

MISS PERSONALITY

SUSAN HULBERT



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS

A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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MISS PERSONALITY

By Susan Hulbert.

1. The Fund Raiser

“The fund raising will be the biggest charity effort in this town for many years,” said Mrs. White. “I know I've not been here long, but it's so wonderful to be part of the community, even if it does mean working so.”

“Yes, I agree,” replied Mother, “and it's up to us all to contribute. All the parents have been involved, and the number of pledges is the largest we have ever had.”

“It's because we're working together to help raise the money for the scholarships, otherwise they would lapse since the trustees can no longer afford them,” said Mrs. White. “After all, it's for all the town's sake.”

With that, they parted. Mrs. White went to her car and Mother came back inside, suddenly looking tired with all the effort of her day. My sister Sally went to her and hugged her gently.

“We'll all help, too,” she said, “there's a meeting at school tomorrow, for the students to come up with their ideas about how to raise the funds.”

“I know, dear,” Mother replied, “and it's just wonderful to see how everyone's pulling together. This appeal means so much to me. It's the first time they've had a woman as organizer of the annual appeal. It's an honor for me, but I'm so nervous. I want it to be successful, it would mean so much to the business as well.”

“I'm going to the meeting too,” I said. “I just hope someone has a new idea. All the businesses have been drained of charity by our parents. It's almost impossible to think what else there could be.”

“Don't be so sure,” said Sally, “there's one idea which hasn't been included yet, but I'll let you wait until tomorrow.”

With that, Sally turned mysterious, and we changed the subject. As we prepared our supper, we naturally drifted into other interests. Sally was a year older than me, so mature and confident that I envied her. Despite the fact that I was her brother, I was both smaller and slimmer than her, a fact I never let her forget when I wanted to

torment her (especially the “slimmer” part). We looked a lot alike, too. I had no need to shave more than once a week, and had a complexion as soft as hers.

We had the same pale brown hair, and mine was almost as long as hers, falling to the middle of my back. There had been some rows about it a couple of years earlier when I announced that I wasn't going to cut it until I graduated. The family realized I was determined, and eventually it was accepted. Perhaps it would have been different if our father had been around, but he had been killed in an accident just after I was born. I guess because we were a close threesome, I was indulged more than would have otherwise been the case. As it was, I had the longest hair of any of the seventeen-year-old boys in school.

The next day, at the meeting, I took my place in a corner of the lecture theatre, intending to stay silent, and not become too involved. I wasn't good at the rough-and-tumble organized sports and games, so I was doing my utmost to stay out of the way. I guessed that things like games and exhibition sports would be discussed. I was not mistaken as these things were scheduled first, but I was unprepared for the way the meeting progressed.

“We need something more,” said Sally to the assembled auditorium, “and I've got a proposal. As you are aware, shops and businesses have given us pledges: hair do's, dry cleaning, that sort of thing, which are going to be auctioned. All the likely sponsors have been approached, but we can auction something else as well.”

She paused and looked round, sensing her audience was baffled by the thought.

“We can auction ourselves, pledge ourselves as cleaners, maids, chauffeurs, child minders, janitors...”

“Or slaves,” came a voice from the floor, followed by a big laugh from the assembled.

“Yes, why not offer ourselves as slaves for a day, or a weekend, or even a week?” said Sally. “If someone will pay, and we're willing to work, why not? Let's show we can raise money every bit as well as our parents. And if a slave auction seems like a good idea to everyone, I say we do it!”

There were a few demurring voices in the hall, then consensus seemed to emerge. A trawl for volunteers was arranged. If there were enough volunteers, the slave auction would be a special feature of the end-of-term festival.

I left quietly. My sister had come up with a different idea just as she had intended. I was happy for her, she wanted to be in the action at these events. I was happy to attend just long enough to be seen, then get out of the way. It wasn't that I was aloof, just that I always felt uncomfortable in crowds. I was happier left to myself.

I thought I had escaped. At supper that evening, Sally was telling Mother about her idea. I agreed that the students had liked it, it certainly seemed popular. Sally looked at me and smiled mischievously.

“I've put Mike's name down for the slave auction already,” she said, looking at me. “If we left it to him, he'd avoid doing anything.”

“That's not fair, Sally,” said Mother, “your brother realizes how important this event is to us all. I'm sure he would have volunteered without you jumping the gun, wouldn't you, Mike?” She looked at me questioningly.

“Of course I would,” I lied, “it sounds like fun. How long do I have to be a slave for?”

“I guess for as long as they're willing to pay you,” said Sally. “We haven't thought that out. You don't have a job for the vacation yet, so you can probably do two months if anyone's got the money to pay you.”

“They couldn't afford me!” I retorted. Sally knew I was frustrated by the fact that I couldn't get a job for the summer vacation now approaching quickly.

We argued a little more and Mother had to interrupt to stop it from becoming heated. Although Sally and I got on reasonably well, we would fight like any other brother and sister. It was easy to provoke a row, and neither of us liked to back down. On this occasion, I was trapped and I knew it. I gave in graciously and agreed to participate in the slave auction.

Sally was busy as the arrangements were new. As she had made the suggestion, she had been immediately delegated to make them. I served as door keeper at our house as a seemingly endless procession of friends, both male and female, came and went to do their bit for my sister. One of the callers was a girl I had never seen before.

“I'm Susan White,” she said, “I've come to join in, if I can. My mother sent me over to see Sally. Did she mention me?”

I stood dumbstruck at the vision standing before me. She was complete “California girl”, a total dream. I must have stood silent for too long; I felt stupid and awkward. Sally rescued me as she passed in the hallway, taking Susan with her into the den. I hung around, hoping for a second opportunity to see Susan, hoping that I would not seem quite so stupid the next time.

“I guess you met my brother Mike,” I heard Sally saying.

“Yes, does he always open the door and stand with his mouth open?” replied Susan. “You should get him trained to speak. That'd be really neat, you know, a boy with words.”

I went out into the hallway, just in time to receive a look of withering contempt from this dream girl. I felt small and childish and it hurt. I was desperate for her to like me. Sally saw my face and laughed.

“You should have helped Mother more if you like her that much,” she said. I started to deny my feelings, but she continued, “Susan's just joined her mother in town. You know, Mrs. White, the one you've been avoiding in case she gets you working for the fund raising. The lady who keeps coming to see Mother.”

It was true, I had been avoiding things. Mrs. White was new in town, but seemed like a dynamo of energy, and not short of money either. She had moved into town to take over the small dance and theatre school at the end of Main Street. The school had been there all my life, but I had never been inside. It seemed to cater to the small girls of the town, giving them dancing lessons.

"I think she's working really hard so that everyone will know about her dance and drama classes," said Sally, "and now that Susan's finished school back east, she's moved here as well. I think we'll be best friends since she'll be coming to classes with me after the vacation."

"You mean she's going to be here all the time?"

"Yes, stupid," said Sally. "Mrs. White used to be an actress and Susan lived with her grandparents. When she was about ten, Mrs. White went to live with them too, and studied to become a teacher. This school's her first business on her own."

"Have you been talking to Susan a lot?" I asked, trying not to sound too interested, although I feared Sally would realize my interest at once.

"Yes, I told you, she's going to be my best friend," Sally replied. "That means she'll be around here a lot. Don't think that means you'll get near her, little brother. She may be the most beautiful girl in town but already the richest and most handsome boys have tried, and totally failed, to impress her. You have no chance."

"What makes you think I'm interested?" I stuttered.

"You do," Sally gloated, 'I can read your thoughts, but I'll tell you what she's interested in. Mrs. White wants to expand the school, start more courses, and get older children in, boys as well as girls. She's working on the appeal to make herself better known and to meet people. Susan wants her to succeed."

"Well, that lets me out," I said, "I have no talent at all."

"I'll tell you one more thing. Mrs. White and Mother knew each other years ago. I've heard Mother say that she'd go over to the school and help out, after the appeal. I'll be over there too, with Susan. My summer job's arranged, and I'll be helping out there. I think it'll be exciting to learn a bit of theatre right here in town."

I changed the subject. Here was the girl of my dreams, but I had no idea how to get near her. We'd met once, and she'd gotten the impression of me as a complete nerd. Not only that, but she was the object of attention for all the guys. I was too puny, and too poor, to compete.

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2. Sally Takes Charge.

"The arrangements seem to be finalized," announced Sally, a couple of evenings later. "We're selling the slaves after the auctioneer has sold all the pledges on Friday. That way, there'll be the greatest number in the auditorium. The slaves will be handed over to their owners there and then and they can make their own arrangements for working out their contracts, to commence at nine the next morning."

"How long are the contracts for?" I asked.

"Well, they're asked for a bid for a day and if they want to extend it, then they can negotiate, as long as we get the funds," replied Sally.

"What if they want the slave for a year?" I asked.

“Don't be stupid, Mike,” said Sally.

“No, seriously, what if they want someone to do a particular job, over a week or two?”

“Just because you haven't got a job for the vacation...” said Sally. Then she thought for a moment and added, “If they want to extend a day or so, and the slave's willing to work for a good cause, that's up to them, but I doubt if any of them will do more than a couple of days at the most. They'll have to go to their summer jobs—that is those who've *got* jobs.”

Mother came in before the argument developed. She seemed quite tired, and I could understand why. After her work day at the real estate office which she had run since Father's death, she had all the extra work and worry for the fundraiser. Instinctively, Sally and I understood, and we abandoned our argument to allow her to relax.

“The auction's going to be the biggest event on Friday evening,” said Mother, “after that, I can relax and count the money. The slaves are going to be sold right after the pledges, so that they can work the weekend and get it over with.”

“It's really up to the buyers,” said Sally, “perhaps they'll chain Mike up in some galley for the summer. Hey, that's an idea! Mom, can I borrow some money to buy Mike? I'll have him chained to a boat on the river to row Susan and I around while we work on our sun tans.”

I threw a cushion at her and Sally launched herself at me. I just wanted the humiliation to be over; then I could get back to looking for a job and dreaming about Susan.

Friday evening found me standing at the back of the hall whilst the auctioneer prepared to sell the pledges. The hall was crowded and good humored. From the start, people paid way beyond expectations for everything. The tennis lessons went for three times their cost, the car wash contract for twice its value, and a pattern was established which was to last through the pledges.

Mrs. White stood out in the bidding. She bid on everything; I guessed it was just to draw attention to herself. From some things she retired, but she seemed quite happy to pay ridiculously large sums for other things. She bought a facial and make-over at the town's best beauty salon, then she bought a hairstyling appointment at the same salon, and two sessions with the finger nail technicians who had just opened a new salon in the mall.

I didn't realize it at the time, but the things she was buying were all feminine services. With everything else, she dropped out of the bidding before an item was in danger of becoming hers. All the same she still spent a lot of money. If her intention was to draw attention to herself, and therefore her school, I guess she was succeeding. Later, I was to learn that this was just part of the plan.

The slave auction came last. There was an interval, during which we slaves got into position. Sally had a rough cage set up on the stage behind the auctioneer. There were three girls and two boys, besides me. We were dressed in mock Roman togas. The girls wore them draped decorously, if not modestly, over their shoulders, while the boys had short ones fastened around the waist. We all were shackled by plastic chains, specially

sprayed with bronze paint. I felt stupid, but the girls were obviously enjoying being the center of attention. The other boys were happy too, posing, showing off the results of their work outs at the gym.

The auction commenced with one of the girls and, as I watched, I saw Mrs. White sitting silently, looking at me, as if she was sizing me up for something. I caught her eye several times as the first girl, then the first boy, was sold. The girls were encouraging boys to bid for them, they'd entered as if they were in a popularity contest and were giggling and enjoying the experience. They were "bought" without exception by their boy friends. Then the first two boys were "sold" to the local ground maintenance company, so I could guess what work they were going to do. Then it was my turn.

"Last, but not least, here's Mike," said the auctioneer, leading me forward, to some laughter, and a few jeers from my classmates. The bidding started slowly, and I seemed to be about to go to the ground maintenance company as well, when Mrs. White joined in. Everyone was surprised, not least me. The auctioneer took a few bids, each going up by a dollar, then fifty cents, amid much hilarity. I was worth less than half of what the other's had raised. Then Mrs. White stood up, smiled and raised the bidding.

The audience gasped, the auctioneer held out his hands for silence and swallowed in shock and surprise.

"Did I hear you correctly, Mrs. White? That's a very generous sum."

"You heard me, Mister Auctioneer," she said, "I'll employ him all through the vacation and pay the fund for the privilege. I've an idea he could help my business and if Mike hasn't another job, I'll pay the equivalent of his wages to the fund, for every week he works for me."

She had bid more for me, than the other five had raised combined. No wonder the auctioneer doubted that he had heard correctly, but he quickly recovered his composure, announced the bid again, then brought his hammer down with a finality I did not comprehend at the time. The hall burst into applause, leaving me standing in my toga and chains at the side. I stood there, not knowing what to do, as the hall emptied. Then, Mrs. White and Mother came across to me.

"Mrs. White has quite a few plans for you," said Mother, smiling mysteriously. "She's been telling me about some of them already. You'll have your work cut out this summer, Mike, and you've got a job as well."

"Thank you, Mrs. White," I said, not realizing then just what I was thanking her for, "I was worried about getting a job."

"I hope you'll enjoy it, Mike," said Mrs. White, "you'll be helping me to publicize the school, that's all I'm going to tell you now. Come 'round on Monday and we'll make some preliminary arrangements, but I want to discuss a few things with your mother first."

With that, she smiled and shook my hand gently. Susan and Sally came up to me, giggling conspiratorially.

“That was a surprise,” said Sally, “I never guessed my brother was so valuable.” I knew she was mocking me, but I bit my tongue.

“I know my mother wants to do something different,” said Susan, “so be prepared for anything,” I detected a little warmth in her smile as she said this, more than I had seen before. Usually, she just looked through me when she was with my sister. This was progress.

I went home that evening, a little curious about my future occupation for the vacation, but more relieved to have a job. Over the week end, I did my chores as usual. Mother spent some time with Mrs. White; I knew they were discussing me, but she told me nothing. I guessed Sally overheard a little of what was intended for me from Susan. She didn't exactly give any hints about what was in store for me, but I knew she was intrigued.

On Monday morning, I was up early and was getting ready to walk down to the theatre, just for a look 'round, when the telephone rang. Mother answered it and then handed the receiver to me. It was Mrs. White.

“Hello, Mrs. White,” I said, “I'm just on my way down to the theatre.”

“Stay there,” she said, “I'll send Susan in the car to collect you. Bring an overnight bag, I've made arrangements with your mother for you to spend a couple of days over here. Don't bring much, I've got some things here you can use.”

As I waited at the door, I wondered why Mother had said so little about the arrangements to me, but I guessed she had forgotten. I didn't think for a moment it was to conceal anything sinister. I was just excited at the idea of Susan coming to pick me up. I never thought *that* would happen. The prettiest girl around was coming to pick me up in a car! That would do a lot for my status this summer.

The car arrived and I pretended not to see it. The doorbell rang, Sally answered and called me. As I passed her at the door, she and Susan exchanged glances which said they knew more than I did.

“I'll call you later,” said Susan, “and then I'll pick you up after...you know....”

Just what she knew, and I did not know, was about to be revealed. We got into the car and Susan set off towards town. She turned and smiled at me; I felt my body go weak as I looked at her. She had left her hair loose and it fell in gentle blonde waves over her bare shoulders. As the sun caught it, silver highlights glistened entrancingly across the car, catching the light from the big gold hoops which swung from her ears. She took one hand off the wheel and lightly touched my thigh.

“I think it's great that you're going to be with us through the summer. We'll be seeing a lot of each other if everything goes well, and I want us to be friends,” she said.

“I'd like that,” I said, “do you know what my job's going to be?”

“I know a little, but you've got to accept the job first. Your mother's coming to the theatre to hear what you'll be doing if you stay with us. I'm sworn to secrecy until then.” She smiled across the car at me as we turned into the small car park attached to the theatre. I grabbed my small bag and followed her inside.

“Good morning, Mike,” said Mrs. White. “I’ll be with you soon, and tell you what we have in mind.”

“You can wait in here, Mike,” called Susan, and I followed her into a small changing room. “Will you help me to lift out all these boxes and old cans of paint first?” she asked.

Together we carried out all the old junk which had been left there for ages. It was so dusty, I was soon feeling quite scruffy. Then disaster struck.

“Look out, Mike, I can’t hold...” It was too late. There was a crash and a splatter of sticky white paint fell across me. Susan came up to me looking more amused than I considered appropriate.

“It’s only water paint,” she said. “It will wash off. There’s a shower in the first dressing room. If you throw your clothes out, I’ll put them in our machine to wash.”

I allowed her to lead me to the dressing room, and obediently threw my sticky clothes out of the room. I stood under the shower, allowing the warm water to sluice away all the paint which had covered my hands and arms. There were some splashes in the front of my hair, but fortunately I had tied it back in a pony tail, so most of it escaped. I washed my hair carefully all the same.

“Here’s a robe,” I heard Susan shout above the noise of the water, “and a couple of towels.” Then the door closed again.

I emerged from the shower and dried myself quickly. I wrapped a towel around my wet hair and reached for the robe. It was pale peach colored, of a satin material and very long. I knew it would be the only one they had, yet I still felt uneasy at wearing something so obviously designed for a woman. I pulled it on and saw that my shoes and shorts had been removed from the room. There was a pair of plain mules with peach trim on the floor, but I ignored them.

I sat for a few minutes, then noticed that there was a hair drier on the vanity unit, so I began to dry my hair, letting it hang loosely, running my fingers through it in the absence of comb or brush. As I did so, I saw myself in the mirror, and I remember thinking how glad I was that none of the guys could see me here.

I finished drying my hair, and still no one came. I opened the door and called. No response. I called again, still with no response, so I stepped out. The corridor floor was dirty and rough so, impulsively, I went back for the mules and put them on. Then I set off in search of anyone who might be in the building.

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3. A Change is Proposed.

“Hello,” I called.

No response.

I wandered along the corridor, trying all the rooms. They were locked. I arrived at the door which I had entered with Susan and tried the handle. It was locked too. I

seemed to have been locked in the empty building. Perhaps they'd had to go out suddenly, I reasoned. I walked 'round, feeling quite spooky as I looked out from the stage over the empty auditorium. I went back to the dressing room and sat to wait.

I was not kept waiting long after that. I heard Mrs. White calling my name and I went out to meet her in the corridor.

"What on earth happened to you, Mike?" she asked, seeing me emerge. I explained quickly and asked where Susan had gone. She ignored my question.

"You come with me," she said, "your mother's coming over in a few minutes, I've just been explaining to her what we have in store for you over the next few weeks."

We walked into a large dressing room which had been locked before. It had obviously been modernized recently, and still smelled of paint and new carpet. There were empty racks standing around, and some clothing in boxes nearby.

"Do you want to get something to wear?" Mrs. White asked. "You will have to get used to wearing all kinds of things while you're with us, so you might as well start now."

She waved me in the direction of the boxes, and as she did so, I heard a bell ringing at the other side of the building. With a gesture, she was gone and I was left to look over the boxes. I looked in one after another, and found only dresses, skirts and blouses, period and modern, but nothing suitable for me. Not that I was wearing anything suitable in the first place.

"Mike," I heard a voice calling me. "Mike, come up here." Susan's voice was my only clue as to where she was. I followed along a corridor and then up the stairs. Seeing an open door, I walked toward it, and was reassured to hear voices getting louder as I approached. I went in and saw Mrs. White and Mother sitting at a table; at the other side of the room, Susan and Sally were lounging on a couch, looking through fashion magazines.

"Okay girls, can you go and do something downstairs please?" said Mrs. White. They left, giving me a mysterious look as they closed the door behind them.

"Well, Mike," said Mrs. White, "I guess you're wondering what we have in store for you. I've arranged everything with your mother. She's happy with my plans, and if you co-operate, then the fund will benefit from your contribution more than from all the rest combined."

