

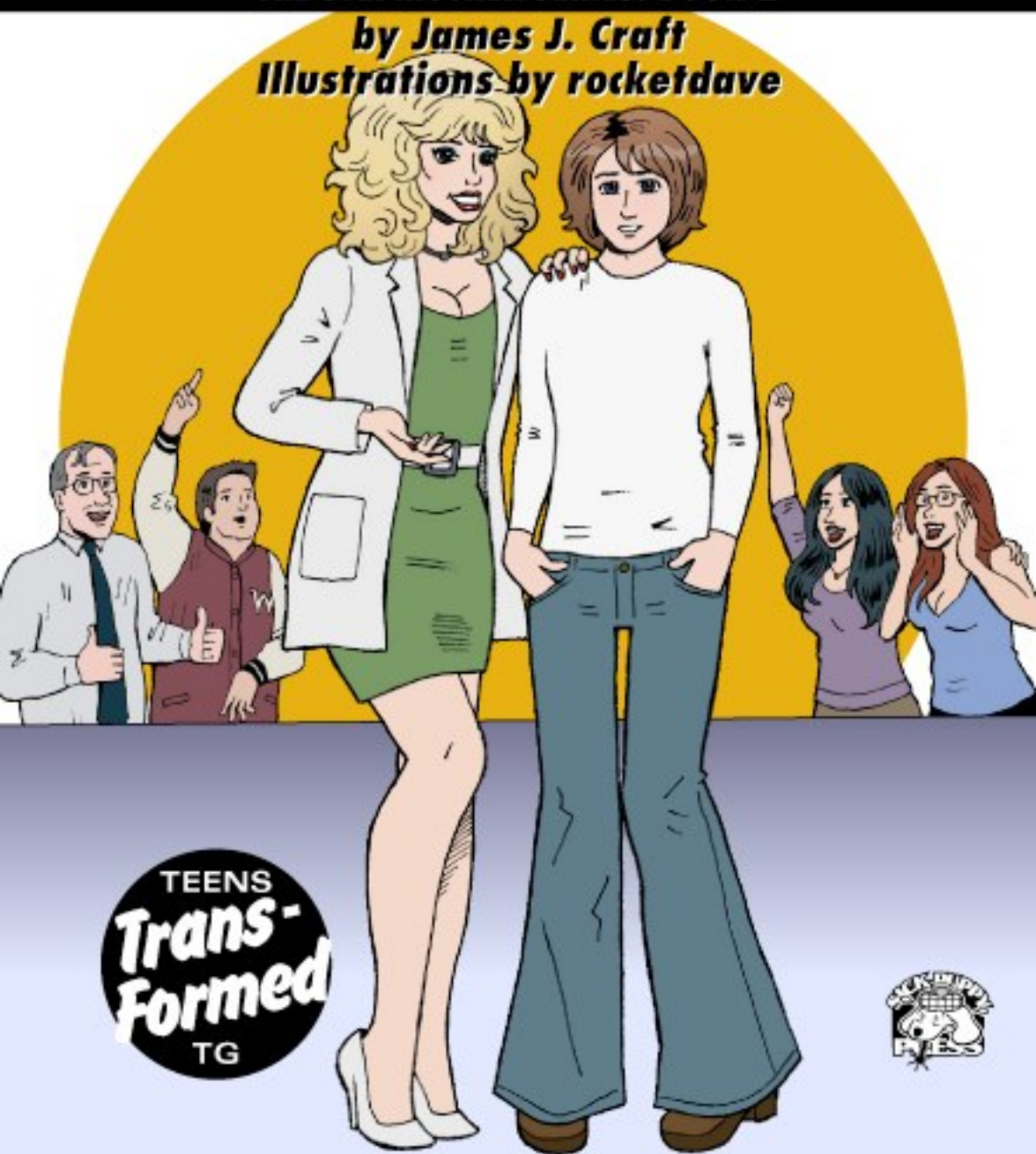
ADULTS ONLY

72 pages **17** illustrations

LITTLE MISS- TER POPULAR

THE STEPMOTHER SERIES: BOOK 2

by James J. Craft
Illustrations by rocketdave



J A M E S J C R A F T

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LITTLE MISS-TER POPULAR

Candace Childress had a problem.

Since splitting up with her husband five years, she had watched her son go from hero to zero. The guilt of allowing it to happen ate away at her decent Catholic soul. How did she let her child slip away from her? What had caused his slow but sure retreat from life? Was it something she did?

True, she had divorced from her husband Abe, which wasn't something many Catholics approved of ... and the reason for the divorce was adultery, which was also frowned upon ... especially since *she* was the adulteress ... and then there was the fact that she had committed adultery on her husband ... with another woman ... *that* certainly wouldn't win her any points with the Pope, now would it?

But in Candace's mind it had ended up being the only option.

Abe, her husband of fifteen years and the father of her child, simply couldn't give her what she wanted. At first she had *thought* that he could – after all, she was a recently hired teacher at the local high school and he a Professor at the local state college. He knew a lot of things, something about every subject, she thought.

All you had to do was ask him.

At the beginning of their courtship, she thought it was his best characteristic. But by the end of it, his know-everything attitude proved to be a little much.

Candace had felt restless, wanting a life beyond just being a sounding board for Abe's endless monologues about trivial information. She could only pretend to be interested in his arcane knowledge for so long. That restless feeling grew stronger and stronger within her as every day passed. So it wasn't long before she started to express her feelings to the new chemistry teacher that was just hired at the school.

The new teacher – a feisty, sexy, full-of-life blonde named Gina – was everything that Candace had once thought herself to be. Only now, after having given birth at the age of nineteen and raised a son almost on her own, she thought of herself as a sad, talentless, complacent housewife and boring English teacher.

