

**J O E S I X P A C K**

***HE'S THE  
WRONG  
GIRL***

**“Office Chemistry” by Joe Six-Pack  
A Tales of Transformation Story**



2011 Second Edition

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## OFFICE CHEMISTRY

“Did someone leave their coffee here?” James called out into the office.

He looked around the drab grid of cubicles and got no response. One person gave him a whole half-seconds’ worth of attention before going back to playing solitaire on her PC.

“Coffee? Anyone?” James said again. He held up the steaming mug to see if anyone recognized their ownage of this particular steam. “Left on the desk up here,” he continued. Still no response. “Anyone?”

James Wright shrugged and sat down at the huge reception desk. Maybe it was just a nice thing someone was doing for him, getting him coffee. First sniffing the coffee, and then sipping it, he decided it was okay to drink. According to a well-known but unavoidable rule of fate, no sooner had he taken a drink of the coffee than someone came around the corner to claim it.

“Wait! That’s...” The look on the man’s face was strangely earnest for such a minor problem. “Don’t drink...!”

James swallowed and then looked at the man. “I did ask if this was anybody’s coffee, Barry.”

Barry, a thin man of forgettable features, was blanched. He looked like he wanted to object in the strongest way possible, but he was holding his tongue. James figured it was because he knew he hadn’t a leg to stand on for claiming the coffee.

“Where’s Sheila? This was for her,” Barry said, looking around. “The coffee was for Sheila.”

“Sick leave,” James explained. “She called in today. Her mother’s not feeling well, so she’s flying out to spend a day or two with her.”

“*Not here?*” Barry said sharply, as if James were responsible for it. “What do you mean?”

“She’ll phone in today for messages,” James said, trying to belay Barry’s obvious fears. “Meanwhile, I’ll be picking up anything that needs attention to.”

“That’s why you’re sitting at her desk?” Barry objected.

James looked a little nonplussed. “That’s why I’m getting some stuff from her email.”

“This isn’t good,” Barry said to himself before leaving abruptly. “Not good.”

“Do you want me to give her a message when she calls?” James asked as he walked away. He got no response. “Okay then.”

He sat back down in Sheila’s chair and began to sift through her email. Not her personal email, but all the business stuff. She was responsible for creating those



spreadsheets everyone in the southwest region depended on, and he was going to have to do his best and make them on his own. He didn't like his chances, but he was given little choice.

Sheila was the lynchpin of the office, the most dependable person James knew. She was always at work, always pleasant, and even when swimming upstream against a torrent of requests, paperwork and deadlines, she still came through. All in all, she seemed to know more about running the business than the people who were running the business.

Too bad she was all work and no play. Sheila was only able to talk about office

stuff, and didn't seem to even have a thought about life outside it. She was a very private person. She was someone James could easily see being a decent wife or mother, but Sheila never seemed to have any other interests besides the office.



He still liked her and admired her, and wanted to come through for her, so he started to get to work on gathering the data for those daily spreadsheets. They'd be due in two hours, and he didn't want to screw it up, if only for Sheila's sake. He didn't want to leave a smudge on her record of dependability. For now, though, since he had to man the big reception desk for a few minutes, he had to pretend like he cared about the people arriving in the lobby. But it was worth it, because when Sheila got back, and he could tell her everything was okay and he'd taken care of it, he'd enjoy seeing that fleeting smile on her plain, spectacled face. He'd be satisfied to make her happy for a moment.



Maureen Newell had just popped her head out of her office for a split-second, and just that quickly, her whole day was ruined. "Hello, Barry," she said to the man waiting outside.

"Oh. Hello, Maureen," Barry replied, looking worried. "Did you know James is at Sheila's desk?"

"He's filling in for her today, Barry," Maureen said, loathing the conversation already. Barry was a toad, who seemed to enjoy getting people in trouble. A tattle-tale. Knowing Barry's penchant for formalities, she felt the need to make James's work official. "He has my permission to be at her desk."

"Someone should have sent out a memo," Barry said. "At least seven days in advance."

That's what Maureen loved about Barry - there was no problem a pointless rule couldn't make worse. "Is there something you wanted to talk to me about, Barry?"

"Oh." Barry said, coming back to his point. "I just got your tea for you, Maureen." He handed over the mug in his hands. "And I wanted to tell you that I respect you."

Maureen looked at him cockeyed. This was so far out of character for him, she could only be suspicious. Ever since he had gotten attached to the Huberson steamroller, he did little else but brown-nose his new boss. Max Huberson was skyrocketing through the company, getting promoted almost every other month or two. He was just a supervisor last year. Now he was vice president in charge of research and development, which made him the head of the division they all worked in. Barry was going right along with him, as his assistant. Maureen hated them both. Not because they were successful, but because they were jerks to everyone. Why did the assholes always get the top jobs in this company?

But that was business for you.

“Thank you, Barry,” Maureen said, accepting the mug. She checked to see if the tag hanging over the rim was her usual brand. Surprisingly, it was. “Was there anything else?”

Barry still stood there, waiting for something. “I think relationships are built on respect. Whether personal or business.”

“I see,” Maureen said, trying her best to end this. He still stood there, like a gargoyle perched on a ledge. “I’ll see you later on,” she added. Usually her broader, middle-aged physique and scowling wrinkles were enough to tell someone when the conversation was over. As office manager, she carried that kind of weight.

Barry remained in place. Maureen sighed and turned her back to him, and walked away, sipping the tea. It was still a little hot. By the time she sat at her desk, though, Barry was no longer haunting her doorway.

“Shame he couldn’t stay for lunch,” she mumbled to herself.



At the sink in his bathroom the next morning, James tugged at the long strands of hair that were growing at the back of his neck. “Need to get that cut,” he said to himself in the mirror. “Again,” he added, remembering his last haircut was just eight days ago. He spied the time and rushed through the rest of his morning routine. Combing through his hair, he found it unusually thick, in addition to being too long. “Must have not washed it very well,” he thought.

He wildly grabbed what he needed, stuffed it all in a briefcase, grabbed a coat and sprinted out the door.



As James hurried into the office to avoid being late, he stopped by the coffee machine for his usual cup a’ joe. But the machine was out of order. “Hey the machine’s not working,” he said to his friend Alex as he passed by his desk.

“Nice tie,” Alex replied.

James looked down. In his rush he had grabbed the exact wrong thing. A silk pink tie. A gift from his mother. “Whoops,” he said.

“They’re takin’ the machine out of here today,” Alex said, addressing the original issue. “They’re gonna replace it. There’s a thing about it in your email.”

Sure enough, when James got back to his desk, there was an email from Barry, saying they were going to have an outside company provide coffee services

every morning. James needed to fill out a form to put in his vote for what types of coffee to be made every day. The top three would be the only types brewed. Yet another victory for executive foolishness.

James wasn't too put off. Anything had to taste better than the greasy weak broth they previously made here. Especially yesterday's stuff. As bitter as anything he'd ever tasted.

"Hello, James. Good Morning," Maureen said, seeing him seated at Sheila's desk. "Don't let Barry catch you sitting here. He'll have a fit."

"God forbid," James replied.



“Nice tie,” Maureen said.

“Is everyone going to give me grief about the tie?”

“No, I mean it. I like the tie.” Maureen clarified. “Pink’s your color. Not a lot of guys can wear it, but you can.”

“Thanks. I guess.”

“Good morning,” Max Huberson said, entering the office. James straightened up a little in the presence of the executive. Maureen, unimpressed, took a sip of her tea.

“Morning.” James and Maureen said almost at the same time.

“Morning. How’s everybody feeling today?” Huberson seemed a little overly transfixed over Maureen sipping her tea. Then his attention shifted to James. “Where’s Sheila?” He said sharply, seeing James seated there.

“She’s with her sick mother,” James replied.

“Said she may be back tomorrow,” Maureen added, “but she wasn’t one hundred percent sure.”

“So, James is taking her place?” Huberson said, angrier than he should have been. “And no one sent out a memo?”

Great minds think alike, Maureen thought to herself. Barry and Huberson were really two of a kind and deserved each other. “I told your assistant.”

“Barry!” Huberson yelled across the office. “Barry!”

In no time, Barry scuttled his way to his bosses’ side. “Yes, Mr. Huberson?”

James and Maureen looked at each other, ready to see a rare, unexpected delight. The boss was going to chew out his assistant. In public.

“Did you know about this?” Huberson said, pointing at James.

Barry fidgeted for a brief moment. “The information had been recently passed on to me...”

Huberson’s face went beet red. “You know how this affects everything, don’t you?” He barked. “Of course you don’t. You’re too stupid.”

No one said anything, but Huberson gathered his things and marched off to his office. “I need to have a discussion with you.” He was halfway there before adding, “right now, Barry!”

James watched the two men close the doors behind them, fighting the urge to go and put his ear to the wall so he could hear it. “Wouldn’t want to be him,” he said to Maureen. “Mr. Huberson can be a real animal at times.”

“I suppose.” Maureen said, sipping her tea. “I just feel sorry for Barry. I respect him.” She turned to head back to her office. “Did I just say I *respect* Barry?”



James' attention quickly returned to other important matters. Like his hair. He could just see a wisp of hair coming into his field of vision from above his eyes. His hair was just growing out of control, and he needed to get it cut today. At lunch, if he could manage it. But his usual clips place was at the mall, across town, near his apartment. Quickly, he flipped through Sheila's contacts and found the name of her stylist.

"What to do think?" The stylist asked him when she was done. "It makes you look younger, if you ask me."

James agreed. It was cut much like he usually had it, a part on the side and combed over his forehead, but the mass and thickness of this cut did make him look younger. "I like it," he said. He took another two looks in the mirror. This stylist was very good. "Hey, can I set up a regular monthly appointment?"

"How about weekly?" She replied.

"Sounds great," James answered, although he had no real idea why a man would need to get his hair cut once a week.



It was the first day of the weekend, and James and Alex had gotten together to finish work on the motorcycle James had been working on for the better part of a year. A few more weekends, and it would finally be done.

"This is gonna be one nasty hog, dude," Alex said, wiping the grease off his hands with a rag. "I can't wait to see this screamin' down the interstate."

It had been a lot of hard work. James stood back to take a look at it for himself. It was a huge bike, an '88 Harley Touring with leather saddlebags. It was decked out all in chrome, with a black gas tank that was detailed with flames painted on the side. "It's sure going to be impressive," he said.

"Got that right," Alex agreed. "You gotta let me ride it once and a while."

James sighed and turned to his friend. He wasn't absolutely sure why he was going to say what he was about to say, but it just felt right. "You want it? Take it."

"What?" Alex said, shocked. "Don't fool with your pal, now."

"No, I mean it," James said, scratching his head. "I'm just not into it anymore. I mean, it was a great idea for a project... but now..."

"Now that it's over, you want to start another project, right?"

*No, not really,* James thought to himself. He had just gotten tired of the idea of

driving a bike. It sounded good at one time, but he just didn't see the appeal in it anymore. It just looked so large and dangerous. He would never be able to handle that monster. Best to leave it up to a real man like Alex. "You got me," James lied. "Time to move on to the next one."

"You're serious, now?" Alex said again.

"Yeah, I've just kinda had my fun with it." He scratched his chest. "Can you take it today?"

"Sure!" Alex said, already seeing himself riding it down the road. "I got my truck. I can take it."

"Good."

"And as soon as it's done, I'll let you have the first go at it."

For some reason, James was also picturing how good Alex was going to look on it, driving down the road. "Don't worry about it. Maybe you can just give me a ride on it sometime."



