



Reluctant Press presents:

Mitchell's Switch

Briana Vermont



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID McKINLEY

A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

Copyright © 2007, Reluctant Press - All Rights Reserved

Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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

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

Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet!

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

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

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

Mitchell's Switch

By Briana Vermont

Illustrations by David McKinley

Chapter 1: Grounded!

"You have *got* to be kidding me!" Michelle whined. "This is a joke, right?"

"I'm sorry, Michelle," replied her mother. "But this is not a joke to us. We have rules in this house, and your father and I expect them to be obeyed." Michelle's father stood at her mother's side, looking stern.

"But your rules are ridiculous," Michelle continued. "I was in by 10:30 Thursday night. That's only half an hour late. And it's not like I was out drinking, or stealing cars! I was at Nadia's, finishing up our history assignment! Would you rather I had nothing to hand in on Friday, and I failed history?"

"We would rather you didn't leave your homework until the night before it's due!" said her father, joining in the conversation. "And we would rather you showed a little respect for your parents, by following the few simple rules we have. Rule number one is 'home by 10:00 on a school night'! We've warned you enough times; this time you're going to learn we mean what we say. For the rest of the weekend, you're grounded!"

Michelle's father was not good at confrontation, especially with his daughter. He usually gave in long before things got to this point. But this time, he really wanted to make his point. Rather than listen to any more of her arguments, and take the risk that he might give in once again, he turned and stormed out of the kitchen to his workroom in the garage.

"Every rule is rule number one around here," Michelle mumbled to herself, then turned back to her mother. "Mom, you've got to make him see reason," she tried. "I'm eighteen years old! None of my friends has a curfew!"

Michelle's mother led her to the kitchen table, and sat down with her. "Michelle, you've got to realize, not everything that happens is about you. When you're out late, your father has to wait up for you. You're not the only one who has to get up in the morning, you know. He has to get up for work by 6:00, an hour before you get up for school. When you're late, it's very hard on him."

"He doesn't have to wait up for me," Michelle muttered.

"The fact that you can say that shows how little you know about your father," replied her mother. "He couldn't possibly *not* wait up for you."

"What about Mitchell?" asked Michelle. This was one of the oldest tricks in the Sisters' Playbook: As a last resort, you can always get your brother in trouble. "He stayed out till 11:00 a bunch of times last week. And he's almost a year younger than me. Why isn't he grounded?"

"He told us in advance that he would be late. He needed extra time to work on a project with Steve. We knew where he was, what he was doing, and when he would get home. And whenever he is going to be late, he always calls to let us know what's happening. And, unfortunately for you, your father has no trouble sleeping when Mitchell is out of the house."

"That is so totally unfair," sulked Michelle.

"No one said life was fair," her mother pulled from the Mothers' Playbook (the chapter titled, 'Infuriating Platitudes'). "You could learn a lot from Mitchell. Why don't you try to be a little more like your brother?"

This was a phrase that should have been struck from the Playbook long ago. Why mothers think it will help, to be told that your brother is better than you, is a mystery that may never be solved. At any rate, Michelle reacted as teens down the ages have all reacted; she got angry all over again.

"More like Mitchell? How could I possibly be any more like Mitchell? He's supposed to be my little brother, but he's in most of my classes so I can't even get away from him! And you gave us practically the same name! What were you thinking?"

Michelle's grandfather was 'Mitchell Alexander Everett', and he had always wanted a grandson named after him. When Michelle was born, she had six older cousins, all girls. It looked like the poor man might never have a grandson, and so when another granddaughter was born she was named 'Michelle Alexandra Everett'. Then, as the universe never passes up a chance for a good joke, Michelle's mother's misplaced confidence in the Latex industry resulted in a son less than a year later. He was named 'Mitchell Alexander Everett'.

Both Michelle and her brother took after their mother. They both had her soft features, striking eyes, and thick, wavy brunette hair. When they were young, people often mistook them for twins, they were so close in age and appearance. Their mother thought this was adorable, of course, and encouraged their similarity. She dressed them in clothes that suited both boys and girls, and allowed Mitchell to grow his beautiful hair.

Now that they were older, Michelle had asserted her independence by choosing to wear dresses and skirts, and never leaving the house without makeup. No one ever mis-

took her for Mitchell any more. Mitchell, on the other hand, generally dressed in T-shirts and jeans, like any other male teenager. He still had his long hair, but it tended to be more unkempt than Michelle's. However, despite the differences people still remarked on their similarity. This drove Michelle crazy.

"I should be more like Mitchell," said Michelle with disdain. "You should be telling him to be less like me! At least tell him to get a haircut, so people stop mistaking him for me!"

"Oh, his beautiful hair," said her mother wistfully. "You're right, it's probably time to do something about it. Your father certainly has been after me to get it cut for a long time, and Mitchell really doesn't take proper care of it. I just don't think I'm ready."

"Hello, Mom?" said Michelle. "We're talking about me, remember? You can't possibly ground me tonight. I've got plans; I've been looking forward to tonight for weeks! You don't know what this means to me. Please, just talk to Daddy!"

"I don't see any reason to let you go out tonight," her mother replied seriously. "You've got to learn, you're not the only person in this house. Until you learn to be considerate of others, and to understand your actions from other people's points of view, we're going to need rules, and consequences to the rules. I'm sorry, but you're grounded for the weekend, little girl."

"I made promises to people! I can't back out now!" Michelle tried.

"Then you'll just have to break those promises, just like you broke your promise to your father and me," her mother replied. "But I suggest you call your friends and let them know your plans have changed; that would be the considerate thing to do."

"So what am I supposed to do here all night?" Michelle asked.

"Mitchell is staying home too. It would be fun to have a family night, like we used to. We can get out a game to play."

"Thanks, but I think I'd rather sit in my room," said Michelle as she stood to leave.

"Suit yourself," said her mother to the empty room.

"So, whatcha got planned for tonight?" asked Steve.

"Planned?" replied Mitchell. He pulled the phone so the cord would stretch to his bed, then lay back as he spoke. "Nothing planned. Probably play some video games." Mitchell didn't bother to ask what Steve would be doing. Steve had to spend every other Saturday night with his Dad. Mitchell couldn't imagine spending that much time with his Dad, but Steve didn't seem to complain much.

"You're not going to play Weird Wars, are you?" asked Steve.

"Probably," said Mitchell.

"No, don't do it. You're already two levels ahead of me. And I don't want to skip any quests to keep up. Wait till we can both be online tomorrow night, okay?"

"Yeah, sure, I guess I can do that. I don't know what else to do, though. Everything else is so lame. I just started a new quest, I'm supposed to rid a forest of these werewolf things, then Master Quan will tell me where I can find..."

"Hey, don't tell me!" Steve yelled into the phone. "I told you, I want to catch up, then we can figure it out together."

"Okay, okay. I guess I'll just pull out my old Game Station, try some of those old games."

"You know who you could play with?" said Steve, an obnoxious tone entering his voice.

"No!" cried out Mitchell. "Don't even say it, Steve!"

"She is so fine, you should play with that..."

"Steve, don't go there! You know that's so sick..."

"Totally hot babe you live with!"

"Dude, that's so gross! That's my sister you're talking about."

"I can't help myself," said Steve. "Every time I think of her, I lose my mind."

"Well, be careful. You don't have much to start with."

"If she lived in my house, I'd be all over her, sister or not. Oh yes, she's so fine, I would be all over her like cream on smooth, smooth pudding..."

"You are completely warped, dude. And you haven't taken into account the fact that she totally can't stand the sight of you."

"That's not true. She's playing hard to get, that's all. It's all a game, a game of love and conquest."

"Oh look, here she is right now," said Mitchell. "Michelle, Steve's on the line. He says he's madly in love with you, and wants to know how you feel about him."

Mitchell passed the phone back and forth between his hands, then placed the receiver back on his shoulder. In his best impersonation of Michelle he said, "Steve, you creepy little pervert, leave me alone or I'll get a restraining order."

"Ha!" laughed Steve. "Pretty good, Mitchell, but I know that wasn't her. She would never call me that."

"Who are you trying to kid?" asked Mitchell. "She called you a creepy little pervert right to your face just last week."

"All part of the game, pal. When she said that she meant, 'Soon I will be your willing love slave!'"

"You're deluded, man. But persistent, I'll give you that."

"Hey, I gotta go, man," said Steve. "My Dad just got here. So I'll talk to you tomorrow?"

"Sure, talk to you tomorrow," said Mitchell. He stood and placed the receiver back on his desk, then turned to leave his room. The way was blocked by Michelle.

"Hey, Mitchell," she greeted him.

"Oh, yeah, hey Michelle," he replied. "Look, uh, you didn't happen to, uh..."

"Overhear everything you just said?" she finished his sentence for him.

"Oh, I guess, yeah, about that," he began to explain. "Sorry Michelle. I know, it looks bad, but really, I wasn't making fun of you. It's just Steve, you know what he's like."

"Oh yes," said Michelle. "Don't sweat it, little bro. I know exactly what Steve is like. What's more, I completely approve of the way you handled him. Any time you want to borrow my personality in order to tell off that twisted little piece of monkey excrement, please go right ahead."

"Thanks, Sis," laughed Mitchell. "Monkey excrement, that's a good one." Mitchell made to step forward into the hallway, but Michelle held him back.

"Listen," she said, looking up and down the hallway to make sure they were alone. Michelle stepped into Mitchell's room quickly, shutting the door behind her. "I need to ask you for a small favor."

"A *small* favor?" said Mitchell suspiciously. "That's interesting. I don't think I can recall you ever asking for a *small* favor before. Outrageous, criminal, or the occasional simply huge favor, yes, but never before small."

"Well trust me, this is small."

"Yes, I generally have to start by trusting you," Mitchell replied. "Okay, but just so you know, if it turns out to be huge, you just don't have a lot of credit in your favor account."

"No credit?" cried out Michelle, forgetting not to raise her voice and momentarily distracted from her purpose. "Who saved your bacon last month when you dented Dad's car?"

"Are you saying that not ratting on me was a favor?"

"I was the one who got it fixed, for free, before anyone found out."

"No you didn't. I took it to Brian Brentwood. He hammered it out in auto shop."

"Only because I agreed to go out with him."

"You wanted to go out with him."

"Trust me, I did not want to go out with Brian Brentwood."

Mitchell stopped to think where this conversation left them. After a few quick calculations, he said, "Okay, you're right. You have one, small to medium sized favor coming to you."

"Thanks," Michelle replied conspiratorially as she pulled Mitchell over to the bed and sat down. "And trust me, it really is small. See, a guy I really like has two tickets to see the Harsh Mellows, in concert, over in Stouffville tonight. Mitchell, I can't miss this! Except Mom and Dad have grounded me for the weekend."

"So you want me to go to the concert for you?" asked Mitchell in mock-seriousness. Thinking briefly he said, "Okay, I can do that for you."

"No, you moron," said Michelle.

"Ah, then you want me to speak to our parents, get them to see reason," he said, still maintaining a serious expression on his face. "I will do this for you, although I don't guarantee they'll respond."

"Could you stop being an idiot for just one minute?" Michelle implored. "Mom expects me to sulk in my room all night. All I need you to do is help me sneak out of the house, then sit in my room after I leave."

"Sit in your room and do what?" Mitchell wanted to know.

"Sit in my room and do whatever," Michelle replied in exasperation. "I've got the same as you. TV, DVD, Internet, video games. Just do whatever you planned to do in your own room." Michelle thought over what she had just said and was compelled to add, "Within reason."

"This is not a small favor," said Mitchell.

"What, asking you to play video games for a couple of hours?" replied Michelle.

"Lie to our parents, assist in the escape of a detainee, be an accessory to breaking the rules," Mitchell listed off the crimes on his fingers.

"Okay, so maybe it's small to medium? It's still covered."

"Plus, your room is pink."

"So, are you going to do it or not?" Michelle asked.

"Yes," said Mitchell after a moment's thought, taking Michelle by surprise. "But this is huge, so in return you owe me one medium favor, plus a future third round draft pick."

"I don't even know what that means."

"So we have a deal?"

"Deal," said Michelle. "I'll tell you the plan, but first, you have to get in the shower and wash your hair."

"Wash my hair?" asked Mitchell.

"If Mom or Dad get a look at that bird's nest on your head, they'll know it isn't me," explained Michelle. "Come on, we need to get moving."

"G'night, Mom," said Mitchell from the front door. "I'm going over to Steve's for a while."

"Oh?" said his mother as she came out of the kitchen. "I thought you were staying home. Wasn't Steve seeing his father tonight?"

"His, uh, plans fell through. We're going to play some games, maybe watch a movie."

Mitchell's father came into the front hallway. "You're not staying over there tonight. You know I need you here, tomorrow morning?"

"I know, Dad," Mitchell replied. "I'll be home around 11:00, maybe 11:30."

"Just make sure you are," said his father as he went back to his TV.

"Bye bye, honey, have fun," said his mother as she gave him a hug and a quick kiss on the cheek. "My goodness, look at your hair, it looks so nice. Mmm, it smells nice too."

"Uh, thanks, I just washed it," he replied. "I used Michelle's Fournier Glucose shampoo."

"Did she help you to brush it out and style it?" she asked.

"Uh, yeah?" Mitchell replied, not sure if Michelle's plan was unraveling already.

"I could tell, it's just the way she styles her own hair," said his mother. "She must be bored, having to stay in all night. Poor thing. But you should learn to keep it this way, it looks so nice."

"Yeah, okay, thanks Mom," said Mitchell, as he turned red with embarrassment. "Look, I really have to go."

"Okay, have fun!" said his mother, then closed the door behind him. Michelle appeared at the top of the stairs in her pink flannel pajamas and shorty bathrobe.

"Mom?" she called down. "I'm going to my room, okay?"

"Okay, sweetie," said her mother. "Thanks for letting me know. I'll look in on you later, okay?"

"You don't have to do that," said Michelle. Then she turned away from the stairs, and walked down the hall to her room.

Mitchell and Michelle's mother walked into the family room, where their father was watching television from the couch. "That boy's hair is out of control," he said. "You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, I know," she replied sadly as she sat beside her husband. "You know I'm not ready to see him cut it, though."

Michelle walked down the hallway, past the door to her bedroom, then looked around to make sure no one saw her entering her brother's room. As she shut the door quietly, the window opened behind her and Mitchell put his head through.

"So far, so good," said Michelle as she helped her brother through the window. Mitchell dropped from the window, rolled onto his bed, then sat upright, with the skill of someone who had done this many times.

"Okay, so you be sure to be back by ... whoa, hey, what are you doing?"

Michelle unbuttoned her pajamas, and whipped off her top without warning, then pulled off the pants. Fortunately she was dressed underneath in a tiny silver mini-dress.

"You didn't think I was going to a concert in my pajamas, did you?" she asked.

"No, but you might have warned me," said Mitchell, still trying to recover from the shock.

Michelle sat on the edge of the bed, and put on a pair of pantyhose as Mitchell looked on.

"Here," she said, noticing him watching, and handing him the pajamas. "You've got better things to do than watch me put on pantyhose. You need to change into these."

"Wait, no, I'm just going to sit in your room, you didn't say anything about wearing your pajamas."

"Mom just told me, she's going to look in on me later. I told her not to, but still, she might. How are you going to explain if you're sitting there in jeans and a T-shirt?"

"Yeah, but Michelle..."

"They're brand new, never worn, I'm the one who should be upset. You know, I could have brought you a nighty! Now hurry up, I need to go."

The two turned their backs on each other, as Mitchell began to undress. "Don't look," he said as he removed his pants.

"Trust me, I have no interest in looking," Michelle replied. She opened her purse, and pulled out a lipstick to touch up her makeup.

"Okay, I'm ready," said Mitchell. Michelle turned around, and stifled a giggle as she saw her brother in pink flannel jammies and her cute little pink bathrobe, with his long hair styled like her own.

"You look great," she said. "But then, why wouldn't you? You look just like me. Except..."

Michelle pressed her brother against the wall, then used her lipstick to color his lips glossy red.

"Hey, that's not necessary," said Mitchell as he tried to fend her off.



"I never take off my makeup until bed. If Mom or Dad look closely, they might notice, so hold still." Michelle proceeded to quickly finish Mitchell's makeover, complete with blush, eyeliner, eye shadow, and mascara. The entire process took less than two minutes. When she was done, the two looked in the mirror, side by side.

"Yikes," said Mitchell, seeing two of Michelle staring back at him.

"Aw, you are the prettiest little sister any girl ever had," said Michelle with a hug. She walked over to the window, and stepped out onto the garage roof. "So try to stay awake till I get back."

"Like I'm ever going to sleep again after this nightmare," he replied. "I think this favor has exceeded the original specification."

"This is the kind of thing sisters do for each other," said Michelle as she leaned back through the window to give Mitchell a quick kiss on the cheek. "Don't forget to wait up for me, Sis!"

Mitchell watched his sister cross the roof, then lower herself over the edge to stand on the fence at the corner of the garage. "Hey," he called out. "Who are you going to this concert with?"

Michelle looked back at Mitchell. "Brian Brentwood," she called out. Then she turned, and disappeared into the night.

"Son of a..." said Mitchell. There was nothing he could do about it now, though. Mitchell closed the window.

Mitchell looked through his collection of games, selected "Ninja Knights," then opened his door and stepped into the hallway.

"Michelle, what are you doing in Mitchell's room?" called his father from the end of the hallway.

Mitchell had his back to him. Without turning around he held up the game and said, "Michelle said I could borrow this."

"I don't think so," said his father. "Put it back, little girl."

Mitchell put the game back, then ran to Michelle's room, closing the door firmly behind him.

Chapter 2 - Taking Flight

Mitchell and Michelle's parents were relaxing in their family room, watching a little television to pass the time on a Saturday night. The phone rang; Mrs. Everett stood to answer. As she picked up the receiver, she noted that the call display said 'Martin Edwards', Nadia's father.

"Hi, Nadia," said Mrs. Everett as she picked up the phone. "Michelle is in her room, I'll go get her for you."

"Mrs. Everett?" replied an older female voice. "Mrs. Everett, it's not Nadia. This is Miss Wilson, from the high school. I'm calling from Nadia's house."

"Oh," said Mrs. Everett. "I'm sorry, Miss Wilson, it's usually Nadia calling from this number. Is there some problem?"

"No problem, Mrs. Everett. We're just running a little behind schedule, that's all. Can you please tell Michelle we'll be a little late, but she can expect us within the hour."

"Miss Wilson, maybe you could back up a bit. Are you saying that Michelle has plans to go somewhere with you and Nadia tonight?"

Miss Wilson was silent for a moment, then said, "Yes, of course. Didn't Michelle tell you? It was all her idea."

"Whatever it is, I'm sure it was Michelle's idea," said Mrs. Everett, starting to get angry. "Perhaps you could fill me in on exactly what it is she's up to this time."

"I can't believe she didn't tell you. Perhaps she's just too modest."

"Modest? That doesn't sound like Michelle. Miss Wilson, please tell me what is going on."

"I'm sorry Mrs. Everett, I'll try to explain. You see, Mrs. Wally is retiring from teaching this week. Mrs. Wally has been a dedicated teacher for forty-three years, and has been a well-loved coach of the cheerleading squad for most of that time. Ever since her husband and two children died in an accident ten years ago, the cheerleaders have been her life."

"I'm not following," said Mrs. Everett. "What does any of this have to do with Michelle?"

"Michelle has been working for weeks on a special presentation for Mrs. Wally. All the cheerleaders are going to meet in the auditorium tonight, to tell Mrs. Wally what her guidance has meant to them."

"But Michelle isn't even a cheerleader," said Mrs. Everett.

"But she was, when she was in grade nine. It's not just for the current squad. Michelle has been phoning for weeks, tracking down girls who've known Mrs. Wally over the years. She wants Mrs. Wally to know just how much effect she has had on the lives of so many women."

"Oh, my goodness," whispered Mrs. Everett.

"That's not all. Mrs. Wally's favourite charity is the local Children's Hospital. Michelle has organized a group of girls to go to the hospital tomorrow, to play with the children and help cheer them up, all in honor of Mrs. Wally."

"I just can't believe this," said Mrs. Everett, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Mrs. Everett, Michelle is a very special girl," said Miss Wilson. "I really have to go now. Can you please tell her we'll be late?"

"Don't worry," said Mrs. Everett. "She'll be ready to leave when you get here."

Mrs. Everett hung up the phone, and looked at her husband. "Oh, Benjamin, we've made a terrible mistake. We've so misjudged our little girl."

Mitchell was struggling to install game components onto Michelle's computer. He'd given up on her video game collection after seeing she hadn't added to it in at least five years. All her games were from their parents' 'No sex, no violence' period. Putting on a "Paper Doll Daisy" fashion show just didn't hold a lot of appeal for him.

Her collection of DVDs was just as lame. Not a single action flick in the bunch. He could go downstairs and find something, except there was no way he was going near his parents dressed like this!

