly.

“You still prefer paper over a tablet, don’t you? Well, I’m not stopping you. You’ll find a stand at the street corner to your right.”

Sharon sat herself down at the table. It wasn’t her intention to let food go to waste even if it was only bacon and eggs, something she rarely ate. She only wanted to agitate me a bit. She still knew how to manipulate me into doing things. She took something from the countertop and threw it to me.

“Here, or you won’t get in again. I’ll notify downstairs so they don’t take you for an intruder. They know all the people who work and live her.”

I almost dropped the key, but managed to capture it.

“Yeah, yeah.”

I passed the counter without looking and, once outside, I went to the right. After a minute, I was cursing Sharon. There was no newsstand to find. So I kept on going. It was of no use to ask a bystander.

I would definitely get lost if I left this street. I’d only been to this city two or three times before briefly and I had left my phone with Sharon. Never leave somewhere in a hurry. Not when you’re angry anyway. I had made my mind up to go back when my last footsteps brought me close to a bookstore. My bad temper was gone. There I would find everything I needed and more.

I tapped on my pocket to check my wallet, something I always automatically did. Once incident in the past was enough to be careful not to be embarrassed looking for a wallet that I forgot. This time I was sure to have it with me, so I expected confirmation, something I didn’t get. I almost ripped my jacket to peaces, but I still found nothing. How could this be? It was there yesterday. I made sure I had it before we left. There was nothing else

to do than to go back. My mind, occupied with this dilemma, failed to notice the curious look from Jack's colleague in the lobby. I went straight up. Luckily I still had the key to the apartment.

"Sharon, are you still here?"

No answer, which wasn't a problem My phone was in reach. She answered surprisingly fast.

"Sharon, have you seen my wallet?"

"Of course not! What would I do with your wallet? Where did you have it last? You didn't leave it home, did you?"

"I'm sure I had it in my jackets pocket, but it isn't here anymore."

"Well, if you're sure, there are only two possibilities. You have lost it or it was stolen. Either way, your wallet's gone."

Both possibilities made me freeze for a moment.

"When you were on the street did anyone bump into you? That's the way a pickpocket works."

My mind went crazy rerunning my time on the street. The problem was that I had been looking too much at the city environment to notice the people around me.

"Did you lose it in the apartment or on the street?"

It couldn't have fallen out my pocket after I had put my jacket on. My pocket was too deep. But that was no problem for a pickpocket. So if it fell out, it still had to be here, in the penthouse.

"Maybe?"

There was not much confidence in my voice.

"Well, look for it. If you can't find it, you have to block your credit card."

"Shouldn't we go to the police?"

"Why, for a blocked credit card and a few hundred dollars? It isn't worth all that trouble."

If only I could have seen the smile on Sharon's face, I would have known that there was more going on.

"What now?"

"You start working after your search. I will call to block your credit card and I'll even call the police if your wallet doesn't show itself within the hour. You'll be busy with other things. Your room needs to be cleaned and refurnished. You'll find everything you need spread out over the other rooms. Put the stuff the painters left into the last room."

"But which is my room?"

"You'll know when you'll see it." And with that, she hung up.

After an hour I stopped looking. I had to accept that my wallet was stolen. The bedrooms would obviously be upstairs. So that's where I went.

The first door was Sharon's bedroom, big and luxurious. I quickly closed the door. Sharon would bite my head off for snooping there. The next one revealed a smaller, almost empty room, freshly painted. Checking the other doors made it clear that this had to be my room. It was the only one that was painted, white. The floor was covered in plastic. A little stepladder was the only other decoration. On it was standing a big bucket of paint which looked very heavy. A handle was missing from it. So I had to grasp it firmly.

I wrapped my arm around it, slowly pulling it to the edge to anticipate its weight. However, something wasn't right. The bucket didn't move, probably caused by dried paint sticking it to the ladder. So I pulled hard in one go. It came loose in an instant, but my reward wasn't what I expected.

The contents of the bucket poured out and covered me from the chest on down. I stood motionless for a few seconds. Then I put the bucket down, the hole upside. After that I used every strong word I knew in the most expressive way. I was soaked with paint. There was no other choice than to take my clothes, socks, and shoes off. The only thing I was left with were my boxer shorts. Luckily cold wasn't really a problem so far south and surely not this time of the year. I threw it all in a heap into the puddle of paint.



My clothes were ruined. At least they were good for cleaning up the leftover paint. I sat myself down in a dry place waiting for something or someone to happen. A half hour passed before it did. I heard the door. That could only be Sharon. I yelled hard enough to wake the dead. Her voice and herself came closer with every step she made.

“Alright, alright, I am coming. Stop shouting. Maybe I can finally understand what you are saying.”

Her face was the first thing I saw. My almost naked body covered in paint was the first thing *she* saw. It took her a full ten minutes to stop laughing and a lot longer to stop grinning.

“What have you done? I didn’t ask you to paint the room again and surely you weren’t supposed to paint yourself.”

“What I have done? Nothing. Those dammed painters set a trap, as a joke or whatever. Look at the bucket.”

Sharon looked, but she did not need to. She already knew what happened. She had paid the painters a lot of money to do it. That was something I didn’t need to know.

“The painters probably took revenge for you sacking them.”

“Ooh.”

That was all I could say because it was a rational and very plausible explanation. But what now?

“So you were the target and I was the victim?”

“It seems that way.”

“And now? I can’t stand around much longer like this.”

“Isn’t it obvious? Wash yourself, take off your boxer shorts and throw them with the rest. I’ll get you some old towels to wipe yourself.”

I hesitated to take my boxer shorts off in front of Sharon. It has been years since she saw me naked. I was younger then and less ashamed to show my butt and more to her. She didn’t need long to find the towels.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Take them off quickly or do you need me to help?”

That was the last thing I wanted. Seconds later my shorts made the clothes pile a little bigger. I was standing with my hands covering a piece of my body.

“Don’t be so prudish. It’s not like I haven’t seen something comparable before. Here.”

I wiped the paint of my body as best I could, leaving enough to be an albino for the most part.

“Here are some slippers. Follow me to your bathroom.”

The slippers were pink, not exactly my favorite color. She took the lead and never looked at me until we were there.

“Step in and wait.”

She came back with a neutral-smelling cream.

“You’re lucky.”

Yeah, I sure was! She could see on my face what I thought of that.

“These days a depilatory cream doesn’t have a bad smell anymore. Use it all over your body, butt keep it away from the hair on your head.”

“What? Why? What does it do?”

She sighed. “I’ll do it myself. You’ll probably make a mess of it.”

Another joke. It couldn’t be a bigger mess. A second later she pulled a shower cap over my head while her hands were covered with long pink cleaning gloves. .

“Hey, why are you doing that?”

“Shut up and stand still.”

She was right that I was lucky. Lucky to be ashamed enough. Otherwise I would have showed my resentment about the treatment I got. After a couple of minutes, that was the least of my worries.

“What is this burning feeling? Damn. Get that cream off me. Quick!”

“Just a few minutes longer. Go stand under the shower.”

I did it without hesitation. The minutes felt like hours of torture.

“And now you may turn the water on.”

A soothing flow of water released me of the burning feeling and also of my hair. I saw it literally going down the drain.

“Sharon, what have you done? The only hair left is what I have on my head. The rest is gone.”

“That is exactly what should happen. All the hair on your body was covered with paint. It was the only way to remove it.”

I looked at myself and couldn't deny it, every trace of white paint was gone. I was satisfied, not with the loss of my hair but that was a small price to pay. It would grow back, right?

My sister stood before me with a pink bathrobe.

“Pink? Really, Sharon? Is that all you have?”

“Yes it is. You can wear it until your own stuff has arrived. But not without underwear.”

“It's a bathrobe! Why do I need underwear and where would I get it?”

“Because I don't want to see something sticking out of it.”

My head turned red, deep red. So red that I couldn't say anything.

“Underwear won't be a problem. We make lingerie. Something should fit. Or we will make it fit.”

“No way. I'm not going to wear women's lingerie. No way in hell will I do that. You've got to be crazy to even think that.”

“Is the little guy saying no to me?”

I knew better than to take a frontal attack. I would lose and Sharon would play even harder.

“No, no, but can’t you go and buy me some underwear? One pair of boxer shorts is enough. I’m a man and I deserve underwear for a man. Or at least lend me some money. I’ll order it online, express. Beside, my clothes could arrive any minute.”

“I promised Mother to not give you a cent. And I have her promise that everything I say goes. You can give her a call, but I can guarantee you that she won’t change her mind. And I don’t give a damn how fast your clothes are going to be here. You’ll walk around in my house decently dressed, whatever it takes to do so.”

“Please Sharon, a man’s shorts is all I want.”

“I can give you boy shorts. But you have to stop complaining and wear them without a word of protest for as long as I think it’s necessary.”

I had thought that Sharon came to her senses about her strange request, but I was wrong. Oh, how wrong I was!

“I swear I will. You give me boy shorts and I promise that I will never turn down a request anymore.”

I was too quick to react. I should have chosen my words better. But I wasn’t thinking straight. All I was thinking about was a decent peace of underwear, just to get my dignity back.

“That’s what I want to hear. Wait in my room. I’ll be right back.”

She walked out of the bathroom.

“Oh and watch where you step. I’ll call someone to clean it up.”

Away she went. I followed slowly, wondering why she hadn’t called someone to clean it up in the first place. She really couldn’t stand to see me doing nothing. There was no other explanation.

With every step, I had a strange sensation caused by the pink robe caressing my hairless body. It was something I had never felt before, but it was not unpleasant.

Sharon was back before I had reached her room. I have to say that I was going very slowly. But nevertheless, it almost seemed as if she didn't have to search for the shorts.

"Here they are, your boy shorts. And they are your size. That I am sure of."

She held the shorts close before me with a smile. It clearly said 'boy shorts' on the packaging.

This couldn't be real. Me, putting on women's lingerie. Not in a million years would I have dreamed of something like this happening. I would rather run around naked. Thought the man in a pink bathrobe.

"No way. I'm not going to wear that, I'm not gay."

"Being gay has nothing to do with it. Having nothing else to wear does. By the way, are you already forgetting the promise you made."

She was right. I had told her I would obey every request by her, which made her every request as good as a command. I could refuse to obey, but it would cost me. Beside, this situation, as embarrassing as it was, was only for today. My clothes would be here any time now. Nobody but Sharon would see me like this. So if she didn't mind, why should I? That's what I tried to convince myself, knowing all too well that I wasn't as self confident as she was.

"Ok, I'll wear them, but don't you have any other color?"

"I do, but I want to keep it for tomorrow."

I almost had a heart attack.

"What do you mean 'tomorrow'? The rest of my clothes are coming today. Then I can get rid of this pink torture device."

"Stop stalling. Put them on."

"Answer me first."

"After you put them on. I don't want to hear another word before that's done. Got it?"

Having no other choice, I did. Well, there was another choice I suppose, but not one I wanted to take. I could leave. I took the package out of her hands with some reluctance and put the shorts on in one smooth movement.

Surprisingly, it felt even better than the robe. I looked at it with some satisfaction. It fit better than boxer shorts and felt much nicer on my body. So nice that one could call it sensual. What was this feeling?

This was more than was foreseen. It was the opposite of what I had expected. My hand caressed it for a moment and another and another.

I had to stop myself from touching it before Sharon could see it. If she did, she didn't show it.

As soon as I tidied up, the robe took over what my hands were forbidden.

Damn, what was this feeling I couldn't get under control? I shook my head and concentrated on the question that had to be answered.

"My clothes?"

"They look good on you, don't they? You should wear them more often."

"No thank you."

I almost said, "Yes, thank you."

"You also have nice legs. They look better than mine, more feminine even. Who knew what secret you kept under your pants?"

I hated what she said, but I couldn't deny it. Surely not, now that all the hair on them had vanished.

"Now you stop it and give me an answer. Where are my clothes?"

"Didn't I tell you? They will be late. There are some problems with the truck. So they had to take a little detour and stock them for tonight. They assured me a delivery tomorrow at three o'clock in the afternoon."

"Very well."

“What’s that, no more complaints?”

“Didn’t I make a promise? As you have reminded me of all too well.”

“I did. But is still expected at least some protest from you.”

“Well, there isn’t. Or isn’t that what you want either?”

Sharon said nothing. She just slapped me on the butt.

“I’ve got to go to work again. Enjoy your day. I’ll be back for dinner. We’re having pizza.”

She left me with a surprised face. I looked in the mirror and opened the robe. Boy shorts, was that thing called “boy shorts”? I felt silly...and aroused. So I quickly closed the robe, before the blood started pumping too hard to the wrong place.

I was watching TV, when suddenly the door opened. I froze where I sat.

Two guys came in without any hesitation.

“Miss Hannigan sent us. We’re here to clean things up.”

I wanted to jump up. Not to show them the way, but to hide myself and my embarrassment. My face was as red as it could get.

“Don’t get up. We know the way.”

“This is not my usual getup.”

I immediately realized my mistake and flustered in shame.

They disappeared upstairs without even given me a further glimpse.

But not without saying something.

“Don’t worry. We have seen stranger things while at work. This is just that kind of city. A man in a pink bathrobe is not an uncommon thing.”

