



*Reluctant Press presents:*

# Mesmerized



**Briana Vermont**

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A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

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# Mesmerized

**By Briana Vermont**

## **Chapter One The Amazing Vesko**

The audience roared with laughter. Paul Veskovitch, AKA the Amazing Vesko, knew how to work an audience. He should; after all he had been performing this same show for over twenty years. Of course it had changed, grown and evolved as he learned what people wanted to see, what they found intriguing and what simply bored them. Yes, Paul could keep a room full of people entertained quite easily for an hour and a half, three shows plus Saturday matinee, before moving on to the next town, the next audience, the next performance.

“Some people accuse me of being a fake. I hope to convince you otherwise. Hypnotism is very real, and a

well-established scientific fact. Our three volunteers here on stage look as if they are asleep, but they are not. They are in a state of hypnotic trance, and will respond to my voice. Any suggestions I give them, they will respond to without question as if it was their own idea. Let's give it a try, shall we?"

Paul turned to his three volunteers. With his back to the audience, he put his hand to his chest and took a deep breath. He'd been running late earlier in the day, and had to bolt down a greasy hamburger at a local diner just before the show. Now the acid indigestion was killing him. One more hour to go.

"Jason," he called out to his first volunteer. All three volunteers had been selected from the audience earlier in the show. They had then been placed in a deep, hypnotic trance, and seated in chairs against the back of the stage. "Would you please stand, take my hand and follow me to the front of the stage."

The first volunteer stood from his chair, and very slowly walked to the front of the stage, his eyes still closed.

"Now Jason, do you remember the key words I gave you earlier?" Paul asked. He knew that Jason would remember, but he found he often had to remind the audience to keep them engaged and to prevent them from getting confused. "When I say 'clock in', you will open your eyes and return to full wakefulness. If I should say 'clock out', then you will immediately return to this hypnotic state, aware of nothing but my voice. Do you understand?"

Jason nodded and slurred, "Yes, I understand."

"Now Jason, for the rest of this evening, whenever you hear me say the word 'Moon', you are going to

moo like a cow, long and loud. Once you have done so, you will immediately forget that it was you who made the noise. Do you understand?"

Again, Jason nodded and responded.

Paul turned to the audience. "As far as Jason knows, he has just arrived on the stage. He has no idea he has been hypnotized, and no memory of the conversations we've had. Shall we bring him back?"

Paul turned to Jason and said in a clear, strong voice, "Clock in."

"Thank you for volunteering," Paul said to Jason, as Jason slowly opened his eyes. "Let's have another round of applause for him, shall we?" The audience responded and applauded enthusiastically.

Paul turned his attention to Jason. "Before we get started, I'd like to find out a bit about you. Can you tell me, how did you come to be here this evening?"

Jason responded, a bit nervous at speaking before the large audience. "Um, my girlfriend Megan told me about the show."

"So you're here with Megan, are you?" said Paul. "And why would two young people want to be here this evening, instead of walking together under the moon?"

"Mooo-ooo-ooooo!" Jason brayed, long and loud. The audience roared with laughter. Jason looked around in shock. He looked left and right frantically and asked, "What the hell was that?" The audience laughed even harder.

"I was just saying," responded Paul as if nothing had happened, "that two young people might find more entertainment under a starry, moon-lit..."

“Moo-oooo-oOoooOO!” Jason roared involuntarily, without allowing Paul to even finish his sentence. The audience laughed hysterically, as he searched frantically around the stage for the source of the horrible noise.

“Are you a romantic, Jason?” asked Paul. “How do you react, when you and a young lady see the full moon?”

“Moo-OOOoo-OOOOooo!” replied Jason. “Didn’t you hear that?” he demanded as the audience fell out of their seats with laughter.

“Let’s have a round of applause for Jason, shall we?” Paul led Jason to the stairs that would take him back to the audience.

“But I thought you would hypnotize me?” said Jason, clearly confused as an usher led him to his seat.

“Ask Megan, she’ll explain it to you after the show. But not now. Later, outside, under the moon.”

“Mooo-oooOOOO!”

“Let’s meet our second volunteer. Melissa, would you please stand, and follow me to the front of the stage.” The young woman did as she was asked, without opening her eyes. Paul guided her, and faced her toward him at the edge of the stage.

Turning to the audience, Paul explained the next part of his act. “In a hypnotic state, I can make someone believe anything, or I can make them forget anything. The simplest, most obvious concepts can be wiped away, leaving the subject to deal with the consequences.”

Paul turned to his volunteer. “Melissa, when you awake you will be unable to remember the number

three. This number will no longer exist. The concept of 'three' will have no meaning. Do you understand?"

Melissa simply nodded.

"Clock in!" said Paul, and Melissa slowly opened her eyes.

"Melissa, thank you for volunteering," said Paul. "Are you nervous?"

Melissa glanced at the audience. "Oh, yes!" she giggled.

"No need to be nervous, everyone here is your friend," he reassured her. "I tell you what; before we begin I'll ask you a few simple questions. Some obvious questions that you don't even have to think about to answer. That should get you used to speaking in front of an audience, okay?"

"Um, sure," said Melissa.

"Okay. So Melissa, how many fingers do you have?"

"Um, ten of course!" she laughed.

"Hold them up, for everyone to see. Doesn't she have wonderful fingers, everyone?"

The audience applauded as Melissa wiggled her fingers for them.

"Amazing, ten of them! Who would have imagined?" said Paul. "Maybe you could count them for us?"

"Um, okay!" Melissa laughed shyly. She lowered her fingers one at a time as she counted, "One, two, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten... eleven?"

"Eleven?" said Paul as if confused. The audience laughed. "I thought you said ten?"

“Well I do have ten!” Melissa said in confusion, looking at her hands, counting again and coming to the same result.

“Try counting each hand separately, so you can figure out which one is the problem,” Paul suggested.

Melissa counted her left hand, “One, two, four, five, six! Six fingers?!”

“Try the right, just to make sure,” Paul suggested.

Melissa raised her right hand and counted. “Six on this hand too!”

“So what is six plus six?” Paul asked.

“Twelve fingers?” said Melissa in amazement.

“I thought you only had eleven fingers?” asked Paul as the audience laughed.

“I do! I mean, no, ten fingers! Not eleven, not twelve!”

Melissa was becoming distraught, and so Paul decided it was time to release her. “Clock out!” he said to her, and she immediately closed her eyes.

“Melissa, when you hear the word ‘three’, you will once again remember the concept of three. Do you understand?”

Melissa nodded.

“Clock in!” said Paul.

“You seem to be having some trouble,” Paul suggested.

“I have ten fingers, really!” said Melissa, frantically counting them again.

“Let’s try it together, okay? Hold your hands up to the audience, and we’ll all try it together. Lower your fingers one at a time, and we’ll all count together.”

Melissa raised her hands, and as she lowered her fingers one at a time, she, Paul, and the audience counted together:

“One, two, THREE!”

The audience roared with laughter as realization dawned on Melissa. Her face showed a mixture of shock, disbelief, and embarrassment, but mostly relief! Paul led her back to the audience.

“Another round of applause for Melissa!” said Paul, and everyone applauded as she found her seat, her friends greeting her ecstatically.

“I hope by now you realize, what I do is real. As real as the moon above.”

“Mooo-ooOO-OOOO!” called out Jason involuntarily from his seat. Everyone laughed as he looked around to find the source of the bizarre noise.

“So far I’ve shown you a few tricks, but for my next volunteer I want to create a whole new world. A world that only he can see, and a world with fundamental differences from the world he has always known.”

Paul turned from the audience. He took a deep breath, still bothered by his indigestion. His hands shook as he wiped the sweat from his forehead. He blinked to keep it from his eyes. Only another forty-five minutes, and he could get back to his hotel room.

“Jordan, please stand, and come with me.”

Paul led the next volunteer to the front of the stage, his eyes closed, his body movements slow and sluggish.

“Jordan, I need you to understand that everything I tell you is true. You will know it is true, and none of it will surprise you. Do you understand?”

Jordan nodded. “I understand.”

“That’s good. Because the truth is, you are a girl.” There was some shocked laughter from the audience. “Everything that has ever happened to you, all your memories, are the same as they ever were. Except you were born a girl, have always been a girl, and are now a girl. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” agreed Jordan groggily.

“When you awaken you will not be on stage, and there will be no audience. You will be in my office. I am Dr. Vesko, a therapist, and you have come to me for advice. You will tell me that you have been feeling lost and confused. Do you understand?”

“Ya-huh,” agreed Jordan.

“Oh, and if you hear a cow, it’s only a truck outside on the street. Now please disregard what I am about to say.” Paul turned to the audience and explained further. “Nothing is more ingrained in us than our gender. Five hundred million years of evolution, plus growing up in a culture that strongly emphasises gender differences, will ensure that Jordan knows beyond a doubt that he is male. So can a few words from me convince him otherwise? Let’s see!”

Paul turned back to Jordan. “Jordan, are you with me now? Okay then, Clock in!”

Jordan opened his eyes and looked around. It was not at all obvious what he was looking at.

“Good afternoon,” Paul greeted him. “I’m Dr. Vesko. And you are...?”

“Um, Jordan. Jordan Perlman,” Jordan replied in a small, slightly confused voice, a little too high-pitched for a boy.

“Jordan,” said Paul, as if listening to himself as he spoke the name. “That’s a beautiful name. A lovely name, for a lovely young woman.”

Jordan smiled shyly. “Um, thank you,” he accepted the compliment.

“I suppose people tell you that all the time,” said Paul, to the laughter of the audience.

“Um, no, not really,” said Jordan, searching his memories and finding no compliments on being a lovely young woman. He looked toward the audience, with a strange look as they continued to laugh.

“I want you to ignore any noises from that direction,” commanded Paul. Jordan immediately looked away from the audience. “Maybe you could tell me why you’ve come to see me.”

“I’m not sure, really,” replied Jordan, his voice sounding very girlish. “I just feel kind of lost, and confused.”

“That’s not unusual, for a young girl at your age,” Paul reassured him. “I’d like to just have a little conversation with you. But first, please take a look around my office. Could you describe it to me?”

Jordan looked at the empty stage, the curtains, the wings and the audience. “You have a desk over there, with a wall of books behind it. There are some diplo-

mas on the wall, and a painting over there. And over there is a couch and a leather chair."

"So with all those diplomas and books, I should be able to help you, don't you think?"

Jordan smiled. "Yes, Dr. Vesko," he agreed.

"Why don't you sit on the couch, and I'll take the leather chair." Paul led Jordan to the two plastic chairs at the side of the stage, and they sat together. Paul was incredibly relieved to be sitting as he was feeling worse with every passing minute.

"Tell me about your childhood," said Paul. "Were you a typical little girl? Did you like unicorns, butterflies and hair ribbons?"

"Jordan thought a moment. "No, no I never liked any of that."

"Clock out," said Paul, sending Jordan into his hypnotic state. "You really did love unicorns, butterflies and hair ribbons, but your parents never gave you any such things. You like all the same things as any other girl. Clock in."

Jordan opened his eyes. "Oh yes, of course I loved all the same things as any other girl. Unicorns, butterflies, hair ribbons, but my parents never gave me such things."

"Did your mother buy you dolls, and pretty dresses?"

Again, Jordan looked back in his memory. "No, she never did."

"Why do you suppose that is?"

"I don't know. I guess I had two older brothers, so I ended up with a lot of their hand-me-downs, and played with their old toys."

"I see," said Paul. "Did your parents give you dance lessons? Girls' gymnastics?"

"No, it was always sports. Rugby, mostly."

"In a girls' league?" Paul asked.

"No, always with boys."

"Did you go to your high school prom?"

"Oh yes, of course!" replied Jordan.

"Who was your date that night?"

"Pamela Menotti," Jordan told him.

"Oh, I didn't realize," said Paul. "You must be a homosexual."

Jordan responded without hesitation, "No! Of course not!"

"Maybe I misunderstood then," said Paul. "Pamela was your date, correct? And Pamela is another girl I assume. Doesn't that make you a homosexual?"

Jordan thought about this. The audience laughed at the puzzled expressions on his face as he tried to figure this out.

"Except, Pamela isn't a girl," he finally concluded.

"Oh, she's not?"

"No, of course not," said Jordan. "She's a boy. She just looks like a girl. So I was a girl, who looked like a boy, and she was a boy who looked like a girl. So we went to the prom together."

"I suppose that makes sense. Clock out," Paul said, and turned to the audience as Jordan's head slumped

down on his chest. "This always fascinates me. A mind that is convinced of a single incorrect fact will twist and turn the entire fabric of reality to maintain its delusion, to ensure everything else fits. This actually explains a lot about the way people actually behave in the real world." He turned back to Jordan.

"Clock in. So tell me, is this the way you usually dress? It isn't very feminine."

Jordan looked at himself, wearing running shoes, jeans, and a regular shirt. "I guess so," he responded.

"When was the last time you wore a dress, or a pretty skirt and blouse?" Paul asked.

Jordan searched his memories. "I can't remember. Never, maybe. I don't think I ever even owned any."

"And do you usually go out without a bra?"

Jordan looked down, and felt his chest with its absence of any brassiere. "I guess so."

"I think I know why you're feeling so lost and confused," said Paul. "It seems as if you've lost all touch with your femininity. It sounds like your parents never acknowledged you as a young girl, and now here you are a young woman still living your life no different than a boy."

Jordan looked shocked. "I never thought of it that way. I've just always been like this, and it never occurred to me to be more feminine."

"I really feel that you should try on a bra," said Paul. He reached into his jacket, pulled out a bra and handed it to Jordan. "Why don't you step behind that screen over there, and try it on," he suggested, pointing toward the front of the stage and the audience - there was no screen.

“Well, okay,” said Jordan meekly. He took the bra and walked toward the front of the stage, but suddenly turned.

“Wait a minute,” Jordan said to Paul suspiciously. “Why do you have a bra in your pocket?”

“It belongs to my receptionist,” Paul told him.

“Oh, that’s okay then,” said Jordan, returning to the imaginary screen. To the audience’s utter amazement, Jordan removed his shirt in front of them and tried to get into the bra. The audience laughed until tears came to their eyes, but Jordan completely ignored them, intent on getting the bra done up behind his back.

Paul sat back and tried to relax, just for a moment. He knew that Jordan would entertain the crowd for at least a couple of minutes. Paul’s indigestion, or whatever it was, was getting worse. He just needed to sit, and breathe. A few deep breaths would clear it, give him the strength to go on, only another half hour...

Paul’s chest felt like he’d been stabbed with an ice pick! The pain was so intense, and so sudden it took him completely off guard. He tried to reach up, but his left arm would barely move. He tried to call out for help, but nothing more than a squeak passed his lips. With all the uproar from the audience, no one noticed as Paul slouched over in his chair, unconscious.

Jordan finally managed to get the bra done up in front of him, and then pulled it over his head like a T-shirt. Checking his handiwork, he put his shirt on over top, then returned to Paul on stage.

“Dr. Vesko, I’ve got it on, except I don’t think it’s the right size. It seems really big. Dr. Vesko? Dr. Vesko!”

Jordan shrieked as he shook Paul by the shoulder, causing him to fall from his chair to the floor.

“Help me!” Jordan called out. “Can anyone hear me? Dr. Vesko, please wake up!”

Jordan was joined on stage by a quick-thinking stage manager, realizing that this was not part of the show and that something had gone very wrong. She quickly looked him over and called out to the wings, “Someone call an ambulance!”

Jordan simply stood back and watched. A man from the audience quickly bounded to the stage, announcing that he was a doctor. He told everyone that it was a heart attack, and quickly began performing CPR.

Jordan remained on stage, out of the way of the action while the audience was quickly ushered from the building. The doctor performed CPR until the ambulance team arrived and took over.

Jordan didn’t know what to do. Feeling slightly foolish, he walked to the front of the stage and removed his shirt, then the bra underneath. Putting his shirt back on he approached the stage manager.

“I think this is yours,” he said, handing her the bra. The poor girl simply stared in confusion as she accepted, then watched as Jordan left the building through a side exit.

## **Chapter Two**

### **A Brand New Day**

Jordan awoke the next morning. He usually slept in on a Saturday, often staying in bed sluggishly till well past noon. Yet somehow today when he woke he felt

refreshed and revitalized. He lay in bed only a moment after waking, then sat up. He felt a strange energy, a need to get up and get moving. A need to accomplish great things! Jordan swung his legs over the side of the bed, and got up.

On a normal day Jordan might have thrown on some clothes, then headed out on the street to find some breakfast. Maybe some bacon and eggs, or pancakes and sausage at one of the small local diners. But with his current energy that all seemed much too heavy. Jordan went to the small kitchen of his small apartment, and looked for what he might put together for himself. There wasn't much to work with, but Jordan easily found exactly what he needed.

"Let's see," he hummed to himself as he looked through the cupboards and the fridge. "I have a few tea bags. No sugar, wait, here's a packet from the diner. Excellent, we can have tea! Let's get the kettle on. And a bit of toast, with raspberry jam. I can't believe I've run out of almost everything."

Jordan found a scrap of paper, then made a quick list of things to pick up at the shop later. By the time the water had boiled he had quite a long list. Jordan vowed to get himself more organized. This was no way to run a kitchen!

Jordan sat at his kitchen table, sipping at his tea and enjoying his toast. He watched out the window as he ate. There was not much of a view, although he could just see a small corner of the park down the street. Mostly he could see the early morning traffic, as people woke and headed down his street, intent on their weekend errands. Then a thought came into his head - a thought unlike any thought he had ever had before...

“Curtains,” he thought aloud in a curious tone. “I should have curtains on this window.”

Jordan was terribly surprised by this idea. Why, after over a year of looking at the same scene through the same window without a thought or a care he should suddenly see a need for curtains he couldn't tell. All he knew was he suddenly had a desire to see curtains on the window. Maybe a nice valance as well. Jordan found another scrap of paper and began a new list, with 'curtains' at the top. He found his original list and added 'paper' to it.

“This place is finally going to get organized,” he said to himself with satisfaction.

With breakfast accomplished, Jordan picked up his dishes and moved them to the side of the sink, where dirty dishes were normally set as they awaited washing. Except there was no room for more dirty dishes. Jordan set his tea mug, small plate, knife and spoon on top of the pile precariously as usual, and immediately felt ashamed of himself.

“Jordan Perlman,” he said to himself sternly. “You are not going to start your weekend this way. This mess looks awful and you can just jolly well take five minutes to clean it up.”

Jordan ran some hot water into the sink, along with a bit of hand soap, as he seemed to be out of dish soap. With a sigh he found his shopping list and made another addition. Then he tackled the week's worth of dirty dishes. Every dish was washed, dried, and stored away in the cupboard. Once he was done he scrubbed down the counter, then wiped the table as well. He finished up by sweeping the floor, which he couldn't remember ever having done before.

Jordan looked around his kitchen with satisfaction. The counters were clean, the table was clean, and the floor was clean! Until he noticed that nothing was really clean, it was all just free of clutter and filth. As he looked more closely he realized that the table and counters were streaky in the light from the window, the cupboards were spattered with who knows what, the stove was grimy, and the window itself was barely transparent any more.

“Tomorrow, this place gets a thorough going-over!” Jordan vowed. Never once did it enter his head that this new cleaning obsession was in any way unusual. It was just something that needed to be done!

Feeling very satisfied with himself, Jordan turned his attention to preparing himself to go out for the day. Normally he would have simply thrown on some clothes and headed for the door, but after his cleaning efforts he felt a need to clean up first. Jordan went to his bathroom, and stared in dismay.

“How did things get to this state?” he wondered. Cleaning this room was added to his mental list of chores for tomorrow. High on the list.

