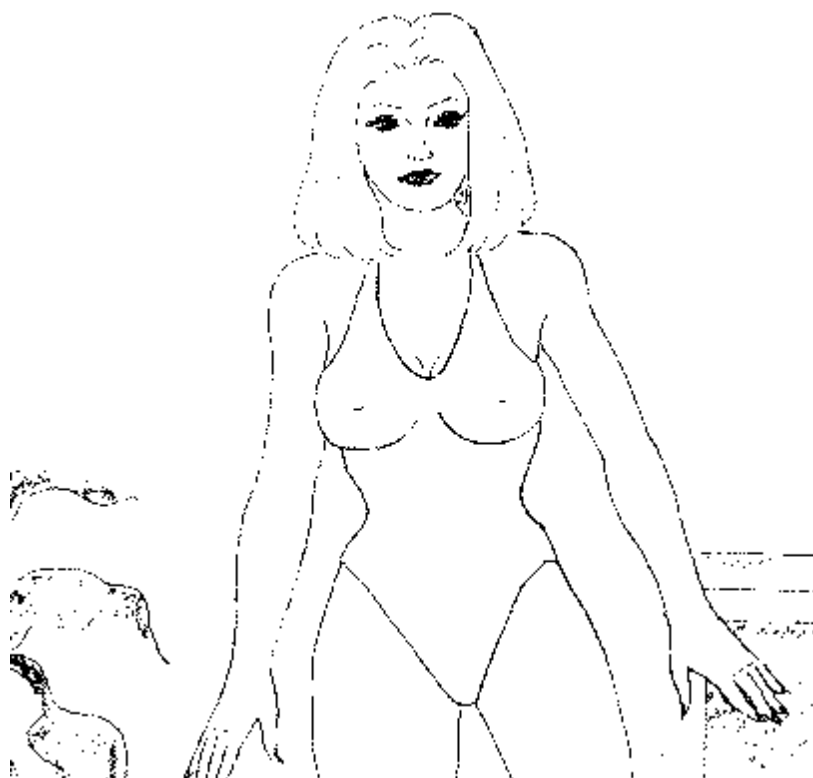




Reluctant Press

Maid Redundant

Katie Lord



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN DUKEHART

A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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MAID REDUNDANT

By **KATIE LORD**

A TRUE MAN

Mary had no time for the new man, the caring, sharing washer of dishes.

She married Joe Tracey because he was a figure of authority. When her father played one Rugby game too many and broke his neck and died, Joe was the man to take his place.

A real man.

Joe was her manager at work, her knight, her tower of strength, her rock, her anchor. His gray suit was the shining armor in which he rode to battle.

Directors and high management buzzed in and out of Joe's office like bees. They dined with the Traceys and admired their home.

Still, despite her home-girl views, Mary stayed on with the firm to help pay their fearsome mortgage.

Mary didn't really mind that Joe wasn't mountainous, noisy and beer swilling like her father. So what if Joe liked to run and swim? What if his body was light, his voice soft and his favorite drink a mineral replacement cocktail? What if they were "sharing" enough to go running together? Mary would pace him on her bicycle.

Mary did the housework while Joe was the blue-collar man. His skills built them a palace.

When Mary's friends moaned that all the nice men were gay and all the straight men were bastards (and gross to boot), smug Mary would think loving thoughts about her Joe.

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In that first summer of their marriage, friends threw a vicars-and-tarts party; women of the commuting villages could be sex objects for the evening.

Joe went as a bishop, Mary as Mitzi the French maid: black satin micro-dress flaring out over frothy petticoats; sheer black hose and tall heels; frilly white cap and apron.

Mitzi added gloss to her scarlet lips and went downstairs to find Joe waiting in the hallway. She wasn't prepared for the effect her costume had on him. His eyes widened, his mouth opened, he swayed on his feet. Then he swallowed, licked his lips, and groaned like a dying man.

“Joe! Was there something in the food?”

“Marry me again. Let's make love. Now. Here. On the floor. I daren't drive the car, I'd let go of the wheel and climb on top of you.”

“You like my costume.”

“LIKE? You mean YEARN, you mean HUNGER—”

“Hey, can't you control yourself until we get back?”

“We won't get back. You'll start a war. There won't be any survivors.”

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Joe wasn't far wrong. Mitzi was a sensation and he had his work cut out to get a dance with her. They made up for it when they got home: he tore off her frilly panties, her pantyhose flew high in the air and he took her on the drawing-room carpet.

At 9:00 on Saturday morning Joe woke up in an armchair with a maid in his arms. She was without panties or pantyhose and her clothes were awry. His pulse raced and his hands began to wander, but Mitzi kissed him and slipped out of his grasp.

“Enough's enough, sweetie. Your maid deserves a bath.”

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Mary returned the hired costumes to the costume shop. On a whim she decided to buy her maid's dress for keeps. One day she might want to turn Joe into a wild animal again. She liked the feel of power, it was risky to the user of course...but that was half the fun.

It was funny that Joe got so turned on by her clothes. Her Dad never noticed what women wore. Never mind, Joe was like her Dad in all the ways that mattered.

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As a manager, Joe worked later than Mary. Sometimes he came home to a curtsy-ing maid. Maybe he'd goose her or ravish her on the hearthrug. Or else they'd be solemnly formal, she'd help him undress, run his bath, serve him dinner.

The longer they kept up the formality the bigger the explosion at bedtime.

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Mary bought a second uniform - to have one for formal evenings and another for wild scenes on the hearthrug.

She'd married a real man, she reckoned, a tiger in bed.

When the winter came, Joe switched to swimming. He shaved his body for extra speed. Mary hated this. His body wasn't much more hairy than hers so now (to keep ahead of the game) she had to depilate her own body twice as often.

She didn't like the little bristles when his hairs grew back, so she lent him her hair removing cream, explaining that depilating was smoother and more thorough and lasted longer than shaving.

His smooth body thrilled her, but her Dad would never have shaved his legs.

Mary began to have doubts.

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Maybe she overreacted to Joe's birthday.

Joe intended to celebrate it at his Mother's home, "because we always do, and stopping suddenly would upset Mother."

Had she married a mama's boy?

She had nothing against Helen Tracey, in fact she loved her, you couldn't ask for a sweeter mother-in-law. But birthdays were for intimacy between newlyweds. Mary kicked herself for being jealous and went out of her way to be pleasant.

BIRTHDAY BOY

They had a happy time but in her insecure mood Mary noticed things. Joe hung around the kitchen helping his mother get lunch ready, beating Mary to tasks which should have been hers. The house was very well heated and Joe dug out an old pair of shorts and a tee shirt and leather sandals. The tee shirt left him baremidriffed and he must have outgrown the shorts a year or two ago, they really were short.

Mary was shocked when she looked at him from behind. With his long hair, slim and hairless body, and legs you could only call beautiful, he looked like...well, if he wasn't androgynous he was certainly unisex. And from the front...oh, my!

Those shorts were *tight* .

Her heart beat faster, there was that awful thrill again, how could he do this to her? She wanted to hit him.

After meals was worse, that ridiculous little frilly apron his mother put round him, half joking. He just grinned and went along.

Too sure of his masculinity to be embarrassed?

She hoped it was that.

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Then there was the talk. When Helen came to Mary's house, she and Mary would have "girl talk" - that's what Mary called it. Joe would disappear and do his blue-collar stuff or watch sports in the other room.

Now in his mother's house he joined in the girl talk. He oohed and aahed when Helen talked about a friend's baby; giggled at stories about office flirtations; murmured appreciation when Helen described a dress she'd bought.

It became harder than ever for Mary to stop being jealous. Joe's contrast with her father was now so extreme that she had to change her manner towards him.

Let's be frank about Mary's father. He was a local celebrity, played once for Wales against Ireland, and got a job on the strength of his cap. He treated his wife as a servant and his only daughter as a toy.

Mary loved him for what he was and didn't know that she hated him for what he wasn't.

He only met Joe once. He didn't want his daughter to marry a non-Welsh, non-rugby-playing, near-tee totaling shrimp.

Joe stood his ground, survived his handshake, jutted his jaw, fixed their lawn mower, drank a beer or two, and snapped quick counters to the aggressive jokes. Joe quite liked the old monster but didn't give much of a damn either way and they parted friends.

Mary had been delighted at Joe's encounter with her father. Now she saw him sitting in the drawing-room in his little shorts, mirroring his mother's expressions and gestures, mirroring her knees-together-hands-on-lap posture. His hand would go to his hair from time to time to put a stray hair in place. This was one of his mother's mannerisms that he copied unknowingly.

Driving home they had the craziest conversation, so it seemed to Joe. His wife wanted to make a big deal out of some old pair of shorts, and washing the dishes. Mother's tired old apron gag had laid a very big egg.

Mary was at him again.

"You realize you've turned my whole world upside down?"

"I know, I know. It's terrible. I've lured you into marriage under false pretenses."

Mary wouldn't be teased.

"Darling, I've nothing against effeminate men. They make wonderful friends, but they just aren't capable of being husbands."

"Gee, thanks!"

"Honey, I don't exactly mean you're effeminate, but oh, you're so...different in your mother's house."

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She was a bit strange with Joe all week. Nothing you could put your finger on, but not the usual adoring little wife.

Then on Friday Joe's French maid welcomed him home. Was everything back to normal?

Joe was tired. He shaved and depilated and showered. This (and the thought of his maid in waiting) revived him.

Mitzi had run him a scented bubble bath. Part of the maid game, maybe. Bubble baths were a bit sissy but she meant well. It certainly was refreshing.

When he was bathed and dry, Mitzi was ready for him with a big bath robe.

She smiled impishly and curtsied. "Would madam like me to attend to her hair?"

For long moments Joe stared at her. It wasn't Mary's kind of joke, she made a fetish of his masculinity. Finally he grinned and played along. Anything she did or said in that costume turned him on.

Before he knew it he was seated at her vanity table having his hair fixed with styling mousse.

“Mary, what's the idea? I thought you hated this kind of gag?”

“Darling, we both hate it, in a way. But Helen's shown me another side to you and it's unfair to leave me out. Hey, what happened to that sense of humor?”

“And now may I do Madam's make-up?”

Joe was in turmoil. The scent and feel of the make-up caused weird feelings.

Was she was trying to steal his manhood? Or was she insecure, trying to test it? He mustn't disappoint her. She liked him to be Joe the jock, didn't she?

Mitzi stepped back after applying Joe's lipstick.

“Is something the matter, ma'am?”

Joe had caught sight of this half familiar girl in the mirror, with Mitzi the maid bent anxiously over her. Panic seized him.

“I can't do it, sweetie. I can't be a girl.”

“Oh, Miss Joanna! Not even to please your little maid?”

“But you keep saying you like a man to be a man.”

“Yes, and I like a girl to be a girl. You're a girl, Miss Joanna.” She bent down and murmured in his ear: “Aren't you a girl, Miss Joanna?”

Mitzi seemed to fill the room with femininity, it was a vapor, sweet and heady; breathe it and melt.

Joe smiled weakly.

Mitzi pressed her advantage.

“Miss Joanna, I hope you don't mind? I thought you might like to wear that lovely pale blue chiffon dress for dinner?”

“Uh...are we the same size?”

“I think you'll look adorable in it, ma'am.”

Mary was shocked when Joe gave in so easily. Was he really a man? Just listen to that breathy little voice.

Joe stood up and noticed the dress and lingerie on the bed.

She handed him a pantygirdle, and helped him tug it on.

She had his bra fastened behind him before he knew, padded him out with silk scarves, a smile on her face like a fellow conspirator.

Joe learned how to pull on his sheer pantyhose and slip into an ice blue satin teddy. To Mitzi's alarm he looked willowy and graceful, all girl.

Mitzi helped him into the lovely blue dress. He sat on the edge of the bed while she put on his high heeled blue sandals.

Part of her was proud of his beauty. Still, she hated him, how could he do this to her? She picked up his satin clutch bag and put in lipstick and tissues and a few odds and ends.

Joe felt deep shame. What were they doing? In a trance, like sleepwalkers, they went on testing to see who would stop first, though it might change their marriage forever.

Joe went downstairs knowing he looked wonderful - he couldn't deny a little thrill. But he'd gotten used to Mitzi admiring his manhood. What would happen now?

She served his dinner with the same curtsies and smiles as before; only now it was "ma'am" instead of "sir". When she used to call him "sir" the fun was that she half meant it. But she called him "ma'am" with an irony that might be saying "look at you, so-called male, you're just a woman like me."

In bed the old ways were gone. Mary was teasing, elusive, contrary. She wanted to spend a long time playing, called him Joanna, did things to his nipples.

