



SUMMARY: With an obsession for the women in cigarette ads, Robert finally lands a job in the ad department of one of the large cigarette companies only to discover that his new boss has plans to use her power to remake him into the image of the girls in the ads.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

By Valerie Hope

I GUESS IT WAS INEVITABLE that I'd turn out the way I did. I was the quiet kid, even before I had reasons to be quiet. I never got really involved with anything, kept to myself and tried to stay out of anything complicated. Then, when I had to deal with the loss of both parents at age ten, I didn't find much use in human contact at all. I was shuffled from relative to relative for a while, never staying longer than a year in any one place. Finally it was decided - not by me - that I'd spend my adolescence in the house of my Uncle Thomas and Aunt Lee in a nowhere little town in North Carolina.

My uncle and aunt were fair enough people, even going so far as to say they were nice. They were just very strict, possessed of a Southern Baptist mentality which they imposed upon me at a time in my life when what I needed most was the time and opportunity to explore myself. I was forced to become a recluse, sneaking around to discover my changing body and wracking myself with guilt every time afterwards. With an uncle like Thomas Lassiter, it was a certainty that I'd never find any "visual aids" around the house to satisfy my curiosity about the opposite gender, either. I'd turned the house upside down looking for something - anything - which would allow me a glimpse of that mysterious female form. I didn't have any chance to date - Aunt Lee was adamant about my being too young to date. Girls and women were a complete fascination and enigma to me which I was kept carefully and cruelly sequestered away from. I don't hate my aunt and uncle for it - they were messed up enough.

It wasn't until I was about thirteen that I finally made the discovery. I'd taken to leafing through my aunt's *Family Circle* and *McCall's* magazines before bedtime, since I'd long since read everything worthwhile in the house and had trouble getting to sleep unless I'd spent some time reading. That was the first time I saw her. She had a face like an angel, with soft features and luxurious brown eyes. Her hair looked like the softest thing imaginable and her smile was enough to set my heart fluttering. Her clothes were stylish and current and she flouted all the old-fashioned values which my aunt and uncle were imposing on my youth. She was perfect.

I ran my eyes over her hungrily, not even knowing what I was experiencing. Her deep, soft eyes and perfect skin, set with the softness of youth but a mature glow that left all the girls in my school wanting. There was a pulling in my gut and my groin which threatened to tear me apart - my first real experience with male desire in its pure form. My hand found its way to my crotch of its own volition.

She was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen in my life and I would have been satisfied just to have been near her. I imagined the shock on the faces of my aunt and uncle when I brought her home, and she stretched her long, silk-clad legs out, crossed femininely at the knee, idly wiggling the pointed toe of her high-heeled suede boot, leaning her lithe, curved body back on

the sofa and smiling her perfect chalk-white smile. Her wide, generous mouth. Her soft curls ringing that exquisite face. The slender white cigarette loosing lazy curls of blue smoke from between her long, elegant fingers.

You've come a long way, baby.

I hadn't paid any attention to what my hand had been doing at all, and when I finally climaxed, it terrified me. I jumped at the overwhelming sensation and bolted, flying frantically around my small bathroom trying to clean up my mess and pointedly not looking at the picture in the magazine. But in time she drew me back. Again and again and again. I belonged to her now.

I've always been a collector - I like the thought of having complete sets of things, paying homage to my obsessions by devoting all my resources to acquisition. So I went through the stacks and stacks of magazines in the garage over the next year, collecting and storing every advertisement I found for Virginia Slims, Eve, More, Capri, even the short-lived Satin and Yves St. Laurent cigarettes for women. I had several photo albums full, and I could remember the location of every one. When Aunt Lee and Uncle Thomas were away, I liked to spread them out on the floor as far as I could see and just run my eyes over the sea of smiling, perfect faces. They were all so vibrant and vital, so current, so uninhibited. Wearing their *haute* clothes and smoking their cigarettes so brazenly and openly, for Aunt Lee and all the world to see and disapprove to their hearts' content. And every one of them smiling - be it coy, sexy, happy, mischievous, it didn't matter. Showing me how happy one could be by being so very open.

But my soul couldn't handle it. I hid, sneaking beneath the hovering specters of my aunt and uncle to be with my Girls every chance I got. And I couldn't bring myself to be around girls my own age, even when it was decreed from on high that I could date. They were too unpredictable and often cruel. No, better to remain among my smiling fantasies where I never got hurt. I dated occasionally, to keep up appearances, but I never went beyond a kiss or a held hand. Not that there were legions of girls pounding down the door to get at me, either - my years and years of silence had given me a reputation of being weird that I couldn't shed. Hell, I was weird. But it didn't bother my Girls, so it didn't bother me.

I promised myself I'd swear them off once I got to college, but that didn't last long at all. My first trip home freshman year at UNC I returned with a satchel bulging with old photo albums full of youthful fantasy. I didn't have as much chance to be with them as before, since I had a roommate now and my silent demeanor had come across in college as intellectual and was making me more attractive to women. But that only made my time with the Girls more special. I told them everything that was going on in my life, and they never judged me. They only smiled sweetly.

My roommate, Jeff, and I became close over the four years of college and decided to try and get a place together in Raleigh with the little sum my parents had left me once we graduated. I managed a respectable GPA (I studied hard since I figured that none of my Girls would appreciate an unlearned man for long) in Marketing while Jeff came away with a degree in Computer Science. Jeff could easily have written his own ticket if not for a complete lack of ambition and drive. He announced that he wanted a break from computers for a little while and talked me into working for a time at his cousin's landscaping service while we looked for something better. I agreed, but only halfheartedly. I wanted to get into a good, high-paying job quickly, but the thought of working with my hands did sound good.

It was a long time before I started getting interviews. I liked the idea of going into advertising and I'd been told that I had a knack for selling. The truth was, I just wanted to get a chance to one day revive the Virginia Slims ad campaign (I didn't like the new one, since they never showed the women's faces) from my past and perhaps get to meet one of the women I'd grown up adoring. So I persisted in calling the marketing division at Hart-Williams, the advertising company in charge of the Virginia Slims account, and sending résumés every two weeks.

I sat in the waiting room in my ill-fitting suit and my graduation-present briefcase, leafing through the magazines on the table. Even in my nervous state my eye was drawn to the ads, especially the ones for women's cigarettes. I found a layout for More which was not in my collection and, carefully checking around to see if anyone was watching, separated it from the binding and slipped it into my briefcase.

"Robert Lassiter?" a silky contralto asked.

I looked up. "Yes?"

She was short, a little dumpy and very frazzled-looking and her expression let me know I was the last thing she wanted to deal with. She pushed her glasses up her aquiline nose and squinted at me. "I'm Carla Morton. We spoke on the phone."

I stood and was surprised to see she could almost look me in the eye. Her frumpy, businesslike attire camouflaged her height. She had a familiar look about her, like someone I might have known in college or high school. She shook my hand briskly, leading me into her office and offering me coffee.

We sat across from each other in full view of body language. I tried a convincing smile, but I think it came across as gas pain. She ignored me, shuffling through a sheaf of papers.

"Mr. Lassiter, I'll be honest with you. There's nothing in your résumé that I don't see a thousand times a day in every résumé that comes through this place," she explained in a charming little Southern drawl. "Tell me, why should Hart-Williams pick you as opposed to the hundreds of other applicants?"