Jordan faced himself in the mirror. His hair was unkempt, his skin was pale, his face was stubbly.

“Your apartment’s a mess, and you’re a mess,” he told his reflection. Jordan found his razor and shave cream, and shaved his face clean and smooth. He smiled at his reflection, pleased with the improvement. Then turning to the tub he prepared to shower.

Jordan pouted, thinking. “I’ve already worked so hard today, and I have so much to do this weekend. I should allow myself a little relaxation,” he reasoned.

Instead of his usual shower, Jordan wanted a bath. A hot, leisurely bath. He had certainly earned it, he reasoned. Jordan put the plug in place, got the water to the right temperature, and filled the tub. Giggling to himself, he added a capful of shampoo to the water, creating a mountain of soft, gleaming bubbles. Jordan lowered himself into the hot water carefully, then lay back with his eyes closed, relaxing in luxury as the bubbles covered and surrounded him.

Jordan raised one long leg through the bubbles, and washed it with the sliver of soap. He mentally added soap to his shopping list. Then as he washed his second leg, he stopped. He looked at his leg, as if he had never seen it before. It looked long, and strange, as if it belonged to someone else.

"I wonder," he thought curiously. Jordan looked around the tiny bathroom, and spotted his razor. He reached out of the tub and grabbed it, holding it, looking at it, looking at his leg.

"I wonder, what it would be like," he thought. Jordan pressed the razor against his leg near the ankle, and pulled it up his leg, removing a patch of leg hair.

"I've never," he thought, entranced by the smooth patch that he had created on his leg. "But I wonder..."

Jordan shaved a bit more of his leg, seeing how soft and smooth it became. Jordan was fascinated by the transformation. Once begun he couldn't stop. He shaved both legs to the knee, and once that was done he shaved both legs to his hips.

"Why have I never done this before?" he wondered, standing in the tepid bath water, enjoying the feel of his soft, smooth legs. "This is just so amazing!"

Wanting more, Jordan found his underarms required shaving. He was not a naturally hairy person, and was just slightly disappointed to find he was done. He was completely smooth and hairless from his chin to his toes. Jordan regarded himself with satisfaction.

“I should have done this long ago,” Jordan thought to himself. His bath water was now quite cold so he opened the drain to let the water run out, and then rinsed himself with the shower. Towelling himself dry Jordan went to his bedroom to dress.

Jordan stared at the clothes hanging in his closet. “Oh my gosh, I hate everything I own,” he said to himself as he looked through the pants and shirts he found hanging there. All of his pants were so baggy, and his shirts were old and limp. He finally picked out an old pair of thin-leg jeans he hadn’t worn since high school, a plain teal T-shirt, and a gray hooded jacket that he had never worn because for some reason he had thought it was too small. It wasn’t great, but at least it wasn’t baggy, limp and lifeless like everything else he owned. Jordan tied on his old running shoes, having nothing else, and set out for the day.

“Dr. Vesko was right,” he thought as he locked the apartment. “I have got to get my life together. Today is going to see the start of a new Jordan!”

\* \* \*

There was a cool morning breeze as Jordan walked to the market, but the sun was already high in the sky and it promised to be a beautiful warm day. Jordan smiled, everything looked so fresh and lovely today. He had a skip in his step, he was actually excited about

all the things he had to do! He had never looked forward to shopping before.

The market Jordan usually went to was on the other side of a mall. It was possible to walk around it, but much easier to just go straight through, as if the mall was just another street. There was a department store at the corner closest to Jordan's home, and this is where he entered.

The first floor of this store, like most department stores, catered to women. Men usually only go to department stores when they need to, already having decided what they need and proceeding directly to that area. So men's wear, electronics, hardware, that sort of thing is generally on the upper floors. Women tend to be the impulse buyers, and so if you are trying to get through a department store as quickly as possible you are guaranteed to go through the women's wear.

Jordan walked through the aisles of the department store, looking up at the mannequins, all wearing the latest fashions. Short skirts, silky blouses, high-heeled shoes. This wasn't unusual for Jordan. He always looked at the mannequins, how their shapely figures filled out the women's clothing in just the right places, in just the right ways. What was unusual were the thoughts running through his head. Jordan usually thought about girls he knew, or imagined girls he might meet, who would look so hot in a skirt like this or a blouse like that.

"I must have been crazy," Jordan thought to himself as he realized. "Why should I be thinking about other girls, how they could wear this, show off their legs, their long hair, their narrow waists? I've never owned a dress in my life! I walk through here every day, and

I've never once even thought about buying a dress for myself!"

Jordan stared as he walked through the women's department, wondering at how he could have lived his entire life this way. He didn't have time to stop; he had too much to do today. But what he saw next forced him to stop. Jordan's mouth fell open, and he stepped into the lingerie department.

"Can I help you?"

Jordan realized the woman had spoken to him several times; he wasn't sure how many. He looked up from the rack of boxes to find himself confronted by a rather stern-looking older woman. She did not appear to be happy.

"I'm, um, looking... need to buy a, uh, bra," Jordan said quietly. It was the first time he had spoken all day, and his voice retained the soft, feminine quality it had the previous night at the show.

"If you are looking for a gift, this is not that type of store," said the saleswoman. "This store sells practical ladies' undergarments. You can find something in the mall which is much more suitable."

"No, it's not for a gift," Jordan tried to explain. "I don't know about the sizes. How do I know what size I need?"

"If you don't know the size of the woman it's for, then you're not going to get very far. Tell her to come in herself, and I will be happy to do a fitting."

"No, no, no," Jordan said, realizing he was not getting the situation across to the woman. "It's just that, I've never worn a bra before."

"I should hope not!" said the saleswoman. "A brassier is a very personal thing. Women wear them because they have to. Because they have breasts. You have no breasts, you are not a woman, and you have no business in this store. Now please leave!"

Jordan felt like crying. He knew of course that he was completely flat chested. But every girl has the right to wear a bra anyway, doesn't she? Then to be told he was so flat chested, he wasn't even a woman! Jordan no longer felt like crying, he was crying.

"I just want to buy a bra," he said quietly through the tears.

"Security!" the woman yelled. Jordan couldn't move, he was so humiliated. It didn't take long for a woman in a store security uniform to arrive.

"What seems to be the problem?" the guard asked as she arrived on the scene.

"This... person... is causing a disturbance!" said the saleswoman. "Please remove him from the store!"

"Come along," the guard told Jordan, but not unkindly. "You'd better come with me."

"Just a minute!" As the guard tried to lead Jordan away, another customer walked up to the small group. She was an older woman, perhaps in her sixties or even seventies, but rather fierce and formidable. Everyone stopped to listen to her.

"If there was a disturbance here, it was caused by your own salesperson!" she told them. "She's been bullying this poor child for ten minutes. He hasn't so much as raised his voice above a whisper. He only wants to buy a bra. That's what you do here, isn't it? So how about you stop judging people and do your job?"

A small crowd of women had gathered around at the disturbance. Some having dealt with this particular saleswoman in the past, and others just knowing the type, applauded.

"I can't throw someone out when all they are trying to do is make a purchase," the guard told the saleswoman. "Please sell him anything he wants."

The crowd applauded again, then dispersed as the guard left Jordan with the saleswoman.

"So, I need a fitting, you said?" Jordan asked.

The saleswoman reluctantly took Jordan back into her department, and answered all his questions. She measured him for a bra, and found him one that was appropriate for a young woman who needed a bit of padding. She assisted him in the change room, showing him how the clasp worked. She explained how he would need two white bras, and one in black. When he asked, she found him some appropriate panties, and pantyhose as well. Although she was not exactly pleasant throughout the process, she remained civil and gave Jordan everything he needed. Jordan left with a smile on his face, wearing his first bra!

Jordan left the department store and entered the mall. He felt so good and so excited about all the changes he was making in his life! One session with Dr. Vesko, and he had a whole new direction. Everything just made so much sense. Jordan was getting his life back on track.

Jordan passed a shop with a mirror out front, and paused to take a look at himself. He couldn't see much under the sweatshirt, but he could just make out the curve of his new shape. He was rather pleased with what he saw, but still just a little surprised. He had

never thought of himself as a girl, with breasts! A girl with an attractive shape.

“Can I help you?” asked the young woman at the reception counter.

Jordan looked around the store, realizing he was in a hair salon.

“Do you need your hair cut? It’s starting to look a bit long!” the girl said, as Jordan didn’t reply.

Jordan looked at the mirror again, looked at his hair. He hadn’t even bothered to comb it this morning.

“Yes,” he said with conviction. “Yes, I need my hair done!”

The receptionist escorted Jordan into the salon, leaving him in the care of Ella, one of the stylists.

“You have lovely waves in your hair,” Ella said as she began her consultation. “Most girls would kill to have hair like yours. But I suppose you will want to cut it right back. Shall I trim it, get rid of your curls and shorten it all over?”

“No, not this time,” Jordan told her. “I’ve always fought my curls, and now I don’t know why. But now I want something cute. Something Pretty!”

“I don’t understand,” said Ella, confused. “What you want is a short cut. A man’s cut! We’ll trim it short on the sides, and leave you a little length on top. Maybe an inch. That should be very handsome, don’t you think?”

“No, that’s not what I want!” said Jordan. He waved Ella’s hands away as she tried to make her first cut. He started to cry as he said, “Not any more.”

"Is there something I can help with?" Jordan was addressed by an attractive woman. "Hi, I'm Tracy. I'm the manager. What seems to be the problem, dear?"

"There's no problem," replied Ella coldly. "We've decided on a traditional man's cut, short on the sides with a little extra length on top."

"That's not what I want," said Jordan, wiping away the tears.

"We want you to be happy with your hair," Tracy told him. "Please, just tell me what you want."

"I want long hair," Jordan said.

"We can't just magically add more hair!" Ella said angrily.

"But we can help to grow it out," replied Tracy. "Keep the length, but neaten it, so it looks like a man's cut."

"No, no, no!" said Jordan. "I want a girl's hairstyle! I'm a girl. I want to look like a girl!"

Tracy didn't reply for a moment as she thought about this. "Are you sure that's what you want? You can't go to work like that! What about your family, and friends? You don't really want to look like a girl, do you?"

"Yes," said Jordan meekly.

"Well, I won't do it!" Ella said, crossing her arms and setting her features stubbornly. "I'll give you a good, short man's cut, or you can get out of my chair!"

Tracy looked around the room at the other stylists. "Mark, do you think you could help this client?"

Mark had heard every word of the conversation. Who hadn't? "Of course I can," he said as he came

over, and escorted Jordan to his chair. "You just come with me. What's your name, kitten?"

"Jordan," replied Jordan shyly.

"Jordan, that's a pretty name. So you want to look like a girl! Of course you do, sweetie. Who doesn't? I can do you up so you'll look gorgeous tonight. But you need to know, if you try to comb it back into a man's style on Monday it's just going to look like a mess. Not much different than it looks now."

"Oh, I'm not going to do that!" said Jordan. "I want to look like a girl. Eventually I want to grow my hair out long, but for now I want something cute, something sassy! People have always treated me like a guy. I want everyone to know, no mistake, Jordan is a girl!"

Mark laughed as he began styling. "Well alright, if your mind is made up, girlfriend! We are going to go for cute and sassy! I have just the style for you. It looks stunning on blondes, but a brunette like yourself should look amazing."

"Can we color my hair?" asked Jordan.

"Well, I was thinking of a platinum blonde. You don't want to go that far, do you?"

"YES!" squealed Jordan. "Oh please, Mark! It's exactly what I want!"

Mark laughed. He set down his scissors, and escorted Jordan to a coloring station. "Okay, kitten! Today, you get the full treatment. Watch out world, there's a new girl in town!"

\* \* \*

Mark colored Jordan's hair, a practically white, platinum blonde. The color needed a long time to set, and rather than simply spend his time in a chair with a women's magazine Jordan inquired what other services the salon provided. So as the color set, Jordan had his eyebrows waxed, plucked and shaped into thin, feminine arches. A manicure and pedicure rounded out the remainder of the waiting time, leaving his painted fingers and toes looking like pretty pink shells. By the time Jordan returned to Mark's chair, he was looking and feeling like the girl he wanted to be.

"Look, at you, kitten!" said Mark. "My goodness, aren't you just the belle of the ball. Let's see if we can style this hair to look as pretty as the rest of you."

Mark trimmed Jordan's hair, trying to keep as much length as he could. After all, Jordan's hair was long and in need of a cut for a guy, but still very short for a girl. Still, there are many women with very attractive short hairstyles as well. When he was done, Jordan's head was a mass of feminine curls.

"How do you like it?" asked Mark as he held a mirror up, allowing Jordan to see his new look from all angles.

"I love it!" Jordan squealed. Ella looked on from her station in disgust, but no one noticed.

"Now this shampoo will help to preserve the color," Mark said. "It's for wavy hair, so it will help to keep your beautiful curls. And this is the hair spray I showed you. Because your hair is still short, you want to get as much volume as possible, so remember how I

showed you to hold out the pieces, then just a little spray to hold it in place."

"I'll remember," Jordan said with a huge smile.

"Do you know what?" said Mark. "You look so pretty, do you have time for a makeover? A little makeup would really make your whole face pop!"

Jordan was quiet a moment as he thought. "I've never worn makeup," he said.

"Oh, sorry," Mark apologized, wondering if perhaps Jordan was offended by the idea. "I didn't mean you need makeup. You're very pretty without, if you don't like makeup."

"No, that's not it," Jordan said. "I just, really, have never worn makeup in my life. Can you believe it? Never! I don't even know how to put on makeup."

"Then kitten, you are in for a treat!" said Mark as he led Jordan to the makeup station. "Jordan, this is Destiny. Destiny, can you teach this lovely young girl everything she needs to know about makeup?"

"Of course!" said Destiny, seating Jordan in her chair as Mark left. "Tell me about your normal makeup and skin care routine? What products do you use?"

"Nothing," replied Jordan. "Just soap, I guess."

"Oh, you poor sweetheart," Destiny said to him. "We have got so much work ahead of us."

Destiny told Jordan everything that every girl needs to know about proper skin care. She showed him lotions, moisturizers, and cleansers. She demonstrated facial scrubs, seaweed masks, products to deep-clean pores and remove unwanted facial hair. When she was done with the lessons on skin care, Jordan's face was as pink and soft as a baby's.

“Now that we have a good base, we can apply the makeup, to really bring out your gorgeous features!” Destiny told him. “We’re going to apply a little foundation, all over. A thin coat like this. A young girl usually doesn’t need this unless she’s going out for the evening, except you still have a bit of a dark hair line on your cheeks and chin. But you keep using this hair remover and that will be gone completely in a couple of weeks. Until then, keep using the foundation every day.”



Jordan took in the lessons, learning everything he needed to know as a girl. Destiny showed him how to use foundation and facial powder, and how to pencil and highlight his feminine eyebrows. She showed him how the right combination of shades of eyeshadow would deepen his eyes, and highlight their feminine qualities. He learned how to use eyeliner and mascara to give the impression of long, girlish lashes. He learned how to contour his features, emphasizing the feminine and de-emphasizing the rest. She showed him how a bit of blush could bring a beautiful pink to his cheeks, and finally, how a bright red lipstick suited him perfectly, creating luscious feminine lips in the shape of a tempting kiss.

Jordan was ecstatic! He had never done anything for his feminine side. No one had ever treated him like a girl, and so he had never realized how important these things were. Now with his hair and makeup done, he was a new woman. The old, tomboy Jordan was gone.

Jordan paid for his hair color and style, eyebrow waxing, mani-pedi, facial treatments and makeover, and he purchased the hair care, skin care, and makeup products recommended for him. It was expensive, but so worth it. He had a bit of money he had been saving up towards a new TV and game machine, which seemed so very childish now. This was so much more important. Jordan walked out into the mall, a totally new girl!

\* \* \*

Jordan continued through the mall, on his way toward the grocery store. Except there are just so many

things in a mall to distract a young woman! Jordan didn't get very far before he came across a trendy women's clothing shop. The colorful outfits in the window drew him in like a moth to a flame. Jordan was going through the first rack of the latest fall skirts, when a pretty young salesgirl approached him.

"Hi, I'm Trish," she introduced herself. "Isn't the new fall line just the best? I love the colors, and I'm so glad the short skirts are finally back in style! I love your hair."

"Thanks. I just had it done. I'm Jordan."

"Jordan! Very cool name," said Trish. "I love it! So are you looking for a new skirt?"

"I think I need one of everything," Jordan replied.

Trish laughed. "I know what you mean! Everything is just so gorgeous this season. Have you seen these dresses? To die for!"

Jordan was having a great time, just talking to Trish. He knew absolutely nothing about women's clothing, while Trish knew absolutely everything! He realized, he had never spoken to another girl like this. All his friends had always been guys. The few conversations he could remember having with other girls had always been slightly awkward for some reason. But talking with Trish was so easy!

And Trish knew absolutely everything about women's clothing. She was an absolute fountain of information, and was able to answer all of Jordan's questions.

"What's the difference between a skirt and a dress?" Jordan asked, not quite sure he understood everything Trish was trying to tell him, because he just didn't have the vocabulary.

Trish would answer his very basic questions without judgement. "This is a skirt," she said, taking one from the rack and showing it to him. "You have to select a top to go with it. Over here are dresses. See, it's all one piece? The top and bottom are together."

"Oh, okay!" said Jordan. Seeing the advantages he added, "So with a skirt, I'll need to buy a shirt in the same color to go with it."

"It's called a blouse, not a shirt," Trish corrected him. "And it doesn't have to be the same color. It just needs to be a matching color. A white or a black blouse usually matches just about anything. Matching different colors can be tricky. Sometimes it's not enough to match the color, though. You need to find matching materials and styles. You should get some fashion magazines and get an idea of what can be done."

"So this is a blouse," Jordan said, holding one in front of himself. Then he noticed, "Hey! The buttons are on the wrong side!"

"All blouses have buttons on the left," Trish informed him. "Only men's shirts have buttons on the right."

"Oh," said Jordan, blushing with embarrassment. Had he really never worn a blouse before? He changed the subject by asking, "So when should I wear high heels? With skirts, or dresses?"

"That's easy," answered Trish. "You should always wear high heels! The higher, the better. A better question is when should you wear high heel shoes, and when should you wear high heel boots. We have a nice selection of both over here."

Trish led Jordan to the shoe section of the store, and showed him the many styles, materials, textures, and

colors of high heels that keep most women fascinated their entire lives. Jordan continued to ask questions, while Trish pulled together a stylish outfit for him to try on.

Jordan came out of the change room wearing his very first skirt, blouse, and heels. The skirt was a very traditional blue with pleats, while the top was an adorable white babydoll T. The heels were only two inches, but they still gave him some trouble. He had also changed into one of his new pair of panties and hose at Trish's suggestion, after he had mentioned he was wearing boxers. Jordan couldn't believe how adorable he looked! He giggled like a little girl as he looked at himself in the mirror.



“Do you like it?” asked Trish.

Jordan clapped his hands and practically squealed, “I love it! I never knew I could look like this! Hey, this skirt has no pockets. Where do I put my wallet?”

Trish pulled him aside and turned serious, speaking quietly. “You’ve never done this before, have you?”

“What do you mean?” asked Jordan.

“Going out in public like this,” said Trish seriously. “Dressed like a girl.”

Jordan hung his head in shame. “Is it that obvious?” he asked.

Trish took a good look at him. “No, it really isn’t obvious to look at you. With that hair, and makeup, and this outfit is so cute on you, no one seeing you would ever guess. But Jordan, everything you say gives you away! You ask the most basic questions, that every girl knows. And you walk like a guy. You really need to change the way you walk!”

