

Stepmother's Volunteer



Susan Hulbert

An "Adult TV" Novel



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By Susan Hulbert

There are some girls who can fill a small space in a crowd. There are some girls who can occupy the foreground of a picture. This wasn't one like that; this was a girl who owned the whole space in which she stood.

She walked with feline grace. She didn't simply slink through the crowds. She moved through them as if they didn't exist. They were there surely, but they gave way as she moved.

Everything about her said, "Look at me."

Everything about her said, "I don't care if you stare."

Everything about her said, "I possess all that I choose to possess and the rest can go hang."

Because everything about her shouted that this was a woman to command an army of suitors, this

was a woman who could choose, one who would not easily be swayed.

In short, this was the girl of a century's dreams; a lifetime of looking couldn't find another.

And underneath? Well, who knew what lay underneath as she walked through the market in the sunshine with her sunglasses pushed up into her hair?

Who knew what she was thinking, as she fingered the belts and blouses, the silks and the leather on the stalls?

She wasn't always like that; so self-assured and comfortable in her skin, yet today, none of that showed. Her eyes saw everything; her lips always showed the nearness of a smile.

It was impossible to see her and not to look at her. Women would hate her. Men would wish that they could fall at her feet.

The short thin dress clung to a perfect figure; the heels so thin and delicate on her shoes. They would see the hair, the eyes so dark and beautifully made-up. They would see the gold at her ears and on her fingers, and know that she was beyond their dreams.

She met another girl who looked almost like her twin. They fell into each other's arms, hugging and holding onto each other like lovers often do. They talked a few seconds and then, arm-in-arm, walked on as if they were the only two in the world.

Yet it all started so differently.

"Logan, you've arrived home just in time. I've an exciting project from my professor," his stepmother announced. "You're going to be my subject to study."

She was June, about twelve years older than Logan and twelve younger than Duke, his father, and about three light years ahead in intelligence. And she ruled the house like a medieval tyrant.

Logan's heart sank. Whatever it was, he knew he wasn't going to like it.

"What sort of project?" he asked without any enthusiasm.

"I don't have all the details yet. I submitted a proposal that fits with his general area of research. I should be able to explain it all when I get back from a full briefing later."

"So that interests me how?"

"I told Professor Speak that you'd be more than willing to help."

"But it's vacation time soon."

"And you'll be lounging around with those so-called friends of yours at the mall or in the ball park. You've not even thought about getting a job. This way, you'll be helping and contributing to valuable research."

"How do you work that out?" Logan thought it a sensible question.

"Don't ask me to explain everything. My professor is funded by the Navy so it must be a valuable project."

She didn't say that he was funded by the Navy for something completely different.

"I don't want to do it," Logan said. "Whatever it is, include me out."

"Logan, just think of what your father would say."

"I hope he'd say that you're my stepmother and that you should butt out of my life."

“Logan, how could you?” There was almost smoke coming out of her ears, she was so angry. “You’re seventeen and still a minor. You’ll do what you’re told. Your father will tell you the same.”

“That’s only because he’s scared of your temper.”

That was it. He knew he’d lit a fuse and that when the explosion came he was going to be the one in pieces.

“Go to your room!” she shouted. “I’ll get your father to talk some sense and respect into you later.”

“I’m the one talking sense,” Logan shouted as he left the room. “Just because you’re a college grad and twelve years older than me, it doesn’t mean that I always have to dance to your tune.”

“You’ve really upset your stepmother,” Dad started. “I think you owe her an apology.”

“I don’t think so,” Logan said. “She’s lined me up for some stupid project. I always get the soggy end of these things. I’m sure that it’s all very worthy but I don’t want to be part of it.”

“She’s always been good to you.”

“I hardly know her,” Logan said. “Sure it was okay before she went to that fancy university for her doctorate but now it’s all she can do to speak to me.”

“She’s worked hard and got her qualifications,” Dad said. “It’s something we’re really proud of.”

“And you both think I’m some sort of waster.” Logan hated arguing with his father. “I’m not as bright, and no matter how I study, I can’t do the things she’s done.”

“I’m sure we don’t expect you to be the same.”

“June does,” Logan said bitterly. “And she expects me to be as excited about her research projects as she is.”

“She only wants the best for you. If helping keeps you away from those wasters you hang about with, then I’m all for it.”

“But...”

“No buts from you; you’ll do what your stepmother tells you and no argument.”

“Well said.” June came into the room. “Logan, you heard your father.”

“I heard.”

“So you’ll do what you’re told and give me no problems,” she snarled. “I’m going to be back tomorrow to learn the details of what they tell me will be your starter kit. No sneaking out before I’m here or you’ll be sorry. And then you’ll do whatever you’re told for as long the project lasts.”

Logan looked at his father who looked away as if afraid to meet his eye.

“I don’t want to be some kind of laboratory mouse,” Logan said to deaf ears.

If this had been a power struggle, they all knew who had won.

“Don’t worry about him,” June said later when the conversation was relayed to her. “Once he’s in the programme, his behaviour’s going to change.”

“I sure hope you know what you’re doing.”

“Of course I do and he’ll be much happier in the end.”

“I don’t know why I let you persuade me that this was a good idea,” Dad said.

“You always wanted a daughter, didn’t you?”

“Hi Logan.” His stepmother hugged him as soon as she arrived home the next evening, acting like they were friends again.

“Hi yourself.” Logan held himself rigid, not returning the hug.

“I guess I’ve upset you again,” she said. “I don’t want you to be upset but I’ve a great chance to impress. I’ve submitted a proposal and got it approved. I really need you to help me with it though.”

“I’ve no choice. I’ve been told that I’ve got to do whatever you want me to.”

“You haven’t heard what it is yet.” She stayed upbeat, trying to break his gloomy mood. “It’s going to be like you’re a secret agent in disguise.”

“Great, I’m going to be James Bond in a bunny costume?”

“Not quite but who told you?”

“Who told me what?”

“I guess that was just a flippant comment. You don’t really know anything.” She came to sit beside him.

“No one tells me anything, you know that.”

“Well, you were partly right.”

“About the James Bond bit?” Logan asked, with a sinking feeling in his heart that he’d chosen the wrong one.

“No but the bunny costume might feature somewhere in the future.” June did that thing with her fingers simulating ears.

“Tell me the worst.”

“Okay, the good news is you can move out and away from me for part of the time.” She saw him smile. “Not all the time, just for part of the time.”

“That can’t be bad,” Logan said. “Not that I want to be rude to you really, but you seem always to be on my case.”

“I don’t want you to see me like that. I really do want to do my best for you,” she continued. “You’re going to my supervisor’s institute for a few days as a first step.

“Why do I have to go there? I’m not the student or project worker, or anything.”

“No, you’re the subject. It’s important to establish exactly what and where you are before we start. They’ll do height and weight, blood and urine tests, metabolic rates and a host of other measurements.”

“It sounds like you’re sending me away to be some sort of biological experiment.”

“It’s nothing like that,” she said. “It’s important that we know the base line before anything changes.”

“Wait, no one mentioned that.” Logan felt a frisson of fear. “Who said you were allowed to change me.”

“Don’t be silly.” She was as evasive as ever. “It’s inevitable that you’ll change over the months of the project.”

“No one mentioned it taking months either,” Logan said angrily.

“That depends on you. It’s going to take as long as it takes. There’s no set timeframe.”

“Is there no good news at all?”

“There is good news,” June said. “You get paid.”

“How much?”

“That depends on the progress we make, but it could include use of a car.”

"I get my own car?" Logan exclaimed. "That could make it all worthwhile."

"The next piece of good news is that my assistant is Valentina Moreno," June said. "She'll be looking after you much of the time."

"I don't think I know her and I don't speak Spanish."

"You don't know her yet, but she's going to be your day-to-day contact. She's not Spanish despite her name and she's a recent graduate from my old university department."

"Don't tell me; brain the size of the universe, hips to match."

"I think you'll really like her." She flipped through her mobile. "I think I've a picture somewhere."

"Okay, I think I could get to like her," Logan said, looking at the picture of a super slim girl with long black hair, in a red dress that left little to the imagination.

"Don't get carried away; she doesn't always dress like that," his stepmother replied. "That was when we went to a fiesta where her folks live."

"I wanted to meet you myself." Professor Speak was one of those old-fashioned absent-minded looking academics; a young fogey, dressed in an open neck shirt and jeans.

It was Logan's first morning on the project. He had no idea what to expect. He'd been dropped off, told where to go, and told that June would pick him up in a few days when they'd decided to start.

"I'm pleased to meet you, sir," Logan replied, surprised at the strength of his grip as they shook hands. "My stepmother speaks very highly of you."

“No need to stand on ceremony with me,” the professor replied. “I bet you hate her; don’t you?”

“Not really, but we don’t always agree.”

“You’re very diplomatic,” Professor Speak said with a grin. “I suppose she’s bribed you into this project.”

“She did mention that I get paid and she mentioned a car too.”

“Nothing like a good bribe, eh?” Professor Speak nodded sagely. “And you get the wonderful Valentina Moreno as your personal supervisor for part of the time. What more could a red-blooded guy ask for.”

“I haven’t met her.” Logan thought that the professor was thinking he was older and obviously more experienced than he really was.

“So you have that treat to come.” He smiled weakly. “Now I have to hand you over to the team. They’re going to do all kinds of measurements. It may get a bit tedious, but it’s necessary that we know what we have to start with.”

“Does that mean me?”

“Of course; if we aren’t sure of where we start, how are we to know what we’ve achieved at the end?”

“I think I understand,” Logan mumbled. “I’ve really no idea of what this is about.”

“Exactly so; all the results will be uncontaminated by your expectations.” Professor Speak indicated a door to the rear of his office and Logan followed him into an examination room.

“Here is our subject,” he announced to a white coated technician who was bending over a machine.

“I’m pleased to meet you.” He recognised Valentina Moreno behind the surgical mask. “You’re very brave to take part in this experiment.”

Logan shook her hand, wondering what was so brave about it all. It wasn't as if he'd chosen to take part. Should he be worried? he thought but her smile of welcome was too genuine for doubts to creep in.

Test followed test, as day followed day. Logan got used to wearing a surgical gown and lost all sense of embarrassment as he was subject to their tests. It got so repetitive that he gave up asking what each was for.

Valentina seemed to be quite cold and humourless as she worked, usually on her own with him, occasionally with an assistant. He was poked and prodded, measured in baffling detail. Blood tests, saliva tests, and tests of tests; no wonder he lost any idea of what they were for.

"These will be the last test tests we need to do," Valentina announced on the third day. "We need a final profile of your present hormone balance to compare."

"Wait a minute," Logan said. "Hormones. They're a sex thing, aren't they?"

"You are right; they're crucial for certain aspects of all of us," she replied lightly. "We all have them to differing degrees."

"So what would you want to compare them with?"

"It's important that we measure these things so that we aren't distracted into making false conclusions when the study is over."

Logan had no idea what this meant but he said nothing. He didn't want to appear ignorant when she smiled so beautifully and looked into his eyes with a "trust me" look.

"Now that's over, I only need your signature of consent on these forms." She held a pen and handed him some forms. "It's only a formality. June has signed as well because you're seventeen."

“I’m nearly eighteen.” Logan signed without looking.

“I think June is in the building. I only have to give you these booster injections and then I’ll take her to you and you can go home.”

“Don’t I have to stay? I thought Professor Speak said that I had to.”

“You may have to stay sometimes but not today.” She picked up the telephone and left a message for June as Logan rolled up the sleeve of his surgical gown.

“No, I need you to bend over the examination couch,” she told him. “These go into your glutinous maximus. It’s the strongest muscle in your body.”

Logan felt the swab and then the jab and pressure as the injection was placed deep into his muscles at each side. He was unprepared for the third jab, which was quicker and sharper than the others.

“I thought you said two,” he complained.

“Don’t worry; the last one was only your chip.”

“You’ve put a chip inside me; a computer chip?”

“It’s only for identification so that your samples in future don’t get mixed up,” Valentina replied. “It’s like they give dogs to identify them if they stray.”

“Wait a minute.” Logan realised the implications in a trice. “Those chips have a GPS. The owner can track the dog anywhere. I want you to take it out. I don’t want to be tracked like a dog.”

“I can’t take it out,” Valentina replied. “Once it’s in, it’s there to stay.”

“I can’t believe this.” Logan tried to feel where the chip was located.

“It’s tiny and has a very soft coating. You’ll never know it’s there.” Valentina tried to be reassuring.

"That's not what I'm worried about," Logan replied. "Anyone who has the code could track me anywhere. I couldn't hide."

"The code won't go out of this laboratory," Valentina said casually. "It's not as if you need to hide from anyone."

Logan could think of someone but he said nothing. He got dressed in his own clothes and waited for June to collect him.

