



SUMMARY: Two buddies send away for pills which promise the "bodies you have always wanted" with out realizing that weight loss is not the only thing in store for them.

THE BODY YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED, Part I

By Valerie Hope

I suppose I had it pretty good. I was young and pretty healthy, I owned my own business and it was only a few points shy of solvent, I had clients on the phone and money in the bank, my own place and my own car and my own life. I had a rock-solid, trustworthy business partner who put in the hours right alongside me, and had the added benefit of being my best friend. I shouldn't complain. But I do anyway. It's the American way.

I mean, I wasn't out to shake the world, to have the name of Nate Walsh etched in stone somewhere beside the names of Emperor Constantine, George Washington, Karl Marx, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi. But a little recognition could be an intoxicating thing. And I had always been told I was an exceptional artist. I could draw before I could write and I could paint before I could tie my own shoes. Sometime in the fourth grade I met Sumir Ragajapolan and we got tight. What I was to visuals, Sumir was to math and science. We stayed tight all through high school - we weren't jocks, but we had some good times and the occasional girlfriend - and wound up getting scholarships to the same college. We roomed together, graduated together and decided to open a business together with a loan from Sumir's dad and mine. We designed and developed e-commerce sites for the web. Shopping malls. I got to use my skills at photography and layout to put together catchy catalog pages while Sumir used his skills to code together encryption and credit-card software, order tracking and inventory databases and anything else special we could dream up to get more money. It was actually quite lucrative. We'd already paid back Sumir's dad - he was far and away the bigger hard-ass about money - and were only a few hundred away from paying back my dad and then we'd be turning a profit. Not bad for a web-based company in the dot-com slump. And we had the added bonus of being able to work out of our apartment. We got a three-bedroom place so that we each had our own room and also an office, one that had a door we could close and not have to look at work all the time. We'd been very busy this first year, no time for socializing outside of the occasional meet for lunch with old college buddies or the rare movie. But that would change soon, we'd be able to hire people to help us out and get more free time. Maybe even take weekend trips or get girlfriends - Sumir's parents were always on him about getting married and my mom was starting to make those strange 'I'm not getting any younger' kind of noises.

There was really nothing to complain about, I guess, but Sumir and I both managed to find it. We'd been sitting over our books for four years in school and then been slumped in front of computer screens for a year getting this business started. I guess we should have known what would happen, but it still came as a little bit of a shock to look in the mirror one morning and discover that I was fat. Sumir felt the same way.

Don't get me wrong, it wasn't like we were morbidly obese or in any risk of health. We were pudgy. Soft. We had love-handles and spare tires and flab. Mushy butts. We tried to change our diets, but when we were on a deadline it was delivery pizza and frozen burritos or we didn't eat at all. We bought memberships to a gym, but we never had time to go and didn't get much done when we did go, too busy checking out the women and playing grab-ass and not enough time on the treadmills.

I tried to shrug it off, but it was hard to ignore. I'd look down from my computer and see that pudgy belly sticking out and notice how my clothes didn't fit right anymore. Sumir was doing the same, I knew it. We'd been friends long enough that he didn't have to say anything for me to know it was bothering him. All of a sudden our 'girlfriends' - the hotties smiling down at us from the Hooters Calendar in our office - weren't smiling at us seductively. The smiles seemed to be attempts not to laugh at how tubby we were getting. We had to do something - it was too damned distracting to just be lived with - but we had to make sure it was something we had time to do, given our busy schedules. Our bodies were a pressing concern, sure, but this business was the rest of our lives. We couldn't sacrifice one for the other and we knew it.

"Hey, look at this, Nate," Sumir said from his computer as I brought in some Cokes from the kitchen. "I was surfing around looking for weight loss pills a couple days ago and I must've gotten on some mailing list. This looks interesting."

I set the can down next to his keyboard and peeked over his shoulder. It was one of those junk emails, sent from some anonymous AOL account with a phony subject line which tried to get you interested.

"HAVE THE BODY YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED" it said in flashing letters across the top. It gave a vague description of some super-secret herbal concoction from the Far East that was only available in America until now. Guaranteed results in only days, no exercise or diet, blah blah blah.

"Looks like crap," I said.

"Not necessarily," Sumir corrected. "I've heard of stuff like this from my grandparents in India. Some of those herbal remedies are pretty amazing. Besides, look - they're offering a free sample. What harm could it do?"

"I dunno, man," I said skeptically. "There's no way of knowing what that stuff could do to our bodies. Those things aren't regulated by the government or tested or anything. They could be poison for all we know."

"Oh, please," Sumir said, laughing at me. "It's not some big conspiracy by a foreign government to wipe out tubby small business owners. It's a weight-loss pill."

"It never mentions weight loss," I corrected.

"It says right there, 'Have the body you've always wanted.' I'm gonna order some. All it costs us is shipping. You don't have to try it if you don't want."

I sighed. "I guess if you trust this stuff, I'm game. We can try it together."

"Cool. Hey, we can have a race. First one to drop, say, ten pounds," Sumir suggested.

"That sounds cool," I said. "Okay, you're on. Twenty bucks says I beat you."

"I'll take that action," Sumir said, clapping my shoulder. "This could be fun."

"Yeah, it could," I agreed. "Let's go for it."

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We really hadn't thought much more about it for the next couple of weeks until the FedEx guy showed up on our door - like he did quite a bit, delivering business-related packages and picking them up - with the box. Sumir had totally forgotten about ordering until he tore open the box and pulled out the two large white bottles of capsules (one for each of us), adorned only with the objectified bodies of a man in Speedos with a musculature that belonged on a statue in Florence and a centerfold model in a bikini, both with their heads cut out of the picture and the requisite garbage about how this product wasn't tested or verified by the Food and Drug Administration. The label recommended that we take four capsules twice a day with water. Seeing no time like the present, we gulped them down, set a pair of twenty-dollar-bills on the top of the television for the bet, hit the scales to start our progress - it wasn't pretty, those numbers we weighed in, I can tell you - and promptly put it out of our heads and went back to work.

It had been a late night to say the least, and tonight looked no later. We'd been up until four a.m. last night putting together a webpage that allowed the end user to select his own color scheme and design for a product and both transmit the order properly and give graphic representation to the end user about what he was getting. It was a pain in the ass, but the pay was great and the visibility even greater. We finally collapsed on the couch in front of the tube at about three a.m., finished and debugged and ready to ship, took our pills and rapidly fell asleep to the mindless droning of the television.

Who knows what caused it - and not that I was complaining, either. I had an extremely vivid and detailed dream about Christina Applegate. I dreamed that she was in her full-on 'Kelly Bundy' get-up with the skin-tight clothes and the heavy makeup and the bleach-blonde 'big 80's hair' all teased out and glam. I was floating around her body, looking at her from every conceivable angle while she stood as still as a statue, like I was studying her from every angle, memorizing every curve. I'd had a thing for her ever since I first watched 'Married. with Children' and she'd been a primary source for fantasy for years and years. I'd dreamed about her off and on for all that time, but never had I had such a detailed and vivid dream.

I woke up to the morning light through the blinds, a huge smile on my face which mirrored Sumir's. Apparently he'd had a good dream, too - at least judging from the tent in his sweatpants - and we felt more invigorated than we'd felt in a while. We took our pills and made the call to the client to let them know their work was ready and posted to the server for their consideration, then we split up and hit the bathrooms for a shower and a shave.

The warm water against my skin felt great. I just stood there for a while, just enjoying the sensation, before I 'came to' and forced myself into motion and away from the decadent luxury of it all. I lathered myself up with my customary Irish Spring soap and tried not to wince. For some reason, the soap I'd been using for nearly fifteen years seemed to make my skin itch and burn in places, like I'd gone over my skin with sandpaper. I stepped under the flow to rinse quickly, rubbing myself briskly to get the lather off and stop the irritation. The only thing pleasant about the experience was the smell. Something about the deodorant in the soap smelled clean and fresh and masculine and it just smelled really good for some reason.

But the lather wasn't the only thing that rinsed off - to my shock, huge clumps of the coarse, wiry hair on my body fell out and swirled around the drain. I'd always been rather a fuzzy guy, since I hit puberty, and it was odd to see big swathes of my skin exposed. I ran a finger across one and was surprised at how soft and tender it was. It felt good just to touch it.

I hopped out of the shower and looked at myself. Where the skin on my chest and belly wasn't completely denuded, it was much more sparse and meager. The lack of the coarse hair seemed to make my skin look paler, as well. Wrapping the towel around my waist, I walked across the little hallway to where Sumir was combing his hair.

"Hey, Sumir, did anything weird happen to you in the shower?" I asked.

"Weird how?" he replied.

"I dunno. Like with me. Some of my body hair fell out."

Sumir stopped what he was doing and looked at me closely. "Yeah, that is weird. Were you using some new soap or shampoo or something?"

"Nope, same stuff I always use. I thought maybe it was the diet pills, that's why I checked to see if anything had happened to you."

"Nothing but losing three pounds," Sumir said proudly.

"No shit? That's great!" I said, patting him on the shoulder. "I haven't weighed in yet."

"Then how're you gonna know if you won that twenty bucks or not?" Sumir laughed.

"It's all gonna depend on who looks better in a swimsuit," I told him.

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I guess it was a side effect, since the next day's shower sent the remainder of my body hair spiraling down the drain as well. I'd pretty much made up my mind that it wasn't a bad thing - I'd never liked being all fuzzy like that, really - and let it ride. I slipped into a pair of sweats and a t-shirt which hung on me baggy in the most pleasing way. The pills really must have been working. I had to cinch up the drawstring on my sweats quite a bit more to get them to stay up.

I plopped down on the couch next to Sumir. It was our Saturday off, the one day a week we didn't let ourselves think about work. Usually the mornings were spent doing the little shit around the apartment we needed to do, like minor housecleaning and grocery-store runs, but this weekend we were pretty much in the clear. So all that meant was cable TV and lounging around on the couch. Sumir had channel-surfed until he'd found *Dirty Harry* on the tube and I ran into the kitchen to get myself a drink before the commercials were over.