“I didn’t know,” said Jordan in shame. Even though Trish knew that he was a guy, Jordan still hadn’t figured it out. He still thought they were talking about him being more feminine.

“It’s okay, really!” said Trish, trying to comfort him. “Do you really want to be a girl? Like, full time? Giving up everything else?”

“I just never thought about being a girl before,” he said, trying to hold back tears. “It’s like I’ve only just realized recently that I really am a girl, but I don’t know the first thing about it! But yes, I really do want to be a girl now. Nothing from my old life matters any more.”

“Hey, don’t cry,” said Trish. “You’ll ruin your makeup. It’s great that you want to be a girl! You really are beautiful, all you need is a little help. You need a girlfriend. Someone who can tell you everything a girl needs to know.”

“I don’t really know any girls,” said Jordan, dabbing at his eyes with a tissue.

Now Trish was the one who looked slightly ashamed. “I’ve never told anyone this,” she confessed. “I’ve always secretly wished I could meet someone like you. Someone who wanted to be a girl. Someone I could treat like a little sister, show him the ropes. Tell him all about makeup, and clothes, and hang out at the mall, shopping and looking at guys! I suppose that sounds kind of kinky, right?”

Jordan smiled. “Not at all! It sounds fantastic! Oh Trish, that’s exactly what I need!”

Trish hugged Jordan, and he hugged her in return. Trish said, “Let’s get you some new clothes to take home with you today. Tomorrow I’m off work, and we can go shopping together. We’ll find you everything a girl could ever need or want!”

Trish sold Jordan two new dresses, three skirts with matching blouses, two belts, a pretty necklace, two pair of heels, and a new pair of ankle boots. Jordan decided he needed to carry everything home before going out again for his groceries. But before leaving the apartment he added ‘fashion magazines’ to his list.

### **Chapter 3**

## **Girls’ Day Out**

Jordan rolled over in bed, and opened his eyes. Looking around his bedroom, he smiled. On his chair he saw his new skirt and babydoll T that he had worn

yesterday. His closet door was open, and hanging inside were the other outfits he had purchased from Trish. Being a girl was so much fun, so exciting! And he had a full day planned. He was meeting Trish later, and she promised him a girls' day out! Jordan couldn't wait.

Jordan got up and went to the kitchen for a light breakfast. Just tea and a piece of dry toast - he really needed to lose a little weight. All his new clothes were size 7/8, but he really wanted to get down to a 5/6. All the models in the fashion magazine he purchased were so beautiful, and in comparison he had no curves at all. Jordan knew it was silly for a girl to expect to look like a fashion model, but he planned to try his best!

Jordan went into the bathroom, and was shocked by his appearance! His hair was platinum blonde, his eyebrows were thin and arched. All these years he had done nothing for his feminine side, but now just look! Jordan was a girl, no mistake!

Jordan washed the hair-thinning cream he had applied the previous night from his face and neck. Destiny had shown him how to use the cream, how to work it into his pores. "Some girls are just a little hairier than others," he thought to himself. "Nothing to be overly concerned about. A couple weeks using this product should take care of it though. It looks lighter and thinner already."

Jordan shaved like usual, and then showered. After drying himself and changing into a bra and panties, he stood in front of the mirror to do his hair and makeup.

Jordan dried his hair, then brushed it out. Using the technique that Mark had shown him he teased out strands of hair, wrapping them around his fingers to add curl, then spritzed them with hairspray. He

worked his way from the front, down the sides and around the back. It was awkward at first, but he would get used to it. These are things a girl just has to do, so he had better get used to it.

Next, Jordan set out all his makeup on the counter. He applied a little concealer to hide the shadows under his eyes. Then a thin layer of foundation, to smooth out his coloring. Powder applied with a big puffy brush to set the foundation. And some blush to bring color to his cheeks, just like Destiny showed him.

Dark eyeliner to bring out his eyes, two shades of eyeshadow, darker on the lids, lighter up to his brows, mascara top and bottom. Lip liner, and bright red lipstick. Jordan applied his makeup for the first time with some difficulty. Getting everything to look the way Destiny had done it, smooth and perfectly blended, was not easy. But after an hour of fussing Jordan was finally satisfied. He was ready to go out with Trish!

\* \* \*

"Jordan, you look gorgeous!" said Trish, greeting him with a quick hug as the two girls met in the mall. And he really did look gorgeous. Jordan was wearing the short, summer-length chiffon dress that Trish had sold him the previous day. It had a pretty flower pattern, and the cutest lace ruff around the off-the-shoulder top. He wore it with a wide belt that pulled in his waist, giving him both a narrow waist and wide hips. Together with his high-heel boots, Jordan was the cutest thing at the mall.

"Thanks Trish," Jordan said shyly. He wasn't used to compliments on how pretty he was. "It's all because of you. You picked out this dress."

"I picked it out, but girl, you filled it out!" laughed Trish. "Honestly girl, your legs are so long I am totally jealous. So what do you want to do first? Check out the guys, or shop?"

"Um, shopping please," Jordan giggled nervously. The thought of guys, well, it had never occurred to him! He had hung around with guys his entire life, but almost as if he were just another guy. He didn't think any of them had ever looked at him as a girl. And he had never once 'checked them out'! Well, maybe Pamela Menotti, but that was different.

"Good choice," laughed Trish. "This will be fun. You need everything, so we don't have to hold back! And the guys, well, I expect they'll find us."

Trish put her arm around Jordan's waist, and took him into the first boutique they came to. It specialized in shoes and purses. They ignored the shoes, as Trish told him that she never found anything here at a reasonable price. But they always had nice purses, and Jordan definitely needed a purse. He was carrying his wallet and apartment keys in his hands! Trish told him everything about purses. He would need several, depending on the occasion. Different purses for day, for night, for work, for casual! For today she helped him to choose a pretty, mid-size leather bag with a shoulder strap that looked adorable with his outfit. Jordan pulled off the price tag, and put his wallet and keys straight into it.

"You should also always carry a little makeup with you," Trish explained. "Have a little of everything in your purse."

"Okay, but why?" asked Jordan.

“Well for touch-ups,” Trish explained. “Makeup wears off you know,” she explained.

“Oh, I didn’t realize!” Jordan exclaimed. “What should I do for today?”

“Don’t worry,” Trish reassured him. “We’ll buy you a lipstick before we have lunch. Trust me, a girl can always use another lipstick. You should be fine for everything else for today.”

Trish led Jordan back into the mall. “I definitely want to see you try on a few dresses today,” she told him. “And shoes! We need to start you on a shoe collection. It might get a little expensive, but it will be so worth it. How much money have you got for today?”

“I still have about \$300 from my savings,” Jordan told her. “I hope it’s enough.”

“Maybe not, but don’t worry,” Trish said. “That’s what credit cards are for. Was there anything else you wanted to look at today?”

“Well,” replied Jordan. “I was looking around my apartment, and it could really use some feminine touches. Maybe some new bedding - new sheets and a pretty comforter. And it could really use some curtains. I’d really like to totally redecorate. Maybe we could look in the paint and wallpaper store for some ideas.”

“Wow!” laughed Trish. “You’re really serious about this. This isn’t just playing dress up for you, is it? You’re really changing yourself into a total girl.”

“That’s the idea!” laughed Jordan. “It’s so funny. It’s as if I just woke up one day and realized I was a girl. One day, none of this meant anything to me. Now all I can think about is dresses, makeup, and nail polish. And the more I learn about being a girl, the more I need to have it all.”

“Have you ever looked in this shop?” asked Trish, approaching a window display.

“The tattoo parlor?” said Jordan. “Sure. I used to come here all the time with some guys. We would talk about which tattoo we wanted. It’s all skulls and snakes, stuff like that. All kid stuff, for guys.”

“No, not at all!” Trish said. “You should look at the back. There’s a whole wall for girls. Really pretty tattoos, with flowers and angels, and cute little birds and animals. I got a tattoo here, see?”

Trish pulled her hair and the strap of her dress aside, revealing her tattoo of a single rose on her shoulder.

“Oh, that’s really pretty!” said Jordan with a smile. “Do you think I could get one like that?”

“Well not today,” Trish told him. “We just have too much to do. But we can look!”

Trish took Jordan by the hand, and led him to the back of the tattoo parlor. The creepy but kind-of-cool guy with the beard who worked there came over, and explained everything to them. He showed them what was new, and what was hot. It was obvious he was more into dragons and skulls than bunnies and flowers, but he assured Jordan that any chick was cool once she was tattooed, no matter what it was. He flirted with both girls and tried to get their numbers. Jordan and Trish left the shop without any new tattoos, but in a very good mood.

“He was sort of cute, and really into you!” Trish laughed, nudging Jordan as they continued through the mall.

“Ha, ha,” Jordan replied with a smile. “Just a little creepy for my taste. He was more into you, anyway! You’re the one with the tattoo.”

“No, he wants a fresh canvas!” laughed Trish. “If you let him tattoo that hot chick on the flaming motorcycle across your back, he would love you forever!”

“Definitely not my style,” giggled Jordan. “I could see getting something small though. Maybe a rose like yours. Or one of those unicorns we looked at. An ankle tattoo would be cute.”

“You are such a girl,” Trish said. “Hey, look over here. I love this store.”

Trish led Jordan into a store called, ‘Heaven Scent’. Jordan immediately wrinkled his nose.

“Oh, yuck!” he coughed. “I have never come in here before. What is that horrible smell?”

“It’s nice,” said Trish. “This place has the most beautiful scented soaps. Here, try this one.”

Trish held out a bar of soap for Jordan to smell. He sniffed it reluctantly, and involuntarily screwed up his face at the scent.

“I’m surprised at you Jordan,” Trish said. “This store is the measure of a real girl. Guys hate it, girls love it. Look around you, every woman in here is in heaven. Maybe you’re not all girl after all.”

Jordan looked around. Just like Trish said, every woman in the store was happily sniffing bar after bar of pink, green, and lavender soap, with looks of total satisfaction on their faces.

“No, give me another chance,” Jordan pleaded. “Maybe it’s because of so many smells all at once. It

was a little overpowering at first. Let me try that soap again.”

“Here, try this one. It’s lilac. No girl can resist lilac.”

Jordan held the bar in his hand, and sniffed it tentatively. At first the scent was overpowering, just like the other. But all the other women in the store liked it so much. Trish liked it so much. He tried it again, and something happened...

“Do you know, this one isn’t so bad,” he said. “Yes, lilac. It’s nice. I could really use this in my apartment. It would really freshen up my bathroom.”

Trish laughed. “Well that’s a relief. I was starting to wonder if you were really ready to be a girl full-time. Don’t decide too quickly though. Here, try this jasmine hand sanitizer. It has natural oils in it, to keep your skin soft and smooth.”

The two girls spent quite a while in the store, trying all the various scented products. The more time Jordan spent in the store, the more he realized how important these soaps and lotions were to a woman. And the more he realized this, the more he realized how important they were to him.

The salesgirl rang up Jordan’s purchases. She read each label as she tapped in the prices, “Cherry almond bar soap, orange spice liquid soap in decorative dispenser, coconut scented bath crystals, floral rehydrating lotion...”

Trish laughed. “I’m sorry I ever doubted you Jordan! But when you first got here, and you wrinkled your nose at every scent, I thought that maybe you weren’t the girl you claimed to be.”

Jordan put his credit card away in his purse and picked up his packages. “That’s not true. I loved it all. I

just wanted to find the right scents for me." He really couldn't remember how he felt an hour before.

"Okay girl, you convinced me!" teased Jordan. "Oh, do you know what else we should look at? Let's check out the perfume counter in this department store. Every girl needs to find a perfume that suits her."

Trish and Jordan entered the department store, and quickly found the perfume counter. But before they had attracted a salesgirl's attention there was an announcement:

"Attention ladies. This is a one-time offer! For the next hour, all ladies' shoes and boots are on sale at a discount of 50%. First come, first served. All name brands, beautiful leather boots and shoes. Everything on the shelves is on sale, no exceptions!"

Trish grabbed Jordan's hand and started to run.

"Come on!" she said when he tried to resist.

Jordan had learned to walk in his high-heeled ankle boots, but now he needed to learn to run, and quickly. "I thought we were looking at perfume. Where are you going?"

"Perfume's not on sale," Trish told him as she bolted up the escalator. "Quick, what's your shoe size?"

"Uh, nine," Jordan told her as he followed her up the stairs at a run. He noticed other women were also running toward the escalator on the floor below. They passed a girl who was huffing up the escalator in front of them.

"That's a guy's nine, so a women's eleven. You might not find anything larger than a ten. Don't worry, a ten will likely be okay."

“These boots you sold me yesterday were a ten,” Jordan said breathlessly as they ran up the next escalator. “They’re a little tight.”

“Like I said, can’t be helped. Just grab as many tens as you can!”

Trish knew exactly where to find the women’s shoe department, and led Jordan there at a run. When they arrived the place was already filling up with women.

“The tens are over there,” Trish pointed above the crowd of crazed women shoppers. “You won’t likely have too much competition. Just get as many pairs of heels as you can carry! I’m going for the six and a halves, so I’m going to have to fight!”

Trish tried to leave through the growing crowd of frantic women shoppers, but Jordan grabbed her arm. He yelled over the growing volume of feminine chatter, “Trish, what’s happening?”

“It’s a sale!” Trish shouted, her voice barely audible. “Fifty percent off! Don’t try anything on, just grab shoes! I’ll meet you at the checkout.” And then she was gone.

Jordan had never seen or heard anything like it. The aisles were filled with women, grabbing boxes off the shelves, tossing packing paper, discarding shoes over their shoulders as they checked for their sizes. The noise was a constant, ear-splitting shriek as women discussed the possibility of fitting their size seven feet into a size five and a half pump.

Trish was right about one thing. Jordan had very little competition for size ten shoes. There were only six or seven women actively shopping in his aisle. Plus about another thousand women who thought this aisle was a perfect way to cross from one end of the store to

the other. But even without much competition, Jordan still found it difficult to even find a matching pair as the other women ripped open boxes and tossed the shoes out randomly. However with some difficulty he was eventually able to find six complete pairs, including the most darling pair of red patent leather pumps with a three-inch heel!

Jordan made his way to the checkout with his boxes, encountering more and more resistance the closer he got to the front. Women eyed his boxes with envy, and he was afraid they might just grab them, but the women would move on quickly enough when they saw the "Size 10" label. "The one advantage for a girl with big feet," he thought to himself.

Jordan was in the checkout line for ten minutes before Trish finally appeared. Her hair was mussed, and her lipstick was smeared as if someone might have shoved her face, but she looked ecstatic.

"Look at this!" she yelled. "An actual size six and a half, the last one in the whole store!"

Trish held out the prized box of six-and-a-halves for Jordan to see. But before he could even smile for Trish's good fortune, a pair of manicured hands reached out and snatched the box right out of her arms. The thief ran into the store, attempting to get away down the aisles.

The look of shock and disappointment on his best friend's face was agony for Jordan. He handed his boxes to Trish, who couldn't hold them all and so immediately spilled them all over the floor.

"Stay in line!" shouted Jordan as he ran after the thief.

Jordan kept his eye on the other woman as she dodged her way through the crowd. Except holding the six-and-a-halves, she was now a target for every woman in the place. Jordan was starting to catch up as other women saw the label on the box, and made a grab for it themselves. But then the woman made a surprise move, heading for the relatively empty size ten aisle.

“Got you now, bitch!” Jordan thought to himself. He knew every scattered box and shoe in this aisle. “You’re on my territory now!”

Jordan closed the distance easily now, leaping over scattered Birkenstocks, dodging shelves and large-footed women with ease. Realizing her tactical error the woman turned the corner and headed back to the lower sizes, but she was too late. Jordan leapt for her, grabbing her legs and bringing her to the ground.

Jordan grabbed the box of shoes and stood, looking down at the woman. “You’re no six and a half,” he told her with disdain, looking at her feet. The woman sat up and stared back, looking furious but she stayed down, knowing she was outmatched.

Jordan looked up, about to return to the checkout line. Except something was in his way. There were approximately a thousand women standing in the aisle before him. He checked the nearest shoeboxes - size six on the left, seven on the right. He had just yelled out “Six and a half” in the 6/7 aisle!

All eyes turned toward him. Jordan would later swear, they all glowed a fiery red just like in that zombie movie he had watched the previous week. The crowd didn’t take long to start moving toward him, clutching and clawing at his size six-and-a-halves.

Jordan turned toward the size ten aisle and started to run, but was brought up short. Two enormous women were shopping side by side, blocking his path! They turned, looked at him with red eyes, then reached for his shoebox.

Jordan spun and ran in the other direction, taking everyone by surprise. With his relatively large feet, no one had expected him to head for the 3/4 aisle! Jordan dodged women, ducked under and around their grasping claws, the six-and-a-halves tucked firmly under one arm. That four years of high school boys' rugby seemed entirely inadequate preparation for sale day in the women's shoe department!

Jordan suddenly found himself at the front of the store by the sales registers. But he was on the wrong side! Red-eyed zombie women turned toward him, hands reaching for the last box of six and a halves. He spotted Trish, next in line at the other end of the store.

"Trish!" he called out to her in his high, feminine voice. "Heads up!"

Jordan tossed the shoes, a perfect lateral pass. By some miracle the box held together, spinning toward Trish over the heads and out of reach of the zombie women separating the two girls. Trish had never played rugby, but she knew a brilliant shoe sale play when she saw one. She leapt into the air, grabbed the spinning box, turned in mid air and slammed it down on the counter with Jordan's purchases.

"Seven pair," said the salesgirl with disinterest as she began to ring up the purchases. A bell rang.

"Thank you ladies. Our one-hour shoe sales event is over," said the voice over the loud speaker. The red light went out of the zombie-women's eyes. They

turned and left the store, leaving the aisles piled high with scattered Louboutins, shattered dreams, and miscellaneous debris. Jordan caught up with Trish, and used his credit card to pay the sale price on their purchases.

\* \* \*

Jordan waited patiently as Trish finished her lunch. She ate slowly, even though all she had was a small salad. Jordan was always surprised at how other girls could order so little, but then eat it so slowly. He took another clean napkin and wiped his hands and mouth - his burger and fries had left him feeling a bit greasy.

"Careful with that," warned Trish. "You don't want to mess your makeup. All you have in your purse is that lipstick we bought."

"Oh! Right. I keep forgetting," said Jordan, seeing the last of his lipstick come off on the napkin.

"That's okay. Let's go fix ourselves in the little girls' room. I'm finished anyway," Trish said, pushing her salad away and standing to leave.

"Don't hurry because of me," said Jordan. "Sit down and finish your lunch! You hardly had anything, and you didn't even finish it."

"I never finish a meal," Trish told him as she tossed out the plastic bowl with the last of her salad. "That's just one of the tricks you'll need to learn as a girl. If you want to lose weight and stay attractive, you need to develop smart eating habits. Like, only eat until you're full. Always leave some food on the plate, to make sure you're not stuffing yourself with an amount someone

else chose for you. You need to determine for yourself how much you want to eat."

Trish led Jordan to the ladies' room, where they touched up their makeup together in front of the mirror. "I don't really need to lose weight anyway," Jordan told her around his bright red lipstick. He filled in the contours of his lips as he continued, "I never weigh myself, and I eat whatever I want. I think I look okay."

"Girls usually start gaining weight in high school," Trish told him. "Guys seem to get away with bad eating habits a bit longer, maybe because they keep busy with sports, but eventually it catches up with them as well. People who don't change their eating habits after high school get fat, Jordan, and you're no exception."

Jordan looked at himself in the bathroom mirror. "I think I look pretty good," he said as he watched himself turn to the left, then right.

