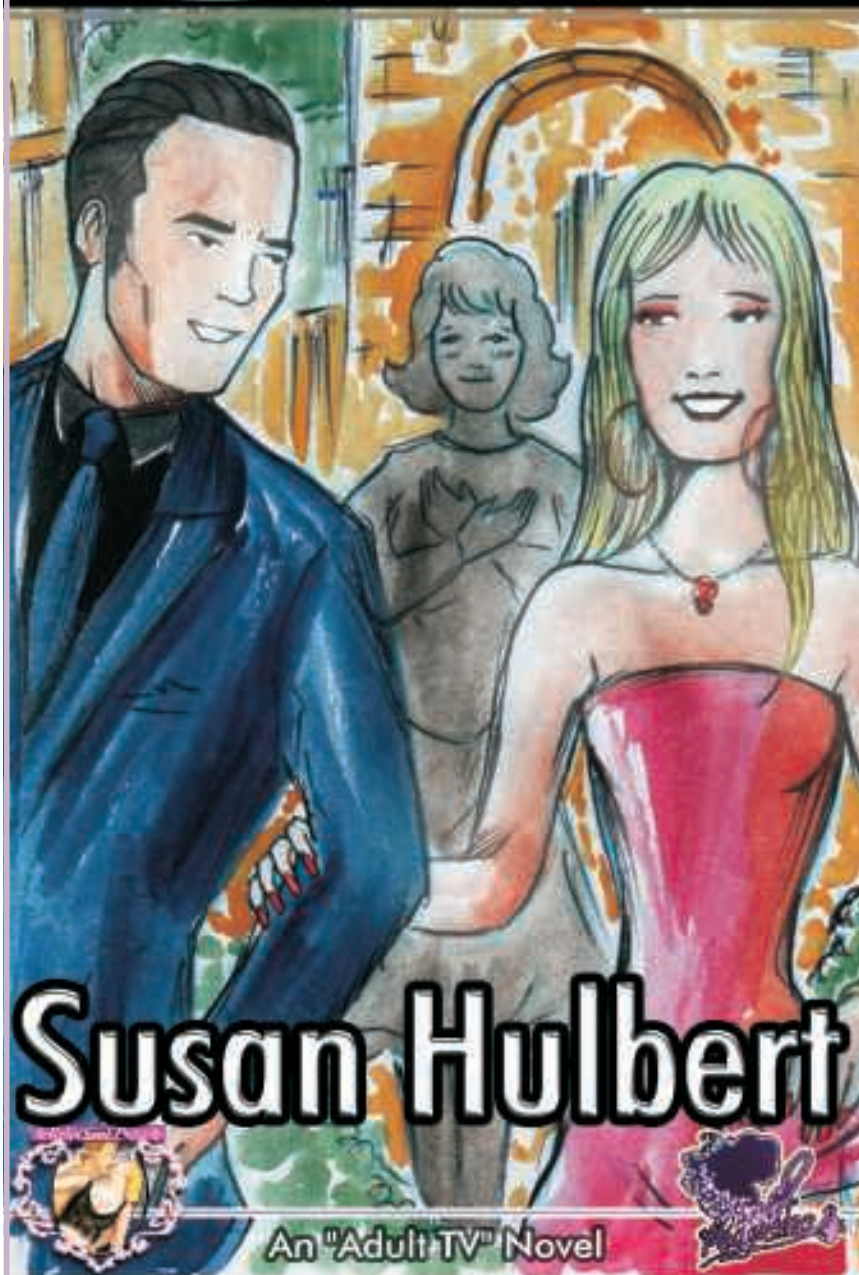


SFX



Susan Hulbert

An "Adult TV" Novel

Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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SFX

By Susan Hulbert

It was difficult growing up. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't have it any other way. Like any kid, I didn't realise what the world was about. Having said that, I didn't know where the world would take me.

I was Mother's much-loved second child. My sister was nine years older and perhaps the biggest influence upon me as I grew up. We weren't alike, except that we never really knew our fathers.

It's often said that the acorn doesn't grow far from the tree. Maybe that's a way of saying that something of the father remains in their children. I don't know if that's true.

Mother said that Karen, my sister, inherited all the wrong bits of her father. She was dark and no matter how she ran and dieted, she remained on the chunky side. She didn't have much height to compensate. Her hair was dark and impossible to tame, hanging

halfway down her back. Her lively mind and irrepressible good humour made up for a lot.

I don't know what I got from my father. I was more like Mother. I was easily taller than Karen before I was ten, but stopped growing when I got to five foot six. I was super slim and had my mother's tawny blonde hair. I loved the way she wore it, straight and silky. She tells me that from a very early age, I protested when I had to have it cut. As soon as I was able to impose my own choices, I never had it cut short, even though the other boys had fashionable short crops.

It's brought me here. I live on Corsica. It's a French island in the Mediterranean, rugged and fiercely independent, with traditions going back centuries.

I don't belong to the island and have only learned their traditions since I came here with my late husband several years ago. I've been fortunate; his investment in several vineyards when the prices were low has paid off handsomely. Wisely too, he left the running of them in the hands of traditional farmers, and paid them according to the profits. I have continued this and I have reaped the rewards handsomely.

It's been a good life and I wouldn't change anything. I've no close family, and the relatives I have are on California. I've decided to write my version of my own biography. You have to remember though, that everyone is the hero – or heroine – of their own story.

I'm conscious that I'm recording my impressions and interpretations. Others may disagree but they can just write their own story.

What prompted me to write my story? It came to me as the vendage—that's what we call the grape

harvest here—was ending last year. As usual, I ordered a huge celebration with the mayor and the priest, the usual rack of local dignitaries, and most important of all, my workers and all their extended families.

It looked like it would be a good year and so it has proven to be.

I'd ordered a special dress for the day. I loved the way my local dressmaker could always make me feel special. I'd asked for something in white. The cotton cloth she used was that rustic weave that's oatmeal rather than pure white.

I wanted sleeves to protect my shoulders from the late summer sun which can be fierce in the island, and an off-the-shoulder style so that it would be cool under the sunshades as the eating and drinking continued. I'd bought a wonderful silk scarf from my last trip to Nice which I was looking forward to wearing with it.

It's not that I'm one of those people who hide from the sun. I'm tanned and think I look good now that I'm of a certain age. I always take care that my public appearances, even when I am going round my vineyards, is appropriate. I always have my lipstick, kohl, and mascara round my eyes. I don't think I've ever been seen outside without this bit of makeup.

I looked out from my bedroom window and saw the courtyard, decorated and already noisy as the first guests arrived. I saw the children running, the girls in their colourful dresses, the boys standing to one side to watch them in the early afternoon sun.

I tried to guess who was watching who and who would end up with who after the sun faded in the evening and the pleasures of the day, not forgetting the wine, had their effect on young hearts.

It was then as I remembered my childhood and early experiences that I decided to write this account. Maybe no one would read it, maybe no one would be interested, but it would be there. I'd already decided that my estate would be given to a worker co-operative after I passed, with my home as a centre to tell the story of the vineyard. Maybe this history could be part of that.

Enough, I hear you saying. Get on with the story!

Karen was a great artist. She could draw so perfectly that it was as close as a photograph as possible. She tried to teach me, but I failed. I didn't see things the way she did. She was good with her hands too. Her model making was inspired, and her life-size clay model of Mother's head won prizes in her final year's examinations.

These natural abilities crossed over into makeup and hair, fashion design and dressmaking. She was always perfect when she went out and spent hours with her friends making them look amazing.

I guess that without these skills they'd have dumped her. She didn't match their social status or fit in with their ideas as glamorous group of girls on the prowl. She'd always be the fat friend or the wall-flower but she accepted her place and seemed to thrive.

Her final year of school was the first time she used me as a model. She wrapped my hair on a plastic cap, pulled it tight as far as it would go, and put plugs in each of my ears.

‘Sit still and breathe through this tube,’ she said as she smothered my face in cream. “I’m making a head cast as a base for your Halloween look.”

She started to smear blue goo all over my head. “Close your eyes. It’s going to be uncomfortable, but it will prove and dry hard in a few minutes.”

It was claustrophobic. I tried to speak but breathing through the tube was a hard enough. The sounds went fainter and I could feel a tightening as the cast dried. It became quite rigid and the movement in my neck was restricted. I knew I had to hold still but it was a weird feeling as my neck was held stiffly too.

“I’m going to take it off now. Be very still or I’ll cut your ears off too.”

I could hear the craft saw buzzing, then a couple of tugs and a little twist and I was free. “Is that what I look like?” I asked, seeing the two halves on the workbench.

“It’s a mould.” Karen ran her fingers around the model. “I use it to make a cast of your head, then when I make prosthetics, I know they’re going to fit you when the time comes. It’s how they make the aliens for those films you like.”

“What’s a prosth...whatever you said?”

“It’s a piece of moulding. I stick it onto you with something like spirit gum, then colour it and your skin so that the seams are invisible.”

“I thought all the monsters were made in a computer.”

“Some are but when they want a monster to appear in some live action, on stage, or even at a convention, they have to do it this way.”

“So what kind of monster am I going to be?”

“You can be a witch, a wizard, a zombie or a robot,” Karen said.

“Which is best?” I asked.

“I’ve done some work on witches for my girlfriends and I have some stuff already prepared that I could use.” She looked thoughtful and went to look in her craft boxes. “I guess a witch would be the best disguise if you didn’t want anyone to know who you were, after all, Halloween’s coming soon.”

And so it was agreed. My first time as a member of the opposite sex, although not the most attractive one, was sketched out.

Halloween arrived. The afternoon was set aside for witch making. Karen let me hang around as her friends came to have scars and bloody smears added to their faces. Teeth were blacked out and fangs added. I was ejected from the process several times as the girls said I was taking too close an interest in it all.

She’d set up a workshop in our spare room. It had a workbench and mirrors with lights all round. It looked a proper salon/studio. And Mother said it kept the rest of the house tidy.

My turn came after all these friends had been finished. I wish I had a picture to show you of that first transformation, but I can't find one. I remember my skin was yellow and I had rotten looking teeth with gaps. My nose was hooked, with a thin tapering point. I had bulging cheeks and warts, scars, and pockmarks. My neck was saggy and lined with veins. I looked really horrible, and wasn't I pleased?

Mom was horrified because Karen got one of her friends to pierce my ears. She dangled long chains with small bats on the end through each of them.

"No one will guess he's a boy underneath," she explained to Mother. "Boys don't have pierced ears."

"But what about school?" Mother asked.

"It'll never be noticed," Karen replied. "And if it is, then he's one of the cool kids who dared to do it."

"Yes, I can live with that," I said to Mother. "I've never been in with the cool kids before"

She sighed and shook her head as she left us to get on with it. "It's too late now whatever I say."

"Only a few more things to add, little brother," Karen said. "I know you've had contact lenses for class, and I've got some for a witch."

"How did you afford these?" I asked.

"I begged them off the suppliers. They're free if I send some pictures of you that they can use for advertising on their website."

"That's not fair," I said. "People will recognise me."

“If they do, I’ll be shocked. I’ll have failed completely.”

“Okay,” I said, not really convinced.

I took the package from her and went through my usual routine for putting them in. I didn’t really examine them closely, other than to note colours were on the lens whereas mine were usually clear. I put them in and blinked a few times. They seemed a little bigger than my usual ones, and it took a minute or two for my eyes to stop watering.

I went to the mirror. “My eyes are yellow and the pupils are shaped all wrong.” I was shocked.