James sat at his new desk. The reception desk. Well, it wasn't *formally* his, but he had pretty much claimed it now. Sheila would be back at some point to take back control like only she could, but word had come down that Sheila's mom had not improved, and the day or two off had now turned into a longer leave of absence. Until then, though, it was his to use. James was sipping some of that delicious new coffee that they were now serving while flipping to the comics page of the newspaper when Maureen arrived. "Hey! G'morning!" James said, cheerily.

"Morning!" Maureen replied, almost as enthusiastically.

"Wow! Did you get a tan?" James asked.

Maureen's skin was a few noticeable shades darker than it usually was. "You know, it's the strangest thing," she said. "My skin is just darker all over. All I did was a little gardening yesterday, and I got the best tan of my life!"

"Well, good for you, Maureen." James said with a smile. Behind that grin, he was wondering exactly what was causing him to be so energetic all of the sudden. Maybe that coffee had a few extra shots of caffeine in it.

"I like your hair like that," Maureen said, returning the good feelings. She, too, was wondering exactly where all this kum-ba-yah attitude had come from. She hated Mondays. Normally she felt like biting the head off a small dog on Mondays.

James rolled his eyes. "I just cut it!" He said, exasperated. It was already coming down over his eyes.

“What, like last month?” Maureen asked.

More like this morning. “It just keeps growing.”

Maureen was just in too good a mood to do much but complement. “Well, long hair suits you.” She looked James over briefly. “In fact, I love your whole look.”

James wasn’t aware he had a ‘look.’ The only thing he had done today was get rid of the tie and roll up the sleeves of his dress shirt. The sleeves were too long on this shirt and they kept covering his hands.

“Morning,” Barry said, speeding by the two.

“Good morning, Barry!” Maureen said as bright as day. “It’s going to be a great day!” *Good God, what has come over me*, Maureen thought.

James was massaging his chest through his shirt. “Maureen, do you think swelling in my chest is a bad sign? Do you think I should see a doctor?”

“You know, I was talking to Barry just the other day, and he was talking about his breathing exercises. Did you know he does Yoga? I found that fascinating.”

“I mean, they’re getting puffier every day. I even think they’re starting to look like breasts.”

“He does these types of exercises where he breathes in and out deeply to clear his mind. He said it helped him mellow out after a tense day.”

“And they’re really sensitive. I’ve put tape over the nipples so they can’t keep rubbing against the insides of my shirt. That was driving me nuts.”

“‘Mellow out.’ What a wonderful phrase. I think that’s good advice. I think we could all try and ‘mellow out’ a bit.”

“So what do you think?” James asked Maureen.

“Oh, it’s something to think about, that’s for



sure,” she replied. “Anyway, I’ll be in my office if anyone needs me.”

“Yeah,” James said, still poking at his chest. “I should probably see a doctor.”



Barry was cringing. He was recoiling. He had just dropped the report on Maureen’s desk. The report, which had left Maureen’s office crisp and white was now soaked with red ink and had post-it notes exploding from its’ pages. What



had been all clean and pristine was being retuned as the Frankenstein's monster of in-house reports. And now, Barry was feeling like a weather man, lashed to a sign post, reporting live from the heart of Hurricane Maureen.

"You do *not* honestly expect me *and* my department to be able to get this done by *Thursday*, do you!?" Maureen bellowed. "That is total *bullshit!*"

"We've already committed to Thursday, we can't push it back," Barry said. He tried his hardest to look determined, but his chinless face, balding head and english rim glasses didn't intimidate anyone. "There's no way to extend the deadline any further. Mr. Huberson is already putting himself out on a limb by giving you this much time."

"Mr. Huberson can take his report and *stick it up his ass.*" Maureen said. "That brown-nosing sycophant will give us a *reasonable* amount of time to get this down, or I'll go in there *right now* and *ram* these revisions down his *cock-sucking throat!*"

"Maureen! *Please!* We have to get this done!" Barry begged – more for mercy than anything else.

"If I had every person on my staff working *twenty-four seven* until Thursday, we'd only get *half way* there! There's more chance of Mr. Huberson getting *laid* by the Virgin Mary than getting this report done by Thursday!"

Barry was going to give it one more try. "We *have* to do this, Maureen. There's no way out! This *has* to get completed! I'd like to give you alternatives, but there *aren't* any!"

"Bullshit! Huberson called the meeting, he can cancel!"

"That's just going to make him look bad!" Barry objected.

"*Look bad!*" Maureen bellowed. "Look bad?" Then she took a breath. And another. And another. She was trying to do those relaxing breathing exercises. "I just need to mellow out," she said to herself, "and treat people with respect."

Barry watched on as Maureen slowly, breath by breath, got her emotions down under control. She opened her eyes again and took another look at the pile. She started to flip though the pages. "The least we can do is try," she said.

"Huh what?" Barry said. Had he heard that correctly? "Uh... Yes. That's all we're asking."

Maureen scratched her chin. "I think if we use all our resources, we can... We'll have it done."

Barry wasn't certain he had just won the argument. He never won arguments. "Great." He pushed his glasses back up on the bridge of his nose. "Good."

"We just have to mellow out and deal with what fate gives us," Maureen said, a slight smile coming to her lips.

"Work smarter, not harder," Barry suggested.

Maureen's lower left eyelid twitched. But she smiled. "I believe you're right, Barry. That's very good advice."



"This time, just buzz it." James said, resigned to get control of this hair problem once and for all. "Fire up your electric shears and mow that mess away."

The old man who was to cut his hair shook his head like a disapproving grandfather. "You really need to see your barber more often. You can't let it grow out of control like this."

"Yeah." James grumbled, knowing his last haircut was just a day ago. How was he going to budget this? He was paying more for people to cut his hair than he was for utilities. Every time had had to find a new barber, too. It was to embarrassing to go to the same place back to back. He was having it cut twice a day now.

"It's a nice head of hair, though." The barber commented. "Might as well enjoy it while you can, before it all falls out." He pointed to his own receded hairline as proof.

He would welcome that right now, James thought to himself. He might just like that option.

"So you going to college?" The barber asked.

"I'm thirty two." James replied.

"Oh. You've got a young face, there. Makes you look like a kid."

James looked up into the mirror to take a look. He did look younger. He had assumed it was the hair that was making him look this way. But maybe it was something else. His cheeks were higher than he remembered them, his lips redder and fuller. And his eyes were missing that world-weary appearance he had grown used to seeing in the mirror.

"You sure you're thirty-two." The barber said, skeptically.

"Yes." James said, a bit put off by the question. "I was thirty-one last year, and next year I'll be thirty three."

"Just never grew a beard, I guess." The barber said.

James looked at himself in the mirror again. That was true, he hadn't shaved in days. Yet it really hadn't even struck him until now. Why hadn't he noticed? In fact, there didn't seem to be any trace of hair on his face at all. This was insane, and it was the last straw.



“Maureen, I need to take a few hours off tomorrow for a doctor’s appointment,” James said, coming into Maureen’s office.

Maureen was thumbing through a copy of *Vibe* magazine on her desk. She looked up briefly to register with James. “Nothing serious I hope.”

“Uh, just... Just going to have something checked out. I’m probably overreacting.”

“Mmm-hmm,” Maureen was too busy reading her magazine to pay full attention. “Well, good.”

“Thanks. I’ll make it up with overtime this week, I’m sure. Any word on Sheila?”

Maureen decided to break the hold the magazine had on her. “She’s saying it may be a while. Her mom is doing better, but she’s going to need to...” Maureen was taking a look at James for the first time that morning. “You’re trying something new today?”

James was tired of people commenting on his appearance. His hair was growing out of control, so he had tied it back in a pony tail, with a few loose hairs sweeping across his face he had to brush away every few minutes. And with the problem he was having with his chest, he had decided that wearing his shirt untucked and loose would be the best way to hide the severity of the swelling there. “Can’t someone try something new without everyone making a smart remark?” He said.

“I was just going to compliment you on it. I think we should be allowed to dress how we feel. There’s no need for a dress code around here. I’m probably going to ask Barry to see if he won’t get rid of it.”

“That’s all I need — to get Barry on my case,” James said. “Is it me or is that tan of yours getting darker?”

Maureen checked her arm. “I guess,” she said. It didn’t seem to be much of a concern for her. “I was going to ask, do you know where I can rent some old movies around here? Some old seventies stuff?”

James had to think for a minute. “You could probably get them on the internet. There’s lots of places that do that.”

“I wanted to watch them tonight. Waiting a few days for them to mail it to me doesn’t really work for me.”

“I’m not that familiar with the area. But I’ll ask Ruth. She lives around the corner.”



“Hey, Ruth.” James said, walking up to her desk. Ruth was a district manager for the Midwest, and spent much of the day on her phone while furiously typing emails on her computer. Today, though, she seemed a little distracted. She was doodling on her post-it notes, drawing little pictures. She was chewing gum and popping the bubbles as she twirled her hair with her free hand.

“Oh, hey,” Ruth replied. “What’s the sitch?”

“I was going to ask if you knew anywhere you could...” James took a second look at Ruth. “Are you doing something with your skin? It looks amazing.”

Ruth shrugged. “Nope. Looks like it always has.”

James was sure that wasn’t true. Ruth’s skin was clear and perfect. It was creamy white and smooth. She had the skin of a teenager. Which was odd, since they had just had a fortieth birthday party for her. James didn’t remember her looking so young.

But it wasn’t important. “Hey, Maureen was curious if there’s a good video store or rental place in the area with old seventies films.”

Ruth just rolled her eyes and looked exasperated. “*Gol!* How would I know? I don’t go out and rent video, I get everything off my iPhone. Only you old farts get things like ‘DVDs.’ That’s so *ancient*.”

“So you don’t know of any places, then.” James clarified.

“*No*,” Ruth said, again rolling her eyes and acting like answering was the most tiring thing she could do. “Why doesn’t she just use the internet like a *normal* person?”

“Yeah, I suggested that. She wasn’t ready to do that.” He thought for a moment. “Okay, thanks, Ruth.”

“Asta,” she replied, going back to doodling and blowing bubbles.



“This is just asking *too much*, Barry. This is truly *over the top*.” Maureen said, restraining herself from physically accosting the small, unimposing man. “There’s no way we can take on *another* project while we’re *still* finishing up the revisions on the report.”

Barry was trying to head out the door, dumping and running, but now he had to explain himself. “This isn’t a request, Maureen. These figures need to be checked and tabulated before the end of the day. *Period*. I need the excel files in my email before you leave tonight.”

“This.” Maureen said, building. “This, is a steaming fragrant pile of donkey shit!” She yelled. “I can’t put up with your massive incompetence any more, you *sawed off little runt!* You’re going to have to do this *yourself* if you want it

done! I'm not going to *touch* this until we're done with the revisions, and that's the *final word!*"

"But Mr. Huberson said..."

"Tell Huberson to *suck it!*" Maureen hollered.

"That's insubordination!"

"That's the *way it is*, Barry!" Maureen said. "And that's the way..." She faltered. "That's..." She then took a deep breath. She needed to mellow out. She needed to take it easy. "I'm sorry Barry. I didn't mean to yell at you like that. Tell me, when are you leaving tonight?"

"Uh... About four." Barry said.

Maureen just put a pleasant smile on her face. "Well, we'll have to have it done by four then."

"Good," Barry said. Lacking any common sense, he decided to push his luck. "And maybe if you just did your job instead of barking at me, we could avoid these sort of confrontations."

Maureen looked at him with fire in her eyes. But when her mouth opened, that fire had suddenly been extinguished. "You know me, Barry. I just want to keep things mellow. Fighting isn't something I'm into. If you need those figures by four, hey, that's cool with me. I can respect that."

