

Stepmother: Stepson to Wife



Susan Hulbert

A "Her TV" Novel



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Stepmother: Stepson to Wife

By Susan Hulbert

“I’ve never felt so nervous,” William confessed as he sat in his huge white dress.

“You look lovely and you don’t even want to think about doubts now,” Melanie said.

“So much has happened in such a few weeks.” He touched the top of his strapless dress once again, thinking to adjust it despite the fact that it fit like a glove over his new breasts.

“They’re lovely and look absolutely natural and perfect. No one would guess you didn’t grow them naturally.”

“I can’t believe I have them.” William lifted them again as if checking that they hadn’t shifted, or worse, disappeared altogether. “I worry that I’m too much of a woman for her.”

“Stop that,” Melanie replied. “You’re my step-daughter and I wouldn’t have given my blessing for you to marry my oldest and dearest friend if I wasn’t sure it would be good.”

“That wasn’t anything I ever thought about.” He turned to the mirror to check that his makeup hadn’t smudged. “I mean I expected that a girl would figure in my future somewhere, but I didn’t expect to *be* one.”

“I never thought that Sarah would end up with a girl,” Melanie replied. “I always thought that she’d be too much for an ordinary boy to make her happy.”

“So this most un-ordinary boy is the one she’s chosen.”

“She told me that story about wanting a trophy wife ages ago,” Melanie said. “I always thought it was a way of deflecting the conversation when we talked about men.”

“I guess it was more than that,” William said and turned as there was a knock at the door.

“Help me with my veil.” He sat to allow her to fuss and arrange it over his head. “I’d better take this ring off so that she can slip the wedding band onto my finger.”

William took the ring from his left hand and slipped it onto his right. “I hope I can get it off this finger. I want to wear them together so that they show in the wedding photographs.”

He stood and took a deep breath, then turned to Melanie. He leaned forward and kissed her gently.

“Thank you, stepmother,” he said. “After you’ve given me away, you have to promise to be a caring mother-in-law to my new husband.”

“Husband?” Melanie asked. “And I’m giving you away?”

“Sarah insisted that I was to be her wife; her trophy wife, remember?”

He waited for her to open the door to walk to the ceremony. “And we have to decide what I’m to be called. I can’t be William forever.”

He stepped forward and saw Sarah waiting for him with their celebrant and friends. His new life was beginning.

It all began some months earlier...

“Melanie, you’re looking wonderful.”

Sarah waited as Melanie stood and hugged her before they sat at their table on the terrace.

“You’ve lost weight and I love your hair.”

“You always know how to say the right thing,” Melanie replied. “I have to admit, I’m feeling very good with myself recently.”

“Divorce must be good for you.”

“It is *really* good.” Melanie smiled. “When I look back, I don’t know how I put up with that creep for so long. It amazes me.”

“It amazes me too,” Sarah replied. “I never liked him. That’s why we dumped his company when he wanted us to represent him.”

“I’m so glad that it didn’t spoil our friendship.”

“Nothing could ever do that. You’re my oldest and dearest friend.”

“That’s so good to hear.” Melanie paused. “It’s because I have to ask you for a favour.”

“Go ahead and ask.” Sarah took her hand. “If I can do it, you know I will.”

“I have a stepson,” Melanie replied. “I don’t think you ever met him, but he was abandoned when his father left me.”

“Don’t tell me you got him as part of the divorce settlement.”

“That’s one way of putting it.” Melanie laughed. “Seriously, William’s graduated last year. He got a first-class degree in Art History.”

“That sounds like he’s really bright.”

“He’s bright all right but he’s got no personality and opportunities for art historians aren’t thick on the ground.”

“I don’t see where I fit into this.” Sarah looked puzzled.

“I thought if you could offer him a job, something or anything to get him started. He’s been trying really hard but I guess at interviews he doesn’t come over as being dynamic.”

“I still don’t know what you’re asking.”

“Please could you give him something to do?” Melanie said. “Anything at all so that he can mix with people, maybe get a bit of experience and some social skills.”

“Surely he learned that at the university. From what I hear, it’s one long party with a bit of study.”

“I think he missed out on the party bit and did the study. He’s nice, polite and kind, but he needs to be brought into the world.”

“I think my staff would make him join in. They work hard but they know how to party too.” Sarah paused to think. “I dare say we could find him something, but we don’t have much to do with art or history.”

“Anything to get him out of the torpor he’s sinking into,” Melanie replied.

“You could tell him that we’re going to represent some art collector, or some institution, and want some expertise in-house.”

“That sounds good.”

“I’m pleased that you think so.” Sarah smiled. “It’s all a lie but if he’s willing to take some sort of low-level job, I’m sure we can fit him in.”

“That’s wonderful.”

“Here’s my card. Have him call Sally, my assistant. I’ll tell her to sort something out for him.”

“That’s great,” Melanie said. “He’s such a nice person, despite that rat of a father.”

“You don’t look to be suffering, despite the rat,” Sarah said.

“I’m not; the settlement was worth all the crap he made for me. He was a dreadful husband, but he knew how to make money.” Melanie signalled to the waitress. “Now tell me what’s been happening in your life.”

“If you’re asking if I’m seeing anyone, the answer is no,” Sarah replied. “They all want to control me. They see me as the future little wife. What I really need is a wife like that.”

They both laughed and turned their attention to the menu.

“I wondered if I could change William into someone’s wife,” Melanie said. “I had a dream like that.”

“Maybe it’s his destiny.”

“I wonder if it could be,” Melanie replied. “He’s not like his father at all and I can’t think of a better way of getting even with him.”

“I can see that look in your eye,” Sarah said. “You’re already thinking about it.”

“It’s nothing really; only a passing thought.”

“There’ll be a boy called William calling you,” Sarah said to Sally when, some hours later, she returned to the office. “I promised his stepmother that we’d give him a job.”

“Had you any particular job in mind?” Sally asked. “We don’t have a vacancy.”

“I don’t know; anything,” Sarah replied. “He’s a graduate in the history of art so he’s probably useless at everything.”

“So what do I do with him?”

“Make him associate vice-president in charge of the coffee machine if you want,” Sarah quipped. “I promised; his stepmother is an old friend. I’m sure you can train him to do something useful.”

“Associate vice-president it is,” Sally agreed. “Presumably we’re going to pay him at basic rate.”

“Of course,” Sarah replied and promptly forgot about William.

“You heard about this vacancy from an old friend, you said.” William held the card with the numbers on it.

“Yes, it was a friend of a friend actually,” Melanie lied. “She said that they’re really desperate to recruit a promising young graduate.”

“But do they have clients in the art world?”

“They’re trying to break into that sector,” Melanie said vaguely. “You’ll have to ask them. All I’m doing is pointing you in their direction before they hire someone else.”

"I'll look them up and maybe call next week."

"William, you will call them first thing in the morning," Melanie said severely. "You've done nothing for months. I've paid all your expenses; now you either take this job or you take yourself off to live somewhere else."

"But I've no money."

"I don't care. I'm fed up; you've turned idleness into an art form." Melanie's eyes told him not to argue. "And you need to be earning money."

When William turned up for his interview at the office, Sally saw at once that he was nervous and tongue tied. He was smart enough, slim and fresh faced, with long dark hair held back in a low pony tail. He moved languorously, with a grace that was quite unexpected.

Sally had her usual set of questions and ran through them quickly. William scored as willing but lacking in any experience. He'd have been rejected but for Sarah's instruction.

"Congratulations," Sally forced herself to say as she stood at the end of the interview. "You've got the job. Leave your details with the receptionist and we'll email you with details and a start date. We have a casual dress code here so dress for comfort but remember that clients will be coming through, so nothing outlandish."

"I don't think I've ever done outlandish." William shook her hand, smiled nervously, and almost stumbled out of the office.

"I hired your friend's son." Sally brought her list of pressing matters into Sarah's office at the end of the day. "I don't know what he can do but I'm sure that the girls will sort him out."

"I'm sure they will." Sarah nodded. "They're all such extroverts, they'll convert him."

"Or kill him trying," Sally finished the thought and they both smiled.

Sarah forgot about William. He started work quietly and with Melanie behind him at home and Sally behind him at work, he started to make himself useful.

It wasn't that the work was particularly difficult; it was just that there was so much of it and as the only man in the office, he had to try harder. There were appointments to book and meetings to arrange. Travel had to be organised and schedules matched. It was never ending.

If there was anything to do with art, he didn't find it. The art of managing the seemingly impossible was something else. He turned out to have a skill.

Once he found his feet and started to build up his own contacts book, William found it to his liking. He was meticulous and if something fell through, the fault was always proven to be at the other end.

The office was all female apart from him. At first he was a novelty; someone to use as the butt of their jokes and their sarcasm. William took it all in good heart. Nothing upset him and he fell out with no one. Quite soon, it was as if he'd always been there.

"What's this carnival night you're talking about?" William asked one evening as they were closing down for the day.

"It's the annual treat for the staff," Zoe, one of the girls said. "I'm surprised you haven't heard of it but then you've not been here long."

"So what is it?"

"It's like a girl's night out where we all get dressed up really specially and let our hair down; no boy-friends, partners or husbands allowed," Zoe explained. "It's a few months away but its great fun."

"So why call it carnival night?"

"I've no idea," Zoe replied. "Dress-up Night sounded dull. We go to one of the best restaurants in town at the boss's expense. We get wined and dined and everyone has a good time."

"I guess I'm not one of the girls," William laughed. "That's why I haven't heard."

"I think you should qualify," Zoe smiled back. "You're one of us and so you could be an honorary girl for the occasion."

William shook his head at the thought of being included. He could guess what they would all be like when let loose together.

"I don't think that's a good idea."

“We can’t leave you out,” Zoe said. “I’ll talk to the others and we’ll work something out. You deserve the chance to really dress up and have a good time too.”

“I’ve talked to the girls.” Zoe caught up with William a few days later. “They’ve had a vote and decided that you should come to the carnival night.”

“That’s really kind, but...”

“You can be an honorary girl for the occasion. You have to dress up.” Zoe stopped William as he was about to decline. “They’ve seen your screensaver and they think you should dress up like her.”

“But that’s a portrait; she’s from a hundred years ago.” William suddenly knew it had been a mistake to put that picture on his home screen.

“So imagine if she was around today,” Zoe replied. “She’d be as beautiful now as she was then.”

“But I’m not beautiful and I’m not a girl.”

“Stop raising trivial objections.” Zoe shook her head. “You don’t get it, do you? We all want you to come. It’s an all-girl affair, so you’re being allowed to be an honorary girl for the evening.”

“What’s an honorary girl?”

“It’s someone who looks like a girl but isn’t a real one.”

“I’m not sure...”

“Don’t say another word.” Zoe put her hand up as if to stop him. “We’ll arrange it all. I know a salon that would help you get ready. You just have to agree and do what you’re told.”

William had a bad feeling as he decided that it would be better to agree than being seen as the one who wouldn’t join in.

“I’m sure they can’t make me look anything like a real girl anyway,” he said.

“It doesn’t matter,” Zoe replied. “It’s not as if there’s going to be anyone there who doesn’t work here and they all know who you are anyway.”

“Okay,” William said cautiously. “Promise me that they won’t all be taking photographs of me though.”

“Get real; this is the twenty-first century,” Zoe replied. “Everyone takes pictures; Selfie Mania is here to stay.”

“Oh goody!” William thought to himself as he went back to his desk. “I’m going to be embarrassed forever.”

“William’s settling in and much to my surprise, he’s becoming really good,” Sally said to Sarah some weeks later. “I have him working on all sorts of problems and to be truthful, he’s like my personal assistant.”

“That’s good, thank you. I was afraid that I was letting my sympathy for an old friend distort my judgement when I said we’d take him on.”

“He’s still as quiet as a church mouse though,” Sally added. “The girls keep trying to get him to lighten up.”

“They’ll sort him out.” Sarah was too busy to worry about something that wasn’t really a problem.

“I think he’s really shy and inexperienced in life.” Sally hesitated at the door. “The girls are trying to persuade him to dress up for the carnival night. I think they’ve succeeded too.”

“I’d forgotten about that staff treat,” Sarah admitted. “I hope you’ve got it all arranged.”

“How could I not?” Sally asked. “The girls look forward to it. They can let their hair down at the boss’s expense.”

“It’s good for morale and its tax deductible,” Sarah laughed.

“They’d like him to join in, it would be good for him,” Sally said. “He’s agreed but he’s so reluctant they think he’s not going to go along with them.”

“I do hope he can be persuaded,” Sarah said. “I like to have a happy team in the office.”

“He’s the only boy and I think he feels a bit left out at times,” Sally said. “It would be an easier fit if he was a girl.”

“Perhaps he could be persuaded to show his feminine side.” Sarah knew the thought was going to stick in her head as soon as she said it.

“If only...” Sally laughed.

“I’m having lunch with his stepmother again soon. I’ll mention it to her.”

It was only when she was going to that lunch that Sarah remembered her conversation with Sally.

“I can’t thank you enough,” Melanie said as soon as Sarah was shown to the table where she was waiting. “I have to convince him that he’s doing well and lately I think he’s starting to accept it.”

“My assistant thinks he’s really useful but he doesn’t socialise much.”

“He never goes out,” Melanie replied. “He still studies, but now he’s been researching fashion in art. He found John Singer Sargeant and some other artists. They painted really fashionable ladies.”

“Okay, you lost me at the name of the artist,” Sarah replied. “Is that the lady in the picture on his screensaver?”

“I’m not sure but you’d love the portraits. I think he’s madly in love with Lady Agnew; she’s probably the one on his screensaver,” Melanie said. “Either that or he wants to be her.” She laughed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beGSYKKI2oU>

“I don’t think I know her.” Sarah looked puzzled.

“You can’t; her portrait was painted over a hundred years ago,” Melanie explained. “But she looks so sexy and exotic in that painting.”

“Okay, I give up.” Sarah waved her hand in a gesture of surrender. “There is one thing you could help him with though.”

“What’s that?”

“The girls are trying to persuade him to dress up and come with them on the carnival night.”

“I never heard of the carnival night.” Melanie looked intrigued.

“I don’t know why it got that name. I set it up a few years ago as a company event for a bit of fun,” Sarah explained. “It’s become a dressing-up competition;

not silly fancy dress, but come as someone you look like or someone you want to look like.”

“That’s going to be way outside William’s comfort zone.”

“It’s a girl’s only night,” Sarah added. “They want him to be an honorary girl for the night.”

“He’ll never agree.”

“They say he has agreed.”

“He’ll probably find an excuse to dip out.”

“I don’t see why it should be too difficult to get him to come.” Sarah winked. “You can use your powers of persuasion. It’s all free, employees only, and there’s a bonus prize for the best costume.”

“I still don’t think he’ll come.”

“Okay, this is your turn to return the favour. Get him to come.” Sarah smiled at a devious plan that sprang into her mind. “Get him to come as Lady Agnew.”

“That’s awful, but I like the idea,” Melanie replied. “I’ll do anything to get him out of the house. It’s going to cost a lot but I can afford it.”

“I’m sure I overheard the girls talking. One said they knew a salon which would help him get ready.”

“I’ll make sure that he’s ready,” Melanie thought. “Could you ask your girl to call me; maybe we can work together.”

“It’s a deal. You get him there and we’re even, favour for favour,” Sarah said. “I suppose I’d better look up the portrait of this mysterious lady.”

She didn’t know that Zoe and the girls had already cooked their own plan with this same objective in mind.

“Sarah was telling me about carnival night when she treats all the girls in the office to a night out,” Melanie said when William arrived home on Friday evening.

“I know and I’m not going,” he replied. “It’s too stupid for words.”

“I’m sure Sarah doesn’t see it that way.”

“But they’re all girls in the office except me.”

“So I wouldn’t think that’s a problem.” Melanie feigned ignorance of it all. “You might decide that one of the girls is really special.”

“You don’t get it,” William said. “Apparently they all dress up and from what I’ve heard, they all do it seriously.”

“Is there a problem in that?”

“They want me to dress up too.” William’s face flushed.

“It’s about time you got a decent suit and stopped dressing like you shop at the goodwill.” Melanie kept her face straight.

“No, they want me in a *dress*.” William looked away. “They want me to go all out like they do; you know with the makeup, heels, hair, nails and everything else that girls do.”