In the middle she stopped: "Promise me something?"

"What?"

"Just for tomorrow morning. Dress up again."

"No."

"What d'you mean 'no'? Darling, It's just a game that any couple could play. Lots of men dress up as girls for a gag."

"Why can't we just go back to normal?"

"Normal, normal, normal! My Dad was normal, I married you because you were a bit like him, but not so...well, Daddy wasn't always as nice to Mummy as he should have been. You just seemed a lot nicer—"

"So what's this got to do with—"

"Daddy used to say that nice guys don't win the ball—"

"That doesn't mean they go about in dresses."

"Are you so unsure of yourself that you can't do this one little thing to please me?"

"Of course I'm not."

"Then it's equality you're afraid of. It's all right playing dress-up as long as I'm your maid, but if we were sisters I'd be a threat. You treat your mother as an equal but you've always been afraid of getting too close to me. Darling, I won't bite."

What could a man do?

"OK, just for Saturday morning."

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Next morning she experimented.

Mary remembered how Joe changed when he joined in the girl talk with herself and Helen. She dreamed up a lot of housework which they did together while she chattered away about women they knew, their children, clothes and boyfriends.

Sure enough, he joined in and his posture and mannerisms changed.

Mary guessed there must have been a kind of mother-daughter relationship between Helen and her boy. Not that either of them knew it. Typical widow and only son!

Mind you, there were other things to girlyfy him this morning. She had him on three-inch heels, black pantyhose, black skirt and top. She'd picked the skirt to make him feel self-conscious; it was very short and tight, the kind that turned his head in the street when he thought she wasn't looking.

The heels, the clothes, the padded bra and tight feminizing pantygirdle underneath them, caused him to move (quite unconsciously) like a model.

Then there were tips from women's magazines and her school charm classes which Mary passed on to him.

Joe decided to go along with the tips. He had to choose between 'stay male' or 'act female', or some blend. He thought the male option would be gross and the blend effeminate so he'd go for the female way. He let his voice pitch drift up, hoping it was so gradual that he'd slip it by before she noticed.

Mary had him stay that way for lunch. Then she decided he should go into town with her as a girl, and then out with her for the evening. She even had him sleep in a nightdress on Saturday night.

This seems to escalate, thought Joe. When Mary gets an idea, oh boy, does she run with it.

The trouble was that Mary was coming on to him like a big sister and he was out of his own territory, very dependent on her. She was just impossible to refuse. She tasted power while he tasted yielding. She didn't admire him for giving way.

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On Sunday morning Mary and Joanna went to a church where they weren't known. They lunched in town, visited an art gallery, spent Sunday evening at home like sisters.

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Mary's experiment was over. She still didn't know whether she wanted Joe to be like her father, or the exact opposite. Both, really. Was that possible?

On Monday evening she gave her verdict.

"I love Joanna. She's a wonderful sister-in-law. We can be friends, but I need a man. Let's try the old way and see if you can cut it."

Joe was relieved. It was a scary and shaming weekend, as if an alien were taking him over. The price was too high for the thrill of being a beautiful girl.

Anyway, he preferred being a man, who wouldn't?

MITZI AND JOSETTE

But a week later came the New Year's Eve party. At the last moment they heard it was fancy dress. The costume shop was closed.

“Mary, what's the problem? You can wear your maid's uniform. I can wear my running shorts or...I've got a policeman's helmet. Or draped in a sheet, a Roman senator?”

“We can both wear maid's uniforms. I've got two, remember?”

“People might think I'm, you know?”

“Well, don't do it if you don't want to. I thought you might like to wear a maid's dress. You seem to find me very sexy when I wear mine.”

“Yes, but that's *your* kind of sexy—”

“What's wrong with my kind of sexy?”

“Nothing, except you're a girl.”

“Well, let's forget it. I just thought you jocks would do anything for a gag.”

“As long as people know it's a gag. OK, let's both wear maid's uniforms.”

“If you're sure that's what you want.”

“Okay, I'm sure.”

“You're sure what?” She smiled teasingly.

“That I want to wear a maid's uniform,” sighed Joe.

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Mary and Joe got dressed together in their bedroom. As their costumes were alike they took care to wear the same color lipstick. Their make-up was too-too much: long false lashes, deep red glossy lipstick, lots of blusher. When they were ready they stood side by side, each with an arm round the other's waist, looking at themselves in the tall mirror.

“Wow! We make quite a pair, Mitzi and Josette!” exclaimed Mary.

Joe's heart was hammering, he thought it was going to burst. The tiny caps and aprons looked so silly.

“Your cleavage is quite convincing” approved Mary. “It's amazing what a little stagecraft will do.”

“Oh, but look at yours!” moaned Joe.

“Are you jealous? Never mind, Josette. The boys will be too busy looking at your sexy legs to worry about your tits. Now! Let's see you curtsy. Come along, we'll curtsy to the mirror. Ready, hold your skirts like so and...dip!”

“Lovely, darling, but let's have a radiant smile. A happy smiling curtsy: ready, smile!”

“Oh, that was sweet. Now let's see more petticoats. This time we'll do a d-e-e-p curtsy, we bow our heads demurely, be graceful, ready? Down...we go. My! We really were graceful, weren't we? The other curtsy is the pert little dip, like... so! You try. All right!”

She gave him an impulsive hug.

“Oh, Josette! Everybody will adore you. We'll put our coats and head scarves on (to prevent rape on our way to the party). Come along, we'll be late.”

“You'll have to drive. I'll never manage in these heels. I can hardly walk.”

“So mince. It suits you. Have you got the keys? Let's go.”

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At the party nobody recognized Joe.

His friends knew him as a little brick of masculinity. All shoulder display, jaw display; with the amiably aggressive jokes, the quickfire tough repartee.

Everyone's forced to learn one act. Somehow he had to learn two.

He found a little-girl voice that came to him out of the blue. Marilyn? Some dimly remembered child actress in a cute commercial?

Now he was a creature of hairdo and mascara and lipstick and blusher. All feminine body language, breasts and hips and legs, so demure and giggly with that little-girl voice, so exposed in those maid's clothes, the showbiz of femininity.

Well, would you believe it, thought Mary, I did discover something on his birthday.

She took Joe aside.

“Hey, Josette! You're doing this much too well. If your friends find out they'll wonder about you. So let's not tell anyone who you are. And we'd better not be seen together too often. I told Peter and Clarissa that Joe couldn't come. You're my old school friend.”

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Mary was both amused and annoyed at the way Joe handled the swarm of men crowding round to chat him up or dance with him. She decided to teach him a lesson with a little flirting of her own. This wasn't too difficult, the men were around her like rutting stags.

Joe kept hearing her musical laugh, she was always dancing with somebody, being kissed like mad during the slow dances. He knew she was taunting him. He wasn't about to let her make the running. He flashed his smiles about and did his own show on the dance floor. If they wanted to see panties...

He discovered that if you wear a mini flared maid's dress you get goosed. Some men's idea of goosing was a very hard pinch. Some men's idea of kissing in the slow dances was to tangle tongues with you, sometimes complete strangers who hadn't even exchanged names. It was scary, you knew if you were in their place this sexy little stunner would drive you wild.

Mitzi and Josette turned the evening into a war of the flirts. When they caught each other's eyes they exchanged just-you-wait-you-bitch glares.

Mary drove them home. They'd had a marvelous time; it's a buzz to be sensationally popular.

Joe broke the silence.

“You were absolutely *brazen* ” he pouted. “I couldn't believe my eyes. I was *mad* with jealousy.”

Mary giggled. “You little hypocrite. You were *far* too busy to be jealous. By the way, can you sit comfortably? We forgot to pad the seats of our panties.”

“Why do they call it goosing? Some of those guys must have used pliers.”

“I'll soothe your tail with Savlon if you'll do mine. We'll both be black and blue, I expect. Do you still like being a woman?”

“Aw, c'mon, when did I say I *liked* being a woman?”

At home they undressed and spread Savlon on each other's bottoms before putting on their baby dolls.

They were ashamed of how they'd spent the evening.

They made wild love.

FALL FROM GRACE

The management at work were nice people. They needed a fall guy, who better than Joe? He was young and bright, the most likely to recover from ruin and make a fresh start.

A third of the work force had to be fired and Joe was handed the pistol.

The nice management didn't want Joe to be known as Joe the butcher so they fired him too.

Methodical Joe spent half his time looking after the house and half the time job hunting. When the job didn't come they were forced to sell house and move in with Helen. Thanks to Joe's handiwork, they made a good profit on the sale.

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Helen owned her house outright and she had a part-time job, so she only asked Joe and Mary to pay expenses.

Joe was now under no financial pressure to find work. He did a lot of house maintenance.

At Helen's request, he did more than that.

It was a blow to Mary to come home and find Helen and Joe doing the housework together.

One evening she put a comforting arm round Joe's shoulders.

“I'm so sad for you, you aren't the breadwinner any more, you aren't my boss any more. You must feel terrible, gradually slipping into the woman's role.”

“Mary! That's sexist.”

“I don't care. A man's a man, he has his pride. No man wants to do women's work, I don't care what the feminists say.”

“But darling, work doesn't have a gender tag on it.”

“Well, OK, as long as you're happy doing women's work I don't mind what you call it.”

- -000-

A week later Mary was promoted to management rank. She came home elated.

“Darling, I've gotten a promotion and a raise. I'm doing the sort of work you used to do.”

Hoping he wouldn't be upset, she broke the news: “In fact it's really your old job but they re-titled it to spare our feelings.”

“You know, you don't really need to work now, so you might as well forget about looking for a job until after the recession. To be honest, you're much more useful at home. It's lovely to come home to a well tended house and a loving, um, a loving...”

Mary's voice died away. She fell into a long brown study, she was absent minded all evening.

Finally, over bedtime hot drinks she came to a decision.

WOMAN'S WORK

“Listen, darling. I've been thinking about your role as house, um, housekeeper. We're going to do it properly. I can't bear to see a man doing women's work.”

“That's—”

“Yes, yes, it's sexist. Well if it's sexist I can't help it. I can't help the way normal people feel about men and women. I need you at home so you'll just have to become a woman, at least until the recession ends and you can go back to men's work.”

Joe's mouth fell open. He stared at her as if he were looking at a Martian.

“You look surprised, darling. Not used to me making the decisions? Oh, I wish you could see how well I do your old job. You'd soon see what a good planner I am.”

“But you seem to be suggesting that I—”

“Don't worry about what your Mummy will think, my love. She knows about the times you played dress-up. I told her what a sweet girl you make.”

Helen was there, visiting from her part of the house. She joined in the discussion.

“I think Mary's right, my dear. The recession is just the opportunity you need.”

“What opportunity, Mother?”

“To learn to keep house. Stay-at-home life isn't all bridge parties and tea dances, you know.”

“But I know all I need to know about house keeping.”

“What's wrong with my housekeeping?”

“As a part-timer you're fine. But now that you're at home all day and Mary's the breadwinner, don't you think she deserves the real thing?”

“Well, I suppose—”

“Besides, think of the opportunity to learn dress sense. Mary will love having someone at home to talk clothes with, won't you dear?”

“That's right. Joanna and I get on very well. I'm so glad that's settled. Joanna can sleep with me. It's nighties again for you at bedtime, my sweet. Before we go to bed we can sort out Joe's clothes. Tomorrow they can go to Christian Aid. We're really going for it, no half measures.”

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Joe was dazed. Being out of work seemed to make him less assertive. It was his ideas, not Mary's, that seemed to get brushed aside these days.

Something had gone terribly wrong. He should never have come back to his mother's house. It had seemed safe enough, Mummy hadn't tried to manage his life for ages. And now this!

He could refuse, of course, but either they'd wear him down or find some awful moral blackmail. His pride! Didn't they have any regard for his pride?

• -000-

For the next few days Joe - or Joanna - actually got less done about the house, his mother kept him so busy buying and trying clothes.

There was a lot of moving around to give Mary and Joanna each a bathroom and dressing room adjoining their shared bedroom.

Local shops and tradesmen soon came to know the woman called Joanna; and Joe's terror died down when they made no connection.

Mary was sad that she had won the day so easily. Surely the man she married would have put her firmly in her place? Or at least given her a fight? Maybe he needed to feel a little goose where his pride was.

Without warning, she came back one day with a surprise for him.

Joanna heard the car draw up, was going to greet Mary with a kiss at the door as Helen had taught him. As he was opening the door he heard the other voices.

He couldn't very well slam the door so he opened up, ready to bluff it out, and was appalled to see Rachel and Stevie, two girls from the computer section whom he knew well.