So that left the Internet. Except when he turned on her computer, he didn't know her password. That meant he had to set up a new account from scratch. With a new account he was able to reach the Internet, but needed to download a bunch of upgrades. Now he was able to reach the games he wanted, but they needed downloads and upgrades as well. Mitchell was starting to wonder if he'd ever get to play, when the bedroom door opened.

"Michelle, sweetie?" said his mother as she peeked through the door. Seeing Mitchell sitting on the bed, she opened the door wide. Mitchell's mother and father came into the room and sat on the bed, one on either side of him. His mother hugged him around the shoulders, and his father hugged him around his waist.

"Michelle, why didn't you tell us about your plans for tonight?" asked his mother.

Mitchell fidgeted in his pink pajamas and looked down, trying hard to avoid his parents' gaze. Why did they care about the concert? Was it going out with Brian Brentwood that had them acting weird?

"I ... didn't think you'd approve?" he tried.

"Approve?" laughed his father. "Kitten, we couldn't be more proud of you."

Very strange. Maybe they really liked Brian Brentwood for some reason?

When he didn't say anything, his mother continued. "Sweetie, Miss Wilson called, and explained everything."

Who? "Miss ... Wilson? She did?"

His mother smiled at him. "Yes, she told us all about you and Mrs. Wally, and sweetie, your father and I are just so proud of you."

Mrs. Wally? Mitchell had no idea who these people were. "Well, thanks, I guess."

"Princess," said his father. "Your mother and I accused you of being selfish earlier tonight. I'm sorry, we were wrong. When your mother explained everything you've done, I finally realized how much you've grown. I can't treat you like my little girl forever. I hope you understand, we still need to give you a curfew, but we're going to try to be a little more lenient about it."

"Okay..." said Mitchell.

"Honey," said his mother. "Your friends are going to be here in about an hour. Your father and I want you to go out with them, and have a good time tonight."

Mitchell hadn't understood a single thing up to this point, but he completely understood this!

"No!" he yelled. "I can't! I'm grounded! I ... missed curfew, that's the rule. I'm grounded for the weekend!"

"Sweetie, weren't you listening?" laughed his mother. "You're not grounded. Your father and I agree, you're mature enough to make these decisions for yourself. And tonight, you're doing such a wonderful thing for Mrs. Wally."

"No, Mom, I can't," said Mitchell, desperate to think of a way out. "I'm ... not ready! I'm ... not dressed!"

"Sweetie, you have almost an hour. You'll be ready in plenty of time."

Mitchell knew that his sister could take far more than an hour to get ready, he just had no idea what it was she did. However, he tried a couple more tactics.

"I can't go – I need to ... wash my hair!"

"Now you're being ridiculous. Your hair looks like you've just finished washing and styling it."

"I need – makeup! That will take ... a while? Too long."

"Sweetie, your makeup is fine."

"Shaving my legs!" Mitchell cried out desperately. "I'm not going to be ready. I can't go! Please, call them back!"

Mrs. Everett stood, and lifted her son to his feet. "Michelle, you're just nervous about your presentation," she said. She walked Mitchell to the bathroom, and organized Michelle's shaving gel and razor for him. "You shave your legs, and I'll get your clothes ready for you to change into. Do you need any more help in here?"

"Presentation?" said Mitchell as he passed into shock.

Mrs. Everett smiled at her 'daughter', kissed 'her' on the forehead, then stepped into the hallway. "Hurry up and shave your legs. I'll be waiting for you, right outside the door in the hallway. Here now, give me your pajama bottoms."

Mitchell pulled the bottoms off from under his bathrobe, and handed them around the door to his mother. Then his mother left, closing the bathroom door behind her.

Mitchell looked at the razor in his hand. He had no idea what was going on. He had no idea what to do. The only thing he was sure about was that he had lost his pants and was wearing his sister's pink shorty bathrobe, with very hairy legs. If he came out of the bathroom this way, he would be in more trouble than he could imagine.

Shaving your legs is not as easy as it would appear, especially if you've never shaved them before. Mitchell tried to shave them as he would shave his face (with which he also had little experience, his beard still being very fine and sparse). He wet his legs with warm water, applied shave gel up his legs (all the way to the hip!), then began stroking his legs with the razor. The razor blade became clogged with hair almost instantly. Mitchell soon found a rhythm that worked, shaving a small three-inch patch, then rinsing the razor. Finishing both legs was a long process.

Mitchell was finishing the back of his left thigh, reassuring himself with the thought that "it will grow back", when there was a knock at the door.

"Sweetie," said his mother. "Everything okay? You've been in there a while."

"Almost done, Mom," he replied.

"That's good, sweetheart. By the way, the top you're wearing tonight is sleeveless. Do you need to shave under your arms?"

Mitchell let out a small groan. "Thanks, Mom." He picked up the shave gel, and applied some under each of his arms.

When Mitchell was ready, he opened the bathroom door. His mother was in the hallway, just as she had promised. Taking him by the hand, she led him back to Michelle's room.

"I found your old uniform," his mother told him, pointing to the cheerleader uniform she had laid out on the bed for him. "Fortunately, I had it dry cleaned and pressed before putting it away. It was still in the dry cleaning bag. Look, it's good as new!"

Mitchell did look. He looked, and his eyes went wide as he tried to make sense of this latest twist.

"Michelle's ... I mean, my, old, cheerleader outfit?"

"Yes, hurry and get dressed, they'll be here any minute," said his mother as she shut the door behind her.

Wherever he was going, whatever he was doing, he was supposed to go there dressed as a cheerleader. Not one thing that had happened in the past hour made any sense.

Mitchell took off his sister's bathrobe, then unbuttoned and removed her pajama top. Picking up the white bra his mother had set out for him, he struggled to figure out how it worked. Eventually he managed to get his arms through the correct holes, and the hooks done up behind his back. Looking back at the bed, he saw a white pair of panties.

"There is no way I'm wearing my sister's underwear," he said to himself. Mitchell had been wearing his own tighty whities under his sister's pajamas all night, and they would do just fine under the cheerleader skirt.

Mitchell picked up the pair of pantyhose. Sitting on the bed, he imitated what he had seen his sister do earlier that evening. He rolled the first leg down to the bottom, stuck his toes in, then rolled it up his leg. Then he repeated with the other leg, finally tugging the crotch and waistband into position.

Mitchell pulled the cheerleader top over his head, pulled his arms through, and adjusted it into position. Then he pulled the miniskirt up his legs, fastened it at the back and pulled the zipper to the top. His sister's running shoes were a bit tight, but he managed to get them on.

Mitchell looked down at himself, and realized one thing was missing. "I can't believe I'm doing this," he said as he looked through his sister's drawers. Finding what he needed, he took a pair of socks, shoved them up his top, and fitted one sock into each of the cups of his bra.

When he was ready, Mitchell stood and looked at himself in Michelle's full-length mirror.

He couldn't believe the image staring back at him. It was his sister Michelle, or at least what she would look like if she were ever frightened out of her wits. His long, wavy hair was styled like Michelle's. His makeup matched hers as well. His cheerleader top came down to within two inches of the skirt, leaving his navel showing. The skirt was very short to begin with, and the fact that it was meant for a fourteen-year-old girl rather than an eighteen-year-old guy made it just that much shorter. He had the nicest legs of any girl he'd ever seen. There was no way he was leaving the house like this!

"Sweetie, your ride is here!" called his mother.



Mitchell froze. He literally could not move. His legs refused to move, as his eyes scanned across his reflection in the mirror.

There was a knock at the bedroom door, and it opened an inch. "Princess?" said his father. "Can I come in?"

When Mitchell said nothing, his father opened the bedroom door and entered. "Oh, Kitten, you look beautiful. Here, let me get a picture."

His father lifted his camera, and caught Mitchell before he could say a word. As Mitchell turned toward him, his father took another picture. He continued taking shots as Mitchell tried to get him to stop.

"Please, Dad, I mean, Daddy, please, no stop!" he called out.

"These are going to be great," his father said as he finally lowered the camera. Looking at his 'daughter', the man became overwhelmed with emotion, and hugged her.

"Thanks, uh, Daddy," said Mitchell, trying to gently break free.

Mitchell's father looked at him, then kissed him softly on the cheek. "You're just so beautiful, Kitten."

Mitchell stared back, horrified. "Okay, now, I'm ready to go." Mitchell disentangled himself from his father and ran down the stairs to the front door. His mother was waiting for him.

"Good luck, sweetie. Here's your purse. You're going to be great!"

"Thanks Mom," said Mitchell as he grabbed the purse and ran out the door.

Once out the front door, Mitchell lost his nerve again. Staring at the headlights of the car, his ride, he realized he had no idea who was inside, where they were going, or what they had planned for him. Mitchell stood where he was, petrified.

"Michelle," he heard his father call. Mitchell instinctively turned to his father's voice, only to receive another flash from his father's camera.

Mitchell turned back to the waiting car, and ran to it. The back door opened, and he jumped in.

"She's quite something, our little girl," said Mr. Everett as he put his arm around his wife on their front porch.

"Uh hmm," hummed Mrs. Everett in agreement. "How did your pictures turn out?"

"Let's go inside and take a look," he replied. The couple walked back into the house, and closed the door behind them.

Mitchell was grabbed by more hands than he could count, and pulled into the car. Before he could get himself oriented, he was thrown across the back seat and the car raced out of the driveway. The back seat was filled with bodies, and in the darkness he couldn't make out a single face. Then someone screamed.

"Aeeee!" screamed Nadia as she hugged Mitchell tight. She laughed as she said, "Michelle, you made it! That was -so- cool!"

As Mitchell's eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he realized that he was lying across the laps of three girls in the back seat, and Michelle's friend Nadia was hugging him. Two more girls were in the front.

"Nadia?" he said. "Nadia, I've got to..."

"Oh no!" laughed Nadia. "You're wearing your cheerleader uniform! Oh my gosh, that is too funny!" All the girls were laughing, and all talking at once.

As the car swerved and bounced, Mitchell found he needed to hold onto Nadia for support. "My mother said I was supposed to. Look, can you tell me..."

This started all the girls laughing again. "Of course! Miss Wilson expects all the girls to be in uniform tonight!" All five girls were laughing and talking so that Mitchell could hardly think.

"Nadia, where is Miss Wilson?" he asked.

Nadia was quiet for a moment. "Where is who?" she asked.

"Miss Wilson," said Mitchell. "I need to speak with her, about tonight."

"Michelle," said Nadia. "What are you talking about?"

"I thought you knew," said Mitchell in confusion. "There's a presentation for Mrs. Wally tonight. Miss Wilson is organizing it. Isn't that where you're going?"

All the girls were quiet by this time, listening to the confusing conversation. "Michelle, what's wrong with you? There is no Miss Wilson, or Mrs. Wally. You and I made them up!"

Mitchell was beyond confusion. "What?" was the only question he could think to ask.

"You seriously don't remember?" asked Nadia. "Last month, after you were grounded, we were at school the next day? You said that next time you were grounded, we should come up with a scheme to get you out? I said we could tell your parents you were supposed to give a speech at some charity dinner? Then we made up Miss Wilson and Mrs. Wally? You remember, right?"

"It's all a scam?" asked Mitchell.

"I made up the part about her husband and children," said one of the girls he was sitting on.

"Oh, Michelle, this is Julie, do you two know each other?"

"Hey, I've seen you around the school," said Mitchell.

"Yeah, me too," replied Julie.

"Julie played the part of Miss Wilson in tonight's production," Mitchell was told.

"You seriously don't remember setting this all up?" asked Nadia.

Mitchell couldn't believe it. His sister had more scams going than he could count. Scams within scams. Scams running on autopilot, with no need of her assistance. So many scams she apparently couldn't keep them all straight, and ended up running two in one night.

All the girls were quiet as they waited for an answer. This was likely the best chance he would ever get to tell the truth. Instead, Mitchell eventually said, "Of course I remember! I was just ... teasing."

The girls all laughed with relief, and the car drove on into the night with multiple conversations vibrating throughout.

After about twenty minutes of nonstop female chatter, Mitchell was becoming seriously worried about where these girls were taking him.

"So Nadia," he began hesitantly, "like, um, just where is it that we're going?"

"You haven't guessed yet?" laughed Nadia.

"Well, it's just that we've been driving a long time," said Mitchell.

Nadia laughed again. "I hope you're teasing again. We talked about this just last week, remember?"

Before Mitchell could answer, the girl in the front passenger seat shrieked, and turning to the back seat yelled, "Look, we're here!"

Mitchell couldn't see anything from his current position, but he could hear and feel the bass rhythm of loud music. The car pulled over to the side of the road and stopped. One of the girls rolled down a window, and someone stuck his head in.

"Hello, ladies," he said. "I hope you're planning to join us this evening. My name is Kevin, and I'm here to help you in any way I can."

"Thanks Kevin," said the driver. "I'm Clarissa. Maybe you can point us to a parking spot!"

"I can do better than that," said Kevin as he opened the back door. "Squeeze over, ladies, and I'll take you there."

As Kevin tried to get into the already overstuffed car, the girls all squealed and laughed, hurting Mitchell's ears. Mitchell tried desperately to move out of Kevin's way.

"I don't think that's going to work!" laughed Clarissa. "Why doesn't everyone get out here, then Kevin can come with me to park the car."

Kevin began unloading girls from the car, one after another. Mitchell found himself swept up in the current, poured out of the car with the others, finally landing on his feet on the sidewalk. Mitchell was part of a huge assemblage of skirts, hair, red lips and giggling voices. Kevin climbed into the passenger seat, then Mitchell watched as his only means of transportation out of here drove down the street and around the corner.

Mitchell turned to find the source of the booming music. It wasn't difficult to locate. The girls were standing on the sidewalk, in front of a large Victorian-style home. Every light was on, and there were people everywhere, including the roof. The booming music vibrated through the air, so that the house seemed to pulse with the beat. Then Mitchell noticed the sign over the front door. It read "DTS", Delta – Tau – Sigma.

"This is a frat party," said Mitchell as realization dawned on him. "You brought me to a frat party, dressed like a cheerleader."

Mitchell was so shocked, he hadn't even realized that he was standing alone. The other girls had already walked up to the house without him. Julie looked back, and seeing him still standing at the curb, ran back to get him.

"Come on!" yelled Julie as she grabbed his arm and started him moving toward the house. "You're being so weird tonight!"

Mitchell couldn't resist. He was in shock, and simply followed Julie's lead. When they reached the front porch, Mitchell found his voice and turned to Julie.

"I can't go in there like this," he said. "This is a frat party, and I'm dressed like a high school cheerleader!"

"I know!" giggled Julie. "Are you ever going to be popular!"

"Ladies," interrupted an enormous man. He must have been six foot four, and at least 240 pounds. He wore a black T-shirt that read 'Security,' and when he crossed his arms over his chest, Mitchell couldn't help noticing that the man's arms were probably thicker than Mitchell's waist.

“Ah said, Ladies!” he boomed in a voice as big as he was, drawing Mitchell’s attention from the man’s enormous arms to his enormous face. “Ah need ta see you’ invitations, an’ some I.D.”

Mitchell felt incredibly tiny, facing this giant. He fumbled with his purse, and said in his tiny Michelle voice, “I.D.? I don’t think I brought it, um, the invitations are…”

The man broke into a huge grin as he placed one tree-trunk-like arm around each of the girls, leading them up the steps to the front door. “Ah’m jes’ messin’ wit’ cha. This is ladies’ night. In fact, everah night is ladies’ night!”

The man laughed so hard at his own joke, he temporarily blotted out the music. He led Mitchell and Julie into the house, then called out, “Somebody get these two fine ladies some beer!” Then he went back to the front porch, closing the door behind him.

Mitchell was immediately swept toward a bar that had been set up in the front room, and a beer was shoved into his hands. This was the first good thing that had happened all night! Mitchell lifted the beer, and drained half of it before coming up for air.

Mitchell was immediately startled to hear an enormous cheer. Looking up, he found himself surrounded by huge men, so huge they probably referred to the security guy as ‘Tiny’. They were all looking at him, and howling like cavemen. Then they began chanting:

“Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug!”

Mitchell looked back at his remaining half beer. Realizing what he had to do, he raised the glass, and drained it. He couldn’t help letting out a rather large belch.

Mitchell laughed, and took another sip of his beer. He was sitting on a couch in one of the back rooms, rather cramped with three of this place’s seemingly infinite supply of gargantuan males crammed around him. It had been more than a little disturbing to be dressed as a tiny girl, surrounded by walls of muscle, when he first arrived. But after a few beers, he figured out what he had to do.

The guys in this place weren’t so bad. They were really like children – enormous, muscular, drunken children, but still children. And although Mitchell – in his ultra-mini skirt – was certainly a great distraction, all he needed to do was find other distractions to throw at them. The two that had helped him get to this point were beer, and football.

Mitchell’s initial appearance, and demonstration of his beer-drinking ability, had initiated a drinking competition. The local Neanderthals quickly outpaced Mitchell, but that was to be expected. No one really thought a little girl like him would actually win the competition. But he encouraged the others to continue, filling over an hour with some of the most outrageous moments Mitchell had ever witnessed. As every one of the guys tried to outdo the rest, Mitchell relaxed and started having a great time.

Once the drinking competitions ended, Mitchell found the conversation steered easily away from himself when he asked a few questions about football. The mountainous men seemed to be just as interested in football as they were in beer. They all had stories to tell, just as many taking place in the locker room as on the field. Some stories needed to be re-enacted, right there in the living room, not an easy feat considering how crowded the en-

tire house was. When the football was tossed through the window, they continued using a lamp instead.

Yes, these guys were just like children. Children the size of freight trains, with little or no impulse control. But Mitchell's initial fears were gone.

Mitchell laughed at the current antics. "You know," he said. "I wanted to a football player at one time."

Everyone nearby who heard stopped for a moment, to figure out what it was Mitchell had said, then burst into laughter. Everyone nearby who hadn't heard laughed as well, because it was that kind of party.

"You, a football player!" howled one of the guys on the couch with him. He laughed and stomped his feet, kicking over his beer.

"Well," explained Mitchell. "I mean, I was a little kid. I didn't know I'd grow up to be, you know, small."

All the guys laughed. "Did you know you would grow up to be a girl?" asked one, to the hilarious laughter of his buddies.

"Well, no, I guess not," said Mitchell to more laughter.

"What position did you want to play?"

"She could be the ball!" answered another, lifting Mitchell off the couch, and tossing him to another.

Mitchell was tossed around the room for a while, shrieking and laughing, as he was just drunk enough to think this was fun. "Please...guys, eeeek! Put me down!"

Finally one of the guys spiked Mitchell back onto the couch, yelling "Touchdown!"

Mitchell couldn't stop laughing as he tried to catch his breath. "That's not fair, guys! I wanted to win the Super Bowl! I told my Dad I'd give him my Super Bowl ring!"

One of the more medium-sized mammoth men spoke up. "I've got a Super Bowl ring."

Mitchell laughed. "Right, like I believe you won the Super Bowl!"

"Really," the guy persisted. "It's not mine, it was my Dad's. But it's upstairs in my room."

"Can I see it?" asked Mitchell, clearly impressed.

"Hey, you can even try it on," he was told. The behemoth reached down with one massive hand, and lifted Mitchell to his feet. As he escorted Mitchell out of the back room, the rest of the herd began howling.

Mitchell turned back to speak to the group, as he continued to be propelled forward. "We'll be right back," he said.

"Yeah, in about three minutes," snorted one, to the great amusement of his friends.

The house was crammed tight with bodies, making it almost impossible to get through the hallways. Certainly Mitchell would have given up if he was on his own, but his escort seemed to have little trouble clearing a path. However, when they reached the stairs, Mitchell saw no way they could possibly get through.

"There are too many people on the stairs," he yelled over the music. "I don't think we'll make it up."

"You can use the elevator," his guide replied.

Mitchell looked around. "Elevator? Where is..."

He never got a chance to finish his sentence, however, as the monster man picked him up like a child, carrying him toward the stairs and saying, "Here's your elevator!"

Mitchell wrapped his arms around the man's neck, laughing as his legs swung back and forth. He was carried up the stairs, screaming and laughing, "No! Not again! Eeek, put me down!"

Mitchell was carried up the stairs and down a narrow hallway, past hundreds (or so it seemed) of partygoers. His ride pushed open a door with his foot, and carried Mitchell inside.

There was a couple lying on the bed, and another making out in a chair. Mitchell's conveyance yelled, "Hey! Get out," and the room quickly emptied. Once the door was closed, he finally set Mitchell's feet on the floor.

With the door closed, the noise from the party was much less. Mitchell finally felt he could hold a real conversation.

"This is your room?" he asked.

"Uh huh," grunted the Neanderthal.

"So you must be ... Jerome?" said Mitchell, reading the name off some of the trophies scattered throughout the room. "So, where is your Super Bowl ring?"

"Jerry," he was corrected. "The ring's in here," he was told as Jerry opened his top drawer. Reaching in, he pulled out a black velvet box. He snapped back the lid so Mitchell could see the ring.

"Wow," said Mitchell, almost speechless at the sight. "May I?" he asked, reaching out.

"Sure," replied Jerry. "Try it on."