Barry smiled to himself when he realized he had won another argument with Maureen. She used to be such a pain in the neck. She always was finding some excuse not to do the things he told her to do. But lately, she had been stopping in the middle of her tirades and giving in. Why, Barry had started to believe he actually had some authority around here.

Ever since he and Mr. Huberson had put their plan into action, the office had been changing. Changing for the better, as far as Barry was concerned. Although he wasn't happy with getting so small a say in what was going on, he did have Maureen.

"Hey, Barry," Maureen said, resting her smiling face in her hands. "Let's not fight. We should be working together. I'm going to grab a drink down on the corner after work. Maybe you could join me?"

Well, this was certainly a new development, Barry thought to himself. "I'll see if I can fit it in," he said.



James was spending more and more time in the company bathroom, trying to deal with what was happening to his body. As he leaned forward into the mirror, he really wasn't sure what he was seeing. His hair had been growing out of

control, and he was just about to give up on trying to even tie it back. He would put a rubber band at the base of his neck, and then by lunch, the rubber band would be down between his shoulders.

He still hadn't shaved in days, and in fact, he couldn't find much trace of his beard stubble anymore. The skin on his face was totally smooth. His lips seemed bigger and redder. His cheeks were more pronounced. His eyes looked larger. But maybe he was just exaggerating things. It could be just a little bug he had caught. That could happen, right?

*But what about the rest of him?* He had been losing weight like crazy. He could see his ribs when he took his shirt off. His legs were scrawny thin. And if such a thing was possible, he had been losing some height.

He was shrinking, he knew it. His pant legs needed to be cuffed when he wore them, rolling them up and folding them twice. Today, he almost needed to do it three times. And even then, he had taken to wearing a pair of cowboy boots that put an inch or two back.

Then there were the things on his chest. He didn't want to call them what they were. He didn't want to even think about it. But there they were, round and firm, bobbing around under his skin. He wrapped a bandage around them most of the time, yet this was becoming more ineffective every day. Especially since whenever he touched them, he shivered. They were so sensitive. So satisfyingly sensitive. He could spend hours just brushing his fingertips lightly on his skin, drinking in the sensations.

In fact, since he was on a fifteen, why couldn't he...?

*No.* He had to get back to work. *Now.*

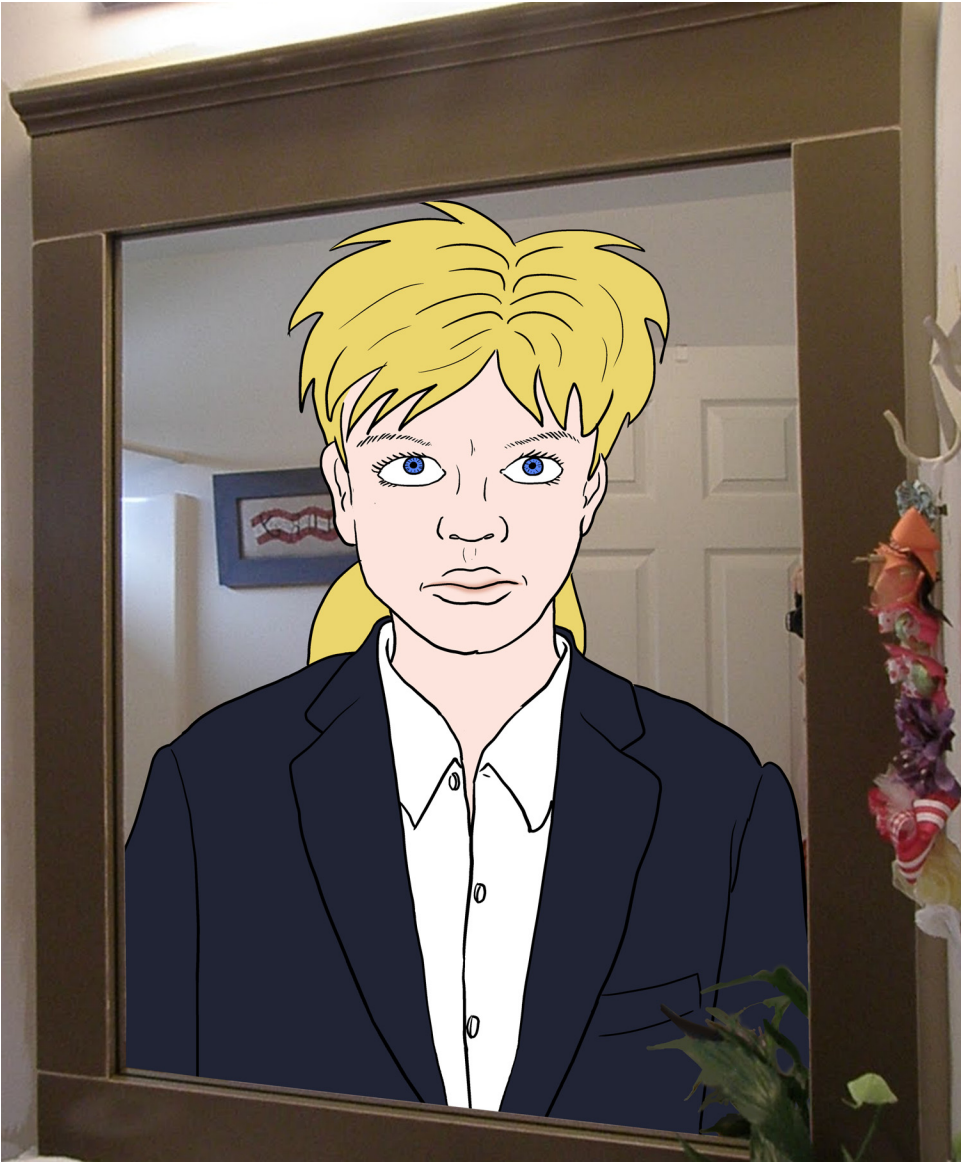
Maybe at lunch.

But before he went back to work, he needed to relieve himself at a urinal. It was happening more and more frequently, and he had to make quick trips to the toilet. His mom used to be like that, in fact most women he had known were like that. Such strange things were happening to him lately.

Maybe if the hair growth was stopped, everything else would be back to normal. It made sense to him. If his body were spending so much energy making this mass of hair, maybe it was stealing from the rest of his body. It was using all its' hair-growing power on his scalp and that's why his beard was gone. Not to mention the hair on his arms and legs, too. Gone.

So, it seemed to him that his bones and flesh were probably shrinking because all the mass of his body was being made into hair. That meant that he had to go to the bathroom all the time because of all the waste products his supercharged body was making. See, it all made sense. All he needed was an anti-hair pill or something, then he'd be fine.

While he was standing at the stall figuring this out, James was still digging



through his underwear looking for his snake to drain. Finally, he found it, hidden away in there somewhere. Boy, it was nestled in there good.



Maureen was trying to pour herself another cup of hot water for her tea when Mr. Huberson stuck his head in the employee break room.

“Getting some tea, huh?” He said.

The oppressing dread of trying to make small talk with her boss caused her to audibly grunt. “Yes. Getting some tea.”

“You like the tea?” He asked.

“It’s fine,” Maureen replied.

“It’s, uh, pretty good, isn’t it?” Huberson added. “I’m a coffee man, myself.”

“Everybody has different tastes.”

“Yes, yes they do. Especially in this office.” Huberson watched closely as Maureen picked out a tea bag from the large crate of bags the company provided.

“The green ones, huh?” Huberson inquired.

“Mint.”

“Ah!” Mr. Huberson said, nodding his head. He then checked his watch. “Well, I have to be in on a conference call. I’ll talk to you later.”

Relieved, Maureen took a long breath to blow her hot mug cool.

“Oh, and fight the power,” Mr. Huberson quickly added before leaving.

“Fight the power!” Maureen said, lifting her fist into the air.



The doctor was examining his notes while James sat atop the butcher-paper-covered bench awaiting comment. “Looks to me like you’re in tip-top shape, James,” he finally said.

“Uh...” James was floored by that remark. “Well, Doctor Lumbago, the fact is that I’ve lost nearly a third of my weight, my hair is growing like bamboo, and there’s the problem with my chest.”

“Just some swelling. Antibiotics should get that under control,” the doctor said.

James’ jaw dropped. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. “Look, I don’t pretend to know much about medicine, but I know I’ve got a problem. *A major problem.*”

The doctor continued to go over his notes, peering over the half-height glasses that made him look more intelligent than he sounded. “I think you should leave the medical diagnoses to the professionals, James. As a trained doctor, I can tell you, you are as healthy as you’ve ever been.”

James wasn’t getting through to him. “I may be healthy, doc, but I’ve lost fifty pounds in two weeks, my hair is growing a foot every forty-eight hours and...”

Right as James was about to get to the breasts jutting from his chest, the doctor’s attractive nurse entered the room, trying to not interrupt and failing miserably. “Here’s a message for you, doctor,” she said, handing over a small pink slip of paper.

Doctor Lumbago examined the note and then excused himself. "I'll be back in just a moment. But I must emphasize, there's nothing you've told me that can't be treated with a healthy diet and a regular regimen of exercise."

As soon as the doctor left, James looked at the nurse with an expression of total befuddlement. The nurse just smiled back at him, but it was an embarrassed and guilty smile. Obviously, she was aware of how much hokey was coming out of the doctor's mouth. She waited for the doctor to return for a moment, but then decided she better leave before she had to explain herself.

Out in the hall, the doctor was on the phone. The nurse leaned in to eavesdrop. "That's been very clear from the beginning," the doctor said. "Well, he's very aware of his condition, and very concerned. I've tried to answer his questions, but I'm not sure he's buying it."

He listened for a few seconds to the person on the other end of the line. "I'll do my best, of course," he said. "You've paid for that at the very least. But the simple fact of the matter is that he has a lot of legitimate questions and I don't think I can fabricate any answers that will placate him."

The nurse, dismayed at what she had just heard, tried to act as if she hadn't been paying attention and reviewed the folders she had clutched to her chest. She wasn't sure the doctor even knew she was there, anyway.

"Of course," the doctor said into the phone. "That goes without saying. Yes. I'll do everything I can. Yes. I'll talk to you later." Doctor Lumbago hung up and headed back to the room James was waiting in. The nurse followed closely behind.

"Sorry for the interruption, James. But as I was saying, you're in great shape..."

"Great shape!" James objected. He pointed to his ever-increasing bust. "You call this great shape?"

"Many of my patients have concerns with their body image. This is just because popular media today emphasizes a certain way to look. If I were you, I'd stop comparing myself to these standards and be happy with who I am."

"They're... they're... they're *breasts!*"

"The doctor looked at James' chest closely for a minute, then back to his notes, and then once again to James' chest. "I see nothing wrong here," he said.

James grunted and hopped off the bench. He grabbed his pants and started to pull them on. "Why I came here I'll never know," he grumbled to himself. "Stupid company clinic."

"I'll see you in another six months for your regular check-up?" The doctor inquired.

"I'm going to get a second opinion!" James proclaimed, certain that this might damage the doctor's esteem in some way.

“If your HMO covers it, I would encourage it,” Doctor Lumbago replied.

No. In fact, it didn't. His health plan sucked. James gritted his teeth in anger. He had nowhere near enough money to see another doctor. He buttoned up his loose dress shirt and tried to do it in such a furious way that it would transmit his displeasure. But buttoning your shirt really doesn't lend itself to that. Fully dressed, he stormed out of the office and out to his car.

Once gone, the nurse turned to Doctor Lumbago. “Why didn't you help him, doctor?”

“Help him? Jennifer, the only help he needed was 500 cc's of manners.”

“But he was obviously suffering from *severe* physical abnormalities. His hair problem alone might be one of the strangest things I've ever heard or even read about!”