Logan felt really tired for the next few days. He didn't say anything at home. He guessed it was because of all the tests. He was even too lethargic to argue when June ordered him around. Everything was too much trouble.

"Are you feeling okay?" Dad asked a couple of evenings later. "You haven't bothered to have a row with June these last few days."

"Very funny," Logan said in a low voice. "I think they gave me something wrong at that clinic. I don't have the energy to do anything."

"Have you mentioned this to June?"

"I've hardly seen her since that afternoon," Logan yawned. "And I seem to have been sleeping most of the time."

"I'll give her a call," Dad replied. "Maybe this is something she should know about."

Within an hour, Logan was back in the clinic, this time lying in a bed, with machines measuring his vital signs.

"Everything seems to be okay." June came to see him after a couple of technicians and a white coated doctor had finished. "They want to keep you a couple

of days and get some test results before you go home.”

“How many more tests can there be?” Logan grumbled. “I’m like a human pin cushion.”

“It’s all for your own good,” June replied. “And we can get your room fumigated and redecorated with you out of the way.”

“I like my room,” Logan protested.

“You’ll like it more when it’s done,” June replied as she went out of the door.

A couple of days later, Logan was feeling brighter. He’d received a couple more injections in the same place and one in his arm. He felt a little hazy at first but as that wore off, he began to feel more like his old self.

“I think you’ll be ready for home tomorrow,” Valentina told him as he was sitting beside his bed. “I’ve been away and didn’t know you were here until I read the lists today.”

“I don’t know what you gave me, but it knocked me out,” he replied.

“That happens sometimes.” She looked at a chart. “It’s easily stabilised and shouldn’t happen again.”

“Is this really still my room?” Logan looked round. “I can’t believe you’ve cleared everything out. It looks more like a girl’s room than mine.”

“Nonsense,” June replied. “It looks clean and bright. All the grungy old furniture needed to go.”

“But what did you do with my posters on the wall.”

“Pictures of naked women are not the sort of thing to be displayed on your walls. Do you realise how insulting they are to women?”

"There's a fat chance of me bringing any women here anyway," Logan snapped back but as he did so, the urge to argue seemed to fade away. "But I don't want to insult anyone."

"You're forgiven." June hugged him and to his surprise, he didn't pull away as he usually did.

"What did you do with my clothes? These drawers and wardrobes are empty," Logan asked as he explored all the changes to his room.

"They went to the cleaners if they were fit to be worn in future and the rest went to Goodwill or the dump."

"That's not fair." Again, Logan wanted to argue but couldn't get the anger to flow; he shook his head as if trying to clear his thoughts.

"I thought you'd like all the clean lines, the soft colours and the matching fabrics. Aren't they just perfect together?"

"It's like you designed the perfect room for yourself," Logan replied. "It's not like a boy's room at all." Once again, the anger wouldn't come.

June left him alone and he sank down on the bed. There was something beside the pillow. He reached to find what it was and pulled out a teddy bear wearing a ribbon and a cute smile.

Instinctively, he pulled it into his chest and hugged it.

Next afternoon, Logan was sitting in a waiting room. June was to collect him when she'd finished in her office.

"Hi, I'm Murdoch." A girl came in and sat next to him. "Are you on the same programme as me?"

Logan looked at her. They were about the same age and size. She was beautiful, but there was something not quite feminine about her. Maybe it was the way she walked, or talked. It couldn't have been her hair which was pure corn silk and over her shoulders, or the way her body moved. She was slim with small breasts showing under her low-cut T-shirt.

Logan couldn't describe what it was but it was certainly there.

"I have no idea," Logan replied. "They didn't tell me that it was a programme, only that I was here for some sort of research."

"Did you see Valentina and did she give you some injections?" she asked, miming where they went.

"I think I reacted badly and they had to give me another couple of shots," Logan replied.

"It sounds like we're on the same thing then. Did they tell you what to expect?"

"They didn't tell me anything."

"It was the same with me," Murdoch replied. "I think I'm a few months ahead of you. I'm here for what they call 'monitoring' where they take samples again."

"But you don't know what they're looking for?"

"They haven't told me, but I think I can guess," Murdoch replied. "I hated it at first but now I'm starting to like everything about it."

Before they could talk any more, June appeared. She looked at Murdoch and quickly shepherded Logan out to her car.

"Who was that girl?" Logan asked as June drove them home.

"She's been on the programme for a few months now," June replied.

"Do you know who she is?"

"I don't know her personally but I've seen her profile and her test results." June replied. "She's about nine months ahead of you in the programme."

"Will I see her again?"

"Probably: her results are really promising and part of the reason why they wanted to expand."

"And that's why I'm stuck in this mess," Logan replied bitterly. "I feel like I'm a human pin cushion. Stick a needle here and another there. How many injections does it take."

"I think it needs one more anti-grump injection." June tried to smile across the car. "Don't worry; one or two more sets of injections to go and then you won't be having more injections for a while but they have given me some pills for you to take."

"I need something," Logan said. "I feel really low, like I have no energy. I can't even be bothered to get mad at you for getting me into this mess."

"You're helping in valuable research," June snapped back. "You should be proud of that."

"I didn't volunteer," he replied. "And I've no idea what I'm supposed to prove at the end of it all."

"No one's going to tell you that." She shook her head as the car turned into their drive. "The results have to be measured separately and if you know too much, you could consciously or unconsciously, produce results which may be false."

"I have no idea what you mean." Logan got out of the car and slouched into the house without saying another word.

Next morning, Logan slept in late. By the time he woke, June and his dad had gone to work. He knew

he didn't feel right as he wandered through the house to the kitchen. He looked in the refrigerator but decided to wait before breakfast.

As the day went on, he grew more and more tired and listless. He sat in front of his computer and tried to concentrate on his favourite game but he lacked the energy to flip the game controller. He gave up and went to lie down.

"I think I'd better sleep this off," he decided and went to his room.

"So this is what they call a room makeover." Logan threw himself onto the bed, feeling so comfortable now that he was lying down.

He looked round, seeing the changes anew. It was all peach and light grey, with gently patterned fabrics and drapes. Gone were his pin-ups and piles of clothes on the floor. Everything was cleared behind the new closet doors and in the drawers under the huge mirror on the wall.

"I bet June designed this to get her own back on me," Logan thought as he drifted away. "It looks like a room she'd like; it's so girly."

He saw the teddy bear again. It seemed to sit there waiting for him. He hugged it to him again and buried himself deeper in the pillows, where sleep came quickly.

"I think I'm dying," Logan moaned as June shook him awake. "I can't stand up without feeling like I want to fall down."

"I'll call the clinic," June replied. "I think you could be having a reaction. Don't worry. I've been warned that this might happen; you'll be alright soon."

"I think I'd rather die," Logan moaned.

"I'll get you some pills," June replied. "They should help you to feel better."

"I hate what you've done to my room," Logan said listlessly; he didn't have the energy to start an argument.

"You'll get used to it," June said breezily.

Logan sweated and ached all over. He drifted into sleep and tossed and turned fitfully. The night passed and the next day slipped away with no relief. On the morning of the third day, he woke feeling both calmer and stronger.

"You look so much better," Dad said when he looked in on him. June sent you these." He handed him some more pills and a glass of water. "I think she's tried to make an appointment at the clinic to make sure that you weren't reacting to anything there."

"Great; they'll probably think it was my fault," Logan mumbled, not quite hearing what was said.

"Valentina's coming to see you as soon as she can," Dad said. "From what I hear, she's a real beauty."

"She is and I'd hate for her to see me like this." Logan tried to sit up but fell back into his pillows. "But I guess she's not many options."

He felt a tear trickle down his cheek. "Now look at me." He turned over and sobbed into the bedclothes. "I'm crying like a baby and I don't know why."

Valentina arrived some time later. Logan didn't hear her arrive until she was shaking his shoulder as he lay in bed.

"June's told me all about what happened," she said. "I've just got to run a few more tests so that the lab can check on your vital signs."

Logan lay there as she took his blood pressure and a blood sample. Obediently, he turned over as she gave him two injections in each side of his butt, then a final one in his upper arm.

“That should help you get some really refreshing sleep,” she said as Logan felt a calm drowsiness creeping over him. “When you wake up, you’ll be raring to go.”

“I believe you,” he mumbled as sleep overtook him.

He slept on. In the middle of the night, he woke and went to his bathroom. He sat there; he was too tired to stand. As he relieved himself, he could feel something different in his backside. He felt round.

“It’s like there are three rods inside the top of my leg.” He tried to feel the other side. “Another three there. They’re soft and malleable. I wonder if that’s what Valentina put inside me. If it is, I didn’t feel anything.”

He was still too tired to think clearly. He went back to bed, deciding to ask questions in the morning.

He woke late and almost forgot about his discovery in the night. As he remembered, he felt round and he tried to locate what he had been able to feel in the night. There was nothing there, only a slight residual soreness from that area. He stood in front of the mirror and turned left and right. There was nothing to be seen either.

Maybe he’d imagined it all?

“You’ve not been out much this last few weeks,” Dad said one evening as they ate together.

“I haven’t felt like it,” Logan replied as June cleared the table and carried things through to the kitchen. “And I couldn’t hang around with the same crowd

when I'm wearing the clothes that June bought for me."

"I think you look very nice," Dad replied.

"I'm not supposed to look nice," Logan replied. "I'm supposed to look like a grungy teenager, not some preppy fag."

"Don't use language like that," Dad admonished him. "It's not polite."

"I'm sorry but I don't know how to describe it. Look at me; if I didn't know better, I'd say I was wearing girls' Capri pants with penny loafers and a matching top."

"You look clean and tidy; what's wrong with that? You were such a slob before."

"But I'm wearing a pastel blue T-shirt with a slashed neckline over pale blue pants." Logan stood to show what he meant. "My hair's loose and brushed shiny clean so that it falls over my shoulders."

"Clean is good."

"But I'm doing it as if I don't know how to be any other way." Logan's eyes teared up. "It's as if I'm turning into some sort of girl."

"How many sorts of girl are there?" Dad asked but then saw Logan's face. "Okay, silly question."

"I don't want the guys to see me like this." Logan replied. "I don't want to see myself like this. I can't explain. When I get dressed, I see all these things and put them on as if by instinct. I make sure that they're clean and that they match. I don't want to do this but I don't know how *not* to do this."

"That doesn't make much sense but I do like to see you clean and pleasant," Dad said. "We always seemed to be at loggerheads before. Surely your friends would be glad to see you, yes?"

“They’d think I’d turned queer.” Logan saw his father’s look of disapproval at the word.

“And June’s being nice to me so I don’t need to be out as much.”

“I’m pleased you’re getting on better.”

“I think it’s because she sees me as less of an impediment now that I’m in her programme.”

“You’re probably both adapting,” Dad replied. “But you must miss your friends.”

“Not really. I think being away has broken those friendships. They never call me now.”

“Do you call them?”

“No, but it’s more than that.” Logan looked thoughtful. “There’s not much future in hanging about the mall, ogling the girls all day, especially when I’m starting to dress like one.”

“Surely there are other things you did with them.”

“Sure there was; we used to drink beer when someone could get it. They’d smoke and tell dirty jokes and insult everyone who wasn’t there and a few who were.” Logan sneered at the memory. “There’d be the occasional ball game but it all seems like such a waste of time now.”

“What’s a waste of time?” June asked, coming back into the room.

“Logan was saying that he didn’t miss his old friends.”

“It’s not only that.” Logan looked at them both. “I think I need to be more serious, do something for the future.”

“And your old friends aren’t in your future?” June asked. “Is that what you’re saying?”

“I need to meet new people,” Logan agreed. “But since I was so ill, I haven’t had the energy.”

“Are you having symptoms?” June looked concerned.

“There’s nothing really that you could call a symptom. I feel like I’ve put on weight around my hips and my chest itches sometimes. I don’t ever need to shave and what bits of hair I had on my body have disappeared.”

“Are you losing weight?”

“No but my waist seems slimmer.” Logan stood up and held his sweat pants tight to show what he meant. “I’m still about a hundred and twenty pounds.”

“That sounds healthy for someone of your height and age,” Dad chipped in.

“You’re five foot six; I’ve just googled it and that seems about right,” June added. “Do you want me to book you in for a physical, just to check everything?”

“Valentina took some blood when I was really sick and she visited. Isn’t that enough?”

“That was a few weeks ago.” June checked the calendar on her phone. “I think I should book you in to be on the safe side.”

“Okay,” Logan agreed without enthusiasm. “Hey, can I go when Murdoch’s there? She looks like the sort of new friend I could go for.”

June and dad exchanged glances. “I’ll ask if that’s possible,” June said.

“Have you seen my new jeans anywhere?” A few days later, Logan was still in his sweat pants and a baggy T-shirt. “I’m feeling a bit brighter and I thought it’s time to stop slobbing around all day.”