Mitchell took the ring from the box, mesmerized by all the football-shaped diamonds. He stuck two fingers of his left hand into it, and it was still loose. Mitchell laughed.

"It's so big, and heavy! I could almost wear it for a bracelet."

Mitchell admired the ring for a few minutes. Eventually he took it off, placed it back into the box and shut it in Jerry's drawer. Turning to Jerry he said, "Wow, thanks so much! That was..."

He never got a chance to finish his sentence, though, as he found himself pressed up against the wall. Jerry's massive arms pinned him in place, as Jerry's lips pressed firmly against Mitchell's.

Mitchell struggled in vain against the wall of muscle that held him tight. When Jerry finally came up for air Mitchell said, "Jerry, this isn't what I..."

He never got to finish that sentence either, as Jerry returned for a second kiss. His massive hands moved down to Mitchell's waist, massaging his exposed skin as he quickly moved his hands up and under Mitchell's cheerleader top.

With Jerry's hands occupied, Mitchell's arms were released. He tried shoving Jerry away, with no luck. He found it similarly impossible to prevent the steady creep of Jerry's hands ever upward. Placing his own hands on Jerry's face, he managed to move it from his lips to his ear, far enough that he could speak.

"Jerry, please, I don't want to do this," he managed to say, as Jerry continued licking his earlobe.

Jerry massaged Mitchell's chest through his bra and whispered into his ear, "You want this as much as I do. You're a cheerleader, I'm a football player. This is what you came here for."

Mitchell struggled helplessly, trying again to move the massive biceps. As one hand squeezed his chest and the other fumbled with his bra hook, Mitchell remembered something he had learned in Health class.

"No, Jerry! No means No!" he said as sternly as he could. He wished he could sound more convincing, but speaking in a little girl voice did not make him sound at all confident.

However, it had the intended effect, at least for a moment. Jerry pulled away from Mitchell, far enough that he could look into his face. Jerry appeared confused, like a puppy that doesn't understand why he's been scolded. But this look soon turned to anger.

"What do you mean, no!" he yelled angrily. "You think you can come into my room, tease me till I'm ready to burst, then just say no? Well sweetheart, it doesn't work that way."

Jerry kissed him again. Mitchell pounded uselessly against Jerry's arms. Finally in desperation, he slapped Jerry across the face.

Jerry backed off, startled by the slap. But then he became enraged. Grabbing the front of Mitchell's cheerleader top in one massive fist, he swung Mitchell through the air, around and onto the bed. Mitchell's short skirt flipped up, exposing him.

Jerry was about to go back for another kiss, when a curious look crossed his face. Taking another look under Mitchell's skirt, he started to laugh.

"What's this?" he laughed. "You're wearing guys' underpants!"

Jerry continued to laugh, as Mitchell squirmed uncomfortably. He tried to fix his skirt before Jerry noticed...

Jerry noticed. One moment Jerry was laughing uproariously, the next he was silent, his mouth hanging open and his eyes growing larger and larger. Eventually he released Mitchell's top, and jumped back off the bed.

"You're a..." Jerry couldn't complete the sentence. He got a sick look on his face. "You little ... what are you? Ugh, you kissed me!" he said in disgust, then spat on the floor. Then rage like Mitchell had never seen before took over Jerry's features. Jerry raised a fist the size of a small ham, and leapt at Mitchell.

There was nothing Mitchell could do. He curled his knees up to his chest in a reflexive fetal position, closed his eyes tight, and waited for the blow. He felt Jerry's massive weight land on him, but as he lay there in terror, the blow never came. Mitchell opened one eye tentatively to find out what was happening.

What he saw was at once both humorous, and terrifying. Jerry was poised above him, fist still raised, his eyes bulging farther than ever, except with tears streaming down his face. As Mitchell boldly opened his second eye and looked down to find the cause of Jerry's obvious pain, he found Jerry's legs were stretched across Mitchell's own knees. Jerry's leap had apparently brought him down onto Mitchell's upraised knees in a way that can only be described as 'excruciatingly painful'.

The terrifying part was, Jerry seemed to be pulling himself together, red in the face with anger, his fist pulled back with murder in his eyes. In a pitiful attempt to escape from under Jerry's enormous mass, Mitchell struggled just to sit up. In so doing he bumped his head into the bridge of Jerry's nose.

Jerry howled in pain. "My nose! You freaking perv, you broke my nose!" he yelled as he stood. In his pain and rage, Jerry missed his footing. Stepping on his set of free weights, his foot slipped out from under him, sending him stumbling across the room, crashing to the floor, and hitting his head on the dresser on the way down. He didn't look like he was going to get up.

Mitchell watched in amazement from his position on the bed as these events unfolded. When Jerry finally came to a full stop, Mitchell waited a moment. Finally he stood carefully, straightened his uniform, and approached Jerry. He wasn't sure if perhaps Jerry was dead, so cautiously, he shoved Jerry with his toe. Jerry groaned, reaching toward his head.

That was all Mitchell needed to know. Mitchell ran out of the room, then down the hallway as fast as he could manage. He only stopped at the top of the stairs long enough to spot Nadia and Julie, sitting in the kitchen with a group of guys. Mitchell ran straight to them.

"Come on!" he said, with a wild, hunted look in his eyes. "We need to go!"

"Already?" said Nadia. "The party's is going to go all night..."

"Yes, now!" said Mitchell, grabbing her and nearly lifting her to her feet. As he pulled her to the front door, Julie followed along after, shrugging helplessly to the guys, and waving goodbye.

On their way to the front door, two more of their group were found and followed along. As Mitchell reached the outdoors, he broke into a run, the others doing their best to keep up. He ran down the street and around the corner, spotted their car and headed toward it.

"Michelle, slow down!" called Nadia. "We can't go anywhere anyway, it's Clarissa's car and she's not here."

Mitchell stopped short at the car. What was he going to do? He couldn't go back to the party for Clarissa, but he had to leave somehow. Deciding his best option was to hide in the car, he tried the door. Inside he found Clarissa and Kevin.

Mitchell grabbed Kevin, throwing him from the car. Quickly organizing everyone into their seats, he had Clarissa turn them around and head back, and none too soon. As they passed the fraternity, he heard a bellow like when Kong found Fay Wray had been rescued. Looking back, he saw Jerry emerge from the house, screaming and running after them.

All the girls laughed, and shrieked, and spoke to Mitchell at once.

Michelle reached her arms up and around Brian's neck. Looking into his eyes, she made sure she had his full attention before closing her own. She didn't need to wait long before feeling his lips on hers. They stayed this way for what seemed like forever, but still not long enough.

Michelle opened her eyes, and smiled at Brian as she pulled away. They were standing in Michelle's back yard, on her patio beside the backyard fence.

"Thanks for a fabulous evening," she said as she gazed up at him, still clinging to his neck.

"Are you sure it has to be over?" asked Brian, hinting that there were activities they could still enjoy.

Michelle smiled, then pulled away. She bent over to loosen the straps on her heels and said, "Yes, that would be great, but not tonight. So please, don't misunderstand what I'm about to do!"

Michelle kicked off her heels, then reaching up under her dress, she pulled down her pantyhose. Brian watched, confused. "Didn't you just say..."

"Keep it down!" hushed Michelle as she handed Brian her pantyhose. She undid the zipper of her dress, then slipped it off, handing it to Brian as well.

"To sneak back into the house, I have to climb onto the roof," explained Michelle, now wearing only her bra and panties. "Climbing down, I nearly snagged my dress. I'm not going to take that chance again."

Michelle jumped up, pulling herself to the top of the fence, then stood. Wearing little more than a smile, she reached down to Brian. "Okay, give me my things."

Brian, mesmerized, took a moment to react. With sudden realization, he handed Michelle her dress and pantyhose.

"And my shoes," said Michelle.

Brian picked up Michelle's silver heels, and was about to hand them over, when he pulled them back from her outstretched hand. With a hint of mischief he said, "Couldn't we just stay here like this for a little while? I'm really enjoying the view."

Michelle smiled. "You nut," she said. "Give me my shoes before someone catches us like this."

Brian relented, handing Michelle her shoes. Michelle then walked along the top of the fence to where it met the corner of the garage. Careful to keep her clothes safe, she climbed onto the garage roof. From there she quickly crossed the roof to Mitchell's window, pulled it open, and slipped inside. She looked out briefly to blow a kiss to Brian, then pulled her head back and closed the window.

Michelle looked around Mitchell's room. It was difficult to make out anything with only the moonlight to guide her. She couldn't risk turning on a light. She could just make out his chair by the desk, and a faint outline of the door. She paused briefly to assess the situation, and consider what she needed to do next.

"Mitchell must still be in my room," she thought to herself. "But there are no lights on and I don't hear anything, so he must have gone to sleep. Idiot, I told him to stay up. Okay, so I just have to sneak into my room and wake him."

Michelle crossed over to the door, careful in the dark not to bump into anything or make any noise. Suddenly the hall light came on. Michelle froze at the door, her hand on the knob. The knob was turning!

"What are you doing?" she heard her father ask.

"I heard a noise in Mitchell's room," answered her mother. "I just want to see if he got home alright."

"He's not home yet. I would have heard him come in."

"Are you sure? He said he would be home by 11:30. It's not like him to be late without calling."

Michelle looked around the room, desperate for a place to hide. There was only the closet, but she couldn't possibly get herself hidden in that mess, not in the dark without making a huge racket. The bed was against the wall, and there was no space underneath.

"I'm sure. I've been lying awake all night. I would have heard him come in," said her father.

"I'll just take a peek anyway."

Michelle felt the doorknob move again. With the knowledge that she was about to be discovered standing in her brother's room wearing only her bra and panties, she moved like lightning.

Michelle crossed the floor in a heartbeat, dropping her clothes on the chair, then setting her shoes on the floor as she slid into the bed. She had the covers pulled up to her neck and her head on the pillow before the first crack of light from the hallway appeared in the room.

Michelle lay perfectly still, facing the wall, her eyes shut tight as she tried to calm her heart. She heard her parents come into the room.

"You see?" whispered her mother. "He was here all along."

"I don't know how," replied her father. "I swear I've been awake the whole night."

"He must have come in quietly, not wanting to wake anyone. Such a good boy."

Michelle heard her father leave, as her mother gently stroked her hair once, then twice. Then her mother left. The door was still open, and so she remained perfectly still.

"You always say you're awake all night," said her mother. "You see, I've told you, you're probably asleep much of the time without even knowing it."

"Well, maybe. Tonight I'm really having some trouble, though."

“Poor dear. You just get back into bed and try to sleep, okay?”

Michelle’s heart had stopped pounding. She lay still in Mitchell’s bed, waiting for her parent’s inane conversation to end. She really was tired, and so closed her eyes to rest until they went back to bed.

“Is there anything I can do for you? Would you like me to make you a piece of toast?”

“Sure, that would be nice. I’ll come down in a minute, okay?”

“Just great,” thought Michelle. “Now they’re going to stay up. Maybe I can sneak over to my room when they’re downstairs. Have to be extra careful not to make any noise. Wake Mitchell, then I can get into my own bed, finally get to ... sleep...”

Michelle was sound asleep.

“Oh my gosh, that was so cool!” laughed Nadia.

“Tell us again, the part where you hit him in the nose and knocked him flying!” said Clarissa.

Mitchell had told the girls the entire story. Well, not everything. Certain details he kept to himself, like the real reason Jerry had been so angry. His heart was still pounding, and it had been fifteen minutes since they’d escaped.

“I didn’t do it on purpose!” he told them. “It all just, sort of happened. One minute he was kissing me, the next I was flying through the air, the next he was unconscious on the floor.”

“Did I tell you that you’re my new hero?” said Julie.

“I’m just glad it’s all over. Does anyone know what time it is?” asked Mitchell. Julie showed him her watch. “Oh no, it’s after midnight! My parents expected me home an hour ago. I’m going to be in huge trouble for not calling.”

“You’d better let Miss Wilson handle this,” said Julie. “Nadia, let me have your phone.”

Nadia handed her phone to Julie, who scrolled through the directory looking for Michelle’s number. Pressing ‘Send’, she waited for the phone to ring. Michelle’s mother picked up on the first ring.

“Hello?” answered Mrs. Everett.

“Hello, Mrs. Everett?” said Julie in a voice that seemed to have aged her by ten years. “This is Miss Wilson. I’m sorry to be calling so late. I hope I didn’t wake you?”

“No, we’re both sitting up, actually. In fact, I’m glad you called. We expected to hear from Michelle an hour ago.”

“Oh, dear, that would be my fault. I’m so sorry, Michelle has been asking me to call you for at least an hour, but I was afraid we would wake you.”

“I see,” said Mrs. Everett. “But still, she should have...”

“Mrs. Everett,” interrupted Julie. “It was such a beautiful evening. And your daughter’s tribute to Mrs. Wally was so touching. You can be so proud of her.”

“Oh, well, thank you,” said Mrs. Everett with obvious pride.

Julie gave a thumbs-up to the other girls in the car, indicating that Michelle's mother was buying it. Mitchell sighed with relief, all the tension being released from him.

"Mrs. Everett, I think I may have mentioned to you, Michelle has organized the girls to do some charity work at the Children's Hospital in the morning."

"Yes, I recall you saying something about that."

"You can imagine, trying to organize this so that everyone has a ride early tomorrow has not been easy. A number of the girls are staying over at Nadia Edward's home this evening, so they can all drive in together in the morning. Mrs. Everett, would it be all right for Michelle to join them? It would simplify things so much."

"No!" said Mitchell, as he quickly figured out what the next step in the girls' plan was. As he reached for the cell phone, Nadia grabbed him and held him back.

"Shhh! She'll hear you," Nadia whispered. Some of the other girls began giggling, and were roundly shushed. Julie clamped her hand over the mouthpiece until the other girls settled down.

"I don't see any problem with that," said Mrs. Everett. "She's slept over at Nadia's many times in the past."

"Thank you Mrs. Everett," said Julie. Some of the girls were starting to giggle again, so she decided to wrap it up quickly. "I've got to go, we'll drop Michelle off at home tomorrow afternoon, goodbye."

"We did it!" shouted Julie in her own voice as she closed the cell phone. All the girls let out a 'Whoop - Hoo!', except for Mitchell. As the other girls hugged him and shared congratulations, he remained in a quiet state of shock at the realization that he would remain Michelle for the rest of the night, and into tomorrow morning. There was so much noise in the car, though, that his silence went completely unnoticed.

"We're here!" said Clarissa as she pulled the car into Nadia's driveway. When she came to a full stop, all the girls poured out of the doors, and pulled overnight bags from the trunk. Apparently everyone else was prepared for a sleepover. Mitchell followed the girls into Nadia's home. He had no other choice; it was too far to walk home from here, and besides, he really didn't want to be on the streets in his cheerleader outfit.

"Hi, Mom, we're home!" called Nadia as she entered the door.

"Hello, dear, I was starting to wonder. How was the movie? How many of you are there? My goodness, I count six. Oh, hello Michelle. Take the girls down to the family room, would you Nadia?"

Mitchell followed Nadia and the other girls down into Nadia's basement. Once settled, all the girls opened their overnight bags, pulling out sleepwear, and removing their clothing. Seeing half the girls with their clothes around their ankles, Mitchell turned to Nadia who, thankfully, was still fully dressed.

"Nadia," he managed to stammer. "You have to take me home. I ... didn't bring anything to wear!"

"Don't be silly," said Nadia. "You know you can borrow anything you need from my room."

When Mitchell simply stood there with his mouth open Nadia continued, "Well, are you going? Go, to my room, right?"

Mitchell edged his way out of the basement, Nadia following him all the way. When he reached the stairs he ran to the top. Nadia just shook her head at her friend's odd behavior.

Mitchell went to the top floor, and quickly determined which room was Nadia's. Stepping inside, he turned on the light and closed the door.

"Please have pajamas, please have pajamas," he chanted under his breath as he searched through Nadia's drawers. Normally, he might have been fascinated to have free rein to look through a girl's private things. He might even have found it exciting. However, knowing that he was already wearing similar items, and might just find himself wearing more in the very near future, took some of the fun out of it.

Mitchell found many wondrous and inexplicable things in Nadia's drawers, but he didn't find any pajamas. He didn't find anything that he thought might be considered sleepwear. Frustrated, he turned to Nadia's closet.

Nadia's closet was filled with the kind of things you'd expect to find in a teenage girl's closet. Dresses and skirts, blouses and sweaters, jackets and slippers and camisoles and hundreds of shoes, but no sleepwear. Finally, at the very back, he found a nightie.

Mitchell pulled it out and looked at it. "No, no," he said quietly. Except there was nothing else.

It was a short satin nighty with spaghetti straps, low cut in the front. It was white, with rose pink lace detailing drawing the eye to the cleavage. It had matching panties. Mitchell dropped it on the bed, and looked through the entire room one more time.

It was no use. This was the only item of sleepwear in the room. Mitchell looked at the nightie, laid out on Nadia's bed. He took a couple of deep breaths, then began changing out of his cheerleader uniform.

Down in the basement, the party was well under way. The other girls were all talking, discussing whether they should watch a film and which one, when Mitchell made his way hesitantly down the basement steps. When the first girl saw him, she gave a wolf whistle. The others looked, and howled in appreciation as one.

"Michelle, you are gorgeous, girl!" they called.

"Michelle, where did you find this?" asked Nadia.

"You said I could wear anything in your room," said Mitchell, turning red. "This was in your closet."

"Really?" said Nadia. "The little closet with my pajamas, or the big one?"

"You have TWO closets?" said Mitchell.

"I think this is probably my mother's," said Nadia. "You can wear it, it's so cute, but try not to let her see you."

Just at that moment, the basement door opened, and Nadia's mother came down the stairs. "Hi, girls, I made some popcorn, I assume you're going to be up for a while."

She handed out bowls of popcorn to the girls, as Mitchell stood in the middle of the room in her nightie. Finally she turned to him.

"Michelle, that is so cute on you! Where did you find it? I can't think when I last saw that. Here, have some popcorn."

As she left, Nadia turned to Mitchell. "Well, Michelle, I guess she doesn't mind, so you can wear it."

"Just great," said Mitchell, sitting down to watch the movie.

The credits rolled across the screen, but Mitchell continued to watch as if fascinated. The alternative, as it had been for the past two hours, would have been to join in conversation with the other girls. Dressed in his skimpy nighty, Mitchell just didn't think he could do that. Watching 'Listless in Detroit' was not his idea of a fun evening, but at least it allowed him to avoid talking to the other girls.

Mitchell had managed to avoid participating in most of the evening's activities. He had stayed out of the conversations, avoided the giggling, and abstained from the pillow fights and makeovers. When anyone spoke to him, he simply watched the TV as if fascinated.

"Michelle, how was the movie?" asked Nadia. Mitchell continued to stare at the rolling credits. "Michelle?" asked Nadia as she turned off the TV.

"Hmm? Uh, wha...?" stammered Mitchell. "Oh, I wanted to watch the end." When Nadia just stared at him, he continued, "You know, how, sometimes after the credits, they have a short scene? It can be, you know, funny?"

Nadia looked at Mitchell, a curious expression on her face. Then she laughed. "You are too funny tonight," she said.

Nadia turned to the other girls, most of whom seemed to finally be running out of steam. "Okay, for beds tonight, we have the pull-out bed in the couch for two..."

"Called it!" said Clarissa.

"Called it," responded Nadia. "There's also my pink Strawberry Kitty sleeping bag..."

"Called it," said another girl. Mitchell started to wonder what to do. He needed somewhere to sleep, but he didn't know what the options were. He needed to call something, but what?

"We also have my father's camping bag..."

"Called it!" yelled out Mitchell, realizing this was the perfect option for him.

"... for two," continued Nadia.

"Called it," said Julie.

Nadia turned to the last girl. "That leaves blankets and couch cushions for you to sleep on. Come on, I'll help you get them ready."

Julie approached Mitchell, the camping bag in her arms. "Come on, Michelle, let's get ready." The other girls were busy preparing their sleeping arrangements, some already settling down.

Mitchell helped Julie to untie the bag, then roll it out on the floor. Julie slipped into the bag, inviting Mitchell to join her.

"I guess we have to share a pillow," she said. "Michelle? Are you getting in?"

Mitchell didn't think he could face Julie, so when he finally climbed into the bag, he climbed in behind her. After an uncomfortable silence, Julie whispered to him.

"Michelle, are you wearing a pad?" she asked.

Mitchell wasn't sure what she meant. "Um, maybe. Why do you ask?"

"It's just that something in your panties is poking me."

Mitchell tried to pull away, except there was very little room in the sleeping bag. Julie rolled over to face him. "It's all right, this should be better," she told him, as they tried to readjust to the new position. Julie was facing Mitchell, their heads resting on the same pillow, their noses touching. Julie put her arms around Mitchell, and he was forced to put his arms around her.

"I'm glad we're together," whispered Julie. "There's something I wanted to ask you all night."

"Mmm, hmm?" said Mitchell, afraid to move his lips as he didn't trust them this close to Julie's.

"Do you have a brother Mitchell?" asked Julie.

N... I mean, yes," answered Mitchell, slightly taken aback at hearing his own name for the first time all evening.