"People don't give advertising enough credit," I said smoothly. "It's the worst of two worlds - it's all the rigors and troubles of a creative position under the pressure and timeline of an administrative position. It takes a very special set of skills in order to manage both well enough to succeed. I'm willing to bet that you have a hundred résumés there that list people more creative than myself, and a hundred more that list people more suited to administration. But I'll also bet that you don't have more than a handful who can do both as well as I can."

Carla Morton smiled and the effect changed her whole face. It nearly brightened the room. I immediately caught her resemblance and my breath caught in my throat. She was one of my Girls, or a relative. She had to be. I had no trouble maintaining eye contact after that, memorizing her features and comparing them to the gallery in my head. I made sure to look away often enough that I wouldn't be staring.

"Is there something wrong?" Carla asked during a lull in the interview.

I decided to cover with honesty. "I researched some of the old ad campaigns you did in preparation for this interview," I said. "You have a real resemblance to one of the Virginia Slims women from the late eighties."

"Good eye," Carla said, pushing her hair behind one ear. "That was my mother."

"You look a lot like her," I said. "Sorry if I was staring a little."

"Well, Mr. Lassiter, I must say I'm very impressed. You're a straight shooter but you also know how to phrase your observations carefully, which is a very valuable skill when you're trying to manage creative people. Knowing how to criticize properly is a real asset," she said. "I suppose there's only one last question. Do you smoke?"

"No," I said. "Never started."

"Well, do you mind advertising for a tobacco company?"

"Not at all," I said. "I believe tobacco is meant to be enjoyed, the same as alcohol. It's only when it's abused that it becomes a problem."

Carla stood, extending a hand. "I may be jumping the gun, but I'm going to recommend that you be offered a position in our advertising department. Do you have a minute? I'd like to introduce you around the office a little, let you meet some of our people."

She took me by the arm after we shook hands, introducing me to the various producers and art directors and copy editors and photographers on the advertising floor. I sat in her office, chatting idly and drinking a cup of really excellent coffee when her phone rang. Excusing herself, she answered it and responded to the caller with a series of cryptic nods and "uh-huhs."

Finally she hung up and stood. "Mr. Lassiter, that was Sylvia Woodard, one of our account executives. I've been authorized to offer you a position. Mary Lyons, one of our creative directors, is retiring soon and we'd like to groom you to take over her position."

"Really?" I said, not truly believing.

"We're prepared to offer you an office and \$52,000 a year."

I tried not to jump for joy. "That sounds very generous."

"When can you start?" she asked, smiling that perfect smile.

"I have a small project to finish up for my current job," I said. "I can start in three weeks."

I stopped briefly in the advertising library to pick up research materials on the Virginia Slims campaign I'd soon be heading up creatively. My heart was pounding in excitement and my arousal was almost to the point of being embarrassing. I gathered up the stack of heavy binders quickly and hurried them out to my car, pulling it into a nearby deserted alleyway so I could release my trousers and relieve myself.

Inside the lobby of the Hart-Williams office, Jeff Wright stepped out of the copy room and walked over to where Carla Morton stood watching the battered Toyota Celica sputter towards the alleyway.

"He's kinda cute," Carla mumbled. "Seems almost a shame."

"Relax," Jeff said. "You'll have your chance at him."

"Are you sure this is going to work out?"

"We've been over this already. Your company needs him to revive that campaign because if he doesn't, Virginia Slims is going to yank the account here. You need to prove yourself before you'll be accepted among your Sisters. And I get what I've always wanted."

She turned to face him. "Which is?"

Jeff smiled. "That's not for you to know."

My hands were still shaking when the phone rang an hour later.

"Hello?"

"Robert? This is Carla Morton at Hart-Williams."

"Hi, Carla."

"Listen, I was calling to see if there was any other research material you needed. You left today in kind of a hurry."

I looked guiltily over at the spot where I'd been framing my Girls. I planned to do one wall of my office in them - it wouldn't look the least bit out of place there. "I wanted to get home and tell my friends I'd gotten a job. I was very excited."

Carla laughed. "We're excited too."

"No, I think I have everything I need for now," I said. "I'll call you if I find anything else."

There was a brief pause. "Are you free tonight, Robert?"

"It's Rob," I said. "And no, I don't have anything going on tonight."

"I wondered if you'd like to get a drink, or maybe dinner. To celebrate."

I blinked. "That wouldn't be inappropriate, since we're going to work together?"

"I don't find it inappropriate at all," Carla said. "Besides, it's not really a date."

"In that case, I'd love to," I said.

"Great," Carla said. "Benito's, about seven?"

"Benito's?" I said. "I don't work for you yet, Carla. Benito's is a little out of my price range."

Carla laughed again. "Who said you were going to pay? It's a celebration, remember?"

"Are you sure?" I asked.

"Of course I'm sure," she replied. "In or out?"

"In," I said a little hesitantly. "Thanks."

"Coat and tie are required," she informed me. "I'll meet you there."

"Looking forward to it," I said, swallowing hard.

I hadn't counted on the midtown traffic, unfortunately, and I was running a little late to Benito's that evening. I was in my interviewing suit and the overcoat I'd gotten from my aunt and uncle, hoping I looked like a young professional instead of an ungainly kid trying to fit in among his betters, which was pretty much how I felt entering the paneled anteroom of the Italian restaurant, shaking the rain from my umbrella and my hair. The maitre d' took my coat and I asked breathlessly whether or not Carla had arrived.

"She is waiting for you at the bar, sir," he said, ushering me into the long bar.

I took two steps in and froze. It was her. My Girl. Carla had shed the frumpy clothes of the day and was wearing a sequined sheath gown which clung deliciously to a set of curves I couldn't believe I'd overlooked in the office. Diamonds glittered at her ears, wrist and throat against perfectly smooth, tanned skin. Her dark brown hair was piled elegantly atop her head, exposing a lissome swan's neck. She balanced a fluted glass of white wine in one long-nailed hand and a long Virginia Slims cigarette trailed smoke from the other. As she placed the white filter against lips stained a glossy, wet red, my erection began to stir. The tip of the cigarette glowed a bright orange and a thin streamer of smoke escaped her puckered lips as she drew it away. She opened her mouth only slightly, letting a small puff of the blue smoke escape before she inhaled, her long-lashes brushing her cheeks as she closed her eyes, showing off a subtle layering of browns and golds applied painstakingly to her eyelids. My cock was fully erect and warm against my left leg by the time she let a thin plume of smoke jet from her lips towards the ceiling and the beautiful, doe-brown eyes opened. She looked at me and smiled her model smile, displaying two rows of even, chalk-white teeth. My breath caught in my throat as I stammered an apology for being late.

Her voice was breathier, huskier. "Don't worry about it. The traffic was terrible."

"You look fantastic," I managed.

"Thanks," she said smoothly. "You're quite handsome tonight yourself."

I ordered a beer, coloring slightly. She took another languid, Marlene Dietrich pull from her slender cigarette and I could have sworn she caught my reaction and enjoyed it thoroughly.

"Are you hungry?" she asked.

"Sure," I said. "Should we take our drinks to the table?"

"We could," she said.

"Lead the way," I suggested. "I'm not used to restaurants where I don't carry my own tray."