How could she do this to him?

Mary introduced him as her sister-in-law Joanna and apologized for bringing them without warning.

The visit was social. Joanna brought iced drinks and the four girls chatted.

Rachel and Stevie were sorry Joe wasn't at home. Everybody at work missed him, they knew how unfairly he'd been treated.

Mary buzzed Helen's intercom and invited her round. Rachel was struck by Helen's resemblance to Joanna.

“You could be sisters”, she exclaimed, “and you both look just like Joe.”

Mary could see that they suspected nothing. She was so proud of Joanna. It was that total change of personality that did the trick. Maybe it was hard on him to do this, but... -

“Darling, you've done it again, you've fooled Stevie and Rachel completely. Girls! Look harder at Joanna. Don't you recognize your ex-boss? That's Joe under the velvet dress. Doesn't he make a wonderful girl?”

Helen was shocked. Her son was turning white under his make-up. Mary might be right to bring his female life into the open, but was this the kind way?

Rachel and Stevie could see that Joanna was upset. Was this a clumsy joke? That girl surely couldn't be Joe?

Mary was explaining.

“Joe can't get a job because of the recession. He was staying at home all day. Helen and I couldn't bear to have a man hang around the house and lose his spirit.

“He did his best, poor darling. He spent all day cleaning and shopping and cooking. But you know me, I don't believe a man should be a housewife. Man's the hunter, woman's the gatherer.”

“The three of us decided that the only way for Joe to do a woman's job and remain normal was for him to be a girl until after the recession. You love being Joanna, don't you darling?”

Joanna hadn't quite fainted. His heartbeat was back to normal but his skin was crawling with shame and he wanted to die.

“Let's say, I'm used to it,” he managed. “Some of it's nice and some of it isn't.”

Rachel laughed.

“At least you don't have periods. Or do you? Are you taking hormones?”

“Have you had the operation?” Stevie chimed in. “Are those breast implants?”

Joanna was indignant.

“Have a heart, Stevie. It's only for the recession. I don't think the recession will last THAT long, or do you have inside information?”



Rachel suddenly took Stevie by the arm. "Hey! Peter and Clarissa's New Year's Eve fancy dress party. Remember?"

"My God, yes, I do. Those two maids! Mitzi and Josette! Oh, no, I don't believe it!"

"Two little street walkers! Now we know what the pair of you do at night."

"You two were dressed as cops," Joanna recalled. "I don't think police regulations allow micro-skirts and fishnet stockings. And scarlet garters. Oh, and what on EARTH were you doing with those night sticks?"

Rachel had to know how Joanna learned her act.

"You're just too convincing. You must have done this for years. Is there something female about your mind or body? This is what you really want isn't it?"

"It's not me that wants it. It's—"

"Maybe I'm the one to blame," Helen intervened. "I'm a widow and Joanna's my only child. We've always been best friends, more like sisters than mother and daughter. I mean mother and son. I suppose I must have taught Joanna everything I'd teach my daughter, all the things a girl should learn. You didn't really notice, did you darling? You always preferred to be a tomboy."

"Aww, how cute!" Stevie exclaimed. "Poor little Joe! His Mummy wanted to have a little girl and now at last she puts her little boy in dresses. Isn't that sweet? He used to try so hard to be manly, don't you remember, Rachel?"

• -000-

In cold fright Joanna pictured Rachel and Stevie telling work mates and friends about him. Oh, the image he'd fought so hard for!

After the visitors had gone and a shaken Joanna was busy in the kitchen, Helen spoke to Mary.

"Weren't you rather hard on Joanna, bringing those girls without warning? We all thought she was going to faint."

"Ah, but don't you see, Helen, it's a challenge. She's free to choose now. She can be your Joanna, or my tomboy Joe. I bet you Joe is so angry now that he'll go out tomorrow and get a job, even if it's just sweeping the streets."

Helen smiled sadly.

"Sometimes we forget how to be free, my dear. Who do you want her to be, Joanna or Joe?"

"Why, Joe, of course! I want to be married to a man."

"A man who happens to be your housekeeper?"

"Well, you know I can't stand a man in an apron."

"And you like Joanna."

"She's adorable."

"There you are, Mary. You don't know what you want. So will you let Joanna decide for herself?"

“You mean let Joe decide for HIMself. Of course I shall.”

“We'll see.”

• -000-

Nobody told Joanna that he was now free to become Joe again.

That was part of the challenge.

On top of his other work he was doing more entertaining.

For the next few weeks Mary kept bringing girls back from the office to meet her little housewife. Joanna would wince as she told them all the same kooky story, that the only way to do a woman's job and remain normal was to be a girl, “until the recession ended”.

• -000-

Mary slipped into the habit of asking Joanna to do little things for her.

Joanna complained to Helen.

“Have you noticed the way she orders me about, Mum? 'Do go and make a pot of tea, darling'. 'Fetch me my shopping bag, honey'. 'Run the bath for me, love'. 'Did you remember to put that dress out for me?’”

His mother soothed him.

“Darling, you used to be *exactly* the same after a hard day at the office. Mary's tired, she's doing your old job, remember?”

Management gave Mary a confident style. She was so polite and loving, and very definite. Refusing her would seem terribly gauche and Joanna's refusing mechanism weakened with disuse.

MAYDAY PARTY

People who hadn't seen the maids' costumes asked Mary so many teasing questions that she persuaded Helen to throw a Mayday party. Office and other friends were invited and welcomed by Helen. There were five French maids bustling about serving the guests - Mitzi, three office belles, and Josette.

The difference from last time was that everybody knew who Josette was. Also, for the first half of the party they really were maids, serving drinks and food from the standing buffet. They were to call everybody “Sir” and “Ma'am” and, unless they were carrying laden trays, they were expected to curtsy.

“When do we curtsy?” asked one of the girls.

“At the drop of a hat, to anything that moves,” answered Mitzi, “and remember to smile, smile, smile. Especially when those heels start killing you.”

The maids were a great success. Everybody was stunned by how real-looking (and sexy) Joanna was but he got some odd looks and overheard comments that made him wonder if he should ever have done this.

When the dancing began the five maids were released to become dancing girls, very popular.

Joanna had worse doubts about what the guests must think of him. These were ex-work mates, friends, younger relatives. Everyone was nice but not always tactful. Nobody would look up to him again, that was for sure. Maybe he could persuade the men to like him in a different way by being the kind of girl men enjoyed, a good sport. After all, he knew how men felt.

He could make this into a real fun evening like the last time if he could stop worrying about being effeminate.

He thought, oh, what the heck, let's give them a show. That's what Mitzi was doing. The other maids and in rivalry, the other women copied. The men must have thought it was their lucky night.

Back home in bed, Joanna and Mary went wild, girl to girl.

MAID BY REQUEST

When Mary came home from work on Monday she got Joanna to run her a bath and sit and talk while she was soaking.

“Everyone at work was talking about you. The men who came to the party said you were sensational. The men who weren't there wouldn't believe them. They do now, there's a lovely photo of you in the mail office, flashing your panties on the dance floor.”

“Now I'm just office cheesecake?”

“Not just in the office, honey. We could do with some cheesecake at home. I notice you never greet me at the door in your little maid's dress. That's terribly unfair.”

“Unfair? *Unfair*?”

“Have you forgotten how I used to be your maid sometimes to help you unwind?”

“Wait, what are you saying? You want me to...?”

“I want Josette to greet me at the door with a smile and a curtsy. Like Mitzi used to greet *you* .”

“What's wrong with a kiss?”

“The kiss waits till later, remember? You have to attend to your mistress's comfort first.”

“Mistress, indeed!”

“Well, you were Mitzi's mistress.”

“I suppose I could do it. But what if Mummy sees me dressed up as a French maid on a weekday afternoon? She'll think I'm insane.”

“Don't be such a sissy. You used to be so can-do.”

“OK, OK! I'll do it. When?”

“How about one Friday night? That's when I most need to unwind.”

• -000-

That evening they ate in Helen's dining room.

Mary told Helen about the times when she dressed up as Mitzi to welcome Joe home from work.

“And now - isn't she brilliant? - Joanna's going to be my little Josette every Friday evening to help me unwind from work.”

This seems to escalate, thought Joanna. *Wasn't it originally just one Friday night?*

“Er, darling, I—”

Helen clapped her hands.

“What a clever idea! Won't it be fun! You both looked so adorable at the party.”

“Thank you, Helen!” smiled Mary. “But you deserve a lot of the credit, remember?”

“Those waspies? I'll tell you what: you can let me take charge of Joanna's figure training. Just like a Victorian mother! I know exactly what to buy and where to buy it, I made inquiries once.”

“What inquiries, Mum? There's nothing wrong with your figure.”

“I was thinking of you, darling. I talked to Dr. Livesey about...various things. Like figure improvement and...you could say...body management, cosmetic touches. She gave me a reading list, you'd be surprised what they can do nowadays.”

Joanna wondered what on earth his mother could mean, but the conversation had moved elsewhere.

• -000-

Helen came home for the day at Friday lunch time. She persuaded Joanna to put on his Josette uniform and serve lunch to her “for practice”.

“Won't it surprise Mary when you serve her immaculately, the perfect little maid? You must call me “Madam” - or “ma'am” - and curtsy and smile. Just like the party, except you must never forget and step out of character.”

“OK, Mum, practice might make me less nervous. I feel terrible, like going on stage. I don't know why I agreed to do this.”

“Because you want to please your mistress. That's how we have to think from now on! So run along and get into your uniform, Josette. I'll make a salad and when you come down you can lay the table and serve me.”

“Yes, ma'am!” The curtsy could wait for the uniform.

It didn't take him long to slip it on. The sight of himself in the mirror still set his heart thumping. With the new figure trainer which Helen had just bought him his waist was inches narrower than Mary's. When he tied the broad white ribbon of the little frilled apron round his waist the material gathered and increased the flare of the skirt over the froth of petticoats. His heels were so tall; was he servant or showgirl?

He practiced his curtsies in the mirror, feeling silly. The girl in the mirror smiled at him and for a moment he felt better.

But now he had to face his mother. He picked his way downstairs on his four-inch heels, every step telling him to go back up and take the uniform off. The sound of his mother working in his kitchen froze him on the spot. He couldn't go on or go back, just stood in an agony of conflict.

He finally moved when out of the corner of his eye he saw the hall mirror and was drawn to it as by a magnet.

I look pretty, but so silly, he thought. *Who would ever take a girl seriously who looked like this? Men wanted you to look like this and then they whistled and catcalled and made jokes.*

He checked himself in the hall mirror, making sure that his apron was tied in a neat bow. How narrow his waist was!

What would his mother think of a son who was willing to be her daughter-in-law's maid?

She'd seen him before in a maid's dress serving the guests last Saturday, but that was a party event with four other pretty girls. Everybody knew they were camping it up. This evening would be too much like being a real maid for comfort.

Taking a deep breath, his teeth chattering, he went in before his mother.

She looked up from the salad bowl she was mixing and smiled a mother's smile.

He needed a kind smile at that moment. His heart suddenly filled with love; it was so like her to help him prepare to be Mary's maid for the evening. He returned her smile and gave her his deepest curtsy.

"Darling, you look quite gorgeous."

"Thank you, ma'am."

Another curtsy, just a little dip and a shy smile.

"How may I help you, ma'am?" (*Was that how he should speak?*)

"Set the table for one, Josette dear. Set it as if for your mistress this evening and we can make sure that you've thought of everything."

For the rest of the afternoon his mother was very kind, but her eagle eye missed nothing. It felt strange to stand demurely by the sideboard (*while she ate as if he wasn't there*) ready to fetch and carry for her.

He remembered Mary joking to the girls: "You curtsy at the drop of a hat to anything that moves."

They hadn't known the half of it. No Prussian soldier ever saluted or clicked his heels as often as a maid had to curtsy.

His mother had never been so exacting with him before. It was hard to bear but he knew it was only to get ready for Mary.

- -000-

Joanna was in an agony of stage fright when he heard Mary's car arrive. She seemed to take an age to garage the car and come inside. When Joanna greeted her with a curtsied, "Good evening, ma'am," Mary gave him a preoccupied stare, a slight frown.

How awful! After a hard day at the office she was in no mood for dressing-up games. Oh, *why* had he put this ridiculous uniform on?

Then her face cleared, she returned his smile.

"Darling, you look sweet."

Joanna nearly fainted with relief. For the rest of the evening he pampered her - helped her to relax and unwind, ran her bath, put her clothes out, helped her dress, served her a delicious light meal on a snow-white table linen.

Mary was enchanted by her adorable little maid. Nobody had ever been so dedicated to her comfort before. She felt like a goddess, and Joanna treated her like one.