“Aren’t they in your room?” June asked. “I remember some in the laundry but that was a couple of weeks ago. You haven’t dressed properly since then.”

“I found some, but they’re really very tight on my hips. I thought maybe they were old ones that didn’t fit any more.”

“It’s probably because you haven’t been out much recently.”

“But I haven’t been eating either. I’ve lost my appetite since I was ill,” Logan said. “And this itch in my chest is getting more persistent too.”

“Go and try some other jeans,” June said. “I’ve booked you in for a physical soon. They’re going to call me if there’s a cancellation so you could be going at short notice.”

“Did you ask about Murdoch?”

“I did but if you’re going on short notice, they can’t promise anything,” June said. “She only goes in for check-ups now.”

“They’re all really tight.” Logan re-appeared some minutes later. “I think my hips have suddenly gotten bigger.”

“They’re meant to be skinny jeans, aren’t they?” June asked innocently.

“Skinny, yes, but not like a second skin holding me in.” Logan demonstrated. “They’re loose at the waist too.”

“I think you’re exaggerating.” June ran her hand over his rear. “They don’t feel to be straining. You need more exercise, that’s all.”

June looked at him as he stood and then gestured for him to turn round. She dare not smile but from what she could see, things were going as she hoped.

"I'll call and pick some more suitable ones up for you later," she said. "I'd better measure you before I go."

Alone in her car, June telephoned Valentina. "I'll bring him in tomorrow," she said. "He's starting to notice things so be really careful when you see him."

"I don't need to be," Valentina replied. "You know he's past the point of no return. Those slow release capsules you had me plant in his rear will go on working for another few months."

"I know and we'd better monitor the rate of absorption, so that he can be topped up when they begin to lose effect."

"I'll take another sample if you want me to but I don't think it's going to be necessary for another few months at least."

"I agree," June said. "I only wanted to ask you to be extra careful about what you say."

"You mean you don't want me to tell him that you're turning him into a girl." Valentina laughed. "Even if I told him, it would be far too late to stop it all now."

"Don't even joke about it."

"He's bound to realise sooner or later. Have you thought about what you'll say then?"

"I'll tell him that it's something natural."

"I can't see him buying that one."

"Okay, I'll say that it's all a mistake in the lab. You gave him the wrong drugs."

"Great. So it's all my fault." Valentina knew they were kidding about and that it wasn't serious between them.

“Who knows, by the time it becomes an issue, he may be too far down the road to even think of complaining.” June ended the call.

First thing next morning, June called Logan to get ready for a visit to the clinic.

“You didn’t get my new jeans,” he complained.

“I picked some up for you. I think I left them in the car. I’ll get them but we have to hurry. We’ve no time now,” June replied. “They’re probably as tight as the skinny ones you showed me last night.”

“They’re still a bit tight around my hips and loose around my waist.” Logan turned to look at himself in the mirror.

“I can’t do anything about it now.” June hustled as if to hurry him. “You can wear a belt and a loose shirt over the top if you’re so self-conscious. Next thing, you’ll be asking if your bum looks too big...”

June checked herself and stopped before allowing that thought to carry on into a full sentence.

June dropped him at the door and went to park the car. “I’ll meet you in the waiting room,” she said.

She pulled away and into a space. Her mobile was quickly in her hand. Valentina answered on the first ring.

“He’s coming in now,” June said. “Get him in quickly. Don’t let him object; use the booster injection as quickly as you can.”

“What if he objects?”

“Tell him it’s vitamins because he’s been unwell. Tell him it’s a precaution. Tell him anything but get it done.”

Meanwhile, Logan had reported to the reception desk and been directed to Valentina's room.

"Logan, I didn't expect to see you so soon." Logan saw Murdoch walking down the corridor towards him.

His first impressions of her were reinforced as he saw the sway of her hip-tight skinny jeans. Her hair hung loose over her shoulders and fell onto the loose apricot sweater she wore. Her breasts looked tempting from the little he could see down the neckline of her blouse.

"It's good to see you again." She came up to him and gave him a kiss; more personal than a quick peck on his cheek.

He could feel the warmth of her body against him and the press of her small breasts against his shirt. Her dangling earrings swung and he could feel one brush across his cheek. He noticed the citrus scent of her perfume as she was close to him.

"What are you doing here?"

"The same as you probably," she replied. "Yet another set of samples for a progress check."

"Can we talk a while?" Logan almost begged.

"I've got to go. Mother's waiting in the car," she replied as she saw Logan's face drop. "Look, give me your mobile. I'll put my number in and you can call me later."

Murdoch punched a set of numbers into his phone and handed it back to him. As she did so, her mobile started to ring. She held it up and smiled, cutting the call as she almost ran down the corridor with her hair waving and her heels clicking. Logan stood and watched until she was out of sight.



Valentina was waiting and as soon as he entered the waiting room, he was ushered into her room.

“June’s told me what’s been happening to you,” she said, indicating that he should bend and lower his jeans. “This is a vitamin shot to boost your immune system. It should help you get over that exhaustion she described.”

Logan complied and turned to ask something.

“I love these jeans,” Valentina chattered so that he couldn’t get a word in. “I wish I could get some that fit as snugly.”

Before he could say anything, the needle went in and he felt that pressure as the liquid penetrated his muscle.

“I wanted to ask some questions...” Logan started to say.

“There’s no need. June told us what your symptoms were and our experts put this shot together for you.” Valentina smiled reassuringly.

“But I need to know what you’re doing to me,” Logan protested. “You could be pumping anything into me and I’ve no idea why.”

“June’s signed consent for you.” Valentina continued to smile. “Why don’t you talk to her about it?”

“It’s probably because we don’t talk much and she doesn’t always act as if she likes me.” Logan felt his anger rising and then fading again.

“I’m sure you’re imagining things.” Valentina turned to clear away the disposable syringe and wipes. “This isn’t a cheap project and you’re not anything like the mice we scientist use for experiments.”

“So why don’t I know what this project is all about?” Logan asked again.

“It’s the scientific method,” she replied. “If you knew, then you might produce false results. We always have a group receiving medication and another group receiving placebos. That’s stuff which has no effect.”

“Which group am I in?”

“I’ve no idea. I do what I’m told by the supervisors. Are you experiencing some effects from the shots you’ve been given?”

“Of course; that’s why I’m here today.”

“Then I think you can work out which group you’re in without me saying anything.”

“Buy why?”

Logan was quiet on the drive home. June smiled at him and squeezed his hand as if to comfort him. He felt spacey again and guessed it was from the injection. He thought about things he should ask but the energy to do so wasn’t there.

He went to his room and fell onto his bed where he slept for the rest of the morning. He woke feeling surprisingly good and alert, then showered, taking time to really wash his hair.

He didn’t remember using this shampoo before and looked at the bottle. He recognised the label came from an upscale brand. He’d admired the girl in the advert on television.

June must have put the shampoo in his bathroom. His old one must have been empty, he guessed. The scent was fresh and citrus based and immediately he liked it. A second matching bottle held conditioner. He knew what that was and used it as well.

He was proud of his hair and he’d kept it growing, despite Dad’s hints that it was too long. June said

nothing about it, which was strange in itself. Logan thought she was always looking for something to criticise. Maybe she thought that encouraging him this way would get him to cut it, or maybe she was trying to be nice.

He wrapped it in a towel and left it like a turban on his head as he looked for his robe. The turban amused him; it was one thing that he'd learned from June. He combed his hair carefully, feeling it detangle easily and fall straight, with the wet ends brushing over his shoulders and down his back. It was a feeling that he always liked.

He sat on the bench in front of his vanity and reached for his hair drier on the hook. He found some mousse on the shelf and shook his head as if trying to remember if it had been there before. He didn't think any more but squeezed some out and combed it through his hair.

Remembering the morning's chance meeting, he found his mobile amongst the clothes he'd dumped on the floor. Finding the number, he saved it in his phone and then pressed the call button.

"Murdoch, hi," he started when she answered on the second ring.

"Hi yourself," she replied. "I've been waiting for you to call."

"You were waiting?"

"From that look you gave me, I guessed it wouldn't be long." Murdock laughed gently. "A girl can tell these things, you know."

"So you don't mind me calling?" Logan was still unsure of himself.

"Not at all. Do you want to take me for coffee? I could meet you at that new place in the mall or we could meet at the lake. You know that little cabin by the west beach."

“The beach sounds great,” he said. “But there’s no one here to give me a lift.”

“I’ll pick you up,” Murdoch said without a second’s hesitation. “I’ve got my mother’s car while Dad’s away and she’s using his big Jeep. I think she’s got a power complex, driving that thing.”

Logan tried to interrupt but Murdock cut him off. “Stop talking and give me your address. If you keep on, we’ll have nothing to say when we meet.”

Logan gave his address. “Give me an hour; I’m just out of the shower.”

“Typical boy. I bet you have to scabble through piles on the floor to find something clean to wear. ”One hour, be ready.”

Logan looked through his clothes, then saw a bag on his desk. The label said it came from his favourite clothes store. He looked inside.

“I must be in favour.” He pulled out some new jeans, a soft khaki canvas jacket, and a couple of T-shirts. “I couldn’t afford this label.”

He put on his boxers and some socks. When he pulled the jeans on, they fit like a glove. They were comfortably skinny, hugging his rear and thighs but they fitted his waist as well, with no spare material. He dressed quickly, then admired himself in the mirror.

“The waistband seems a bit low.” He pulled the jeans up as high as he could. “Maybe it’s their new style.”

“This T-shirt looks a bit small too and it only just reaches my waist.” He looked in the mirror. “If it’s from here though, it must be in fashion. I guess I’ve been shut in here for too long.”

He turned to look at the back and sides before pulling it down over his waistband. It barely reached, leaving no spare material between the bottom of the

shirt and the top of his jeans. He slipped a belt through the loops and fastened it.

“Shoes, where are you?” he almost sang as he shifted through the mess on his bedroom floor.

“I don’t remember these.” He looked at a pair of trainers, with sky blue flashes over white. “Maybe these are new as well. Thank you, June.”

In his haste, he didn’t notice that all the labels were missing from the clothes themselves.

“I hope it all doesn’t look too new when Murdoch comes.”

“You’re staring at me.” Murdoch said.

“I’m sorry.” Logan was sitting opposite her in a booth. “I can’t believe you’re here with me.”

“I’m not that special,” Murdoch said, looking coyly away with a smile.

“I think you’re beautiful.”

“Keep talking like that and I might believe you.”

“You should.” Logan blushed.

“It’s only the makeup,” she said, holding out her purse so that he could see all kinds of pencils and tubes in there. “I never thought about it before but now I’d never go out without at least some eye makeup.”

Before it could get more embarrassing, their pizza arrived with Cokes. The waitress set out their flatware and paper napkins, then looked at them as if she knew what was going on.

“Enjoy,” she said and looked them over again, smiled conspiratorially, and left them to it.

“So why are you at the clinic?” Logan asked waiting as Murdoch cut the pizza.

“Probably for the same reason you are,” she replied. “My stepmother doesn’t like me much, so she volunteered me for the programme. I think she hoped that it would make me more like the daughter she wanted.”

“So *are* you the daughter she wanted now?”

“Funnily, I think I’m getting there.” Murdoch sipped her Coke. “I don’t seem to have much to argue with her about anymore.”

“Is it something the clinic’s doing to you?”

“Can we talk about something else, please?”

“I have problems with my stepmother too,” Logan replied. “It’s not that she’s really mean. I guess we just rub each other the wrong way. And like you, I seem to have less to argue about recently, although I haven’t been well.”

“Maybe you have less energy to argue?”

“Could be but you said we should talk about something else.”

“It just so happens that I have a vacancy for a boyfriend at the moment,” Murdoch said. “You look as if you could meet the physical requirements but I don’t know if you’d like to apply for the position.”

“You don’t have to ask.” Logan’s eyes said it all.

“But I don’t know if you’d qualify.”

“I think you’re beautiful,” he said. “I’m sure you’re witty and charming, have knowledge of world affairs and skills in all areas. Is that enough?”

“Maybe but you’ll have to realise that there aren’t many girls like me around,” Murdoch said quietly.

“I already know that.”

“But I don’t think you know the half of it yet.”

"I'm willing to learn." Logan couldn't believe his luck at the speed of this.

"Okay, so where would you like to take me?" Murdoch's eyes said that there were several meanings to that question.

"Anywhere in the world but for now, why don't we walk along the beach a little?"

They walked to the water's edge, then turned to follow it along towards where there were open spaces, benches and soft grass for lounging. As they ambled slowly together, Logan felt Murdoch's hand slip into his.

What did they talk about? Cabbages and kings and all kinds of things. What did they like and what did they avoid; music and movies, games and clothes. If you were to ask either of them about those first conversations that day, neither could tell you.

