



Reluctant Press presents:

Mannquin For Life

Norman Way



ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. HAIGHT

A YOUNG ADULT TV' E-BOOK

Copyright © 2005, Reluctant Press - All Rights Reserved

Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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

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

Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet!

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

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

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

Mannequin For Life

by Norman Way

My father died in Desert Storm when I was a baby. My mother struggled for a short time before moving back to the Midwest to be near her parents. She finally gave up about a year later and killed herself. The court decided to place me with her parents who farmed just outside of Des Moines, Iowa.

With no memory of my real parents, I grew up in their care.

Henry and Marion were honest, thrifty, hard-working people who believed in self-discipline and the work ethic. I began helping out on the farm at an early age and was no stranger to hard work by the time I entered school.

When Henry dropped over dead of a heart attack while working in the fields, Marion decided to sell and move to the city. She found work in a discount store and made a good life for us.

I did well in school and enjoyed the challenge of the academics as well as athletic competition. At 5' 6" and 145 lbs., I was too small for contact sports but I excelled with the swimming team, lettering in my freshman year. We didn't get much respect from the guys who played combative sports like football and hockey but the school was quite pleased when we went to the state finals and placed third in my first year.

I turned sixteen in May. In short order, I completed my Drivers Education and got my license. With Marion's help, I purchased a used car and then got a full-time job for the summer at J.J. Anderson's department store. If things worked out, I might be kept on part-time during the school year, though there were restrictions because of my age.

Jacob and Joshua Anderson founded the J.J. ANDERSON COMPANY in the late 1800's. In the beginning they sold dry goods and hardware. They offered quality goods and credit terms for the working class at a time when credit wasn't always available. By the end of the Second World War, the company had dropped its hardware line and concentrated on selling quality but moderately priced clothing. The founders' sons, John, Jo-

seph and James continued the family tradition by expanding the chain to twenty-five stores.

In the late 1980's, the effect of the competition from larger discount chains and the flood of cheap imported goods forced the company to re-organize and downsize their operations. Half of the stores were closed and the product line was reduced. Fewer brands were offered and the high-priced as well as the budget end of their merchandise were dropped. With only twelve stores and a much smaller inventory, they were still able to offer quality clothing but at affordable prices for the average working people of the area.

Through the Nineties, business continued to decline but not in a rapid fashion. It was slowly being reduced by the big box stores and cutthroat pricing. The grandchildren of the founders could see the handwriting on the wall and it wasn't long before rumors were flying about a possible sale to a larger chain.

I worked hard that first summer. I applied myself and was given a raise after three months. I spent most of my time unpacking merchandise, pricing and tagging it and putting it out on the floor where it was needed. In addition, after night stocking, I would clean the restrooms, floors and windows. Once a month the floors were waxed and polished. I got along well with everyone and was respected for my hard work.

By the time I started my sophomore year, I was well versed in all my responsibilities and except for an initial meeting each night with the supervisor, my work was no longer monitored closely. With my hours cut back because of school, I was not part of the day-to-day operations so buyout rumors caught up with me only occasionally.

Normally, during the first weekend in November, we would be getting in Christmas merchandise and decorations. It was then I learned that the axe had finally fallen. We had been bought out by a West Coast chain of Women's clothing stores. Exact details were not available but corporate reps would be visiting each store and talking with employees.

Losing your job is bad enough but it happening at this time of year made it worse. Many employees had families to support. I could get by working part-time until I was finished with school, though I wasn't sure if there would be a place for me in a women's clothing store. We would all be in the dark for the time being, so everyone kept working and hoped for the best.

There would be no merchandise shipments until the entire old inventory was sold out. This meant, of course, no holiday stuff. There would be an immediate markdown of fifty per cent on all merchandise. Slower moving inventory would be shipped to other stores where it was selling better. Final markdowns would take place the week of Christmas and then whatever was left would be packed up and shipped to a warehouse to be auctioned off. Company reps would be in to see us the weekend before Christmas and we would be notified of our status.

The closeout sale was heavily advertised and the response was overwhelming, to say the least. We were pretty well cleaned out by the end of the next two weeks. Following the Thanksgiving holidays, I helped box up and ship the remaining inventory to the warehouse. The meeting had been moved up to the first weekend in December and we would be informed about the store's status and who would be let go.

I arrived at the store for the 9 AM meeting to find the new owners looking over the building and making notes on their clipboards. Once the meeting was called to order, we all gathered around the front cashier's area and listened with interest as the corporate rep began to speak. The woman in charge was tall and thin with a short hairstyle. She appeared to have a permanent scowl on her face. She was dressed in a black pantsuit and flat shoes. She wore no makeup and spoke with a sharp clear voice.

"Good morning. I will be brief. This buyout will enable our company to expand here in the Midwest. With the stores cleaned out, you will all be laid off for several months. During that time, the store will be re-configured to suit our needs. You will be called in for an interview when we are ready to hire and if you are brought on board, you will make things ready for the new product line and stock the new inventory when it arrives. We don't anticipate any delays, so stay close to the phone. Most of you will be eligible for unemployment benefits until then. Thank you and good day."

The meeting broke up and we all went home. I found many part-time jobs in the want ads but I needed more of a permanent part-time job to go with my schooling so I didn't apply for them.

Just after New Years Day, I got a phone call to report for an interview at the store on a Saturday afternoon. I was a little nervous. If this was a women's department store, what would they want with me? I walked in the front door and was amazed at what had been done.

The old store had several cashier counters in the front and they were still there but the rest of the store had a much different look. The old store had a large main aisle running the full length of the main floor with men's clothing and shoes on the right hand side and women's clothing and shoes on the left.

At the rear of the store there was a side exit on the right and a stairway on the left that led to a balcony with children's clothes and shoes. Straight ahead at the rear were the two restrooms on either side of the large double doors that led to the back loading area and the employee lounge.

All the fixtures had been removed and new ones were put in place. Also, the walls were painted a delicate pink color with white trim. The floor tiles were pink and white and had been highly polished. The right side had areas marked off with tape indicating a large section for lingerie and a slightly smaller one for shoes. A beauty shop and wig salon was next to the rear exit. The entire left side was marked off for clothing. The balcony at the rear had a banner reading "Formal/Bridal."

I turned left and walked up the stairs of the front balcony which had housed the offices of the old store. At the top of the stairs, I stopped at the front desk and introduced myself.

"Good morning. I am Danny Weston. I have a 2 PM appointment to see Ms. LaRue."

The receptionist looked at her appointment book, and then gave me a big smile.

"Have a seat Danny. She will be with you shortly."

I sat down while she buzzed Ms. LaRue on the phone. "Your 2 PM is here."

I was still trying to figure out the playful smile she had on her face when Ms. LaRue walked up to me and extended her hand.

"I'm pleased to meet you Danny. Please come back to my office."

I followed her along the corridor to the manager's office.

"Please sit down," she said as she closed the door.

I took my seat in the chair opposite her desk.

She sat down and glanced at the folder in front of her.

"You have been highly recommended by the former owners and I would be very pleased to have you join us. There will, however, be some changes in the things you will be required to do for us. Is that understood?"

"I understand that this is a different type of store but exactly what would my new duties be?"

"First, you will be responsible for general cleaning and upkeep the same as you have always done. Second, you will be handling only some of the merchandise, making sure it is tagged, priced and properly displayed. Third, there will be other assorted duties as assigned and I use that term as an all-inclusive one to cover miscellaneous things. There will also be the occasional once-in-a-blue-moon jobs that may surface. Is that clear?"

"Yes it is. What would my hours be? I have school, you know, and I have to work around my class schedule as well as my swim meets which begin shortly."

"I understand. You will keep us apprised of your class schedule and the dates of your swim team's matches. This will enable us to schedule you for work well in advance so I won't have to be concerned about you missing any school function as well as keeping you here when we need you. Do you have a copy of your schedules with you?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I do".

I opened my case and handed her a photocopy of the information she needed.

"Excellent. It's good to see you are well prepared. I like that. We expect the same job performance from you that the previous owners did. Be certain you understand that we will deal with incompetence or insubordination in a harsh manner. If you have any questions about how something is to be done, don't hesitate to ask. Once tasks are assigned, go do them. I like people who know how to get things done quickly and properly. Do you have any other questions?"

"No."

"Good. Thank you for coming in. I will mail you your work schedule in a few days. I'm glad to have you on board and I'm looking forward to working with you. You'll be getting the same wage as you were making before. In about ninety days you will be eligible for a raise. Have a nice day."

I stood up and shook her hand. She followed me out to the main office where she handed my file to the receptionist. As I left, I noticed that quizzical smile on the receptionist's face again. Almost like she knew something that I didn't.

When I got back home, I found a police officer waiting for me. Marion had been killed in a car-jacking incident at the mall. She had been shot through the head and had died in-

stantly. Her assailant drove off. At the next intersection he slammed into a cement truck and was killed.

I drove down to the morgue to identify the body, then called a nearby funeral home to make the arrangements. I didn't have time to grieve or feel sorry for myself. I knew I had to go ahead and make the best of things.

A local attorney who had helped Marion with the sale of the farm agreed to help me with the estate. After the funeral, I closed out her savings and checking accounts and deposited everything into my checking account.

Her safety deposit box had the title to our small two-bedroom condo and her car. The insurance company gave me a check for the totaled car. Her life insurance policy was small but it would cover the funeral and burial costs. We didn't know many people and except for a few of Marion's co-workers at the discount store and Ms. LaRue, no one else came to pay their respects.

After the funeral, I packed up Marion's clothes and donated them to a local charity. There were no relatives to notify and few bills to pay. I had the power and phone bills changed over to my name as well as the title to the condo.

Because of my age and the fact that there were no relatives, my attorney convinced the judge to continue to let me live on my own, for which I was very grateful.

The letter from Ms. LaRue arrived a week after everything had been settled. I opened it up and read the letter of hire and the enclosed work schedule. I would begin work the next Saturday.

I had just got caught up with the schoolwork I had missed during the funeral and now I could start work again. I wanted to keep busy. Finances were not an immediate problem but in two years I wanted to attend college and I would need more than the savings I had and my earnings from the store to be able to pay for the cost of a good education.

That first weekend, I finished assembling some storage units and also a few small counters. The racks for the clothing were next; after assembly I moved them out on the main floor. New cash registers were installed and the office received new furniture as well as new computer terminals. After cutting up the shipping cartons, I cleaned up the loading area, then swept the main floors.

I was quite surprised to find myself the only male employee from the old store. In fact I was the only male employee, period.

The next day, I assembled and set up the beauty shop chairs and merchandise counters in their proper places. I put together some shelving units for the wig salon and installed several mirrors as well.

I worked two nights during the week unpacking and storing the beauty shop and wig salon supplies in their respective cabinets. I found myself feeling a bit uncomfortable having to learn where to store cosmetic supplies as well as the wig care products. I had no idea of the amount of things a woman uses to look nice but I learned fast and there were very few things Ms. LaRue found out of place.

That Saturday, a large shipment of clothing came in. I stocked the shoe department first. While I was doing that, two of the new girls stocked the lingerie department. The next day we all stocked the dresses and skirts in the clothing section.

I worked quickly and Ms. LaRue was quite pleased at having the store completely stocked and ready for opening two weeks early. She found everything to be where it was supposed to be and without any pricing errors. After a complete walk through of the main store, she checked the beauty shop and the adjoining wig salon.

"Everything looks great. The only thing remaining is the stock for the formal wear shop on the upstairs balcony. That should arrive sometime this week. Have a good night."

I headed for the time clock to punch out. When I got in the back room, several of the younger girls were giggling and laughing about something but they shut up quickly when I arrived. I punched out and wished everyone a good week.

As I walked out the back door, the laughing began again. I couldn't imagine what they found so amusing. I wasn't paranoid or anything but I almost got the feeling that something was going on that I wasn't aware of. I couldn't quite put my finger on it. Maybe it had something to do with my being the only male in the store. Or perhaps the idea of a male working in a feminine environment and having to learn about make-up, wig care and the proper way to display women's clothing, shoes, and lingerie had given them reason to laugh at me. Anyhow I couldn't let it bother me. I needed this job and would do whatever it took to remain in Ms. LaRue's good graces. Little did I realize exactly how dedicated I would have to become or how soon I would be tested.

That Friday night when I reported for work at 6 PM, I was immediately summoned to Ms. LaRue's office. After punching in, I walked up the front stairs. The door was open but I knocked anyway.

She looked up from her paperwork and smiled at me.

"Come in, Danny. I'm in a bit of a jam to say the least. As you know, the formal apparel arrived this week and is being displayed on the rear balcony. Only the prom dresses are in, the bridal fashions won't arrive for another month. We are having a preview showing of our prom fashions in a window display this weekend and one of the girls who would be modeling the dresses has called in sick. I know this is quite an imposition but I need your help desperately. You have a pretty face, almost girlish, if you don't mind my saying so, and a slight build. I need you to wear several different styles of prom dresses and sit with the other girls in the window display from nine to noon and one to five both tomorrow and Sunday. I will pay you double your hourly rate if you will help me."

"Well, I don't know. I'm afraid I've never done anything like this and..."

"Nonsense! You'll do fine. My assistants will help you with everything you need. All you have to do is look pretty and smile. Throughout the day you will have to change into several different outfits and you will get a break for lunch. NOW I MUST EMPHASISE THAT I REALLY NEED YOUR HELP. WILL YOU DO THIS FOR ME?"

Judging by the look on her face, I could scarcely refuse.

"Yes, I will."

“Splendid. You will report to the beauty salon. They will help you get ready for tomorrow. Do exactly what they tell you. Remember, it’s just as if their instructions came from me”

“Yes Miss LaRue, I will.”

As I got up and left her office, I wondered what was in store for me now.

When I entered the beauty salon, the manager, a short, stout woman named Madge, was checking out a customer. None of the other beauticians were there which surprised me since Friday night was usually busier than this. After the woman left, I introduced myself. Madge greeted me with a big smile on her face.

“Oh yes, Danny! Step over here to the middle of the floor. Ms. LaRue said you’d been in. This won’t take very long.”

She opened one of the drawers and removed a measuring tape, a clipboard, and a pen.

“Stand still with your feet a little apart and hold your arms out straight.”

I did so and she measured from the middle of my back to my wrist, then my chest, waist, hips and then across the palm of my hand. As she jotted down the figures from each measurement she kept saying “Yes, yes, you will be perfect for this.

“Sit in this chair and remove one shoe and sock. Then stand up on this measuring scale.”

I did so and she jotted down my shoe size.

“Good. Now sit still.”

She placed a nylon wig cap over my hair, then she measured my head from ear to ear, front to back followed by the circumference. After jotting the figures down on her clipboard, she looked closely at my face. Again she smiled and wrote something additional down.

“Okay, I guess that about does it. Put your sock and shoe on. Report to the loading area where Jean is waiting for you.” As I left, she picked up the phone. I heard her telling Jean to use a “ten wide,” then I was out the door.

When I got to the rear of the loading area where Jean was standing, I saw several pairs of high heel shoes on the floor next to a folding chair.

“Sit here and take off your shoes and socks”

After I did so, Jean handed me a pair of knee-high nylon stockings.

“Put these on and then try on those black pumps.”

I put the stockings on and slipped my right foot into one of the shoes. It was a tight fit.

“Try a half size longer.”

I took off the ten wide and slipped on the ten and a half wide. My foot slid in easily.

“Good. Now put the other one on and walk over here.”

I followed her over to the wall where an eight-foot section of a metal conveyor had been set up. To say I felt a little silly wobbling in those three-inch heels while dressed in my work clothes would be an understatement.

"Tomorrow you will be sitting with three other models in the window but you will be dressing back here and must walk to the front of the store, enter the small corridor to the left of the main door and climb three steps and take your place at the far end of the window display. You must do this in a ladylike, professional way. No slipups! Understood?"

"Yes, Jean"

"Okay. Now watch me."

She slipped a black purse over her arm and stepped up on the conveyor. I watched her walk to the front of the machine and turn it on. After adjusting the speed, she placed one hand on her hip and began walking a model's walk. It looked so easy and effortless.

"Get the picture?" she asked.

"Yes, I think so."

"Good. Now it's your turn."

She shut the machine off and stepped down, handing me the purse. I slipped it over my arm and stepped on the machine. She turned it on and I began walking. After she corrected me several times, I finally got it right and continued to walk as she directed me to.

Several minutes went by; when she was satisfied that I was following her direction precisely, she set the timer on the control panel and sat down to read a magazine.

I began to have doubts about this. The money was too good to pass up. I could only hope that no one at school would find out about it. I knew I would never hear the end of it. Shortly, the timer went off and Jean shut the machine down.

"Okay. You did pretty well, all things considered. Tomorrow morning, take a hot bath and shave before coming to work...and I mean shave everything! Now put your regular socks and shoes on and you can go. Ms.Larue said you can have the rest of the night off with pay. Report to Madge at the beauty shop promptly at 8 AM tomorrow morning and don't be late!"

"I won't," I said as I walked out the door.

That night I tried to watch television but nothing seemed to hold my interest. I wanted to do a good job for my employer, yet it did seem rather odd they couldn't find a girl to fit in on short notice. Two of the girls I worked with were certainly pretty enough to do the job, why weren't they asked? In any case I was locked into being a girl model for the next two days at twice my regular wage so that wasn't so bad.

The images of the way the girls had looked at me when I began working there were hard to suppress from my mind. How Madge had smirked and smiled when she measured me as well as the way Jean had delighted in teaching me the professional way a lady model walks and acts when she is on the runway. I couldn't help but think there might be something else going on here that I didn't know about.

Nothing particularly sinister of course, just a bit unusual. I couldn't quite figure it out so I didn't think any more about it and went to bed.

I slept well and felt refreshed when the alarm went off at seven. I took a hot bath and shaved my legs up to my groin, then my arms and finally my face. I had very little body hair to begin with and I had always used clippers to keep my body shorn for the swim

meets. My skin felt tight and a little raw but I had managed to accomplish this task without any cuts.

I dressed and drove to work. I walked through the side door at 7:45 and went to the loading area to punch in. Madge walked in.

"I'm glad you're early. Punch in and come with me."

I punched in and followed her to the beauty shop. She handed me a paper bag.

"Put your clothes and shoes in here. Put on the stuff on the chair, and hurry up."

She stepped outside the shop.

I disrobed and placed my clothes and shoes in the bag. I picked up the garment on the chair and found it to be a woman's foundation garment. It was a strapless spandex body brief. I stepped into it and pulled it up. It seemed to be too small.

"Madge, it fits real tight. I think it's the wrong size."

Madge walked in and looked at me.

"No it's fine. It's supposed to fit like that." She opened a drawer and removed two breast forms and filled the cups.

"Look's good. I guessed right this time. Your legs look great, you won't need the wax. Put this on."

She handed me a pair of pantyhose.

I rolled up the right stocking and slipped it over my foot and brought it about halfway up and then did the left. Next, I pulled it up the rest of the way and smoothed the garment up to my waist.

"You got great legs, kiddo, too bad you're a boy! Now sit over here."

I took the seat she pointed at. She plucked a few stray hairs around my eyebrows and then applied eye shadow, eyeliner and mascara. Next she brushed my cheeks with rouge. After outlining my lips with a pencil, she filled them in with a thick coating of bright red lipstick.