“What do you think a witch would say about that?” Karen asked.

“Oh, she’d probably say that I look normal for a witch.” My shock evaporated into a laugh.

“Now hands,” Karen said, taking out a bowl of deep-coloured liquid. “I can’t use ordinary makeup on your hands. It’s going to wipe off as fast as I put it on. This is a temporary dye to yellow your skin.”

“How temporary?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” Karen replied. “It’s the first time I’ve made anything like this. “It should come off in a day or so but if it lasts longer, it will just have to wear away.”

“Wear away?” I didn’t understand.

“Yes. Your skin cells shed all the time, so it will eventually come off,” Karen said, and then looked

pensive. “Maybe we’d better not do this. Your hands could still be yellow for school next week.”

“Let’s do it,” I said and impulsively placed both hands into the bowl. The liquid came over my wrists and I sloshed it even higher up my arms.

“It’s too late to consider anything sensibly,” Karen chided me.

“How long does it take?” I asked.

“That long,” Karen replied, handing me a dry rag. “Rinse them off and see what the damage is.”

“They’re really yellow,” I said as the clear water ran over them. “Did you mean it to be this deep shade?”

“I had no idea.” Karen looked at them and patted them dry. No dye came off onto the rags. “I was going to do a patch test but you plunged in before I could say anything.”

“This is going to have to do,” I said. “I’ve never had yellow hands before.”

“And you’ve never had fingernails to match,” Karen said, holding out another packet. “I’m going to glue these over your nails. The glue is really strong so they won’t fly off. They’re much longer than your own, so you won’t be able to do much with your hands either.”

“Can I wave my hands menacingly and bring spells on people?” I asked.

“I suppose, but you’re not to bring any toads home.”

“That’s okay then,” I replied. “I could like being a witch for the evening.”

There were a few more things to do before I was ready to face the world. My face was made up as yellow as my hands, with black lines over and under my eyes and some hideous shade of purple lipstick. It went down my neck; darker shades emphasised bulging veins and flabby skin.

My hair, which had been pinned back out of the way, was covered by a tight cap, and a black wig was pinned securely over it. It was uncombed, straggly and looked matted in places. It was horrible. It was perfect for the job, as was the yellow paint applied to my front teeth.

I hardly need to say that my costume was all black. Black boots with short pointed toes, reaching a long way in front of mine and heels which went to a sharp point, worn over black stockings with a black shapeless dress from neck to knees, and a rough rope for a belt. I looked awful.

Karen insisted on taking pictures of me from every angle and more. Close-ups, and full body shots; my nose and eyes, my hands with the claws. Every wart and scar seemed to have its own frame shot.

I turned to Karen and gestured that we should go and show Mom. I followed her into the house, tripping a little on the boot heels. I hadn’t really noticed them as I put them on, but walking in them was a different matter. I had to take short steps.

I cackled as I thought a witch might do.

“Oh my lord.” Mother looked really surprised. “Karen, what have you done to your brother?”

“I’m Griselda, the wicked witch of the west... or east, or wherever wicked witches come from,” I said reaching out a shaking yellow hand with long yellow nails.

“You two take care this evening,” Mother said. “I’m going over to see your aunt and her kids; I’ll maybe stay over and see you tomorrow.”

Karen had changed into her own costume very quickly and easily. She was going as the Good Fairy; perhaps a little too large but she liked the sparkly dress and the fibre wings which flapped in the gentle breeze as we walked along.

It was getting dark. If the sight of a witch and a fairy looked incongruous, the whole community knew it was a big thing for all the schools and the dance we were going to was a big charity fund raiser.

“I like to do other people’s makeup and things,” Karen said when I asked her about this. “I don’t really like doing it on myself. I know I’m not as attractive, whatever I do, but we have to work with the things we have. I know what I’m good at.”

“Where are we going?” I asked Karen as we walked out of the house that evening.

“The big party is in the community centre but because we can’t buy beer, we’re supposed to stay in the annex. I guess the boys will have beers or something stronger.”

It was the first time that I’d thought of my sister in terms of boys and beer.

“How old do witches have to be to buy beers?” I asked.

“Don’t go there,” she replied. “I don’t want to get you into any more trouble than you can get into yourself.”

I followed her into the hall, and into her group of friends. They were on the glamorous end of the witch kingdom, with the odd boil or scar doing little to detract from their usual flawless perfection. They primed and preened. They talked loudly and laughed just as loudly; all the time looking over each other’s shoulders to find their perfect boyfriend for the rest of the evening.

“And which witch are you?” One boy put his arm round me as if we were old friends. I felt his arm drop and his hand rub across my behind.

“I’m Griselda.” I turned and exposed my yellowed teeth in a grimace rather than a smile. Despite the cape and the orange face, I recognised Greg from our senior class, everyone’s idea of a good boyfriend to have. “If you’re not good to me, I can make bits of you fall off.”

“I’d better take care of you then,” he replied. “If I can drag you away from your coven, I’m sure there’s something refreshing over there.”

The girls stared open-mouthed as he took my arm and led me away. I made sure to cackle loudly as we walked across the floor.

“Do you have to cackle?” he asked, handing me something which smelled stronger than lemonade. “It’s quite coarse and draws attention.”



“Don’t you want attention to be drawn?” I asked. “If you didn’t, you shouldn’t have chosen the only real witch here.”

“There’s one sort of attention,” he replied, “And then again, there’s another sort of attention.”

“You’ll have to explain.” I was puzzled.

“You see, I know who you are under that wonderful makeup,” he said. “And as you’re so well made-up, I can pretend to be fooled. I’ve watched you for ages.”

“Watched as in... what exactly?” I asked.

“As in I’d like you for a girlfriend.” His face looked sincere, with no hint of mockery.

“I’m sure there are others who want you more,” I replied, blushing under my yellow complexion. “And if you know who I am, you know I’m not a girl.”

“But you have that grace and charm, that little extra to offer,” he whispered. “I’d rather have you. Come let’s dance.”

He took me onto the floor and, much to my surprise began to lead me into something like a slow dance. I saw the girls with Karen, whispering, pointing and looking daggers at me.

“I don’t think you should be doing this,” I said as we turned around the floor.

“Why not?” He even kissed my forehead. “I can be laughed at as the biggest dupe in town on Monday, but at least I’ve had this chance to talk to you.”

“I can’t believe you’re doing this,” I hissed as we went round again and I glimpsed the girls to the side. “They’re going to make mincemeat of your reputation.”

“I don’t care. I go to college in the Fall and I may never see them again.” Greg pulled me closer so that I moved in time with his body.

I knew what I was feeling and why he’d pulled me close to hide it. “You’re not pushing me away,” Greg said. “May I take it that you don’t object to what I’ve said?”

“That’s not fair.” I pulled away. “Maybe we’d better sit this one out.” I walked away with a cackle to keep in character, not that I’d been doing that for a while.

Greg went to the corner where the girls were gathered. I heard them laughing together, then he was dancing again with what looked from the distance like the prom queen from last summer. She was blonde and thin, hair tumbling to her waist as they danced elegant turns and generally showed off.

I went looking for Karen, trying to analyse my feelings. I knew I hadn’t tried dating, yet the idea of dating Greg? I was hopelessly confused. Was he kidding—or worse, was he serious? That could really damage my reputation in town.

Karen was flushed from dancing. She was with a tall guy who I recognised as the town pharmacist’s son. I couldn’t remember his name but he seemed a good sort for Karen. She was smiling and looked radiantly happy.

She saw me and excused herself to come over. “What were you thinking?” she asked. “Dancing with Greg?”

“I think he was using me to play up to his girlfriends,” I replied.

“He certainly did that,” Karen said. “You should have heard them. Fortunately none of them guessed who you were.”

“You’re doing well.” I nodded back to where the guy was obviously waiting for her. “You’d better get back.”

“Thanks, little brother.” She kissed my cheek. “You look out for yourself.”

I took my chance to slip out and walked home alone.

I let myself in to the empty house, and went to strip off the costume. The prosthetics came away easily, and I put them with the wig, onto Karen’s workbench. I unzipped the boots; no mean feat with the hideous yellow fingernail” and flipped the dress over my head. What a mess I looked as I stood in front of the mirror. I went to the shower.

After a long scrubbing and shampoo, I dried myself and looked in the mirror. I recognised what I saw. My hair was dripping down my shoulders and all the yellow had gone from my face and neck. I was pretty normal except for my yellow hands and fingernails. Nothing seemed to lift the colour and the nails were as firm as ever. I’d have to wait for Karen to do something about that.

“Remind me to be a white witch next time,” I said to myself. “I wonder what it would be like to be the pretty one.”

I dismissed the thought and dried my hair so that it hung smooth and loose once again and slipped on an old bathrobe. Then I went to make a drink and watch some TV.

I couldn’t concentrate. Greg filled my mind. I hadn’t thought about the sex thing with any seriousness. I knew how I felt as she said those things to me. I was certain that he knew who I was.

“I’m not girlfriend material,” I told myself sternly, yet I knew that there was a new power in the makeup and the feelings beginning within me.

“If I can be a witch, I wonder if Karen can make me a prom queen as well.” I pictured myself differently now. “But I don’t have the right plumbing and I don’t have the right shape.”

I thought some more. “I can’t ask Karen to do anything like that and I don’t have her skills. She’ll probably hate me if I ask. I’d be better putting this down to experience and forgetting the whole thing.”

These thoughts were interrupted by a soft tapping at the window. I ignored it, then it came again, more insistent this time. I went to the curtain and peeked out. I got such a shock that I rapped back on the window, then hurried to the door before anyone should see.

“Greg, what on earth are you doing here?” I hissed to him.

“I came to see you,” he replied. “If you don’t let me in, I’m going to start serenading you and then what will the neighbours think?”

I let him in and immediately felt his arm around me, while his other hand held the back of my head. He pulled my face towards his; bent down and I felt his lips against mine. I knew what he was doing. I should have pulled away but something inside me seemed to melt and I let him do it again. Then I kissed him back.

He leaned back and took my hands. We both laughed spontaneously when the sight of my yellow hands and claw size nails became obvious.

We stumbled into the lounge where we kissed more. I felt his hands reaching my bottom, the small of my back. With one hand round my back, his other reached between the folds of my robe. I pulled away at that touch. I don’t know if I really wanted to, but only thought of that afterwards.

“What are you doing?” I almost shouted. “Karen could be back any time soon.”

“No she won’t,” Greg answered. “I gave Kyle the keys to my car and he was going to take her to Butler’s Hill, you know where they...”

“I know what goes on at Butler’s Hill,” I said. “I may be young but I’m not stupid.”

“I thought it might give me a little time alone with you.” He leaned in again and this time I melted and let him kiss me.

“This can’t be happening.” I let myself fall into his arms and felt so good as he held me. “I’m fifteen.

You're off to College next fall, and I'm going to be at our High School for another two years after you've gone. No one must know about this, promise me, no one at all."

"It wouldn't do me any good either," he replied. "I had to come. I had to know."

"Okay, so you know." I sat up and away from him. "Now you'd better go before something very wrong happens. Don't come back and pray no one ever finds out. I'm far too young for this."

"I'll go but I'll find some way to see you again, maybe when you're older." He kissed me once again and then was gone.

I sat on the floor and burst into tears. I couldn't tell you which emotion was hurting most, but tears seemed impossible to avoid.

"I hope you both had a good time last night." Mother arrived home in the early afternoon as Karen and I were lounging about in front of the TV, not really paying any attention as an old musical played along.