“That sounds like good fun. You studied art so you should be able to do it well,” Melanie said enthusiastically. “I think you’ll really enjoy it.”

“What part of ‘I’m not going’ did you not hear?”

“Don’t be such a wimp.” Melanie looked at him fiercely. “You’re going. I’m going to help you and you are going to look beautiful.”

“There’s not much chance of that.”

“I have made up my mind; don’t you dare answer back,” Melanie raised her voice. “If you don’t want to go, pack your bags. Get out of here at once. I’ve had enough of your attitude and self-pity, leaving me to clear up after you.”

“You know that there’s nowhere I can go.” William was shocked at her outburst.

“Not my problem.” Melanie’s face was reddening in anger. “It’s time you learned that to get on, you sometimes have to do things you don’t want to do because your friends and colleagues are doing it too. It’s called joining in, or being one of the team.”

“But I’d be humiliated.”

“Do you think that girls are humiliated by dressing nicely?”

“That’s not what I meant.”

“Did you mean that having fun and looking good is only for the girls then?”

“I think they want to make a fool out of me.”

“They probably don’t need any help if that’s your attitude.”

“I’m scared...”

“You are going and that’s an end to it.”

William and Melanie started at each other until William looked away, understanding that he’d lost the argument.

“I’ll tell Sarah that you’ve decided to join in,” Melanie said. “We’re having drinks later this evening. I’m sure she’ll be really pleased to know that the whole team will be together and that you *can* do something for fun.”

“Where’s my clean underwear?” William called down after his shower on Monday morning as he was rushing to get ready for work.

“It’s in your drawer, where it usually is,” Melanie replied.

“It’s not there.” William came into the kitchen a few minutes later. “I think you’ve mixed up your lingerie and put it into my room.”

“No I haven’t.” Melanie smiled. “It’s not my lingerie; it’s *your* new lingerie.”

“But it’s all silky and patterns,” William replied.

“Good lingerie often is.”

“But I can’t wear those things.”

“You can’t wear your old things either. I threw them out,” Melanie said calmly. “They were washed out and horrible anyway.”

“But they were mine.” William’s frustration showed. “They were for a boy. This lingerie isn’t for a boy.”

“It is now. I thought it would help you to get into character for the carnival night,” she replied. “Sarah thought it was such a good idea that she’s arranging for her favourite store to send a set for you.”

“Be serious.” William sat with a sigh. “I can’t wear lingerie to the office.”

“Why? Who usually looks at your underwear in the office?”

William looked at her as if waiting for an explanation. Melanie sighed as if it was too simple for him to understand without prompting.

“No one needs to know unless you tell them.”

“I certainly wouldn’t do that.”

“Think of it as helping you to develop a feminine character for when you really dress up.” Melanie smiled. “Imagine that you’re turning into your favourite, Lady Agnew.”

“Have you been looking at my computer?”

“You told me who it was ages ago when I complimented you on the screensaver.”

“I guess so; she is rather special,” William replied.

“I looked at her again and I think you could look a lot like her,” Melanie said. “Your hair’s not as dark, but long enough to take a decent up do. With good makeup, your facial structure could look like hers. She has eyebrows that would look good today and really sensuous lips.”

“My eyes aren’t that colour.”

William forgot himself; he should be objecting, but here he was following Melanie’s fantasy. Lady Agnew had deep green eyes and William’s were light blue.

“Contact lenses could fix that easily,” Melanie replied. “You used to wear them a lot when you were studying.”

“I still wear them.”

“So it’s settled. Give me your prescription and I’ll order some that will give you that colour,” Melanie replied. “Go and get dressed now and wear the lingerie I’ve put out for you.”

“Do I have to?”

“Yes but only if you want to stay here tonight. Remember, panties have to match the bra; no mixing, its bad taste.”

“Who’s going to know if I match, let alone if I’m wearing a bra?”

“You are and I am. I’ll come to help you fasten your bra and adjust the straps for you.”

“Surely you don’t want me to go that far.”

“I do and the reason is obvious. I know you’ve nothing to put in the cups but it’s the smallest size. You need to get used to feeling one around your chest.”

“Why on earth should I need that?”

“It will change the way you move.” Melanie thought quickly. “When you’ve got your best dress on, it would be awful if you were forever fiddling with your bra.”

“But the panties, the stockings and the garter belt...”

“They’re all essential for you to get used to,” Melanie persisted. “I thought stockings would be easier for you than tights. Think about going to the bathroom.”

William’s shoulders slumped as he stood and went back to his room. Melanie followed a few minutes later.”

“I called Sarah to say that you’d be delayed. She said that she quite understood and to take your time.”

“You told her why too.” William’s face registered his shock as he realised what this meant. “You didn’t have to do that.”

“She’s my friend. Do you want me to lie to her. Anyway, she knows all about it.”

“But how do you expect me to walk in to her office and face her?” William asked. “She’ll know what I’m wearing.”

“Has she ever inspected your underwear?”

“No but she’ll guess...”

“You’re not there to show her your lingerie. You’re there to do your job. I’m sure that she’ll expect nothing less.”

Twenty minutes later, William was standing in front of the mirror in his room. He looked and tried

hard to reconcile the image he was seeing. From the neck down, it was a girl; a girl with very tiny breasts.

The panties were pale pink, decorated with a darker pink flower pattern. They matched the bra which he'd allowed Melanie to fasten and adjust with great reluctance and after many protests. The garter belt matched too and held up nude stockings on six tabs.

William looked and felt a stirring which quickly became a swelling of his penis. He didn't want to feel excited, but he couldn't stop it."

"I think you'd better go and use the bathroom." Melanie smiled at his discomfort.

She sat and smiled knowingly as he closed the door behind himself. She guessed he wouldn't be gone for long.

"I can see that you're feeling better." Melanie smiled as he came back into the room. "I got you a dancer's belt to hold you in."

"Hold me in?" William repeated.

"It's so that you don't have that embarrassment in the office." She pointed meaningfully. "Now you can put your usual work clothes on over your lingerie and no one needs to know what's underneath."

"But I'll know."

"That's the idea," Melanie replied. "A girl needs to know how to wear good lingerie."

"A *girl* needs to know but not a *boy*." William tried to regain some authority.

"In a few days, you'll wonder how you ever managed to wear anything else."

"Does that go for the empty bra as well?"

"You're right; it doesn't look proper," Melanie replied. "I'll have to get something to make it look better."

"I have to go to work, remember." William pulled at the spare material where his bra cups were loose.

"That's no problem," Melanie replied, crossing her fingers. "I can get the smallest breast boosters. They'll never show under your shirt."

As he was going out of the door, Melanie called him back. She inspected him closely and had him turn

round. When he turned back, she sprayed some of her perfume over him.

“Now I’m going to smell like a girl,” he grumbled.

“You’ve a lot to learn if you want to be a girl, but don’t worry. I’ll speak to Sarah and I’m sure she’ll get the girls in the office to help you.”

William wondered if he’d have been better off saying nothing.

It wasn’t a good day at work later that week. William felt that everyone was looking at him; that they all knew what he was wearing. He could feel the way his stockings rubbed against his chinos.

The small bra boosters had been discarded. William thought they were too prominent and made everyone look at him.

Every so often, he’d feel the bra strap slipping off his shoulder and he tried to get it back as inconspicuously as possible. The worst time was when he was explaining rearranged appointments for Sarah.

He was leaning over her shoulder, comparing her screen with the new list in his hand. The strap slipped own and the bra began to bunch under his shirt making a bulge. He tried to be surreptitious, reaching down his open collar to grasp the errant strap.

“I know what you’re doing.” Sarah looked at him with a huge smile on her face. “Your bra strap’s slipping.”

“How did you know?” William was shocked.

“We all know. It shows through your shirt and I see the way you’re standing and moving,” Sarah replied. “All girls have to get used to bra problems.”

“I’m so sorry. Please don’t fire me.”

“I’m never going to fire you,” Sarah laughed. “Melanie would never forgive me and I know you’re wearing her favourite perfume too.”

“It wasn’t my idea.”

“Well, it should have been your idea.”

“I don’t want to change into a girl.”

“That would take a lot of surgery.” Sarah laughed at the absurdity of it all.

“I mean they want me to dress up.”

“Just do it and don’t be embarrassed,” Sarah replied. “Remember, your stepmother is one of my dearest friends. We talk and sometimes you’re mentioned.”

William wished he could drop through the floor. “Melanie made me wear it,” he stuttered.

“And you’d look better if you put some bra boosters in.”

“How did you...” William realised how she knew.

“The loose material showing through your shirt looks messy. A little shape would look better.”

“But it’s embarrassing.”

“Not in an office full of girls and women. It shows you’re fitting in.”

“I’ll try...” William felt defeated once again.

“I’m proud of you,” Sarah said. “The girls in the office do so want you to join in, to be one of them.”

“Please don’t tell anyone.”

“Okay, if that’s what you want but I think they’ve all guessed,” Sarah agreed. “I’m sure they’d help you if you asked.”

“They’d probably assume that I really want to do this and make me go further and further.”

“I can’t see anything wrong with that.” Sarah loved his discomfort. “I bet you’d make someone a beautiful bride.”

William blushed and stepped to the side. He turned his back and wrestled the strap back into place.

“If you want my advice, I’d suggest some weight in the bra cup would hold it into place better and then the strap wouldn’t slip so easily,” Sarah said. “It’s one of the things girls learn.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Young girls always buy a bra too big, wanting to look like they have more than they really have in there,” Sarah said patiently. “When they get wiser,

they understand that a better fit is more comfortable and that size is a matter of under wiring or padding.”

“You make it sound like it’s all calculated.” William looked at her.

“Believe me, most of it is. A girl doesn’t let her bra slip unless she really wants it to.”

“She might want to?” William asked in a surprised voice.

“It makes the boys look,” Sarah replied. “Call it behavioural science.”

“So there’s some science behind this.” William knew he wasn’t expressing himself well.

“It’s more art than science and you’ve a lot to learn.” Sarah shook her head gently. “Remember that the right size bra is the best. It’s a lot more comfortable and secure.”

“I’ll remember,” William replied. “But I’m only intending to do this once.”

Sarah turned her attention back to her appointments and said nothing more on the subject. She’d heard the talk in the office when he wasn’t there.

“Mrs. Marsh, please may I have a minute to speak to you?”

“Of course, Sally. Give me a few minutes to look through these emails. Some of them look important.”

“I’ve already starred the ones you need to look at first,” Sally said. “I’ll get your coffee and come back to talk later.”

It was the usual Monday morning activity. There were the reports of weekend trading in the restaurant and bar chain, posts to fill and errors to fix. There were always staff moving on, and applicants to take their places. Special offers had to be arranged and promotional sales planned.

The Monday afternoon meeting was usually the most important one of the week. Sarah Marsh was proud of her family business. She’d inherited it unexpectedly when her father’s illness prompted him to retire.

Now, five years later, she'd expanded the chain and increased profits. All that time, Sally had been by her side, seamlessly arranging her diary and picking out all the really important matters.

"Now what was it that you wanted to see me about, Sally?" she asked a couple of hours later when that first rush of business problems were cleared.

"I'm pregnant," Sally said.

"Congratulations." Sarah was genuinely pleased. "I know that you and Derek have wanted to start a family from when you were working for my father."

"It's truly a blessing," Sally smiled. "At my age, I was beginning to worry that it would never happen."

"I suppose that this means you'll need to take things easy and then you'll be away on maternity leave."

"I'm so sorry."

"Don't be sorry, I'm so happy for you," Sarah replied. "I'll make sure that you get all the benefits you're entitled to when you have to leave and your job's secure for when you want to come back."

"I know it's going to cause a problem but the gynaecologist wants me to go in hospital. I've got to take it easy afterwards. I've had so much trouble that I don't want to take any risks with the baby."

"Of course you don't," Sarah said.

"Please may I work part time, until I have to finish work to have the baby? I'd like to drop to two days a week at the most." Sally spoke quickly, almost afraid the answer would be negative.

"I think that's very sensible," Sarah replied. "You're going to be a very hard act to follow though. Have you any idea who might be able to take over?"

"I've been giving it some thought," Sally said. "There's only one really; it's got to be William Shaw."

"But he's a man, despite his mother's efforts to get him to be one of the girls. You can't be serious."

"Think about it; you've seen him nearly as often as you've seen me," Sally said. "He's very efficient."

"I suppose you're right." Sarah looked up. "I remember when he started to wear lingerie under his clothes."

"I think that was when he started to fit in with the girls in the office," Sally replied. "It can't be easy being the only man."

"His stepmother is a close friend," Sarah replied. "I think she had a hand in it too."

"He's still wearing really good lingerie," Sally replied. "It almost seems natural now. The girls are looking forward to seeing him all dolled up."

"Don't you think my closest assistant should be one of the girls?"

"There's no reason why your PA shouldn't be a man," Sally replied. "He's reliable and a quick learner."

She didn't say that she thought he might be on a journey away from manhood.

"I know who he is and I know how he's adjusting to fit in, but I can't say that I know him well enough to trust him as much as I trust you."

"There's no reason why you should know him that well but he's been almost shadowing me, getting things in order before I trouble you with them, as well as doing his own work," Sally said. "I really think he'll do well."

"But he's like a little mouse, tucked away in his corner of the office." Sarah could hardly picture him. "Do you really think he'd have the confidence to take over from you?"

"I agree that he's very quiet but he's also super-efficient," Sally said. "And as for confidence, wearing what he does suggests that there's something akin to confidence there."

"Okay, get him to work with you until you have to leave," Sarah decided. "If he can be trained to do things as well as you've always done, I'll be happy."

"Will you tell him or should I?"

"You can tell him; he's your protégé. Tell the wages office to pay him at your grade."

"I don't feel too good." William's face was very pale and he was sweating profusely.

"I'll call the doctor," Melanie said. "My insurance covers you as well, even on a Saturday. I'm sure they'll see you today."

Melanie walked downstairs and, when she was sure that she was out of earshot, called the number she'd stored on her mobile.

"Doctor Sinclair, it's Melanie Shaw," she said. "Remember, that we spoke earlier in the week?"

"I guess he's ready to see me." Helena Sinclair replied. "Did the potion I gave you work?"

"Yes, I slipped it into his drink last night and now he's pale and sweating."

"Can you bring him in to the surgery in the next hour? I'll warn my nurse and I'll see him immediately."

"Get dressed." Melanie said, back in William's room. "The doctor says you're to get there right away. Apparently, there's a lot of this going round and you could be really sick if you don't get it treated quickly."

"Did they say what it is?"

"No. All I did was describe your symptoms."

Half an hour later, William was dressed in a robe in an examination room. He felt so unwell that he forgot to hide his black lace panties. The doctor saw them and smiled inwardly as she took his blood pressure, looked in his eyes, and listened to his chest.

"It's good that you came straight here," she said. "I'm going to give you an injection, some tablets to take, and I'll take some blood to confirm my diagnosis."

"What's wrong with me?" he asked.

"I suspect it's a gastrointestinal infection, coupled with you being rather run down. Have you been working hard recently?"

William wasn't going to deny that. "I guess so," he replied weakly.

"Lie on your stomach on the examination bed. I'll go and get your injection."

The doctor left the room as William did as he was told.



"I only have the children's strength in my cabinet and there's no delivery today from the hospital, so you'll have to take it in two injections."

"Can't you just do one?"

"They come pre-loaded," she replied. "I'm sure that you're not afraid of needles anyway."

Without ceremony, she lifted William's gown and stabbed the right and then his left buttock. "There. That wasn't too bad, was it?"

"Not if it makes me better." William sat up, feeling the pain from the needles as he did so.

"All I have to do now is to take a blood sample." She saw his look. "Don't worry; it's from your arm this time."

Without allowing any time for disagreement, she put his arm on an armrest and before he knew it, she was filling a syringe with his blood.

"I really need to see you again in a week's time," she said. "I should have the results from your blood analysis by then. Meanwhile I'll give you some tablets to take each day."

"Thanks, Doctor." William could feel his stomach settling.

"You can get dressed and I'll tell your mother that you'll be out soon."

William started to dress as she left the room. He was more alert now and more embarrassed that she'd seen his pretty panties.

"Did it work?" Melanie asked as soon as the doctor came out of the examination room.