“His hair?” Doctor Lumbago said. “I saw nothing wrong with his hair. He was in perfect health.”



In the lounge at the Orbit Room, Maureen stirred her drink. What had come over her lately? Here she was, a twice-divorced middle-aged woman looking down the barrel of menopause. She had long given up on dating or trying to find a man to share her life with. Not only was she resigned to spending the rest of her life alone, she was at peace with idea. But now, as much as she knew she didn't really need to, she was in the middle of a relationship.

“Maureen,” Barry said, arriving with his briefcase. “You're on-time. That's good.”

Maureen rose to meet him, and kissed Barry on the cheek. “Hey, sugar,” she said. “Have a drink and mellow out. We're off the clock, and we got no reason not to have a good time!”

“All right. It seems appropriate,” Barry said, seating himself. “I'll have a gin & tonic,” he told the bartender. Barry and Maureen had been meeting together after work every night for the past three days. He was vastly enjoying the slow thaw of his one-time nemesis. Maureen had been difficult and belligerent from the first day he had come to work, and had been a particularly prickly thorn in his side ever since. Now, though, the tables had turned. Whenever Maureen was about to fly into overdrive, she stopped herself and let Barry win the argument.

Also, it was particularly gratifying to be able to talk her into having these little get-togethers after work. He had asked Maureen to keep it confidential, but they were now formally dating. It must have been eating her up inside. Or maybe she was now over it. It was hard for Barry to tell. All he knew was that

he had a woman who would do whatever he asked.

“I reviewed your proposal to loosen the dress code, and I do have to say it was a good idea,” he told Maureen.

Maureen smiled. “Oh, baby we all should loosen up,” she said, biting her necklace.

“I’ll let the staff know tomorrow by e-mailing them a memo,” he said, as his drink arrived. “I think it’s best to start the new code immediately. It’s best to be pro-active.”

“That’s why I like you, honey,” Maureen said. “You’re a man who likes to take charge.” She let her shoe drop from her foot and started to rub it alongside Barry’s leg under the table. Immediately, Barry’s eyes bulged in surprise.

“Maybe we should go see a movie or something,” Barry suggested, realizing he could now take the relationship further.

Maureen reached across the table for Barry’s tie. She played with it for a moment and then tugged it. “Forget the movie, baby. Let’s just go back to my place and *get it on*.”

Barry claimed his tie back and adjusted it back in place. “Please, Maureen!” He looked around to see who was watching him, but nobody really seemed to be paying attention. “Let’s have some self-control.”

Maureen quickly hopped from the chair across Barry to one next to him. “C’mon, Honey. Show Mama some silky.”

Barry saw at the unmistakable look of lust in Maureen’s eyes, drank his gin & tonic in one swig, and then threw some money on the table. “Why don’t we both take my car,” he said. “That way we can use the carpool lane.”



James was back at the mirror in the company bathroom, unable to fathom what he saw. No longer able to any way to contain it, he had just let his tremendous head of hair fall loose about his shoulders. They didn't even make a rubber band strong enough to hold his hair. He had reservations about letting his hair out like he had, but he had received nothing but the highest compliments from his coworkers about it. Its' lustrous, flaxen blonde color was unreal. The gentle curls and waves that naturally formed made it so that his hair practically styled itself. In fact, although he was slightly embarrassed about having such long hair, he was feeling pride at all the compliments he had gotten.

That wasn't his only issue, though. He was sure he didn't used to have the swollen, plump lips that were on his face. His eyes didn't used to be this blue. Never had his skin been this smooth.

But at the top of his concerns were the things that were hanging from his torso. Breasts. He had finally decided to call them what they were. Why it hadn't been obvious earlier, he wasn't sure. But now he knew. This wasn't swelling or an infection. These were two, round, soft, perfect *breasts*.

He knew he had to see another doctor to get rid of them. Even if it involved surgery, he needed to have this problem dealt with. Of course, just touching them sent him into a state of bliss. Brushing the nipples with his fingers caused his entire body to spasm in delight. They were direct connections to the pleasure center in his brain. He could finally understand what women had known for so long. Just the right touch was totally erotic.

So while he desperately wanted them removed, if he had to wait a week or two to see a doctor, he was willing to put up with this inconvenience. If he had to wait a month for treatment, he could do that. If it were a year... or two... before any surgery could be scheduled, James was certain that having these magnificently delightful things on his body would be something he could bear with. Any day now, he would be able to stop touching them. Because he could quit any time. Anytime he wanted.

James sighed as he took a look at the time. Nine o'clock. The office was about to start up for the day, and he needed to be at his desk. He made sure he looked good in the mirror by fluffing his hair and exited the bathroom, stumbling in his cowboy boots.

No sooner had he taken a seat than Maureen arrived. "Hey," Maureen said, with a stupid smile of satisfaction on her face. "Keepin' it real?" She asked.

James' eyes went wide as he saw his boss. She had dressed in a skin-tight black miniskirt with a skimpy orange crop-top. A large gold medallion hung from a gold chain around her neck. She wore dark green boots with three-inch heels, and walked with a sassy strut.

But that wasn't what was giving James problems. "Maureen!" He yelped. "What happened? Your skin!"

"Are you gonna make fun of the color of my skin? Cuz you better think twice before you do that, sister." She stuck her nose in the air, causing the large gold hoops in her ears to shake violently. "My skin is beautiful."

"Uh..." James said, trying to cover for himself. "It's just that..." He was trying to put into words what was wrong. "It's... It's..." He just couldn't find the right phrase. Without that, he just gave up. Maybe Maureen was always African-American, and he had just never noticed before. Maybe she had always sported that dark coffee-color skin. Things were getting so hard to concentrate on lately. It was possible James had just gotten confused.

"I'll be in my office if anyone needs to get hold'a me, dig?" Maureen said, and then strutted her way past.



“Hey, James,” a voice said from behind. James was on his way down the hall, headed for lunch. He turned abruptly, a little startled. He thought he was alone. James sighed a sigh of relief when he saw it was just his buddy, Alex. “Wait up, dude,” he said, breaking into a trot.

“Got the bike running yet?” James asked.

“Oh, yeah. The bike. Um, well, I got kinda stuck,” Alex said, a little embarrassed. “Hey, I was gonna ask you, the engine uses metric and I was wondering if you had a mount that was metric, or if you were going to use fittings to make it English?”

James just looked a little flummoxed, and grinned as he threaded his long hair behind his ear. “Um, what’s a metric?”

“Aw, it’s not important. I’ll figure it out,” Alex said. “Wow, that chest problem of your isn’t getting any better, is it?”

James hunched over a little, involuntarily hiding his problem just a little bit. “No, it’s just getting worse.”

“Wow,” he said, a little preoccupied by staring at them. “You wanna go somewhere for lunch?”

“Sure, I guess.” James replied, looking a little flush.

“Where do you want to go?”

“Wherever. Anything’s good. I’ll go anywhere you want to go, Alex.”

“Cool,” Alex replied. “We’ll take my car.”

The two men walked down the flights of stairs to the parking lot, where Alex helped James up into his huge truck. James thought that the truck had never looked as large as it did today, for some reason. He was sure it had been smaller at some point. But now, he felt dwarfed by it. He pressed his knees together and rested his hands primly in his lap, waiting for Alex to get in and start it up. They drove to the local Wendy’s, where Alex ordered a triple cheese and James just felt like getting a chicken salad. He wound up picking out most of the chicken. It was too filling.

“Those things don’t hurt, do they?” Alex asked after they finished eating. They were parked in the parking lot.

“What?” James said, answering the question quickly. “Oh, my chest.”

“They look... Incredible,” Alex said. He reached his hand over to poke them. “Are you wearing something over them?”

“Oooiee!” James yelped, his voice rising two octaves when Alex poked him. “Watch out, they’re sensitive.”



“Sensitive?” Alex said, not quite believing it. He poked a few more times. “You’re sensitive to just being touched?”

“Oooh, *oooh!*” James said, breathlessly. He bit his lip to not make any more noise. “Yes! They’re very, very sensitive.”

“It doesn’t look like it’s *painful*, though,” Alex said, moving to the other side of James’ chest.

James was awash in all-consuming ecstasy, unable to verbally respond. He just used an arm to wildly flail at Alex, harmlessly trying to stop him. But Alex just kept poking. “P... p... p... Please stop!” James managed to say.

“So if I were to do this,” Alex said, using both hands to rub James’ breasts in a circular motion, “it would probably really tweak you off.”

“*Oh my God!*” James yelled aloud. He shuddered in the seat, thrusting his chest into the air and arching his head back. He moaned out loud in the most arousing way.

“Fuck!” Alex yelled, only now aware of just what was happening. “You’re getting off to this, aren’t you?”

James sheepishly blushed and nodded. “I... Guess so. I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry too. I didn’t mean to do that to you, buddy. You should have warned me.”

James nodded again, agreeing with the statement. He was still breathing rapidly, and was slowly getting it under control, heaving his chest. Alex couldn’t tear his eyes away. Eventually, James sat up proper in the truck seat, and wiped the sweat from his brow.

“So, what do you think of this whole steroids problem? I think it’s ruining the game,” Alex said, trying to find a subject to talk about. “They should just put an asterisk next to all those records.”

James couldn’t stop himself. He had been driven to the lake, and needed to drink. His hand crawled into the seam of his button-down shirt and dug underneath the bandage that he had wrapped around his chest.

“You use these drugs to change people and fool with nature, and I think it ruins everything,” Alex commented. His eyes started to dart to the side, spying what James was doing.

What James was doing, was prying into the bandages. That was so he could get to his huge pencil-eraser-sized nipples and could pinch them. Then, all of the sudden, the bandage gave way. His 36-inch D-cup breasts burst from his chest, sending a button from James’ dress shirt flying into the windshield. His shirt gaped open at the top, showing everything inside.

Alex was now agog, looking at his friends’ chest. They were more than just amazing. They were tremendous. They were perfect. And they were hanging from the chest of his old friend. A friend who he never made any physical contact with, save the occasional gratuitous high-five.

But being a man, Alex couldn’t help himself. He reached right for them like he was getting cookies from the cookie jar. They were too tempting.

“*Oooooah!*” James cried, moaning even louder than he had before. Instead of stopping him, he grabbed Alex’s arm and helped him move his hand to better massage his amazingly intoxicating breasts. Because that’s what they were. They were breasts. Women’s breasts. Hooters. Melons. Tits. James was fine with it. They were wonderful, exquisite and delectable. And right now, in the hands of his friend Alex, James was feeling more sexual excitement than the last five

years of his life put together.

Oh, how glorious it was to have breasts!



James was furiously trying to re-button his shirt as he came running down the hall. He was fifteen minutes late from his lunch break, and he didn't want anybody to notice. Because if people noticed, they might ask questions. And if they asked questions, they might suspect. And no one must ever suspect just what he had been doing for his lunch break. With Alex. And those strong, nimble fingers he had. His face flushed just thinking about it.

"Hey, James," a woman said, as he passed by an open door in the hallway.

James stopped and looked in to see who was talking. It was Patricia who worked in shipping. He had tried to date her early last year, but had been rebuffed. Patricia had always come off to him as slightly snobbish and superior. She was still friendly, but James had always wished they could have been friendlier. "Hi, Patricia." James responded, making sure he had his shirt as buttoned up as best he could.

"How is it out there? it looked like it might rain."

"Yeah, well... it's kinda wet out there. But it's not raining," James said, trying to come back to reality.

"Hey, James, I was going to ask you, because I've been asking a lot of people, have you noticed anything strange going on around here?" Patricia asked. "Anything out of the ordinary?"