"Mike, I want you to know that I think it's worth it, and I'll support you through this....er....project. And I'll see that Sally does, too," said Mother. "Now, I'll leave you with Mrs. White." She smiled at me, touched my shoulder through the robe which I still wore, and left.

"I'll not waste any more time, Mike," said Mrs. White, looking more business-like than I had seen her before. "I've a new business here, and I want to get a lot of publicity quickly, as well as doing my bit for the community. I've placed a bet on you in Atlantic City and I'm going to win. The winnings go to the funds. I get the publicity."

"And I do the work," I smiled, trying to lighten the atmosphere which seemed to be getting a little heavy.

“Yes,” she smiled back, “I guess you do, although you'll have help. You see, I'm an actress and teacher, and I've bet that I can train you, in just a few weeks, to act a part perfectly in any situation, even though it's completely foreign to you now.”

“I don't understand, what do I have to do?” I asked.

“You have to enter a contest and win. If you come in second or third, we still win something on the bet. But you'll have to work at it. Are you the sort of person who has a determination to succeed, Mike?” asked Mrs. White.

“I'm not afraid of working,” I answered, wondering why she was being so evasive, rather than telling me just what she wanted me to do.

“Right. That's settled, we start preparing at once.” She smiled at me. “You're going to win the Miss Personality contest at the State Fair in four weeks time.” She paused to let the words sink in. I felt my mind tumbling, had I heard her right? I must have looked really dumb, for she spoke again. “Did you hear me, Mike? I said you're going to win the Miss Personality contest.”

“Yes,” I heard myself reply. I was in shock, what could she mean? “What do I have to do? I mean, I know we've got sexual equality and all that, but surely, the contest is for girls.”

“Yes, it is,” she replied, “and that's the part you're going to learn. You're going to act the girl's part in the contest so that you'll win.”

I guess I was still in shock. “But I'm not a girl,” I said.

“That's the point. By the time we've finished with you, no one will ever guess, no one will know outside those of us working with you, unless you tell them.” She laughed, perhaps to reassure me, but I wasn't feeling at all easy.

“Does Mother know about this?” I asked.

“Yes, we're old friends, and she likes the project. It will occupy you through part of the vacation, then I'll employ you for the rest of the time. You won't lose. She won't have to worry about what you're doing with no job and no money, and you'll be raising money for a good cause.”

I hesitated, it wasn't sounding too good for me. “What will happen when all the guys find out?” I asked.

“They'll think you were braver than them, and that you fooled them all. Everyone will be happy that the money's been raised,” said Mrs. White.

I thought desperately for a way out of this, as panic rose within my chest. “What if I can't win? What if I get found out? What if we...?” She cut me off.

“Never mind the what if's,” she laughed gently and smiled for the first time. “I'll take care of those.”

“I really don't think..,” I started.

“Let's not go into the reasons why not, Mike,” she smiled. “Let's just try, and see if there are reasons why we *can* do this. Susan's really excited at the prospect of working with you.”

At that, my objections paled into insignificance. Did this mean I would be spending some time with her, and more important, with her interested in me?

“Does she know about this?” I asked.

“Why yes, it was partly her idea,” said Mrs. White. “She's going to theatre school if she can get a place. She wants to specialize in make up, hair and costume. She loves the glamour of it all, and a project like this may help her to get a place in one of the better colleges.”

I couldn't object. I was apprehensive as to what I was letting myself in for, but the butterflies in my stomach were telling me that I would be with Susan. That's what excited me, not the thought of what she would be doing to me.

“Okay,” I said, “when do I start?”

“You've started already.” Mrs. White smiled and pressed a button on the intercom on her desk.

Seconds later, the door behind me opened and Susan came in smiling, followed by Sally who was wearing a wry look of amusement.

“Well girls, he's all yours,” said Mrs. White. “You heard all that on the intercom. Mike has agreed, and you've got four weeks to get him into shape.”

“We'll do it, won't we, Mike?” said Susan, giving me a gentle hug. I could hardly believe it. I'd been wanting her to notice me ever since I first saw her, yet the first time she actually did so was now. And I was agreeing to be a *girl* for her. ‘Sally's going to be working with me, it's going to be a joint project.’

“I'm not going to give you a hard time, Mike,” said Sally. “I know how important it is for us to raise the money, and for Mrs. White to advertise the school. I've got my summer job here with the school, and I'm going to make it work, so you'd better be good, you hear?” She was laughing too as she tried to sound severe. To tell the truth, it seemed we were all a little shocked with the suddenness of it all. Now when I look back on those moments, I realize that it was only me who was shocked. They all knew what the deal was going to be.

“Now, practicalities,” said Mrs. White. “Mike, you'll be living in the guest rooms at my house until this is over. It would hardly do for you to turn up as a girl at home. The story your mother will tell everyone is that I've asked you to go back to my old house to tidy up the gardens and outhouses, and do some other jobs there as caretaker, until the place is sold.

“I've told the neighbors here that Susan's cousin is coming to stay for a while, and that's the story you'll use if you have to talk to anyone. Oh, by the way, your name is Michelle from now on. No more Mike under any circumstances.”

“When do I start?” I asked, a little dumbfounded by the rapidity of it all. “I'll have to get a few things.”

“You've started already, Michelle. There's nothing of Mike's to get,” said Mrs. White. “Mike has gone east to work. You're here visiting with your cousin. You're going to have to work quickly, we need to send your photographs into the Miss Personality contest organizers in the next couple of days, so there's no time to waste.”

I recoiled a little. The thought of all that I had agreed to was just hitting my consciousness. I sat quite still, and must have looked really stupid.

4. Creating Michelle.

“Come on, Michelle,” said Susan, gently shaking my shoulder, “we'll go down to the dressing room and make a start. Susan's going to do some shopping for us.”

I allowed myself to be guided out of the door. “Come on, this is going to be really exciting,” she said, smiling at me, not just with her face, but with her eyes as well. I really wanted to please her.

In the dressing room, there were all the clothes I had seen before. Now I realized why there were only girls clothes.

“We have to get you used to being Michelle very quickly. Mike has gone away, and it wouldn't do to have anyone see him around, least of all at my house.”

“I guess not,” I said. It felt good to be alone with her.

“Now, get out of all those clothes, we have to get you ready. No modesty, Michelle, we're all girls together from now on.” Susan turned as I got out of the robe which I had been wearing all this time. I held it against my nakedness.

“Put this on first,” she said, handing me small garment with dangling straps. I didn't know what it was, and looked at it, puzzled.

“It goes like this,” she said, turning me around. She held it out while I stepped into two spaces. She began to pull it up my legs. It was so small and tight, I wondered how far she intended it to go, but I knew the answer. She eased it up until it was almost across my groin.

“Now, the instructions say that you have to tuck everything carefully back before it goes into place. Are you going to do that?” I looked at her, slowly understanding that if I demurred, she would do it for me. I reached down and did as I was told, then stood still as Susan pulled the garment up into place.

“That's it!” She stood back to admire my new profile. “I've read about these things, but I've never seen one until this and a couple more like it, arrived last week. I'm amazed at just how well it conceals your profile, Michelle.”

“It's doing more than that,” I croaked, “it's cutting off my circulation.”

“Don't worry,” Susan said, “the instruction book said it would be uncomfortable for the first few days. After that, you'll hardly notice it's there at all.”

“I wonder if I'll survive the first few days,” I said, really in pain.

“It will become second nature,” Susan said confidently. “The book said that you would feel wrong without it, once you got over the initial strangeness. It says you should rest for a few minutes after first putting it on, then keep it on all the time, except in the shower.”

“What about, you know, when I need to go?” I asked.

“Oh, *that* sort of ‘go’.” Susan was laughing at me again, though kindly, and gently. “You just sit down, like all us girls. It just comes out at a different angle,”

I sat down carefully, feeling tears rise into the corners of my eyes. The pain from my groin was still severe, but I could feel it subsiding slightly as I struggled to breathe normally, instead of in the short gasps I had been using. Slowly, I felt calmer, easier and then I felt myself breathing normally. My eyes seemed no longer protuberant, no longer watering freely. Experimentally, I stood and then walked ‘round the chair, taking little steps, feeling more comfortable and confident with each one.

Susan watched me with amusement and something more in her gaze. I began to feel strangely excited. I had really wanted to be with her ever since that moment when she first came to our house. Now I was with her, but not in the way I imagined. I was being controlled by her; it was almost as if I had been given to her as a plaything. It felt wrong, yet natural and exciting.

“Okay, you can move again, can you?” she asked. “Are you ready to continue getting into Michelle?”

“I guess so,” I said cautiously, “although I'm getting more unsure every moment.”

“Nonsense, you'll love all the things I'm going to do to you. By the time we're finished, you'll be the cutest girl in the contest. You just wait. In a few weeks, I'll make you forget you ever were a boy,” said Susan.

“I don't know if that's a threat or a promise,” I joked.

“Why, it's a promise, of course,” she replied. “Come on, we'll get you dressed before Sally comes back. I'm sure you'd prefer to be transformed before she comes to watch.”

“You're right,” I admitted, “the thought of having my sister watch all this is not something I'm looking forward to.”

“She's going to be so supportive to you,” Susan replied. “I've talked all this through with her before she set up the auction. We've got it all worked out, there's nothing to worry about.”

Susan turned and began to sort through one of the clothes boxes. As she did so, I pondered what she had just admitted. All this had been planned some time earlier. Susan, Sally, Mrs. White and my mother all knew what was going to happen long before anything was revealed to me. I was just the fall guy, or rather I was going to be the fall *girl*. I felt uneasy, but really excited at what was to come.

More than that, I was beginning to get a thrill out of being told what to do by this girl who was little older than me. I looked down, all the way toward my feet. There was nothing masculine in sight, just a smooth contour, and none of the hairs which I knew should be there. I felt strangely submissive, ready to do whatever she told me.

“Step into these.”

I was pulled back to the present, to see Susan holding out some plain panties for me to step into. Obediently, I lifted first one foot, then the other, watching as she pulled them up to my waist. They were high-cut on the leg, and if I looked carefully, I could just see where the clinging fine elastic material of the restraint garment

overlapped it. I looked again and saw that it blended so well against my skin that it was almost invisible.

“Now for the bra,” said Susan. “Hold your arms out and I’ll help you, but you’ll have to get used to doing this yourself.”

Obediently, I did as I was asked, and felt the strangeness of the material being fastened around me. If this was different, I was hardly prepared for what was to come next. Susan came towards me, holding out two flesh-colored shapes, each as big as the palm of her hand.

“Say hello to your first pair of tits,” she said. All at once, I recognized what these shapes were, and where they were going, but not before she showed them to me in more detail.

“Look how they’re shaped so that they follow the contours of the body and the natural form that my breast takes.”

She turned and held herself in profile for me to look at her, and I enjoyed the opportunity to stare by invitation. I had been doing so surreptitiously ever since I first saw her. I almost fainted at what came next.

“Just feel here.” She took my hand and guided it. “Feel how the breast shapes out from my chest.” She pulled my hand further ‘round. “Feel how it hangs in my bra, then feel how the space between my breasts rises naturally up towards my breastbone and then my neck.” I was almost fainting with pleasure. I wasn’t meant to be, but how do you turn off your feeling when the girl of your dreams is inviting you to touch things you thought would remain forever out of reach?

She placed the pads in either side of the bra I was wearing. I was unprepared for the weight which now fell from my chest, and I took the cups in each hand, feeling the weight which was attached, yet was not really part of me.

“Strange, isn’t it?” Susan stood back, watching me. “You’ll learn how girls feel about their breasts before we’re over. These are fine for today, but for the contest we’ll have to do something better, and bigger. Padding’s no good for the swimsuit part of the contest. There’s no time for hormones to work, so you can’t grow your own. Implants would be ideal, but we’ll try some permanently adhered prosthetic breasts first.”

I could not believe what I was hearing. I had only agreed to be a girl for a silly contest, just to be near Susan, yet here I was, calmly listening while she made plans to give me a girl’s breasts. What was happening to me? Why wasn’t I running out of the building as fast as I could? I was finding all this more exciting than I would ever have imagined. I was starting to enjoy being changed, in a way I would have thought impossible, just a few hours previously.

“Michelle,” I heard, and turned. “You were miles away then; I’ll not ask what you were thinking. Sit down here in front of the mirror.”

“Gosh,” I gasped, rather weakly, as I got my first glimpse of Michelle in the mirror. It was a female reflection, not one I recognized as mine, which looked back at me.

"I'm going to do something with your hair and then a little make up. Then when you're dressed, we can start getting some training on how to be a girl for real."

"It's all so sudden," I heard myself say. "I don't know what I'm supposed to do."

"Let me worry about that," Susan said. "If you like, I'm the manager and you're the project. Let me do all the worrying, you just concentrate on doing the things I tell you."

Susan took the pony tail band out of my hair and combed it out so that it fell loosely across my shoulders. Some fell over the shape within my bra, then she combed it again, sweeping it across to one side. Taking all the hair in one hand, she twisted it, and with a couple of deft wrist movements, my hair was swept up and pinned on the top of my head in a neat chignon. What a paradox. I had always felt quite masculine and secure with my hair down, but now with it pinned up, I did not know what to think. The reflection in the mirror was looking less and less like the one I remembered from my bedroom that morning.

"That seems pretty good so far," said Susan. I guessed that no reply was expected. "Now for the make up. I'm just going to give you a little, nothing special or dramatic, just something to remind you that you're female when you look in the mirror."

I sat totally still as she worked, using a whole range of cosmetics. I recognized a foundation and powder that Sally used, but all the rest was totally new to me. I watched as my eyes were made up most carefully, the lids darkening and contrasting significantly against the way the mascara made my eye lashes look twice as long as before. My lips were outlined with a dark pencil; then with a brush, Susan colored my lips. The shape of my lips was not a shape I recognized, and the total effect was simply that everything I expected to see in the mirror had disappeared. It was a girl who looked back at me.

"Now for some clothes," she said, reaching into one of the baskets. "Step into this skirt."

Obediently, I stepped into a straight denim skirt and stood while she fastened the zipper. The skirt felt tight against my thighs, and reached little more than halfway to my knees. I

Would have looked twice at any girl wearing this on the street. That thought didn't comfort me at all.

"Just put your arms out," said Susan, "I want to get this over your head without catching the make up, or having to put up your hair again, so be careful."

I did as I was asked and she carefully placed a black and gray patterned top over my head. It was short, just reaching to my midriff, and had thin shoulder straps which were little more than adequate to cover the straps of the bra I was wearing. I looked in the mirror again.

"I could really go for me, if I was a girl," I said.

"Just wait until I've had a few weeks to practice with you," Susan said. "I'll have everyone going for you." She paused to let this thought register. "Now sit down again, we have to try some shoes next."

Obediently, I sat and allowed her to place a couple of pairs next to my feet. Both had heels of a kind I had never worn before.

“Can't I just wear trainers?” I asked.

“No, you can not. If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing well, especially when ‘well’ means a bit sexier. Now try the lower heels and let's see you walk.”

I slipped my foot into the shoes and stood. Although the heels were much lower than those I have worn since, I still remember that first time. How unsteady I was, as I stood and walked a few paces.

“Try putting one foot directly in front of the other,” Susan instructed, “and use smaller steps.”

“If this skirt was any tighter, I couldn't take any steps at all,” I replied.

“Nonsense,” laughed Susan. “You can do better than that.” She walked a few paces in demonstration. I stood and tried to do the same. “I can see we shall have to work on that walk,” she said thoughtfully as I walked past her for the fourth time in succession. “Anyway, we have no time now. Let's go and meet the others.”

5. A New Home.

“What, you mean go out like this?” I felt panic rising.

“Yes, of course.” Susan seemed amused at my question. ‘You're Michelle now. There's no alternative, especially as there's only four weeks to the Miss Personality contest, and you're going to win. I'll see to that. Now come on, head back, chest out, look confident. You're with me now, and I'll look after you.’

“Okay if you say so.” I followed her into the corridor and down toward the front door. Fortunately, there was no one else there. I think I would have died if Sally had been waiting to see Michelle's debut, but she wasn't,



and we went out of the building, across the car park, and into Susan's car.

“Come on, look up, the world's not going to bite you.” Susan had noticed how I tried to look small and inconspicuous as we drove slowly through town.

“I can't,” I replied, “what if someone sees me?”

“They're *all* going to see you, that's the idea!” Susan replied. “By the time we're finished, they'll all want to see you. Remember that little contest you're going to win.”

“I think this was all a mistake.” I felt bad. “I just agreed...well, because I wanted to be with you. Since I first saw you, I wanted to be with you, but I know I can't go through with this. I'll make us all look stupid.” Then taking my courage in both hands, I asked, “Please, would you come out with me when I look like myself again?”

I knew it was a mistake as soon as I said it. “Never. I could go out with anyone in this town. I've had all the offers, from all the boys your sister thinks are real cute. And what would they do if I did go out with them? They'd soon be going camping or fishing with the boys. Come the football season, they'd be going to games, or training. I don't want that sort of relationship.”

“I'm not that kind of person,” I said, feeling suddenly very insecure.

“I know you aren't. As a boy, you're a wimp, nothing special. I'm too strong for you, and you couldn't keep up with me.” I looked at her, feeling afraid at having been dismissed with so much contempt, but then she smiled. “But on the other hand, I'm getting to like you right now.”

“What do you mean ‘right now’?” I suddenly felt excited. I hadn't expected these words to follow her outburst.

“Well, I mean, how would you like to be my girl?”

The suggestion hit me without warning. I must have looked dumbfounded.

“What, how would that work?” I was confused. “What could we do...I mean, have we any future?” The thoughts tumbled from brain to lips in no particular order.

“Of course we have,” Susan smiled gently at me. “After all, you're going to be a girl for a while, why not be my girl? I'd really like that. As a boy, I really have no interest in you, despite your obvious devotion, but as a girl, I could really go for you. I don't want machismo, I want tenderness. I don't want sweat and coarse behavior, I want perfume and femininity around me.”

“I guess we could try,” I said, still a little uncertain as to what she wanted.

Susan reached across the car and placed her hand on my bare thigh, just where the tight denim skirt ended and gave it a gently squeeze. In that instant, I wanted to be her girlfriend, whatever it meant. Suddenly too, I felt confident, and I lifted my head as we came to a halt at some traffic lights in the middle of town. All the boys would hang around in the car park at the side when they wanted to watch the girls going by. There were several I recognized there, and I saw them appraising us, appraising *me*. I met their gaze and didn't look down. After all, I was somebody special's girl, and I couldn't let her down.

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Susan drove 'round the block a couple of times, saying nothing, but I could feel that she was watching me, noticing how fast I was adjusting. She was being gentle too, letting me take my time to get used to the attention that an attractive girl gets from the boys on the street corners, in their cars and pick-up trucks. I had stood there myself, watching the girls go by. It was really weird to realize what it was like from the other side. I knew I would have been terrified alone, but with Susan gently touching my thigh as we drove, I was feeling better all the time.

We drove to Susan's home, which was to be my home for the next few weeks until the contest was over. She parked in the drive of a substantial bungalow which looked very nice indeed. There were lawns and flowers at the front, and I could see that there would be a big back garden. There was a large garage and a couple of cars parked there.

"There's no one home yet," Susan said. "Come on, I'll show you around."

I stepped out of the car, still a little unsure of myself in the tight skirt and heels, but Susan set off towards the house and I followed. She stopped and turned, waiting for me to catch up. When I did so, she put her arm around me and gently kissed my ear.

"You're going to be real glad you're my girl," she said and I knew she was right, even though I was in much confusion at the thought at the same time.

"Your room is upstairs at the back, right next to mine. We'll go up first, then I'll show you around everything else."

"Wow, it's beautiful!" I exclaimed as I was shown into my room for the first time. "I can't believe this is really where I'm going to be staying."