As they reached the shade of the trees, they slowed and stopped as if drawn by some unseen instinct. Logan looked at Murdoch. Murdoch looked at Logan, then then they came closer. Their lips touched, fleetingly and gently.

As if surprised, they broke apart but then Murdoch's arm sneaked around Logan's waist as her other arm went to his shoulder and then the back of his head. Logan's arms went round her waist and that first soft touch of the lips was followed by a longer kiss.

Their lips touched and opened, tongues followed and a soft whimpering noise escaped. Neither could have said which of them was first as the kiss melted into another and then again and again.

They broke apart and looked at each other as if seeing something for the first time and in a com-

pletely new way. Arm in arm, they walked slowly again, aimlessly, but closer and arm-in-arm. Logan felt Murdoch's head resting against his shoulder.

"I knew when I first saw you that I wanted this." Logan's voice was little more than a whisper.

"I never guessed that this could happen to me." Murdoch kissed his ear.

They walked a little more, silently now, each feeling their way into these new emotions. If there were people around, they melted away, as their own space in the world made everything else separate and distant. In another copse, they stopped and kissed again.

"I'd like for you to feel my breasts," Murdoch whispered between kisses.

Logan responded slowly and tentatively. He knew that girls had breasts. Goodness knows he'd seen enough pictures and June wasn't averse to wearing low-cut necklines, but this was different.

His hand softly stroked around and then under Murdoch's breasts, left and right. She sighed as his fingers flicked over a nipple as he felt and explored this new flesh.

"That feels special," Murdoch said. "I didn't like having breasts when I got them but for the last few months I've had a wish to feel someone's hands gently doing what you're doing right now."

"You feel so nice." Logan allowed one hand to linger there and he pulled her to him again.

They kissed again, this time with lesser urgency and more need to touch and explore. Logan could feel a straining in his groin too. He tried to hold that part of his body back but Murdoch pressed herself against him and slipped a hand down there to feel what was happening.

She found it and let her hand explore as his had explored her breast. It was slow and gentle. She leaned back with a smile on her face as if she'd discovered a great secret and then she pulled him deeper into the copse.

She turned to kiss him, then Logan felt her hands at his belt and before he could protest, even if he'd wanted to protest, she was sliding slowly down his body as her hands freed his growing penis from the confines of his jeans. He sighed as her fingers ran up and down the shaft, then held it firmly.

Murdoch's head bobbed once and he knew that she was taking the tip of his shaft into her mouth. Her tongue was rough against it as it circled the head and then ran down the length and up again.

She kissed it up and down, then very gently ran her top teeth along the length of his shaft. She licked the tip, tasting the first drop that appeared there.

"I don't think you should..." Logan started.

"Shut up and let me." Murdoch's reply was hampered by what was in her mouth.

Logan arched his back. It was an instinctive reaction as she sucked and worked him mercilessly. All too soon, he could feel himself swelling. He knew what was going to happen.

He tried to stop it happening, to prolong the ecstasy of all he was feeling, but it was no use. His first spasm was inevitable and was followed by a full explosion of every drop he possessed. Murdoch clung to him now; arms round his back, holding him firmly in her mouth.

He could feel the strength in his penis ebbing away as Murdoch leaned back and the floppy remnant of what had been dangled uselessly.

“I think you should dress, young man.” Murdock wiped a dribble from her chin with a red tipped finger.

She looked at it, licked it clean, and grinned wickedly. Logan struggled to dress again, the tightness of his new jeans and the zipper making him took down to tidy himself up.

“That was more fun than I expected it to be.” Murdoch kissed him and Logan got a taste of when he had put into her mouth as their tongues played with each other.

Logan’s legs didn’t feel quite connected as she steered him back towards the lake shore. Her head came onto his shoulder once more and both her arms held onto one of his.

“I wish I’d had the chance to feel like that,” Murdoch said. “I didn’t know how to do that before...”

She stopped in mid-sentence. Logan waited for it to be completed but nothing came. He could feel her head going down from his shoulder as she slowed and gripped tightly onto him. Her shoulders heaved and he knew she was trying not to sob.

Logan held her for what seemed like ages but could only have been a few minutes, not knowing what to do or say to make it better. Her shoulders stilled and he could feel her taking deep breaths. Her arms went round him and hugged him closely and silently. Eventually her hold released and she wiped her nose and looked up.

“I’m sorry.” Murdoch’s voice was smaller as she sniffed again. “My makeup’s probably run all over the place.”

“You look fine,” Logan said.

“Liar; my eyes will tell anyone that I’ve been crying.”

“Murdoch wiped under her eyes with a tissue from her pocket, looked critically at the smear of black eyeliner there and then looked up.

“Am I presentable in public?” she asked. “You must think I’m an awful fool. It’s only that... it’s a problem...”

“You can tell me whatever it is,” Logan reassured her.

“Okay. I have a problem with a penis.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t intend for that to happen. You didn’t have to do that for me.”

“No, it’s not your fault; I enjoyed it. As I said, I loved being in control.” Murdoch hesitated and then looked him in the eye. “You don’t understand. I have a penis. I didn’t start out as a girl. They’ve changed me into one.”

“What, like by magic?”

“You don’t understand. I’m a boy like you, or I was last year. They’re doing it to you as well.” Murdoch linked her arm in his and almost pulled him into walking with her. “It’s the clinic and all those injections.”

“They didn’t really tell me what they were for.”

“They wouldn’t.”

“Do you know what they’re doing to me?”

“I can guess. They started on me over a year ago; injections and tests. I changed. Somehow everything felt calmer and my stepmother became much more my friend. I guess that was when the mental changes were starting.”

“But you’re kidding me surely?” Logan smiled at her as if he was getting a joke. “You don’t look anything like a boy. You’re the prettiest girl around.”

“They wouldn’t have picked me if I was going to be ugly as a girl. I think the same applies to you.” Murdoch’s face said that this was not a joke either.

“Did you ever like what they were doing to you?” Logan asked after a few moments silence as they walked slowly.

“Ask me that later,” Murdoch said. “It was when my physical changes became too apparent for them to pretend that nothing was happening that they told me the truth.”

“And you think the same is going to happen to me?”

“I know it is,” Murdoch said emphatically. “They’ve implanted thin strips of slow release hormones in your bum.”

“I’ll demand that they take them out.” Logan’s puzzled expression said that he was having trouble understanding it all.

“You can demand all you like but they can’t take them out even if they wanted to. They’re like a gel that absorbs into your muscle. From there, the hormones seep out slowly. I don’t know how long they last.”

“That sounds unreal, like Doctor Frankenstein.”

“It’s very real,” Murdoch replied. “I had the last injections ages ago but they still appear to be working. That’s why they keep testing my hormone levels; to make sure the readings are female, not male.”

“I’m still having trouble understanding all this,” Logan said. “You’re too pretty. Being a girl seems to be... well, just you.”

“That’s kind since I can’t be anything else now. I’m a girl with a penis though. That could make life a little difficult.”

They walked in silence. Murdoch was giving him time to take it all in. Logan was trying to understand this strange new girl by his side.

“You’re kidding me with all this,” he announced.

“You think I’d tell a lie about something like this?” Murdoch pulled him behind a bush and turned to face him.

Slowly, keeping her eyes locked on his, she undid the button of her low-rise jeans and pulled down the zipper. She held open the jeans; her long red nails almost pointing.

“If you don’t believe me, put your hand down here and tell me what you find.”

Logan’s face went from puzzled to confused. He stood close and touched her flesh.

“For goodness sake, why didn’t you warm your hand first?” Murdoch winced.

“You didn’t tell me...” Logan’s hand went further down and cupped underneath. His face showed that he believed what he’d found there.

“Are you satisfied that I’ve told you the truth now?” Murdoch fastened her jeans again.

“I believe you,” Logan said quietly. “But my eyes are telling me that it can’t be true.”

“Logan, it’s true. I’m all girl except for one thing, one part of my anatomy that I can’t change.”

“How can you be all girl...?”

“It’s very easy now.” Murdoch linked her arm in his again. “At first, I think I was in denial or disbelief.”

“It must have been awful. How did you ever get your head around that?”

“I cried a lot. I didn’t move out of my room much until I realised that there were no options. Then my breasts grew and my body reshaped itself.”

“You have nice breasts.” Logan forgot himself for a moment as the memory of touching them returned strongly.

“I hated it when they were starting to grow. The sensations weren’t nice but when they grew too big to hide, they felt different. I made friends with them.”

“That’s a strange thing to say.”

“I liked the way they made me feel and I got more confident by the day. I got used to pretty lingerie and the way it looked on my body.” Murdoch smiled at the memory. “My first low-cut dress was a dream come true. I loved it instantly.”

“That must have taken some time though; waiting and wondering how far they’d grow.”

“I never thought about that. Other things were happening at the same time. My hair grew long quite quickly, my skin softened and cleared. One day, I looked at myself in the mirror and realised that I loved this new me. I started learning about makeup and hair and liked it even more.”

“You like it that they’ve turned you into a girl?” Logan sounded surprised and then remembered his own likely fate.

“Do I look unhappy?” Murdoch’s eyes shone. “I quite like watching as guys can’t help talking to my chest before they look me in the eye. I quite like acting as if I’m stupid sometimes too.”

“You’ll be going blonde soon.”

“I will if you’d like me to. It might be fun and then I could really act as if I’m ditsy.”

“Don’t you want to change back?”

"If they offered to turn me back, I wouldn't accept," Murdoch replied. "I like being a girl now."

"Don't you miss things about being a boy?"

"I miss playing with my penis," Murdoch laughed. "It doesn't grow now but I loved playing with yours. I was in control and all you could do was stand there like my marionette."

"You can play with it anytime."

"That's probably not going to be true for long." Murdoch sounded serious. "I think you'll already be feeling some changes starting to ripple through your body."

"Are you sure that this can't be stopped?"

"I'm sure. The slow release hormones are deep inside you forever. They couldn't fill you with male hormones to counteract them; that would be too much for your body."

"So there's not much to look forward to?"

"There's lots, believe me." Murdoch's smile returned. "It's wonderful being a girl. You get to wear all kinds of pretty things. You can play with your image; change your hair, or makeup. You can be naughty or nice, maybe both in the same minute."

"I'm not sure..."

"And you have me to guide you and be your favourite sister."

Much as he tried to be mad, Logan couldn't get there. He knew he should be seething. He knew he should have an angry confrontation with June. He knew all these things but after Murdoch kissed him and dropped him outside his house, the temper wouldn't come.

“Hi, sweetheart,” June greeted him as soon as he came through the door. “Did you like your new jeans?”

“Yes.” Logan wasn’t expecting this question and it threw him off balance, as he’d intended to shout and holler.

“Let me see.” June gestured for him to turn round. “They’re really lovely. I knew those lady-fit jeans would do wonders for your figure.”

“Lady-fit? What do you mean?”

“I mean that your waist and rear have changed shape and boys’ fitting wouldn’t be any use at all.”

“So I’ve been going round in girl’s jeans all day.”

“Of course. Don’t tell me you didn’t like the way they feel.”

“I do, but...”

“Was that Murdoch I saw driving away?” June changed the subject quickly.

“Yes, we’ve been out to the lake together.”

“Was it a date?”

“Not really,” Logan answered, his words coming out slowly. “Do you know about Murdoch?”

“I know she’s very pretty.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

“Oh, I understand.” June’s face changed. “You mean do I know about Murdoch as in *really* know about her.”

“That’s what I meant,” Logan replied, still trying to be confrontational but not managing to get there. “Is it true that you’re doing the same things to me?”

“If you’re asking if you might be changing into a girl, then the answer is yes.”

"But why?" Logan sat and felt tears coming into his eyes.

"You've been such a difficult boy, we figured that a change for the better was what you needed."

"But no one asked me."

"Why should we? What would you have said?" June towered over him. "You'd never have agreed, even if it was for your own good."

"Tight, I'd never have agreed." Logan wondered how it could be for his own good.

"It's too late to argue now," June softened her voice. "You'll start to feel the changes very soon, if you haven't already."

"Can't you stop it?" Tears came again to Logan's eyes. "Please stop it. I'll change and be a good son to you."

"You'll be a beautiful daughter. It's too late to change anything." June smiled at him. "You've had all the treatment. It's irreversible and no one could stop it."

"There must be a way," Logan pleaded. "I don't want to be a girl."

"You'll have much more fun when your changes are complete," June said coolly. "I know you're trying to be mad at me and you can't."

"Was that in the treatment too?"

"Of course it was. No one wants a foul tempered girl hanging around the place."

"Murdoch says she still has her penis."

"My oh my, we have been sharing secrets." June smiled. "If it's of any reassurance, you'll still have yours too. It won't be as it is now. It'll much less active but some guys like their girl to have one."