"Sure, Mom," Karen replied. "He pulled Greg, the absolute most desirable of the final year."

"He only danced with me to get away from those girls you were sucking up to," I retorted, feeling my face reddening.

"Sure and he had no idea who was under the Griselda makeup." Karen smiled wickedly. "I've had my doubts about him since he split with Tammie."

“Maybe it was because she doesn’t have a brain.”

“Hey, stop it you two,” Mother intervened. “I’m sure there’s nothing to be read into Greg thinking Griselda was a girl. Anyone would have; I saw her, err, him before you went out.”

“Was it a Grab The Ugliest Girl Competition?” Karen again.

“And who went to Butler’s Hill with Kyle?” I asked ‘innocently’

“It was only to look at the moon,” It was Karen who turned red this time.

“Oh stop it,” Mother laughed. “It was a dance for Halloween. It’s always silly. I bet the boys got some drink from somewhere. They always did when I used to go at your age.”

“Things haven’t changed since you went, Mom,” Karen agreed.

“You’d better do something with these claws.” Mother held my hands and looked at them closely. “If no one recognised your brother last night, they’ll only need to glance at his hands tomorrow in school and everyone will know who Griselda was.”

I kept my hands firmly in my pockets all through the next week. The claws came off really easily but I was conscious of a lingering yellow stain around my knuckles. Maybe no one else would have noticed but I was very self-conscious.

The few guys I hung with at school hadn't seen anything of Griselda at the party and so I didn't have to say anything about it. A couple of the girls hinted that I knew something and tried to get me to say more.

"You're Karen's little brother. You must have seen who it was."

"Not me," I replied. "That's girl stuff." I usually walked away then.

As for Greg, we exchanged a few furtive words as we bumped into each other. I half-wanted him to do something or to say something more, but nothing came. It was as if Halloween had never happened.

We spoke at the mall or if we passed in the street. It was all inconsequential. He asked after Karen and said he was going to the same city as she was hoping to go to for further study. There was an occasional hint that we may meet there. I could feel a spark whenever I saw him. I guessed he felt it too, and that's why he hurried away. I wanted it so much, but he never tried to make any arrangement to meet.

Expectations dimmed and hope faded as weeks turned to months. Maybe it was just a simple act of madness after all.

I was seventeen going on eighteen when Karen was leaving High School in summer. I didn't know much about what she was intending to do but it took me by no surprise when the announcement came. She'd won a place on a training programme with a SFX studio and moved to the city about three hours away.

I knew Greg had gone to the same city.

I began to pay attention. These were the guys who made monsters and robots, scary ghouls and rotting zombies. It fired my imagination and I spent ages with her asking stupid questions. I knew all the superheroes and all their opponents. Karen had no idea what I was talking about. Her head was full of the images she could design.

She left home and went to live in a student dorm near the studio. I missed her like crazy and begged to be allowed to go and visit. I begged Karen to invite me too. I didn't realise that Little Brother tagging along might not be her idea of fun.

I got my way. It was school break week at the end of October. I was on the bus for hours; my first journey alone. It was exciting. I dozed and only woke when the bus clattered into the terminal where Karen was waiting for me. I ran down the aisle and hugged her tightly.

We looked at each other. "You've grown taller," she said, "And thinner. I'm jealous, why did you get the slim gene and leave me with the fat one."

"You're not fat," I told her and she pulled a face. "Anyway don't blame me, you were first and could have had your pick of the genes. I got what you left."

She pulled a face and pretended to punch me. "Where's your bag?" she asked.

I turned to see the bus disappearing from the concourse. "It's there," I said, pointing forlornly.

We ran after it but the bus turned onto the freeway and clearly wasn't going to stop. We looked at each

other. The depot office on the bus station took my name and our numbers and promised to get the bus checked at the next stop. We hung around, waiting for the call to be returned.

“Bad luck, kid,” the clerk called. “There’s nothing left on the bus.”

“Everything I had was in that bag,” I complained. “Still, it’s my own stupid fault for leaving it there.”

“Never mind,” Karen said. “It’s no use worrying about things we can’t change. I’m sure we’ll be able to borrow some stuff for you to wear. It’s not as if we were planning on going anywhere dressy.”

“No, I guess not,” I replied. “There must be a few guys my size in your dorm.”

“There are a few your size, that’s true, but it’s a girls only dorm,” Karen replied. “I got the girls to agree that you could hide a few nights in my room.”

“So what do I do?” I asked forlornly. “There’s not another bus until tomorrow, and I don’t really want to go home after just one night.”

“I’ll think of something.” Karen smiled with a confidence I didn’t share. “I’ll speak to the girls when we get back. First job is to get something to eat.”

It was dark outside when we walked into the dorm. Karen hurried to her room and told me to stay there. She’d made it into a pretty room with cushions on the bed, and a small stereo. There was an en-suite bathroom, with a kettle on the desk top.

I looked at the pictures on her walls and noticeboard. They showed heads with all kinds of moulded things attached; tentacles and snakes abounded. I looked through her pictures in an album on the desk. There were all kinds of designs here. A torso with six breasts caught my eye. They looked to my inexperienced eye just like the real thing, only ranged downwards in two sets of three.

“Imagine trying to buy a bra for that girl.” Karen came back and caught me looking. I tried to put it away.

“It’s alright,” she said. “Have a look at them all. Griselda is in there somewhere. I never told you, but she was one of the reasons they gave me this placement.”

“Really?” I asked in surprise.

“Yes, really. So I owe you for letting me do that on you,” she replied. “At my interview, I had to describe how the costume worked in practice. I told them about you being unrecognised and that you even danced with the school heartthrob who had no idea...” She looked at me. “He didn’t, did he? I know I said something stupid when we talked about it with Mom the day after.”

“I think he sort of guessed,” I replied. “I don’t know how, but he knew.”

“And he still danced with you?”

“I think I may have turned him on a little,” I stammered. “I don’t think he was prepared to find out...”

“I knew there was something about Greg,” Karen said.

I looked away, blushing and not knowing what to say.

“Did you see him again?” Karen asked. “I never noticed him with you, or even speaking to you after that night.”

“He came to the house after I left the dance,” I confessed. “We talked a little, and then he went. I think he realised that I wasn’t who he thought I was and I was younger than he thought too.”

“Does Mom know?”

“No.”

“Don’t say a word to her or anyone,” Karen said. “I think he’s gay, and you wouldn’t like that to get around school.”

“You know something else?” I said. There was something about the way she was looking away as we talked.

“Come on; you might as well tell me.”

“Okay.” She paused as if collecting her thoughts. “Greg spoke to me. He swore me to secrecy.”

“Something you couldn’t share with me?”

“It was a few weeks after Christmas. He’d been trying to bump into you. He really wanted to see you again, but he was afraid.”

“Go on.”

“He didn’t want to get a reputation... you know, for being that way. He feared what it would do to his folks. He didn’t want you to get a reputation either.”

“He could have called me.”

“No, he decided that keeping away and doing nothing was the safest course. I agreed with him. I’m sorry, but I did. I guessed you might be having feelings too, but I did what I thought was best.”

I spent a fitful night on Karen’s floor. I waited until she was showered and on her way out before stirring. She waved as she went, muttering something about clothes. I got into the shower and tried to soak the kinks from my limbs under the hot water.

I got out and wrapped a towel round my head like a turban to dry my hair. It was below my shoulders now and I liked to take care of it. I wrapped a second towel around my waist but it was far too long, so I ended up tying it under my arms. I sat in Karen’s office chair and looked through some more of her designs.

After the scary worlds stuff, I came to some more recognisable designs. Many were photographs of models she had made from casts; some even had descriptions of how she’d made them. In some of the photos, she had models made up and dressed as her designs.

I turned the pages, fascinated by the mermaid, and the dog faced girl with a fur body and a long fluffy tail. Griselda was there and afterwards a sequence which made my eyes pop.

It started with a guy about my age standing dressed in front of a screen. As picture followed picture, he undressed, then sat whilst Karen appeared to fix all kinds of moulds and shapes to him. From

being a naked guy, he changed into a naked girl with pert breasts.

He stayed smiling for the camera as he was dressed in full underwear, a red skater dress, stockings and heels. He sat back in the makeup chair, whilst she worked on him, giving him a full look complete with false eyelashes and beautiful lips. The final pictures showed him outside and then in a bar, looking every bit as cool and feminine as any girl I ever met.

I was still looking in fascination through these shots when Karen returned. I tried to hide the album but it was no use.

“I see you’ve found my secret portfolio,” she said. “I’m really proud of how this came out. I got a commendation from the school.”

“Wow, that must make you proud.”

“It does and I’ve you to thank for a lot of it.”

“Me? How?”

“There’s a lot of Griselda in here,” she said. “The basic ideas that made me think I could get away with the prosthetics here were those I’d used on a smaller scale on you. It was really fun to do. I even took him out for a beer and he got hit on. Poor guy was in a real panic.

“I got all sorts of clothes donated. When I told them what happened to your bag, they were so sorry,” Karen had returned with a huge laundry basket full of all sorts of clothes.

“Most of it is girl’s stuff,” I said, emptying the basket.

“There are jeans, a denim jacket and a few T-shirts,” Karen said. “Just don’t choose the one with ‘Princess’ on the front. There’s a lot you could wear here, as well as some dresses.”

“I guess some of your friends didn’t listen when you said I was a boy,” I replied.

“Maybe they thought it was a Goodwill collection. I’ll put it all in the corner and look through it later. Maybe there are things I can adapt for class.”

“How hard are they making you work?” I wondered about this because she seemed so happy and full of life.

“It’s really hard work,” she replied. “But I love it all. The only hard thing is getting volunteers to model for me. If I was a beautician or a hairdresser, they’d be queueing up, but because I’m being more creative, it doesn’t attract them.”

“Maybe they don’t want to be Griselda’s cousins on a Friday night date,” I suggested.

“But it’s not all monsters and ghouls.” Karen reached for her photographs. “Look at this.” She turned to that set of the boy changed into a girl.

I stopped in shock as she looked at me. I could feel my face turning bright red. “Could you do it again?” I said quickly. “On me, I mean. Please?”

There was a silence, as she looked at me. “You want to see Greg again, don’t you?”

“Maybe,” I replied. “I’ve thought so much about all the things you told me. I can’t get it out of my mind.”

“Something happened that night,” Karen said, looking at me closely.

“He kissed me,” I said. “I didn’t let him do anything else.”

“But he tried?”

“Yes, but I didn’t...*he* didn’t. I think he realised how old I was.”

“Have you seen him since?” Karen looked at me seriously. “Don’t lie to me.”

“Not really. Only a few words. I know he’s in college here, I thought I could find out and maybe bump into him.”

“And when you bump into him, would you prefer to be dressed as Griselda rather than the boy you are?” She laughed at the thought. “Maybe a more attractive version of Grizelda then, without the warts and the yellow skin.”

“That would be really nice.” I decided to stop pretending. “I don’t know why I feel this way, but I’ve been thinking and thinking. I really want to see him and hang about with him a little. It would be easier if I were to do it as a girl.”

“If you’re sure that you want to do this,” Karen asked seriously. “I’ll help you.”

You’ve seen the pictures, and luckily for you, I’ve been asked to do a better version. I know what I’m going to do and I can do it on you as easily as anyone

else. I'm not sure that I approve, but I'll accept your offer to be my model, as long as you don't tell Mom."

"You could do a better job on me?" I clung to those words. "I'm going to be really patient and help you all I can. I want to be perfect, and thank you. I was so afraid to admit this to anyone before. I'm bursting with excitement now. I don't know what to say."