His words should have given me peace of mind, but they didn't. It took a half-hour before my heart stopped pounding like hell. What had happened? How could they appear so suddenly without any warning? It wasn't the front door. So how did they get in? It had to be Sharon that let them in, but how? Why didn't she warn me? The answer was obvious. She was punishing me for my rebellious behavior, showing me that she was the boss. It was just a warning that I better not do it again. Sometimes she was worse than the devil.

I had the scars to show it, mental and physical. They were gathered during my youth when she showed me who was the stronger one of the two of us and therefore the boss. Maybe I could have fought harder, but hurting a woman wasn't something I was capable of. It was just a part of a bigger plan. One that needed a lot of work to see it to an end. So I hid myself in Sharon's room until they were gone. It was the easiest way to avoid another embarrassment.

After a few hours they were gone and I could admire their work. My room was clean. More so, it was spotless. How they had done it so easily, I didn't know. If I had read the label on the paint bucket, I would have understood. It said "water-based paint." That meant that it was easy to remove, even from clothes so long as the paint wasn't totally dry. Everything that was a reminder of my accident was taken away; the plastic on the floor, the stepladder and my clothes with them.

My room looked like it came out of a design catalog, stylish, with a subtle but undeniable touch of femininity. It even had a dressing table, something I doubted I would ever need.

"Well, how do you like your new room?"

Sharon's head was visible behind me in the doorway.

"Nice, but a dressing table is a little unnecessary, don't you think?"

"It was originally a guest room. You never know when it might come in handy."

"But where is the wardrobe?"

"Follow me."

I did, to the room next door and there waited a surprise. The whole room was a walk-in closet.

“Are you crazy? This is way too big for me. A normal wardrobe in my bedroom would have been sufficient.”

“Yeah, but what would have been the fun in that? Now you’ve got a walk-in closet and space enough for all your clothes.”

“They don’t even fill half of this room. Nevertheless, I will be happy when they finally will arrive. Then I can get rid of this pink getup.”

“About that. I got a phone call from them. They still have problems. They expect to deliver the boxes in a few days.”

I only heard half of what she said and even those few words went right past me. My attention was totally drawn to yet another dressing table. It was grander and more equipped than the one in my bedroom. It had stands for jewelry and wigs. I shook my head and left. Sharon noticed that I hadn’t listened to her but let it be. She had another surprise.

“I have to go back, but you’ll have a new visitor in an hour or so.”

“Who and why?”

“Pizza delivery. But you’ve got to eat it without me. Something came up. I won’t be back until late. Knowing you, you’ll probably already be asleep.”

Some of those words also never reached my conscious mind. A delivery? I couldn’t answer the door in a pink bathrobe. The incident with the painters was more than enough for one day.

“Don’t worry. Jack will bring it up and leave it at the door.” Sharon knew me all too well.

“Oh yeah. I left something to cover you when you go to sleep. It’s in the bathroom. And you better wear it. I don’t want your naked body running round my house or touching my sheets. Got that?”

It was obvious that I better do what she wanted. I knew when she really meant something.

She was gone before I could ask what she had laid out for me. I had to go and see it for myself. That it was a surprise was an understatement. It was pink of course, but even worse. It was a baby doll with matching brief, made of lace, except the middle piece on the front and the back. That was satin. It felt softer than anything before. I had seen things like it in catalogs and on the internet, like almost every hot-blooded teenage boy. But until now, some years later, I never had touched one or anything made of satin for that matter.

It was an arousing feeling and a part of my body showed that firmly. So I did what every man would do in such circumstances. It didn't take long before my body was back in its normal peaceful state, the result of being alone in a soundproof house. The shower afterwards was a welcome refreshment. There I stood naked, looking at a pink baby doll nightie. My body's peaceful state was in danger again.

Why would Sharon give me a baby doll nightie? I knew that there was no male clothing to find. So it would be women's nightwear. That I was sure of. But what I expected was a pajama, a woman's pajama. Was this Sharon's revenge for my previous behavior, or did she just had no pajamas in the house? I chose the latter explanation...which didn't change a thing. I still had to put that baby doll on.

The first touch of it required me to take another shower. My intention was to put it on as quickly as possible. A third shower would be too much. I had to be quick. The brief was on before blood could flow. Then came the baby doll, but I stopped after a few seconds. It felt too good to spoil this with haste. I slowly continued with what I was doing and enjoyed every second of it. After I had pulled the last bit over my shoulder I had to sit down on my bed.

What just happened? What had I become? This wasn't normal, was it? How could a man have these feelings from putting on a baby doll nightie? These were feelings I shouldn't be having. I needed to find a girlfriend and quick. That had to be it. My body and mind were craving for a woman's body, the only explanation possible.

Before I put the pink robe back on, I looked at myself in the narrow dressing mirror which was part of the wall. I just wanted to see how bad it looked. Well, I looked like I expected, a man in a baby doll nightie. But

it didn't look obnoxious as I expected, not at all. It just made me look more feminine, a look that I could live with for a day, no, for a night. I kept on looking at that pink contraption. My eyes were impossible to pull away. It felt like I was under a spell. At that point I was glad that my clothes were coming soon. Well, until I realized what Sharon had said to me.

I went to watch TV to get the bad news out of my mind. That seemed to work. By the time the pizza came, it wasn't an issue anymore. Jack rang the doorbell. I waited to answer it until I was sure he was gone. With a stuffed belly, I continued to watch TV, but my mind wasn't with it. So I eventually went to my bedroom to sleep. if you could call it that, the few hours I managed to close my eyes. The rest of the night I was under that spell. This was the first night but it wouldn't be the last one. That was clear to me when Sharon woke me up the next morning.

"I see that you learned to listen. Good, because your clothes won't be here until Saturday. They just phoned me again."

Were they really serious? *Another* delay? But I couldn't say much. It was my problem, but Mother's money. And she didn't know of the delays. If I told her, I had to tell her what I was wearing instead, which was out of the question. So I had to accept it, reluctantly. I jumped out of bed Which I shouldn't have done. Now Sharon could admire me in full attire.

"And no point in getting mad. It won't change anything. Saturday morning it is."

Suddenly the realization came of what position I had put myself in. Sharon kept checking me out with a light smile on her face.

"Not bad, not bad at all. If I had known that it flattered you so much, I would have had you in it ages ago. For tonight, though, I have something else in mind."

"Not in pink please, not in pink."

"I can't promise you that. But look."

She pointed at the foot end of my bed.

“Your fresh underwear for today. These boy shorts have a nice deep red color. So, no pink. That should make you happy.”

I changed clothes in the bathroom. The presence of Sharon took my mind off my predicament. I passed Sharon while going back to where I left the bathrobe.

“It does make me *slightly* happier, but can’t you lend me some money? It’s not my fault that my clothes aren’t delivered yet. If I can borrow a few dollars for a few days, I can get some new clothes. Then everything can get back to normal. I’ll pay the money back as soon as possible.”

Her smile only got bigger.

“No can do. You’ll have to learn to stand on your own two feet. I promised Mother that I would make sure that you would.”

“But!”

“Speaking of butts, yours is fitting nicely. That’s obviously something you got from Mother. You should have asked for a little more. Then it would fit perfect.”

Uncomfortable because of her words, I looked for the bathrobe. It was not where I had left it.

“Sharon, have you seen the bathrobe?”

“Yes, I threw it in the laundry.”

“No! I still need it. Why did you do that?”

I went to the laundry basket and searched vigorously. The robe wasn’t there. I looked at Sharon with questions. What the heck was going on?

“It’s with the company’s laundry. They come every week a few times to pick up laundry.”

“But this was a robe, *your* robe. You’ve got a washing machine!”

“I do and so what? Why would I wash it myself if I have a laundry service that can do that? That doesn’t make sense. What is wrong with you? You act as if the world is coming to an end.”

She knew what was going on, but she was having too much fun to not play this game.

“I hope you got another one or else I’ve got nothing to put on over this underwear. What if somebody sees me? Like the cleaners did. Luckily they only saw the robe.”

“Yes, that was a mistake. I let them through without thinking. I had forgotten what an awkward situation you were in. Besides, *I* see you. Do you hear *me* complain? Or do you think that I like watching a man in women’s lingerie. It belongs on a feminine body.”

I couldn’t tell if she was lying or not. It was Sharon. She always sounded serious. There was no reason to doubt her.

“By the way, how did they get in? They didn’t use the front door.”

“Oh, I let them in through the office. It’s just a few doors away. But don’t worry. That won’t happen a second time.”

It had better not. Dressed like I was, I wouldn’t have survived it from embarrassment.

“Where is this laundry? Operating a washing machine is something that I can do.”

“Congratulations, but it won’t make any difference. The laundry is already picked up. You’ll have to do without one.”

“What, you really only have one bathrobe?”

“For guests, yes. It’s either mine or none for you to wear. Uh, didn’t you promise to stop complaining?”

“I’m not complaining. It’s just that it will be cold this way.”

“It’s going to be a warm day. I’ll turn the air conditioning off. I prefer to open the terrace doors this time of year anyway.”

She looked at me, who was only dressed in boy shorts, with her usual emotionless face.

“Nevertheless you are right. This will be cold.”

She left in her usual way, without a word, leaving me standing there with my boy shorts. I was glad they weren't pink. That was all I could think of. Truth be told, my resistance to wearing them was already fading, although I was unaware of that at that moment.

I heard the sound of a drawer closing, the announcement of her imminent return.

"Here's a chemise. It even has the same color. So you won't have to be afraid that your outfit will clash."

I tore the plastic off, anticipating the worst. I knew what a chemise was, but there were different kinds. This was like the rest of her clothing, of high quality and also like the rest, luxurious. Knowing that there was no alternative, I accepted it as a necessity. One I could live with it. As long as nobody would see me. Wearing lingerie in the day was still more daring than wearing it to sleep. But I seemed to manage it without feeling ashamed. That was progress compared with yesterday. After I had put it on, I looked in the mirror.

She gave me another package.

"You wanted a robe, I give you a robe."

She was right, it was a robe. It fit perfect. My slender build was an advantage. The robe was the same color and a little longer than the previous one but it was made from the same materials, satin and lace. The boy shorts were only lace.

Sharon came closer.

"One second please. It's looking too chaotic."

While putting everything straight, her hand touched my skin, then the chemise. I froze again. It wasn't the first time that I had been touched by Sharon, but it was the first time with me dressed in women's lingerie. She saw my reaction but kept rearranging everything.

"Well, that's strange. I have to consult Amanda."

"What's strange and who's Amanda?"

"Nothing to worry yourself with. There are more frightening things to worry about."

"Like what?"

“Like that bulge in your boy shorts. It’s gross. It’s a disgrace to the lingerie. I love lingerie too much to allow such an insult.”

“I’m a guy. One can’t cut it off, you know.”

“Can’t one?”

“Don’t be that way. You know what I mean.”

If she found it funny, she wasn’t showing it. Sharon was Sharon. the same Sharon I had known all along. She grabbed at a bag with books on the dressing table. That was the first time I noticed it.

“Here, this will help you. When I get back, I want to see a little less than now.”

I knew what she meant, but how? With the books in my hands, she was off, before I could ask anything more. Every day seemed as cryptic as the previous ones. Only the props were different.

I jumped on the bed, an excellent place to read a book.

The books weren’t what I expected. The titles said it all. “No, You’re Not Gay” and “So You Like Crossdressing.” The most inspiring title was “Crossdressing For Dummies.”

I had hours to spend and the more they passed, the more confused I was. The books left me totally surprised. I was stunned by the fact that some of the outlined characteristics could be used to describe me. And those were only the ones I was ready to admit to.

But at least I wasn’t gay even if the books considered me a crossdresser. I didn’t. Not that it would be “wrong” if I had been gay, but it didn’t feel that way. I loved women too much to be gay. So I could scrap that as an explanation for these feelings I got when I put on those clothes. They had me so confused that I doubted myself. The books were informative, but I was convinced that what the books described had nothing to do with me. I knew what the problem was. I just needed to find a woman to lose myself to. Then these feelings would go away. I must say, the bulge was not to be seen after that thought.

Sharon made one of her surprise appearances. One privilege of being a CEO was that she could leave the job when she wanted to.

“Good, I see you have been doing some reading by my not seeing things. Well, just that one thing anyway.”

She wasn't acting normal. From the moment she came in, she was staring at me, parts of me that is. She even turned me round to have a better view.

“What's going on? You're acting weird.”

As an answer she pulled the robe from my shoulder and pulled the chemise up so most of my upper body was visible.

I wanted to pull it back but the look on her face stopped me. She rubbed my skin which resulted in a strange feeling, considering the circumstances.

“As I thought. It's still irritated on a lot of places. That's what you get when you use a depilatory. But it was unavoidable.”

That was a lie of which I was not aware at that time.

As soon as her hand retreated, I made the chemise, the robe and myself look decent again.

“It probably looks worse than it feels.”

“Nevertheless, something has to be done and will.”

“What do you mean? What is it that you have cooked up behind my back.”

“Hey, mind your manners. It's for your own good and that of your skin. Get out of your clothes and wrap a towel around you.”

My mind went into overdrive making up all kinds of explanations for this request, but none of them came even close to the truth as I would find out a little later. I undressed while she waited outside the bathroom.

“OK, that will do.”

I didn't dare to ask her for what, being afraid of what the answer might be. So I followed her to the main room.

A woman's appearance in the room made me shrivel.

"Sharon, are you crazy. Why did I have to get half-naked when there is someone waiting?"

"Oh, keep your shorts on!"

