

# **TGSTORIES PRESENTS**

## **Nailed**

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**“RAY, YOU PROMISED,” HEATHER WHINED**, dragging harder against her boyfriend's hand in a vain attempt to pull him bodily along the sidewalk of the posh, uptown shopping district.

“I didn't think you meant *today*,” he growled back, putting up more resistance. “Do I *look* like I want to spend the rest of my morning in a nail salon?”

“I booked you a foot massage,” Heather shot back. “And a manicure. Guys get them all the time. I thought it would be something special, y'know, something we could do together. Besides, how many opportunities do you get to actually pamper yourself? I really think you'll enjoy yourself. C'mon, baby, *please*. Try to keep an open mind.”

“Still sounds faggy to me,” Ray grumped, raking a hand through his short, dark hair but relenting a little bit and allowing himself to be dragged forward a couple steps. An errant breeze over the flagstone path caused the dark acrylic sign over the door to creak on its brass chains. *Salon Belle*, it said in elegant calligraphy. Heather pushed open the door, eliciting a merry little tinkle from the brass bell over the door.

The salon's interior called out with an air of class and luxury as Heather and Ray stepped into a small foyer of adobe tile and subtly tinted plaster walls. Even the *pro forma* portraits of hands tipped with elaborately done nails which seemed standard issue for every manicure salon in the United States were in tasteful, elegant antique frames.





A svelte, leggy woman wearing a stylish black dress, her raven's-wing hair drawn back behind a burgundy headband, stepped into the waiting room. “Ah,” she sang out in a melodious mezzo. “You must be Heather. I’m Amanda, we spoke on the phone.”

Heather extended her hand readily. “I am,” she replied. “And this is Ray.”

Amanda extended her hand in turn to Ray. He shook it brusquely – his last attempt at rebellion against the enforced 'spa day' would be total disengagement from everyone involved – and muttered something unintelligible. Amanda's smile never slipped but something behind her eyes seemed to harden in response.

“Heather told me a bit about you, Ray,” she said airily. “I’m sure you’ll find our full-service package to be most unique and, hopefully, enjoyable. Now, if you will both step this way, please?”

She held the door open and ushered both of them into a beautiful open-air

courtyard beyond, filled with the music of a babbling fountain which fed a shallow koi pond, surrounded by meticulously landscaped greenery and flowers in the early stages of bloom. Sweet perfumes drifted on the air, a tiny little oasis of green in the midst of the thriving city.

Amanda chatted gaily with Heather about nothing as they walked, giving Ray ample time to look around at the elaborate salon. Many windows looking into the courtyard showed women receiving facials, massages, haircuts and whatever other pampering treatments Ray could imagine. The amount of space behind the doors of the spa seemed larger than it could have been from the outside, but he chalked it up to a nifty architectural trick and shoved it immediately out of his mind.

“A lot of men are taking advantage of the spa these days,” Amanda's voice filtered in through Ray's musings. He realized with a shock that she addressed him. “You won't be alone.”

“Really?” Ray asked noncommittally.

“Of course. Several men are here already. Here, wait inside here. Make yourself comfortable,” Amanda said, opening a door into a luxuriously appointed waiting room. The entire back wall of the sitting room was occupied by men. A lanky, nerdy type engrossed in a game on his smart phone sat next to a tubby, self-absorbed man in khakis who made an elaborate show of being bored. Beside him, a button-down guy in a tie paid rapt attention to the *Wall Street Journal* next to a disgustingly healthy, athletic type who chatted about college football on a phone a little bit too loudly for Ray's comfort. Still, Ray felt a rush of relief that he wouldn't be the only guy at the spa that day. He took a seat quietly on the end of the row and received a brotherly nod from the tubby guy in greeting, sorting through the stacked magazines on the end table for something that didn't obsess with clothes, makeup or menstrual periods. Finding a dog-eared copy of *Car and Driver* dated several months prior, he flipped through it and tried to will the time to pass more quickly.



“Now, if you gentlemen would excuse me, I'll go get you all registered in the office with your lady friends,” Amanda said, draping an elegant hand across Heather's shoulder and gently ushering her towards a polished wooden door. Ray grunted softly in agreement and tried to pay attention to the magazine, hoping the would all be over soon and he could be back, doing what he wanted to do, and have enough 'bonding' in the bank to shut Heather up for a few months.

Amanda's office embodied luxury – Persian carpets, aged leather upholstery and polished wood, scented candles burning in nooks in the corners and shelves stacked with aged leather-bound books in more languages than Heather could identify. Four other women milled about inside, sipping champagne from crystal flutes and trying to look at home amid the lavish elegance.

Heather accepted a glass of champagne from Amanda and turned to face the large one-way window looking out onto the waiting room and the bored men seated there.

She sneered a little at Ray, her erstwhile boyfriend, surreptitiously picking his nose and checking to see if anyone noticed.

“I assume you ladies all know why we're here,” Amanada began, lounging back in her leather chair and steepling her fingers in front of her face. “You all contacted me for the same reason. The – I hesitate to use the term *men* – in your lives have pushed you to the breaking point, each in their own unique fashion, and you have enlisted me as an agent of change and, ultimately, punishment.

“I can sense that many of you don't believe that the claims made about me from whatever friends, relatives or acquaintances who mentioned me. I can assure you, I am quite capable of whatever they may have intimated about me. Now, perhaps I could impose upon you ladies to tell me which one of those gentlemen in the other room belongs to you and what, shall we say, crimes you believe they have committed?”

“I guess I'll start,” a mousy-looking brunette with thick glasses and a disturbing absence of chin said in a small voice. “My name is Molly. Molly Hicks. The charming little man-child in there who can't stop playing video games on his phone is mine. Richard Strickland. When we started dating about two years ago, he was everything I was looking for. Shy, sweet, thoughtful, romantic – but he changed. Once we started having sex, I think he just stopped trying. Anything even approaching maturity just went *poof*. He's on one video game or another every waking hour, when he's not hanging out with his nerd friends talking about video games. Or *Star Wars*, or who'd win in a fistfight, Spock or Frodo. It drives me crazy.”

Amanda tapped her lower lip in thought. “I see.”

“And the suit-and-tie next to him is David. David Tompkins,” a lanky, freckled woman said, stepping up to the window with a heavy, clumping stride. “I'm Donna Landau. We've technically been dating for three years, but it's been tough. He's married, you see. To his fucking job. He works at least twelve, sometimes sixteen or seventeen hours a day. Don't get me wrong – I enjoy the money. But I'm sick to fucking death of taking second place to his occupation. I've tried everything – I even offered to bring another girl into the bedroom – to tempt him out of the office, but he isn't budging.”

“Hi, I'm Kim. Kimberly Cooper,” a pretty but slightly *zaffig* brunette in a brightly-colored dress chimed in. “The guy sitting next to Donna's boyfriend talking *way* too much about college football is mine.

Jeff Anderson. I guess you wouldn't expect anybody to bring a guy like him in here.

He's handsome, sweet, thoughtful and kind.”

“So why are you here, Kimberly?” Amanda queried.

“Because he and I have been going out for five and a half years,” Kimberly explained. “And no ring. No commitment of any kind. 'Let's keep it light, let's not put labels on things,' he says. 'Why do we have to bog ourselves down in all that traditional bullshit, Kim? We have a good thing going.' Meanwhile, everyone I know is getting married, having kids, and even though they aren't saying anything, I can see the way they look at me. Like I'm somehow less of a woman because I can't reel him in.”

“There's mine,” a short, round-faced woman said, pointing through the window at the overweight man making a huge show of being bored. “Lovely, ain't he? His name's Eric Baumgarten. He seemed okay when I met him, two years ago. Hell, he was actually nice. Funny. But I peeled back the layers of the onion as I went along and *wow*, do we have some serious Mommy issues. Turns out he's a woman-hating schmuck, underneath it all. Thinks we're all here on this earth just to serve him. Oh, yeah. I'm Lisa Stansfield, by the way.”

“Which leaves me, I guess,” Heather said, standing and indicating Ray through the window with his untucked shirt and unkempt hair. “I'm Heather White. That unmade bed over there is my boyfriend, Ray Simmons. The world's biggest slob. I started dating him about a year ago, and since then it seems like I spend all my time cleaning up after him. I can't even get him to tuck in his shirt or comb his hair these days, it seems.”

Amanda turned to face them, leaning gracefully against the wall and regarding the toe of her expensive pump disinterestedly. “You all understand why you're here,” she said. “And you further understand that what you are asking me to do is irrevocable. There is no going back.”

Everyone in the room nodded.

“It's not simply that I will be altering them to make these bad behaviors go away,” Amanda continued. “You must comprehend that the men you see in that room – the men you care for and have forged relationships with – those men will *no longer exist*. Their own mothers will not recognize them when I'm finished. You understand this, and still you are willing to proceed?”

Everyone nodded again, without hesitation.

Amanda looked a bit somber. "I see," she said.

"Um, Amanda?" Lisa Stansfield said shyly. "You haven't mentioned how much this will cost."

"Of course," she said. "We will discuss cost later. Once you see the results, then we will determine what you all believe it is worth."

She sashayed effortlessly across the intervening space and draped a lissome hand around Heather's shoulders. "Now, it falls to you ladies," she said to the room. "We'll begin with what you told them was going to happen. It's time to go to the nail stations. If you will each go in and get your significant other, I leave it to you to go and bring them to the nail salon."

"She's... I dunno. *Wow*," Donna said in a hushed tone after Amanda left the room. "I don't even think I believed this place once my girlfriend told me about it. But after meeting her..."

"I know," Molly said. "There's something about her."

"I just hope she can do what she claims," Kimberly said. "I don't know how much more of Jeff's behavior I can take. I'm still not a hundred percent sure if I believe what everyone says she's capable of, but I'm at the end of my rope."

"Why didn't we just break up with them?" Heather asked. "I mean, that's the simplest answer."

"I love him, that's why," Lisa chimed in. "I don't want anyone different. I want what I have, only better. Improved. I don't think that's too much to ask, and this woman seems to have the answers."

Heather walked into the waiting room first, slapping on a happy face immediately as she took Ray by both hands. "You ready, honey?" she chirped happily, drawing him to his feet with protest and pulling him none too gently through the door. Heather led Ray into the manicure room and pushed him forcibly into a chair. Ray placed his hands onto the towel spread out on the table in front of him and looked at Heather, flabbergasted, as a short and silent Asian woman with her hair in a ponytail took a chair across from him and began laying out manicurist's tools.

“Are you sure about this?” Ray stammered, looking at Heather imploringly.

“Jesus, Ray, it's not gonna turn you gay,” Heather said exasperatedly.

“It's just a manicure. Lots of men are getting them. I've told you – just sit back and enjoy yourself. It's nice. I think you're really gonna get a lot out of it.”



The silent woman bent low over Ray's hands and began to clean them with aromatic soap and water.

“That smells girly,” Ray said distastefully, wrinkling his nose.

“Oh, for fuck's sake, Ray,” Heather snapped. “If you're *that* insecure about your masculinity...”

“I agree,” Amanda said, emerging from a back room. She loomed over Ray regally, making him – and Heather, for that matter – seem smaller by comparison. “Mr. Simmons, you really should make a bit more of an effort, you know. Open your mind to new experiences. Today could be a big eye-opener for you. You might find yourself changed by it.”