"Well, you'd better believe it." She pirouetted in the center of the floor, then flopped onto the bed with her arms open for me to come to her. I followed and before I knew what was happening, she pulled me to her and kissed me on the lips. I remember thinking how totally unreal it all was. Here we were, smearing each other's lipstick. I'd wanted to smear hers, yet I never believed it could happen *this* way, or that she would be the one taking the initiative. Perhaps I really *was* slipping into the role of being her "girl".

She pulled away. "Come on, there's lots to see." I followed through a shower room, then to the window, which opened onto a small balcony. There was a door just beside the window, but we ignored this and went outside. At the other end of the balcony was a second window. "This is my room," said Susan and we went inside. It was identical and I saw the door which had been ignored on my side.

Putting her finger to her lips conspiratorially, Susan reached onto the top of the door frame, and produced a key which unlocked the door. She opened it. "This is our secret," she said and then closed it and returned the key to its hiding place. Suddenly there were noises down stairs.

"Coming, Mother," Susan replied. "I'm just showing Michelle her room." Then to me, "Come on, my girl, head up, shoulders back. Let's show her we're going to win."

We both giggled and she took my hand as we went down the stairs and out through the hallway, into the biggest kitchen I had ever seen. Mrs. White was unpacking some shopping bags as we entered. I saw her turn, look, then look again as if she could not believe her eyes.

“Well, you have done a good job,” she said to Susan. “You were right when you said he'd make a good subject for your summer project. Michelle, I think you're wonderful. If you can look that good in one afternoon, I can't wait to see just how totally feminine and attractive you'll be by contest day.”

“Mother, Michelle will win everything,” Susan said, and I felt her squeeze my hand. “The only trouble is that you'll have to tell everyone who she is to claim the money, and I guess I'm not going to want you to do that.”

I couldn't believe my ears. I did not know how to react to that statement; was there something in Susan's mind which had not been revealed to me? This was just a summer job, reality had to come into play at some time. After all, I was not a *real* girl. Indeed, I had only been a “girl” for a couple of hours or so, but it seemed much longer. I wasn't just a girl, I was *Susan's girl*, and that made me something special.

I've had time to think about my reaction on that day. It still amazes and confounds me as I try to sum up my feelings just at that moment. I was adjusting so quickly to my changed circumstances that I could hardly believe what I was feeling. I was demure, yes, but I was also so submissive, passive even. I wanted to be whatever Susan wanted me to be, and if she wanted me to win Miss Personality, then I wanted it too, even though I did not know what was to come, and even if Mike were to disappear completely. But on that day, I didn't have time to think these things out at all.

“Here's Sally,” said Mrs. White, seeing a figure coming to the door. I felt a tremor of nerves. How could I face my sister, now that I was “Michelle”? I had no time to prepare, she was in the room and saw me at once. Her eyes widened in surprise. She came to me.

“Well, I think I like you better this way,” she said, “I think Susan spotted something about you that I've missed all these years. You make a better girl than I thought you would.”

“Thank you,” I said quietly. “I don't know what to say or feel just now. It's all too strange for me to take in. Every time I get a glimpse of myself, I feel that I don't know who I am, but I think I'm going to enjoy the next few weeks.”

“Right you are,” said Susan, ‘now let's see what Sally has been able to find in the shops for you.’”

We adjourned to the den, where parcel after parcel was opened. Firstly, and very importantly, there was a cream to remove the hair which, although still fine and sparse, made up my beard. Removing it this way would produce a smoother finish and discourage the hair from growing stronger. I had my own set of make up, nail varnishes, cleansers and all sorts of things that I knew Sally had in her room, but I never ever thought I would use, let alone possess. I got really excited as I saw all the things spread out before me. Then the discussion turned more serious.

“What we're going to do for the next few days,” said Susan, “is to let you get used to being female. One of us will be with you all of the time. We're going driving first, then we're going to walk around, then we're going shopping, into a restaurant, and everywhere. You're going to get used to going everywhere as a girl, so that you are comfortable and natural without thinking about it and without feeling self-conscious.”

“I don't think I'm ready for any of that,” I almost whispered. “What if we meet people who recognize me?”

“That's why we're going,” said Sally. “You'll meet lots of people who you know, but I bet they won't recognize you at all, if you behave right.”

“That's what you have to learn,” said Susan. “Don't worry, we'll teach you, but there's no better way of learning something like this than by being immersed in the learning environment, as one of my language teachers used to say. That's what you're doing, immersing yourself, so that being female will become second nature.”

“Okay,” I said, “I trust you both, I'll do whatever I have to do.”

“I knew you would,” said Susan, squeezing my hand. “From tomorrow, each morning you can get yourself dressed and do your make up.”

“But I can't do that.”

“That's why you're doing it, so you'll learn, Dummy,” said Sally.

“Wait, no arguments.” Susan stopped the conversation before I could rise to the bait. “Michelle's right, she can't do it yet, but we'll give you some books to read, and then before you go out, one of us will clean it all off and help you to do the make up really well, and we'll do your hair, too. You'll soon find it's easy, and it's really fun to create new looks each day. You'll find it much more enjoyable being a girl, especially with me.”

I said something to agree with Susan, and then drifted into fantasy, drifted into thought of being with Susan. I was still in some confusion about her feeling towards me, but I felt I was getting closer to her, and it felt good. Sally left after supper and I stayed with Susan, talking and swapping favourite music, films and books in the den.

“We'd better go to bed,” she said. “It's going to be a long day tomorrow and you must be tired.”

“To be honest, I'm too excited to sleep,” I said.

“But you must, there's lots to do. Come,” and she took my hand and lead me into the sitting room to say good night to Mrs. White. Then we went together upstairs. Susan took me into my room, and helped me to undress, leaving only the garment which concealed my maleness. She cleaned my face and brushed my hair loose, before braiding it carefully with a deep red ribbon entwined within it, then tied in a big bow at the bottom.

We talked and talked, about nothing in particular, the way I guess girls talk together, as she worked on my hair. Then she helped me into an ivory-colored silk night dress which had thin straps and ended just above my knee. Then she led me to the bed, kissed me gently, stroked the side of my face and was gone. I lay back, my mind tumbling over all that had happened in the day. I was soon asleep.

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6. The First Night.

I cannot guess how long I was asleep, but it was still dark when I awoke to find that someone was getting into the bed beside me. I felt Susan's night dress and recognized her perfume as she put her arms around me.

"We girls often like to share a bed, so that we can share our secrets," she said, kissing my ear. "Tell me how much you want to be my girl."

I told her, I told her all kinds of things. I was becoming more entranced with her with each moment that passed. I didn't care what she was doing to me, I just wanted it to continue, and I liked being so submissive to her. She listened as I spoke. I said all kinds of things to her, just wanting to say things she wanted to hear, to make her stay. I must have said some right things, because she moved so close to me, and we kissed with more and more feeling. I could feel pressure against my control garment and I knew she could feel it too.

Slowly, gently, she worked her hand inside the tight material, and eased it downward so that I stood free. Using both hands, she began to massage and stroke me, so that within a few seconds I lost control. She kept on stroking until I was spent, then gently wiped away the remains, saying nothing until she pushed me back. Then she raised the elastic back into place, making my profile smooth again.

"I'm going to make you forget you ever looked like a boy, or acted like a boy," she said. "You're my girl now." She talked for some more moments. I must have fallen asleep, for the next thing I remember is the light streaming in through a gap in the curtains where the breeze had parted them slightly.

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The next few days passed in a daze. I was soon into a sort of routine. I would get up and dress in whatever clothes Susan had chosen for me. I wore dresses and skirts, never shorts or trousers. I wore tight skimpy tops and summer sweaters which made every curve and bulge in my body stand out. I wore loose and flowing things too, which the slightest breeze would turn into figure-hugging shapes. I wore high heels, clumpy heels and flatties, even enormously high stilettos, until I could walk in them all as easily as I could in my own shoes. I worked hard at my make up, and by the time a week had passed, I was so proficient that Susan did not have to re-touch it before I went out.

I continued to wear the false breasts inside my brassiere. Susan experimented with different sizes of padding and placed them in different garments, but was never quite satisfied with the result. My necklines were consequently much more modest than either she or Sally wore. Meanwhile, Sally was acting as a chaperone whenever Susan couldn't be with me. She took me driving and I started to walk with her in less crowded areas. We went to the next town for my first walk where there were people around. I found it to be quite nerve-racking, but there was no one I recognized, so it passed relatively easily.

“We have a problem,” said Susan one evening toward the end of the second week. “It’s one that’s not going to go away, if we’re to meet our schedule for the contest, and we have to work something out. We have less than three weeks to sort it out. Your breasts are not going to pass inspection in a swim suit. We could use a high cut one, but that would be too unusual for the judges to award you first prize.”

“Assuming we get that far,” said Sally. “We’ve got the photographer in a couple of days and she’s going to print the pictures immediately, then I’m driving them over to the contest office. It’s going to be the last day to hand them in. They have accepted the forms, but we’ll be rejected without the photographs.”

“Well, that’s arranged, so we know we can meet the deadline. I’m doing the make up for that one anyway, so she’ll look as good as any of the contestants,” said Susan.

“What a modest person,” Sally joked. “But seriously, what are we going to do?”

“I’ve started working on latex pieces for special effects, and this is just as special, so I’m going to take a chest impression, and work with surgical quality latex to make something. I just hope I can make it indistinguishable from the real thing.”

“That sounds like a long job,” I joined in the conversation.

“Yes, it will take a full day at least to make the first set, then I’ll have to make some modifications and make several more pairs.” Susan was pensive. “Then we’ll have to work out how to blend them in with make up, and just what Michelle can wear over them. I think we all need to work on this problem, it could be our downfall. If we don’t solve it, there’s only one alternative left. We can’t leave it too late, if we have to go down that road. Anyway, let’s change the subject. Tomorrow’s make-over day.”

“What’s make-over day?” I asked. I dared not ask what the “alternative” was. I could guess, and I didn’t want to think about it.

“Well, you’re going to the beauty parlor, then the nail studio. Remember that my mother bought the pledges from all those people in the auction. You’re using them tomorrow,” said Susan.

“But some of these people will know me!” I gasped, “I’ve no chance of getting away undetected.”

“Yes you have,” said Susan. “You’re in their appointment book as my cousin, you’re just visiting, and Mother’s given you these pledges as a treat because she thinks you could be beautiful.”

“What better story could there be?” asked Sally. “Anyway, unless you blow it, no one will guess anything. We’ll see that you look the part when you go in, and one of us will be there with you, at least part of the time. All you have to do is enjoy.”

I thought that the last thing in my mind was enjoyment at that moment, but I did not give voice to that. Instead, I said, “What’re they going to do?”

“Oh, that’s arranged, all the instructions and requests have been made. We’ve told them you’re going in for the contest, so they know what to do, especially as it’s your first experience,” Sally smiled enigmatically.

“We've presented you as something from the backwoods,” added Susan. “Like as if, they don't have beauty parlors where you come from ‘cause it's so small.”

“And they're getting electricity soon,” laughed Sally.

“So you have nothing to worry about,” said Susan. “They're expecting you to be unsure of everything and they've been told to use the most modern styles and products, so it would be new to lots of people.”

“Okay,” I sighed, “I give up, I'll prepare myself to be girlish and excited at everything.” I stood and pouted at them over my shoulder in the most exaggerated girlish manner I could muster. We all laughed.

Susan helped me to bed again that night, braiding my hair back as she had done previously, this time entwining black ribbons into the strands. She helped me clean off all the make up and was about to clean off my finger nails when she looked up at me.

“I guess we can leave them for the nail technician. You're going there tomorrow, as well as other places.”

“What other places?” I asked.

“Never mind,” Susan touched her finger to my lips. “You'll see tomorrow.”

She turned and took a black night dress, very short, and made of several layers of fine material, from where she must have hidden it when she came in.

“I've brought this for you tonight.”

I touched it and felt its silky softness.

“It's too feminine to be real,” I said.

I knew it was what she wanted to hear. She wanted me to be more of a girl than she was. I hope you understand that, I don't think I can explain it any better, but I was finding that the way to please her was to act in a more and more feminine way, and I was learning fast how to do it. I gushed and almost squirmed with pleasure as she slipped the whisper-thin folds of the garment over my head. She pulled out my braid and laid it gently forward of my left shoulder, allowing the heavy ends of the ribbons to fall almost to my waist. She kissed me, and we lay on top of my bed together, whispering girlish things.

“I'm so glad you're here,” she said. “I was going crazy, wanting to work on someone. Doing special effects is not just a matter of studying, it's about making the effects yourself, and getting them to work.”

“Am I just a special effect?” I asked.

“No, of course not,” she laughed, stroking my hair, “you're my girl.”

We lay together again that evening. She manipulated my maleness away, and then we lay as two girls together, two very intimate girls, she describing her plans, me submissively accepting, being excited at all the things she wanted me to be. She left me after an hour, while I tried to accept the overwhelming certainty of her plans; they seemed too incredible to be real. I liked being her girl, make no mistake about that, but I wondered if I wanted to be quite as much of a girl as she seemed to want.

I quickly fell asleep before arriving at any conclusions, and over the next few days, events moved so quickly that I had no time to think about the implications of all that she had revealed.

7. Michelle's Next Steps.

“Come on, Michelle, wake up.”

I opened one eye, then shut it quickly, against the light pouring in through the now open curtains.

“Come on, up now,” said Susan, already fully dressed in black trousers and a tight black low-cut vest, which showed all the things I couldn't. “This is the day for the big transformation in public.”

I winced. “Are you sure this is a good idea? I don't think I'll be able to fool the staff in the beauty parlor. They'll see through me immediately.”

“Nonsense,” she said. “They'll see what they expect to see and that, my girl, is a rather unsophisticated cousin of mine from the back woods, who we're treating to something special.”

I got out of bed and went into the shower room, leaving Susan to busy herself with preparations for my appearance in public. I used a depilatory to remove the few little wisps of hair that had appeared in my beard area. I was lucky that nothing much had really developed in that area, I thought as I waited for the goo to work before stepping into the shower.

All done, I stepped out, and immediately pulled on my elastic restraint before I stepped in front of the mirror to comb out my hair. I had become so used to wearing it that it felt strange to allow my boy parts to remain free, even for a few moments. I put on a robe, pulled my hair so that it fell loosely down my back, and I stepped back into the bedroom.

“Come on, Michelle,” Susan said, “don't look so petrified, it's going to be a great day. Sit here and let me dry your hair.”

Working quickly, Susan dried my hair with a big blow drier and casually tied it back with a pony tail set high upon my head. She applied light make up only. Then, with Susan urging me to hurry, I was dressed in a pale blue outfit of skirt, tight cotton shirt, with no sleeves, and low blue pumps. This time, my breasts were padded differently. Instead of wearing a bra and then putting inserts in the cups, this time it was given a bra with the padding already in place.

“How do you feel with your new tits,” asked Susan with a giggle.

“They look fine in this blouse,” I replied, “but don't ask me to wear anything low-cut, the gap will show. Please don't ask me to do the swim suit bit with these; I'd die of embarrassment.”

“Don't worry, they're too strict, they'd spot the falsies and have you disqualified on the spot,” said Susan. “We're really going to have problems there, unless I can come up with something virtually undetectable.”

“Do you mean they check the contestants, to see that they're for real?” I asked.

“Yes, of course,” Susan replied, “they don't allow cheating.”

I stood, once again dumbfounded, not knowing how to react to this information. After all, we were setting out to be the biggest cheats in the history of the contest. It was too much to take in. I seemed to be moving in a daze as I struggled to get my mind back up to speed. Susan noticed me hesitating.

“Come on,” urged Susan, as I stood to check my appearance in the mirror before we left. “There's not much time, and we don't want to be late.”

“Are you sure about this?” I asked, my nerves forcing themselves into overdrive.

“Yes, I'm sure, now come on.”

We were in the car. Susan drove quickly toward town with the stereo on so loud that we could not talk. I guessed this was deliberate, Susan did not want to hear my doubts. She pulled into the parking space outside the beauty salon, and was out of the car and waiting for me before I got out of my seat belt. As I shut the car door, she took my arm and propelled me wordlessly and with mounting terror into the air-conditioned reception area, where they seemed to be expecting me.

“This is my cousin Michelle,” she said to the receptionist. “You remember, I spoke to the senior stylist about her the other day. She's here for a make over, the one my mother bought at the charity auction.”

“Yes, I remember,” the girl smiled. “You've come on the right day too. We're doing a special today with our new process to introduce it to everyone. You can have eye-brow shaping, with semi-permanent makeup to keep it looking good for free, if you want. It's really great, and lasts for a couple of months.”

“Yes, she'd love that,” I heard Susan saying, before I could collect my thoughts, or make any comment.

“I'm having mine done tonight, after we close,” the receptionist confided. “I'm going to have a real fine arch, with the shape just defined to the center. It will be like they do in Hollywood, and it will last.” She laughed. “I always feel that I get the shape wrong, and I've been practicing since I was ten years old.”

Someone was talking to me. “I'm Rose, and I'm your stylist today.”

I came back to my senses and smiled at her. “You're here for the make-over from the auction. It must have been really exciting when they gave it to you,” she said. I agreed.

“Susan's told me what you want and what she says I have to let you have,” Rose smiled at me genuinely, as if she was part of the conspiracy. “I guess with hair like yours, I'm going to have a really great chance to show off my skills.”

Rose sat me down in front of a mirror and ran her fingers through my hair, pulling it forward across my shoulders and back again, as if testing how it fell against my

body and framed my face. She combed it gently, saying nothing, first to the left, then back again, still testing its texture and fall. Then she seemed satisfied.

“Right Michelle, we'll get your hair washed and started.”

I followed through into the back where I was seated in a chair and leaned back while Rose pulled my hair behind me and into a basin. I began to relax as the soft shower gushed and hissed warm water over my head. The touch of her hands against my scalp was really soothing as she washed and rinsed my hair carefully. From there I went again to sit in front of the mirror where Rose combed my hair straight and set at it with some small scissors

“Hey,” I protested, “I don't want it cut off.”

“I'm not taking any length,” Rose said, “I'm just making it even so that it all falls together. Trust me, the end result will make your hair look much thicker, especially with all the highlights.”

She set to work again as I wondered *what highlights*. I had been told nothing about them, but by then I was not expecting that I would have been told much anyway. I decided to say nothing, for the same reasons as before and sat back, distracted and only half-listening as Rose chattered about all kinds of things. She must have been used to silent customers, for my lack of response did nothing to slow her speech.

I sat and watched as she brushed some liquid which looked like paste and smelled quite awful onto strands of my hair which she carefully wrapped in foil. I responded in single syllables to her continuing chatter as the foil-covered parts of my hair increased and expanded across the whole of my head, giving me a bizarre appearance. The drier was placed over my head and I was left with a magazine while the warm air circulated across my head.

Rose returned and removed the drier. “I know your secret,” she said. “I knew I'd seen you before. You're Sally's little brother, don't deny it. While I'm doing your hair, you can tell me just what's going on.”

I told her. What else could I do? If I had denied everything, I would have never gotten out of there. I felt really bad about admitting who I was. I knew it was a failure on my part that I had been spotted so easily, and I was dreading Susan's return. I would have to tell her as well.

“Don't worry. I won't give you away,” said Rose. “It's just that there's so much about you that didn't add up. Your hair was one giveaway. It's just too healthy. Most girls your age have done something to damage their hair a little; yours has no signs at all. Then I noticed your ears, and my mind started rsearching, until it came to Sally's little brother.”

“What about my ears? I don't understand,” I said, quite puzzled.

“They're not pierced at all. Where have you been the last few years. Every girl wears ear rings, probably a few pairs. A lot of boys do as well, but you're the first girl your age I've seen without any since I started working here a couple of years ago.”

“I guess I never thought of that.”

“Well, never mind. I’m qualified and I’ve brought the piercing tool with me. We’ll fix that in a couple of minutes. And no protesting when I do it! You sit quiet and still, or I’ll scream and tell everyone you’re a boy.”