Then Sharon started to giggle which got worse when she saw the stunned and frightened look on my face. It was the first time I ever stood half-naked before a woman I did not know. It was really nothing to be ashamed of, but I was. For a shy one, like me, it was hell.

The woman didn't show any indication that she was aware of my embarrassment. More, she didn't show any signs that she was surprised. It was as if she expected me to be half-naked. That made my embarrassment even greater.

"Ethan, this is Dr. Greenbaum. She's a good friend of mine and a dermatologist. I asked her to take a look at your skin."

Mentioning that she was a doctor reassured me. My face slowly found its way back to a normal color.

She came closer and closer. The fact that she was a doctor made such a difference. Now I didn't have the urge to run and hide.

The touch of her synthetic glove on my skin brought my exotic color back for an instant.

"Well, this doesn't look good."

I panicked a little bit. A doctor only had bad or good news. I had hoped for the good.

"Is it as I thought, Samantha?"

"No Sharon, it's worse."

My panic grew.

"Is it my skin, Doctor?"

"No, no. It's your hair."

My panic turned into surprise and my face showed it very well. Sharon looked, as always, stoic.

“Your skin is fine. The redness isn’t even from the depilatory.

The problem is the hair which is growing back. It’s ingrowing and that is dangerous. Your hair needs to be removed, permanently, as soon as possible. I’ll call the necessary people.”

And off she went, talking into her cell phone. She was gone before I realized it.

“What do I do now, Sharon?”

“Wait. Samantha is calling for help and they will be here soon.”

‘Soon’ was an understatement. Only fifteen minutes had passed before the doorbell rang. It was Sharon who opened the door. I was still wearing a towel. Five women came in, five! I closed my legs firmly and pushed the towel in between, scared that they would see too much.

“Good evening, Dr. Greenbaum sends us. Where is the patient?”

The woman’s eyes caught me on the couch.

“Never mind.”

The woman came closer, leaving what appeared to be her team behind. She repeated Dr. Greenbaum’s examination.

“The doctor was right to call us. Not that I would know it better than her, but I have seen this more than once. Luckily we can solve this, and quick.”

She waved her hand, a sign for the rest of her team. They brought their bags closer and started to unload them.

I was still sitting in the couch, not moving a inch, not even when Sharon laid a hand on my shoulder as she stood behind me.

“Here.” Sharon reached over my shoulder and held a glass before me.

“Drink this. It will calm your nerves and help you control that part of your body you have covered.”

“Umm?”

Someone other than me would have been suspicious about Sharon. It was as if she knew what the women were here for and that it was not something I would like.

I drank the whole glass, nervously waiting for the inevitable, whatever it would be. The woman saw how nervous I was and smiled.

“Relax, it’s just a laser treatment. It will take care of your problem without any doubt. But one session won’t be enough, not to be sure that everything is gone forever.”

“Do you mean my hair will never grow back?”

Sharon jumped in. “It’s for your own good. Besides, you never had a lot of body hair. You won’t miss it.”

She pulled me off of the couch and pushed me towards the table.

“Go lie on it. It’s easier for them that way. Hop, move on.”

Before I knew it, I was lying on the table dressed only in a towel which I held down with both hands, a gesture that made everybody smile. But it didn’t bother me. Whatever Sharon had given me was working. I felt relaxed, a bit too relaxed. I started to fall asleep. When the team started in on me, I was well asleep.

“Wake up, sleepyhead. It’s time for you to rise and shine.”

I growled and looked at my alarm clock. It said seven o’clock. A second later I was wide awake.

“Sharon, have you gone crazy? It’s only seven o’clock in the morning. Not an hour to start the day.”

“It is for you as long as you live here. I want you to be up and prepare my breakfast. I’ll take it from now on every day at seven-thirty so I have time enough before I start my day.”

“Breakfast? Why don’t you make it yourself?”

“You want me, your boss, to make her own breakfast? I give you a job, ;et you live here at a very low rent

and you don't want to make me my breakfast. Maybe I should give this job to somebody else?"

"No, no, Sharon. I'll do it. What do you want for breakfast, Boss?"

I could have stood up to Sharon, something I never have been able to do. Or I could have told Mother of my failure. That was the last thing I wanted to do. I didn't want to see the disappointment in her eyes anymore. I had let her down more than once. The last time I felt guilty for months.

"That's much better. Just some toast, marmalade, a lightly boiled egg, coffee and juice. That will do. Call me when it's ready. And tomorrow I want you up at six. That will give you time to shower, get dressed and tidy yourself up. But for now, make breakfast and I mean now."

I shook my head. As if I ever would need so much time to get ready in the morning. How wrong I was. But for now I didn't have the time to think about that. I had to hurry with her breakfast if I wanted it to be ready at seven-thirty.

I grabbed the robe at the end of my bed and stopped where I stood. It was pink again. But that wasn't the worst. I suddenly realized, to my horror, what I was wearing: a teddy.

When did I put on a teddy? Then it came to me. It had to be Sharon. The only thing I could remember was falling asleep on the table. From that moment on was black, until now.

"Ethan, your time is running out." Sharon's voice made me aware of my predicament.

I grabbed the robe and ran to the kitchen, while trying to put the robe on. I didn't succeed in, not quite. It was too small. For some reason the sleeves were the right length, but the waist was totally wrong and so was the length of it.

"Sharon, what is this?"

"A mistake at the factory, but you can still wear it. So stop nagging and start with my breakfast."

There I stood in a pink teddy and no robe to hide it. It couldn't be closed and it showed a big part of my bottom and that of the teddy.

As I now know, Sharon had read the books too.

There was no bulge to see. Which was strange. The teddy wasn't so tight. But it wasn't the moment to figure out why. First I had to make breakfast. This time Sharon kept an eye on me every second, right until she had to leave, but not without a warning.

"Leave it that way. Better yet, keep on wearing it. I'll check up on you now and then. And if you don't know what to do, do the dishes and clean up the place."

And away she went. Leave what that way? I soon found the answer. She had used tape to secure my manhood's movements. It was efficient for what it was meant to accomplish but I wouldn't call it the most comfortable solution.

So I did what she wished. I did the dishes but my sleeves kept falling in the water so I took the robe off without thinking of what that would make me look like: a man in a pink teddy doing the dishes. I didn't even think about how silly that would look. My mind and body were starting to get used to the fact that I was wearing lingerie.

My cell phone rang. It was Mother.

"Ethan, how is it there? Is everything going as expected? No problems?"

"No Mom, everything is fine."

We kept on talking for an hour. But not once did I mention the situation I was in. I didn't want my mother to know that I was wearing lingerie. I couldn't imagine how she would react if I told her.

The phone warned me that I had another call.

"Mom I have to go. There's someone else on the phone. Bye."

I was relieved that I hadn't blurted it out. The other phone call turned out to be Sharon. What did she want?

"Are the dishes done?"



“Yes.”

“And the cleaning, how about that?”

“Sharon, what do I know about cleaning a house? Tidying it up a bit, OK, but cleaning? I wouldn’t know where and how to start.”

“Well then, I hope that you at least make lunch and dinner.”

“But Sharon, that would be a even greater disaster. I can barely make breakfast.”

“I know, I ate it. Nevertheless I have decided that you will learn how to cook and clean. As long as you have nothing else to do than lie on the couch and read one of your books, you will learn to do something useful.”

“But how? I know nothing about these things.”

I didn’t want to say no. Sharon was obviously not in the best mood. She would have my balls if I wouldn’t listen, justified or not. I had ignored her mood a few times before and paid dearly. There was the time when I was sixteen and had left the bathroom in a mess. Sharon was furious and demanded that I cleaned it up before my mother and step-dad came home. I laughed and said that it was a woman’s job. The next thing I knew was that all my comics had disappeared. Sharon had convinced my mother that I was too old for such childish books. I learned the hard way not to oppose Sharon and absolutely not when she was in a bad mood. There were other incidents and she never even blinked, but I could never tell which way it would end up. So I played it safe and learned how to avoid a standoff with Sharon while the years passed.

“You like to read, do you not? Reed a cookbook, experiment. I’ll give you a week to learn, but no longer. Do you understand?”

I wanted to hang up but there was more.

“Jack will bring a few boxes upstairs.”

“My clothes?”

“No silly, shampoo and creams. Ellen, Dr. Greenbaum to you, wants you to use them from now on.

It is necessary for your skin to stay healthy. These brands are the safest one can use. From now on you'll bathe every few days and use the shampoo that is in the box. Then you'll treat your face with a cleanser, toner, and moisturizer. Use the moisturizer on you hands and feet too. There is a booklet with it. Ethan, it's for your own good."

Not much later were the boxes where they needed to be. So I took a bath. I needed to change anyway. I had been in the teddy until I was ready with the cleaning or what I made of it.

The shampoo smelled of lavender and mint. Not something I wanted to smell on myself.

When I finally was done, I not only smelled soft, but felt it as well. I was surprised what it did to my face and the rest. After that I had no more objections and I took the smell gladly.

To my surprise there was no fresh outfit on the bed. That left me naked. the last thing I wanted to be, so I looked in my closet and found what I needed. On the left in the drawer was boy shorts and on the right there were chemises, nicely arranged by color. The top layer was blue.

I was so glad that is wasn't pink that I didn't even think for a moment to not put it on. That was a precedent I was not aware of and the beginning of a new state of mind. The next days had a fixed agenda: nightwear off, daywear on, breakfast, then take a bath and so on. Mainly trying to cook, which I failed at every day. Luckily Sharon never said a word; she ordered take out as if we never ate anything else. But Saturday was very close so I had nothing to worry about. Once I had my clothes, I could start to do the job I meant to do as secretary and Sharon would have no reason anymore to push me to do household chores. Everything would be back to normal.

Saturday morning started like the days before. Normally Sharon would spend a Saturday morning in the office. Nobody would interfere with her there; all her employees were enjoying the weekend. This time she stayed to keep me company.

"How's the teddy?"

She had given me a black lace teddy to sleep in. Since it was black, I had reason to complain, so I just sighed. The robe was faulty so I tried to wear an old one, but she didn't want to hear about it. She said that the colors had to match, whatever that meant. I just gave in. Why bother arguing about it when it was to be the last time?

She helped me with the dishes, an unexpected surprise, when the phone rang.

"Yes Jack. Sorry, Louis. I thought that Jack did the first weekend shift. So who will do the night? Allen? That's the new guy, isn't it?"

"Sharon!"

She saw my impatience and laughed.

"What can I do for you, Louis? OK, just put the boxes in the elevator. What? How many? Just send them to the office. I will take care of it."

"It's the transport company. Your clothes have arrived. But something isn't right. There are too many boxes."

"No, not again!"

"I'll be back when all the boxes are delivered."

Nervously I waited. That there were too many boxes didn't mean that my clothes weren't part of the delivery. It only meant that they delivered too much. That had to be it.

More than an hour passed before Sharon came back.

"The delivery guys are gone. The boxes are left in my office."

"Have you looked? Are my clothes with them?"

"I don't know. I guess so."

More I didn't need to hear, just so there was a possibility that they were part of the delivery.

"Why didn't you bring one with you?"

Sharon looked at me with a frown, a sign that I overestimated my luck.

“What a stupid question to ask. That’s your job. You know that.”

I never had been into her office, so I stood still. Waiting till she led the way.

“What’s the matter? It’s a warm day already, but you’re lightly dressed. You can always lose the robe. I don’t mind.”

That she had already demonstrated, having seeing a man’s body in a teddy. Not many women would accept that vision. But it wasn’t a repulsive view. The teddies Sharon had chosen were strangely flattering for someone of my posture. Or was it just me?

“Where’s your office?”

“Oh yes, you haven’t been there, haven’t you? Follow me.”

I followed her to the corner of the room where there was apparently a corridor. It was not hidden but it wasn’t in plain sight either. Whenever one looked to that direction, one was distracted by the big windows, plants and the great view it provided of an oasis one did not expect on a rooftop.

Passing a few doors we suddenly stood in her office, decorated with the grandeur of Versailles, only a little more modern. Let’s say early Twentieth Century.

“Sharon, what an office! The rent must be enormous.”

“This old building is mine. I am not the one who has to pay rent, only the three first floors. But I have had no complaints about it till now.”

“What, you own this six-story building? Your company must be loaded. You too.”

“I have money. But almost all of it is put into my company and so far it’s financially healthy. That can always chance, though. Something you ought to know.”

We went to a high double door and found another room. It was the same style, only not so luxurious and it had no windows. There were only shelves and closets

spread against the walls and against one of them was a lot of boxes.

“What is this?”

“This is the workplace of my secretary, in other words, yours.”

“But there are no windows!”

My voice sounded disappointed. I needed daylight to live and work. I wasn't a vampire.

“Don't be an idiot. You can sunbathe if you want to.”

She took the phone and called the lobby.

“Louis, can you turn the alarm off on your end once more? It's just for a minute. I'm going to open the main door of my office. When I have closed it, you can turn it on again.”

She disappeared into her office and a few seconds later a heavy sound coming from behind me drew my attention. What I thought to have been a wall moved slowly aside. It showed the world behind it bathing in sunlight, Sharon hadn't lied.

“Stay here. Otherwise you will be seen on the security camera. And I don't think you are dressed for that occasion.”

She had maneuvered herself behind my back and laid her hands on my shoulder. That gave me a strange feeling, even though it was only Sharon.