After clipping a pair of four-inch dangling earrings to my ears and a single strand pearl necklace and bracelet in place, she stepped back to admire her handiwork as the three other girls walked in.

"Be with you in a minute, girls. I'm almost done here."

Madge directed them to the other chairs, then she opened a package of press-on nails. After picking the correct size, she put them over my short fingernails. The nylon wig cap was placed over my head and a black wig was fitted into place. A red satin bow was pinned just above where the bangs fell down over my forehead.

"Okay. Stand up."

She walked over to the door and removed a red satin sheath dress from its hanger. She unzipped the back and held it out to me. I stepped inside and put my arms through it as she zipped it up the back.

"Wow!" exclaimed one of the girls, "you look fabulous!"

"Yes he does," said Madge.

"Now get into your pumps."

She placed the shoes in front of me and I put them on.

"Sit down until I finish with the other girls, and don't forget to smooth your dress with your hand before you sit down."

The girls giggled as I did so. The girls were already dressed and in about twenty minutes, Madge had finished their makeup.

"Okay girls. It's almost nine. Showtime! Jackie, you will lead, Shirley, you will be next. The two of you will sit to the right as you enter the window display. Danny, you will be third and Betty you will be fourth. You two will sit to the left when you go in. At ten and eleven, you will all come back here and change to another style. From twelve to one, you will have lunch. After lunch, you will change and again at two, three, and four. At five, you will be through for the day and you can go home. Are there any questions?"

There were none.

"Good! Go to it! "Oops! Wait a minute, Danny!"

I turned and Madge handed me a matching red satin clutch purse. I felt very flustered as the girls burst out laughing.

"That's okay Danny," laughed Betty. "More than one girl has forgotten her purse!"

I let the comment slide. I wasn't a girl and I resented the crack but for the money, I could put up with this sort of thing for two days.

We walked out onto the floor and headed towards the front door. It was just after nine and the doors had been opened to let in some early shoppers. We received some admiring glances from two young men as they entered the store with their girlfriends.

"Careful, Danny, I think they have their eyes on you!" Jackie said as we walked along.

The girls couldn't hold back their giggles. We walked through the corridor entrance to the stairs leading to the window. Shirley turned back to me.

"Don't forget to pick up your skirt when you step up the stairs, we don't want you to trip!"

With my free hand, I pulled my skirt up and ascended the steps, turned left and took my seat. I even remembered to smooth my skirt as Madge had instructed.

There were white signs in front of us with the name of the brand of dresses we were wearing as well as the sale prices. There were a few people walking the streets but it was early and more would be coming soon. I kept silent while the girls discussed fashion, make-up and of course their boyfriends.

Promptly at ten, Jean opened the door.

"Let's go, girls! Madge has a changing area set up in the back room."

We all got up and filed out. As we walked back to the loading area, there were many admiring glances, particularly from the older women and the two men who had seen us

when they walked in at the opening. Once in the back room, Madge directed the girls to one side and me to the other.

"Turn around," she said.

When I did so, she unzipped my dress and I stepped out of it. After putting it on a hanger, she replaced it on the rack, picked out another style and removed it from the hanger and unzipped it.

"Face me."

I turned around again and held out my arms. I pulled the dress over me. This dress was bright red satin from the waist up and light red chiffon from the waist to my knees. She zipped me up and gave me my purse.

"Okay, back to the window."

Jean had just finished zipping the last of the other three girls up. I took my place in line and we began our walk back to the front window. As we neared the front of the building, I saw Ms. LaRue standing at her office window overlooking the store's main floor. I hoped she was happy with the job I was doing.

I took my place in the window again and waited out the second hour. More people stopped by and looked at us as it got closer to the lunch hour. We changed again at eleven. My third outfit was another red satin sheath, this time a strapless one. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to keep it up but the breast forms held everything in place nicely.

Finally, it was noon and we could break for lunch. Once in the back room, I took off the dress and Madge handed me a pink chiffon robe and a pair of pink scuffs.

"Put these on and join us at the lunch table."

The lunch table had six places. Madge, Jean and I sat on one side and the three girls sat across from us. At each place was a small salad, a diet soft drink and a plastic fork. I was hungrier than I thought and could probably have eaten two of those salads but I said nothing. While the women chatted about designs, hairstyle and makeup, I kept quiet. I was daydreaming of 5 PM Sunday when this would all be over. Madge interrupted my thoughts.

"It's time to get back to work, girls!"

I followed her back to where I would change and removed my pink chiffon robe and scuffs.

My first style of the afternoon was a black, floor-length, sleeveless chiffon dress with matching over-the-elbow gloves, handbag and black leather pumps. After zipping me up and checking the hem length, Madge re-applied some blusher and freshened up my lipstick.

"Okay. You're all set."

I took my place in line and we walked to the front of the store again.

The afternoon brought more people to the window and in the store. Most of the women had their daughters with them, anticipating they would be asked to the prom in May.

The 2 PM change had me in a black satin knee-length dress. The 3 PM change, a black, floor-length, satin sheath and the final change at 4 PM into a flirty black chiffon mini-dress all went without a hitch.

Finally, 5 PM came and we walked back to the rear of the store. Madge motioned me into the beauty shop while the other three girls headed for the back room.

"Sit down."

I did so and she quickly removed all the make-up, my bracelet, necklace and the press-on nails. Next came the bow, wig and nylon wig cap.

"Stand up and slip off those pumps."

After I did that, she quickly unzipped the dress and I pulled it over my head. She put the dress on a hanger and picked up the shoes.

"Take off your lingerie and get dressed."

I slid the pantyhose off and struggled out of the spandex briefer. I put my own clothes and shoes back on, then placed the feminine garments in the paper bag. Madge returned from the back room.

"You're done for the day. Be back tomorrow at eight-thirty sharp and we'll do this again. By the way, as you probably know Ms. LaRue was watching from the office window and she said to tell you she is quite pleased with the job you did today. We really do appreciate your willingness to help us out. Have a good night!"

I walked out of the store and drove home. It was difficult to describe how I felt. I had just spent an entire day enveloped in femininity. I had to admit that I enjoyed the way the sheer pantyhose felt on the smooth shaven skin of my legs. There was something to be said for the feel of satin and chiffon on my body as well.

I ate a light supper and watched some TV. I was quite surprised to see a short segment about the store and its prom preview with Ms. LaRue describing the dresses on display. Sure enough, there was a short clip of the four of us walking the length of the store. I didn't recall seeing any cameras but I must say I certainly looked good. There was no way you could tell I was not one of the girls!

Sunday morning, I was up at seven and took another long hot soaking bath. Just to be on the safe side, I shaved my legs and face again. I dressed and ate a light breakfast. After reading the Sunday paper, I drove to work.

I punched in at 7:45 and Madge beckoned me to the beauty salon.

"It's the same as yesterday. Put your clothes in the bottom drawer and put on the items in the bag. I'll be back shortly."

I undressed and, after putting my clothes in the drawer, opened the bag. I struggled again with the spandex briefer; after adjusting the plastic breast forms, I put on the pantyhose. With both hands, I smoothed the hose up one leg and then the other making sure there were no wrinkles. I sat down and was thumbing through a magazine when Madge returned.

She looked closely at my face and then my legs.

“Good, you shaved again. We can’t have any stubble showing, now can we?”

“No, of course not,” I answered.

She made up my face again, putting on eye makeup, pink blusher and a thick coating of creamy pink lipstick. The nylon wig cap was next. Today, I wore a blonde wig with a pink satin bow at the top. The same long earrings were attached to my earlobes and I put on the same necklace and bracelet. After attaching pink press-on nails, she stepped back.

“Stand up now.”

I stood and Madge removed a pink satin sheath from the hanger. After unzipping it, I stepped inside and put my arms through the short sleeves. I turned around and she quickly zipped me up. I slipped into the pink high heel pumps as the girls entered the salon.

“Ooh, pink is definitely your color, Danny!” squealed Shirley.

The other girls laughed as Madge handed me a pink purse.

“Settle down, girls,” said Madge.

While I waited, she made up the other three girls.

“Okay. It’s time. Let’s get out there!”

As we were walking to the front of the store, it was hard to describe the erotic feeling of sheer hose on smooth flesh under the soft satin dress.

Once again the first hour was slow but after changing into a strapless floor length chiffon gown for the next hour, we got more attention from the passers-by. The girls were always quick to point out a cute boy walking by. I felt it was better not to say anything.



My next change at eleven was a very frilly chiffon mini-dress and it gave me a feeling of vulnerability because the hem was way above the knee. I wondered if girls felt the same way when they wore shorter hemline dresses or skirts.

At noon, we broke for lunch. I hardly felt full after the small salad and diet soda but with only four more hours to go, I could make up for it by grabbing a pizza on the way home.

My 1 PM dress was a spaghetti strap pink chiffon dress. Several petticoats were added to flare the skirt out more. As I smoothed my skirt with my hand prior to sitting down, Jackie remarked, "You're picking this up really fast. I love your feminine movements and the way you carry yourself, especially the way you managed to walk effortlessly in those high heels."

The other girls were trying to stifle their giggles.

"Well, I just did what I was told. With a little practice, I guess I'm doing it well enough to please the boss."

At two, I changed into another short dress. This was a pink satin sheath with an above-the-knee hemline.

More and more people were crowding around the window as the day wore on. Numerous couples stopped, the men looking at us and the women looking at the dresses. I could only hope nobody from the school would recognize me.

My 3 PM change was another sheath dress of pink satin from the waist down and pink chiffon from the waist up with billowy sleeves. The store was quite crowded by this time and we were walking through lots of people to and from the changing area. The final change at four took place and I wore another floor-length gown entirely of pink chiffon. I was greatly relieved to see 5 PM finally come.

After taking off my dress and heels, Madge removed my make-up and jewelry. She stepped outside the salon while I removed my hose and briefcase. I got dressed I handed her the garments.

"Thanks so much for your help this weekend," she said.

"It's okay." I said. But I don't want to have to do this again, ever!"

She laughed. "See you next weekend. Good luck in your meet Thursday night."

"Thanks. I'll do my best."

I walked back to the loading area and punched out. The girls were already dressed and followed me out the door.

"Nice working with you Danny!" said Betty.

"Thank you," I answered.

As soon as I got around the corner of the building, I could hear fits of giggling and laughter coming from where the girls had parked their cars. At least it was over. As much as I found myself sensually aroused by the feel of the soft fabric of both hosiery and those dresses, there was no way I wanted to be put through that experience again.

When I got home, I showered and, after double-checking my face in the mirror for any traces of makeup, I got dressed and ordered a pizza.

The next two months went by quickly. The new sign out front said "Amelia's." I was busy both at work and at school. No one had said a word to me about my brief excursion into femininity. I guess I assumed it was in the past and forgotten.

It was a Friday night in mid-March. I found a note on my timecard to report to Ms. LaRue's office before starting work. I wondered what she could want now. I walked to the front of the store and up the stairs to her office. I knocked and the receptionist opened the door.

"Go right in, Danny. She is expecting you," she said with that big smile again.

I walked in and stood at the front of her desk.

"Sit down, Danny."

I did so and she handed me an evaluation sheet. I saw my hard work had not gone unnoticed.

"I'm pleased with everything you've done so far and hope it continues. I'm giving you a raise to eight dollars an hour. Please sign on the bottom next to my signature."

I signed the paper and handed it back to her.

"Now, something has come up quite unexpectedly. The convention center is having a formal apparel fashion show two weeks from now. The show runs Saturday and Sunday. In addition to the latest prom fashions, the models will also be showing bridal and bridesmaids dresses. I know you aren't crazy about this sort of thing but one of the manufacturers' reps saw you in the window and specifically asked for you. I lied to her and said your name was Danielle. I told her that you worked for me and would be happy to represent her company at the show.

"We do a lot of business with this company and I am willing to pay you three times your eight dollars an hour to model for them. It would help keep a good relationship with this company as well as get us a good deal when we purchase their new line. Will you help us out here?"

I was a little stunned. I thought this would all be put behind me. I could say no but then I wasn't sure what my future employment picture would be here and didn't want to take the chance that it might end on a sour note, particularly in view of the fact that this was my first real job. The money was good and the work wasn't that hard. I nodded.

"Yes, I will."

"Good. I will give you more details later. After you finish your work tonight, you have the weekend off with pay. Enjoy it.

"Thank you," I said as I left. I worked the rest of my shift, punched out, and went home.

That weekend I did a load of laundry and cleaned up my apartment. I had mixed feelings about doing this again. I felt a sense of loyalty to my boss and the company for hiring me. I had my doubts about carrying this impersonation off in front of a lot of people. It was one thing to sit in a window display and be looked at or to have someone glance at

you as you walked by. It was quite another to be parading around in front of a lot of people, most of whom were experts at this, and could probably pick me out of the many models as the only “different” girl in the group.

I thought about changing my mind. The picture of an angry Ms. LaRue put that idea to rest once and for all. Saturday night I went to a movie and spent most of Sunday finishing up the final draft of my term paper as well as the rest of my homework.

Monday night when I came to work, there was a note on my time card to report to Ms. LaRue before starting work. The secretary had gone for the day.

“Sit down a minute, Danny. I want to go over a few things with you regarding the show. First of all, how much do you weigh?”

The question took me by surprise.

“I’m not sure exactly. I guess about 145.”

“I need you to lose between five and ten pounds before the show. I know you may think it is unnecessary but you’re just over the limit for what our Junior Miss models usually run. You’re almost a perfect size 16 and losing that little bit of weight would make the sales rep and me very happy.”

I cringed at the term “Junior Miss.”

“Well, I’ve never dieted, so how do you want me to go about this? I’ve trained for the swim team and I don’t know how much more exercising I can do.”

“Exercising won’t do it. I want you to eat less. I want you to drink twelve ounces of water before each meal. This will fill your stomach and make you want to eat less. Next, eat a good breakfast every day, skip lunch every other day and eat a cup of yogurt for supper every other night. Drink only diet sodas. Do you have any questions?”

“No”

“Good. Now here is the agenda for the show. Saturday morning, take a hot bath and shave before reporting to Madge here at the store.

“She and Jean will prep you and then take you to the convention center. You will be dressed there. Remember to walk and move the way you’ve been taught. The store and I have a lot riding on this so I want you to be your feminine best. By the way, you’ll be wearing four-inch heel dye able shoes. That’s an inch higher than you wore last time, and they are not as supportive as leather pumps, so watch your step.”

“I’ll do my best.”

“I’m sure you will. That will be all.”

I left her office and went to work. I wasn’t looking forward to doing the show, but the pay was too good to pass up.

I slept uneasily that Friday night.

Saturday morning, I bathed and shaved as instructed trying to keep my mind on the money I would be making. I weighed myself before getting dressed and found I had lost seven pounds. I hoped it would be enough to suite Ms. LaRue. After putting on sweat togs, I drove to work.

I arrived at the store at 7:30 and walked to the beauty salon where Madge was waiting for me. "You're on time as usual. Thanks, Danny. I'll step out while you put on your foundation garments and hose."

She left and I undressed, putting my clothes in one of the drawers. The garment she had left for me was different. It was a combination of a long-line bra and girdle all in one piece. It was a tight fit but I manage to get it on. When Madge came back, she hooked up the back, inserted the breast forms, and adjusted the straps.

"Okay. Put your stockings on." I picked up a nylon stocking, rolled it down and slipped it over my foot, smoothing it up as I went. After I put the other one on, Madge handed me the wig cap and I put it on.

"Sit down and I'll do your makeup."

She worked quickly, doing my eyes first, then the blusher and finally the lipstick. She clipped the four-inch dangling earrings on, then placed a single strand pearl necklace around my neck and clasped it in the back. The blonde wig was next.

"Stand up."

I did so and she adjusted the wig slightly and then stepped back.

"You look great," she said as she smiled.

She unzipped a light blue shirtdress and removed it from the hanger. She handed it to me and I slipped it over my head.

"We didn't want you to be seen arriving as a boy and undressing with the girls so you will wear this to and from the convention center."

I turned around and she zipped me up.

"Put on your heels and we'll go."

I stepped into the navy three-inch leather pumps and followed her out to the car. The weather was mild and a slight breeze was blowing.

"After you open the car door, turn and smooth your skirt before you sit and then swing your legs in. Do the reverse when you get out."

I did as she instructed and after closing the door, fastened my seatbelt.

The drive to the convention center took about twenty minutes. I was concerned about the possibility of an accident and being taken to the hospital or the car having a breakdown and me having to wait in a mechanic's shop dressed the way I was. Worse yet, someone I knew might recognize me and they would spread the word all over town as well as to my coach and fellow swimmers on the team about how I was dressed.

Fortunately the drive was uneventful and we arrived at the convention center a little after eight.

Madge pulled into a reserved parking place next to Ms LaRue's Mercedes. I unfastened my seatbelt, opened the door and swung my legs out as Madge came around the other side.

"When you stand up, smooth your dress to be sure it hasn't ridden up in the back. Lock the door, then follow me inside."

I followed Madge to a service entrance and then down a long hallway. She turned down a second hallway and we entered the dressing area that had been set up behind the makeshift stage.

The place was crowded with racks of dresses. As we neared the front of the backstage area, I saw several long tables set up with lighted makeup mirrors on both sides. About two dozen models were in various stages of being made-up or getting dressed in their gowns.

A smaller table had been set up near the right entrance to the stage. Jackie, Betty and Shirley were seated at the table applying their makeup while Jean and Ms. LaRue were making their gown selections from the racks behind us.

"Nice to see you again!" smiled Jackie. "You look positively radiant!"

"Thanks," I mumbled as the other two girls tried desperately to stifle their giggles.

I stood and waited while the final selections were made. Some of the models who were already dressed began to line up on the right side of the stage. Ms LaRue came over with a dress in each hand.

"Prom dresses are modeled first from nine to ten. Each of you will wear two dresses. Bridesmaids' dresses are next from ten to eleven. Each one of you will model four dresses. Bridal gowns are last from eleven to twelve and each of you will wear two gowns. We will break from noon to one for lunch and then begin again. Prom dresses from one to two; bridesmaids' dresses from two to three and bridal gowns from three to four.

"The line always forms on the right and you will walk down the right side of the runway. Walk slowly and keep about ten feet between you and the girl ahead of you. At the end of the runway is a circular stage. You will stand in the middle and smile while the photographers get their still pictures. Walk back on the left side of the runway. Once you exit, come back here and change into the next gown. Remember to smile and keep your poise. Carry yourself in a ladylike, professional manner."

I turned around and Madge unzipped me. I pulled the shirtdress over my head and slipped out of the navy pumps.

Ms. LaRue unzipped my first gown, removed it from the hanger and handed it to me. It was the same pink satin sheath I had worn previously in the window display. I stepped inside and Madge zipped me up. From under the table she took a pair of pink four-inch heel shoes from their box and I put them on. I picked up the matching purse from the table and followed the girls to where the line was forming.

Jackie and Shirley preceded me and Betty was behind me.

"Remember to lift your dress when you climb the stairs, place one hand on your hip as you walk and keep smiling!"

She and the other girls began giggling simultaneously.

"I will," I said as we waited in line.

When I got to the top of the stairs, a woman with a clipboard stood just off the stage entrance.

"Name and store, honey?"

I opened my mouth and almost said Danny but managed to come out with a dry voiced "Danielle, for Amelia's department stores."