Carla laughed, a much throatier, huskier affair than before. I desperately wanted her to lead off so she wouldn't see the painful erection I was trying to conceal. "You'd best get used to it."

She took a final pull from her cigarette and, to my disappointment, ground it out in the ashtray on the bar. I'd very much wanted to watch her walk across a room with it, leaving a lingering trail of smoke in her wake as she held it up between her long fingers, the French manicure throwing off the light.

"Problem?" she asked, seeing my face.

I laughed. "I wasn't expecting you to look so different," I said. "I hope you don't think this is out of line, but I wasn't prepared to have such a beautiful woman on my arm this evening. I was just thinking I should have brought flowers or something."

She stood, smiling. "That's sweet."

Once her back was to me I could stand, keeping close behind her and concealing my erection from the rest of the restaurant behind her exquisite body. Her *derrière* traced a maddening figure-eight through the air in front of me as one luxuriously nailed hand touched up her intricate hairdo. I couldn't look away.

The maitre d' led us to a table behind a concealing wall of greenery. I pulled the chair away for Carla and she sat elegantly, waiting for me to seat myself before ordering a bottle of wine and accepting a menu. I hid my blushing face behind my menu gratefully, trying to gain my composure.

Once the waiter had accepted our orders, Carla sipped at her wine and smiled at me demurely.

"Is that a pistol you're carrying, or are you just happy to see me?"

I choked on my lager. "I'm so sorry. I hoped you wouldn't notice."

She laughed again. "Don't be. You like what you see?"

I looked down, embarrassed.

"Rob, look at me."

I met her sparkling eyes.

"I'm flattered," she said honestly. "I'm glad that I excite you. I *want* to excite you."

"You do?"

"Of course I do," she said. "I've been thinking of you all day. You think I dress like this for just anyone? I have every intention of seducing you after dinner."

I felt her high-heeled evening pump slide up the inside length of my calf.

"You've just made it that much easier for me," she concluded with smoldering eyes.

I didn't know what to say.

"You're very attractive," she continued. "Tell me honestly, Rob. Do you want me?"

"Yes," I stammered. "And no."

"How do you mean?"

"I'm afraid to get too close to you," I said. "I'm afraid I'll wake up and it will be over."

She took my hand and drew it across the table, placing my palm against the warmth of her silk-clad breast. My eyebrows must have risen into my scalp.

"Feel? I'm very real."

I coughed, drawing away. "I feel like I'd be spoiling you," I said. "You're... *too* beautiful."

She smiled. "Too beautiful to touch? To have?"

"Yes," I said. "I'm not good enough."

"I'll be the judge of that."

It was one of the most unmemorable five-star dinners I'd ever had. To this day I can't remember what in the hell I ordered. My gaze drank her in during the entire meal, especially when she took out another cigarette from a filigreed cigarette case after dinner. I lit it for her with a trembling hand and she rewarded me with a glittering smile.

"I like how nervous you are," she told me. "It adds to your charm."

"I don't know how much more I can take," I confessed. "I think I might explode."

She rummaged in her purse for her wallet. "Then I'd better get you home," she said. "So I can help let some of the pressure off."

"I don't know if I can, Carla. I'm honored for the offer, but..."

"But nothing," she interrupted. "I didn't go to all this trouble to let you get away tonight."

I hope I didn't disappoint her - my excitement was so intense by the time we'd arrived at my apartment that I had little in the way of control left. We made love several times that night. She kept on her garters, stockings, heels and diamonds and looked as elegant nude as she did clothed. She seemed able to play on every desire I'd ever had.

I stepped out of my cramped bathroom to find her examining the framed pictures of my Girls.

"You framed these?" she asked, drawing on her cigarette.

I couldn't answer.

"Rob," she prompted.

I sat on the edge of the bed and told her everything, from my earliest times to the present, how I relied on my Girls to keep me from being lonely and how I longed to surround myself with them. She listened intently to my tale, rubbing the back of my neck with her slender fingers and smiling encouragement.

I stared at the floor, overcome with guilt. I felt her soft, warm lips against my neck.

"I saw you tear the ad out of the magazine in the waiting room," she whispered, nuzzling my neck. "I wondered what you might be up to. I never would have imagined it would be so innocent."

"Innocent?"

"It's certainly not depraved," she said, looking me in the eye. "A desire to surround yourself with beauty? There's certainly nothing wrong with that. What bothered me was your reluctance to be with me. But it seems you overcame that quick enough with the right amount of coaxing."

I laughed. "You don't think I'm weird?"

"Not at all," she said. "I think you appreciate beauty."

"I do," I said. "Like yours."

It was her turn to blush.

She took me by the arm then, making me show her my entire collection, going over every picture in every album, revealing which ones were my favorites and why, never judging, always smiling.

"I guess I don't need them anymore," I said at last. "I've dreamed of a woman like you since I was a little boy. You're everything I've ever wanted, come to life."

She smiled again, lighting my soul. "You are so very romantic."

She lit another cigarette and my erection stirred once more. She looked up, the smoke curling around her flawless face. She exhaled quickly, a quick jet of blue against the moonlight through the window, and stepped closer.

"You really like it when I smoke, don't you?" she asked.

"I thought that would be pretty obvious."

She stood behind me, pressing the hot softness of her breasts into my side. "Have you ever tried one of these?" she asked, bringing the elegantly slender cigarette into my field of view.

"No," I said. "They weren't for me. Only for my Girls."

"Close your eyes," Carla said softly. "You're one of them now. One of your Girls, wearing a designer gown and smiling for the cameras. Your nails are long and freshly manicured."

Seemingly against my will, my lips stretched into a smile.

"You look so beautiful," she chanted softly. "Perfect. You're perfect."

"I'm perfect," I repeated.

She slid the filter between my lips and it was the most natural thing in the world for me to take a deep pull, letting a feminine little puff escape my pursed lips before inhaling deeply.

The dream fractured as I dissolved into a coughing fit. Behind me I heard Carla chuckle.

"Needs work," she said. "But you'll get it eventually."

"Think so?" I croaked.

She drew me back to the bed, lying above me while tracing little circles on my chest with her long nails. Fixing me with a smoldering erotic gaze, she reached into her purse on the bedside table and drew out an object which glittered gold in the moonlight.

"What's that?" I asked.

"A little toy of mine," she said throatily. "Made to enhance pleasure."

She dangled it before me. It was made of a shiny metal, like gold but with a little different luster to it. It consisted of a small noose of what looked like herringbone chain connected to a golden teardrop about the size of a quail's egg.

"Want to try it?" she cooed.

"What does it do?"

"I wouldn't know, I'm not a man," she said. "But no man it's used on is ever the same."

I smiled in what I hoped was a sexy fashion.

She slipped the loop over my rising penis, pulling it snug around the base. Carefully running the short wire between my testicles, she inserted the teardrop into my anus, pulling the contraption tight against my prostate and separating my balls. The metal was a bit cold but not at all uncomfortable. Carla took my rising member in her elegant hand and began to massage it with long, twisting strokes.

I moaned. Something about the jewelry was making the experience very intense.

"Rob, when your eyes were closed before, and you imagined that you were one of your Girls."

"Yes," I said.

"Tell me what you looked like. Describe yourself to me."