"Jordan, I picked out this dress for you. I know its secrets. Without this belt you would have no waist at all. Even for a guy you're starting to get a bit thick through the middle. This is a size 7/8. Didn't I tell you that you should be in a 5/6?"

Jordan pouted as he looked at himself critically. "Yes," he agreed reluctantly.

"If you're planning to continue as a girl, you need to make some changes," Trish told him sternly. Then her eyes lit up as she got an idea. "Come with me! I know exactly where you need to go!"

Trish took Jordan's hand and led him through the mall. She was practically running in her excitement, and Jordan found it difficult to keep up while carrying all his packages in his high heels. Eventually she

slowed, and stopped in front of a pair of frosted glass doors.

"I've been looking for an excuse to come here!" said Trish, barely able to contain her glee as she opened the door for Jordan.

"Hi," said the girl behind the counter. "I'm Jill. Welcome to Inspiration Women's Fitness Center!"

"A gym?" said Jordan. "I don't know about this. I joined a gym once. I only went a couple of times. It was a complete waste of money. I lost \$500."

"But this gym is different!" said Trish enthusiastically. "This is Inspiration!"

"It sounds like you're about to give my sales pitch for me," said Jill as she joined the girls. "Why don't you let me show you around?"

Jill led Trish and Jordan through the entry, and into the main gym. Everywhere he looked, Jordan saw women on bicycles, or treadmills, or weight machines. An aerobics class was in progress, led by a small blonde girl who appeared to have endless enthusiasm. Very few people were sitting, or standing around not exercising.

"How much does this cost?" Jordan asked.

"Well," said Jill reluctantly. "I usually discuss the price at the end of the tour."

"The price is the best part!" said Trish. "It's totally free!"

"Free?" said Jordan, not quite able to believe it.

"That's not quite true," Jill interrupted. "Why don't you let me tell your friend about Inspiration my own way?" she laughed.

“Okay, sorry,” said Trish, pulling her fingers across her mouth as if she were closing a zipper.

“You joined a gym once before,” Jill said to Jordan. “So why did you quit?”

“I don’t know,” replied Jordan. “It was hard work.”

“Didn’t you lose a lot of money?” asked Jill. “Money wasted, because you didn’t use your membership? Didn’t that make you want to go?”

“I guess,” said Jordan, trying to remember how he felt at the time, “I spent the money, it was gone. There was nothing I could do about it. I couldn’t get it back.”

“Didn’t you have some goals? Something that would motivate you to go to the gym?”

“Sure,” replied Jordan. “I wanted to get stronger, be better at sports. But I gave up sports.”

“Everything you’ve just told me is the classic response to exercise!” Jill told him. “The money spent can’t motivate you to exercise. It’s gone whether you exercise or not, so why bother? Your goals can’t motivate you either. As much as you want to get fit, you’re more likely to give up the goals than go back to the gym. You gave up sports entirely, eliminating your whole motive for getting fit. Be honest, part of the reason was so you didn’t have to go to the gym, am I right?”

Jordan thought about it. “Maybe. I’m not sure any more.”

“I’m sure,” Jill told him confidently. “All women eventually end up at a gym, hoping to lose a few pounds, firm up their muscles, drop a dress size or two. And most fail, never reaching their goals. It’s just too easy to find excuses. To decide that she looks fine,

she doesn't want to have to replace her entire wardrobe, that too fat is better than too thin. Any excuse to avoid exercise."

Jordan looked around the fitness area. "So if that's true, what makes this place any different?"

"Oh believe me, Inspiration is a very different type of fitness center!" Jill replied. "We address the money problem by paying you back your fee as you meet your goals, so missing your goals costs you real money. But that's not the best part. We give you real goals, goals you can't avoid!"

"Like I told you, it's free!" chimed in Trish.

"Wait, how can you afford to give me back all of the fee?" asked Jordan. "That doesn't make sense. You'd go out of business."

"Let me tell you about the goals we set for you first," said Jill. "Inspiration Women's Fitness is associated with Inspiration Modeling Agency. Every girl who joins Inspiration Fitness also has to sign a contract with Inspiration Modeling. Every month, Inspiration Modeling puts on a fashion show here in the mall, using models from the fitness center. You will be contractually obligated to participate in at least four of our shows over the next year."

"Participate how? Model what?"

"We model clothes from all the shops in the mall," Jill informed him. "It's really a lot of fun. Anything from the latest teen fashions, to lingerie or bikinis."

"But what if someone doesn't lose the weight?" asked Jordan. "They can't model if they're still fat! No one would want that."

“They have to participate, at least once every three months. It’s in their contract. That’s why no girl ever misses meeting her goals! I wouldn’t worry if I were you, though. You need to lose a few pounds, but I bet you could wear anything.”

“But what if you lose fifty pounds, but you’re still fat?” asked Jordan, still trying to understand this system. “You wouldn’t make someone like that model nighties and bikinis?”

No, of course not!” Jill told him. “If you meet your goals, we put you in something appropriate to your age, weight and body type. But if you miss your goals, you could be in for some humiliation.”

“She could just refuse to show up for the fashion show,” Jordan suggested.

“Then I guess we would have to sue her, based on her contract. And that would be just as humiliating, being in the papers every day because you weren’t able to lose ten pounds and couldn’t fit in a muumuu.”

“I’m not sure...” said Jordan.

“Stop worrying about it!” laughed Jill. “No one ever misses their goals. You’re practically guaranteed to get fit, lose the weight, drop the dress sizes, and look gorgeous on the runway. I can tell just looking at you, you will be a typical Inspiration success story!”

“So how much does it cost?” Jordan asked.

“It’s a thousand dollars,” Trish told him. “But like I said, really it’s free.”

“A thousand dollars!” said Jordan. “No, I can’t afford that.”

“But here is where the financial motivation comes in,” explained Jill. “Four times a year, we measure you

against your goals. And if you meet them, we give you back up to \$125 of your fee. So the real cost at the end of the year is only \$500. Remember that \$500 you wasted at your other gym? We make sure it's not wasted!"

"So why does Trish keep saying it's free?" he asked.

"Remember that contract with Inspiration Modeling?" Trish reminded him. "It's a real modeling contract, and models get paid. For each of the four shows you participate in, you'll be paid \$125. So at the end of the year, you have your \$1000 back!"

"That's my job to explain!" laughed Jill. "But she's essentially correct. Meet your goals, and participate in the fashion shows, and your \$1000 fee is returned to you. In fact, as a client of Inspiration Modeling you may be offered other modeling assignments. A pretty girl like you could make a lot of money. We've actually had some clients start fulltime modeling careers."

"Okay," said Jordan, still hesitant. "So if I agree, what's the next step?"

"We need to set your goals!" said Jill. "Let's get your measurements!"

Jill took the two girls into a back office, where she measured everything that could be measured on a girl. When she was done she sat down with Jordan and Trish to discuss their goals.

"Jordan, you have very unusual measurements," she said. "By the charts you're a bit overweight, although you wouldn't know it to look at you. At 5'10" you should be no more than 150 pounds, but you're actually 175. That's a little high even if you were a guy. I would set you a goal to lose at least 20 pounds over the next three months, then another 10 by the end of six

months. Now your measurements are 36, 29, 34. So unlike most girls, you could actually stand to gain a little on your ass! But you need to lose a few inches around your waist. I'd like to see you get down to 26 inches in three months, then ultimately 24 inches by the end of the year. We'll design a program for you to really target your waist, and thin you down to perfection!"

Jordan looked at Trish. "So, are we going to do this?"

"Oh, yes!" she replied. "And we are so going to find you a sexy workout outfit!"

## **Chapter Four** **A Year in the Life**

Monday Morning...

Monday. Again. Life was just an endless cycle for Frank. Weekends never lived up to the hype. Every Friday night Frank couldn't wait for Monday morning. Then every Monday he couldn't wait for Friday night. Frank pulled into the staff parking lot and looked at the building that would keep him busy for the next five days. He couldn't wait for Friday.

Frank always entered by the back door. It was faster than going around to the front, then through the factory to the warehouse where he worked. He had been using this door for over thirty years. Last year the company put a special lock and alarm on it to prevent employees from getting in this way. Except someone, no one knew who, shorted the wires to the alarm and taped the door bolt open so they could continue to use it. Frank didn't like anyone telling him he had to change.

Frank turned into the staff break room, and stopped short. He wasn't always first to arrive and so he wasn't

surprised to see someone else at the lockers. What did surprise him was that the other person in the break room was a young girl.

“You’re not allowed in here,” he told her. “Employees only,” he added.

“Frank?” the girl laughed. “It’s me! Don’t you recognize me?”

Frank looked more closely. “Are you that girlfriend of Max? Doesn’t matter. Girlfriends still aren’t employees.”

The girl just laughed again. “Frank! I’ve been working with you for over a year. Don’t tell me that I can just put on a skirt and you don’t even recognize me any more!”

Frank looked again. The girl was wearing a short sleeve work shirt like the ones the girls over in the office wore, with a short canvas skirt. All employees wore a nametag on their shirt, and this girl’s read...

“Jordan!” Frank blurted out. Then he laughed. “What kind of joke are you playing? Jeez, you’re convincing! What’s this all about, did you lose another bet with Mike?”

“No, nothing like that,” Jordan attempted to explain. “You see...”

“Okay, good joke,” Frank interrupted. “But seriously, you’ve got to get out of here before anyone else arrives. You got no idea how these guys are going to react.”

Which was precisely when the next workers arrived for the Monday morning shift. “Morning Frank,” said the first in the door. Noticing Jordan he paused a moment, then asked, “This your daughter? Sydney, right?”

Haven't seen you in a few years. Look at you, you're all grown up now! Remember me, you used to call me Uncle Bill?"

"That's right," said Frank. "Just gave her a ride into the city. You got to leave now, Sydney before you get in the way. Go get on with your shopping. Wave goodbye to Uncle Bill."

Frank tried to hide Jordan as he pushed him toward the door, except more warehouse staff kept arriving and blocking the way.

"Hey, who's the babe?"

"She's with Frank."

"Nice going Frank! You getting a little in the break room before shift?"

"Shut up! That's his kid, you moron."

"No way! Frank has a hot daughter? Is that even genetically possible?"

"Okay, goodbye Sydney," said Frank with a strong shove toward the door. "Have fun at the mall."

Jordan braced himself against the door frame to prevent Frank from shoving him out, then turned. "I am not Frank's daughter! Why are you all behaving like such a bunch of loonies today? I come here every, freaking, day, okay?"

The room full of men was quiet as they all stared at this girl, trying to recognize her. Finally one of them asked, "Okay, so who are you?"

Jordan got an exasperated look on his face. "I'm Jordan!" he finally told them.

"Okay," said Frank, stepping back from Jordan. "You are on your own."

The crowd of men just stared a while longer. Then one of them laughed. Suddenly all of them were laughing.

Jordan pouted out his lower lip, and crossed his arms petulantly. "I fail to see what everyone finds so amusing," he said, turning up the laughter to a louder volume. "There is nothing funny about a girl working in a warehouse! I've been working here for over a year! What is wrong with you people?"

When the men just couldn't laugh any more one of them finally asked, "Jordan, what were you thinking when you come to work like that? Did you think it was Halloween?"

"There's nothing wrong with the way I'm dressed," said Jordan unable to look up, his face was so red. "It's in the company dress code. I checked. Skirts and blouses are allowed."

"I'm pretty sure that's meant for, like, the girls working in the office. Not for guys in the warehouse," Bill suggested.

"You really went all out," laughed another. "Not just the dress, but your hair and makeup, and you painted your nails! But joke's over. Wash your face and get changed so we can get to work."

"It's not a joke!" Jordan tried to yell at them, but instead he started to cry. "I'm a girl. I just want to dress like one."

"You're serious?" said another. "Jordan, you look ridiculous. There is no way I'm going to work with some fruitcake princess! Come on outside and I'll beat this nonsense out of you."

"Why are you being so mean?" Jordan said through his tears.

“Now hold on, calm down,” Adam, one of the younger workers intervened. “Jordan is obviously going through something. And whatever it is, I think it was incredibly brave of him to come to work this way. He did this because he trusts us, and thinks of us as friends, and thought we would understand. Isn’t that right Jordan?”



Jordan nodded, still unable to look up.

"I dunno, I still feel like we should beat him up."

"Look, Jordan's a good guy, and we're not going to beat him up," Adam argued. "If Jordan says he's a girl, then he's a girl. She's a girl, I mean. John, you were the first to say she looked hot, now you want to beat her up?"

"Well, that was before," John stammered. "She looked hot, before she was Jordan. Now she just looks, you know..."

"Exactly the same," said Adam.

"Look," said Frank. "I don't understand any of this. I have no idea what's got into Jordan. But if he wants to wear a dress in the warehouse, I don't see it's harming anybody. He looks like a girl, so let him be a girl."

"Let *her* be a girl," Adam corrected him.

"Ah, hell," said John. "I don't think I'll ever get used to this world. Okay, *she* can dress however the hell *she* wants. Except she can't wear them damn high heels! That's a hazard and as union rep I can't allow it."

Jordan perked up at hearing everyone's acceptance. "That's why I bought these," he said, going to his locker. Jordan pulled out the cutest pair of women's steel-toe boots, with a sturdy three-inch platform heel.

## **Inspiration Modeling**

Stan Jackson sat across the table from Emma Marcozzi, the owner of Inspiration Modeling as well as Inspiration Fitness. Emma Marcozzi's office was a large room above the fitness center, professional and businesslike but decorated with a definite feminine touch.

Emma was leafing through books of models - photos plus bios.

“What about this one?” suggested Emma, removing a page from the album, then passing it across to Jackson.



Jackson looked at the photo critically. "Maybe if you could have her dye her hair," he suggested, passing it back.

Emma took back the page. "Mr. Jackson," she began to explain. "Inspiration models usually aren't professionals. They're ordinary women, looking for a little fun or excitement, or a little extra income. Most are simply looking for inspiration, for their weight loss. Our contracts with them are almost totally in their favour. We really can't ask them to make major changes to their personal appearance."

"I'm just saying you could suggest it to her," Jackson said.

Emma looked at the picture. "Yes, maybe," she replied. "The problem is you want so many girls, all the same type. We try to maintain a variety of girls, each with their own style. Also, most girls are very proud of their hair. I don't think I'll be able to get too many to cut it as short as you're after."

Jackson was starting to realize he might have to settle for less than his vision. He stood to leave. "The three we've agreed are fine. Maybe you can ask this one if she's willing to go blonde. Even if not, I suppose she'll do."

Emma stood and escorted Jackson from her office, then down past the fitness center. "That leaves two more. I'll see what I can come up with over the next couple of days, and get back to you."

Jackson looked through the glass wall that separated the offices as they passed the fitness center. One girl caught his attention.

"What about her?" he asked, pointing at Jordan who was working out in a DanceFit class. "She's tall,

with a pretty face and short blonde hair. She'd be perfect."

Emma looked out at Jordan. "She's fairly new. Comes to the center several times a week, very dedicated. But she's only been here a couple of months. Hasn't quite met her original goals, and hasn't had any experience modeling. I don't think she's even had her portfolio shoot yet."

"I'm not concerned about her goals," said Jackson. "She looks to have a great figure. And as for modeling experience, that's also not an issue. The job doesn't really call for models, just ordinary girls. Can we speak to her?"

"I don't see why not. It looks like the class is just winding down."

Emma led the way as she and Jackson entered the workout area. She discreetly inquired of one of the staff as to Jordan's name as the DanceFit class came to an end. As the girls wandered away from the class, Emma stopped Jordan.

"Hi, you're Jordan, am I right?" Emma asked.

"Oh! Miss Marcozzi," said Jordan, surprised at being stopped by the owner. "Um, yes! I'm Jordan."

"Jordan, I'd like you to meet Stan Jackson, one of our clients for the modeling agency."

"Um, hi," said Jordan, still unsure what was going on or how he should react.

"So Jordan, how are you enjoying your fitness program?" asked Stan.

"Oh, it's so much fun!" Jordan enthused. "I love the workouts. I was raised a bit of a tomboy, so one of my

personal goals has been to become a bit more graceful. The dancing has helped a lot."

"And what about your fitness goals?" asked Emma.

"I met my three month goals today!" Jordan exclaimed. "I've lost twenty-one pounds, and I'm down to a twenty-six inch waist!"

"That's wonderful Jordan," Emma told him. "I'm so happy for you. Jordan, I'm sure you know that the modeling agency sometimes offers modeling work to girls in the fitness program. You're not under any obligation, but I think Mr. Jackson has a job that you might find a lot of fun."

Stan took over the explanation at this point. "I'm opening a new nightclub in the midtown area," he explained. "It's opening this weekend, and I need a number of girls to help advertise. I saw you, and you are exactly what I was looking for."

"Well what would I have to do?" Jordan asked.

"The name of the club is 'Heaven Can't Wait'. We need bright, energetic girls to dress as angels, and hand out pamphlets on the street the day of the opening. Then when the club opens, you would come back and act as hostesses for the evening."

"What does a hostess do?" Jordan wanted to know.

"Just enjoy the club," Jackson explained. "Talk with the customers, drink, dance. Nothing too difficult for a beautiful young girl like yourself."

"And for this type of contract, Carl will never be far off," explained Emma. Carl was the muscle hired to keep all the girls safe, and ensure no one got the wrong idea of how the models can be treated.

“So what do you think, Jordan?” asked Jackson.  
“Do you think you can help us out?”

“Sure,” responded Jordan. “It sounds like fun!”

### Heaven Can't Wait

The day of the club opening arrived quickly. It was a day Jordan would never forget! He got up early (for a Saturday), and made his way to the studio. There he met the five other girls who would be the club's “Angels” for the day.

The girls were treated like princesses for the morning. All six were taken for hair and makeup. Jordan sat back in his chair as one styling expert after another fussed over every hair, then used every cream and conditioner, every lotion, oil, and powder known to woman to make every square inch of his face as beautiful as possible.

Jordan watched the other girls as they were put through the same treatment. One after another they finished, each one more beautiful than the last.

“Oh my goodness,” thought Jordan to himself. “I don't belong here. All these other girls are real models! I can't possibly look like that good!”

When he was finished Jordan looked at himself in the mirror. He looked good, but he still didn't know how he could possibly compare to the others he had seen. Jordan stood, and approached the others nervously. The other girls were all chatting excitedly, but stopped when Jordan approached. They all watched him as he stopped just outside the circle.

“Um, I know tha...” Jordan was interrupted as the other girls squealed, and pulled him into the close circle. He needn't have worried! They were six beautiful girls, some experienced models, others not, but Jordan

was one of them as they all chatted excitedly about their makeovers.

“Ladies, quiet please,” announced Emma, who was tasked with keeping things organized and moving forward throughout the day. “Costumes next, please.”

Each girl was handed a large garment bag, and directed to the change room. The girls would all share the large room, but this was fine. Jordan was used to changing with other girls, as this was the arrangement at Inspiration Fitness. Jordan stripped down to his bra and panties, both white as he had been instructed, then pulled out his costume and arranged the pieces around him.

Jordan opened the new package of pantyhose, then put them on expertly. He’d been wearing pantyhose almost every day for months, and no longer had any difficulty. Next he found the cutest white silk gown, mini length and accented with lace and long, puffy sheer sleeves that draped far down past his fingertips. The sleeves made getting into the dress awkward and so the girls all helped one another.

Jordan reached down into the bag one last time and pulled out a pair of boots. All the girls squealed as they looked at them - the cutest white vinyl go-go boots they had ever seen! Jordan put his on with the rest of the girls, straightening them as the long vinyl twisted around, finally pulling his foot to the bottom. He pulled the boots up past his knees until they held snugly half way up his hips. A zipper on the inner calf of each leg had to be done up, and the girls laughed as none was able to reach. They sat on benches and once again helped each other, then as a group went back to the studio.