She gave me a funny look. "Is this your first time on the runway, honey?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"Well, try to relax. You look kind of scared. Just remember they're here to look at the dress. Keep smiling and give us your best walk, you'll be done before you know it."

I waited until there was enough space between Shirley and me. Then I stepped out on the runway and began my walk. I took my time and reached the round stage at the end as Shirley was being photographed. After she stepped off, I stepped on and stood at the front of the circular end. After a minute, I stepped down and walked back on the left side, exited the stage and down the steps to where Madge had my next dress ready. I was unzipped and helped into a floor length pink chiffon dress.

"You did fine, Danielle," said Ms. LaRue.

In about twenty minutes, most of the girls were back and changed into their second dress. I took my place behind Shirley again and paraded once more down and back without a hitch. I felt relieved as I walked back to the table and saw everybody smiling at me.

"Good job, all of you. Now we have just a few minutes to get ready for the bridesmaids' collection."

I set my pink purse on the table. Madge unzipped me while Ms. LaRue and Jean helped the other girls out of their dresses.

My first bridesmaid dress was a jade green satin sheath with large puffy short sleeves. I stepped inside and Madge zipped me up. I put on the matching gloves while Ms. LaRue attached the hairpiece to my wig.

After stepping into the green four-inch heel shoes, I picked up my purse and waited until the other girls were finished dressing.

"Relax girls, it'll be a few minutes yet," said Jean.

I noticed several of the girls that were hired for other stores were looking in my direction with big smiles on their faces. I was almost afraid somebody had told them there would be one impersonator in the crowd.

The line began moving again and the four of us walked over to take our places. When I got to the top again, the lady with the clipboard smiled when I gave my name.

"You look fabulous and you're doing fine."

I proceeded out and began my third trip down the runway. When I finished, my green dress was replaced with a long-sleeved version, only in royal blue. I changed shoes, gloves, hairpiece, and picked up a blue purse from the table and took my place in line again. By now I was accustomed to the rhythm of the walk and felt very confident about my ability to show off the dress.

Backstage again, Madge helped me out of the blue sheath and then had me step in a long petticoat. I brought it up to my waist and then she held up a garment that was a slip from the waist up and a petticoat from the waist down.

“This is a petti-slip. It is worn over the petticoat to fill out the skirt of your next two dresses which we call tea length.”

From the rack, Madge unzipped a dark red dress and slipped it over me. She adjusted the hem over the petticoats and then zipped me up. Again, I changed shoes, gloves, hair-piece and purse. A few minutes later I was in line, waiting to go on. Another trip and I was backstage being helped out of a red dress and into a bright purple one with the same matching accessories. Another walk and we were through with the bridesmaids’ part of the show.

As much as I hated to admit it, there was quite a thrill about fooling all these people. To say nothing of the erotic way the apparel felt when I put it on. To say I had mixed emotions would be a very true statement. I was a male, yet when dressed and made-up, I became a very convincing female. I had crossed a line. I was experiencing something few men do. I found it a bit frightening that I was becoming a natural at acting female and what’s more starting to like it. Ms. LaRue interrupted my train of thought.

“DANIELLE!”

I’m sorry, Ms. LaRue, I was lost in thought.”

“Well, stop thinking and get into this gown!”

Madge and Ms. LaRue held the white satin long sleeve dress up by the hem and slipped it over my head. Carefully, they adjusted the dress over the petticoats. Madge then pulled the zipper up the back and hooked it at the top. The veil was pinned to my wig and I stepped into the white four-inch heel pumps.

“Be extra careful this time,” warned Madge, “the hem of the gown is almost to the floor. I don’t want you taking a spill out there.”

“I will,” I replied as I made my way to the line.

The satin felt *so* good against my bare arms. I felt like I could float down the runway. Soon I was at the front of the line. With both hands, I grabbed the gown and petticoats and lifted them up so I could climb the steps. Once at the top, I let go and followed Shirley again down the runway. I was just as careful on the return trip. Backstage, I was helped out of my dress and petticoats.

“Last one!” exclaimed Ms. LaRue as she unzipped the last dress I would wear for the first show.

This dress was a short sleeve satin sheath and really conformed to my body. The veil was replaced with a smaller one and, after stepping back into my white shoes, I got in line for my final walk of the morning. When I returned, the girls were all smiles.

“Wow!” said Jackie. “Danielle, I mean Danny, we didn’t think you could do it but you were magnificent!”

The other girls nodded their approval as I was helped out of my gown and put the blue shirtdress and navy pumps back on. A catering service had been hired to deliver lunch. After salads and diet soft drinks, it was back to work.

Madge freshened up my makeup and Ms. LaRue began picking out the dresses for the afternoon show. Everything went like clockwork. I felt even more confident as I went

through the routine of dressing, walking, undressing, until I finished the final walk of the day.

While Ms. LaRue and Jean helped the other girls, change Madge drove me back to the store. After removing my makeup, wig and jewelry, she stepped out while I changed back into my male clothes.

"I must tell you, Danny, you were terrific! Be here tomorrow at seven and I'll get you ready for the Sunday show."

"Thank you," I said and hoped this would be the last time I was going to go through this.

I picked up a sub sandwich and fries on the way home. I watched some television and decided to watch the news. Sure enough, there was a brief story about the show at the convention center. Part of the clip showed me in the royal blue bridesmaid's dress as I walked down the runway. I stayed up for the movie and then went to bed.

The next morning, I got up early and bathed and shaved closely again. I dressed and drove to the store where Madge was waiting for me. After I put on my foundation garment and hose, she prepped me and I was back in the blue shirtdress and navy pumps.

We arrived at the convention center about eight and went straight to our table. Ms. LaRue had picked out two different prom dresses for me to wear at this show. The first was a bright yellow floor-length chiffon gown. I was zipped up and slipped on the matching pumps, gloves and picked up my purse.

Following my first walk, I changed into a black satin mid-length dress. Once more, I changed to black pumps, gloves and a matching purse. The bridesmaids' dresses were similar to the day before with two of them floor-length and two of them tea length. The bridal gowns were also similar, one with a very broad skirt and the final one another sheath.

I was becoming quite adept at this type of thing, almost like it was second nature to me. I was feeling quite confident as I walked up, gave my name and proceeded down the runway.

To see me, you'd think I'd been doing this all my life. I could hardly believe no one had said anything to me. Everybody seemed to be caught up in doing their job and making the show a success.

After another diet lunch, the afternoon show started and was completed on time. Everyone was happy. The show had been a success; to show their appreciation the manufacturers and store reps passed out free gifts for all the girls.

I walked to the car with Madge and on the way back to the store, I looked through the large pink bag I had been given. There was an assortment of cosmetics, brushes, and sample bottles of perfume, body powder and bubble bath crystals. At the store, Madge cleaned me up and I dressed to go home.

"Here, you can have this stuff," I said and handed her the bag.

"Thank you Danny. I'll give them to my niece, she'll love it."

I drove home and, after showering, splashed some aftershave on to cover any lasting remnant of the smell of makeup. Finally, it was over and I could go back to being a male employee. I was glad to be seen as a man again, even though there was something to be said for the sexy, sensuous feel of satin and chiffon.

The next several months went by without any mention of my modeling. At school the swim team had not done as well as expected, finishing a few points short of fourth place in the conference. We would not be going to state finals this year but despite the loss of several seniors to graduation, next year's squad would be a strong contender for the title.

Academically I was doing well and I liked my business and computer courses though I wasn't sure which path I should take in terms of a career. I would be a junior in the fall so there was still plenty of time to consider my options.

Work was going great. Our formal apparel sales had been better than we expected, although overall sales were still a little short of their anticipated goals. We still had about six months left in the year to rectify that.

I kept busy with my stock and cleaning duties. I was becoming quite knowledgeable about the various brands of cosmetics, wig and beauty shop supplies that the store carried. Sometimes the beauticians would send me to the back room for specific makeup items and I knew what it was they needed and where it was stored. The lingerie, clothing, and shoe sales clerks knew that I was familiar with their products as well and could find what they needed in a hurry. All in all I was earning my keep.

School let out for the year on a Friday and that night when I reported for work, I went to Ms. LaRue's office to notify her that I would be available for additional hours over the summer until about the end of August.

"Thank you, Danny. I'll see what I can do about getting you more hours. I don't see much at this time; four hours Monday and Friday night as well as weekends are about all I need right now but I will let you know. It's good to know I can count on you. By the way, I'm glad to see you have maintained your weight like I asked you to. Are you still at 135?"

I was a little puzzled by her question. "I'm not sure exactly but it's probably close to that," I answered.

"Well, it's important to stay trim and healthy, you know." She smiled at me.

"There may be other opportunities for you to earn extra money for school."

"I'll try," I answered, almost fearful of what "other opportunities" might mean.

"Get your work done and I will be in touch."

With that, I left her office and went to work.

After getting home that night, I weighed myself and found that I was back at 140. I decided to change the way I had been eating. I didn't think I really needed to lose the weight but I didn't want to test our relationship either. I wanted to stay on her good side as she didn't take kindly to people who displeased her.

Business had picked up a bit. The warm weather always has that effect on shoppers. Things were going smoothly and I hadn't even thought about my brief sojourn into the world of modeling. Each of the first three weeks in June had been a little bit better than the

previous one. Ms. LaRue was pleased with the way things were and that was the important thing.

On Monday of the last week in June, she was waiting for me at the time clock. As I walked up to her, I had an uneasy feeling. Usually when she needed to talk to me she left a note on my time card or sent for me. This had to be really important.

"Danny, the newly appointed district manager is coming for the weekend. She will be flying in from the west coast on Friday night. I will pick her up and take her to her hotel. The next morning, she will be coming here for a tour of the store after which I will take her out to lunch and then we will come back to my home for coffee. I felt it would be more relaxing to discuss business in the comfortable surroundings of my home than here at the office."

"What does that have to do with me?" I asked.

"Well, my secretary Anne is on vacation this week and I need someone to help me serve my guest. Ms. Verdote is a very discriminating woman and appreciates elegance and the finer things in life. Like myself, she has worked hard and got where she is by being smart and making the right decisions. Many of her ideas, particularly emphasizing femininity in our line of products, have been incorporated into the stores and the excellent results they have achieved did not go unnoticed, hence her promotion here to manage our twelve Midwest outlets. Now, I do appreciate your help in the past and I am certain you won't let me down."

"I don't know anything about serving," I replied.

"That's alright. Jean will fill you in on what you will be required to do. Oh, by the way, a costume and makeup is required. Jean will help you with that too. There's not much for you to do tonight, so when you are finished, see Jean at the rear of the loading area."

With that, she turned and left.

Oh boy, I thought. Now what had I got myself into? I went to work and finished up at eight, then walked to the back where Jean was waiting for me.

Jean smiled as she got up from her chair and put down the magazine she had been reading.

"Sit down and take off your shoes and socks."

After I did so, she handed me a pair of knee-high nylon stockings.

"Same drill as before. Put these on and then the pumps."

I put the stockings on and picked up the first shoe to discover these black leather pumps had five-inch stiletto heels.

"Wow, I don't know about these," I said as I slipped one on.

"Don't be silly, Danny. You had no trouble going from three-inch pumps to four. Why be concerned about these? It's just another inch. Besides, I know you don't want to disappoint Ms. LaRue."

I slipped the other pump on and walked to the small conveyor. Jean started the motor and I began walking. This was entirely different. I would have to be more precise in my movements.

“Take smaller, more mincing steps. Keep your elbows in and hold your arms across your body with your hands dangling effeminately at the wrist.”

I adjusted my stride and brought my arms in and let my hands dangle.

“That’s it! Now keep going.”

I continued my girlie walk for the next thirty minutes.

“That was very good, Danny,” said Jean as she shut off the machine.

I walked back to the chair and sat down.

“Take the stockings and pumps with you. Practice for about thirty minutes twice a day. By the end of the week, I’m sure you’ll be used to the new height. Remember, smaller mincing steps and keep your elbows in and your arms across your body, understand?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Good. After work this Friday, take a hot bath and shave. Saturday morning, shave your face again and be at Ms. LaRue’s house at 11 AM sharp. I’ll take care of everything else when you arrive. You can punch out and go home now. See you Saturday at eleven.”

She smiled again as I left.

I didn’t have much to do that week with school out of session. Tuesday I did laundry and cleaned the place up a bit. Wednesday I went to a nearby mall and walked around, trying to sort things out. In a way I resented being used like this, but on the other hand it was a seemingly harmless way to make some extra money.

Thursday I changed the oil and filter on my car, gassed it up, drove it through a car wash, and then vacuumed it out.

Friday after work, I ate a light supper. After a hot soak, I shaved myself again and then stepped on the scale. I was relieved to find I was back to 134. I watched some TV, and then after another thirty minutes of walking around in heels, I went to bed.

Saturday morning I got up late and after shaving my face again, I got dressed. I read the paper, then about ten o’clock, I grabbed the box of pumps and left.

Ms. LaRue’s home was on the opposite side of town and it took about forty minutes to find it. I parked out front behind Jean’s Chevy, leaving the driveway open for Ms. LaRue’s car.

As I walked up to the door, I noticed the lawn was immaculately groomed; the hedge and bushes had been trimmed to perfection. I rang the bell. Jean opened it and smiled that big smile of hers.

“Hi Danny, come right in.”

I stepped inside. The interior of the house was tastefully decorated. Everything was neat as a pin. Elegant was the perfect word to describe it.

“Follow me,” said Jean as she shut the front door.

I walked behind her through the combination living and dining room. We turned left and she led me into one of the smaller bedrooms of the three-bedroom, two-bath ranch-style house.

On the bed was a lacy black bra, a matching pair of black nylon tricot panties, a garter belt and a pair of fish net stockings.

“Put those on and I will be right back.”

I stood still for a minute, contemplating how I had gotten into this. It would do no good to complain now. I sat on the bed and removed my sneakers and socks. I stood up and undressed, placing my clothes on the bed.

I picked up the panties and put them on. The cool softness of the tricot felt good against my skin. Next I stepped into the garter belt and brought it up to my waist. I rolled each stocking down, slid it over my foot, then smoothed it up my leg and secured it at the top with the garter. The stockings also felt wonderful against my smooth shaven legs. I had just put my arms through the bra straps when Jean knocked on the door.

“Come in.”

Jean entered the bedroom and fastened the hooks in the back. From the vanity table she removed the breast forms and inserted them into the cups and then adjusted the straps. She stepped back and looked me over.

“That looks about right. Sit at the vanity, your makeup is next.”

I walked over to the vanity table and sat down. Jean turned on the small lights at the top and both sides of the vanity’s mirror.



“You will do your own makeup this time. Ms. LaRue feels it’s about time you learned how to make yourself up.”

“But I’ve never done this before,” I protested. “I don’t know anything about makeup.”

Jean smiled. “That’s why you’re doing it today. Now pay attention and follow my instructions.

Sit closer to the mirror.”

I slid the chair in as far as I could.

“Pick up the tweezers first. Look closely in the mirror and you will see a few stray hairs around your brow line. Grasp the hair at the base and pull straight out.”

I did as she instructed and was surprised at how much it hurt.

“Now keep doing that until the brow line is clean. Fortunately you don’t have thick eyebrows so you won’t have much to do.”

When I finished, I put the tweezers down and she handed me a scissor like device.

“Open this up and place it close to the edge of your eyelid and squeeze, then move it out a little and squeeze again.”

When I finished, I saw my eyelashes had a definite feminine curl.

“Okay. Open that small box in front of you.”

The small box contained several palettes of eye shadow and a small brush.

“Take the brush out and swish it around in the gray palette, then brush it on your eyelids starting from the nose and work outwards towards the corners of your eyes.”

I did as she instructed.

“That looks pretty good.”

She took the brush from my hand and touched up each eyelid, then replaced the brush in the box and closed the lid.

“Your blusher is next. Use this larger brush and the red palette from this box.”

I opened the box to find four palettes inside. I moved the brush over the palette.

“Start in the middle of your cheek with small circles and work outward.”

I did the left cheek and then after dabbing a little more of the powder on the brush I did the right. She took the brush from my hand and, after adding a few deft strokes of her own, she replaced it in its holder and closed the lid of the blusher box.

“These are lip pencils. Open your mouth wide and outline your lips first.”

I took the pencil from her hand and drew the line around my mouth. I handed her the pencil when I finished and she handed me a lipstick and a lipstick brush. I removed the cover of the lipstick and turned the base to raise the tube.

“After putting some on the brush look in the mirror as you fill in your lip outline.”

It took several applications before the job was completed

“Now press your lips together to smooth the makeup evenly.”

When I finished, she was smiling again.

"Nails are next."

She opened a package of press-on nails and removed the sheets inside.

"There are several different sizes for each finger. Match up each one, remove the adhesive tab and press them on your nails. These are called French nails, by the way."

I examined the sheets and began removing the nails, checking each one against my finger before attaching them to my own nails. When I finished, she placed a nylon wig cap on my head and removed a black wig from its display head. She handed it to me.

"Start at the front when you put it on."

When I finished, she placed her hands on the wig and checked for fit. Next she pinned a white maid's cap to the top. From the jewelry box she removed a pair of clip on earrings about four inches long.

"You should really have your ears pierced. Even guys are doing it today, you know, but these will do for today."

I cringed at the thought of someone puncturing my earlobes as she clipped the earrings on.

"Stand up and I'll help you into your costume."

From the closet, she brought out two small white petticoats on separate hangers. She unclasped the hangers and placed one petticoat inside the other, then handed both of them to me.

"Put these on and I'll get your dress."

I stepped in the petticoats and brought them up to my waist. She unzipped a black satin puff sleeve French Maid's minidress and removed it from the hanger. She held it up by the hem. I slipped my arms thru the puff sleeves and she helped me smooth the dress down over the petticoats. I turned around and she zipped up the back and closed the small hook at the top. Last, she placed a white nylon tricot apron around my waist and tied it in the back with a large bow to complete my ensemble.

"Now put on your pumps and take a look in the mirror."

I put on the five-inch stiletto heels as she closed the closet door. I walked over to see my reflection in the full-length mirror and was quite amazed at what I saw.

"Super!" Jean exclaimed as she stood behind me and attached a frilly choker around my neck.

"You are one lovely French Maid, Danielle, Now let's go to the living room and I will tell you what to do next. Remember to take small mincing steps. Don't be in a hurry, that's how you trip and fall and we don't want that, do we?"

"No, we certainly don't," I replied."

Once we were in the living room, Jean sat down on the davenport.

"I want you to walk back and forth between the kitchen, dining room and here several times. Remember your posture and keep your elbows in, arms across your body and

hands dangling at the wrist. Being feminine isn't enough, you must be overly effeminate. Ms. Verdot will be watching for this and we want to give her a good impression, don't we?"

"Yes Jean, we do."

"Good. Get started."

I began my walk to the kitchen. I came back, walked around the dining room table, then stopped in front of Jean.

"Very good, now make several more trips until I tell you to stop."

I took my time and made sure each step I took was prim and proper. After the fourth trip, Jean held up her hand to stop me.

"You did fine. Now stand closer in front of me. Do you know what a curtsy is?" she asked.

"I think so. You put one leg behind the other and sort of squat down and then stand up again," I answered.

She smiled. "Watch me."