"I thought so," said Julie. "You two look a lot alike, you know."

"So I've been told."

"I've seen him around school," continued Julie. "He's really cute, but he's, like, a year ahead of me, and I don't expect he's ever noticed me."

"Actually, I know that he has noticed you," Mitchell told her.

"Really?" asked Julie hopefully. Then she realized, "Oh, thanks, but how would you know that?"

"Trust me," said Mitchell. "I know a lot about Mitchell." In fact, he knew that Mitchell's attraction was growing with every touch, every sound, every sight and scent from this exquisite girl.

Julie brushed her fingers up and down Mitchell's back distractedly. "He must have lot's of girls interested in him," she said sadly. "I don't suppose he'd ever be interested in me."

"I'll talk to him tomorrow," said Mitchell. "I guarantee, he's going to ask you out for tomorrow night."

"Really?" squealed Julie, as she hugged Mitchell tight. She kissed him gently, then said with a yawn, "You hardly know me, but you're being so sweet. Thank you, Michelle."

"No problem," Mitchell managed to squeak out. But Julie didn't hear. She was already fast asleep, dreaming she was in Mitchell's arms and not Michelle's.

Chapter 3 - Back to Earth

"Get up!" yelled her father, slapping Michelle on the rump. "I need you out at the truck in fifteen minutes."

Michelle had been facing the wall, but spun around at the rude awakening. Her father was already walking out the door – Mitchell's bedroom door. Michelle couldn't quite figure out what was happening. Then she remembered.

"Ewww!" she said, realizing she had slept all night in her brother's bed. She jumped to her feet, but then realized, she was wearing only her strapless bra and panties. Quickly closing the door, she stopped to think.

"Okay, no problem," she realized. "I just need to get to my own room, and wake Mitchell. I just need something to wear in the hallway."

Looking around, Michelle realized her best option was Mitchell's housecoat. "Ewww, disgusting," she said as she put it on. Picking up her dress and shoes from the previous night, she moved to the door, listening for her parents.

Michelle opened the bedroom door, and stepped into the hall. Realizing she was alone, she confidently walked to her own bedroom and snuck inside, closing the door behind her. After laying her clothes out on her own desk chair, she turned to wake Mitchell. Except he wasn't there.

Michelle turned away, and looked again. Mitchell still wasn't there. Not only wasn't he there, but the bed hadn't even been slept in.

"Where would he go?" she said aloud. She did a quick sweep of the room, just to make sure he wasn't under the bed. He wasn't. Confused, Michelle considered her options. Switching to a sports bra that would help her to pass better for her brother, she put Mitchell's housecoat on again, then left her room and called down from the top of the stairs.

"Mom?" she said in her best Mitchell-impersonation. "Where's Michelle?"

"Not here," said her mother unhelpfully.

"Yes, but where is she?" Michelle asked.

"I'm not going to hold a conversation by yelling across the entire house!" yelled her mother. "How many times do I have to tell you, come down if you want to talk to me!"

Michelle's father was coming up the stairs. "Don't worry about your sister. You've got ten minutes." As he passed Michelle he stopped, confusion on his face, and turned back to her.

"Are you wearing mascara?" he asked.

"What? No, of course not," Michelle said, keeping her head down as she turned away from her Dad. Spotting the bathroom, she slipped inside and closed the door behind her.

She needed to get downstairs and find Mitchell. Where was he, and why was he being so useless? Wherever he was, it seemed he was still pretending to be her, so she would have to be him. Michelle quickly washed off her makeup from the previous evening. She almost reapplied new makeup before she caught herself.

Michelle's mother was waiting in the kitchen. "What can I make you for breakfast, Mitchell?"

"Just toast and juice," said Michelle.

"Is that all? You need more, you're going to be working hard today."

"Mom," interrupted Michelle. "Where is Michelle?"

"She stayed over at Nadia's last night," her mother replied.

"What?" said Michelle. "No, she was grounded!" Why would Mitchell sleep over at Nadia's house?

"Don't worry about your sister, you've got enough to think about today already," said her mother as she placed a plate of pancakes and bacon in front of her. "Now hurry, your Dad's waiting."

Michelle took one look at the huge plate of food, and was nearly nauseous. She picked up a piece of dry toast instead, and ran from the room.

As she rounded the stairs, Michelle realized what must have happened. "That little creep," she thought aloud. "Somehow he convinced Mom and Dad to let him go out. He's not at Nadia's, he's probably over at that idiot Steve's house."

By the time she reached the top of the steps, she had formulated a plan. She would get dressed, sneak out of the house, and spend the day with her friend Nadia. Her parents already thought she was doing that, anyway. And if Mitchell got into trouble for disobeying their Dad, it was his own fault.

Except, as she reached for her bedroom door, her father came out of his bedroom and looked at her. He came up to her, looking closely, as if trying to figure something out. Then the moment passed.

"Five minutes," he told her. He continued to stand in the hallway, watching her. Michelle walked slowly away from her own door, toward Mitchell's. Her father watched until she was in Mitchell's room, with the door closed.

Michelle waited, listening at the door. The hallway was filled with the noise of her parents, coming and going about their tasks. She wasn't going to have an opportunity to sneak into her own room!

"Come on, time to go," called her father from the other side of the door.

"Okay, just one more minute," she called back. Seeing no other option, Michelle resolved herself.

"I need to wear something," she realized. Finding a pair of jeans in the closet (at least they were clean!), Michelle slipped them over her own panties. She put on a T-shirt, but

her bra still showed through, so she placed a loose shirt over top of that. Mitchell's runners were a bit big, but not too bad. A baseball cap finished the outfit. Then she stepped out of the window, onto the garage roof. There was no way she was going to play Mitchell with her father all day!

As she made her escape from the roof and down from the fence, Michelle finalized her plan. She would make her way over to Nadia's. The loose shirt and baseball cap would make sure no one realized it was her dressed like this, without makeup! Once at Nadia's she could ditch the clothes. Nadia would lend her something to wear and some makeup, and this nightmare would be over.

Except Michelle's plans hit a serious complication when she ran into her father at the front of the house.

"Right on time, get in the truck."

Mitchell woke. The sun felt warm on his face, and he stretched as he looked up at the blue sky. Everything was perfect; everything was exactly as it should be. Mitchell was completely at peace.

"Good morning, Mitchell. I just wanted to thank you again for last night."

Mitchell looked to his left. Lying at his side was a beautiful girl. Thinking back, he remembered her from the night before. She was everything he could ever want in a woman. Mitchell rolled onto his side, as she snuggled her head into his shoulder. He brushed the hair away from her face and looked into her eyes.

"Hey, my pleasure," he replied. "It's all good, baby."

The girl giggled. "Mitchell, what's with your voice?"

"My voice?" said Mitchell, puzzled.

The girl started to laugh. "Stop it, you're tickling me! Stop it, Michelle!"

Mitchell was startled awake. Julie was squirming in the sleeping bag, laughing. Mitchell found that his arms were wrapped around her, but he couldn't quite figure out where his hands were. He pulled his hands away, although he couldn't get far in the confines of the bag.

Julie settled down, still giggling lightly. "Michelle, I can't believe you would do that!" she said. "I was barely even awake!"

"I didn't..." stuttered Mitchell apologetically. "I was still..."

Julie laughed again, pushing the pillow at Mitchell. "Michelle, what's with your voice?"

Mitchell was using his own voice! After pretending to cough a few times he responded as Michelle, "My throat is just a bit dry."

Julie giggled a few more times, giving Mitchell a mischievous look. Mitchell wasn't sure what she had planned, but whatever it was it was cut short as the basement door opened.

"Well, it's about time you girls got up," said Nadia's mother kindly. She came down the stairs, and started fussing with some of the bedding. Mitchell and Julie simply lay on

the floor as the woman worked around them. "The other girls left about an hour ago. Nadia's upstairs. She's already had her breakfast, but I'll get something for you girls when you get up."

Mrs. Edwards picked up an armload of sheets and blankets, and disappeared up the steps.

Julie looked back at Mitchell, the mischief still in her eyes, but a hint of a question as well.

"Breakfast?" said Mitchell, realizing he had about two seconds to avoid a tickle fight.

Julie's face didn't change for a moment, but finally she nodded. "Breakfast," she responded. "But I am so going to get you later, Michelle!" she added playfully.



Julie struggled past Mitchell, every part of her body rubbing against every part of his as she emerged from the tight sleeping bag. Once she was gone Mitchell composed himself, straightened his nighty while thinking about baseball, then extricated himself from the bag. He followed Julie as she bounced up the stairs.

Mitchell exited the basement, and watched as Julie continued to bounce down the hall to the kitchen. When he went to follow, though, he was stopped short. Something grabbed his hand and spun him backward into a tight bear hug of an embrace.

"Michelle, you are looking incredibly hot!" said the bear. As he was lifted and cradled in the bear's arms, Mitchell recognized Nadia's older brother. "Why didn't I ever notice you, all those years you were hanging around here?"

"Maybe because she wasn't wearing a sexy, low-cut

nighty," said Nadia as she pushed past them in the hall. "Don't hit on my friends, Mike!"

Mike kissed Mitchell as he held him pinned in his arms, then set him on his feet. "We should get together some time."

"Yeah, uh," said Mitchell, stunned. "No, I'm...breakfast," he stammered as he turned and ran. Mike watched the flip of Mitchell's skirt appreciatively.

Mitchell closed the kitchen door behind himself. Mrs. Edwards told him, "Just sit anywhere, Michelle. Breakfast is almost ready."

Mitchell turned to face the room. Nadia and Julie were already seated in the small breakfast nook, as was Nadia's father. Mr. Edwards had a shocked expression on his face. This was possibly because he was not used to seeing so much exposed female flesh in his kitchen. It could also have been that he recognized Mitchell's nighty from a prior, passionate occasion. Naturally, the only seat left was beside Nadia's father.

Mitchell padded barefoot across the kitchen floor to the last available seat, and sat next to Mr. Edwards. For his part, Mr. Edwards had the good grace to look extremely uncomfortable.

"Good morning, Mr. Edwards," Mitchell said without looking up.

"Good morning Michelle," replied Nadia's father as he stole a quick glance at Mitchell, his face turning scarlet for the effort.

Mrs. Edwards served the breakfast, a small one-egg omelet and half a grapefruit for each of the girls, and a large three-egg omelet with strips of bacon for her husband. Nadia and Julie talked animatedly about their plans for the day. Mitchell pretended to listen, while Nadia's father stole quick glances at him.

Mr. Edwards finished his breakfast quickly, then stood and pushed his way past Mitchell. He whispered a few words in his wife's ear, then left quickly.

Nadia's mother spoke to the girls. "Everyone have everything they need? Good. Then, I have to take care of something..."

Mrs. Edwards left the kitchen, to join her husband in their bedroom. Mitchell turned a bright red just thinking about it.

When they were finished, the girls stood and carried their dishes to the counter. Then they left the kitchen, walking toward Nadia's bedroom.

"So what do you think, Michelle?" asked Nadia. "Go to the mall? Call some guys? What do you want to do?"

Mitchell just wanted to go home, as soon as possible. "Thanks, but I can't stay around today," he said. "I need to get home."

"Michelle," said Nadia, looking at her friend. "What's wrong with you? You can't go home."

"I can't?" said Mitchell, puzzled.

"Of course not!" said Julie. "Your parents think you're at the children's hospital, doing charity work! You'll be busted if you show up at home."

“Why would you want to go home, anyway?” asked Nadia. “We went to all this effort to break you out. What a waste if you just go right back home.”

If he could just get back home for five minutes, he could be back in his own clothes. This nightmare would be over. He needed some excuse, any excuse to get back home! Spotting Michelle’s cheerleader uniform lying on Nadia’s bed, he knew what to say.

“I can’t spend another day dressed like a cheerleader!” he cried. The sentiment was so close to his true feelings, he actually started to cry.

“Well of course, I’m going to lend you something to wear,” said Nadia, unaware of his distress.

“Here’s your purse, Michelle,” she said, picking the bag off her bed and handing it to Mitchell. “You two go do your makeup, and I’ll pick out something for you to wear.”

Mitchell followed Julie into the bathroom, where Julie began arranging her own makeup items on the counter. Not knowing what to do, Mitchell opened his purse and pulled out all the makeup he found there, arranging it on the counter as well.

What followed was like an elaborate game of Mirror. Mitchell watched Julie as she applied her makeup, and imitated everything she did on his own face. When she picked up an eyeliner, he picked up his. When she used hers to draw a line below her lower lashes, he did the same. When Julie opened her eyes wide to apply mascara to her lashes, Mitchell opened his eyes wide to apply mascara.

“Do you remember last night?” asked Julie as she applied her eyeshadow.

“Um, what part?” asked Mitchell, hurrying to keep up.

“We were talking about your brother? You thought he might want to go out tonight?”

“Oh, yes!” said Mitchell. “Of course I remember.”

“Maybe we could call him, after we get dressed,” suggested Julie, making a face as she applied some color to her cheeks.

Mitchell made the same face, and brushed color on his own cheeks. He wasn’t sure how he could manage to phone himself. “I’ll go home and talk to him. Believe me, he wants to take you out tonight.”

“But you can’t go home, at least not until late this afternoon!” complained Julie as she blended the color on her cheeks. “Then it might be too late! Please, let’s call him.”

Mitchell thought as he blended his own makeup. He didn’t know how he could, but... “Sure, we can call him.”

“Thanks Michelle, you’re the best!” said Julie with a smile. She painted the smile a deep crimson with her lipstick. Mitchell smiled as well, although he didn’t exactly feel like it, and painted his own lips.

“There!” said Julie, with a smack of her lips toward her reflection in the mirror. Then she turned to look at Mitchell. “Michelle, is anything wrong?”

“Why do you ask?” asked Mitchell as he smacked his lips at himself in the mirror.

“It’s just, your makeup is kind of smudged.”

"Oh, it's just," said Mitchell, trying to think of an excuse. "I'm a little shaky this morning, after all the trouble last night."

"Here, let me help you," said Julie as she picked up a sponge, and helped fix Mitchell's makeup. "Can I brush your hair for you?" she asked when she was done.

"Um, sure, thanks," said Mitchell. He sat quietly on the side of the tub, as Julie sat beside him, gently brushing his long hair into a pretty, feminine style.

The two girls left the bathroom, and found Nadia already dressed and waiting for them.

"Michelle, I've laid out some clothes for you on my bed. Get dressed and come join us downstairs!" Nadia took Julie's hand, and led her down to the basement to get dressed. Mitchell went into Nadia's bedroom to get changed.

In Nadia's bedroom, Mitchell found Michelle's cheerleader uniform had been folded and set aside. His own, comfortable underwear was nowhere to be found. He imagined it probably raised some questions, but was likely tossed into the household laundry to eventually become Mike's or Mr. Edwards'.

In its place he found a pair of pale yellow panties, Nadia's, he supposed. He also found his sister's bra, and a new pair of pantyhose. The clothes he was to wear were folded on the bed. He left them there as he removed his nighty and quickly changed into his bra and panties, not wanting to be caught naked in Nadia's room. He struggled into the pantyhose, stalling, not wanting to look at what Nadia had chosen for him to wear.

Standing in his bra, panties, pantyhose, and perfect makeup, he stared at the tiny square of folded cloth. Mitchell knew he had to wear it, whatever it was, but he needed a moment to prepare himself.

Finally Mitchell reached down, picked up the clothing by the collar and let it fall out in front of him. Without thinking he pulled it over his head, not wanting to see what it was. He pushed his arms into the sleeves and his head through the neck, working the clothing down his body, straightening it with his eyes tightly closed. He found a few buttons – none above chest level – and so did them up. He pulled his hair through the neck hole, tousling it so it fell down his back. He noticed that there seemed to be a belt hanging loose, so he pulled it tight and fastened it. Looking up so he still couldn't see, he opened his eyes.

Nadia had a full-length mirror in her room. Mitchell stepped in front of it, still looking up. When he was ready, he looked into the mirror. Staring back was his sister Michelle, wearing the cutest little dress he had ever seen. It was a pretty yellow cotton summer dress, short sleeved, low-cut, and belted. But it was the length, or possibly lack of length, that immediately caught Mitchell's attention! The pretty yellow dress barely covered his bottom. In fact, almost any movement on his part seemed to bring a flash of panties from beneath the skirt. Mitchell tried loosening the belt one notch, and was relieved to see that the dress fell another half inch.

Looking down, his sister in the mirror noticed the tiny yellow shoes that had been left for her to wear. She slipped her feet into the shoes, standing awkwardly on the two-inch heels as if unused to them.

His sister was a very pretty girl. Mitchell had always known that, even though it's not something you like to admit about your sister. Except, this wasn't Michelle! It was *him*, looking every bit as pretty as his sister ever had. Mitchell started to undo the belt. He was not wearing this dress!

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know anyone was in here," apologized Mrs. Edwards as she opened the door.

"That's all right," said an embarrassed Mitchell. He couldn't take off the dress; he had nothing else to change into. The only other thing he could think was to get out of there, as quickly as possible. "I was just leaving!"

Mitchell rushed past Mrs. Edwards, redoing the belt on his dress and having difficulty with his heels when he ran straight into Nadia's father. Mitchell tripped and fell, but Mr. Edwards caught him. Mitchell looked up into Mr. Edwards' eyes as he was held in the man's arms. Mr. Edwards finally set him upright, holding him for a moment until Mitchell found his balance.

"Thank you, Mr. Edwards," he said, struggling from the man's embrace. Mitchell ran down the stairs as fast as he could manage in his pumps.

Mr. Edwards looked shocked for a moment, then nodded for his wife to follow as he went back into their bedroom.

"Oh dear, so much for getting any work done today," she said to herself as she entered the room, closing the door behind her.

"There you are," said Julie as Mitchell reached the first floor. Taking a closer look at Mitchell she told him, "You need to tighten your belt. There now, that looks incredible, the way that dress curves in at your waist!"

"Uh, right, thanks," said Mitchell, noting how Julie had pulled the belt two notches, causing his hem to rise at least an inch.

"Can we call your brother now, please?" pleaded Julie.

Mitchell collected himself and said, "Okay, sure. But he might not be home." Mitchell knew he wouldn't be home!

"Do you think he'll get a message if we leave one?" asked Julie.

"I know he will," said Mitchell. The two girls found Nadia's cell phone in the living room, and Mitchell entered the number.

After a couple of rings, Mitchell's mother answered. Suddenly, he wasn't sure what to do. Michelle was probably sitting at home right now, in the kitchen with his mother! What would his mother think if she heard Michelle on the phone as well? Except he had to use Michelle's voice; Julie was right beside him!

"Hello?" repeated his mother.

"Um, Mitchell please," he said quickly.

"I'm sorry, he's not in right now. He's gone out with his father," he was told.

"Could you tell him... wait, where is he?"

"He's gone out to work with his father today. Michelle, is that you?"

"Uh, yes, hi Mom," he stammered. "Um, where did you say Mitchell is?"

"He's gone out with your father."

"So, Mom," said Mitchell, trying to sound casual. "Did you actually see him today?"

"Yes, of course," she replied. "I gave him breakfast, then he got dressed and I saw him get into the truck with your father. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, no reason," said Mitchell, trying to picture this. He had assumed his biggest problem in getting his own life back would be avoiding anyone seeing two Michelles, but what had happened at home while he was away? Was Michelle pretending to be him? Why would she do that?

"Hello, Michelle?" said his mother. "Are you still there?"

"Yes, yes, I'm here," said Mitchell, gathering his thoughts.

"Leave a message!" whispered Julie, quite loudly.

Whatever was going on, it should be straightened out by tonight. Mitchell decided to leave a message for himself.

"Can you give Mitchell a message, please? Tell him he has to be at Cheval Dégoûtant, tonight at 7:00. Tell him it's very important." This made Julie smile.

"I'll let him know," said his mother. "Michelle, how did things go last night? Are you at the..."

"Gotta go, Mom," Mitchell interrupted. "See you later."

Julie could hardly contain herself. When Mitchell hung up the phone, she threw herself at him.

"Cheval Dégoûtant!" she cried. "That's so elegant. Is he really taking me there?"

"I told you," said Mitchell. "He really likes you. He's going to want to show you a beautiful evening."

Julie gave Mitchell a hug and a kiss. "This is so great! I'm going to go tell Nadia! Maybe I can buy a new dress at the mall."

When Mitchell saw that Julie was gone, he picked up the phone to call the restaurant, and made a reservation for two.

Mr. Everett inspected the drywall sheet Michelle had just dropped in the Construction Warehouse parking lot. The corner was smashed, but he decided it might still be useable, maybe in a corner, if they cut off the broken edge. His look of concentrated calculation turned to barely controlled anger as he turned to his daughter.

"Damn it, boy, what's the matter with you today?" he asked. He bent to pick up one end of the eight-foot sheet as he continued. "All you need to do is hold onto your end, and you can't even do that. Well, what are you waiting for? Pick it up."

Michelle struggled to lift her end of the sheet. "I couldn't help it, it slipped. I've already carried, like, ten of these things already. They're heavy!"