“Ladies, please step over here for one last costume piece,” Emma directed. Each girl was then fitted with a large pair of white, feathery wings. Each girl really was an angel!



For the next hour a professional photographer took pictures of all the girls, alone and in groups. As much fun as this day had been so far, this was the best time Jordan had ever had! Jordan had struggled the past few months to be accepted as a girl by his friends, his co-workers, and his own family. He'd met resistance from everyone and he couldn't understand why. They didn't want him to change, didn't want to see him grow up, he supposed. Yet here was a group of girls who had never even met him before, and they accepted him as one of their own!

Jordan posed as directed, in front of a large backdrop of clouds and blue sky. Most of the other girls had modeled before, or had at least taken all the modeling classes offered at Inspiration. Jordan had only taken the first class, and that was only the day before as Emma tried to get him ready for this job. Jordan watched the other girls, saw how they took the photographer's directions, and tried to emulate them. It felt awkward at first, twisting his hip this way, tilting his head that way, but after getting over his initial bout of nerves Jordan started to relax and have fun. The other girls encouraged him, and helped him out.

The photographer shot what seemed like hundreds of pictures. He did a lot of singles, so if it wasn't his turn Jordan would stand with the other girls giggling and encouraging the girl in front of the camera. There were a lot of pairs photos, and Jordan frequently found himself in demand for these. Then there were the group photos, where all six girls posed together. Jordan was having the time of his life!

Shortly after noon the girls were each given a huge stack of credit card-sized leaflets, advertising the club opening. Their wings were removed and placed in the

trunk of a huge, white stretch limo. Then the girls all piled inside, to be taken to their next destination. The girls giggled and chatted excitedly as they drove to midtown, and one by one were dropped off.

Jordan's turn finally came as the limo pulled over on Fifth Avenue at 49th Street. Jordan got out, and the remaining girls wished him luck. One of the support staff opened the trunk, removed Jordan's wings and helped him into them. Then the limo drove away, leaving Jordan to his task of distributing the announcements.

\* \* \*

Josh led Matt through the crowds. Rockefeller Plaza was a major tourist attraction and so Matt had wanted to see it, although Josh would have paid good money not to have to spend any time in this crowd of gawkers. Still, Matt was new to the city. Josh could put up with it for a while.

"Where are we now?" Matt asked as Josh led him out to another major road.

"This is Fifth Avenue," Josh replied. "Not much to do here, unless you're really into shopping. Lots of designer shops that way, Saks is right there."

"Saks Fifth Avenue, really?" asked Josh. "We should go check it out, just so I can say I've been there. Hey, what's that?"

Josh looked where Matt was pointing. It seemed to be some kind of street performance. A girl dressed in angel wings. No, not a street performer. Just someone handing out pamphlets.

"It's nothing. Just an advertisement," said Josh. "Ignore her." Josh and Matt continued along Fifth Avenue in the girl's direction.

"Hi, Heaven Can't Wait! Come out tonight, it's going to be amazing," the girl said, holding a card out to a passerby.

"Are you going to be there?" the man asked, accepting the card.

The girl laughed. "Of course! See you there!"

The man walked on with a smile, and the girl turned to Josh and Matt. Josh tried to ignore her, being approached on average twenty times a day to buy something, but Matt reached out to accept the girl's card.

"Hi! Heaven Can't Wait! Come out ton... Joshua?"

Josh stopped and turned to the girl. He looked at her closely. Nobody but his mother ever called him Joshua, and the girl was definitely not his mother.

"Joshua, what are you doing down here?" the girl said excitedly. "I can't believe this, running into you here. I haven't seen you since April, back home!"

A look of horror started to spread across Josh's face, although Matt didn't notice. He was too busy looking at Jordan.

"Jordan?" said Josh as recognition set in. "I heard some rumours, but I didn't really believe it. Jordan, what the hell are you doing?"

"It's just a temporary job," Jordan responded. "But it's good money, and it may lead to more modeling work."

"That's not what I mean!" said a flustered Josh.

“Josh, do you know this girl?” interrupted Matt.

“That’s no girl!” yelled Josh. “She’s my... that’s my...” he stammered, unable to complete the sentence.

“I’m his little sister!” Jordan said, in the happy, excited pitch that only attractive young women can achieve. Jordan held out his hand toward Matt. “Hi, I’m Jordan! Josh, aren’t you going to introduce us?”

When Josh said nothing, Matt introduced himself. He took Jordan’s hand and said, “Hi, I’m Matt. I work with your brother. I’m from the Chicago office, only here for a few days.”

“That’s so great!” said Jordan. “So Josh is showing you around? Has he taken you to the...”

“Jordan, what the hell are you doing out here dressed like that?” yelled Josh. “And makeup, and your hair, and high heel boots! What’s wrong with you? Have you lost your mind?”

Jordan frowned at Josh. “You’re being just a little over-protective, don’t you think?” Then he turned to Matt with a smile. “Joshua can’t live with the fact that his little sister is all grown up.”

“That’s not it at all, and you know it!” shouted Josh. “It’s not safe for you out here like that! Anything could happen to you.”

“I’m perfectly capable of taking care of myself,” Jordan replied. “Plus, the agency has a car passing by once in a while to make sure we’re all okay. There it is now.”

Carl pulled up in the white limo and rolled down the window. He looked at Josh as if he might need to break him in half. “Everything okay, Miss Jordan?”

“Yes, thank you Carl,” Jordan responded with a big smile. “This is my brother,” he said, giving Josh a sisterly hug. Josh shrugged away.

“Okay,” said Carl, still watching Josh closely. “I’m nearby if you need me.” He rolled up the window and pulled out into traffic.

“You see Josh?” said Jordan. “Everything is fine. You don’t need to take care of me!”

“What’s this card all about?” asked Matt, hoping to break the brother-sister tension.

“Oh, it’s an amazing new club!” Jordan said enthusiastically. “It’s opening tonight, up on 57<sup>th</sup> between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. Get there early, because there’s going to be a huge crowd.”

“Are all the other ‘girls’ like you?” asked Josh. “Because if they are that’s the last place anyone wants to be!”

“Josh, relax!” said Matt. “This sibling rivalry thing does not look good on you.”

“So do you think you can make it?” asked Jordan hopefully.

“Are you going to be there?” Matt asked.

“Of course!” laughed Jordan. “It’s going to be a blast!”

“I’ll see if I can talk your grouchy brother into it!” said Matt as he and Josh turned, and continued down the street.

Jordan laughed and waved, then turned back to the approaching crowds. “Hi! Heaven Can’t Wait! Opening tonight, it’s going to be amazing!”

“Are you going to be there?” said a passerby as he accepted a card.

Jordan giggled. “Of course!”

\* \* \*

Jordan swayed with the music, his arms wrapped loosely around the man’s shoulders, the man’s hands at his back, occasionally slightly lower. The music ended, and a faster song began immediately. Jordan stepped back, ending the contact.

“Thanks, that was fun,” he said, backing away.

“Listen, I’m going to another place after this,” the man told him. “Maybe you’d like to come along?”

“Sorry,” replied Jordan as he turned and walked away. “I have to get back to work.”

“How about I buy you another drink?” the man called after him. “What time do you get off?”

Jordan returned to the bar, ‘home base’ for the club hostesses. His feet were really starting to kill him. He’d been standing all day, and now dancing all night in these thigh-high go-go boots.

Carl had picked up all the girls early in the evening, about an hour before the club was to open. Jordan and the other angels were taken to the club where they were reminded of their hostessing duties. Their job was simply to keep the customers happy. Talk with them, drink with them, dance with them. Be bright and cheerful, and smile. Don’t spend too much time with one customer before moving on to the next. It didn’t sound difficult. Except Jordan had no idea how much hard

work would be involved in being the life of the party until two in the morning.

At least the girls were not expected to wear the wings in the club. Mr. Jackson had reluctantly agreed that trying to get around the crowded club with enormous wings would be impossible. But the girls were all still recognizable from their bright white silk mini-dresses, and those thigh-high high-heel go-go boots. That vinyl really didn't breathe.

Jordan reached the bar and sat on a stool. He knew that he wouldn't need to wait long before being approached by another guy.

"Hey beautiful, come here often?"

Jordan turned to face the perpetrator of that lousy pickup line. But when he finished working up his prettiest smile and batting his lashes he was in for a surprise.

"Adam?" he laughed. "I almost didn't recognize you outside of work! What are you doing here?"

Adam smiled in return. "Someone on the street handed me this card down on 34th street," he said, holding up one of the club's card-size advertisements. "But I expect you know all about that, by the way you're dressed."

"Is it that obvious that I'm an angel?" Jordan joked as he gestured at his miniskirt and boots. "It's just a part time modeling job. Just for today, actually."

"Wow. So now you're moonlighting as a professional model? Are you allowed to do that under union rules?" asked Adam.

"I'm not really a model," blushed Jordan. "It's actually part of my fitness program. Never mind that, it

would take too long to explain. Oh wait, do you really think the union would object?"

Adam laughed. "No, I don't think so. How could anyone object to letting you show off those legs at every opportunity?"

Jordan blushed again. Then he told Adam, "Listen, I'm not supposed to spend too much time with any one customer, unless they buy me a drink."

"Oh! Okay," said Adam. "It's just, I've never bought a drink for someone like you."

"What do you mean?" asked Jordan. "You've never bought a drink for a girl?"

"No, I've bought drinks for girls," Adam fumbled for the words. "Just, you know, not a 'girl' like you."

"A pretty girl?" probed Jordan. "An angel? A professional model / slash / warehouse forklift operator?"

"No it's just that you're a..." fumbled Adam once again, then he gave up. "Never mind. How about a Cosmo?"

"Actually," suggested Jordan, "I'll tell you a secret. Save your money because no matter what you order for me they'll give me a ginger ale. They don't want a bunch of slutty, drunken angels bringing the place's reputation down."

Adam laughed. "Okay! Bartender, two ginger ales, in martini glasses. And don't spare the ginger!"

Jordan laughed. He and Adam simply looked at each other as the bartender set out two glasses and filled them.

Adam was no longer sure what he was looking at. He had thought it was Jordan, the nutty guy from work

who started showing up in dresses. Except over the months Jordan had started looking more and more feminine, to the point where you could forget who he really was. Now here, late at night in a club and wearing a sexy minidress, Jordan was something else entirely.

The two picked up their glasses and clinked. "Here's to a beautiful angel," Adam toasted.

"Thank you," replied Jordan shyly, sipping his drink. Setting the glass down on the bar he suggested, "We can hang out a little longer if you'd like to dance."

Adam finished his drink, then set the glass on the bar. "I'd like that," he said. He stood and took Jordan's hand, helping him up and leading him to the dance floor.

It was a slow song. Adam wrapped his arms around Jordan's waist, and Jordan placed his head on Adam's shoulder as he began slowly swaying to the music.

"So, what time do you get off tonight?" Adam asked. "Do you need someone to see that you get home? It might not be safe for an angel on the subway late at night."

Jordan didn't need anyone to see him home. He knew that Carl would be there to drive all the angels back to their homes in the stretch limo. He looked up into Adam's eyes.

"Two o'clock," he told him. "Thank you, that would be really nice."

## Paint Party

“Ting!”

Jordan opened the oven door and looked at his cookies. Yes, perfect! He reached over to the table where he had left his oven mitts.



“RRap, tap tap!”

Oh no, someone at the door. He looked over at the oven, then back to the door.

“Just a minute!” he yelled to the front door as he quickly slipped on the mitts and turned back to the oven.

“Brring-ring! Brring-ring!”

Now there was someone downstairs!

“Arrgh!” yelled Jordan, removing his oven mitts and running to the intercom.

Before Jordan could push the button, Trish came out of the bedroom and laughed. “What can I do to help?” she offered.

“Please get the door,” Jordan said in a panic. Then before answering the com he remembered to call out to her, “Thanks Trish!”

Jordan pushed the button to speak with the downstairs front door. “Come on up!” he said, then pushed the button to unlock the door. Jordan raced to the oven and grabbed the tray of cookies with one gloved hand, only to find that the job really needed two.

“Ow!” he said, dropping the tray on the top of the stove, then putting his burnt thumb in his mouth. He ran to the front door to see who had arrived.

“Hey, still sucking your thumb little bro?” said Jacob, Jordan’s other older brother. Joshua stood in the entrance as well, along with Jacob and their mother. Jacob raised his arms for a hug.

“Hi Jacob!” said Jordan, raising his arms as well. But as he reached out, Jacob grabbed his arm and quickly turned the hug into a headlock. Jacob held Jor-

dan around the neck with one arm as he mussed Jordan's hair with the other.

"I used to have a little brother, who needed this done for him every day!" said Jacob. "Now that I've got a little sister, I'm betting she needs the same!"

"Ow, quit it!" said Jordan, but laughing as he said it. Jacob was one of the few people in Jordan's life who really seemed to accept him, albeit in his own way. "Jacob, stop! You're messing my hair. Mom, make him stop!"

"Jacob, that's enough," reprimanded their mother.

"Looking good, little sis!" said Jacob, allowing Jordan to stand. "Very domestic. Love the apron and the oven mitt."

"Thanks," said Jordan. "I just made cookies."

Jordan had said the magic word. Jacob and Joshua pushed past him into the kitchen where they found the cookies cooling on the stove.

"They're not ready yet! They need to cool!" said Jordan, trying to stop them. As his older brothers each reached for the pan he realized there was nothing he could do. "Okay, you can have one each." Josh and Jacob each took two.

"I guess it's not so bad, you being a girl, if you're going to bake for us," said Josh as he stuffed the first one into his mouth. "So, where do you want us?"

"Out of the kitchen!" laughed Jordan. "Come with me." Josh grabbed one more cookie as he and Jacob followed Jordan.

"What can I do to help?" asked his mother as she removed her sweater and hung it over a kitchen chair.

"I was just going to slice some vegetables and make a dip!" Jordan called back to her. Then he turned and led his brothers through the apartment to his bedroom.

In the bedroom, all the furniture had been pushed into the middle and covered with plastic and old bed sheets. Painting trays had been set out along with cans of paint, rollers and brushes were piled to the side, and there was even a ladder. Jordan had organized all his friends to come help him paint his apartment. However his brothers didn't notice any of that.

"Wow, another benefit to having a little sister," said Jacob. "Hot girlfriends!"

"Wait until you know their names before you start hitting on them!" laughed Jordan. "This is my best friend Trish. This is Donna, she works in the office at the factory. And this is Jenny, from my fitness club. Ladies, these are my brothers Jake and Josh."

The introductions complete, Jordan explained to everyone his vision for his new room. "I have two colors, Pink Rose and Mauve. These three walls will be pink, with mauve accents on the window and baseboards. Then this wall is reversed; mauve wall with pink highlights. I've put a P or an M on everything in pencil to make sure you know what to do. If it gets too crowded in here, some of you can move out to paint the living room. The colors there will be pretty much the same."

"I love the colors you've chosen," said Trish. "Really pretty."

The other girls agreed. "I love pastels. It's going to look like a little girl's room," giggled Jenny.

"Jake has painted before, so can I leave you in charge? I need to go see what Mom is doing in the kitchen."

“Sure, no problem,” replied Jake. Then as Jordan left, he quickly caught up to him outside the bedroom door.

“Jordan,” said Jacob quietly. “Your friends, they’re all girls, aren’t they?”

“Um no,” replied Jordan. “I have guy friends too. Some are coming later.”

“No, that’s not what I mean,” said Jacob. “I mean those girls, Trish and Donna and... the other one. They’re all girls?”

“Jenny,” Jordan reminded him. “And yeah, what else would they be? The hair and makeup isn’t enough of a clue for you?”

“Okay, just checking,” said Jacob as he went back into the bedroom.

Jordan shook his head in disbelief as he walked back to the kitchen, when he was interrupted by a loud knock at the door. Startled, he stopped and opened it.

“Adam!” he exclaimed. “I’m so glad you made it. Come in!”

“I was starting to wonder if I had the wrong apartment,” said Adam, accepting a friendly hug but breaking it off quickly. “I knocked a few times, but no one answered.”

“Oh, sorry!” apologized Jordan. “I was getting everyone set up in the bedroom and I forgot to listen for the door. I need to get some things done in the kitchen, can you get introduce yourself and get started?”

“Sure, no problem,” said Adam, heading toward the noisy bedroom.

“Oh! Wait,” said Jordan, stopping Adam while he popped into the kitchen. He returned with two cookies and handed them to him.

“I just made these,” Jordan said shyly. “You should have them while they’re still warm.”

“Thanks Jordan,” said Adam, biting into one of the soft, warm cookies. “You’re full of surprises.”

Adam turned and walked to the bedroom. Jordan smiled his biggest, happiest, most girlish smile, then ran back to the kitchen.

Jordan’s mother had filled the kitchen sink with water, and had washed all the carrots and celery. When Jordan arrived she was peeling carrots, then setting them on a cutting board to be sliced.

“Did you see him?” asked Jordan, looking around the kitchen and trying to decide what needed doing next. The cookies seemed to be almost all gone so he decided to make another batch. “That’s the boy I told you about,” he said, reaching up into the cupboard for the flour.

His mother didn’t look up as she turned to the cutting board. She picked up a long knife, and began reducing the pile of carrots and celery to edible-size sticks.

“So he is your boyfriend?” said his mother, managing to make the question sound like an accusation.

“No!” said Jordan as he measured two cups of flour into his mixing bowl. “No, I just work with him. And I ran into him at a club. But he walked me home, just to make sure I was safe. And I really like him.”

“And now you go to clubs,” said his mother as she slid the vegetable sticks onto a serving tray. “This is

how you behave now. Now that you decide to be a girl, living in the city." She picked up another carrot and proceeded to slice it.

"It's not like that," said Jordan, carefully measuring the baking powder and adding it to the bowl. "It was a job. From the modeling agency. It pays well, and I need the money."

His mother looked him up and down. "To buy dresses and high heel shoes, and makeup."

"Please, Momma, I thought you would be happy for me," sulked Jordan. He added butter and shortening to the mix, then placed it on the mixer.

His mother looked over at him. "You should mix the butter and shortening first, then add the dry ingredients."

"Thanks," said Jordan quietly.

"So," said his mother, breaking the awkward silence to ask more awkward questions. "This Adam. Does he know about you?"

"Does he know what about me?" asked Jordan curiously.

"Does he know," asked his mother hesitantly. "Does he know that you are..."

"What? Jewish?" suggested Jordan when it was obvious his mother would not be completing her sentence.

"No, no," said his mother. "But he should know... all about you. How you were raised. That you weren't always a girl like this."

"Momma, please," said Jordan, taking the bowl from the mixer, then adding the chocolate chips and

stirring them into the mix. "I've known Adam for almost two years. We've worked together at the warehouse, and he knows enough about me. And don't worry about me! You raised me right, and I haven't become some crazy party girl. I'm just trying to be more feminine. It's a part of me I need to understand. Can't you just please understand that?"

Jordan's mother looked up from her cutting board, and looked at Jordan. Possibly for the first time, she really looked at her son and saw him not as the boy she had raised, but rather as the young woman he had become. She reached out to him, almost reluctantly at first, but slowly smiled as she touched Jordan's face and used her fingers to brush his hair back from his eyes.

"I suppose if you must be this way, at least you are a very pretty girl. Yes, Adam would be lucky to have a girl so pretty as you."

"Thank you, Momma," said Jordan, setting aside his bowl long enough to give his mother a tearful hug. Then mother and daughter went back to their assigned kitchen duties.