I peered into the refrigerator forlornly. "Sumir, what happened to all the Mountain Dew? Didn't you get any at the store?"

"We're trying to lose weight, remember, dumbass?" Sumir called back. "Just break down and drink one of my Diet Cokes. They're not that bad."

Grumbling, I snatched one of the silver cans out of the opened twelve-pack and jumped the back of the couch to bounce in a lying position in front of the tube. God, how I loved

Saturdays. I popped the top and, fighting a grimace, took a slug of Sumir's Diet Coke. And it really wasn't that bad, after all. In fact, it tasted kinda good.

"See?" Sumir said, raising his eyebrows.

"All right, all right," I said, laughing. "You were right, okay? They're not that bad."

We watched the movie in silence for a while. I had remembered *Dirty Harry* as a great flick, but I guess I gave it too much credit in hindsight. I certainly didn't remember it to be so violent and gory. Hell, I even hid my eyes for a couple of scenes. The whole thing just seemed so pointless.

"Wanna watch something else?" Sumir asked me on the next commercial. I nodded emphatically. I noticed that Sumir hadn't been enjoying the movie that much either.

We surfed around a little until we found *Austin Powers*. Sumir and I had never been big Mike Meyers fans and frankly found the movies he did kind of juvenile and not all that funny. But for some reason this was just what the doctor ordered. We were holding our sides laughing by the end of it, wiping tears out of our eyes. The channel-surfing then led us to *Crazy from the Heart*, which ordinarily we would have avoided like the plague - just being on Lifetime Television would have been enough for us to stay away, ordinarily - but something about the story, the teacher and the janitor who fall in love, the things they have to go to and discover about themselves, just seemed to draw us in. We watched the whole thing, start to finish, and I had a wonderful warm and cozy feeling left over when the two lovers wound up together against all the odds. I didn't say anything, but I noticed Sumir had even been wiping his eyes a little with the back of his hand. I didn't even feel the urge to make fun. It just - I dunno, I guess it just made sense.

By the time that was over, we were all set for dinner. We went through our usual rigmarole of suggesting burger joints and pizza parlors, but everything just sounded so greasy and unappetizing, plus there was always the specter of weight loss hovering over us - we were just starting to show some progress and we didn't want to screw that up. We wound up at Souper Salads, pigging out on vegetables. It was a lot better than either of us remembered - normally we were "meat and potatoes" kinds of guys, but the big green salads and the pasta and the soup and bread just really tasted good for some reason. We took our trays to the tables and dug in with gusto.

The waiter came by shortly after we started eating and queried us about drinks.

"Diet Coke," Sumir said, mouth half-full.

"Same here," I echoed.

Sumir looked at me, one eyebrow raised in a very "Spock" way and fighting back a smile at my expense.

"Okay, okay," I said, hands raised defensively, "it turns out I like them. Screw you."

He just smirked at me and returned to his salad.

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Sunday dawned cloudy and kind of dreary, just the kind of day that usually depressed me, but this morning I found myself in a good mood and nothing seemed able to snap me out of it. I

ran a hand over my chin - no need for a shave today, which was weird, I usually was really stubbly after three days without - and dug a finger into the corners of my eyes to "de-crust" them. I had to flinch from nearly poking myself with fingernails that I must have been seriously neglecting. They stuck out over the tips of my fingers by about an eighth of an inch. I scratched my hairless belly (well, not really hairless, just the hair I had now was pale, wispy and sparse) which made a weird *skritch-skritch* sound with my uncut fingernails and raked a finger through my hair, which seemed softer and fuller somehow. Usually it was a thick mat of unkempt brown, but this morning there was a fair bit of bounce and shine to it, and it seemed thicker over my forehead where my hairline had been retreating like Hitler from Russia. Softer, too. More side effects of the pills? If it was helping me regrow my thinning hair, then more power to them. These things were absolutely great.

I took my morning dosage and washed them down with water from the bottle next to my bed - I was one of those 'thirsty sleepers' who had to keep H₂O nearby for nighttime emergencies. Yawning and stretching, I kicked off the covers and swung my feet off the edge of the bed. I was so used to the usual 'thump' my heels made when they hit the floor that I nearly jumped when I didn't hear it. I looked down in shock. My feet dangled a good three inches above the floor. Even scooting forward didn't help that much. It was more than a little shocking.

I needed to get to a mirror, 'stat.' But the parquet tiles on the floor of my bedroom positively radiated cold this morning. Normally I didn't mind the icy floor during the fall and winter months, but for some reason the cold just seemed to be really getting to me this morning. My skin was pebbling with goosebumps and I wrapped the covers around me to ward it off. Normally I liked my room chilly. I must have overdone it last night. Mirror or no, there was no way in hell I was going to put *my* feet on *that* cold-assed floor. I kept a pair of ratty old slippers under the bed which I hardly ever used - those would to the trick until I could get some woolly socks on.

I didn't even think about what I did until after I did it. Me, Nate Walsh, the anti-athlete, bent completely in half at the waist and put his palms flat on the floor when his feet wouldn't even touch. I slid my hands back under, grabbed the slippers, and was putting them on when it hit me what an impossible feat of flexibility I'd just accomplished. Even in my old gym classes in high school and college, when the other kids had touched their toes I'd only been able to wave at mine from a distance. I'd never been able to bend and stretch like that. Something was definitely *up*.

I shuffled across the icy floor in my slippers and dropped the covers from my shoulders in front of the full-length mirror on my closet door. And my jaw dropped.

There wasn't an ounce of fat on me anywhere. The little bit of muscle definition I'd had was now extremely apparent, giving me a lithe and lean frame like a gymnast. I was far from ripped - my muscles, such as they were, were still small and compact - but looked extremely healthy and fit. Attractive, even, which is something I never thought I'd say about myself. I had no idea what was on the docket for today, work-wise, but I was bound and determined that as much of the next few weeks as possible was going to be spent not wearing a shirt.

I had to get Sumir, to see if he had the same kinds of results. I shuffled down the hall and knocked on his door.

"What is it?" he asked through the door in a muffled voice.

"It's me," I said in a high, squeaky voice. I cleared my throat and tried again. Still high-pitched, like I had a frog in my throat. I did a long, rapid-fire series of throat-clearings and tried a third time. It still sounded like I had breathed helium.

The door opened, and a skinny, well-defined Sumir peeked out from beneath a mop of frazzled black hair which hung down into his bloodshot eyes. When he spoke, his voice sounded like a strange falsetto as well.

"So it happened to you, too," he said.

"What the hell, man?" I asked, feeling my throat. Was my Adam's apple shrinking?

"I think it's the fucking pills, Nate," Sumir squeaked at me. "I mean, we lost the weight we wanted to lose, sure. But now all this other shit is happening."

"So we quit taking them," I said simply. "Maybe once it's all washed out of our systems, these side effects will reverse themselves."

"Maybe we should see a doctor," Sumir suggested.

"You think? Let's wait a few days," I amended.

Sumir grabbed the cordless phone from beside his bed. "Fuck that. I'm not waiting. I'm making an appointment now. Even an HMO doctor has to notice that there's something wrong with us."

"What do we do in the meantime?" I asked.

"We have a ton of work to do," Sumir said. "We just do that and wait."

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We waded into the ton of work like we usually did - Sumir did his thing and I did mine. Usually, hours would go by when we wouldn't say a word to each other rather than for one of us to select the next CD we'd listen to (we took turns, Sumir was into techno and hip-hop and I was much more of a guitar-rock and blues aficionado). But somehow that wasn't working for us today. We kept the music down, instead, and we worked over one another's shoulders all day. We actually asked each other for help and opinions - not that we hadn't done that before, really, but usually it was in the form of an argument, aesthetics vs. function. And it wasn't lip service, either. I really wanted to know what Sumir thought of my layouts. I cared. And he seemed genuinely concerned that his requirements weren't going to spoil my work.

We were contracted to do an e-commerce portal and catalog for a store specializing in 80's clothing. Lots of Lycra and fishnet hose and Swatches, fingerless gloves and huge plastic jewelry and parachute pants. At first we thought it was silly, even though we'd both copped to wearing Hammer pants and Vans and skinny ties and sport jackets with the sleeves pushed up back in the day. It was kind of weird, seeing a place that sold Oakley Frogskins sunglasses. If only we'd kept all our old stuff, we probably could have sold it for a fortune. Sumir confessed that he'd even had the red-and-black Michael Jackson jacket and wind-pants. Part of our deal with the retro store for the website was that we'd be given a 75% discount on any merchandise we wanted. Looking back at this stuff, we doubted we'd ever take advantage of that.

It was cool, the way we were working now. I liked it - it seemed more natural, more productive, than the nose-to-the-grindstone approach and argumentative process we'd always used before. The only real problem was it didn't allow us to 'zone out' the way we always had, to just lose ourselves in the single-mindedness of our tasks and really crank out the man-hours. We got plenty done, but usually by the time four o'clock rolled around we had a lot more to show for it. Still and all, a pretty productive day.

Until the headaches started.

We both started rubbing our temples and the bridges of our noses shortly after four. It started like a little bit of pressure behind the eyes, like a sinus headache, but it quickly spread all over. I took Tylenol, but it didn't seem to do any good. By the time it was five, Sumir and I were both curled up on the couches, eyes squeezed shut and our arms and legs shaking. Something was really wrong. And somehow, although we didn't say it, we both just knew what was happening.

We had to take those pills.

Sumir must have been made of sterner stuff than I was, because I caved about five-thirty. There wasn't any real pain - nothing that I could point to, anyway, but there was just enough discomfort in just enough ways that I was thoroughly miserable. My pain tolerance was kind of specialized, I guess - I could take a whack across the forehead with a two-by-four and be okay, but feeling 'yucky' just overwhelmed me. I made my slow, shuffling way across the hardwood floor and took the bottle of pills from the shelf in the bathroom. I took mine and set the bottle down on the coffee table next to Sumir. He looked at them angrily - hatefully, even - but he finally broke down and took them.

Within five minutes, we were both feeling better. No, scratch that. We were feeling great. Not high or anything, just really energetic and healthy.