She stood up and went thru the motions of a curtsy as if she were wearing a dress.

"Now you try it."

I was a bit awkward on my first attempt. My next effort got an "almost" and the third try got her to smile.

"That last one was the best. Now walk around like you did before, only this time when you get back to me, curtsy, then turn around and make another trip and so on."

I turned and made four more trips out and back, each time curtsying when I had completed each trip.

"Very good, Danielle, you've got it! Now when the women get back, they will enter the house. You will curtsy and greet them with 'Good afternoon ladies, did you have a nice lunch?' Ms. LaRue will introduce you to Ms. Verdot and you will curtsy again and extend your right arm with the right hand dangling at the wrist.

"When Ms. Verdot takes your hand, give her a wet dishrag handshake and tell her you are pleased to meet her. Let Ms. LaRue take it from there. You will speak only when spoken to.

Don't forget to address them by name or use 'Madame.' You will curtsy each time you appear before them and again when you leave their presence. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Good, now follow me into the dining room."

She opened a bottom drawer and took out a white tablecloth.

"Stand at the other end and help me cover the table."

After unfolding it, we both held it up and set it down, making sure there was an equal amount hanging over each side.

"There is a bouquet of flowers on the kitchen table. Please bring it in here and set it down in the middle of the table. You should start curtsying now so it gets to be a habit."

"Yes, Jean."

I curtsyed and walked to the kitchen and brought back the flowers and set them down, then curtsyed again.

"Very good, you learn quickly," she said as she opened the doors to the china closet.

"Set this cup, plate and saucer at the other end."

"Yes Jean," I said as I curtsyed and took the dishes to the opposite side of the table and set them down.

From the top drawer of the china closet she removed two forks and two spoons. She handed one of each to me.

"Set the fork on the left of the plate and the spoon on the right."

"Yes Jean," I said as I curtsyed and took the silverware to the other side and put each item in its' proper place.

"There we're all done here. Follow me into the kitchen."

"Yes Jean," I curtsyed again and walked behind her to the kitchen.

She handed me two cloth napkins.

"Place these under the forks and come back here."

"Yes Jean," I curtsyed again and took the napkins and placed them where she wanted them. This was getting tiresome. I walked back to the kitchen where she was pouring boiling water in a silver coffee pot.

"This will keep the pot warm until the coffee in the percolator is done. When they are ready for coffee and cake, come back here and I will dump the water out and fill it with coffee and place the silver pot on the cart between these two cake pans. The chocolate and lemon cakes you see in these two pans have been cut into squares. After they choose the one they want, pick up their plate with your left hand and remove a piece of cake with this utensil in your right. Deposit the cake gently on the plate and set it back in front of them. Keep the plate level because you don't want it sliding off, especially on somebody's lap. Then pick up the saucer and cup with your left hand and the coffee pot in your right and pour the coffee into the cup but leave about a quarter-inch of space at the top in case they may want to add cream or sugar.

"This small pitcher holds the cream and the sugar bowl is next to it. When you add cream, just pour a little in the cup. If she wants more, she will say so. With the sugar, remove the spoon from the bowl and shake it level, then let it fall slowly into the cup. Don't just dump it in. I will be in the kitchen and will coach you if there are any problems. Other than the things I've covered, is there anything else you think you need to know?"

"No Jean. I think I'm ready."

"Alright, let's go into the living room and wait for their arrival."

"Yes Jean," I replied as I curtsyed and followed her into the living room.

"It's nearly one. They should be here around two-thirty so we may as well watch some TV. Sit here on the couch with me and don't forget to smooth your skirts when you sit down."

"Yes Jean," I said as I curtsayed again and turned to sit down, smoothing my minidress as I did so.

"This will be the only time you will be allowed to sit down. A maid always stands nearby just out of sight. There is a small bell on Ms. LaRue's side of the table. When she wants you, she will ring the bell. Be prompt and remember to curtsy when you enter and again when you leave."

Jean flipped the remote on and found an hour long special on the history of fashion. I closed my eyes and wished the day was over. I wasn't tired so sleep was impossible. The hour dragged on until I heard Ms. LaRue's car pull into the driveway. Jean shut off the TV and headed for the kitchen. I stood up and walked towards the front door.

"Check yourself in the entryway mirror before they come in," said Jean over her shoulder.

I looked at the pretty French Maid staring back at me and was satisfied with the way I looked as the women entered the house.

"Good afternoon ladies, did you have a nice lunch?" I inquired as they came in.

"Yes, it was quite nice, thank you," said Ms. LaRue. "This is Danielle, my maid. She will be serving us shortly. Danielle, this is Ms. Verdot our new district manager."

I curtsayed politely as I extended my arm and gave her a limp handshake.

"I'm pleased to meet you," I said as I withdrew my hand.

"We'll sit in the living room awhile to discuss business. When we are ready for coffee, I will ring for you."

"Yes ma'am."

I curtsayed and went into the kitchen. Jean was sitting at the table sipping coffee.

"Go ahead and help yourself, there are cups on the counter."

I took one and filled it half full of coffee. I never cared for coffee but it was something to do. I sat down at the table.

"You should hold the cup by the handle with your thumb and forefinger and your little pinky extended like this."

I looked at her hand and then did the same with my own. "It's considered very lady-like; if a man held his cup that way, he'd be considered effeminate."

After about forty-five minutes, I heard the bell. Jean motioned me to get up. As I stood up, I brushed my hands over my dress and petticoats. I walked into the dining room where the two women were now seated at the table.

"Yes Ms. LaRue, how may I serve you?" I said as I curtsayed.

"We shall have our cake and coffee now please."

"Yes ma'am." I curtsayed and walked back to the kitchen.

I pushed the cart forward and stopped at Ms Verdot's end of the table first. I curtsayed and said, "Would you prefer chocolate or lemon cake, Ma'am?"

"I'd like the lemon please," she answered.

I picked up the plate from in front of her, placed a piece of lemon cake on it and then put it back down on the table. Then I picked up her cup and saucer. After filling the cup three-quarters full, I set the pot down and asked, "Would you like cream or sugar?"

"Just a little cream please," she answered.

I picked up the pitcher and poured a small amount in the cup and placed the cup and saucer back in front of her. I backed the serving cart up to where Ms. LaRue was sitting.

"Which cake do you prefer, Ms. LaRue?"

"I'd like the chocolate please."

I took the plate and placed the cake on it and set it back down in front of her. I picked up her cup and saucer and poured the same amount of coffee in her cup and set the pot down. "Would you care for cream or sugar?"

"No, thank you. I prefer my coffee black." I set the cup and saucer in front of her.

"Would either of you care for anything else?"

"That will be all for now, Danielle. I will ring for you again when I need you."

"Yes ma'am." I curtsayed and pulled the cart back to the kitchen.

Jean was holding her thumb and forefinger in a round circle to indicate an "OK" sign. She placed one finger up to her mouth to shush me.

"Speak softly," she whispered. "They won't be long. I saw the schedule. She will be leaving early in the morning and wanted to wrap everything up as early today as possible to get a good night's sleep before tomorrow."

I pushed the cart next to the cupboard and waited patiently for the sound of the bell. I wasn't trying to eavesdrop, but they spoke so softly that, except for one outburst of girlish laughter, I couldn't hear what they were discussing.

It was an agonizing thirty-five minutes before the bell rang again. I walked back into the dining room, stood before Ms. LaRue, and curtsayed.

"Yes Ms. LaRue, how can I serve you?"

"We're finished. I will be taking Ms. Verdot back to her hotel. Please clear the table. Wash and dry the dishes and place them back in the china closet."

"Yes Ma'am," I answered.

I curtsayed and went back to the kitchen. I retrieved a tray and brought it back to the dining room. As I picked up the dishes from the table, the two women left the house and got into the car.

Back in the kitchen, I helped Jean wash and dry the dishes. When we were finished, we placed them back in the china closet and removed the centerpiece from the table. We folded up the tablecloth and Jean tossed it down the laundry chute along with the two cloth napkins.

“We’re done!” she announced.

I followed her back to the bedroom. She removed the choker first, untied the apron, then unhooked and unzipped my dress. I slipped it over my head and Jean put it on a hanger. Then I slid the two petticoats down to my ankles and stepped out of them. Jean placed them back on their respective hangers as well.

“Take off your shoes and sit at the vanity. I’ll show you how to remove your makeup.”

I removed the stiletto pumps and sat down.

She explained how to use the eye makeup remover. When I had finished, she took the lid off a jar of face cream.

“Smear this on your face and then wipe it off with a tissue.” I did as she instructed.

“That looks good. I think you got it all.”

I removed my earrings and press on nails. After Jean unpinned the maid’s cap, I removed the wig and wig cap and placed the wig on its foam head. Jean stepped out while I unhooked my fishnet stockings, rolled them down and took them off. I slid my garter belt and panties down and put them on the bed with the stockings. After dressing in my male clothes, I walked back to the living room where Jean was waiting for me.

“You did a great job, Danny. Ms. Verdot left this for you.”

She handed me white envelope. I opened it up and inside was a note and a hundred dollar bill. The note read, “You are an outstanding servant. I’m looking forward to using your services again.” Her handwriting and signature was as elegant as she was.

“Let’s go, Danny. Ms. LaRue said you can have tomorrow off so I’ll see you on Monday.”

We walked out the front door and she locked it behind us.

I was greatly relieved that this day was finally over. I stopped by a fast food place but instead of ordering a greasy meal decided to try one of their large salads. I was more tired than I thought; after a hot shower I went to bed early.

Sunday, I read the paper and didn’t do much else. I began thinking about the things that I had done so far. As much as I liked the money, I was concerned about how I was slipping more and more into feminine roles, *subservient* feminine roles at that. I wanted to hang on to my job but this craziness had to end.

It was scary to think how, once I was dressed and made-up I, for all intents and purposes, became a girl. I found it difficult to understand why, when I was “en femme,” my male feelings were overridden with the pleasure of acting feminine, to say nothing of the way I loved the touch of nylon, satin or chiffon against my smooth hair-free skin. I certainly knew who I was and what side of the gender line I was on. I had never been attracted to men and, though I had only one sexual experience so far, I definitely was heterosexual.

When I walked out on the runway, I not only got an erotic kick from the clothing but there was a sense of power. I was in control. Even as a maid. My performance had fooled Ms. Verdot. As a servant, I had used my femininity to give the impression that they were in charge and I was just an underling but I had actually controlled the situation and per-

formed quite well. Maybe I could use this talent, if you could call it that, to further my employment position or at the very least enhance my bank account a little more, as Ms. Verdot had done.

Monday after I punched in, I had just started unpacking some boxes when Ms. LaRue stopped by on her way out.

"I'm very impressed with the job you did Saturday and so is Ms. Verdot. She has flown back to the coast and will be making several more trips to see our Illinois and Minnesota stores before purchasing a home. She seemed to like this area quite well."

"I'm certain she was pleased with our store because of your management. The fact that we have, under your direction, opened sooner and within our budget guidelines as you stated in the last employee meeting, is a credit to everyone's hard work. Plus, judging by the amount of stuff I have been unpacking, our sales are up too. Everybody is doing a good job, I think."

I was hoping that little bit of flattery was taken in the right way. Everyone HAD been doing a good job, especially me, doing double duty as both a male and female employee. I was hoping I would not be called upon to do that again, but if I were, maybe the rewards would be greater.

"Have a good night, Danny, and thanks again." She smiled at me again as she left for the night.

July was a hot slow month and August wasn't going to be much better. We were just barely above sales goals for the year. The Fall line of merchandise began arriving the last week in August but was kept in storage in the back until the summer clearance sales were over. I was going to work all three days of the Labor Day weekend.

Friday, I left Ms. LaRue a copy of my Fall school schedule. Then I boxed up the remaining summer merchandise for shipment to the warehouse. Saturday morning, I helped restock the shoe department with the latest fall styles and the beauty shop with makeup and nail products in the new fall colors. I installed another shelf in the wig salon and then I put a dozen wigs on foam heads and placed them on the shelf.

That afternoon, I unpacked the new formal apparel line and carried them up the stairs of the rear balcony where the sales girls removed the plastic film covers and put them on hangers. As I walked down the stairs after delivering the last load, I overheard them giggling and one of them said something about being "too pretty for a boy".

Sunday, I brought boxes to the lingerie department where the girls filled the shelves and cabinets. In addition, I moved several half-mannequins to the floor from their display stands so the girls could dress them. When they finished, I cut up the boxes and carried them back to the recycling bin.

After lunch, I began bringing out the fall clothing line. Coats came first, then suits, dresses, blouses, skirts, gloves and finally handbags. The dumpster and the recycling bin were just about full after I dumped the last load in. It was just after 6 PM when I punched out and went home.

Monday at nine, I came to work and found a note on my time card from Ms. LaRue. It seemed about the only time she wanted to see me now was when she needed Danielle, not Danny. I reported to her office as she was finishing up some paperwork.

“Come in Danny.” She looked up at me and smiled as I entered her office. “Ms. Verdot has decided to purchase a home in Rochester, MN. She will be here about every two months on her inspection trips. She will be here next Saturday and Sunday to do some auditing and perform the usual inspection of our store. Anne is having her eye surgery on Friday and I need someone to be here that weekend to assist Ms. Verdot. Of course she knows you only as Danielle, who I said works here in an administrative capacity and provides maid service for me on her own time. I know you have taken both computer and accounting courses at your high school and have earned very high marks. Can you be here as Danielle, my administrative assistant, next weekend?”

I swallowed hard. I was pretty well caught up with my other tasks except the night cleanup.

“What would I be doing? I usually stock on the weekends and most of that is already done. I’m not familiar with your system the way Anne is.”

Ms. LaRue smiled and shook her head.

“No problem, Danny. Anne has agreed to work the rest of the day with you to familiarize you with our system. Actually, you need only pay close attention to payables and payroll as they are the only records she will be looking at.”

Her face had taken on a more serious look.

“What about cleanup? I usually have to do that before leaving.”

Her voice had a more serious tone. “Don’t worry, I’ll have one of the other employees do that. If you spend today with Anne, do you think you can be ready by next week?”

“Well, yes, but what about...I mean she is expecting a girl and ...”

“Madge will be here about eight-thirty when you arrive. She will assist you with wardrobe and, as Jean has informed me, you are now capable of doing your own makeup, correct?”

“Well, I did it that once but I...”

She gave me a tight smile.

“Good, then when Ms. Verdot arrives she will find a properly dressed, made-up and coiffured administrative assistant.”

“What about pay? I mean before you...”

She cut me off with a wave of her hand.

“Oh, don’t worry. You’ll be on double time. Just be sure Ms. Verdot is pleased with your work as well as your appearance.”

“Well alright.”

“Report to Anne and she will go over the system with you. Make sure you ask questions, I don’t want anything to come up that you can’t answer”

I nodded in agreement and walked back to where Anne was sitting at her desk. Ms. LaRue left the office as Anne began showing me where everything was located in the desk drawers and the filing cabinets. The phone paging system was next. Finally I learned how to boot up the computer system and access the files that would be audited the next weekend.

I was feeling pretty comfortable with everything by the time we got back from our noon lunch break. I made a couple of practice entries to locate as well as update information on the computer. The phone hadn't rung at all since it was a holiday but just for good measure Anne went out on the floor and, with her cell phone, made several calls asking for specific extensions and requesting information from various file on the computer that might come in during the weekend I would be manning the phones.

"I guess you've got it," she said as she picked up her purse.

"Good luck next weekend, Danny! Oops, I mean Danielle!"

I bit my lip as she smirked at me and then left the office. The rest of the day was uneventful.

The week went by quickly and I hadn't even thought about the masquerade I was going to be a part of that weekend. Friday night, I did some stock work and after cleaning up, I punched out and went home. Saturday morning, I got up early and took a hot bath and shaved myself again. My hairless body was now ten pounds lighter. I decided it was easier to modify my eating habits and maintain my weight at 135 than to constantly yo-yo up and down whenever the occasion required it.

When I reported to Madge in the beauty parlor at 8 AM Saturday, I was hoping this would be the last time I was going to have to do this but I had my doubts about that.

I punched in a few minutes before eight and walked over to the beauty parlor. Madge was on the phone, giggling. As I entered the salon, she whispered something and then hung up.

"Good morning, Danny. Put these on and I'll be right back."

On the chair were the foundation garments and hose. I began undressing as she left and put on a long line bra and girdle. Nylon stockings were next and after I hooked them to the garters, I stepped into a half-slip.

Madge knocked, then came in. She put the breast forms in the cups, helped me adjust the straps, and then closed the hooks in the back. I picked up the lacey camisole and put it on and she helped me adjust those straps as well.

"Jean tells me you know how to use makeup, so stand at the mirror and fix your face."

I walked over to the mirror and applied pink blusher and lipstick. When I finished, Madge handed me the wig cap and helped me adjust the blonde wig. She removed a frilly pink blouse from the hanger and I slipped it on. I fumbled with the front buttons, much to her amusement, then stepped into a black slim skirt. I tucked in the blouse and closed the side zipper. I put on a pair of three-inch black leather pumps, placed the cosmetics and the office keys in a black purse and slipped it over my arm.

"You are good to go," said Madge. "Oops! I almost forgot!"

She stood in front of me and clipped a pair of earrings on my earlobes.

“There, that’s better. You better get up to the office; you don’t want to be late on your first day as a secretary! Don’t forget to modulate your voice like you did at Ms. LaRue’s house.”

I walked out of the beauty shop through the empty store. The sales clerks were already at their stations, all smiling as I walked by. It was ten minutes before opening and the store was quiet except for the sound of my high heels clicking on the floor as I made my way to the front stairway to the office.

As I closed the door and began to walk up the steps to the office, I could hear the sound of giggling and laughter coming from the girls nearest the stairwell door. I unlocked the door and turned on the lights. After making the coffee, I switched on the phone system and booted up the computer. Ms. Verdote was scheduled to come in around 9:30 so I had a little time to relax. I went over my notes from the previous day, then sat down to await Ms. Verdote’s arrival.

There were a few phone calls, which I was able to transfer properly and several requests from other stores about stock pricing. I managed to locate the required information and passed it along with no problem. Ms. Verdote arrived at 9:30.

I stood up and greeted her with a cheery “Good Morning!”

“Good morning, Danielle!” Bring me some coffee if you would, please.”

She breezed past me and walked into Ms. LaRue’s office.

I brought her a cup and set it down in front of her. She smiled as she looked up at me.

“Give me a few minutes and we’ll get started.”

I walked back to my desk and sat down. About ten minutes later, she came over to me with a sheaf of papers in her hand and took a seat at the desk behind me. She handed me several sheets from the folder.

“Double check these for me, will you, Danielle?”

I took the papers from her and began checking the figures on my adding machine. I handed them back to her when I was finished.

“Thank you. I’ll be on the computer for a while, so just take care of the phones for now.”

I nodded and turned around. Saturdays weren’t busy in the office so I opened the desk drawers and found some of Anne’s magazines. There were some tabloids and a few fashion magazines. I decided on the fashion magazines and began reading the articles on dresses and makeup.

There were no more phone calls that morning and, except for helping Ms. Verdote with a few things and locating some information in the filing cabinets, the morning had gone quite quietly. It was 11:45 when she got up from her desk; after picking up her folders, she walked back to her office. She returned a few minutes later.