"Why didn't Daddy come?" asked Jordan as he measured out cookie dough onto a pan with a tea spoon. "Is he still upset after last week?" Jordan had gone to Sunday dinner at his parents' house, and it had not gone well.

"Yes. Well, no," said his mother. "He is upset, but I spoke to him. He will not try to change your mind any more."

"I wish he had come today," said Jordan sadly.

"He's not ready. He doesn't know how to relate to a daughter. Give him time." his mother was busy open-

ing and closing cupboards, obviously not finding what she wanted.

“What are you looking for?” asked Jordan.

“Spices for the dip,” said his mother. “You will need dill weed, dried onion, parsley...”

Jordan opened a cupboard and pulled out a small envelope. “Just add this to the sour cream.”

His mother looked at the package. “Packaged dip? This is no way to impress a man. He wants to know you can make real food, not just tear open envelopes.” She looked at the envelope, shrugged, and poured the contents into the sour cream.

Jordan smiled. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Jordan grabbed up a towel to wipe his hands as he ran to the door and opened it.

“Hi,” said the man standing in the hall.

Jordan was speechless for a moment. Finally he managed to say, “Daddy? We were just talking about you. Momma said you couldn’t come.”

“I... can’t stay,” said his father hesitantly. He didn’t move, but remained standing in the hallway. “I just... I’m sorry about last week. The things I said. I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay Daddy,” said Jordan.

“No, it’s not,” said his father. “You wanted me to understand what you’re going through. It was just a surprise. I wasn’t ready. I’m still not ready, but I’m going to try. If you want me to. If you can forgive me.”

“Of course I forgive you Daddy!” said Jordan. “I love you!”

“And I...” said his father, leaving the thought unspoken. Suddenly remembering the gift bag he was holding, he handed it to Jordan. “I... brought you this.”



“Thank you Daddy,” said Jordan, pulling the tissue paper from the top of the bag. “You didn’t have to do this.”

“I never told anyone,” his father muttered. “But, I always wanted a daughter. I just never knew that you... I hope you like it. For your new apartment.”

Jordan dropped the paper and gift bag to the floor as he lifted out a large, soft, teddy bear with a yellow ribbon tied lovingly around its neck. He stared at it, it was so cute. Then he looked at his father, and tears rolled down his face.

“I love it! Thank you Daddy, I love it so much!” Jordan threw his arms around his father and held him as if he would never let go. His father stood stiffly, not sure what to do. After a few moments he placed his arms around Jordan, patting his son gently.

### High School Reunion

Name:

Graduation Year:

Favorite Class:

Favorite Teacher:

Favorite Activities:

Funniest Memory:

Jordan filled out the survey. He probably should have done this last week when he had received it rather than now, on the subway, on his way to the reunion. Except he never seemed to have time these days! His life had become so complicated recently. There were so many demands on his time. Just the cooking and cleaning of his apartment took up his whole night, every night. And then there was the re-decorating. After painting his apartment he realized he needed new linens and pillows, and then all new furni-

ture. His apartment was so cute now, with his heart-shaped desk, his lace curtains and pink comforter and kitten posters. But he was always finding one more thing he needed to shop for. Now he realized he would need some kind of shelving unit in his room to get all his dollies off the floor and out of his bed. But that would have to wait for next week. This week was the high school reunion!

Filling out the survey was fun, and it brought back so many memories. But it was also confusing. Everything that he remembered about high school seemed somehow strange. It was as if he was a different person back then. Was he just trying so hard to fit in that he didn't ever realize who he really was? He didn't think so at the time, but now, well, how else to explain it?

"I guess everyone feels that way in high school, more or less," Jordan thought to himself.

The subway train pulled into his station and so Jordan hurriedly folded the survey and put it away in his purse. He stood and exited the train, then climbed the stairs. He was back in his old neighborhood!

Jordan laughed as he walked to school - he was so different back then! He had cut his hair short; he had never once worn a dress or high heels. Jordan was wearing the prettiest light cotton dress today. It gathered at his waist with a bow that tied at his back, then hung loosely over his hips. It was pink, with the cutest little white polka dots. He never would have thought of wearing a dress like this in high school! Just blue jeans and T-shirts (without a bra! Why did no one ever tell him?). He walked the familiar route, his three-inch heels making a very unfamiliar click-clack on the sidewalk.

Jordan thought about the last question on the form. What activity do you wish you had joined in high school? He had only been on the rugby team, and a couple of clubs. He had tried out for the musical one year and played a part in the chorus. What else was there? He had never thought about joining anything else.

Jordan approached the school. "I can't believe I'm so nervous!" he thought to himself. "It's like the first day of school all over again!"

The front of the school was a riot of activity. It was the 50th anniversary of Harry Howell High, and a lot of former students and teachers were here to celebrate! Jordan made his way through the crowd to the front entrance.

Inside the school was just as chaotic as the outside. Tables had been set up in the front foyer, where people were lining up to get their welcome packages. Jordan lined up at the table identified with his graduation year, and soon found himself facing the young woman sitting there.

"Oh my gosh, Delia Carpenter!" he said. "I almost didn't recognize you. You look great."

"Um, thanks," Delia replied, looking at Jordan with absolutely no sign of recognition. "You too. Here, this is your welcome package. Here's a pen, can you just sign your name tag?"

"Sure," said Jordan. He took the pen and filled in his name under the words, 'Hello my name is'.

"Did you fill in the online survey, uh, Jordan?" said Delia, reading Jordan's name tag as he arranged it on his dress.

“Oh, I didn’t fill it in online. But I printed it and brought it with me,” said Jordan, finding the form in his purse and handing it to Delia.

“Not a problem,” said Delia. I can take that for you.” Delia took the form and placed it in a pile on the desk.

“Oh, wait!” said Jordan. He took back the form and picked up the pen. “I just realized what my answer to the last question is!”

What activity do you wish you had joined in high school? Jordan remembered, he had always admired Delia. She was so pretty in high school. So popular. Jordan wished he could have been so self-confident. He and Delia had gone to school together since grade three, but he couldn’t remember once ever talking to her, although he remembered wanting to. Maybe if he had joined a club she had been in, they might have been friends. Maybe Delia could have been the girlfriend he needed back then, the way Trish was to him now. Jordan filled in the bottom line of the form.

“Cheerleader,” he wrote, then handed the form back to Delia again. Delia had always been on the cheerleading team! Jordan turned and started to walk away.

“Okay, nice seeing you again, uh,” Delia said, looking at the form to remind herself of Jordan’s name. “Jordan... PERLMAN!?”

“Yes!” laughed Jordan. “You too! Maybe we can catch up later!”

Delia tried to catch Jordan, but he turned around and disappeared into the crowd.

“Hi Delia!” said the next girl in line. “It’s so great to see you.”

Delia didn't even appear to have heard the girl. "Did you see her?" she asked. "That last girl, did you see her?"

"Sure," the girl answered. "Who was that?"

"That was Jordan Perlman!"

\* \* \*

Jordan wandered into the science room. Some of the current students were giving a demonstration. They poured one clear liquid into another, and it turned into some kind of yellow goop. Another student was writing a chemical formula on the blackboard which supposedly explained what had just happened.

Jordan looked around the room and spotted a familiar face. "Richard!" he called out. "I thought I would find you here!"

"Uh, hi," said Richard nervously, then looked back to the demonstration.

Jordan frowned. Richard had been a really good friend in high school! Sure, Richard had always been nervous around girls, but he never acted that way with Jordan. That's why they were able to be such good friends. Richard had always seen Jordan as another science nerd, never as a girl. Jordan sat next to Richard at his lab bench.

"Richard?" Jordan tried. "Richard, it's me!"

"Uh, hi, uh... Jordan," said Richard, reading Jordan's name tag.

"Oh my gosh, you don't remember me!" said Jordan. "Have I really changed that much?"

“Um, no,” said Richard nervously. “I’m trying to watch the demonstration.”

“Richard, you seriously don’t recognize me?” asked Jordan. Richard turned to him, realizing he was not going to get rid of this strange girl. “I was a year ahead of you, but we were in the science club together for a couple of years. We entered the state science competition! Richard, you must remember!”

Richard looked at the girl’s name tag again. “The only Jordan I ever knew was Jordan Perlman.”

Jordan turned his hands up and rolled his eyes. “Well, duh!” he said.

Richard took a moment to realize, but when he did his mouth dropped open. “Jordan? What are you, crazy? Why are you dressed like that?”

Jordan laughed. “What did you think, that I would stay a nerdy little science geek my entire life? We all grow up after high school, Richard.”

Richard had no idea what to say to that. Fortunately he didn’t need to say anything as two other members of the old science club arrived, Lenny and Vic.

“Hey Richard, nice to see you man!” said Vic. He looked Jordan up and down and said, “Don’t tell me you brought a girl friend? Nice!”

“This is Jordan,” Richard said, still stunned.

“Jordan?” said Lenny. “What are you doing dressed like that? You some kind of freak now?”

“Yeah, freaking awesome!” said Vic. “Jordan, you look amazing! Why weren’t you a chick in high school? I would have so asked you for a date!”

“Ha ha!” laughed Jordan. “I might have even said yes! It was great running into you guys. Maybe I’ll see you later at the dance.”

Jordan kissed Vic on the cheek, then wandered into the hallway.

“Whoa, that was totally righteous,” said Vic, feeling the spot on his cheek where Jordan had kissed him.

“Vic, that was Jordan!” said Lenny. “He’s a guy! A guy just kissed you. That wasn’t righteous, it was creepy.”

“Hey, a hot chick is a hot chick,” Vic explained. “It doesn’t matter what’s underneath. Other hot chicks see you with a hot chick, all of a sudden they all want you.”

Richard, Lenny, and Vic all realized the opportunity they had at the same time.

“Jordan, wait!” they all cried as they followed him into the hallway.

\* \* \*

Jordan was having the greatest time. He found his way to the gymnasium, where a lot of the activities had been arranged. There he ran into a lot of old friends, and people from his years at Harry Howell High. Everyone seemed surprised to see him, and they all wanted to talk about his new look!

“Really, it’s not that big a deal,” he would tell them. “I just wanted to grow out my hair.” Honestly, most of the girls had changed far more than he had! Different hairstyle, different hair color, new makeup, new cloth-

ing styles! In comparison he wasn't that different than the girl he had been in high school.

A lot of people, especially the other girls, seemed to be genuinely happy for him. Others seemed to be almost offended, and he couldn't understand why. Some of the guys he thought he knew best were actually rude to him. One guy he thought of as a good friend from his rugby days shoved him to the floor, and had to be pulled away by two other guys. Jordan really couldn't understand. Why was everyone else allowed to grow up and change, but not him?

Jordan was talking to a group of girls he had known, although not well. He had never spent much time with other girls like himself. Like everyone else they wanted to know all about his new look, his weight-loss program, and his modeling.

"So have you gone all the way?" asked one.

"Sorry?" asked Jordan, not understanding what the girl was asking.

"You know," the girl giggled. "All the way! Are you totally a girl now?"

"I guess so," replied Jordan. "I'm not sure how much more of a girl I could be."

All the girls laughed. "She means surgery," said another. "Have you had the surgery?"

Jordan looked puzzled for a moment. "Do you mean, like, breast implants?"

All the girls squealed. "Yes!" they laughed. "You should definitely get breasts!"

Jordan looked down at himself. "I guess I never thought about it," he said.

“You really should,” said another. “Especially if you’re serious about being a model. Look at me, I had it done last year and I never looked better.”

Jordan had to admit, the girl looked amazing. Since he had been wearing a bra, what little he had was giving him some shape up top. But he had to admit, this girl’s breasts made him feel like a boy wearing his sister’s bra.

“Maybe I should,” he admitted. All the girls squealed again.

“Hi, are you Jordan Perlman?” asked a young girl wearing a cheerleader outfit. “Someone over there said you might be Jordan Perlman.”

Jordan turned from his friends to speak to the girl. “Yes, that’s me. What can I do for you?”

“Hi Jordan, I’m Britney!” the perky young girl introduced herself. “I’m on the cheerleading squad. Um, right, totally obvious! So we’re, like, looking for girls who said they wish they had been cheerleaders in high school to help us with a demonstration.”

“Me?” asked Jordan. “You want me?”

“Sure!” replied Britney. “We have a cheerleader costume for you, and we want you to lead a cheer on-stage. You would be great! It’ll be fun, I promise!”

All of Jordan’s new girlfriends surrounded him and Britney, the young cheerleader.

“Jordan, you really wanted to be a cheerleader in high school?”

“That is SO cool!”

Jordan looked nervous. “I don’t know if I can do this.”

All the girls squealed at once. "Jordan, you have to! Everyone wants to see you as a cheerleader! Please!"

"Well, alright," said Jordan reluctantly, to more squeals and hugs. "So what do I have to do?"

"Just go over to the change rooms," Britney told him. "We'll get you an outfit to change into."

Jordan left the group, and walked to the change rooms. Britney turned to Jordan's circle of girlfriends.

"She seems very popular!" Britney said. "Were you all friends in high school?"

"Not really," one girl told her. "You won't believe this, but back in high school 'she' wasn't even a 'she' at all! Jordan was a guy!"

"No way," said Britney, watching Jordan sway to the change rooms in his heels.

"Way!" said another girl. "He was totally a guy. No one ever knew he was like this. Not a clue!"

"No wonder she, I mean he, was reluctant to go up on stage," said Britney. "We'll try to keep his secret then."

"Don't worry, it's not a secret!" she was told. "He's telling everyone openly that he's a girl now."

"Wow, that is so cool," said Britney. She left the group, and followed Jordan to the change rooms.

\* \* \*

Jordan waited outside the change rooms with the other women who had agreed to be part of the cheer-leading demonstration. Most were much older than Jordan. Jordan struck up a conversation with one

woman named Gladys who looked to be in her sixties. She was very small, but had a nice figure and a beautiful face.

"How do you stay so young?" Jordan asked.

"Oh, that's easy," Gladys told him. "As you become a young woman, and eventually an old lady like me, you must never forget what it was like to be a young girl."

Jordan nodded and smiled. "That makes sense."

"Some people say to treat every day like it's your last," Gladys told him. "I say, treat every day as if it's your first! Look at everything as if you've never seen it before. Every sight, every sound, every taste and smell. Never lose the joy of being a beautiful young girl."

"I won't," Jordan said.

"Hi!" interrupted one of the cheerleaders. "What are your sizes?"

"Six," said Gladys.

"Four," said Jordan. The girl sorted through a pile of uniforms, eventually handing one to each.

"Yikes," said Jordan. "This is a little revealing," he said as he held the tiny top and skirt against himself.

Gladys laughed. "If I can wear one, certainly a beautiful young girl like you can."

"You're right!" laughed Jordan. "Never lose the joy of being a young girl!"

"That's the spirit!" said Gladys. "Come on, let's get changed."

Gladys entered the girls' change room. Jordan made to follow, but was stopped.

“Oh, wait!” said Britney. “Um, do you think you should maybe use the other change room?”

Jordan looked where Britney had indicated, the boys’ change room. He was puzzled for a moment, but then realized.

“Oh, of course!” he said with a laugh. “That’s what I always did in high school, how did you know? I even had a locker over there.”

Jordan turned with his cheerleader’s uniform, and went into the boy’s change room. Inside there were a number of boys, mostly high school age, in various stages of undress and preparing to participate in sports displays. Jordan walked through them all to his old locker and set his things on a bench.

“Uh, this is the guys’ change room lady,” one of the bolder ones managed to say.

“Oh don’t worry,” Jordan replied. “They asked me to change in here.”

“Why?” asked another. Then attempting to answer his own question he suggested, “Was the girls’ room too full?”

“I’m not sure,” said Jordan, a puzzled expression on his face. “Maybe that was it. I hope this is okay with you boys?”

The boys looked around at each other, but none seemed to particularly object to having a potentially naked girl in the room with them.

“Good! Thanks,” said Jordan. All the boys watched as Jordan turned and pulled open the bow behind his back, letting the ends fall loose to his sides. Their mouths fell open as he reached down, grabbing the hem of his dress, then slowly swayed left and right as

he pulled the dress up and over his head. They then lost all semblance of conscious thought as Jordan took the opportunity of being in only his bra and panties to spread moisturizing lotion over his calves, then his thighs and hips, then his shoulders and chest.

Finally Jordan pulled his tiny skirt over his long legs, settling it on his hips and then fastening it behind his back. He pulled his tiny top down over his head, adjusting it over his bra. Fully dressed as every high school boy's cheerleading fantasy, he wandered to the mirrors where he fixed his hair and makeup.

"All done!" he declared. "Thanks for your patience," he said as he hung up his dress in his old locker. Jordan picked up his purse and walked to the exit, every eye watching the hypnotic sway of his hips.

Before Jordan could exit, the door burst open. "What's taking you girls so long?" shouted the football coach before he came to a full stop, mouth open at the sight of Jordan.

"Sorry coach, my fault," said Jordan. He squeezed past the coach in the narrow doorway and went to join the other cheerleaders.

\* \* \*

"For Harry Howell we'll fight,  
with all our might,  
With victory always in our sight.  
Your banner we'll hold high,  
And march and fight,  
For the red and gold and white!  
For with our..."

Jordan stood in the wings, watching as Gladys led the crowd in singing the school song.

After leaving the boys' change room Jordan had caught up with the other cheerleaders. Britney and a couple of other girls from the current squad led them to a practice room, where they all learned cheers. Once they had the words and a few moves they all went to the auditorium. Each of them was going to lead the entire auditorium in a cheer!

"...We'll never, ever let you down!"

Gladys finished her song, jumping in the air and waving her pompoms, then ran back into the wings. Some of the crowd applauded, others laughed, but most weren't really paying attention as they chatted with old friends. Jordan was next!

"That was so much fun!" said Gladys as she exited the stage. Then with a kiss on his cheek she said, "Good luck Jordan!"

"I can't do this!" Jordan admitted.

"What's the problem Jordan?" asked Britney. "Is it because you don't want your old friends to see you dressed like a girl?"

Jordan gave Britney an odd look. "No, that's not it at all. I'm just no good at speaking in public! I get too nervous! Britney, I can't go out there. I won't be able to say a word! My stomach is all in knots just thinking about having to speak out there."

Gladys comforted him. "You'll be fine Jordan. It was a lot of fun. You'll see."

"I'm going to introduce you," said Britney. "Just relax. All you have to do is say your cheer. You'll be

great!" Britney left Jordan in the wings, and walked to center stage.

"Thank you, Gladys Kravitz, class of '68!" called out Britney.

"I can't do it!" said Jordan. "Anything but public speaking!"

Then he got an idea. Jordan quickly located the stage manager, a young high school student with a clipboard and headset. "Can you play a song for me?" Jordan asked.

"If it's on the internet, we can play it," he was told.

"I need you to play 'I wish she was my Girlfriend' by the Go Go Dolls when I get on stage."

"Original or remix?" asked the stage manager.

"Original. I dance to it all the time in my fitness class. Only play about thirty seconds, okay?"

The stage manager spoke into his headset. "Tom, can you download 'I wish she was my Girlfriend'? Cool. Play it as soon as the next chick is on stage. Only about thirty seconds, or just cut it off when everyone starts getting bored."

Out on stage, Britney picked up the microphone. "Our next wannabe cheerleader is Jordan Perlman. Some of you may remember Jordan as 'that guy in my English class'! You probably never knew that he secretly wanted to be a cheerleader! So now he finally gets his chance. Here SHE is, Jordan Perlman!"

Britney ran off to the side. Some of the crowd began to pay attention, having heard some of the intro and wondering if they had heard correctly. Jordan stepped on stage, and the opening bars of his song played.