"We're addicted to these damned things," I said, looking over the label once again.

"I'm suing the hell out of that company," Sumir growled. His voice was getting husky, kind of breathy. It didn't sound like a squeaky falsetto anymore. It was starting to sound more natural and less forced. My voice, on the other hand, seemed to be just going upwards. If it didn't stop soon, at this rate, by the end of the week only dogs and passing bats would be able to hear me.

"When do we see the doctor?" I asked.

"Day after tomorrow," Sumir replied. "Maybe we should try the emergency room."

"Why? There's not really anything wrong with us," I told him. "Look at us, dude. We're in better shape, probably in better health than we've been in years. And this stuff is supposed to be all herbal. It's not like they're going to turn up anything nasty on a blood test."

"So what do we do, Nate?" Sumir asked.

"We see the doctor on Wednesday," I said calmly. "We can wait until then."

"I don't think I can keep from taking those pills again," Sumir said, his eyes looking a little hunted. "That was awful. And I could tell, somehow, that it was going to get worse if we didn't do something."

"Yeah, I know what you mean," I said. "So, we keep taking them until Wednesday. Then we bring the pills in to the doc and have him send us to a specialist. Maybe we can even convince him it's an emergency and we can get ourselves admitted to the hospital or something. They're bound to have something to help us get off these things."

"Mmm. Methadone," Sumir said in a Homer Simpson voice. Of course, as high and breathy as his voice had gotten, it sounded a little more like Lisa Simpson than Homer. That was a shame. Sumir's 'Homer' was dead-on.

"We have plenty of work to keep us occupied," I said. "In fact, we're a little bit ahead. We could conceivably get all of this stuff done before Wednesday if we haul ass."

"Think so?" Sumir asked. "That's a pretty steep hill, there, Nate."

"I think we can do it," I said. "What else are we going to do? Sit here and try not to jones for the pills? I vote for keeping busy."

"Right," Sumir said, getting off the couch. "Let's go get it done."

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We had the heat up - odd, considering that we both were hot-natured - and were still wrapped up in flannel shirts and sweatpants against the evening chill. It was all we could do to keep our minds on the task at hand, but still there were some wonderful stretches of time where the world just basically went away and left us alone. I just zoned into the mechanical work of resizing and correcting photographs, trying not to let myself think. The weirdest thoughts had been popping into my head all evening, too. The models from the catalog were cute enough - I usually took some time out to notice that - but their attractiveness didn't seem to really pop up. I was much more interested in what they were wearing. I didn't want to say anything to Sumir - he was a big one for never letting a joke die, and I didn't want to hear about this one for the next six months - but I'd actually managed to go from remembering how ridiculous some of the clothes back then were that afternoon to really thinking some of them were cute now.

I yawned and stretched. The clock on my computer said it was after two in the morning, and I'd gotten the whole catalog set up, with thumbnails. I'd laid out the opening page and user interface and Sumir's keyboard hadn't been silent for an instant as he set up the tracking and inventory stuff and was knee-deep in the ordering software. The women that ran this boutique were very picky about their inventory tracking, almost anal-retentive about it. Sumir had grouched and grumped about it ceaselessly since we'd signed the contract, but he didn't seem to be having much of a problem anymore. It was almost like the concept of needing to know the numbers of a certain blouse in peach, sunflower and fuchsia went in Sumir's book from being an utter waste of time to something relatively important.

I turned to look at my friend and tell him I was calling it a day. And hair fell in my eyes.

"What the hell?" I said out loud, getting Sumir's attention. I raked my hands through my hair and was able to get a double handful. My receding hairline was gone. Long, shiny tendrils of soft, healthy hair were hanging into my eyes for the first time in three years.

"Your hair," Sumir said.

"Yours, too," I gasped, pointing. Sumir's hair - usually worn in a very close-cropped, utilitarian haircut which didn't need much in the way of upkeep - was easily over his collar now, soft and

full. It was still as dark as it had been, but now it had a hint of auburn in it which reflected coppery in the light from our halogen stand-lamp. Mine seemed a few shades lighter, too.

"This is fucked up," Sumir said, pushing past me and into the bathroom. There, in front of the mirror, I saw that my hair had regrown, thicker and fuller than it had been before I started losing it. It fell in shiny, thick waves down into my face, over my ears and down to the tops of my shoulders. It was as soft as a kitten and nearly glowed with health.

"What in the hell is going on?" I asked.

"I wish I knew," Sumir said. "You still against the emergency room?"

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We took Sumir's car, since mine was out of gas, and wended our way through the nearly-empty streets to the emergency room. It was largely unoccupied - this wasn't a county hospital, so the ER stayed kind of sleepy at 2 a.m. on a Tuesday out in the 'burbs. We parked the car near the all-night entrance and checked to make sure the stocking caps keeping our runaway hair were in place before heading across the rainy parking lot.

I jumped out first and started across, anxious to find out what the hell was going on. I was halfway across when I noticed that Sumir wasn't with me. I turned back around to see him standing near the hood of the car, staring at me slack-jawed with astonishment.

"What? What's wrong?" I asked.

"The way you walked," Sumir breathed, his breath pluming in the cold air.

"What's wrong with the way I walk?" I demanded, starting to get very nervous.

"I dunno - it was like. I guess. you. you *swayed*," Sumir said.

"Swayed? What the hell does that mean?" I half-shouted. Around us, it was starting to snow. The wind had a bitter, deep bite that was really working against my lowered tolerance to cold.

"You swayed. Sashayed, I don't know what the fuck to call it," he said. He stepped out towards me and I immediately knew exactly what he was talking about. Sumir usually walked like it was the only thing between him and falling down, heavy clumping footsteps and very little grace. He crossed in front of his car with a silky, sexy strut, putting one foot in front of the other, arms swaying and ass tracing an exaggerated figure-eight in the air behind him. His shoulders dipped but his head stayed perfectly steady. God, had I walked like that too? The only thing I had to compare it with was the way the models made their way down the catwalk during the Victoria's Secret fashion show that Sumir and I had watched earlier this year for all the wrong reasons.

"I'm not walking like that, am I?"

Sumir looked down and stopped in shock. "Jesus. It's happening to both of us."

"What do we do?" I asked, a little frantic.

"We can't go in there," Sumir said, pointing at the hospital. "We'd be laughed at."

"Does that really matter?" I half-shouted.

"It does to me, dammit!" Sumir shot back hotly. "Can you imagine what I'd have to go through if my dad found out? You know what a hard-ass he is!"

"Shit, I didn't even think about that," I said. "But, Sumir, what if there's something really, really wrong with us?"

"There is something really, really wrong with us, Nate," Sumir told me. "Look, man, I know it's going to be rough, but maybe we should flush the pills down the toilet and try to quit them cold turkey. Maybe we can do it together."

"That's going to suck," I said.

"We have to try something," Sumir told me, clapping me on the shoulder. At least it was meant to be a clap. It turned into more of a caress, really, a gentle rubbing. About as masculine as the way we were walking.

"Let's do it," I said, staring at his hand.

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I got out of the blistering hot shower about thirty minutes later - I told myself I deserved a nice long soak. I wrapped myself in a woolly outer robe and stuffed my feet into my ratty slippers, which seemed to me had a lot more room in them now. Maybe I was stretching them out. Or, the way this day had been going, maybe my feet were turning into hooves or treads or something. Wrapping a towel around my head in that weird 'turban' thing I'd seen my mom do - it worked well, considering my hair was so much thicker and longer now - I tried very hard not to notice the sexy sway in my hips and the smaller, swishing steps I took as I went down the hall and into the living room. Sumir was in a pair of pajama bottoms and a too-big Budweiser t-shirt, sitting on the couch with a Diet Coke and flipping channels. The sun was just beginning to peak over the horizon outside, to be lost shortly behind the iron-grey clouds and the constantly falling snow.

"If we're going to do this, we probably better hit the drugstore before it gets much worse," I told him as I sat. "Ibuprofen, Gatorade, that sort of stuff."

"I guess," Sumir said.

"You guess? This was your idea, Sumir."

He shrugged. "Sorry. I guess I'm just trying to figure out what's going on."

"Yeah, me too," I told him. "I scaled in before I took a shower. I'm down to one thirty-three. My skeleton should weigh that much by itself."

"I'm not much more than you. One forty," Sumir confessed. "I barely have any clothes I can leave the house in, and no shoes that I can wear without a pair of socks stuffed in the toes."

"None of my clothes fit either," I said. "Except that they're still tight in some places."

"Maybe we should wait till it stops snowing and see if we can pick some up. If yesterday was any indication, we've got about four hours before the headache starts up."

I turned to my best friend. "Sumir, I'm really scared."

He lowered his eyes. "Yeah, me too."

"This may sound weird to you, but. ah, never mind. Forget it."

"No, what?" Sumir pressed.

"I was going to ask. I mean. Would you. I guess, would you hold me?" I finally managed to choke out past the lump in my throat. My higher voice made it sound almost like flirting, if it hadn't been so plaintive.

Sumir slid closer to me on the couch and put his arms around me. I'd never realized before just how soft his skin was. The thought was distracting, as was the smell of his hair as I buried my face in it. His body was soft and very warm, making me want to touch him. It made me wish that there were nothing between our skins, that I could feel the warm softness of him over the length of my body.

You're talking to a man who's never had a conscious homosexual thought in his life, so you have to believe how weird it was when pressing my lips against his felt like the most natural, perfectly normal thing in the world to me. I couldn't believe how soft his lips were. The kiss was tentative at first but gained power, and soon I felt his hands slithering underneath my robe as his tongue and mine started a quicksilver little fencing competition first in my mouth, then in his. My hand just naturally found its way down his smooth, taut belly - with just the most adorable little swell of curvy baby-fat - and into his crotch where I could feel something down there taking on a rigidity and a length. It throbbed against my palm. It excited me. The turban-towel thing fell from my damp hair as I bent, one hand playing gently with his puffy nipples and the other drawing his cock out of the loose sweatpants and pointing it upwards, directly into the descending pocket of my open, waiting mouth.