"I was tall," I began. "With an athlete's body, very firm and healthy-looking, not bony, but with smooth, luscious curves, like Christy Brinkley. Flat, muscular stomach and long legs."

"Mmm, nice," Carla said, continuing the exquisite massage. "Go on."

"A high, firm Baywatch rear end that wiggles a little when I walk," I continued, "and high, firm breasts, a little on the smallish side with compact, tight nipples and small areolae. 34C-24-34."

"Keep going," Carla said, her voice husky with excitement.

"Smooth, even skin with just a spray of freckles on my nose, shoulders, and the tops of my breasts. Like heavy cream, deep and even. A smile like yours, one that lights up my whole face and makes my nose wrinkle a little."

"Your face. Tell me about your face."

"A long, slender, Jodie Foster nose and deep-set eyes the color of emeralds in firelight. High, arched eyebrows. High cheekbones and just a *little* baby-fat. No bee-stung lips; I have a wide, expressive mouth, like Whitney Houston. Little ears with petite lobes.

"A long neck and long, slender arms. Long-fingered hands with narrow palms that look just as good in a manicure as they do in elbow-length satin gloves."

"And your hair?"

"Bright red with golden highlights. Angie Everhart in a Pantene commercial red, with natural curl, but not too much. I wear it long, just to the bottoms of my shoulder blades. Soft as a rabbit's fur, and thick. Hair that begs to have fingers run through it."

"You're beautiful," Carla said. "Perfect."

"As long as I'm dreaming," I said with a chuckle, "I also have a double-jointed ankle that can stand all day long in four-inch heels and not have sore feet. A jacked-up metabolism that doesn't let me get above twelve percent body fat unless I'm pregnant. I'm also a trained ballet

dancer and have a black belt in aikido. I can do my own hair and makeup without assistance and have a knack for fashion and color."

"Wow," Carla said. "I wonder if that works."

"A silky contralto voice that's perpetually just a little hoarse and a thick Australian accent. The ability to function perfectly well with only three hours' sleep a night. Light periods with no cramping and a light flow, and I'm very easily orgasmic, experiencing multiples both clitorally and vaginally."

Carla giggled. "You sure have put a lot of thought into this."

"I spent a lot of time thinking about the Girls, wondering what they'd be like. I guess you can say I was working on that image for most of my life. But I wasn't done. I haven't even started on my house and wardrobe yet," I said.

"Leave that to me," she said.

Her hand had picked up speed and I didn't think to question that cryptic statement. My body tensed and I exploded in orgasm, my back arching and my fists balling up the sheets. My eyes rolled back in my head a little and I made a gurgling sound. The pleasure was close to pain, it was so intense. I think I stopped breathing. I felt consciousness slipping away easily, remembering only Carla's words as I faded away into a comfortable, exhausted blackness.

"And your name is Robin Suzanne Kelly."

Carla made sure the golden strand of the Circe Amulet was securely embedded in the skin of Rob's penis, testicles, and anus before kissing him a final time and rising to dress. She slipped into her gown of the night before, pulling on her shoes one-handed as she slid out the door into the foggy North Carolina morning outside. Jeff Wright, Rob's roommate, was waiting.

"Did it work?" he asked.

"I think so," Carla replied. "The texts of the spell vary, but they usually agree that the complete transformation takes seven days. The changes will be very slight at first but evident to anyone watching."

"Good," Jeff said. "Now you can inform the rest of your Sisterhood that you've performed a major spell flawlessly. You'll get your membership card and Sorceror's newsletter any time now."

Carla sneered. "You shouldn't mock what you don't understand."

"Sorry," Jeff apologized. "Just trying to lighten things up."

"I can't help but feel I'm hurting him somehow," Carla said, looking at the closed door.

"You shouldn't," Jeff said. "You're only helping him."

"I suppose. I still think we should have told him."

"It's best this way," Jeff assured her.

Carla paused after opening the door to her car. "You never did tell me what you're getting out of this arrangement, Jeff."

The tall man thought a moment. "I'm not like Rob. I dated a lot, slept around a lot. I never got along over the long haul with any girl I met, you know that. Women are so... *feminine*. I can't be with what I don't understand. Rob, I understand. We've lived together for five years now and have never had a single fight, not once. So I think to myself, 'why can I get along with a guy so well and not a girl?' Easy. I don't understand girls. So the only way to satisfy my parents clamoring for grandchildren and my own sexual desires is to find a woman somewhere who's a guy inside.

"So I find you in college and discover the League of Sorcerors, I hear about the Amulet of Circe and the spell, and I think about Rob and all his hang-ups and his photo albums that I'm not supposed to know about. I put two and two together and came up with something not far from four."

"I hope you know what you're doing," Carla cautioned.

"Relax," Jeff said. "Once Rob figures out what's happening to him, he'll be scared and confused as hell. His world will be upside down and I'll be right there. There's no way Rob won't fall for me."

Carla sighed. "Pray he never finds out," she said. "Hell hath no fury."

"And the best part of the deal is that you get a kick-ass ad executive who's going to bail your failing campaign out of the crapper, *and* a cover model at the same time," Rob concluded. "I doubt seriously that Rob dreamed himself up a librarian, having seen his taste in women."

Carla shot him an unreadable look. "Yes," she said at length. "At least there's that."

I awoke terribly groggy and sore. My mouth tasted terrible and my head was pounding. It was all I could do to force my legs over the side of the bed and sit up. Strangely, my feet didn't touch the floor. I scooted forward a little and put my toes onto the cold hardwood planks. A shiver ran up my back.

"I feel terrible," I croaked, placing my hand on my forehead. My hair tickled the backs of my knuckles.

Time for another haircut, I thought distractedly. *It'll be hanging into my eyes soon if I don't do something about it.*

I tottered into the bathroom and stood under the shower for a while, luxuriating in the hot water as I tried to muster enough energy to go to work. I had to finish the landscaping at Kensington Gardens with Jeff before I started work at Hart-Williams.

I pulled on a faded pair of jeans and my work boots, trying to work the aches out of my shoulders and neck as I pulled on a battered cotton work shirt. I swept my still-damp hair underneath a bandanna and knotted it, hoping it would keep my lengthening mop out of my eyes until I could get it seen to.

As I brushed my teeth in front of the bathroom mirror, it struck me how pale I looked. I'd worked in the sun all summer, and I'd thought that my tan was a little deeper on my face and neck. Maybe I really was sick. My skin was not quite pallid, but it looked like I'd lost a lot of my color.

At work, I asked Jeff if I looked sick. He denied it, saying I only looked tired. That was certain enough - I didn't have the energy for anything. The fifty-pound sacks of peat moss - which I

used to be able to flip onto my shoulder without much effort - seemed to weigh twice as much today. And when the three-o'clock break came around, I flopped onto the trailer as if I'd just run a marathon. I just didn't seem to have the endurance to keep up. I barely made it to five o'clock and went straight home, wanting nothing but my bed and the whole night to sleep my fill. I hoped I'd feel much better in the morning.

I pulled off my work clothes and stumbled into the bathroom. My boxers didn't seem to want to come down properly and I had to tug them forcibly to get access to my plumbing. I fumbled my penis out of its hiding place and released my bladder. This virus or whatever it was I had was even making my privates tired - it almost seemed as if my member had shrunk or shriveled. Thinking no more of it, I flushed my waste and flopped onto my bed face-down.