"They're not heavy. They're only 80 pounds, and I'm carrying most of the weight. All you had to do was balance your end, and you couldn't even do that," he berated her as they slid the sheet on top of the others in the back of the truck.

It had been a long day for Michelle. She had been helping her father all morning, hauling construction equipment and supplies in the back of his truck. It was difficult work, and Michelle was not used to heavy lifting. She was almost ready to cry as she sat in the passenger seat.

"Are we done yet?" she asked as her father climbed into the driver's seat.

"Done?" he replied. "No, we're not done. We haven't even started. We haven't even been to the site yet." He started the truck, and backed out of his parking spot.

"Well, can I go home?" asked Michelle. "I've got a lot of things to do today."

"Mitch," said her father, trying to be patient. "I asked you last week if you could help me today. You said you would. Now I'm counting on you. So, would you please stop this childish whining? This was supposed to be fun, you and me, working together. I wanted to teach you about construction."

"I don't need to know about construction," sulked Michelle.

"Every man needs to know about construction. One day, you'll want to renovate your basement, then all this will make sense to you." Mr. Everett pulled out of the parking lot, into traffic.

"I'll hire someone to do it for me," she said.

"Then you better understand construction, to make sure they're doing it properly," said her father as he made a left turn.

"It's so boring," she said as if to herself. She turned to her father and added, "We spent half an hour looking at a wall of screws."

"There are a lot of different kinds of screws. A different kind for every job. You need to know the difference; it can save you a lot of time and effort. Use the wrong kind of screw, and you may have to tear the job down and start over."

"Okay, okay, I get it," said Michelle, twirling her hair around her fingers. "Screws are important, wood is important, big heavy boards are important. Can I go home now? I've got things I need to do." Michelle pushed her hair back from her face, tucking it neatly behind her ear with her little finger.

Mr. Everett watched Michelle as she played with her hair. He had really tried to be patient, to keep his temper in check. He had thought that Mitchell had been looking forward to working together as much as he had. To find out that his son was not only unwilling to work with him, but was also almost useless when he did, was disappointing. To find out that his son would whine like a spoiled child rather than help out was infuriating. But to watch him making effeminate gestures with his long hair was more than the man could stand.

"Fine," he said. "I can see this was a big mistake. We have one more stop to make, then you can go home."

"Thank God," said Michelle. "I want to wash my hands."

Mr. Everett pulled the truck to the side of the road, stopped the engine, and got out. "Come on, let's go," he said to Michelle.

Michelle opened the door and stepped down from the truck, then followed her father down the street. He walked into one of the shops, and she followed. She decided to be cooperative; the sooner they finished this, the sooner she could go home! Michelle was feeling filthy, exhausted, and very angry at her stupid brother who had gotten her into this mess. Michelle looked around the shop.

"What are we doing here?" she asked.

Her father ignored the question, addressing the shop owner instead. "Got room for one right now, Stan?"

The man turned to face them. "You were just in here last week, Ben. What do you need, just a trim?"

"Hardly," he replied, grabbing Michelle by the collar and pulling her into the barber chair before she knew what was happening. "We need this one to look like a man."

"Happy to oblige," said the barber, picking up his scissors.

"Hey, wait, no!" cried Michelle, forgetting to use her Mitchell voice as her father held her down in the chair. "Dad, I'll come with you! Really, I want to help. Daddy, please don't do this!"

Her father ignored her as he grabbed her hair in a huge, thick ponytail. Gesturing to Stan for the scissors he asked, "Do you mind?"

"Be my guest," replied Stan, handing them over.

Michelle had to tell the truth, it was the only way out. "Daddy, please, I'm not..." she said through her tears. She stared into her lap as her father dropped a good foot of hair into it. "Nooo!" she shrieked.

"Stop blubbering, you're starting to sound like a girl," her father told her. Then he turned to the barber. "Think you can finish him up from here?"

"Oh, I'm pretty sure I know what to do," joked the barber.

Mr. Everett gave the man \$20. "That should cover it. Give him \$2 change when you're done, so he can catch the bus home."

"Thanks Ben," said the barber as Michelle's father left the shop. Then he turned to Michelle, still in shock in the chair.

Michelle looked at herself in the mirror. Her hair was gone. Well, not all of it, of course. Where before it had extended far down her back, it was now chopped bluntly so that it barely reached her shoulders. Michelle wanted to cry. Oh, right, she already was.

"Come on son," the barber tried to console her as he tied an apron around her neck. "It's going to be fine. Tell you what, you can choose any style you want. Just point to a picture on the wall."

Michelle looked at the pictures. They all looked the same; they all looked like they were taken in the 1950s. "Any of these?" she asked.

"Sure, it's up to you. The ladies really go for this one," said Stan, pointing out one of the photos.

Michelle knew this wasn't the case, as she considered the guy in the photo to be a hopeless nerd. She looked again at her ponytail, now on the floor, under Stan's shoe. She wanted to cry again, but knew that she couldn't, not now. She had to get out, except Stan had strategically placed himself between her and the door. And he was holding scissors.

"Can I look at that one?" she said, standing as she pointed to one on the back wall.



"Sure, take your time," said the barber. "We got all day."

Michelle crossed to the back of the shop, looking at the photo. When she was out of Stan's reach, she bolted through the door to the back office, slamming it behind her. The door had a lock; she flipped the switch.

"Give me strength," said Stan under his breath. "Son, you're not allowed in there. And it doesn't have a back door." When Michelle didn't answer he tried the knob. With a sigh he reached into his pocket. "You know, I have the key."

While Stan looked through his keys, Michelle looked around the small office. There was no back door, just like Stan had said. But there was a small window. Michelle pushed for all she was worth, breaking the bonds from years of paint that held the window like glue. As soon as it swung free she climbed out head first, falling to the pavement on the other side. Michelle tore the apron from her neck as she ran, tossing it to the ground behind her.

Stan watched her from the window. "That boy runs funny. Hmmm," he said, turning his attention to the window. "I never knew this could open."

"This is so much fun!" said Mrs. Edwards enthusiastically. "I'm so glad I let you girls talk me into bringing you here."

"Yes, thanks Mom!" said Nadia with a hug. "You know how much I love it when you bring me to the spa."

"Today is my treat, anything you girls want," said Mrs. Edwards.

"Really?" said Julie enthusiastically. "Thank you so much!"

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Edwards," said Mitchell, with slightly less enthusiasm.

"Please, you don't have to call me Mrs. Edwards," she said. "Call me Sandra. Today, I'm just one of the girls, like you," she told him.

"Okay, Sandra," said Mitchell hesitantly.

"Can we get a seaweed wrap?" asked Nadia.

"Sure, whatever you girls want," said Mrs. Edwards.

"What is that?" asked Mitchell.

"It's wonderful," replied Mrs. Edwards. "They cover you from your neck to your ankles in seaweed."

It didn't sound wonderful to Mitchell. It sounded incomprehensible. It also sounded like something you did while naked, which he really wanted to avoid.

"I think I might be allergic," he said.

"Full-body massage?" suggested Julie.

Another naked activity. "What else?" asked Mitchell, studying the board for anything that could be done while remaining clothed.

"There's always a facial," said Mrs. Edwards.

Mitchell weighed his options. "A facial sounds so great," he said with feigned enthusiasm.

"Me too!" agreed Nadia.

"Me three!" giggled Julie. "I want to look beautiful for Mitchell tonight." Mitchell couldn't help himself – this brought a huge smile to his bright red lips.

"Well, Michelle," said Mrs. Edwards. "With that kind of enthusiasm, how could I say no? You girls can each have a facial, but I think I'll still have the seaweed wrap. I'll catch up with you later."

Mrs. Edwards was escorted to a private room at the back of the shop, while the three girls were taken off to the side by a young woman. "We can take all three of you in a few minutes, but there's one chair available right now. So, who's first?"

"This was your choice, Michelle. You go first," agreed the other girls.

Mitchell turned hesitantly, then sat in the chair while attempting to tug his dress down. The woman sat beside him, and reclined the chair so she could work on his face. Nadia

and Julie chatted beside Mitchell as he waited nervously for the facial to begin. He didn't have to wait long, as the woman tied a pretty apron around his neck, then began to remove his makeup with cleanser and cotton balls.

"This is great," said Julie. "It's like we're getting a preview of what to expect."

"We've both been here before, so Michelle knows what to expect," said Nadia. "Remember my sixteenth birthday, Michelle? We had facials, and complete makeovers."

"Yes, of course," lied Mitchell. "It was so amazing." He was starting to find the woman's stroking of his face soothing. He closed his eyes; he could almost fall asleep like this.

"Will we be getting makeovers?" asked Julie. "That would be the best. I want to look good so badly for Mitchell tonight." This made Mitchell smile.

"Of course," said Nadia. "Anything you want."

Nadia and Julie continued to watch as the woman spread warm wax over Mitchell's forehead. Mitchell smiled, it felt so good as she pressed a cloth strip down firmly over each of his eyebrows. He was almost asleep when she pulled the first one.

Mitchell was unable to speak, even though he wanted to scream like a little girl. He tried to sit up except the woman pressed him back into the chair, then ripped the strip from his other eyebrow.

"Ooh, that looks so good now, you really needed your eyebrows waxed, you know," said Nadia.

"It really does look good, I can't wait to get mine done!" said Julie.

"Is it supposed to hurt this much?" asked Mitchell. The other girls laughed as if he was joking. He wanted to stand and run, and never look back, except Julie was holding his hand.

"Never mind," said the woman, pressing him back into the chair, and going at his eyebrows with a pair of tweezers. "The worst is over now."

Eventually, the chairs on either side of Mitchell became vacant, and Nadia and Julie moved into them. The two girls laughed, and chatted, and thoroughly enjoyed their afternoon at the spa. Their every pore was squeezed and plucked. They received deep cleansing facials and lash tints. Their makeup was redone professionally with the greatest attention to detail. Their cuticles were trimmed, their nails were filed and painted. Their hair was curled and teased and done up into beautiful, feminine styles. And, of course, the same was done to Mitchell. By the end of the afternoon, the three girls were gorgeous.

Chapter 4 -Up in the Air

Michelle entered her front door – finally. It had been a horrible day. She was still filthy from the heavy work she had done in the morning. She was sweaty from her escape from the barbershop. And she was exhausted from having to walk the eight miles home, after discovering she didn't have one cent for the bus.

The walk had not been uneventful, either. She found that she couldn't walk the main streets, after she was nearly spotted by some girls she knew from school. So the walk became that much longer as she navigated back streets. And halfway home, she'd actually been forced to use a men's room. Michelle had never felt so disgusting in her life. But at least she was home. She wanted to just collapse, but first she was going to go upstairs and take her life back. The front door clicked closed behind her.

"Mitchell, is that you?" called her mother from the kitchen.

Was she Mitchell? Michelle wasn't sure. Damn him, she had no idea where he was. For all she knew, there could be another Mitchell in the next room. She wanted to run, or hide, but she wasn't given the chance as her mother came into the front hallway.

"How did it go today, working with your fath...?" Mrs. Everett looked up as she entered, seeing Michelle's hair, and was struck speechless.

"Not very good," said Michelle, trying to make light of the situation. Except she couldn't. She could barely hold herself together as she continued, "Daddy – cut – my hair!"

"Oh dear," said Mrs. Everett as she looked at her daughter's hatchet job. "What with, a saw?"

This was too much for Michelle, and she began to cry. Her mother held her and said, "It's all right, Mitchell. It was time to cut your hair. You just need to get it cut professionally now. This length just isn't right for you. It looks a little too – feminine."

Michelle stopped crying and looked at her mother. "Do you really think so?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm sorry dear, but I'm afraid it's true," she told her.

Michelle sniffled, then hugged her mother. "Oh, thank you, Mom!"

"Oh, you're ... welcome, I guess," she responded as she comforted her daughter. "Now, why don't you go upstairs, dry your tears, and have a shower?"

"Thanks, Mom, that's exactly what I'm going to do." Michelle considered what she would do after she was clean. Putting on her own clothes and makeup, then going out to find Mitchell and stomp him into the dirt sounded like a good plan. "I think I'll go out for a little while after."

"Oh, goodness," said her mother. "I almost forgot. Your sister called, and left you a message."

"My ... sister? Do you mean ... Michelle?"

"Of course, that's the only sister of yours that I know!"

"Except – it's just," said Michelle, trying to figure this out. Was Mitchell actually impersonating her? That didn't make any sense. Why would he be running around town impersonating her? "Never mind, I guess. What did he – she, want?"

"She wants you to meet her at Cheval Dégoûtant, at 7:00. She said it was very important."

"Yeah, I bet it's important," said Michelle, half to herself. If he really was impersonating her, why doesn't he just come home? Maybe it would make more sense after a shower.

Michelle went to Mitchell's room, removed his filthy, sweaty, grimy clothes, and placed them into his laundry basket. She wore his bathrobe, and went to the bathroom for a long, hot shower. Michelle was feeling much better when she finished. She even had a plan, of sorts. She would put on a dress and makeup, go to Cheval Dégoûtant, and stomp Mitchell into the dirt. Yes, this plan would work. Except when she went to her bedroom, her mother was in the hallway.

"Mitchell, I've set out some clothes for you on your bed," she said, indicating Mitchell's room, and thereby implying Mitchell's bed, and Mitchell's clothes.

"Thanks, Mom," said Michelle, hoping the woman would leave. She didn't.

When Michelle didn't move, her mother said, "Come on, I'll show you," and lead her into Mitchell's room. On the bed were a jacket and tie, dress pants, black socks, and black Oxford shoes.

"Hurry and get dressed," said her mother. "You're supposed to be there in half an hour. Do you think your father will be home in time to drive you?"

Her father! She needed to get out before he came home!

"I don't think so. Can I have your car tonight? Thanks Mom, please, I've got to get changed!"

Michelle dressed in Mitchell's best clothes, raced out the door, and drove downtown to meet her brother.

Mrs. Edwards drove up to Mitchell's home, and stopped to let him out. Mitchell stepped lady-like from the rear seat, then turned to speak.

"Goodbye, Mrs. Edwards – I mean Sandra! Thank you for the ride home."

"You're very welcome, dear. We have to hurry now, we still need to get Julie downtown in time for her date!"

"Oh, Julie," said Mitchell. "Don't worry if Mitchell is a little late. Believe me, he's really looking forward to tonight and he'll be there! You really do look gorgeous."

"I hope he thinks so," said Julie.

"I know he will."

"Michelle, you look so beautiful, it's too bad you don't have a date tonight!" said Nadia.

"Thanks, bye, have fun!" said Mitchell as Mrs. Edwards drove off. Then he turned and raced into the house. Hopefully a shower would get rid of the makeup, and make his hair look normal again. Then he needed to get dressed, hopefully he could borrow Mom's car. It was going to be tight, getting to his date with Julie!

"Michelle, you're home," said his mother. Then she took a good look at Mitchell. "My goodness, you look amazing! Michelle, I've never seen you looking so glamorous!"

"Thanks, Mom. I'm in a hurry." Mitchell passed his mother, heading for the stairs.

"By the way," his mother called after him. "I gave your message to your brother."

Mitchell stopped halfway up the stairs and turned. "My ... message?"

"Yes, your message about Cheval Dégoûtant. You just missed him. He looked almost as handsome as you look beautiful."

"Michelle, uh, I mean, Mitchell, has gone on my – his date, with Julie?" This was unbelievably bad!

"Oh, was it a date? I thought he was supposed to meet you. He didn't mention anyone named Julie."

"Yes, I mean no, I mean I, guess it doesn't matter," said Mitchell as he gathered his wits. Finally he decided to say, "Yes, I'm supposed to meet him there. A group of our friends are going. Mom, can I borrow the car?"

"I'm afraid Mitchell already took it. You'll have to get a ride somewhere else."

Who did he know who would be able to drive him? Brian Brentwood would probably come running to help Michelle, but he didn't want to open that can of worms. Then he had an idea. Mitchell dashed down the stairs to the kitchen phone, and dialed.

"Hey, Mitch!" said Steve, seeing the Everett name on call display.

Mitchell's mother was standing right next to him. He couldn't explain things to Steve, and now that he thought about it, he wasn't sure he wanted to. Instead he told him, "Steve, it's not Mitchell. This is Michelle."

"Oh, right," said Steve. "Mitch, I'm never going to fall for that one."

"Steve, I really am Michelle!"

"Wait, are you serious? Who is this?"

"Steve, just shut up. I wouldn't be calling you if it wasn't absolutely urgent. I need you to drive me downtown, to Cheval Dégoûtant."

"What, like a date?"

"No, it definitely is not like a date."

"So you already have a date?"

"No, I don't have a date. I just need you to drive me there. And I need you to do it right now!"

"Okay, I'll pick you up in ten minutes, my love!"

"I am not your ... hello?" Steve had already hung up.

"Are you going to wear your silver dress?" asked his mother. She led him up the stairs to Michelle's room as she continued, "I only ask because it's been out in your room all day. I assume you set it out for your date with Steve?"

"It's not a date," said Mitchell as he was led into his sister's room. The silver dress was where Michelle had left it, together with the matching strapless silver bra, on her dressing table chair.

"Here, let me help you get changed," said his mother, grabbing the bottom of his dress and lifting.

"Mom!" he cried out, pushing his dress back down.

"Now you don't want to muss your pretty hair and makeup. Let me help you. Hands up Sweetie, like a big girl."

Mitchell had no choice. He was trained from childhood to respond to a 'Hands up Sweetie' command without fail, and so raised his hands as his mother lifted his dress up and over his head. Standing in only a bra and panties in front of his mother, he turned away from her. She responded by quickly undoing the bra.

"Come on, change your bra and we'll get you into your pretty dress," he was told.

Mitchell kept his arms tight to his sides, his back to his mother, as he let the bra slide over his arms. He quickly picked up the silver one and covered his chest with it. His mother grabbed both sides from behind, and did it up for him. Then she held out the silver mini-dress for him to put on.

Mitchell lifted his arms, and his mother slid the dress down them. She carefully guided it around his hair and makeup, adjusted it to his curves, then helped him with the zipper. He sat on the bed, and put on Michelle's matching silver shoes with the three-inch heels.

"Oh, Michelle," his mother said as he stood and turned for her. "You look so pretty, I think I'm going to cry."

"Me too," said Mitchell. The doorbell rang.

"It's probably your date," said his mother. "You stay here, don't come down till I call for you!"

"It's not a date!" he yelled after her.

"Mrs. Everett," said Steve as she opened the door. He handed her a half-dozen red roses and said, "You look lovely this evening. These are for you."

"Oh, thank you Steve," she replied, obviously enjoying the flowers. "Michelle will be right down." She turned to the stairs and called.

Mitchell appeared at the top of the stairs. He stepped carefully down the stairs in his heels, his face turning pink with embarrassment.

"These are for you," said Steve, as if in a dream, as he handed Mitchell a dozen red roses. He couldn't tear his gaze away from Mitchell, the girl of his dreams. "For our date."

"Um, thanks, Steve," said Mitchell. "You didn't have to do this. And it's not a date." He turned to his mother, just then noticing that she had received roses as well. "Oh, sheesh. Mom, could you take care of these for me?"

"I'll put them in a vase right away. Have fun, you two."

"Don't worry," said Steve as he walked Mitchell to his car. "This is going to be the best date of her life."

"It's not a ... oh, never mind," said Mitchell as Steve helped him into the car.

Michelle sat at her table in the restaurant, and waited. And waited. This was ridiculous. What was she doing here, dressed like Mitchell? She should never have gone along with this. Mitchell was probably somewhere having a good laugh at her expense.

She had arrived at the restaurant exactly on time, 7:00. So she couldn't have missed him. There was a reservation for two, in Mitchell's name, so for whatever insane reason Mitchell had decided to handle this situation here, in public, rather than at home. Her brother was an idiot.

In the time since she had sat down, she had already chased away the Maitre D', two waiters and a wine steward. Michelle felt as if everyone in the restaurant must be watching her, wondering why she's sitting alone, speculating on the reason, thinking how terrible it must be for 'him'. They had no idea.

Mitchell's clothes were starting to aggravate her. She wasn't used to the heavy materials, the thick jacket, bulky shoes, a tie tight around her neck, her pockets full of wallets and keys. She wanted her purse! She wanted her makeup! And most of all, she wanted her hair.

This was too much. Michelle couldn't wait any longer. Five more minutes, she decided. Five more minutes, then if Mitchell doesn't walk through those doors, she would walk right out.

Michelle watched the doors, daring them to open and let Mitchell in. She had no idea what she would say when she saw him, where she would start, but she knew it was not going to be pretty.

Michelle watched an older couple arrive. The Maitre D' greeted them, and escorted them to a table. They looked at Michelle as they walked past. This was humiliating.

Michelle watched as a young woman arrived. No, not a woman, a teenage girl, younger than herself. She spoke to the woman at the front, who consulted the reservation list.

"Man is she over-the-top," thought Michelle to herself. "Who is she trying to impress? Way too much makeup, the dress is too short and she's trying to show cleavage she doesn't even have."