"Yes, he's got two starter shots. You paid for the strongest hormone treatments and that's what I used. I told him I only had a children's dose, and that's why he had to have two shots. He didn't ask what they were and I didn't tell him."

"That's great," Melanie said. "How long will they take to start acting?"

"It varies with the patient but you can call me when you start to see anything." She handed a bottle of tablets to Melanie. "One each morning is the dose for a week or longer if you can persuade him to go along with it."

"Will he be ready for the second injections?"

“Of course, whenever you can bring him in. That’s what you’re paying me for.”

The doctor disappeared through another door and left her waiting for William who came out a few moments later, dressed and looking much better.

“I think I’ll be okay for work on Monday,” he said. “The doctor said she’d caught it in time to stop it being serious.”

“Did she say what was wrong?” Melanie asked.

“No and I forgot to ask. She did say that there was a lot of it about; something gastro.”

“So you’ll be ready for your new responsibilities on Monday.”

“I’m looking forward to them,” he replied.

“I want to thank you for giving me this chance,” William said shyly when he brought papers for Sarah to approve.

“You have Sally to thank” Sarah said. “You’ve impressed her so much that she recommended you.”

“She’s always been really kind to me,” he replied. “I won’t let you down.”

“I’m glad to have you,” Sarah said. “I know that the girls have taken to you now that you can talk about the same things.”

“I slipped into it.” William blushed. “They started talking about lingerie and the best brands. I told them what mine was and it went on from there.”

“I believe you even modelled for them.”

“That was a bit of silliness when the office closed. They wouldn’t let me out until I showed them,” he replied, arranging the papers for her to read. “I’ve put the most pressing papers on top.”

He almost crept out of the office as Sarah started to read. Time passed and he worked steadily. Under Sally’s tutelage, William proved to be just as efficient as Sally predicted.

A few days later, Sally knocked on the door and came in.

“You haven’t forgotten that Friday’s my last day. I expect to be in hospital for a couple of weeks to have the baby. They say I need to be monitored carefully.”

“You must take all the time you need, I’d never forgive myself if you came back too soon.”

“I’ll be on maternity leave after for a few months. I want to bond really well with my baby.” Sally patted her stomach. “It’ll be good to slim down again too. You’ll have William to look after my job. I hope he’s doing okay.”

“He’s fine,” Sarah replied. “He’s a bit like a ghost in the way he comes and goes so quietly. He’s a complete contrast to you.”

“Give him time. Confidence will come as he grows into the job.”

“I agree. From what I’ve seen he’s really efficient,” Sarah agreed. “I wish I could find someone as able to run things at home.”

“But you live alone.”

“I do but that doesn’t mean that I don’t need some help there,” Sarah replied. “I take work home most nights and the place just gets messier. I’m too tired for housework each day and then comes the weekend. I’m shopping and washing, cleaning and tidying. It never seems to end.”

“I thought you had someone to help with the house.”

“I did but they left a couple of months ago and I haven’t found a replacement.”

“Don’t look at me; I’m going to have my hands full.”

“I’m sure you’ll make a wonderful mother,” Sarah replied. “Your daughter will be very lucky.”

“But that doesn’t solve your problems.”

“I know but there’ll be a solution one day.”

As Sarah spoke, William entered. “Ivana, your nail technician, has arrived,” he announced. “Shall I send her in or ask her to wait?”

“See what I mean? I’m up to my eyeballs in work and my nail technician arrives,” Sarah said to Sally. “I have to try and make time for everything. I was

wondering about having signal red or deep purple extensions for the award ceremony tomorrow.”

“You could have her do one hand in red and the other in purple,” Sally said.

“That would look silly,” Sarah laughed.

“No, I mean you could get them both done, see which you liked best and get the other hand redone in that colour.”

“But I haven’t time,” Sarah said, then looked at William.

“William, could you do me a favour?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Call her in for me.” Sarah looked at Sally and winked as William showed her in.

“This is William; he’s going to be my model,” she announced. “I want you to do his left hand in signal red and the right in deep purple, with long coffin acrylics.”

Ivana looked at William and watched as his face coloured bright red. “You can’t be serious,” he said.

“I haven’t time to argue and I want to see which colour I prefer. You have the time, so you’re the obvious solution.”

“I understand,” William’s protests disappeared. “Of course I’ll be your model.”

Later that day, William returned to model his new nails.

“I still can’t decide,” Sarah said. “Let me look before we go home and I’ll make a decision.”

As they left Sarah’s office, she and Sally exchanged glances as they watched Ivana leaving through the front door. “That was amazingly easy,” Sally said. “I knew he would be willing to do whatever you needed but I never thought any man would agree to that.”

“Me neither.” Sarah looked thoughtful. “He’s going to have a real problem getting them off.”

Sally giggled. “I hadn’t thought of that.”

Then they were distracted and both forgot about William and his new nails.

When the office closed William panicked when he realised that he’d have to go home like that.

Melanie noticed as soon as he came through the door. She said nothing until they were having dinner together.

"I love your nails." She took his hand in hers. "But why do you have different colours on each hand?"

"Sarah couldn't decide which she wanted so she got me to have both done so that she could see them."

"You must like them." Melanie stroked the back of his hand and looked closely at his hands.

"Why do you say that?"

"They're such an elegant length and shape. It must make everything you do with your hands feel so different."

"I wanted to have the technician take them off but she'd left before Sarah got to inspect my hands. Now I'm stuck with them." William looked at his hands. "Can you take them off for me?"

"No, I'd probably damage your hands," Melanie lied. "They're professionally bonded and I don't have a solvent to release them. Apart from the different colours, why would you want to remove them anyway? I think they look really good."

William looked at his hands again and suddenly realised he was admiring them.

"They look like hands that are cared for," Melanie said gently, noticing how he was looking at them. "You haven't said anything about how you can work with them."

"They do look so different and I've got a way of using my keyboard with the flat of my fingers. It's not so difficult. What is difficult is getting things from my pocket and people staring at me when they see my hands."

"There's an easy way to solve that," Melanie replied. "I'll lend you one of my purses."

"Isn't that going too far?"

"I was thinking of a plain one for you to use instead of your pockets."

"People will still stare."

“Maybe they will but there’s something you could do about that too.”

“I don’t know what you mean.” William looked puzzled.

“You’re afraid that people will think you’re a strange sort of boy,” Melanie said. “But with a little makeup, you could pass as a girl and no one would give you a second glance.”

“Now you’re being stupid.” William’s voice rose.

“Calm down,” Melanie said softly. “All I mean is a little trace. You could look like a real tomboy, rather than some effeminate in-between.”

“That sounds mad.”

“Let me show you,” Melanie said. “You can wash it off if you don’t like it. You’ve nothing to lose except a little embarrassment.”

William sat silently. Melanie walked to her purse and brought it back to the table.

“A little eye makeup will change the whole aspect of your face,” she said. “The girls in the office will love you for it.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of.” William saw that she was amused and laughed with her.

“I was only suggesting a little makeup, not a full makeover.”

“All right, you can have your evil way,” he said. “Show me what you mean.”

“All you’re going to use is here.” Melanie put a pencil and a tube on the table. “This is a kohl eyeliner and the tube is maşcara. They’re both black and they’re easy to apply.”

“I’ve seen the girls in the office using them.”

“So you know what to do,” Melanie said. “Here’s a small mirror. You can try now and I’ll tell you if you’re doing it wrong.”

William looked at her, realising that he was trapped. Slowly, he complied.

“That’s wonderful,” Melanie said when he’d finished. “I like the way you did the water line and smudged the line above your eye.”

“That wasn’t entirely deliberate,” William confessed. “It went a bit wrong and I smudged it then.”

"It looks good and your mascara looks like you've been doing it since you were a little girl."

"I was never a little girl."

"I wish you'd been a little girl," Melanie said. "That would have made being your stepmother easier."

"Am I difficult?"

"You have been but we're changing all that now." Melanie liked the way her plans were developing. "A little lip gloss is all you need to add for now."

She watched as William obediently brushed the gloss over his lips and instinctively rubbed them together.

"That looks really good," Melanie approved. "Now you could pass as a girl on her way to work. Act confident, even if you're not and no one will give you a second glance."

"Do you mean that I look a bit like an ordinary girl?"

"For today, of course," Melanie said but what she didn't say was that she intended him to look much different in time.

William felt as if he'd stepped willingly into a trap from which escape would be difficult.

Next morning, William dressed as usual. He checked that he didn't need to shave; rubbing his chin and not really sure if he should feel disappointed or glad. He sat in front of the mirror on his wall for a few moments, thinking about the traces which remained around his eyes.

"Do I go and ask Melanie for something to take it off?" he asked himself as he looked more deliberately at his eyes. "She'd never let me," he decided.

The eyeliner pencil and the mascara were on the vanity in front of him. He didn't remember picking them up from the table last night and didn't remember putting them there, but there they were.

He sighed and looked again. He knew it would be easy to stroke the pencil around his eyes and how a swipe of the mascara could change his lashes into something striking.



He shrugged and, seemingly without making a decision, his eyes were made up again. It wasn't subtle. Lip gloss followed. The makeup was unmistakable and seemed to change his whole face. He could feel some butterflies in his tummy as he stood back from the mirror and looked more critically.

His hand stroked his cheek. The red talons went with the eye makeup. He suddenly felt like he was trespassing in some strange country; a country of women but it was alright. He'd chosen it this time. Melanie hadn't pushed him across the border; it was his choice.

He put his mobile into the shoulder bag, seeing that other things from his pockets were already in there. Melanie must have done it when he was asleep. A final look but he wasn't ready. He loosened his hair, brushed it through, and allowed it to fall over his shoulders.

It looked better that way. He heard Melanie as he walked through the house. He hoped to get out without her seeing him.

"Don't sneak out like that." She caught him at the door and looked at him. "That's so much better. I love your hair loose."

"Thanks," William mumbled.

"You look great. I'll take you to get some pretty earrings and ask my stylist if she can trim your hair."

"I don't want my hair cut." William was on the defensive immediately.

"I don't mean she'll cut it, just trim away the split ends so that it looks healthier, believe me. You'll turn head afterwards."

"I don't think I want to turn heads," William replied. "That's for the girls."

"Said the guy with the eye makeup and shoulder bag."

William accepted her pack on the cheek and took a deep breath before putting his hand on the door latch. He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror there and couldn't help liking what he saw.

He felt a sudden confidence in his appearance as he left the house. Now all he had to do was brave the girls in the office.

"Honorary girl, here I come." He smiled to himself.

Walking into the office was scary. William crept to his desk and started to work with his head down as much as he could. It was all in vain. Within a few moments he could hear whispers and signals around him.

“Okay, I’ll let you all take a look.” He stood with his heart thumping and looked round to see that he had their attention. “It’s a bit of eye makeup; it doesn’t mean anything.”

There was a silence for a few moments, then everyone spoke at once. He sat down again and the chatter faded.

“I think you’re very brave.” Zoe perched on the edge of his desk. “You’ve realised that you could be quite attractive as a woman and I’m so pleased to see that you can accept it.”

“I’m not changing sex,” William blurted rather too loudly.

“I never thought you were,” Zoe replied. “I’m so happy that you’re able to try things out.”

“I know you all want me to dress up,” he stuttered.

“Of course we do but that’s not something for you to be afraid of. We’ll all look after you.”

“That’s *what* I’m afraid of,” William couldn’t help a smile. “I’m not sure about what that might include.”

“It’s going to include us all having a good time.” She took his hand and held it. “And you really must get your nails done properly. Having different colours on each hand is not a sign of elegance.”

“May I ask...” William placed a folder on Sarah’s desk later that day. “When is Ivana coming back. I’d like her to take these nails off?”

“Let me see.” Sarah looked at his hands and then held out hers. “Oh dear, you still have those nails. She came to see me at home. I went with the signal red.” She held up her hands to show him.

William still had the elegant long nails he’d modelled for her. They were still perfect in length and colour.

“That’s rather awkward,” William replied. “I’ve been hiding these for the last few days but I’m getting used to them and I forget to hide them. People look at me.”

“I can guess why.” Sarah looked at him, really looked at him for the first time that day. “I can see your eye makeup; it’s good and understated. There’s something more though. I think there’s an understated femininity about you today.”

“I’m not sure that’s something I want, but it stops people looking at my nails and wondering what sort of boy I am.”

“I’m not surprised but how have you managed? I’d forgotten that you were my hand model; that must have been... four days ago?”

“It’s not been too bad. I can type with the balls of my fingers and I started to use a shoulder bag for my wallet, mobile, notebook and all the rest of the stuff that I used to carry in my pockets.”

“But what about when you’re at home?”

“My stepmother thinks I should keep them, but then she’s always on my case.” William smiled ruefully. “I don’t go out much so there’s no one else to see them.”

“What about your father?”

“He’s not around; there’s just the two of us most of the time. I don’t think either of us really expects to see him again,” William replied. “I got left with her when he disappeared.”

“That must have been hard.” Sarah could tell that there was some hurt there, so she changed the subject. “I’m impressed with the way you adapted to those nails and I’m surprised that you didn’t kick up some fuss.”

“Stepmother admired them so much. She always said that she’d have preferred if I’d been a girl.”

“I’ll call Ivana right away.” Sarah reached for the phone on her desk. “I’m sure she’ll be able to get here before we close this evening.”

Ivana arrived just as the office was closing.

“I’m so sorry,” she said. “I completely forgot about his nails. It’s unforgivable because I see so few men. I should have remembered.”

“Never mind.” Sarah dropped her voice. “I think he’s quietly enjoyed the experience ,although he’d never admit it. Maybe you could persuaded him into something less noticeable, but secretly feminine.”

“What’s secretly feminine about acrylic nails?”

“I’ve no idea but that’s what I want you to do.”

“I’ll see what I can do.” Ivana understood who was paying. “How long do you want them to be?”

“I’ll leave the length and colour to you,” Sarah said, indicating with her hands that longer nails would be better.

Sarah returned to her desk but she couldn’t concentrate. Very quietly, she opened her door and looked across the outer office where Ivana was working on William’s hands. She couldn’t hear what was being said which was frustrating as she returned to complete things which had to be finished today.

“Ivana said you needed to see me as soon as she’d finished.” William came to stand beside her desk. “She said she had to hurry to her next client and she’d see you as usual.”

“I’ve quite forgotten why I needed you.” Sarah vamped an answer but she knew why Ivana had sent him. “Could you pass these drawings back to the general office?”

She held the papers close deliberately so that he would have to reach for them.

“I like your nails now.” She took his hand and held it to look as he reached for the papers, seeing the French manicure. They were a little too pink, a little too white, and almost as long as the ones she’d taken off.

“Ivana said she had to leave them longer than I would have liked,” he said. “I didn’t know but she told me that the work she did to attach the acrylics would have done something to the surface of the nail underneath. She had to cover it to prevent infection.”

“She’s a very reliable and clean technician.” Sarah was delighted by the ruse which had worked so well.

Sarah watched as he turned and walked out of her office. He was so slim and for some reason, she thought the way he moved was elegant, smooth and coordinated.

She saw how he held his hands. That was different and much more feminine than before. She tried to concentrate on her work but other thoughts were swirling round her mind.

"If that's what a little change can do to him, I wonder how he'd accept something outrageous," she thought.

A few days later, William was standing at her side as she sat at her desk. He was putting paper after paper in front of her to sign off. She saw how feminine and elegant his nails looked as he shuffled the papers and took his hand.

"I'm going to tell Ivana to see you every week, before she does my nails," Sarah said. "I want you to keep your hands nice and have attractive nails as long as you're working for me."

"But they look a bit feminine." William's protest was made softly.

"I know, that's what I like about them," she said. "It will remind you that you're working for me every time you see your hands."

William thought of protesting more but he'd gotten used to having long nails. These didn't look so bad and he'd learned to ignore the looks when anyone noticed that they were so beautifully manicured.

If Sarah wanted him to have nails like this, he knew he'd comply. It wasn't as if he had a girlfriend to notice them anyway.

And thus it went. Days turned to weeks and weeks turned to months. William worked steadily and reliably. Nothing was too much trouble and nothing turned into a crisis.

The fuss about his lingerie died down too and Sarah saw how he adapted. He was no longer embarrassed and even shared catalogues and new styles with the girls. No one seemed to notice that he now had green eyes, thanks to coloured contact lenses or that lip gloss had given way to a real lipstick.