“Why are you doing this? You could give me away right now,” I said.

“Well, I like the idea of you in the Miss Personality contest. It will show the contest up for what it’s really worth when a boy wins it.” Rose was amused at the thought. “They’re just so old-fashioned, they deserve to be sent up. The people who run them deserve to be made to look stupid, too. If you’re the one to do it, then I want to help. I’ll keep your secret, don’t worry, just introduce me to the rest of the team, and I’ll help all I can.”

As she finished this speech, she was ready to take me back to the basins, where my hair was washed again. All the bad-smelling paste was washed away and replaced by a sweet-smelling conditioner. My hair was wrapped in a towel and then we went back through the salon and into a small cubicle at the rear.

“Now, you have to sit there and be brave,” said Rose. “I’m going to do your ears, before anyone else makes the same connection I did.”

“But I haven’t any money for the ear rings,” I said.

“That’s the least of your problems,” Rose smiled sardonically. “If you’re spotted too soon, you won’t even get near the contest, the whole town will be laughing at you. I’ll get some earrings out of the stock here and put them on the bill. I’m sure I’ll be paid in a couple of weeks, out of your prize money, or otherwise...”

“Will it hurt?” I asked.

“A little. More afterward than when I do it. You’ll have to keep the ears clean and wait until the swelling has gone down and the holes have healed before you start changing earrings, but it should be fine in a week or so,” Rose replied, taking some sterile pads out of a box.

“It’s good of you to help,” I said.

“Nonsense, it’s my pleasure.” Rose looked happy as she said this, so I guessed it must be true. “I want you to look good. I know Sally, and Susan’s been really nice when I’ve met her. If they want you to be a girl, then I’ll help.”

“Thank you, that’s really kind.” It was all I could say, even though it sounded feeble.

“Look at these earrings,” she said, holding out a box of plain hoops of several different diameters. “I’m just fitting these hoops. They’re ideal for a first set. They’re easy to wear and to keep clean while the newly-pierced holes heal up.”

She turned and picked up the piercing gun. I looked away in fright. It was like something the dentist would use. She turned the swivel chair I was sitting on away from the mirror. Looking from one ear to the other, she used a small felt marker on each ear to make sure she created an even effect.

“Remember, any noise, or protest, and I’ll scream and tell everyone who you are.” Rose looked directly into my eyes as she said this, and I knew it was no idle threat.

She went to my right side and took the box of earrings with her, out of my sight. She adjusted the towel which was still wrapped around my head to expose my ear and to keep the hair out of the way. I felt her wiping across my ear with something cold and I smelled the antiseptic.

“Ready? Take a deep breath, keep still and keep quiet until I tell you it's done.”

I felt the metal of the piercing tool brush against my neck as I took a deep breath. Then I heard the tool making a slight “plopping” sound once, twice and again. How many times was she using it? I wondered as I struggled to keep still. I felt her tugging against my ear. It hurt a little, but I held my breath and made no sound. Then she was standing back, looking at the ear.

“Well done,” she said. “Now for the other one, same process. Not a sound, remember.”

“I know,” I replied, and I knew I could comply.

“Ready?” she asked and without waiting for my reply, I felt the towel being lifted, the cold of the antiseptic, then the metal against my ear as the plopping sound came again, and I felt the tugging against my ear lobe. Then her hands were pulling and twisting again. She seemed to have more difficulty than on the other ear. It began to hurt, and it was all I could do to keep still and quiet, but I did so.

“Finished.” Rose stood back and smiled as she admired her handiwork. “I'll turn the chair 'round and you can look.”

“Gosh.” It was all I could say, as I saw the glittering hoops dangling from my ears. There seemed to be a lot of them; I'd only been expecting one. I touched the right ear and got a twinge of pain. The hoops were firmly attached through the lobe.

“I thought you'd only be doing one on each side,” I said weakly. “Boys just have one. No one would comment on one ear ring, but this...”

“I know,” said Rose, “but you're not having it boy style, you're definitely having the full girl style. I don't want you to be able to pass without comment if you decide to give up half way. This is a real mark of your commitment to being female. You'll feel them all the time; there's no escape, they'll make a little sound as they touch each other that only you can hear, and you'll feel them move as you move your head. It's done, and you'll love them once the holes have healed and you can wear different ones.”

“Thank you,” I said. I really meant it. Much to my surprise, I was glad of another step toward a complete female identity. Susan would like this, I knew.

“They'll be sore for a day or so,” Rose said. “Just ignore them as much as you can, keep them clean. Above all, don't take them out and be careful you don't catch them when you brush your hair. Now come on, let's get that hair done.”

We went back into the main salon where she took the towel off my hair and began work with a blow drier and brush. The noise of the drier prevented any conversation. At first, I paid little attention as my hair was sectioned and lifted to the drier, then I began to notice changes, gradually at first, then more profoundly as the hair dried. It was lighter. Blonder. Much blonder than it had been before. I was a blonde!

The revelation sent a spin of panic through me, then a tingle of excitement. I was a blonde, with lots of earrings. It was crazy, this *couldn't* be happening to me. But it was, this was all me in front of the mirror, no doubt about that, and there was equally no doubt about my new looks. The hair was mainly dry now, falling in loose, shining strands. It had been cut so that, as Rose predicted, it looked much thicker than ever before.

"That's come out better than I ever hoped," said Rose. "We'll be able to do so much with that hair."

"I look like a beach bunny," I said, turning my head from side to side to watch the hair swing as I moved. A new thought came to me. "How do I make it look like a boy when I want to?" I asked slowly.

"You don't," said Rose. "You can't. It won't look boy, not with this cut and color." She started to remove my robe. "Tell me, how do you make your breasts look so natural? I could do with improving mine. Any tips?" I could see she was teasing me now, and I smiled back.

"Now, lets get some real style into that hair," she said. Standing behind me, she brushed it all gently back and started to work it with her hands, taking it all back off my face and exposing my ears. She pulled gently, weaving the hair. She talked as she worked.

"I'm doing a full French Braid," she said. "It always looks good on a blonde, and more than that, it exposes your ears for everyone to see. It's a style which looks really complicated, but it's so easy, you'll be able to do it yourself with just a little practice. I'll show you."

Then she was finished and holding a mirror so that I could see the intricate weaving of the hair at the back of my head. She was right, the blonde highlights shimmered in the light, and the contrasts of the strands of hair interwoven so evenly, made the style look wonderful. I guess at that moment, I was so taken with what I was becoming, that I was totally detached from whatever the boy in me might have felt. At that moment, I was Susan's girl and I couldn't wait to show her my new look.

8. The Point of No Return ?

"Now for the make up," said Rose, opening a substantial cabinet on wheels which she pulled over to the side of my chair. "You sit back and don't watch. Just let me work. If I'm silent, it's because I'm concentrating. I see you're booked for the semi-permanent eyebrow make up. That's a good choice, especially as it's free today. You've not messed around with your natural shape at all. That makes my job so much easier."

"I'm not sure about this," I started to say.

"Oh yes you are," Rose replied. "If you're not, just prepare to listen to me scream. Remember how much we've done this afternoon. What an embarrassment it would be if I had to start screaming now."

“Okay, you win,” I said, sensing she was just the sort of person to carry out her threat. “How long does semi-permanent mean?”

“Well, it will last a month at least, possibly two. I can only really predict how long the second treatment will last, and that's only because I know about the first,” said Rose. “It depends on all kinds of things, like your skin type, the sun, how your make up interacts with it, and of course, how carefully I apply the chemicals.”

“It sounds very complicated to do.”

It's not too easy to do well. I got lessons from a good doctor though, and I think I'm the best.” Rose was studying my face as she spoke.

“Modest, too,” I tried to joke.

“The good doctor said so, too,” She gently pushed my head into a rest on the back of the chair. “Mind you, his name *was* Frankenstein, so you may have doubts.”

I laughed nervously. I was really feeling more frightened than ever before. What would I look like after this? I had no idea, but I knew that I was moving far further from my own appearance that I ever imagined possible when I agreed to this stunt. I was wishing I had never agreed, but what could I do now?

“Keep still, and let me work.”

I felt her pulling and knew she was plucking out my eye brows. She moved from left to right, watching carefully I guess, to make certain that she was even. She worked steadily and I could see that the number of my eye brow hairs was mounting on the tissue on her free hand as she wiped the tweezers repeatedly. At last she seemed satisfied, and stood back, looking intently, comparing left with right.

“That seems right,” she said. “You can't look yet, so don't try. Just lie back and let me get on. I'm just going to make some marks to guide me, so keep very still.”

I knew it was far too late to worry about what she was doing. I lay back as she instructed, and felt the marks being applied.

“Now keep still, this is the semi-permanent bit. If you move, you could end up with a line like a lightning fork.” She was smiling as she said this, but from her eyes, I knew she was deadly serious. “Don't worry about the noise, the tool I use has a small electric buzzing sound and you might feel a little vibration. Close your eyes and keep your eyebrows as still as you can.”

“I don't think I want to look,” I said, catching a glimpse of the pencil-shaped tool in her hand, with the electric cable dangling from it.

“Now relax, just don't worry,” Rose spoke soothingly. “Joking apart, I'm really good at this, and the result will be wonderful, I promise.”

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Okay,” I said, “I'm ready.”

I settled back to keep as still as I could. I heard the instrument making a soft electrical sound, then felt it vibrating as it was applied to my brow. She worked on the right first, stroking from center towards my ears repeatedly. Every second stroke, I felt her wiping something cold across the area where she had worked, gently as if with a brush, then softly as if with a cotton ball. There was no conversation at all, and I knew

the tension within me was mounting. I tried to breathe deeply, to let it go. It was too late to worry now. The process was repeated on the left brow, then suddenly, I realized that the noise had stopped. She had finished. I opened my eyes to see Rose looking intently at me, from brow to brow, then standing back to look at the overall impression.

“That's perfect,” she said. “I told you I was good. Well I can safely say that you have the best shape I have ever done. Not only that, the color matches your hair perfectly.”

“Can I look now?” I asked.

“Okay, but don't look too closely yet. You need to see it with the rest of your make-up to get the full effect.”

She held a mirror for me to take and I nervously reached for it. I looked and saw that, in place of my own rather full eye brows, I now possessed a thin arch, paler in color, shaped to perfection, with not a single hair outside the arch. I raised my hand to feel. There was a little tenderness, but nothing like I expected. There were a few hairs there, but they felt nothing like as numerous as I expected. I looked closely and saw just a few hairs remained, but that the shape I was seeing was etched beneath them. The color was part of my brow, not the hairs that were left there. I felt a wave of panic.

“Right.” Rose's voice seemed to be coming from a long distance away. She touched my shoulder and took the mirror from me. “Come on, we'll finish off the makeup now. I told you not to look too seriously until I had finished. You're like all the other girls, frightened that it won't look right, but trust me, it will look perfect.”

“But I've no eye brows left.” I seemed to be having trouble getting my voice to work. I tried to say something more, but only a croak emerged. Rose ignored me.

“Come on, I'll show you,” Rose almost commanded my attention, and pushed me back into the chair. “Keep still,” she said firmly.

I did as I was told, feeling far too weak and defeated to do anything else. I felt her alternatively stroking and patting my face, working around my eyes, then drawing a shape on my lips which she filled in carefully, all the time, making sure I could not see what she was doing.

“As this is a special occasion,” Rose said, “I thought you'd like some false eyelashes too.” She held out a packet with a pair, looking like hairy caterpillars, bald on one side.

“Thank you,” I said. I had recovered my composure, and was feeling like I would be ready for anything. If Susan wanted me to be her girl, then I would be more girl than she had ever seen. I would show her that I could be more than she ever realized. Rose looked at me long and hard, as if she too detected something different about the tone of my voice. I realized I had spoken differently: softer, more huskily, more breath in each syllable. Was this my feminine voice? I wondered, and if so, where had it come from?

"I'm looking forward to seeing just how I've changed," I told Rose. "I hope you've made me really beautiful." I had designs upon Susan just formulating in my mind for later this evening.

I sat still as the eye lashes were applied and blended with mascara. I knew about the processes, but realized it would take me a long time to get this proficient, but soaking in what knowledge I could get from Rose was not going to be wasted. Then at last I was finished. I saw Rose stand back and look critically at the overall effect.

"That's all I can do," said Rose. "The rest is up to you. If looks can win Miss Personality, you've got them."

"Wow," I exclaimed, "I would go for me, that's for certain." I was as much of a California blonde as I had thought Susan was that first time I saw her. I turned to see left profile, then right. I stepped near the mirror, then away. I was impressed. There was a fabulous girl looking back at me, one who would stop traffic on the streets. I saw her raise her hand to touch her earrings, felt the pain, and realized it was all me.

"Your friends are waiting. It's time to face the world."

She led me back into the reception area, where Sally and Susan were waiting. They looked at me, then at each other, almost in a double take.

"You'd better have a few words with Rose," I said, "she knows what we're doing."

There was a few moments more of silence, then Sally and Susan started to talk at once. They both shut up, then started again. Susan raised her hand for silence.

"Can we talk somewhere?" she asked Rose.

"Let's use the staff room." They went, the three of them, leaving me standing alone in the reception. I felt really hurt in that instant. No one had noticed me, and I looked so good. I felt a tear start, then I had a second thought. I was a boy under all this. What was a boy doing having such female emotions? I turned to admire myself in



the mirror. If they weren't going to notice me, I would have to tell myself how stunning I looked. The more I looked, the more I loved the new me. I guess anyone seeing me must have thought how vain I was at that moment, but I didn't care.

I turned to look out of the window at the street beyond. There was a cafe on the sidewalk next door and the tables were spread untidily, partly across the parlor front. I saw a group of boys at one of the tables. One saw me and nudged his companions to look at me as well. I could tell their looks were more than passing interest. They *liked* what they saw. Without thinking, I raised my hand and pulled the bottom of my braid to the front of my left shoulder and let it fall across my padded chest, while still looking out at the street.

“What are you doing?” It was Sally who came to stand beside me and looked out at what I saw. “Come away, stop sending hair signals to those boys. Where did you learn that?”

“Learn what?” I asked.

“You were sending signals to those boys. You know, it's what girls do when they want to attract attention. They play a little with their hair, keeping a bit of eye contact. It's a classic come-on. Don't tell me you didn't know what you were doing.”

“But I didn't!” I protested.

She looked at me. “Boy, have *you* got a lot to learn,” she said. The absurdity of it struck us both at once and we began to laugh.

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9. Nailed.

“Rose is joining the team,” said Susan as she came back into the reception. This stopped our giggling fit.

“I convinced Susan that I would be valuable to you,” said Rose. “Please believe me, I really want to help make the Miss Personality contest look as dated and sexist as possible. It upsets me that no one speaks out against competitions like that where the sole object is to make girls exhibit themselves. I don't mind girls looking good; in fact with my job, I'm in favor of it, but the contests are rubbish,”

“Welcome aboard,” said Sally, “I don't know just how this is going to develop, but with your skills, I think we'll all enjoy having you with us.”

“We'll think about that later,” said Susan, “but I do know where we're going now, and that we're late.”

“The nail studio,” said Sally, “I almost forgot, I'm taking him there.”

“Not so much of that ‘him’ stuff now that I look like this.” Susan and Sally turned to look at me as I spoke. I wondered why, and then understood that I was using my new female voice with them for the first time. “It could get me into trouble.”

“Sure, you're right,” said Sally, “but let's get going. It's only about fifty yards down the street, so we'll walk. Susan, will you pick us up in the car, say about an hour?” Susan agreed and as we turned to leave the salon, Sally added quietly to me, “No more hair signals until you learn to control them, no matter how instinctive they feel, or you'll get yourself into trouble.”

“Sally, I can't walk out like this. I'm frightened,” I began to protest as she walked to the door.

“Don't be silly,” she replied, “what do you think you'd look like if we dressed you in jeans and trainers? Look in the mirror.”

I turned and looked, as much for the pleasure it gave me, as to reassure myself. “I can't pass for a boy, can I?” I said, “but it doesn't mean I'm not frightened to go out there.”

“Just go,” said Susan pushing me toward the door where Sally waited.

I went out, into the sunlight and the street. I knew I looked wonderful. That made it worse, I knew I would turn and look at a girl who looked like me, and I knew I was it. I was the object of other boys' attention. I kept my eyes fixed ahead, avoiding making any eye contact. We walked past the tables and I tried to ignore the whistles which followed us. It was strangely exciting to hear them. Sally noticed my reaction too.

“Don't take any notice,” she hissed at me. “They want to provoke a reaction, then they'll follow, hoping they'll get you to talk, have a drink or whatever.”

“Can we hurry,” I asked, feeling more insecure.

“Just walk normally,” Sally replied, “we're almost there.” Then after a few seconds, “In here.”

Another receptionist sitting behind a desk greeted us as we walked in. Another blonde, with pale, light make up and worse, she had been in my class last term. I felt the hairs on my neck stand on end. Keep calm, I told myself. No one can possibly recognize Michelle now.

“We've an appointment,” Sally was saying. “Mrs. White bought the pledge at school, and this is her niece, Michelle. She's visiting with them, and Mrs. White gave her the pledge.” “That's right,” said the receptionist, smiling at me. I wondered if there was any recognition in that smile. “You're booked in, and we're just about ready for you.”

“Thank you,” I heard myself saying, “I'm really looking forward to what you can do. I've always been a bit ashamed of my nails.” I was using my female voice. I might as well; if she was going to guess who I was, she'd do it anyway, but I could detect no flicker of recognition as she escorted us through to the studio proper.

“Please sit here,” she indicated a chair in front of a white desk, “your technician will be here in a moment. Here are a selection of our styles and the latest colors.”

Sally and I looked at the examples she placed on the desk in front of us. They varied in length, just as much as they varied in color.

“What do I choose?” I asked.

"It's your choice," said Sally. "You've been given the pledge as a present, remember."

I was about to argue that she should help me, but I knew she would not. Before I had time to think of anything else, the technician was in front of me. She was a dark, intense looking girl, several years older than I was, with her name, Cherry, on a badge which she wore on the lapel of her white overall.

She looked reassuringly at me. "I see you have our style and color guide. Have you chosen yet?"

I glanced at Sally who avoided my gaze. I was on my own here. "The color's easy," I said, trying to keep my female voice working. "I'll have the dark crimson." I indicated the color.

"That's a good choice, it's very new and it must be the choice for the season. What about style and length?"

"Well, I was wondering what you could advise," I said, holding out my hands to her. If Sally was not going to help, then I was sure Cherry would.

"Let's see," she took up several examples and held them in turn against my fingers. "This is the ideal shape," she decided, "but you will have to decide how long you want them. Let me fix them first, and we'll see about the length afterwards. Remember, it's easy to shorten them after they're on, but if you go too short, and decide you want them longer, we have to take them off and start over."

"This is my first time," I said, "I've never been able to grow my nails, so perhaps a medium sort of length for a first time." I must have sounded very hesitant.

"Let's see what looks good then," said Cherry, and she took my hands and placed them together in a bowl of liquid on the front of the desk. "If this is the first set of nails you've had, I'll leave them a little longer. That way, you can file them back at home if you're careful, and get them to a length you're comfortable with. Next time you come, I can use that length as a guide."

"That sounds good." I looked at her, really pleased, relieved not to have a decision to make. "Let's do that."

Now that I had gotten over the hard part of the business, Sally was prepared to join in the conversation. As Cherry worked, she chattered and asked questions. I remained largely silent, watching my new nails taking shape at the ends of my fingers. Cherry worked quickly and confidently, and in no time at all, the pale shells were in place. Then they were filed and shaped to a length which satisfied Cherry.

"This is where we'll leave them for today," she announced. "You can file them back at home if they're too long, or if you want to come back here, I'll do them for you. Give them a few days, get used to them, and I'll be surprised if you don't love them. You'll probably want longer ones next time."