I'd never given a blowjob before, but then again I'd been the proud owner of a similar piece of equipment my whole life. It wasn't a great cognitive leap for me to just do to him what felt good to me. Sumir's throaty, hoarse contralto moans were wonderful, they were almost like caresses on my skin. My head pistoned up and down gently, careful to avoid any unfortunate incidents involving my teeth, while my hand gripped firmly around the base of the shaft tugged upwards in gentle, quick thrusts. His hands tangled in my hair. It was a delirious feeling. He stiffened, arching his back, and I felt the hot, salty wetness of his climax fill my mouth. I almost choked on it at first, since he grabbed the back of my head and thrust deeply into my mouth, but I swallowed reflexively. I'd tasted my own come once, back in a fit of adolescent curiosity, but it had been nothing like this. This tasted wonderful, warm and masculine and musky. I couldn't get enough. I popped Sumir's deflating cock out of my mouth and licked it up and down, licking the remaining drops from the head and off of my fingers. The little bit that had leaked out onto my chin I scooped up with a finger and sucked clean.

Sumir was having trouble looking me in the eye. I put a hand on his cheek - the lightest of caresses - and smiled at him.

"I wanted to," I told him simply.

"It was incredible," he told me.

"I'm glad you liked it," I replied, smiling shyly and feeling my cheeks color a little. "I liked giving it."

He put a hand against my shoulder and pressed me upright, then back against the cushions of the sofa.

"Lie back," he told me, looking a little nervous but very excited. "It's your turn."

My erect member was poking out of my robe, standing at a gently throbbing attention. My eyes closed in rapture as he bent, licking and stroking my length.

He looked up at me suddenly, his eyes wide with an idea. "Don't go anywhere. I'll be right back." He stood and rushed into a back room and returned with his hands behind his back. Pressing me back to a reclining position, he continued his ministrations.

I heard a little tiny click and then a warm, slick wetness over my cock. My eyes opened and I saw that Sumir was generously spreading baby oil over my cock until it glistened with lubrication. Smiling with a mixture of tenderness and embarrassment, Sumir stripped off his sweatpants and straddled my lap, pausing just a moment to spread a liberal amount of the baby oil onto his anus, then slowly slid my length into his waiting interior until our pelvises came to rest on one another.

Our faces were level and he kissed me gently, his fingers in my hair again. I didn't care that they were covered with baby oil.

"I heard that this hurt," I whispered to him.

"Me, too," Sumir said. "I just really, really wanted to feel something inside me all of a sudden. This was all I could think of."

"Does it hurt as bad as they say?" I asked him.

"Not at all," Sumir told me. "Maybe it's because I wanted it so badly. Or maybe because we're going really slow and using a lot of oil. I dunno. But it doesn't hurt. As a matter of fact, it feels really, really good."

"I'm glad," I told him. "I'd hate to think I was hurting you."

He began rocking back and forth a little. The tight grip on my cock and the slippery oil made for sensations that made my breath catch.

"And I think I want you to do this to me, later," I added.

"Okay," Sumir said, smiling at me sweetly. Our faces were only inches apart. Strange that before, no matter how good of friends we were, we'd never achieved anything more intimate than a firm handshake. Maybe one of those bend-in-the-middle 'guy hugs' where we made minimal contact and beat the hell out of one another's backs. But today, this level of intimacy wasn't even close enough. We couldn't be close enough, it seemed. Maybe it was the fear of what was happening to us both. Maybe it was the culmination of all our time together. But believe it or not, in that moment I realized how much I loved him. Had always loved him. And I knew how much he loved me. Today, everything just seemed to make sense.

He rode up and down, slowly and gently sometimes and hard and fast others. He seemed to be able to read my mind, to know just how I wanted it. With a high-pitched cry and squeal in my new voice, I stiffened and grabbed him around the hips hard, shooting jet after jet into my friend. I thought I'd never empty. And it was different, somehow, than all the other times I'd climaxed. Before, it had been like everything in the world disappeared except for the flood of sensation running through my dick. Now, it was more spread out, throughout my body. I'm

pretty sure I felt it in my fingertips and my scalp instead of just the one part of my anatomy. If I had to choose, this was the kind of orgasm I really liked.

He fell against me and we kissed again, passionately and hungrily. He rested his sweaty forehead against mine and cupped my face in his two hands while we breathed the same air.

"God," I said, panting a little.

"I know," Sumir said. "Wow."

Reluctantly, he slid my semi-erect dick out of him and sat down next to me. We put our clothes back in order and held hands for a little while.

"We don't have much time left before things start happening," Sumir finally said. "As much as I just want to curl up next to you, I guess we should go and get our errands run."

"Are you bothered by what just happened?" I asked him.

"Nate, no," he said, looking deeply into my eyes. "I wanted that. A lot. I don't regret it and I don't feel awkward about it."

"Neither do I," I said. "I just wondered if it changed anything. Y'know, between us."

"It changes the fact that we weren't fucking before and we sure are now," Sumir said. "Unless you want to quit or something."

"Not on your life," I told him, squeezing his hand. "So, are we gay now?"

"I guess we are," Sumir told me. "Somehow I don't mind so much, do you?"

I kissed him. "Get dressed," I told him. "We have to hit the store."

Ω



SUMMARY: Two buddies send away for pills which promise the "bodies you have always wanted" with out realizing that weight loss is not the only thing in store for them. part two

THE BODY YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED, Part II

By Valerie Hope

The all-night drugstore was largely empty at six fifteen in the morning when we got there. We were a little out of our depth, for one thing, since we usually took to a store with a list and got just what we agreed to get. This time we were sort of "browsing" like we would in a bookstore. Ibuprofen, Tylenol, over-the-counter sleep aids, anti-diarrheals and vitamins were the first things in the cart, as well as tons of Gatorade to combat dehydration. We didn't know much about drug withdrawal, but we decided it would probably be a lot like a very bad case of the flu. It was really nice when I reached over and held Sumir's hand while we shopped. We didn't care if people called us queers. It just felt good to hold his hand in public, to let everyone know in some small way that we were in love and we didn't care who knew it or what they thought about it. I couldn't keep from smiling, a little 'I've-got-a-secret' smile.

Sumir led us down the skin care aisle and pulled down a thick tube of K-Y Jelly to put in the cart as well. He smiled shyly and looked down at his feet.

"For later," he said quietly.

I laughed and kissed his cheek. His hair tickled my nose. Which led me one aisle over to hair care to grab some clips, barrettes, scrunchies - I didn't know a goddamn thing about hair, but these looked easy enough to deal with and would keep our thickening, soft hair out of our faces at the very least. While I was there I grabbed mousse, gel and hairspray as well. An old girlfriend of mine swore by them to keep hair out of her face. I even picked up Pantene shampoo and conditioner. Hell, I was almost out.

While I was gone, Sumir had laid in a stock of moisturizers, exfoliants and all manner of skin care products. I raised an eyebrow in question and he shrugged.

"I like the way your skin feels," he told me. "I thought these might keep it that soft."

"Okay," I said. "I'll use them."

"What's this stuff?" I asked, picking up a big pink bottle from his collection.

"It's apricot scrub," Sumir told me. "It smells really good, and one of my old girlfriends used to use it all the time. She said it did wonders for her skin."

"Sounds cool," I told him. "Do we need anything else?"

Sumir nodded. "I don't know about you, but I really want to find some clothes that fit. There's an all-night Wal-Mart not too far from here. We could pick something up."

"I'm all for it," I said. "I'm sick of sweatpants and my shoes feel like clown shoes."

Sumir pushed the cart to the checkout. The bored-looking woman behind the counter didn't seem to notice that we were two men holding hands and buying a whole lot of beauty products. I figured working graveyard shift at Walgreen's this close to downtown, she'd pretty much seen it all by now.

"Anything else?" she asked in a gravelly voice.

"Yeah," Sumir said. "Two packs of Marlboro Ultra Lights."

I looked at him in surprise. He held up a hand to defer me.

"Regulars or 100s?" the woman asked.

Sumir looked a little flummoxed. Thinking that 100s had to be a better value or something, he shrugged and said, "One hundreds."

She rang them up and Sumir slid his ATM card through the scanner and punched in his pin. While we were waiting for authorization, I sidled close to him and whispered in his ear.

"Cigarettes? Neither of us smokes," I said.

"I know," Sumir whispered back. "I had a friend back in college - remember Danny Kirtchner? - who was on drugs and cleaned up. I asked him about it. He told me a lot about getting off dope, and he said that the cigarettes really helped. I don't know if that will hold true for us, but I figured it couldn't hurt. We can always throw them out if they don't."

"They helped? How?" I asked, curious.

"I don't know. He just said they helped," Sumir said a little irritably. I decided to let it drop. Besides, I'd take anything that would help. Who knows, maybe they would.

"Did you want to redeem this?" the woman behind the counter said, pulling a red coupon off the neck of the bottle of apricot scrub.

"What's it for?" Sumir asked.

"A free makeup assortment," the woman said.

"Do you want it?" Sumir asked her.

She only raised an 'oh-please' eyebrow.

Sumir shrugged. "Why the hell not? Throw it in the bag."

* * *

Wal-Mart wasn't empty at 6.45 a.m. Wal-Mart was *never* empty. We found a parking space relatively close to the entrance - miracle of miracles - and trotted briskly through the cold morning air, just as the newest flurry of snow began to fall. The weatherman on the car radio in Sumir's Honda Accord wasn't too optimistic. We were supposed to end up tonight with over a foot of snow. It was probably for the best we got here when we did. People were going to be flocking in soon to get groceries and supplies in case they got snowed in.

The morning mothers shopping after taking their kids to school were showing up, and we were still in the dressing rooms. Nothing we tried seemed to fit. The jeans and the chinos we were

grabbing were 28" waists and they still didn't seem to fit right. Too tight in the seat and too loose around the waist.

"I don't get it," I said. "No way could we have lost that much weight, and pants still won't fit us. What the hell is going on?"

Sumir tossed a pair over the door of the room. "Here. Try these. They fit me."