“Changed? How would it change me?” Ray asked.

“How would you like it to?” Amanda asked. “I know how Heather might like it to change you.”

“Heather? What did you say to her?” Ray challenged.

“Just the obvious,” Heather said. “That I spend all my time cleaning up after you. That you haven't made any effort in this relationship for a long time, and that I was sick of it. You wear the same clothes over and over, you never do anything with your hair or your appearance – shit, Ray, you won't even tuck in your shirt or wear different shoes when we go out.”

“I'm here, aren't I?” Ray riposted.

“Kicking and screaming, and only because I offered to pay,” Heather countered.

“So *that's* what all this is about?” Ray asked. “That you think I'm a slob?”

“Basically,” Heather said, self-satisfied.

“Fuck this,” Ray said, attempting to stand. “I'm outta here.”

Amanda made a simple gesture and Ray plopped back into his seat and stayed as if glued there. He looked at her in shock, the words of protest strangling in his throat.

“I'm afraid I must insist that you stay,” Amanda said. “There are certain things that have been set in motion, Mr. Simmons. Certain bargains that have been struck. You are to remain here, Mr. Simmons, for the duration. I suggest you make the best of the situation, because the situation will continue – with or without your participation.”

Ray swallowed hard. “What do you mean, things have been set in motion.”

“It should be evident,” Amanda told him. “Why don't you stand?”

Ray struggled a little, then looked back up at Amanda with fear in his eyes. “I can't.”

“One of the things that has been set in motion,” Amanda told him.

“I'm calling the cops,” Ray said, digging in his pocket.

“Sit *still*, Mr. Simmons,” Amanda commanded, and Ray replaced his hands on the table immediately.



“And I rather think I've heard enough of your protests,” she said, and the reply Ray had been about to utter died in his throat, leaving him breathing through silently mouthing protestations.

“Now, if you don't have any other little rebellions to stage, I suggest we get on with the process,” Amanda said. “Hồng Ba, if you wouldn't mind, my dear, please continue.”

The demure little manicurist nodded and took the first of Ray's fingers and began to buff and file the nails with quick, precise motions. Her experience and expertise at her job

showed plainly with her efficiency and economy of movement. She had Ray's hands looking better and cleaner than they had in months in a matter of minutes.

“She's good,” Heather commented.

“The best,” Amanda commented with a proud half-smile. “You would not believe what she was like when I first found her.” She seems quite young,” Heather commented. “Wasn't she in school?”

Amanda chuckled, deep in her throat. “Actually, she was nearing retirement age,” she told Heather airily. “A very powerful and successful businessman. One who didn't have a very healthy respect for members of the service industry. She took a look at the *Manicurist's Monthly* in the waiting room and decided a future as a nail technician might be more her speed.”

“Did you say *businessman*?” Heather asked her.

“You heard me correctly,” said Amanda brightly. “A by-product of the magic I use.”

“By-product?” Heather asked, agape.

“Is that going to happen to Ray?”

“It should,” Amanda said. “It should happen to them all. Is that a problem, Ms. White?”

“Problem? Of course it's a problem,” Heather protested. “I wanted his bad habits taken away, not his cock! I love Ray! That's why I brought him here! I don't want him changed into a little Vietnamese manicurist!”

“Please, moderate your tone,” Amanda said. “I detest hysteria. And he won't become a 'little Vietnamese manicurist,' as you put it. At least, I think he won't. The magic tends to be a bit more specific than that. And his bad habits *will* be taken away. That was the arrangement.”

“The other girls – did they know about this?” Heather asked.

“Immaterial,” Amanda said dismissively. “It is what it is.”

“This okay, Ms. Amanda?” Hòng Ba asked in a soft, timid voice, gesturing to Ray's fingertips.

“Lovely, my dear. Now, the acrylics. French tips, do you think?”

“Yes, ma'am,” Hòng Ba said, bending back to her work. With her quick, deft motions and customary silence, she filed and shaped acrylic nail extensions to Ray's nails, setting them with glue and covering them with a thick coating of acrylic gel. She shaped them with an emery board and a rotary tool, causing a fine white dust to settle around Ray's hands, and then brushed them clean. Without a word, she brushed a sharp-smelling glossy white enamel onto the tips and then covered them with a transparent gloss layer which left them shiny and glamorous. Ray could only stare dumbfounded at the long, square-cut nails now tipping his fingers, as the gloss and sheen surrounding them suddenly took on a strange purplish glow which coalesced into a pulsating nimbus which surrounded his fingertips, limned with little arcs of electricity which darted from tip to tip. Ray stood, gazing down at his hands in abject terror.



“Oh, my God,” Heather breathed. The glow widened and began to spread down Ray's fingers and onto his hands and wrists. Where the glow faded, now slender fingers remained, no hair on the knuckles or backs of the hands where before little wiry curls had stood. Even the ropy veins which mapped the backs of Ray's hands and arms – something Heather had always found attractively masculine – now lay flat and smooth.

Onward the glow spread, up Ray's arms, leaving behind hairless and gracefully slender willows, then onto his shoulders and chest. His shirt seemed to crumple around him, as the circumference and girth of his once large, manly chest deflated beneath it. As soon as the wrinkled shirt settled around new, narrow shoulders, the front ballooned out until the buttons strained and gapped. Long-nailed, lissome hands flew up to the perky, 36C breasts which now strained at the front of his shirt in a vain attempt to push them back in. The glow spread down his torso, leaving behind a trim and flat-as-a-board toned belly peeking from between the buttons.

Ray's mouth spread in a completely silent scream as the glow spread up a neck now long, slender and swan-like and suffused his face, making it heart-shaped and wide-eyed with lush, kissable lips and very white, straight teeth. The glow settled in his scalp, forcing his thick brown hair out in a lustrous wave which hung across his face and settled on his narrow shoulders.

Ray collapsed back into his chair just as the cuffs of his blue jeans bunched up around slender, dainty ankles and the telltale bulge in the front beneath the seam deflated and collapsed, leaving his faded Levi's now several sizes too large and cut entirely wrong for the wide hips and trim waist he now possessed. The first sound to come out of him in a seeming eternity escaped a bitten lower lip – a long soprano moan, breathy and sexual.

“Dear God,” Heather breathed, looking down at the twenty-something pretty brunette, all of five foot six and a hundred twenty pounds, who sat breathlessly in the place where her six-foot-two, two hundred twenty pound boyfriend once occupied.

“Now, Ray – I suppose we won't be able to call you that any more, but we should probably finish doing this before we decide on a more suitable name – I expect you to compose yourself and act like a proper young lady,” Amanda cautioned. “You don't want me to put you back under the silence spell, now, do you?”

“No,” Ray breathed, terrified.

“No what?” Amanda pressed.

“No, ma'am,” Ray said in a very small voice – made smaller still by the little-girl soprano voice he now possessed.

“Now, I suggest you get rid of those clothes – they simply won't do any more – and change into a robe. We have a lot of work to do,” Amanda said, snapping her fingers impatiently. “And you should thank Hòng Ba, too, don't you think?”

“Thanks,” Ray mumbled.

“Thank her properly, young lady,” Amanda hissed, eyes narrowing dangerously.

Ray cleared his slender throat. “Thank you, Hòng Ba,” he said, eyes downcast. “My nails are beautiful. You did a wonderful job.” Even forced, he sounded gushy and girly.

Ray turned to Amanda with wide, frightened eyes. “What's going to happen to me now, ma'am?”

Amanda caressed Ray's cheek gently. “Not to worry, my dear. You're absolutely lovely. Now, we must let the magic run its course. We have to make you beautiful.”

“I'm scared,” she said.

“I know,” Amanda soothed. “But we must trust the magic. Everything will be perfect. You'll see.”

Hồng Ba helped Ray slip out of the overlarge jeans and ill-fitting bowling shirt he'd worn in, revealing a lushly-curved and trim, athletic body. His skin shone with health, a beautifully-tanned amber free from the slightest blemish. He perched gracefully on slender dancer's legs topped by a perfectly spherical bubble of a butt nipping into a tiny waist. A taut little belly flowed up into a round, gravity-defying pair of largish breasts. The body of a centerfold. Heather couldn't suppress a pang of jealousy. Her own long, sweaty hours in the gym hadn't produced so perfect a body, no matter how hard she tried. The tiny Vietnamese woman wrapped Ray's body in a thick, fluffy pink robe and wrapped her long brunette hair in a pink towel expertly.

She took Ray's slender, perfectly manicured hands in hers and led her back through the open-air courtyard. Birds sang in the precisely maintained trees and the fountain babbled happily. Amanda paused a moment, letting the sun warm her unparalleled face for a second. A slow smile spread across her lips and she sighed deeply.

“You all right?” Heather hazarded.

“Of course,” Amanda told her. “Casting that particular spell takes quite a bit out of me, added to the stress of casting across five people. I feel as though I could sleep for a week. It makes one appreciate the simple things of the world, I've found. Sunshine on one's face, and the smell of fresh air.”

“Why do you do it?” Heather asked.

“Do what? Work magic? As well ask me why I breathe,” she told her.

“Not magic – I mean *this*. Changing people.”

“Ah,” Amanda said, nodding. “The world needs balance, Ms. White. Demands it, actually. When the world is out of balance, everything suffers. You can see it in everything around us. Doing this – in my own small way, it restores the imbalance plaguing us all. Our world, Ms. White, exists as a combination of billions and billions of smaller worlds. I cannot shatter the one great world, not with my own magic. But I can change one world at a time, hopefully for the better.”

“I think I see,” Heather said.

“It doesn't matter if you see or not,” Amanda said. “The magic *is*. That is all that matters.”

Amanda seemed to recharge whatever batteries she depleted over the course of the spell she had woven and took Ray's hands in hers again with a renewed energy and sense of purpose.

Heather moved in close to her once-manly 'boy'friend. “Ray – I didn't know.”

“Don't talk to me,” Ray hissed in his new high, girlish voice.

“For what it's worth, I'm sorry,” Heather said.

“Go fuck yourself,” Ray spat.

Amanda overheard the exchange and offered Heather a reassuring smile. “I wouldn't worry, Ms. White. The shock of the transformation still colors Mr. Simmons' reactions. Once we see this all the way through and let the magic run its course, his – or should I say, *her* – reactions to you will be quite different.”

She tugged at Ray's hands insistently. “We must hurry, my dear. The others will be waiting for us. It's a busy day, we mustn't dawdle. Better to do this kind of work while the sun is shining.”

“I'm having trouble walking,” Ray complained.

“Not to worry,” Amanda reassured him. “It's your those dainty new feet of yours. Much more accustomed to walking in high heels. Walk on your toes for the time being.”

“High heels?” Ray asked, aghast.

“Of course, darling,” Amanda said. “You'll learn to love them. You'll learn to love it all. High heels, short skirts, makeup, perfume, the attention of attractive young men...”

“Waitaminnit – young *men*?” Ray stammered. “You mean I'm gonna start liking *guys*?”

“You're a perfectly healthy, red-blooded young woman, my dear,” Amanda said patiently. “Of course you will appreciate an attractive young man. And you will particularly appreciate what he will be able to do for you in the bedroom. One of the side effects of the magic, you see. You will be a very, shall we say, *adventurous* young woman. The magic always seems to bring that out in people.”

Ray turned to Heather with narrowed eyes. “Just because I didn't comb my hair and wear clean shirts,” he hissed. “You vindictive bitch.”