“She’s hot! She’s hot! Uh huh, uh huh, she’s hot!  
She’s hot! She’s hot! Uh huh, uh huh, she’s hot!”



And all the boys say..."

"She's hot! She's hot! I wish she was my girlfriend!  
She's hot! She's hot! I wish she was my girlfriend!"

Jordan cat-walked out to center stage, one leg crossing smoothly over the other, his arms held loosely out to the sides. He hoped Britney wouldn't be angry, but he just couldn't say his cheer in front of the crowd. On the other hand he had danced to this song a hundred times in his JazzFit class. He could perform every movement without thinking.

Jordan started with some head rolls and stretches. He rolled his shoulders, and his body rippled from the hips upward. Jordan worked his hips in a figure 8 and did a shimmie with his shoulders, picking up speed with the music until his whole body was in motion.

"What is she doing?" asked Tom over the headset.

"I don't know, but I like it!" replied the stage manager. "Tom, take down the house lights and follow her with a spot!"

Jordan continued to dance, barely aware that he was causing a sensation. With the lights down and the spot light on him, he quickly became the focus of all attention in the large auditorium. The camera club, who had been filming random attendees and projecting their images twenty feet tall on the auditorium walls, pointed their cameras at Jordan. And Jordan kept dancing.

"I thought they were going to cut the music after thirty seconds?" Jordan thought to himself. "I'm going to go through my entire workout at this rate!"

Jordan contracted his body, he curved and arched his back. He ran to get speed, jumped high in the air

with legs bent behind him, dropped to the ground in a control fall, turned and rolled backward to his feet.

“Dude, is that your brother?” someone asked Joshua.

“Yeah, that’s Jordan,” Josh admitted, yelling to be heard over the music.

“Does he always dress like that?”

“Nah. Mostly he just dresses like a regular girl.”

Jordan was definitely tiring and was very glad to get to the chorus. The chorus was spoken, and usually his class did some stretches since the music at this point didn’t suit dancing. In the video from their live concert though, the Go Go Dolls spoke the words to the audience and the audience responded.

Jordan struck a pose like the video, squatting with his knees together, one finger to his lips as he pouted and lip synced, “Don’t you think I’m hot?”

And the audience roared back, “Oh yeah, she’s hot!”

Jordan was shocked as he realized for the first time, everyone in the auditorium was actually watching him. He barely recovered in time for his next line, “Do you want everything I got?”

“The girl’s so fine!” called out everyone who knew the words, which was everyone.

Jordan stood, running his hands up his legs and flipping his skirt as he did so, just like the video. He spoke over his shoulder to the audience, “Do you think I’m hot? Do you have a thought to send?”

“You’re so hot, I want you for my girlfriend!” shouted the crowd.

The music picked up, and Jordan began to dance again. He leapt, and spun. He posed and stretched and dropped and rolled. He twisted and turned and shimmied and stepped and spiralled. The song lasted over five minutes, giving him a complete jazz workout. When he was finished the audience erupted in thunderous applause.

\* \* \*

“Brring-ring! Brring-ring!”

Jordan pressed the intercom button. “Hi, I’ll be right down!” he called into the speaker.

Jordan ran around his apartment, turning out lights and looking at everything, wondering what he might be forgetting. Finally deciding that he was ready he took one last look at his hair and makeup in the heart-shaped mirror at his apartment door. He touched up his lipstick one last time.

“Ready as I’ll ever be,” he told himself in the mirror. Jordan picked up his evening bag, placed his lipstick inside, and exited into the hallway.

The gown he was wearing was stunningly beautiful, but not easy to get around in! The full length, form fitting gown fit snug over his hips and thighs, then draped from there to the ground. The silky material wrapped around his legs with every step. He wasn’t sure if it might just be too much for what was essentially a high school dance, but when Trish had heard there was to be a prom at Jordan’s reunion she had insisted he borrow it. The gown had been Trish’s prom dress two years earlier, and she never had an occasion to wear it since. The silver-gray material was abso-

lutely beautiful, and Jordan had to admit, he felt incredibly glamorous as he made his way to the front door.

Jordan exited the big front doors of his Brownstone apartment. There on the landing was his brother Jacob, dressed in his best suit and tie.

“Wow, look at you little bro!” said Jacob when he saw his little brother dressed like a Hollywood starlet ready for the red carpet. He raised his arms in greeting.

“No, Jacob!” pleaded Jordan, shrinking from his older brother. “Please, don’t put me in a headlock! Not in this gown, and these heels! Please, don’t!”

Jacob laughed. “Sure thing, kid. I won’t muss your hair and makeup. I know that kind of thing is important to you now.”

“Thanks Jake,” said Jordan with relief. “Help me down the stairs, please? You have no idea how hard it is to walk in these heels and this dress.”

Jacob laughed, but he took his little brother’s hand and helped him to navigate the tall steps to the sidewalk.

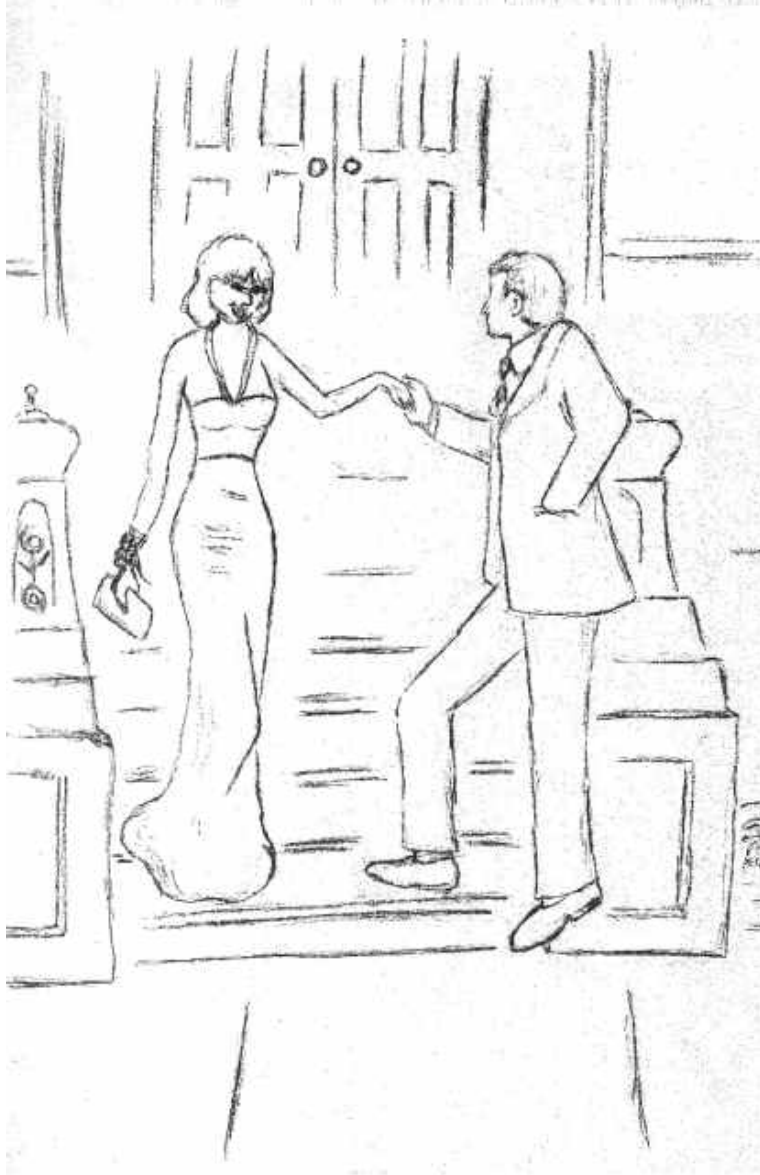
“Wait here. I’ll go get a taxi,” said Jacob as he ran to the corner. It only took a few moments for him to return with a yellow cab.

Jordan fumbled with the door, then tried to get in the back seat. Finally in frustration he said to Jacob, “A little help here, please?”

Jacob got out of the cab. He held the door open for Jordan, and held his hand for balance as Jordan lifted his skirts into the cab. With Jordan securely placed in the back seat, Jacob ran around and got into the other side.

“Harry Howell High, please,” Jacob told the driver.  
The cab pulled from the curb.

“I really appreciate you taking me tonight, Jake,”  
Jordan said.



“I was actually going to skip the whole reunion thing until you called me,” Jacob told him. “High school wasn’t that big a deal for me.”

“I hope you don’t think this is weird, taking your sister to a high school dance,” Jordan said.

“Weird? No,” said Jacob dismissively. “I knew a few people in my day who took sisters and cousins to dances. That’s not so weird. What might be just a little weird is, I’m the only guy I know who took his little brother to the prom!”

Jordan pouted. “Please don’t call me that. No names, not tonight. I know what I was like before, but I’ve really changed. I want everyone at high school to know that I really am a girl now.”

“You are too weird, little br... little sis? Can I call you little sis?”

Jordan smiled. “I’d really like that.”

Jacob fumbled in his jacket pocket. “I bought you something,” he said, pulling out a box.

Jordan took the box and looked at it. “What is it?” he said with a curious smile.

“Open it and find out,” said his brother.

Jordan opened the box. “A corsage!” he said with delight. Jordan lifted the arrangement of flowers and ribbons out of the box, and slipped the flexible band over his wrist. He held it up, admiring it with a huge smile. “That was so thoughtful. Oh my gosh, look at it, it’s beautiful. Oh Jacob, I can’t believe this, I’m crying.” Jordan leaned over in the back seat and put his arms around Jacob.

Jacob didn't have the heart at this point to say that he had meant it to be a joke. "It was no big deal. I'm glad you like it. Just don't kiss me, okay?"

Jordan smiled, and dabbed at the corner of his eye with a tissue from his clutch purse. "You didn't even hire a limo to take me to the prom. What makes you think you're getting a kiss?" he teased his older brother.

\* \* \*

"Thank you, everyone," announced Principal Brooks from the podium that had been set up in the gymnasium. "Thank you all for coming. This has been a fabulous day. I'm sure you all know..."

Jordan stood with a group of girls from his year, watching the principal. Everyone was reasonably attentive, being well trained to remain quiet during school assemblies!

"We have a few awards we would like to hand out," said the principal. "The first goes to the oldest graduate to attend today. Can I ask Gladys Kravitz to come up?"

Jordan applauded as he watched his fellow cheerleader walk to the podium and accept her award. "I know her!" he said with a smile to Delia Carpenter. A picture of Gladys from her graduation year was projected on a screen set up behind the podium. "Oh, she was so pretty!"

"Thank you, everyone," Gladys said into the microphone. "It was such a privilege earlier today to lead you all in singing the school song."

Principal Brooks led the applause as Gladys stepped down. "Thank you Gladys. Next we have an award for the attendant who travelled the furthest distance. Our winner came all the way from Berkeley, California to be here today. Can Sam Bernstein please come up?"

Everyone applauded as Sam made his way to the podium and accepted his award. Sam was a large man, and towered over the principal. Sam looked at the picture of his younger self projected behind him, a picture from his high school football team. He raised his award over his head and called out, "Harry Howell High School football rules!"

Everyone cheered, and Sam stepped back into the crowd. Principal Brooks took the podium one more time.

"Next, we asked people to suggest which of their classmates was the most changed since high school. The winner by a huge margin was Jordan Perlman. Jordan, can you come up and accept your award?"

Jordan was never so surprised in his life! Delia and the other girls applauded for him, and pushed him toward the podium when it seemed he would never move. Jordan lifted his long skirt and made his way through the crowd to the podium.

Principal Brooks took Jordan's hand. "So why do suppose so many of your classmates feel you've changed so much since high school?" he asked. Then he happened to notice the yearbook photo of Jordan projected on the screen behind them. He stared at the photo, and his mouth dropped open. He stared back at Jordan, blinked a few times, but didn't seem to be able to do anything about his drooping jaw. The entire crowd joined him in his speechlessness.

Jordan was too nervous to speak. He looked up at his photo, then back at the speechless principal. After what seemed like ages, Jordan started to laugh. He looked at his picture again, then turned to the audience, and he couldn't stop laughing. Finally he managed to say,

"I was such a dork!"

The room exploded in laughter and applause, as Jordan took his award and rejoined his girlfriends.

There were a few more awards, but most people had trouble paying attention. Jordan had truly been the high point of the awards presentation. Following the awards, Principal Brooks announced the start of the dance. Jordan stayed late into the evening, dancing with his girlfriends, and some of his guy friends as well.

When the last notes of the final song faded Jordan still wasn't ready to go home. Jordan said his goodbyes to all his friends, promising to get together real soon. Jacob saw him safely back to his apartment, and Jordan danced into his room. He carefully undressed, hanging Trish's gown on a padded hanger. Jordan washed off his makeup and brushed his teeth, then changed into his nightie and fell into bed, asleep almost before his head hit the pillows. He dreamed of his magical night as the belle of the ball.

## **Chapter 5**

### **One Year Later...**

Emma Marcozzi sat and crossed her long legs. She had dealt with Rick Chapman a couple of times before. Rick represented one of the largest modeling firms in the city, and on very rare occasions needed to fill out an assignment with a few extra girls. Emma never kid-

ded herself though - Rick Chapman represented career models, potential super models. Her girls were strictly amateur. When Rick called with a job it always paid well, but the jobs were always for hostesses at fashion shows, or the occasional background extras in films. He didn't call Inspiration because he needed a star.



And yet this time was something different. In the past Rick had called Emma on the phone, described the event and the jobs available, then left the selection of girls to her. He knew he could trust her to find suitable candidates. After they agreed on a number he was always satisfied with the results.

So why had he insisted on a face-to-face this time? Rick was very evasive on the phone earlier. Something was different this time. Emma could imagine any number of scenarios. What kind of job would he be unwilling to discuss except in person? Rick had never been involved in the porn industry, although others had approached her in the past. Whatever it was, she was going to make sure she had the upper hand. Long legs and a short skirt were only her opening move.

"Thanks you for seeing me, Miss Marcozzi," Rick said, trying to cover the fact that he had watched every movement of Emma's legs.

"The pleasure is all mine, Mr. Chapman," she replied, leaning forward. "I must say, you've got me very curious. You don't usually come all the way out here to see me. What kind of job do you have for my girls that can't be discussed over the phone?"

Rick laughed. "It's nothing improper if that's what you're thinking, I assure you. I wanted to talk to you about one of your models. You have a girl by the name of Jordan Perlman who has been causing some talk downtown."

"Jordan?" said Emma, showing some surprise. "I know her well. A pretty young thing, although slightly awkward. And you say she's attracted attention downtown?"

“She was pointed out to me about three months ago,” Rick explained. “I saw some pictures, and she was beautiful of course. But then I attended a couple of events where she was modeling. In person she is something very interesting. She was in your regular fashion show here at the mall last month modeling lingerie and her personality dominated the show. I want her to model for me.”



"I have to agree with you," Emma said. "Jordan is something unusual. But if you wanted to hire her to model in one of your shows, you could have simply called."

"No, you don't understand," said Rick. "I want to buy her contract from you. I want her to model full time for my agency. You've done great things with the girl, Emma, but you've taken her as far as you can with Inspiration. I can offer her Paris, London and Milan. Nothing is ever certain in this business, but I think she has a very good shot at becoming a top model."

"Yes, of course," said Emma, seeing an opportunity and turning all business. "I never want to stand in the way of my girls. Jordan just recently re-signed her annual contract. It covers a minimum of four modeling assignments over the next year, although Jordan regularly volunteers for additional assignments. Say, twenty-four assignments over the next year at \$1000 per assignment, I could let her go for \$24,000."

"Emma, I normally pay you \$250 per assignment," Rick countered. "And you pay half that to the girls. The number I had in mind was \$6,000, which is twice what you could expect to earn from her."

"\$12,000" countered Emma. "And Jordan does a commercial for Inspiration at your expense."

"Deal," said Rick, offering his hand. He and Emma shook, agreeing on a new career path for Jordan without his knowledge.

"Can I ask," said Emma conversationally. "What is it about Jordan in particular that you find worth pursuing? She's pretty, yes, but I have other girls prettier."

"The prettiest girls aren't always the best models," Rick told her. "At the level I deal with, the girls need

something else. And no one can define what that something else is, because in each case it's different. It can't be defined, but when you see it you know it. Jordan is pretty, obviously. And that comes out really well in her photographs. But there's something in her eyes, something hiding below the surface which is fascinating."

"Yes, I've seen that," said Emma. "There's an innocence to her. It's like she doesn't know how really amazing she is. As if she's a grown woman, but still learning what that means."

"Exactly," agreed Rick. "And I can tell you, men find that irresistible. Is she a woman, or a frightened child? And every once in a while, just a hint of something else. Something suppressed, trying to get out. I don't know what it is, but I want to find out. And everyone who sees her is going to want to see it too."

## **A Beautiful Evening**

"I can't believe Adam finally asked you out!" Trish squealed into the phone.

"Me too!" agreed Jordan. He held the phone in his left hand while applying mascara with his right. He sat at his makeup desk, wearing only a bra and panties covered by a shorty kimono. "He's been so shy for so long! Always afraid to talk to me at work in front of the other guys, but never able to stay too far away from me! It's so cute, how shy he is!"

"He knows how you were raised, doesn't he?" asked Trish. "Maybe that's why he doesn't want the other guys to know he's attracted to you."

A puzzled look crossed Jordan's face. "What would that matter? He was raised the same way. And so were most of the guys at work."

"Oh, ha ha, very funny," deadpanned Trish. "So tell me how he asked you out."

Jordan switched the phone to his right hand so he could apply mascara to his left eye. "After I told everyone two weeks ago that I was quitting for this fulltime modeling job he started hanging around a lot, like he really wanted to speak to me, but he was so cute because he just couldn't get up his nerve! It started to actually get frustrating, he was taking so long. Then yesterday was my last day, and I said my goodbyes and left, and he watched me go without saying a word, so I figured that was it, he really would never ask me out. But then he ran out of the building and caught up to me in the parking lot! Oh Trish, he was so romantic. He told me he had been thinking about me, and was confused about his feelings, but when he saw me leave he knew he had to say something and he couldn't just let me walk out of his life forever."

"That's so beautiful," sighed Trish. "So what did you say?"

Jordan switched the phone back to his left hand so he could work on his lipstick. "I asked him if he was asking me for a date? And he said yes, that was exactly what he was doing. And I didn't want to just say yes right away, so I asked him if he was going to take me somewhere nice? And he said yes, the best restaurant in town! And then I thought about it, and made him wait. But finally I said, 'Yes. I would very much like to go to the best restaurant in town with you Adam.'"

"And did you kiss him?" asked Trish.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” said Jordan. “Of course I kissed him!”

“Do you think he told the other guys at work?”

“He didn’t have to,” said Jordan. “They were all watching from the loading dock, hooting and making kissy noises!”

“That is too funny!” laughed Trish.

‘Beep-beep’. Jordan’s phone let him know there was another caller on the line.

“Hold on a second,” Jordan told Trish. He pressed the button for call waiting. “Hello?”

“Hi Jordan, it’s me. I’m at the front door.”

“Oh gosh! Hang on, I’ll let you in.” Jordan stood from his desk and raced to the kitchen. He punched the call waiting button and spoke as he ran. “Trish, gotta go! He’s here!”

“Good lu...” he heard as he hit the off button. Jordan pushed the button on the intercom to open the front door, then set down the phone. He quickly collected himself and walked to the door of his apartment. Jordan picked up the brush he kept there and quickly fixed his hair in the mirror. He barely had time before Adam knocked. Jordan put down the brush, took a calming breath and opened the door.