At least I felt better the next day, but I was covered with aches and pains like I'd just slept off a fever. My balance was a little off and my chest, shoulders and ass felt as if they'd been kicked. I rose at my usual hour and crawled into the shower not even fully awake. I wiped a clearing in the accumulated steam on the mirror and took a look to see whether or not I needed a shave this morning. Running a hand over my jaw, I felt nothing but smooth skin. Usually I could go two or three days between shaves, but I'd decided to get in the habit of shaving every morning now that I was working for a high-class ad agency. I lathered my face with shave cream and ran the disposable razor over my skin anyway, wincing as the blade scraped across my skin. I'd always had a problem with razor burn ever since I'd started shaving, but it seemed much worse this morning. I shrugged it off and toweled myself, pulling on my jeans and work shirt. I stopped a moment... was I losing weight? My jeans, usually a good fit, were baggy on me and I was standing on the cuffs of the legs. I cinched up my belt only to find that the final notch wasn't quite enough to tighten it. I was losing weight. I'd worn a thirty-four inch waist my entire adult life and now I couldn't be more than a thirty-two. I poked an extra hole in my belt with my pocketknife and made a mental note to buy a new pair of jeans once I got off work.

I pulled my hair out of my eyes and forced it into submission under a beaten baseball cap. It was tickling the back of my neck now and was driving me crazy. I really had to get that haircut.

At least I didn't have that damn fatigue which had shut me down yesterday. I was able to work the whole morning without getting tired, but I was still a little weak; the sacks still felt like they weighed a ton. I'd worked up a tremendous sweat by the time Jeff and I made the midmorning break and I plopped onto the trailer next to the water cooler and began filling my mug. Jeff joined me later.

He said something, but it didn't really register.

"Rob?" he repeated. I still didn't answer - it just didn't seem to apply to me somehow.

"Robin?" he asked.

"Yeah?"

Jeff blinked for a moment. "How you feeling, buddy?"

"Not bad," I said. "Better than yesterday."

"Good," he said, lighting a cigarette and sitting back comfortably. "You wanna go grab a beer tonight after work? You're getting pretty short here and we're not going to have the time to spend together before too long. What do you say?"

"I guess so," I said. "I have a few errands to run but I could meet you later."

"What kind of errands?"

"I need a new pair of jeans," I said. "And a haircut."

"Your hair looks okay to me."

I pulled a strand of it out from beneath the ball cap. It stretched to the end of my nose. "You kidding? Look how long it's getting."

"I dunno, it looks pretty hip," Jeff countered. "Ever think about wearing it long?"

"No," I said. "Too much trouble." I let the long tendril of hair go and it snapped into a lazy curl. The sun seemed to have lightened it a shade or two, sure, but my hair had never curled before.

"Weird," I said. "My hair's never been curly before."

"You've never worn it this long, either," Jeff said. "It's probably natural."

"May be," I mused, shoving the forelock back under my cap.

Jeff stood tiredly and strolled casually behind a bush to relieve himself. I sat back, sipping my water and listening to the cicadas in the trees singing in the heat. I tried to relax a little, but I was too tense. I kept thinking like I was forgetting something, or that something was missing.

I looked down to Jeff's pack of Winstons laying on the lip of the trailer and my brows knit a little worriedly. I didn't smoke, I didn't even care for the taste or the smell, but for some reason I wanted one. I eased one of the little tubes out of the pack and held it between my fingers for a moment, my eyes riveted on Jeff's disposable lighter. The thought of a smoke on my break sounded so good, it was almost too much. Not knowing why, I reached furtively for Jeff's lighter.

I heard him zip his fly and start walking back towards the trailer. Embarrassed, I slid the cigarette back into the pack and tried to look as if nothing happened.

"You okay?" Jeff asked.

"Sure," I said nervously. "Why?"

"No reason. You just looked a little jumpy."

"You're imagining things," I said, downing my water in a single gulp and heading back to work.

I only had time to run home and grab a quick shower before getting to the store and then to meet Jeff at a little neighborhood bar. I stripped off my clothes quickly and jumped under the steaming water, wanting to make it as quick as possible since it was my second shower of the day. I grabbed the soap and my washcloth and started scrubbing the day's grime away, starting with my face and working down to my shoulders and chest before I had to stop. The

rough cloth seemed to be rubbing me raw - my face and neck were irritated and my chest felt like I'd just gone at them with sandpaper.

"Ow!" I cried. My voice broke at the end of the exclamation, jumping nearly an octave and making me sound whiny. I grabbed my tender chest and turned my back to the flow of water. The skin of my chest was reddened and the nipples were standing out in protest.

Standing way out.

And there was no hair to be seen.

I stared. I'd had a nice thick coating of brushy hair across my chest and stomach ever since I was fourteen years old and now it was all gone except for a downy little "treasure trail" beneath my navel. And my nipples were much bigger, it seemed, standing out a good quarter inch where before they'd only been little pellets. And, after looking again, the reddened, tender flesh was visibly swollen as well. Two very subtle bulges were forming on my chest beneath those nipples. In a work shirt it just looked as if I had well-defined pectorals. In the shower, it looked like I was starting to grow...

I leaned against the wall hard, the soap and washcloth forgotten. Somehow, I seemed to be growing a pair of breasts. I'd never heard of something like this happening. Fearful of what I'd find, I traced the soft line of peach fuzz beneath my navel to the thicker bush of hair between my legs. My equipment was all still there, but it seemed a little meager. Shriveled, almost.

I bent in half and took a close look. There was something beneath the hair there, a little ridge around the base of my penis, between my balls and towards my asshole. Right where the little chain that Carla used on me had lain. I could see, now that I knew what to look for, that my scrotum was starting to elongate a little, stretching out along the chain, between my legs towards my anus, and my balls no longer seemed to fill the sac as completely. It was almost like they were just floating inside, not attached.

I shut off the water in a daze, wrapping a towel around my waist and stumbling towards the mirror. No way could this happen. Sure, if I was taking hormones or something, this could be a side effect. But I didn't even take aspirin. What the hell was happening to me? People don't just all of a sudden switch sexes from using cock rings. I was fumbling through my address book, trying to find Carla's number to demand what was going on when the doorbell rang.

I answered. Carla stood on the front stoop, wearing a very attractive business suit and carrying a wrapped package, a long elegant cigarette perched between her long-nailed hands. She favored me with a glittering smile which I didn't return.

"Hi, Rob," she said brightly.

My brows knit in puzzlement.

"Robin," Carla said.

"G'day," I told her coldly. "I was just looking for your number."

"Why?" she asked, stepping in. I closed the door behind her.

"You wanna tell me what the hell is going on?" I demanded roughly.

"What do you mean?" she asked, not alarmed at all.

"Don't give me that!" I half-shouted. My voice was cracking again, making me sound ridiculous. "I'm growing tits, lady! And my dick is shrinking up. And I can feel the outline of that chain thing you used on me under the skin on my balls. What did you do to me?"

Carla weaved her hand in an intricate gesture that I couldn't quite follow. "Relax," she said.

Despite my best judgment, I felt the tension flow out of me. I just stood there, transfixed.

"These things you're noticing, they're nothing to be worried about. Nothing at all. You just keep going to work like you normally do and going about your life," she said soothingly.

"Right," I mumbled.