I pulled them up my bare legs with a teeter-totter motion and pulled them tight over my hips and butt. They were a little snug, but they fastened. They didn't seem to come up high enough, no matter how I tugged on them, and they bent my cock into several new and interesting positions, like the jeans weren't designed to accommodate it. The legs flared out around my feet. Great. Bell-bottoms.

"These fit okay," I said. "Grab me another pair or two. I'll be right out."

I tugged off the new jeans - "L.E.I.?" Never heard of that before - and slipped into my cavernous sweatpants again. I had the new garment wadded up under my arm and gathered up Sumir, who was loading jeans into our cart, about six pair of the L.E.I. kind and another brand called "Mudd." Probably just lines made especially for Wal-Mart, that was why we'd never heard of them. We pushed off in search of shirts and shoes. We never noticed the sign above the clearance table of blue jeans which read proudly, "Women's and Misses Jeans 40% to 70% off."

Shirts weren't as big a problem - we just bought simple, one-color tee-shirts in size small and that was pretty much it. Socks were taken care of by grabbing one of those big plastic assortment sacks and just pitching it in without looking at it past the fact that it said size small as well. I grabbed us both a couple of fleeces and lined denim jackets, too, since the weather was getting ugly.

Shoes were a problem. We were down into children's sizes, it seemed, and nothing really fit well. We finally grabbed some plain white canvas lace-up shoes that fit okay off the children's rack, but they only came in pink and yellow. Swallowing our pride, we put them into the cart.

"I think we're done," I said, starting to get embarrassed and a little agitated about the difficulty of finding clothes. And I wasn't sure, but maybe the time for our pills had passed and I was starting to feel the effects. We hustled to the checkout line and got through in a decent amount of time (considering it was Wal-Mart). We'd spent a lot of money this morning - more than we'd planned on - but hopefully we wouldn't have to leave the apartment again until all this shit was sorted out. And at least nobody had noticed our weird, swaying walks and over-the-top gestures, or if they had no one had given us a hard time about it. For that I was glad.

We loaded the car and were then faced with eight o'clock traffic - heavy drive time for work commuters. It was stop and go, bumper-to-bumper, one of those blissful urban mornings where it took fifteen minutes to go maybe three quarters of a mile. I could already tell I was starting to get antsy, and so was Sumir. He tried to take his mind off of it by hunting through radio stations, but it didn't do any good. We were still easily thirty minutes from being home.

"Shit," Sumir said. "This is going to suck."

I slipped out of my seatbelt and rummaged in the sacks in the back seat, fishing around until I found the cigarettes and the disposable lighter he'd bought at the drugstore.

"Maybe they'll help, like your friend said."

Sumir looked at the impossibly long train of idling cars, barely moving. "What the hell else are we going to do? It's not like we're going anywhere."

Fumble-fingered, I tore off the cellophane and pulled the foil loose. It took a while for my cold fingers to be able to work one of the tightly-packed white tubes out of the pack. I passed it to Sumir and pulled out another for myself.

"What do we do?" I asked. "I've never done this before."

"It's not hard, I smoked in high school for a while," Sumir said. "You pull the smoke into your mouth, let it cool off, then breathe it in. The first couple of times, you're going to cough until your lungs get used to the idea, then it'll be okay."

He lit his and showed me. He coughed a little, but not badly. He cracked a window just a fraction to let the smoke out while still keeping the heat in. I followed his example.

He was right. The first two drags off of the cigarette made me cough and choke a little, but after that the bitter, acrid smoke didn't bother me anymore. It tasted different than it smelled. There was actually a flavor to it that I hadn't expected. It was kind of nice. And the all-over, tingly stood-up-too-fast-head-rush kind of sensation when the nicotine hit was most excellent. I'm not sure if it was just me, but it did seem like the agitation and the tension in my body was lessened. Maybe they did help diminish the symptoms.

We finally pulled the car into our little covered parking slip and loaded ourselves down with bags. None of this stuff had been so heavy when we put it in the car, I was sure of it. Was I losing muscle mass, now, too? We half-sprinted, half-trotted through the quickly falling snow (which was starting to pile up in pretty respectable drifts) and up the stairs into the apartment.

We took a while to sort through our stuff and get it laid out within easy reach of the couches. If the last time was any indication, we weren't going to be too interested in moving around once the worst of it started. I scavenged an old soup bowl we never used to use as an ashtray - no way were we going outside in the snow to smoke, and it did seem to help some - while Sumir tore through the bags of clothes we'd bought and divvied them up between us.

"Oh, man, I can't believe this," Sumir said. "I don't remember buying any of this shit."

He was sorting out the clothes we'd grabbed. We'd been in a hurry to be sure, but I didn't remember buying any of it either. Sumir was holding a pale pink t-shirt in one hand with a gold-foil decal that said "Li'l Angel" on in one hand and a yellow shirt with "Hottie" on the other.

I grabbed the receipt. "We were in the girls' section the whole time, man," I told him, looking over the itemized purchases. "Everything. The shirts, the jeans, the socks, everything is chick clothes."

Sumir pulled off his oversized rugby shirt and pulled on the yellow "Hottie" shirt and started pulling the tags off one of the new pairs of flare-leg jeans.

"What are you doing, man? They're girls' clothes!" I protested.

"They fit," Sumir said back. "For Chrissakes, Nate, we're already queer. What harm are girl clothes going to do now? Besides, it's not like I'm going to tell anybody." He picked out a pair of woolly yellow socks that matched his shirt. The t-shirt didn't quite cover his midriff, leaving

his navel exposed. With the longer hair, actually, he did look sort of feminine, with the smooth skin, the tiny tapered waist and the flaring hips.

"What?" Sumir asked hotly. "What are you looking at?"

"I can't believe I'm saying this," I told him. "You look cute."

"What?" he asked.

"I mean it," I reiterated. "You look adorable."

"Shut up," he told me, but he dropped his eyes in that way that meant he was embarrassed and flattered at the same time. I think he actually liked me saying he looked cute. He tucked his much-longer hair behind one ear in a way that was completely feminine.

"Here," I said, not wanting him to be embarrassed. "I'll put on my clothes, too, and then you won't have to go through it alone."

I tugged on the pair of jeans I'd tried on at the store and pulled the pink shirt over my head. It didn't really cover my bellybutton either. It actually tented up a little bit over my pectorals - well defined now that I'd lost the weight - and made me look like I had breasts, a little. I pulled on pink socks to match (it was actually kinda cute when Sumir did it, so I wanted to try as well) and tied my hair back with a pink scrunchie from the drugstore. Surprisingly, my hair was long enough for a ponytail. I'd almost had a crew cut this time three days ago.

Sumir playfully tossed me the makeup kit we'd gotten for free by buying the apricot scrub. "Here," he laughed. "We can do each other's eyes later."

"I'm just hoping I can get to sleep before the worst of this stuff hits us," I told him. "I don't want to be awake for this."

Sumir nodded and grabbed the pack of cigarettes on the coffee table. "One more of these and I'm going to try to get some sleep, too. They really did seem to help. And is it just me, or do these things actually taste kinda good?"

I held out my hand for one. "It's not just you."

* * *

Two hours later was a nightmare. Nothing helped - not the ibuprofen, the Gatorade, the sleep aids or the cigarettes. We were sweaty and shaking, our joints aching and our heads throbbing with lances of pain running behind our eyes. My muscles felt like they'd been tied into millions of tiny, fiery knots. I had to almost fight for breath and no position I laid in was comfortable for more than about ten seconds. My bowels were turned to water, as were Sumir's. We couldn't stay away from the bathroom for more than about ten minutes at a time, which kept either of us from getting any sleep.

"Oh, Jesus," I moaned, holding my head. "I don't know if I can take this anymore."

"Stay strong," Sumir groaned in his husky contralto. "We can do this."

"Look, Sumir," I said, panting a little and making my squeaky soprano sound hoarse, "those damn pills have already done pretty much everything they're gonna do to us. We're tiny. We

only fit in girls' clothes. Our voices sound like we're on helium and we're queer as three dollar bills. We're walking like little swishes. What the hell else can they even do to us?"

"You think we're not going to go through this when we run out of pills?" Sumir asked. "And it won't be worse if we keep taking them instead of quitting now?"

"God, man, I don't think I can take this."

"We're in it together," Sumir said. "I'm not taking them if you aren't."

"Be honest, then," I told him. "How much longer do you think you can hold out?"

Sumir sighed and groaned a little. "I dunno. Two or three hours, maybe."

"Okay, then," I replied. "It's ten o'clock now. We hold out until noon. If this shit isn't gone by noon, then we take the pills. If it's gone, or eases up by then, then we ride it out."

"You up for it?" Sumir asked me.

"Other than wanting to put a bullet in my brain, I'm pretty much great," I groaned.

"Hang tough, Nate," Sumir told me.

I felt his hand snake across the corner of my couch and take my hand. He squeezed it hard, and I felt his fingernails digging into my palm a little. They must have grown.

"How much more of those damn pills do we have left, anyway?" I asked him.

"Two days' worth," Sumir breathed.

"Okay," I told him. "We dig in, then."

"Noon," Sumir confirmed.

* * *

I have to admit - I didn't think the symptoms could have gotten any worse. But by the time Sumir's little travel alarm rang noon, it felt like my whole body was being roasted over a very hot fire. Needles of pain were stabbing my skin and my throat burned with every single breath. It felt like my muscles were wound too tightly.

"It's noon," Sumir said, his voice more like a croak.

"I think I'm gonna puke," I told him.

"I don't recommend it," Sumir told me. "I tried about an hour ago, and it's not pleasant."

"Did you get any sleep?" I asked him.

"Not much. A little."

"I'm sorry, Sumir. I can't hang with you. I'm gonna go take the pills."

Sumir sat up. He was trembling uncontrollably and even his olive skin looked pale and washed-out. He opened the pill bottle and shook out some capsules into his hand. Then he passed it over to me.

"I got it from the bathroom when I went to hurl," he told me.