“You don’t think I’m going to be hanging about with the guys, do you?”

“I think it’s inevitable. You and Murdoch will make a great pair for double dates.”

“Now you’re being gross.” Logan’s tears were flowing easily now, much as he tried to hide them.

He got up and ran to his room. It had been severely tidied up again and lots of things were missing. He stated to go towards the door, then changed his mind. Another confrontation wouldn’t change things. Besides, his mind was on Murdoch.

Idly, he opened his wardrobe and saw new jeans and shirts hanging there. He looked at the labels and saw to no surprise that they were from shops catering to women and girls.

His underwear had been cleared from the drawers and replaced by things in silks and lace; socks were replaced by stockings and tights. The drawer where all his odds and ends had been was filled with makeup; mascaras and eye shadow, lipsticks and jars he didn’t recognise.

There was even some perfume on the top.

“Why can’t I get really mad and fling things across the room.” Logan asked when he was again riding in the passenger seat of Murdoch’s car. “I try to get really angry but I end up talking like a pussy cat. It’s as if my whole personality has been switched off.”

“It’s part of the conditioning,” Murdoch said. “You got injections in your arm. They were something else with a slow release. They control your temper and make you feel like you want to be compliant.”

“Have you had those?”

"Yes, can't you tell?" Murdoch turned to look at him. "Look at me. I'm as feminine as anyone could ever be."

"Apart from your penis."

"Apart from that," Murdoch admitted. "They think we're both so compliant that we can't fight against it."

"I certainly can't," Logan admitted. "I try and try but I'm scared. I'm so compliant. Look at me. I'm wearing pale blue jeans with ballet flats. I didn't even know what those were a couple of weeks ago."

"I did the same and I see you're wearing a little eye makeup too."

"You noticed." Logan met Murdoch's eye. "I did it for you."

"That was daring. Did June notice?"

"If she did, she didn't say anything," Logan said. "Why did I feel it was the right thing to do before I came out to meet you? It was almost an instinct."

"I know. It's as if we reward ourselves with warm feeling for being so well-behaved."

"I know what you mean." Logan gestured with his purse. "I'm so conditioned in such a short time. I picked up my purse before I left the house."

"And I bet I could tell you what's in there," Murdoch said. "There's a lipstick and mascara, maybe an eyeliner pencil. There will be some tissues and a tampon, a small mirror, maybe a credit card and some money."

"I've some perfume too." Logan looked thoughtful. "Are girls that predictable?"

"I don't think so but it's been programmed in as part of our conditioning," Murdoch replied. "We have to be completely archetypical girls."

"I really hate to be so predictable."

“I think they’re making us into completely submissive woman. From what I can piece together, the plan is to marry us off to suitable men on the staff. They want to monitor us over a longer term.”

“That’s awful,” Logan replied. “I can’t understand how... do they really expect us to have sex with men?”

“The way I feel, I could have sex with anyone as soon as possible.” She turned to look at Logan. “Does your penis still work?”

“It did last night.”

“Would you like to have sex with me?” Murdoch took his hand and squeezed it. “I’d like my first time to be with someone I know.”

“But you still have your own penis.”

“Don’t worry; it hasn’t worked for a long time.” She shrugged. “There’s another way and I know about it. I think they left some magazines deliberately for me to see.”

“You want me to come into...” Logan’s voice faltered at the suggestion.

“I really need you to.” She looked imploringly at him. “You don’t have a lot of time either.”

“I don’t have time? What do you mean?”

“If mine has stopped growing, it won’t be long before the same thing happens to you.”

Logan looked as if it was a struggle to take all this in.

“Come on; you’d be stupid not to want to know what it felt like, even if it’s only for a little time. Where else are you going to find someone like me who’s begging you to have sex with them?”

“Where? When? How?” Logan looked at her and she could see that he was getting excited about the prospect.

“They’re mere details,” Murdoch said. “I’ll find us somewhere. I really want you to be my first.”

“Can I be second and third too?” Logan laughed.

“My stepmother’s going to be away tonight,” Murdoch said as soon as Logan picked up his call. “Dad’s away all week. I was wondering if you’d like to come over.”

“I’d love to,” Logan whispered into the mouthpiece, his heart thumping away with excitement.

“It’s a girlfriend’s sleepover, if you get what I mean.” Murdoch’s voice was a husky invitation.

“Can you pick me up?” Logan whispered so that June wouldn’t overhear.

“I’ll text when I’m outside.”

Logan knew this wasn’t just any old invitation; there was only one reason why Murdoch would invite him over, especially when she was to be alone in the house.

He dressed carefully, thinking of what June might say when she saw him leaving the house. He chose a baby pink top, waist skimming and figure hugging so that the surplus flesh which had accumulated around his chest was prominently on show.

He’d never worn a bra before but on a whim, he picked it out from his lingerie drawer. He’d held it against his chest and looked in the mirror before deciding to wear it. He knew girls could reach round the back and fasten one. He tried and failed, then he fastened it in the front, twisted it round and put the straps over his shoulders.



"I didn't realise." He gasped in shock as he saw that there really was some spare flesh to fit in the cups.

His top skimmed his waist still, but this time the shape was more feminine. The top exposed his tummy button above tight dusky pink Capri pants. He deliberately chose pink trainer boots with white flashes and brushed his hair out to great volume, fixed with hairspray.

He sat in front of the mirror in his room, looking hard at the reflection. He screwed his eyes up and then added black kohl lines over and under his eyes, followed by several coats of sooty black mascara.

Deliberately, he had chosen to look more feminine than he'd ever been before. If June's idea was to turn him into a girl, then he'd be one tonight, he thought.

He knew what was likely to happen. He prayed that June wouldn't guess and wouldn't stop him. He picked up a soft black leather jacket, slipped it over his shoulders and crept downstairs.

"I'm just going out with a girlfriend," he called to June and his father as he passed the study door. "I may sleep over."

June looked at him as he walked through the hallway. She always saw everything and he made sure that she saw his made-up eyes. He didn't stop to hear if there was any reply as he opened the door and ran to the waiting car at the top of the drive.

"Go go go," he instructed Murdoch as he jumped in and slammed the car door.

She took one quick look at him and set off with a squeal of tyres and a roar of the engine. Her hands moved across the steering wheel, crimson nails flashing, as she manoeuvred around the narrow road and onto the highway

“You’ve gone blonde.” Logan looked at Murdoch properly after he’d fastened his seat belt.

“Thank you, kind sir, for noticing me,” Murdoch replied formally, then giggled. “I thought a new look might help me get out of the mental hole I was falling into.”

“I thought that’s what we were going to do tonight.”

“Don’t burst my balloon,” Murdoch replied. “If I have to be a girl, then I’m damn well going to try everything. You’ll want to do the same.”

“Don’t be too sure.”

“Honestly, it’s an amazing experience. I never knew that changing the colour of my hair could be such a profound experience. I had to keep looking at it in the mirror to see the new me. I even checked the back to make sure it was all the same colour.”

“You look amazing.” Logan smiled across the car at her. “The blonde hair, the tight leather jeans and that tight black top; did your breasts grow too?”

“Don’t be cheeky.” Murdoch smiled. “I got a new push-up bra especially for the occasion.”

“You make it all look beautiful”

“I know; I’ll turn heads wherever I go. Since I went blonde, my skin seems brighter and my eyes sparkle like they never did before.”

Murdoch ran her fingers through her new silvery blonde waves, noticing how Logan watched as it fell back into place over her shoulders. She knew that this was what was meant when the magazines talked about sending hair signals.

She did it again. Logan watched as if entranced. She watched his eyes and glimpsed the way her hair fell in the mirror. It was a bit messier but maybe that was the idea anyway.

"I'm going to grow it as long as I can," she announced. "You'll feel it tumble over you and you can run your fingers through it later."

"Promises, promises." Logan couldn't help grinning.

"Did you tell anyone that you were coming with me tonight?" Murdoch asked as they sat side-by-side in a coffee shop.

"All I said was that I may sleep over with a girlfriend."

"I'm sure they'll guess who that girlfriend could be," Murdoch replied. "But they'll not be worried."

"How can you be sure?"

"You have a GPS chip in your thigh. They'll be able to check where you are any time."

"Does that mean they won't care that I'm with you?"

"It's simple; you can't get me pregnant and they know that in a few months you'll be someone like me."

"I'm not going to let that happen."

"You can't stop it." Murdoch took his hand and placed it on her thigh. "They've injected all the slow release hormones into your body already."

"There must be an antidote." Logan let his hand work up her thigh until it nestled in the space at the very top.

"You're making me squirm." Murdoch pulled his hand away and kissed it with a meaningful look in her eye. "There's no antidote. "They're slowly releasing a little every day, changing you into a girl like me

and at the same time making sure that you're docile and easy to control."

"It's true; I can't get angry and I don't want to disobey... but if that's the case, why didn't they stop us today?"

"Perhaps they want us to have a fling and get it out of our systems?" Murdoch put his hand back on her thigh and playfully slapped it when he started to move upwards again.

"That's a good conspiracy theory, but it could be true." Logan took the hint and didn't move his hand again.

"I think that they're turning us into suitable wife material."

"Wives? But for who?"

"I expect we'll find out soon enough," Murdoch said. "But let's swear to be best friends forever, no matter who they marry us off to."

"I don't think I could be a wife."

"I could," Murdoch surprised him by her answer. "Think about it; if they chose the right one, I could have a life of luxury; a car and an expense account. No children of course; all in return for a bit of sex now and again."

"You wish." Logan laughed although a tremor of fear rippled through his body. "What if you're presented with half a dozen angry stepchildren?"

"I could become the wicked stepmother." Murdoch shrugged. "We've both got experience of how to do that."

"That would be awful."

"I know but don't worry. I don't think it's at all likely to happen."

"You know something." Logan caught something else in her meaning.

"I may know something," she replied. "I think we're to be introduced to some powerful men. They're going to use us to keep them from getting into trouble."

"What sort of trouble?" Logan caught her slight nod. "You mean *that* sort of trouble."

"And I don't mind as long as the sex part isn't too much."

"I wish I could say that you have a vivid imagination but I think you may be right about us being destined to be created for someone or something special," Logan replied. "The cost of all this must be immense."

"And we're wasting time," Murdoch said. "You could be screwing my brains out if we hadn't stopped."

"It was your idea." Logan started to stand.

"I only wanted to talk a little and sit with my boyfriend for a while. You can call it pleasurable anticipation; after all, we have all night."

"What are we waiting for?"

Logan hardly had a moment to take in the house. As soon as they were parked in the drive, Murdoch was out of the car and hurrying to unlock the door. He hurried to follow, hearing the beep as the car doors were locked.

He almost stumbled over the threshold and blinked in the brightness of the hall. Murdoch wrapped her arms round him and kissed him hard, pushing her body against him and grinding her hips into his groin.

“There’s a bottle chilling in the fridge, which you can find for yourself. Glasses are in the lounge over there. I’m going to change into something suitable for the occasion.”

“And I wait in there,” Logan finished the thought for her.

“You wait with mounting anticipation, as a romantic lady novelist might say.” She kissed him again, then turned and went up the stairs.

Logan did as he was told. He looked round the lounge and set the stereo to play soft jazz in the background. He checked that the drapes were closed and dimmed the lights. He checked everything was as prepared as he could in the unfamiliar setting, then settled on the couch to wait.

He didn’t have to wait as long as he expected. Murdoch appeared, wearing a floor-length gown, deep crimson and trimmed with lace and flounces. The sleeves were long and wide, so wide that they almost touched the floor, yet so light that they moved as her arms reached out to him.

As she came closer, her perfume filled his senses and a host of things flicked through his consciousness. Her earrings were long, golden and dangling in her hair which had been brushed out to be full and framed her face. Her eyes were sparkling in the midst of heavy dark makeup. Bangles jingled on her left wrist as she reached to pull his face to hers for a first gentle kiss.

“Pour me a drink.” He could taste her lipstick as she released him and slipped languorously onto the couch.

Logan fumbled with the glasses and handed one to her, before coming to sit beside her. She sipped and then put her glass onto a low table to the side. She took his glass and placed it with hers.

“Now how do we do this?” she said softly, half standing, then gently straddling Logan’s knee so that they were very close and face-to-face.

Logan said nothing as she put her hands to each side of his head and stroked his ears. She leaned in and kissed him softly, then leaned back. Keeping her eyes on his, she released the bow which held the robe fastened, revealing a low-cut chemise underneath, with her nipples protruding underneath the silky material.

“I dreamed of feeling hands there,” she said as Logan cupped her breasts. “I hated that they made me have breasts and tried to pretend that they weren’t growing, but now I love these feelings.”