The evening drew to a close with Mary in her shortie nightgown and negligee, sitting at her vanity. Joanna had brushed her long hair and braided it and was tying each braid in wraps.

He was thrilled to see how pleased Mary was.

Mary could see this and was surprised to see him so happy. With shock she remembered that Josette was Joe and how Joe used to be.

"You love being my Josette, don't you, sweetheart?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do."

Joanna had to answer with a smile and a curtsy but was upset. In truth he didn't love it at all. He was very happy that he'd survived so far and managed to please Mary. But he would be glad when his ordeal was over.

Still, as a maid he had no choice when she asked him but to say he loved his work.

Mary should have known how he really felt but instead she believed his answer, that he actually wanted to be her maid.

What an awful misunderstanding!

Mary wondered if she should encourage him, give him what he wanted? Maybe she should give him *too much* of what he wanted? That might bring him to his senses.

They went into the bedroom. Mary handed him her negligee, ready to climb into bed. They exchanged glances and realized they were thinking the same thing. This was the moment, in the old days when their roles were reversed, when Joe usually started something.

Both suddenly felt uneasy about the way they had spent the evening. Their relationship had been demeaning; why had they allowed it?

Mary thought, *I've been a selfish woman, and as for Joanna, how could he be such a...*

"I married a real little sissy, didn't I?"

“Yes, ma'am.” It was polite for a maid to agree, so he had to. But Joe was hurt; it was unfair of her to make him agree to something like that. After all the trouble he'd taken for her! Making her his maid was her own idea, wasn't it? Sometimes she was hard to fathom.

Suddenly she grinned.

“Go and make me a pot of tea.”

“Yes, ma'am.” His smile of relief was genuine.

• -000-

The next morning found them snuggled together. They woke gradually, French-kissing each other while half asleep.

“What's the time, Joanna?”

“It's...um...9:00 A.M..”

Suddenly she pushed him away.

“Ooh! No! Nasty!”

“What's the matter?”

“Your bristles.”

“No more than usual, surely?”

“No, but it's tacky, kissing someone with last night's make-up on and she's got bristles. You've got to have electrolysis. We can afford it. We'll see the beautician on Monday.”

“What's electrolysis?”

“Instead of shaving, they pluck the hairs out.”

“What's the point?”

“It lasts longer. They stun the root with a tiny electric shock.”

“Doesn't it hurt?”

“Just a teeny little pinprick.”

“Why doesn't everybody do it instead of shaving?”

“Most men wouldn't spend the money or have the patience.”

“OK, why not? Your money and my patience.”

By the time Joanna discovered how long the treatment would take and what hundreds of “teeny” little white-hot pinpricks felt like, the beauticians' relaxation tapes had gotten him hooked.

Joanna's life became routine. He got used to electrolysis. Even the dreaded upper lip was bearable because of the relaxation tapes.

He became an expert housewife and perfect maid.

Much of his perfection was thanks to Helen. Perhaps her longing for a daughter was the cause of her unexpected enthusiasm. Whenever she was at home during the

day she would make excuses to give Joanna “practice” and “experience” and “refresher courses” and “advanced training”.

There was something childlike in a smiling young maid who did everything her mother asked without question. There are just a few happy years when a daughter is young enough to obey and old enough to do it intelligently. Sometimes a widow's only son is so close to his mother that for a few years he is that perfect daughter.

By putting Joanna in his uniform and running him through his paces she was recreating those happy years and Joanna sensed her happiness and did not object too much.

So, while Mary was wondering if Joanna could be persuaded to be a maid more than once a week, Joanna was already (unknown to Mary) spending a good part of his days in uniform.

Mary loved having a maid so much that she persuaded herself it wouldn't harm their marriage if Joanna remained her maid from Friday night to Monday morning each week.

Joanna thought enough was enough; but. Helen and Mary were allies and hard to resist.

This seems to escalate, thought Joanna. Now I seem to be a weekend maid.

SURPRISE ME

One evening Mary pouted: “Darling, why don't you surprise me the way I used to surprise Joe?”

“You surprised Joe in hundreds of ways. Which one in particular?”

“Joe never knew whether he was coming home to Mary or Mitzi. We kept him guessing. Why don't you keep me guessing?”

“You want to see more of Josette? Like midweek?”

“Please?”

“Well, but why don't I see Mitzi any more? It's not fair.”

“Breadwinner's privilege is why, uppity girl. Breadwinners can't be maids, maids are dependents.”

“Uppity girl! What cheek!”

Helen's interest in Joanna's training redoubled. She unearthed her grandmother's copy of The Book of Etiquette by Lady Troubridge. She kept reading out passages from chapter XXV - The Servant in the Household.

Joanna was astounded at all the things a maid was meant to know.

Lady Troubridge was very helpful about the duties of general maids, housemaids, parlourmaids, between-maids, lady's maids, young ladies' maids and nursemaids - in one-servant, two-servant, three-servant and large households.

On the other hand, Lady Troubridge had nothing to say about (and would have denied her calling card to) households served by French maids in tiny dresses.

• -000-

Electrolysis clients used earphones to listen to the relaxation tapes. The beauticians themselves were innocent: they didn't know the tapes had been made by a hypnotherapist whose wife ran a chain of beauty shops; all they knew was that clients were drowsy and skins did not inflame with burn response. A client with the money could safely be treated daily.

But the tapes did more than blank out pain and hypno-suggest skin health. They tinkered with a woman's self-image. They made her feel beautiful and they encouraged her interest in her beauty. Women who listened to the tapes became ardent clients of the beauty shop. To be pampered became a need rather than merely a treat.

Helen was puzzled, amused, pleased by Joanna's enthusiasm for the beauty shop. He kept reading *Cosmo* and *Vogue* and *Seventeen* for ideas. Helen chipped in with money of her own and Joanna added a second hour of electrolysis devoted to body hair.

• -000-

The demands on his time forced Joanna to dream up every sort of labor saving idea to get through his housework. He became so quick that Helen was impressed.

“Joanna darling, you must have been *born* to be a maid. Do you realize that according to Lady Troubridge you are managing all the work of a four-maid household plus cook. My little treasure is worth *five* common servant girls. (*Not that your Mummy would trade you for all the other girls in the world!*)

“Of course, you don't have to empty out the grates, fetch the coal and light the fires, accept visitors' calling cards, hand launder, scrub or polish the floors, take out and beat the carpets—”

“But I'm practically a slave to Mary at weekends—”

“Devoted companion, darling, hardly a slave!”

“Oh yeah? And now she expects me to 'surprise' her by being her 'devoted companion' once EVERY week. Preferably on Wednesdays. How can that be a surprise?”

“If you could see what an adorable maid you are you'd understand, sweetheart.”

• -000-

The setting on Joanna's body trainer was down to 20 inches at the waist. His appetite was much reduced; this young girl's body didn't take much feeding, and a small, confined waist makes for a small, confined appetite. The electrolysis was complete.

Helen reread the little feminisation guide Dr. Livesey gave her when Joe became Joanna. Some of its recommendations had appealed to her then, but it had seemed premature to press them.

Now might be better.

Although Mary was torn by conflict, half of her was on Helen's side and Joanna seemed very interested in beauty. Helen decided to sell them her idea. She had to choose the right moment and mood.

It wouldn't work in midweek when Joanna was in her lady of the house role. She and Mary would resist anything that tended to bury Joe deeper. They were both determined to resurrect Joe as soon as the economy revived with good jobs to be had.

Helen could understand and sympathize. Joe was her son and she loved him. But she had always wanted a daughter and her longing had become painful.

Very well, then. First she'd take Joanna round to Dr. Livesey for a medical. A good soldier spies the land out first.

Then she would strike during the weekend when Joanna was Mary's maid. As Josette she'd do what she was told. As for Mary, the sight of Josette brought something out in her (that Mary herself was a bit afraid of).

Helen could read her like a book. She was like a young Victorian lady with her first maid. She loved the girl but just had to revel in her power. If she teased too far she didn't really mean to be unkind. Sometimes she was goaded by Joanna's sweet "Thank you, ma'am," couldn't he fight back?

• -000-

Sunday would be the day to pounce.

Helen got herself invited to lunch.

Joanna had changed back after church from his demure Sunday suit into his maid's uniform. On Sundays he was allowed to serve a cold meal and Helen and Mary were enjoying a leek and mushroom quiche while Joanna stood in the background with his hands behind his back. The shame at looking like this in front of his wife and mother was something he hoped he would learn to live with.

They took his appearance for granted and ignored him unless to ask or signal for something. Thank you's were rare and spoken absently. It was a relief not to be noticed but to be dismissed as a non-person was galling. For instance, they were talking about him now as if he wasn't there.

"Mary, I know she looks lovely but it's all rather artificial. The body shaper has done its work and so has the electrolysis. She doesn't need them any more; what she needs is a natural means of keeping her beauty."

"A new beauty treatment? She'd *live* in the beauty shop if I let her."

"Hormone therapy, my dear. Hormones to soften her skin and maintain and develop the contrast between her waist and the rest of her body."

Mary looked startled, she looked at Helen to see if she was serious, and looked thoughtfully at Joanna.

A slow smile spread over her face.

"You mean female hormones? What would they do? A better complexion, you say. Broader hips...she'd grow breasts, wouldn't she? Just like her mistress! What a glorious idea!"

"Oh, ma'am!" gasped Joanna.

“You shouldn't call out like that, my sweet, remember?” Mary reminded him kindly. She accepted his curtsy of apology. “Tell me more, Helen. What would the treatment involve? It wouldn't be permanent, would it?”

“What nature can do, nature can undo” replied Helen airily. “She can take pills orally, and she'll have injections of time-release micro capsules or some such implant.”

She smiled at Joanna.

“The hormones are all natural, of course. It's very important that what we do is natural, don't you agree my dear?”

“Oh yes, ma'am!”

“Dr. Livesey tells me she has a number of patients on hormone therapy. I can take Josette to see her. She can also arrange a nice little cosmetic nip and tuck. I know you like your maid to keep trim by swimming every day. Won't it be super when she can swim in a bikini?”

“Nip and tuck?” Mary was puzzled, though half guessing.

“No more dangling! Don't look so shocked, Josette dear. You don't lose anything, you just keep it below the surface like other girls. Just like us!”

Joanna's mind swam with unlikely visions. *They wouldn't do anything to hurt him, would they? No, Mary wanted Joe back when the recession was over.*

Why wasn't he protesting at this insanity?

He knew well why, it was this darned uniform. There was a spell on it, some witch's charm that took away his will and handed it to Mary or Helen. It got worse every time he put it on. Something to do with sinking into the role? Sinking into quicksand! An onlooker wouldn't know, wouldn't understand, wouldn't believe: but he really had very little freedom.

• -000-

The next morning Joanna felt better. They wouldn't get anywhere with their hormones or nip 'n tuck while he was out of uniform and could stick up for himself.

Well, he might just consider the hormones.

He was very interested in beauty these days. If he had to be Joanna he might as well make her a work of art. Hormones were reversible, according to Mummy. And natural.

Anyway, he'd see Dr. Livesey, let her make her sales pitch and then decide.

CONSULTATION

He was finishing his breakfast of orange juice and a croissant when Helen came round from her wing of the house.

“We're in luck, darling. One of Dr. Livesey's patients canceled at the last minute so she can fit us in at 10:30. Come as you are, casual chic!”

Joanna felt tomboyish and free all in black: flared miniskirt, pantyhose, jersey top, boyish flat-heeled shoes, a broad bow tying back his ponytail, a black shoulder-bag for his odds and ends. Before the electrolysis he had to dress too smartly for his taste in order to “explain” his elaborate day make-up. Today he had touched up his eyes and lips, no more.

Being a woman used to be a chore, an embarrassment he went through to please Mary. Going out and being a girl like this was different.

To be honest, it felt terrific. He thought most men would want to do it if they could look so great and nobody knew they were men.

A smile played over his lips as Helen drove him to Dr. Livesey's surgery.

• -000-

Dr. Livesey was brisk.

“As you know, the results of all your tests last week are positive. If you will just step in there and disrobe...”

“Good! Now if you'd come this way. Could you hold the robe away from...lovely, the nurse will swab...and now...”

Joanna was bewildered at the pace of everything. He'd expected to sit down and have a chat with the doctor, ask questions, decide whether to make an appointment to come back for hormone therapy. He thought he was just stripping for an examination, but here were these people all over him swabbing and jabbing.

He sighed. He was committed now. He relaxed, tensed again as they did his other buttock. Then by each nipple.

Would they ever stop?