"Say thanks, little brother, that's all," Karen replied. "In some ways that makes life easier."

"How so?"

"With your clothes gone, all you have is what you arrived in plus this lot I collected today. I've can go round the dorm asking for spare clothes and say it's for my project. I think the girls will let me have stuff on loan. There's your wardrobe."

"Won't they be suspicious when they see me wearing them if I go out? What if they see you with someone?"

"You'll have to be very careful and not let them," Karen replied. "I'm not sure that I'm doing the right thing here, but I do know where he's going to be tomorrow evening and I've told him that I have a surprise visitor from home wanting to meet him."

"Do you think he knows?" I said.

"Well, maybe not, but he'd have to be a bit dumb not to take the hint."

Karen was as good as her word and collected clothes from all over the place. She took me to a

workshop in the college that she'd booked and started the process. She did another cast. This time it wasn't my head, but an impression of my torso she needed.

"I can do your face and hair easily," she told me. "The breasts are a different matter. They have to look right and fit perfectly. If they don't, then the join will show and the material will separate from your body."

"It would be a scene from a horror film," I quipped. "Griselda sheds her skin to reveal the monster underneath."

"I'll remember that. It could be another project," Karen laughed. "Are you sure you want to go through with this? There's a huge conceptual gap between being you playing Griselda and becoming a passable girl."

"It's going to be an experience," I realised. "I know I'm asking a lot of you, but what have I got to lose?"

"Your reputation? Your sanity? Need I go on?" Karen replied. "I'm only doing this because it fits in with the project I have to complete."

"I suppose that gives me a get out," I said. "If anyone finds out and it all goes wrong, I could say that I was only helping you."

I hadn't thought of that angle, but it could work.'

The next stage was fascinating. Karen took the cast of my chest and, after some careful measuring, matched it with another cast. This was smaller and contained the reverse image of a girl's breasts. She trimmed it and fit it over my cast, then clamped it

somehow. Working from the rear base, she inverted it and injected a deep coloured liquid into the mould.

“That’s your new boobs,” she announced when she’d finished. “All we have to do is wait and hope that the result is good enough to use.”

“But it wasn’t anything like the colour of my skin,” I protested.

“That’s another bit of magic,” Karen said. “It’s all in the mix. It’s not an exact science but I’m working on it. I put pigments into the liquid, aiming for your skin colour. It lightens as it proves, and in a couple of hours we should see the result.”

“So we sit and wait?”

“No, we do your photos before anything else. Then it’s hair, nails, and eyebrows.”

“Eyebrows?” I asked.

“No girl would ever be seen with those two caterpillars on their face.”

“Won’t everyone see what you’ve done?”

“I thought that was the idea,” Karen sighed. “Girls have to go through a lot to be beautiful.”

“But back at school?”

“If anyone notices, which I doubt, then you can tell them you were at my monster factory,” Karen replied. “They’ll be jealous rather than anything else.”

I'm not going to describe that afternoon. Suffice it to say that I was really given the treatment. By they time the stylists finished, my hair had been trimmed rather than cut or restyled. It hung and shone beautifully, with a centre parting. I resisted bangs, so each side hung like a curtain, and swung as I turned my head.

My brows had disappeared. Karen had asked me about the modern style of really heavy brows but I pointed out that those were the very thing she was hoping to change. I got them plucked really severely, to high, thin arches, which I could always fill in with pencil if I wanted to change.

Karen called a visiting service to do my nails. She said that she didn't have the skills. It was a bit daunting to sit there, as a boy, whilst this glamorous lady gave me beautiful acrylic nails, far longer than my own, finished in a deep pink which shaded to white at the tips. I couldn't stop admitting them.

As morning was turning to afternoon, Karen released the clamps on the chest moulding. I think we both held our breath as a floppy mass of silicone was eased out and laid flat on the work table. I stood silently by as Karen inspected it minutely. I hardly dared to look let alone say anything, until she turned and smiled her approval.

"Lie back on the bench," Karen said. "I think this is going to work. If it doesn't, we'll try again tomorrow."

"It looks really strange." I lay where she told me. "It's like a breastplate piece of armour... only with breasts, and wobbly."

“It’s to cover from the base of your neck down to near your navel.” She started rubbing my chest with something which smelled like booze.

“It’s alcohol and it makes sure that we remove all traces of grease and moisture so that the glue will adhere where it should.” She did it again, and again.

“Now the spirit gum.’ “

She painted on the whole area. It was cold and, immediately, this part was finished. She lifted the breast piece, supporting it over one arm, while the other carefully eased it place. She looked at it closely, then applied more glue to the edges, smoothing and trimming as she worked round.

“Keep still and let it set,” she instructed. “If you feel it peeling, then get out of wherever you are and get back here quickly. They’re not big breasts, but enough to be noticed. If we made them any bigger, they’d be heavier and more risk of peeling.”

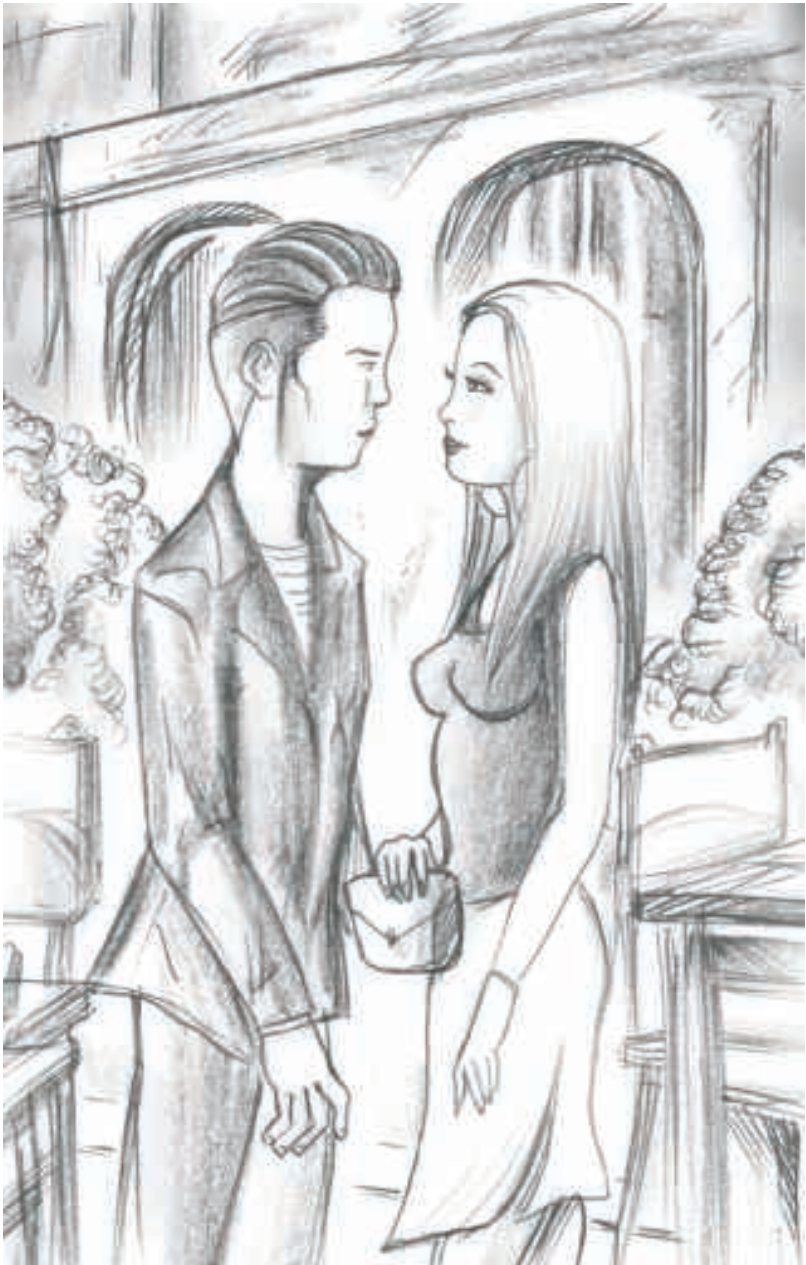
“It feels weird,” I said.

“Whatever it feels like, keep still and don’t you dare to play with them.” I dropped my hands to my sides and lay back.

Two hours later I was ready.

“I look like a high school girl who’s trying to look older and more sophisticated,” I said, inspecting my reflection.

I was really beautifully made-up, with subtle lashes and eyes rimmed with just enough black liner



and mascara. My cheeks looked healthy, with that young girl glow, and the pale lipstick shone with gloss. Karen found that my pierced ears still had holes and she put her own favourite gold hoops in there. I loved the feeling of their weight in my ears. She also gave me a silver bangle which I wore on my left wrist, and a plain neck chain.

Karen's clothing collection had gathered such a lot of useful things and a bigger lot of hideous creations that someone must have worn for a bet.

I had really nice underwear, pale pink matching panties and a push up bra which supported my B-cup breasts in a way that we hoped wouldn't affect their security.

I had hold-up stockings, nude sandals with a little heel, and my dress was mainly white, with a red pattern round the hem of a really full skirt which moved well as I walked. Karen gave me a white shoulder bag to carry, with a small bag of cosmetics and a mirror.

"Do I need to put a condom in this?" she asked, raising her eyebrows quizzically, before dropping one inside. "Remember to touch up your lipstick. It's a very feminine gesture and it makes the guy look at you."

"Karen, he'll know I'm a guy under all this," I said.

"Of course he will but that doesn't mean that you can't use every weapon at a girl's disposal." Karen looked at me long and hard. "I'm not sure I should be doing this. Mother would hate it. Greg's parents will hate me forever if word gets out, and I may hate myself in the morning."

Karen called a cab and took me round to the other side of the campus. She made sure I knew my way back to her room and walked with me a while, telling me to take smaller steps, sway my hips more and hold my arms differently. I tried, but I wasn't really listening. My mind was too busy with the 'what if?' questions.

"If you take that path through the bushes, it will bring you to a small outdoor bar," Karen said. "I'll wait here a few minutes and if you don't come back, I'll know that you've found someone there."

"Wish me luck." I kissed her on the cheek.

"I don't know if I should," she replied, a tear in the corner of her eye. "Go on, good luck anyway."

I walked round the path, my heart thumping more than was good for it. I don't think I ever felt so nervous. I knew I looked good, but part of me wanted to turn and run back. I didn't.

I saw the tables and chairs arranged on a courtyard with flowering bushes all around. I saw someone sitting alone at a table at the far side. My eyes fixed upon him and I walked through the tables, my eyes on where I was going, determined not to lose courage at the last minute.

"Hello," I said, pulling back a chair. "Is this seat taken?"

Greg looked at me. I saw confusion in his eyes as he took in my hair, my face, and the pretty dress I was wearing.

“Do I need to ask permission to sit with you?” I asked.

Suddenly his face relaxed into a smile, a genuine one; a girl can tell. He jumped up, knocking his own chair over and pulled out one for me to sit on. Remembering the script, I carefully smoothed my skirt underneath me before sitting. I placed my bag on the table in front of me and turned to him.

“It’s so good to see you again. How have you been?” I talked; he seemed incapable or in deep shock.

“Grizelda,” he said as if it was the only word he could form in his mind. He reached for my hand and I let him take it.

“Are you going to say anything?” I asked to fill the silence. “You can say ‘go away’ if that’s what you want to do.”

“I don’t,” he said, looking at me intensely. “May I kiss you; properly this time, maybe even smudge your lipstick?”