James thought for a moment. "Well, there's just kinda been this weird vibe here for the past week or two. Or three." He looked at Patricia, who was dressed in a tasteful pink ruffled party dress. She had white tights and shiny black Mary Jane shoes, which kicked back and forth as she talked. Patricia had curled her blonde hair in tight Shirley Temple curls, and licked a huge Frisbee-sized rainbow lollipop in between speaking. "Things have just felt kind of... 'off.'" James concluded. "Not bad, but 'off.'"

Patricia nodded in agreement. She grabbed a Raggedy Ann doll off her desk and clutched it to her chest. "I've definitely been perceiving a kind of shift here in the office. Nothing really tangible, but sort of like a change in priorities." She talked to her doll. "And Ann thinks there's been a definite downturn in efficiency."

"Well, I know what you're talking about." James said, scratching his bare chin in thought. "And I think you and Ann might be right. I definitely don't feel as efficient as I used to be. But at the same time, I think maybe the expectations of me as an employee are different. I don't think results and deadlines are as

important as they used to be. I think maybe they're focusing more on the personal side of the business."

"Oh yes, I have to agree. Daddy has... I mean Mr. Huberson has definitely taken a hands-off approach to managing the staff." Patricia said. "I used to worry about micromanagement, but lately, I think maybe it's swung the other way. Maybe now we're too loose."

James stifled a yawn. He hated talking about boring office stuff like this. "Yeah, well, I have to get back to my desk before I'm missed. Nice talking to you."

Patricia held up her doll.

"And to you too, Ann."



James was at his desk twenty minutes late from lunch, but no one seemed to notice. Oddly, when he looked at the desk, it had his nameplate on top of it. It was odd, because although he was using this desk, it was Sheila's desk, really. He went and asked Maureen about it. "Am I being moved?" He asked.

Maureen looked up from her copy of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. "Oh, child. I wanted to talk to you about that." She got up out of her chair and walked closer to James. "Jamie, suga, you've been doing so great filling in for Sheila, I was hoping we could make it a full-time thing. She's going to be on a leave of absence for a li'l while and we need someone to take over." Maureen sat on the corner of her desk.

James was shocked. "But I'm a manager in charge of sales support for the southwest and pacific regions. Sheila was a receptionist. You want me to *become the receptionist?*"

"Yes," Maureen replied.

"Okay!" James answered. "I like the work better anyway. Not so much pressure."

"Right on!" Maureen exclaimed. "I can dig it!"



On the way home from work, James stopped of at a car dealership and traded in his Lexus sedan for a nice, fun yellow VW beetle. As the receptionist, he wasn't going to make as much money as he used to, and he needed a car with better gas mileage. Getting a cute little bug only made sense.

He stopped off at his favorite department store and bought a few new things to



wear at work, too. With the new dress code and his new position, he had to change the way he presented himself. Wearing the same old dull shirts and slacks wasn't going to get it done anymore. He was the first person people saw in the office. He wanted to look good.

Finally, he got home, tuckered out from shopping. But it was a good tired. He jacked up the stereo to the top-40 station and unloaded his new stuff into his closet. He resigned he was going to have to clean out the back of it and get rid of all those stupid barbells and stuff he had packed back there. Why had he even bought that stuff in the first place? He was going to need the space for more clothes.

He then stripped himself bare to get out of his work outfit. As he was ready to change into his casual home stuff, he caught sight of himself in the mirror. He was really letting himself go. He had dropped almost fifty pounds in just over a week. Was that some kind of record? He'd have to look it up. But he'd become shorter, too. He'd lost about six inches and stood just five foot six inches tall.

*You can get height back with a rigorous course of exercise and conditioning, right?* James thought to himself. He was sure that was possible. You could gain weight by working out, so why not height? It only made sense. Maybe he'd join a gym. All he had to do was commit himself to doing it. Maybe as a new years' resolution. Next year.

Also, the breasts jutting from his body were ridiculous. His bony frame shouldn't have been able to support the weight. And going from the tiny, eighteen-inch waistline to the stupendous 36-inch chest just looked freakish to him. Who could look at him and not be repulsed?

Well, maybe Alex. Alex was such a good friend. He'd never had a friend like Alex. He always knew how to make James feel good.

He decided that he should dress nice tonight, as it was a night out on the town. He chose a new blue silky dress shirt he had just purchased and a pair of black slacks. The silk was the only thing that didn't rub tantalizingly against his nipples. And the only sizes that fit him were in the juniors department, which was terribly embarrassing for him to purchase. He didn't like the idea of someone catching him buying clothes made for juniors. After all, he was a college graduate. He was an adult. Juniors were obviously for kids.

He slid on his new boots, the ones he had bought to replace the cowboy boots he was wearing out at work. James still needed those type of boots to compensate for his loss in height, but the cowboy thing was just too silly. So he settled on the same general type of boots with raised heels, tan leather and such. One more day in those cowboy boots and he figured someone would ask him to rope a horse or something.

As he imagined himself roping a horse, he giggled to himself. Sometimes he could be such a silly billy.

The doorbell rung and James quickly dashed to the mirror. He made sure his long hair was in shape, decided to put some stuff on his lips to keep them from chapping, and then headed for the front window. He poked his head through the drapes to verify it was Alex. It was. Why had he brought flowers? Oh well. He smiled at him when he waved hello, and then James went to the door. As he did, a flash of memory from what they had done in the truck came over him. Oh, he loved that feeling.

At the last moment before opening the door, on impulse, James pulled out that damn bandage from around his breasts and make sure Alex had full access. He even unbuttoned a few shirt buttons so he didn't miss the hint. He then left

with Alex for dinner, after placing the flowers in a nearby half-full 20 ounce Pepsi bottle.



“Oh, my sweet, sweet Barry,” Maureen said, snuggling up to her man in bed. “I’m having a groooooovy time, baby.”

Barry, his energy drained, had a look of shock on his face. He never knew sex could be like this. Why, when he had met his wife in college back at Yale, she only allowed sex every few weeks and it was only done under what one could call “controlled laboratory conditions.” But this woman, this goddess, was doing it in ways he had never even conceived of. She was some kind of... Jungle woman.

“Oh, honey, you look like you’ve been snake bit,” Maureen said, looking at the startled, goofy expression on his face. She started to stroke Barry’s penis. “Do you want mama to suck the poison out?”

“God no!” Barry pleaded. “Just... just give me some time to recover. Have mercy.”

“Mama’s all full of mercy, baby.” She got up on her knees and then straddled Barry, letting him stare up at the statuesque beauty Maureen had become. Her skin had become dark and exotic. With just the slightest bit of perspiration, it shined and glistened. Her fortyish body had drawn tight, becoming lean and young. She appeared to be no more than twenty five now. Her proud head rested on top of the neck of a Nubian princess. She held it regally, showing the world she was full of pride for who she was.

The wrinkles had disappeared from her face. Her whole head looked like it was sculpted smooth from obsidian. Her nose, once a jagged blade was now wide and curvy. Her cynical eyes were now afire with intention and purpose. Maureen was no more. She was a new woman. A woman Barry had dreamed of. A woman like he used to secretly desire. Women like he had watched in his confidential stash of seventies blackploitation films. A woman like...

“Foxy,” Barry said. “I’d like to call you Foxy.”

Maureen considered it. Then she smiled, revealing her brilliantly white teeth from behind a dark curtain of plump, red lips. “I like it,” she said, looking passionately at her captive lover. “Foxy likes it.” As a reward for the name, she started to tickle the underside of Barry’s limp member. It quickly sprang to attention.

“I’m not ready,” he said, starting to breathe harder.

“Foxy’s cool. Foxy’s mellow. Foxy can wait.” But as soon as she said it, she started to tickle again.



James was feeling a bit nervous. Nervous and awkward. Mr. Huberson had been sitting silently for several minutes. He had been making a few coughing noises that violently interrupted the tense silence in his office. He had been “reviewing” a file folder in front of him for some time, and James had just been getting more and more nervous as every minutes ticked by.

James had been called into Max Huberson’s office, and it was never good when you got called into the boss’s office when you weren’t expecting it. Alone. James had been tugging on a large lock of hair that was all the way down his shoulders and stopped a little short of his bellybutton. He had nervously been twisting, braiding and un-braiding the hair as he waited.

His attention was fixated on his knees. He hoped he hadn’t been called in because of what he was wearing. After all, the new dress code explicitly said this was okay. He was wearing his new spike-heeled leather boots and one of his new silky dress shirts. He had tucked the shirt into his pants because it looked neater.

James sighed. He knew it was too good to be true. Now he was going to get chewed out over wearing the boots. They were the only things that kept him from feeling like a munchkin, but apparently, that didn’t matter.

“James, I’ve called you in here because your productivity has been falling off.” Mr. Huberson finally said. James noticed that his attention seemed to be at his chest for a moment. He broke it off to look James in the eyes. “There’s just a certain level of efficiency we expect from our employees, and you’re just not up to those levels.”

“I’m not?” James said, alarmed. He was a good worker. He was a hard worker. What was wrong?

“Despite the fact that we’ve reduced your duties from management to reception, there have been several complaints from our clients that you simply don’t get the job done.” Mr. Huberson said.

James was flustered and at a loss. “Well, what did they say? What did I do?”

“The complaints seem to run along the lines of not being attentive to their needs, not passing on messages, misdirection of voice mail, not projecting a professional image, not offering refreshments while in the waiting room and misfiling of paperwork.”

James was aghast. “But I’ve only been at reception for two days!” He declared. “I’m still getting the hang of it.” Well, to be honest, those one-and-a-half hour lunch breaks with Alex were probably not the best way to show his level of dedication at his new position. And being late every morning because he just



couldn't stop playing with himself in bed wasn't good either.

"I realize that taking on new responsibilities is a challenge, but frankly, we just haven't seen the enthusiasm and initiative we would expect. Are you sure this job is right for you? Because we could always put you back in charge as a manager."

"No!" James yelled. "Please don't do that. I didn't like managing. I was always miserable, thinking about what I needed to do, who I needed to call and all that stuff. I like reception. It's my dream job."

“Then you need to make a decision. Do you want to work here? Do you want to be an employee of Kline-Bremer Biogenetics?”

“Of course I do! I love working here!” Especially lately, James added in his mind.

“Then you need to show me why I should keep you on here.” Mr. Huberson scanned the paper in front of him. “Looking at these objections...” Of course, the papers he held were not complaints, but actually a stack of Chinese take-out menus he had lying around.

“Let's see... Just picking one at random... Professional appearance. How can you improve your professional appearance?”

“Um...” James was sweating it out for an answer. “Maybe dress nicer? Is this about the boots? Because, I can...”

“No. It's not about the boots. What I think would make a better impression is if you thought about being a receptionist and what a receptionist should present herself. Then maybe you could follow that example. Improve on it, even. Remember Trixie? The girl we had here last year on weekends? That's a good start. Try her as a role model.”