Next time. Something like an alarm was ringing distantly in the back of my mind, but I ignored it, and said something non committal. Sally looked over my shoulder and said simply, "Yes."

"Now for the color," Cherry said. "That will totally transform them, just watch."

Carefully, Cherry painted the nails, first one coat, then a second coat after allowing the first to dry. They became the dark crimson I had chosen.

"They're so much longer with the color," I said. "How on earth will I ever be able to use my hands?"

"Everyone says that," said Cherry. "Then they usually ask if they can have them taken off tomorrow if they can't cope. I always say yes, but only two people have come back to have them removed in the three years I've been here. So, don't worry, give yourself time to get used to them, then enjoy them."

I started to move my hands from the desk. "Wait, I haven't finished yet," Cherry said. "There's the high gloss, toughened finish to go over. We just have to wait a moment and make sure these are dry."

As she spoke, she directed a warm jet of air over my hands, then felt gently at the nails themselves. She seemed satisfied and took up a small bottle of clear liquid from which she painted the final coat over my new nails.

"Just keep still for a few moments and let it harden, then you're all finished," said Cherry. "I think they look very good. I love this new color."

"They're great, Michelle," said Sally. "You'd better take a bottle of that color and one of gloss as well."

"Yes," I said, taking up the prompt, "can I have those please?"

We waited as the bottles were selected and placed in a small gold sack. Sally paid, then we left the shop. Outside, I looked at the nails. I tested them, and found they were firm and hard, securely attached over my own nails. I touched my face, feeling the nails scratch gently along my cheeks, contrasting this sensation with the way it normally felt as I did so. I touched my hair, only to feel a nudge in the ribs from Sally. I knew why.

10. Breast Works.

"No hair signals," I said.

"Right, get things under control before you start all that," she cautioned, and before we had time to say anything more, Susan was there with the car. We got in, and she set off immediately.

"Let me see," she said, and I held out my hand for her to inspect as she drove. "They look great, I think I'll have a set, but after the contest, I couldn't work in those,"

"Perhaps it's just as well that I don't have to work in them," I said. "They're beautiful, but I guess they'll take some getting used to. How do I pick things up, small things that is?" I asked, "and how do I fasten zips and buttons?" All I can feel is the nails, nothing else. The tips of my fingers seem to be clumsy."

"You'll get used to it," said Susan. "Remember, you're Michelle. Think how she'd do things. Boys use the tips of their fingers, but girls, especially when they're taking care of their nails, have learned to use the top section of their fingers differently. You'll find

you can adapt quickly, try gripping with the sides of the fingers, not the tips. It will soon become second nature. You'll do it without thinking.”

“You make it sound so easy,” I replied, hoping that it would be as simple to adapt, because at that moment it seemed too remote.

We drove back to Mrs. White's house and I was sent to make coffee for Susan and Sally while they discussed the next part of my progress. It seemed strange to be both the subject of their discussion and their servant at the same time. I struggled to do simple things with my new nails too, yet I paused to look at them frequently. I really liked them, they made me feel so feminine, especially when I heard the earrings make that special sound that only I could hear as the several sets bumped against each other as I moved. I was falling in love with myself as a female.

I took their coffee through and then was sent to answer the door. I would have worried, but they told me that it was Rose who had come to join their deliberations. I served her with coffee too, then I was invited to join their discussion. I felt a little affronted. It was me they were talking about.

“If only they didn't have the swim suit part, we'd have no problem,” said Sally.

“But the fact that we can get Michelle past that part of the contest will be our biggest success,” said Rose. “We *must* make sure he passes the swim suit test.”

“I know, I know,” said Susan, “and I'm working on it. With the time we have left, there are few alternatives. It's too late for implants, even if we could have convinced Michelle to have them, and raised the money. We could just enter the contest with the most flat-chested entrant ever and see how far we get. There's only one other possibility, and that's for me to produce some prosthetic device. I've been working on it, but I don't know that I'll be ready in time.”

“I don't understand,” said Rose, ‘what's a prosthetic?’”

“Sorry,” Susan said. “It's a term used in special effects makeup. It means a bit we stick on. Usually it's false noses, but when we're talking about Michelle, it means breasts. I've made some, but I don't know how good they are. The color's wrong. I can correct that, but I need to know how they look and move, how they will stand up to prolonged scrutiny and wear, and how Michelle will adapt to them.”

“It seems to me that there's only one way to find out,” said Sally. “You know what that is, why are you hesitating?”

“You're right,” Susan said. “I'll show you what I've got and you can decide what we do next.”

She reached behind her chair and pulled out a case. Carefully, she removed a cloth bag, then brought out a shape which was attached to a base board I did not recognize. When she removed the cover, I saw at once that it was a breast shape. No, it was two shapes, and they looked quite realistic to me.

“I don't understand,” said Rose. “What do you do with these?” She touched them, recoiled, then touched them again. “They feel real.”

“They're made of latex compound,” said Susan. “I made them out of a cast of some real breasts, superimposed on a flat chest impression. The only way to test them is to

use them. I've got some surgical quality super glue. They could be attached to Michelle's chest. With this glue they'd be permanently attached until I removed them with a solvent."

"Let's do it, then," said Sally. "What are we waiting for? I vote that we do it now. Get the glue out."

"Why not try it?" asked Rose. "There's nothing to lose by trying."

"Okay, we'll try it, but you must remember, these are just an experimental pair. The color's not quite right, and if I'm honest, I think the breasts themselves may be too large," said Susan. "In principle, though, there's no reason why we shouldn't try them out."

I was listening to this in silence. I was appalled that they could be thinking of this, yet at the same time, I was fascinated by the prospect of having breasts. I could not conceive how Susan could have come up with such a project, but I knew if they insisted, I would not be able to argue with them. I knew what would come next.

"Michelle," called Susan, "can you come over here?"

I complied.

"Let me introduce you to your next pair of tits," said Susan. Sally and Rose giggled. "We need you to strip to the waist and then I'll try them out. I'll need help, so don't be modest. Just take off your blouse now, and sit here," she indicated a chair beside the table.

"Is this safe?" I asked as I took off my blouse, then the bra which held my falsies.

"Yes, of course," Susan replied, removing one of the breasts from its position. "Just keep very still, so that I can get them even."

I kept absolutely still, horrified yet fascinated by what she was about to do to me. She offered the right breast to my chest, measuring the position in which it should lie, and marked it on my chest with a cosmetic pencil. She did the same on the right, then I watched as she applied a covering of glue from a tube onto the back of the prosthetic, then onto my naked chest.

I looked up and away as she again offered the right breast to my chest, then I felt it being pushed against my skin and smoothed across the glued area. Rose was delegated to hold it in position as the process was repeated on my left side. Again I felt glue being applied to my skin, then the false breast was brought into contact with the left side of my chest and smoothed into position. To my embarrassment, Sally was left to hold it in place, as Susan stepped back to check on the relative position of the two breasts on my chest.

At Susan's signal, they both let go and stepped back. Immediately, I felt a weight, a totally different sensation, of two masses attached to the front of my chest. I looked down in horror at what I had allowed them to do to me. I had two substantial breasts attached to my chest. Apart from a slightly darker color, they looked like they were part of my skin. They were not, I knew that, but I could hardly see any joining point. I knew no one else would be able to tell that they were anything other than real breasts when the colors were blended with make up.

For the next half hour I was totally humiliated. I was handled and examined most carefully. I had to walk, stand and sit, raise and lower my arms, bend. Then worst of all, I was told to adopt poses like the girls on the calendars do, with my arms partly covering my chest. All the time, my audience of three made approving or critical noises, both on my demeanor, and on the quality and appearance of the breasts themselves.

"That's enough for now, Michelle," said Susan at last. "Come here and I'll help you with a bra."

"You mean you're not going to take them off?" I stammered, horrified.

"No, of course not, silly girl," she replied. "They need to be tested for durability. How else can we do that? You'll be wearing them for a few days, at least until the next set are ready."

I was speechless for a few moments, letting it sink into my consciousness. "But how do I look like a boy," I asked weakly."

"You don't, not this month at least," laughed Susan. "Just look in the mirror and you'll see a dozen reasons why not. Remember where you've been today." I knew she was right, but I had never felt trapped like this before. Then it had just been a game. I stood compliantly as she fastened a cream-colored lace bra around my chest. The cups were cut low and as I looked down into my own cleavage for the first time, I could not suppress a feeling of real excitement, despite my misgivings. I was even more of a girl for Susan.

"The main problem is the color," said Susan, after I was dressed in a low-cut sweater. We can do a lot with makeup, but I'd be happier with a more even color match. I don't think that I can get the mixture much lighter and make it look natural in texture,"

"If you can't make it lighter, why not make Michelle darker?" It was Rose, and we all looked at her as if she was speaking a foreign language. She realized no one understood and continued. "Use a sun bed, get a tan. We've some of the new super-safe sun-drench cabinets at the salon. Surely something like that would darken the skin."

"Of course," Sally understood. "And the way the tan develops will hide any color variations."

"Wait a minute," Susan interrupted. "I want to leave this pair on for a few days to test how they wear. The sun tan won't get under them, and I can't guarantee that the next pair will be fixed exactly in the same place. It would be embarrassing to have a white line at the join."

"Well, can you make the next pair slightly larger to cover any join?" asked Sally.

"I guess so, but I didn't want them to be too enormous."

"No, not enormous, just slightly bigger," suggested Sally.

"Why not take them off for the sun-drench sessions and put them back on afterwards?" I said.

“That would be the best way of ensuring there's no line at the join,” Sally said. “And you can teach Rose and I how to glue them into place properly.”

And so it was decided. A sun tan cabinet would be hired and installed at the theatre for me to use each day, and one of the girls would remove and reattach my breasts at each session. I didn't know if I was in favor of this arrangement, but then I was not consulted.

“You'll have to get used to them,” said Susan. “You'll be wearing breasts all the time from now on, until at least after the contest.” I heard the words “at least” and noted them for the future. “You'll find you can do everything while you're wearing them, and I mean *everything*.” She laughed, “I mean you've no choice, they're there, and they're not going to go away. You can shower in them, water won't affect the glue. It needs a special solvent. You don't have to worry, they won't come off unless I take them off.” This was the last thing worrying me at that moment. I was more worried about how I was going to cope with life with these new “additions”.

11. The Photographer.

That night, Susan came to me again. She seemed relatively cool as she helped me undress, I could hardly help at all with the finger nails in the way of everything I tried to do. I just assumed she was a little tired and frustrated at my seeming inability to do the things I had learned, like creaming off all my makeup, as quickly and efficiently as before.

I noticed that the addition of my breasts caught her attention more and more as she helped me into a short black night-dress, trimmed with lace around a plunging neckline. I guessed she had selected it carefully for what it revealed. I saw too that my earrings caught her attention.

“I never realized you had so many sets of earrings. Why did you decide to have all those?” she asked.

I told her how Rose had threatened me, and that it had been her decision. Susan found this amusing, and as I recounted how badly she wanted to sabotage the Miss Personality contest, Susan became more amused, less serious in mood. I relaxed, too, and settled quickly once she left me.

I had not been asleep for long, when I woke to feel her slipping alongside me. We spent a long time exploring each other that night, as if we were both brand new. Instinctively, I adopted a submissive role, acting as girlishly as I knew how to excite her. I had learned what to do for her, just as she knew how to keep me in a constant state of excitement. She explored my breasts repeatedly.

“It's a pity you can't feel all the things I'm doing 'round here,” she whispered, “but these are only temporary, for the competition. Perhaps we'll do something better afterwards, then you can feel things, too.”

I murmured some agreement, not wanting her to leave me, not wanting to break the spell which her pleasure had cast over us both as we lay there, but I knew that these were portentous words, not said idly. From these, and previous remarks, I was

getting the feeling that she had designs on my future beyond the contest. I was not sure how I reacted to this. On the one hand, I was appalled at the thought that my male identity was not of any interest to this girl of my dreams, but on the other, I was just so excited to be with her that thoughts of a male role did not intrude on my happiness.

"I'm going now," she said at last. "Tomorrow, Sally's taking you over to the salon. Rose will make sure of your makeup, then it's over to the photographer's studio for the contest pictures. They have to be in tomorrow, so it's a bit of a rush. Sleep well."

With that, she was gone. I turned over into my usual position, and found I could not get there. These breasts were in the way. I turned over and felt them pulling against my skin. They were more comfortable this way, but still felt strange. I knew that they were just stuck on, and that they would be pulling on my skin alone. Perhaps that made them more awkward. If they were real, there would be muscles to help support them. I raised my hand to support them more comfortably and found my hands were exploring them sensuously, feeling across and 'round them, I felt the carefully molded nipples and around the join to my skin which was tight and seamless. Then I must have fallen asleep.

In the morning, I was awake early, but everything I tried to do was difficult and slow. I could not do things in the same way with finger nails which protruded way over my finger ends. They seemed to make me clumsy. I knew I would get used to them in time, but I wanted to hurry today. I loosened my hair, and set out for the bathroom where I applied the special depilatory. Then, after waiting a few moments for it to work, I stepped into the shower.

I managed to get out and dried my hair with a blow drier, leaving it loose and tumbling all over my shoulders. Now that I was blonde, there seemed to be so much more hair than there had been before. Perhaps it was just the color, or, more probably, Rose's skilful cutting had indeed made it look thicker. There was something more about being blonde, too. I was much lighter in my mood, more upbeat, and less worried about appearing foolish. I was conforming to the stereotype of the dumb blonde, and I wasn't even really female.

"Are you ready yet?" It was Sally at the door.

"Almost," I replied, as she came in. "I'm just finishing my makeup. It's been slow work today," I held out my hands to her and she nodded.

"The photographs are just meant to be casual ones, not really posed and modeled, but everyone takes liberties with that rule. We've got a couple of changes of clothes to take with us and after you've been to the beauty parlor, Rose says she should be able to come with us to make sure of your hair and makeup through the session."

"That's wonderful of her," I replied. "No offence, but I get nervous being female with just you around."

"That's because you're more used to being my little brother," she smiled thoughtfully, "but I'm beginning to agree with Susan, you are nicer this way. I had my doubts

at first, but now..." She didn't finish the sentence because I was ready and we were on our way.

Rose quickly repaired the mistakes which I had made in the makeup department. Then, carrying an enormous box, all of which she decided was absolutely essential, we set off to the photographer's studio. It was on the top floor of an old warehouse just across town, and as we got into Sally's car, I took the front seat deliberately. I wanted to be seen now that I had confidence in my appearance, so I insisted that we drive right through the most crowded part of town.

I could see the boys turning to look at us as we went. Some of them had been in my class only a couple of weeks before, and they never recognized me. Some made eyes at me, and I saw Sally looking at me out of the corner of her eye as she drove.

"Stop that," she said, "or when they ask me who the girl in my car was, I'll tell them it's my little brother who used to be in their class."

"You wouldn't!"

"Just keep doing that to the boys, and watch me. I'll pull the car over and tell them with you sitting there. Now behave." I could tell Sally was not joking, and it calmed me down. I half-turned in my seat and saw Rose struggling not to laugh audibly. She was enjoying our sibling spat. We had no more time though, for at that moment we pulled into the car park outside the photographer's building and went immediately inside and up to the top floor where we were expected.

To my surprise, Mrs. White was there discussing the pictures she wanted and remained to direct me into position. With Sally acting as dresser and Rose on makeup and hair, everything was done with an urgency and bustle which made for quick progress. I changed from a revealing white silk dress into a dark red sweater with a really low-cut neckline, which revealed an awful lot of my new cleavage, especially when I was made to pose leaning forwards, toward the camera. I was photographed so many times that I lost count. I had no time to be self-conscious.

"I'm tired," I said, "I never realized how hard it was to be a model."

"Well, that's the session," said Mrs. White. "It wasn't a long session either, you'll have a lot to get used to if you win Miss Personality. There's a modeling contract included in the prize, and if you do well, there could be a whole career for you."

"You're not serious!" I said.

"Why yes, of course," she replied, looking straight into my eyes so that I could see that she was not joking. "Susan was telling me yesterday how she thought you'd be able to do it easily, as long as the team was in place to look after you. You could earn more than I could win in my bet. Think of that."

I did, and not just then, but several times as the contest approached. On this occasion, I simply said, "That's really exciting, I'd love to win."

"That's what I want to hear, Michelle," said Mrs. White. "I want you to win as well, more than you'll ever know. I'll see you this evening, I have a friend coming to help our efforts."

With that, she turned and we, knowing we were dismissed, turned and left the studio. We went into the small cafe in the foyer of the building and sat at a table beside the window. It was the first time they had taken me into such a public place and I nervously engrossed myself in the menu while we waited for service. Out of the car, I was afraid to raise my head, let alone make eye contact with anyone. If Sally was calling my bluff, she had succeeded.

“What can I get you ladies?”

I looked up. I knew the voice, I had spent most of the last term sitting in front of him in Civics class. He looked at me deliberately and smiled. I felt my color rising in terror. Did he recognize me? I couldn't speak and it was all I could do to look away and appear unruffled. Sally and Rose ordered, then it was my turn. I was aware of the silence, I had to say something and hoped my female voice would come out.

“I'll just have an orange juice, please,” I said. Thankfully the voice worked and did not give me away.

“She's in the Miss Personality contest, you see,” said Sally to the waiter. “She has to watch her calories.”

“Hey, is that right?” he said, “I'm going there. too. My band's playing in the intermission. I'll see you there. Good luck!” He smiled earnestly at me, and I had to reply again. I could have killed Sally for exposing me this way.

“Thank you,” I heard myself saying, the voice still working. “I'll look forward to hearing you, although I'll probably be too nervous to think then.”

“That's not true, I'm sure you'll be totally in control,” he replied. “And if you don't win, those judges will be blind.” With that, he turned to get our order.

“Do I look good enough to win?” I immediately demanded of my companions.

“You will do if I've anything to do with it,” said Rose/ “Why do you think I came to help? Not to back a loser, that's for sure.”

Sally patted my hand. “You've a great chance, just hold onto your nerve, and trust us all. And stop flirting!”

“I wasn't!” I protested.

“Yes you were. The trouble is you don't know you're doing it. All the time he was talking to you, you were playing with your hair, fluffing out the strands. You were pulling it in front of your shoulder. It shows how long and blonde it is, and shows off your nails too,” Sally said severely.

“She's right,” Rose said gently, as she saw me about to argue. “You may not know what you're doing. It may be pure nerves, but you're giving signals all the same. Be careful. If we weren't here, you could get yourself in deeper than you want.”

“Okay,” I agreed. “I didn't realize. Can you give me a kick or a nudge to keep still? I admit, in the car I was playing, but here, it was purely unconscious. I'm sorry.”

“You shouldn't really apologize,” said Sally reflectively. “The contest is about personality, and the ability to flirt like that is a good thing. If you can do it without know-

ing, just think what you can do when you really want to impress, to win the contest. Just control it, that's all."

The waiter came back with our order. I deliberately kept still, avoiding his eye as he placed my drink on the table. I pretended to be absorbed in conversation with Rose, who kindly helped me. She knew what I was doing. I remained subdued as Sally paid our check, and we left. I even behaved as we drove back to Susan's house.

12. The Contest Approaches.

"Right," said Susan when we arrived home. "I've got a sun tan cabinet installed and we need to get you into a routine with it. I'll talk about that with Sally and Rose and we'll make up a chart so that we all know what's going on. You'd better have your first session this evening. You have to go in there absolutely naked, with no makeup or perfume."

"What about my breasts?" I asked. The "my" just came out and surprised me. I hadn't realized that I was thinking of them as part of me, at least not in that sense.

"They'll have to be removed temporarily while you're in the sun cabinet, but I've made several sets from the mold, to experiment with different shades of flesh tones, so we'll use a different one each time you come out," said Susan. "I've also got three new molds almost ready, so there should be some different breast shapes to try as well. You'll never be without breasts for the foreseeable future, except when you're in the sun cabinet."