I leant towards him and felt his arm going round my back as he leaned towards me. I leaned my head slightly to the side to accept his lips upon mine.

“Yes,” I said looking into his eyes.

Our lips touched. I could feel my heart bursting at the feeling, and then I was kissing him; greedily, openly, devil-may-care-who’s-watching sort of kissing. I didn’t want to stop. I didn’t want to come up for air. It was as if time were standing still.

I stroked his face. He held my hand. Words didn't seem necessary for those first minutes, gazing into each other's eyes.

"You've changed," he said. "You're not Grizelda anymore."

"Thank you for noticing," I said formally. "You can call me Zelda in future."

"Zelda seems an exotic name to choose."

"I'm feeling exotic right now."

"I can't believe how you've changed." I saw him looking down the front of my dress.

"They're not real," I said. "Karen made them for a project. She's here doing courses on special effects. They disappear at midnight."

"I can't believe I'm looking at you," he said. "I know what's under that dress and the makeup. You look fabulous by the way. If I didn't know who you were, I'd never have picked you out from the other girls."

"Blame Karen," I replied. "She was the one with the magic wand that turned me into this."

Suddenly we were strangers again, tongue tied and embarrassed, yet looking at each other.

"Has it really been so many months since Halloween?" he said. "I was in such a state of panic after that. I wanted to approach you, but I couldn't. I was afraid."

“What were you afraid of?” I asked examining his fingers as I held his hand.

“I didn’t want to cause a scandal at home, for you or for me.” Greg’s hand rested on top of mine. “I’ve known about my feelings for ages. I think I worked it out when I was about thirteen, but I thought I was the only one. Then I watched you.”

“I don’t think I was different from any of the other guys,” I said.

“There was something about you though. It was maybe a different resonance in your aura.” He looked at me. “Yes, I know I’m making this up as I go along and it probably sounds crap, but there was something about you.”

“So what are we going to do about it?”

“I’ve a current vacancy for a girlfriend. Are you interested in the position?”

“You’d better explain the duties of the said girlfriend,” I replied. “I couldn’t possibly accept a position for which I have no training or experience.”

“How about if training could be provided?” he asked.

“In that case, we’d better start the training as soon as possible.”

Greg and I wandered through that day. It was as if we’d known each other for years, not merely through a couple of chance meetings. We strolled through the gardens and ate in one of the restaurants. Time

passed so quickly. I knew I was pretty hopelessly falling for him.

It didn't sit comfortably though. I knew that this wasn't the way it was supposed to be and that back home, many people would be appalled. There'd be all kinds of damage to contend with. Mom for one would be hurt and I knew nothing about Greg's family.

On that day, it didn't matter at all. We were lost in our own bubble and looked to all the world like a boy and girl, a young couple, no different from any of the other couples around us.

When evening turned to late evening, easy turned to awkward. I didn't want to leave and go back to Karen's room and I don't think that Greg wanted me to do so either. We didn't discuss it but somehow ended up heading towards Greg's room in his student dorm.

We went inside and it was as if all the steaming emotion of the day came to the boil. Our hands explored our bodies in a way that was brand new. I could feel Greg's penis was hard even though it was confined in his clothes. I think he could feel mine too but it was only held back by thin panties.

We came up for air. At that moment I think we both realised that we had reached a tipping point. It was break or come closer. I stood still as Greg lifted my dress and felt inside my panties which slipped below my hips. His hand took my penis in his hand.

I took a deep breath and using both hands, unfastened his belt and pushed his trousers down to free him and get my hands to do the same to him. It was the first time I had touched another penis. It didn't strike me as anything unusual, as I pushed mine so

that our two penises touched as our hands held them together.

It was a shock when we came together. Greg's gasp came a split second before mine. Pulses of messy fluid was everywhere; on our hands and falling over our clothes. It seemed to go on and on, and then we were shrinking away, spent and looking at each other, not really comprehending what it all meant.

I can't remember what we said, or how we parted. I can't remember how I got back to Karen's room or undressed and removed my false breasts.

"Somebody was doing naughty things last night." Karen woke me with a cup of coffee. "I guess you found Greg and worked something out."

"You could say that."

"I saw the evidence." She pointed to the untidy pile of clothing that I had discarded. "I'll put it all in the wash later. Make sure Mom never finds out about this."

"I will, no, I mean I won't," I spluttered. "It wasn't how it appears."

"Perhaps you want to tell me how it appears then?" Karen asked.

"We spent the afternoon walking and talking. It was as if we'd been together forever." I saw her looking at me, waiting for me to continue. "The mess was an accident. We didn't do anything together. It was only a bit of overexcitement. It might never happen again."

“Do you want it to happen again?”

“I don’t know,” I replied. “I can’t answer everything.”

I cried then; really broke down and wept. Karen held me and I guess I made a fool of myself there and then. Eventually I stopped and Karen gently cleaned my face of all the makeup residue, then pushed me into the shower. I stood a long time under the hot water, washing my hair and then I sat as the water fell on me.

At Karen’s call, I turned off the water and emerged with a towel like a turban around my hair and another towel tucked under my arms. I realised that I still had the big hoops in my ears.

“What am I going to do?” I said to myself as much as to Karen.

What I actually did seemed to fall into place quite easily. Karen was wonderful. She helped me to become Zelda again and again whilst I stayed with her. She taught me makeup skills and much about presenting myself as a girl.

Okay, I know. You’re thinking why ‘Zelda?’ The answer is that there’s no reason. It simply popped into my head at the time. It seemed to fit the moment and the more I got used to separating her from my everyday life, the more real Zelda became as a person and all that goes with it.

Thanks to Karen, Greg and I spent the next few days together. We were almost inseparable. I met a few of his friends and he time introduced me as his

girl from back home. I did ask him not to say that because if word got back there could be repercussions, so we glossed over how and where we met.

And if you're asking, yes; we kissed and cuddled, hugged and squeezed, and explored each other by touch and feel and smell and sight and taste. We didn't have sex. I was too afraid and too unprepared. He wanted to and could be mightily persuasive in most things, but I wouldn't be swayed. I did make him come in my hand and that was as far as it went... well almost as far as it went, because he did the same for me.

We also made some decisions. It was clear that I was the girl in this relationship. I didn't mind. I really liked the idea if I have to tell you the truth. When we were to be together, I would dress as a girl and leave Greg to the male role.

At home, we'd never do anything but occasionally and by chance bump into each other in public. These were the days when phones weren't in every pocket or handbag, and only email was readily available. We did the old trick of sharing an address and leaving drafts for each other to read. We were so innocent.

"I'm really pleased that you and your sister are so close," Mom said one evening as we were home having dinner together, during Karen's vacation.

"It's been good having him visit," Karen said, looking at me with a straight face.

Yes, and I'm learning about the city too." I said. "When I go to college next year, I won't have to worry

about finding my way round and finding friends there.”

“I do wish you could find a nice girlfriend,” Mother continued. “You seem to spend so much time on your own.”

“Don’t forget, I work too.” I had a job as a night cleaner in one of the local supermarkets, only on weeknights. The weekends were far too precious and as they paid more, the other staff didn’t mind.

“Even so, you need someone,” Mom insisted.

“I have to study,” I replied. “Things don’t come naturally to me like they did with Karen.”

“I’m sure she worked just as hard,” Mom said. “And she knew her direction; she was always the artistic one in the family.”

“I was lucky,” Karen agreed. “Right place, right time for the things I want to do. What kid wouldn’t want to work in a monster factory?”

“It’s hard work,z’ I assured Mom. “I’ve been a victim of Karen’s skill so many times now. I think it’s why she lets me visit with her so often.”

“I think you get a lot out of it.”

Karen kicked me under the table.

She was telling the truth, but not the whole truth. I’d gotten into the habit of turning up at Karen’s studio, changing into Zelda, and spending the rest of my time with Greg. She was so supportive, even though she knew Mom would be hurt and shocked if she found out. I didn’t want her to find out.

Changing into Zelda was becoming easier too. I learned about makeup easily; I had a good teacher and my hair grew longer and longer. The fact that it was cut in a girl's style was hidden by the way I tied it back at home.

Girlish mannerisms were something I worked on. I watched the way they walked and listened when they talked amongst themselves. The body language was as different as the way they spoke to each other and the different way they spoke when there were boys in the group. I was becoming such a mimic that Karen had to tell me off for acting girl when I was supposed to be boy.

This was especially true of the way I used my hands. I'd gotten used to doing it as a girl. Waving my hands and using them for emphasis. I'd got used to the long acrylics that Karen arranged for me. I loved the silly length and the restrictions they added to every movement. It was hard to stop doping it when I was in boy mode.

She was a good friend as well as a good sister. She knew I was with Greg. I don't know that she approved; she always refused to come to meet him or to go out with us, even though I offered over and over again.

I was using silicone breast prostheses most of the time, still in a modest small cup, and only occasionally would Karen be persuaded to make me the full breastplate so that I could wear something low-cut and provocative. I liked that. She got her revenge too.

It was April Fools' Day and she had one ready for me. The breasts were huge; she said a D cup; I had to use a bra she'd obtained to hold them up. They were really heavy. Greg's eyes almost popped out when he

saw me. I did let him play with them and moaned in pleasure as if I could feel anything through the silicone mass.

One thing that Karen didn't notice was my dress style changing. I always used to slop around in any old jeans and T-shirt. I changed gradually and started choosing a more androgynous style. I got tighter jeans and a leather jacket which I wore continuously. My T-shirts were tighter and more colourful. I got my first pair of boots, admittedly with a flat heel, but I sometimes wore them over my jeans.

"You're getting more eccentric every day," Mom said when she saw me in another new outfit.

Summer came around. School finished and I was going to college next year. I didn't take a date to the prom, but went on my own. I danced with some of the girls but none of the really popular ones would have anything to do with me. I had become known as something of a loner.

Karen was getting paid part time by one of the SFX contractors who wanted her when she graduated at the end of her course and so she stayed to be near her workshop.

Greg was entering his last year at college and was sending out job applications all over the place. He told his family that he was staying on to research more applications in the college library.

But for now we had vacation time and Greg and I seized an opportunity to be away together. I thought I was looking forward to it but really it was Zelda who was really excited. It's true. Zelda was real to me, far

more real than my other identity. It felt as if Zelda was masquerading as a boy rather than the other way round.

Greg booked a cabin for us to go away together. I don't remember what excuse I gave for going, but Mom accepted it.

"You need a break," she said. "Your last year at school has been hard for you, I know that."

I took the bus to Karen's place, changed into Zelda and suddenly felt scared. I'd looked forward to this for ages, and now it was here, I was having doubts.

"Don't worry," Karen told me. "You're perfect as Zelda, no one is ever going to call you out."

"Unless I wear a bikini," I said.

"You're not that stupid, you have a lovely one piece. The black makes you look so slim. I hate you; I'm so jealous."

"That's just the point. I *am* stupid," I said and it all came pouring out. I couldn't help myself.

"You can tell me." Karen opened the door to all my doubts.

"You know I'm in love with Greg," I said and she nodded. "I know it's wrong and I'm trying to stop it but it's like a drug I can't give up."

"Love's never wrong," Karen said.

"That's kind of you," I replied, weeping a little. "We haven't had sex, if that's what you're thinking. He's tried to persuade me, but I'm so afraid."

“If you didn’t want to and he respected your decision, I’d say that’s a really good and responsible way to run a relationship.”

“I know and I keep telling myself that,” I replied. “But I know what he wants and I know that sex is an important part of a relationship...”