“Get your purse. I’m taking you to lunch.”

I reached into the drawer and took out my purse and followed her out to her car.

It was a short drive to one of the better, classier restaurants in the city. As I got out of the car, I even remembered to smooth my skirt.

After we were seated at our table, I glanced at the menu. I was a little nervous. It was the first time I had been in public dressed like this and I was very self-conscious.

“Relax, dear.” Ms. Verdote smiled at me. “You seem a bit edgy today.”

“I guess I am. I had a very busy week”

We both ordered salads and diet soft drinks.

“I see you have removed your nail polish and are still wearing those clip-on earrings. You would look great in pierced earrings.”

“Thank you, but I’m really not much for jewelry and I think fussing with my nails is more trouble than it’s worth.”

“Sometimes I wonder about that myself. Have you made any plans for tomorrow?”

“Well, no I haven’t. Why do you ask?”

“The fall line is in and normally the print ads which originate in California are sent directly to the stores to be sent on to local publications. There was a computer glitch somewhere and those files were somehow lost, so each store must take their own photos and submit them Monday for publication in next Sunday’s morning newspaper. I was just informed of this before coming here and I would like to know if you would mind coming in again tomorrow to model suits, skirt-blouse combinations and their related accessories for us.

“I talked briefly with Ms. LaRue on the phone and she said you had helped us out in



the past at the formal apparel show and had done a wonderful job. You would be compensated additionally of course."

I didn't know what to say. The last thing I wanted to do is model again but I didn't seem to have much choice.

"Yes, I guess I can."

"Good. The store opens at 10 on Sunday and we want to be finished by then so you will have to be in early; around six would be fine. Madge said she would be there to help out too so report to her at the beauty shop. The photographer will be there by 6:30 so be sure you are ready. Now finish your soda and we'll get back to work."

I drank the last of the soda and wiped my mouth. I was about to get up when Ms. Verdote stopped me.

"Freshen up your lipstick, Danielle. A lady should never be seen white-lipped in public."

I opened my purse and took out my compact and lipstick. After applying the makeup, I replaced the items in my purse and we left. The rest of the afternoon was uneventful as we completed the audit. Ms. Verdote left around 5:30. After making sure everything was shut off, I locked the office and went back to the beauty shop and changed back to Danny again.

I drove home and ate a bowl of soup and a sandwich for supper. I read the paper, then I decided to rent a couple of movies. I picked two adventure movies to keep my mind occupied so I wouldn't be thinking about the next day. The movies were pretty good; afterwards, I showered and went to bed.

It seemed I had just gotten to sleep when the alarm went off at five. I had a leisurely hot soak in the tub and shaved myself again. I dressed and checked my face in the mirror for any trace of hair. Satisfied, I drove to the store dropping the movies off on the way.

Madge had things ready for me when I arrived a little after six. She stepped out and I put on a black longline bra and girdle. I put the nylon stockings on and fastened them to the girdle. After placing the breast forms in the bra cups and adjusting the straps, I applied my makeup. When I finished, Madge walked in and smiled.

"You're getting pretty good at this, Danny. It won't be long before you will be able to do this without me!"

"I was hoping I wouldn't be doing this at all any more," I said. I turned around and Madge closed the last three hooks of the long line bra. I put on the wig cap and a dark brown wig that curled up at the shoulders. The cool softness of the black lacey camisole felt great as I pulled it down over myself and tucked it in the black half-slip. I turned back around to face Madge and she was nodding approvingly.

"The photographer was just about ready when you came in. Let me check with them before you go out there." She came back in a few minutes.

"All set. The clothes you'll be wearing are near the ladies dressing room closest to the front. Follow me."

I walked behind her and saw that a small, makeshift stage about five feet by five feet and a foot high had been set up on one side of the aisle. A camera and two lights were opposite the stage. A blond woman was standing behind the camera with her arms crossed.

“Your first outfit is inside. When the photographer is finished with that style, come back here and put on the next one.”

I nodded and stepped inside the dressing room. The first outfit was a sleeveless purple satin blouse, black skirt and short-sleeved jacket. I put them on, then I slipped my feet in a pair of black leather four-inch heel pumps.

When I stepped out of the dressing room, Madge looked me over and handed me a pair of black leather three-quarter length gloves. I put them on and slipped the black handbag over my left arm. Carefully, I made my way to the stage and stepped up on it.

“Stand in the center please,” ordered the photographer.

After shooting several poses, she waved me off. I walked back to the dressing room and undressed. My second outfit was a black long-sleeved jacket and skirt combination. The third and fourth were brown variations of the first two. I was getting quite adept at my ability to change quickly and pick the proper accessories. At 8:15 we took a break.

“You’re doing a good job as usual, Danny, whoops! I mean Danielle,” said Madge. Keep up the good work!”

The rest of the time was spent modeling a series of dark long-sleeved blouses and slim skirts of various lengths. At the center of the stage I always struck one of two poses with each ensemble. The first was standing straight in the center facing the camera with my right arm at my side and my left arm across my body with the purse dangling from my elbow. The second pose involved standing in the center but with one leg straight and the other turned to one side with my left arm cocked at an angle, the purse dangling from the crook of my elbow and my right hand placed smartly on my hip, just as I had done previously when I modeled the suits.

The last shot was taken about fifteen minutes before ten. I went back to the dressing room and removed the last blouse and skirt and after kicking off the heels, I walked quickly back to the beauty shop to remove my makeup and change clothes. Just as I was leaving, Madge came running up to me.

“Thanks again, Danny, I know Ms. Verdote and Ms. LaRue will be well pleased with your work. Here, take this card.” She handed me a white business card.

“The photographer asked me to give you this. She said she liked the professional way you handled yourself and wanted to know if you were available for some independent shoots she has coming up in the near future. I told her I would give this to you and you would contact her. Enjoy the rest of your day off.”

That’s all I need! I thought as I walked out to the car, *somebody else who thinks I am too pretty to be a boy!* I stuck the card in my wallet and drove home. I was tired from getting up early that morning and didn’t feel like doing anything. I was getting very tired of playing a girl too. I was making good money at it and the extra time off gave me ample time to keep ahead of my schoolwork. My change in diet had stabilized my weight; overall I never felt more fit in my whole life.

The Sunday want ads didn't offer much in the way of improving my employment if I left the store nor did the following Sunday's but I did enjoy the store's full-page ad with me modeling their Fall line. I had been able to maintain a modest savings account and because the condo was paid for, I had no bills to speak of. Except for this charade I had to perform every once in a while, things were going pretty well.

"Pretty well" lasted almost a month when, on the way to work the first week in October, I thought I could smell something burning. I pulled over several blocks from work and had just gotten out of the car when smoke began billowing out from under the hood. I ran into the nearest building to call 911 and when I came back out, my old car was engulfed in flames.

The fire department arrived and after they put out the fire, I answered their questions and filled out a report for the police. I walked the several blocks to work.

During my lunch break, I notified my insurance man and contacted a car rental company and had them pick me up after work. I drove the clerk back to the rental office, then drove home. My insurance man called me back and came over to help me fill out the claim forms. I finished the forms and gave them to him along with the signed title to the wreck and he left. My rental would take care of the week but I would have to do car shopping on my own. I had never done that before.

That week I studied the consumer magazines, the car ads in the newspaper and local shopper papers for something I could afford. I needed basic, dependable transportation. I liked the comfort of my old sedan but I wanted better gas mileage and I didn't want to spend a lot of money. GOOD LUCK! I thought to myself. I finally decided on a two-door sport coupe with a very peppy and economical four-cylinder engine and only thirty-two thousand miles on the odometer.

The insurance company gave me less than I thought the car was worth but I wanted to get things settled and get back to driving my own car. The good news was I got a nice car that I liked and was a lot of fun to drive. The bad news was my insurance almost doubled, my savings had been wiped out and I had a two-year loan at one-forty a month.

I drove it to work that Friday night and a couple of the girls who had seen me drive up asked me about my new set of wheels. I was not a "car guy" so this car—or any car for that matter—didn't hold any special meaning to me. It was just something that cost a lot to get, insure and maintain. They seemed to be impressed with my choice more than I did.

At school that week, some of the guys got on me and wanted to know if I had a rich friend or maybe was picking up a few bucks on the side with my good looks. I led it all slide off and continued working and concentrating on my studies at school.

Halloween fell on a weekend that year, a Saturday to be exact. On the Friday of the week before the holiday there was a note on my time card to contact a Lisa Newman. I looked at the name and number and thought they sounded familiar. I finished work and drove home, trying to remember how I knew that name.

I ate supper, then sat down to read the paper. When I finished, I watched the late news and took a shower. A shipment of stock had come in; I would be very busy tomorrow. Just before getting into bed, I remembered the note. I opened my wallet and took it out.

When I removed it, a white business card fell to the floor. I picked it up and saw that it was the photographer's card I had been given a month earlier. I compared the card to the note and found the name and phone numbers were the same. "Lisa Newman: Professional Photographer. Custom shoots for any occasion. Fashion is my specialty." It was late and I was in no mood to discuss another foray into the feminine world.

By noon the next day, I had separated the shipment into their various departments. After lunch I would begin opening the boxes, taking out the stock and applying the security and price tags. I just sat down in the lunchroom when I was paged to the phone. I took a swallow of my soda and walked to the stockroom phone. I picked up the phone and pushed the button for the line that was blinking.

"Danny," I said.

"Hi Danny, this is Lisa Newman. Did you get my message?"

"Yes, I did. I've been real busy and haven't had time to get back to you," I replied.

"I understand. I have a specialty shoot coming up for a costume company. These photos of their costumes are for print ads. If they like my work, I may get hired to do regular shoots for the company's catalog. It would mean a great deal to me if you could come to my studio this Saturday and work for me.

"I spoke with Ms. LaRue and she said you will have most of your work done by then and she won't need you. I will pay you triple your eight dollars an hour for your modeling time. In addition there is a Halloween party here afterwards but I need you to help serve my friends; you wouldn't be there as a guest. Will you do it?"

I thought about my recent signature on the car loan application. As much as I disliked the idea of another day in makeup, dresses and heels, I needed the money, which made my decision very easy.

"Sure."

"Oh, thank you so much! Be at my studio at 8am sharp this Saturday. My assistant Ms. Perez will help you get ready. See you then."

With that, she hung up. Just great, instead of another day/another dollar, it was going to be another day/another dress. I was beginning to wonder if there was a vast conspiracy among the professional women of this city to keep me en femme. Just how many women knew I was Danielle? I finished my lunch and got back to work.

The week went by quickly; I hadn't thought much about the job that was ahead of me. Saturday morning, I got up early and took the usual hot soaking bath and shaved again. I arrived at the address on the card about fifteen minutes early.

The studio was located in a two-story office building on a side street not far from the downtown area. I parked my car and walked in the building. I checked the directory and found her studio was in the basement. I walked down the stairs and found the correct suite number. No one was at the front desk but I could hear someone in the back moving things around.

"Hello, anybody here?" I said in a loud voice.

A few moments later, a short Hispanic woman with ugly black glasses and an unlit cigarette dangling from her lips walked up to me.

"You must be Danny. So you gonna be Danielle for today?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Lisa ain't here yet. She comes later. C'mon in the back."

I followed her in the back room where things had been set up. She directed me to an area that had been sectioned off with six-foot panels in a "V" shape. Behind the "V" was a folding chair in front of a lighted vanity. There was an ample supply of makeup and false fingernails, as well as several wigs on their foam heads.

"Strip, put on the stuff in the box and put your boy clothes in the box, fix your face and wear the blonde wig first." She turned and went back to her work.

I opened the box and removed a white bra, breast forms, a short panty girdle and a pair of pantyhose. I undressed, put the items on and placed my male clothes in the box. Sitting at the vanity, I applied red blusher, lipstick and the matching press-on nails. I put on the wig cap and was adjusting the wig when Ms. Perez came to check on me.

"You done?" she smiled.

"Yes I am. What's next?"

"Lisa will be here any minute. I will help you get dressed. Step out here."

I followed her out to the area where we would be shooting the pictures. The camera, lights and stage had been set up and Ms. Perez was looking over two racks of dresses next to the wall. She removed the petticoats and handed them to me.

"Put these on, then your heels," she instructed.

I took the petticoats from her, slipped one inside the other, then stepped in and pulled them up to my waist. I put on a pair of four-inch black patent leather pumps as Lisa walked in. Ms. Perez handed me a black satin puff sleeve maid's dress. It was similar to the one I had worn when Ms. LaRue had me work for her at home serving Ms. Verdote.

"Good morning, Danielle, you look as lovely as I thought you would," she said with a big smile on her face.

"Thanks, I'm just glad to get the work."

I put my arms thru the sleeves of the dress and adjusted it around the petticoats as Ms. Perez zipped me up. Next, she pinned the maid's cap in place and I put on the white apron and she tied it in the back. Lisa got behind the camera as I stepped on the stage and went through several poses before she began taking pictures. This dress also came in blue and pink so I did two more quick changes with matching shoes.

"Okay, next style."

I changed into shorter petticoats and put on a French Maid's minidress. This style also came in blue and pink so I did two more costume changes. The third style was a satin sheath dress in the same three colors.

"That's it for the maid costumes. Take a break for a few minutes, freshen your makeup and come back here."

Ms. Perez removed the cap, apron and unzipped me. I took off the dress and walked back to my little alcove and sat down. I checked myself in the mirror. Everything looked OK so I spent the time paging through a fashion magazine in the drawer.

Ms. Perez came back and when I stood up, she scrutinized my face. She glared at me.

“Didn’t she tell you to fix your face?”

“I didn’t think it needed it. I thought I looked OK,” I said defensively.

“THINK? Look girly, do you know what a mannequin is?”

“Yes,” I replied. “A mannequin is a plastic dummy used to display things in stores.”

“Right! That’s what you do, dummy! You display the goods. Now keep your mouth shut and do as you’re told. Freshen your makeup and get back out there, pronto!”

I turned and sat down at the vanity and applied some additional blusher and lipstick. Listening to Ms. Perez barking orders like a boot camp drill instructor with that staccato manner of hers was like standing in front of a Mexican machine gun. I walked out to where she was standing and presented myself.

“That’s much better.”

The next series of dresses were long-sleeved shirtdresses in several colors with a very unique feature. At the top where the zipper closed the dress, a small padlock could be attached. This kept the wearer in the dress until somebody unlocked the padlock and unzipped the dress. In addition, the patent leather five-inch heels that went with the dress had an ankle strap with a similar closure for a padlock. I couldn’t imagine why any woman would want such a thing but both Ms. Perez and Lisa found the style quite amusing as the pictures were taken.

The next style was called “sissy dresses.” They were a combination of frills, bows and ruffles. I modeled them in eight different colors with not only matching four-inch heel shoes but at the top of my wig was pinned a large satin color-coordinated sissy bow. When the last dress was back on the hangar, we stopped for lunch. I slipped on a pink bathrobe and we had sandwiches and diet soft drinks.

After lunch, I touched up my makeup and slipped off the robe.

“Take off what you’re wearing and put these on,” ordered Ms. Perez.

I removed my lingerie and stepped into a pair of pink brief-style nylon tricot panties with four rows of ruffles in the front and back. I placed the breast forms in the pink bra and put it on and then a garter belt and a pair of light pink hose. I stepped in a pair of four-inch heel fuzzy slippers and walked back to the stage.

Both women were all smiles as I posed in the very feminine outfit. When the last shot was taken, Ms. Perez handed me a pink corset.

“Take the bra off and put this on.”

After I had done so, she began lacing up the back.

“Exhale, blow all the air out of your lungs.”

I did so and she pulled the lacing so tight I could hardly take a breath. When Lisa had her pictures, I repeated the procedure seven more times for each color the lingerie set came in.

“Wonderful!” exclaimed Lisa as she took the last picture.

“Danielle, you have done just a super job! “We’re all done now, so go back and change into that pink sissy dress and heels, but use pink blusher and lipstick this time and exchange your red nails for pink ones and we’ll go to the party next door!”

When I had changed into the sissy costume, I walked out to the office to find Ms. Perez dressed as a matador and Lisa in a Spanish dancer costume.

“The party is in an unoccupied suite next door. It’s an after-work party for some of my clients. I need you to be the punch girl, so come with me. It’s three-thirty and they won’t be coming until four. It’ll be over by eight so you can come back here and change. I’ll pay you and you’ll be done for the day.”

Lisa locked the door to her suite and we walked down the hall and entered the party suite. Tables and chairs had been set up. There were four place settings with the names of the guest at each of four tables. Two tables had been set up end to end. The smaller table had plates, silverware and napkins. The larger table had platters of small sandwiches, chips and cake for dessert. I would stand at the very end of the table and offer people a choice between two types of fruit punch, then ladle their choice into a cup and hand it to them.

Lisa walked around checking everything and came over to me. She placed a rectangular nametag on the left shoulder of my dress and said, “Sit down, Danielle, put this on and relax for a few minutes.”

She handed me a pink eye mask. I stretched out the elastic band over my wig and set the mask over my eyes. I sat down on the folding chair, remembering to brush my hand behind me to smooth out my dress, then crossed my legs in my best girlish fashion.

Just before 4 PM, the guests began to arrive. I stood up and prepared to serve her guests as Lisa greeted them at the door. After they had filled their plates, I filled a cup with a ladle from their beverage bowl of choice and handed it to them with a smile. When all the guests had arrived and were finally seated, I got a plate myself and then filled a cup with the pink lemonade.

The conversation was low key as Lisa made the rounds of all the tables and chatted briefly with each guest. She sat down next to me and winked.

“The guests are all asking about you, Danielle, but don’t worry, your secret is safe with me.”

“Thanks,” I replied.

I remembered to hold the punch cup daintily with my pinkie extended as I sipped small amounts from the cup. I ate with small bites and after finishing, set the plate down and patted my mouth with a napkin. I thought some of her guests were watching me more closely than they should, or was it my imagination? Several guests got in line for seconds and I stood up to refill their cups. After I sat back down, I kept my hands folded primly in my lap and awaited the next guest.

Lisa was all smiles. "You are doing just famously. I am certainly glad that I hired you! Ms. LaRue was right. You're not only a perfect mannequin, maid and hostess but you're a great looking sissy, too!"

I took a sip of lemonade to keep from saying what I wanted to and just nodded appreciatively. The guests began leaving about 7:30 and Lisa and I bade them a good evening.

"Leave the mess for the cleanup crew tomorrow," said Lisa as we walked back to her suite.

She unlocked the door and I went into the back room and removed my costume, wig and makeup to become Danny once again. I stopped at the front desk where Lisa had me sign a release for the shoot and then handed me my check.

"Thanks, Danny, maybe we can do this again."

"We'll see," I replied as I walked out the door.

I drove back home and after showering, I checked myself in the mirror just to be safe. This was getting to be a real drag, no pun intended; the fact that now I needed the money didn't help matters any. I thought about my "Vast Conspiracy" theory which wasn't so funny anymore since not only did a lot more people suddenly know who I, Danielle, was, they also knew my lingerie, dress, wig and shoe size. Wherever I worked, everything I put on was exactly the right size. It wasn't coincidence, that was for sure. I watched some TV, then went to bed.