“Language, please,” Amanda cautioned.

“Fuck that,” Ray shot back. “Look at me, Heather! I have bigger tits than you do! And now this crazy bitch is telling me that I'm gonna start craving cock and looking at guy's asses and for what, Heather? For what? For not washing behind my fucking ears? This is fair to you?”

“Enough,” Amanda said simply, raising a hand in a subtle gesture. The purplish lightning flashed again, diving in and out of Ray's forehead like hyperkinetic, glowing earthworms.

“I'm sorry, Heather,” Ray said in a quiet, abashed tone, eyes downcast. “I don't know why I just blew up like that. I hope you can forgive me.”

Heather's jaw dropped. “Of course,” she stammered.

“I can be a catty little bitch sometimes,” Ray amended. “I think I'm about to start my period – oh God, my *period* – and I always get kinda touchy.”

“Your cycle is no excuse for that kind of language and behavior,” Amanda scolded. “Not if you value your friends thinking of you as a sweet girl. Don't you want to be a sweet girl, Mr. Simmons?”

“Yes,” Ray mumbled after a very long pause. Tears glistened at the corners of his wide, guileless eyes.

“Say it,” Amanda said gently but in a tone that brooked no defiance.

“I want people to think I’m a sweet... a sweet *girl*.”

“Good,” Amanda said. “I’m glad to hear it.”

“And I’m sorry I called you a bitch,” Ray added.

“Forgiven,” Amanda replied with a casual wave of her hand. “Think nothing of it.”

“Thank you,” Ray said, sniffing a little.

“My God, Ray,” Heather breathed, “are you *crying*?”

“I’m sad, okay?” he replied testily.

“Girls cry,” Amanda told her patiently. “She’s as emotional as any of us. Particularly around her time of the month as it is. You need to stop judging her by old standards, Ms. White. None of what you used to believe of this young woman applies any more.”

“I’ll try to keep that in mind,” Heather said quietly, examining the pretty young girl standing in front of her anew, seeing a new person for the first time instead of the man she’d been in a relationship with for so long. The shock settled a bit and she began to truly sympathize with Ray for the first time since the bizarre magic had transformed him. Very little of the man she’d known remained – a particular set of the jaw, a few nervous fidgets with the hands, a bit of his smell. Everything else about this woman oozed unfamiliarity and newness.

“We should move along,” Amanda prompted. “It’s a bit nippy out, don’t you think? We should get inside, with you in just a robe.”

“Sure,” Ray said, looking down at his feet in dejection and allowing himself to be led along across the little courtyard towards another bright, sunlit room across from the fountain. A line of very expensive-looking pedicure stations lined one wall, and Amanda seated Ray in the farthest along with a smile and a few whispered words of encouragement. She handed Ray a glass of champagne, which Ray took in slender, graceful fingers.

“Drink,” she told him. “It will help ease your fears.”

With a look of doubt, Ray sipped at the golden fluid and his cares melted away – *like magic*, he thought, and giggled quietly at the irony – leaving him refreshed and lighthearted. A slow, sensuous smile spread across his newly-pretty face, revealing very straight white teeth and wrinkling his petite, button nose just the slightest bit.

“There, now,” Amanda said solicitously, “doesn't that make you feel better?”

“It does,” Ray said, taking another sip. “Thank you.”

“I would be careful, however, were I you,” Amanda said. “You may not be entirely used to how little alcohol it requires to get you tipsy, now. I'd hate for you to spend the first day of your new life with a hangover. Unless you profess to be one of those 'party girls.' In which case, drink as much as you like.”

Ray gazed off into space thoughtfully, then smiled brightly and up-ended the glass, holding it out to Amanda for a refill. Amanda smirked and handed her a fresh glass.

“Party girl it is, then,” she chuckled.

“I have pressing business elsewhere, I'm afraid,” Amanda said. “If you'll excuse me?”

Ray nodded absently, absorbed in a woman's talk show showing quietly on one of the recessed high-definition televisions mounted near the ceiling. One of the selfsame shows, Heather noticed, that Ray had criticized and ridiculed so often in the past when she'd tried to watch.

Amanda left quietly through the courtyard.

“Are you all right, Ray?” Heather asked as soon as she was gone.

“Shh,” she said distractedly. “I'm trying to listen.”

“Ray, please. Look at me,” Heather pleaded.

Ray turned to her impatiently, giving the impression of a spoiled-little-girl snit.

“Are you okay?”

“I'm fine,” he shot back. “Why wouldn't I be?”

“Because you just got transformed into a girl,” Heather reminded him.

“Oh, that,” he said, blowing a curt raspberry in dismissal. “I'm fine.”

“How can you be fine?” Heather said, raising her voice.

“I just am,” Ray shot back. “Try some of this champagne. It's really good.”

“We can get out of here,” Heather prompted. “Just say the word and we're gone. Maybe we can find some way to reverse all of this.”

“Reverse all of what? I'm not going anywhere, Heather,” he said, eyes still glued to the round-table discussion on the television. “Besides, you promised me a spa day and I'm not leaving until I get it. Why don't you get a pedicure, too? Maybe a massage? You look tense.”

“My God,” Heather breathed.

Across the courtyard, Heather could see Amanda emerging from one of the many doors, leading Kimberly Cooper and a slim, leggy girl clad in a pink bathrobe identical to Ray's with hair bound up in a turban made from a pink towel. Amanda stopped midway across, as she had with Ray, and engaged in what seemed to be a very similar conversation to the one she'd had with Ray and Heather before leading her inside, placing the young woman in the chair next to Ray and giving her another glass of champagne. Soon the two newly-minted women chatted airily to one another, commenting on the content of the show and making banal conversation about what colors they wanted to do their toes, gesturing grandly with their long French manicures.

“It's uncanny,” Kim Cooper said to Heather, pressed against the far wall.

“I still can't believe it.”

Kim giggled loudly. “I know. Isn't it awesome?”

“Did you know this was gonna happen?” Heather asked.

“I thought it might,” Kim said. “My sister-in-law's co-worker was the one who told

me about this place. When I fed her enough margaritas she started talking about this place a little more in detail. She never came out and said this was what would happen, but she kinda hinted around it.”

“I'm not sure this is what I wanted,” Heather said.

“But it's what's happening,” Kim said. “You can either get on the train, honey, or get your ass left at the station. Might as well enjoy the show.”

“HAVE A SEAT RIGHT THERE,” Amanda instructed the coltish, svelte young woman who answered to the name David Tompkins, a suit-and-tie workaholic with salt-and-pepper hair and a neatly trimmed Van Dyke, gesturing to the leather-upholstered pedicure station next to Jeff Anderson. The young woman moved as if in a haze, slipping unceremoniously into the seat and accepting a glass of champagne wordlessly.

Sunlight dappled the back wall of the sunny little room, now becoming crowded with spa workers, all very attractive and silent young women, who took seats in chairs at the feet of the newly minted women and began massaging calves and arches, eliciting girlish *aahs* of delight from the women there.

Against the far wall clustered Heather White, Kimberly Cooper and Donna Landau, three of the women who had brought the men there – through cajoling or outright coercion – to receive the 'treatment' they received from the sorceress Amanda, transforming them from flawed men into the blank slates of attractive young women. They watched in dumbstruck awe from their little flock, as the girls who had once been their boyfriends chatted gaily, sipping champagne and acting utterly girlish.

“This is the most amazing thing I've ever seen,” Donna breathed.

“It's like they were born girls,” Kim added.

“I don't know if this is right,” Heather said, still unsure about what they brought about. “I love Ray. I wanted him *fixed*, not totally destroyed and then remade.”

“You're just jealous because she's prettier than you are,” Donna teased.



“You think I'm pretty?” Ray asked, turning to them in his pedicure chair where the cute little 'French' pedicure dried on his petite toenails. His flawless amber skin shone faintly in the sunlight through the large bay windows.

“Gorgeous, honey,” Donna told her. “All you girls. I can't get over it.”

“Neither can we,” Ray answered. His neutral tone rendered it impossible to determine whether or not he attempted irony. “But still – this is kind of fun, don't you think?”

“Sure,” Heather said. “What girl doesn't like a pedicure?”

“Yeah,” Ray repeated, as if it dawned on him for the first time. “What girl doesn't like *that*?”

“You'll all be pleased to know that you're lifetime members of the spa, then,” Amanda announced from the doorway to the open-air courtyard outside. “Any

time you want to come back, you're welcome. Free of charge. I like to keep in touch with my girls, you know, and you never know when you'll need a touch-up."

"Or a fill," Jeff Anderson said in a husky, sexy alto, looking at the glossy French manicure on his inch-long, square-cut nails. "My nails are so pretty. I can barely stand to think of getting a chip or much less breaking one. I want to keep them perfect, just like this."

"Then you will most likely want a weekly appointment," Amanda suggested. "Speak to the manicurist you like best and get on her schedule before you leave."

"Awesome!" Jeff chirped, clapping his hands. "I hope Hông Ba has room for me. She's such a sweetheart and does *such* a beautiful job."

"Does that offer include tanning?" David Tompkins asked in a squeaky, guileless little-girl soprano.

"If you like," Amanda said. "We only offer airbrush tanning, however. Tanning beds are too harmful to the skin. I wouldn't feel comfortable offering it."

"That's sweet," Ray said.

"I'm so pale," David whined, sticking out his lush bottom lip a little in a girlish pout. "I think I want to sign up for tanning. Get myself all nice and brown for the summer."

"Whatever you like, my dear."

Amanda excused herself again, leaving the young women sipping champagne and chatting, while she retreated across the courtyard and retrieved another freshly-transformed woman, this time a petite and very curvaceous girl who used to be Eric Baumgarten, a burly he-man of an athlete, and his once-time girlfriend Lisa Stansfield. Lisa's face creased with poorly-hidden amusement at the plight of the young girl, who seemed to be having difficulty walking without eliciting painful bouncing in her large, lushly-developed breasts.

Amanda stopped for the customary counseling-slash-scolding session in the courtyard, the way she had for each of the women involved, and once Eric stopped protesting and adopted the sashaying, one-foot-in-front-of-the-other stride with smaller steps, toe first, the jiggling of her breasts settled to tolerable

levels in exchange for a very inviting sway to her bubble butt. Amanda led Eric to the next of the pedicure chairs in line, gave her a glass of the mind-numbing champagne, and then left to go and get the last of the transformed women.

Lisa could barely contain laughter as she joined the other girlfriends against the wall. “Can you fucking believe this? When my cousin's roommate told me about this place, I *never* imagined that even half of what she said would be true. This is the funniest thing I've ever seen!”

“Funny?” Heather protested. “How can you think this is funny?”

“Honey, you weren't in a relationship with that woman-hating slug like I was. Now we'll see how *he* likes being the one who cooks and cleans and is destined to be barefoot and pregnant for the rest of his life. Talk about poetic justice.”

“There's no justice here,” Heather whispered *sotto voce*.

Molly Hicks joined them shortly thereafter, stunned and silent, as Amanda seated her *über*-nerd boyfriend Richard Strickland in the last of the chairs, now a very tall and svelte-but-buxom girl with over-large eyes and creamy skin. Once Richard got a glass of champagne inside him, washing away his fears and trepidation, the five new women enjoyed their pedicures and their mindless conversations while the girlfriends huddled against the walls, staring at them each with their own unique cocktail of emotions.