She pulled her arms back and moved Logan’s hands away, allowing the robe to fall to the floor. Underneath she wore a short chemise in the same colour and with the same lace trim. She pulled it up, revealing matching panties with ribbons tying the sides.

“I think you’ll know what you’ll find if you undo these ribbons,” she said, watching as he did so.

Logan registered a little shock as he saw her tiny penis for the first time. This wasn’t how he’d ever imagined things he might be doing.

“You need to be really hard for where you’re going,” she said.

He watched the elegantly manicured hands as Murdoch undid his belt and unzipped his trousers, making him wriggle to free himself.

“I’m very clean and lubricated for you,” she said. “But you’ll have to use some oil.”

Logan didn’t grasp what she meant immediately but then as the panties fell away and she raised herself to test the tip of his erect penis, he knew what he had to do and slathered oil along his shaft.

He watched as she reached behind and pulled something long, wide, and flexible from her rear.

“I wanted to be sure that I was open and ready for you.” She raised herself on her haunches and slowly got into the position she wanted. She reached round and grasped his penis. He could feel the tip touching her skin, then settling at the entrance to her rear.

“You don’t know how much I’ve fantasised about this. I want to watch your face as you come into me,” she whispered. “Don’t let me down.”

Slowly, Logan felt her easing down onto his shaft. She did it cautiously at first, raising, then lowering her body to take more of him inside her, gradually taking more with each move until he could feel that he was as deep as he could ever go.

She sighed and shuddered; a gentle sound almost of relief as she pressed down and wriggled as if to feel him from side to side. Logan heard himself breathing heavily as these new sensations stopped any other thought.

“Now you can move,” Murdoch said, raising herself slightly.

Logan grasped immediately what she meant and he began to move, up and down, pushing further and harder each time. She was panting and moaning now, head thrown back and then forwards so that her hair tumbled over Logan’s face.

He felt a swelling and knew what was to come then. She must have felt it at the same time. She leaned back, arching her back as Logan’s spasms came forcefully, one after another, as he held her hips to keep himself as deep inside her as he could.

Then Logan looked down and saw something else. Murdoch’s shrivelled penis had come to life too. It was standing erect and pumping in small spurts onto his shirt. She saw him looking and as he began to

subside, she leaned against him and slowly rose until his penis came out. He could feel drops of his fluid oozing out of her.

“Well, you did get me in a sticky mess,” Murdoch said teasingly, as she rocked back and then stood. “I should have brought a towel or something.”

“Are you always this practical?” Logan asked.

“Always.” Murdoch wiped her hand inside her thigh to catch some of the liquid. “It tastes of you.”

“Who else could it taste of?” Logan asked.

“I don’t know.” Murdoch crossed the room, reached inside a door, returned with a towel and wiped herself and then him. “I wonder if different people taste different.”

“I wonder if that’s part of our stepmother’s experiment with us.” Logan laughed at the thought.

“Don’t even joke about that,” Murdoch replied. “I’ve no real idea of what she’s planned for me or what yours has planned for you. But I’d guess we’re heading for the same fate.”

“But for now, we’re here.”

“And you’d better gather your strength quickly.” Murdoch put her arms into her robe and fastened it. “You’ve a lot more to do before this night’s over.”

“Are you ready yet?” Murdoch was curled up on the couch next to Logan, listening as some soft jazz played in the background and her hand softly fondled Logan’s penis.

“Soon,” he replied. “And the way your hand’s working, you’ll probably be able to tell when.”

“I’d like you to take me from behind this time,” she said. “I’ve seen pictures and read all about it and now

I want to try it for myself. I want you to be forceful and really do me as hard as you can.”

“If that’s an instruction, I’m sure I can follow it.”

“And you’re getting a little stronger.”

Murdoch’s head went down and Logan felt her lips on the tip of his penis. Her tongue flicked over the tip and he felt her teeth drag softly down the head. She released it and ran her tongue up and down the shaft as if willing it into action. Her fingers curled round it, squeezing and teasing.

Logan wanted to feel it hardening so badly, yet he was enjoying the feelings she was giving him as she played. They there came the feeling that he’d been waiting for. He grew strongly.

Murdoch looked up at him. “I think someone’s ready for action.”

She stood and walked round the end of the couch, beckoning him to follow. She bent over the arm, one hand holding his penis in a very obvious way.

As she bent further, Logan moved closer. His penis touched the entrance, but there was resistance. They both felt it.

Murdoch’s hand passed him something. He looked down and recognised a spray of slippery lubricant. He sprayed some on himself and more against Murdoch’s entrance. He pushed again and slipped inside.

Murdoch grunted and looked over her shoulder at him. She reached forwards with her arms and pushed back against him. Logan arched his back and pushed further in, against some muscle resistance. He eased away, then pushed again as he slapped her rear hard.

Murdoch squealed in shock. Logan pushed. The resistance disappeared and he was further in and knew he could get every fraction of his length inside.

He pushed until he could feel his sack against her skin and knew he could go no further.

He was impatient to feel everything and remembered she had asked him to be forceful. He allowed himself a little frisson of amusement at that thought; if this wasn't forceful enough, then he could do no more.

In and out he moved, holding her behind into his groin as he worked it with his hips. Murdoch's moans became louder and her head shook from side to side. She was saying something but he couldn't tell what it was. He kept on pushing as hard as he could each time he withdrew the thrust for a moment.

It took longer this time. He worked it and she seemed to be taking as much pleasure as he was. It seemed to take ages before that feeling began again. And then it came. He was thrusting and the swelling sensations took over. He knew he was going to come and from the way Murdoch's body stiffened and held still against him, he knew she could sense it too.

She gave a littler tense scream as the first spasm shuddered through his body. She panted and pushed back as they came, pulse after pulse. Then all too soon, he was fading again; slipping away and slowly out.

He lay on his back on the other end of the couch and sighed. Murdoch crept up the couch to lie beside him. She kissed him gently and they lay contentedly with her head on his shoulder.

Sometime later, they ended up in bed. Logan had no memory of doing so but he knew he awoke slowly with Murdoch spooned into him and his penis huge and instinctively wanting to go into action.

He slipped it between her cheeks. Still more asleep than awake, she moved languorously, making it easier for him to feel his way into her. He used a hand to better his aim. It came away sticky and smelling of sex.

They must have done something before they slept, he concluded, but didn't dwell on the thought as he eased his hips and began to thrust his way inside her. Soon she was matching his thrusts with her own. She moaned in satisfaction at the feelings.

He pushed harder and harder, then rested. content to feel that he was so deep and connected to her. One arm was over her shoulder, her hair tangling around his skin. The other arm was reaching round to discover that her penis was stiff and as hard as it had been the previous night.

It was stiff but there was something else that he half-registered as he let his hunger for release take over. She was his girl now and he wanted to make sure that she knew it.

He tried to hold back as long as he could. He wanted the release from his climax but at the same time, he didn't want it to be too soon. He wanted these feelings of possessing her and holding her so closely to last forever.

It wasn't to be. Murdoch pushed and pushed, making that movement which made it inevitable that he come. He felt the power rising, tried to hold it back, but it wouldn't wait. Murdoch wouldn't let it wait and as he felt the first spasm, he heard her first deep moan of pleasure.

They lay together quietly as their lust subsided, content in the way their bodies were entwined together. When he slipped from her, she turned and they kissed and whispered everything and nothing to each other.

Eventually they had to get out of bed but still couldn't keep their hands off each other. The shower took ages as they found ways of doing it again under the warm cascades.

Then he remembered what he'd found earlier.

"You don't have a ball sack," he said, puzzled.

"They took it away. They said it was producing the wrong sort of hormones." Murdoch saw the shock in Logan's face. "It didn't hurt and I don't feel any different. You'll see; they're probably going to do the same to you.

"I'm not going to let that happen."

"You will." Murdoch held him close. "You're so full of all kinds of chemicals to make you compliant; don't forget there's a GPS chip somewhere in your hip, even if you knew where to go to get away."

"I'll find a way."

"No you won't, not if you want us to be together sometimes. I don't want to lose you, no matter what they make us do."

It wasn't a strong argument but then Murdoch's warm embrace and her renewed enthusiasm for him to get inside her again took over.

Life was good, life was easy for the next months. Murdoch grew more feminine by the day. She turned heads wherever they went and Logan loved her being the centre of attention. June knew or guessed what they were doing and put no obstacles in their way.

The first change was when Logan was mistaken for a girl. They were together in one of their favourite cafes, quite lost in a world of their own, when two boys came and sat next to them. They were polite boys fortunately and took their brush off easily.

It wasn't the last time that this happened. Heads turned as they walked together and they both realised that Logan was attracting as many looks and whistles as Murdoch.

"I think you should wear some makeup all the time we're together," Murdoch said one day after they'd passed a construction site where whistles followed them. "They think we're two girls, so why not play the game?"

"Is it a game?"

"It's the only game in town," Murdoch said. "I'm going to take you to get your ears pierced and then for a manicure. You'd love nails like mine."

Murdoch held out her hand. He'd never thought about it before but her nails were always painted, usually dark red shades, and suddenly the idea attracted him.

"Girls get their nails done," she said.

"I don't look anything like a girl," Logan protested.

"Have you looked in a mirror recently?" She smiled back at him innocently. "You're getting curvier than I am and your hair looks wonderfully soft and silky. I'm so glad that you always wear it loose. It moves so well."

"I'd make an ugly girl."

"No, I don't think so," Murdoch insisted. "Let me make you up and then we'll see."

"If you really want to..."

"I do and I promise that you're going to love your new look." No sooner were they back to Murdoch's home than he was pulled to her room and placed in front of the vanity as she got to work.

"I'm going to do it quickly and you'll see the difference. You'll never go out without makeup again."

"I'd look stupid, like a bad drag queen."

"I promise you won't, now shut up and watch what I do. Don't say a word until I've finished."

Murdoch worked steadily. Logan sat there, watching and wondering as his face seemed to change shape subtly. His cheeks got a new glow and she seemed to spend ages on his eyes.

He said nothing as his eyes were shaded and lined, his lashes were coated with mascara, so that in the end they looked so dark against his paler complexion.

"I always liked too much eye makeup," Murdoch confessed. "Now I feel naked without it."

"Is that too much?" Logan looked at his reflection, fascinated by the change.

"For me, it's not, but you're a first-time user." Murdoch brushed his hair softly so that it framed his face with some falling in front of his shoulders and some behind.

"I think you've convinced me." He turned his head to look at it in the mirror from different angles.

"I knew I would," Murdoch said. "Seriously, it's something you need to know."

Next day, Logan got his ears pierced, with Murdoch watching as the jeweller punched two holes in each of his earlobes. She wanted him to have studs but Murdoch insisted on golden hoops.

"I want them to be there for all to see and for *you* to see every time you look at your reflection," she said. "You'll wonder how you ever managed without earrings."

The next stop was at a shop called "Nailed" and after what seemed an age, Logan walked out with new nails, almost as long as hers and just as red."

"You'll get used to them," she said.

The inevitable changes were happening a little more every day.

He loved her being with him and they shrugged off these events. Inevitably, one day things began to change and once they began, things tumbled along, almost out of control.

"I can't get hard," Logan said in panic one night as her hand was playing with him in a way which usually produced results quickly.

"Don't worry." Murdoch stroked his face and wiped away the tears which dribbled down his cheeks. "I haven't been able to get hard since before we met."

"But I need you," he sobbed.

"You've still got me. We'll do other things." Murdoch replied. "I knew this day would come."

"I guess you did warn me." Logan sniffed and wiped his eyes. "I should be angry but I can't."

"That's part of the treatment," Murdoch explained. "I'm the same. I seem to be able to do every emotion but anger."

"Maybe we need to think this through more." An idea flipped into Logan's mind. "Our stepmothers work at the same place."

"I know that and we've both been there for some kind of process. It's turning us into female versions of ourselves."

"But they know we're having sex."

"Anyone looking at us would know we've been going at it like rabbits." Murdoch smiled at the thought.

"But they haven't stopped us, even though they know we're both boys underneath."

"I think I left that behind a long time ago." Murdoch put his hand on her breast. "Don't you?"

"Be serious for a moment," Logan tried again. "They know how we're having sex but they haven't interfered in any way."

"Why should they; it's good to have sex," Murdoch purred. "Don't you want to do it right now?"

Her arms came around him and she pulled him closer. Logan's reactions kicked in. In a few moments they were naked and he was sucking her nipple as she fondled his flaccid penis. She turned and started to suck it but there was no reaction.

"Maybe you should suck mine too," she suggested, changing position so that hers was presented to his lips.

He licked under it and drew it into his mouth. It grew a little but no more than he had ever seen it grow. Still he licked and sucked; he ran his tongue up and down, then softly nibbled at the tip. A little taste came into his mouth, slightly salty and quickly swallowed.

"I can't make you grow either," she said. "But I can do something. Don't move."