"There will be some more minor changes," she said. "You'll take those in stride as well."

"Okay," I said. It made perfect sense, after all. Nothing to be upset about.

"I brought you some things you might need," Carla told me, handing me the package. "Open it."

I set the package down on the table and untied the string. Inside were a pair of jeans, a new pair of boots and a couple new work shirts, along with a plastic bag full of shampoo, conditioner, body wash and bath powder and a bottle of moisturizing lotion. I laid them out on the table.

"Thank you," I said. "I needed these."

"I know you did," Carla said, opening her attaché. "I'm terribly sorry about not realizing how fast things were going to be taking place, either. I'm pretty sure you're going to need this by tomorrow or the next day as well." She handed me a training bra, folded neatly. I took it without reaction and set it on the other clothes.

"Thanks very much," I said.

"You're welcome, Robin," she said. "Now, you should probably finish your shower, right? You're meeting Jeff before long, aren't you?"

"Yeah," I said. "I should get ready."

"You should do something with your hair," she told me.

I gathered the strands, which now tickled the tops of my shoulders, and gathered them into a ponytail in my hand, nodding assent.

"Anything else, Robin? I really should be going."

"No, nothing," I said.

"You look like there's something on your mind."

"Not really," I repeated.

Carla narrowed her eyes. "Robin, I command you to tell me what you're thinking."

"That's a gorgeous outfit," I blurted. "Is that a Chanel? That blue brings out your color so well and shows off that tiny little waist. I wonder what I'd look like in that, maybe in a pale grey or a rose."

Carla smiled suddenly. "It *did* work," she said. "I'll be damned."

"Sorry I yelled at you," I said as she passed me on her way to the door.

"It's okay," Carla said, pausing before she left. "You're just irritable."

"I've been that way lately," I confessed.

"I know just what you need," Carla said. She shuffled through her attaché quickly and laid a pack of Marlboro Lights 100's and a disposable lighter on the table beside the door. "You're just having a nic fit, Robin. You shouldn't try to go cold turkey like that."

"I don't smoke," I said mechanically.

"You do now," Carla said.

"Of course," I agreed.

She slipped through the door and closed it behind her.

I blinked. Had somebody been at the door? I'd gotten out of the shower, evidently, but it didn't look like there was anyone at the door. Shaking my head in wonder, I walked back to the bathroom, plastic sack of bathroom supplies in hand. I started the water back up, dropped my towel and continued my shower, not thinking any more about that momentary interruption.

Jeff wasn't there when I got to O'Malley's Bar. The new clothes were taking a little getting used to - the training bra was a little confining but it was keeping the points of my nipples from poking up little tents in the front of my work shirt. The new jeans Carla had brought me were terribly constrictive and they made my hips and ass a very pronounced curve. The boots were nice, though - a smaller size of my customary steel-toes with a built-up heel. I normally didn't like the raised heel, but it wasn't bothering me at all. I had my hair scooped into a loose ponytail at the nape of my neck. The curly ends of my lightening hair were almost between my shoulder blades and I couldn't resist twirling it around my fingers. It was so thick and soft. The conditioner that Carla had given to me was really something. My hair was soft as rabbit's fur. And working in the sun was really having an effect on the color, too - it was a deep brownish auburn, like the color of cherry wood. It was even affecting my eyebrows. The effect made my eyes look green instead of blue in the right light. The only puzzle was that I didn't have deep tan to go with it. Usually I was a rich brown color by this time of the summer out-of-doors, but if anything my skin seemed to be lightening. It was all very strange, but nothing to be alarmed about.

I tapped the box of Marlboro Lights against my wrist a few times and tore the cellophane in one smooth, practiced motion. It took me a moment to grab the tip of the foil insert. Didn't I just cut my bloody fingernails? They were growing so fast lately, it was difficult to keep them trimmed.

I licked my lips and hung the slim tube between them. My lack of beard stubble made my mouth look much more wide and expressive as I tore a match from the book standing in the ashtray. I struck the flame and took a deep pull on the cigarette, feeling the smoke easing all the myriad tensions of the day. I blew the match out in a long plume of blue smoke.

I heard Jeff's voice behind me, saying something. I turned.

"Rob?" he asked.

"What?" I shot back.

He blinked, then seemed to come to himself. "Robin, I mean," he corrected. "You look different."

"G'day," I bid him, gesturing to the seat across from me.

He sat down in wonderment. "Since when do you smoke? And what's wrong with your voice?"

I beetled my brow. Jeff was acting weird. "I thought it might be nice to have a smoke with my beer since you seem to enjoy it so much. And there's nothing wrong with my bloody voice, mate." It was the same breathy, dusky alto it always was.

"Damn," Jeff said. "An Australian accent?"

"What about it?" I asked, a little defensive now. "What's crawled up your ass?"

Jeff shook his head. "Nothing," he said. "Sorry. Just a long day."

The next day I awoke to Carla's gentle hand on my face. I smiled sleepily, unsure whether it was a dream or not. She returned the smile fondly as I placed my hand over hers.

"Mornin'," I mumbled. "What are you doing here?"

"Just checking on you," Carla said gently. "I also brought along a few more things you might need. How are you feeling?"

"Sleepy," I said with a playful groan, rolling over and snuggling my head into the pillow of reddish curls around my face. It was so soft, like the linens against my skin. I was floating in softness.

"You'll be late for work," she scolded. "You should get up and get going."

"I know," I said, swinging my legs off the bed and scooting forward until the balls of my feet could touch the floor. Carla put her hand on my knee and drew it back in mock alarm.

"You're hairy," she said.

"It's not bad," I countered.

"It's awful," she said. "I don't see how you can go out in public like that."

"You're right, I suppose," I said. "I'll take care of it."

"Why don't you go get in your shower and I'll take you to breakfast."

"Sounds great," I said, leaning in and kissing her lightly, so as not to impose my morning breath. The contact between our lips was nearly electric as the twin softnesses found each other. The kiss drew on into a long affair full of mounting passion. I pulled away through sheer force of will, my bottom lip limp and showing my bottom teeth as I gasped for breath.

I pulled off my boxers and the undershirt I was wearing and padded into the shower. The mounting desire inside me was making me feel funny - heavy and soft inside where I was used to urgent hardness. I ran a hand through the light bush of pubic hair and felt my limp member. A glance in the mirror showed that my once-respectably sized penis was now a tiny thing with a distinct downward point and my scrotum was limp and distended nearly to my anus. I ran a finger between the very distinct lips being formed out of my sac and felt no

evidence of my testicles. My penis would soon be tucked between them, lost in their continued swelling. The barest brush of my fingers against the drooping head of my male member sent a shivering thrill up my spine. I dimly realized that I should be very freaked out by this whole turn of events, but the knowledge that Carla was in the other room made everything somehow all right.

I showered quickly, shaving my legs and armpits to satisfy Carla, and towel-dried my long russet hair. I only had time to run a brush through it a few times and scoop it into a loose ponytail still damp. Even wet, it was as soft as mink fur. I looked frowningly at my fingernails, which were now grown quite past the ends of my fingers even though I'd trimmed them the day before, and decided to just skip it.

Then as automatically as I'd reached for the shave cream since I was a teenager, as soon as I lay my toothbrush down on the countertop my hand immediately and automatically sought out a bottle of creme foundation and an applicator sponge.