Finally, Amanda entered the room from another door, leading an impeccably-dressed redhead who had the looks and demeanor of a runway model, pushing a cart of magazines into the room. She struck a catwalk pose, one hand on her slim hip, and regarded the women in the room – particularly the girlfriends – with a haughty and slightly disdainful expression.

“Thank you, Cassidy,” Amanda told her, and the model's face transformed briefly into one of utter adoration before melting back into the coolly regal mask from before. Heather, eager for some break from her own dark guilt, stepped forward towards the cart, hoping for some kind of distraction, but was held back by Amanda's firm hand.



“I wouldn't,” she cautioned.

“Why not?”

“They're not for you.”

“Amanda?” Kim asked. “Who is she? The girl with the cart.”

“That's Cassidy,” Amanda said. “She helps out around here. She's a model.”

“I mean – who was she?” Kim amended.

“Ah,” Amanda said. “Rather an impolite request, don't you think?”

“Please,” Kim said. “It seems like everyone here was changed. I just want to know.”

Amanda sighed. “Who she was would mean nothing to you. Suffice it to say, a very sad and angry woman – much like yourselves – brought a man to me, once. Monstrously obese, on a fast road to death or disfigurement from the diabetes, high blood pressure and coronary artery disease, and with utterly no interest in saving himself or making the slightest improvement in his life. He believed firmly that if this woman truly loved him – if anyone truly loved him – then they owed it to him to love him exactly as he was.”

“And now she makes a living being what other people want her to be,” Donna said.

“You were correct in your assumption, Ms. White,” Amanda said. “There is no justice here. But there *is* a balance. You only have to look in order to see it.”

\* \* \*

Cassidy, the model, pushed the cart closer as the women stood from the pedicure stations and began to mill around. One by one, they selected magazines from the assortment in front of them and opened them in utter absorption. Amanda led them wordlessly into an adjoining room and saw them comfortably seated on leather chairs and sofas, reading their selections. A small, waist-high window looked into the little reading room, and the girlfriends gathered on the other side, each watching her fallen significant other in curiosity as the white-painted French tips of their magical nails began to glow again with the eerie, purplish light that signaled transformation.

“Oh my God,” Kimberly Cooper breathed, pointing. “Look what's happening to Jeff.”

Jeff Anderson – whose self-same fear of commitment led him into the transformation Amanda wreaked on him – sat with his slender legs thrown over the arm of a leather chair, reading an issue of *Cosmopolitan* with a hint of a smile on his pretty face. Slowly, that face began to change, almost imperceptibly at first, but then with greater speed. His eyes became a shocking sapphire blue and the lines of his face and jaw softened, making the already-pretty face now subtly shifted into stunningly beautiful. Straight, honey-blonde hair now peeked from beneath the towel wrapped around his head and tastefully-done but rather heavy makeup appeared on his lips, eyes and cheeks. Golden hoops dangled from pierced ears where none had been before, and his chest swelled out a bit into a generous C cup. Wordlessly, Jeff stood up and set the magazine in the chair behind him, then pulled the towel from around his head and shed the robe, standing in the room wearing a very *chic* pink cowl-neck sweater over a short

black suede mini, belted in wide black leather that matched his black Miu Miu ankle boots and the black Prada purse which sat in the chair atop this month's *Cosmo*. Square, black heavy-rimmed eyeglasses appeared on his slender nose, perfectly complimenting the shape of his face, sporting a Gucci logo in silver on the temples.



Visions appeared in Kim Cooper's head as the transformation occurred. Memories of dating the commitment-phobe Jeff Anderson faded into something akin to a dream, replaced by memories of being close friends with this stylish young professional woman who worked as a marketing manager at a software company with dreams of running her own PR firm someday. But despite her career ambitions, every Friday night saw her at the clubs in something skimpy, searching for the elusive boyfriend in the wild tangle of bodies comprising the local singles scene. Her goal remained simple, despite the complexity of her life – combing her way through the single's scene hunting a husband, so she could settle down and have children. Kim knew with absolute certainty that her friend would stop at nothing to reel in her future husband – many of her nights clubbing

found her naked in a strange man's bedroom, her lush lips wrapped around a stranger's cock or plunging deep into her soft pussy, some small part of her desperately wishing she would turn up pregnant from one such encounter to 'force the issue' of commitment. Kim recognized her lifelong friend as a hopeless romantic, however, who longed to be swept off her feet by some Prince Charming to a perfectly-tailored Happily Ever After which included a four-bedroom-three-bath split-level in the suburbs, soccer practices and dance classes, an SUV and parent-teacher conferences. Kim knew that the overstuffed day-planner in her friend's designer purse contained an entire section devoted to the wedding she had been planning since she was sixteen.

"I... I *know* her," Kim breathed softly, looking in awe at the stylish blonde who now touched up her lip gloss in a compact on the other side of the small window.

"Of course you do," Amanda said. "You've always known her. The two of you went to school together, grew up three doors down. She's your best friend."

"My best friend," Kim repeated, in a trance.

"Kim? Sweetie? Are you all right?" Heather asked, concerned about the faraway look in the brown eyes.

"Sure," Kim said, snapping to with none of the day's previous vitriol present in her eyes. "I'm great."

"Oh, my God," Molly Hicks squealed, pointing suddenly through the window. "I think it's happening to Richard, now. Look!"

Richard Strickland, the bookish 'power nerd' who showed more interest in video games and science fiction than he did in his girlfriend, sat on a leather couch with one leg drawn up beneath him, engrossed in an article found in this month's issue of *Shape* magazine having to do with a six-minute exercise regimen to tone abdominals and rid one of belly fat. Once again, the changes began subtly but picked up speed as the transformation progressed.



Thick, reddish-gold hair peeked in soft tendrils from the pink towel as the face became a bit more severe and angular but still breathtakingly gorgeous, with large green eyes sparkling with humor and mischief. The shoulders widened a bit and the breasts swelled both out and up – giving them the unmistakable look of being 'done.' Her lips, already lush, swelled out as well into a pouting moué which could only be achieved by collagen. Standing gracefully, Richard slipped out of his pink robe and let it drop to the floor, atop the magazine, revealing a lean and sculpted body which could only have been achieved by countless hours in a gym. A little silver belly-button ring glistened in the midst of a perfect abdominal six-pack and well-defined muscles cut the various angles of her arms and legs – just shy of being the overdone look of bodybuilding, this woman instead shone with health and strength and a single-minded dedication to honing her body. She wore tight black yoga pants and a yellow jog-bra which hugged her every sculpted curve.

“She's... a model,” Molly breathed. “A fitness model. My God, I can see it. I *know*.”

Flawless memories formed whole in Molly Hicks' mind – her friend since childhood, the little chubby girl from next door who languished under the constant teasing and ridicule of her classmates until something snapped, the summer before their freshman year in high school. She saved every penny from her summer job as a grocery-store cashier and hired a nutritionist and a personal trainer and spent her every free hour grunting and sweating in a gym. It only made sense that she would get her own personal trainer certification and go to work in a gym, where she worked out constantly in addition to teaching classes. Her body slowly became a thing of perfection, leading her into fitness competitions and into magazines. But the little fat girl never really left her, and her self-esteem hinged unfortunately on the admiration and acceptance of men – Molly knew how many times her friend fell under the spell of the chiseled and gorgeous narcissists who populated the gym scene – they hired her as a trainer and she spent many hours near them with her customary near-obsessive dedication, usually winding up giving herself to them on some piece of gym equipment after hours, her deep-seated self-esteem issues leading to incredibly hot sex and an unfortunate reputation as a complete and total slut. Molly felt closer to her friend than she ever had her boyfriend – her friend had plenty of buddies, but she needed her rare true friends to turn to when the gorgeous, self-absorbed users who fucked her senseless and then stopped returning her calls broke her so-easily-shattered heart – the only weak muscle in her new, precision-toned body.

“So beautiful,” Molly breathed.

“She is,” Amanda agreed. “She always has been. The only one who doesn't realize it is her.”

The beautiful, regal sorceress turned to Heather then. “You still have misgivings?”

“Ray didn't deserve this,” Heather breathed, summoning what little defiance she could muster in the face of such daunting power. “This is not what I wanted for him.”

“Look, my dear – really *look* – and see if you feel the same way in a moment.”

She pointed through the window, and Heather's eyes flowed to the long-legged girl who had once been her boyfriend seemingly of their own accord. Ray reclined lazily in a wicker-sided lounger, legs drawn up comfortably beneath him, thumbing raptly through the latest copy of *Vogue*.

His eyes sparkled and nearly caressed the pages depicting the expensive clothes, jewelry and accessories and the glamorous women who wore them. A stray lock of the thickest, shiniest sable hair escaped the front of the towel-turban around his head to bob mischievously across his eye. Ray brushed it away with a gesture so remarkably feminine that Heather forgot he had ever been male. A satisfied smile spread across the pretty face, which altered subtly as Heather watched.

The lips became thicker and lusher, taking on a characteristic bee-stung pout which suited the narrower, more heart-shaped face. Eyes a deep and shining dark brown sparkled beneath dark lashes so thick and long that it appeared she wore falsies. The front of her robe tented out to accommodate the largest breasts formed so far, pressed together and up by the unmistakable lift of a push-up bra. A twinkling of diamonds – Tacori, Heather knew, her friend would never wear anything that wasn't designer – shimmered on her right hand as she flipped the glossy pages.

Ray stood lissomely – *flowed* seemed to be the more appropriate word – and opened the robe, letting it drop to reveal a figure-hugging cocktail dress sparkling with golden sequins. Heather recognized it instantly as Dior. Her friend's passion for designer labels sprang unbidden into Heather's mind and she knew with absolute certainty that no article of clothing or jewelry on her friend's person would be anything less than *haute couture*. The pink towel fell next, revealing a thick fall of luxurious, impossibly soft-looking sable hair which hung down well past her narrow shoulders, so full and thick that it made her face look small by comparison. She raked it from her face with slender fingers, revealing gold-and-diamond designer earrings in the shape of oversized hearts which dangled from pierced lobes.

Heather gaped as memories seeped into her mind. Of the shy little girl she met in Scouts, who endured endless teasing from the other girls because her mother made all her clothes to save money. Her mother, Heather remembered clearly, possessed questionable taste and only the most rudimentary skill at sewing, Butterick patterns notwithstanding, so her friend spent an entire childhood in ill-fitting, poorly made clothing in fabrics pulled from clearance racks. Heather clearly remembered her friend sweeping hair from the floors of the local hair salon for an entire summer just so she could afford her one and only pair of Guess? jeans which she wore until the knees finally gave out.

When her mother and father perished suddenly in a car accident a few weeks after her friend's sixteenth birthday and the substantial settlement arrived from the lawsuit filed against the city dump truck driver who had fallen asleep at the wheel, Heather's friend's life changed forever – more than just the loss of her parents. She now possessed a trust fund, managed by a true investment hotshot, who turned her money into millions over the last years of her high school education. It allowed her friend to attend Harvard, for one thing, and also to let her buy and wear only the best and finest clothes. She became the quintessential trust-fund debutante, grafting herself to up-and-coming designers and couturiers and getting her invited to all the right after-parties. She did a brief stint as a model, just enough to fully indoctrinate her into the bulimic lifestyle of the fashion model's three C's – champagne, cocaine and cigarettes. Only an MBA from Harvard Business School kept her from going the modeling route wholeheartedly, instead opting to become a buyer for one of the big department store chains.