“Between a man and a woman.” Karen completed the sentence that I dare not.

“Sure, I know.” I took a deep breath. “But I am Zelda most of the time. It’s all of the time when I’m with him and most of the time when I’m not. What do I do about that?”

“You go with your feelings,” Karen said softly. “I’ve never been in love like that. I can only say that I think you should follow your feelings. Follow your heart and it will all come out right.”

“Thanks, Sis.” I sobbed and dried my eyes. “I must look a mess.”

“Dry your eyes, Zelda,” she said. “I’ve got everything ready to make your beautiful for the first day of your holiday.”

A couple of hours later, I was walking towards Greg’s place. He was collecting a car and we were to meet there before driving away for our first holiday together.

I knew I looked good and Karen had helped me to work through things which had been troubling me for quite a while. I was Zelda and I shouldn’t be afraid of her sexuality, neither should I be afraid of my man’s sexuality. It was meant to be part of love. They

all said it was fun. I determined in my mind to stop worrying and to let it happen without fear.

I carried my clothes and things in a rucksack, with my handbag across my chest. My breasts were silicone inserts in my bra and so were modestly covered in a sleeveless low-cut blue top, which ended above the waist of my tight blue jeans. I wore wedge sandals and had borrowed Karen's big hoop earrings again. I hoped Greg would approve.

I needn't have worried. Greg was waiting for me in a yellow Toyota which looked as if it had seen better days. We kissed and hugged; then with a map on my knee, we headed out of town.

It was a full day's drive to our lakeside cabin. We were outside of a small town but within an easy walk along the beach to the restaurants and bars of the resort. We had a deck and a small jetty with a rowboat, and of course the trails into the surrounding countryside were literally on our doorstep.

It was fun settling in. I unpacked and saw my dresses and jeans in the wardrobe, my shoes underneath. It was the first time I was free of anything 'boy' in my closet.

We didn't have time to change, but walked out and ate seafood and white wine at a lakeside restaurant, chatting and trying to forget the real sexual tension between us. I wanted him so badly and I knew he wanted me too. I was scared though, unsure of what to do.

We walked slowly back, arm-in-arm, kiss after kiss. I had a black pashmina which Greg wrapped

around my shoulders against the chill of the evening, holding my arms tightly by my side while he kissed me again. I snuggled under his arm as we walked onto the deck. We didn't linger outside.

The bed was big and ever so comfortable. I can remember the covers were creamy white and the light dimmed. We looked at each other naked and with all the time in the world, for the first time. Nervously, we got into the bed and under the cover.

I snuggled up to him immediately and reached for his penis. We held each other. I think we were both too nervous to make the first move. I could feel his erection and I was sure that he could feel mine.

"Would you like to take a closer look?" he asked.

I knew what he was asking, but wasn't going to let on. "Has it changed?"

"I don't know, but I think you should go and look."

I slipped my head under the covers and twisted downwards. I knew where he was, there was a little light through the cover. I stopped and thought about it.

"Do I want to do this?" I thought.

"*Can I do this?*" was my next thought.

"Stop thinking." I licked him, my tongue rasping slowly across the tip of his penis.

He tensed in surprise. I think I did too. I held it to get my position and then licked along the length from base to tip, and again, slower the second time.

“No going back now,” I told myself, as I felt his hand stroking the back of my head.

I flicked my tongue up and down the shaft. Then taking a deep breath, I slid down the bed. Leaning on my elbows, I took the tip into my mouth and swirled my tongue round the head and then swirled it the other way. I could feel the rough side of my tongue sliding slowly across his skin.

I took a deep breath and took more of it into my mouth. I could feel the roughness of his skin slipping over my lips. I felt the tip hit the back of my throat. I gagged and had to jerk my head back quickly to cough. I came back up the bed and looked at him.

“Did you like me taking a closer look?” I asked.

“I loved it,” Greg replied, kissing me again. “You’ve left me halfway there.”

I knew what he meant. “I don’t think I can,” I replied.

“Take your time,” he said. “There’s no pressure, no demands, only go as far as you want to.”

He knew as he said it that it was a challenge, or maybe a demand in itself. I reached down with my hand and felt his erection still firm and strong. I looked at it and it was as if soothing primeval, something animal, took over my mind.

I slipped under the cover again and took the tip in my mouth. This time I sucked and tasted something salty and slippery. I took more of the shaft inside my mouth and sucked again. I could feel him responding and thrusting gently upwards into my mouth.

I took a deep breath again and slipped my mouth down as far as I could go. I suppressed the gag reflex this time and worked up and down, sucking and gripping with my lips, careful not to let my teeth scratch.

I did it again and again. He didn't seem to mind. Then, putting extra effort into my lips, I moved up and down his shaft, still keeping the suction where I could. I breathed through my nose.

Then something seemed to switch on. I felt his penis stiffen and swell. Its girth was pushing against my tongue. A surge came from base to tip, and again. I felt something hitting the back of my throat. I'd never experienced this before but instantly I knew what it was. I tried to swallow, but there was no room in my mouth to do so. I held my breath and allowed it to trickle down my throat.

Then suddenly it was over. Then there came the last spasm. It shocked me that it stopped and I pulled back a little. I felt it shrinking away, smaller and smaller against my lips. I knew in that instant that I had passed through a barrier and that this relationship was on its way to consummation.

I crawled up the bed and wiped my lips against a tissue from the bedside cabinet. Then I turned back to Greg. I kissed him and he responded. I lay in his arms and my next memory is of daylight shining through the curtains.

We looked at each other, a little nervous after the night's exertions. I was looking into Greg's eyes for any sign that may be there. Was I right? Had I done it

well? I needed some confirmation of my status now as his girl.

He kissed me slowly and long. I could feel his erection hard against my thigh again.

“Was I good?” I asked.

“You were wonderful.” He smiled. “And you can be wonderful again if you’d like.”

I did, and I did. Like *and* love. It took longer this time and I wasn’t as afraid. I knew what to do and how to make it happen. I knew if I wanted to, I could make him do it very quickly. I knew too that I could make it last a long time and make him groan and bag.

Women have lots of power, I realised as I was working his penis, although given my non-existent experience in that field, I had to question how I worked this out.

“Boys have to worry about growing. This is far easier and far more controlling,” I thought as his penis slipped through my lips again on its downward journey. “I can do this again and again. I don’t think he could manage it as many times.”

We showered and dressed. The plan was to walk further along the lakeside and to sail back on one of the pleasure boats that plied the lake.

“What’s taking you so long?” Greg called.

“Are you forgetting that I’m a girl? All you have to do is comb your hair and get dressed. I have to do my hair, my makeup, and make sure that I’ve everything I need to keep beautiful through the day,” I replied.

Thus the days passed. We walked and talked, we held hands and walked arm-in-arm. Greg swam in the lake most afternoons after we got back from walking, but I was too vain. I sat in my swimsuit and wet my feet, but I didn't want to spoil my hair. We ate in the lakeside restaurants and drank, although I suppose I was too young, in the bars. I was never asked my age – those were different times.

The nights were filled with sex. I couldn't get enough of him.

“You're insatiable,” Greg pretended to complain.

“It's your own fault. You were the one who danced with Grizelda without understanding the power of a wicked witch.”

I so wanted him to come into me and make me a real woman. I wanted to feel his penis deep inside, as far as it could go, thrusting and demanding his rights, before pumping deeply inside. I hadn't thought how messy it might be but that was me then; I didn't care about the mess.

It was the fifth night that we tried for the first time. I'd sucked him once, and he'd grown again. I played with him to make sure he was as firm and hard as he could be. Without telling him what I was going to do, I turned and presented my behind to him.

I don't think he got it at first. I wriggled, provocatively I thought. I pulled him to his knees, kissed him, then turned again, kneeling, with my shoulders on the bed and my arms held forwards. I think he got the idea then.

He began to fondle my behind. I felt his lips kissing it, then his tongue running around the entrance

slowly, teasingly. I was bursting with anticipation; I wanted it so much.

He placed his penis at my entrance and pushed softly, then harder. I felt my muscles clench even though I was willing them not to do so. I willed them to relax and open. He pushed again; I felt a little give. I clamped tighter than tight again. Greg was patient and good. He tried several times but it didn't happen. The door remained tightly closed.

"There must be a way," I told him as we lay together after I'd taken him in my mouth once again.

The holiday ended and it was time to go back to reality. Greg dropped me off near Karen's workshop and I walked the rest of the way.

"You've had a good time," Karen said as soon as I walked in. "I'd guess you've had lots of sex, a few walks, and a lot of mooching around, looking gooey-eyed at each other and then you'd go for more sex. Is that a fair summary of your week?"

"Is it that obvious?" I asked.

"Yes, you have that look." Karen hugged me. "I may not have fallen for anyone like that, but I know the signs. I like in a dorm full of girls here."

"And now it's over and I have to go home."

"You'd better get that look out of your eye or Mom will guess what you've been doing."

"She knows about Greg?" I was suddenly scared.

“No; at least not as far as I know,” Karen replied. “It’s the way you look. Call it feminine intuition if you like, but a woman can tell.”

“We didn’t have full sex,” I revealed to dispel her suspicions. “He didn’t get into me.”

“I can guess what you did then and I’ll bet you were doing all the work.”

“Not *all* the work,” I replied and blushed. “Well, maybe most of it, but it didn’t seem like work at the time. It felt as if I was in control.”

“I can’t believe the monster I created in real time.” Karen smiled. “If the ghouls and aliens I’m creating for the screen aren’t as successful, I shall blame you.”

She looked at me hard. “There’s more,” she said. “There’s something you’re not telling me.”

“How do you know?” I asked. “Is it intuition again?”

“No it’s the way you’re telling it. You had a good time, everything was perfect, but I detect a ‘but’ somewhere in there. Do you want to tell me or shall I guess?”

“You’d never guess,” I snapped back.

“Oh, so there *is* more.” Karen smiled at me; I’d fallen into that one.

“Okay, I’ll tell you, but you must never, ever repeat it.”

“As if I’d ever discuss what my brother does in the sack with his boyfriend.” Karen had a point.

“I so wanted him to come into me.” I blurted it out. If I’d had time to think, I’d never have said anything.

“I can’t think of a way to ask this politely.” Karen took my hand and pulled me onto the couch where we sat side-by-side. “Couldn’t he get it up?”

“No, that was never a problem. Keeping it down was more difficult, but I didn’t mind that. He couldn’t get it in. I couldn’t let him get it in.” I blushed at my confession. “It was as if my mind wanted to let him in, but my body rejected the idea. I don’t know; I can’t explain it.”

“Perhaps cleanliness, alcohol and lubrication might help,” Karen said innocently, as my eyes widened at her advice. “I saw it in a book about masturbation,” she said, very cool and politely.

“Oh” was all I could say. “Lubrication. Right.”

“Come on,” Karen said. “You’ve got to go home tomorrow. Let’s make sure that we’ve removed all traces of Zelda before you go.”

“It feels really strange to be dressed as a boy again,” I said as Karen walked with me to the bus depot. “Are you sure that Zelda’s invisible?”

“She’s mostly invisible,” Karen said and saw my look of alarm. “It’s the walk and the body language.”

“So what do I have to do?” I asked.

“Stop examining your nails all the time,” Karen said sternly. “I never knew that giving you acrylics would have such a profound effect.”

“Sorry. I really loved them. They were probably the most feminising thing that we did, at least in terms of instant effect. It took me so far from being a boy. I miss them all the time.” I paused, seeing her still looking at me. “What else is there?”