Sunday and Monday, I was busy putting stock out. I had put the weekend out of my mind. I was busy in the evenings as well with schoolwork. November was a better month than the previous two months and, not surprisingly, the fall line of clothing was all but sold out.

I put up our holiday decorations and set up a table between the cashier's counter and the front door where a gift-wrapping service would be offered. Things were looking very festive as we turned into December and we became really busy. I hadn't given my other job, if you could call it that, a second thought.

Occasionally I would see one of the salesgirls giggle and turn to another salesgirl and point in my direction as I walked by. Once I had brought some stock up to the formal apparel shop on the rear balcony and as I left, one of the girls whispered with a smile, "You know you could be such a pretty bride!" I had to let these little incidents slide since I was certain the girls would deny they said anything. It would be my word against theirs if I were to make a complaint.

School was out about a week before Christmas and would not be open again until a week after New Year's Day. I checked with Ms. LaRue but no extra hours were available. I wasn't hurting for money just yet but I could always use some extra cash.

The store gave out Christmas bonus checks. I was surprised to get one since I was part-time but Ms. LaRue said I had earned it but I shouldn't say anything to the other employees. In lieu of a Christmas party, each employee received a gift certificate to a local supermarket to be applied to a ham or turkey of their choice. In addition, Ms. Verdote had sent a small package to me, addressed to "Danielle" in care of Madge, our beauty shop manager.

Inside the box was a pair of earrings. These required piercing and I thought about giving them to one of the girls until Madge brought up a critical point.

“When Ms. Verdot comes here and needs your help, it would be nice to show your appreciation by wearing them.”

I succumbed to the idea and Madge seemed quite delighted as she pierced both earlobes and inserted the gold plugs.

“Don’t worry about people talking, Danny,” she said. “Lots of men have piercing done today.”

There was a rush of returns after Christmas and I got an extra day to pack them up and ship them to the central warehouse in California. After New Year’s Day, things began to slow down. Despite big discounts, overall sales were not up to the company’s expectations, though our store did very well. School would start soon and the days would not be quite so long.

Once school was back in session, I became busier; to my surprise no one commented about my pierced ears. Even the guys on the swim team said nothing. After several weeks, I thought things were going to be OK until I saw Ms. LaRue walking towards me one day after I punched in at six.

“Danny, there’s going to be a managers meeting here Sunday night after closing. I’ll need Danielle’s help, of course. You will have this Sunday off but be at the beauty shop at four in order to be ready when the managers start arriving about four-thirty. Madge will not be here but Jean has agreed to help you again.”

I thought about protesting but I didn’t feel this would be a good time since it would put Ms. LaRue in a bind and the consequences of that, I preferred not to think about.

“Okay, I’ll be there,” I replied.

“Good. Tomorrow when you come in, please set up the tables and chairs in the loading area according to this diagram. The meeting will last about two hours. Afterwards, clean things up a little. On Monday night when you come in, fold up the tables and chairs and put them in storage.”

“Yes ma’am,” I replied as she turned and walked out.

Saturday, after setting everything up, I wondered how long I was going to be able to keep this up.

I reported to Jean on Sunday. While she stepped out, I put on my white foundation garments and hose. When she came back in, she had a pair of four-inch heel brown leather pumps. She fastened the last three bra hooks and helped me adjust the straps so the breast forms in the cups looked all right. A lacy camisole and half-slip came next. I made up my face and put on pink press-on nails and then a wig cap and wig.

“You look great, Danielle,” said Jean as she handed me an orange sleeveless satin blouse.

She quickly fastened the buttons in the back and I stepped into the brown skirt and tucked the blouse inside. I slipped the jacket on and stepped into my pumps. Jean gave me the once-over.

"You forgot your earrings," she reminded me.

I fumbled with the plugs; finally Jean took over and fastened them into place.

"I'll be here doing inventory. When you are through, come back and I'll help you again."

As I walked from the beauty shop to the back room, several girls smiled at me as I walked by. One even winked and held up ten fingers. I had learned to modify my walk; by now I was confident in my overall appearance as well as my ability to walk in heels, no matter their height.

Once in the back room, I set out notepads and pens at each place on the table as well as pitchers of water and glasses. The managers began arriving and I introduced myself to them and showed them where they were to be seated. I pushed the podium on wheels to the front as Ms. Verdot approached.

"I see you like those earrings," she said as she smiled at me.

"Yes I do, thank you again."

She stood behind the podium and I walked to the back and sat down. Without being conscious of it, I had walked and talked in my modified voice, smoothed my skirt when I sat down and, of course, crossed my legs in a ladylike fashion as if these were my natural mannerisms. I had not so much pulled off another charade as I had BECOME Danielle.

Once the meeting started, I kept my attention on Ms. Verdot and what she had to say. I glanced at the managers once in a while to catch their reaction to some of the things being discussed but for the most part I watched the proceedings, sitting quietly with my hands folded in my lap. Twice I was called to come up front with folders that Ms. Verdot needed to verify some formation. Other than that, I had no part in the proceedings. The meeting broke up about 6:45 and everyone left.

I got two trays from the lunchroom. After dumping the water out of the glasses, I put them on the trays, took them back to the lunchroom and set them on the sink. I carried the pitchers in and dumped the remaining water in the sink. I put the pads and pens back in the box and took it to the front office doorway.

The staff had left at five-thirty and the store was deserted. The only noise was the sound of my high heels clicking on the hard floor as I walked back to the beauty shop. Jean was reading a magazine as I walked in.

"Is everything ok?" she grinned.

"Yes, I guess so."

I sat down and removed my wig, wig cap and makeup. She helped me again with my earrings, then unbuttoned my blouse and unhooked my bra. She stepped out and, after taking off my heels and clothes, I got redressed.

Jean handed me a white envelope and my earrings as I left.

"Another nice tip, I hope!" she grinned.

"Yeah, me too," I said.

When I got home, I put the earrings on the dresser and opened the envelope to find a dozen crisp ten-dollar bills. At least the ladies were grateful for my efforts.

The next night after school, I folded up the tables and chairs and put them in storage. I did some stock work, then I cleaned up the store and restrooms after we closed.

As I was leaving, the two sales girls from the formal wear department waved at me and then pointed at the rear balcony as they left. I looked up to see a sign over the balcony reading "Formal Apparel Show-Convention Center Mar. 20-21." I got a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. It wasn't possible that for the second year in a row they were short a girl again. I thought it was about time I put my foot down and inform Ms. LaRue that enough was enough. I was going to put an end to this crazy charade once and for all. There wasn't going to be a window display or a fashion show with me as a "Junior Miss" this year.

The next several weeks went by without a hitch. The show had been moved up to March and that meant if there was going to be a window preview I would be asked to do it the week before the big show.

I reported for work as usual and found Ms. LaRue's note on my time card. As I walked down the main aisle some of the salesgirls turned away from me, giggling, as I walked by them. I went up the stairs to Ms. LaRue's office and knocked.

"Come in."

I opened the door and walked in. Everything on her desk was in neat orderly stacks. Sitting on top of one of the stacks was a booklet about the upcoming show.

"Sit down, Danny."

I sat in the chair in front of her.

"The formal wear season is upon us once again. I appreciate the way you helped us out last year. This year our window display is taken care of. Two of the lines we used to handle have been dropped and the two new lines our buyers have picked up to replace them will be shown at the center. The reps from these lines asked about you when we agreed to buy from them. They got your name, that is, Danielle's name, from the rep that saw you in the window last year. Can I count on you again for the show this year?"

"No. I don't want to do this anymore. I am a young man, not a girl, and I think you should find someone else."

I saw her eyes narrow and wondered what was next.

"Danny, I must ask you to reconsider. No one here thinks less of you because you make a very attractive female. You will be paid more than last year. Fifty dollars an hour and you work two ten-hour days. That's very good money."

I nodded in agreement. "Yes, I know but I am still not interested. I just want to be Danny, do my job here and go home."

"I understand. I don't blame you but many people here are counting on you and judging by last year's sales in both formal and women's apparel. We could possibly stand to lose a good share of the market we've worked hard to get. Take a look here."

She pulled out a large notebook from her bottom desk drawer. She flipped it open to reveal the eight by ten photos of me in all the gowns and clothes I had modeled, followed by the sales figures from the previous year compared to last year. I saw about a twenty percent increase. I found it hard to believe that one model could make the difference but there was no arguing with the results. Nevertheless it was time to put my foot down and get out of this situation once and for all.

"I'm sorry if you think I'm letting you down. That isn't the case at all. I am just not interested in being the company's mannequin any more and that's that."

Ms. LaRue's eyes seemed to get hard as she glared at me.

"Take a look at these," she said softly.

As she flipped through more pages I saw that she also had pictures of me making myself up and dressing myself in lingerie both at the store and her home when I was her maid as well as behind the stage at the convention center changing gowns.

"You seem to be enjoying yourself for somebody who doesn't like being a girl. Check these out from Lisa's collection too. Aren't you just an adorable little sissy?"

The bra and panty sets I had modeled as well as the sissy dresses were in very sharp focus. I DID appear to be enjoying myself. Some of the photos of me were without the wig and makeup so there was doubt as to who I was. The last page was my model's release. When I looked up again, she was smiling ear to ear.

"Now look, my pretty little sissy boy. I'm certain your class mates, to say nothing of your teammates and coaches, would love to get copies of these, wouldn't they?"

I sat dumbfounded.

"I take it by your silence then you will participate as previously stated?"

I nodded.

"Good. I shall inform the reps as well as Jean and Madge. By the way, Lisa sends her regards and says she will contact you soon for another shoot. That's all for now."

I got up and left. As I walked back to the loading area, I saw Madge standing outside the beauty salon giving a "thumbs up" signal. I'm sure Ms. LaRue was standing in the balcony window doing the same thing.

I completed my work for that evening and went home. I finished the paper and turned on the TV but nothing seemed to be able to hold my interest. Trying to figure out a way to extricate myself from this situation was giving me a headache.

I was locked in to another fashion show; after that Lisa was sure to call. After that, who knew what was going to happen to me. I had become too good for my own good. The more I worked, the more people saw who I, that is Danielle, was, the more work I got.

I was making more money in the two-day show than I would make working part-time at the store in four weeks. Lisa paid good money, too, but this constant changing back and forth from Danny to Danielle was killing me. It was as if someday I would have to choose between one of the two and in my current situation Danielle was ahead of Danny by a slight margin. I wasn't sure just how long I could keep up the charade before somebody would find out the truth.

There had to be a way out of this. I knew I had to find an avenue of escape pretty quick before I became trapped in a dual life, half masculine, half feminine. It was going to take some fancy maneuvering to get out of this mess and somehow take possession of those photographs as well as well as the negatives. The model release was supposed to be for the pictures taken on stage, not for the ones in the dressing room, particularly since I was not aware they were being taken.

Worrying wasn't going to get me out of this. It was just giving me a headache. I took two aspirin and went to bed. Maybe in my dreams I could come up with something before the show.

I thought about not showing up. I could just put my car in a ditch and feign injury. I could get the flu or maybe fall down the stairs and wrench my ankle. They would have to get someone else, wouldn't they? I finally stopped thinking, closed my eyes and went to sleep.

My schooling continued and though the swim team was not as good as expected, we were holding on to third place in the conference. At work nothing was said and I continued my weekends and five-to-nines on Mondays and Fridays. As the dates of the show approached, I became more and more apprehensive. I was running out of time and I was still without an excuse for not showing up. I had maintained my weight and had to replace most of my pants now that my waist was slimmer. I felt uncertain about going outside of the store to get help. Who would believe me? I mean if someone told me this story I would have thought they were pulling my leg. What kind of a man would allow himself to be trapped into a life of being a half-man, half-female mannequin?

The week before the convention show, I cleaned out the window display area and set up four chairs. Saturday morning as I was moving some stock to the shoe department, Jackie, Shirley, Betty and the new girl, Laura, walked past me on their way to the window. They were all smiles. Jackie blew me a kiss as she walked by and Betty said, "Miss you Danielle" in a soft voice that only I could hear. I looked away and continued unpacking the merchandise.

I kept busy throughout the day and stayed out of the loading area where I knew the girls would be changing. I even took a different lunch break. Just before five, I returned from putting trash in the dumpster when Laura held up a dress she was putting on the rack. She held it across her body and with a big smile said, "Don't you just love this gown? Pink is such a lovely color and I understand it's your favorite too!"

I turned and walked away without saying anything. I punched out with her giggles in the background and went home. Apparently I'd become the worst kept secret in the store. I had to go through with this weekend's show; that was for sure. Once that was over and done with, I definitely was going to extricate myself from this mess.

The routine was the same as last year. I reported to the beauty shop early and did my makeup and press-on nails. This time I wore a pink shirtdress with matching three-inch heels and a black wig. The backstage of the convention center was a beehive of activity again. Madge and Jean were there to assist.

My first time out I was wearing a pale blue satin sheath and matching four-inch heel dyeables. About halfway down the runway, I decided to add a little something to the walk and began swaying my hips a little more. A little bump here and a little bump there.

After I was photographed at center stage, I walked back and changed into a frilly pink chiffon dress with a hemline just above the knee, flared out with a single petticoat. Once again about halfway down the runway, I decided to mix it up a little. I grabbed the skirt with both hands and sort of swished it back and forth as I approached the stage. After the pictures were taken, I twirled around and stepped off stage and in addition to moving the skirts, added a little more wiggle to my walk.

When I got backstage, Ms. LaRue had a rather stern look on her face.

“Okay, knock it off,” she barked. “Just be a mannequin and none of that girly wiggle and playing with the dress. Got it?”

I smirked and said “Okay.”

The next dress I did nothing but with the third dress, I got cocky and did the same things again. With the fourth and last prom dress, I nearly stumbled walking off the stage but I continued a more exaggerated girly walk until I was backstage once again.

Ms. LaRue was furious.

“All right, that’s enough! Stop sashaying around like a prima donna. Knock it off this minute. Bridesmaid gowns are next and I want you to give the audience a demure, sophisticated look. The same with the bridal gowns. Understood?”

I smiled again. “Yes ma’am.”

I behaved myself with the bridesmaid dresses. Jean helped my out of my first bridal gown, a sparkling, beaded, sheath dress and while her back was turned, I slipped on a garter without her noticing. My second gown was a long-sleeved dress



which had a long wide skirt flared out with several petticoats. I walked a little slower this time and as I stood in the center for the pictures, I suddenly reached down and hiked up the skirts and adjusted the garter, much to the delight of the audience and the photographers. When I returned to the back room Ms. LaRue was livid.

“Just stick to the plan. Danielle, you’re making me very angry.”

I just smiled and nodded as Jean helped me out of the dress and into another one. The last two dresses completed my portion of the show. I put on my pink shirtdress and heels and Madge drove me back to the store where I changed clothes. Madge warned me as I left.

“Tomorrow, you best behave yourself out there. You never know what Ms. LaRue will do if you should screw up again.”

I smiled at Madge. “If you say so,” I said as I left.

Back home I ate supper and read the paper. I got to thinking about what I had done. What had made Ms. LaRue so mad? I was just acting a little more girly. Like I had seen professional models do in clips from the fashion shows on TV. I thought if I had a little fun with the audience, they might like it. What was she afraid of? Maybe more people would buy from us? No, of course not. Would more people inquire about my services?

Hmmm, now there was a thought. Maybe someone who would offer more money? Aah! Was she afraid she was going to lose me to a competitor? I began to think there was more to this than I originally imagined. With possession of photos and negatives, they had control over me to some degree but when I stepped out on the runway I was in control and they were powerless. If there was a way out of this, maybe it wasn’t in trying to stay a man. By becoming more in demand as Danielle, they would have to surrender more control in order to keep me employed selling their line with my image.

Sunday’s show went smoothly. I behaved myself except for a barely perceptible wiggle here and there. I did pull the garter trick again, just for spite. Judging by the flashes from the cameras, at least twice as many this time, I knew I had drawn more attention to myself than the dress I was wearing. I was quite happy with myself as I walked off the stage for the last time.

Ms. LaRue was not in the back when I got there. Neither Madge nor Jean said anything as they helped me change. I rode back to the store in silence. I went through the pink gift bag and found a half a dozen business cards from photographers. The free beauty supplies I gave to Jean and went home.

I felt good. I had showed Ms. LaRue that I was going to be reckoned with. If they were going to make money off my image, or should I say Danielle’s image, then I was going to get a piece of the pie!

I ate a light supper and then went through the business cards. One was from Rochester, three were from California—one from L.A. and the other two from San Francisco—and the other two were from Chicago. I was curious about each one, of course. This sudden interest in me was flattering and I wanted to talk to each of them.

I was certain the two from San Francisco had some affiliation with the store since the chain was based there. But the others had the word “independent” on their cards indicat-

ing they could freelance. I mulled over who to contact and when. It would be easier to start with the Rochester photographer since it was closer. I decided to wait awhile and see how things went when I got back to the store. If there was going to be any trouble, I figured it would surface the first day I was back.

That Monday when I reported for work, I learned that Ms. LaRue was out of town on business. I did some stock work. One of the salesgirls in formal apparel told me orders had just started to come in and they would know by the end of the week just what kind of a season they might have. I finished my cleaning that evening and went home.

School was going OK but the swim team wasn't. I hadn't lost a race but overall we had slipped to fifth place and it looked as if we wouldn't be going to state finals again this year. I was now at a trim

132; I was eating healthier and feeling much better than I had ever felt before in my life. At least that part of my dual life was good!

There was about two months of school left and I hadn't made a choice about what I was going to do in life yet. I liked my business courses but there wasn't a lot of money in Business Administration and I wasn't too thrilled about the prospect of spending the rest of my life behind a desk. I was making more in a weekend in dresses than I was making in two weeks stocking and cleaning the store.

Those business cards were still on my desk at home and I thought maybe I should give them a call and see what they were interested in having me do. I decided to wait a little while longer. I would be eighteen in May. I would make the contacts then and see what was out there for me as Danielle.

The week I turned eighteen a notice on the bulletin board announced the completion of the new Rochester store. It was located not far from the original but was almost twice the size. There was to be a grand opening soon and employees from the other stores were needed to help stock the new store. I was tabbed and agreed to go.

I finished school and tossed the diploma in the drawer. I hadn't applied to any college, much to the dismay of my counselor. I wanted to work for about a year yet, not as Danielle of course, but as Danny to consider career options as well as earn some more money. I notified the post office to hold my mail for pickup in about a week, then I packed a suitcase and left for Rochester, MN.

I checked into my motel which was a few miles off the interstate and about five miles from the new store. I called the old store to check in and the office told me to report to the new location first thing in the morning. I took in a movie and then went to bed.

The next morning I arrived at the new store just before nine. I reported to the office and Ms. Verdot's secretary informed me she would be in later but I should report on the loading area to a woman named Maureen.

I walked back to the rear of the store. The tile floor had alternating squares of pink and white. The walls were pink with white trim and a white ceiling. I pushed through the double doors leading to the back room and made my way around a maze of counters and fixtures. Men were unloading a semi-truck and a woman was checking things off on her

clipboard as another woman in a sharply tailored pants suit looked on. I walked up to them.

"Excuse me, I'm Danny from the Des Moines store. What do you need me to do?"

The woman in the pants suit turned around. "Hi, I'm Maureen the assistant manager and this is Donna from our front office."

I shook hands with both women.

"Come with me," ordered Maureen.