Heather knew her friend spent a great deal of time in front of mirrors – checking to make sure her appearance suited the mental image of the glossy magazine photos to which she aspired – and most of her days were spent in one boutique or another, pawing through racks of sumptuous clothes both for herself and for her company. She cut a very stylish figure, striding up and down the walkways of the shopping districts, arms laden with bags emblazoned with designer labels and puffing on her everpresent long, skinny white cigarettes. She had her hair and makeup done weekly at the most upscale salons by the most prominent artists as a matter of course – nothing else would do for the girl who could barely afford SuperCuts once every two months or so. And from her time on the runway circuit, she had developed a long-standing taste for casual sex, sometimes with more than one man at a time. She talked about her dalliances the way other women would discuss the weather, Heather knew, absently commenting on a sweaty encounter sandwiched between two massively-endowed African silk merchants while at this or that A-list mansion party without the slightest trace of guilt or shame.



A far cry indeed from the boyfriend who refused to tuck in his shirt or comb his hair – now the paragon of the fashion plate, without a single strand of hair out of place even if it were just to walk down the driveway of her million-dollar house to retrieve her mail. The slovenly man who frequently made entire meals out of Chee-tos, beef jerky and Mountain Dew now obsessed so completely over her appearance and figure that she politely excused herself after every meal to adjourn to the nearest bathroom and shove her manicured finger down her throat, snorted one or two bumps of high-purity Bolivian cocaine from a sterling-silver spoon and lit a long cigarette to keep hunger pangs at bay.

“I have to keep her grounded,” Heather breathed. “She’s so close to being out of control.”

“Of course,” Amanda whispered. “She should have a friend like you.”

“She *needs* me,” Heather continued.

“She does, indeed,” Amanda said. “You see, Ms. White? Not the punishment you thought it was?”

“She loved being beautiful so much,” Heather whispered. “It’s the only thing that makes her truly happy. I wish she wouldn’t make herself throw up, sure. And I wish she would stop smoking and give up doing drugs, but it’s not like she really has a problem. I’ve seen her go months without getting high and it doesn’t seem to bother her. But I’ve never seen her happier. I’m happy for her.”

“You see? I’m not the monster you thought I was, perhaps.”

“I misjudged you,” Heather said. “I’m sorry.”

“Apology accepted, my dear,” Amanda said with a wry smile.

Heather stepped close to the glass and tapped on it with her fingernail. The svelte brunette – for the life of her, Heather could not recall the woman’s name, even though she believed utterly that she had known this woman her entire life – turned, brushing her thick luxuriant hair out of her face with a casual motion and offered her best friend a beaming smile before blowing her a playful kiss. She tugged her dress here and there, coaxing it into hugging her curves just so, and fluffed up her hair before taking a seat on the same lounge chair and taking up her copy of *Vogue* and resuming her covetous, near-sexual perusal of the outfits on the pages. She reached back onto the cart and picked up the latest copy of *Elle* once she finished, but no further magic seemed to stem from the second reading, no more than the copy of *Women’s Health* changed Richard Strickland’s new incarnation or Jeff Anderson’s thumbing through the latest issue of *Sassy*.

“Wonder what would have happened if one of them had picked up *Sports Illustrated*?” Donna ventured to no one in particular, waving to her best friend through the glass.

“The world is full of female athletes,” Amanda said flatly. “In point of fact, there is a very prominent and extraordinarily attractive female professional golfer who was once a client of mine, as well as an Olympic skier. Both of whom picked up *Sports Illustrated* while in my sun room.”

“Why can’t I remember any names?” Heather asked.

“The naming of a thing gives us knowledge – and therefore power – over a thing,” Amanda explained, choosing her words carefully. “I don’t like to assign

names to my new darlings. I prefer to let the name choose them. It's a very natural, organic process. You will know names when it is time for you to know names, that is the best explanation I can offer.”

“She should have a pretty name,” Molly said. “She's a pretty girl, she should have a pretty name.”

“Something elegant,” Heather said. “To match her personality.”

“Something fun. Something playful,” Kim Cooper stated.

“The magic will take it all into account,” Amanda explained patiently. “Trust the magic.”

“I feel like I know those girls,” the brunette in the designer clothes said, peering through the window at the group of haggard-looking, unkempt women staring at them. “I mean, that one is my oldest friend. But I also feel like I'm looking at them for the first time.”

“Shh,” said a slender girl in a pink robe, huddled over a magazine. “Trying to read, here.”

The brunette lowered her voice a bit. “Sorry, honey.”

“It's weird,” said the blonde with glasses, playing idly with her hair. “I feel the same way.”

The thickly-muscled, athletic redhead leaned against the wall near them, tucking a copy of *Women's Health* under one superbly-toned bicep. “I hear you,” she said. “I know that's my oldest friend, right there, and I know I've known her for, like, ever. Since we were girls. But I feel like I barely know her at all. And how weird it is for me to say that we were girls together. It's almost like I'm lying, but I know I'm not.”

“Yeah,” the blonde said. “Totally.”

“And, even though I feel like I just met you, there's this... I dunno,” said the muscle-girl. “This *sense*. Like you and I are friends. Like we're connected somehow.”

The brunette looked at her carefully, then nodded. “Aren't you my personal trainer?” she asked.

“Yeah,” said Muscles. “I think I am. And you... don't you go to my gym, too?”

“You know I do,” Glasses said. “You talked about hiring me to help expand your client base a few weeks ago. I'm starting up my own PR firm, don't you remember?”

“I do remember, but it feels like I shouldn't.”

“And you did a calendar shoot with the photographer I was fucking,” Fashionista added. “We met at the launch party. I remember. You were getting really cozy with one of the male models. I think his name was Chris, or something.”

“Yeah,” Muscles replied. “He was *really* cute. Not real big, though.”

“I seem to remember you being kind of a size queen,” Fashionista said.

“Size does matter,” Muscles laughed.

“How weird is this?” Glasses said. “All of this is getting so clear inside my head. But it still feels a little bit like it never happened.”

“I guess it's a question of what we want,” Fashionista said.

“What d'you mean, baby?” Muscles asked.

“I mean, it's not a question of whether or not it actually happened,” Fashionista clarified. “It's a question of whether or not we wanted it to happen. And I think I do. Want everything I remember to be real, I mean. I seem to remember not being as happy as I am right now. I don't want to feel like that any more.”

“Yeah,” Glasses said. “Me neither.”

“Or me,” Muscles added.

Something settled inside them at that moment, something profound and comfortable.

“So, how's Jason?” Muscles asked Glasses suddenly.

She twisted her mouth in a wry smile. “I like him, y’know, and he’s really sweet – and great in bed – but I don’t think he’s The One, y’know? I just don’t see him as husband material.”

“So, you just keep hunting,” Fashionista said. “It’s gonna happen, sweetheart, I know it is. You just have to have a little faith.”

“And if you keep finding fun guys to fuck in the meantime, then at least you’re not wasting time,” Muscles said.

“I dunno,” Glasses contradicted. “I’m not getting any younger.”

“Jesus, girl, you’re only twenty-six. You have plenty of time,” Fashionista scolded.

“Doesn’t feel like it,” Glasses said. “I just want everything to be perfect.”

“It will be,” Fashionista said. “Just don’t force it. Trust me, honey, I’ve been married twice. Both times ended because I rushed in. As fun as it is to follow your heart, you *have* to use your head or you wind up in court.”

“Don’t follow your pussy, either,” Muscles added. “Or you just wind up bouncing back and forth from asshole to asshole, like I do.”

Glasses wrapped her in a fond, sidelong hug. “Don’t get so down on yourself, sweetie,” she said. “You’re gonna find somebody, too, I know you will.”

“I’m not really looking any more,” she said. “Just concentrating on having fun.”

Fashionista looked around furtively for a moment, trying to ignore the other girls in the room still engrossed in their various magazines. “Think there’s a place around here where I can sneak a cigarette? This is one of those disgustingly healthy places,” she said. “If they didn’t do such a great job on my nails I probably wouldn’t even come here.”

“Wow,” Heather breathed, watching the curvaceous and oh-so-*chic* brunette who had once been her slob of a boyfriend sashay out of the sun room towards the back of the spa, knowing with her uncanny *sense* of the woman now her best friend that she sought an out-of-the-way place to sneak a cigarette.

“You approve?” Amanda asked quietly.

"I'm not sure I'd go that far," Heather said. "But it is certainly impressive, to say the least."

"You are quite difficult to satisfy," Amanda told her. "I can't help but wonder if that contributed, in some small part, to Ray simply quitting any effort on his part to try and look good for you. You seem to find fault very easily, my dear."

"Are you implying that his behavior was *my* fault?" Heather said defensively.

"His choices were his own," Amanda said. "But nothing exists in a vacuum, Ms. White. It is the rarest eventuality of all when a human being actually does something for no reason."

"So, I drove him to it, that's what you're saying," Heather said.

"No, that's what *you* are saying," Amanda countered. "I am merely hypothesizing. Much the same way I am hypothesizing that Mr. Anderson never made a commitment to Ms. Cooper, perhaps, because he never viewed her as the woman with whom he wished to spend the rest of his life because she went to no effort at all to meet his own emotional needs. Or that Mr. Tompkins devoted himself to his job and to the earning of money to satisfy Ms. Landau's seemingly inexhaustible desire for material possessions. Or that Mr. Baumgarten's hatred of women doesn't stem from simple misogyny, but rather from Ms. Stansfield's proclivity to withhold sex, conversation or the slightest affection for the slightest perceived infraction of her standards, and that she painted him as the target of ridicule throughout their relationship. Or that Mr. Strickland's constant attempts to distract himself with games and fantasy were done to fill the sizeable hole left in him, emotionally, from the sexual and emotional indifference with which Ms. Hicks routinely treated him, treating him as if he owed her for even allowing herself to be seen with such a social outcast."

"You're crazy," Kimberly said. "I treated him well. Very well. He never complained."

"Yet he never committed, either," Amanda countered. "Which is why you brought him to me. Tell me, Ms. Cooper – what did Mr. Anderson want out of life? What did he aspire to? What was he working towards?"

"He wanted... I mean... Uh..."

“Exactly,” Amanda said. “Would it surprise you, Ms. Cooper, to know that Mr. Anderson worked, in the meager spare time you allowed him, on starting his own business – simply because he wanted a legacy which he could leave to his children?”

“Jeff wanted children?” Kim stammered.

“All of you ladies went to extremes to solve your problems,” Amanda scolded. “You could just as easily have talked – and more importantly, *listened* – to the men in your lives to change them. Instead, you opted to bring them to me. This never had to happen. Their behaviors were inexcusable, yes, or the magic would not have worked. But I put it to you all that those behaviors did not develop for no reason. Perhaps you should think about that while you watch them men transform in front of you.”

Amanda turned abruptly and strode out of the room, accompanied by the sharp *click-clack* of her stiletto heels on the tile floor, shutting the door behind her and leaving the women alone in silent – and perhaps even guilty – contemplation.

“Will there be anything else, my lady?” Cassidy, the slender and stylish model recently pushing the magazine cart said, curtsying quickly to the powerful sorceress standing just outside the sun room.