"Perhaps the best time to use the cabinet will be first thing in the morning," Sally suggested, "before Michelle gets made up for the day."

"Yes, I agree," Susan said, "that way, we'll get a routine. We have to be careful with the exposure, so I've got some sun preparations, especially for use with the cabinet. Michelle should have a really deep tan by contest day, and with that hair, she'll be unbeatable."

"Let's do the first session now," said Rose. "I've taken the rest of the day off, and I want to try a new make up, so I can do it afterwards."

It was agreed, without consulting me, that this would be the order of events. Susan applied the solvent to remove my breasts. I was surprised how long it took for the glue to be released. Any thoughts I might have entertained about them coming detached when I least expected them to do so, were totally dispelled. I knew that once they were attached, there they would stay, whatever I did. I was a little uneasy at this thought. It meant that they could keep me female by simply denying me access to the solvent. I had no control whatever, once the breasts were applied. What had I allowed them to do to me?

I was sent to take a shower and then come back in a robe. I did so and then we went into the utility room at the rear of the kitchen where the cabinet had been installed. Rose fastened my hair in a loose pile on the top of my head, then had me re-

move my robe, but not my small concealing restraint, which I had replaced out of habit. Then she sprayed me generously with a sweet-smelling liquid.

“This will get you tanning quickly,” she explained, setting the dial on the cabinet as I entered. “Don't forget to put your hands into the straps,” she said before closing the door. “That's to make sure you raise your arms and tan evenly at the sides.”

I adjusted the goggles she had given me, then the door was closed and the tanning tubes lit up. My sun tan had started.

I stood there in the light, looking down at my body with the breasts removed. How often would I be allowed this, outside the cabinet, I wondered. Then I dismissed the thought. I was only in this for the contest. It couldn't go on after that, I told myself, then I relaxed in the delightful warmth of the rays which surrounded me.

All too soon the lights went off. I removed the goggles, dislodging the pins in my hair as I did so, and stepped out. Rose held out my robe, and together we went back upstairs where Susan was waiting with a new set of breast prosthetics ready to attach to my body. The routine was as before: glue was applied to my chest; then, with Rose helping, the prosthetics were removed from their stand, and the glue was applied to the rear. This set was different, they were in one piece, not two separate parts.

I stood rigidly still, as Susan instructed. She marked my body, left and right, with a cosmetic pencil as before, then carefully she began the process of attaching it to me. Rose supported the mass, while Susan delicately began to attach the top edges in their correct locations. She worked quickly, yet gently. All at once it was over. I felt the weight pulling against my skin and knew my body once again appeared female.

I turned to the mirror and looked. I knew they were not real, but as I looked, I could not see any clue to suggest they were false. I could hear Susan and Rose talking to me, but I was so entranced by the reflection that I was not listening at all, as I approached the mirror. There, leaning forward, I could see a slight difference in shade, where the skin joined the latex. But if I was not looking for it, I would not have seen the difference.

Suddenly, I felt naked and embarrassed. I put my hands over these breasts, which were now *my* breasts. It was an instinctive thing to do, as I turned to face my creators. It was instinctive, yes, but it was also a totally feminine gesture. How had I learned that? The breasts were false, why should I feel any emotion when I was naked and they were exposed like this? After all, I was a boy, wasn't I? Or was I so far changed into “Susan's girl” that I could not change back into whatever I might have been just a few days before.

“I'm talking to you,” said Susan gently, “have you finished admiring yourself? Can we help you dress now?”

I came to my senses. “I'm sorry, I was just overwhelmed for a moment.”

“Come on,” said Rose, “we'll go upstairs, I've already taken my cosmetic kit up there.”

We went up and I was dressed simply in a short black dress with a deep red body top, quite low-cut and tight against my breasts, which were supported by a fine lace

bra which pushed them up and together into the neckline to emphasize the effect. I wore matching lace panties, high-cut on my legs, no stockings at all and for my feet I chose a pair of black mules with a medium heel.

"I selected that outfit to show off your cleavage," said Susan. "You'll have to get used to men and boys talking to that area of your body. It seems to draw their eyes whenever they are exposed to it and yours will be one of the most attractively packaged around."

"Leave me to it," said Rose. "I'll be about an hour, but I'm going to try out my first thoughts for the contest makeup and hair. I want an unbiased opinion after I've finished."

She pulled a number of sketches from the drawer at the bottom of her cosmetic box and pinned them on the front of the box itself, where she could see them as she worked. She put a band over my head and pulled all my hair back from my forehead so that she could work on the makeup first.

"This is going to be a classic style, simple and precise. You can watch, but I don't want any comments until I've finished," said Rose. "If I don't talk, it's because I'm concentrating, okay?"

"That's fine," I replied, sitting in the chair before the big makeup mirror. "Do you want me to keep quiet while you're working?"

"No, it's not that serious," said Rose, "I think this style will be a winner, but let's see what the others think. Hold this." She passed me a small rack which contained a number of brushes of various sizes and shapes. "If I don't keep them all together, I lose the one I want," she explained.

She started work immediately, applying a base coat to my face which provided a completely pale and plain surface on which to work. I watched in fascination as this base gained color and shade. My face remained quite pale, but the shaping, which the makeup produced, made it leaner, with cheek bones defined and shaped. Rose worked in silence, looking from my face to the reflection in the mirror, adding subtle colorings to change the shape to the one she wanted.

"That's coming just how I wanted it," she said, pausing in her concentration. "Of course, we shall have to alter it as your tan develops, but it's the basic shape I'm interested in."

"This is far more clever than I could do," I protested. I was getting better at doing my own makeup each day, despite my nails, and could even apply false eye lashes successfully. This was beyond my skills, though, and Rose must have known it.

"Yes, it is, but I'm a professional," she said quietly. "I have to have some tricks of the trade to use. Now keep still, it's lips, then eyes."

"I've never had such full lips," I said. She paused after outlining them in a dark pencil. "The shape is wonderful."

"Yes, I'm rather pleased myself." Rose looked satisfied as she spoke, but then her brow creased in concentration as she brushed a pale peach color onto my lips. When

this was finished, she brushed again on top of the color. I must have looked puzzled as she did so, and she answered my unspoken question.

“It’s a top coat, to seal and shine the lipstick. Don’t move your lips and don’t lick it until it sets. I’m going to do your eyes now.”

For the next few minutes I opened and closed, looked up and looked down as I was told. I watched the eyes change shape and stand out more than ever. I held absolutely still as black eyeliner was brushed thinly onto my eye lid. After it dried, I was even more still as very fine, but long, false eyelashes were glued above my own. The mascara finished the effect.

“Pretty good, pretty good,” said Rose, pulling back the band to let my hair fall free.

She quickly backcombed it until it stood all around like a great blonde bush on my head. Then, working quickly, she turned this chaos into a high smooth style, a little old fashioned for my taste. It was high on my head and tumbled down, almost into my cleavage. Without the backcombing, it would have been in there. She sprayed it with an aerosol, and then I was done. I looked like a modern version of an old-time movie starlet. It was a shock at first and then I understood how clever the whole effect was.

“That’s great!” I said, turning from side to side across the mirror to see the full effect.



"I'm not so sure about the hair," said Rose, "but the make up's a good basis for me to work from. Let's go and show the others.

We went down to the sitting room. Susan and Sally were there, but I was not prepared to see Mrs. White and Mother there as well. My knees started to shake. What would she think of me for allowing all this to be done? It was Mother's gaze that I was most conscious of as I heard Rose asking for comments on her creation. I barely heard the replies until Mother stood and came over to me. She took my hand.

"I think you've done a great job," she said. "I would never have recognized this person," Then to me she said, "Are you happy? Come and tell me about it all."

I walked with her into the kitchen and we looked at each other for a few moments. Then we both spoke at once. I shut up and waited for her to speak again.

"Mrs. White's told me how well you've worked with her Susan. That's great. Susan's documenting the whole project for her admission to college, and her mother expects that the presentation will be so different that she'll be able to get in to a really good course. Sally tells me you're happy too, and that she's enjoying everything. It's so good to see you together, passing the summer. I don't have to worry about either of you. Tell me, are you happy?"

I hadn't expected this question. "Yes, I'm happy. Susan and I seem to get along so well. If it hadn't been for that, I wouldn't be here. As it is, I don't think I want this to end."

I wasn't explaining things well. How could I tell my mother that I was a "girl friend" of the girl whose boy friend I so badly wanted to be, but she didn't want a boy friend, and if she did, she wouldn't want me anyway, but this way we were better than girl and boy friend, and I was happy? I was happy, but at the same time, I was frightened by my reactions to being so female. I couldn't explain all this, so I didn't try. I just said, "I'm really happy, Mother." She smiled and took my hand, squeezed it, then we went back into the room to join the others.

Susan spoke for them all, "We've decided we like the makeup idea, but the hair has to be looser and more modern. The retro effect is out." With that verdict, with which I would have agreed, if I had been asked, we talked of other things.

13. A Night to Remember.

The next week passed very quickly. I was more or less kept to a routine. My sun tan was gradually deepening each day, and my confidence in public was much better. Sally was relieved that my natural behavior was more controlled. I could walk into shops on my own and purchase the most intimate of items. I could go with them to restaurants and order confidently, behaving in an entirely proper manner, with no wrong signals. Overall, I was behaving female in public all the time, with total self-assurance.

At home too, there were no problems. Rose had taught me more makeup tricks, and I was left to my own devices more and more during the day, as Susan had other responsibilities in her mother's business. Sally came 'round to see me occasionally, but the evenings were generally for Susan and I alone.

My clothing was kept very feminine. At the same time, I noticed that Susan had developed the habit of always wearing trousers, slacks or jeans. I could not remember when I last saw her in a dress or skirt. It wasn't that she was becoming masculine. She wasn't. She wore her hair long and loose, always very beautifully done. Her perfume was always most feminine. She wore makeup each day, sometimes a more extravagant style than I would have dared to attempt. It was the contrast between us which I was becoming aware of, and when I mentioned it to her, she confirmed my view.

"I want you to be my girl, I told you that," she said. "In this relationship, you're the most female. I'm female, I don't want to be anything else, but I like the relationship we have. I don't want to be pawed by some guy, then ignored. I like my guy to be a girl. I like to have control of the relationship, and there's no way you and I would be together on any other terms. If you're happy, accept it, don't think too deeply. Just go with your feelings."

"I am going with them, that's why I'm here," I said. "I want to win the contest for you, but what happens to us then?"

"Well, that's when you choose," said Susan, looking directly into my eyes. "Don't worry about it now, but if you still want to be my girl after the contest, then that will be wonderful. If you decide you want to be a boy again, then I don't think we'll have much to say to each other. The choice will be yours, much as I want you to stay."

I tried to talk more, but Susan refused to continue with the subject, no matter what I said. I was confused. How could I give up this relationship, yet how could I tell Mother and Sally that I wanted to stay as Susan's girl friend full-time? It was too difficult to think about, so I pushed it to the back of my mind, resolving instead to take advantage of the moment.

The weekend before the contest approached. Susan and I were to be alone on Saturday. It would be the last chance to relax before the day of the contest which was the following Friday evening. The week was scheduled for nails, clothes fittings, a full hair appointment because my hair had grown since the first one, exposing dark roots on my scalp. I also had to attend a couple of rehearsals at the contest venue itself. Every moment seemed to be accounted for once the weekend passed.

Susan came to my room on Friday night, to talk to me as I undressed and got into bed. "I think you're ready for a different sort of day tomorrow," she said mysteriously as she braided my hair back.

I asked her what she meant, but to no avail. She became more mysterious than ever. Soon any questions were forgotten as we tumbled into bed together, exchanging secrets in the dark. I don't remember her leaving me, but in the morning I woke alone. Before I moved out of bed, Susan was bustling through the door, dressed in a check shirt and blue jeans, with her hair tied back by a scarf which flowed behind her as she walked. She absolutely radiated energy.

We talked incessantly as she applied the solvent to remove my breasts, and continued as I showered and washed my hair. The conversation stopped as she helped me to dry my hair, but by the time she tied it back and applied the sun tan lotion to my richly tanned body, we were talking and laughing as much as ever.

“Just what did you mean by a ‘different sort of day’ when we were talking last night?” I asked.

“Never mind,” came the reply. “You’ll find out soon enough.” She was enjoying being mysterious I could tell, so I played up to her game, trying my feminine wiles upon her, but it did not work. I got no information at all.

I stepped into the sun tan cabinet again, and felt the warmth relaxing every part of my body. I stretched and turned in the light, still wondering what she had in store for me. I guessed that I would soon find out after I stepped out of the cabinet.

Susan was waiting for me with the usual surgical super glue. She applied it to my body and carefully marked the points the prosthetic had to cover. I saw the breast forms were on the other end of the table, covered by a soft cloth, but thought nothing of it. I stood carefully, allowing the adhesive to touch nothing as I watched Susan work the rest of the adhesive into the breast itself. I still suspected nothing as she carefully applied the latex to my flesh and worked gently ‘round my body.

It was only when she finished and stood back that I realized what she had done. I felt the weight; it seemed more than usual. I walked across the room and looked in the mirror and nearly fainted in shock. There fastened to my chest was a pair of the biggest breasts I had ever seen. They were so big, I could not believe my eyes until I ran my hands over them and watched the fingers tracing their outline in the mirror. I saw the nipples too, prominent and proud, with deep brown circles surrounding them. That the overall color matched my sun tan perfectly was the last thing I noticed, and when I did, I laughed at the absurdity of the thought.

I felt abused and humiliated. The breasts were so big, I hardly knew what to think. That they were mine for as long as Susan chose, I had no doubt. I was a prisoner behind these breasts. I looked again, and felt different—not just excited but with more anticipation. Susan must have done this for a purpose. I looked up at my reflection in the mirror and stood as tall as I could. The breasts stood firm and looked real. I felt a surge of femininity. “Be proud of them,” I thought. I looked again and saw how my slim waist accentuated the curves of my body. I resolved that today was going to be a good one, no matter what she had in store.

I turned to Susan who was watching me. She was enjoying watching me, and she had a wry smile of amusement on her lips. Still smiling, she walked across to me, and kissed me gently on the lips.

“What have you done to me?” I stammered.

“I *told* you we were going to have a different sort of day,” she smile. “Well, it’s just starting. We’re going to go to all sorts of places and show off. I’m going to test how good a girl you are. Come, it’s time to dress.”

I followed her out of the bedroom, still naked, my arms crossed across my chest to support my breasts which moved heavily against me when I walked. We went into Su-

san's dressing room where she picked up a couple of packages, then back to my room.

She helped me into a black bra which had strong under wires and half cups. The effect was that my breasts were pushed up and together. I had worn something similar before, but the effect was nothing like it was today. I put on matching suspenders and panties and stood obediently as sheer black stockings were pulled over my feet and attached to the dangling clips. Then I saw the dress. It was deep dark red, very short and very low-cut.

“You can't be serious!” I said as Susan held it out for me to step into. “There's not enough of it to fit me, it's too short, it's too low. I'll be afraid of falling out of it, or showing my stocking tops.”

“Darling,” she said, “I chose this dress for you today. Wear it for me. I promise you'll love it.”

She zipped the dress up my back and adjusted it on my shoulders, then helped me to step into high stiletto-heeled shoes. She looked into my eyes, smiling. “That's the idea. I want you to be so self-conscious that all you can do is brazen it out. I want you to out stare everyone who stares at you and more.”

“You can't do that to me!” I protested.

“I just have,” she said.

We looked at each other. I could see the excitement in her eyes, and it communicated itself to me. I felt my own excitement rising. Compliantly, I sat and let her complete my make up. She was quite unsubtle, making me look more obviously sexy than before. When she arranged my hair in a loose tumbling mass, part piled onto my head, part falling down onto my shoulder and chest, the picture was complete.

She finished the effect with three gold chains around my neck, the longest being quite long, with a pendant that fell into my cleavage to draw attention to it. She gave me five bracelets to wear on my left wrist, heavy ones, which fell across my wrist whenever my hand was in such a position. One had a heavy medallion dangling from it, and inevitably it would fall in the way of my hand as I wore it. This was not all! She took my hands and placed rings on all the fingers of my left hand and the two middle ones of my right. I counted afterwards and discovered that I was wearing fourteen.

She allowed no comment to distract her from what was obviously her plan for the day. When she was finally satisfied, I was allowed to look at the total effect in the mirror. I looked and stood back in shock and a little fear. There in the mirror I saw a self-assured girl, dressed to emphasize all her sexual power, dressed like a little tart, and it was *me*.

“Right, we're off, get your bag,” she ordered.

I was surprised that we were going out at this stage. Susan was dressed very modestly. Black jeans and top, light makeup, and severe hair. She was beautiful, but *I* was the one everyone would look at. Hurrying to keep up with her, I ran as fast as my

shoes would allow. I followed her outside, just in time to see her getting into the driving seat of a white Mercedes convertible. She waved for me to get in.

"It belongs to a friend of my mother's," she explained. "He's lent it to us for the day. Let's go and turn heads."

We drove across town, circling the mall twice to attract the most attention. At first my reaction was to hide, but I wasn't that sort of person today, so I looked up, eyed the boys and did everything I could to be provocative. The more I pouted, the more Susan seemed to like it. I felt her hand on my thigh several times, and I could see the amusement on her face as she drove. We drove for the sheer pleasure of driving and being looked at, until evening overtook us.

By the time we turned into the most exclusive restaurant in town, I was beyond surprise. We walked in and were immediately shown to a table in the most prominent area, where everyone could see us. I played up to it, fluttering my eye lashes, leaning at every opportunity to allow my gold chain to move into my cleavage, and draw the men's eyes there. It was a good game and it amused us both.

We had a light lunch enhanced by a bottle of expensive Chablis, donated by one of the men at the bar. He came over to talk after the bottle was accepted. I knew he would, and I knew this was my test. I resolved to shock Susan, or at least to try my best to do so. I invited him to sit down and, noting where his eyes were, I leaned toward him, as if to get my napkin which I had pushed onto the floor for the purpose. His eyes followed my cleavage. If only he knew, I thought.

He made small talk, contrasting his Porsche with the Mercedes. I made sure I talked a lot. I knew about cars, sure, but I knew to use my hands a lot, with the wildly extravagant finger nails flashing at their ends. I touched my hair, and played with a tendril which fell down my cheek. I waved and played with the chains around my neck. Several times, taking care to seem totally natural, I tucked the longest chain into my cleavage. Then I moved to make sure it would come out again. The poor man quite lost his thread, and when we left, he was reduced to saying he hoped to see us again. I was disappointed that he hadn't had the self-possession to ask for my telephone number.

"You are wicked!" said Susan as we pulled out of the car park with a wave and a roar from the engine. "The poor sap didn't realize you were playing with him."

"I did it to impress you," I said. "What do you think of your girl friend now, Doctor Frankenstein?"

"I think you're learning more than I guessed," she said, looking at me sideways as she drove. I was repairing my lipstick, doing it as obviously as I could, pretending to be totally absorbed.

"Do you think I could get away with being a platinum blonde?" I asked. "You know, like the old-time film stars always used to be, with the black eye brows and the glossy red lips. I could go for me like that."

"It's perhaps a bit over the top," Susan said. "It's a look which would certainly be noticed."

“It would be great,” I continued. “Especially with tits like these to go under it all. You could take me out in the evening, and I could wear one of those old-fashioned strapless numbers, with the tight bodice, and a pencil slim skirt. That would be a wonderful experience. Wouldn't you love it?”

I could tell I was exciting her, so I continued. “Or perhaps I could go for a Thirties look, still platinum of course, but with the tiny penciled eye brows, and pale skin. I'd wear a diaphanous silk dress, floor length, with thin diamante shoulder straps. I wouldn't walk, I'd slink and glide.”