Then there was the repeat visit to the doctor. Melanie insisted that he should go and this time she remained in the waiting room as he went into the examination room.

He was careful to dress conventionally – well, as conventionally as he could, with plain black panties and knee-high stockings under his jeans. If the doctor noticed his shoes were ballet flats, she didn't say a word.

“Your blood test is fine,” the doctor announced. “Another vitamin injection should restore your energy level and ensure that you don't relapse.

“Is it really necessary?” William didn't like needles.

“I wouldn't be suggesting it if the injection wouldn't do you good,” she replied. “And you were a brave boy last time.”

William wasn't sure he liked being cajoled this way but, compliantly, he pulled his jeans down and felt the cold touch of the antiseptic and then the stab of a needle in each cheek.

He was being ushered out before he had time to ask anything, not that he had any reason to question his treatment. Melanie spoke quietly with the doctor but he didn't pay any attention to that either; all he wanted to do was get out of there.

At the office, Sarah found herself watching him more and more. He strove to please and if ever there was a word of criticism, he worked harder to make sure that whatever it was did not recur. She watched his hands as they passed her coffee, her documents, her purse, anything at all.

His nails were always perfect from her nail technician. He was blasé about it and now didn't mind sitting in the office with everyone watching as Ivana renewed his manicure every week, either before or after Sarah's were done.

“Stop it, Sarah,” she chided herself. “He's much too young for you.”

As she said it, a little voice inside her head was telling her something completely different. An old fantasy was emerging, one which she might be able to change into a reality; after all what was ten or twelve years difference?

At first he took a bit of ribbing; a few off-colour remarks from the women who saw him having his nails done. Sarah intervened gently to show she not only approved but required that he have nice hands as he did so many things directly for her in her office. As the weeks passed, it became accepted as normal.

Gradually, Sarah started to involve him in more and more of her life. He was sent to housesit when she had to be away for a few days. He wandered through the rooms, wondering what it must be like to live in such luxury. He ventured into her bedroom and explored her clothes, her makeup and perfume, her jewellery.

"I wish I could..." the thought came to his head as he held up one of her dresses against himself. "But no, she trusts me to be here and look after things."

He didn't know that Sarah was watching his every move through hidden cameras in her home and a secure connection to her laptop.

He was asked to deal with her decorator and gardener. When her cleaning company was found wanting, William was in charge of finding and hiring their replacement.

Quite quickly Sarah judged that he had better taste than she did and a positive flair for getting things right and fashionable. His duties extended to arranging caterers for her parties, a marquee and entertainment for the staff party.

These were things which Sarah and Sally had fretted over and now they seemed to flow successfully without any effort.

"He's becoming indispensable," Sarah confided in Melanie when they met for one of their regular lunches.

"I can't believe the change in him," Melanie replied. "He's like another person."

"That's no exaggeration," Sarah agreed. "I think it all started when you made him wear lingerie. He was so quiet for a while and then it was as if he found a new confidence."

"And your ploy with the acrylic nails helped. He's so careful and clean around the house."

"Do you think that's what gotten him to makeup?"

"I simply encourage him. I complement him and leave cosmetics around the house. He reads my magazines and I've seen him watching instruction videos. I've stopped being subtle now. I buy something new, like a new lipstick, and give it to him to try."

"Did I tell you about him spending ages looking through my bedroom and my dressing room?"

“You did and you showed me that video where he held up your dress against himself,” Melanie replied. “He doesn’t seem to have realised that your things would fit him though.”

“I think he’s too conscientious,” Sarah replied. “He’d love to try them but he’s looking after the place for me.”

“I think I should feel guilty about his injections,” Melanie said. “But I don’t and if he’s changing, it’s been subtle so far and I do think it’s made him a better person.”

“He seems a little more confident but he’s never assertive at work, even when he knows he’s right about something. He has a way of pleasing people.”

“That sounds like William,” Melanie agreed.

“I can’t believe how much I’ve come to depend on him,” Sarah said. “He’s been so good at helping me deal with things at home as well as in the office.”

“He’ll make a good wife for someone one day,” Melanie quipped. They both laughed.

“Maybe I should give him an excuse to try some of my clothes,” Sarah thought out loud. “I could pretend to sort some bags to give to goodwill.”

“And some shoes,” Melanie added.

“Leave that for me,” Sarah replied. “I’ll make it work somehow.”

The carnival night approached. Melanie was so excited to see what William could be turned into. She started with taking a copy of that Lady Agnew portrait to a special dressmaker.

“He’s going to be using some padding in his bra and he’d hate it to look too obvious,” Melanie said as they poured over an enlargement of the portrait.

“I can do something like that,” the dressmaker said. “It’s a dazzling portrait.”

“I think she was about 26 when she sat for the painting. I think she looks assured and like a lady who really knew her own mind; confident and in control of everything around her.”

“Your William is a bit younger, I think.”

“He’s only a couple of years younger.”

“The neckline with those flounces will be excellent. I can make it appear to be lower cut than it really is and the way the fabric falls will make the breast area look bigger with subtle padding.”

“What about the sash at the waist, with those extravagant pieces of fabric trailing as if it were a bow tied there?”

“I do love that effect, it’s so delicious. It’s good that it’s so wide. There’s a lot of material to play with and the ribbons falling from it are good too.” The dress-maker looked at the style again. “I can’t tell exactly how it was done there but I can do something very similar. The loose ribbons could be a casual bow, would float as the wearer moves.”

“I guess that when the dress was made, they didn’t use zippers like we do today.”

“No, I’ll have to make it a bit more practical too. The sheer luxury of the fabric is impossible today without spending a fortune.”

“What do you suggest?”

“I’m going to make the sleeves a little longer and opaque rather than the gauze of the original. I can do the decoration on the shoulders and on the cuffs too.”

“I think you might make the skirt shorter and a little less full.”

“Don’t you think he’d like it to feel like he was wearing such a lot of material in the skirt?”

“Do you think that would be better?”

“It hasn’t to be too long.” The craftswoman looked again. “He’s not Cinderella going to the ball, just below the knee would look good. Leave it with me and I’ll work it out.”

“When do you need him for a fitting?”

“Ideally as soon as possible.”

“I’ll call you,” Melanie replied, reaching for her mobile.

“I’m here until late most evenings,” the dress-maker replied. “It’s when I get most of the measuring and fittings done.”

Meanwhile, William was watching the office clock inching towards the time to close. He reached for his jacket, thankful for the thought that it would cover him from further embarrassment. Then his mobile rang.

“What now?” he said as Melanie told him that she was picking him up for a fitting.

“Be there waiting,” she said.

“That was embarrassing,” William said as they drove home after his first fitting.

“I thought you looked as if you were enjoying Lady Agnew’s dress brought up to date.”

“I’m not happy. I don’t like the way everyone thinks I could look like a real girl.”

“But you can’t hide it. You loved the way she could see that dress styled especially for you?”

“That was really impressive,” William said slowly, his mind wandering to how it would feel to be walking in that lovely dress. “But I’m still a boy.”

“Of course you are, dear,” Melanie humoured him. “I never think of you as anything else.”

“Of course not,” William said sarcastically, then he caught the glint in her eye and smiled himself. “Do you think I could get away with it... really?”

“If I have anything to do with it, you’ll be so amazing you’ll want to date yourself,” Melanie said in an exaggerated accent, making them both laugh.

“Seriously, I think you could look really good,” Melanie said after a pause. “Put yourself into my hands. I’ll not ask you to do anything silly but with a good hairdresser and a few other things, you’ll be so happy when you’re all dressed and made-up and everything...”

“What’s everything?” William asked.

“It’s all the girl secrets that I’m going to arrange for you,” Melanie replied. “Don’t ask me to list them; I haven’t thought of them all yet.”

“Why does it make me scared when I hear you say that?” William asked casually.

“That’s because I’m your evil stepmother,” Melanie replied. “And I’m going to turn you into my stepdaughter.”

“Do I get to be evil too?”

“No, you get to be a submissive girl who does what she’s told.”

William laughed but his mind was wondering how far he wanted to go and how far she intended to make him go. There could be a problem coming.

“Why on earth did I allow all this to happen?” William sat in his room and tried to make sense of it all. “I should have stopped it all ages ago.”

He started to take off his work clothes and then came to look at himself in the mirror.

“I even wear a bra every day.” He felt the cups with the tiny fillers against his chest. “I don’t need to but it’s become second nature. And stockings; how many girls wear a garter belt and stockings every day?”

He sat and let his mind churn along for a few moments, thinking about everything and nothing. Idly, he examined his hands with the long French manicured acrylic nails he’d worn for so long, and sighed.

“Melanie said she was turning me into her stepdaughter,” he said to himself. “I think there’s more than that. The girls in the office expect me to dress up. Melanie’s joining in and Sarah acts like it’s all expected.”

He sighed and looked at himself again.

“I’ve no idea what’s happening to me.”

He may have had no idea but as he was wondering, Melanie and Sarah were plotting and planning.

“I’m going to ask him to look after my house for a week,” Sarah said. “Whatever he asks for, you can’t bring it for him.”

“I don’t understand,” Melanie replied.

“He’s going to be abandoned there with full access to everything I have,” Sarah replied. “There’ll be all my clothes and shoes and you can guess he’ll be tempted. I’m going to make it sound like I don’t care what he does.”

“But he’ll want his own things if he’s going to be there for a week.”

“I’m going to spring it on him so that he’s very little time to think and less time to plan.”

“That’s really wicked,” Melanie giggled. “I bet he tries everything on. Those injections should be starting to kick in soon. I wonder if they’ll alter his perceptions.”

“That’s too deep a question for me,” Sarah replied. “We’ve been throwing femininity at him from all sides, so something must be percolating through his brain.”

“William, could you look after my house for the week?” Sarah asked one Monday morning. “There’s a contractor coming to check plans to enlarge the orangery and I have to be away all week.”

“When will he be coming?”

“That’s the problem. I’m not sure but one afternoon. I don’t want to miss him; this is a job I want to hurry along,” Sarah said. “You’ll have to be there from this evening until I get back.”

“I’m sure I can,” he replied, thinking of her wardrobe again. “I’ll have to call home and check.”

“That’s okay; I’m going to speak to Melanie later. I’ll tell her and then you can ride home with me.”

“I need some clothes and other things,” William said.

“I’m on a tight schedule. We can pick up some jeans for you on the way home. You won’t need much else and there’s everything else in the house. Help yourself; treat it as your home. You’re doing me a big favour after all.”

“If you’re sure.”

“Of course I am,” Sarah replied. “I’ll leave you there, grab my bag and leave you to it.”

The day went by very slowly. William watched the clock. Would it never get to the time to go? His mind was racing. “Treat it as your own,” she’d said. He dreamt that she included her wardrobe as well. He knew he’d be unable to resist another opportunity.

Finally they were off. William sat in the passenger seat as she drove first to a small mall. They walked in together and with little ceremony, she grabbed two

pairs of jeans, one black, paid for them and rushed back to the car with a bemused William in tow.

“What about a shirt?” he asked as the car set off again. “I can’t wear this all week.”

“I didn’t think of that,” Sarah said. “I haven’t time to go back; you’ll have to look in my wardrobe. There must be something in there that would do.”

“Okay,” William replied, not wanting any excitement to show in his voice.

“There are some things on the floor in my bedroom. Could you bag them up if you’ve time?” Sarah asked. “They’re for the goodwill shop.”

“I could take them for you.”

“No, that’s no good. I need you to stay there. You can’t drive anyway so it would take you ages,” Sarah said. “We can do it when I’m back.”

Twenty minutes later, William was in her house.

“I’ll leave you to look after everything,” Sarah said, rushing down the stair with her travel bags. “Go anywhere; use anything you want. Get comfortable in my bedroom; the spare isn’t made-up. I’ll see you later on Saturday.”

William waved her off with a grin like the cat that’d been given all the cream.

“I can’t believe this,” William said to himself. “She said that I can help myself.”

With mounting excitement, he went up the stairs and into Sarah’s bedroom. It was far more than a bedroom. There was a huge walk-in wardrobe, with neatly arranged sections for dresses and skirts, blouses and shoes. Drawers held lingerie in all colours.

The top shelf made him jump when he opened the upper closet. There were eyes looking at him from all sides. He gasped startled until he realised that they were wigs on lifelike heads for storage.

The vanity had a full makeup mirror and drawers full of everything William had ever heard of and a few more besides. The bathroom had a full tropical shower as well as the biggest tub he’d ever seen.

“This is like letting a kid loose in a candy store.” William sat on the bed and looked at all the riches around him.

“That must be the goodwill pile.” He spied folded garments on the floor beside the door and carefully started to go through them. “I can’t believe all this. She could probably wear something different every day of the year. I could wear something different every day that she’s away... If I dare.”

William stood, looked round again and went downstairs. Suddenly he was certain that he dared; the problem lay in deciding what to wear.

He was too excited to eat and nibbled an apple in the kitchen. The light was fading as he walked from room to room, closing the blinds and drapes, then found that he was once again in Sarah’s bedroom, looking at the riches there.

Her music player stood on the bedside cabinet. He turned it on and soft jazz filled the room. He sat on the bed and took a deep breath to calm himself down, as his eyes went to the goodwill pile.

“She wouldn’t mind,” he thought. “And she wouldn’t notice anyway as I’m packing them up to go. I don’t have to do that today.”

He didn’t see the pinhole cameras around the room, not that he could have found them all, even if he knew they were there.

His eyes strayed again to the clothes, wondering why she could decide to discard so many things. He held them up in turn; the scent of her perfume lingered and filled his nostrils.

“I wonder what it could be like to wear such beautiful scents every day,” he thought, burying his nose deep into the folds.

Towards the bottom of the pile, he came to a nightdress and matching robe in flame red. They were ornate; extravagant to the extent that he wondered if they were meant for bed, or perhaps for activities of a different sort before bed.

They were irresistible and before he had time to think, his clothes were discarded and he was slipping the nightdress over his head, then his arms into the sleeves of the gown. He turned to the closets in

search of shoes or slippers to match. There were none and he had to make do with some mules with black marabou feather trim and wedge heels.

He stopped to look in the mirror and liked what he saw. Almost on auto-pilot, he sat at the vanity and lined his eyes with a dark brown kohl pencil and his lashes with mascara.

“That’s not how it should be done,” he told his reflection. “It’s enough for me this evening.”

He went downstairs, settled in a large cuddle chair and tucked his feet under him, wrapping the gown around his legs. With remote control in hand, he settled to watch something on cable until when he realised that he was dozing. He went upstairs again.

Once there, he realised that his clothes were still in Sarah’s room. He knew he’d love to sleep there but he didn’t dare. He collected his things and looked into the next room along. It looked like a guest room and it was there that he decided to sleep.

He lay down, feeling the gown around himself and realised that it wasn’t for sleeping in. He hung it over a chair and after looking again at how the nightdress caressed his body; he got into bed and fell asleep at once.

Next morning, he understood why girls always should clean their makeup off before they go to bed. His pillows were marked a little but when he looked in the mirror, he had huge black eyes; something like an untidy panda might look.

He stripped and showered in Sarah’s bathroom. The shampoo and conditioner were a world away from the products he used at home. These were soft and scented, and made his hair feel silky, even in its wet state.

He wrapped a towel round his head like a turban in the way he’d seen Melanie wearing one. He stood near the mirror and inspected his body.

“That’s strange.” He felt across his chest. “My nipples are really sensitive and the flesh looks different. I used to have solid muscle there. I wonder if I’ve not been exercising enough now that I’m working.”

He discarded the thought and wrapped a second huge bath sheet around himself, fastening it high



under his arms, as if to hide the breasts he didn't have. It all felt deliciously forbidden and naughty.

Maybe they want me to pretend to be a girl but this isn't for them," he decided. "This is for me."

He sat at Sarah's vanity and used her hair drier to blow his hair dry. He stood and dried it upside down. He'd seen Melanie doing the same thing. She said it made her hair look bigger than it was. He knew to brush it through with the drier afterwards so that it hung straight and full down to his shoulders.

"The contractor will be coming some afternoon." He remembered what Sarah had said. "So the morning and the evening I can dress up."