“No, Cassidy, I believe that will be all for the moment,” Amanda said. “If you would be so kind as to tell Maggie at the front desk that I will need new documentation packages started for each of our new friends, I would appreciate it very much.”

“As my lady desires,” Cassidy said, curtsying again. “Documentation for five.”

“Oh, no, my dear. Documentation for *ten*.”

“IT'S HAPPENING, LOOK,” LISA STANSFIELD said suddenly, pointing through the window to the sun room beyond at her transformed boyfriend, Eric Baumgarten. She brought Eric to the spa to punish him for what she believed to be misogyny and, as she termed it, “mommy issues,” but recently received an emotional slap in the face from the sorceress Amanda, the architect of these fantastic transformations, which caused her to question all her motives and wonder if she had done the right thing at all.

The women in the room – Heather White, Kimberly Cooper, Donna Landau, Molly Hicks and herself – had all dragged their boyfriends to this place, having heard rumors from trusted sources about the magical punishments which meted out here, hoping to see them punished for their perceived crimes against the innocent women in their lives.

Women whom, it now seemed, might not have been so innocent after all.

But in the face of the remarkable transformations which changed the young women in the pink robes and towels beyond the window, taking new lives and mindsets from the magazines they chose from the nearby cart, all thoughts of guilt or self-blame rapidly faded into the pure awe and wonder of watching the otherworldly magic work.

All the girlfriends watched in fascination as Eric Baumgarten – described to them all as a woman-hating neanderthal by Lisa – thumbed happily through this month's copy of *Brides* magazine, a wistful smile on her pretty face, legs drawn up beneath her as she lounged on a leather settee in the sun room.





Before their eyes, the subtle changes began. A lightening of her brows from dark brown to a sun-kissed ash blonde, and long thick eyelashes now surrounding a sexily sleepy-looking pair of hazel eyes. A slight perking up and widening of the bosom, just enough to push the lapels of her pink robe aside to expose a bit of tempting cleavage. A fading of the freckles on her cheeks and upper chest into a pale, creamy and flawless expanse. Carefully marking her place in the magazine – an article on destination weddings – she set it down on the seat and took the barest second to admire the two-carat diamond engagement ring sparkling on her left ring finger, then rose smoothly and let her robe drop open, revealing her in a snow-white sheath dress, belted in satin. A tousled-looking cascade of ash-blond fell to her shoulders and a tasteful application of earth-tone makeup appeared from the ether on her cheeks, lips and eyes. She possessed the kind of complexion that needed no make-up for enhancement, suffused with a glow of health and vigor and free from the slightest blemish or impurity.

Slowly, memories began to take shape in her head – and in the mind of Lisa Stansfield, in the adjoining room – of a simple life. A relatively happy girlhood marked in no way by much in the way of distinction; average grades, average friends, average achievements and admission to an average college. She cheered in high school and was on the Prom Queen's Court. A job waiting tables at Hooters to pay her expenses in college, but never really the prettiest girl in the room. Until she met Ben Holloway. Even Lisa could remember the change that came over her friend when she came back from the party they'd thrown at the Kappa Phi house where they'd met their freshman year in college. She glowed now, and easily eclipsed any girl in the room now. Her smile seemed just a little brighter than anyone else's, her eyes sparkled just a bit more gaily. Her days of second place vanished. Within a year, she became the Kappa Phi Sweetheart, became captain of the college cheerleading squad and achieved a 3.92 GPA in her courses. She became magnetic – people found themselves drawn to her and her complete and total devotion to her boyfriend. Rumors abounded in Kappa Phi, Lisa remembered, of the wild sex she lavished on him routinely – her love for him surmounted any fear or inhibition she possessed and she willingly offered him any kind of sex which interested him – anal, in public, bondage and domination. Lisa even remembered being asked to join the two of them in a *menage-a-trois* their junior year – Lisa declined, but she remembered another Kappa sister accepting and the rumor mill running overtime. No one felt the slightest shock when Ben proposed to her on graduation day. Becoming his wife simply *fit*. As naturally as breathing. Even though she plied her bachelors' in communication at the local television station, her life revolved around dress fittings, flower arrangements, seating charts and caterer's menus. She smiled in utter satisfaction, remembering shopping for cakes with her beloved Ben, of unwrapping naughty lingerie given her by her Kappa sisters at her bridal shower, of the trembling anticipation of her bachelorette party and of picking the stationery for her thank-you notes.

Lisa remembered tearfully accepting her request to be maid of honor, her closest friend and confidante, listening with a mixture of shock and arousal to her stories of sexual experimentation with her fiancé. Of how their dabbling into the world of domination and submission awoke something deep inside them both and how, in addition to being a loving fiancée, she also became Ben's willing and devoted live-in slave, rushing home from work to clean his house and cook his meals, then to model her bridal lingerie and veil in the living room while deep-throating his cock to the point of choking herself. She told Lisa – her closest friend – breathlessly of her plans to surprise Ben with pierced nipples on their honeymoon and how she already stopped taking birth control in an attempt to become pregnant with his child on their wedding night.

“Lucky bitch,” Lisa said mock-derisively as she leaned against the glass, watching her friend slip out of the wedding dress and into a more casual outfit of white Uggs, a flirty little mini-skirt and a white tee-shirt with pink three-quarter length sleeves and “Bride to Be” emblazoned across the chest in pink rhinestones.

“I thought you might be a touch jealous,” Amanda said with wry amusement to Lisa's reaction. “It seems that under your exterior, Ms. Stansfield, lurks a little girl who dreams of a fairy-tale wedding.”

“I'm so happy for her,” Lisa breathed.

“She has nothing but faith that you will find someone of your own,” Amanda told her. “Haven't you noticed how often she attempts to set you up with Ben's friends? Granted, most of them are fellow dominants and have, shall we say, sampled her while Ben watched. But that only illustrates her care of you. She never sets you up with men unskilled in the *boudoir*.”

“I don't like the whole tie-me-up-and-spank-me scene,” Lisa protested.

“Still, you know what your friend says about that,” Amanda teased.

Lisa nodded. “That I haven't met anyone who does it right,” she answered.

“You sound intrigued,” Amanda opined.

“Maybe,” Lisa said, blushing. “Maybe not.”

Amanda turned back to the glass slowly. “Which leaves our last domino to fall.”

Donna Landau leaned forward on her toes and stared at the young woman who came into the spa as her workaholic, ambitious boyfriend. David Tompkins sat straight and tall on the edge of a leather chair, a copy of *Seventeen* magazine opened in front of her and a sweetly confident smile on her face. Slowly, the changes began – a gradual loss of height, first, and an un-ripening of features back through the years to the very first blush of womanhood. The body beneath the pink robe became taut and compact, the breasts firm and small and utterly defiant of gravity. Strawberry blonde hair peeked out from beneath the towel wrapping her head. As her naturally-pouting lips parted, a gleam of metal glinted in her mouth from the braces on her teeth.

Makeup materialized on her face, a bit heavy and trumpy but suitable for her age – Donna knew it to be freshly eighteen years, as of a few weeks ago, but she looked younger and overcompensated for it by heavy application of makeup. Thickly mascara'd eyelashes blinked rapidly around wide, naïve blue eyes. Of its own volition, a bright and toothy smile spread across her features.

The robe fell away, exposing a very trim and lean athletic body just shy of the full flower of womanhood, clad in a blue cheerleading shell with white trim, emblazoned with “Knights” across the chest. The strawberry blonde hair gathered itself up as if manipulated by unseen phantom hands into a high ponytail caught in a blue bow. The barest hint of taut, firm belly peeked between the hems of the shell and the little pleated miniskirt she wore. Petite feet, nestled inside scrunched-down ankle socks and shod in pure white Keds, danced a little to unheard music as she stepped away from the crumpled heap of robe and towel behind her.

Donna's brow furrowed a little as unbidden memories blossomed in her mind. Even though they were a few years apart in age – Donna being four years older – the two of them had met in high school during Donna's freshman year. Donna liked the young firecracker instantly – a bright and energetic girl whose natural beauty and kind demeanor made her instantly popular – as the young woman disregarded any tacit rules of seniority and went straight for varsity cheerleading and dance. Within no time at all, she became student body president and head of the school's chapter of Habitat for Humanity. She was a strange aberration in high school society, Donna remembered – no one hated her. Regardless of clique or social standing, everyone seemed to like and approve of her. She quickly rose to the status of high school royalty, attending the senior prom her freshman year by dating the starting middle linebacker of the football team. But despite an active social life and runaway popularity, her true and abiding passion remained cheerleading and dance, to which she devoted herself wholeheartedly. Donna had transferred into the school for her senior year. Her mother moved away after a particularly acrimonious divorce and Donna found herself uprooted and utterly friendless in a new – and much larger than the one she'd come from – school and town. The very first person to introduce herself, much less treat her with friendship, had been the strawberry blonde cheerleader with the light spray of girlish freckles across her nose who rapidly grew into Donna's closest friend.



Donna found herself at every football game and every basketball game to support her friend, whose sole aspiration in life was to someday wear the uniform of a Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader, using her only social advantage – a battered Toyota Corolla with a rattling muffler and dented rear quarterpanel – to ferry her friend from ballet and tap classes to cheerleading practice to jazz, latin and hip-hop dance classes at the local community college.

Unfortunately, the young cheerleader's list of talents did not include impulse control – part of her passion for cheer spilled over into a similar passion for young high school athletes. She remained as discreet as a high-school freshman could in order to preserve her reputation – and her future career with the DCC, she hoped – but seemed unable to resist sneaking into locker rooms after practice or games, creeping behind bleachers and field houses and offering her nubile, sinuous body to the sexual hunger of teenage boys. Donna sat with her friend through a few pregnancy scares, both of them staring transfixed at the indicator window of the little pee stick waiting for the plus or minus to appear and dictate the shape of her future.

Her simple inability to control her sexual desires – she was a *very* horny young woman, even by 'teenage girl' standards – led Donna to stay tied to high school despite having graduated, just so she could keep a watchful eye on her wild friend. Unfortunately, that plan backfired – having a college-aged friend who lived in her own apartment provided a venue for hedonistic parties which the cheerleader didn't have before and led her into more sexually compromising situations.

“Just my luck,” Donna grumped to herself, “to be BFF's with the Girl Who Can't Say No.”

“You love it,” Heather teased her. “You get a lot of action at those parties.”

Donna blushed a little. “I guess I do,” she said.

Amanda stood from the chair where she'd seated herself, overlooking her sorcerous work. “It is almost done,” she announced. “If you ladies will please come with me, we can finish this work and move on with our lives.”

The women followed her into an executive-style office down a short hallway, taking seats along the wall on a leather-upholstered couch. Amanda took a seat behind a polished hardwood desk, reaching into a bottom drawer and bringing out a locked box which she carefully set on the green blotter. Cassidy led the newly-minted girls in through another door, all chatting and giggling with one another as they walked. The multiple conversations died into nervous silence as Amanda opened the locked box with a silver key kept in a separate drawer.

“I am most pleased,” she said happily, a warm smile spreading across her beautiful face. “You have become lovely young women. A true enrichment to the world.”

“Thank you,” the Cheerleader said, smiling toothily to reveal the silver of her braces.

“There remains one thing left to do,” Amanda continued.

“Names,” Glasses said.