“The stairs you see lead downwards to the research and development department. Next to it you'll see another corridor leading to the right and onwards to the offices of my staff. And this is will be your desk. Well, when you can keep me satisfied, that is.”

Confusing words when you took it the wrong way. I did not.

“I'm going to move the boxes. Help would be appreciated.”

“And asked in vain. You should know that already. Are you really the kind of guy that asks help from a lady for lifting boxes?”

I knew I had lost this battle before I could start it. So I just began moving the boxes.

Sharon started to open some of them. She didn't stop which had me worried. Why would she open all my boxes, unless they were not mine? Asking that wasn't even necessary.

"Ethan, I have good news and I have bad news."

I growled and sighed at the same time. Which was easier than it sounds.

"Give me the bad news first."

"These aren't your clothes."

I used words I didn't realize were part of my vocabulary. It brought a smile to Sharon's face so I must have said some crazy things. My mind was already wiped clean of them.

"Then, what is the good news?"

"There are some stylish and expensive clothes to find and that's not all it contains. And none of it looks cheap."

I only thought of one thing.

"Clothes! Do they fit me?"

"Yes they do. It all seems to be the wardrobe of one person. Every piece of it is your size."

"So I can wear them. Problem solved."

I didn't care that it was the wardrobe of someone strange, with a wash it would be fine.

"Yes you can wear them. But you probably won't. Even when you would look good in it."

"Why not? Is the style of the clothes so repulsive?"

I was thinking of a man's suit in bright flashy colors, not my style and completely not wearable for me. Not that there was something wrong with flashy colors. It was just not my taste, especially if the color was pink.

"No, it's classy and totally your taste."

“Then what’s wrong with them?”

“They are women clothes.”

The little hope I had of everything returning to normal had gone. It was as if I was doomed to spend my days in turmoil.

I didn’t give up. Just like Sharon had I checked every box, hoping that there would be male clothes in at least one of them. There wasn’t just clothes. Under the clothes there were some uncommon things.

“Look, Ethan. They must belong to an actress, one that does theater.”

A few boxes were filled with costumes, makeup, wigs, and jewelry, things one would need for performing. The rest of the boxes were filled with dresses, skirts, blouses and more. Enough clothes to satisfy any woman, but not me. There were only three pairs of pants. Five if you counted the shorts. They all had a high narrow waist, a zipper on the side and legs going wide at the end, which gave them a very feminine look. They were pants for women, too feminine for me to wear as a man.

“Actress or not, these are not my clothes. I want you to call the transport company and get my clothes back.”

“You want. Those are strong words, but this one time I’ll give in and phone them.”

For a moment I thought I had been too demanding. And for a moment I thought that Sharon would bite my nose off for being so aggressive. She had made me pay dearly before for less. So I was slightly surprised and content that she had accepted my demand.

I waited patiently until she came back. Whenever she made official calls Sharon demanded privacy, even when privacy wasn’t necessary.

She pushed me onto the couch and faced me. That didn’t look good.

“Your clothes are gone, destroyed.”

“What? They can’t do that!”

“They had a mix-up. The clothes you got are the ones that should have been cut into rags.”

“Impossible. Who would throw away such expensive clothes?”

“Apparently, the owner of these clothes has moved to Europe and shipping it there is way more expensive than buying a whole new wardrobe.”

That sounded reasonable and acceptable. Sharon wouldn't have any motive to lie about that.

“But it isn't all bad news,” said Sharon with a very big smile. A smile that made me curious.

“And the good news would be?”

“You may keep it all as payment for your loss.”

“They can't do that. I want money so I can buy myself new clothes. Something I can wear.”

“Well, it's too late. I already have accepted their offer.”

“What!? That was not your decision to make.”

I shouldn't have said that. It woke up a Sharon I didn't want to face. A half-hour and a lot of shouting later, I was glad to have something to wear and I thanked Sharon for it.

“So now you have something to wear. At least until you have some male clothes.”

“Yes, but the underwear is still only female.”

“You really are asking for it today. I never spanked a grown man, but you can be the first if you want. It's something I always wanted to try, especially with you. Be glad that you have underwear. And now you have something to put on over it.”

“I'm grateful, but I wish you would lend me some money.”

The look on her face made me shut up. The rest of the day and night went the way I had gotten used to.

Six o'clock and I was up, but to my surprise there was no outfit laid out as usual. There was just a note from Sharon asking me to have patience. I didn't know for what. Sharon acted as if nothing had happened, until breakfast. Then she spilled the beans.

“If you wish, I can give you some money.”

I wanted to shout out my consent as loud as possible. Sharon’s hand stopped me quickly.

“But you’ll have to do something for it.

I should have known that there was a catch. Sharon wouldn’t just give me money without getting something back. The only problem was, what?

“I’ve noticed that your aversion to lingerie isn’t as deep as it used to be. So this is my proposition. Just hear me out before you react.”

I braced myself for what was coming. But it still knocked me off my feet.

“You wear lingerie that I give you.”

She laid her hand over my mouth, stopping me from going bonkers. I could not believe my ears.

“You already are used to it. So that can’t be the problem. You will write a report every day on how it feels, fits, and everything else you think about it. If the reports are written in a professional way, I will pay for the, which will give you the opportunity to buy things you want.”

I calmed down. That wasn’t as bad as I had feared. It was the same thing I had been doing the past days and now I would get paid for it.

“Why?”

“To get a feeling for a special market. Crossdressers. I have nothing to go on with what women tells me. It must be the vision and feelings of a man.”

“Then hire a crossdresser.”

“Discretion is most important her. I have to be sure no one else will hear about this. If this leaks out, the carefully built reputation of my company would be gone. If you don’t help me, this experiment will end before it can start.”

“How much and how long?”

Sharon smiled. She knew she had gotten me to take the bait. Now she only had to reel me in.

“It won’t be much. Let’s say fifteen dollars a week. It’s not hard labor and you really have to do nothing for it but wear it. How long? Until I say ‘stop’. I need to be sure that you won’t bail on me. This project is important so I have to be sure that you won’t leave me stranded on a whim. You’ll have to sign a contract when you agree.”

“Twenty five and only if you give me an advance for two months.”

“Agreed, the contract will be ready at ten. Once you sign it, you know what you’ll have to wear.”

At that moment I didn’t care anymore. I would have money. Why would I mind wearing lingerie for a limited time of the day? I had been doing it long enough to not be bothered by doing it for just a few minutes at a time. A few minutes was enough time for writing a report about it, one that would be sufficient to fulfill her request. She called me to her office to sign the contract but not until after she made sure no one could get in. I wouldn’t recover from such a blow to the reputation I still had to make at this company. My image would be ruined before it was created.

I stuck my head round the door before I went in and rushed to the door to check it. It was locked with the key still in it. No one could get in.

“Now can you tell me why we couldn’t do this back there?”

“To show you that it isn’t just some paper you’re signing. It is an official contract. You will have to follow its rules or it will cost you.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

As if Sharon could do worse things to me than she already had. I sat down at her desk, looking at her face which didn’t show any tension or stress.

She laid the contract with a gesture before me and said, “Sign here after you read it.”

I started to, but I stopped after the clause that said how much I would be getting. I had to wear what Sharon

would give me which I already knew. If I didn't follow the rules, my punishment would be final and non-debatable. The duration of the experiment had to be conform to reality. But before I could ask what she meant by that, I read on.

There were more rules, but after the next one, I just skimmed over them. Suddenly, I was taken by surprise. The advance would be for six months, not two.

"Are you giving me six hundred and fifty dollars?"

"Yes and before you ask me why, it is to make sure you won't let me down after a few months and run out on me. It wouldn't be the first time you let me down."

She was right. I had already broken a promise to her. But that was years ago.

"Here it is."

She laid the thirteen bills of fifties before me. Thirteen, I should have known that I would be cursed, but I was blinded by the money.

Just a second later, 'Ethan Williams' was nicely written in blue on the bottom of the paper.

I dropped the pen with a smile. I wanted to take the money and stuff it away beyond satin and lace. It would look silly, but I didn't want to take any risk. I didn't get the chance.

"Hold it. Not yet. First you have to proof that you're worth it. You'll get it Friday after I see that you comply."

"You're not playing with me, are you?"

"Don't worry. I promised and I always keep my promises."

She opened a drawer and took out a plastic-wrapped package. She threw it on her desk.

"Here, put this on. After you take off what you are already wearing of course. And quickly please. I'm paying for this."

"Now? I can wear later tonight and then write a report. It's all about the report, isn't it?"

“Yes it is. But to make a report that tells it all you’ve got to live it all. By that I mean wear it all the time. Like women do in reality. Just like the contract says. Besides, what you have on is almost the same as what this is.”

“That may be, but this was just for a limited time. It lasted longer than it should. How can I wear lingerie continually for six months? It’s impossible and I refuse to wear it under my clothes. At home for a little time, OK, but that’s it. Contract or not, you are asking too much.”

Sharon took a moment to think.

“Let’s make an agreement. You don’t have to wear it constantly when you are wearing male clothes. Can you live with that?”

I stepped on the quicksand without any hesitation and didn’t even notice that I was sinking.

“OK, that I can live with.”

“Promise?”

“Yes, promise.”

“Then take the robe, the camisole, and those boy shorts off. I’ll help you put on your new daywear. You will look lovely in it.”

“Very funny. But I can do that myself.”

“Not this stuff and I want to be sure you’ll do it right. At least when you’re doing it for the first time.”

First time? What did she have in mind for me?

“And you know it will be for the whole day, right? You haven’t got any new clothes yet. Well you have, but not male ones.”

She unwrapped the lingerie, while I just stood there doing nothing.

“Well, are you going to take that off or do you need my help for that too?”

I started to loosen the robe as an answer. Getting undressed in front of Sharon was something I tried to

avoid. Getting dressed in front of her would be strange enough and I would soon find out what that would feel like.

“Here? Does it really needs to be here?”

“Why not? You have stalled long enough and as I said, no one can get in.”

She had come closer and saw my naked form.

“Good. First this.”

I had to swallow. What I saw wasn't completely unexpected. But it still was a bit of a surprise to see it was a garter belt, luckily a black one.

I felt her hands wrap the belt around me. A shiver rolled up my back, not as a result of cold hands, but the continuation of the intense feeling the touch of her hands had brought forth. Her hand disappeared, just leaving the belt, but the feelings didn't stopped. They just changed. It was now the feeling of a garter belt being wrapped around me and the garter tabs dangling against my upper thighs.

“Keep that thing under control or I'll have to do something about it and it will hurt a lot.”

She made a gesture of squishing one's balls. That helped but not much. I tried to think of things that would put me off. It worked so long as she didn't do something. But that was asking too much. Sharon had taken out the next part of my new outfit, stockings.

“Here, I'll teach you the best way to do this, so you can do it yourself the next time.”

There hadn't yet been a first time and she was already talking about a next time. This was starting to get out of control, out of mine anyway.

“Stretch your leg and your foot. First you fold up the stocking and then...”

The rest didn't need any words. My toes disappeared into blackness quick, but the rest followed very slowly. She must have thought I was a slow learner.

Sharon's hands glided over my legs which were now totally hairless.

“Stand up.”

The tabs were fastened in a snap.

“You can do the left one yourself, then you can go and take care of your perky friend there.”

That I turned as red as a tomato is needless to say. It was humiliating as hell too.

I just came out of the bathroom when I bumped into her, which made my cheeks color a nice shade of red again.

“Here, this tape should work better.”

She said it with the smile I had seen on her face more than once since this all began. Sharon was amazing; she talked about these things as if it was as normal as can be for men to dress themselves this way.

“I’ll let you do it and here’s the bikini brief that makes the lower part complete.”

I disappeared again into the bathroom to reemerge ten minutes later, taped and covered. The feelings that rushed through me were overwhelming.

More than I would admit at that moment, I liked being dressed as a woman. Even when it was only underwear.

“Are we done now?”

“Of course not. That’s just the lower part. Now comes the upper part.”

For one second I thought of quitting and walking away, but that would be disastrous. I had just signed a contract. Mom would be disappointed in me if I lost this job, even when she didn’t know what the job really entailed. It would mean that I would break another promise to Sharon and, surprisingly, that was not what I wanted. To let Sharon down would make me a bigger disappointment in her eyes than I probably already was.

“There is still this.”

She pulled her left hand from behind her back. I hadn’t noticed that it was kept hidden.

I should have quit that moment. Putting that bra on had me submitted totally to Sharon.

“Put your arms out and through.”

She held the bra before me and I followed her instructions with interest.

“You can turn it around and hook, but a skilled person can hook a bra without turning it first. So you better train.”

I finally had it on but Sharon was determined to let me suffer a little longer. She went round with her finger, touching my body just above the bra.

“You know that you have beautiful shoulder blades? Do you? And your collarbones are also a lust for the eyes.”

What was she doing? I was losing it before; if she kept going, I would faint. Then she went for the kill and that with a very cheerful voice.

“A bra without a filling won’t do. There has got to be something in it. Empty, the bra will be useless. Therefore, take these beauties. They will do the job very nicely until you get better ones that imitate the weight and movement of real ones. These you’ll barely notice.”

She took two fake breasts from the table and put them with a trained eye and skillful hands into the cups of my bra.

“These aren’t the best quality, but they will give you a notion of how it feels. It’s all for the job. Don’t forget that.”

She looked at me, well at my so-called breasts and nodded, satisfied.