“Hi,” he said. “I’m sorry I’m not ready. Trish called, and I lost track of time. Come on in.”

Adam looked at the vision before him. Jordan’s hair and makeup were perfect. He was barefoot, his long naked legs stretching up to his shorty kimono. The kimono was held together with a single tie, gapping above his waist to reveal pale skin and a hint of bra. Adam was speechless.

“Well, come in!” Jordan finally laughed.

Adam walked into the apartment, closing the door behind him. “These are for you,” he finally managed to get out as he handed Jordan a bouquet of mixed flowers.

“That is so sweet,” said Jordan, sniffing the fragrant bouquet. “Can you take care of them while I get dressed? There’s a vase in the kitchen cupboard, second from the left.”

Jordan handed the flowers back to Adam, then quickly ran to his bedroom. He had not intended to answer the door for Adam dressed like that!

Alone in his bedroom, Jordan checked his makeup one more time. Satisfied that it was perfect he took off his kimono, setting it aside on the bed and struggled into a new pair of pantyhose. Then he went to the closet and pulled out the dress Trish had helped him pick out.

Jordan looked at the dress. It was a champagne-colored cocktail dress, sleeveless with an elegant draping effect. A plunging V revealed quite a bit. A lot. Just about everything, and it was really short.

It had seemed like such a good idea when he and Trish had been in the store, but now he wasn’t so sure. It was so daring! But it was too late to back out now.

Jordan removed his bra - this dress didn’t need one - and let his breasts swing free. The incisions from the implants had healed a month ago, but this was the first time he would be letting the girls out loose in public! Jordan pulled the dress over his head, arranged the straps over his shoulders, the skirt over his hips, the draping fabric of the plunging V between the girls. He stepped into his heels, the color chosen to perfectly

match the dress. He stepped back to look at himself in his full-length mirror.

Perfect. Jordan filled his clutch purse with the makeup items he would need, and walked to the kitchen.

"I'm ready," he announced. "How do I look?"

Adam stared in amazement. "You are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen," he said very simply.

Jordan smiled. "Thank you," was all he said.

Adam had found the vase and put the flowers in it, but had not added any water. Jordan smiled, secretly thinking to himself that men are so helpless about such things. He picked up the vase and filled it half way at the sink, then replaced it in the center of the kitchen table.

"Shall we go?" Adam asked.

"Yes, let's," Jordan replied.

Adam helped Jordan out of the building, down the steep stairs to the street, then to the corner where they caught a cab. Conversation was difficult at first as they were both very nervous, Jordan being on his first big date with a guy, and Adam also being on his first big date with a guy. But on the ride they warmed to each other.

Jordan asked Adam how he finally worked up his nerve to ask for a date. Adam admitted that he couldn't do it. He watched Jordan leave the warehouse the day before, and couldn't work up his nerve to say anything. But then Frank had said, "Well, are you just going to let her leave? Go after her!" Adam didn't even know what happened next. He just suddenly found himself run-

ning up to Jordan, wanting to tell her a million things but unable to say a single word.

Then Jordan told him that he had said all the right things, in just the right way. Jordan smiled, just thinking about how happy this man made him feel. The cab pulled up to the restaurant. Adam got out first, then held Jordan's hand to help him stand. He didn't let it go as they entered the restaurant.

"Good evening. Do you have a reservation?" they were greeted.

"Yes. The name is Jordan Perlman," Adam told him. The maitre d' quickly checked the name against a list, then led the two into the restaurant.

"You put my name on the reservation?" asked Jordan.

"Of course!" replied Adam. "You're going to be a famous supermodel soon. Your name is going to get us the best tables."

"Maybe, but not yet," said Jordan as they were led deep into the back of the restaurant.

The maitre d' left them at their table with their menus, and the couple continued their earlier conversation.

"I couldn't just let you go!" said Adam. "You're leaving next week for that Asian fashion show, and never coming back."

"Of course I'm coming back!" laughed Jordan. "It's just two weeks, modeling in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore. Then I'm straight back here."

"As a famous supermodel," said Adam. "You might as well leave forever, because I would never see you again."

"I'm just one of twelve girls," said Jordan. "Two of them are actual supermodels. No one is even going to notice me. And anything could happen. I could fall off the runway. That would make a quick end to my modeling career."

"Everyone is going to notice you. And not because you fall off the runway!" Adam said admiringly.

"Well that's sweet of you..." Jordan began to say. But then he looked up and saw someone he recognized. "Oh my gosh, do you know who that is?"

Jordan waved, trying to get the other diner's attention. "Dr. Vesko! Dr. Vesko!" he called out.

Paul Veskovitch looked up from his conversation at hearing his name called out across the restaurant floor. He noticed a young woman waving at him, but not recognizing her he simply waved politely and then returned to his meal.

"Gosh, Dr. Vesko!" Jordan said, returning his attention to Adam. "I haven't seen him in over a year."

"I need to wash up before dinner," said Adam. "Will you excuse me a moment?"

"Sure," said Jordan as Adam stood and left for the washrooms.

Jordan sat by himself for a few moments, still looking over at Dr. Vesko. Finally he decided; he needed to go and speak to him. Jordan stood and weaved his way across the room until he reached Paul Veskovitch's table.

"Excuse me, Dr. Vesko?" said Jordan, interrupting Paul and his dinner companion. "I don't know if you remember me. I came to see you about a year ago. My name is Jordan Perlman."

Paul looked at the woman. "I'm sorry, I meet so many people in my work. I would have hoped to have remembered a woman so lovely as yourself, though!"

Jordan blushed. "Thank you. I only saw you the one time. I've often wondered what happened to you though. You collapsed half way through the session with a heart attack or something, and I was so worried for you."

"That night!" said Paul. "Of course I remember. I was in the hospital for two days, and unable to work for a month. I hope you weren't upset."

"Oh, I was terribly upset!" replied Jordan. "I tried a few times to find you, to make sure you were okay. You're going to think I'm a dumb blonde or something, but I could never find your office."

"My office?" said Paul, puzzled. "I don't really have an office."

"Of course you do!" laughed Jordan. "I was there. I can describe it perfectly. You have a big desk, with a wall of books behind it and diplomas on the wall. There's a big painting, and a couch and a leather chair."

Paul got a sick feeling as he recognized the description of a stereotypical therapist's office from a hundred different shows. "You're saying that you were in my office when I had my heart attack?"

"Yes. I'm so glad your secretary was there. I was totally useless. I couldn't even find a phone. She had a doctor there in no time."

"Jordan," said Paul. "I think there's something we need to get straight..."

"I don't want to bother you Dr. Vesko," said Jordan. "I just really wanted to let you know that you've made a huge difference in my life. I was really lost and confused when I went to see you. You made it possible for me to become the woman I am today."

"Clock out," said Paul. Jordan's mouth went slack and his eyes closed. He simply stood at the table, Paul's hypnotic effect still able to control him.

"Jordan, please sit down," said Paul, guiding Jordan into a chair at the table. "Jordan, do you remember one year ago, the night we met?"

"Yes," mumbled Jordan.

"And where were we?" Paul asked.

"In your office," Jordan replied.

"Now think about this Jordan. We were not in my office. Do you remember where we really were?"

Jordan thought. "On stage, at the old theater."

"That's right," said Paul. "I'm a performer. A hypnotist. I'm not a therapist. Do you remember what I told you?"

"You said I was lost and confused," Jordan droned. "You said I'm a girl. You said I like all things girls like."

"Jordan, this is very important," Paul instructed him. "Think about your life before you and I met. Think very carefully and tell me the truth. Are you a girl?"

Jordan thought a long time. Finally he said, "No."

"Jordan, I'm going to wake you soon. And when I do, I want you to remember everything from the night we met. You will no longer be a girl, you will be the

Jordan you always were before that night. You will remember everything that has happened over the past year, and you will remember this conversation. Are you ready?"



"Yes," said Jordan.

"Clock in," Paul instructed.

Jordan slowly opened his eyes. He looked around the table shyly, as if he might have briefly fallen asleep and wondered if anyone had noticed.

"Jordan?" inquired Paul. "Do you remember what we were just discussing?"

"Yes, of course!" laughed Jordan. "You were just explaining..."

Jordan went quiet. Then his lovely red lips dropped open and his bright, beautiful eyes widened. Jordan jumped up from his chair and away from the table.

"You're not a... You're... I'm not a... I'm a... What the hell?!"

"Jordan, there's been a terrible mistake..." Paul tried to explain.

"Mistake?!" cried Jordan, all traces of femininity gone from his voice. "Look at me! Look at this dress! I'm wearing a dress! This dress! Oh my god, I'm on a date, wearing this dress!"

"Does your date know how you were raised?" asked Paul.

"Of course! What difference does that...? Oh wait, *that's* why everyone keeps asking me that question!"

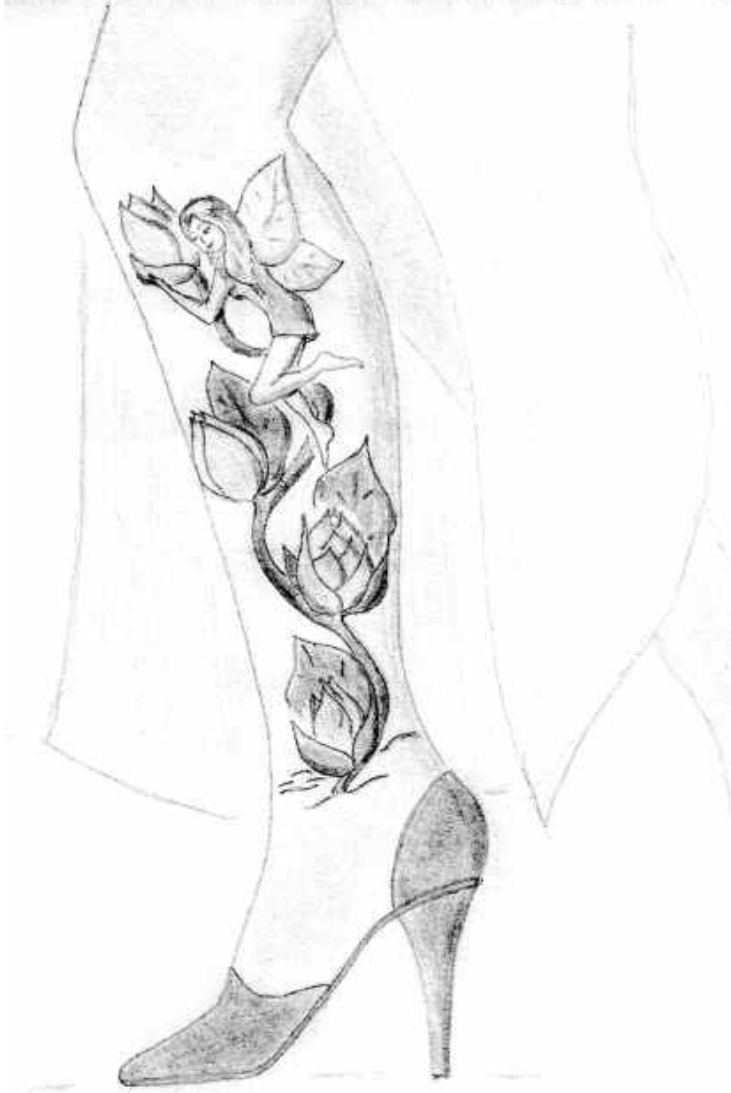
"Jordan, if you could please lower your voice," suggested Paul. "You're attracting attention."

Jordan seemed to notice the restaurant for the first time. People were indeed starting to look at them. He sat, and spoke quietly with Paul.

"Do you realize what I've been through over the past year?" he whispered.

“It’s all been a terrible mistake,” said Paul. “But now that you realize, you can go back to your regular life.”

“I’ve lost fifty pounds to fit into a size two! I got breasts, and a tattoo of a freaking fairy on my leg!”



"I suppose these things can be reversed," Paul suggested lamely.

"My family and all my friends think I'm a nut case!" Jordan cried.

"Yes, but now that you know the truth," suggested Paul. "Surely they will understand."

"I've spent a fortune on dresses and shoes and makeup, and perfumes and moisturizer and manicures. I redecorated my apartment like a pink pastel nightmare, with hearts stenciled all over my bedroom. I have a table just for applying makeup, and a room filled with dolls and teddy bears!"

"Perhaps you can get some money back on Craig's List?" Paul suggested.

"I went to work every day for a year wearing skirts and high heeled work boots. I was a Teamster! Oh my god, I quit my job. I signed a contract to become a model! I'm supposed to model swimsuits in Tokyo next week!"

"I'm... sorry?" Paul tried.

"Here you are!" laughed Adam, joining Jordan beside Paul's table. "I was starting to wonder what had happened to you."

Jordan looked at Adam like a frightened lamb spotting a wolf. He couldn't even speak.

"Aren't you going to introduce me?" Adam asked.

"I'm Paul Veskovitch," said Paul when Jordan simply continued to stare. "An old friend of Jordan's. Jordan, here is my card. Please let me know if there is anything further that I can do to help."

Jordan accepted the card, looked at it briefly, and put it in his purse. Adam put his hand around Jordan's shoulders and led him back to their table. Jordan involuntarily shivered at the unexpected male touch on his bare shoulders.

Adam pulled out Jordan's chair for him. Jordan simply looked at the chair. Then he looked at his manicured hands, his long naked arms, his gorgeous designer cocktail dress. He turned his head and felt the weight of his hair, so long since he had been growing it over a year now.

Jordan looked at Adam. Adam knew that Jordan was a man - they had worked together for over two years now - and yet here he was on a date with him! Nothing made sense any more. "Adam, I have to go home," he said, trying to mimic the voice he had used naturally for a year.

"What? we just got here," Adam replied. "Is something wrong? Did I say something to upset you? I'm sorry. Just tell me what it is."

"No Adam," Jordan tried to explain. "It's not you. You've been great. Really. I've just, suddenly got a terrible headache. I feel ill." Jordan wasn't lying - he really did feel ill.

"I'm sorry, I had no idea," said Adam, the perfect gentleman. "Do you want to sit down?"

"No, let's just leave!" Jordan said. Adam tried to take his hand, but Jordan pulled it away. The couple made their way to the front of the restaurant, and the street.

"Well, that went well," Paul's dinner companion said, watching the couple leave.

"I never imagined anything like that could happen," said Paul. "It just goes to show, you should never say there's nothing new under the sun or moon!"

From the next table they heard,  
"Moooo-OOO-ooOOOO!"

## Closure

Jordan sat in his booth, slowly sipping his ginger ale. He wore a simple, knee-length blue skirt with a white blouse. And he was wearing slippers, as he couldn't help walking like a man and had some trouble with heels. Dark glasses hid his face from view. The waitress came by to speak to him again.

"Do you want to order yet, Sweetie? Or maybe another ginger ale before your date arrives?"

"No, it's not a date," Jordan explained in his best approximation of a feminine voice. "He's just late. He's coming. No, nothing, thank you."

"Well, you just holler if you want anything at all, okay Sweetie?"

As the waitress returned to the kitchen, the bell over the front door chimed. Paul Veskovitch entered the diner and scanned the room. Spotting Jordan, he hurried over to the table and sat.

"Sorry I'm late," he apologized.

"That's all right," Jordan said in his old masculine voice. "I'm just really glad you came. I didn't know who else I could talk to."

"I'm surprised to see you dressed this way," said Paul. "I thought you would have gone back to your old clothes, your old life."

“My old clothes are gone, and so is my old life. This is the least feminine clothing I own! I tried to put an outfit together, straight-leg jeans with a t-shirt and no makeup. I looked ridiculous. Like a cute little girl trying to look boyish. There’s nothing masculine about my face any more. I killed off my beard, my eyebrows are thin arches, and my hair won’t look anything other than gorgeous no matter what I do. And this body, no one is going to think I’m anything other than a girl for a long time.”

“How did your date end the other night?” Paul asked, looking at Jordan with some concern. “He didn’t strike you, did he?”

“No! Why would you think... oh, the dark glasses,” Jordan said. He removed the glasses so Paul could tell he wasn’t lying. His eyes were red and his makeup slightly smeared. “I’ve just been, sort of... crying a lot lately, I guess. No, Adam is a perfect gentleman.” He laughed to hear himself talk like this, almost to the point of crying again.

“So how did he react when you told him?” asked Paul.

“I didn’t tell him anything,” said Jordan. “How could I? And what would I tell him anyway? That I’m a man? He already knew that. The only person who didn’t know was me. It was too confusing; it didn’t even make sense to me. How could I explain it to him?”

“Have you spoken to anyone about it?” Paul asked.

“My girlfriend Trish called the next day and I tried to tell her,” Jordan said.

“You have a girlfriend too?” asked Paul with surprise.

“No, not like that! A girlfriend, like...” Jordan tried to explain, waving his hands in the air. “Like two girls, another girl girlfriend. But I couldn’t explain it to her either. She’s been helping me fit in, telling me how to walk and how to act and what to wear. She knew I was a man, but made me into this perfect woman because she thought that was what I wanted. How could I tell her she helped destroy my life?”

“Then my mother called to ask about my date. And my father said he was proud of me. It took him almost a year to accept me! Can you imagine what it was like to hear him say he was proud of me? Proud that I had put on a dress and gone on a date with a man?”

“It sounds like you have a lot of work ahead of you, getting back to your old life.”

Jordan was quiet for a while. When he finally spoke it was in a reflective whisper, “This past year, I really thought I was a girl. And I thought that explained everything that had ever gone wrong in my life. Understanding that I was a girl, even though I was mistaken, gave me the courage to try new things, to meet new people and completely remake myself. I was so happy, with a sense of purpose I’ve never known before. My old life was okay, I guess. But for the past year I was someone special. I wasn’t just Jordan Chapman, warehouse worker. I was Jordan Chapman, the girl who could do anything. The girl that everyone wanted to hate, but just couldn’t. So many guys I met wanted to beat me up, and I never understood why, but I just persisted until I won them over! I never had that kind of confidence before.”

“Maybe you can use that confidence in your new life,” Paul suggested.

"I'm not gay, you know," Jordan said defensively, changing the topic abruptly.

"I never thought that you were."

"When I was a guy, I dated girls. I never thought about guys, never! Not once. But for the past year I was a girl. At least I thought I was. Girls think about guys, date guys. there's nothing wrong with that. Sometimes, they even fall in love with a really great guy. They're supposed to."

"Jordan, what do you want from me?" Paul asked. "I don't have a lot of money. You can sue me, but you wouldn't get very much. It would ruin me, and I wouldn't blame you if that's what you wanted. I don't have much, but I can get you a few thousand dollars if that will help."

Jordan looked up, removing his dark glasses. With the same confidence he had displayed over the past year he said, "I don't want your money, and I don't want to ruin you. Mr. Veskovitch, you took my life away from me. All I want is for you to give me my old life back."

"I've done all I can," said Paul. "I've brought you out of your hypnotic delusion. There's nothing I can do about anything else."

"No, I don't mean my life as a man," Jordan explained. "I want you to give me back my life as a woman. I know you meant well, but ever since you told me the truth my life has been a mess. All I want to do is forget that the past few days ever happened. I want to be in love with Adam, and tell Trish everything like giggly schoolgirls. I want to be able to forget all my problems by going shoe shopping at the mall. I want to make friends just by smiling. I want to do Jazz

Fit and take belly dancing classes and model swimsuits in Asia. Mr. Veskovitch, can you please make me forget?"

Paul looked at Jordan seriously. "Are you absolutely sure this is what you want?"

"Yes, more than anything!" Jordan told him.

Paul looked at Jordan, and thought. Then with a heavy sigh he said, "Clock out."

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