The girl was led into the restaurant alone. "I hope her date shows up," thought Michelle. "Before someone gets the bright idea to match us up."

Michelle looked back to the front of the restaurant, imagining how she would pounce on Mitchell as he appeared, throwing him to the ground and stomping him. Michelle smiled.

"Hi," said someone nearby. "Um, hi?" she said again.

Michelle turned from looking at the doors. Sitting across from her, at her table, was the slutty girl. Michelle just stared.

"I've always wanted to come here," the girl said nervously. She laughed and continued, "This is such a beautiful room. Have you seen this room?"

"Yes," replied Michelle. "I'm in it."

The girl laughed. "Seriously, though, thank you so much for inviting me."

"Look, are you sure? *I* – invited *you*?"

The girl laughed again. "Well, I guess it was really Michelle. Michelle arranged everything."

"No I didn't," said Michelle, then thought about it. "Wait, how do you know Michelle?"

The girl laughed again. Her laugh was really starting to annoy Michelle. "My friend Nadia introduced us last night, but we've been, like, best friends ever since. You wouldn't believe the things we've been up to!"

"Really," said Michelle. "Why don't you tell me all about it?"

"I'm sorry, monsieur, mademoiselle," said the Maitre D'. "But there is at least a two-hour wait."

"That's alright," said Steve. "Come, my love. I know a nice place just down the block. Dark, romantic, fantastic Italian cuisine. Trust me, you are going to fall in love."

"Steve, would you please, just, shut up," said Mitchell in exasperation. "Are you sure there isn't a small table somewhere, by the kitchen? By the bathroom?"

"We have no such table," replied the Maitre D' with disdain. "Next time, might I suggest you consider making a reservation?"

"Oh!" said Mitchell, his heavily made-up face brightening. "I did! I did make a reservation. It's under the name of Mitchell Everett."

The Maitre D' quickly scanned the reservations list.

"Yes," he said condescendingly. "There is a reservation in that name. However the Everett party has already arrived."

"Yes, we're with them," said Mitchell as he strode into the restaurant as quickly as he could in his three-inch heels. Which was actually pretty quick, as the Maitre D' didn't catch up until Mitchell had located Michelle and Julie.

"Mademoiselle," said the Maitre D'. "This reservation is for two."

"Yes, thanks," said Mitchell. "We'll need two more chairs."

Realizing the alternative was to cause a scene, the Maitre D' called for two chairs to be brought to the small table. Michelle and Julie moved close together to make room for the new chairs that were set up opposite them. Steve sat in one, while the Maitre D' fussed over assisting Mitchell into his.

"Mitch, dude," said Steve. "What did you do to your hair?"

Mitchell looked at his sister closely for the first time, and his mouth hung open at the sight of her chopped hair. "My hair!" he yelled. "I mean, your hair! Our hair!"

Michelle, for the first time today, was not at all concerned about her hair as she stared at her brother. "Who told you that you could wear that dress?" she said in outrage.

"Your mother, that's who!" shot back Mitchell. "Who told you that you could cut – that – hair?"

"You think I wanted to look like this?" she shouted. "While you were going to parties and lounging in spas, I was going through hell!"

"You don't know what hell is until you've had your eyebrows ripped off your face!" yelled Mitchell.

"Guys, guys," said Steve, trying to calm the two. "Mitchell, buddy, Michelle my love. Let's just sit, okay? You're starting to really freak out all the normal people."

Mitchell and Michelle looked around, and noticed that indeed, everyone in the restaurant was staring. The two sat slowly and quietly. When it was obvious that the fireworks had ended, the other patrons picked up their conversations where they had left off, and the restaurant returned to business as usual.



"So, Mitchell," said Mitchell in an attempt to make polite conversation with his sister. "I see you and Julie found each other."

"Is that her name?" said Michelle. Then, seeing her brother prompting her to say more she added, "Yes, we've been having a lovely conversation about her day, your day together. I hope someone thought to take pictures."

"Nadia did," said Julie, trying to join the strained conversation.

"I told Julie that you really like her," said Mitchell, hoping his sister would take a hint and cooperate, just once in her life. "Have you told her how beautiful she looks this evening?"

"No, no, I don't think that ever came up," said Michelle unreasonably.

"Well," said Mitchell. Slowly and carefully he hinted, "You do like her, very much, and you should tell her how beautiful she is."

Michelle thought for a moment, then said, "Yes, I do like

her, very much." Mitchell was visibly relieved to see his sister cooperating, until she continued. "I like her as much as you like your date, Steve."

Michelle gave her brother a look that said, "You first." Mitchell looked horrified, and shook his head at her, the corkscrew curls in his hair swinging left and right. Michelle just stared, until Mitchell relented and turned to Steve.

"Steve," he said reluctantly. Summoning up his courage he put a wide smile on his face and continued, "You look so handsome this evening." Mitchell looked back at Michelle, who encouraged him to continue. "I'm having a wonderful evening with you, and I'm so glad you were able to join me."

"Thank you Michelle," Steve replied. "I knew you would eventually warm up to me." Steve quickly leaned in toward Mitchell, grabbed him before he knew what was happening, and kissed him.

Mitchell squirmed and broke away, then turned to his sister. "Mitchell?" he said, with a look that suggested he wanted to wash his mouth.

Michelle turned to Julie and said, "Julie, you really do look lovely this evening. I'm glad you were able to come, and I've been having a great time."

Mitchell stared at his sister. "That's it?" he said in outrage. "Where's the kiss? I kissed Steve, you have to kiss Julie!"

"No," said Michelle, with mocking laughter in her eyes. "That's not the way I saw it. It looked to me like Steve kissed you, not the other way around."

"Is that so?" said Mitchell, with all the indignation he could muster. "So do you think you can kiss Julie after this?"

Mitchell grabbed Steve by his lapels, and pulled him forward. Mitchell held Steve and kissed him intensely while Michelle and Julie watched in shock.

"There," said Mitchell, looking as if he wanted to spit out his tongue. "Now that was a kiss!"

Michelle looked shocked, but only for a moment. There was fire in her eyes as she told Mitchell, "I think I know what *you* want. *You* want something like this!"

Michelle grabbed Julie, whose eyes went wide as Michelle held her in a passionate embrace, kissing her amorously. When Michelle finally let Julie go, Michelle said to Mitchell, "There! That's what *you* wanted, wasn't it?"

Mitchell was furious. He didn't know why, and it would likely take a year of intense therapy to even begin to understand his emotions. Jealous of another man with Julie? Jealous of himself? Furious with Michelle? It didn't matter. He was beyond reason, and only wanted to hurt Michelle as much as she had hurt him.

"Not quite," he fumed. "This is what I want!"

Mitchell stood, then sat, straddling Steve in his chair and told him, "Steve, you're my new boyfriend!" Facing Steve, he leaned down and kissed him lustfully, holding him by his hair, his ears, anything to keep him from escaping. For his part, Steve flailed his arms, and tried desperately to draw breath.

"I think you're really hoping for something more like this!" Michelle yelled back, as she dragged Julie from her chair and into her lap. Michelle bent over Julie, holding her in her arms, kissing her wildly. Brother and sister continued their respective kisses, watching each other to see who would give in first. They didn't even notice the Maitre D' until he uncharacteristically rapped on the table for their attention.

"Please!" he called out. "Messieurs, mademoiselles, this is too much!"

Mitchell and Michelle suddenly realized the spectacle they had become, and released their respective dates. With everyone back in his or her proper seats, the Maitre D' continued.

"Should I bring the waiter to take your order?" he asked.

Mitchell picked up his menu. "I think we need a couple of minutes, thank you."

"Fine," replied the Maitre D'. "You shall have a couple of minutes, and I will go turn up the air conditioning."

Everyone studied his or her menus in silence. After a few moments, Mitchell put down his, and addressed the group.

"I need to go to, uh, the ... ladies' room," he said. He tried to send a message with his eyes to Michelle across the table, but she wasn't receiving.

"Oh!" said Julie, picking up on his hesitation. "Did you want me to come with you?"

"Oh, gee, thanks, but no," Mitchell told her. "Mitchell, could you please come with me?"

Michelle looked around the group, and then realization dawned on her. "Yes! Of course." She stood, and followed her brother to the ladies' room.

Steve and Julie watched in puzzlement. "What should I order for you?" was all Steve could think to ask.

"It doesn't matter," replied Mitchell. "It's all in French, anyway."

Mitchell and Michelle stood in the narrow hallway to the washrooms.

"I want my dress!" whispered Michelle.

"Well, I want my pants, but there's not much we can do about it here," answered Mitchell.

"Yes there is," she told him. "We're changing clothes, right here, right now."

"What about my hair?" he asked. "It'll look a bit odd if my hair suddenly grows a foot, don't you think? And what about my hands? I don't have any polish remover," he said, displaying his manicured, glossy red nails.

"Tuck your hair in your collar. Keep your hands in your pockets. I don't care! I want my dress, now!"

"Agreed," said Mitchell. He instinctively headed for the men's room, while Michelle headed for the ladies'.

"I'm not going in there," said Michelle.

“Well, I’m not going to come out of the ladies’ room dressed like a man!” said Mitchell. The two stood facing each other defiantly, until an older man came down the hallway, eyed them suspiciously, then entered the men’s room.

Mitchell and Michelle looked at each other. “Ladies’ room,” they said in unison. Michelle opened the door, and held it for Mitchell to enter first.

Michelle sighed with relief as she threw her jacket on the counter and loosened her tie. She had her pants half off before she noticed Mitchell.

“A little help with this zipper, if you don’t mind,” he said.

Michelle stopped to help her brother with the zipper in the back of his dress. Mitchell shrugged his shoulders out of the dress, and bent down to step out of it. Then the ladies’ room door opened.

Mitchell and Michelle looked up to see a middle-aged woman enter the ladies room. Mitchell was in front, bent over with his dress around his waist. Michelle was behind him, helping to pull the dress over his hips, her pants around her knees.

Michelle and Mitchell stared at the woman. The woman stared at Michelle and Mitchell. Finally, the woman screamed, running from the ladies’ room. Michelle and Mitchell could hear the woman as she ran down the hallway and into the restaurant, shouting, “Manager! Someone, call the manager!”

Mitchell looked over his shoulder at his sister and said, “This isn’t going to work.”

“Just what I was thinking,” replied Michelle.

Mitchell stood, pulled his dress back into place, and Michelle helped zip him up. Michelle pulled her pants back on, did up her belt, and grabbed her jacket. This only took seconds, but as they left the ladies’ room they found the Maitre D’ blocking their way.

“The young lady can return to her table, for now,” said the Maitre D’, all hints of a French accent gone.

Michelle tried to leave, until Mitchell said, “I think he meant me.” Mitchell passed the Maitre D’ sheepishly, leaving Michelle to face him alone.

“I know what it looks like,” she said. “But it’s not like that. You see, it was ... her bra! It was snagged, on her dress. I had to help her; it would have been ruined. And she’s my sister! So you see, nothing happened.”

“I believe you,” said the Maitre D’.

Michelle didn’t know what to expect, but it wasn’t this. “You do?” was all she managed to say.

“No,” replied the Maitre D’, and began walking with Michelle. “But it doesn’t matter whether I believe you or not. You’ve been disrupting my restaurant all night, and you are no longer welcome. You are going to leave immediately, and if you don’t I will call the police to have you arrested. Is that clear?”

Michelle and the Maitre D’ arrived at the front door. “Now wait a minute,” said Michelle. “What about my brother – that is, my sister?”

"Your entire party will be joining you on the street as soon as I can arrange it. Please leave, now."

Michelle was shoved roughly out the door, stumbled down the front steps, and walked out to the side of the road. "This is the best thing that could have happened," she thought as she straightened herself. "Now we can get in the car, drive home, and end this freak show."

A car was coming down the street toward Michelle. The driver caught Michelle's eye, and they stared at each other. She continued to watch as it drove down the street another fifty feet. Suddenly it slammed its brakes, and with a squeal of its tires reversed back to where Michelle was standing.

Jerry was on his way back to campus, with two of his buddies in the car. The team had had a game that afternoon, and had lost miserably. A group of them had come into town to shoot pool and have some beers, neither of which had done anything for Jerry's mood. It was still early, but coach had said he expected everyone at practice tomorrow morning. Anyone missing would be cut from the team. Coach was always saying things like that, but this time it sounded like maybe he meant it. Jerry decided not to take any chances, and so was heading back early.

"Hey Jerry," said Danno from the passenger seat. "Look at this freak, getting tossed out over here. Look at him stumbling around!"

"Nice hair, freak," said Gordy from the back seat. "Looks like a chick."

"Yeah," added Danno. He looked closer, then turned to Jerry. "Hey, looks like your girlfriend from last night!"

Jerry looked up, and watched the guy as he drove past. He continued to watch him in the rearview mirror, until recognition sunk in. Jerry slammed on the brakes, and drove full-speed reverse until he was parallel with the guy. He slammed the car into park, cut the engine and jumped out.

"Are you that chick?" he yelled as he approached Michelle. She was so taken aback, she didn't even move. Jerry was in front of her in seconds.

"What?" she asked. By this time, Jerry's friends were out of the car and had her surrounded.

"Are you that chick?" Jerry yelled again, grabbing Michelle by the throat and slamming her up against the wall.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said, panic starting to set in.

Jerry raised a massive fist, aimed directly at Michelle's face. "Last chance," he said. "Tell me – are you that chick?"

Michelle was scared for her life now. In her own voice she cried out through her tears, "Please, you can't hit me! I'm a girl!"

Curiously, this didn't have the effect she expected. Instead, her attacker went red with rage and roared as he picked her up by her collar and belt, tossing her overhand down the street. Michelle hit the ground, and rolled a few times with her momentum. She had no

idea if she had any broken bones, but she didn't care at this point. She stood, and ran from her attackers as fast as she could move.

"I knew it was him!" bellowed Jerry. "Get him!"

Jerry and his two friends took off after Michelle, chasing her at full speed down the block and around the corner.

Nothing happened for about five seconds. The front door of the restaurant opened, and Mitchell, Steve, and Julie walked out to the street. They looked around.

"So, where is he?" asked Julie.

"The Maitre D' said he'd be out here, waiting for us," said Mitchell.

"Here's his jacket," said Steve, picking it up from where Michelle had dropped it when she was first attacked.

"He was acting very strange tonight," said Julie. "He seemed like maybe he was upset about something. Do you think he left without us?"

"Steve, why don't you go get the car?" suggested Mitchell. "Julie and I will wait here in case he comes back." Steve went to get his car, while the two girls waited in front of the restaurant.

"Do you think Mitchell is coming back?" asked Julie.

"I don't know," said Mitchell. "He was a little upset, like you said. But please give him another chance. He's not normally like this. And don't worry; Steve and I will give you a ride home."

"Thanks Michelle," said Julie. "Actually, tonight was kind of fun, in spite of all the trouble. I didn't know Mitchell had such a bad-boy streak in him. And Michelle, he is a really great kisser!"

Michelle managed to maintain her lead on the three men for several blocks. They were football players after all, and not used to having to exert themselves for more than five or six seconds at a time. However she was beginning to tire, and looked desperately for some place she could find help.

Unfortunately, it was Sunday evening. Most of the downtown businesses were closed. It was a cool evening, and there was no one on the streets. Worse, Michelle was disoriented, and had run in a direction away from the main streets. She was completely unfamiliar with the twisting series of alleys she currently found herself in. She hadn't seen another human being since she entered, and didn't think she would approach one if she did.

Michelle took a quick peek behind her. She couldn't see her pursuers, but she could hear them not far behind. She'd managed to get at least a full turn ahead of them. This of-

ferred her some hope! If she could make a turn, and get them to go the wrong way, she might just get away. Michelle spotted exactly what she was hoping for, halfway down the next street. There was a small alley leading off to the left. If these guys assumed she went straight, she would lose them. Michelle turned left into the alley, and ran full speed...

Into a dead end. She turned back, but heard her pursuers making the last turn. Desperately, she looked around the alley. There was a door; she tried it, but it was locked. A couple of quick thumps brought no response. She heard the sound of pursuit, only seconds away. There was a dumpster at the end of the alley. Without considering the consequences, Michelle jumped in, and listened intently.

"Come on, he went this way," she heard from the end of the alley. It was difficult to make out anything over the pounding of her own heart.

"No, wait, I heard something down here."

"It's a dead end, he didn't go down there!"

"Let's just check it out."

Quiet for a few seconds – "I can't hear him running any more. We lost him."

"So, let's check out the alley."

"For what?" A pause. "Door's locked." Several thumps.

"Over here, guys, see what I found!"

Michelle looked up, to see three faces looking down at her.

"Oh yeah!" yelled Jerry. "A freak in the trash! Looks good on you, freak!"

Jerry slammed the lid – the reverberations nearly deafened Michelle. Jerry jumped up on top of the dumpster, yelling, "Oh yeah, this freak is going to die!" while leaping up and down. The others kicked the sides of the dumpster, and pounded it with broken bricks they found on the ground. Michelle screamed, although it was unlikely anyone heard her.

"Scuse'a me," said a small man in a white apron from the previously locked door. "Wha' d'you think you doin'?"

The three stopped their pounding, and turned to the little man. Jerry jumped down from the dumpster and spoke.

"None of your business, Short Order!" he said.

The man looked around the alley, then at the door behind him. "This is'a my business," he said, indicating the door. "So I think, this is'a my business."

"Look, Short Order," said Jerry menacingly. "We got no problem with you, so just get back in your little hole."

"Now," said the man, "I think maybe I got a problem wit' you." Two very large men – with meat cleavers – emerged from the doorway to stand behind the man.

Jerry and his friends looked up in surprise. Slowly they passed the three men, cautiously heading for the street. The little man watched as they ran down the street. Jerry called back, "This isn't over, freak!" Then they disappeared around the corner.

Michelle lay in the filthy, greasy restaurant remnants, and listened. She tried hard not to breathe, for at least two reasons.

“What was that all about?” said one of the large men.

“Kids,” said the little man. “Who knows what gets into them. Smoke?”

Michelle waited while the three took a break from their work. Then she waited a long time after they had left. She would wait until she felt safe again. Michelle waited a long, long time.

Julie stepped out of the back seat, onto her driveway, and closed the door behind her. Mitchell rolled down the window so he could speak to her.

“Goodbye, Julie,” he said.

“Goodbye, Michelle, Steve,” Julie replied. “I had a really ... I mean, it was really a ... an interesting night,” she finally settled on.

“I know,” apologized Mitchell, “that it wasn’t the evening we thought it would be. Just, everything went wrong. But please, please, *please* don’t blame Mitchell. It was ... it was all my fault! Yes, like usual, it was all my fault. So please give Mitchell another chance!”

Julie laughed, warming Mitchell’s heart. “You and your brother must be very close,” she said. “Okay, because you’re such a good friend, I can give him another chance. To tell the truth, I’m sort of curious to see what might happen next!”

Steve pulled the car out and onto the street, where they watched as Julie ran up and into her house. He put the car in park, and turned to Mitchell. “Don’t worry about me, Michelle,” he said. “I’m having a wonderful evening.”

“Just drive me home,” said Mitchell in exasperation.

“But the night is still young,” said Steve. “I’d like to pick up where we left off, in the restaurant. I know a great place to park. Quiet, a beautiful view of the city...”

“Stop right there!” said Mitchell, removing Steve’s hand from his thigh. “This night is over, understand? O-V-E-R, over! You are going to drive me home, and if one of your monkey paws so much as brushes against me I am going to break it off!”

Steve pulled back, assessing the situation. Finally he put the car into drive and pulled away from Julie’s home.

“Sure, Michelle,” he said reassuringly. “You’ve had a difficult night, I can understand that. I’ll just take you home. You obviously need to ... look out!”

Steve slammed on the brakes, bringing the car to a screeching halt. Mitchell was thrown forward, but Steve threw out his right hand to stop him.

When his heart stopped racing, Mitchell turned to Steve. “What was that all about?!” he demanded.

“A cat, in the road,” said Steve. “That poor animal, we almost hit it.”

"There was no cat in the road," said Mitchell.

"Oh yes, there was," said Steve. "I barely stopped in time."

Mitchell looked down, to where Steve's hand was still holding his chest. "What do you think you're doing?"

"It's all right," said Steve. "I saved you." He still didn't remove his hand, but instead his fingers began to examine the lace edging of Mitchell's brassiere.

Realization dawned on Mitchell's face. "You pig!" he cried, grabbing Steve's hand from his breast and tossing it at him. "You disgusting pig! You did that just to get a quick feel!"

"No, Michelle, that's not..." said Steve, but it was too late. Mitchell had left the car and was screaming at him from the sidewalk.

"You creepy little pervert! You nauseating heap of dog vomit! Don't you ever come near me again, do you hear?"

Steve put the car into drive, and raced off into the night. Mitchell continued to rant, even as Steve turned the corner and disappeared. When Mitchell finally managed to stop screaming, he realized the only sound was his own labored breathing.

He also realized, he was miles from home, in the middle of the night, without a ride. Mitchell sniffled, then turned, and walked back down the street to Julie's house.