Apparently not. They gave him another injection in his other arm, then led him to a sort of cousin to a dentist's chair and sat him down. He began to feel tipsy, drowsy, ridiculously at ease with the world.

They tilted him back, whee-ee, fun! His feet seemed to be supported as if in stirrups so that his knees were apart. The nurse came and swabbed him down where he kept his secret.

Who cared? Have a look nurse, have a look doc, have a look neighbors, have a look world, feel free.

And now an injection down there? Why? Must be to counter the stream of male hormones pouring out from good ol' Joe. Good on you, Joe, boy. Fight back, show those damned women.

His thoughts focused again when he noticed two masked and gowned people, one of them busy between his legs. He felt gentle tugs, a feeling of activity.

What were they doing.

Did it matter? Probably that nip 'n tuck thing. He was going to refuse that, wasn't he? His mind told him he ought to care about this, he ought to be fighting, kicking, screaming.

Would he hate his mother when this tranquilizer wore off?

She must have planned this weeks ago. The medical, negotiating with the Doc for him - “because he was too shy” — or some excuse?

The consent forms? Hmm.

Had she asked him to sign anything recently? Of course, of course, fiendishly clever old Mum! Those house reinsurance sheets looked genuine. She probably tucked the consent forms in among them.

He began giggling helplessly at the thought of his mother acting all cloak-and-dagger. He saw the surgeon stop and look at him. What if his giggles had made him shake so much that...He went into another bout of wild giggles, pictured the scalpel slipping. Oops! Did you see where it fell, nurse?

He couldn't hate his mother but he treated her to a mean old sulk in the car.

When they got home she disappeared into her own wing, suddenly remorseful at what she had done.

Joanna was uncomfortable rather than in pain when the tranquilizer and local anesthetic wore off.

• -000-

When Mary got back he couldn't bear to break the news to her. He was subdued but she was too wound up from the office to notice anything until they were at dinner.

“Did Helen do anything about the doctor, sweetie?”

“She made arrangements.”

“Do you want to try the hormones? Helen was so convincing, but now I'm not sure.”

“Are you sure you're interested in my opinion?”

“Oh, darling! Why d'you think I'm asking?”

“You didn't ask yesterday.”

“What? Oh! I see what you mean. Well, I thought the question was much too serious to discuss with you while you were serving at table. The thing is, beauty is all very well but once you lose your manhood you might not want it back.”

“Darling, I'm going to bed. Can we talk about it later? I've got a sore throat, I'll sleep in the blue room, I don't want you to catch it from me.”

• -000-

The next day the doctor removed the bandages and urine catheter and was satisfied. Back at home, Joanna snapped at his mother when she asked to look. He warned her to let him tell Mary himself. She left in tears. When she was gone he felt weepy too, knowing what this meant to a mother. Probably he would let her look, but not yet.

He stripped naked and stood in front of the mirror. Feet apart. Feet together. Feet apart.

“A boy with a cunt.”

He snarled the taboo word to arouse the anger that would not come. He didn't know what he felt. He looked again. She was trying to smile at him!

She was sort of cute, really. He spoke to her again.

“A girl without tits, that's what you are, kid. Well, just you be patient. Little girls have to wait for their titties. Leave it to mother nature, and Dr. Livesey.”

He didn't even know who the masked surgeon was. Was it a man or a woman?

He fetched a magnifying hand mirror and sat on the bed with his legs apart. It looked like the real thing, but they wouldn't do anything radical in a general practitioner's surgery under local anesthetic.

Major lips, yes. Minor lips? Well, they'd get by at a first glance. Now this clitoris was wrong. Phew, relief! They'd left the main thing. How had they...? Ah! The concertina effect.

He wasn't that monstrous anyway. And no need to panic, the two vital glands were still retracted into his body where they'd been for the past year or so.

No vagina.

He had the doctor's hygiene pamphlet. It was well printed on glossy paper. There must be lots of in-betweenies like him. So there had to be many wives like his - or mothers like his.

Who would have guessed?

-000-

He went out and bought a young-teen swimsuit with padded breasts and legs cut steep to above the hipbones. When he went swimming the freedom and exposure was exhilarating. He was sure he could feel the boys' admiring stares caress his skin. He preferred to be a man but sometimes being a girl was just wonderful. If only he could wait until he got to heaven and then ask permission to be a girl there for the rest of eternity. Earth was getting so complicated.

While he swam it suddenly came to him, a good way to break the news to Mary about all this, was to visit to the doctor.

That Tuesday evening he pleaded a sore throat and slept in the blue room again. The incisions should be fairly well healed by Wednesday night. The stitches would be removed next Monday.

Mary would be “surprised” by Josette on Wednesday evening, and more surprised at bedtime.

She behaved as if Joe and Joanna and Josette were three different people. She was eager to feminize her maid but she was ambivalent about Joanna; so it was safer for her maid to break the news.

• -000-

Mary was genuinely surprised when Josette greeted her.

“My dear! Is your throat better?”

“Perfect, thank you, ma'am!”

Mary loved to soak in the bath while Joanna shampooed and rinsed her hair. Afterwards Joanna might perm or blow dry it.

She was pampered to purring point by the time she went down for dinner. When she was tired or preoccupied she just dismissed Joanna to the kitchen and forgot about him.

He knew she was in a good mood this evening because she ran him off his feet with small errands just for the fun of bossing him about.

At bedtime nowadays she liked him to undress in front of her so that she could watch him turn from a little maid into a sort of half boy half girl. He'd be naked except for cap and high heels and pretty make-up, but very shy about it. She thought his shyness was cute.

So as usual, after her maid had braided and wrapped her hair, Mary climbed into bed and told him to strip.

A minute later she was wide-eyed.

“Darling! What have you done? Stand up and let me see. Oh! Josette! What a lovely surprise! You want to be like me.

“Well! That settles it, you really must take the hormones now.”

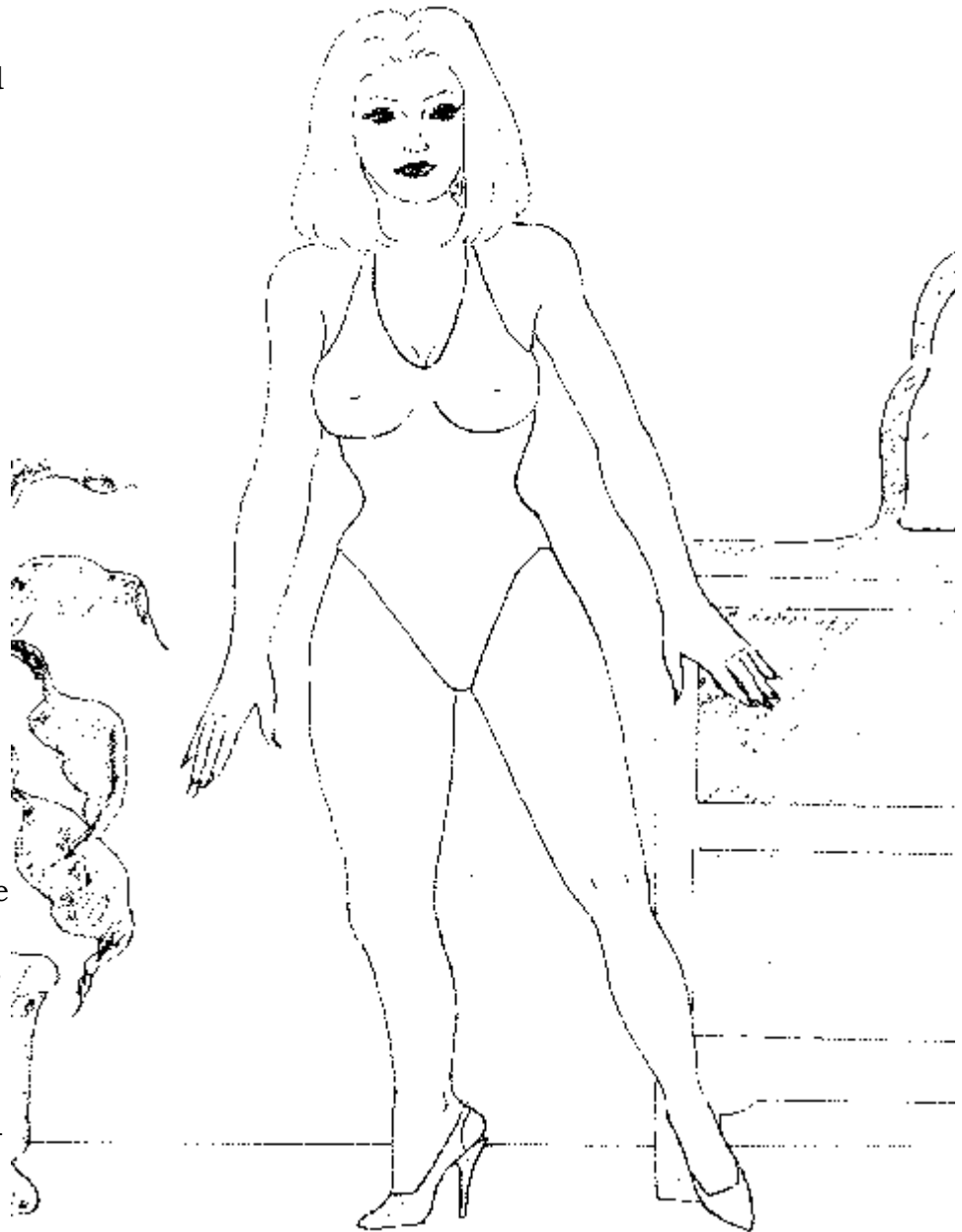
“Yes, ma'am.”

Wearing nothing but his brand new alteration and his little maid's cap he curtsied bashfully.

“You may undress now and come to bed.”

With a quick curtsy he unpinned the tiny cap and jumped into her bed, into her arms.

His clitoris engorged and pressure built up against the concertina effect behind, but the stitches and healing tissue held. He was in pain,



half of it despair, and he groaned.

Mary, forgetting, reached between his legs to seize what she usually seized. What she felt reminded her and she giggled and pushed the duvet down.

“Let me look. Oh, my, it's wet. So's mine. It's got to be girl love from now on, I haven't done that since University. I can't wait for your breasts. Watch me finger my little lady. Now you do yours the same way. No, put one arm round me and use the other...yes, middle finger. Isn't this fun? Like wife, like husband! You can kiss me if you like. Mmm!”

They kissed for a long time. Their fingers were busy, their pelvises writhing, their voices blending in little moans.

Mary stopped kissing, pressed her head back against the pillow and began wailing. This set Joanna shrieking and climaxing.

Mary handed him a tissue. “Such a messy girl!”

A little later she switched off the light. “Darling, are you still awake?”

“No!”

“We must celebrate tomorrow when I come back from work.”

“Mmm.”

“Did you hear me? What did I say?”

“Mmm.”

Mary switched the light back on. “Darling, listen. Tomorrow we must celebrate.”

“Celebrate what?”

“Your new body. You and Helen planned it, didn't you? Well I've got a surprise too. For both of you. Helen must come to dinner. You can wear your pink uniform.”

“Tomorrow's Thursday, I won't be a maid again until Friday.”

“This is a special occasion, honeybee. Please?”

“Well, OK, I suppose. Er, what pink uniform?”

“Oh, that was another surprise. I bought you some uniforms for your smaller waist.”

“Mmm. Can we sleep now?”

A JOB AT LAST

Helen was free on the Thursday afternoon to help Joanna prepare dinner. While changing into the new pink uniform he relented and let his mother see his new femininity. He knew she would fret if she didn't, but it was mortifying to stand before her naked.

Her smile was radiant, the smile of a mother for her baby, and tears began to course down her cheeks. She came forward with arms extended. In a moment his na-

ked body was enfolded and pressed against her soft clothing. He wondered if his breasts would grow as large as hers.

The new uniform was modest enough on top: it was high necked, with a frilled lace collar. The dress clung to his tiny waist but the full circle pink satin skirt flared out over a tutu of petticoats.

Joanna kept turning this way and that in front of the mirror. He liked wearing a pink ribbon in his hair instead of a maid's cap.

But the dress!

“Mummy, how can I wear this? You can see all the petticoats even when I stand still. If I turn or lift an arm you can see my panties.”

“Nobody will realize unless they look, my dear. The ruffles on your bottom match the hems of the petticoats.”

“Why would she give me a uniform like this, Mum? Whatever would Lady Troubridge say?”

“I'm sure Lady Troubridge would be amused if she saw it in a knockabout play at a house party. It's a theatrical costume, my sweet, and you're an actress. You look quite delicious.”