“These babies will do nicely indeed. Now you’ve got a B, the perfect fit for someone of your figure.”

I stood there and couldn’t say a word. It took me minutes, which felt like a hour, to come to my senses.

In the meanwhile she had started with dinner as if nothing special had happened. I was still too confused to notice her looking at me all of the time, something

she wouldn't have done if this really had been nothing special.

“See what’s happening? You are already slacking at your job. Now I am making lunch, salads. Eating them will do us both good.”

“Why, I am not overweight.”

“No, but you can lose some fat here and there. I’m putting you on a diet. From now on, you get only salads for lunch. And you will make them for us.”

“What?”

After torturing me with underwear she had to do it with food!

“Mother agrees. So if you have any complaints, tell them to her.”

I looked in the bowl Sharon made and my mind complained before my stomach could. But I hadn't the will anymore to say it out loud.

My mind for a brief moment hadn't been occupied by lingerie, but Sharon had to bring it back into the picture.

“I see you continue to run around without shoes.”

“What shoes do I have? Mine were completely ruined by the paint and you wouldn't lend me money for new ones.”

“In the boxes there is a pair of ankle boots, your size. I will search for them and give them to you. And yes, you have to wear them. Otherwise you will destroy your stockings and that is not the meaning of all this.”

I still was busy with the dishes when Sharon came back. I thought she had gone back to work, but she had been looking for the boots. She had taken her place on the couch and tapped her hand on the cushion next to her.

“Stop with the dishes and sit next to me.”

While I got closer I saw that she had more than just a pair of boots. On the arm of the couch there were lying one of the black pants and a light black sweater with a

turtleneck. It had long sleeves which were decorated with four buttons on its end. It was something a woman would love to wear.

“But I am not a woman!” tugged the man in lingerie dragging along fake breasts.

She said nothing about the clothes, so I didn’t asked and sat down next to her.

“The heels are two-inch high heels, but that shouldn’t be a problem. They’re boots and therefore stable and the heel is very sturdy. You shouldn’t have any problem with walking in them. Once you have buckled up that is.”

Now I saw the three buckles on the ankle, ensuring a firm grip.

“I’ll leave it to you. But if you ruin the stockings, you’ll pay for them.”

I missed her exit again because I had one of those boots in my hands.

I was playing with the buckles while a light breeze touched my face. Sharon had turned the air conditioning back on. Not much but the comfortable temperatures I had enjoyed the last days would not last, not inside. It was sneaky of her, but I already had made up my mind to put something more on than just lingerie. The pants and sweater didn’t looked bad and I wanted to put those breasts out of view.

I kept looking at them and it didn’t repulse me a bit. Not even when Sharon had put them there. I obviously was changing. Being so long in lingerie, my way of looking at things had changed.

The pants were stylish and the sweater completed that look. At first I thought that the pants were too long, but after putting on the boots I saw I was wrong. The dressing mirror showed me the next stage of a new me and I loved it. Not that I would say that out loud, but I felt that.

When Sharon saw me that night after work she landed a kiss on my forehead. That surprised me more than getting breast from her.



“Nice. You’re looking much better. Keep it that way.”

The next days passed without many changes. That was until the day came when I would hand my reports over to Sharon and the money was mine. I had worked hard on those reports. I outlined every detail, even the ones I didn’t wanted to share with someone else. But Sharon had stopped being just someone else. The distance between us had shrunken.

It was Friday. I was wearing what I had been wearing all week: a girdle, a bra, stockings and, just for that day a thong, just one of those sweet surprises of Sharon. It was burgundy, and I didn’t hated it, the opposite actually. What I was wearing over it hadn’t changed much either over that week: black pants and a sweater.

I was so used to the boots now that I could dance in them and that was what I was doing in the kitchen when my mother found me.

“Ethan, what in heaven’s name is the meaning of this?”

I didn’t hear her coming in because of some music on the radio. But I heard her question loud and clear. My answer wasn’t more than a whisper.

“Mom.”

She dropped her luggage and stood before my nose before I knew it.

“You’re wearing women’s clothing? You have breasts? What is this?”

She kept lifting the sweater while turning me round, touching me.

“It’s even worse. You’re wearing lingerie, a thong. Was a normal brief too much or was it too little? Ethan, son. Who are you? What are you?”

She shook her head.

“I have to sit down.”

She sat down on the nearest chair, while I started to panic. Not because she had seen me like this, but because I feared for her health.

“Are you one of those men that wants to look like a woman or that wants to be one?”

“No, no, not that. None of those! It’s just a coincidence.”

“A coincidence? Wearing women’s clothes, lingerie and, as I see now, also boots, is just a coincidence for you? Do you really expect me to believe that?”

“No, not at all Mom. But I assure you it is not my intention to look this way. Ask Sharon. She can vouch for me.”

“Now we will find out if you’re speaking the truth. You better not be lying to me.”

Sharon entered the room.

“Why are you making so much no... ? Mom?”

Sharon kissed her on the cheeks as if nothing had happened.

“You’re early. I expected you to arrive tomorrow. I wanted to surprise you with a nice breakfast.’

“Ethan surprised me more than enough and my appetite is completely gone. But I could use a cup of coffee.”

“One coffee coming on.”

No one moved.

“Ethan, coffee for Mom and make one for me too.”

I only started to move after she pinched me.

“I must admit, Ethan looks a bit different, but there is a reason for it.’

“There is. He likes wearing women’s clothing and more.”

“Let’s go to my office while Ethan prepares our coffees. Maybe his hands will stop trembling when we leave him alone.’

They disappeared while I tried to calm down.

Sharon was the first one to come back.

“Mom is still mad and not convinced. She still thinks that you don’t dare to admit your feelings. She thinks that you kept it a secret from her and finally show you true color now you are living with me. She is especially mad because you never told her anything about it.”

“No, this can’t be. Mom has to believe me.’

“She will. But you have to prove it to her.”

“How so?”

“By going shopping with me this afternoon. We are going to buy you some new clothes, male clothes.”

Now Mom spoke. She had also returned.

“Show me how much you want it. You are going with me dressed as you are now. You show me what you want by doing what you don’t want.”

“No, no! Going out like this? People will see that I am not a woman. That is *way* too embarrassing. I’ll be laughed at from the moment I set a foot out the door.”

“You won’t. Because now you can show me how much you want to be a man. I will make sure you look decent enough to pass as a woman. No one will laugh with you.”

“No way. This is crazy. Making me look like a woman!”

“This way and no other way. You already look like a woman. You just need a little bit more adjustment. It’s this or you’re not my son anymore. Prove to me that you didn’t lie to me all these years. I don’t mind you being one of those you-know-what. But I do mind that you would lie to me for so long about something so important.”

Sharon was drinking the coffee I gave her with shaking hands. I could have sworn that she looked at me

with eyes that promised a lot of mischief. But it being Sharon, I had to be mistaken.

“Here’s the money I promised you. Reports or no reports, you can use it to buy new clothes when you go shopping with Mom.”

“He won’t need it. I will choose and pay for every piece of clothing, male clothing. If he wants to buy female clothing, he has to pay for it himself.”

“I won’t need it then. You can be sure of that.”

“We’ll see. But now it’s time to make you presentable to the outside world.”

Sharon had other plans.

“I’ll see you both this evening. It’s gone be a hectic day because we have a bride-to-be and a bachelorette party. So don’t expect me for dinner. By the way Ethan, how long have you been wearing those pants and that sweater?”

She didn’t wait for a answer, but Mother did. I let her wait. Mother never liked it when I wore something longer than a day, even when nothing was wrong with it.

“The fact that you don’t answer is more than enough. Go change your clothes.”

I disappeared to the bedrooms. The boxes were moved to an empty room there. Sharon had asked me multiple times to put them away in the closet, but I was convinced that there would be no need for it. And I was right, well, I would be after our shopping trip.

I knew what was in which box. Enough spare time and a marker had been very useful. So I looked in the box with pants and found only the white ones. My search ended with the dirty laundry basket. There they were. I grabbed the pants and was ready. Keeping the ones I was wearing wouldn’t work with Mother. This pair didn’t either.

“Ethan, don’t tell me that you’re doing what I think you’re doing,” Mother’s voice came from behind me. I froze and waited for what would follow. It would be the first time that I got scolded for fishing for clothes.

“It’s all I have. I have to take it or wear these.”

“If it wasn’t you, I might believe it. Show me those boxes Sharon told me about. I’m sure there will be something more.”

My chance for choosing how to look was gone. What I was wearing was the most manly outfit there was. There still was a white pair of pants and sweater, but that would draw too much attention compared with black. But it would be pants, so it was better than the rest of what I had.

I showed her the boxes. The white pants were the first she took in her hands, but she laid them aside to my horror.

“Get those clothes off so I can see what’s underneath.”

“Your son. The one you have seen many times naked before. That’s what’s underneath”

“I know, but now there are obvious add-ons. Come now. Undress!”

A minute later the pants and sweater were gone. I tried to show the least possible of myself. Mother looked at me with interest and not with disgust. Which was unexpected.

“It seems you have the body to go with your new preference. You’ll make a fine woman.”

“*I don’t want to be a woman!* How many times do I have to tell you that?”

“Only once today. And it’s the only chance you’ll get.”

She pulled something from the box.

“Ah. This will do fine.”

When I saw what she had in her hands, I protested out loud.

“Mom, no way. Why not the white pants.”

“It’s not your color, but this is.”

What she had in her hands was one of the pairs of shorts, a dark olive green one. And it was short, really short. The legs were little more than the cuffs.

“No. Please no, Mom. I can’t wear this!”

Mother looked at me with a face that wouldn’t take one more word out of me.

“Put it on. Now. Or you’ll get dressed by your mother for the first time in years. But before you do that...”

Yes, maybe she had changed her mind?

“Where are your pantyhose? These stockings are too revealing for these shorts. You need to lose that girdle and stockings too. Now, where do you keep your lingerie?”

I didn’t know what to say or what to do. I just pointed to the walk-in closet. A second later I heard her going through the drawers.

“This one will fit fine with it. It’s thick and non transparent. I’ll bring you a new thong and bra too.”

So a moment later my lower part was as good as new. But why a thong again? She could have taken boy shorts or a brief. I should have said something, but I didn’t dare. It would make her angry again. So I said nothing. Her next choice made me regret that decision.

“This sweater will make you a very beautiful looking girl. Well, below your head anyway. But that will be fixed soon.”

It had the same color as the shorts. So that was nothing to complain about. As if I would. It had also a turtle-neck. And it had even more, or should I say less?

“Mom, I feel a slight breeze on my back. How come? Is there something wrong with this sweater?”

“Nothing, dear. On the contrary, it is perfect.”

My hand went to my back.

“Oh my goodness. Mom, this sweater has an open back!”

It felt as if the back was cut in half, almost until the collar. Then they were connected with each other by two broad elastic straps. One was placed where you would see the hooks of my bra and the other one connected the waist, keeping it together.

“Yes. It will be hot outside so it will come in handy.”

“But why would you choose one with a turtleneck.”

“To hide your Adam’s apple from the glances of the people around you.”

“Oh, OK then. I hadn’t thought about that.”

“You’d better in the future. It’s the details that give you away.”

I just sighed. It was of no use to react to those words.

“Now, let’s see how you look.”

I gasped when I saw myself in one of the mirrors. This one had the advantage of not showing my face from where I stood. So it didn’t disturb the view. I had to say if I would choose this, I wouldn’t look bad at all. I would look hot. Luckily I realized what I was thinking and came to my senses.

“Um. I have a fine-looking second daughter I may say. And those boots make it even better.”

No, she couldn’t be saying that. That was the last thing I wanted to hear from my mother. Talking about me as her daughter. My world was falling apart.

“And now comes the moment of truth. Go sit at the dressing table. I’m going to make your head fit with the rest of your look.”

I sat down, holding my breath in fear for what would come.

More than an hour later I could breathe again. What I saw was the head of a woman, a plain one, but definitely a woman. My eyebrows were plucked in a female curve. I had eyelash extensions, some black eyeshadow and a lot of makeup on me. My hair was in a very simple female hairstyle. I never knew my mother was so great at these things. But then, I had never needed them.

“I saw that one of the boxes had jewelry in it. That will give you an even more female look.”

It was little sparkling clip-on roses. They were perfect. And I was losing it again, being happy about the way I looked, feminine. I was less satisfied about the color of my lips and nails, pink. But I had to admit, it worked.

“Stand up. I want to take a picture of my beautiful new daughter before she disappears.”

I had to end this or she would have never stopped. Her cell phone couldn't hold any more pictures anyway.

“Now comes the most important rule you have got to follow. Act female. It's not your look that will give you away. It will be your behavior. Take small steps, one foot before the other. No big waving with the arms...”

She kept on going, but I listened carefully. I didn't want to be exposed. It would be devastating. It surprised me that I was prepared to go out like this. The way I now looked had a lot to do with that.

It was past two when I left the elevator arm-in-arm with my mother. We stopped at the counter. It was Jack. I tried to hide myself behind my mother, but it was no use. He couldn't keep his eyes off me.

“Good afternoon Mrs. Hannigan. Going for a walk?”

“Just taking... Jenny here shopping. She's Sharon's new secretary.”

“Well, I am looking forward to see her again.”

I was quick to drag Mother with me past the counter. We were out of the building when I stopped and whispered angrily.