I swallowed the capsules with Gatorade and forced myself to sit upright, cocooned in a blanket even though I was sweating. My cute pink t-shirt clung to my body, now sodden and damp. With a shaking hand I fished another cigarette out of the pack and lit it, gulping down the smoke and hoping it eased the pain. Surprisingly, it seemed to help a little. Or maybe it was just the knowledge that I'd just had my "fix" of the diet pills.

We sat and smoked a while, trying to rehydrate with the Gatorade. Neither of us felt much like talking and instead just watched television (or more to the point, we just stared at the pretty colors, too tired to even move). I never nodded off, but I zoned out a lot. I blinked in surprise when the travel alarm went off again.

"What the hell?" I said, jumping.

"Time for the afternoon dosage," Sumir said.

"Think it'll fuck us up, taking the pills so close together?" I asked.

"I have no idea," Sumir said. "It doesn't say anything on the bottle. And I don't want to wake up in the middle of the night with sweats and shakes."

"I guess you're right," I said, tapping out my dosage onto my palm and handing him the bottle. I noticed that my nails were extremely long now, extending past my fingertips by at least three quarters of an inch. I made a mental note to cut them short as I swallowed the four capsules that had made my life such a hell.

"Think we should try to get some work done?" I asked, lighting a cigarette. I was really starting to enjoy those things. They looked a little weird, with my fingernails so long, but also kinda cool. Sexy, even. My eyes kept looking at the way my fingers held the smoke, the first two fingers extended and the others curling gracefully this way and that as I gestured. It seemed like I couldn't talk without my hands anymore, and my fingers and wrists were so skinny now that it made them look much longer than they actually were. So did the long nails. I'd never really noticed how much a difference long nails could make to the way my hands looked.

"I don't know if I could," Sumir said. "I'm completely exhausted. I feel completely drained. I think maybe we better just write today off."

"Maybe so," I said. "What's on TV?"

* * *

We woke up some five hours later, in the middle of an episode of 'V.I.P.'. I'd had the weirdest dreams, sort of half my dreams, half the show. Lots of strange images, Pamela Anderson in skin-tight tube dresses and feather boas, tottering around on skyscraper platform heels, but sometimes it was Christina Applegate in the outfits and sometimes some other girl who looked really familiar.

I sat up groggily, feeling all out of whack with myself. I reached over and gave Sumir a gentle shake. The sight of my arm was a little shocking, but then again I was pretty numb from all the changes of the last couple days. My arm was downright skinny, almost completely devoid of muscle mass, with gentle, long curves and a tapered, almost delicate wrist. Long, nimble, slender fingers capped with long nails. I yawned in my high-pitched voice as I called Sumir's name.

He sat up quickly, with a start. I goggled. His hair spilled over his shoulders in long, auburn-highlighted waves of silky dark chestnut, shiny and thick and undeniably healthy. Long, feathery bangs spilled into his face, which was smaller, somehow - softer and more heart-shaped than it had been before. His formerly thick, bushy eyebrows were thinner and more arched, the cheekbones delicate and high and the lips now full, pouty and lush. Even, chalk-white teeth peeked from between them as he fumbled on the table for a cigarette.

As he reached across the coffee table, his blanket fell open and I gasped, covering my mouth in shock. Tenting out the front of his little yellow midriff-baring shirt were two spherical, luscious mounds. Pert, erect nipples poked at the tight fabric.

"Sumir," I whispered. "Your chest."

He looked down and nearly choked. His slender, long-nailed hands cupped the swelling flesh there, his tapered fingers unable to contain the soft rounded globes which rode high on his shrunken chest. Huge brown eyes - looking all the bigger for the smaller, more delicate face - regarded me in utter disbelief.

Almost terrified to look, I parted the blanket wrapped around me. My own large, firm mounds pushed out the front of my shirt and my own nipples - grown to the size of the first joint of my index finger - poked provocatively against the tight pink fabric. Soft, full-bodied blonde hair spilled across my eyes when I looked down, and I could feel the end of the ponytail I'd pulled back earlier that day tickling the back of my neck.

"We have tits," Sumir breathed.

"Oh my God," I added, also breathless. "What the hell happened?"

I slowly shucked out of my blanket and stood. The shirt and jeans now fit like a second skin, hugging my incredible curves - firm, soft breasts and a perfect rounded bubble of a posterior. The impossibly tiny nip of my waist made my hips look more flaring and my legs longer. I ran my hands over the tight denim and the cotton of my shirt, feeling waves of sensation spreading away from my touch. Slowly, I lifted my shirt. My tits sprang out, bobbing up and down gently once they were free of their confinement. The nipples stiffened and tightened in the chilly air of the apartment. I rubbed them in amazement, feeling how unbelievably sensitive they were and how touches there seemed to inflame my crotch.

"Ow," Sumir said. "Oh. Fucking ow."

"What is it?" I asked, suddenly concerned.

Sumir worked quickly and frantically, trying to see around the generous blockage of his own luscious chest to open the very difficult button and zipper of his tight-as-sin low-rise jeans. He finally managed to worm them down over his round, tight ass and his cock sprang free. Sumir had never been huge in that department, not since I'd known him. But now he looked positively meager. His erect penis couldn't have been more than two or three inches long, skinny and spindly. But it still hurt like the dickens to have it get hard in tight blue jeans. I laughed a little hysterically. At least some things about a man never changed.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Watching you, feeling yourself up like that," Sumir said. "I started to get a hard-on and then shit just got folded up and twisted down there. These jeans are really tight."

I smiled, a little relieved somehow. "Aw, poor baby," I said. "C'mere and let me kiss it to make it better."

I was only joking, but surprisingly Sumir did rise, shucking out of his jeans and pulling off the t-shirt as well, standing there naked except for his thick yellow socks. It was a body to die for, trim and well-muscled, curvy and lissome with mouth-watering tits and long, shapely legs. His skin was as soft as I remembered, softer maybe, and I loved the firm-soft feel of his ass cheeks in my hands as I squeezed them while guiding his cock into my waiting mouth.

I primed him like an expert - being the owner/operator of similar equipment, I pretty much knew how to get him on the edge and keep him there - as I got myself naked. I tried not to pay too much attention to the changes in Sumir, since I knew they were happening to myself as well. His scrotum was flattened against his crotch, elongated strangely back towards his anus, and his balls were no bigger than acorns when I could feel them in the fleshy, heavy skin of his sac. I dug through the bags from the store and found the lube jelly, spreading it over him after warming it in my hand and putting a liberal coating on my own anus. I knelt on the couch and guided him in.

He'd been right. It didn't hurt, it felt glorious. I loved the intoxicating feeling of having him inside me, surrounding him with my body and milking joy from him. I fucked back, pounding my shapely ass against his pelvis and savoring the strange new feel of the little ripples of fat which traveled up my butt-cheeks as I did. Sumir grunted silkily and he spent himself deep inside me, grabbing my hips and thrusting as deep as his tiny little organ would allow. He collapsed against me, kissing my hair.

"Oh my God, you're blonde," he said softly, stroking my sweat-damp hair.

"Among other things," I said.

"Well, you sure helped me not worry about it so much," Sumir said. "Let me return the favor." He slid down my body and knelt between my legs, using his full and soft lips to stroke my tiny, denuded member. The orgasm was wonderful, like the last - instead of feeling it just in my penis I felt it more all over my body, like a cup brimming over or like being submerged in pure pleasure.

We shared a cigarette, our bodies twined together as we caressed one another's sweaty, sated skin. I teased Sumir's new breasts and he did the same, introducing one another to the incredible new sensations of fondling that we'd never known before. Before the changes, I never liked having my nipples touched or sucked. Now, I didn't want to go a day without it.

"We're turning into women," I said simply, without preamble.

"I know," Sumir said. "I think I've known for a while."

"I just kept thinking about when you made love to me," I continued. "How much I wanted your cock to be bigger, to go into me deeper. I mean, I love you, Sumir - I really do, I always have - but I don't think that our current equipment is going to be enough to satisfy either one of us."

"I think you might be right," Sumir said.

"We have to find out what's happening," I told my friend.

"I think we both know what's going to happen if we keep taking the pills," Sumir said.

"And I don't think either of us has what it takes to hold out and not take them," I replied. "Look, Sumir, we're in way too deep. We either have to go see a doctor and convince him what happened to us - which isn't too likely - or we have to see this through."

"What do you want to do?" Sumir asked me.

"I want to fall asleep next to you with your arms around me," I said. "And I don't want to decide shit about anything until tomorrow."

* * *

We didn't wake up until after eight, which meant that the withdrawal would start any minute. Panicked, we didn't have much time for debate or discussion. We took the pills right before the morning cigarette.

I rattled the nearly-empty second pack of smokes. "You know what this means?"

Sumir nodded. "We have to go back out."

"Has it stopped snowing?" I asked.

"Not really," Sumir answered. "We have more on the way, too. We'd probably better look into spending some serious cash today. I don't know when we'll be able to get back out again."

"Hmm. Snowed into the apartment with you. Somehow that doesn't sound so bad," I said, rubbing his shoulders. He moaned and pillowed his head and soft, shiny hair against my hand.

"But spending a ton of money sounds pretty good, too, don't you think?" he asked.

I sat down next to him. "You know, if we're going to go out with boobs, we should probably make an effort to look and act like girls," I said. "If we act like guys, we're just going to draw attention to ourselves."

"I guess you're right," Sumir said. "But I don't have the faintest idea how to be a girl."

We did the only thing two computer nerds could do. We hit the Internet. Within half an hour, we had pages and pages of helpful advice, how to dress, makeup tips, latest fashions, it didn't matter. We sat down with our meager freebie makeup assortment and tried not to make ourselves look like whores. Luckily the apricot scrub stuff worked as a makeup remover, as well, so our first six unsuccessful tries were washed off. By the time we got to attempt number seven, we looked decent. The eyeliner was relatively straight and the same thickness, the mascara wasn't clumped, the eyeshadow was a little heavy but not clownish and the lipstick actually stayed *inside* the lip line. We weren't any Rembrandts where makeup was concerned, but we didn't look like cheap hookers. And we got better on try number eight, as well - none of our information imparted to us that you needed to get dressed before you put on makeup, or pulling on a tight t-shirt would smear and smudge everything everywhere.