I followed her and as we left, I saw Donna with a smirk on her face, trying to suppress a giggle.

"I want these counters moved out on the floor right away. The stock is coming in two days and I want all the fixtures on the floor ready to be filled before that truck gets here. Each counter is labeled as to where it goes. Ms. LaRue said you were very dependable. You'll be working pretty much on your own but if you have any questions check the floor plan on the lunchroom table. For anything else, ask Donna or myself. Any questions before you get started?"

"No," I answered as I began rolling out the first of the counters.

She turned and walked away, smiling as if suddenly I had made her very happy.

I spent the rest of the day moving the larger counters out on the floor to their respective places. The wall-shelving units had already been put in. The cashier and the small counters were next. I placed the mannequins in their respective places as well as in the windows. It was beginning to look like a department store by the time I took my noon lunch break. I had just finished lunch when Maureen came in the door.

"The beauty shop and wig salon fixtures have been unloaded. Do those next."

I nodded my head as I got up. I moved the small counters under the beauty shop mirrors and then put the wig salon counters in their place. The chairs were next and when I finished with those, I placed about two dozen foam heads on the wig salon shelves.

"The supplies for both salons are in the boxes against the wall. Please put them in the same way you did in the Des Moines store."

I moved the beauty shop supply boxes out first. I unpacked the contents and stored them in their proper places. I did the same for the wig salon. I reported to Maureen when I was finished. She pointed at another stack near the restrooms.

"Stack those along the back wall of the beauty salon. Remove the wigs from the boxes I marked with a black "X" and place them on the foam heads. Make sure they sit on there right, as if they were on a woman's head. There are four sample palettes of lipstick and a brush; do the mouths when you are done."

I moved the stock into the salon and opened the marked boxes. I removed each wig and placed it on the head, adjusting it slightly so it looked just right and then applied the makeup. When I was done, I picked up the cardboard and carried it out to the recycling bin. I checked my watch and it was nearly five.

"Go ahead and go," said Maureen from the balcony as I walked back to the main floor.

I walked out to my car and drove back to my motel. I ate supper at the motel restaurant and went back to my room. Things had gone pretty well. I had accomplished quite a bit and no one had complained. I hadn't seen Ms. Verdott all day, not that it mattered, since I doubt she would have recognized me anyway. I had forgotten to call the photographer when I checked in but it was late and I could call later in the week. I watched some TV and then went to bed.

The next day, I helped carry a counter up the stairs to the formal apparel department on the balcony, and then brought some smaller fixtures to the shoe department on the main floor. I hung the sign announcing our grand opening in the front window. I put up the departmental signs, white on a pink background of course, then after cutting up more cardboard boxes and depositing them in the recycling bin, I stopped for lunch.

As I approached the lunchroom, I overheard several of the girls talking about how knowledgeable I was about stocking the makeup and wigs until I walked in and they clammed up. I sat down to eat as they left and I could hear the laughter as they walked away. I finished eating and, as I left the lunchroom, Maureen came up to me.

"Everything is where it should be and I am pleased with your work. This afternoon I want you to clean all the counter tops and put blusher and lipstick on the mannequins. When you're finished, clean all the mirrors and windows, sweep the store, loading area, and empty the garbage. Tomorrow there will be about a dozen additional people from the other Iowa stores to help unload the trucks, unpack the stock and move it out on the floor. Figure on about a twelve-hour day each day. Do you have any questions?"

I shook my head.

"Good. Keep up the good work."

I went ahead and completed the tasks I had been assigned.

The other women working there didn't seem to pay much attention to me. Occasionally when I passed, I would hear an inaudible whisper and then some subdued giggling. I left for the day a few minutes before five.

I decided to call the photographer since the next two days would be quite busy. I dialed the number, then quickly hung up. What if I was asked to come in for an interview? How would I explain being in town but not available? I decided to wait until I got back to Des Moines to contact anybody.

The next two days were extremely busy. I helped unload the trucks and then hauled the stock to the department where the extra help would unpack the boxes, price, tag, and display the merchandise. There was barely enough time for a restroom break and lunch.

At 8:30 Friday night, the last of the stock was finally out and we left for the day. Saturday, I came back to clean up the store and wash and wax the floors. I finished just before five. We would be ready for our Monday morning grand opening without a hitch. I drove back to the motel, relieved to be done. I slept well that night. Sunday morning I checked out and drove back to Des Moines.

The summer stock had been moving pretty well and orders were up for our new formal apparel lines. I was glad to be back home in familiar surroundings and sleeping in my own bed.

A week after getting back to normal, I was eating my lunch when I noticed a retail trade magazine had been left on the table. The page was open to an article entitled "Live Mannequins, The New Rage." I began reading it; on the second page our store was not only mentioned but there was a picture of me with three other models in the store window from when we had our prom preview window display. Our names weren't given but both Ms. Verdote and Ms. LaRue were quoted about the increase in sales figures. I was engrossed in the article and didn't see Ms. LaRue walk into the lunchroom.

"I see you are reading about our success," she said.

"Yes, I am. It seems the stores are doing very well. How is the grand opening in Rochester?" I asked.

"Splendid. Sales are over and above our expectations. I need you to work in the shoe department this weekend. There won't be enough stock work to keep you busy and one of the girls has called in sick. You know the stock and size system as well as anyone, so just be helpful and try to make a sale."

She turned and left before I could say anything. I knew nothing about selling but after familiarizing myself with the various styles and types, I was confident of my ability to find what the customer was looking for. I was relieved that was all she had on her mind. Maybe my mannequin days were over but I wasn't certain of anything at this point.

I sold shoes Saturday and Sunday. I found most women were easy to deal with, though a few would try anybody's patience. I left the shoe department at four each day to do my regular cleanup chores. The weekend had been good for sales. Our store had earned a good reputation by offering women style and quality at competitive prices.

I came to work Monday night to find a note on my time card to report to Ms. LaRue right away. Something told me this wasn't about shoes. I walked through the store to the front stairwell and went up to her office. She met me at the door.

"Come in, Danny, and sit down." I took my seat and waited as she placed a file in the cabinet behind her and then sat down.

"What you were reading about is something that will now be a permanent part of all our stores. Our Rochester store is continuing its monthly grand opening sale with a live mannequin display this weekend. All the other stores will be doing the same thing with our summer sale items.

"I want you here at eight am Saturday to model summer dresses. You will spend part of the time in the window and part of the time walking amid the customers. The first hour from nine to ten and the last hour, four to five, will be your window time. The balance of your time you will be seated in the clothing department and you will periodically walk among the customers, showing off your dress and accessories. Jackie and Shirley will be here as well. Both girls said they are delighted to be working with you again. Ms. Verdote is very pleased with your help setting up the new store.

"She also said the sales girls were happy with the way you helped dress the mannequins as well as using your makeup skills to give their faces a lifelike look. She doesn't know yet that you are Danielle. Her employees, like mine here, think of you as just one of the girls."

With that she smiled as I grimaced. She handed me several nice shots of me putting dresses on a mannequin as well as applying makeup to their faces both on the floor of the store and in the wig salon.

“Not exactly a manly occupation but you do it so well!” she laughed. “You have Friday night off so you can get your beauty sleep. Report to Jean Saturday and this time follow Jean’s instructions to the letter.”

I simply nodded and walked back to the loading area to begin my work.

The week dragged by without much to do. Friday night, I had my usual soak and shave. Saturday morning, I reported to Jean. She stepped out of the salon as I undressed and put on a pink bra and panties. I applied pink blusher and lipstick, then attached pink press-on nails. After I put on a pink shirtdress and stepped into pink four-inch heel open-toed sandals, Jean came back in and zipped me up. She chose a dark brown wig and after I put it on, she handed me a matching purse and a large floppy sun hat.

Jackie and Shirley were waiting for me in the women’s department as I walked to the front of the store. Both girls were smiling as I walked towards them.

“Hi Danielle!” said Jackie. “You look terrific. Betty is right. Pink is definitely your color!”

Both girls laughed as we headed towards the side door that led to the window display. I said nothing as I walked up the short steps and into the display area. I turned and smoothed my skirt as I sat down and crossed my legs. Jackie and Shirley did the same. Jean popped in and handed us big sunglasses to put on.

After an hour, we got up and walked back to the clothing department where I walked among the few customers, showing off my dress while the other two girls changed outfits and went back to the window.

Every hour, except for a brief lunch, we changed places and outfits. I answered a few customer questions about my clothes and their matching accessories. I was glad when five o’clock came and I could leave. I changed back to Danny and drove home.

The next day I wore a sleeveless pale blue sheath dress with black pumps and purse to start with and continued the round robin changes with the girls, ending up with a mint green shirtdress and matching pumps and purse. Finally I was done for the day and I could clean up and change back into Danny and go home.

“Good job again, Danny, thanks,” said Jean as I left.

Monday, I came to work and wanted to see Ms. LaRue but she had left for the day. Anne the receptionist had a big smile for me too as I left.

I went into the back and started to work. I took some shoes out to the shoe department, then carried several bundles of dresses up the stairs to the formal apparel department. As I hung them on their racks, I could hear the two sales girls giggling behind the counter. They shut up as I finished and walked back to the loading area. I cleaned up the backroom and decided to take my break and drink a soda.

Two of the sales girls, one from lingerie and one from shoes, were just leaving and were laughing about something as I walked in. They immediately stopped and got up to

leave as I sat down. I thought better about saying anything but this was getting on my nerves.

Ms LaRue's comment about me being "just one of the girls" had apparently made the rounds. I would not see her until Friday so I was left to stew about this predicament for several more days. I was reaching a breaking point. I didn't want to blow up in her face but I felt I had to take some action soon or I risked becoming a permanent joke.

That night I found a catalog in the mail from a school in Rochester, MN. I tossed it in a pile with several others I had gotten over the last month. I wrote out checks for some bills and then read the paper.

After a shower, I decided to go over those catalogs. They were all pretty similar though I didn't recall sending for one from any school in Rochester. I felt business was boring and the computer industry was so volatile that neither one offered the career I would like. I saved the Rochester catalog for last and after opening it, I knew why I hadn't remembered sending for it.

This school offered programs in the beauty and fashion industry. The programs offered were beautician, nail technician, make up artist, fashion photographer, fashion design and fashion merchandising. Trying to figure out which one of the girls had put my name and address on their list was a waste of time.

This was obviously somebody's idea of a prank to rub my nose in it one more time, knowing I would never know who was responsible. I read through the course descriptions just for something to do. I knew I could never stand to work in a salon. That smell would drive me nuts. Like somebody had died in there and they couldn't find them.

I had no knowledge or interest in women's clothing, let alone designing them. I owned a small camera but I had no interest in taking pictures for a living so only one program remained. The course in fashion merchandising included some of the things I had already done and my experience could probably save me some course credits but I definitely wasn't interested in working in ANY feminine environment. I tossed the catalog in the wastebasket with the others and went to bed.

The next day as I was cleaning out the desk, I remembered those business cards I had. I looked them over again. The only reason they were given to me was because they knew me as Danielle. I wondered if this might be the right time to call them. I tossed the three from California and the two from Chicago in the wastebasket and looked at the remaining one from Rochester, MN.

The card read "JENCO STUDIOS, Jenny Conte, independent photographer." I called the number and got an answering machine. I decided not to leave my name and number. I would call back later.

I finished cleaning out the desk and then the entire condo. I had just finished a turkey sub when the phone rang. My caller ID told me it was JENCO STUDIOS calling back. I had forgotten that caller ID works both ways.

I picked up the receiver and said, "Hello."

"Hi. Is this Danny Weston?" the woman asked in a very soft voice.

"Yes, this is Danny," I answered.

"This is Jenny Conte. I saw your name on my caller ID. What can I do for you?"

"Well, I got your card at the convention center some time ago but I've been quite busy. Things have been slow at work recently, though. I found your card as I was going through my desk drawer and I thought I would give you a call," I answered.

"I see you are in Des Moines, Iowa. I haven't been there since the formal apparel show at the convention center. Are you sure I gave it to you?"

I swallowed hard.

"Well not exactly. I got your card with some freebies the models are given after the show."

I wondered how she would take that since all the models were female.

"YOU were one of the models?" Her voice had gone up an octave.

"Yes. One of the girls couldn't make it and I agreed to fill in for her using the name Danielle. I didn't expect to continue doing this but the money is very good."

She paused a minute. "I see. Have you done any other work like this?"

I thought it was better to answer honestly. "Yes. I was in the store's first window display and also worked for Lisa Newman here in town."

"I see. I like the way you handled yourself. I may have something coming up in the near future. Are you able to come to Rochester for several days?"

"Yes I can. The middle of the week is better for me with my current work schedule at the store."

"OK, that works out better for me too. I'll be in touch within a week or so. Thanks."

I hung up the phone and marked my calendar two weeks in advance to see if she would call.

If I spent three days of the week there, I could make as much as a couple weeks stocking shelves and scrubbing toilets.

I continued my duties at the store with no mention of my call to JENCO. I still saw an occasional smirk and heard the giggles behind my back. The grand opening at Rochester was almost over when Jenny called me on a Saturday night.

"Can you come here for a shoot Wednesday and Thursday this week?"

"Yes I can," I answered right away.

"Good. Here's a number for a motel about two miles from my studio."

I jotted the number down.

"Be at the studio at 8 AM. You get fifty per hour and expenses. See you on Wednesday."

I hung up the phone. I was quite surprised to hear from her. She couldn't be desperate for a model. Maybe the fact that I was a man intrigued her. In any event, I couldn't lose much by going up there to work.

Tuesday, I packed a few things in a small bag and drove up to Rochester. I found my motel, checked in and called JENCO. I got the answering machine and left a message that I was in town and would be in at eight the next morning. I watched some TV and, after supper, took my usual soak and shave.

I was tired from the drive and went to bed early.

The next morning I shaved my face again and drove to the studio. I parked in the rear of an office building and walked inside. After locating the suite number on the register, I went downstairs where the studio was located. I walked inside and stood at the counter.

There was no one in the front office but I could hear voices in the back. Several minutes went by and a short brunette walked in with a cup of coffee in her hand. She smiled and walked over to me extending her right hand. "Hi I'm Jenny."

"Danny Weston," I said as we shook hands.

"Come in to my office and we'll get started."

I walked around the counter and followed her into the office.

"Sit down."

I took the seat opposite of her. She looked me over.

"You have excellent features. I can see why there was so much buzz about you in the audience."

"I just did what they told me to do," I answered.

"That's not the story I got. You got a little carried away there and while the audience was pleased, your employers weren't too thrilled."

"They seemed to be OK with the sales orders that came in following the show," I countered.

Jenny smiled. "Yes they were. That's why I asked you here. I have a job for you but there won't be any time for games. Are you willing to do as you are told?"

"Yes. I can do a good job for you. Your offer was very generous."

She smiled again as she got up. "Good. Let's go to work, follow me."

I got up and walked behind her to the studio.

"This is Barb. She will be assisting us today."

I smiled as a stocky black haired woman in a purple football jersey and jeans walked up to me and shook my hand.

"I am pleased to meet you, Danny. In the dressing room you will find what you need. For your makeup, use blusher and lipstick only."

I nodded and walked inside the dressing room. There was a toilet, sink and a lighted mirror on a small table with some makeup items as well as a brown wig on its foam head. On a stuffed chair next to the vanity, I found a white body briefer with foam breasts already in the cups and a pair of white pantyhose.

I undressed, put the items on and made up my face. I put on the wig cap and wig, then walked out to the studio floor.

Barb adjusted the briefcase straps and handed me a full-length white slip. I put on the slip as she stood back and looked me over.

"You look fine," she said.

She tightened the slip straps slightly, took a uniform off the rack and unzipped it. I put the white nurse's dress on and she zipped me up. After pinning a nurse's cap to the top of the wig, she pulled the dress a little tighter and secured it in the back with clothespins.

"This will make the dress look more tailored," she explained. "Now put those shoes on and get in front of the camera."

The white sneakers were a little small but I managed to squeeze into them. I walked to the makeshift platform and faced Jenny. She looked through the camera and began taking pictures. After taking several shots, she motioned me to change poses and I followed her instructions.

"Okay. Change uniforms."

I modeled several different dresses, then I removed my slip and modeled several pantsuit uniforms before we finished.

"Very good, Danielle, I mean Danny. Change from white to sheer panty hose and take off the nurse's cap.

I took off the last pantsuit and Barb placed it on the rack. Then she wheeled the rack to the corner of the room. I went into the dressing room and changed. When I came back out, I took a seat as Barb and Jenny began setting things up for the next shot.

"These next shots are uniforms for a private school."

Barb handed me a frilly white blouse. I put the blouse on and buttoned it. Next she handed me a plaid skirt. While I put it on, she removed a dark blue blazer from the rack.

"Try this on for size," said Barb.

The blazer was a little small so I took it off and she got another one off the rack which fit close enough. The ensemble's last item was a pair of black leather pumps with two-inch heels. They didn't fit quite right but were good enough to be photographed in. I followed Jenny's instructions and stood in several different poses. When she was finished, Jenny waved me off again.

"Done!" she said.

I walked over to Barb, kicked off the shoes, and undressed.

"What's next?" I asked as Barb hung the blouse, jacket and skirt on the rack.

"A break!" said Jenny as she handed me a fuzzy pink bathrobe. "Have a seat in your dressing room while Barb and I set up the backdrop for the next shot. We'll call you when we are ready."

I went back to my little room and sat down at the vanity. The reflection in the mirror said it all. I certainly did make a pretty girl. I couldn't help but think of what money I could be making if I ever got to a real runway or photo shoot. As I gazed at my feminine image in the mirror, I thought about all the things I could buy. It would be like winning the lottery. My financial fantasies came to a halt as Barb opened the door.

“Freshen your blusher and lipstick and come back out here.”

I brushed some more powder over my cheeks and filled in my lips again with more lipstick. I walked over to the white backdrop and Barb handed me a pair of ruffled pink panties.

“Give me your robe and slip these on. We’re shooting only the panties so just stand still.”

After several shots, I changed panties seven more times, once for each color. The next eight panties were long-legged ones that reached about halfway to my knees. The last set of eight was full-length and went all the way to my ankles. The nylon tricot material had a soft and sensual feel. I’m sure it would have been better on my bare skin instead of wearing them over pantyhose and a foundation garment.

After slipping off the last pair, Barb handed me a large petticoat and I stepped into it and pulled it up to my waist. These also came in many colors and Jenny took two shots of each color as well. The last petticoat to be photographed was the white one.

“Leave that one on,” said Jenny.

Barb then handed me a square dance dress and I slipped it over my head. There were about a dozen of these and Jenny took several shots of each style. Finally we broke for lunch. Barb ordered some sandwiches as I undressed and got back into my pink fuzzy bathrobe.

“You’re doing fine. We’re a little ahead of schedule so keep up the good work!”

We ate lunch and then got back to work. The afternoon’s work consisted mostly of slacks and blouse combinations as well as pantsuits, all with low or flat heel shoes. None of the clothes were brand names and most were polyester or blends.

About three, Jenny said we were done for the day and I should be back at nine the next day to finish up.

I removed my wig, makeup and lingerie. I dressed and checked myself in the mirror before walking to my car. I ate supper out, caught a movie, drove back to the motel and turned in.