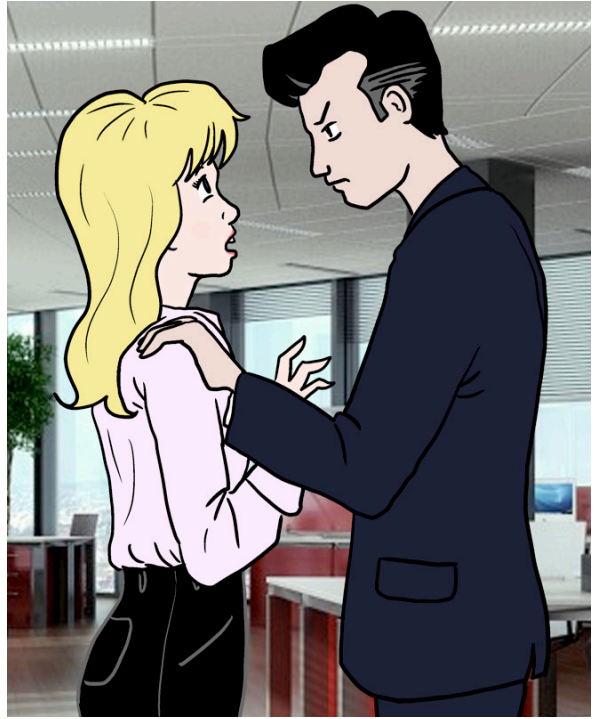
“Oh!” James exclaimed, suddenly finding the memory of Trixie. “I remember her. She was so friendly! But she kinda dressed like a whore.”

“I wouldn't say ‘whore!’ I would say she dressed exactly the way a good receptionist should. A pretty little picture to greet our clients.”

“Okay,” James said, smiling. At least they were working towards a solution, not getting rid of him. That was good.

“And another on the list... Let's see...” Mr. Huberson scanned it once again. Broccoli and beef, orange chicken... “Take this one, not offering refreshments. A simple thing. You just need to be attentive to people's needs. Let's do a little role play. Say I'm a salesperson who's waiting for a meeting. What should you do.”

“Offer a drink?” James said.



“Yes, good.” Mr. Huberson replied. “And then you go get a drink. Say, coffee.”

“Right.” James replied.

Mr. Huberson seemed to be waiting for something. “So, get up and pretend like you’re serving coffee to me.”

James was taken off guard. “Oh. Okay.” James jolt up and after a minute of trying to figure out what to do, pretended like he was holding a mug.

“So you’re holding a mug,” Mr. Huberson clarified. “What if the guest wants milk or sugar in their coffee?”

“I... I, uh. I hadn’t thought of that.”

“That’s exactly the sort of thing you need to consider when you’re being a good host,” Mr. Huberson said. “...ess,” he whispered under his breath. “So, you’ll need to carry a tray with milk, cream, sugar, sweetener, non-dairy, stirrers and some biscuits.”

“Oh,” James said, looking down at the floor again. He hadn’t even considered this. No wonder they thought he was doing a bad job.

“And then, say, the guest wants you to sit on his lap.”

“What!?” James said, startled. “*Sit in his lap?*”

“You heard me, sit in his lap. The guest has been on the road, he’s tired, he’s away from his family, he’s lonely. He needs someone to just show him some simple human compassion. Are you going to refuse a heartfelt request like that?”

“Well, that’s a little going over the top, isn’t it? Is this a trick question?”

“No. This is very serious. If you refused his simple request, maybe he doesn’t give us a good deal. Maybe he takes his product or services elsewhere. To a competitor. They make a breakthrough using this salesman’s stuff. And then what’s the excuse? The receptionist didn’t want to be cordial?”

“I guess I see your point,” James replied. “That would be a hard thing to explain.”

“So, here,” Mr. Huberson patted his leg. “You have a seat on his lap.”

James made his way over and took a seat, although tentatively. Once he realized he wasn’t going to be hurt, he nestled in on Mr. Huberson’s lap.

“And of course, smile. That’s very important.” Mr. Huberson said, putting his hand around James’ waist. James had to force himself to do it, but after he did, his smile looked heartfelt and genuine. He saw the smile on Mr. Huberson’s face as well. This was going to turn out okay, James thought. Mr. Huberson liked him.

James tossed back his large head full of perfect blond hair. He had noticed the positive the effect this had on people. Everyone seemed to be more friendly

when he tossed his hair like this. Well, guys seemed to like it, anyway.

Mr. Huberson looked a little tense. He seemed to be sweating a bit on his brow. "Very good," he said. "Now, what if the guest makes a very special request of you?"

"W... What kind of special request, M... M... Mr. Huberson?" James asked, trying to be as attentive and focused as he could be. It was tough, because James realized his nipple was rubbing into his boss' jacket, and he couldn't stop it without getting off his lap. It was causing James to get a little distracted. "P... Please tell me."

"Say he wants you to spend some time with him in private." Mr. Huberson said.

"In private?"

"Like we are now."

"Oh." James nodded his head, but didn't realize it would cause his chest to move again. He gasped quietly, trying to deal with the sensations. He wasn't going to be able to hold back much longer.

Maybe Mr. Huberson would be nice enough to help him out.

"And he wants to touch you."

"That's exactly what I was thinking," James replied.

"And he'd like you to give him a little tenderness. Say, a blowjob."

"*Blowjob?*" James said, his eyes popping like ping-pong balls. What a terrible thing to even suggest. Disgusting. Disturbing. The thought made him straighten up and take a deep breath.

That very act caused his nipples to graze over Mr. Huberson's rough tweed coat.

"But I'd only have to *promise* that if he touched me, right?" James asked. "He would have to *touch* me first. That's what he said."

"Y... Yes." Mr. Huberson said. "Like this." With great caution, he brought his hands up to James's awe-inspiring breasts and grabbed them.



“Ooooh!” James squealed. Mr. Huberson continued to caress and knead. “Oh, oh, oh, oh!” James started to cry, louder and louder. “Yes!” he exclaimed. “I’ll do it! I’ll do anything! Just don’t stop, Mr. Salesman! Please don’t stop!” James gripped the lapels of Mr. Huberson’s coat to keep himself from falling off.

As Max Huberson continued on, and drove James into higher and higher states of ecstasy, he could feel his fly being drawn open. He looked down and saw James’ blossoming derriere bounce up and down on his lap. With one mighty landing, he felt James’ buns touch his penis.

Mr. Huberson jumped out of his chair, sending James onto the floor, still in the throes of ecstasy. He looked up with shock and dismay. “Mr. Huberson?” He said.

“I can’t do it!” Mr. Huberson yelled. “I just can’t do it! No matter what, it’s still a man!” He straightened his coat and stormed out of the office. “Barry! Get your goddamned ass in the conference room!” He yelled as he continued on. “Now!”



Barry nervously entered the room, and found his boss with his head in his hands, and his fingers into his well-kept hair. “You asked for me?” Barry said, meekly.

“I just can’t do it!” Mr. Huberson repeated. “And that’s the last time I take any of your idiotic suggestions!”

“Can’t do...?” Barry was trying to catch up. Then he remembered. He must have just had the ‘special meeting’ with James. “If you don’t want to *now*, just wait a few days, and he’ll be one hundred percent...”

“I don’t care if it’s a couple of days or a million billion days!” Huberson yelled. “I know that’s a man inside there, and I can’t get that out of my head!” Huberson looked up with anger at Barry. “If you had just waited to give that fucking coffee to the right person, this never would have happened!”

“Sheila hadn’t missed a day of work in three years! How was I supposed to know her mother was going to get sick?”

“You could have just... simply...” Max Huberson had already had this argument with Barry several times in his office over the last week. He simply didn’t want to go through it again. “Sheila deserved all this. She deserved to be everything that idiot is becoming. Sheila deserved to be beautiful and sexy. She deserved it, and she deserves me. We were always meant to be together, Barry.” He looked at Barry again with determination. “Always!”

“Look, she’ll be back at some point, we can get her started on the mega-dose when she comes back. I still have enough of that stuff for two or three more

people. It's not going to be a problem."

"But we can never make another woman like that. She was the woman I designed. She was the woman I wanted. There's no substituting."

"Who says she can't have a twin?"

"Then she wouldn't be special. I want her to be special. I want her to be mine and mine alone."

"I'm sure we can work something out," Barry said, trying to think. "I'll get in contact with my man at the lab and see what he can do. See if there are any options." He straightened his tie. "Maureen's come along pretty well, don't you think?"

"Hm?" Max replied. "Yeah. I suppose." He stared out the window and into the sky.

Barry decided it was time to leave. But there was one more thing. "So, what do you want me to do with James?"

"Just..." He sighed. "Just keep on plan. He's still going to be one amazing piece of eye candy at the front desk. No sense in wasting him."



Foxy was laid out on the couch in her office, just where Barry had left her. She seemed to be drifting off, a smile on her face. She wore her now trademark thigh-high leather boots with a pair of tiny yellow short-shorts. Her orange halter top was a meager defense towards keeping her colossally impressive tits from being seen. The feathery black boa she had worn to the office today was draped over the top of her desk across the room. As she laid there, dreamily drawing her talon-like two-inch red nails over her plump red lips, her other hand was slowly massaging her crotch.

"I told you not to play with yourself, Foxy," Barry said. "Big poppa don't like it when one of his girls is gettin somethin' on the side. Even if it is with themselves."

Foxy's head sprang up. "Foxy ain't tryin to nuthin', big poppa! Foxy was just... Foxy was sleepin. That's right. It's just sleepin." She turned away and started to primp her hair. It was an enormous, almost comically large afro. It wasn't really her hair, but soon enough, it would be.

"Don't lie to me, woman!" Barry barked. He liked playing the pimp. He liked bossing her around. "I'm not gonna be responsible for my actions, if you're lying to me! That better not be a bunch of jive!"

"It ain't no jive, Big Poppa! Foxy's your girl, right? Foxy don't lie to her man." She immediately ran over to him and kissed Barry deeply, wrapping a leg



around his backside. She kissed him long and hard enough to clean his teeth. “See? Foxy’s got nothin but love for her man.”

“You’re not playin me for a sucka?” Barry, the old, balding white man in the expensive suit said.

“No, no. Everything’s groovy, dig?”

“I dig.”



The workmen had just left, all very nice guys, and left James by himself for the first time that day. What they had been doing was remodeling the front office. Previously, the office looked like a lot of offices, with one, large, semi-circular desk that stretched along a beige wall featuring the company’s logo, lit softly. The desk was so large, you could just barely see the head of the person working behind it. But that was all gone now.

Now, the reception area was remodeled. A glass table replaced the large desk. It had just a tiny phone on it. Behind that, there was a tall metal pole with a form-fitting clear plastic seat attached to the top of it. When someone was seated at it, their feet wouldn’t be able to reach the floor, so a metal bar was

there to rest them on.

All the walls in the room had been replaced with floor-to-ceiling mirrors. They wrapped around the desk, letting anyone in the room see James from all angles. They could, all at one time, see his trouser-tenting tits and his luscious heart-attack ass. Of course, with no obstructions like a real desk to block the view, they could see the receptionist's long, thin, shapely legs nimbly crossing and uncrossing themselves as James shifted his weight. The seat, being hard plastic and small, was terribly uncomfortable, and caused James to have to move around quite a bit – just to keep his circulation going. It also provided a show for anyone watching.

And boy, did they watch.

But so did James. With all the mirrors, he could see his reflection just as well as anyone else. Quickly, he became very self-conscious about himself. He watched how he sat, how he moved, how he smiled and how he presented himself. Every moment he was on the job, he was watching himself. And slowly, he was starting to act just like a receptionist should. Just the way Mr. Huberson wanted him to act. Like that girl that used to work reception. Trixie.

James resolved that he was going to be just like Trixie, if that's what it took to save his job.

He would experiment with different ways to feature his new favorite part of himself. His breasts. They had pretty much taken over his life. They had become the most amazing things he could have ever wished for. They gave him ten times as much pleasure as he ever got from his old thingy down in between his legs. He had practically forgotten about having it. All he wanted was to have his new boobies touched.