I was dressed in another pair of skin-tight, low-rise jeans with flared legs, white socks and my little pink Keds I'd found. Not exactly warm for the weather outside, but it fit. I probably would have walked out of my old snow boots in a couple of steps. I wore a little red-and-white striped t-shirt with a pink fleece over that and a fleece-lined denim jacket that was quite a bit too big for me over that. I gathered my hair back in a ponytail with a red scrunchie and found a little stretchy band which I could use to keep my ears warm, like some of the snow-bunnies on the slopes wore. One of the first stops we planned to make was to Victoria's Secret,

though. My new jugs were way too large to go for extended periods without a bra. They went everywhere when I didn't restrain them. Brushing my teeth was a real event.

Sumir was dressed very similarly to me, in pink socks with white Keds, hip-hugger jeans, a white three-quarter sleeve t-shirt with "Spoiled Brat" across his generous tits, a sunshine yellow fleece pullover and a denim jacket identical to mine. A black knit stocking cap pushed his now voluminous dark chestnut hair down around his heart-shaped face.

"Where do we go?" he asked me.

"Well, I figure we have to use cash only right now," I said. "No way will anybody accept that we're Sumir and Nate if we try to pass credit cards. We'll have to solve that problem later, I guess. We have about eight hundred in the bank between us. So first stop is to use the ATM and get out as much as we can. We also better pray that we don't get pulled over while we're out driving, since our IDs wouldn't pass, either."

"Good plan," Sumir told me. "Then what?"

"My first stop would be Walgreens again. For cigarettes."

"Okay," Sumir said.

"And God help me, I never thought I'd say this. Next stop needs to be Victoria's Secret. I can't go the rest of the day without a bra."

Sumir giggled a little. "Our lives are certainly changing," he told me, slipping his arm through mine and leading me out the door.

"I figure anything we can't get today, we should get online later this evening, since we can use credit cards there without worrying about it," I added as we left, locking the door behind us. The air was bitter and our breath plumed out from between our lips. Somehow, I knew my pale skin was paler except for rosy patches on my cheeks and nose. That's how most girls looked, out in the cold like that.

"After Victoria's Secret, R.E.I.," Sumir said, teeth chattering. "Boots and a coat."

"Maybe we should make that our first stop," I said, shivering.

* * *

The drugstore actually wound up being a little more of a stopover than we'd suspected at first. We'd only wanted to pick up some cigarettes, but we wound up getting sidetracked down the makeup aisle as well. The crappy little free makeup kit we'd gotten was all right, but if we really expected to pass as women we'd have to have a little more than that. The woman who ran the cosmetics section was really helpful, too - she got us started with the colors that would look really good on us. We wound up buying foundation, concealer, blush in about three different colors apiece, eyeliners, eyeshadow, pressed powder, lip-liners and lipsticks and lip glosses. We also made our first small step into the byzantine world of nail-care as well, strengtheners and hardeners and a couple shades of polish, files and buffers and emery boards too. Sumir even splurged and bought a set of rollers, a curling iron and a super-powered blow dryer. We even had to buy cases to keep the makeup in, and sponges and stuff to put it on with. To that, we added two cartons of cigarettes. One of the Ultra Lights we'd

gotten before, and another of Virginia Slims because they were for girls and we thought we'd give them a try.

From there, we did opt to head to R.E.I. for jackets and boots. Each of us found a very nice pair of insulated hiking boots and a snug, warm ski jacket with a removable lining, some little knit gloves that looked like they belonged on a doll when they were off but stretched to fit our hands. I bought another couple of the fleecy head-wraps to keep my ears warm, in cute colors. I also took some time to buy industrial-strength Chap-Stick. Just my brief exposure outside had my lips dry and cracking already.

We'd already put a sizeable dent in our cash supply by the time we reached the mall. It took quite a bit of trial and error in Victoria's Secret to find out our sizes, and we didn't want to blow our cover by asking someone what our bra size might be. Real women would know that kind of thing. So after grabbing several sizes and grunting and cursing softly in the dressing rooms as we figured out the unfamiliar garments, I discovered I wore a 36C and Sumir a 36D. Once we knew that, we were able to hit the sale tables and grab both bras in our sizes and matching panties. We took them to the sales counter, a little abashed, and paid for them. Girls we may have looked like, walked like and even acted like, but the soft music and the hot pink carpet was still a little much. I still felt like some kind of an impostor, and I'm pretty sure Sumir did the same. We scampered out of there *tout-suite*, giggling and embarrassed, still not quite 100% down with the whole girl thing. But the same reasons that got us out of Victoria's Secret so quickly is what kept us away from places like Rave and Wet Seal and Charlotte Russe. I guess we just weren't ready to shop in places that sold such sexy clothes. We played it a little safer and made our run to Dillard's.

Most of the stuff we bought was really bland, considering how hot Sumir was and how hot he said I was. It was simple sweaters and tees and blouses, long skirts and slacks. I wasn't exactly ready for the sexy stuff yet, and if I wasn't then I was pretty sure Sumir wasn't either, considering he was the less adventurous of the two of us. We picked out some purses - great idea on Sumir's part, since that never would have occurred to me - and I grabbed us some pairs of tights, pantyhose and stockings. Finally, we hit the shoe section as well, getting some dress boots and flats and I even went out on a limb and got a pair of pumps with a three-inch heel.

Then we divvied up what was left of the cash equally and split up for a while. We thought it would be fun to surprise one another. I wrote down Sumir's sizes carefully while he did the same for mine, and I wandered off in search of presents for my lover. I kept it to a theme of stuff that Sumir would never in a million years choose for himself, super sexy and revealing clothes. And the first step had been a pair of four-inch heels.

Once we had all the warm, winter stuff we needed, we checked out and used the last few bucks in cash we had left to 'top off' the supplies at home at the grocery store. We actually got looks in passing from some of the guys there! I suppose it was to be expected, with the way we walked and how tight our clothes were. We got home around one o'clock and put the groceries away before we tried everything on.

I discovered that in my mad dash through the sale tables at Victoria's Secret, I hadn't been paying much attention to what I was grabbing. All the panties I'd grabbed had been thongs, some high-rise and some low-rise. The bras turned out to be two with straps, one strapless and one a convertible one of those "WonderBras" that pushed my tits together and up in a way that made me look like I had a lot more boob than I really had. I decided to keep it on for a

while - the support was nice and it did make my rack look incredible. I slipped into a matching black satin thong and looked forlornly at my hair. It was sodden and limp with the snow and dry from the heaters in the stores and in the car.

Sumir came in with a bag in his hand, wearing a Jog-Bra that hugged his tits in the most delicious way and a skin-tight pair of Lycra workout pants. His hair was pulled up into a very long ponytail almost right on top of his head, keeping all the hair out of the way to display his brand-new, freshly pierced ears.

"OhmyGOD!" I squealed, clapping my hands and jumping up and down a little. "That looks so cute on you! I can't believe you actually went through with it!"

"I know, I can't either," Sumir said. "I was just walking by the little place in the mall and it said free piercing if I bought some earrings. I figured I'd be like my friend Nate and just say, 'fuck it' and do it."

"Did it hurt?" I asked.

"Only right when it happened," Sumir said. "It felt like a bee sting, that's all, and it went away right then. I can't wait till they heal. I bought some big hoops that I can't wait to try on."

He held me at arms' length. "Look at you, though," he said with more than a little desire in his voice. "That bra makes you look. well, I want to fuck you."

I kissed the tip of his nose, grinning. I could feel my nose wrinkling up. It did that when I smiled now. "Later, baby. I want to show you what I got you first."

"Oh, wait," Sumir said. "Me first, me first. 'Cause I got something for both of us, kinda."

He pulled a big, white book out of his sack and handed it to me. It had a picture of a woman's face on the front and was titled *Making Faces* by Kevyn Aucoin.

"The lady told me it's a virtual how-to on makeup. I read some, it breaks everything down, even for beginners like us."

I paged through it quickly, looking at the diagrams and some of the photos showing different looks. Very glamorous. I had to admit - I really couldn't wait to try.

"Want to practice tonight?" I asked.

"Yeah, that would be fun," Sumir said. "Maybe you'll let me do you up like Marilyn Monroe. Your hair's almost that pale, now, anyway."

I pulled a strand of it down to check. He was right. It was a vanilla blonde, more white than gold now. Almost like I'd bleached it. And it was easily down to the bottoms of my shoulderblades, now. I was going to have to do something with it, soon.

"Okay, my turn," I said. "I have a theme. Stuff you were too embarrassed to buy yourself but that I could tell you wanted to try out."

"Uh-oh," Sumir said, smiling.

I handed him the four-inch heels. "My God," he said. "I'll fall and break my neck."

"No you won't. My old girlfriend Nina used to wear heels that high all the time, and you remember what an über-klutz she was. I have a pair, too. We can practice tonight."

"Okay," Sumir said. "They are really sexy. Thank you."

He dug in his bag and handed me out a tight-as-sin black knit sweater with a turtleneck and these ultra-sexy keyhole cutouts on the shoulders. He'd seen me eyeing it on the mannequin but I'd talked myself out of it to save money.

"You remembered," I said, hugging him tight. "You are such a sweetheart."

Then I handed Sumir out the stretch-lace top I'd found. It was long sleeved but rode off the shoulders and didn't cover the midriff. He looked at it a little shocked.

"My tits will show through this," he said.

"You're supposed to wear a bra underneath, silly," I said.

"It's really pretty," Sumir commented. "You have really good taste, did you know that?"

Sumir slipped out of the Jog-Bra, letting his tits bounce free in a way that had me thinking about so many other things than clothes. He pulled the lacy top on and modeled it for me with a little mincing turn, his breasts and arms covered in sheer black lace.

"You're drooling," Sumir told me. "I suppose that means I look good."

"You were right the first time," I told him. "Don't wear a bra with it. I like it this way better."

"You are so bad," he said, smacking me lightly on the shoulder. "My turn. This actually may wind up as more of a present for me."

He handed me a lacy white merry widow, with underwired cups and attached garters. I could feel myself blushing, not because of the suggestiveness of the gift so much as the fact that I couldn't wait to try it on.