Logan lay where she left him and waited. She returned with a bottle of oil and what was unmistakable a very flexible but thick plastic penis; hard yet pliable.

"Guess where this is going?" She whispered and licked his ear. "You need to get into position because you're not used to it and it may get a little messy. Come and lean over the arm of the couch for me, like I do for you."

Feeling uncertain, Logan moved as she told him. He knew what was coming and he felt a little insecure. He'd been the man in this relationship. Was

that going to change when he allowed her to take him?

There was no way back from this situation, he realised as her finger started to probe his rear. Slowly and softly, she moved and kept on moving. His feelings of doubt gave way to feelings of pleasure and anticipation.

“I think you’re ready for this.” Murdoch withdrew her fingers and he felt the different pressure from the tip of the plastic. It was smooth and the oil made it slip inside easily.

Logan clenched against it once it first entered. It was a reflex action. He could feel the pressure mounting and still he resisted. He tried to relax that muscle, but couldn’t will it to ease. Murdoch’s pressure continued though and slowly was winning.

Logan gritted his teeth. It wasn’t good and was hurting. He knew that this was what he’d been doing to Murdoch at every opportunity they had. He’d never realised that it might not be easy as he still resisted.

Murdock slapped him twice. He heard the slap and felt the sting in her hand and, almost at the same second, he was penetrated further and further, resistance weakening as the barrier had been passed. This time he heard his own breath coming louder and the little gasps he’d heard from her were now coming as soft moans from his own lips.

She pushed onwards slowly, easing and thrusting gently, until he thought there was nothing more that he could take. She left it in there like a rod deeply inside him, and stood.

“I’ll quickly get the other piece that goes with this,” she said. “I think you’ll like it.”

Logan lay there inert and full of thoughts and sensations that he’d never even considered could be going through his mind. She came back into view with

some sort of harness around her waist and went to his rear.

“Keep still while I fix this,” she said.

An instinct told him what was going to happen next as she started to move back and forth, gently at first and then with more insistence, each thrust making him moan again. He knew his penis was trying to grow as she thrust harder and he felt the release when it did finally release, even though he knew it was hardly anything like as powerful as it had been.

Logan’s muscles all seemed to release at that point and his breathing returned to something like normal. Murdoch slowly withdrew. He felt every fraction of the withdrawal, sensations accompanied each tiny movement until, with a final plop, it was entirely out.

“I think I could get used to that,” Logan said slowly as if there was hardly enough energy left to speak.

“You’d better; there aren’t any choices left.”

The very next week, things started to change again. The easy life that Murdoch and Logan had enjoyed for the previous months was overtaken by appointments at the clinic, mixed with overnight admissions for observation and tests.

After those came the interviews and meetings; psychologists, psychiatrists and probably every other something-ist that universities had created in the last couple of centuries. It was long, tedious, and ultimately exhausting.

They were never together and their mobiles were taken. Thus, with no computer access either, they seemed to be separated forever. If that wasn’t enough, the medications that they guessed they were

having stopped them from becoming angry or uncooperative.

Whilst they both had feelings of sadness and loss, they were ignored and pushed aside by all the therapists of whatever school. The drugs which kept them subdued and compliant were working and their step-mothers knew that they were in control.

It was several weeks later before things were to change but they didn't know how.

"June, you'd better look at these results." Valentina pointed to her screen.

"I see what you mean," she replied. "Logan's testosterone level has risen far above the projection. It should be going down rapidly by now."

"Murdoch's went as predicted."

"Yes but Murdoch had one different item in his treatment. We thought we could do without it, given the way he's turned out."

"Well, that was a wrong prediction," Valentina replied. "Do you want to tell him or shall I?"

"I think neither of us." June picked up the internal phone. "I'll ask Professor Speak. He has to know about this anyway, so he can decide what to do next."

"In the meantime, I think he'll need another dose... you know, just to make sure that he doesn't develop any outbursts of anger."

"Yes, will you see to that please? The professor isn't answering. I'd better go and speak to him in person and I think I know where he'll be."

"You're looking very nice this evening." June looked at Logan carefully when she arrived home.

“Your father and I are really pleased to see that you’re taking some pride in your appearance.”

“You know why,” Logan replied. “It’s all the things you’ve had them do to me at that clinic.”

“It’s not me personally.” June’s voice was soft and reasonable. “All your father and I did was to put you into their volunteer programme. We thought it would help you to have a better life.”

“A better life as a girl, you mean.” Logan knew he wanted to be angry, but once again he couldn’t do it. “And I haven’t gotten a car yet.”

“I think you’re going to be perfectly lovely,” June said. “Your hair is clean and you always dress nicely.”

“I like to look good.” Logan could have kicked himself for saying that but somewhere in the recesses of his mind, he knew it was part of his conditioning.

“Your perfume is really nice too.”

“Murdoch gave it to me,” Logan replied. “She was teaching me all about makeup and hair styles but I haven’t seen her or heard from her in the last weeks. Do you know where she is?”

“I don’t think there’s much more for her to teach you. Your makeup is better than mine.”

“But do you know where she is?” Logan asked again. “Or are you avoiding the question?”

“All I know is that she’s on a different part of the programme. You have to remember that she started long before you were enrolled.”

“But she could have called me at least.”

“I don’t think she’s been allowed to take her mobile, or to use a computer,” June replied. “I think I heard that there were to be no distractions in her module.”

“I think you know more than you’re telling me.”

“I don’t and I can’t say more.” June stood to leave the room. “I’ll try and get a message through for her to call you.”

“What did you do to me?” Logan woke slowly and realised that he was lying in a bed with a nurse sitting beside him. “The last thing I remember, I was sitting with Valentina. She injected something into my thigh again and then I had to put on a mask for a breathing test or something.”

“I think you fainted.” Valentina appeared behind the nurse. “I had to call for Professor Speak and he came at once.”

“Why did I faint?” Logan had a cannula in one hand but the other was free and he tucked it under the sheet which was covering him.

“I’ve no idea, it took me by surprise.”

“And why do I have this dressing behind my balls?” He looked up puzzled and then it dawned on him. “It’s where my balls used to be, isn’t it? They’ve done the same to me as they did to Murdoch.”

He tried to sit up but fell back onto the bed. Valentina reached for the valve on the drip bag which was connected to the cannula and soon all went fuzzy and spacey." Logan lay back.

When he awoke, Murdoch was sitting beside his bed. She saw his eyes open and leaned across to kiss him. Her hair, smelling sweetly, fell over his face.

“Hello stranger,” he croaked, realising that his throat was dry. “Where have you been this last two months?”

She held a cup towards him with a straw to drink through. “I can’t wait to tell you about the next mod-

ule in the programme. I've nearly finished it and it's been so exciting."

"So tell me." Logan was so pleased to see a friendly face. "I think they'll have me following you soon. They've done the thing that they did to you to me too. We could be sisters now."

"Oh." Murdoch's surprise sounded in her voice. "Oh, they didn't tell me that when they said I could come and see you."

"And I'm trying hard, but I still can't get mad." Logan's eyes started to tear up.

"They only allowed me a minute to see you," Murdoch said. "I know you'll be home tomorrow. I'll call you and arrange to pick you up in the afternoon later in the week."

"I don't think we'll be doing much in the bedroom," Logan said weakly.

"It doesn't matter for once. I've such a lot to tell you."

"You've changed a lot." Logan climbed into the passenger seat as Murdoch drove away from his house.

"I know; it's so exciting too. We're going to have coffee and walk and talk like we did that first time, if you'd like that."

"That sounds good but I don't think I could fire on all cylinders right now."

"I'd guess that you won't be firing on any cylinders for a while. Does it hurt?"

"Not much, really, and for most of the time it doesn't feel any different. The dressings are off and all I

have to do is keep it clean and be careful to choose soft panties that aren't too tight."

"And I bet you still can't get angry."

"You're right," Logan replied. "They put something in that injection. I try to be angry. I even rehearse getting angry in my mind but when it comes to the time to do it, I simply can't."

"I can't rise to the occasion either." Murdoch grinned across the car. "But you haven't said anything..."

"What am I supposed to notice?" Logan stopped. "Your breasts are bigger."

"Do you like them?" Murdoch asked. "They're totally proportionate for my figure, my surgeon said. Please say you like them."

"You look really lovely," Logan replied. "If you hadn't been wearing that denim jacket, I'd have spotted them as soon as I got in the car."

"I was a little nervous about showing you."

"I can't see why; you couldn't have hidden them anywhere."

"You know, I can't explain. Maybe I'm getting a bit too vain or too self-conscious," Murdoch said. "I'll take my jacket off when we stop and you can see the full effect."

"Do they feel real?" Logan asked and then laughed. "I guess that was a stupid question."

"They do feel real and they *look* real, which is even better. They move naturally and don't look like a pair of grapefruits stuck onto my chest."

"I've seen some of those bad porn movies too."

"I had them done not long after I last saw you. They did the incision around my nipple so that there such a little scar, you can hardly see it."

The car pulled into the parking lot and they got out. Murdoch slung her jacket into the back seat, grabbed her purse, and came to pose beside Logan.

"I like this top," she said. "It has a deep neckline, but it's not too obvious."

"It's obvious what's in your bra." Logan stepped closer.

"You can feel them if you'd like but maybe when we get a little further away."

"I need to use the bathroom so let's get coffee first and you can tell me as we walk afterwards."

"That's a good idea; I don't want to be telling all the tables around us."

"Wow, they *do* feel real," Logan said as his hands explored her breasts. "Not that I've a lot of experience to compare."

"Valentina let me feel hers, so I know that they feel real." Murdoch eased her bra back into place and pulled her top down.

"So are you going to tell me why you decided to get them, or was it decided for you?"

"I'd better tell you the story from the beginning," Murdoch said. "It's been such a whirlwind; I can't believe it's been two months since we were together."

"It's nearer three but who's counting?"

"I went into the clinic a couple of days after we were last together. It was all the usual; test after test, and endless injections this time. They said they wanted to get my metabolism in balance, whatever that means. I think it was an excuse to keep on doing what they wanted."

"And of course, you couldn't get angry."



"I did manage a little outburst," Murdoch said. "And that's when Doctor Shelley, Howard Shelley, was with me. He was so nice and kind. He took it all seriously and held my hand. He came to see me every day after that and spent ages explaining everything to me. Of course, it all went over my head."

"It sounds like you've got a thing for this doctor," Logan said. "Just like the girl you are."

"You're anticipating, but yes, you're right." Murdoch paused. "It's funny but I don't remember asking for breast surgery."

"You can't have forgotten something so momentous."

"Howard was so nice about it though. He explained the different types of implant, the sizes and the shapes. I remember getting all confused about which to choose but he did it all for me and when I came round from the anaesthetic, he was there, telling me how beautifully it all went."

"Didn't you suspect anything?" Logan interrupted.

"Of course not; not then. I remember how awfully bruised I looked and how sore it all was." Murdoch pulled a face at the memory. "I couldn't wait for it all to heal and for the dressings to come off. I wanted him to be the first to see how good I looked."

"Did that take a long time?"

"Darling, it took ages," Murdoch remembered. "And I was so impatient. I could have cried with happiness when he examined them and told me that they felt perfect. I knew that they *were* perfect then."

"I'm guessing that there's more to this doctor of yours." Logan's instinct told him that there was a *lot* more.

"I have my stepmother to thank," Murdoch said. "That's something I never thought I'd ever hear myself say. When I was allowed home, she persuaded

Howard to come and visit me. He asked me out and I agreed.”

“Don’t tell me; I can guess.”

“You probably can. We went to so many places. He treated me like a princess. He didn’t mind that I had my little penis. His is much bigger.”

“Whoa, there’s too much information there.” Logan held up his hand. “From what you’re saying, you and the doctor are now an item.”

“More than that; he wants to marry me.” Murdoch’s face gave away what was coming next. “And I’ve agreed. He’s promised to take me for a ring on Saturday.”

“I’m happy for you,” Logan said almost automatically. “Your stepmother must be ecstatic too.”

“We both are, and I never thought we could have agreed about anything.” Murdoch saw the sadness in Logan’s face and took his hands in hers. “Don’t worry; it’s not going to come between you and me. I’ve made it quite plain to Howard that my special girlfriend and I are inseparable. You’re going to be my bridesmaid, of course.”

“That’s something I never thought I’d ever be asked,” Logan replied. “I can only accept. You’ll make a beautiful bride.”

“I know and there’s more,” Murdoch said. “Howard knows all about you because he’s Professor Speak’s assistant. He says he’ll arrange to do your breasts in time for the wedding.”

“I don’t know...” Logan hesitated.

“Oh, please say yes,” Murdoch pleaded. “I want us to be like sisters. I even want to persuade you to have your hair as blonde as mine; that’s how close I want us to be.”