I froze when I realized what I'd done.

I was only going to work! I didn't need foundation! Just a little eyeliner would be fine. After all, my complexion was even and smooth enough to where foundation didn't matter that much anyway. I gave my aquamarine eyes a medium-thick lining with a soft brown pencil and brushed a hint of peach color into the crease of my eyelids.

I stepped back into my room to the smell of brewing coffee from the kitchen. Even though I'd never cared for coffee at all, the smell appealed to me greatly. Carla had laid out some clothes for me. I slipped arms through the straps of the little lace-trimmed cotton AA-cup bra and reached behind my back to fasten the straps like I'd done it my whole adult life. I stepped into a pair of matching high-rise panties, loving the feel of the silky fabric sliding up my hairless legs. Standing just in my underwear, I gave my bangs a tug and a fluff to get them standing properly and looked at myself in the mirror appraisingly.

My legs were long and pale, leading from slim ankles up to pleasantly wide hips and a girlishly rounded behind with a subtle curve. I was slender and lean-flanked, like a teenager, with prominent ribs and the barest swell of little handful breasts. My shoulders were narrowing and there was a light spray of freckles across my chest. My neck was long like a ballerina's and I had a narrow, well-defined face with high cheekbones and a long, narrow nose that turned up at the end. It was difficult to tell, in the light through my blinds, whether or not my eyes were green or blue. The sunlight was bringing out golden highlights in my hair as it dried.

I shrugged into a baseball jersey and a new pair of jeans which hugged me like a second skin, giving a pleasing roundness to my ass. I pulled on my workboots over a pair of thick socks and tied a bandanna in my hair to keep the sweat from my eyes. I stuffed my wallet in the nearly-useless back pocket of the designer jeans and grabbed my keys, lighter and Ray-Bans on my way to the kitchen.

Carla was seated at the kitchen table, a cup of coffee held just below her bottom lip in a contemplative manner. She took a drag from her slender cigarette and sent a jet of pale blue vapor towards the ceiling through sexy pursed lips. I leaned over her shoulder, pressing my breasts into her back, and gave her a long, hungry kiss. She pulled away from me with a smile.

"Hungry?" she asked as I poured myself a coffee.

"Not really," I said. "I don't seem to have much of an appetite lately."

"Understandable," she commented, sliding her cigarette pack across the table to me at my gesture. I took one of the slender cylinders between my long-nailed fingers and lit it, pausing to take a deep first-drag-of-the-morning before fixing my lover with a stern eye.

"Carla, what's happening to me?" I asked point-blank.

"What do you mean?"

I laughed. "You mean you don't notice anything different about me?" I asked sarcastically. "I seem to be turning into a woman in front of your very eyes and you haven't noticed?"

"I thought..." Carla stammered.

"The weirdest thing is that I *know* I should be freaking out about it," I said. "But I'm completely calm. It's like it happens every day. And I think you know what's going on."

Carla sighed. "I guess I didn't realize how strict the wording of the spell was."

"Spell?"

"I cast a spell on you the other day to calm you down," I said. "It did, but it didn't make you not realize that something strange was going on."

"You cast a spell?" I asked incredulously. "Are you a witch?"

"No," Carla said, smiling. "I don't use nature in my work. I think you'd call me a sorceress."

"I'm guessing the chain you used on me that night was part of a spell, too," I said.

"It's called the Amulet of Circe," Carla said. "It works by transforming a man into the woman of his dreams. It was originally designed as a punishment for men found guilty of rape. The keys to its use are that the subject must experience both arousal *and* climax while wearing it and that the sorceress has to trigger the spell by giving the subject a new name."

"And I was found guilty of a crime to get this punishment?"

"No," Carla said gently. "For you, this might be freedom. Your world before was a lonely one, Robin. This could change that forever for the better."

"It was lonely," I said. "But it was *mine*. This life... this isn't mine. I didn't work to make it. I certainly didn't *earn* it. And I never asked for it." The bitterness leaked through the spell.

"I didn't want you to have a sad life," Carla said, looking away.

"Because it doesn't fit in with some magic agenda you have? Because some spell you need to cast requires my personal contentment *and* my menstruation?"

"No," Carla said. "It was because I've fallen in love with you."

I gaped. "I beg your pardon?"

"You heard me," she repeated. "I've been watching you for some time, Rob - I mean, *Robin* - once Jeff contacted me in college. He said you might be a candidate for the Amulet, so I scried you - I watched you through a magic reflecting pool. And I saw what a wonderful person you

were. You're even nice to your pictures upstairs, a perfect gentleman. And I fell for you. I didn't mean for it to happen."

"Wait one second," I interrupted. "You said *Jeff* contacted you about me?"

"Yes," Carla said. "In college."

"Why?"

"He was tired of trying to find the right girl," Carla explained, "when he already knew how well he got along with you. After all, you did all the cooking and cleaning and housekeeping. Jeff commented that if you had a body to match your disposition he'd marry you."

"I see," I said coldly.

"He threatened to expose me and my circle as sorcerers," Carla said. "I was commanded to cast the spell on you, Rob-Robin. I'm sorry. Believe me, I would much prefer your staying a man."

I put my hand over hers. "I believe you," I said at length.

"Thank you."

"Look at me, Carla."

Her eyes met mine.

"I know you said you'd rather I was still male," I said slowly. "But, when we kissed... I guess what I'm trying to say is, if you don't mind my being a woman, I certainly don't mind it either."

Carla chuckled. "It will be different," she said. "But I think I'm willing to try."

"Good," I said, leaning close to kiss her.

"It can't last, though," she said. "Jeff plans to have you for himself. If you don't go to him of your own free will, then he'll blackmail me into compelling you."

"Forget Jeff," I said. "Just leave him to me."

Armed with the knowledge of my betrayal, I proceeded to lay it on thick at work. I stayed away from Jeff all day, trying to hide my budding breasts from passersby as if a last-ditch attempt to hide my new form. I wouldn't talk to anyone who passed and frequently kept tears in my eyes which I hastily wiped away whenever Jeff came near. He watched with deepening concern all day long and once quitting time came around I knew I had him.

"Rob," he said gently.

"It's Robin," I corrected, wiping my eyes. "You know I hate that nickname. What is it?"

"You've been a basket case all day long, buddy. Talk to me. What is it?"

I laughed, a little hysterically. "What is it? What is it? Jesus, Jeff, are you blind?"

He sighed. "Yeah. I noticed."

"You and half the world," I said, starting the waterworks again.

"Do you know what's causing it?" Jeff asked.

"No," I blubbered. "I'm too scared to go see a doctor. Hell, I'm too scared to leave the house half the time. I was at the gas station this morning and the guy behind the counter called me 'Ma'am.' I can't take this, Jeff - I don't know what's happening..."

I started to get a little hysterical and Jeff put his arms around me quickly, holding me tight. I liked the feeling of safety and I buried my face in his shoulder, crying out all my fear and outrage at the treatment. Jeff stroked my hair down the back of my neck, making calm shushing noises.

"It's okay, buddy," he whispered. "It's gonna be okay."

"No it's not," I whimpered.

He lifted my chin with a finger. "Look at me," he commanded gently. "We'll figure this out, okay? This is me here. Jeff. We'll get it figured out. We've gotten through everything else together, right?"