"Wow," I said, turning the lacy garment over in my hands. "This is really sexy."

"So are you," Sumir said.

"So here's the sexiest thing of all I got for you," I told Sumir. "It's my favorite. I hope you like it too."

I handed him the bottle of Chanel #5 I'd picked up. I hoped Sumir wasn't upset, with the gift of the ultra-feminine scent. But it had always been something I equated with sexy, glamorous beauty and to be honest, I couldn't think of anyone more suited.

"You are so sweet," Sumir said. "I love Number Five. Thank you so much."

I kissed him. "Thanks for all my stuff, too," I said. "I love it."

We were moments away from another kiss, one that promised to lead to more afterwards, when the doorbell rang. I gave Sumir a regretful smile and trotted across the chilly floorboards and pulled the door open to reveal Tommy, our FedEx guy. His eyes goggled and his jaw dropped a little.

I hadn't thought. I was too used to before, having no real trouble answering the door without a shirt. Now I stood in front of Tommy wearing nothing but thong panties and a WonderBra, my tits spilling out of the top invitingly.

"Who is it?" Sumir said, coming around the corner in a pair of Lycra shorts and a lace top that exposed all of his new-grown 'assets.' I thought Tommy was going to hyperventilate.

"Uh." Tommy began, ". is Sumir or Nate in?"

Of course he hadn't recognized us. We looked completely different since he'd seen us last. I thought briefly about trying to cover myself, but it wouldn't have done anything except to make me look even more foolish. And besides, I had to admit something to myself. I liked him looking. It made me feel naughty. Powerful. It was intoxicating.

"No, they're not here right now. I can sign, though," I told Tommy.

He handed over a small package and offered his digital signature capture board. I scrawled something illegible on it and handed it back to him. I couldn't keep from looking at the rapidly swelling bulge in his uniform trousers.

"Would you like to come in out of the cold for a second?" I asked him, my heart thudding in my chest with over-the-top excitement.

"I can't," Tommy stammered. "I have a ton of deliveries."

I shrugged, giving my titties a delicious wiggle. "Oh, well. Maybe next time."

"Uh, sure," Tommy said, backing out. I closed the door slowly. He never took his eyes off of me.

"That was fun," I giggled.

"You're such a tease," Sumir said, joining in the laughter.

"Tease, my ass, I forgot that I was in my underwear." I said. "Y'know, if he'd come in, I probably would have blown him."

"You would have had to take a number," Sumir told me. "He's cute."

"Yeah, he is, isn't he?" I said. "Funny how I'm just now starting to notice things like that. I must've seen Tommy a million times before today. I never thought he was cute before. I wonder if he has a girlfriend?"

"What did we get?" Sumir asked.

I opened the FedEx package. "It's from the company that manufactures the pills," I said excitedly, pulling out the documents.

Dear Customer:

I hope that your experience with our herbal formula has been a pleasurable one, and that now you are the proud owner of the body you've always wanted. We here at Herbal Expressions, Inc. realize that the adjustment period can be a difficult one, and we would like to offer to our valued customers the Platinum Plus package. This includes assistance with identification and documentation, videos delivered to your house detailing hygiene, clothing, style and etiquette

for the total beginner. We also include a selection of herbal supplements which will increase health and vitality of body and mind, free of charge.

Thank you for choosing Herbal Expressions. Call our twenty-four hour customer service number at any time to order your Platinum Plus package! You might even qualify for a \$5,000 clothing allowance!

Sincerely,

The Staff of Herbal Expressions, Inc.

"Get the Body You've Always Wanted."

I handed the envelope to Sumir. "They knew this was going to happen. Those bastards knew it was going to happen."

"I'm going to sue the hell out of them," Sumir half-growled.

I thought a minute, trying to sort out the mess that had happened the moment we took those pills. Then I took a long look at my lover and roommate.

"Sumir, the day we first took the pills," I said consideringly. "Did you have a dream about Selma Hayek?"

Sumir looked at me a little amazed. "How the hell did you know that?"

"Did you know you look like her?" I asked. "The face, the eyes, the body, the hair. you two could be sisters."

"My tits are bigger," Sumir said.

"I dreamed about Christina Applegate," I told him. "The big blonde hair and pale skin. I haven't looked in a while, but I'd be willing to bet that my eyes are green now instead of brown."

"You're right, they are," Sumir confirmed. "What are you saying?"

"How long have you had a thing for Selma Hayek?" I asked Sumir.

"For as long as I can remember, same with you and Kelly Bundy," he told me.

I laughed and put my hands to my forehead. It was so simple. We were supposed to be smart, I couldn't believe we hadn't caught the joke. I guess we could be forgiven, considering everything we'd had on our minds.

"Why are you laughing?" Sumir demanded.

"You've lusted after Selma Hayek as long as you can remember," I said. "I've lusted after Christina Applegate. Now we look just like them. We have the bodies of the women we've always wanted."

"Oh, God," Sumir said.

"What do we do now?" I asked.

Sumir sighed. "Well, it's getting to be time to take the last of the pills," he said. "Shortly thereafter I'm going to eat your pussy for the first time."

"What do we do in the meantime?" I asked, suddenly curious as to what it would feel like to have my pussy eaten. By my girlfriend.

"Well, we still have lots of room on the credit cards," Sumir said, pulling a long and skinny Virginia Slims cigarette out of the pack and putting it between his - no, *her*. It was *her* now - pouty, sexy lips. "I'm thinking about going on the web and ordering a whole shitload of clothes."

"That sounds like fun," I said, smiling.

"I was actually thinking that I would let you pick them," Sumir added. "Just so I don't pick anything baggy that doesn't show me off."

"Well, then, you have to pick out mine," I said. "And actually, why don't we start with the retro site we just designed? I'm Kelly Bundy, right? I need flashy, tight 80's clothes to carry off the look."

"Done," Sumir said. "Then what?"

"Well, I feel like I'd better read up on that hairstyling information you downloaded. I'll need big 80's hair, too, to go with it."

"I'm going to get one of those wild, curly perms like Selma wore in *Desperado*," Sumir said. "I can wear it straight for a little while, though, but I like the wild look."

"Mmm," I said. "That'll be super sexy on you. I think we probably ought to call that 800 number that's going to help us out with ID. That would be a help."

"What do we do after that?" Sumir asked.

"Well, we talked about practicing makeup. That really sounds like fun," I said. "We're going to need the practice for when we doll up and go out clubbing, right?"

"Right," Sumir said. "Y'know, I'm really surprised we're not more freaked out about this. Don't you think we ought to be mad as hell and scared shitless to boot?"

"Yeah, but we're not," I said. "It may be the pills, too, doing that."

"Speaking of which," Sumir said. He tapped out the final dosage onto my outstretched palm and then onto his. I picked up my open Diet Coke from the coffee table, and Sumir grabbed one of our half-empty bottles of Gatorade.

We toasted, plastic bottle against aluminum can.

"To our new pussies," I said.

We shotgunned the pills and washed them down.

"Wanna order sexy clothes?" I asked.

"Yeah," Sumir said. "Wanna make it interesting?"

"What do you mean?"

"I'll put on my high heels and you put on yours. First one to make it to the office door without tripping owes the other one a suede mini-skirt."

* * *

The club was hopping, and there was no shortage of cute guys to eyeball and consider. We'd been doing this ever since the winter left and it was finally warm enough to wear the little tube-dresses that bared most of our sensational legs and showed off enough cleavage to turn heads. It had been kind of a dare, right at first - going out and dancing with guys - but we'd really gotten into the fun of it. And tonight was the night we were actually planning on taking one home. We'd been girlfriends and living by pussy only for nearly two months, and both of us decided that we just missed cock.

We took our time, dancing and drinking and smoking and generally making ourselves visible and narrowing down our field of applicants. We finally settled on one, a rugged-looking brunette at the bar with a little stubbly beard that looked like Joey from "Friends," who we both agreed was hot. He was single and not having much luck tonight. That was going to change.

"Hi," I said, giving him my most flirtatious smile. The tapes from Herbal Expressions had broken down flirting step by step, giving us all the trial and error of years of female puberty in about two hours. It was nice to know we were prepared, though - the clothes were smoking, the makeup perfect and my trademark big 80s hair hadn't fallen an inch. My girlfriend's wild mane of dark curls wasn't frizzed, either. We were as hot now as we'd been when we came in the door.

"Hi," he said, suddenly attentive and interesting. "I'm David."

"Hi, David," I said, having to stop a minute to remember the name from my new drivers' license that had just arrived. 'Nate' still came too easily to my tongue. I covered it with a sip of my margarita and said, "I'm Natasha, and this is my roommate."

I'd almost said 'Sumir.' Old habits died hard. He - no, *she* - covered gracefully, extending a long-nailed hand.

"Summer," she said brightly.

"What do you do, Natasha? Summer?" David said to make conversation.

"We run our own internet business," Summer told him. "Web design, mostly. We both do a little modeling on the side, too."

"Our pictures are on the web," I told him. "You should check us out sometime. Summersplace.com. I was even the photographer for some of it."

"Interesting," David said. "I'm an architect."

"That sounds interesting," Summer said.

"Tell me something, David," I said, "do you get as tired as we do of all the dancing around and word games you have to do to meet somebody in a place like this?"

He chuckled. "God, yes."

"Then how would you like to come back to our place and fuck?" Summer asked.

"Seriously," I said. "You're cute as hell. Summer and I both think so."

He seemed to be fighting for air, gasping a little. "Both of you?" he croaked.

"Why not? You'll have a hell of a letter to send to *Penthouse* afterwards," Summer said.

"How can I say no to that?" David said, recovering his composure - a little.

"Great," I said, taking a seductive drag off my Virginia Slims. "Let's finish our drinks and get to know each other a little better, then take off."

"You're in quite a hurry, sounds like," David told me.

"I just can't wait to have your dick in my mouth, that's all," I replied smoothly.

He blushed beet red. "You're as direct as a man, you know that?"

"But she's 100% woman," Summer told him. "And so am I."

Ω