“Mum, do you think Mary's a bit...kind of...you know, like when you do THINGS to people?”

“‘Things', darling?”

“I mean *things* for fun. Things the people don't like? For instance teasing them and things, or making them feel silly on purpose?”

“You mean is she a...no, my darling, I don't think so. She's just a natural young animal.

“A strong woman seeks a strong man to protect her children. She tests his strength constantly, pushing to see if he can push back. If he yields ground she advances until he takes a stand. Well, that's what Uncle Henry says in his book. Aunt Freda's a frightful nag, you know. Uncle Henry is totally henpecked.”

“Should I have taken a stand, Mum?”

“Darling, I don't think you belong in Uncle Henry's book.”

Helen looked thoughtful. It was more than just teasing, she was sure. Well, it was better than nagging, better than henpecking. She sighed. A marriage of equals was so *rare*.

That evening Joanna served medallions of venison with a bottle of Gruaud Larose. He was happy because his cooking was always appreciated, but the new uniform was a distraction. The hem of the flared skirts kept brushing his wrists to remind him of the spectacle he must be.

The petticoats were light, floated up quick and settled slowly every time he curtsied. Could this reveal the front of his panties? Could Mary and Helen see the new feminine

'nothing' there? Every time he left the room he tried to tug his skirt down, but it didn't do any good. He must exchange the dress for a longer one. If he dared.

Mary told Joanna to wait by the sideboard and listen.

"I've got a surprise for everybody.

"The house is a labor-saving house. Joanna has a perfect system thanks to Helen. One woman could easily manage the house on her own and still do a day's work at the office.

"Joanna no longer spends half of every morning at the beauty clinic. Even with her daily swim she has time on her hands."

Joanna didn't like the sound of this.

"Joanna is now a good amateur beautician. She can do simple things on the sewing machine. This is what I propose.

"There are good local day courses in beauty and dressmaking. I shall pay to send her to one of them this year, and the other next unless Helen would like to chip in and we can get it all done in one year."

"I'm game!" responded Helen at once.

"Joanna will want to pay her way. She paid us for the electrolysis by refitting the house for easier running. And I know just what she can do to repay us this time."

Joanna began to regret installing all that equipment. What's the use of saving labor if they fill the time you save with more work?

Mary explained to Helen: "What you and I both need more than an under employed housewife is a truly versatile cook and general maid.

"From today, Josette is dismissed and Joanna becomes our full-time maid and we share her. She has been a superb cook and housemaid and a useful parlor maid. What we haven't really exploited is her talents as a lady's maid."

Joanna recognized the crisp tones of a manager at a planning meeting. She was probably formidable at work.

As I used to be, he thought sadly. Now look what I'm getting into.

"She can take responsibility for our wardrobes and shopping and do routine hair and beauty work. What do you think, Helen?"

"I think it's a marvelous idea. So sensible, so well thought out. She's been a part-time maid for so long that I'm sure the work will be second nature to her. I think you'll be very pleased with her dress sense."

"Good! Let's do it. Joanna, what did you think of my surprise?"

"It was, er, very...surprising, ma'am. Unexpected."

"But you're thrilled at the chance to do what you do best?"

"Yes, ma'am!" he lied.

His world was falling about his ears. Now he was at their mercy.

Joanna's head was swimming. Everything around him was fuzzy, changing shape.

Becoming a full-time maid wasn't just taking a job, it was leaving civilian life, like a nun.

Mary would no longer be his friend, his equal. Not even his employer. She loved him all right but on “Josette days” she used to *play* at being his owner. Now it was real.

0-0-0

He was still dazed next day when his mother briefed him on uniforms. He didn't seem to understand her.

“Have you been listening, dear?”

“Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am. Trying to, ma'am, I'm sorry.” He looked as if he might burst into tears.

His mother was calm. She took him in her arms.

“There, there, darling! What was distracting you?”

“It's all been too much, Mum. It's like when I lost my job, I began to just...fade.”

“Well, you've got a very important job now. Looking after the two people you love. So let's get down to work, shall we?”

“OK, Mum!”

“Right! Your clothes! You can't go on answering the door in those silly uniforms, so we'll be guided by Troubridge—”

“Great, Mum! So I don't have to—”

“Don't interrupt, dear. Unfortunately your mistress finds Troubridge boring. So when you're her lady's maid you'll still be as you are now, but with ribbon instead of cap, and print dresses in the morning.”

Joanna groaned inwardly.

“However, when you're parlor maid you'll have a sensible cap and apron. Your morning print dresses will be knee length but your afternoon dresses will be below the knee and the skirts will be narrow enough that you'll need to practice. Don't frown, dear. You'll like the next bit.

“When out shopping and on your day off (that's Tuesday) you dress as you please as long as you look good. Out of the house you're my daughter again, and Mary's your girl friend.”

“So I won't be serving meals dressed like this again?”

“You may want to surprise your mistress occasionally.”

“And end up getting teased? She calls me a sissy.”

“If it lets her unwind you should be grateful for the chance to help.”

“Oh, Mum! Whose side are you on?”

“Do you have to ask me that, my precious?”

• -000-

Joanna tried to recover from shock by conceding that a phase of his life was over, accepting his new routine. He worked very quickly, hardly ever put a foot wrong, looked good, slipped without effort from costume to costume like a quick-change artist.

He always remembered instructions. There was a nice simplicity about things. If somebody told him what to do, it was curtsy, "yes, ma'am," and do it. Whether he wanted to do it or not didn't matter. If they obviously made a little mistake, he curtsied apology and asked for clarification.

His mistake, not theirs.

He didn't have to worry who to obey, inside the house he obeyed everybody. He knew his Troubridge by heart, to knock at bedroom doors always and downstairs doors never; how to answer the front door, how to deal with callers, how to lay the table, how to keep accounts of his purchases...

Out shopping or at the dressmaking and beauty classes he was somebody else; assertive, a lively, laughing, pretty girl, always beautifully dressed.

He knew he was a good maid and enjoyed his work very much.

Of course, this was work for someone totally compliant.

He remembered his adolescence and his office days and wondered how he let them magic away his pride in having a mind of his own.

There were two ways to tame a free spirit.

With him they'd used the deadly gentle way, not force or blackmail, just love. Although they left the stable door open how could he escape? Could he ever be a man again?

Still, he was haunted by his free self.

Even in his happiest moments as a maid he knew what people must think of him. Few women and fewer men could take what he had to take from Mary. But he had to smile sweetly and love it.

Mary liked to put Joanna through his paces like a pony. She was amazed that Helen had trained him so well. At first the guests she brought home were people who didn't know who Joanna was.

Then she brought girls from the office. The girls thought it was another maid gag. Amused office gossip went around.

• -000-

After visits by various people Rachel began to wonder. She asked Mary what was going on. "Why was Joe always dressed as a maid?"

"It's quite simple, that's what she is. Joanna's our cook, parlor maid and general maid. She's a treasure. You saw for yourself."

"But Mary, that's totally weird."

"What's so weird? She's a great organizer, have you forgotten so soon? She gets through more work in a day than three of our managers laid end to end. I'm happy she's doing a job for once that challenges her."

“Oh, c'mon, Mary. Joe, ah, Joanna isn't even a girl.”

“Rachel, what's girl got to do with it? *Now* who's sexist?”

“You and Helen! Making her do all that yes ma'am, no ma'am. Nobody grovels like that nowadays.”

Mary burst out laughing. “When were you last in the CEO's office?”

• -000-

After a month the gossip petered out. Mary's talent would lift her higher but this eccentricity would bar her from the peaks. So what? She meant to leave while she was young, when her investment portfolio was fat enough.

Mary had guests to be sociable, but also to show off her pretty maid. She couldn't remember why, from his first time in dresses, she had done things to tease him. She felt such victory when Joanna curtsied a polite, “thank you, ma'am,” after being teased.

Of course he wasn't allowed to tease back now he was her *real* maid. Showing him off to guests *definitely* teased him. He still wasn't at ease being a maid in front of visitors, she could tell.

Mary giggled, remembering the way they teased each other after the May Day party when Mitzi and Josette had been a big hit with the men.

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Big Pat and little Mike, two guys from the office, got very smoochy with them in one of the slow dances. The four of them went off the floor to drink Buck's Fizz and the two boys pretended to get into an argument about which of Mitzi and Josette was nicest to kiss.

Mike put his arm round Joanna.

“Definitely the nicest armful! And look at those tasty lips. Mmmm! Mmmm!”

He kissed “her” very thoroughly.

“I disagree.” Pat took Mitzi and kissed her. “Definitely Mitzi!”

“Rubbish! Here, you try Josette and see what I mean. Let me have Mitzi.”

Pat and Mike were a dishy pair, popular with the office girls because they made them laugh.

It was a gag to make fun of social conventions - kissing a girl in front of her husband, kissing a guy in front of his wife, kissing a guy period, kissing a guy dressed as a girl, comparing two girls to their faces...

The two maids were passed back and forth between the two boys who were so cute and sure of themselves that Joanna and Mitzi sort of screamed and let them have their way.

For no particular reason, Mary decided to invite big Pat and little Mike to dinner. Pat, Mike and one of the girls. Mike and Stevie got on well, she'd ask Stevie.

DINNER PARTY

By now Joanna's breasts were coming along nicely. He usually served dinner in his black parlor maid's dress, the tight calf-length one that made walking into an art form, but Mary thought that his newest French maid's dress would please the boys and surprise Stevie. It was low cut in front and showcased his breasts very well.

Joanna didn't think it was such a good idea.

The boys were friends who'd been on cross-country runs with Joe. He'd hoped when they saw him in uniform again they'd think it was another maid gag, but when they saw his breasts...

The three guests arrived together in Pat's car.

Joanna welcomed them and took Stevie's cloak in a very polite way that he hoped would get this awful bit over with.

It seemed to work; Pat whistled, Mike said something nice and Stevie returned his smile. They didn't try and kiss him as if he were the hostess or anything embarrassing like that. Phew!

He ushered them into the drawing room.

"Miss Ortheris, Mr. Learoyd and Mr. Mulvaney, ma'am," he announced.

Stevie murmured "Four!" to herself. She was counting Joanna's curtsies: one when she let them in, one in thanks when Mike said wow she looked great, one to announce them and one when she was told to serve drinks. Pert little bobs that you began not to notice, they looked like second nature.

Now that he was a girl Joanna always knew where men (or women) were looking. During the evening nobody took any notice of him, and yet...

Mike's eyes were devouring him. They went from his legs to his breasts and back all evening.

Stevie seemed annoyed at first, then amused when she saw Pat's eyes undressing Mary.

Thank goodness nothing too terrible happened. Though it felt weird to serve dinner feeling naked in the mini-dress after getting used to the hobble skirt, especially with your breasts popping out and your panties showing every time you leaned forward to serve somebody. They didn't really, but that's what it felt like, the guests' eyes popping out to match. *Why had Mary made him wear his upstairs uniform (as if he didn't know)?*

The worst thing was when Mike, ex-good-ol'-buddy, passed him in the corridor. Mike grinned and told him, "You make a brilliant maid, Joanna."

Before Joanna knew, Mike grabbed him and gave him a big kiss. But, you couldn't resent happy-go-lucky Mike, not for long.

Mary and Stevie saw what a hit Joanna was with the men. They exchanged amused glances and after dinner Mary murmured in Stevie's ear: "We'd better fight back."

Furniture was pushed out of the way and the two couples were soon dancing to music on the tape player.

Joanna wished he could join in. He found a shadowy spot in the hallway where he could stand and watch without being seen. He could see a fair bit of the room, the music made him move and sway in time with the dancers.

When the music slowed the dancing grew more intimate. Joanna was amazed to see Pat and Mary dance like lovers.

This was not like the time when he and Mitzi teased each other by flirting and kissing all the men. He had buried his fears then in the excitement of competition. This was different. There was nothing he could do to distract himself from the terrible pounding in his heart. He couldn't bear to watch, but he couldn't stop watching.

Mike and Stevie disappeared out of sight in the direction of the sofa. Mary and Pat were still dancing slow and kissing madly. Pat's hands were kneading the cheeks of Mary's bottom under her short skirt.

Joanna had a desperate need to stop him but what could he do? Hurry in on his high heels and stamp his foot and burst into tears? No, he needed time to think.

The music stopped but Pat and Mary were still kissing. Mary gave a squeal when Pat suddenly picked her up and cradled her in his arms as if she were a baby. Her feet were kicking in protest, but her arms were round his neck and she was looking up into his eyes. He slowly lifted her head and lowered his. She pulled herself the rest of the way and they were kissing again as Pat carried her out of sight.