“Won’t Howard object?”

"He knows I need you in my life too. He's promised not to come between us at all." Murdoch's eyes pleaded again. "Please be happy for me. Please stay with me forever."

"I love you too, Murdoch," Logan said. "I'll do anything you ask."

"And I love you," Murdoch repeated. "But we're girls together now and this love I have for Howard is different. It's a woman and man thing."

"Is that how you see yourself?"

"Look at me; how could it be otherwise?" Murdoch said. "What we have is a girl thing; a girl crush."

"I understand."

"I hope you do," Murdoch replied. "We've a lot of unfinished business between us and some of it may involve a plastic penis."

At that, the tension eased and they hugged and kissed like sisters do.

Life seemed to drift for Logan. He and Murdoch became inseparable; they shopped and shopped. Murdoch seized the opportunity to escape her stepmother and moved into Doctor Shelley's apartment, an arrangement which suited them all.

"If this is what engagement's like, I can't wait to be married." Murdoch picked Logan up from his home to go shopping again.

"Your doctor's credit card seems to have no limit." Logan said. "Maybe he's doing that now and once you're married, he'll put limits on."

"He could try." Murdoch pulled a face to emphasise her meaning. "He says that he needs me to be a visible asset."

“That’s not very romantic.”

“May I remind you about this?” She held her left hand out to show off the huge diamond there.

“You win; I shouldn’t ever be suspicious. When’s the ceremony? You haven’t told me.”

“I’m waiting until you get your breasts done.”

“It’s never even been mentioned. You could be a very old lady before that happens.”

“Maybe not; I overheard a conversation with June and the Professor last week,” Murdoch said. “You’ll be called to the clinic soon.”

“I’m not sure that I want to be.”

“You’ve no choice. You can try and resist, but your conditioning will be like mine and you’ll comply.”

“I’ll hide.”

“You’ve a GPS chip in your thigh. They’ll find you and then you’ll comply.”

“Seeing you so happy, I don’t really know if I want to protest or resist. Do you think there’s another like Doctor Hastings waiting for me?”

“You can dream.”

“It’s so good to see you again.” Valentina hugged Logan as soon as he came into her examination room. “I swear that you get more beautiful every time I see you.”

“I don’t really understand how that happened.” Logan’s mind replayed all the stages he had gone through. “I don’t understand how I went from male to female so quickly.”

“Surely it doesn’t matter. You’re here now and no one could ever think you were once a boy.”

“Don’t be silly. I have a penis and if it wasn’t for this push-up bra and the silicone inserts, I’d have no figure at all.”

“But there’s not a boy who’d be out wearing as much makeup as you, not to mention the heels.”

“Okay, I’ve changed.”

“And you’re here for me to check your blood levels and run a few other tests.”

Three hours later, Logan was lying in a bed with a doctor speaking to him. His tests, he said, had shown that he needed some urgent treatment. Doctor Powell was brought in to explain it all.

Logan listened to all he said, “Call me Warren” included. All the figures and percentages, minerals and balances drifted over her head. Murdoch came to see her in the evening.

“He’s a real dish,” she said after the doctor had visited. “This is your chance. I can see he likes you, otherwise he wouldn’t have come. The readings are all recorded and there’s an alarm if anything goes wrong.”

“You’re making that up.”

“No I’m not and if I’m right, this is where you get your breasts.”

“That’s never been mentioned.”

“Trust me, it will be soon,” she said. “And I want you to say yes, then we can be like sisters at my wedding.”

“Things seem to be happening quickly,” June said when she came to visit the next morning. “You already have a drip to help your body restore its balance.”

“I’m sure it’s needed.” Logan tried to sound sarcastic but the treatment already administered left his brain a bit foggy.

“I’ve told them that your condition could be due to negligence,” June continued. “They’re really concerned and I’ve agreed that they can do your breasts and your nose in compensation.”

“You’ve what?” Logan tried to sit up in anger.

“I think you heard.”

June adjusted the drip and a few seconds later, a warm lethargy spread through Logan’s body. He drifted away until he slowly came back to consciousness.

“I’m glad you’re back.” Warren Powell was sitting beside the bed. “Everything went so well and I’m sure you’ll love your new nose and breasts when all the dressings come off. Your levels are now really healthy too.”

Logan mumbled something which could have been thanks; equally it could have been anger or confusion. It didn’t matter and he didn’t remember. What’s done was done and he knew too that his changes had made this transition inevitable.

“You look a mess,” Murdoch said as soon as she came into his room the next day.

“That’s what I wanted to hear,” Logan replied. “I feel bad enough already. They’ve done my nose as well as given me breasts.”

“I guessed. I spotted all those dressings over your nose and your eyes look like you’ve done ten rounds without landing a punch.”

“You get more comforting all the time.”

“I bring joy and happiness to all, at least. That’s what Howard tells me.” Murdoch pulled her hair

back. "He bought these diamond earrings for me yesterday."

"I think they're interfering with my mind here."

"Okay, so you don't need to admire my lovely new earrings," she said. "Never mind that; how're you getting along with your dishy doctor?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Howard told me Warren said that he really likes you," Murdoch said. "He's a real catch too, on his way to a directorship here."

"There's a coincidence. It's the same as Howard and they're both about fifteen years older than we are. Don't you think we've been set up?"

"I think you're talking nonsense. The anaesthetic can't have worn off properly yet."

"But you're right, I'm starting to find Warren quite attractive and I can't think why," Logan said. "I've only spoken to him a couple of times and know absolutely nothing about him."

"Isn't that how all romances start?" Murdoch asked. "You see someone, there's not much interest, but then a spark starts to glow and gets bigger."

"You're a romantic fool."

"No I'm not, I'm happy and I'd love it if you could be happy too."

"I think I'm being manipulated," Logan said. "I'm not really a girl, yet here I am with breasts and a nose job. I wanted to object, but I couldn't. I don't want some man drooling over me, but my thoughts are going the other way. I do like the idea of being courted and I hate myself for thinking like that."

"Accept it, you're a girl now. If they've made you into one, it's too late to change it."

"I guess you're right, but..."

“When the dressings are off and all the bruising and swelling has gone, you’ll feel different, I promise.” Murdoch squeezed Logan’s hand and kissed the bit of his face that wasn’t covered by dressings. “It’s all going to come right in a few weeks.”

“You’re looking good, girl.” Murdoch looked at him closely, seeing how the weeks had changed him. “I can’t tell that you’ve had a nose job.”

“That’s the idea. It would have been a failure if you could tell. I love it; it’s made my face look a lot more... girlish. And since I fell and broke a tooth, the dentist has done wonders with repairing my smile.”

“You’re getting vain.”

“Just like you did after you got your breasts done.”

“I know and I think mine are the same size as yours.”

“So, you’ve no regrets then?”

“None and from your expression, I’d guess that you don’t have any regrets either.”

“None at all, Warren has been so kind and thoughtful. I’m so sorry that I doubted his intentions.”

“He has intentions? How can you be sure?” Murdoch asked.

“He takes me to beautiful places and he’s so attentive. I get flowers when I don’t see him for a few days.” Logan looked at Murdoch’s expression. “Okay yes, we make out. I’ve played with his penis but we’ve never had sex... at least not yet.”

“Are you saying you’ve had his penis in your mouth and that’s not having sex?”

“Okay, I have, but he’s not...”

"I've been thinking..." Murdoch started.

"Always dangerous; you should give it up."

No; listen for a few moments," Murdoch said. "Think of the coincidences. We've both got stepmothers who didn't make things easy for us but who both are researchers working at the clinic. I got taken in for research and some months later you appear."

"I remember seeing you for the first time," Logan smiled. "I thought you were really beautiful."

"You thought I was a girl."

"Of course I did."

"Then a bit later, you begin turning into a girl as well. Not only that, but suddenly neither of us can argue with our stepmothers. We're happy and compliant. They say dress like a girl and we do it. They tell us to wear makeup and we do it."

"Perhaps it's a coincidence?"

"Like we both get our ears pierced and wouldn't dream of going anywhere without eye makeup." Murdoch looked for agreement and paused.

"I think we chose to do that."

"But only because we were changing and did what was expected."

"And then we both end up here again and we both get breast implants."

"I agree it's a big coincidence."

"To top it all, we both end up longing to be fucked by our doctors."

"You may have been but Warren hasn't tried it yet."

"But he will and you'll moan and thrash about in ecstasy and want him to do it again and again."

“I can’t wait.” Logan’s face looked dreamy as if he was contemplating the act. “Can we do it again, it seems ages.”

There’s no use talking to you.” Murdoch hugged him and then shook her head. “Promise me you’ll think about it.”

“I can’t stop thinking about it,” Logan sighed. “I’m wishing he’d make a move.”

“I guess I’m not getting this through to you. You’re not buying my conspiracy theory. Don’t worry, your doctor will make a move, all in good time.”

“You guessed it right,” Logan said as soon as Murdoch walked into the coffee shop. “He took me away for the weekend. We went to this little place he knew on the beach with private bungalows and it took my breath away.”

“The place or Warren?”

“Warren of course,” Logan said. “The place was good too.”

“It sounds lovely.”

“It was. I spent the first hours being pampered. I got my nails done with these blood red acrylics. They’re really too long but he likes them.”

“They’re dangerous at that length.” Murdoch took his hand and examined them. “I think I’ll get some like that for my wedding but they’ll have to be a paler shade to go with my dress.”

“I had my hair washed and blown out so that it looked like I’d twice as much. They did my makeup too with really long lashes. It was a bit much for the afternoon but I wanted something that I could really vamp up for the evening.”

"It sounds like he had no chance."

"When I went to join him round our private pool, I wore a tight swim dress, with bare shoulders, the tiniest of skirts, and my five-inch black stiletto heels. You're right, he had no chance. My bangles jingled and my earrings almost touched my shoulders. I was almost dripping with Chanel too."

"I think you've learned too much about being a girl."

"It was all instinct, believe me," Logan laughed. "I sat and tried to look a little bored, then I started to play with his penis. He didn't expect me to do that then, outside. If he was worried, it soon went away. I licked and sucked for all I was worth. He tastes delicious, by the way."

"I can tell by your grin that it didn't stop there." Murdoch smiled.

"I was rather naughty after dinner in our room. I went to change," Logan said. "I bought this really tight outfit. It was a vintage bunny girl costume, far too tight and low-cut. I did my eyes even darker and my lips redder than I would normally. I used the same black stilettos and sheer stockings, with really short garter tabs just showing. I walked in with a drink for him on a tray and knelt down. He took it and I unzipped his trousers."

"I can guess..." Murdoch said.

"It didn't stop: he picked me up and carried me to the bedroom and kept going all night," Logan said. "Of course, I had to do a lot of licking and sucking to get him going again and when I thought he was done, we seemed to fall asleep together."

"I think you're going to tell me that he proposed."

"Not yet." Logan wagged a finger. "Don't be so impatient."

"I bet you didn't say that to him."

“In the morning, he was like a rod of steel between my cheeks when I woke. I can’t believe the ways he pushed it into me. I was lying down, bent over, flat on the table, which wasn’t so comfortable, then squatting on his knee. I was exhausted but really happily exhausted.”

“So then did he propose?”

“What do you think?” Logan held up his left hand with a sparkling diamond on his ring finger. “We get married on Saturday week. I’m moving into his house on the park at the side of the clinic.”

“These coincidences get wilder and wilder. I get married this Saturday and I’ve moved in with Howard,” Murdoch said.

“That’s amazing. I think his house may be next door to Warren’s,” Logan replied. “We’ll be neighbours.”

“I’ve got my dress and yours for being my bridesmaid all ready. I was hoping you’d come for a fitting with me this afternoon.”

“You know what this means?” Logan said. “All your theories about us being set up could be right but I don’t care.

“Neither do I.” Murdoch smiled. “Our husbands will be busy at the clinic and we can spend as much time as we like together.”

“I’m so glad that you don’t have anything against sex with a married woman.”

“Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for asking me to introduce the paper we have produced on the use of drug and persuasive techniques to alter the personality of our test subjects.

“I’m Norman Speak, professor and director of this clinic. Naturally this paper must remain in limited circulation, because there may be implications for national security.

“I thank our two unknowing volunteers and their parents and guardians for allowing them to be participants in our programme. They can’t be with us, simply because they don’t know that they have been the subjects of our study and it may jeopardise both their future and our continued assessments if they were to find out in detail what has been accomplished.

“I also have to thank two of my colleagues, both now directors of this institute for their unwavering support. They continue to live and work in close proximity to our subjects and have made personal commitments to the continued success of the institute.

“I refer of course to Doctor Howard Shelley and to Doctor Warren Powell. Their commitment is far beyond anything that you can read in the paper.

“I now turn to the major part of our presentation, may I have the first slide please.”

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