The desire to be touched was just, in itself, arousing. Simply thinking about men touching his breasts set him off. So, in order to make sure it was always on his mind, he always tried to show as much of his cleavage as he could. He wanted men to stare at them. Unbuttoning his shirt until it was a little bit shy of indecent was something he did quite deliberately. He bent over and thrust his bosom in peoples' faces. He dipped low enough to let men see all the way down. He made it so there was no way a man could resist the thought of touching them. When James visualized men desiring to touch his breasts, it was just arousing enough to get James through the day without having to take matters into his own hands.

As he tried to figure out something to do, James found himself staring off into the reflections that surrounded him. From every angle, he looked pretty good. It wasn't hard to see why guys had been hanging around him more often. And that wasn't such a bad thing. Oh, sure girls were cute and all, but they just didn't do what men could do for James. Men really knew how to work his breasts. Women? Please. They always wanted foreplay and cuddling and all

that. Relationships. Commitment. James just wanted someone to manhandle him. And you can't spell manhandle without man.

He continued to look at himself critically, and he realized he was just the sort of thing men wanted. Soft, small, frail, curvy, blond and breasty. And that was good. He wanted men to want him. Maybe a little more make-up and some sexier shoes could help. Maybe he could even try a miniskirt or something. Men loved short skirts.

"Face it, dude," he told his reflection, "all the men are gonna want your sexy little bod."

All of the sudden, the phone bleated its' harsh electric tone, breaking James' concentration.

"Thank you for calling Kline-Bremer Biogenetics. How may I direct your call?" James spoke.

"Hi, um.. This is awkward. But I'm looking for James." The timid voice on the other end of the line said.

"I don't think we have a James..." James started to say. "Oh, I'm James." He giggled. "Where is my head today?"

"Oh my God, you're James?" Said the voice. "But you sound like a woman!"

"Everyone who calls says that. I think it's the phones."

The voice on the other end gasped. "This is much worse than I thought! This is so much worse than I could have ever imagined possible!"

"What?" James asked. "What are you talking about? And who is this?"

"Oh. This is Jennifer Ryland. You don't know me. But I was the nurse working with Dr. Lumbago when you came to see him. You were telling him about your *unusual* problems."

"Oh yeah. I remember. I liked your hair." James said.

"Really? Thanks. I get it styled every... Forget about my hair, I need to let you know that Dr. Lumbago was lying to you!" Nurse Jennifer said. "Are your breasts still growing?" She asked.

"That's kind of personal. Is the doctor there?"

"The doctor isn't telling you the truth, James. He's not telling you why you're changing."

"Oh. That's too bad. Maybe I should cancel my appointment for tomorrow. Can you do that for me?"

"I don't work for that bastard anymore! He was taking bribes to lie to everyone from your office! He's crooked and can't be trusted!"

"Oh, I guess I'll have to call his office then," James said. He made a note.

"Well, thanks for calling!"

“Wait!” Nurse Jennifer yelled. “I have to tell you that you’re being changed by the people you work for! The genes in your body have been spliced with someone else’s DNA, and you’re turning into a woman!”

“A woman?” James replied. “That’s impossible. There’s no way that could happen!” The conversation was starting to bore him, so he started to imagine Mr. Huberson pinching his nipples.

“Well, it’s happening to you. Believe it. And not only are they turning you into a woman, but into some kind of hormonally overcharged woman who’s always in heat! They’re giving you huge breasts and thick lips like some kind of slut!”

“I’m not a slut, Mr. Huberson!” James objected. “I mean Mrs... Nurse.” James’ imagination had gotten the best of him, and now he was going to have to go to the restroom to try and finish off what she started. “I have to go. Call me back later or something.”

“Waiiii...” Click.

“Who was that, James?” Asked Mr. Huberson, as he was walked into the room.

“Nurse Jennifer. She was trying to warn me.”

“Warn you? I see.”



James was pulling into his driveway when he was his old friend Alex waiting for him. The poor boy had been sitting on the curb outside his apartment for who knows how long.

James put his car into the parking space and Alex came over to meet him.

“What are you doing?” James asked Alex. “Did Daphne kick you out?”

“No,” Alex replied.

“Phew!” Jamie said. “That would be...”

“I... I left her.”

“What?”

“I left her.” Alex turned to face James. “I... I had to. I can’t get you out of my mind, James.”

“Sure. Knock it off, Alex.” As James went for his door keys, Alex grabbed the various shopping bags from James’ hands and arms. “You’d never leave her. Who else would take in a loser like you? Put the bags on the sofa.”

Alex set the bags down as directed. “Where’s all this come from?” He asked, looking around the apartment.

James’ relatively spacious place was now packed wall to wall with bouquets and flowers. “People keep sending flowers to me. It’s so weird.”

Alex wasn't buying that. "No it's not, James. Have you taken a look at yourself lately?"

"All right, maybe I do look kinda cute," James admitted.

"You look like the hottest thing on two legs, James."

"Really?" James replied. He couldn't help but blush at the compliment. Then he righted himself. "Okay, so I guess that's true." James turned to Alex and came up close to him. He had developed this little habit lately, getting face to face with whomever he was talking to, and pressing his breasts into their chest. "But you know the truth, right, Alex? You know I'm still your old friend James, right?"

"Of course I do," Alex said, saying anything this beauty wanted him to say. "But I really did leave Daphne."

"Oh, Alex, why?"

The last excuse didn't seem to take with James, so Alex thought of another. "She was... We were growing apart."

James, trying to be supportive, got even closer to Alex, which just resulted in more breast flesh being mashed in between them. "I'm s... s... so sorry." James intended to sound more sincere, but the tingling... The wonderful, wonderful tingling was starting to do the thinking for him. "Tits is awful. I mean... *This* is awful."

Alex used every bit of his brainpower to say the next few words: "Uh... Um... Yeah..." It was safe to say his brain was not winning the battle between mind and mammarys.

"Do you need a p... p... p... place to stay?" James asked, thoughtfully but haltingly. Then he just gave in to his needs. "Shoot," he said. "I think they're going to need some attention. Could you?"

"Could I what?"

James made a circular gesture with his hands around his breasts. "You know..."

With the invitation to fondle those soft and gelatinous wonders, Alex had to use all the willpower he had, plus calling on the spirits of his ancestors, to not do just what he had been asked to do.

Because he had a plan.

"Well, you're a guy, you know. I shouldn't do that."

James' eyes popped open in surprise. He had been waiting for the hands. Alex's big, meaty hands. He had been waiting for them to take him away to the land of moans and giggles. "Uh, what?"

"You know the deal. Two guys shouldn't be feeling each other up like this."

"Yeah, I guess." James considered the point. It was unfortunately valid. He

took some steps back. "You're right, of course."

"So, I'll just see you later." Alex made for the front door. "I'll call you."

"Okay," James replied.

"Well, that is unless..."

"Yes?" James replied, bright and hopeful.

Alex headed for the door again. "No, that's a bad idea."

"What!" James asked. "What is?"

"It's just too crazy."

"What is?"

"Well, I was thinking, just you know, speculating..."

"What?" James was desperate. He needed Alex's big hands on him now. *Now*. With every question, he stopped Alex from taking another step away. So he just kept asking. He had to get him back any way possible. "Tell me, what?"

"It's just an idea..." James then interrupted himself and waved off the notion of going any further. "Nah, forget it." He once again turned to leave.

"Tell me!" Alex demanded to know. "*Please!*"

"Well... Okay." James capitulated. "I was just thinking to myself, that if you *pretended* to be my girlfriend, and I *pretended* to be your boyfriend, then there wouldn't be anything wrong with it."

"What do you mean?"

"The whole hang up is that we're both just two old friends. Two guys. Two dudes." Alex explained. "If we were we boyfriend-girlfriend, then it'd be all right. No problems."

"Okay, I guess I see where you're going with this." James was very excited about this new plan – even though he had no idea what Alex was talking about. If it meant that he was about to get his boobs massaged, then he was all for it. "So... Explain it to me. Here. On the sofa."

"Uh, sure. Okay." James and Alex sat next to each other on the sofa, somewhat awkwardly. "Like this?"

"So, what did you want to do again?" James asked, scooting closer.

"If you pretended to be my girlfriend, and I pretended to be your boyfriend, then we could just do what we want to do."

"Oh yes! I like that idea. So I'm your girlfriend. Rub my nipples."

"No, not like that," Alex said. "Like this." He leaned in and kissed James on the lips. After a moment of hesitation, a flash of shock and an expectation of nausea, James leaned into it and returned the action.

"Wow, I didn't know my lips could feel like that!" James said. He had never

gotten that much out of a kiss before. His lips were like live wires, sizzling with sensations. Was it another effect of his changes? He hoped so. He went back for more, but Alex backed away slightly.

“So, they call me Alex,” his old friend said. “What do they call you?”

“Oh I get it, *pretending*,” James replied with a wink. “My name is Ja... Jamie. So do you live around here?”

“Born and raised here. You?”

“Me too. Just a local girl. It’s funny how we’ve never met.”

“Well, Jamie, I’m sure glad we finally did.”

“Me too,” James said before plunging in for more tonsil hockey.

“You’re a very sexy girl, Jamie.”

“You think so?”

“I really do.”



Sheila stopped her car on the street outside Kline-Bremer Biogenetics. It was a suburban office park type of development, and she locked her car as she started across the vast lawn towards the main building. She was finally able to drop by work for a few minutes and make sure everything was okay. She resolved that she wasn’t going to let the place suck her back in. No more than an hour. Then she had to get back to taking care of her mother.

The building itself was only about five stories tall, and shared with another business. It was boringly cube-shaped, with dark black glass for windows. If you didn’t work there, there was almost no hope of even finding an entrance. It was that nondescript a building.

Stepping into the elevator, she pressed the button for the fourth floor, where Kline-Bremers’ office was located. She was very weary of making a quick visit to the office like this. Sheila knew how they’d all cling to her, like suckling piglets. She liked her job okay, but the whole office always seemed to depend too much on her. That was why she was coming in unannounced. If she had let them know she was arriving, no doubt they’d have a stack of papers waiting for her.

The doors to the elevator whisked open, and she was not prepared for what she saw.

In the room she entered, two women were working lackadaisically at their desks. One was poking at the keyboard of her computer with one finger, the other was slowly collating some papers. This activity, in itself, was of no interest

to Sheila, however. What had caught her attention was that they were identical twins. In bikinis.

“Sheila! You back to work, ya?” One of them said, speaking in a Swedish accent. Her nordic features were obvious. She was well-built, with slightly angular features, and had long, straight blonde hair. The bikini she was wearing also happened to bear the flag of Sweden on it.

“Work, ya?” The other girl said.

Another girl then entered the room. She was the spitting image of the other two. “Is Sheila back, ya?” She asked.

A fourth girl came in from the other direction. “Ya?”

A fifth. “Ya?”

A sixth. “Ya?”

Sheila quickly bolted and left by the nearest exit. What had happened to Jenny, Pam, Fred, Moose, Kevin and Anjali? Why would you replace the entire shipping department with... six-tuplets... Or whatever you'd call them. How did they know her name?

She started back through the hallway, back towards the reception area. Fortunately, the office wasn't terribly busy, and no one seemed to be walking around. No sooner had she gotten fifteen feet down the hallway than she heard a voice.

“Are you wost?” A little girl's voice said.

Sheila turned around and looked down to see the little girl who asked the question. But all she saw were a woman's knees. Realizing there was no girl in the area, Jennifer quickly looked up to see who was standing there.

She was indeed a grown woman, but she was dressed like a six year old. She had on a pink pinafore dress, white stockings and black Mary Janes. A teddy bear was being held in one hand, and the other was being used for thumb sucking. Standing with her knees knocked and her feet pointed towards each other, she idly swayed left and right. It caused the pigtails in her hair to flail around, whipping the tiny pink ribbons at the ends.