The more the idea circulated in his brain, the more he liked it. He could no more have resisted it than anything else in the world.

"I think I should dress for the office on the mornings, change back into a boy for the afternoon, then I can dress any way I fancy for dinner," he decided. "I can use YouTube and learn how to do makeup properly so my time won't be wasted."

Any inhibitions or thoughts that he didn't want to dress as a girl were lost amidst all the opportunity presented to him. The silly boy didn't even stop to wonder if this was some sort of trap leading him on.

Using YouTube, he watched a video and managed to make his hair behave as he folded into some sort of French pleat. A few locks didn't want to be arranged and persistently fell over his eyes and over his ears. Patiently, he took it down again. This time, with the addition of hair spray, he formed it into a sensible up do.

"I should have got my ears pierced when I had the chance," He thought as the stark choice of clip-on earrings was not good and hurt his ears. "Piercing may hurt a bit, but they say that it soon heals. This nipping goes on and on but I do like the look of earrings."

Two hours later, he was dressed for the office in a white blouse and a pencil skirt. He wobbled on heels so high that he wasn't used to them.

"Damn, they hurt," he thought. "But there's only one way to get used to them."

He made himself walk up and down more than strictly necessary. He took smaller steps, placing his

leading foot deliberately in front of the one behind. He'd heard that would help his posture and help him develop a wiggle in his hips.

He paused momentarily to wonder why he'd want to have a wiggle in his hips but the question soon slipped from his mind.

After a light lunch, he showered and made sure that all traces of his makeup were cleaned away carefully in case the contractor arrived but once the clock ticked round to evening, he changed again.

The first evening he chose a yellow sundress with spaghetti straps. Perhaps the neckline was too low for he was conscious that however he arranged his padded breasts, the padding would show unless he was very careful.

He blew his hair dry; trying to make sure it was as full as it could possibly be as it fell over his shoulders. No one was going to see him so he felt free to experiment with his makeup. He might make a mess, but he could wipe it off and try again. He might be overly made-up, but he had only himself to please.

He liked the way he was learning and as the evening turned to late evening, he returned to the bedroom and tried on some of the wigs from Sarah's cupboard. He loved it instantly. He blondes made him feel lighthearted and frivolous, the darker ones made him feel more serious and, he had to admit, sexier too.

"I'm falling in love with my own image," he thought more than once as he looked in the mirror.

It had to happen. It was Thursday and early evening. William had changed and dressed in a pale blue dress with short sleeves and a boat neck. He'd curled his hair roughly with the heated rollers he found in Sarah's drawers so that his hair was arranged extravagantly as it fell loosely over his breast.

His makeup was perfect; the best he'd ever achieved, with smoky eyes and pale lips. He'd been generous with Sarah's perfume too. He crossed the conservatory and went into the garden, listening to the satisfying click of his stiletto heels on the hard floor.

He was congratulating himself on his mastery of the heels when a voice called from quite near. He turned, with his heart thumping.

"I didn't mean to startle you, miss." An older man in workman's clothes stood there. "I'm running so late. I didn't realise it," he stuttered, obviously embarrassed to have startled William. "I hope you don't mind if I do some measuring and take a few photos."

"Not at all." William realised that his voice wasn't working as it should and coughed to clear his throat. "Please carry on."

He could feel embarrassment and hoped that he didn't blush or that his makeup would hide it. He kept his voice softer and higher.

"Do you need me to do anything?" William asked.

"No, it's all simple." The contractor held up something the size of a mobile phone and, working from special pegs in the ground and the solid walls of the house, took the measurements he wanted. He took a few photos. William stayed out of the way but thought that the camera had been pointing at him a few times.

"I suppose I should feel flattered," he thought, raising his hand to shield his face.

"That's everything," the man declared a few measurements later. "I only need to see where the water connections would be and then I'm finished."

"I'm not really sure," William admitted. "I'm only house sitting while Sarah's away."

"We'll look together," the man replied. "Maybe we could try the garage?"

William got the remote control and they walked round and into the darker garage. The man stopped and brushed against William's chest as he squeezed past, despite the fact that there was more than ample room there.

He heard something drop on the floor and instinctively bent down to see what it was. No sooner had he done that, than a hand was squeezing his rear. He stood with a jump and backed away.

"I'm sorry," the man said, with a look that suggested that he was anything but sorry. "I bent down to look and lost my balance."

"If you haven't gotten enough, I think you'd better come back when Sarah's here," William said nervously, feeling a cold sweat.

“That’s fine.” The workman backed away and started to walk towards his pick-up. “Tell her I’ll be in touch,” he called back over his shoulder.

William went back inside and locked the door. He was surprised to find that his hands were shaking. It took him some minutes to feel calm again.

He double checked the locks before going upstairs to clean his makeup and change for bed. Once he was enveloped in the lace folds of his nightdress, he felt better and relaxed.

“I guess girls get that sort of thing,” he thought. “I’ll have to ask Sarah if it’s alright to slap the guy.”

All too soon it was Friday evening. Sarah was due home the next day but William had no idea what time she’d be back.

“I guess now that the contractor’s been here, I won’t be disturbed,” he thought as he pondered what to wear that afternoon. “It’s really sunny out there and that floaty sundress is calling to me.”

He showered and dried his hair quickly, bending so that he could dry it upside down as one of the videos had suggested.

“That’s amazing volume,” he thought as he tossed his hair back and watched it fall into waves over his shoulders. “It’s going to look good just like that.”

He ran his fingers through it and tucked it behind his ears to do his makeup.

“I think it has to be heavy round the eyes, with a lot of black shadow and mascara,” he decided. “I like this look too much. If anyone could see me, they’d think I was addicted to black eye makeup... which I probably am.”

He spent a lot of time on his eyes and then took a pale lipstick just to make sure that his lips didn’t dry out in the sun. An hour later, he was reclining on a sun lounger, under a parasol, with the radio playing softly. He was at peace with the world.

“Fancy me getting paid to housesit and to dress up at the same time,” he thought. “And to think that it was something I never even imagined just a few weeks ago.”

“You look like a lady of leisure.” Melanie’s voice interrupted his afternoon.

“How did you know I was here?” He sat up quickly.

“It wasn’t difficult. You weren’t at the office, you weren’t at home. Sarah’s away, so where else would you be?”

“It’s not what you think...” he started.

“Don’t be silly.” Melanie came to sit next to him. “I think you make a lovely girl and that you’ve been practising being a girl all week.”

How did you...”

“It wasn’t difficult,” Melanie replied. “You never saw the cameras all over this place. Sarah’s sent me a few pictures. I think you’re doing very well.”

“She never said there were cameras.”

“Well, she wouldn’t, would she?”

“I guess...” William tried to think where the cameras might be hidden and how much he’d been on display.

“You didn’t even dress as a boy when the contractor came,” Melanie smiled. “He was quite taken with you. He asked me if I could get him a date.”

“I didn’t think he’d come that late in the day.”

“Obviously.”

“You know him? He talked to you?”

“He’s a dear friend,” Melanie replied. “I promised him that you’d be delighted to have dinner with him. He’s picking you up here at eight.”

“This evening?”

“Yes, this evening and you’re going to be ready, unless you want me to show him all the pictures I have.”

“You can’t do that,” William gasped in terror. “You can’t make me.”

“Of course I can’t but he’ll be here at eight and you’ll have to tell him yourself.”

“I can’t...”

“Of course you can,” Melanie said. “I promised that my step-daughter would be ready and delighted. I told him how shy and inexperienced you were.”

“At least you got that part right,” William replied.

“It’s no use resisting it,” Melanie said. “Haven’t you worked out what those injections you had were for?”

“They were vitamins.” William looked at her and understood that he’d been stupid. “They were something else. Is that why my hips are getting a bit rounder and my nipples are itching?”

“That’s the hormones working,” Melanie replied. “I told you that I’d prefer to have a step-daughter rather than a step-son.”

“They can’t work forever.” William tried to stare her down.

“Maybe they can’t work forever but there’s a big enough dose inside you to keep you changing for a long time yet.”

“What do you mean?”

“You got two injections of long-acting, slow-release capsules each time.”

“I’ll get them taken out.”

“Silly boy; they don’t come out.” Melanie smiled. “They’re like a gel inside your muscle, slowly dissolving. They’re very expensive.”

“That’s not a consolation.” William could feel a cold sweat of fear rising.

“They’re very gentle too.” Melanie smiled again. “They work slowly and inexorably. There’s nothing you can do to stop them. Very soon, your breasts should start to develop. Trying to go back to being a boy will be impossible without some serious surgery.”

“Why didn’t I realise?” William sat back in horror.

“You weren’t meant to realise. Once the gel had been injected, there was nothing you could do anyway.”

“So I’m stuck.” William suddenly felt calmer. “I’m a girl whatever I do.”

“Not completely but I’ll leave that explanation for later.” Melanie smiled again; a smile that said she was pleased with herself.

“Does Sarah know?”

“She didn’t at first but after the injections, I had to tell her.”

“She never said.”

“What could she have said?” Melanie continued to smile. “Hey, your step-mother’s like the Wicked Witch of the West?”

“Maybe something like that would have been good,” William replied.

“Don’t mistake her,” Melanie replied. “I think she really likes you and if she said anything, she would be afraid that you’d blame her.”

William couldn’t think of what to say next. He felt as if the world as he understood it had been whisked away and a new one substituted.

Was he really going to be a girl?

Were his breasts going to grow?

“Tits and ass; that’s all I need,” he thought, not a little bitterly.

Didn’t he need surgery for breasts anyway?

“Time is passing,” Melanie stood. “You’d better start getting ready for your date. He’s called Clinton, by the way, and he’s a really nice guy. I dated him myself before your father. I promised him that you’d give him a good time.”

“What did you mean by that?”

“I’m sure you’ll work something out.” Melanie stood and walked away with that smile still on her face.

“Another fine mess...” William sat and thought for a few moments. “I don’t have his number so I can’t call and put him off.”

Several options raced through his mind but he realised that they weren’t really options. He was trapped. He’d have to go through with this ridiculous date, or be forever shamed.

He had less than two hours to be ready. Slowly he stood and went to change his makeup for the evening and choose something to wear.

“I need something that won’t get me deeper into trouble,” he thought as he went into the bedroom and opened the closet.

He stood looking at his options, wondering what this Clinton expected. There were some fabulous gowns which he'd been intending to try later but they probably weren't suitable for what he hoped would be a casual Friday evening drink and dinner.

"When in doubt, a little black dress can't be wrong," he said to himself as he looked at several in different styles. "This looks good."

He walked to the mirror, holding the dress in front of him. It was a plain black dress in a slightly stretchy material. It matched his requirements; it had a slashed neckline and a zipper at the back. The waist was tight and it would cling to his thighs.

"It's a bit shorter that I'd like," he thought. "It's just going to come to my knees but with black heels, I know I'll look something like an ordinary girl on a night out. I don't want to stand out at all."

He stripped and chose all black lingerie with black stockings and a garter belt. He selected a really tight dancer's belt to keep his male equipment well-hidden and under control. One of the things he'd learned was that if he had to go to the bathroom, this was probably an easier option than tights.

He took his time over his makeup. He knew it was going to be a darker version of the look he'd come to regard as his basic look; black eye makeup and pale lips, with carefully defined brows and a smooth foundation with contour to make his cheek bones look good. He coiled his hair and pinned it up so that it looked loose and artful, with a stray lock falling casually to the side.

"I wish I'd gotten my ears pierced when I had the chance," he thought as he rummaged through Sarah's drawer in search of some to clip on. He looked at the clock and realised that he'd better get dressed quickly.

There was no time to doubt or even to think of a plan now. Clinton would be here soon. He selected a black purse with a thin shoulder strap, and remembered to put in his lipstick, mascara, and a few tissues. He saw that there was already a condom and a tampon in the bottom. He left them there and put in his set of house keys.

"At least that should look like an authentic lady's purse."

William got his dress zipped up, then went to try some shoes. "I should have done this before the

dress,” he realised as he strapped a pair of strappy stiletto heels round his ankles. “I hope I can walk in these.” Before he could think to change them, the door bell sounded.

He took a deep breath, sprayed Sarah’s favourite perfume liberally, picked up his black purse, and went to the door.

Clinton stood there with a bunch of roses and a bottle of wine. He was a little older than William remembered, but then he hadn’t been looking closely anyway. Clinton was clean, muscular and looked good; non-threatening. He smelled good too.

William made a show of thanking him but didn’t get too close. He went to put the wine in the refrigerator and the roses in a pitcher of water.

“They’re lovely,” William said. “I’ll arrange them later.”

“I thought you’d like something Italian,” Clinton said once they were in his SUV and rolling towards the coast. “Melanie said you liked their cuisine so I booked a table at Federico’s Trattoria.”

“That sounds good.” William said. “It’s expensive too.”

“It’s not too often that I get to take out an attractive young lady,” Clinton replied. “I thought I’d choose the best. I like it there too.”

William watched the road go by, conscious that he wasn’t talking. That phrase about “an attractive young lady” kept repeating in his mind. If only Clinton knew...

“I’m Clinton, but I guess Melanie told you that. What do I call you?”

“I’m... I’m Billie.” William replied, cursing himself for not thinking of something more feminine. “It’s a nickname that stuck.”

“Nicknames can last through life. My girls decided that they were Jade and Amber when they were little. They weren’t christened that but everyone uses those names now.”

“You have daughters?” The idea gave William a little feeling of ease but he couldn’t say why.



“Just the two but I don’t see much of them, what with them being all grown up and their mother hating me.”

“That’s sad,” William replied.

“I guess I spent too much time building the business and too little building a family,” Clinton said wistfully. “Divorce is horrible but you have to come through it.”

“I guess so.” William couldn’t think of what else to say.

“I guess you’re too young for all that,” Clinton replied as he pulled in to a parking lot. “I’m sorry; that was a silly thing to say.”

“It doesn’t matter.” William opened his door. “I’m not your daughter and I’m certainly not your ex.”

“Where did that come from?” William thought as he took Clinton’s arm to walk to the foyer. “What’s happening to me? He’ll think I’m flirting.”

They walked towards the door, which was held open for them. Clinton spoke to the maitre d’ who shook his hand like an old friend before they were shown into the bar. As soon as they were seated at a corner table, a waiter appeared with two glasses.

“Here’s a special aperitif for a beautiful lady,” Clinton announced.

They raised their glasses and touched them in a silent toast.

“This is really a superb place.” William looked round. “I don’t think I’ve ever been somewhere so nice before.”

“That amazes me,” Clinton replied. “I thought you’d have a steady boyfriend. I was so pleased when Melanie said you’d be happy to accept my invitation.”

“She said you used to date her.” William tried to change the subject.

“Yes, but she preferred your father,” Clinton said. “And that’s another story.”

They talked and sipped, sipped and talked as their aperitif turned to a second glass. Clinton was amusing. William was so pleased that he’d remembered that men liked to talk about themselves whilst their date listened.

It had been in one of the women's magazines that he'd read so long ago in the office. It was a wonder that he'd remembered and even more surprising that the tip was working so well. He didn't have to think what to say.

Their table was beautifully arranged, with a full view towards the coast, and an easy view of the other diners. One or two came to shake hands and exchange a few words with Clinton.

William saw how their eyes sized 'her' up and he felt a little uncomfortable. It was as if their eyes were appraising her lingerie. He avoided their gaze and none stayed more than a few moments.

"You seem to be well respected," he said.

"I'm good at what I do," Clinton replied. "I've been in business here a long time."

Clinton's conversation was light and amusing as they ate. William deliberately chose a fish course with a green salad and refused a desert, pleading the need to watch his weight. Clinton laughed at that.

A digestif with coffee followed and William was surprised to see how late it was. The time had flown. The drive home seemed much shorter than the drive out to the restaurant. At the door, Clinton got out and opened William's door. He offered his hand, then followed him as he unlocked the door.

"I think we've a bottle of wine waiting," Clinton said pointedly.

William smiled, while thinking what to do next. Clinton made himself at home on the big couch in the lounge and somehow got the stereo to play softly.

With panic rising, William brought the bottle of wine with two glasses and the corkscrew on a tray. He set them on a low table and was going to sit at the opposite side of the room when Clinton patted the seat next to him in a very meaningful way. William sat the edge of the seat.