“Mom, why did you say I was going to be Sharon's secretary? He will see me as a male then. It will make him wonder why.”

“Don't worry. Sharon will fix that. She will tell that Jenny had to resign.”

I was assured, but not for long. A voice behind us brought a new risk for my identity. It was one of Sharon's employees and she knew Mom.

“Mrs. Hannigan, what did I hear when I got out of the elevator.

Is this going to be our new secretary or better said, Sharon’s?”

“Um, yes. This is Jenny, a distant niece and, yes, Sharon’s new secretary. She will start Monday or Tuesday if everything works out as it should.”

“Wow, finally and such a babe. All the women of you family seem to be stunners.”

My cheeks went red again. Not for what Mother had said. Sharon would fix that but for what that woman had said. I never had heard a woman talk about another woman like that.

“Where are you going, Mrs. Hannigan, on such a beautiful day?”

“We are going shopping. Jenny needs some new outfits for the office. What she has on won’t do.”

“It would for me.”

Her eyes kept on taking me in. My face was as red as it could be, but she never said anything about it.

“Are you looking forward to working with us, dear?”

Before I could answer was I stopped by a hasty mother.

“Jenny is very, very shy. She won’t say a word. She will barely nod at a stranger. So excuse her for being silent.”

“Oh, that’s not a problem, Mrs. Hannigan. Once she’s part of the company I am sure we will talk a lot. And now please excuse me, I have to go. I have to get ready for the party this afternoon. Goo...”

Before she could say goodbye, Mother’s cell rang.

“Hello. Sharon? What? I’m coming right away.” She put her phone back in her purse.

“We have to go back, Jenny. Sharon has sprained her ankle. I have to help her. We will go shopping tomorrow.”

She didn't need to say more. I had to fight to keep from turning back since I entered the elevator. I was glad to seek shelter and try this again tomorrow. Or maybe, just maybe, I could convince Mother to go shopping on her own.

"Wait, Mrs. Hannigan. If you want, I can take your niece with me. In the neighborhood of the beauty salon there are more than enough shops for her where she can buy a new suit for the office. And when she's done, she can take a taxi home. It's safe, I assure you."

I shook my head vigorously left and right. But it was obvious that Mother was thinking about it.

"Well, that is not a bad idea Ann. She still has to proof something to me and this will be a perfect way to show me how much she wants that."

Mother's cunning eyes sparkled and her smile showed me how much fun she was having tormenting me. That was a side of her I never knew she had. She must have picked it up from Sharon.

"Here's your money Jenny. Don't spend it all."

I took the money out of her purse. But where would I put it?

"Come, give it to me. I will keep it until we are there." Ann took it out of my hands and stuffed it away in her purse.

In the moment I was distracted by Ann, Mother had used the opportunity to disappear back into the building. I wanted to go after her, but Ann grabbed my arm. She hooked hers firmly around mine.

"Come along, gorgeous. I will take my time to show you off."

I had no other choice than to follow. So we walked slowly down the streets. It gave me time to think about every step I took. When we were where we should be, I had my female walk perfected enough to be believable to anyone.

The beauty salon was enormous. They did anything a woman could desire. Ann walked in without a warning

and I had no other choice than to follow if I ever I wanted to get my money back.

One of the women at the counter was well-acquainted with Ann.

“Ann, just on time. That’s how I like it.”

I clamped myself on to Ann’s arm that holed her purse and made the universal gesture for money.

“Oh sorry, Jenny. I already forgot that I had your money. But are you taking off? I’d hate to see you go.”

“I shook my head longer than necessary for a confirmation.”

Before she could open her purse the lady at the counter interfered. “Ann, is your friend leaving? If so, then we have a problem.”

The woman came out from behind the counter.”

“The reservation said for two and Sharon will have to pay for two. That’s because we had to refuse others to fit two in. So long it is alright with her, I don’t have a problem with it.”

“Well, I can’t let the company pay for two and only get value for one. That means that Jenny has to stay and enjoy a free beauty treatment.”

My eyes popped almost out of my head. What? Before I knew it, I was dragged along by Ann, both of us following the woman. We went right through a door to the back, where the real magic was going on.

“Ally, take care of these two, would you? They get the royal treatment today. So you can go crazy. Anything they want, goes.”

“I love that and so will these two.”

She looked at me.

“Ann I know, but who is this?”

“This beauty is Jenny. And even though she doesn’t look as if she needs anything, I know you can make her even more stunning.

“I know I can. What’s already done is not bad, but it has faults. So we start again from the beginning, from a blank canvas. Tabula rasa.”

I kept my head shaking while I was pushed down in a chair, but it was futile. Ann laughed and encouraged them to go on.

“Jenny is a very shy girl. When she says no, it means yes. Make her look like an angel and you will see the devil in me.”

“Stop joking around. You scare her pants off.”

“I hope so.”

I was the only one there that didn’t laugh. I was too scared to do that.

First Ann removed my makeup, which scared me even more. The fear of getting caught was immense. Then she washed my hair and away went the clip-ons, right into the purse of Ann.

“The hair, what should we do? Keep it short or make it long with extensions? I bet you’ll look even more beautiful with long hair. Ann?”

“Make it a tomboyish style. That’s Sharon’s favorite style and Jenny here will be her secretary after all.”

“Ooh, her secretary. Have you warned her yet?”

“No, silly. That’s something she has to find out for herself.”

What were they talking about? Warn me for Sharon? That was not necessary. I knew her long enough to know she bit. I knew my future boss better than they did, even though they probably saw and talked to her more in a few months than I had in years. How foolish, arrogant, and dumb I was. I would find out that Sharon had layers I had still to unravel.

“Long it is then. The nails? Pink is a nice color but I think you can use a deep red. It matches your personality better. Doesn’t it?”

My answer confirmed it. I blushed.

“And they should be longer, much longer.”

Then Ann made her contribution.

“Earrings. Give her earrings. Those clip-ons are beautiful, but a girl needs piercings to make her whole.”

She giggled.

“OK. At least three. But I love the roses. So one of them will be an invisible stud. The other two will be diamond ones. I have some red ones that will make you jealous. Would you like that?”

I shook my head lightly.

“She doesn’t want them.”

Ann interfered. “Oh yes she does. If she doesn’t say anything, it’s a yes. If she really doesn’t want it, she can say no, not just shake her head. It’s not that hard to do. Jenny! If you don’t want them, say no now, loud enough for the both of us. And no going back on your word or should I say non word.”

I said nothing and some time later my ears were embellished with two pairs of red diamonds. How long it all took, I couldn’t say. I had no idea. I looked at Ann and pointed to my wrist, hoping she knew what I meant. She did all too well.

“You want the time? I can give it to you, but I won’t. Every woman should have a nice watch. Even when it’s only to show its beauty. So today is your lucky day. They have some very beautiful ones here. I said it was more than just a beauty salon, didn’t I?”

A watch? I didn’t need a watch. I needed to escape.

“Here you are, Miss. I think one of these will suit you.”

They were all beautiful watches, but only one of them was red. So before I could refuse, Ann made my choice for me.

“The red one. She will take the red one.”

Well, I didn’t have to take it because it was put around my wrist for me.

“Maybe she wants something for her neck too.”

Panic started to take over, but it was unnecessary. Ann had a sense of when to stop.

“No, that is something we leave for her love. Whoever that may turn out to be.”

“OK, that’s done.”

I sighed from relief, and of disappointment. Ann was ready, not me. I looked at my watch. They had set the time right. It was four-thirty.

It took them a half hour longer to finish me.

Ann was the first to react. She whistled.

“Girl, you look even more stunning than before. Now you see what some eyebrows, the right makeup, longer eyelashes, the right hair style and some jewelry can do.”

A moment later I was standing next to Ann at the counter.

“That will be six forty-five for the earrings and watch. It’s so cheap because it is for Sharon’s employees. Otherwise you would pay the full price.”

Pay, why was she talking about paying? Wasn’t Sharon paying for all this? That was all the money I had with me! I had to give the things back and quick.

Ann saw how I struggled with what was said. She laid her hand on my arm to reassure me. In the other one she held her credit card. Both gestures calmed me down before I went totally crazy.

“Don’t worry about money. I’ll pay for everything you will be buying today. You can pay me back later.”

Then she went for the kill.

“But I’ll be keeping the money you already have given me. Now let’s go buy some working clothes.”

I wanted to scream my lungs out but that would give me away and that scared me more than having no money.

With the money I could have left Ann behind. But without money I couldn’t even get back without her. I knew Sharon’s address but not how to walk back to it.

And walking while looking like this? That would leave scars on my mind for the rest of my life. Some men are pigs and it was a long walk.

“This is a great shop. I buy my suits here too.”

Ann went in, holding my wrist. We were greeted before we were all the way inside.

“Ann, what can we do for you today? Did you forget something yesterday? Or have you won the lotto?”

“It’s not for me. It’s for my new friend here.”

“Another new girlfriend! What happened with the last one?”

“Very funny. You now that I only have eyes for Jessica.”

“Is that why you can’t keep them off your new friend?”

“Is it my fault that she is such a looker? I’m in love, not dead.”

Both women laughed. I was in shock. Was Ann a lesbian? Not a problem for me if I didn’t look like a woman. Luckily for me, she had a girlfriend.

“How can I help your friend then?”

“With some new clothes for the office. She’s Sharon’s new secretary. She has to look like one.”

“Sharon’s new secretary, you say. Then she has to look stylish and hot. That won’t be easy, but I’ll manage.”

All that for Sharon? Was I living in a different world from the one I thought I knew?

“Umm.”

She walked round me, holding a finger against her mouth and squished eyes as a sign of concentration.

“I’m never wrong in guessing sizes and that means that you are lucky. We have a lot that will suit you. So if you will...”

She pointed at a curtain.

“You can change there. I will bring the clothes to you and Ann can admire the result. And knowing her, you will hear immediately how it looks.”

Luckily the lightning was bad enough to keep my Adams apple in the dark. When the dust settled, I had four skirts, two pairs of pants and seven blouses. Some were short, some narrow, some striped, some plain and that was only the skirts and pants. The blouses were all white and six of them were ruffled, something Sharon loved, according to Ann. Some of them showed more of my ‘breasts’ than I wanted. I thanked God for bad lightning. Ann never asked me to stand in the light. She had more than enough to satisfy her with what she could see.

It was late when Ann was satisfied enough to take her credit card out.

“I’ll take these and you can take those two bags.”

I wanted to grab more. I couldn’t let her care almost all of them.

“Don’t worry. You will have more to carry. A girl like you needs shoes and lots of them.”

I went weak at the knees. Was this hellish day not done yet?

“There is a great shop a block away. So no time to waste.”

“Bye, Ann and new friend.”

I had to wave for Ann. How she was able to walk a block with that load, I couldn’t tell. But she managed.

My feet were killing me when we finally got there. To my surprise was it still very busy. I had expected an empty shop at this hour.

My stomach started to growl when we were ten yards in. Nobody but Ann heard it, there was so much noise in the shop.

“Poor dear. You are hungry. I’m used to eating late, but don’t worry. At the party you can eat some.”

What party? Oh yes, Sharon had said something about a bachelorette party. It had to be the party Ann was talking about.

“But you look tired too. So let me do the picking and you can sit down and rest a little bit. I’ll choose the right shoes for your lovely feet and you only have to wear them and show them to me now and then.”

I hadn’t the energy anymore to go against her. Sitting down was the only thing I desired. How do women stay on their feet so long on these heels? That would be no problem with the new shoes. Ann should know from experience what were the best shoes to wear at the office. They should all have low heels, How they looked I didn’t care.

My mind went crazy again.

“Wait a minute! Am I now thinking about what women’s shoes to wear at the office? I am going completely mad! I am not going to wear any woman shoes. Or anything that Ann paid for today. I just have to tell Mother what happened. She will understand and give me another chance.”

I just barely managed to help Ann bring all the bags in. The taxi driver was too busy with enjoying the view and so was Louis. He had an excuse. He was checking the security. Except that’s not what his eyes were looking at.

“Hi, Ann. That can’t be all for the party?”

“No, it’s for Miss Hannigan. Can you make sure it gets there? We have to go to the party.”

A moment later I was chuffed into the other elevator by Ann. I soon found out what its last stop was. I only had seen a little part of Sharon’s company. What I saw at that moment was impressive. She obviously took good care of her employees. She even let them have a bachelorette party at the office. Blabbering and laughter showed us the way.

“Ann!” A dozen voices shouted the same name and they all had to hug and kiss Amanda. It seemed to go on endlessly.

“Who’s this? Are you cheating on Jessica?”

“Me? Never. This is our new colleague and Sharon’s new secretary, Jenny. She will start next week.”

It was my time to get hugged and kissed and, surprisingly, I didn’t hate it. A week ago I would have ran fast away from this kind of display.

They all shouted their names to me, but I couldn’t remember them all. But they didn’t expect me to.

“Shut up everybody. What will she think of us if we keep on suffocating her? Let the girl say something for herself.”

This woman was almost forty, I guessed. She looked her age but in a way that made you wish you were her age. I hadn’t heard her name yet. It was Ann who saved me.

“Amanda, Jenny is a very, very shy girl. I couldn’t get a word out of her all day. Don’t expect her to say anything. And yes, you are right. She isn’t crazy about all this attention and she can’t stay long. She’s also Mrs. Hannigan’s niece and they are expecting her.”

“Is she Sharon’s niece?”