“My nameths Patty.” The woman spoke, sounding just like a little girl would, both in tone and in pitch. She clumsily curtsied. “I'm dwec... di... wec... Di-wectah of acwounting.”

“Uh, are you new here?”

“I juwst stawted thwee weeks ago.”

“I'm Sheila. Uh... Are you all right?”

“Uh-huh.” Patty nodded. “Do you need'ta see someone? The wecepshunist is ovah dere.” She pointed down the hall.

The receptionist? Had they replaced her? “Yes, thank you very much, uh...

Uh..." She had no idea what to say. Did 'Patty' really think she was a kid? Or was it an act? Well, from what she had seen, this wasn't an act. "Thank you, little girl."

"I'm not a wittle girwl!" Patty shrieked. Then she started to tear up. "I'm a big girwl!" She cried as she tore off down the hallway, tripping over her own feet.

Sheila was quickly on her way, unable to even comprehend what she was seeing. Was this a costume day? She didn't remember putting a costume day on the office calendar. She scowled. If anybody had screwed with her calendar, there was going to be hell to pay.

As she continued on, another woman walked by, this one was dressed in a school girl's outfit with a plaid skirt. Jennifer tried to be friendly and nodded. "Good afternoon," she said.

"Hello, Sheila," the woman said, walking on by.

Before she reached reception, she had seen a Japanese geisha in full costume, a cheerleader with a skirt three inches too short to hide her panties, a nun going topless, and a flight attendant in seven inch ballet heels. None of them looked familiar. But they all smiled and nodded at Sheila as if they knew her.

She had the definite feeling she had just fallen through the rabbit hole.



Finally, she reached the end of the hallway. As she did, Sheila's hopes for just a hint of normality flew out the window. Because sitting there was the last thing she wanted to see.

Tentatively, fearing the very worst, she turned another corner and found herself right in the middle of the reception room. Sitting at the desk, was a living parody of a bimbo receptionist.

"Sheila?" James said, recognizing her. "What are you doing here? I thought you were looking after your Mother!"

Sheila looked around, not only stunned that the room had changed, but that they had horde this... *Joke* to be her replacement.

"How does everybody here know my name?" She asked.

"Sheila, you haven't been away that long," James replied with a giggle.

"Who *are* you?"

"It's me, Jaimiel!" James replied. "I mean, James. James Wright."

"No, really."

"Really!" James replied in a good-natured way. He thought Sheila was just kidding with him. "Oh, I guess you don't recognize me with my new hairdo. And

the shoes. The shoes are new.” He stuck out a slinky leg high in the air to show off a pink, high-heeled platform mule. “Alex said people might not recognize me today He’s so smart.”

“What...” Sheila looked around. “Is this a TV show? I someone punking me?”

Next, a very sexy African-American lady with an enormous round afro sauntered into the room, and handed James a piece of paper. She was dressed in a skimpy leather outfit in green, red, yellow and orange. She had an air of superiority about her and wore it like a badge.

“Thanks, Foxy!” James said, taking the paper.

“Foxy? Seriously?” Sheila asked.

“Oh look who decided to show her cracker face back here!” The woman said with spite. “I give you a few days off and you just waltz right back like nuttin’ happen! Well, news flash, honey! You ain’t gonna just come here and steal my man!” She pointed an accusing finger at Sheila. “You stay away from my man!” She then make a throat-slit motion with the same finger. With that, she walked away, strutting proudly.

“You know Foxy,” James replied, “she’s a little intense.”

“I *know* her?”

“Oh, you must have not seen her since she went by ‘Maureen.’ You miss a lot when you’re away for three weeks, I guess.”

“That is not... I don’t... How the...” Sheila’s exasperated expression suddenly vanished from her face. Then, slowly, a look a bemusement took over. She snapped her fingers in recognition. “Oh, I get it.”

“Huh?” James asked.

“Tell me, James, have there been a lot of changes around here since I left?”

“No. Not really.” James replied. Then he put a pink-nailed finger to his pink-rouged cheek in thought. “Well, maybe *I* changed a little. The new job and all. And Foxy, of course. And then there’s Patty. And the shipping department... And the accounting department... Tim, Andy, Mike, Sandy, Reggie, Lars... The whole fifth floor... And then...”

Sheila held up her hand. “Stop there. That’s enough. Didn’t you notice these changes? You can’t tell me that you expect to work in a place that has women walking around *topless*, dressed up in costumes, and changing from men into women? Even you have to see that something has gone horribly, *horribly* wrong here!”

“Well...” James said, thinking about the question. “I suppose things *have* changed a bit around here lately. But whenever I ask anyone else, they... just kind of... Y’know...” James started to play with a strand of hair, as his eyes glazed over.



“...Get distracted?” Jennifer said, trying to finish the thought.

“Yeah, that’s it. Exactly.” He nodded. James looked from side to side and then hushed his voice. “Thank God you noticed. I was too afraid to say anything to anybody... I know I’ve changed, but I can never concentrate hard enough to know what’s happened to me.”

“What about Mr. Huberson? Has he changed?”

“Hummm...” James said, thinking about the question, never realizing how adorable he looked trying to think. “Not really. He and Barry seem to be the same...”

“That’s all I need to know,” Sheila said.



“I can’t afford having any lose ends. You should know that!” Mr. Huberson said to his guests. He stood over them with a syringe, testing it out and flicking air bubbles from the chamber. Barry stood by the window, closing the blinds in the small room.

It was the employee break room, now converted t being a prison for the next few minutes.

Doctor Lumbago and his nurse, Jennifer, were bound to two office chairs with miles of duct tape wound around them. Their mouths were gagged. They struggled to get free, but to no avail. They were trapped.

“I especially like what I have planned for you, doctor. You seem to like the medical profession. How would you like to be my own personal candy striper?”

“I hope you like... candy canes.” Barry added, with a wicked laugh. “Especially... *licking* them.”

Mr. Huberson joined in. “Once we’re done, you won’t have the brains of an eight year old!” He laughed even louder than Barry. The sounds of their evil laughter echoed harshly in the small room and down the hallways.

At which point, Sheila walked into the room and grabbed a Snapple from the fridge. She popped the top and took a sip. “I swear to God, I take a few days off and I don’t even recognize the place.” Both Max Huberson and Barry were taken completely by surprise.

She snapped her fingers at Mr. Huberson. “Come with me, doggie.”

Mr. Huberson quickly dropped to all fours. “Rowf!” He barked.

“You too, kitty.” She snapped her finger in front of Barry who also dropped on all fours.

“Meeeoow,” he said.

"I'll be back for you two in a minute," Sheila said to the prisoners. She walked out the door, drinking her Snapple, and Barry and Mr. Huberson followed.

Sheila grabbed a stack of papers off someone's desk, rolled them up and swatted Mr. Huberson's nose. "You looked into the confidential files, stole the secret biological formulas and turned the entire staff into sex perverts." She crossed her arms. "Again."

Mr. Huberson whimpered.

"This happens every time I leave. I can't trust you to do anything." Sheila said to herself. "You ruined a perfectly good office. I bet they can't even type an email without needing to screw."

"Rarf!" Mr. Huberson said, trotting along dutifully at his master's side.

Sheila walked past where her desk used to be, shaking her head in disgust. "Honestly," she said, looking at the mirrored walls. "Like a teenage boy's wet dream."

It was just for these occasions that he had implanted those hypnotic suggestions in Huberson's brain. She was the person in control of this office. The fail-safe. There was so much life-altering technology floating around that someone had to be able to keep accidents from getting out of control.

After all, it was true – Sheila *was* the only person in the office who knew what was going on. She didn't have to be a mind reader to know Mr. Huberson had a scheming little mind. Dutifully, she had taken steps to protect herself.

Years ago, Sheila had hypnotized Mr. Huberson and that toady little assistant of his, just to be sure.

She proceeded to Mr. Huberson's office, and stopped at his desk. Sighing heavily, she tugged at the drawer that held the chemicals for the formula. "What a mess," she said to herself. Mr. Huberson curled up in the corner and set his head on the floor. Barry clawed a curtain.

"I bet this is exactly why the Republicans want to ban stem cell research," Sheila said, as she grabbed a syringe from the drawer. Sheila took some bottles from Mr. Huberson's desk and read them. Fortunately, there was plenty of antidote left. Enough for the whole office.

She pressed the intercom button on the phone. "James, come in to Mr. Huberson's office would you?"

"Okie-dokie!" James replied.

"I hope I have enough syringes for everyone." Sheila checked the time. "It always happens," she said to herself. She sighed dejectedly. "Just a quick trip to the office and now I'm going to be here for hours."



Alex waited patiently out in the parking lot. He had been there for an hour or two, as he had been told that everyone was in an ‘all-office meeting’ and it could not be interrupted under any circumstances.

He fiddled with the knobs on the radio, trying to find new stations. He read through the owners’ manual to the truck. He adjusted his seat in different positions and tested them out.

Finally, people started to come out of the bland, nondescript office building. Quickly, Alex sat upright and got ready.

He watched as the employees left the building, walking to their cars. Walking may not have been the best way to describe it. They meandered to their cars. They looked almost lost. Eventually, they would get to where they were going, but they seemed to have a little trouble doing it.

They also didn’t look right. Some were wearing absurd clothes. Men were rearing dresses. Women were wearing costumes. A grown up woman in a girl scout out fit. Six men in small blue bikinis. It was very strange. Of course, he had gotten used to strange lately with Jamie. He had accepted strange into his heart.

More people left. A man in a cheerleading outfit. A woman in a Playboy bunny uniform. Two men in sailor’s uniforms.

Was it a costume party? That certainly would explain the outfits. Alex scoffed at the idea of a company meeting. Yeah. *Sure*.

After a woman with cats’ ears and tail emerged, followed and a man in a bridal gown, Alex was about to go in and get Jamie. But as he watched three women in sheep costumes following another man in a Little Bo Peep outfit leave, he felt the truck wobble a bit.

Jamie leapt into the cabin and closed the door behind her.

“Are you guys all done in there?” Alex asked.

“Baby!” Jamie squealed, quickly wrapping her arms around his neck.

“Hey, Jam-Jam,” Alex replied. He used a little pet name he had been working on. He pinched one of Jamie’s nipples and got a squeak out of her.

“I’ve been thinking about you all day!” Jamie said, taking a break from smothering Alex with her pillowy lips.

“You guys sure were busy, huh? Long meeting. So what did they talk about?”

“I’m not supposed to say. Well, it wasn’t really a meeting, actually.”

“Yeah, that’s what I thought.” Alex leaned into smell Jamie’s breath. “You didn’t have any drinks, at least.”

“What?” Jamie replied. “No, it wasn’t like that at all, baby!”

“Uh-huh.”

“Well, what was it about, then?”

“Um.... Well, let’s say that everybody got, uh.... Reassigned. Or unassigned. Something like that.”

“Everyone?”

“Well, not everyone,” Jamie said, taking her hair out of its’ rings. “Some people could turn it down if they wanted. Maureen did.” Her unrestrained flaxen hair fell down like fluffy clouds along her back and milky shoulders. “Sheila stopped by, to check in.”

“Was she angry about not being the receptionist anymore?”

“No,” Jamie shimmied out of her miniskirt. “She got a promotion.”

“Good for her,” Alex said, repositioning himself in the truck cab to lie along the seat. Jamie mounted him and took off her top.

“Oh, and guess what?”

“What?”

“I got promoted, too!”

“Is that so?”

Jamie removed her pink panties and tossed them aside.

Alex took one look and then looked back up at Jamie’s smiling face. “We’re not pretending anymore, are we?” He asked.

“Nope,” Jamie replied.

The End



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