I checked out early that morning and got breakfast at a drive-through on my way to the studio. Jenny hadn’t come in yet when I arrived. Barb was in the back setting things up as I headed for my dressing room.

“Put on your makeup and the lingerie I left for you. Jenny will be here shortly,” she said.

I nodded, entered the dressing room, and closed the door.

I undressed and after inserting the foam breasts, put on a black bra and panty set. A garter belt and seamed stockings were next. I did my makeup, put on a black wig and walked back out to where Barb had a red satin sheet over the top of a small bed. Next to the bed was a pair of five-inch stiletto heel leather pumps.

“Put the pumps on and stand in front of the bed,” said Barb.

I did so as Jenny came in and set her camera on the tripod. After changing several times to model each color, the next style was modeled; again several shots for each color were taken. When the last shot was taken, Barb handed me a strapless flesh-colored bra.

“Wear this under the sleepwear sets.”

I went back to the dressing room, put on the bra and inserted the falsies. The sleepwear sets came in a variety of styles and colors. The feel of satin and chiffon on my bare skin never felt so good. The garments had no labels but I am sure they were an expensive brand. Each peignoir and gown set had a matching hair ribbon that Barb pinned to the top of my wig. Jenny took the last shot just before noon. I put on my fuzzy pink bathrobe and scuffs and we broke for lunch.

“We’re ahead of schedule and you’re doing just fine,” said Jenny. “Sometimes when I’m looking through that lens I can’t believe I’m photographing a guy!”

I smiled and said “As long as you’re happy with the shot, that’s all that matters, I mean in addition to spelling my name right on the check.”

The girls laughed as we sat down to eat our sandwiches.

After lunch, I freshened up my makeup and we went back to work. I spent the first hour in a blouse and skirt, sitting at a table in front of a white backdrop. Barb took out about two dozen wigs in various colors and styles from their boxes. I put each one on and Barb helped me adjust it and then I was photographed.

The next hour was spent modeling a variety of hair bows, clasps and pins with a few changes of wigs in between. The last hour I was in and out of raincoats, plastic boots and rain hats, all of which came in a variety of colors and styles.

When the last shot was taken, Jenny said, “That’s it.” I went back to the dressing room and removed my makeup and wig. I dressed as Danny again and walked to the front office as Barb began packing things up for the various vendors. Jenny handed me a check. I checked the amount and signed the release.

“Thanks Danny, good job!” she said.

“Thank you too. I’m glad to get the work as well as the money!”

I left the studio and drove back to Des Moines.

It was late when I got back so I stopped to grab a burger and fries at a drive-through and went home. I was pretty proud of myself. As much as I had hoped to find a way out of this, I had to admit if there was this kind of money out there, then there certainly was no point in turning it down!

Two days work here with Lisa or in Rochester with Jenny a couple of times a month and my car would be paid for in no time and I would be able to save more for school...if I could ever decide which school that would be.

If my prettiness was good enough for female modeling, maybe I could get a job as a male model. Most of the male models were physically larger and more muscular than I was. Swimming had kept me in top shape but I had my doubts about being “masculine enough” in the sense of a chiseled facial look or muscular arms and legs.

After watching some TV, I became aware that I had begun to take more notice of the actors in the commercials and the stories. I watched the females to see how they were dressed, the way their hair and makeup was done and how they accessorized themselves. I also was more aware of the women in print ads in both newspapers and magazines in a similar fashion.

When I was walking through a mall or working in the store, I seemed to be more and more drawn to observe the female customers and how they were dressed, made-up and the way they behaved in their walk and other feminine mannerisms.

While at home, I continued to practice my walk and mannerisms periodically. I wore a pair of five-inch heel pumps I had purchased from an Internet site and a black skirt I had picked up at a garage sale. I read the makeup ads and became more familiar with the different products.

The summer was a warm one, so to protect my face, I stayed indoors most of the time and used the pool only in the evenings as well as washing my face with cold cream instead of soap. The clothing, shoes and paper or cardboard boxes kept the store almost humidity-free; as a result everyone used hand lotion frequently at work and I used it at home too.

As August approached, the back-to-school sale was next on the agenda and I would be plenty busy unpacking and moving out the stock until Labor Day Weekend. I hadn't heard a word from Ms. LaRue in some time and my only contact with Madge or Jean had just been to say hello in passing as I moved stock out on the floor.

August was hotter than July. The air conditioning unit could barely keep up with the load it was put under. Customers came in wearing shorts, T-shirts and sandals. All the employees wished we could do the same. Sales were on pace with expectations and things appeared to be going smoothly. Famous last words, as someone once said.

The heat wave had just begun to taper off as the third week in August was drawing to a close. I went to work Friday night as usual and found a note on my time card. This time it was from Sally who worked in formal apparel. I punched in and walked up the stairs to the balcony and found Sally at the rear. She was standing next to a woman on her knees who was fixing the hem of a bridesmaid's dress.

"What do you need?" I inquired.

She motioned me back to her small office. As I walked by the woman on her knees, I caught the glimpse of an ear-to-ear grin.

"One of our clients' bridesmaids has been in a car accident and can't make the wedding. Its tomorrow and she needs someone to fill in. You're about her size. I know you modeled for the store as Danielle and you were a very convincing girl. I said I might find someone to substitute. They already bought the dress and it would be a shame to disappoint the bride. Can you help them out?"

I was a little stunned to say the least.

"Well first of all, I'm scheduled for work tomorrow and..."

She cut me off and said, "I talked to Ms. LaRue. She said there's nothing here that has to be done that urgently."

"Okay, I guess I can," I answered.

"Oh, that's wonderful. I'll call her right away to let her know. Come back up here when you're finished working so we can alter your dress."

I left and went to the loading area and began moving stock out on the floor. After finishing up with my cleaning chores, I went back to the balcony and found Sally.

"I'm all done," I announced.

"Splendid. Go in my office, change into a foundation and come back out."

I walked to her office and closed the door. God, I couldn't believe I had agreed to this! I undressed and put on the white body briefers. I stepped out of the office and walked over to where Sally was. She handed me a long petticoat and I stepped into it. She held up a peach-colored satin tea length dress by the hem and I slipped it over my head. She zipped me up and adjusted the dress over the petticoat.

Working with pins, she fixed the hem, then stood back, some distance away.

"Put the shoes on next."

I put on a pair of white three-inch dyeables.

"The shoes she bought would be too small for you. Do those fit?"

"Yes, these will be fine."

"Good. I'll dye them tonight."

She unzipped me and helped me take off the dress. I removed the shoes and stepped out of the petticoat. After I finished changing into my clothes, she handed me a sheet of paper.

"This is the address of the church. The wedding is at noon but they want you there at ten-thirty to be dressed and made-up. Everything will be at the church for you. The rest of the sheet details the ceremony and the itinerary afterward. I'll drive you back to the church after the reception, dinner and dance."

"DANCE?" Whoa, I'm not dancing with a guy!"

"You won't have to. You are going to be the punch girl at the dance after the reception. Besides your escort, the bride's brother, Eddie, is gay, and he's not going to try anything!"

"Well okay, I guess."

I went back to the loading area, punched out and then drove home.

I took a hot shower and shaved my legs and face. I slept soundly and the next morning shaved my face again for good measure. I went over the itinerary and memorized the service processional.

There were only a few cars when I arrived at the church around 10:15. I went inside and found Sally waiting near the door. "I'm glad you're early. Come with me."

I followed her to a small room at the back of the church. Once inside, I saw she had set up a folding chair and a table with my foundation, hose, and wig on it.

"Get dressed and let me know when you are ready."

I undressed and put my clothes on the chair and then put on the body briefers, hose and wig. I stepped into the petticoat and the peach-colored heels. I opened the door and let Sally back in. She unzipped the dress and removed it from its hanger, then helped me put it on. After adjusting the hem around the petticoat, she zipped me up. The peach-colored hairpiece was attached to the top of my wig. From her purse, she removed blusher and lipstick and did my face. I opened a package of press-on nails that was on the table and put them on. Sally was all smiles when we finished.

"We're all set. The bride and the other bridesmaids haven't arrived yet. When we are ready for you, I'll let you know."

She walked out and I sat down and began thumbing through a couple of bridal magazines that had been left on the table. I paged thru the magazines slowly as I had about a forty-minute wait. I could hear people arriving as I looked at one beautiful dress after another. Satin was not only gorgeous to look at but it felt wonderful against smooth skin as well.

The prelude music began and the buzz of conversation died down. There was a knock on the door and then Sally walked in.

"Showtime!" she announced.

I stood up and smoothed my dress as I walked out to the main entrance. The Bride and her dad as well as two bridesmaids and their escorts were standing ahead of me.

"Danielle, this is Eddie, the bride's brother. Eddie, meet Danielle, one of the employees at Amelia's."

I smiled and shook hands with Eddie.

"I am pleased to meet you, Danielle, and I'm so glad you could fill in today. My sister and I really appreciate it."

"I'm glad I can help you out," I said as I put my arm through his.

We took our place in line and waited for the processional to begin. The music stopped and the wedding march began. As we began to move forward, Eddie patted my arm and said, "Try to relax. You look fabulous. Just follow my lead."

The wedding went off without a hitch and after the people left the church and the pictures were taken, Eddie drove me to the reception hall. Eddie was the perfect gentleman, opening doors for me and taking my hand as I exited the car.

I found the punch table and began serving the guests who didn't care for alcohol. Following the dinner, Eddie drove me back to the church. We wouldn't be missed at the dance since most of the people were pretty well lubricated by that time and wouldn't remember much of anything.

Eddie thanked me again and left as Sally arrived and helped me get the dress off. She stepped out and I changed back into Danny's clothes. She gave me a container of face cream and some tissues. I removed my makeup and wig. From her purse, she handed me a white envelope.

"The bride is very appreciative of what you did on such short notice and she wanted you to have this."

"Thanks," I replied as I left the church.

When I got home, I opened the envelope and inside the thank you card was a hundred-dollar bill. Not bad for an afternoons work and tax-free to boot.

The end of August brought the fall line in and I shipped the balance of our summer inventory back to the warehouse.

I received a large envelope in the mail with some of the pictures taken at the wedding. The attached note read, "Thought you might enjoy these, Danielle." The photographs were sharp and clear. I looked as pretty as any of the bridesmaids and almost as radiant as the bride herself.

I put them in the drawer with the copies of photos from the jobs I had done for Lisa and Jenny. Included with these photographs were cuttings from newspaper photographs of our store's ads as well as from the articles about the shows at the convention center. I was slowly but surely building a portfolio of my work. I had a better resume for work as Danielle than I did as Danny.

As the Labor Day Weekend drew near, I was continually being asked to work in the shoe department with one excuse or another. I wasn't falling behind in my stocking duties so it didn't really concern me too much. I had no better flair for shoe sales than anything else but had learned quite a bit about the different styles and types of shoes women were buying as well as a lot about human nature.

I found that women won't talk to another woman the way they will talk to a man who is waiting on them. Like if something has gone wrong in their life, it's my fault. I much preferred to do stock and cleanup work than listen to the women bitch about one thing or another as I was trying to sell them a pair of shoes.

Nevertheless, I continued to fill in when I was needed. At least I wasn't being asked to sell lingerie or dresses. It wouldn't have surprised me in the least if Ms. LaRue would ask me to become Danielle for a day in the dress department.

I was still unsure about a school. I normally had no problem making a decision about anything but I still was not certain what course in life I should take. Right now money was not a problem; with a part-time job four days a week and the extra money I got as Danielle, I was getting by well enough.

The Friday after a busy Labor Day Weekend, I found a note on my timecard to see Ms. LaRue. I couldn't imagine what she needed to see me for. I had hoped my days of being Danielle at the store were over since I could do much better freelancing her image to others outside my regular employment.

As I walked through the store, a couple of the girls smiled as I walked past them. Now what? I thought as I climbed the front stairs to the main offices. Anne had gone for the day so I walked directly back to Ms. LaRue's office and knocked on the door.

"Come in," she said.

I opened the door and walked in. She was seated behind her desk. Sitting in the corner chair opposite her was a tall woman with dark brown hair.

"Danny, this is Cindy Rome. Cindy, this is Danny Weston."

I extended my arm as she stood up and we shook hands.

"Pleased to meet you, Danny," she said as she sat back down.

"Same here, Ms. Rome." I said as I took my seat.

"Ms Rome is the owner of a California modeling agency based in Sacramento. She has a three-year contract with us to do all of our ads for print as well as the film ads for TV commercials. She has seen your work for us here as a live mannequin, tapes of the two convention shows as well as copies of the freelance work you have done for both JENCO and Lisa Newman. She feels you are a perfect candidate to be Amelia's girl and has a business proposition for you."

Cindy spoke in a soft almost melodic voice.

"You will be the featured model in all the stores' advertising. You will be working in Sacramento doing the photo shoots and will travel occasionally to the other stores to do live mannequin work as well as appear at grand openings of new stores. You will have a three-year contract that coincides with the agencies. There are stipulations however.

"The first and most important of these is that you can no longer freelance yourself to other studios or agencies. The second is that you must follow the instructions you are given. Insubordination, cutting up at shows, et cetera. will not be tolerated. You will wear what the agency tells you to wear, when, where and how to wear it. In addition you will be told what to say and how to act at various functions.

"The third stipulation is that after a company physical, you will strictly adhere to a diet, vitamin & supplement, and exercise routine specified by the agency so that your weight stays around but not over 135. Amelia's retains the rights to all of your pictures and video ads for TV. You will have life, health, and dental insurance paid for as well as all expenses. Your compensation will be \$100,000 per year.

"You will receive \$10,000 each month except February and November. In addition you will receive relocating expenses not to exceed \$2000. A local realtor will handle the sale of your current home and the company will loan you fifty percent of the cost of a new home until the old one is sold and you get your money. All of this is spelled out in the contract."

She handed me a folder with the papers inside.

"Take some time to think it over. Consult an attorney to go over the contract with you so you know exactly what we expect of you. We have to know your decision by October 1st. You will have to be in Sacramento by January 2nd to start work. Do you have any questions?"

I was absolutely stunned. I honestly couldn't believe what I had just heard. An extra fifty bucks an hour here and there was one thing but three years guaranteed at a hundred thousand per was unreal!

"I don't know what to say except that I will take the time to consider this."

"That's fine, Danny. We understand completely. Just be sure to let us know by October 1st."

"I will."

I got up, walked out to my car, left the papers on the front seat, then went back inside to work. It was hard to be thinking of anything with that mind-boggling offer on the table. I had never been to the west coast. The weather would certainly be much nicer. The cost of living would be higher in California but the difference in salary would make it worthwhile. I went about my usual chores and drove home still somewhat dazed at the offer.

That week I made an appointment with an attorney recommended by the man who helped me with my mother's estate. I made no mention to him that I would be modeling as Danielle and kept my questions to what was outlined in the contract. Everything seemed to be in order.

I still had lingering doubts about how I could carry this double life off. This would almost require me to live my life full-time as Danielle and I wondered how I was going to work around that. My swimming had kept me trim and maintaining my weight would not be a problem.

Over the next several weeks, I would jot down questions I wanted to ask Cindy when we talked again. I kept trying to find a reason to turn it down. As a young man, I certainly didn't want to live as a young woman but the money was overriding all of the objections my mind was trying to conjure up.

At the end of the three years, I would be able to start any school in whatever field I decided with no financial hardship; at graduation I would be still young enough to have no difficulty entering the labor force. I had a few sleepless nights the week leading up to my deadline. I read and reread the contract stipulations and felt there would be no problems with any of the requirements they would impose upon me. It seemed that I was being drawn to do this, so I decided to sign the papers.

I called Cindy and she answered my questions. After signing the contract and making photocopies, I turned in the originals to Ms. LaRue.

I had three months to get things in order before I would be officially on board as an employee and I wanted to have everything taken care of ahead of time. I contacted a realtor and had the condo appraised and listed. I planned on selling everything but my clothes and leaving whatever was unsold as part of the condo. I didn't want to be hauling a lot of stuff two thousand miles.

I received a package from Cindy the next week with a letter confirming the receipt of the signed contracts and enclosing several containers of vitamin supplements that I was to begin taking immediately. There was also an appointment card for an employment physical I had to take the next week as well as one for a laser clinic for hair removal.

Cindy's note indicated this would be better than shaving frequently which I admit was time consuming and bothersome. I didn't have a lot of body hair to begin with and had kept myself smooth for swimming, which I enjoyed so much. She also instructed me to let my hair and nails grow. I stopped getting haircuts but I kept my nails trimmed somewhat short so they wouldn't be too noticeable and interfere with moving boxes of merchandise at work. No one mentioned my leaving at the end of the year so I didn't either.

I reported for my physical the next week and it went quickly. The laser clinic was in the same building and I found the process to be pleasant.

By the end of the month, my body was almost entirely hair-free and the special beard retardant shave cream I had been given for my face worked equally as well as I could now go almost four days without shaving.

My skin seemed to have a softer texture and an almost feminine glow to it. My last trip to the laser clinic involved some eyebrow shaping and I was truly amazed at the results. Once my hair got longer, I would have a much prettier face.

I gave my two weeks' notice the first week in December. The condo was practically empty and I was eating out, having used up all the groceries. A few potential buyers had stopped by but there hadn't been any firm offers.

I reserved a U-Haul trailer and made out a trip itinerary with a travel club. I made reservations for a week at a motel in Sacramento as well as contacting a local realtor to set up appointments to see some small condos in that area. I was pretty much set for my trip out west.

A week before I was due to leave, I stood in front of the mirror after showering and was surprised at the way my body looked. For the last two weeks I had felt an unusual tightness in my chest. I had figured it was just muscle soreness after lifting a lot of boxes of Christmas stuff that had been coming in. My smooth, hair-free body with the longer hair on my head gave me quite a girly appearance. I was intrigued by the way I looked and knew I was going to pass easily as Danielle.

I worked my last day and Ms. LaRue handed me a check for the hours worked to date. "Good luck in California," she said as I walked out of her office.

Anne was on the phone but she smiled and waved good-by. I walked through the store for the last time and the girls who did see me leaving were smiling as I walked by. I passed the loading area on the way out and saw a young boy, not unlike myself several years ago, loading up boxes of stock on a handcart.

I went to the bank, cashed my check and closed my accounts. I purchased some travelers checks and headed home. I contacted the phone and power companies to discontinue service at the end of the month. I checked my list for the last time and found I had done everything to get ready to move. The only thing left was to load up the small U-Haul and leave the keys to the condo at the realty office.

I planned to leave a week before Christmas. A small storm had just passed through, leaving about three inches of snow. It would be about a week before the next system would be coming from the west so I would have about four days of good traveling weather.

Saturday I picked up the U-Haul and loaded everything I was going to take. The realtor came around with some prospective buyers. At 3 PM, he called with their offer and I accepted it. Sunday, I sold the last pieces of furniture. I checked into a motel and slept fitfully that night. Monday morning, I dropped the keys off at the realty office and headed west. I wasn't leaving much of a life behind me and I wasn't real sure what lay ahead.

I looked into the rear view mirror and saw a reflection that told me Danielle would have more of a say about that than I would. A new beginning is supposed to be a good thing and probably this would be all of that. There was a little uncertainty in this adven-

ture I was embarking on but like my stepmother once said, "No matter what happens, tomorrow is another day."

THE END