“*Vraiment*,” Amanda said, using the French for 'truly.' “You are effectively severed from your former lives. Even now, the magic works outside these walls. When you return home, your possessions and clothing will be changed into

things more suitable to your new lives. But the magic leaves the mundane to us, I'm afraid. It falls to me to generate new identification for you, bank accounts and credit cards and such. And for that, my darlings, we will need names.”

Wordlessly, Cassidy took a seat at the vacant desk and opened an expensive-looking laptop, loading a very sophisticated program which appeared to be the source of all this new identification that Amanda had mentioned. She poised manicured fingertips over the keys and turned rapt attention to the sorceress, ready for dictation.

She opened the box before her and took a few bills out of her petty-cash till, one of each denomination, setting them before her: a one, a five, a ten, a twenty and a fifty. She placed them all into an opaque vase set on a display stand behind her, shaking it gently and holding it out in front of Fashionista, who nodded and selected a bill from the vase with long-nailed fingers. She held out the five-dollar note.

“Last name Lincoln,” Amanda said to Cassidy, who began typing furiously. “And a first name to suit her heat and your fire. Summer. I place little stock in middle names, so I think you can choose your own.”

“I really don't care,” Summer said. “Something common will do fine. I don't plan to ever use it.”

“Perhaps Elizabeth, then,” Amanda said. “Summer Elizabeth Lincoln.”

The purplish lightnings flashed again around the tall, svelte runway model and she smiled. “Summer Lincoln,” she whispered in echo of Heather, who whispered her former boyfriend – and now best friend's name to herself.

“Now you, my dear,” Amanda said, offering the vase to Glasses. She pulled out the twenty-dollar bill and displayed it pulled taut between her fingers, dancing it playfully back and forth in front of her.

“Last name Jackson,” Amanda announced, as Cassidy typed away on the laptop. “And something suitable for your whimsy, my dear. Something *cute* and playful and full of song and merriment. Like the *ceilis* of my girlhood in Ireland. That's it – Kaylee. And for a second name?”

“Ooh, I think Annette is cute,” Kaylee bubbled. “I kinda remember having an aunt named Annette that I thought was really fun to be around.”

“Kaylee Annette Jackson,” Amanda said with a nod of finality. “Very pretty. It suits you.” Kaylee giggled and blushed very prettily in response as the eldritch lightnings danced around her.

“To you, my dear,” Amanda continued, holding the vase out to the young fresh-faced cheerleader who had once been David Tompkins. She reached in and pulled out the one-dollar bill.

“Last name Washington,” Amanda announced. “You look disappointed.”

“I only got the one-dollar bill,” the cheerleader grumped.

“No real indication of your worth, darling, I promise,” Amanda soothed, stroking the teenager's cheek fondly. “But if it's another denomination you wanted, perhaps we can take that into account. I think you are easily a hundred times more than the largest denomination in the vase – which would be five thousand dollars. The five thousand dollar bill features the image of James Madison, I believe. Madison is a *lovely* name for a girl.”

“That is so pretty,” Madison answered. “Can I use Danielle for a middle name? If I ever had a daughter, that was what I wanted to name her, y'know... *before*.” The lightnings began their dance around her before she ever finished speaking.

“Very appropriate, Miss Madison Danielle Washington,” Amanda said with a warm smile. The young cheerleader, overcome with emotion, gave the sorceress an impulsive hug which Amanda returned fondly after the initial shock wore off.

“So, are you gonna, like, go by 'Maddie' or something?” the blushing bride-to-be asked as she reached into the vase and drew out the fifty-dollar bill. The cheerleader shrugged but appeared to be considering the suggestion, chewing a little on her pillowy lower lip in thought. The bride/slave handed the bill back to Amanda and waited for her pronouncement.

“Last name Grant,” Amanda said to the dutifully typing Cassidy over her shoulder. “And for you, a name that appreciates the happiness I see shining from you now. This transformation opened up a path to true contentment for you, I can see, something I did not foresee for you before. It is almost as if this transformation was fated for you.”

Which is why I think you should be called Destiny.”

“OhmyGawd, I love that name so much,” the bride gushed, clapping her hands. “Is it okay with you if I spell it with two e's? It's a little more girly.”

“I see no issue with that at all, my dear,” Amanda chuckled. “And for a second name?”

“Well, it'll be 'Grant' soon enough,” Destinee said, displaying her expensive engagement ring flirtatiously, “so I really don't mind what it is right now. Something simple. Megan. I always thought that was a pretty name.”

“Lovely,” Amanda announced as the lightnings capered and dove in and out of Destinee's creamy skin. “Destinee Megan Grant fits you perfectly, I think. Just perfectly. Which leaves you, my muscle-bound darling, and the ten-dollar bill remaining.”

The gym-rat took the bill anyway, looking at it briefly before handing it back to Amanda.

“Last name Hamilton,” Amanda said, “and for a given name, let's see. Something to suit your physical perfection, I think. A chiseled body like yours... chiseled. Sculpted. From something precious. Like amber.”

“Amber,” the beauty said with a slowly-dawning smile. “Amber Nicole.”

The lightnings did their final dance in time to Cassidy's flickering fingers while Amanda announced, “Amber Nicole Hamilton. Just perfect.”

The witch shook her head a little as if to clear it and her tone became brisk. “There are clothes and handbags in the other room for you all,” she announced, pointing back at the door where they'd entered. “I suggest you go and change. Your drivers' licenses will be ready for you by the time you're done, and I should have social security cards, passports, bank accounts and the like prepared for you by the end of the week. I also provided prepaid credit cards for your expenses in the meantime until we have your finances settled and accessible.

“Now go,” she said playfully, giving Madison a playful little smack on her pert rump to speed her along. The girls – Amber, Destinee, Madison, Kaylee and Summer – hustled along, collapsing back into their giggling, chattering knot before the door closed behind them.

Amanda offered Cassidy an affectionate caress on the shoulder as the leggy model began furiously setting up their identification, entering the new names into multiple databases and digitally arranging pictures – which must have been captured by hidden cameras in the other room – into mock-ups of their licences.

“Be sure and sign out,” Amanda called through the closing door, “or you won't receive your lifetime memberships to the spa. Massages, tanning and manicures, my darlings, don't forget!”

Amanda sighed a little, seeming to deflate just a bit, and picked up the business-stylish high-tech telephone from her desk. She pressed a single button as she pressed the phone to her ear.

“Andrew, please bring the limousine around to the front of the building,” she said into the receiver. “The young women will be ready to go home in fifteen minutes.”

She hung up without even waiting for a response – the thought of someone disobeying the imposing magician seemed almost obscene in light of what forces she commanded. Wordlessly, she led the girlfriends out of the office and into the front room where a quiet woman sat having her hair cut and styled by a hairdresser in one of the salon chairs. Amanda greeted her quietly but fondly, then looked at the leather-bound book open near the door. With the names of the new women scribed there in rounded, bubbly script with the occasional *i* dotted with a heart or a girlish circle. Destinee, ever the consummate girly-girl, even surrounded her bubbled signature with little hearts.

Amanda looked out the front window as the girls walked in a tight, arm-in-arm cluster, laughing and chattering as they went. Madison already spoke on a mobile phone, setting up one social event or another, and Summer attempted to read text messages on her phone in spite of Destinee's insisted placement of her firm breasts on the brunette's arm. They walked down the short sidewalk to the street, where a liveried chauffeur waited next to a stretch limousine with the back door opened and ready for them. The girls piled in, one after another, and everyone watched through the plate-glass of the front window as they slowly drove away, to their new lives.



“I can't believe that actually happened,” Kimberly Cooper breathed.

“It's like a dream,” Molly added.

“No dream,” Amanda corrected. “And services rendered. Now I think the time has arrived for us to discuss payment.”

Heather paled visibly and Lisa swallowed hard enough to be heard aloud, over the murmured conversation and the quiet *snip-snip* of the stylist's scissors across the room. For a transformation such as this – with all the attendant additions to the young women's lives – the dollar amount could easily stretch into the millions.

“What – what does something like this cost?” Donna asked, subconsciously clutching her purse.

Amanda laughed airily. “You can stop clutching your pocketbooks,” she said. “When I mentioned payment, I never clarified that the payment be made with currency. Forget the money. You must repay the magic for its work, not I. And the magic demands a redress of the balance for what it did.”

“What does that mean?” Heather asked.

“You received all you wanted and more,” Amanda said. “Each of you saw the flaws that irritated you so removed from your boyfriends, saw them transformed into paragons of what you desired in them. Summer Lincoln will never be the unkempt slob that Ray Simmons was. Jeff Anderson ran from the same commitment and long-term relationship that Kaylee Jackson now runs headlong *toward*. David Tompkins poured every erg of his time and energy into his job while Madison Washington pours every bit of herself into social activity and play. Eric Baumgarten no longer hates and fears women – Destinee Grant dreams only of servitude, sex, marriage and children and being a faithful and devoted woman. And Richard Strickland will never again be accused of neglecting the body physical in favor of pursuits of the mind – Amber Hamilton's entire existence revolves around the physical.

“And in addition, the magic saw to it that you did not lose them from your lives,” Amanda continued. “You are able to continue to love and cherish them as you did – you simply lost the sexual element of the relationship, and with it any aspiration to bearing children with them. Which, coincidentally, none of you particularly relished the thought of in the first place.”

“So what do we do to balance this?” Lisa asked.

“In layman's terms, you asked that 'bad' be taken from the world and replaced with 'good,’” Amanda explained. “But those elements are conserved in the universe. You have to put 'bad' back in to keep the balance. You saw them punished and remade for their flaws. You now must be punished and remade for your own.”

“Our flaws? What did we do?” Donna protested.

“All the things which you vilified your boyfriends for,” Amanda said. “You will say you made efforts to change them, but you really did not. You complained about it, you whined and some of you attempted to blackmail them by withholding sex – but you never tried to *help* them. And if the problems were as intolerable as you claimed, then why didn't any of you leave? Yes, those men you brought to me had problems.

They did thoughtless and unfortunate things. But the blame lies with you, as well – men like that wouldn't act the way they do if they didn't validate their behavior by getting women. You were the ones doing that validation. You were the ones that let it continue, in exchange for the sex, or the money, or the simple fact of not being alone.”

“That sound like you're calling us goldiggers,” Kimberly said acidly. “Or whores.”

“Not at all,” Amanda corrected. “Goldiggers and whores are the way they are because they consciously choose to pursue it. You women blundered into it stupidly, without the slightest clue of what you wanted or how to get it.”

“Oh, so we're not whores,” Donna said. “You're calling us bimbos.”

Amanda's resulting smile fell far short of pleasant. “Bimbos. What a *splendid* idea.”

The sorceress raised both hands in a complicated gesture and the room seemed to dim. The faint snipping of the stylist's scissors became loud as shouts as Amanda seemed to physically grow to near-gargantuan height – or were the others simply shrinking? The perspective of the room warped around them until the angles of the walls and ceiling did not seem to meet properly.

In the gloom surrounding them blared the first flash of purple.

“Oh, God,” Heather moaned. “What are you doing... what... um... like...”

A shrill scream punctured the stunned silence. All eyes snapped to Donna, who raked fingers through her short sandy hair. Before her eyes and theirs, it lengthened and lengthened, spilling over her shoulders and down to the small of her back, all the while lightening into the vanilla-white of bleach blonde. She opened her mouth to scream, revealing a tiny silver tongue stud that hadn't been there before. The buttons of her shirt began to strain as the breasts beneath swelled into enormity, popping buttons free to land clattering on the hardwood floor.