"Don't be afraid," Clinton said. "I'm not going to attack you." He smiled reassuringly. "You're beautiful but you're much too young for me."

"You don't know how old I am," William blurted out.

"No but I promised my daughters that I wouldn't date anyone younger than they are." He smiled. "I

hate to say it but they're probably right and I'm too old."

William felt his heart warm to Clinton as he opened the bottle and poured two glasses. "I have enjoyed this evening but I know I'm not the man for you."

"I've loved every minute." William almost threw himself into Clinton's arms. "I was so worried that you'd think something else."

"I guess I know my place in the world." Clinton put a glass in William's hand. "Let's drink to a beautiful friendship at least."

They touched glasses, then placed them on the table. They looked at each other and before he knew what he was doing or why, William found himself in Clinton's arms, being kissed like he'd never been kissed before.

He could feel Clinton's penis rising to the occasion, and when a hand started to travel from his lap to the hem of his dress, he knew what it meant.

"It's the wrong time of the month," he lied.

"But we could..." Clinton asked an unfinished question as his hand slipped towards William's rear.

"I don't do that," William said. "It hurts too much."

They kissed again, a little more tender this time, but no less urgent. William's hand stroked Clinton over his trousers. Then without thinking, he loosened the belt and slipped his hand inside.

Clinton was erect and ready; there was no doubt about what he'd do if the chance had been offered. William knew it too.

He took the penis in his hand and brought it into the open. Tentatively, for he'd never done this before, he stroked up and down the length, watching as his red nails wrapped around the shaft. His other hand went to cup Clinton's ball sac

William leaned over until his nose caught the scent of Clinton's readiness. The penis was so close. He put his tongue out, licked the tip quickly and heard Clinton moan.

He flicked his tongue over it a few more times and then moving further around, he licked it from tip to balls and back again. He did this a few times and it seemed that the penis was straining to get bigger.

Taking a deep breath, William took the length in his mouth. He gagged as it touched the back of his throat but he kept going. Breathing through his nose and trying to suppress any reflex, he sucked it hard, feeling it slipping down into the back of his throat.

“He worked it; sucking and releasing, bobbing his head up and down and staying down as he felt another swelling inside his mouth. He knew that he’d passed the point of no return and looked up to see Clinton’s looking down at him, his eyes not quite focussed. He started to pump again and again into the back of William’s throat.

William didn’t so much swallow as let it all go down his throat. It was a gooey, salty taste, but he didn’t register the taste, only the sensations of what he’d done.

It could have been seconds or it could have been minutes but Clinton’s erection subsided and he slipped out of William’s lips. William watched Clinton as he wiped himself on his shirt bottom. William got up and went to the cloakroom.

Once inside, he thought he was going to cry but he didn’t. He spat and rinsed his mouth. He drank some water, then, loosening his hair, swept it back and loose and went to where Clinton sat, calmly sipping his wine.

“I think you need a drink after that.” He handed William a glass. You were more than I expected.”

“I enjoyed it,” William lied. “After all, it was a lovely dinner.”

Clinton looked at him and laughed. Then they both laughed and William found himself being held in Clinton’s arms. They drank and who could remember what they said? It was euphoria after good sex and nothing more.

At the door, Clinton kissed William gently. “Good-night and never fear. I know I’m too old, but you’ve made an old man very happy.”

There were too many thoughts for William to process. Had he really done that? What did it mean? He decided not to think, took another glass of wine, and went to his bedroom.

Sarah returned unexpectedly early. She called from the door and the look on her face when William appeared showed her surprise.

"I could get to like the new you," she said.

"I may have abused your hospitality," William said. "Please don't be mad but I've been working my way through your closets."

"I hoped you would," Sarah replied. "And my guess that you'd turn into an attractive girl given the chance looks to be correct."

"I've loved it." William blushed. "Once I got over my fear of dressing like this, I couldn't stop."

"I heard that you even went on a date."

"You must have been talking to Melanie," William replied. "Did she tell you what she did to me, about those injections?"

"She did confess," Sarah replied guardedly.

"I was so angry when I found out. What right did she have to change me like that?" William's voice rose and then he was calm again. "I should be so mad but somehow I can't get the anger up."

"Does that mean you want to stay like this?" Sarah took his hand gently.

"I'm not sure. I think I'd like to revisit this girls' world but I don't want to make a quick decision."

"Are you sure?" Sarah looked at him closely. "Remember those hormones are going to keep working."

"I know I can't stop that but my mind isn't settled. Please don't ask me to explain that."

"I won't, but let me look at you." Sarah stood back. "I'd never guess that there was anything boy about you. Your hair and makeup are so perfect and the choice of that denim skirt and pale blue blouse would be right to go shopping or lunching; anywhere really."

"Your contractor came and measured," William said, changing the subject and looking away so that she wouldn't see him blush.

"Melanie told me," Sarah answered. "I think he's a past boyfriend of hers."

“She told me.”

“And he took you out for dinner.”

“It was silly of me to accept; he’s so much older.”

“But from what she says, you were a good date and made him happy.”

“He said so.” This time William couldn’t hide his blush as he wondered how much both Sarah and Melanie knew. Then he remembered the cameras.

“You can tell me all about it sometime, but not now,” Sarah replied. “I need to change, then after I’ve checked a few things from work, we can go for dinner and you can let me show you off.”

William watched her go upstairs. He frowned as he wondered what was so special about him dressed and acting as he was. An attractive man had taken him out and now a more attractive lady wanted to do the same.

Could this be real?

“It’s the carnival night in a few days,” Sarah said as they sat at their table between courses. “I know Melanie has organised your dress but she won’t tell me a thing about it.”

“Don’t ask me,” William replied innocently. “You’ll have to wait to see it.”

“You’re sounding like a true girl.” Sarah squeezed his hand. “And I have to confess that I like it.”

“Are you serious?” William asked. The wine had released some of his inhibition and made him bolder.

“I wasn’t sure about trusting you at first but you’ve changed so much. I think I can rely on your judgement for everything.”

“Even though I’m a bit confused about some things?”

“You’re not confused, you’re discovering how you can be the person you want to be.”

“I’m not sure that I want to be a girl but I suppose Melanie told you. I’ve had some injections and they can’t be removed.”

“But you can still dress as you want; act as you want, can’t you?”

“The trouble is that I don’t know what I want.” William was determined not to shed a tear right then. “Whatever I do, my body shape’s going to change.”

“That’s natural.”

“But boys don’t grow breasts or have curvy hips.”

“Not all boys are built like football stars.”

“I don’t think I was ever destined to be a football star,” William laughed. “This week’s taught me that I could enjoy staying in Girl Land.”

“But Girl Land often clashes with Boy Land.”

“I know that too but somehow it’s not such a frightening thing. A girl can be in control too.”

“Well said,” Sarah laughed. “You could grow into the sort of girl that I’ve always loved.”

There was a silence between them in that instant. Sarah looked down and William studied her. Had she really said that and what did it mean? He knew he was attracted to her but she was older and she was his boss.

The conversation that followed was slow. They both realised that there were boundaries and that they were edging their way towards breaking through them. Another glass of wine, sipped slowly, helped to get them over their mutual hesitation.

On the cab ride back to Sarah’s house, they sat at opposite sides of the back seat, each conscious of the closeness of the other and yet so conscious of the gap between them. Once in the house, with the door closed, things changed.

Sarah took the lead, putting one arm around William and the other slipped behind him. He felt her hand pushing his head towards her waiting lips. They touched briefly and parted as if a flash of electricity had shocked them both.

The parting was a mere moment as Sarah pulled him closer again and this time, they both abandoned any pretence; they were kissing for real.

Sarah dimmed the lights and made sure that the drapes were all drawn closed. She took his hand and they sat side-by-side on the couch. Sarah took the lead again, pulling him close and holding him in the

kiss. Her tongue probed his slips and then almost forced its way into his mouth.

William couldn't do a thing, didn't *want* to do a thing to change the moment. This was a fantasy coming real. She was kissing him and she was most definitely taking control. He felt his penis stirring inside its elastic restraint and wriggled, trying to disguise the discomfort.

Sarah pulled back and slowly slid her hand up his nylon-clad leg, playfully tangling her hand in his garter belt and then dramatically pulling up his hem to untangle it. Her hand went to free him, stretching the elastic to one side so that his penis stood uncomfortably under the material of his skirt.

She pushed him back and, looking him in the eye, pulled up his skirt and glanced down at his erection. She leaned over to kiss him again, then put one knee over to his other side. She was kneeling over him and slowly she lowered him.

William could feel where he was going and tried to move but she anticipated him and held his elbows down as she lowered herself onto him until he could go no further. She looked at him, her eyes moist, her lips parted, and moving towards his.

Her tongue entered his mouth as she began to raise and lower herself on his penis. Sarah's breathing changed and then changed again. Each time she lowered herself, she moaned and gasped. She raised herself and took a big breath, then lowered again with a moan.

Slowly she worked him. William could feel that he was about to burst. Sarah must have felt the same thing because she slowed and remained rigid as he willed himself not to come too soon, but he wasn't in control.

He saw the way she looked at him, then holding his gaze, she deliberately and slowly began to move up and down, gripping with her muscles as she did so. William knew that he had no chance. This was her game.

He allowed himself to go with the sensations. She was riding him for all he was worth. He couldn't hold any longer. A feeling of swelling inside her, a pause, and then he was over the edge, filling her, pushing up as she pushed down against him.

If Sarah knew what she was doing, William was simply lost in sensations as he tried to prolong the

feeling as long as he could, before inevitably he'd shrink away, empty and deliciously used.

Silently, Sarah stood and held out her hand to him. William allowed himself to be pulled up and led by the hand into her bedroom.

"Strip," she told him.

She went into her bathroom, then returned to stand beside him as he dropped his bra and panties to the floor. Sarah took a soft washcloth and wiped his penis, lifting it to clean underneath before patting him dry with a towel.

"I need to keep it safe for later," she whispered and kissed his ear. "You need the most fabulous nightdress I have. You can wear it as a reward."

She must have planned it, he realised as she turned and immediately started to hold an intricately lacy silk nightdress for him to slip his head and arms into. He watched it fall and shivered in delight at the silkiness that was falling down over his chest, then over his hips and down almost to his ankles.

"You'll get so tangled up." Sarah kissed him again and held back the duvet for him to slip under. "I'm going to love exploring you. I think you need to rest and recharge. Then you've work to do, if I can find it in all that silk."

She stepped into the bathroom and returned, wearing an identical gown.

"This is a fantasy for me, so please enjoy it with me."

She snuggled against him and they lay face-to-face, kissing and licking, hands exploring slowly and carefully. For William, it was all brand new and so far from anything he'd thought of, yet here he was. This was for real.

He woke with Sarah spooned against him. He lay there quietly enjoying the closeness, the scent of her hair, and the way her silk nightdress was tangled against his silk nightdress.

She must have sensed that he was awake. She pushed back into him and his super erect penis slid between her legs, but contained within two layers of silk. Her hand reached round and found it. She held

it, then released it to turn round to face him. Her hand found his penis once again and started to rub gently but insistently up and down. She pulled at his nightdress so that her hand was skin to skin with it.

“If I hold onto this so that it doesn’t get lost in all the silk, you can roll on top of me and find your way inside my nightdress.”

“You want me to come on top of you?” William remembered how she’d controlled him the night before.

“Yes, I don’t want to be in charge all the time,” she said languidly.

She was pretending that submission was something she could do, whereas she knew that she needed to be in charge. This was a hook to reel him in. She purred encouragingly as William fumbled his way between her legs. Then when he was almost in position, she wriggled forwards, pushing him into her.

William gasped, thinking that he’d done it all. Sarah bucked and pushed, purring again as she tightened her muscles around his penis and released them as if to the beat of her own tune. William’s sensations told him nothing of this. He was concentrating on not letting go too soon.

Her hands went around his waist and she pulled him more tightly, altering the angle of his penis to rub against a more sensitive spot. That really did it for her but she still remained conscious that she needed to make him feel that she was lost in the rapture of his erection.

Sarah held still, feeling that she didn’t want him to climax too soon. She lay back now and her head went from side to side, spreading her hair over the pillow, as William’s hair fell over her face.

And then her need overtook any other feeling. She started to move, forgetting about any wish to let him think he was doing other than being moulded to her pleasure. She considered that sharing the thought might turn him on later and tucked it away for later. He was on the cusp now, trying to hold back but she wouldn’t let him. She pushed and gripped and then he was out of control, throwing his head back to push into her as hard as he could.

He began to pulse into her. She could feel his seed striking those sensitive parts inside her as her orgasm built and she shuddered again, enjoying every moment. She could feel him weaken, perhaps a bit

too soon, but she knew he could be trained. He slipped out of her.

“You’re not finished yet,” she said softly, pushing his head down so that he had to lower his body. With one hand, she pulled up her nightdress further and with the other she pulled his mouth to her breast.

Her hand pushed the nipple up to his lips. William didn’t expect this, but instinct told him what to do. He nibbled and sucked, wrapping his tongue around her areola and making the nipple stand out.

She pushed him again, this time towards her vagina. With his nose against her moist skin, instinct again told him what to do. His tongue flicked out, tasting the saltiness and slipping through the viscous liquid.

Her hips bucked upwards. His tongue flicked forwards again and into the slit as far as he could. He knew his chin was getting wet and messy, with his own fluids leaking all over his face. She held his head in position and he kept on doing what he was doing, listening to her breathing and softly moaning.

It all reinforced the idea that he was doing it right.

Eventually he returned to lie beside her, ignoring the wetness on both their nightdresses. He fell asleep and woke to find her straddling him and bucking hard as she rode another erection. This time he had no control as she leaned forwards and back, to one side and the other, leaning back, then falling forwards to kiss him hard as his penis managed another climax inside her.

This time she clambered on top of him and worked her way so that her legs straddled his shoulders. He knew what to do and his tongue cleaned out her private places. Eventually, she decided he’d done enough to learn what was expected in bed.

She stood and stripped off, letting her nightdress fall to the floor. He watched her with rapt admiration, following when she beckoned him to join her in the shower. There, he tried to get erect again but failed and had to content her by kneeling and using his tongue as the water cascaded over them both.

“You’ve certainly changed,” Melanie greeted him when he eventually returned home later that day.

"I know." William did a twirl on his heels, letting his short skirt flare out. "Don't say you don't like it."

"I love it but what brought about this change? Are you going to stay all girl now?"

"I'm not sure. I don't know how that would go down at the office. Maybe I'll save that for the carnival night when they all dress up."

"Your dress should be ready this week," Melanie said.

"I think I need a few days to think about it." William wondered if she should say more, then plunged ahead. "I know about those injections."

"You don't sound mad," she replied.

"I should be but being let loose on Sarah's wardrobe seemed to fit. It taught me that I could be really comfortable. I know my body shape is changing, but I'm not sure that I'm ready to be a girl all the time."

"Well, let me know when you're sure because looking like that, you're going to have to carry a stick to beat the boys off."

"I'm not sure that I want to do that either."

"You don't want to beat them off?"

"No, I mean I don't know if I'm attracted to them."

"It sounds like you have a lot of thinking to do."

"I know and right now, I'm going to get changed. Expect a boy to be coming down the stairs later."

Melanie watched as he went to his room. If ever she knew what was going on, right now she wasn't sure.

She wondered if she should call Sarah but decided to leave it alone and see what happened. She was sure that her friend would work it out.

William came down later. Melanie tried to look at him without staring. He wore jeans and a loose T-shirt, flat mules and no stockings. His body language suggested girl rather than boy. Maybe it was the way he carried his hands or how he placed his feet.

As he sat, she thought she detected the outline of a bra under his shirt but she wasn't sure.

She served a simple pizza, then sat across the table from him. As she was so close, she noticed that he wore a pale eye makeup and a little mascara. He had no other makeup and his hair hung loosely down over his shoulders. He ate more daintily than she remembered.

"What are you looking at?" William noticed how she had been watching him.

"I'm fascinated by how lovely you look and how much nicer you've become in such a little time."

"I don't think I've changed that much," William said defensively.

"You don't really think that." Melanie shook her head. "You couldn't resist wearing a touch of makeup, even though you knew I'd notice it as soon as you came down."

William blushed and hesitated before speaking. "It's become something I do without thinking."