“No, of course not. She is family of Mrs. Hannigan. Sharon probably doesn’t considers her as family. She doesn’t even consider that stepbrother of her as something you’d call family. He’s an acquaintance that happens to be the son of Mrs. Hannigan. I believe his last name is Williams. There isn’t much affection between them.”

“I heard her once say that when she would prefer men over women, he would be glad not to be related. Does that mean she likes him?”

“Who knows? I have never seen him. It must be some extraordinary looking guy then.”

I heard a lot of things I didn’t know about Sharon. I might have known something if I had been more than a distant stranger. I had learned more about her over these few days than I had ever known before. Like that they talked about Sharon as if she was just one of the girls. I never knew that she was so well-liked, even as a boss. This really was another Sharon than the one I thought I knew. They all sat down again, except me. I

looked around searching for a chair when Ann shouted at me, which silenced them all.

“Jenny, squeeze yourself next to Amanda. Her chair is wider than ours.”

For a moment I didn’t know what to do, but keeping on standing wasn’t possible either. I would be the center of their attention. So I slowly approached Amanda who tried to hide a smile. I soon found out why.

Just before I sat down, she maneuvered herself under me and left me sitting on her lap. Everybody laughed and my face was once red again.

“Oh, look. She really *is* shy, isn’t she?”

They all giggled and I made myself smaller and moved back. Amanda hadn’t giggled but her smile had gone bigger.

The party kept going on for an hour and all I could do was listen, eat and drink a little champagne. If I got drunk, Mother would skin me alive.

When everybody was standing up to leave, I noticed that Amanda had her arms around me. During that hour I had been leaning against her and was sitting on just one of her legs. After a second load of hugs and kisses I finally could go back. All the doors were still open, so I could go in through the office. I made a very slow entrance in silence, hoping they were already asleep. It was late but not yet late enough for Mother.

She and Sharon were sitting on the couch, Sharon with her leg up. Both of them looked at me for a second, then hell broke loose.

“Ethan! What have you been doing? You said you just went shopping for clothes, male clothes. Now, look at you. You’re still Jenny!”

Sharon had to butt in.

“He’s even more Jenny than before, Mother. Look at his hair, nails and ears. He has had a whole makeover.”

“Well at least I know now what choice you have made. I knew it! You were lying to your own mother. I’m glad that you’ve finally found yourself but I’m mad that you

didn't dare to tell me how you really felt. Now you can dress yourself as a woman as much as you want to. I even prefer it that way. It is better that you'll do it all the time. It makes everything easier. Now I have two beautiful daughters."

"Mom, no. This is a mistake. I don't want to dress like this. Everything went wrong today. I was tied up by Ann and my money was gone and..."

Mother cut me off.

"Ethan, um, Jenny, stop it. I don't want to hear it anymore. You say one thing to my face and behind my back you do the other. You are making a fool of me and I won't have that. I said to make your choice and you have. So from now on you will be Jenny and I don't want to see Ethan again. Except when I call for him. Did you get that?"

I never had her seen so angry before. She would never listen to reason when she was in that state. So I better play along until she calmed down and I could convince her that this all was one big mistake.

Sharon made things even harder.

"Where have you been the last hours? Don't bother, answering is unnecessary. We know where, at the party. Where everybody could see you as Jenny."

She dragged me further in. I didn't dare to move any more, hoping that they would stop. Sharon had no intention of doing that.

"Mom told me about Ann, but that wasn't been a problem. She's good at keeping secrets and can always use a raise. But now the whole company has seen you and knows that you are my new secretary. Even when you're going back to being Ethan, I only have a job for Jenny now."

"Another good reason for you to stay Jenny. I asked Sharon to give you this job so you could find yourself a woman and give me some grandchildren. I guess one can say that you found one. But that is not what I had in mind. You better be a lesbian?"

"Mom, of course I still like women."

Sharon kept on going, rubbing it in. This time by pretending to ask about my many purchases she had to take over from Louis.

“You’re looking wonderful, Jenny. But how did you pay for all that? You only had around six hundred dollars.”

“Um, Ann lent it to me. I can pay it back when it suits me.”

“It seems to me that you already shop like a real girl. I checked your bags. Those things will suit you fine. You’ll be a fine looking secretary. And I love your hair. But paying it all back will take some time.”

She came closer to kiss me on the cheeks and whisper in my ears.

“You better not run and leave me behind with the check. Mother will be very disappointed if that happens...and so will I.”

“Today has been more than enough. Let’s just go to sleep.”

Mom made an end to the evening. They both left and I dragged along. To my great surprise Mom walked into my bedroom.

“Mom, that is my room.”

“I know. But after today I need my rest and want to sleep alone. You’ll sleep with Sharon. She doesn’t mind. She says so.”

They both went in, giving me no chance to say anything. I guessed I could sleep on the couch. Well that was what I thought, anyway.

“And don’t you dare sleep on the couch. That is something Ethan can do, but not Jenny. She has to have more manners than he has.”

Mother really left me no choice so I went in to Sharon’s bedroom. She was undressing and as good as naked, but didn’t show any shame as if Ethan wasn’t there.

“Your nightwear is on your side of the bed. I always sleep on the right side. Don’t you forget that.”



Why would I care? Mom wouldn't stay forever. I was in a camisole and a bikini brief, nothing unusual for me. I looked at Sharon and saw that she wore the same only in a bigger size. I had to close my eyes for a moment and think of other things than Sharon in the same outfit as me. There was one thing more. On my side there was also a bra. I knew what that meant. I couldn't ditch the breasts. Sharon lay in bed and watched me change. I kept my back to her. Not out of shame, but so I didn't had to close my eyes. Something had changed. Sharon stirred things in me.

"You look much better now. Now you got that extra on you. Perfect for a good night's sleep. Come in, then I can put out the lights."

She threw the sheets open. I hesitated, expecting her to kill the lights but she waited until I finally crawled between the sheets.

I maneuvered myself onto the edge of the bed, hoping that it would be far enough from Sharon. I was getting overwhelmed by all this new feelings and didn't wanted to show even a glimpse of them to her. Feelings from lying next to her thinking of her perfect body. Feelings gathered during the day wearing women's clothes. Feelings I hid away in the back of my mind. If somebody asked, I would deny it but I had a great day as Jenny.

Tired but satisfied I fell asleep in a few minutes. Sometime that night I woke up and looked right into the eyes of Sharon. Those feelings running through me were the cause of my awakening. Looking at Sharon I realized that she had woken more than just my mind up. I had to admit that I was starting to like her, even more, loved her perhaps. It was as if being Jenny had made me a total different person. Or was it just that I could be as Jenny what I didn't dared to be as Ethan?

The feelings kept on stirring up that part of me that had nothing to do with Jenny. But being her didn't mean that I wasn't Ethan anymore. I could never be Jenny without still being Ethan. He was hidden behind a woman's face, but still existed in me, able to pop up now and then, where and when I felt like it. I relaxed and went back to sleep and didn't have to worry about a rising problem.

"I think I'm starting to like you," I said to her in my mind as I drifted off. "Even worse, I think I'm starting to

have feelings for you. I know we're strangers to each other, but I will try to make you like me. Even if it's just as a friend. One I never have been before."

It helped. I felt soundly asleep.

The sun was shining bright when I woke up again. It looked like Mom had let me and Sharon sleep in. I quickly realized there was another problem now. I felt Sharon's breast against me and her arm over me. Her breath was caressing my hair. Morning wood was blooming. I didn't dare to move out of fear. Not that she would notice it, but that she would let go of me. I didn't want the moment to pass.

The sun stood a lot higher when she started to awaken and I sprinted to the bathroom to avoid difficult questions and to have a necessary and releasing shower. The release came immediately, then a shower for more than fifteen minutes. I needed it very much. I heard Sharon opening the bathroom door, apparently to speak to me.

"Mom has brought some new clothes for you. I think that she is still a little bit mad at you."

"Why's that?" I screamed.

"You'll see. You can put on what I laid on your towels. The rest has to be a surprise. I can't wait to see the look on your face."

That didn't sound good but I didn't worry too much. What could Mother do to me that hadn't been done already? I would soon find out.

What lay on the towels was the lower part and that was not much different from yesterday's. So the surprise had to be the upper part.

I went back into Sharon's bedroom to see what it was.

"Turn around. I have to help you with this."

She wrapped something around me and started to connect it from the bottom up. I looked down to discover what the surprise was: a corset. I just kept on staring off until she connected the last front hook. It was heaven to feel her arms around me. These feelings were new, but I

could not escape from them. They kept on coming and multiplying.

“This is a over-bust so you don’t need a bra, only the fake breasts. Where did you leave them? You won’t be complete without them.”

I pointed her in the right direction and a minute later the dress-up was over. But I didn’t know that a corset is never really finished.

“Stand still. Now the real work begins. Whatever I do, don’t move or we have to begin again and you won’t like it. Now, breathe out.”

An instant later I felt her knee in my back. That was the last thing I expected to touch me there. She started lacing up the corset and I knew that Mother was still very angry with me. That much I was sure of.

When she was finished, I still was grasping for breath. Sharon laughed.

“You’ll see immediately why woman torture themselves this way.”

A minute later I was admiring myself in the mirror and knew the answer. My figure looked far more female than before. I was immediately hooked. After a half-hour I had to be laced up again, like it was a saddle on a horse.

One must suffer to be beautiful! I finally knew the meaning of those words. But I liked the result I saw in the mirror too much to be put out.

“Oh, and Mother has given you a uniform for this day.”

Sharon held a maid’s uniform in her hands.

“Sharon, not a maid’s uniform! Talk about a crossdresser cliché.

“Yes it is, but a nice one, don’t you think? No time to waste. Mother insists on it. So quit you whining and put it on.”

The color was the usual black and white. It had a cut-out heart over the breast area, along with short puffed sleeves and a little white apron. The skirt was

short and the petticoat had multiple layers. It was a crossdresser's dream and my nightmare. A white lace choker made it complete. The shoes had four-inch heels. They were not the easiest way to walk and work in for me.

"Sharon, what's with these shoes? Why so high?"

Her laughter didn't promise much good.

"You're the one who bought them. None of them are lower than three inches. Besides, these have a very sturdy heel. It should make it easier to walk in for a novice as you. Now, no more excuses. Put them on."

"Can't I wear the boots again?"

"Mother said shoes, so shoes it will be. Hurry up, she's waiting."

"Mom, is this really necessary?"

She was busy with our breakfast when I finally was ready to face her.

"Yes Jenny, it is. It will remind you what choice you have made and to stick with it. And that is the last I want to hear about this. Besides, it is fitting for what we're going to do today. We are going to fill your closet with what's in the boxes. Eat up. It's going to be a long day."

Sharon disappeared after breakfast and I had no other option than to help Mother fill my closet with wigs, dresses and other female knick-knacks.

The closet slowly filled itself and I slowly realized that this was my future. A future that I, to my surprise, accepted. Ethan didn't mind being Jenny anymore. On the contrary. I was starting to like the New Me.

"Mom, when are you going back?"

"Why, are you tired of me already?"

"No Mom, but I will miss you when you go back."

"Good because I won't go back. Well, I will, but only for a few days."

Well, this was already a day of surprises and they kept coming.

“I’m staying here now. Sharon has asked me to move faster. She missed me also and didn’t want me to be left alone. So from next week on, you’ll have me to watch over Jenny. According to Sharon you need some cooking lessons. I only need a few days to get things in order.

“When I come back it’ll be me and my two girls from then on. And then you can’t say no to a visit at a coffeehouse, it’s mandatory for Jenny.”

My Saturday was mostly spent filling my closet and making dinner. At the end of the day, I was glad to get out of my maid’s uniform, but that was only after Mother had taken a million pictures of me. I was too cute to ignore, according to Mother.

Sunday and Monday weren’t much different. I woke up next to Sharon and dressed as was now usual. Mother did the fine tuning on me, meaning hair and makeup. She made me practice a lot. I had to be able to do it when she wasn’t there. I didn’t dare ask Sharon for help. Mother held a tight rein on me, but as of Tuesday she would be gone for a few days. For Sharon, that was the perfect moment to start me off at being a secretary.

Everything went fine. They had all met me already and knew how shy I was so they weren’t surprised to get only silence from me. My work day stopped at two. As Sharon had said, it was only part-time. For the first few days, Sharon would answer the phone, but she already had a solution to that problem: Voice lessons and they started that afternoon. That was when the discreetly-sent DVD with instructions landed on my desk, just before two o’clock.

I had my first lesson behind me when Sharon called.

“Jenny, can you go to Amanda? She says she has something to talk about with you. You better go. She’s my head of research and development. I want to keep her happy. Take the elevator on your end down and then the other one up. It’s faster and easier that way. Her office is the first door on your right. You can’t miss it.”

It was indeed easy to find. I could imagine the eyes of another Jack or Louis burning into my back, but Sharon checked my appearance every morning so I had

nothing to worry about. Well, maybe a little. Why did Amanda need to see me?

“Well, there is our new secretary, as beautiful as ever. Come in.”

I did. She immediately came closer, close enough to see the hairs in my nose if she hadn't been as tall as Sharon.

Before I knew it, she grabbed between my legs, quickly finding what wasn't supposed to be part of my anatomy.

“I knew it! You're a guy. No wonder I felt something at the party.”

She dominated me in silence. I was speechless and she was concentrated on studying the girl that wasn't.