I felt her hand on my thigh again. I was really getting to her, and was about to continue when she pulled into the car park of the “Century Club”, the most exclusive in town. I had stood in the line and tried to get in in the past, but had been turned away. This time, we went immediately to the front, and were welcomed inside. It just shows what a pair of tits can do, I thought, as we walked towards the bar.

We did not get there for, almost at once, two men descended upon us, pulling us toward the dance floor. They tried to speak, but the noise from the band was so loud that I could not hear anything else. I looked to Susan for support, but she just melted away with her new partner, leaving me to fend for myself the best I could. I felt frightened, but I quickly pulled myself together.

“He's just after my latex bits,” I said to myself. “Well, I'll shake them under his nose and see just how much of a fool I can make him.”

I was never a good dancer, until that moment. I just felt like dancing. I was conscious of him looking at me as I gyrated my hips, doing a “bump and grind” as best I could, mixing in many opportunities for him to look down my cleavage. I felt safe in the crowd and just let go completely. I impressed my partner, I could tell, by the way his eyes followed me—certain parts of me anyway—wherever I moved. It was fun leading him on, and so easy. All too soon the music stopped and before my partner could do anything more, Susan was at my side, pushing me away.

“What are you doing?” she hissed, “you'll get yourself into trouble like that.”

“I was just leading him on,” I replied, “once I started, it just seemed so easy to do. Are boys always that obvious?”

“You should know,” she smiled at me, and we both laughed. “I'll get us a drink, then we're going.”

She left me standing by one of the doors. I stepped outside to get some air and almost immediately I found myself face to face with my partner of a few moments earlier.

“Where are you running off to?” he asked. I heard the slurred words as I smelled the drink on his breath. I turned and found myself surrounded by other men, presumably his friends. “You're too pretty to be leaving me,” he said, leering at my chest.

I was afraid. What could I do? I felt his arm on my shoulder, then saw his other hand rising. He touched my neck and started slowly to slide his hand down, and down towards my breast. I tried to push away, but the others closed around me. I was cornered; then, suddenly, anger took over. How *dare* they treat a girl like this? I stemmed a little closer to him, and I could see that he liked that, as my dress touched his shirt.

Then with all the force I could muster, I brought my right knee sharply upward, aiming for his most delicate region. Thank goodness I connected perfectly; he went down hard. If I had missed, well, I dared not think of the consequences. I ran back, hearing the jeering laughter of the other boys at their stricken friend. I ran blindly and collided with Susan, who had seen the end of my encounter with them.

“We'd better go,” she said, seeing me trembling. “I think you've had enough for one day.”

It was dark as we drove back home. I leaned toward Susan, who held my hand almost all of the way. I knew that if there had been any test set today, I had passed it, especially when she gently kissed me after she parked the car in the drive. Our lipsticks seemed to seal us together, as our lips, then tongues, began to explore each other.

Without speaking, we went inside, then up to my room. I felt in that evening what every woman must feel to be undressed slowly and lovingly for the first time. Susan was tender and gentle as my clothes fell to the floor. My hair tumbled all over my shoulders, covering her exploring caresses. She quickly threw off her clothes. Then we were lying together, tongues exploring again every crevice of each other, lingering where gasps of pleasure indicated that an extra sensation was to be obtained.

Susan played with my nipples and massaged my breasts, knowing that they were her creation. She obviously got pleasure there. I knew she understood that there was no feeling in these appendages, but I sensed that, for her, the fact that they were attached to my chest, and that she was concentrating my attention on them as she brought me to a new height of passion, was sufficient for the occasion. She straddled me; then, reaching for my concealing device, she freed me and brought me to the peak of ecstasy.

Exhausted, I slept in her arms. She woke me again in the night and used me shamelessly, to our mutual pleasure. As I lay still afterward, I felt confused and fulfilled in a way I could not explain to myself. Then I slept.

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14. To The Contest.

The next few days raced by. I was so happy, feeling so close to Susan, that everything just fell into place. Nothing was too difficult for me. Mother called several times. I don't know what she thought when she saw me, with nothing of her son visible at all, but she always supported me, reminding me of the contest and the prize which would seal her time as fund raiser-in chief. Neither the multiple piercings in my ears, nor all the gold, which I had continued to wear at Susan's insistence since our night out, excited her comment. She looked at me as if she liked what she saw.

Sally took me to the rehearsal at the contest venue. I was dressed very plainly for this; nothing was to be given away to the other contestants. There was really nothing to rehearse, just to move to certain positions at certain times. It was hardly challeng-

ing. Our dressing room was allocated, and lots were drawn for our running order. I was to go on sixth out of ten finalists. Once this was ascertained, we were free to leave.

The day before the contest was a flurry of activity. I was delivered to Rose at the salon and was to spend virtually the whole day there.

“Are you ready for all this, Michelle?” she asked, as I sat down in her chair. “You're going to win this contest. You look beautiful already. When I've finished, you'll be fabulous.”

My hair was washed carefully. Then she began to brush the unpleasant smelling paste over the roots of my hair, sectioning it carefully as she did so. This completed, she worked a second paste into the remaining hair. This was covered and I was left under a set of warm lights, while the nail technician who had done my nails before came to me. We decided upon a crushed damson shade over the longest nails I had yet worn.

“It's a good thing that I don't have to get myself ready tomorrow,” I said, looking at the finished talons. “These look positively dangerous.”

As soon as the nails were done, my hair was washed again, then more sweetly-scented paste was applied. A cap was put over my head and Rose pulled strands of hair through the cap. Working quickly from the nape of my neck, she pulled about half my hair through, then brushed the contents of another bowl across this hair. All was covered, and I was left again, for the color to develop.

At last my hair was washed for the final time, and finished with the sweetest scented conditioning rinse, before a towel was wrapped around my head, and I went into a private room at the rear of the salon.

“I'm not going to let you watch at all today,” Rose said. “I want you to see the total effect, not the halfway stages. This shouldn't take as long as the last time you were here. The basic work on your brows was done last time and I guess I know your face better now, so I can work faster.”

She talked little as she worked and merely grunted when I tried to make conversation. I soon gave up and just sat back to let her work. She roughly dried my hair, then set to work on my face. I had no idea what she was doing as all I could see was the passing of brushes, sponges, and palettes before my eyes. I relaxed and let it all happen around me. I was not required to do anything more than open and close my mouth or eyes, or look up, then down, on demand. Even the false eyelashes went on in an instant. Then she was working on my hair again, brushing, back combing, smoothing and pinning it up.

At last she was finished and, theatrically, she prepared to turn my chair around. I was ready, but when I saw myself in the mirror, I was totally unprepared to see the woman who appeared there. “She” was beautiful. The hair was elaborately dressed in a loose arrangement on the top of my head, from which tendrils fell and framed my face, twisting artfully down to my shoulder. But it was the color which amazed me.

I wonder if Susan had spoken to her about the platinum blonde image I had used to excite her for whereas I had been pale brown with mink blonde streaks, now I was mink blonde with silver and pale platinum streaks.

“What a color!” I gasped in excitement, then a thought hit me. “No boy would ever be seen with a color like that.”

“Not many girls either,” said Rose. “You have to be really special to be able to get away with a color so blonde and extravagant. That should catch the judge's eyes.”

“You've excelled yourself with the makeup,” I said as I looked from the hair to my face, raising my hand, not to touch, but for the sheer delight of seeing the long nails on ringed fingers, next to the makeup and hair.

“And tomorrow, it will be better,” Rose nodded. “Now let's get going, Sally's outside with the car.”

We got into the car, and drove back home. “That's a knockout,” said Sally. “It's going to be fun to see my brother explain that away next week.”

I don't know if she intended to be cruel or merely to make a joke, but the thought hit me hard. Tears sprang to my eyes at once as I understood what she meant. Rose saw at once.

“Don't cry,” she said, reaching with a tissue to catch any tears before they fell across the makeup. “It's tomorrow that matters, the day after is not important. Think of all it means for your mother and Susan, for all of us.”

“I didn't mean to hurt you,” said Sally, realizing she had spoken too quickly. “I just...” She allowed her words to fall away, without offering anything further. The damage had been done though. The thought was in my mind: what was going to become of me after the contest? What would I do? More importantly, what would happen to my relationship with Susan? I didn't want that to end, at any cost.

We rode in silence until we were home. The gloomy mood persisted through the evening, as I tried on the three costumes which I was required to wear in the contest. All were pronounced successfully choices, but even the enthusiasm of my friends failed to lift my spirits. I sat silently and refrained from joining the conversation unless addressed directly. I announced that I was tired and wanted to go to bed. Susan helped me undress and stayed with me until I fell into a restless sleep. I tried to speak normally to her, but I failed. I just hoped she would put my silence down to “contest nerves”.

The day of the contest dawned bright and clear. I went through my morning routine as I had become accustomed. I used the depilatory extra carefully, then found myself waiting with mounting excitement as my breast prosthetic was glued in place. It felt strange to be sitting there flat-chested as I waited. Then I felt calm, relief flooding through me as the surgical glue took hold, fastening the now familiar orbs to me once again.

I stood to look in the mirror and felt good as I saw my reflection. The breasts looked totally my own, matching in color the deep dark suntanned appearance of my skin.

“These are the most perfect creation,” said Susan. “I don't think I've ever gotten the balance so perfect before.” We stood together for a moment, looking. She was dressed as usual in jeans and shirt. I was totally naked, except for my usual concealment.

Then the moment was gone as Rose took me for the makeup and hair session which would seal our fate in the contest. She worked carefully and slowly. Conversation was sacrificed to concentration as the time for our departure neared. Then I was ready and dressed in peach silk underwear, with an underwired bra to make the most of my figure. A wrapover dress of soft pink was put on me and I was ready to leave for the contest, not one minute before time.

Sally drove there, with me silent and nervous in the passenger seat. We said nothing, the slip of the previous evening hanging heavy between us. I left the car in silence and we walked together, through the backstage bustle, to our dressing room.

“Here you are at last!” said Rose, in more of a fluster than I had ever seen her. “Sit here and let me get you ready.”

I sat and watched as her busy fingers recreated the hair style of the previous evening. Then, working so quickly that I could hardly believe my eyes, my makeup was applied as perfectly as ever it had been in the time she had been working on me.

“Here's the dresses,” said Susan, bustling in the door. “The traffic is tremendous, I thought I was going to be late.” She saw I was ready to dress. “Get into this quickly, they'll be calling you soon.”

I stepped into my first dress, the formal one. It was a shimmering white creation, sleeveless, with a low-cut back and decorative figuring on the bodice and hem. All I had to do in this dress was parade, first solo, then with the other entrants, across the stage for the judges to see the overall effect. I knew I could do that, I could walk in heels as well as any other girl. I heard the voice inside my head telling me that. I laughed at the paradox, but I knew I could do it. I stepped into the pale kid stiletto heels, four inches high, which just peeped out from the hem.

Susan and Rose walked to the side of the stage with me. Then with a whispered “Good Luck,” I was on my way. The lights were upon me, the applause of the audience almost drowned out the voice of the MC. I walked, then turned to stand at the rear as the remaining contestants joined me. Then we were off again, parading round. Then off the stage and back to our room we went. I had no time to look at the other girls.

My first costume change was into a less formal dress. This time it was a short black dress, very plain, and low in the neckline, but not too much to pass the bounds of taste. The shoes were black stilettos, again with the four-inch heel. I was propelled back on stage with just sufficient time to retouch the lipstick. There was no time to talk or get nervous. I paraded again, then it was off for the final change.

This was the one I was secretly dreading; it was the bathing costume round. It was the one which Rose most objected to, and the one where I would have to answer a couple of questions from the MC. I was nervous about this, but as the questions were totally random, Susan had decided to leave it to spontaneity rather than rehearsal. I just had to survive.

My swim suit was a one-piece, conventionally shaped at the top, with very high-cut legs. This was worn with stilettos of the purest white to show off my wonderful deep tan. I looked at myself in the mirror as Rose loosened my hair so that it fell all over my shoulders and down my back in the loosest of tumbling curls and waves. The blonde

tones made the tan seem even deeper. My lips were glossed and the tiniest touchup was made to my eyeliner. Then I was off and on stage almost at once.

I walked in a daze up to the MC, trying to ignore the microphone in his hand and the audience beyond. I felt his hand on my bare shoulder, warm and clammy as he guided me onto the marks in center stage. I tried to ignore the cameras so close to me. I knew I had no flaws. He introduced me to the audience.

“Well, Michelle, you're the only contestant from out of state. What brought you here?”

“Well, I'm staying with my aunt, Mrs. White who has the theater and dance school in town, for the summer. I like it here and I thought the contest would be fun. They're so politically correct at home, they don't have them.”

“That's sad,” he said to the audience who all sighed at his prompting. “It's refreshing that a beautiful young girl likes the traditional things in our country,” The audience clapped. If only they knew.

“What would you do if you won all this money?” he asked.

That was easy. “I'd donate it to the community appeal,” I said with a straight face. “I've had so much fun here and every one's been so nice to me, that I want to give something back.” They all clapped again, louder this time.

“Well, I'm sure we all wish you well and hope you enjoy the rest of your stay here.” With that, my interview was over and I went back off-stage. Rose and Susan escorted me back to our room quickly.

I heard the group who had been booked to entertain mid way in the contest start their routine, then it was time to go back on stage, with all the girls, for the judging. It was strangely nerve-wracking to stand there in the lights. I could feel the others eyeing me up and down, but I was careful to keep smiling and not meet their eyes.

The third prize was announced. It wasn't me. I stood numbly at the back as a girl accepted her prize and was kissed by some greasy local dignitary. Wait, I recognized the face. It was the chairman of the local Chamber of Commerce. Mother knew him, and he knew me. I felt a wave of panic.

Then came second prize. Again, not me. I stood even more in awe of the proceedings, not moving, not thinking, but smiling all the time.

Then, first prize. What was the name? I stood, lights played about me. The MC was reaching his arm towards me, the other girls were looking at me. I had won. I stood, unable to move. The third and second prize winners came to either side of me and helped—no, almost dragged—me down to the front of the stage where I was handed a big bunch of flowers. I waved them at the audience in thanks.

The microphone was pushed under my face, but I could not think. I raised my hands to my face and to my surprise felt a tear fall. I managed a “Thank you, I'm so thrilled,” then the microphone was mercifully removed and I received an envelope from the chairman and a slobbery kiss on the cheek. His breath smelled of cigarettes and, as he turned, I smelled his sweat. I felt close to collapse and panic. Then Susan and Rose were at my side, supporting me, waving to the crowd.

“Come on, Michelle. The photographs,” hissed Rose. “Look happy, it's your big moment,” she continued to cajole me.

I gathered my shattered nerves, took a deep breath and felt my composure return. I had done it, I had fooled them all. I waved in triumph and smiled. I walked around the front of the stage, blowing kisses in an exaggerated way to the audience. I reveled in the moment. Whatever happened next, for tonight, I was the winner. The evening passed in a blur. Rose and Susan at my side answered all the questions that were fired at me from all sides. Then suddenly we were alone, back in the dressing room. It was over.

I do not remember leaving the dressing room or getting into the car with Susan. Neither do I remember how the wraparound dress came to be over my swim suit. I remember riding in silence, feeling quite sad and unable to speak. Susan must have felt it too, for she smiled at me and gently touched my knee.

At home, she parked in the drive and got out without speaking. She walked around the car, opened my door, and offered me her hand. I took it and got out.

“We won,” she said quietly. “We won.” She put her arm around me as we walked towards the house.

“But what now?” I asked. I could feel tears rising and fought back the urge to let go and cry.

“We'll see,” said Susan, as we walked inside.

“I'm afraid. We've been so happy, I think I...”

“Hush,” she said. “Let's just drift tonight. We'll go upstairs, and I'll help you unwind.”

“That's what I want,” I said, almost swooning with relief. She was still with me.

“I've enjoyed having such a pretty girl friend,” said Susan, as she helped me undress. “You've been everything I hoped.”

“I wanted to be,” I said.

“And you won, *we* won, we fooled them all,” She was laughing now, and kissed me hard.

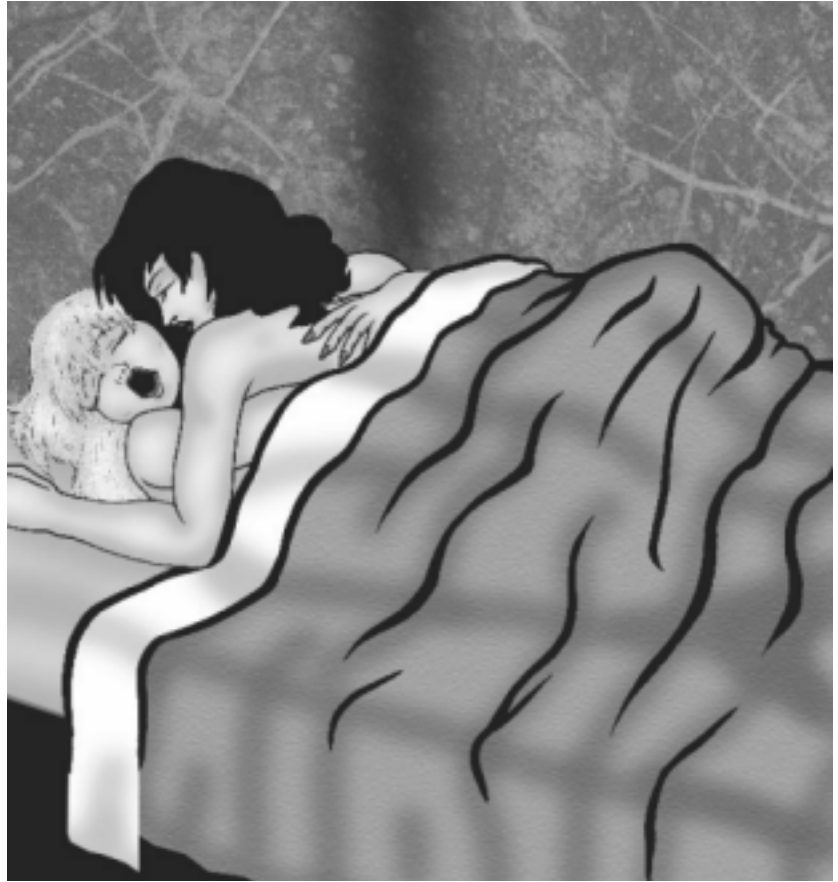
I had no time to speak. She kissed me again, and we fell onto my bed. I lay back, stroking the back of her head as she enjoyed my body, or rather the body she had created upon mine. She guided my hands, then my mouth as I tried to attain the abandon which she seemed to be feeding. It was not easy for me; I was becoming more afraid of the future, but I was even more afraid of allowing the moment to fade.

Eventually, she turned me over onto my back and straddled me, her legs astride my waist. She played with my latex breasts gently, I could feel some sensation where they were adhered to my chest. I tried to imagine feeling more as her other hand reached behind her and groped for the only garment which still covered me. Slowly, her hand eased between the material and my flesh, releasing me, rubbing and squeezing me, until I abandoned any other thoughts and feelings until I was spent. Then we lay together and I slept.

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15. Aftermath.

Next morning I woke alone. No one came to my door as I lay there, silently going over the events of the past few weeks, trying to conceive of what was to come. I got up slowly and tied my hair back, then creamed off all the remains of the previous night's makeup. I got into the shower and lingered there, letting the harsh jets of the water hit me, hoping they would brush away the tension I was still feeling. I dried myself and pulled on a robe. I went downstairs, hoping to hear a voice, but none came until I wandered into the kitchen.



“Oh, you're awake,” Susan said, smiling at me. “My mother and your mother have gone to see the contest organizers with the evidence.” she said. “We have to wait here until we hear.”

“Hear what?” I asked.

“What they decide. They may want to see you in the flesh, to see the evidence,” Susan said. “Come on, I'll help you with the solvent.”

We went upstairs and I waited for the solvent to release my breasts. For the first time, there were no prosthetic breasts waiting for me.