"It's something you do because you don't feel complete without it," Melanie said gently.

"You don't mind?"

"I'm pleased. You're a much nicer person like this and you seem happier too."

"I'll pick you up after work," Melanie announced as William was preparing to leave next morning.

"What for this time?" William sighed.

"I made an appointment for you to have full body waxing," she said. "Your legs would look awful if you leave them hairy."

"No one sees my legs. I wear stockings."

"But hairy legs could show through sheer stockings," Melanie replied. "Besides it will be good for your self-image."

"What self-image?"

"Think about it," Melanie replied. "When you're wearing that dress, the whole image could be spoiled if you don't attend to the details."

"I guess..." William replied unenthusiastically. "Waxing hurts, doesn't it?"

"Don't look so glum." Melanie smiled at him. "Girls do it all the time and they all survive. The way you feel afterwards makes it all worthwhile."

"Ask me afterwards," William replied.

He was incredibly nervous as he entered the salon later.

"You can undress in there." The girl in the waxing salon pointed to a door. "Here are some paper panties for you to wear."

"Do I have to?" William looked at them with some distaste.

"It's in case your own get stained from the wax," she replied. "There's a gown there too."

"I don't really have any body hair and I've never been able to grow whiskers enough to shave."

"You're very lucky but even so, when you're completely hairless, you'll love the sensations; the way your clothes feel will be so different."

William did what he was told. He lay on his stomach and he lay on his back. After the shock of the first couple of strips being pulled out, he managed to lie there without wincing and without shouting at every rip.

"You really don't shave." She ran her hand under his chin and across his cheek.

"I told you that. I don't think my facial hair has come in yet," William replied.

"That's saved you a lot of discomfort." She ran her fingers over his eyebrows. "There's something to come off here."

"Can't you leave my eyebrows alone?"

"I'm not going to strip them away; that's not today's fashion." She held up a picture to prove her point. "All I'm going to do is take away the stragglers and maybe a few from the bottom, just to open your eyes up."

"You're the boss," William said with resignation.

"That's the right attitude. I like that."

It didn't hurt as much as he feared. She was careful and removed hairs in small sections. He shut his

mind as to the appearance of his face when she'd finished.

"If it looked bad, I'd be out of business quite quickly," she replied. "Now that we know each other, there's only a little more hair to remove."

Her glance told him where that was.

"Don't come on all coy now," she said. "I've seen it all before."

"You mean that men come here?" William was surprised once again.

"I see lots of men; all shapes and all sizes. You're not going to shock me and I'm not going to cry rape. Lie on your stomach first."

William did as he was told and when she started to remove his panties, he lifted his torso to make it easier. He felt the wax being applied and held his breath, knowing the rip was coming and being determined not to squeal. She worked to the side and then into the crack as far as she was able.

"Now turn over." She patted him to encourage him to move. "If it's all excited, I'm going to send you to the bathroom first."

"How could it be excited at this pain?" William asked as he laid face down again, waiting for the next rip.

"What are you doing?" William could feel that she was pulling his paper panties down.

"I have to do it all," she replied. "And you don't have anything I haven't seen before."

He could feel her working right into his crack and steeled himself not to yell as she ripped the hairs out.

"Turn over and don't say a word. My boyfriend's enormous, so what you've got isn't going to be impressive. Now do you want a little heart, a landing strip or it all off?"

William looked at her, not understanding. She looked exasperated.

"Like this," she said and with a sigh, indicated what and where she meant.

"I don't know." William blushed. "I've never been here before. What should I do?"

“Let’s leave a patch. It’ll be like the girls have; a landing strip.”

“Please don’t tell me what that means,” he said, still shielding his eyes.

“You can change your mind next time and take it all off.”

“Which hurts least?” He put his hand over his eyes.

“I’m sure you can use your imagination.”

William didn’t reply and lay back, focussing his eyes anywhere but on what she was doing. He tried his best to remain impassive as she worked. It seemed to take forever to get all the hairs from his private parts.

He couldn’t help but wince as the hairs were pulled from his sack and around the base of his penis. The last big rip seemed to hurt more than all the others combined.

He was wary when she told him it was all finished and he could stand up. “Okay, you’re done.”

She sprayed him all over and rubbed it down. “That’s a moisturiser to soothe the skin.” William rolled off the bench and quickly pulled on the paper panties. He was surprised once again, this time because his legs were trembling. He looked down and then looked inside the panties.

“That doesn’t look bad,” William said in surprise when she handed him a mirror. He stood naked in front of the big mirror, all thought of modesty forgotten after his ordeal.

“How does it feel now that you’ve been a brave little girl? It’s really all over for this time. Next time it will be much easier because we’ll be starting with much less hair.”

“That feels weird,” he announced. “I didn’t believe it when I was told that it would feel different but it really does.”

“Believe me; you’ll never want to be hairy again, I’ll call Melanie to pick you up.”

"You're looking strange, like you're a bit mystified," Melanie said when she and William were back at home.

"I've not a hair below my eyebrows." He replied. "It's made all my clothes feel different, just like they told me it would. They seem to slide over my skin and with these silky panties you like me to wear, it's quite a distraction."

"If you're trying to shock me, you're failing," Melanie laughed. "It's a sensuous feeling. I feel the same every time I have my legs done."

"Only your legs?"

"You're asking for too much information," Melanie replied. "Did you have a heart, a landing strip, or did you decide to have it all off?"

William replied, "I can laugh about it now. I agree that it feels like nothing else but boy, did it hurt."

"Every girl knows that you have to suffer a little for beauty."

"But I'm not really a girl. You keep forgetting."

"I know but you're going to be an honorary one wearing a modernised version of the dress you've been admiring for ages."

"I'm not sure," William said. "Despite all you've made me do, don't you think I should stop now?"

"You can't," Melanie said sternly. "I'm not having you backing out of anything."

"I was only..." William knew she was angry.

"You were only doing nothing," Melanie replied. "You can't go back anyway."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to be cruel, but you're not a rugged specimen of manhood."

William's mouth gaped open in shock as he realised she was right.

"Look at you," she said. "You wear really lovely lingerie as a matter of course now and you feel naked without at least a little eye makeup. You stopped protesting long ago."

Melanie saw that he was taking a deep breath and thinking about how to argue.

“Look at the way your body language has changed,” she said. “You’re more girl than boy. You even play with your bra strap like a girl wanting to show off her breasts.”

“I don’t play with the strap; it keeps slipping.”

“Okay,” she said with a big grin.

“And I don’t have breasts,” he snapped back.

“Maybe you don’t have big ones yet but there’s something there and they’re growing every day. You can’t tell me that you haven’t thought about it; imagined how it would look if there was something bigger and softer in your bra other than a little spare flesh. I know you don’t keep those small breast forms in your bottom drawer any more. You’ve started wearing them every day.”

“Who told you?”

“I can see things.”

“I was only curious.”

“That’s all right,” Melanie said. “As long as you know where it’s leading.”

“And where might that be?”

“Why the full Lady Agnew effect of course.” Melanie softened her voice. “You’ll be lovely. Imagine how it’s going to feel when they all admire you. They’ll be saying that they didn’t know how beautiful you could be.”

William sat down and leaned back in the easy chair. His face said he was thinking hard.

“Do you really think so? I’m so confused. Part of me hates it, part of me wants to hurry it along and see who I could be.”

“It’s all right.” Melanie put her arms round him and held him gently. “I’m not blind. I can see how conflicted you are. I’m here to help you.”

“I know but I’m still afraid. It’s a big thing. They all know what I’m wearing under my clothes. They even watch me having my nails done when Sarah’s nail technician comes to the office.”

“You’ve always had nice nails,” Melanie said.

“They tell her to do them longer, do them in deep red, have a jewel or some glitter. It’s getting to be a battle to avoid being an embarrassment when I’m out of the office and have to walk home. I have to keep a hand in my pocket and the other closed around the strap of my shoulder bag. I dread shopping.”

“I don’t know why,” Melanie said. “If you act normally, no one’s ever going to challenge your sex. Perhaps it’s time to give in and go full girl all the time.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that might be easier to be a girl with a bit of boyish accents, rather than a boy who looks more than a little effeminate.”

“Do I look effeminate?” William asked.

“Yes and as I get you ready to go out at the end of the week, you’re going to look more and more effeminate.”

“Can’t you stop it?”

“Don’t you want to see what you look like in that dress?” Melanie knew that would make him think. “Imagine how she would feel if she could come back today.”

“I can’t be her.” William’s face said something else.

“You can imagine anything,” Melanie said softly. “Think about it; silk lingerie and a slim waist; a figure to die for, with breasts concealed by the delicate trimmings around your neckline.”

“I can see it in my mind’s eye,” William said. “But I don’t know if I can do it.”

“Of course you could,” Melanie said. “Think if she was alive today. She’d delight in modern makeup and hair. She’d love the way modern girls wear heels and earrings, bangles and perfume.”

“I’m sure she had perfume, although she doesn’t have jewellery in the picture other than a long necklace.”

“She has some bracelets on her left wrist and I think I can see the hint of rings on her left hand too.”

“You’re right.” William looked harder.

“She was the height of fashion in her day,” Melanie replied. “If she were alive now, she may have a pendant like that but she’d definitely have earrings.”

William looked away.

"I haven't forgotten," Melanie said. "I promised you'd have your ears pierced. I've made the appointment and they're going to do your hair properly at the same time."

"I don't think she's wearing earrings in the portrait," William tried to protest.

"Imagine her today," Melanie said softly. That's the look you're going for. She'd be in fashion but in good taste. She'd be calm and confident. That smile in the picture says it all; she knows everything and sees right through the viewer, as if there are no secrets hidden from her."

"You make it sound so easy and so exciting." William had a dreamy look in his eyes as he realised that resistance was futile. "I hope I don't let her down."

"Trust me; I won't let you." Melanie kissed him lightly. "Only trust me."

That trust was tested a little later.

"I can't believe you arranged all that." William walked across the mall to where Melanie was waiting.

"I promised you'd get your earrings and your hair styled, and now you have," she replied.

"I was so frightened when you forced me into the salon." William's excitement was hard to miss. "I hated you for it, but you were right."

"I love your hair," Melanie said. "The highlights really make it all shine."

"I like the highlights too, although I was doubtful when she said she was going to do them." William turned his head to make his hair swing and fall back into place. "It feels great and the way it moves; I can hardly believe it's me," even though it's made me look even more like a girl."

"What nonsense you talk," Melanie replied. "You like wearing your hair long. If anything, it looks longer."

"She only cut a tiny bit off the ends to make it healthier, she said. It really feels like it too."

"And what about the ear piercing?"

“That was the scariest part,” William said. “She was like you; she told me what to do in a voice that said I shouldn’t argue. . She made me sit there. She didn’t leave me anywhere to run, and there was nowhere to hide.”

“Did you want to run away and hide?”

“At first I did but when I sat down and realised it was really going to happen, I went all calm,” William said. “I’d have looked really strange if I’d ruin through the salon with foils in my hair and a cape round my shoulders.”

“I’d have seen you from across the mall.” Melanie laughed at the thought.

“I sat there and let her get on with it.” William lifted his hair so that Melanie could see.

“You got double pierced,” she exclaimed. “That’s really lovely. I can’t wait to see what you can wear when they’re healed.”

“That was something else she did.” William touched the studs making sure they were still there and secure. “I didn’t get a choice. She did it so quickly that I didn’t guess that I was getting two sets until she showed me in the mirror afterwards.”

“There’s something else.” Melanie deduced that she wasn’t being told the whole story.

“You guessed.” William turned to her and made an exaggerated smile.

“Your lips,” Melanie gasped. “I never thought you’d ever dare to have that done.”

“They told me that I was on your dollar and said it was the only thing that they could add to my treatments.”

“Even so...”

“I only let them use a little of the filler,” William said. “It still feels a bit numb but my lips are going to look more kissable.”

“Kissable? Is that what you want?”

“If I’m going to be this girl, I might as well look kissable.” William relaxed. “It was like a dare and after everything else, I thought why not?”

“Not a bad experience then?” Melanie asked.

“If I’m honest, I’m rather pleased that you made me go there, although heaven knows how I’m going to explain it when the girls in the office see me.”

“Why don’t you let me show you how to give them the full-on girl effect?” Melanie asked. “You know you’re going to do it eventually.”

“Do I?” William suddenly looked afraid again.

“Yes, you do,” Angela said firmly. “Look at you; you have the hair, the nails, the earrings, you’re wearing makeup and lingerie every day. There’s not much further to go.”

“I don’t think they’d like it,” William said. “They’d think I was trying to make them look foolish... or something.”

“No they wouldn’t,” Melanie said firmly. “All you need is a dress and heels and you’re there.”

William looked at her as if his thoughts were coming together.

“Is this what you wanted when you said you wished I’d been a stepdaughter instead of a stepson?”

“I didn’t quite plan it that way but you’re a lot more fun now that your feminine side is showing,” Angela replied. “You can’t pretend that you’re unhappy.”

“I’m afraid that I’m slipping away. I don’t know myself anymore.”

“Then I think you should explore everything; take every opportunity and if that means being one of the girls, I think you’ll learn a lot about yourself.”

Finally the night arrived. William had the day off from work and Melanie had arranged a timetable for him so that he didn’t have time to think or to doubt what he was doing and what was being done to him.

His first stop was the salon for nails and hair. After that, his makeup was done specially for the evening by a real expert. If she knew that there was a boy underneath it all, she didn’t let on in the slightest.

“How does that feel?” Melanie picked him up and they walked silently to her car.

"I love it now," William replied. "I know I've done some scary things recently but when they dried my hair and I saw how much blonder I'd gone, I was really scared."

"You're kidding." Melanie was really surprised. "You've changed from being a boy to dressing and acting as a girl and *that* was the scariest?"

"I think it's because before I knew I could wash off the makeup, change my clothes, and I'd be a boy again. With my hair this colour, I can't do that. I'd never get away with it. No boy has hair this colour."

"It is really special."

"And they gave me false eyelashes." William looked at her and blinked to show them off. "I was really conscious of them at first but now I'm getting used to them."

"It's one of a girl's secrets," Melanie replied. "They can be a pain but for a special occasion, they're worth it."

"So you approve of the overall effect?"

"It's going to look lovely with your dress." Melanie wanted to make him look forward, rather than thinking back.

"You're right." William smiled across the car at her. "I can't wait to get dressed and ready. Please say you'll help me."

"Spoken like a true stepdaughter. Of course I'll help you."

The time to set out was almost upon them as William's dress was zipped up and the ankle straps of his matching stiletto heels were fastened. He looked in the mirror and smiled. He liked the person he saw and felt comfortable to go out like this.

He was used to lingerie but even he was surprised by the delicate pale yellow garter belt, bra and panties that matched the delicate hues of the dress. The feel of stockings going up his newly hairless legs was an erotic thrill on its own.

His newly blonde hair was flowed loosely over his shoulders, where the lace trim of the dress' neckline concealed the fact that his breasts were really small underneath, despite the bra boosters. The waist was nipped in under the tight bodice and the skirt draped artfully to his knees.

He spun round to get the full effect, thinking that the heels he was spinning on would have been impossible to wear a few weeks before.

“You should stop being so vain.” Melanie said lightly as she watched him. “You need to get your jewellery on, touch up your lipstick, and grab your purse. It’s almost time to go.”

“I don’t think I can do earrings with these nails.” William held up his hand to show Melanie how long and sculpted his nails were.

“I’ll do them for you,” she said and fixed golden hoops through his bottom holes. “Gold goes well with your dress. I’m not so sure about the colour of your nails.”

“I couldn’t have them in anything other than deep red. I do love the way they look.”

“You do realise that it’s the classic colour for a femme fatale, don’t you?”

“Do you think that’s what I’m going to be?” William said jocularly.

“I’m sure you’re almost there already.” Melanie opened the door for him to go through. “But you need to think what you want to be called. A girl called William might not be believable everywhere.”

“I did tell Clayton to call me Billy but that was because I couldn’t think of anything else and I didn’t know what he knew.”

“I’m sure you could think of something more exotic than that.”

“Lady Agnew was called Gertrude but I think that’s too old fashioned and a bit of a mouthful,” William said. “Maybe I’ll ask the girls to think of something for me.”