“Umm, not bad but not perfect. You need a better boob job, but that's all. The rest is a matter of taste.”

I finally dared to say a word.

“What are...?”

“What am I going to do with you? Have fun of course. My kind of fun. And don't worry. I won't tell anybody. Not if I'm satisfied with your work.”

A moment later I had the first taste of that. She kissed me intensely, forcing her tongue into every corner of my mouth.

“Umm, needs improvement. But don't worry. We have more than time enough. You'll learn.”

She grabbed again at my testicles and this time she squeezed. Tears appeared in my eyes. Amanda only laughed.

“You need to hide your tools better. It gives you away and that can be a painful moment. It's obvious that you need a gaff.”

She opened a closet and rummaged around. Her hand came back holding a trophy. It was a gaff, but one that looked not quite like the pictures I had seen.

“I guess by the lack of a question that you know what a gaff is. So there is no reason to stand there. Take your panties off.”

Of course I knew what a gaff was. I read the book more than once. I wasn't a dummy anymore, only a novice, but that wouldn't last. I did what she said.

“Here put it on, but not all the way. Tuck everything down there away between your legs and use tape. It takes some practice to find the right way to position it all, but you'll learn the painful way.”

I did what she said. Mentioning the word ‘painful’ was enough to make me listen but the piece of tape I used was losing its grip.

“And now.”

She pulled the gaff up hard while one hand still was down there. I tried to scream but Amanda had anticipated that and kissed me at the same moment.

“It will take some time to get used to, but I know something that will help you to keep your mind off it. Now I know what your tongue can do up here. It's time for you to show me what it can do below. A girl like you needs to be skilled in many ways. Who knows what your future spouse's desires might be?”

She didn't let me have time to breathe, which already was hard to do with a corset on. Her hand pulled my head under her dress where I discovered that she had no panties underneath. She waited to let loose of my head until my tongue started with the job.

“That's terrible. Haven't you learned nothing as a young girl? How will you ever be able to satisfy a woman? You need practice, a lot. From now on, we will work a few afternoons a week on it.”

I swallowed even when it wasn't the place to do that. I didn't dare to refuse. Who knew what she would do? My refusing could ruin Sharon and that was the last thing I wanted to do. Strange how fast things can change.

Weeks passed. Mom was back after a few days. Soon I was able to cook a decent meal. Amanda was more and more pleased with me with every day that passed. My visits to her were cut to just once a week. She said that I

had passed with an A plus, but I needed to maintain my skills.

Sharon had a big smile on her face and I couldn't tell you why.

Even Ethan became a little happier with each passing day. He loved waking up every morning to see Jenny appear in the mirror. I was so happy that I was thinking of sending the transport company a thanking note. I even ask Sharon if that was a good idea.

"I didn't know you felt that way. Does this means that Jenny is here to stay?"

"No, no, I just want to tell them that I am not angry anymore."

"You're lying! You like being Jenny, don't you? Tell me or I pinch."

I ran but she caught me and pinned me on the floor, holding my arms.

"Come on. Admit that Ethan likes being Jenny."

I shook my head and kept shaking it until she let go, but not before she kissed me on the mouth. I was so surprised I lay there for half an hour.

She was toying with me, but *this* me was Jenny, the girl that was in love with her, not Ethan, the guy that hated her.

That night at dinner, Mom was more curious than ever.

"Jenny, you look happier than before. Have you finally found someone you love? Is it one of the girls here?"

"Yes, I am happier and yes I am in love, but that doesn't make me happy. It makes me sad. It's a girl that Ethan always disliked. He even thought he hated her. As Jenny, I am able to show my true feeling. Yes, I love someone but I can't tell her. She's out of my reach. She doesn't know what I feel and never will."

I started to cry. Sharon stood up to hold me in her arms. That was unusual, but I wasn't aware of the significance at that moment.

“You silly girl. Being in love is wonderful. Don’t cry”

I had my head on her breast and her arms around me. I cried from happiness.

“Jenny, as your mother I can say that woman have a way of knowing who has the hots for them. You never know what can happen. Maybe she’s even loved you since you were an obnoxious teenager of sixteen or seventeen but she never could tell you. Is it someone I know? Is she younger than you? Older?”

Mother winked at Sharon who winked back, of which I was unaware. I was enjoying the warmth of a woman’s body and touch.

Weeks passed and every day I became more Jenny than Ethan. After a few months, I never spoke anymore about going back to being Ethan. Every night I lay next to the woman I loved as the woman I loved to be. Mother and Sharon seemed to have noticed it too. They never made a remark anymore about me being too much Ethan or too little Jenny. They obviously didn’t have the time. They were too busy.

I found them more than ones conspiring about something and quickly falling silent when I passed by. I didn’t make much of it. They always did that when they talked about female stuff. But I should have known that, as Jenny, there were no more female secrets I was to be kept out of. Well, maybe there were still one or two. One Friday morning Sharon went on the offensive and took me by surprise.

“Ethan, you haven’t complained for being Jenny for weeks now. Does that mean that you are finally ready to admit that you like being Jenny and don’t need to be Ethan anymore?”

“Of course I do.”

“So you want to be Jenny from now on?”

“You know that it is not what I meant.”

I didn’t dare to admit the truth. As much as I loved my new femininity, once I admitted it, I couldn’t take it back and I would be Jenny forever. Sharon had come closer and started to pinch me, repeating loudly, “Admit it, you love it.”

It was her intention to make me angry and with every pinch she was succeeding. I hated that. Then came the moment they were waiting for.

“Yes, I admit that I love being Jenny and don’t need to be Ethan anymore. I love being Jenny. Satisfied now?”

I was angry and therefore not able to tell a lie. Sharon laughed. Mother had a look on her face one could only describe as ‘relieved’. They both stood up and went their way, but not without a final word on exit.

“Yes we are.”

That day passed by like all the others. The rest of the week seemed to follow the same pattern. Friday afternoon, however, Amanda had a surprise. As if I hadn’t had enough of those. She said it ‘was time’. Time for what?

“These are prosthetic breasts. The best of the best. It took me some time and money to get them, but here they are.”

I had to admit they looked and felt very realistic.

“Get naked and quickly. We don’t have a lot of time.”

It felt funny to undress before Amanda. But I could handle it as there it was only the blouse and bra. Well, that was what I expected.

“What are you doing? I said naked. That means everything, including the gaff. Do you need help? I don’t mind.”

“No, no. I can manage.”

I did what she ordered. But standing there with only a gaff before Amanda made my cheeks go red again, the first time in days.

“Ooh, you’re blushing. So cute.”

She smeared something on the bottom of a breast and positioned it without touching.

“Don’t move a inch or you’ll look ridiculous.”

She pushed the breast in place and stepped back.

“That looks fine. Now the other one.”

A moment later I had two new breasts. After a little makeup, none of us both could tell them from the real thing. I wanted to touch them but Amanda slapped my hands hard.

“Wait until I say you may just to be sure they don’t come loose ever again.”

“What? Never? Then how do I ever get them off.”

“Why would you, they’re perfect. But don’t worry. There is a dissolver. I believe Sharon has it. Some of our models use the glue too.”

Apparently the glue on my chest was dry because Amanda touched them.

“Wonderful. They’re the best fake breasts a guy can have.”

She started to pull a box from a shelf.

“This gaff is special. It’s made to be the least visible possible. The material is transparent and takes on the color of the skin it touches. Most important, its material is minimal. If you find something squeezing between your butt cheeks, don’t be surprised because it’s very tight”

It was so tight that Amanda had to help, which she did gladly, smiling.

“You’re going to be my model for the day. You’re my latest creation. And before you say no, Sharon already has approved it. Now put this on. We’re going to shoot a commercial and you will be its centerpiece.”

It was a white lace corset, with a lace string. My bottom cheeks were very visible. Luckily the garter belt made it more elegant. I should have felt some embarrassment, but I didn’t. The stockings were transparent but with a seam at the back. On top was a broad lace band trimmed with little bows. Then came what I thought to be the last part, the shoes.

“Sharon gave me these shoes. They’re one of your purchases or should I say Ann’s. She told me about the shopping you both did.”

White shoes. Why was I not surprised? The next detail caught me off guard though. They had stiletto heels, five inches high. I could barely stand.

“Now stand still while I lace you up.”

When I finally could breathe again, I saw a lady in white, but why. Why did I have to model this? A bigger model should be a better fit and view.

“Now put this on. Just do it. I have my reasons.”

Amanda gave me a white blindfold mask. I hesitated, then I put the mask on and found out that my ordeal wasn't over.

“Put out your hands. These are to protect your arms.”

That was a little white lie from Amanda, but one I couldn't yet see. Long lace fingerless gloves were slid over my hands. I had never worn anything like them before. Then Amanda put something on my head. I felt something against my cheeks, not the bottom ones. Those still felt naked.

“Last thing before we go, put your arms behind your back.”

A ribbon was wrapped around my wrists and tied in a knot before I knew what was going on. I tried to pull it apart, but it was no use.

I only heard Amanda's giggle and what sounded like her getting undressed. What the heck was she doing and what was she planning?

“Stop messing with the ribbon. It's to prevent you from taking off your blindfold. Come. We're ready to go to the studio. I will hold you tight.”

We advanced with very short steps. We entered the next room. It was filled with voices. Most of them I knew. It was the other girls. Were they having a party? Did I have to model this new outfit?

I started to panic, but Sharon's voice relaxed me.

“Sit down. We need to do your hair and makeup, then everything will be revealed.”

Something was lifted onto my head and my hair was a work in progress. Then came makeup, nails. I only could guess at their color, white?

“Come. We’re almost at the climax. I’ll hold you firmly these last steps.”

It was Sharon, the only reason I had endured those hours blindfolded. She was the only one I trusted and I knew why. I hoped that one day she would trust me for the same reason.

I found out what was up the next moment. The ribbon was removed. The blindfold I had to do myself. I could take it off without bothering my veil. That was the headdress I was wearing. The first thing I saw were blinding lights, cameras and the outline of people. I realized that I was the center of their attention.

I couldn’t have been more embarrassed.

Before me stood Amanda, in lingerie, holding a book.

Ann and the rest were obviously standing behind me, but I didn’t dare to turn around. If I had, I would have seen a sea of pink. They were all standing there in lingerie. They were all dressed the same and all chattering and laughing.

Out of the corner of my left eye I could see flashes of someone in black lingerie and a top hat. But I stood too far to the front to see who. Then she came standing next to me and smiled while speaking words of madness.

“I’ll give you the choice. You choose to be Jenny and to work and live with me as my wife, my spouse or you choose to be Ethan, leave and live as the stranger you have always been to me. I’ll even give you some money to survive a while on your own. Don’t answer yet. You’ll know when.”

Amanda started to speak and I knew when.

“We are gathered here today in the face of family and friends to join together Sharon Hannigan and Jenny Williams. Do you, Jenny, take this woman to be you your lawfully wedded husband?”

For a moment I stood in silence. Then:

“Yes I do.”

Sharon released a sigh of relief. That was the first time I knew she wasn't sure what the future would bring, the first time she had ever showed a sign of anxiousness, the first time I saw her as she really was.

Amanda continued and a moment later Sharon chuffed a wedding ring over my finger. I recognized it. It was Mother's.

Mom saw me admire it and came closer with tears in her eyes.

“Keep good care of it. I don't need it anymore. And what are you waiting for Sharon? Kiss the bride, fast, before Amanda beats you to it.”

She did and I have no idea how long my eyes were closed. But that wouldn't be the last time they were that evening. Just ask Amanda. And I understood why she called my footwear 'kissing shoes'. Sharon had taken her shoes off for a second and I was almost tall enough to look Sharon straight in the eyes. It made kissing much easier.

Even Mother was wearing lingerie. It was a Nineteenth Century version of it perhaps but lingerie nevertheless. It was some wedding.

“Mother, you were in on this too?”

“Yes I was. They all were at the end. They all wanted the best for Sharon and that seemed to be you. A mother wants the best for her son, even when that means he has to be a daughter. And what I see lets me know that I made the right choice. You look happier than you ever did before. Sharon liked you as Ethan, but could only fall in love with the Jenny of her dreams. So we had to make some changes.”

Sharon held me close and never let go of my hand. She still had something to whisper.

“I lied when I said that I don't want to see women's lingerie on a man's body. I don't mind when it's your body and I like it even more after those small adjustments. I live and breathe lingerie. I prefer the man I love in it most of the time. I am bisexual and I now have the best of both worlds. You can dress as a man some days

of the years, but I prefer you this way. Exceptions must be requested and I can't guarantee you that they will always be permitted. But I can guarantee you one thing. You'll love it. You already do. So make me happy and I'll make you happy."

"But how did you know that I loved you or even liked you? More, since when do you love me? You *hate* me."

"You talk in your sleep and I never hated you. The line between love and hate is thin, very thin. I liked you from the first moment I pinched you, from the first moment I stepped in your house, from the first moment you gave in to me at a fight. But I only love Jenny."

She turned her head away to search for a particular face.

"Amanda!"

She rushed to us and gave Sharon a little box. It was another ring for another finger on another hand. It was a second wedding ring covered with small pink diamonds. I laughed loud and happy. Pink seemed to be my color after all. The wedding party turned out to be hot and wild and so did the wedding night. But that shouldn't surprise anyone. Oh, one more thing, I never gave Sharon any reports about my time in dresses.

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