“It feels really strange,” I said, flexing my arms without the weight I had become accustomed to.

“It looks strange, too,” said Susan. “Did you ever think what it would be like to have real breasts? I could have worked on them, and you could have felt it all. Nipples respond, you know, they have a life of their own.” She touched my tiny nipples and let her fingers play, squeezing gently.

“I can feel what you mean,” I said, dreamily, closing my eyes.

“But there's a limit to how long you can use the glue. The skin has to rest for a while now,” Susan said. “You'll have to get used to being flat-chested.” The way she said it made me think she was not excited by the prospect.

The telephone rang in the distance. Susan went to answer it, as I walked back into my room. What to wear? I had only dresses and skirts. Susan had not allowed me

trousers of any kind. I looked in the mirror and saw the blonde looking back. I saw the way the sun tan contrasted with the pale waves, the way the eye brows arched so high above the eyes. I sat and looked in the mirror, then got up slowly. I pulled on a denim blouse and skirt, then pushed my feet into white loafers.

I bent down so that my hair fell forwards and brushed it downwards, then flicked it back as I stood up. It looked good, I thought, *for a girl*. I went to the mirror and made up my eyes lightly, and used a pale peach lipstick and gloss. I watched my feminine hands, still wearing all the jewelry, as they moved, and I stood back as I finished. I felt better, but still apprehensive. Susan had not returned, so I walked down stairs.

“Our mothers are coming back now,” she said when she saw me. “We have to wait here.” There was none of our previous intimacy as she smiled at me. I was about to say something about this, when the sound of a car in the drive interrupted my thoughts. The door opened and our mothers came in.

I saw my mother look at me, still dressed like a girl, made up, still wearing a lot of jewelry. The way she looked told me that she had guessed that I did not want to take it off. Mrs. White looked at me, then at Susan, reading something else into the situation, I guessed. I did not know what was happening.

“They want to buy us off,” said Mrs. White. “We’ve won, but they don’t want the publicity.”

“They’ve offered to pay double your winnings, if we just keep quiet,” Mother said to me. “I told them that the winner usually got a lucrative modeling contract for the summer, and they offered to pay more to cover that as well.”

“If we accept, they’ll more than double what we expected, and the bet I made will be paid out as well,” said Mrs. White. “In fact, the company which owns the contest also owns the gambling concession. They’ll pay four fold for no publicity.”

“What about my college application? Can I still use the contest as evidence of my ability?” asked Susan.

“Yes and they’ll add a reference. Since they sponsor a lot of college projects, the admissions offices will take notice,” said Mrs. White.

“What about Rose?” Susan asked.

“We didn’t forget her,” said Mother. “She’ll be looked after too; in fact she’ll be offered a college place with you if she wants to go. I telephoned her and she thinks it’s better than just destroying the competition. She says she could do this every year and earn more than she does in the salon.”

“She agreed?” I asked, slightly shocked.

“Yes, she says she’d love to study at college, especially if she can go to the same one as Susan. She wants to talk to her about starting a business to help pay your way,” Mrs. White said.

“What does Sally say?” Susan asked.

“She’s happy we’ve won,” said Mother. “She has her college place already, and just wants to work through the summer as planned.”

“Well I guess that's taken care of everyone,” said Susan, smiling. Everyone but me, I thought, but I remained silent.

“You'll be able to come home now, Mike,” Mother said, “and resume normality.”

“Yes, Mother,” I replied. I was not at all excited by the thought of “normality”.

“Rose is waiting for you. She'll tone your hair down and make it like it was before. You'll have your job with Mrs. White through the summer as promised,” said Mother. “Do you have anything to collect from upstairs? I've a bag of your clothes in the car, and you can change in the salon.”

“I've nothing to collect,” I said, realizing the enormity of what I was leaving.

“You've a lot to leave here,” Mother said. When I looked confused, she added, “The jewelry. It's not suitable for a boy.”

I looked 'round for Susan as I took it off. She was nowhere to be seen. The earrings were the worst. I had worn them constantly since Rose put them in. I had never counted before, but there were six sets of hoops there. I felt sadder as I removed each one, and totally naked after I had taken off the bracelets, the rings and the necklaces. They sat, forlorn and unwanted, in a small heap on the table.

“Come on, Mike, I'm sure Mrs. White wants to get on,” Mother commanded.

“Thank you, Mrs. White,” I said. “I'll be in for work on Monday, if that's all right.”

“That's fine, Mike,” she said. “I guess I'll have to get used to calling you that. It's been so nice having you living here, you've been like a sister to Susan. I shall miss you.” She looked 'round and noticed for the first time that Susan had left. “I'm sure Susan will miss you as well.”

The journey to the salon was silent. Mother dropped me outside and I walked in with a bundle of clothes under my arm. Rose met me just inside the door.

“Isn't it exciting?” she gushed. “I'm going to go to college too. I thought I was stuck as a hairdresser for ever.”

“Yes, it's great, I'm so happy for you,” I said, trying to sound really pleased, although I was so sad to be losing such a friend.

“We'll still see each other, won't we?” she said as I emerged from the changing room dressed in my own jeans and a shirt. “It will be hard to get used to calling you Mike.”

“I guess it will be hard to *be* Mike again,” I said. She thought I was joking and laughed.

As Rose worked on my hair, I felt sadder and sadder. When I looked at the pale brown result, which approximated my natural color, I felt pretty sad; by the time I was home, I just wanted to go to my own room and cry. I stayed there for a couple of days. Sally didn't come near, and Mother just assumed it was exhaustion. I tried to telephone Susan, but there was no reply. The weekend passed very slowly and I was glad when Monday came. At least I would see Susan at the theater when I went to work.

“Good morning, Mrs. White,” I said, reporting for work.

“Hello, Mike,” she replied cheerily. “Did you hear Susan's news?”

“No,” I replied, with a sinking feeling in my stomach.

“She's gone to work the summer for Excell Productions on the coast. They're part of the same group as the contest organizers. When they heard how good she was, they invited her out there. They want her to do her college placements with them. Isn't that wonderful?”

“Yes, wonderful!” I replied. I knew now why I couldn't reach her. “Will she be home at all?”

“She's coming back in three weeks, I think. Perhaps she'll call you then.”

“Yes.” I guessed that I was being warned off, dismissed, now that Susan was doing something more exciting.

The week passed slowly, the second and third even more slowly. Then Susan was home. I called as soon as I heard she was back. She was so excited to be at work, that I could hardly get her to talk about anything else. She seemed not to want to see me, and terminated the call quickly. I rang again the next day, and got even less. I was in despair, what could I do to see her?

“Mrs. White has asked us all to a barbecue tomorrow, Mike,” said Mother the following day. “It's for Susan, before she goes back, Rose will be there as well.”

My heart jumped for joy. I could hardly wait. The big day came, and I was up and dressed early. I don't know what I looked like to everyone. My hair was reasonably normal. My eye brows were more or less normal, as the semi-permanent makeup had faded, and the hairs were growing back to cover the finely-shaped line. The only thing which remained was the line of six holed in each ear lobe, but my hair covered those. I was reasonable secure about appearing in public. I hadn't taken stock like this before; I hadn't wanted to go out at all.

The barbecue was attended by other friends of Mrs. White. I hardly knew anyone, and kept out of the way, until Susan arrived. I went to her when she disappeared inside.

“I wanted to see you,” I said.

“It's nice to see you too, Mike,” she replied.

“Since you left, I've not known what to do,” I said lamely. ‘I thought we were friends, I thought you were my girl.’”

“You'll find something else, Mike,” she said, looking at me with gentle pity. “I was never your girl. Michelle was my girl friend. I told you what I wanted then, and it hasn't changed. I want a boy who wants me enough to be my girl, not just a boyfriend who wants to impress me. There's enough of those around.” With that, I was dismissed. She walked away.

I was devastated. Rose must have seen what happened, but she could not have heard the conversation. She came to me and gently put her hand on mine. I almost cried. She put her arms around me and steered me away from everyone else. I could not help myself. I told her all that had passed between Susan and me.

“That's awful, Mike,” Rose said. “But perhaps Susan wasn't just giving you the brush off completely.” I looked at her. I was totally confused as to what she meant. “Have you thought that it was Mike she didn't want, but she really liked Michelle?”

She paused to let her words sink in. “Do you mean that as Michelle, I might have a chance with her?” I asked.

“Perhaps, Mike,” Rose replied. “You know you're both my dearest friends. I'd do anything to help, but only you know what she said to you.”

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16. Susan Gets her Girl.

We spoke no more that day, or the next, but her words remained in my mind, as did Susan's last words to me. Did I want her enough to be her girl? After a couple of days, I was certain of the answer, but how could I show her? I knew Mother would not really like it if I discussed it with her. Telling Sally was out of the question, so I went to the only other person I could talk to.

“I want to be Michelle again,” I said to Rose.

“Have you thought that through, Mike?” she asked.

“As much as I can,” I replied. “I only know I want to try to be with Susan, no matter what.”

“You know I'll help you all I can,” she replied. “I'm going to see her next weekend. We're getting an apartment together for college. Excell Productions is paying on condition that she works for them in the vacations. She's already making more money than you could imagine. I know she's only going to college so that she can do her own thing away from their influence. She says it's so that she can take care of me. You know we were going to work together, to get through college.”

“Can I come with you next weekend?” I asked.

“You know that's hopeless, Mike.”

“No, Rose, I mean...” I hesitated for a moment, getting used to what I wanted to say. “I mean can you help me to..?” I still couldn't get it out. “Rose, will you take Michelle to see Susan, as a surprise? I've got to know if I can do it.”

“Yes, if that's what you want,” Rose replied. “I'll get your ticket. You'll have to give some time to getting ready. Have you thought that out?”

“You tell me when to be here and I'll be here. I can't do it without you.” I threw myself at her mercy.

“Right. We fly out on Friday morning. You come to my apartment before I go to work on Thursday and we'll leave Mike there. I still have some of Michelle's clothes at home. If you're not there, I'll assume you've changed your mind, or you can't come. Don't be late.”

With that, we parted. I wondered if Rose really expected me to be there, but I was determined. I said nothing to Sally or Mother until the day before, then I announced

that I was going to see Susan and have a studio tour. Rose was going too, I announced. I guessed Sally suspected something and I was careful to avoid both her and Mother in case I was questioned. They both knew Susan had given me the brush off, and that I was really upset by it.

On Thursday morning, I was out of the house early, and was knocking on Rose's door before she was up.

"Right," she said, handing me a black trash bag. "Put Mike in here. Michelle's things are in the shower room."

I said nothing, but went into the shower room. I stripped and threw all Mike's things into the bag. Then I turned to Michelle's clothes. Almost at once, I felt a calmness flowing through me. I knew what I wanted. I decided to shower first, symbolically washing away all that was left of Mike. Then, with my hair wrapped roughly in a towel, I pulled on the tight elastic to conceal my true shape. At once I felt more comfortable.

"Are you not ready yet?" Rose shouted through the door.

"Soon," I replied, pulling on panties of ivory silk. I fastened a matching bra around my chest, but I had nothing to fill the cups. It still felt better. The dress was a simple denim shift, short but darted so that it would have been tight across the chest, had I been able to fill the bra. There were no stockings, just pale blue tennis shoes with white laces. I pulled them on and opened the door.

"At last," said Rose. "We'll have to leave at once."

"But I've no makeup on yet," I protested.

"Never mind, just get that towel off your head and come on. No one will see you. Besides, I'd only have to remove it all," said Rose, pushing me out of the door and into her new car.

"If we're doing this, there's to be no protests, no criticism," said Rose. "If you start to object to anything at all, you're on your own. Is that a deal?"

"Yes, it's a deal," I answered.

In the salon, Rose turned to me and took my hands in hers. She looked directly into my eyes and let her gaze rest for a few moments.

"Are you absolutely sure you want to go through with this, Michelle?" she asked. "Susan may not want to see you, and then you'll have suffered all this for nothing."

"I know," I said, "but I've got to give it my best shot, whatever happens."

"Okay, you asked for it." Rose looked once more into my eyes, then smiled. "Let's go."

My hair was still damp, but she washed it again, then began the process of coloring it once more.

"This is a new shade," she said. "I'm going to streak it with the pale mink shade we used last time."

I sat patiently as the hair was covered in the paste and then drawn through the plastic cap for the contrast to be applied. I sat quietly, wondering what I would do if Susan rejected me, and dared not to think it through.

“Let's do everything to the limit, Rose,” I said when she came back to rinse off the color. “Show her I dare everything.”

“As long as you're sure,” she replied.

I was sure, and I said nothing in complaint as she began to wind my hair onto lots of tiny rollers. Each one wound carefully from the bottom of my hair to the scalp where it was fixed. It seemed to me that the process was going on for ever. By the end there must have been sixty or more tight wraps in my hair. Each one was treated to a coating of liquid from a dark tube. Then I was left to sit by myself for what seemed to be a long time.

“Right.” Rose returned. “Let's get all this rinsed, then we'll really start to do different things. Are you still sure you want me to carry on?”

“Of course I'm sure,” I replied.

“Seriously, I want you to think about it,” Rose said. “The hair—well if you hate it, you can always cut it off, but some things won't be that easy to change back. That's why I want you to be sure.”

“Rose, just do the most feminine things you can. I know that I can't have breasts when we go to see Susan, but I want everything I can have, and I mean *everything*.”

“No matter what the consequences?” Rose asked.

“No matter. It's all or nothing,” I assured her.

“Right, no more questions,” Rose relaxed. “Just sit back and let me work. The nail technician will be here as soon as she's free. I told her who you are, and what you want. I'll do everything else myself.”

Deliberately and slowly, she turned my chair away from the mirror. The first thing she did was to set to work on my newly regrown eye brows. I reclined and said nothing. I knew all the hairs were being plucked out this time and I didn't care. I sat still as she worked with the electric device, drawing and fixing the semi-permanent color which would be my eye brow. I was surprised when she changed the device for a finer one and started to touch it gently to my right eye lid. I felt her working gently along the lash line, touching it every few seconds with something wet and cold. She repeated the process on the left eye, then stood back.

“Now keep really still while I work on your eye lashes,” she said.

I kept really still. I felt her painting something onto the lashes, top and bottom, then she left me alone, with a caution not to move. I remained motionless for what seemed ages until she returned. With my eyes closed, she sprayed warm water over the lashes and wiped them gently until she was satisfied they were cleaned. Then working alternately, left, then right, she began with fine tweezers to attach more lashes to my own, working from center to edge, first on the top, then the bottom. I knew what she was doing, but I still was not allowed to look. No sooner had she finished on my eyes, when I felt her prodding my lips.

“This will hurt,” Rose said. “I’m going to inject some collagen into your lips to make them big and pouting. I’m qualified to do this, but you’re going to suffer because I’m not qualified to do anesthetics. Now keep still.”

I kept still. It hurt. It hurt terribly, but I dare not move. Afterwards, the relief was almost a total pain killer. It was wonderful when she finished. I knew this was more than we had done before, one more mark of femininity, and that, too, encouraged me.

Rose took a break when the nail technician arrived. “I know who you are,” she said. “You’re the boy who won Miss Personality.”

“How did you hear that?” I asked.

“My sister works over there. She was sworn to secrecy, but when the rumors spread about the contest and I saw the pictures, I recognized the nail job. I’d only seen one like that, so I figured who was wearing them. Clever.” She smiled at me. “What’s the project this time.”

“It’s to impress the special effects people at the movie studios” I said. In a way it was true.

“Right, I’ll give you something that will impress them,” she smiled. “Of course, you might not be able to do much to impress them...”

“Not too long, I have to fly out to the coast,” I said.

“Right, just middle impress, not total impress. I get the picture. The new color is ‘Midnight Damson’ a real deep dark red, with darker strands. How does that sound?”

“Let’s do it!” I said, and relaxed to watch her.

As she was clearing up, she looked deeply into my eyes. At least that’s what I thought she was doing until she spoke. “Hey, great eyes. I wish I had the courage to go for the semi-permanent eye liner and the extra lashes. They look great on you, you must be certain of the job at the other end to risk that.”

I saw Rose listening to this. “What did she mean, Rose?” I asked when she had gone.

“She means you’ve got state of the art semi-permanent makeup on your eyes. There’s no being a boy for at least a couple of months until it fades. I gave you the opportunity to back out, remember.”

“But you didn’t spell it out,” I said, suddenly frightened.

“Look, if Susan’s going to look at you, it’s Michelle or nothing. What greater commitment to Michelle could you show her?” Rose said.

“I understand, it’s just sometimes...well, I get afraid it could be wasted,” I said.

“Let’s worry about that later. There’s a lot to do before I’m finished and you’re not looking until everything’s done. Now, let me rinse off your hair, and get it conditioned so it shines.”

With that, I sat patiently as my hair was unwound from the curling rods, then rinsed and conditioned. I felt the new tension in the hair as it assumed the shape of the rods. I knew that whereas the curl I had before was temporary, this was perma-

ment. I still could not see the color. I was speculating to myself about this when I felt Rose pulling at my ear.

“Keep still, I've kept all the earrings you wore. I didn't tell you, but Susan left all the jewelry you used to wear, in my car. It's here,” Rose held out a small plastic bag, and I could see the gold glittering.

I could not wait to wear it all again. It was a mark of Michelle; everything stopped as I adorned myself as quickly as I could. When I was finished, Rose began to blow my hair dry, working carefully, making sure it dried evenly and gently. I caught glimpses of the color as it dried. I was blonde again, very blonde with pink and silver shades paler than before, whiter shades showing through. I saw the texture as well. It was all in loose corkscrews, tumbling loosely, so loosely that, although it seemed thicker than ever, there was little loss of length.

With the hair dry, there was only the makeup to complete. Rose tilted the chair back and raised it so that I was in an easy position for her to continue. She spoke little as she worked. Then, theatrically, she lowered the chair and prepared to spin it round. I thought I was ready, yet when the chair turned, I was hardly prepared for the face which looked back in the mirror. The eyes were more than generously surrounded by long lashes, all the darkest of black, none of my own pale lashes showing at all. The eye liner was apparent under gentle shading of autumn colors. The brows were very fine, high arches and ever so thin. There were no hairs visible, just the line.

Michelle was on her way.

17. The Meeting.

As I looked in the mirror the next morning, I knew there was no going back. I had chosen my path. If Susan rejected me, I could not begin to look like a boy for at least a couple of months. I could shave off the hair, but the eyelashes, the eyeliner, and the eye brows were marks of femininity which would remain with me, and which I could not hide.

Rose had gotten me a long, blue print dress with a high neck line and short sleeves. I wore a denim jacket over it and shoes with thick heels. I padded my bra with tissues, so that it stood quite proud, but then removed them. I would be flat-chested when I met Susan. If she wanted me, she would take care of that deficiency.

It was with tingling nerves that I sat in the car taking us from the airport to the apartment that the company had provided for Susan. I remained in the car while Rose went to the door. The wait was agonizing, endless. I reapplied my lipstick twice, although it could only have been a couple of minutes. Then Susan was there. She opened the door and took my hand, leading me out and toward her door.

“I'll see you two later,” said Rose, “I've got some shopping to do.”

Wordlessly, Susan led me through the apartment, and into the bedroom. She kissed me, and the familiar feeling of lipstick on lipstick thrilled me all over again.

“I knew you'd come to me, Michelle,” she whispered. “I knew you couldn't stay away. You're my girl, you see. I knew you were from the moment I saw you.”

“I have no breasts,” I said stupidly.

“I’ll buy some for you tomorrow. This is the coast. I’ve got money, and anything is possible here.”

She was true to her word, and I made no protest at all as I was admitted for surgery the next day. This time the breasts were my own, with nipples on top. The recovery time was agony, not simple pain. As soon as I was home, Susan gently initiated me into the joys she had hinted at before.

Of course, Mother was not pleased when she found out where I was, but I was Susan's girl now. There was no going back.

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