Joanna tiptoed to the door and peered through the gap between the hinges. Both couples were sitting and necking.

Would they go further?

Joanna gasped when he saw Pat's hand go up Mary's skirt. Why didn't she tell him to stop?

What excuse could a maid make to go in and interrupt them? If only a visitor would call! That's it! He'd buzz his mother on the intercom and ask her to come and interrupt.

Just then, to his knee weakening relief, Mary detached herself and went over to the phone. He heard the intercom purring in the kitchen, checked himself in the hall mirror to calm down, went into the drawing-room and curtsied.

"You rang, ma'am?"

Mary was too busy to answer. She was back on Pat's lap in the big armchair in which she and Joe used to love each other in the old days.

Stevie and Mike were in each other's arms on the sofa.

Joanna stood waiting, feet together, breasts heaving, hoping he could hide his feelings. Now he was worse off, he couldn't go and buzz his mother.

Pat seemed to have forgotten his earlier plan, Mary's blouse was undone and Pat's hand seemed to be inside her bra, she was making little murmurs.

Had they forgotten who he was or didn't they care? Maybe they thought that as he'd let himself become a maid he just wasn't worth taking seriously.

They seemed to go on forever while Joanna stood pretending not to stare and wondering what to do..

Finally Mary glanced in Joanna's direction and broke off her kiss.

“Joanna, dear, could you make some more coffee, please? And see to everyone's glasses. Mr. Learoyd is having orange juice, he's driving.”

Joanna nearly fainted with relief; Mary was giving the guests their cue to leave after coffee. He hurried back to the kitchen.

He was wheeling the dumbwaiter through the hallway to the drawing room when he met Stevie.

She gave him a sympathetic smile.

“That was really mean of us, it was meant to be like the May Day maid party, but you aren't allowed to retaliate, are you? I didn't think, or I wouldn't have played along. Don't worry, I'll make the boys leave after coffee. Poor little Joey!”

She gave him a kiss on the cheek.

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Mary talked about the evening while Joanna was braiding her hair before she went to bed.

“Mike looked at you more than he looked at Stevie. Did you notice.”

“He probably fell for the uniform, ma'am.”

“That was YOUR downfall, honey. You seemed to love Mitzi's uniform more than you loved me. Perhaps you wanted to wear it, perhaps you were destined to be my maid.”

“Oh!! Ma'am! If I believed you *planned* from the beginning—”

“The unconscious can do anything. The point is, do you like Mike or not?”

“You know I like him, ma'am.”

“You fancy him?”

“Of course not, ma'am! He's a man.”

“We could go out with Pat and Mike one weekend. You could swap your Tuesday off for Saturday. You must be tired of going out on your own on Tuesdays.”

“That's true, ma'am. I miss...all sorts of things.”

“Oh, my poor little angel! We must put a little sparkle in your life. I made quite a hit with Pat, didn't I? He's got very big hands and feet, you know what that's supposed to mean. That's one thing I've missed since you had your nip and tuck. We should see more of those two.”

• -000-

A Saturday or two later Mary and Joanna were driven to the river side by the boys.

Many girls knew big Pat and little Mike because of the boat they owned; as soon as the weather turned pleasant they liked to find themselves a couple of girls and cruise up river, stopping for whatever might please the girls of the day. They reckoned the river could match the culture of any girl they could lure.

The outing was a surprise to Mary. She suggested it lightheartedly to Mike and a week later he came up to her at work with the invitation. To her and "Joanna".

"Are you sure you mean Joanna and not Joe?"

"Whatever. It's up to you. I thought Joe was kind of...out of the picture?"

"Oh, right! OK, Mike, we'd love to come, everybody raves about your river trips."

Mary was still puzzled. The word on the boys was that they were real fun, not pushy or anything - your company and a few laughs was payment enough for the trip. But they always had high hopes and weren't always disappointed. So...why would they invite a married couple?

• -000-

Pat was not as keen as Mike.

"You're talking wasted weekend, boy. They're married, and one of them isn't a girl. You're talking questions we'll get asked at work. Hey, Mike, did you make it with your boss's husband, have you finally come out?"

Mike laughed.

"Most of the studs in the office kissed Josette at that party, I'll be very glad to remind them. Listen, it's just a weekend, we'll have plenty of laughs. It was Mary's idea. Anyway we owe them a dinner. Gotta keep in wid de bawuss."

• -000-

Besides laughs they got two foxy ladies to keep them company.

Mary wore a blue and white striped top with tight white shorts to make a man howl with desire. And a sailor's peaked cap and white sneakers.

Joanna looked stunning in a tight pink skirt (so short it was a danger to traffic) with a clinging pink and white striped top. His legs were bare and he wore pink and white trainers. It was obvious to the boys that he was bra-less. The tiny waist that Mike had wondered about was real and nothing to do with tight lacing.

The weather was perfect for a picnic, a swim in the river, a visit to a country fair.

In the evening they moored in a small town which had a good Saturday night rave.

When Mike saw Joanna in his bathing bikini he was sure he must be a sex change. It would explain everything. Men didn't have real boobs like that, no way a man could be like that between the legs.

They wandered around the fairground as two couples, going hand in hand or with an arm round each other. By bopping time nobody remembered that Joanna was a boy.

Joanna danced a few times with Pat and various river boys but mostly with Mike. As the evening went on separate dancing gave way to close dancing.

The four grew affectionate and kissed as they danced.

Mary and Joanna pretended it was war of the flirts like Mitzi versus Josette, but really they'd warmed to the boys after a happy day together.

Joanna tried not to feel bad, Mike was a lovely guy who'd been really sweet all day and deserved a bit of friendship in return.

Anyway, Mike was different. Very different from Pat, half his size, small hands and feet. Nice face. Come to think of it, he'd look cute in a dress.

Joanna giggled, and wouldn't tell Mike why when he asked him.

They walked back to the boat along the towpath in the dark. Mike and Joanna stopped now and again to look across the river or up at the stars. A faint wind occasionally rustled the trees. They came to a grassy part of the bank and sat down. They lay back on their elbows side by side in the cool grass.

Mike pointed and whispered, "Look".

Something in the water was moving, they could just make it out in the dark.

"Is it an otter?" asked Joanna

"I think it's a water rat." responded Mike.

After minutes of silence, Joanna felt his lips grow warm. He was shocked at how easily he melted into Mike's arms and when Mike kissed him he was glad. He knew this wasn't him but the moment was so romantic he was swept away. He liked Mike very much, he knew what any man in Mike's shoes would want and he just had to please him, he'd been so nice all day.

Mike's brain reminded him that Joanna was not all girl, but his instinct said what the hell and Mike believed in instinct.

His instinct was not to press his luck too soon. If he played the waiting game he might do more with her.

He murmured into her ear. "Oh, Joanna, you've been driving me wild all day, you're so beautiful, my God you're perfection. I want to kiss you and kiss you and kiss you and kiss you." So he did.

Joanna was thrilled at the effect he had on a man. He had to admit it, some of his best moments were as a girl. It grew more bearable when you got used to it. Even the kissing itself was not too horrible - sort of...nice, in a way. He just hoped Mike would know when to stop.

"Mike, I'm trusting you."

"Don't worry, sweets, I'll look after you. Let's walk on before we tear each other's clothes off."

• -000-

Back at the boat Mary made coffee on the tiny stove. The neat little galley was always a hit with girls who'd never been in a cabin cruiser. They would eye the sleeping bunks, acting casual, wondering if the trip was a mistake.

Pat and Mary's grins, when Mike and Joanna climbed down into the main cabin, caused Joanna to blush. Mary passed him a hand mirror and he hastily repaired his make-up.

Without realizing what Mary might think, Mike held Joanna's hand while they sat and drank coffee and talked about the journey back downstream tomorrow. Joanna tried to withdraw his hand but Mike thought he was squeezing it and squeezed back.

In reply, Mary took Pat's arm and leaned her cheek on his shoulder.

Mike and Pat both thought, *aha! A definite maybe.*

Out came a bottle from the wine cooler, on went the radio, very soft.

There was just about space in the main cabin for two couples to dance - to sway to the music and maybe turn on the spot.

Mary was going through a phase of looking at men's pants. A kind of under nourishment, maybe. When they bathed in the river that afternoon she saw Pat's bathing trunks and thought, *"Wow! But forget it, I'm married. Well, sort of."*

A little more music, a little wine and she thought: *"This may be my only chance at the real thing until the day I die. Joanna's the love of my life but Pat's a man and she isn't. Anyway she's got her own man this evening."*

With sudden enthusiasm she reached between Pat's legs and grabbed. She whispered in his ear, "Are you doing anything special with that this evening?"

Pat gave her a deep French kiss before arising from the cabin's galley bench where they were sitting between dances to walk back towards the head, pausing long enough to whisper into Mike's ear, "She's hot to trot, what are you going to do?"

Joanna wondered what the boys were whispering about, but he saw Mary's dreamy smile of anticipation, and he knew.

How could she? his mind protested as Mike returned to his fondling of Joanna's all too sensitive breasts through Joanna's pink and white striped cotton top until the inflamed nipples swelled like cherries and Mike actually reached under the blouse to lift it up so that he could tongue the hard tits.

"My God!" poor Joanna squealed in disbelieving protest as he struggled to break free from Mike's sucking lips, only to cause Mike to think that Joanna was struggling like a woman in passion. Frantically Joanna's hands tried to push Mike away from the throbbing nipples until Mike grabbed the flailing hands and sought out Joanna's protesting lips for another breath taking French kiss as he lifted Joanna into his arms and placed Joanna on a nearby bunk!

An astonished Mary watched as Mike actually pushed Joannan unto *her* back on the bunk and overwhelmed *her* with his masculine strength and body weight while his strong hands tucked their way into Joanna's panties and tugged them down while he knelt eagerly between her legs...

"Oh, My God! Noooo," Joanna cried out in half scream smothered by another passionate kiss that turned his head so that he could see, to his mortal shame, his wife's amused smile of fascination over his seeming enchantment when Mike arose between Joanna's flailing legs upon his knees to release his rampant maleness that swelled forth from his fly to sway before Joanna's eyes like a snake about to strike. "OH, NO!!!"

Mary couldn't believe it when she saw Joanna's hands as they reached out almost timidly to actually fondle Mike's organ just as Mary had played with Joe's! Before she could see Mike's efforts to protect himself, she found herself in Pat's arms as he moved her to his own bunk and began to excite her own femaleness. *“Well, if Joanna can do it, why not?”*

Minutes later Mary and Joanna were on their bunks, on their backs, naked with their legs apart.

Mike was too frantic to understand why Joanna's womanhood was no-entry, he just produced a tube of lubricant from somewhere and changed his aim a little lower down as he pushed a pillow under Joanna's all too female hips.

Joanna thought he was safe as long as they faced each other.

When Mike entered him he did not realize (because he could not believe) what was happening until he was in to the hilt and it was too late. Joanna squealed in horror, hearing his screams mingling with Mary's!

The others listening from their boats at a nearby mooring thought he was screaming with joy. Listening to Joanna's screams and Mary's cries of passion they knew that the two boys in the next boat had scored.

Cheers and applause came from a boat in the next mooring, causing poor Joanna to actually believe that they were watching his ravishment as Mike continued to thrust...

Poor Joanna accepted Mike's sudden spurting release with a scream of surprise just as Mike jerked free to relax holding Joanna tightly in his strong arms as he actually fell asleep!

From the bunk nearby Joanna could hear Mary and Pat as they continued until Mary cried out in her own orgasm while Pat urged her on. Then there was a silence broken only by the sound of a party in the boat nearby, that seemed to be a celebration of Joanna's rape... Joanna could actually hear their loud jokes about the “whores” in the boat near-by!

“Are they asleep,” Pat whispered as he sat up in the bunk while Mary arose to straighten her clothes before going to the head.

“Yes,” Mary whispered in return knowing that Joanna was undoubtedly awake from the sound of his breathing, while she noted with secret pleasure how Mike had wrapped himself about her hapless husband so that he couldn't escape... “Don't they look sweet, locked in a lovers' embrace? Why, our little Joanna actually is smiling, isn't she?”

Joanna actually cringed at the sound of Pat's chuckling agreement as Pat looked at the couple nearby.

“I never would have believed it, but Mike certainly took to your husband like Joanna was a real woman. I didn't know he was gay...”

“You're surprised, how do you think I feel? Why, Joanna squealed loader than I did on my wedding night. But, from what little I could see Mike is a real man, while Joe is just Joanna,” Mary giggled as she took Pat's hand and led the way back towards the

head. "Let's leave the lovers alone while we take a shower and maybe join the party next door. It sounds like they are having fun..."