“I can’t think what else tell you.” Karen stopped and looked at me from top to toe. “It’s something about you. Something has changed. I can’t define it; maybe it’s a side effect of all the sex.”

“How can that have any effect?” I asked.

“It’s possible that it’s a mental thing. You’ve acted the girl’s part and taken to it so well that you can’t shake it off.”

“I’d better get it shaken off before I get home,” I said.

“I think you’re starting to see the world as a girl and you can’t stop it now. It’s gone too far.”

“I’m confused. I don’t want to be a girl. I don’t want to change sex.”

“No but you have to admit that when you’re dressed and made up, you adapt to being a girl without the plumbing.”

“Be careful, and don’t let Mom find out,” Karen warned me. “If she suspects, goodness knows how she’ll react.”

The bus ride seemed endless as a journey away from such carefree happiness must always be. When I got off, everything seemed drab and dull. I trudged home and dumped my rucksack in the kitchen and made myself coffee. I drank it feeling more morose at the thought of so many months alone and living with a secret.

“Its lovely to have you back home.” Mom fussed around, even though I’d been home a couple of weeks. “Your sister’s coming for the weekend. She must be so busy there.”

“She’s happy there,” I assured her. “There’s lots of work for her and she’s starting to build up contacts and getting paid. No wonder; she’s brilliant and so inventive. I’m proud of her.”

“And so am I.” Mom poured another cup of coffee for me. “I really am so pleased you visit with her. I worry that she’ll get lonely there.”

“She’s in demand,” I told her. “She said lots of girls come to her for makeup tips and help. She doesn’t only do monsters these days.”

“I heard about some of her work,” Mom said casually.

“From this far away?” I asked.

“There are spies everywhere,” she replied enigmatically. “You remember that boy, used to be in senior class when Karen was there. His mother showed me some photos on her iPad. There were a couple of space aliens and then a lot of pictures of some girl that she thinks Greg’s seeing a lot of.”

“Anybody we know?” I asked as casually as I could manage.

“She did look a bit familiar, but I couldn’t place her.”

Karen came home for the weekend a week or so later. Immediately, Mom seemed to brighten up and we all blended just like old times. Karen sneaked me a message from Greg which she said had been left at her studio. He gave me a number to call if we could meet casually and as if by chance whilst he was in town next week.

I had gone back to my old cleaning job. I took the opportunity to do overtime, to save a little for college in the fall. It was hard and dirty work. I never used to wear gloves but now, being conscious of the need to take more care, I always used the gloves and creams provided for the ladies on the team.

Mom and Karen went shopping. I know that’s what girls do together; my studies had gotten me that far. I would have done it myself if I’d had any girlfriends to go shopping with, but the chances of that were somewhere around nil.

It was a couple of days before Karen was going back that mom dropped her bombshell. We were sitting together, the delivery guy had just arrived with our pizzas and Mom poured a glass of red wine for each of us.

“I’ve been hearing rumours,” she started. “I’m not sure you’re being truthful with me.”

She looked at me and I could feel my face going redder by the second. “I haven’t told you any lies,” I said.

“No, but neither of you have been telling me the whole story,” she said sternly. “Do I have to wait until the rumour mill gives it to me, or are you going to fill me in?”

“There’s nothing wrong, is there?” Karen asked.

“I’m, waiting for you to tell me,” Mom said. “You could start with the girl on Greg’s mother’s iPad. She looked familiar and it seems that his mother knows who it is, but she wasn’t sharing it with me, even though the girl looked so familiar.”

Mother looked at me directly. Before I could say anything, Karen interrupted.

“It may have been from when we were fooling around,” she said. “Remember Grizelda? I thought it would be fun to try Zelda instead. She’s a sort of white witch in contrast to the horribly scary one.”

“So a college project?” Mom asked.

“Yes, it was for my portfolio,” Karen replied quickly. “I have to produce a lot of different designs over the year and it’s got me into some paid work too.”

“I assume this girl was your brother.”

“Yes, he was very helpful. I had to buy him dinner though.”

“I’m sure he was helpful, but how does that explain all the pictures I saw” He was inside and outside,

wearing different dresses and even jeans and boots in the country,” Mom carried on the attack, for that’s what it seemed like now.

“That’s what’s required,” Karen said. “Different locations and styles show how adaptable the character can be.”

“So why was Greg in a couple of the pictures with him, and why did it look like they were having a good time together?”

Karen looked at me and I looked at her. Mom looked from one to the other. It was obvious that our explanations were getting weaker with each sentence. She waited, leaving space for one of us to speak. I broke first.

“Yes, I’m the girl in the picture,” I admitted. “I’m Zelda when I’m a girl.”

“Zelda; that’s a nice name, a bit unusual but one you clearly chose for yourself.”

“I was Grizelda the evil witch. Zelda seemed natural.” This sounded even lamer and I could see where it was going.

“Natural,” Mom said. “Hold on to that word.”

“It’s only makeup,” I said.

“I have heard rumours,” Mom said sternly. “Some people have gone out of their way to make sure I heard the rumours, so I want the truth. Greg’s mother knows something. Other people know something. Why don’t I know anything? What’s going on?”

Karen and I looked at each other, each waiting for the other to start.

“It’s me,” I said. “I’m Zelda, or rather Zelda is me.”

“I guessed that, and you already told me, so let’s get on with the explanation,” Mom sighed in exasperation.

“It’s difficult,” I said. “Let me take my time. And before I say anything more, Karen isn’t to blame in any of this. Please promise you won’t be mad at her.”

“I never said anything about being mad,” Mom said softly. “I guess that there’s some story behind this. I only want to learn from you, so that I don’t have to hear it from anyone else.”

I took a deep breath. “When I was Grizelda that time, I danced with Greg. He knew who I was, we met a few times, and that’s where it started.”

“Keep going, and tell me *what* started.”

“He kissed me that night,” I said quietly.

“I guessed something happened that night. When I came back, you were both a bit sheepish.”

“I didn’t do this to hurt anyone. I didn’t mean it to happen, it just happened. It took me by surprise. We tried so hard to keep it secret.”

“And these pictures; where did they come from?” Mom didn’t seem to be in any sort of temper as she asked quietly.

“Honestly I have no idea,” I said. “I never saw anyone taking them.”

“I don’t know,” said Karen. “Was I in any of them?”

“They were only of your brother or your brother and Greg. They didn’t look posed for the camera, so someone took them without anyone knowing,” Mom said.

“Who sent the pictures to Greg’s mother? Have you no idea?” Karen asked.

“I can’t think who would do that,” I said. Karen shook her head in agreement.

“I didn’t dare to ask that question,” Mother replied. “I stayed silent and congratulated her. The way you do when you don’t really know what’s going on.”

“I’m sorry, Mom,” Karen said. “I should have been more sensible.”

“Me too,” I added.

“Maybe sense goes out of the window when hearts start beating and love, or lust, takes over. You looked really close in those pictures. If I hadn’t been pushed to this, I’d have said that Greg had got himself a very pretty girlfriend and looked very happy,” Mom said. “His mother thought that was the way of things.”

“It’s love, I think,” I said. “Not just lust.”

“What happened next?” Mom wanted the rest of the story.

“I wanted to see him and he wanted to see me,” I said. “I knew it was wrong, but there was nothing I could do to get rid of the feelings. I wanted to see what it felt like to be a real girl, so Karen helped me to be one. I saw him at college, never here.”

“Have you decided to become a girl for real?” Mom said softly.

“No, nothing like that. I don’t want any surgery. I don’t want a sex change, it’s nothing like that. I want to live as a girl though; Greg’s girl. I want him and I know that he wants me.”

I couldn’t stop talking once I started. “I’m going to college in the fall. I’ll be a boy there and I’ll study as a boy.” I had already decided on this and half-discussed it with Greg. “When I’m with Greg, I’m going to be a girl. I’ll dress and act as one. I find it’s easier now than pretending to be a boy, because that’s what it feels like.”

“Don’t apologise,” Mom said slowly, taking my hand. “I can’t pretend that it’s what I wanted for you, but I can’t change the world. The problem is what are we going to do about it?”

No one said anything more that day, or the next one. Karen and I went about our business, tiptoeing around mother, neither daring to bring up the subject.

As we had dinner the day before Karen’s last day with us, she stood, banged on her glass for silence, even though there were only three of us there.

“I’ve made a decision,” she announced. “Mother first; are you prepared to meet your daughter Zelda? She’s very pretty and a thoroughly nice person. I think you’ll like her.”

Mother stared at her for a few moments. The silence was something you could have cut through with a knife.

“I guess so.” Mom looked at me, questioning what she was looking at, as if I was some stranger in her home.

“Good.” Karen turned to me. “Is Zelda prepared to meet her mother for the first time?”

I looked back and forth at them, considering even though I knew that I had no choices. “Yes, if you’ll help me. I think I’ll be too nervous for Zelda all by myself.”

“Of course I’ll help you. I reckoned on that when I went shopping for you earlier.”

“You’re a wonder, sis,” I said, afraid to look up in case they saw a tear in my eye.

“And a final question.” Karen looked at us in turn. “I’ve asked Greg to come in the evening. Will you welcome him to our home?”

I turned to mother and saw a whole range of thoughts reflected in her face.

“Yes, I’d like to meet him. If he makes our Zelda happy, we must welcome him here.”

I cried and hugged them both.

I’ll never forget that next day. Karen was so organised that I wondered if she’d secretly been preparing all this in advance, or if she knew more about the

photos than she admitted. If either were true, I never did find out.

“It’s Transformation Day,” Karen announced, flinging back my curtains to let the sun in. I blinked and sat up in bed.

I was sent to shower and wash my hair. Karen had bought all kinds of fancy brands for me to use and they were absolutely heavenly. The scents alone were worth it. The now familiar routine followed. My hair was in a turban drying and I wore the towel around me as I waited for the mobile nails lady to arrive.

If she was surprised to see me as the client she never showed it and set about giving me acrylics in my favourite too long style. I loved them; really deep red, fading to pearl pink and square tips.

Time seemed to be passing by so fast as Karen started on my makeup. She chattered all the time. I think it was her nervousness as well as mine that ran through the day. I was going to meet Mom for the first time as her daughter at dinner time. Karen had warned her that I was going to be dressed and made up to kill at forty paces.

I had the smokiest of eyes, deep and dark, mysterious and wonderful. I had false lashes and lots of mascara to blend them in.

“What girl about town would be seen in the evening without her lashes?” Karen said when I asked her if this was going to be too much for Mom’s first meeting.

My lips were a more neutral shade, something like a dusky peach, but shining, with silvery highlight at the centre of the top and bottom lip. I worried in case

it should smudge too easily, but she assured me that it was well fixed as she sprayed my face all over with something to set it all.

“I don’t want you to dress too soon,” Karen said as she excused herself to change and do her own make up. “I’ll bring your clothes when I’m ready.”

I sat aglow with anticipation and more than a little frightened. What if it all went wrong? Maybe Greg wouldn’t show up. Maybe Mom would hate me, or hate him. It could all go so very wrong I thought as my mind raced through several scenarios. I tried to read, and then tried to watch TV, but it was no use. The longer I sat, the worse it got.

“Time to get you ready,” Karen announced, looking good in a tight little black dress.

She unwrapped the towel from my hair and sprayed it with some sort of lotion and then with a hair drier and a round brush, set about drying and shaping it so that it fell in my natural dusky blonde fall. It curtained my face, with the longer strands falling behind my shoulders. It seemed to stretch as she dried it. Finished and satisfied, she sprayed it gently and patted it into place.