Michelle closed the front door behind her. She was finally home – finally, completely safe. With a sigh of relief she turned the lock, then headed for the stairs.

"Mitchell?" said her mother, emerging from the kitchen. "Is everything okay, dear? You're home so late, and you didn't call, I was worried."

"Sorry, Mom," said Michelle, sounding very tired. "I ran into some trouble, but everything's fine now. I have to talk to Michelle for a few minutes, then I'm going to bed." She turned to continue up the stairs.

"Alright dear," said her Mother. "That sounds like a good idea. Except Michelle isn't here."

Michelle stopped again, and turned. This time she sounded wide-awake as she said, "Michelle isn't here? Where is she?"

"She had some trouble with her ride," explained her mother. "She's staying over at a friend's house."

"What friend? Where does she live?" asked Michelle, racing to the front door as she pulled out her car keys.

Mrs. Everett placed a motherly hand over Michelle's and smiled. "She's staying with a girl named Julie," she explained as she took the keys from Michelle's hand. "I don't know where she lives, and if I did, it's too late to pick up your sister tonight. The girls are probably asleep in bed already, which is where you should be. So, scoot upstairs and get into bed!"

There was nothing else for her to do. Michelle went upstairs, washed off as much filth as she could, threw Mitchell's clothes into the laundry, changed into his pajamas, climbed into his bed, and fell asleep.

Chapter 5 - Ground Zero

“Michelle! Sleepy-head, get up already!”

Mitchell opened his eyes. He was lying in a sea of pink sheets, in a room decorated with soft pastel colors, lacy curtains, and stuffed animals. Looking up, he saw Julie, dressed only in panties, sitting on the side of the bed and doing up her bra. He was starting to get used to these situations, and was not surprised to find that he was wearing a baby yellow, shorty pajama set with lace bloomers and a baby doll top. Mitchell quickly covered his aroused interest with the bed sheets.

“Julie,” he said groggily. “What time is it? It’s only seven! Wake me in about an hour, okay?” He put his head back on the pillow, and was almost asleep again.

“Oh no, you don’t!” said Julie, grabbing the covers and tearing them off of Mitchell. “I let you sleep while I had my shower, but we both have to get ready for school! Come on, you need to wash your hair, then dry it, and style it. We both need makeup, and to choose a dress for you. Come on, let’s go!”

Mitchell sat up beside Julie, rather than continue to lie exposed on the bed. “Okay, I’m up. What’s first then? Shower, and wash my hair, that’s what you said, right?”

“Right,” agreed Julie, as she stood and gave Mitchell a hand up from the bed. “I hope you don’t mind, but if we’re both going to get ready on time, I’m going to have to do my makeup while you shower. You don’t mind sharing the bathroom, do you?”

“No!” said Mitchell. “Well, no, I mean, of course I don’t mind, that is, I can’t think of any reason...”

“Good, come on, I’ll get you a towel!”

Now this was going to be a challenge.

“Mitchell! Sleepy-head, get up already!”

Michelle opened her eyes, and looked around Mitchell’s room. Everything was in dark shades, black and gray. Piles of clothes and junk lay everywhere; the walls were decorated with posters of supermodels and grunge bands. Looking up, she saw her mother sitting on the edge of the bed, gently massaging her back and shoulders. Looking down, she remembered she was wearing her brother’s flannel pajama bottoms and a loose black T-shirt. Michelle quickly grabbed the sheets, and pulled them to cover her chest.

“Mom,” she said as she sat up, refreshed from a good night’s sleep. “What time is it? It’s 8:15! How could you let me sleep this late?”

“Relax,” said her mother. “You always get up at this time. What’s the matter, sweetie?”

“Well, I mean,” stammered Michelle. “I mean, I have to do my hair, and, and...”

“Do your hair?” asked her mother curiously. “Do you mean wash it? You always wash your hair at night, and I know you washed it a couple of days ago.”

“A couple of days ago?” said Michelle. “Just how often do I wash my hair?”

Her mother had to think about this. "I guess once, sometimes twice a week? Now stop all this foolishness. You get dressed and downstairs; you have to leave for school in fifteen minutes."

"Fifteen minutes to get ready for school?" said Michelle after her mother had left. "Sleeping until eight? Washing his hair once a week? This is one sweet life he has going!"

Michelle threw on a baggy shirt and black jeans over her sports bra and a pair of boxer shorts, and was ready for school.

"You're late, Miss Everett."

Mitchell staggered into class, unused to balancing his load of schoolbooks while navigating the classroom in his high heels. "I'm sorry, sir," he apologized. "I had some trouble at my locker, it took me a while..."

"Never mind, just take your seat," he was told.

Mitchell found his way to his sister's seat, next to his own, where Michelle now sat dressed as him. Michelle watched as he sat, then looked him up and down, an expression of disgust on her face.

"What?" Mitchell mouthed at her. He didn't know what she had to complain about. At least she was dressed in clothes she could name. And Mitchell felt he was actually managing to do a fairly good job on his hair, makeup, and clothes. After he had washed and dried his hair, Julie had helped him to brush and style it, and he had done the same for her. He was getting used to doing his makeup, having had it done a few times now, and having done it for himself a couple of times as well.

And the dress Julie had found for him was absolutely adorable. The soft, stretchy white fabric clung to his every curve. The belt pulled his waist in tight under his ribs. The white sleeves ended just below his elbows, where they became black and white striped sleeves that continued to his wrists. Similarly, the white skirt ended below his hips, where it continued in black and white stripes to fingertip length. In short, it was the cutest dress you could possibly imagine.

Michelle continued to look at him as if he were wearing a burlap bag. Mitchell decided to ignore her. He crossed his legs into the aisle, and turned to face the front of the class.

"Alright," began the teacher. "If you would all please stand, and exit in an orderly fashion. Bring your things, as we won't be returning to the classroom."

Michelle and Mitchell looked around, unsure what was happening. No one else seemed surprised, however. Mitchell picked up his purse and books, and followed the crowd out the classroom door.

"Nadia, where are we going?" asked Mitchell as he caught up with Nadia.

"It's in the cafeteria this year," Nadia told him.

"What? What's in the cafeteria?" asked Mitchell as he was jostled down the hallway in his three-inch heels.

"School pictures, of course," he was informed. "You remembered it's picture day, right? That's why you changed your hair, and the new makeup? I really like your dress, by

the way. I thought you were going to wear your new, pink mini-dress for pictures? I think this was a good choice, though."

"Picture day? Oh, no," said Mitchell. With everything else that had happened, he had completely forgotten.

"Mitchell," said Michelle, as she caught up to her brother. "Michelle," she corrected herself when she received a few odd looks. She grabbed Mitchell's arm and drew him aside.

"Today is picture day!" said Michelle, quietly but urgently. The two continued to walk with the crowd toward the cafeteria.

"No kidding, what was your first clue?" replied Mitchell. "Come on, we can change in the washroom."

"Change?" said Michelle, as if this would never have occurred to her. "No way, I'm not going to change with you! Do you think I want to get my picture taken with this hair? No, you're going to have to be me for my picture."

"You are so unbelievable!" shouted Mitchell, drawing attention to their argument. He continued quietly, "I want my life back! So if you don't want to change, what is it you want from me?"

"You're completely ruining picture day for me! I had a dress picked out for this, you know."

"Yes, I do know. There's no time for me to change into your pink mini-dress, though, even if I had it with me. Besides, Nadia says this dress is a better choice."

"Did Nadia also tell you that your hair is flat and lifeless, and your makeup is all wrong?"

"Julie and I worked on my hair together this morning, and I happen to like it. It's my hair, and you have nothing to say about it."

"No, it's *my* hair! It's *my* photo, going in *my* graduation yearbook above *my* name, and you're ruining it!"

"And I happen to think my makeup looks great," said Mitchell with obvious pride.

"Maybe if you're trying to blend into a crowd. This is my yearbook photo! I need to stand out! Why haven't you used my glossy red lipstick? And did you use any eyeliner at all?"

"Just back off, *Mitchell*," Mitchell told his sister. "I worked hard on my makeup this morning, and I'm actually getting good at it. I'm not changing a single thing for this photo."

"Give me your brush!" said Michelle, lunging for her brother's purse. "Just let me fix your hair!"

"No!" replied Mitchell, grabbing his purse back. "I am not going to stand in line, while everyone watches my brother brush my hair!"

"Mr. Everett, Miss Everett, is there a problem here?"

Mitchell and Michelle stopped fighting over the purse and looked up. Michelle was left holding the purse, but quickly handed it back to her brother.

"No sir," they said in unison to their teacher.

"That's good, I'm glad because it looked like a problem. Since it isn't, the two of you should be able to stand quietly and wait your turn, is that right?"

"Yes, sir," they replied as they stared at the floor. Their teacher walked away, but made it clear that he was still watching them closely.

Michelle and Mitchell quietly waited in line, slowly moving toward the photographer at the front of the cafeteria. Eventually it was Michelle's turn, so Mitchell walked forward and sat for his sister's photo. He posed, and smiled, was told he was beautiful by the photographer, then stepped into the hall to wait for his sister. A few minutes later Michelle walked out to join him.

"I think you'll be happy with your picture," he said kindly to reassure her. "How did mine go?"

"Not so good," answered Michelle with a belligerent tone. "I think he took the picture when I had my eyes closed. Oh, and I think my thumb may have been up my nose."

"You ruined my photo?" said Mitchell in disbelief.

"After you ruined mine," answered Michelle. "Now come on, let's find a place to change. That dress will have to do for today. I suppose I can get by with whatever makeup you have in that purse as well. Maybe I can borrow something decent from Nadia."

Mitchell was outraged. "Now you want to change? You humiliate me forever by having me photographed like this, then ruin *my* photo, and *now* you think is the right time to change?"

"Don't be such a spoiled little girl," said Michelle. "Now is the perfect time, we have at least half an hour till our next class."

Mitchell took a moment to calm himself, then said, "Fine. I know the perfect place to do this. We just need to stop by my locker to collect something first."

"Whatever," said Michelle.

Michelle and Mitchell walked quickly to Mitchell's locker, where he picked up his sport bag. From there, Mitchell led them to the hallway behind the gymnasium.

"Where are we going?" asked Michelle. "The locker room? What if a class comes in?"

"Relax," said Mitchell. "I have something better in mind."

Mitchell led Michelle past the locker room, around the bend to the short hallway leading to the coach's office. Where they found the coach.

"Everett!" shouted Coach Horton. "Nice of you to show up! Where have you been?" Michelle looked at Mitchell, unsure what was going on.

"He's talking to you," said Mitchell, looking at his sister with a very satisfied grin on his pretty face.

"Me? I was, uh..." stammered Michelle. "It's picture day."

"The team gets their pictures tomorrow, after class," she was told. "You knew that, Everett. Fortunately the bus was late, so you didn't miss it. Now get out there!"

"I guess we get another chance at that picture after all," Mitchell told her. Michelle stood with her mouth open as he continued, "I had hoped to spare you from this, but you were just *so* helpful this morning. Here's your uniform."

"Remind me," said Michelle, accepting Mitchell's sport bag. "What sport do you play again?"

"Rugby," replied Mitchell. "Good luck in the tournament!"

"Come on, Everett," said the coach, grabbing Michelle by the collar and dragging her out to the bus. "You can play hopscotch with the little girls later."

Mitchell was left alone in the hallway, where he crossed his arms below his prominent chest, and smiled a very satisfied smile. Of course, he realized that he was now stuck playing Michelle all day, but...

"That was so totally worth it!" he said, then spun on his heels and headed to Michelle's next class.

Three thirty, and school was finally over for the day. Mitchell stood at his sister's locker, putting away her notes and books, and preparing to go home. It would feel so good to be home; his feet ached after spending all day in these heels. He couldn't wait to finally be able to take them off.

Mitchell reflected on what an amazing day it had been. He couldn't walk ten feet without someone wanting to stop and talk to him! At first he was incredibly nervous, absolutely positive that someone would realize he wasn't Michelle. But he soon realized, they only wanted to talk about their weekend, or next weekend, or parties coming up. He quickly found that all he had to say was, "That is like, so totally amazing!" or "No way! Really?" to keep the conversation rolling. And if they asked him about something Michelle should know but he didn't, he just did his "Clueless Michelle" act.

The most surprising thing was, Mitchell found he actually liked all the attention. Girls he'd only looked at from afar now wanted to be his best friend; guys who would never have spoken to him before shyly approached him, nervously seeking his approval. Even a conversation with Brian Brentwood - which began incredibly awkwardly - ended by giving Mitchell endless amusement. He had such control over that guy; Brian would roll over and bark if Mitchell told him to!

Michelle's life was actually, totally amazing. Too bad it all had to end. Well, after Michelle got back from her all-day rugby tournament. Mitchell smiled as he thought about Michelle's day. He hoped it hadn't been too painful for her. Painful yes, but not too painful. Mitchell closed the locker, and tried unsuccessfully to suppress a giggle.

"Michelle, are you ready to go?" someone said from behind Mitchell. He turned, and saw a group of four kids standing behind him. Mitchell recognized them as kids he had gone to school with for years, but neither he nor Michelle had had much to do with in re-

cent years. Shanna, Madison, Mark, and Eddy hung out with a totally different crowd, mostly music students. Mitchell was a musician as well, but had always taken private lessons outside of school. Michelle had taken some singing lessons, but was no musician. Mitchell couldn't figure out what this group wanted from him – from Michelle.

"Ready to go?" Mitchell stalled. "Um, yeah, I'm ready to go. It's three thirty, and I'm – going home now."

"Going home?" said Mark as if annoyed. "You were supposed to bring everything here. We agreed, so we could leave directly from school."

"She did bring everything," said Madison. "I saw you put it in your locker Friday."

"Right," said Mitchell, opening Michelle's locker and looking for something, whatever it was.

"Here it is," said Madison, reaching past him and grabbing a shopping bag down from a hook. "Okay, let's go!"

"Okay," said Mitchell slowly. "You guys go, do, whatever, with the bag. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Michelle," said Eddy. "You do know, it's tonight, don't you?"

"It is?" said Mitchell.

"Oh, for..." said Mark, trying hard not to swear. "Michelle, you know it's tonight! I mean, you can be ditzy, but you can't have forgotten!"

"She didn't forget," Shanna defended him. "Look, Michelle, you wrote it on your calendar."

Mitchell looked at the calendar, taped to the inside of Michelle's locker. "PD, that's Picture Day, we already did that..."

"Below that," said Shanna.

"S-Y-T-Y-A-B," Mitchell read the letters slowly, trying to think what they might mean. His mouth dropped open when realization hit him.

"Let me see that bag!" he said, grabbing the shopping bag away from Madison. Inside he found a couple strips of cloth, a plunging push-up bra, low-rise bikini panties, and a pair of boots.

"It's your costume," said Madison.

"Oh, no," said Mitchell.

Michelle grabbed the ball as it came rolling toward her. As she started to run, she looked quickly to see where the other players were. No one was even close! Michelle took off at top speed, heading toward the opposite goal line.

Only a few yards to go, yes, she was going to make it! Michelle took one last look around and... her legs were pulled out from under her. The ball bounced out of her hands, and suddenly two dozen players were stampeding in her general vicinity. Michelle covered her head until the stampede moved on.

The tournament consisted of four games, all to be played in a single day, against the other regional high schools. The tournament was held every year, and the local university allowed the schools the use of their fields for the event. The first two games were terrifying for Michelle. Sent out into a muddy field, with 29 guys, all running, tackling, and generally acting insane by any rational measure – Michelle was frightened beyond belief.

But the more she played, the more she was able to make sense out of what was going on. What seemed at first to be simple, random, violent outbursts actually followed a few simple rules. Rules that the right player could exploit. Now well into their third game, everyone was tiring, and the pace had visibly slowed. Except for Michelle. Michelle weighed half as much as any other player on the field, a distinct disadvantage in most situations. But in this case it meant she could run twice as long as any other player.

Michelle stood, determined to retrieve the ball, and chased into the midst of the action. The ball was on the ground; one of her teammates grabbed it and tossed it to her. Without hesitation Michelle headed straight for the goal line. As she passed between the goal posts she slid, touching the ball to the ground. Michelle had scored!

As her team surrounded her, Michelle was jubilant. She was filthy, soaking wet, bruised and aching, yet she had never been so excited or happy before in her life.

SYTYAB, it could only stand for one thing. And it all made sense now. The music students, the costume, and of all the secrets Michelle kept, Mitchell had never even suspected this – Michelle was in a rock band!

SYTYAB – So You Think You’re a Band. It had been advertised on the local radio station for weeks; the popular TV show was coming to town, looking for bands to participate as contestants. Amateur bands were being auditioned all across North America. The best bands would go to Los Angeles in June, where they would compete to be in the top ten. Then the top ten would play off against each other over the summer, one being voted off every week by the viewers.

So that was why Mitchell now found himself in the school’s music room, wearing a pair of white ultra-short short-shorts, a paisley wrap-blouse with three-quarter sleeves, a push-up bra and low-rise panties, and cute little white stiletto ankle boots.

“Stop fooling around, Michelle!” said Mark. “We’re going to be late, and we won’t get a second chance!”

“No, I can’t!” said Mitchell. “I can’t go out, dressed like this! Why am I the only one dressed this way?”

“We’re dressed like musicians,” said Shanna. “Musicians wear street clothes. You’re dressed like a lead singer. Michelle, why are you so upset? You chose this costume yourself.”

“Hey, I don’t care how you dress,” said Eddy. “Just so long as you remember the lyrics.”

"The lyrics!" cried Mitchell, suddenly realizing he had no idea what song they were going to play. "Um, does anyone have a copy of the lyrics I could look over?"

"Michelle, you know the song!" yelled Mark. "Let's just go already!"

"Mark, can't you see she's nervous?" said Madison as she opened her guitar case. "You're not helping by getting angry. Here, Michelle, here's my copy."

Mitchell took the page and began reading, "So it's Saturday night, and you're..." He'd never heard this song in his life. "Could someone, like, play a bit of the melody for me?"

"Enough, let's go!" said Mark, but Shanna walked over to the piano and played the first few lines of the song. Mitchell tried singing his part:

So it's Saturday night, and you're all alone,

You'll never find this girl, waiting by the phone...

Mitchell was awful. He had never taken singing lessons in his life. Not only that, but he couldn't sing in Michelle's voice. Maybe if he had a week to practice singing as a girl, and then a couple years of lessons, he might be able to pass for an alto. But as it was he couldn't hit a single note. Mitchell was the worst female vocalist of all time.

"What was that?" yelled Mark. "That was horrible!"

"Mark!" scolded Madison. "Leave her alone. It's just nerves."

"I don't know," said Mitchell, coughing to get his Michelle voice back. "Maybe I'm getting a cold. I don't think I can go."

Unbelievable," said Mark. "You're bailing on us, at the last minute! We should never have let you join the band."

"No, no way," said Eddy. "She's in the band because she's good. Michelle, you can do this. I wrote this song just for you, for your voice. You know you can do this! You're going to be awesome."

"Let's get a drink in the hallway, for your throat," suggested Shanna. The group picked up their instruments and left the music room, Mitchell with them in his teeny shorts, plunging top, and stiletto ankle boots.

This was bad. This was unbelievably bad. Mitchell walked through the hallways like a prisoner being taken to the gallows - in his sister's underwear. Fortunately the hallways were nearly empty; most of the students had already left. There were very few people around to notice his utter humiliation. But unless he thought of something soon, he would appear on national TV dressed like this, then reveal himself as a guy when he tried to sing.

The band walked out of the school, into the parking lot, up to Eddy's van. As the others placed their instruments into the back, Mitchell looked around the lot. He didn't know what he was looking for, he didn't have a plan, he was just looking, desperately. Then he saw something that gave him some small hope.

"Guys, I'll be right back!" he called as he ran as fast as he could across the parking lot in his stiletto boots.

Mitchell caught up to Steve at the exit, knocking on the window of his car. Steve looked up in surprise, then rolled down the window.

“Steve,” said Mitchell as he tried to catch his breath. “I need you to do something for me.”

“Michelle, hi,” said Steve. “Look, about last night, I thought I saw this cat in the road...”

“Will you just shut up for once in your life?” said Mitchell in exasperation. “I’m in real trouble here, and I need your help.”

“Michelle,” said Steve. “I know, you’re confused about your feelings for me. You made that pretty clear last night. I’m thinking, maybe we need to back off for a while. Think about where this relationship is going, you know?”

She was dealing with an imbecile. “Steve, I need one thing from you. You do this, and we can start over. All is forgiven, flowers will bloom, birds will sing, blah blah blah, okay?”

“Will you go out with me Friday night?”

Mitchell rolled his eyes. “Yes! Friday night, you and me, flocks of doves, skyrocket, I’m yours.”

“Okay,” agreed Steve. “What is it you need?”

“Mitchell is at the university stadium, in a rugby tournament,” explained Mitchell. “I need you to pick him up right away, and get him to the old Ford Theatre, downtown, ASAP. Do you think you can handle that?”

“Mitch, University stadium, old Ford Theatre, no problem,” said Steve.