Pat grunted his agreement as they headed away...

Shattered, Joanna managed after some struggle to turn his back his back on the snoring Mike and fell asleep despite his sore rear and tears of humiliation...

He awoke after an hour to find Mike's arm round him, cupped over his left breast. Mike's strong masculine fingers were playing with Joanna's nipple until it became erect and Joanna felt a certain warmth spread from his erect nipples towards his loins. *Oh, my, why do I feel so strange?*

With shock he remembered what they had done earlier.

He could feel that Mike was aroused again so he pretended to be asleep, but Mike slid in sneakily as if to enjoy himself without waking him. The warmth Joanna felt caused his body to actually relax to Mike's urgings as Joanna moved in responsive receptiveness to each deep probing stroke...

Mike slowly slid his throbbing warm damp shaft in and out for half an hour until Joanna: heard his breath hissing in rapid eagerness, felt his body shudder, cried out in response to his douche-like explosive pumping release, and whimpered when Mike jerked away with a self-satisfied chuckle.

Joanna felt a strange disappointment from Mike's sudden withdrawal as he turned to see Mike's maleness go limp before Mike again rested while holding Joanna. Joanna became conscious of pressure in his own groin where he'd been stitched up to look dainty.

*I can't **like** this terrible thing, he thought. I've always been **normal** . What's he done to me?*

Twice more during the night he woke to find Mike within him. Once he thought he heard movement in the other bunk. He did, he heard rhythmic movement, the other two were trying not to be heard.

• -000-

As they sailed back down river on Sunday morning, Mary and Joanna were subdued, haunted. Both had that stretched feeling to remind them of repeated invasions over the past 12 hours.

Pat and Mike were wondering if they had done right. They saw themselves as a team with a duty to cherish all girls and make them happy, not as marriage breakers. But they had meant well. These two were more like attractive sisters than a married couple, the boys had followed their instincts.

They moored near the lovely church of Eyot-St-Swithin's for morning service. The hymns cheered Joanna as his voice rose to the sky blending with those of the women and choirboys. He felt at peace. It wasn't as if he'd cheated on Mary, she was in the next cabin fulfilling herself, he couldn't begrudge her having what he couldn't give her. He prayed, please teach me to be generous and not jealous (it's very hard) and thank You for sending us Pat and Mike, they're terribly nice.

• -000-

Helen came back from work at 11 A.M. on Monday to have her hair done by Joanna. It didn't take her long to get the whole story of the boat trip.

It was obvious that her child would never become a man. She came to a decision.

“Look, why don't you two come on holiday with me? Schloss Aesir is the best hotel in Europe, you'll love being pampered. We can relax in the sun and discuss your future. I'll talk to Mary this evening.”

Most guests at the hotel knew vaguely about the health clinic but it didn't concern the majority who were there for a break and a good time.

Schloss Aesir was located in the Grand Duchy of Mistiltein where the doctrine of consent was as liberal as their banking laws - allowing, for example, third parties to consent to surgery on behalf of patients unready (through youth or other reasons) to take the responsibility themselves.

For instance, a loving mother with a son who would benefit from cosmetic surgery could bring him to the Schloss for a nice holiday. To spare the boy anxiety he wouldn't be told why he was there until the proper moment. The surgery would be a surprise for the boy, quick and painless thanks to state-of-the-art anesthetic.

- -000-

Joanna woke from the sedative (slipped into his morning orange juice) to find himself ready for surgery, on his back, his legs apart, his head propped up slightly.

Two gowned figures were beside him, each holding one of his hands. A curare-like drug had removed just his voluntary muscle control to prevent him jerking or spasming.

The gowned figures lowered their surgical masks to let him see that they were Helen and Mary. They smiled reassuringly and replaced their masks.

He tried to speak but was unable to.

Helen pointed between his raised knees: “Watch, darling.”

A surgeon and assistant were ready to work between his legs.

Joanna could feel nothing but he saw that the entire region had been shaved of hair. He began to guess what might happen.

The surgeon's scalpel approached his sealed-in pubic region and went between his simulated labia and cleanly cut open where he had been stitched. The assistant dabbed away the small amount of blood and the surgeon's gloved hand drew something from its dark hiding place out into the light.

Pressure with one hand on the abdominal cavities forced his testicles into the open and the surgeon quickly cut them free and dropped them into a nutrient solution.

Joanna wanted to scream but the drug did not permit it. He knew he was partially sedated for his breathing and heart rates increased only slightly. He felt his wife and mother tighten their grips on his hands.

He had read somewhere that his glands would go next and the rest would be opened up and made into a lining for...

He wouldn't watch. Could he close his eyes? Yes! He could at least blink.



He kept his eyes closed. He wouldn't watch. Why did they expect him to watch? He wouldn't watch.

What had his mother once said about a transplant? What could she mean by that?

He felt the grips on his hands tighten much more and couldn't help opening his eyes.

The surgeon now had a grip of his member and seemed to be pulling at it. Pulling it straight outwards.

Joanna could feel the tugging on the skin of his belly where he had not been anesthetized. (Omi-god, he's trying to pull it off).

But now the surgeon seemed to be drawing a line right round the base with a pencil. In slow motion, round it went. A long stainless steel pencil slowly drawing a red line. No, it was a scalpel, and it wasn't a line, it was an incision. Cutting quite deep, he couldn't be cutting it right off? The whole thing came away and the surgeon held it up to show to Joanna and Helen and Mary, before dropping it in nutrient.

Helen and Mary screamed.

Joanna wanted to scream but could not. He hyperventilated.

Mary removed her mask and kissed him on the lips to comfort him for his loss. He felt her tears on his cheeks, the warmth of her lips. His mother had her arms round both of them. Both women were crying.

He passed out.

• -000-

It was weeks before he could ask.

“Why did we all have to watch?”

Helen explained. “It's symbolic. Apparently some girls have regrets and want to go back to what they were. Sometimes their 'significant others' won't accept what has happened. This way, we all know how final it is.

“Did they tell you, by the way, that your tissue match with your donor was the best they've had yet?”

“Over and over again. Apparently I might be able to have children. If I do, I might be one of the first. World wide publicity, they offered me a contract, huge fees. They can forget it.

“Apparently my donor is happy with what they took from me, she's a man now and hopes to be a father. The surgeon says we can meet one day if we both want to. Funny if we made a baby together.”

CODA

Mary and Joanna had their marriage annulled so that Mary could marry Pat.

Joanna was a bridesmaid.

Pat became the man of the house.

It was a strange experience for Joanna to be Pat's maid as well as Mary's, to have Pat's clothes to look after, to see Pat in her mistress' bed every morning when she brought them tea, to see them make love, to remember that she was the one who used to be in Mary's arms kissing her; to console herself that her mistress was happy.

Mary continued to enjoy having a maid whose life was dedicated to hers. They were closer than either could be to a man.

- -000-

Mike fell in love with Joanna.

He took her out on her days off and was determined to rescue her. Mike saw that she was no better than a slave to her mother and Mary and Pat. He wanted to marry her, but English law was inadequate, it would have to be a European marriage.

When he told his plans to Joanna, she was not sure whether giving up the carefree life of a maid for the “freedom” of husband, church and children would be a true escape. She asked her mother what she thought.

Helen had been considering that very problem for weeks.

“I think you should have a runaway marriage, my sweet. Your holiday in Schloss Aesir wasn't very restful. You deserve to have some fun, be cooked for and waited on by others for a change. A honeymoon with Mike should be just the break you need. Leave everything to Mummy, I'll arrange your holiday and not a word about marriage to Mr. and Mrs. Learoyd, we'll surprise them.”

- -000-

The honeymoon was wonderful. Joanna adored Mike for being such fun, so wild about her, so gentle. After her strange life with Mary, this was so *normal*. Little things like dressing as she pleased all the time, lying on her back morning and night and sometimes during the day and spreading her legs for Mike to spend his passion.

What a relief to be a normal girl and not a funny kind of servant. Mummy and Mary were pretty crazy, when you thought about it.

She wanted Mike's child. Would the miracle of creation transplanted into her be able to cope in its new body?

Mike really liked the way she dressed. She had to admit, she knew what suited her. Mike was so happy to parade her around in her short shorts and short dresses. He was quite thrilled at the effect her stunning legs and slender waist had on all the men.

Mike had very nice legs himself.

Whenever she went out in shorts she made him wear short shorts himself. They made such a cute couple. Maybe he'd enjoy wearing dresses and things?

He wouldn't admit it of course, but maybe if she worked on him? Her new insides gave her such confidence, she could make Mike do absolutely anything by being his "helpless", adoring little wife.

In just days Joanna achieved what Helen and Mary took months over. In playful honeymoon fun she'd try a different game each bedtime, braiding Mike's hair, painting his nails, depilating his body, making up his eyes, dressing him in a baby-doll, painting his lips, calling him "Miranda".

Mike thought, *Gee, if that's what turns her on... Her whims were not too surprising if you remembered her past.*

He couldn't admit that there was something exciting about a girl who had been a boy. He felt a real fool humoring her but she paid him with wild times. You got used to making love in a nightie, it was kind of sexy.

Mike's hardest time was when Joanna brought all the bits together, dressed him up from head to toe, from sexy undies to gorgeous little dress. His maleness was sealed flat in a tight pantygirdle and his padded bra gave him round breasts.

She'd spent an age doing his hair and making him up and manicuring him, calling him "Miranda" as she worked. She made him wear big earrings and bracelets and walk about on two-inch heels. They felt awful, but as soon as he looked half comfortable she took them away and gave him sandals with three-inch heels.

Mike now felt helpless and when Joanna gave him a clutch bag and a shawl and pushed him out of the hotel room his will failed him.

Taking him around town that evening, Joanna was pleased to see that most people took Miranda for a girl. The people who did see that he was a boy were friendly; it was an up-market holiday resort. As the evening went on, Miranda learned how to go undetected by watching other girls in a way he hadn't done before.

In the end he just let go and had fun. Well, why not? Now the men had two pairs of stunning legs to gape at. You could see their Adam's apples going when he crossed his legs or tugged the hem of his skirt down.

Maybe he used to envy Joanna a teeny bit?

The next day, Joanna challenged him to make his act so perfect that nobody could see through it. He raised protest after protest, but she calmly used every enchantment in her armoury until he gave in, and after his first day as Miranda he grew easier to persuade.

They spent the rest of their honeymoon as two girls and by the time they changed back to man and wife to go home, Mike was no longer sure who he was.

Joanna consoled him.

“Believe me, darling, for small and pretty men it just isn't a predictable world. I know from experience.”

She and Mike settled down in Pat and Mike's bachelor flat. The flat was chic and labor-saving, fitted out to charm girls. Joanna grew restless with nothing to do except visit Helen or spend too much money on dresses for herself and Miranda.

For a giggle she fetched her maid's dresses and became Miranda's lady's maid. Miranda was as excited by this as Joe used to be so long ago.

Aha! I know the signs, thought Joanna.

“You have the makings of a maid yourself, Miranda, dear. Well, that can easily be arranged. A little luring, a little coaxing: Darling we'll laugh and laugh, I bet you'll look stunning, we'll do it together.

“Then,” she added, “this should be fun, I'll be the mistress, you be the maid. You can call me Miss Joanna!”

It grew easier and easier to get her own way with Miranda. Joanna didn't have Mary's doubts and hang-ups. She'd make Miranda learn to adore being a maid, see if she wouldn't.

She got Helen to visit without warning when Miranda was in his maid's dress. Miranda nearly died but Helen behaved as if a man in a maid's dress was perfectly normal. Indeed, she soothed him: “Don't worry, my dear. Lots of pretty boys become maids nowadays. It's all the rage.”

And Joanna became pregnant; and as soon as she knew, she longed to be with her mother.

Helen as usual had the solution.

“Simple, my dear! Let the flat out. It will earn you a fortune. There's plenty of room for both of you in this old house. Mike won't have to go to work, he can stay at home and help you look after your baby.”

Mike was upset at being expected to trail after his wife when she ran home to mummy. He was outraged when Helen urged him to let the flat out and stop work; but he kept his feelings hidden.

For to Joanna the world revolved round the child in her nearly-new womb, and Mike's world revolved round Joanna, the woman who would bear his first child.

Back home where she belonged, Joanna felt the old love that clings. When Mary smiled sadly and said how much they missed their maid, Joanna sighed, unpacked her uniforms and resigned herself to looking after her ladies for a little while - at least until she was too pregnant to continue.

She made it tactfully clear to Mike that she and Mary didn't believe in male housewives. If he wanted to make himself useful, he'd have to become a girl, it was one of the house rules.