I nodded, my eyes never leaving his. The distance between our faces gradually began to dissolve away until our lips touched. It was like an electric shock. I backed away, startled, and ran from him.

He only gave half-hearted chase, smiling broadly.

After the kiss, Jeff was very solicitous. By that afternoon my hair was to the bottoms of my shoulder blades and I had to really work at not speaking with an Aussie accent. All the identification in my wallet was changed, magically, to reflect that I was born Robin Suzanne Kelly and had emigrated from Melbourne with my parents when I was fifteen years old. I even had pictures to prove it, of parents I remembered but hadn't ever seen before. My breasts were now brimming out of the simple white cotton B-cup I'd bought on the way home from work and would probably be at their full C-cup size by dinnertime. The cleft between my legs was thickening and deepening and I could worm the tip of my little finger - having to be very careful of my long fingernails - in nearly to the second knuckle.

Strangely enough, even the skills I'd jokingly given myself under the influence of the Circe Amulet were coming to bear. Although I couldn't tell where the knowledge had come from, I could easily run through ballet positions or aikido forms at will with a practiced ease and precision.

I refused Jeff's calls pointedly, not wanting to rush into what I had planned for him, instead spending about an hour on the phone with Carla. She comforted me and told me the Amulet's spell would culminate tonight at precisely when the spell had taken place, which was about 11 o'clock at night. The next morning, Carla would come over with my new car and the keys to my new apartment, where we planned to spend the whole day making love and trying on everything in my extensive new wardrobe. I started work as Robin Kelly two days later, which wouldn't be much time to get my modeling portfolio put together, but with Carla's help it would be easily do-able.

When the final change came, it was rather anti-climactic... there was a slight tug and pull in my abdomen and all of a sudden I had a vagina. A quick exploration with my little finger showed me my hymen still intact. I ground out my cigarette, thrilled with the end of the transformation, and quickly whipped up a fresh crop of panicky tears as I dialed the phone.

"Jeff," I sniffed when he answered. "Jeff, it's me."

"Who?"

"Robin," I said. Apparently he wasn't used to the thick, soft contralto my voice had become.

"What's wrong?"

"I... I'm not a man anymore, mate," I whimpered. "I felt a cramp, like, and I woke up and... I'm not a man anymore, Jeff. I don't know what happened. I'm so scared and I didn't know who to call..."

"Relax, Robin. It's okay. Where are you?" he asked.

"Home," I sniffed.

"I'll be right over. Don't move."

"Okay," I said, hanging up the phone.

I just had time to get my eyes all nice and red-rimmed with tears and change into an ill-fitting pair of my old, male pajamas by the time there was a knock on my door. I answered the door timidly, trying to hide. He took me back into his arms and I cried against his shoulder a little.

"Jesus, Robin," he breathed. "You're beautiful."

"No I'm not," I said.

"Yes, you are. Have you looked at yourself?"

I nodded.

"At least if this had to happen, you became a beauty from it," he said.

"I guess that's one good thing," I sniffed. "I just wish I knew why..."

Jeff put a finger across my lips. "Don't worry about it. What matters is that you're all right."

I gazed into his eyes guilelessly. "Thanks for coming," I said breathlessly.

"You want to go to the ER or something?" he asked.

"No," I said, my tears drying. "I'm just scared. I'll go see a doctor in the morning."

"You want me to stay?" Jeff asked.

"Yeah," I said. "Jeff?"

"Yeah?"

"Would you... I mean, would you... sleep next to me?" I asked in a tiny voice.

"Sure," Jeff said. "If that's what you want."

I took his hand. "Yeah, I think that's what I want."

I have to admit, after I got over the pain and shock of Jeff's first penetration, it was a very enjoyable night. The first time was awkward, even though Jeff was quite a lover by reputation. After I settled down a little, I really started enjoying myself. Knowing from Carla

that Jeff knew next to nothing about the workings of the Circe Amulet, I thanked my college drama professors for all the improv training as I made a very convincing show of "Rob's" personality submerging beneath the new personality of "Robin." As we made love, I became more and more involved with it and Jeff never suspected a thing, the dunce. Well, I did have to give him a little credit. If a gorgeous redhead was sucking *my* cock with all the energy and abandon of an aerobics workout, I wouldn't think too hard about how I got there either. Thankfully, the transformation had instilled a very natural and exciting desire in me for my former sex, or I might have been gagging. But by the time we were at it, the thought of a big, thick dick driving deep into me seemed the most wonderful thing in the world. I was going to have to talk Carla into investing into some toys.

We were finished for the second time and I was giving Jeff the time he needed to recuperate. I seemed to be sexually insatiable, and if not for the lingering soreness in my middle from my deflowering and the marathon of very athletic sex that followed, I might have jumped him again. There was a maddening emptiness in my middle, a hole full of damp heat which very badly needed filling. Female desire wasn't as urgent as its male counterpart, but it was every bit as overwhelming. I traced idle circles on his chest with a slender finger while we shared a cigarette. The air was heavy with the scent of our mingled sex.

"That was nice," I said huskily.

"Yeah, I liked it," Jeff replied.

"I mean really nice," I repeated.

"Think so?"

"So nice that I want to do it again," I said, running my hand down his chest to the thick tube of his semi-erect member. It stirred a bit under my ministrations.

"Again?" he asked. "Jesus, you're insatiable."

"You like that in a woman," I chided.

"I do, I really do," Jeff said.

"And you're pretty good at fulfilling my needs," I commented offhand.

"Glad you like it," he replied.

"So good, in fact, that I think you could even do it blindfolded," I continued with a seductive smile, pulling a dark silk scarf from the nightstand. His answering grin told me he was all for it.

I had fun, running my hands and tongue all over his body while he was blindfolded and bound until I finally straddled him, sinking his length deep into my soft middle with a gasp of pleasure. I rode him slowly, a gentle rocking back and forth. Jeff's breath caught in pleasure.

"Admit it, mate," I cooed in his ear. "You like me better like this than as a ugly old bloke."

He laughed. "I do," he said.

"So, am I everything you expected I'd be?"

"More," he breathed.

"Tell me something, lover," I purred, "what kind of woman did *you* want me to become? With your eyes covered up, what kind of woman do you see in your mind, riding your big thick cock like this?"

"Well, the shape would be about the same, but bigger tits," he said. "Nice, high-riding double-D's. And blonde, thick honey-blonde hair that tickled the top of your ass. Big, fat bee-stung lips and blue eyes and a nice, tight ass."

"Sounds like you want me to be your little slut," I said. "And tell me, how would you want your little slut to act? How would your little whore treat you?"

He chuckled, into the game. "You'd rather suck cock than eat. You love to please men and women both and you dress to attract them. Always short skirts and spike heels and your makeup and hair all done. You'd pose for *Penthouse* and *Playboy* and *Hustler* and you'd be in porn movies where you had to take on two or three guys at once. You'd love the feel of having men come on your face and your tits. And you'd come at the drop of a hat, too. You'd be a screamer."

He tightened under me, coming close to climax.

"And would I be smart?" I asked urgently.

He snorted laughter. "Of course not, silly," he joked. "Dumb as a post."

As his orgasm began and he grunted in pleasure, I whispered into his ear: "And your name shall be Jennifer Marie Taylor," I said with great satisfaction.