“This is a new product.” She showed me the bottle. “It’s designed to help the hair swing, without flyaway bits annoying you.”

“Does it work?” I asked.

“You’re the first,” she replied. “It should, so don’t worry.”

“I got you this bra and panties to match.” She showed me a delightful pink set, with small lace trims and tiny bows on the boy boxer style panties, and the same on an underwired and lightly padded push-up bra.

“This must have cost you a fortune,” I said.

“No matter,” she replied. “I got a big golden hello payment last week; some of the things I’m using tonight are on loan from the studio where we’re going to be doing some character work. They apparently loved my designs and insisted that I was included in the contract and I got the best rates. I’m going to love the job and the pay of course.

“I may have another surprise for you later, but don’t ask for now.”

“I promise not to ask,” I replied with a huge grin on my face. I was so happy for her, and happy for myself that she would do all this for me.

She helped me to step into the panties and then produced a garter belt.

“I’ve never worn one of those before” I said. “It looks really complicated.”

“It has its advantages as you’ll see in a few minutes.” She fastened it round my waist and then held stockings for me to step into, carefully so that they didn’t snag, then fastened them to the snaps on the garter belt.

She held the boy boxer panties for me to step into, and pulled them up. “Now look,” she said. “You only need to take off your panties to go to the toilet, or set

other things free to air.” She winked theatrically, then giggled.

“Do I need to know that now?” I asked in my nervousness and ignorance of what was to come.

“Now your dress.”

She held up a deep red version of the classic little black dress style. It was a tight shift, with a narrow skirt and a back zipper. I stepped into it and she pulled it up, settled it around my shoulders and fastened it up. There was a small split at the back to allow movement, but the skirt was tight on my thighs and to my knees.

“Thank goodness I’m so slim.” I turned left and right to admire myself in the full length mirror.

“Don’t forget your shoes.” Karen held up a pair of stiletto sling backs, with pointed toes and the highest heels I’d ever worn up to that. “You can kick them off under the table if you need to, but these are shoes for a dramatic entrance.”

“Do I need to make a dramatic entrance?” I asked.

“You do have to. Twice,” Karen replied.

I looked at her for an answer.

“The first is to meet Mother. The second is to meet and greet Greg when he arrives. I’ll give you the cue, you’ll go and repair your lipstick. Then count to twenty and come back into the room when he’s standing there, so that he can get the full view of you, top to toe. Do it right and you’ll slay him.”

“Not literally, I hope.” We laughed. It wasn’t a good joke but the tension was rising.

“And the final touches,” Karen announced bringing out her jewellery wrap. “The gold hoops you love so much, a gold bangle for your left hand and a ruby ring for the middle finger of your left hand. A light necklace with a small diamond pendant and you’re all set.”

“Why my left hand and arm?” I asked. “There must be a reason.”

“There is. If you’re sitting in a car, he’s driving, and he’s on your right. If he holds your hand, he touches the ring, or maybe the ring and the bangle. Either way, they’re a symbol that you’re a woman and he’s with you.”

“So it’s a bit of a game.”

“Yes, it’s called being female.”

“I think I hear Mother downstairs,” Karen said, spraying me liberally with perfume. “Calvin Klein should be good. I’ll go and check if she’s ready. I’ve ordered in so don’t come down until I call you after that arrives. I’ll have her sitting at the table and you can make your entrance from across the dining room.”

Karen disappeared downstairs, and she could hear them talking. She heard the doorbell sound and from the words that floated up the stairs, it must have been the delivery man. A few long minutes later, she heard Karen calling me.

Nervously she checked her reflection in the mirror, patted her hair and touched her earrings for luck. Taking a deep breath, she stepped down the first stair, checked her balance in the high heels, and went carefully down the rest.

“It would be awful if I fell and made my dramatic entrance in a heap with a broken ankle,” she shrugged at the thought and got to the bottom. Another deep breath, a smile, and she was into the room, looking at Karen standing beside mother who was sitting at the table,

“Hello, Mom,” Zelda said softly.

“Hello, Zelda.” Mom stood and went to embrace her, careful not to smudge her makeup or scramble her hair. “I’m really pleased to meet you. It’s a delight to know I have such a beautiful daughter.”

They sat together at table. None of them ate much as they spoke about something and nothing; everything important yesterday seemed to have blown away and with the Big Event over, there was peace at last.

But it wasn’t all over. There was the sound of a car door shutting and then a hesitant knock at the door. Karen nodded to Zelda; time to get out for a few minutes.

Zelda stood nervously in the kitchen. She wished she had a mirror there, there were so many things she wanted to check. She touched her earrings again for luck and tried to listen to what was being said. At least there were no raised voices.

Karen opened the door and it was just as she had predicted and arranged. Greg stood at the far end of the room as Zelda came out of the kitchen. He saw her for the first time in the red dress and heels, made-up so perfectly and smiling at him. He took a hesitant step forward, but before he could do more, Zelda flung herself at him and kissed him in joy.

She broke the kiss, took his hand and turned to her mother. "This is Greg. I hope you'll approve of him taking me out."

"I promise to treat her well," Greg said formally, and held out his hand to Mother.

She stood and took it in hers. "I have to approve. You're her choice and you've done nothing wrong. I have to say that I never saw any of this coming, but I approve. You'll be welcome here."

They all seemed to get on easily. They didn't get much time to spend on getting to know each other though. Karen had one more surprise. She rang a spoon on a glass and stood for an announcement. She handed an envelope to Zelda.

"This is for both of you." she began. "I think you've earned it after all the trauma of the last day or two. I know I'm delighted it's all worked out and all I can say is enjoy." She handed a golden envelope to Zelda and sat down with a sigh.

Zelda turned it over in my hands. "I don't know what to say," she said. "I'm shocked, you've been too kind already, meeting me and allowing Greg into your lives as well as mine."



“Don’t you think you should open it?” Karen said.

“Oh, right.” Zelda looked at the envelope again as if seeing it for the first time. Cautiously she slipped her thumbnail under the fold.

“You’d better do this; I don’t want to break a nail.” The beautiful new girl handed it to Greg as Karen laughed out loud.

“Wow, it’s a reservation at the Oakhill Country Club. We’ve a suite for tonight and tomorrow.” Greg turned to Zelda and kissed her in front of her mother and sister for the first time.

“So you’d better be going,” Karen said. “I packed you a few things in the bag in the hallway. There’s a nightdress and a skirt and blouse for tomorrow. If you need more, call me. I’ll be there anyway about ten to do your hair and makeup for that day.”

“Better make it two.” Zelda wagged her finger as if to tell her off. Karen smiled sweetly showing that she understood perfectly.

As they were going to the door, Karen whispered. “The lubricant is in the cosmetic bag. Use lots on yourself and get him to use some too, if you really want what you said you wanted to happen.”

Greg took his girlfriend’s bag and put it in the trunk, and then he held the door whilst she got in sideways, careful to tuck her dress underneath smoothly.

It wasn’t a long drive, but Greg took Zelda’s hand as we slipped out of town and onto the freeway. She smiled to myself and felt his hand brushing over her

bangle. Then she gripped his hand tightly, so that he could feel her ring.

It was all part of the game.

Once the formalities were over, the couple were settled in our suite. They stood looking at each other as if unable to believe where they were. The lights of town twinkled in the far distance as the beautiful young woman pushed the button to close them.

Greg popped the cork on a bottle of champagne, filled two glasses and handed one to her. Before she could sip, he kissed her lightly and then kissed her hard. She felt one foot rising from the floor as she leaned into him. She groped for somewhere to put my glass down.

As Zelda turned again towards him, she knew that she was erect. The front of her dress was shouting its own tale. She turned for him to unzip her, and felt the dress tumbling down her thighs as I slipped her arms free. It fell to her ankles where she kicked it away. All the time, Greg was nuzzling her neck and nibbling her ear.

Zelda kicked off my heels and heard them fall somewhere out of the way, then helped Greg out of his jacket and shirt. She loosened his belt. It was awfully tight and she had to hold up my hands in helpless female defeat.

“I’m not breaking my nails. You’ll have to do that,” she commanded and waited impatiently as his trousers hit the floor and he stood out of them, then his socks and underpants followed.

Zelda caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror to the side. She looked fabulous in her lingerie, with the garter belt still in place as she let my panties fall to the floor.

She turned to him and pressed my bra and silicone breasts against his chest. She could feel his penis demanding attention as She clung to him. Next moment he had picked her up and placed her gently on the huge bed. She turned to him as he came so close. He took her penis and She took his.

On an impulse she held them together as she had done once before. They rubbed against each other and a tingle went through her. With all the time in the world, they played with each other, kissing and sucking.

Her silicone breasts fell out and he started to pull her bra aside and nibbled her nipples. She thought that very erotic. She took him in my mouth. She loved doing that now, and could judge his moment pretty well. She could feel it, and pulled out.

She pouted at him, and left him lying, erection pointing to the ceiling. She went to her bag. A little rummage and she found the lubricant that Karen had so thoughtfully provided. She held it up for him to see in the dimmed light of the bedroom.

Holding his eyes with hers, she squeezed a generous amount into her delicate hand, and took the hand slowly to her rear. She emphasised what she was doing, licking her lips as suggestively as she could.

I took a second amount from the tube, and spread it over his erect penis. I covered it from tip to base,

adding more to the tip and making big movements as I wrapped my fingers around it.

She turned and presented her behind to him. On the edge of the bed, she knelt, bottom high, head on the bed. She felt him approach. She felt his finger probing; first one and then two entered. She felt the tip of his penis, pushing, then slipping away from its target.

Zelda couldn't reach to help, even though she knew where the target was and she wanted so much for him to hit it. She moaned and wriggled like a cat in her impatience. Then he was pushing again. There can only have been a second or two since he missed but it seemed an age.

Slowly she felt it go in. She clenched as I had before, but he didn't withdraw at all. The pressure kept on and on. Slowly and relentlessly, he pushed further in. She moaned with every little movement.

He rocked a little back and forward, out a fraction and then in further. She loved the feeling. She pushed back and arched her back, trying to ease the angle for him. Still he pushed. She screamed. She was sure she must have alarmed some of the other guests in the Country Club, but she didn't care. All she wanted in life was there and she wanted it more.

And then suddenly the pain stopped. He was in and moving back and forth more easily; in and out, working it hard towards a climax. Zelda knew what to expect. He'd come in her mouth several times. This was different. He was coming right deep inside her taking her as a woman for the first time.

She felt him tense and then he was squeezing his fluid into me, pump after pump. She felt my penis

pumping at the same time onto the bed and onto her thighs. It seemed to go on and on. She was panting with effort and sweating with pure lust.

Then he started to weaken and to shrink away. Her muscles and the effect of the lubricant squeezed him out far faster than she wanted. But then she would have been happy for him to stay all night.

They made love several times more that night and through the next day and night too. They only left the suite when their time was up and he drove her home, ravished but happy, and a little bit sore.

It was a good relationship. They stayed together for several years. He got a good qualification from college and after a year or two, took a job in Paris, testing how to apply fragrances to hair conditioner and shampoo.

Zelda went with him of course. They were inseparable and from the day she left college, she never even tried to dress or act as a boy whilst they were together, and loved him all the time.

Sadly, she lost him in a terrorist outrage near the Pompidou centre. They'd had a few good years together and as we weren't married, she didn't get much in the way of a pension. They were generous to her, but that was before today's enlightened times.

What happened to her afterwards is another story for another time.

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