“Michelle, get in, we’ve got to go!” The band had driven up beside Steve’s car, and Madison was holding the door open for him.

“ASAP!” Mitchell called to Steve as Madison helped him into the van.

“You look great, by the way,” called Steve. “I like your shorts.”

“What a putz,” said Mitchell under his breath.

“Mitchell, over here!”

Michelle looked up as she exited the change room to see Steve, waving at her from down the hall. The two met halfway in-between.

“Hey, I saw most of your last game,” Steve told her. “You were great!”

“Hey, thanks,” said Michelle. “I noticed we had one fan in the stands. So what brought you way out here?”

Steve led Michelle through the stadium, toward the parking lot. “I thought you might like a ride home. Also, your sister asked me to pick you up. She seemed really anxious to see you for some reason.”

“Ha! I bet she did,” said Michelle knowingly.

“I think I really blew it with her last night,” said Steve seriously.

“Really?” said Michelle. “It didn’t look that way to me,” she told him while trying to suppress a laugh.

"Oh, in the restaurant, everything was fine. Fantastic, better than I ever imagined. But after, she was suddenly cold and distant, and sarcastic. You know how she is."

"Yeah," said Michelle, slightly embarrassed. "I know."

"She said she'd go out with me again if I picked you up, but I don't think she meant it. I had my chance last night, and I blew it. Mitch, I know I kid a lot about your sister, but I really do have feelings for her. She's just so bright, and beautiful, I love the way she lights up a room just by entering..."

"Have you ever thought, maybe you could just tell her those things?"

"No way," said Steve morosely. "I couldn't stand the rejection."

Michelle looked at Steve, in a way she had never looked at Steve before. I mean, he was Steve. Except, there was something attractive about this Steve. He had let down his guard, left himself vulnerable. Normally Michelle would pounce for the kill if anyone made that mistake. Except this time, she just wanted to wrap her arms around him, and tell him everything would be okay.

Michelle smiled. "Try talking to her tomorrow. I bet things may just have changed by then."

"Thanks Mitch," said Steve. "Hey, maybe I could talk to her tonight?"

"Not tonight," said Michelle quickly. "She won't be ready to see you yet. You better just take me home and I'll talk to her."

"Oh, she's not at your place," Steve told her. "She wants to meet you at the old Ford Theatre."

"What the...?" said Michelle. "What kind of game is he playing – is she playing now? Why can't that idiot just go home?"

"Search me," said Steve. "She was heading down there with Madison and some others in a van."

Michelle's blood turned to ice in her veins. "No! Not tonight, tell me it isn't tonight! Oh crap, it's tonight. What time is it? Come on, we've got to move!"

Michelle ran toward Steve's car, with Steve close behind. As she sprinted between two parked cars into an aisle, she nearly collided with a small group of people. Michelle darted between Jerry and his friends without looking up.

Jerry continued walking for a few paces before recognition struck. "Freak!" he roared, then turned to chase Michelle.

"Oh, no, not you again," said Michelle. She barely had time to jump into Steve's car and shut the door before Jerry was on her. As he reached for the door handle, she snapped down the lock.

Michelle rolled down the window a half-inch and said, "What do you want from me?"

"What do I want?" asked Jerry. "I want to kill you, you little freak!" he yelled at the spittle-flecked window.

"Just drive. Drive!" Michelle told Steve. Steve started the car and pulled out.

"Back to my car!" Jerry told Gordy and Danno.

"Coach says we can't miss practice tonight..." Danno reminded him.

"That don't matter!" Jerry bellowed. "We're going to catch that freak!"

Mitchell and the others had been waiting anxiously for what seemed like hours. First outside the theatre on the street, now in the theatre lobby for the past half-hour. There must have been hundreds of bands auditioning. Mitchell's band had been given a ticket with the number...

"One, zero, seven, five," called out the stagehand. "Band number one, zero, seven, five, you're up."

Mark pointed to the ticket that Mitchell was trying to hide. "That's us. Hey, that's us!"

The stagehand led them to the back, just off the main stage. "Singers?" he asked. Eddy and Shanna raised their hands. Mark shoved Mitchell forward when he did nothing.

The stagehand picked up a headset from a table of headsets, and demonstrated on Mitchell. "Each of you, pick up a headset, place it over your head like this. Push the wire down the back of your shirt, attach the wire to the transmitter like this, attach the transmitter to the back of your pants, flip the switch to 'On' when you're ready, got it?"

Eddy and Shanna nodded, then picked up a headset each.

"Musicians," continued the stagehand. "There's a drum set, guitars, and keyboards set up on stage."

"We brought our own guitars," said Madison.

Mitchell could hear the judges finishing up with the current band on stage. It sounded like they didn't make it. "There are amplifiers on stage for you to plug into. Okay, you're on."

The band made their way onto the stage, as the previous band left. Mark headed for the drum set, Shanna for a keyboard, Eddy and Madison found amps to plug into, and Mitchell stood in the middle, looking hopelessly lost.

"Alright." The first of the three judges (the British one) finished writing, and looked up from the desk. "What is the name of your group?"

Everyone looked at Mitchell, who simply stood with his mouth open.

"Shards of Glass!" Mark called out to him.

Mitchell turned on his microphone and repeated, "Shards of Glass."

"Fabulous," said the British judge without enthusiasm. "How long have you been together?"

Mitchell had no idea, but would do anything to keep from singing. Clueless Michelle would just have to take over. "Oh, a while, I guess. Like, maybe, two years?" Madison gave him an odd look. "More? Less? Most of us have known each other since grade school, anyway, so really..."

Steve raced down the street. "I think we may have lost them," he said.

"I doubt it, they were right behind us at the last corner," Michelle responded. "That's the theatre up ahead, just drop me by the back door."

"Who are those guys?" asked Steve for the third time.

"I wish I knew," Michelle replied.

Steve pulled up to the back of the theatre. There was still a fairly long line of bands along the sidewalk, but no Mitchell. As Michelle opened the door Steve asked her, "Look, should I maybe call someone? The police, anybody?"

"No!" said Michelle. "No, thanks for the ride, but there's no need to call anybody." Michelle got out of the car, then thought of something. Leaning back into the car she said, "But do call Michelle, tomorrow. Things will be different, I promise."

Michelle had to resist the urge to kiss Steve. After closing the door, she watched briefly as he drove off. Then Michelle turned and ran.

"Hey, back of the line," she was told as she turned up the stairs that led to the theatre.

"You can't go in there," said the security guard as Michelle pushed past into the building. "Hey buddy. Hey! Get back here!" he called as he turned to follow.

Jerry slammed the brakes, bringing his car to a screeching halt. Jumping out onto the road he said, "That's her – him! He went in that building!"

"Do you want me to park the car?" asked Gordy.

"Forget the car!" boomed Jerry. "Get in there and find that freak!"

Michelle found her way backstage. She didn't know where the security guard had gotten to, but that was the least of her worries. Well, maybe still in the top five, but more importantly she had to find Mitchell, assuming he hadn't already blown her chance at fame and fortune. Then she heard a voice...

"... and this is Shanna, I think she plays piano. Oh, yes, she does, because she's at the keyboard, right? Um, when we were in grade six, Shanna and I..."

"Look," said the second judge (the sympathetic one) for the third time. "For the third time, we don't care. So are you ready to play or not?"

Mitchell opened his mouth, not knowing what to say, when suddenly he heard the words, "We're ready!"

It was his voice, or rather Michelle's voice, but he didn't say it. Looking off stage, he saw Michelle adjusting one of the spare headsets, and giving him a 'thumbs up' gesture.

"About time," said the female judge.

"Mark, count us in," Mitchell said with relief. Then he reached for the switch on his headset and turned it off.

Mark raised his drumsticks over his head, then struck them as he counted, "Five, six, seven eight!"

Suddenly the theatre was filled with music. Mitchell stood on stage, in the middle of a swirling sea of notes, a hard rock intro that had him mesmerized. "These guys are actually pretty good," he thought to himself. The music filled his head, but there wasn't enough

room for it there. It crept down to his shoulders, and forced them to move. The music continued downward until it filled his whole body. Mitchell couldn't help himself – he was dancing!

Michelle waited offstage for her cue to sing. She smiled, then laughed as she saw her brother's performance. Hilarious to know it was really him, but somehow, on stage with the music, it looked great. Then she heard...

"How the crap should I know? Look back there, he's gotta be somewhere!"

Michelle looked around for a hiding place. She couldn't run; she didn't know the range of this headset. Running and singing were not a good combination, either. Then she saw a ladder, bolted to the wall and heading up into the catwalk, high above the stage. Michelle started to climb, just as the band reached her cue. She had no choice; she sang as she climbed:

*So it's Saturday night, and you're all alone,
You'll never find this girl, waiting by the phone.
If you're not here, there's another boy to take your place!*

Mitchell couldn't believe this! Michelle's band was actually good, and Michelle's voice was amazing. Fortunately he'd had time to memorize the lyrics; all he had to do was lip-sync. Except, somehow that didn't seem enough. Mitchell was inspired by the music, by the singing. He needed to perform! As he danced across the stage, lip-synching to Michelle's voice, he acted out the song. He chastised the judges with a wag of his finger, he talked to his hand as if it were the phone, he cozied up to Eddy as if he were the new guy in his life. Mitchell was having a ball!

*Well, you want me for your girlfriend, wouldn't that be handy,
But as far as you're concerned, this girl's just eye candy,
With a body like this, I don't need you in my face!*

"Wait a second – that's him!" said Jerry. "On stage, that's the guy!"

"Are you sure?" asked Danno. "How'd she get changed so fast?"

"How the crap should I know!" Jerry yelled at him. "Maybe it's a magic act. You guys, go around to other side so he can't get off stage that way. This freak is going to lose some teeth tonight."

*When a girl's as hot as me,
There's no way that she could be,
Tied down to one guy,
Look me in the eye,
And tell me what you see!*

Michelle finished climbing the ladder and pulled herself up and over, onto the catwalk. The song had reached the instrumental section, and just in time; she was breathless from singing while climbing the tall ladder! Michelle looked down to see what was happening. Mitchell was still dancing his heart out, which made her laugh. Then she saw Jerry and his

friends. Jerry was pointing at Mitchell on stage, then he sent his friends around to the other side. Now he was after her brother? He must think that Mitchell was her. What was this guy's problem?

During the instrumental section, Mitchell had nothing to do. While he was singing, the dance moves seemed to come easily to him, but now he started to feel self-conscious. Mitchell looked around the stage, and spotted one of the spare guitars. He crossed to it, picked it up, strapped it on over his shoulder, and began to play. Standing back-to-back with Madison, the two girls laid down alternating guitar riffs!

Michelle looked around from her hiding place, high above the stage. When Mitchell finished and walked off stage, those guys would jump him! Michelle didn't really understand why, but she didn't want that to happen. Really, why should she care? It was just her brother, but for some reason she couldn't understand, she did care. She looked around for anything she could use.

"In the movies, there's always a sandbag up here you can drop on the bad guys, and knock them out!" she thought to herself. There was nothing like that up here, just a lot of ropes and curtains. Lost in thought, she almost missed her cue to sing:

*Boy, you're only thinking of yourself,
Well a product this hot won't stay on the shelf,
You snooze, you loose, there's no other way with me!
You only get one chance, if you want more that's tough,
You gave it your best shot, which wasn't good enough,
But it doesn't matter anyway, there's no one guy for me!
When a girl's as hot as me,
There's no way that she could be,
Tied down to one guy,
Look me in the eye,
Tell me what you see!
When a girl's as hot as me,
There's no way that she could be,
Tied down to one guy,
Look me in the eye,
And tell me what you see!*

'Shards of Glass' finished their audition with an instrumental flourish that brought the judges to their feet. Mitchell beamed and took bows for the entire group, as the judges applauded their performance.

"I didn't know you could play guitar!" said Madison, rushing at Mitchell and then hugging him tight.

"Um, we never had an extra one before?" suggested Mitchell.

“Absolutely cracking!” said the British judge. “Girl, you are a real firecracker, aren’t you?”

“Thank you,” blushed Mitchell.

“I’m serious. You’ve really got it all going on, haven’t you? Beautiful, obviously, but out of your mouth comes this amazing voice, then you also play guitar, and your dance moves – was it just me, or was that performance incredibly hot?”

“Oh, it was hot,” said the sympathetic judge.

“That was so hot, *I* wanted a piece of her!” said the female judge. “Woooo!” she screamed.

“That’s all I needed to hear,” said the British judge, holding his ears. “When Marie screams, you’re through to the next level. Michelle Everett and Shards of Glass, you’re going to Los Angeles!”

Mitchell didn’t have time to be astonished, the rest of the group was on him so fast. Even Mark was smiling as he gave Mitchell a hug.

“Could one of you exit stage left to do a bit of paperwork, the rest exit stage right?” asked the stagehand who had somehow appeared before them. Mitchell was unanimously chosen to be their representative. After a few more congratulatory hugs he walked off the stage alone, right into Jerry’s waiting hands.

“Surprised to see me, freak?” said Jerry as he grabbed Mitchell and shoved him against the wall. “Cute little act you’ve got going there, let’s see how it goes over without any teeth!”

Gordy and Danno were on the other side of the stage, and moved to join Jerry. Unfortunately, before they got the chance a very large and heavy curtain fell on them, trapping them like a net. Michelle looked down from above. “Two down, one to go,” she said.

Turning to see what was happening to her brother, Michelle realized she was going to be too late. Jerry had already cornered Mitchell, and was prepared to make dogfood out of him. She couldn’t possibly get down in time to help, unless...

There was a rope at the other end of the catwalk, dropping down directly above Jerry and Mitchell. Michelle ran to it, grabbed on and swung her legs over the side, sliding down the rope to the stage below.

At least, that’s what she’d intended. Michelle had drastically over-estimated her own ability to support her weight on a rope. After about ten feet, her arms gave out, leaving a twenty-foot fall to the stage. Michelle crumpled as she hit the ground.

“What the...?” said Jerry, seeing Michelle land in a heap beside him. “Who’s this guy?” he asked Mitchell.

“My brother?” responded Mitchell in a whimper.

Jerry was undeterred. Pulling back a fist the size of a five-gallon tank, he aimed at Mitchell...

"Freeze!" said the security guard, who had finally caught up to them. Even this would not have stopped Jerry, except it seemed the security guard was late because he had called the police. Two officers had their guns trained on Jerry.

Mitchell sat on the side of the hospital bed, swinging his feet in their tiny white ankle boots as he finished Michelle's pudding.

"This is good. Anything else left in your dinner?" he asked as he poked through the remnants on her tray.

"How can you eat that?" asked Michelle. "Hospital food is gross."

Mitchell scraped the bottom of the bowl, then put it and the spoon back on Michelle's tray. "Oh, in all the excitement I forgot to ask. How was the rugby tournament?" he asked with a laugh. Mitchell opened his purse, looking for a lipstick to fix his makeup.

Mitchell was baiting his sister, but instead of getting angry she looked thoughtful. Then she said, "It was a lot of fun. Not at first, but once I figured out what was going on, I really had a great time. Do you know, I scored three times? I think I might actually try out for the team."

Mitchell looked at the cast on his sister's arm. "I'm thinking, it may be a while before you're playing sports again!" he laughed.

Michelle smiled back at him. "So what about you? How was school today, little Sis?"

"It was so amazing," replied Mitchell without hesitation. "You have the most incredible life. Everyone in school is your best friend, everyone wants to talk to you and be with you. And finding out you were in a rock band, how cool was that?"

"If you want to know the truth," confessed Michelle, "I was so nervous about performing. I've been nearly sick about it for a week now, just thinking about it. It was nice to have something to distract myself, these past couple of days!"

"You'll be great, in the competition next month," Mitchell told her.

"I can't do what you did," said Michelle. "You were amazing, the way you danced, the way you performed. And you played guitar, I didn't know you were so good!"

"It was your voice, though," Mitchell told her.

"I would have just stood there, and been a nervous wreck. I wouldn't even have been able to sing." Just then the hospital door opened.

"Mom, Dad!" cried out Michelle.

Mrs. Everett ran to Michelle and hugged her gently. "Oh, Mitchell, my poor baby boy, look at you!"

"Where have you been?" asked Michelle.

Her father answered, "The police wanted to question you two, but since you were taken to the hospital they figured we were the next best thing. That boy they arrested had a very strange story to tell. I'm afraid we weren't a lot of help at sorting it out."

"I don't know what I could have told them," said Michelle. "He's been following me all weekend, trying to kill me, but I've never seen him before in my life."

"He said he met Michelle at a party," said Mrs. Everett with a glance at Mitchell. "He says you beat him up, and that you're really a boy dressed as a girl."

Mitchell looked embarrassed. "It's true," he told them. "I did meet him at a party. He tried to get – physical, but he fell, and hit his head, and I just ran. I didn't beat him up!"

"Don't worry, Kitten," said his father. "No one looking at the two of you together would ever believe that you could have beaten him up!" he laughed. "But why does he think you're a boy?"

Mitchell couldn't think what to say, but Michelle spoke up. "All his friends must have kidded him, about being beaten up by a girl. Then he ran into me. Michelle and I look a lot alike, maybe he thought I was her."

"Well, no one will be mistaking you for each other for a while," said their mother. "For the next two months, Mitchell is the one with the cast on his arm!"

Mitchell and Michelle just looked at each other. This hadn't occurred to either of them – they couldn't change back! There was a long moment of silence as they struggled with this thought. If they were ever going to confess, now was the time...

"Right, that's me!" said Michelle.

"Right, that's him!" said Mitchell at the same time.

"Hey, has Michelle signed your cast yet?" asked their father. "You should have a signature from a genuine, rock star celebrity."



Michelle held out her arm to her brother, and Mrs. Everett supplied a pen. In his most feminine handwriting Mitchell signed, "Michelle Everett."

Epilogue: *Twelve Years Later...*

Mitchell went to answer the front door, but first checked his lipstick in the hall mirror. You never knew who might be dropping by. Opening the door he found Michelle, dressed in her usual suit and tie, looking like she'd just come from the office.



"Hey, Mitchell," said Mitchell. They had long ago given up trying to keep their own names, even between themselves. "Working late tonight?"

"You guessed it," she said as she entered, dropped her briefcase and headed for the couch in the living room. "Just finishing up some contracts for the tour next month. Making sure you don't get any black jelly beans in your dressing room, that kind of thing."

"Stop it," giggled Mitchell. "You know I'm not like that. This is how rumors get started." He sat on the couch beside his sister. "Did you bring me something to sign?"

"Not this time, no need," said Michelle. "I just wanted to ask a favor. I wondered if you'd mind if I took the kids this weekend. I haven't seen them in a while."

"Not a problem, no problem at all," said Mitchell. "You

know they both love spending time with their Uncle Mitchell.”

“I also wanted to talk to you, seriously, about them. Michelle, I notice that you’re still dressing them alike.”

“I know. They’re just so adorable, they’re like little twins, they look so much alike.”

“Michelle,” said Michelle. “I know you’re their mother, but I’m their mother too! I carried them for nine months each, don’t forget, while all you carried was a big piece of foam rubber!”

Mitchell was shocked. “Mitchell, I never forget that you’re their mother, never for a minute! I always try to keep you involved in their lives.”

“It’s just, they’re getting too old to be dressed the same. Alexandra is a girl, and needs to be treated like one. And Alexander, the last time I saw him you had them both in skirts.”

“No, they were in matching kilts. Their father is part Scottish, you know.”

“Just try to remember, how much we appreciated when Mom finally let us be ourselves. Please, Michelle?” said Michelle.

“Okay,” sulked Mitchell. “You’re right, I’ve known it for a long time. Maybe you can take them shopping on the weekend – I couldn’t do it!”

“Exactly what I had in mind,” said Michelle.

“Just don’t cut Alexander’s hair!” said Mitchell. “I’m just not ready for that.”

“Okay, we won’t touch his hair,” said Michelle. Michelle then shifted uncomfortably. “I also wanted to tell you, I saw Steve the other day.”

“Oh, no!” said Mitchell. “No, I am not going to have a conversation with you about Steve!”



"But Michelle," said Michelle. "You know, I still have feelings for him."

"You do, I don't!" said Mitchell. "I can't believe, you convinced me to marry him for you! Five years of marriage and two children with him was all I could stand. Even you agreed, it wasn't working. Do you know, I actually had to have sex with him once?"

"Really?" said Michelle, having never heard this before. "How did you do that?"

"I don't want to think about it," said Mitchell.

"He's still in love with you, you know."

"Yes! I know, I know. He looks at me every time he picks up the kids, like a puppy that's been kicked and doesn't understand why. Mitchell, I am not getting back together with Steve. Find yourself any other guy and I'll date him for you, but not Steve."

"I know, it's a lot to ask. What if I asked Julie out again? What if I invited her on tour with us? Adjoining hotel rooms? You could have Steve up, just one night, I promise!"

"Adjoining hotel rooms?" said Mitchell hesitantly. "Double blind, double switch?"

"Same old routine," said Michelle.

Mitchell was quiet for a while. "I'll think about it," he finally agreed.

###