Beside her, Lisa attempted to contain the swelling breasts with her hands as the massive globes stripped the buttons of her own blouse. Her pale skin took on the unnatural, orangish hue of the cheap spray-tan as a lush, thick spill of bleach blonde tumbled over her shoulders.



Heather gasped audibly, and the light of intelligence faded slowly from wide, shocked eyes as two-inch long, white-tipped 'hooker' nails sprouted from her fingertips and thick brunette hair so dark as to appear almost black cascaded over her shoulders. The seams of her blouse ripped to accommodate her enormous silicone breasts. She squealed a little as a sharp pain pricked her tummy, and her outstretched hand reached down to find a little dangling belly-button ring nestled on her flat, smooth abdomen. A quick look showed the same happening to all the assembled women.

Molly, beside her, barely seemed to notice the transformation of her nails or breasts, much less the little rhinestone heart dangling from her navel or the thick fall of dark auburn hair which had once been a short, curly mop of ash blonde, instead transfixed by the very complicated, multicolored tattoo which appeared at her slender wrist and spread up her arm into a total sleeve of interconnected waves dotted with hearts, stars and flowers.

Kimberly stared agape at her lengthening nails, which rapidly became the longest of the quintet, nearly two-and-a-half inches long and crusted with little rhinestone appliquéés. Her hair became thick and slightly curly, changing from its subdued light brown into a brassy, bottle reddish-blondé. A tribal 'tramp stamp' tattoo appeared in the small of her back and her breasts swelling past what her blouse and brassiere could contain. The calculating look in the brown eyes faded into vapid cluelessness by the time they sparkled emerald amidst the frame of her thick, black false eyelashes.

“Um... so... like, what just happened?” Molly asked in a squeaky little-girl soprano.

“Look at my tits 'n' stuff!” Kimberly said, cradling the enormous silicone 38DDs bouncing on her narrow chest in defiance of sagging gravity, flicking the huge pink nipples with her ridiculously long fingernails and giggling happily.

Heather twirled a lock of dark hair around one finger as she sucked her bottom lip – now enhanced to mammoth 'cocksucking' proportions – in thought which obviously proved difficult for her. The massive 40FF breasts on her chest seemed to fascinate her. “I like mine better,” she giggled.

“So, um... what do we do now?” Donna asked in a high-pitched half-whine.

“What d'you mean, mama?” Lisa asked, genuinely oblivious.

“I mean, like... oh, I dunno,” she said, collapsing in a giggle. “Whatever.”

“I think she means, what happens next?” Amanda offered.

“Oh, yeah! Totally!” Donna said.

“Why are you, like, asking me?” Lisa said.

“Um, so – y'all know my friend Madison, right?” Donna chirped.

“The cheerleader? Totally,” Heather said. “She's so cool.”

“She's, like, throwing a thing at my apartment tonight,” Donna told them. “You bitches should totally come by 'n' stuff. Gonna be cuh-ray-zee 'n' junk!”

“Bitch throws some sick parties,” Lisa said. “But, um... I kinda think I gotta work 'n' stuff.”

“Oh, yeah,” Heather echoed. “Totally have to work.”

“Work?” Kimberly asked, twirling her hair around one finger. “What, um... like, what do we *do*?”

“I’m totally a bank manager,” Heather offered. “But, um... I can’t remember what bank any more.”

“Shit, I’m a nurse,” Donna mentioned, “but it’s soooo boring. I’m, like, totally quitting. Like, right now. I so don’t fucking wanna do that any more. It’s all, like, sick people ‘n’ stuff.”

“Eww,” Kimberly commiserated. “That’s almost as bad as being a computer programmer like me. Fucking *yawn*. And nothing but nerds around me, too – no cute boys or *nothing*.”

“I dunno, being a police dispatcher was pretty cool ‘n’ stuff,” Molly said. “But it’s, like, *super* complicated, y’know? Way too much fucking work.”

“Let’s all, like, quit together!” Lisa said suddenly, and all the girls bounced and giggled. They rummaged in their purses as one, drawing out cell-phones which they struggled to use correctly, sending text messages and emails to their now-former employers not to expect them at work, rife with text-speak shortcuts and misspelled words.

A few minutes elapsed of giggling, happy chatter before Donna seemed to grasp the gravity of what they’d done. “Um, guys? It was totally cool how we all quit our lame-ass jobs ‘n’ stuff, but, like – what are we gonna do for money ‘n’ stuff, now?”

“I’m getting me a sugar daddy,” Molly said, giggling but more than a little bit serious.

“Yeah, some old dude who likes my tits and pays my bills for sucking his dick,” Kimberly laughed.

“Yeah, but that doesn’t really help us, like, right now ‘n’ stuff,” Heather mentioned. “We should probably get something for right now.”

“But what?” Lisa asked.

“If I may be so bold,” Amanda interjected, “Perhaps I could offer a suggestion?”

Five pairs of wide, guileless eyes – rimmed with thick, trumpy makeup – regarded her with total trust.

\* \* \*

The thump of the club music vibrated the drinks on the tables in their glasses as the giant-breasted stripper slid down her customer's torso, cradling his face between her mammoth silicone breasts for a moment as she caressed his hard member with the soft skin of her thigh, through his pants. Beside her, her friends gave lap-dances too – they hooked into a bachelor party and were raking in the money – through a haze of cigarette smoke and the fumes of cheap liquor.

The song ended and she plopped in the customer's lap, drawing out her g-string so he could slip in a folded twenty-dollar bill. She kissed his cheek for thanks, leaving a little smear of trashy red lipstick and a little film of body glitter behind. She cast an eye towards the front door for just a second – her friend Destinee said that her bachelorette party would swing by for champagne and lap dances later that night, and she looked forward to their arrival. Particularly getting to squirm naked in the lap of Amber, the fitness model that she had a little crush on. She had already made arrangements with management (in the form of a spirited blowjob on her knees in the storage room) to overlook the underage status of their friend Madison and let her in to party with the rest of them. And with a bankroll the size of their friend Summer's, everybody should make out good for the night. No timeframe for their arrival blinked as an unread text message on her phone, however – the organizer of the night, Kaylee, sucked at keeping people informed of plans.

“So, what's your name, beautiful?” the customer asked, resting a hand on her thigh just close enough to where he could accidentally cop a feel of her moist, ever-ready-for-action pussy. With as much champagne as she'd consumed and as much as the man had spent on dances from her, the young, nubile stripper wasn't at all sure she wouldn't let him. He was pretty cute, after all, and the American Express black card in his wallet next to the wad of twenties and fifties easily overcame her aversion to his little pot belly and double-chin. And the tan line from the wedding ring he'd slipped into his pocket before coming in, as well.

“Used to be Heather,” she replied breathily – guys loved it when you sounded like a little girl, “but I just changed it to Holli. That's way cuter, right?”

“Absolutely,” the customer agreed.

“We all changed our names, like on the same day 'n' stuff,” Holli continued, rummaging in her cheap, designer-knockoff purse for a long, slender white cigarette which she puffed alight from a disposable lighter before taking up a fluted glass of champagne. The bachelor party had splashed out on a few bottles of Cristál which the gathered exotic dancers tore into with a passion. She pointed with a long, manicured nail to the blonde who danced for the ebon-skinned groom-to-be at the end of the table. “That used to be Donna – I know, totally boring, right? – but she changed it to Brandee. Totally my idea.”

The blonde in question smiled as she slid down the future groom's chest, pillowing her head against his belly as she fondled her enormous breasts with both pink-fishnet clad hands and teased her customer with lingering, smoky eye contact. In the chair next to her, another blonde ground her pert bubble-butt against the best man's trousered erection. She cradled her breasts between arms clad in candy-stripped red and white arm warmers that matched her thigh-high stockings.





On the other side of Holli, her friend sat perched alone – her customer having excused himself to the men's room – having slid back into her little red party dress against the everpresent chill the club used to keep the dancers' nipples erect. She sipped the last of a vodka-and-cranberry (she abstained from champagne in favor of cranberry juice for her urinary tract infection, caught from fucking some guy she met at one of their wild, hedonistic parties) and smoked a long, white cigarette while waiting for her customer to return and resume spending money.

“That's Brittani,” Holli introduced, reaching over to playfully fondle her idle friend's gigantic breast. “She used to be Molly. So much better. Can you imagine *her* as a Molly?”

“Not at all,” the customer said.

Behind the row of chairs, a statuesque brunette with her already tremendous breasts made even more prominent by a grey pinstriped corset, led the last of

the groomsmen by the hand back from the club's private 'champagne' room. His satisfied smile and the newly-repaired look of the girl's lipstick told Holli unequivocally that her friend had sucked the lucky man's cock back there – proved further by the handful of money ruffling out of her matching g-string.

“That used to be Lisa,” Holli announced, as the mammoth-breasted woman slid into her customer's lap and poured herself another – her sixth or seventh – glass of the expensive champagne. “But we all talked her into going with Jiselle. I think she's way more of a Jiselle.”

“Are you boys having a good time?” Brandee asked.

“Great time,” the groom commented.

“Cool,” she said. “So are we.”

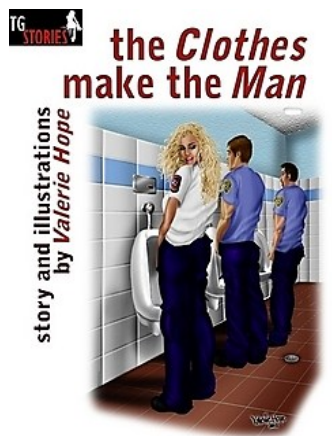
“Yeah,” Holli agreed. “Us bitches *a/ways* have a good time.”

**The End...**

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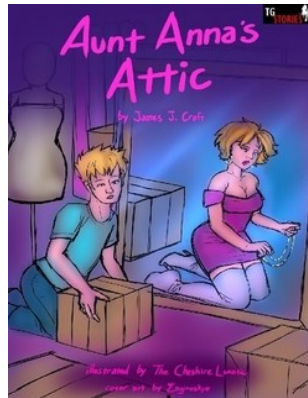
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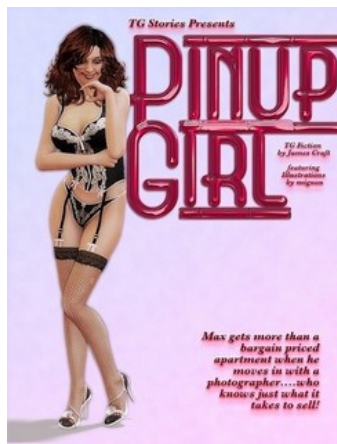
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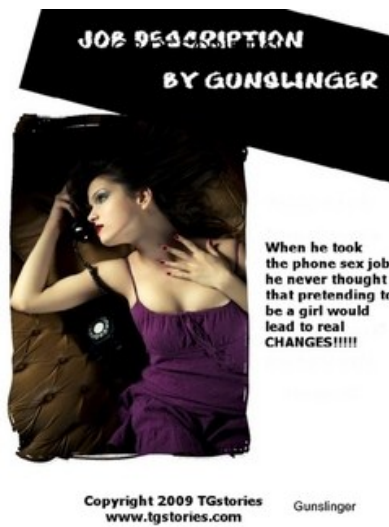
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## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

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