“That’s dangerous,” Melanie said. “You are your own creation really. It’s your choice.”

“I think *you* created me,” he said.

“I’ll admit that I started you off,” Melanie said cautiously. “I didn’t think that you’d develop so far and so fast.”

“I think Sarah’s been an influence too.”

“She’s been more than kind.” William remembered that spectacular night when she’d taken him to her

bed and couldn't help but smiling. "I do hope she likes me and doesn't hate me for doing this."

"I know she won't," Melanie replied, spraying him liberally with perfume. "Now hurry up and go. I can hear your cab outside."

A sudden attack of nerves almost made William turn back as he stood at the door. He could see the girls through the glass. It was all so glamorous and so exclusively feminine. He hesitated with paralysing indecision, feeling his anxiety levels rising.

He became conscious of someone behind him and turned to see Zoe with a puzzled look on her face until she recognised him. Her smile of recognition turned to a look of pleasure as she took his arm and pulled him inside with her.

"Look who's here," she shouted, adding to William's fears.

His first thought was to turn and run but the girls gathered round him. There were hugs and air kisses. There was praise for his dress and amazement at the height of his heels.

"Look at those earrings." Zoe spotted them as his hair swayed. "I think I need some more piercings just to keep up." She giggled at the thought.

Then they were all chattering at once and throwing questions at him, before leading him to a seat at the main table. He saw Sarah arriving and his nervousness came back. He did his best not to catch her eye but she'd seen him. He saw recognition in her eye and in turn waved back as she waved to him.

"I can't believe I'm dancing. I never thought I could dance." William was in the middle of the small dance floor as old disco hits played over the sound system.

"I can't believe anyone could dance like that in those heels," Zoe said. "You're amazing."

"I'm amazing myself," he replied, turning and swaying his hips dangerously as she whooped encouragement.

Eventually the tempo of the music slowed as the evening was coming to an end. Some girls still danced. For some, drink had been taken and they

were almost holding each other up. Some danced for the sheer fun of it, not wanting the evening to end.

“I think you should dance this one with me.” Sarah tapped William on the shoulder and smiled down at him.

“Are you asking?” he replied.

“I’m asking.” She held his eyes. “I want you to dance with me.”

She took his hand and pulled him gently onto the dance floor, then wrapped her arms around him as they swayed together in time to the music. They were still there when the song ended and the last waltz sounded out.

“My car’s outside,” Sarah said. “You’re going to ride with me.”

It sounded like an instruction rather than an invitation.

“But they’ll all see us,” he objected.

“I’m giving you a ride home, if anyone asks.” Sarah took his hand. “If anyone asks tomorrow or the day after, then I took you home.”

“Okay,” William replied cautiously.

She allowed her to lead the way to the door and into the balmy night air where her SUV stood. Sarah flipped the remote to unlock the door, then opened the passenger side for him to get in. William saw Zoe and a couple of the other girls watching and decided to wave. They’d seen it all now and pretending it wasn’t happening would be useless.

Sarah stayed at the open door and pushed his skirt in safely as he settled in the seat before she closed the door. It was as if she wanted to make sure he didn’t change his mind. If she saw the girls watching, she didn’t give anything away.

Sarah led him into her home and into the comfortable lounge where things had started last time he’d been there with her. All the way, Sarah kept gently touching him; holding his hand, her hand on his arm or his shoulder.

It was as if she was afraid to stop touching him in case he disappeared.

"I love that dress," she said. "It makes you look so feminine and so special."

"It's a copy from an old portrait. Melanie arranged it all. In the portrait, the dress is much richer, more formal and probably floor-length. I didn't think that would be appropriate for tonight."

"It's beautiful," she said, handing him a glass. "It's my favourite champagne."

"I don't think I ever had enough champagne to have a favourite." William touched glasses with her in a silent toast.

They talked some more. Neither of them said anything serious. Both knew what was going to happen next, but there was no need to hurry. William was feeling something like elation, with nervousness creeping underneath as he realised they were talking for the sake of talking.

Sarah leaned in and kissed him in mid-sentence. He could feel her tongue at his lips and as soon as he opened them, her tongue slipped into his mouth. It was gentle the first time. She broke away and looked into his eyes as if checking for his reaction. Satisfied, she kissed him again, this time with more urgency.

"Come," she said, pulling him up and leading him towards her room.

It was a simple command and he walked slowly, letting her take the lead. The two silk nightdresses lay at the foot of the bed; inviting, but issuing their own command at the same time.

"You'll have to help me with the zipper," William said, turning so that she could pull it down. "I don't want to break my nails."

"I don't think I want you to break them either." Sarah slipped the dress to the floor and turned to place it over a chair.

Sarah turned to release her own dress and quickly stripped off her clothes. When she turned, she found that William had done the same and they stood slightly apart, dressed identically.

"I'm going to seduce you again," she said.

"I'm going to let you." William's eyes said he was expecting that she would and that he was waiting for her to make the first move.

“You know I like to be in control,” she said, pulling him to her.

He could feel the swell of her breasts through the layers of silk, with the nipples standing proudly there, waiting to be touched. He rubbed his hand against them as she pulled him closer. His penis rose and he pushed it towards her. She gave a slight shudder of pleasure as it slipped into the silk between her legs.

“I should clean my makeup,” William said softly as she held him.

“Don’t you even dare to think about it.” Sarah pulled him towards the bed. “Lipstick-on-lipstick kisses are the best kind and I’m going to enjoy every wicked minute of spoiling your perfect makeup.”

And then they were on the bed. Sarah pushed William down onto his back and pulled up his night-dress. She pulled up her own and straddled him. He could feel her demand and her urgency as she slipped him inside her without pausing for any fore-play.

Once there, she arched her back and allowed all her soul to flow into descending onto his penis as deeply as she could. William knew instinctively that he should keep still at that moment. He could feel her and the little pressures from the muscles deeply inside her.

It was more than he could ever have dreamed and far more than he had dared to imagine. She controlled him, allowing him to come inside her, allowing him to rest for a while, then demanding that he grow again. Once she allowed him to lie on top of her, but she soon tired of that and turned him over, holding him inside her as she did so.

Unsurprisingly, it was late when they woke together. Equally unsurprisingly, she took him again.

They showered together in the morning. William performed his duty with his tongue as she stood over him and the water cascaded over them both. He could taste himself and knew she was making him clean her out.

Something in his brain told him that she was doing this to emphasise that she was in control, not only of

the moment, but of him and everything about him. He knew it was different from anything he'd imagined but decided that he really liked it like this.

They dried their hair together and Sarah dressed quickly.

"Can you do your makeup?" Sarah asked. "Can you do it to look more feminine?"

"It's feminine; it's makeup." William looked at her with a puzzled expression on his face.

"You know what I mean. I'd like you to do it a bit more obviously."

"Do you mean slutty?"

"No, I don't mean slutty but maybe heading a little in that direction, like you really want to be somebody's girlfriend and you're being obvious about it."

"Have you anyone in mind that I should be trying to make it obvious to?"

"If you have to ask that, then you haven't been paying attention."

An hour later, they went to a little bistro for lunch. William had borrowed a yellow sundress with spaghetti straps which matched his heels from last night. His lips were a darker red than he usually wore; his eyes were darker than ever, with lots of black liner and heavy mascara.

"I couldn't do anything with the false lashes," he confessed. "You'll probably think there's a spider in your bed but it will be one of those lashes."

"I'll have to send you for something more permanent."

"You're taking me over?" he asked.

"Hold that thought," Sarah said. "I don't want to rush you."

Melanie knew something had happened between them as soon as they walked through her door. She didn't ask and William went up to his room, leaving her with Sarah, who didn't tell her anything more than she could guess.

"We had a wonderful evening," she said. "I think you've found the step-daughter you wanted."

"And maybe something you wanted too?" she asked.

“I don’t know,” Sarah replied and changed the subject.

William went back to the office the following week. He went in full girl mode. There was no point in concealing anything now, not that he wanted to. He was comfortable in his skin. He hadn’t felt like this before.

He wore a dark grey business suit with a pencil skirt. His hair was back in a French pleat which allowed his earrings to show all the time. His makeup was subtle but with his dark eyes, there was no doubt that he’d spent time doing it.

There was no doubt that he knew how to do it as well as any of the other girls in the office. If they were surprised or shocked in the change in him, they didn’t show it.

They treated him gently and joined him into their conversation, even the bits about their boyfriends and the things they liked to do – and disliked doing as well. Some of it shocked him but he didn’t let that show.

Sarah didn’t appear for a couple of days and he wondered if he’d been toyed with. That was what happened to girls who got played by their bosses after all. It was an old, old story.

When she wasn’t there on Wednesday and Thursday, he felt really worried, although he said nothing. Fortunately the other girls who might have guessed that something had happened didn’t ask and didn’t treat him any differently.

Sarah came in on Friday, not long before lunch time.

“William, I really need to speak to you. Can you step through into my office please?” She turned and closed her private door behind her.

He hesitated for a moment, then went to knock on the door. He knew that all the girls were watching him. He entered and looked nervously round to see if anyone else was there as he stepped inside.

“Let’s sit down.” Sarah stood up and came round from her desk to lead him to the soft seating area at the side of her office.

“Shall I get you some coffee?” William walked to the espresso machine on the side table and, without waiting for an answer, started the process.

“Make one for yourself as well,” she said as she settled in the corner of the long couch.

William carried a tray to the small table in front of her and laid coasters for their cups plus cream and sugar. After he’d put it back, he saw Sarah patting the couch, indicating that he should sit close to her.

William wondered why he’d been called in. Was it something he’d forgotten to do?

Was it that rather drunken incident in her hotel room after they’d been hosting a seminar?

Did he do something so terrible after the carnival night?

His nerves were jangling and he almost spilled his cup as he waited for her to speak.

“I’ve decided that it’s time for me to marry,” she said.

“Why are you telling me this?” William looked at her in some surprise. This was the first he or, as far as he knew, anyone had heard Sarah say anything about this.

“I’m not getting any younger and this company’s giving me a very comfortable life. I need someone to share it with.”

“Err, congratulations; I hope you’ll both be very happy,” William said.

“I haven’t explained the reason I’ve called you in.” Sarah placed her hand over his. “I want you to marry me.”

“That’s crazy. I don’t know what to say.” William blushed and stuttered. “I didn’t expect anything to happen after that night...”

That night was when the company had been celebrating. Sarah had been a little over-served with the champagne. She’d grabbed William in full view of everyone and taken him to her suite.

He hadn’t known what to do but she knew what to do with him. He’d awoke in her bed and, rather frightened, crept out before she woke. He’d probably been over-served too.

"It's nothing to do with that night and it was my fault anyway. I knew what I was doing and I lead you on mercilessly." Sarah gently squeezed his hand. "I need someone to love and look after, someone to have some fun with."

"But why me? I'm not able to support a wife and you have so much."

"I'm not explaining this well." Sarah moved a little closer to him. "You remember Jeremy Savage came in a few weeks ago to see me."

"He's your accountant," William remembered. "His wife sat in my office while he was in with you."

"That's one of the reasons I've decided to marry," Sarah said. "What do you remember about his wife? Tell me about her and don't be afraid to give an opinion. I won't be repeating anything."

"Okay, she was a very pretty lady." William pictured her as he spoke. "She was much younger than Mr Savage; I think she's his third wife. Am I allowed to say that I think she was high maintenance?"

"That's one way of putting it." Sarah's expression said that she understood what he meant. "Do you think she's a trophy wife? Is she someone he can take round to show off wherever he goes?"

"Oh yes," William laughed. "She looked like a movie star, with all the hair, the glitter and the wiggle in that tight dress. It must take her ages to get ready to go out. He must love having her to take to places and show her off to his friends."

"Do you think she was happy?"

"I think she was enjoying every minute of it. She had the attention of every man in the room and some of the women as well."

"I bet some of the girls were jealous and the others were catty and rude."

"That's right. How did you guess?"

"I'm a woman too," Sarah replied. "Jeremy made sure I met her. It made me think."

"I don't get it." William looked puzzled. "I don't know why you're telling me this. I have no idea why you think marrying me is a good idea."

"I think it's an excellent idea. Have you any objection to me as a potential spouse?"

“No, I think you’re quite amazing. The way you’ve developed this business is no mean feat.”

“And I think I need to have a little down time and someone to share it with. I don’t want a superego to tell me what to do. I want something else.”

“Do you really know what you want?”

“I know what I want. I want you to marry me and I want you to be *my* trophy wife.”

“But if we married, I’d be your husband.”

“That’s not what I want.” Sarah looked him in the eye. “I want someone who’ll let me turn him into my trophy wife.”

“But I’m a boy.” William didn’t know what to say. “In spite of the way I look, I’m still a boy.”

“I know that and I’m not asking you to have a sex change,” Sarah replied. “But I do want to make you look more attractive and more feminine than the new Mrs. Savage. I want to show you off.”

“Wouldn’t people think that was weird?”

“I think I’d rather like them to think that,” Sarah said. “If they’re talking about me, then they may remember what this company does and what it could do for their business.”

“Mrs Savage must spend hours getting ready,” William said. “I couldn’t do my job and look anything like that.”

“You wouldn’t be working here. Your job would be looking after me and the house. That means letting me make you look better than any other wife in the whole state.”

“I don’t think I can take this all in,” William said. “I thought I’d done something wrong when you called me to see you.”

“You’ve done nothing wrong,” Sarah laughed. “I know I’ve sprung this on you suddenly and you weren’t expecting it.”

“I wasn’t expecting anything like it,” William replied. “Are you *sure* you know what you’re asking. You’re a couple of years older than I am and much more experienced.”

“Don’t remind me; I’m a bit older than that,” Sarah replied. “And yes, I have reached a decision and you’re part of it. You’re younger than I am so I can

teach you and train you. I can have fun moulding you and you'll have fun being with me. I promise."

"This is too much to think about," William sighed. "Please may I have some time?"

"You're not dismissing the idea out of hand?"

"I need a little time. You're asking such a lot. You're asking me to do things that I've never even thought of, even though I may be part of the way there."

"Take the rest of the week off and come and see me on Monday afternoon," Sarah said.

"Can I call you if I want to ask anything?"

"I'll get you my personal card." She walked back to her desk and took a card from a drawer, and handed it to him with a small box. "This has my private cell number and you can call any time."

"And this little box?" William looked up at her.

"It's your engagement ring." Sarah opened the box, took his left hand and, with a little resistance, slid the ring over the knuckle. "There. It fits perfectly and won't slip off."

"It's beautiful." William looked at his hand. "But it's a girl's ring. Men don't wear a ring like this with diamonds and sapphires. No one would think it anything other than a seriously expensive engagement ring."

"That's the idea," Sarah said. "I want you to be my wife. That means you get to wear things like this."

"But I haven't agreed."

"It doesn't matter; think of it as trying it on for size."

"You're serious, aren't you?" The full import of all that Sarah had been saying came home to William and the consequences chilled him to his bones.

"I've never been more serious." Sarah leaned in and kissed him gently.

William felt his heart thumping as he accepted the kiss. He pulled away and looked down shyly. He sat down and looked at the ring glittering on his finger. His body trembled. Was it shock or excitement? He didn't know. His mind was churning.

“I think you need someone to get you home safely” Sarah said. “I’d take you myself but I’ve a meeting I can’t miss. Stay there, I’ll call an Uber for you.”

Sarah pulled him to his feet and guided him through the office. William put his left hand in his pocket in case anyone noticed the ring and he didn’t dare to look left or right as he passed his colleagues. She walked with him to the entrance to the building and waited until the car arrived.

“Think carefully, William, and come and see me on Monday afternoon.”

William tried to behave as normal when he got home. He avoided conversation with Melanie and, pleading tiredness, went to bed early.

He wanted to think but really he knew he didn’t need to.

“Can I come and see you now?” William asked when she picked up her mobile the next afternoon. “I can’t wait until Monday.”

“I’ll call an Uber on the office account to pick you up,” she replied. “I’ll be home by the time you get here.”

The Uber followed her SUV up the drive. The Uber slowed as Sarah got out and walked to her door. She opened it and stood waiting as William’s ride pulled up.

William stood and swallowed hard as the Uber pulled away. He and Sarah looked at each other. He walked towards her, then ran the last few steps. He held out his left hand; the ring was there.

“Yes,” he said.

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