No wonder her son was now acting the same! Sad, talentless, complacent and boring.

A massive lack of confidence.

Candace had seen what a lack of confidence could do to a student, having worked in the high school for so many years now. She was truly concerned that she was raising a child who was – perish the thought – unpopular.

But Leon's Dad, in his typical fashion, wasn't interested in any of it. "Just leave him be," he said, "He doesn't need any of your lesbian voodoo crap to fix him. With my luck, you'll somehow turn him gay..." he grumbled.

"Abe," Gina looked across the table at her lover's ex with a steely glare, "How could a couple of lesbians make him want to be with a m..."

Candace cut her partner off before she got herself in trouble, "Let's not get off topic, shall we?" she sighed. She knew that bringing Abe and Gina into the same room was a recipe for disaster. Frankly, she would have rather just met with Abe one-on-one. But Gina insisted on helping with Leon. Candace knew that Gina simply wouldn't take no for an answer.

She turned lovingly to her 'civil partner' and smiled, "Is there anymore coffee love?"

Gina grumbled and stood up from their kitchen table and went to find replacement coffee on the counter, while Candace lowered her voice and spoke directly to Abe, "Abe, this is serious. You know as well as I do that Leon is showing all the signs of clinical depression. We really need to move quickly on this. What about his future? What about college? Don't you think he needs this?"

Abe furrowed his brow. His ex-wife had a point, but he wasn't sold on her fiery blonde-bomber of a wife's solution.

"Never. I'd never let my flesh and blood be subjected to the sort of thing you're suggesting!" Abe was barely able to keep his voice quiet enough to not be heard. "What *she's* suggesting..." He motioned at Gina who was returning with the coffee carafe, "Is tantamount to brainwashing. While she may think that she's doing some grand favor to all the little high-school girls that she's 'treating'..." he made quotation signs in the air as he spoke, "it's still unethical – and illegal – and I'm certain that if your boss knew what you two were up to..." he let his voice trail off in a threatening tone, "Let's just say if he knew what methods you were using in your so-called 'Confidence Club', he wouldn't be very impressed."

In fact, he would certainly have her fired.

That didn't stop Gina from defending her pet project. "The 'Confidence Club' has proven results!" She said, with conviction. "It's helped dozens of young students break out of their shells and realize their full potential!" Gina had begun an informal gathering of students who she had picked out from her classes with the idea that she could use her talents to shed the shyness and awkwardness teenager can sometime find themselves prisoners of. As far as the outside world was concerned, the 'Confidence Club' was pure altruism.

As far as Gina was concerned, it gave her an excuse to satisfy her deep need to meddle in other people's lives and feed her inner control-freak nature. But no one else needed to know that.

Abe sighed, "Let me make another appointment with Doctor Kerman..."

Gina scoffed and rolled her eyes. Doctor Kerman, also known as the oldest psychiatrist in the country, had already had his shot at fixing Leon. *Several* times.

She looked at Candace, "You're not seriously thinking about doing that, are you?"

Candace turned to her wife and shrugged, "I don't know Gene," she used her lover's short name, "I mean... maybe he can do something new that he hasn't tried yet."

Gina scoffed again, "Oh sure," she shook her head angrily and sipped her coffee, "You won't let me try some mild clinical hypnotherapy, but you'll let Doctor Zivago turn him in a... a... medicated *zombie*!"

"I think you're being a little overly dramatic dear," Candace tried to calm her partner down.

"A little?" Abe muttered as he took a swig from his java mug.

"Now don't you start!" Candace scolded her ex, "She's only trying to help..."

"Oh, *now* you take my side..." Gina complained.

Candace looked up at the ceiling and sighed, "Oh my God, you two..."

"Fine," Gina sneered and she slammed her mug on the table, then stood up and left the room.

Abe gave Candace a '*what's her problem?*' look.

"Just go, Abe," she sighed as she rubbed her temples, "Just go, go and make an appointment with Kerman..."

Abe nodded and stood up from the table.

"But *so help me*," she began as her former spouse made his way to the door, "If that *quack* can't do *something... anything...* with our son..." she paused to make eye contact with Abe, "Gina's ready to go, and I don't care *what* you tell my boss... my son's future is *too* important."

Abe nodded silently, then left.

Candace took a deep breath and lowered her head to the table.



Leon glanced around Doctor Kerman's waiting room. He sighed. He didn't like being here, but also didn't want to disappoint his Dad, who seemed *certain* that *this* session would somehow be different from all the other sessions that he had attended here.

Leon knew that it wouldn't.

There wasn't anything emotionally or mentally wrong with him, he just was just a loser, and no psychiatrist was going to be able to cure him of *that*.

"Hiya there Leo," the Doctor smiled as he came into the reception area to collect his next patient, "Whaddaya say we go have ourselves a little chat?"

The Doctor was a little over-the-top in his enthusiasm, and again, Leon didn't want to disappoint, so without correcting the Doctor's erroneous use of his first name – again – he sighed, forced a smile and followed the shrink into his office.

"So tell me what's got you so blue, kiddo," the Doctor said as the two of them sat in the wood-paneled room.

Leon shrugged, "I dunno... it's my parents really..." he sighed.

"Uh-huh" Doctor Kerman nodded, "And how does that make you feel... their reaction to you and your feelings that is?"

Leon was unsure what he had just been asked, but was too insecure to question, so he began to give the psychiatrist what he figured were the exact answers he was looking for.

He told him, again, about how the early years of his life had been happy. At least he *thought* they were. He told him how he had felt the most connected with his mom, even though he knew she had spent the first twelve years of his life, carefully constructing the illusion of a happy family for his benefit. He lamented to the Doctor how it had all come tumbling down in the past few years since his parents had split up.

Leon figured it would appear to be a pretty standard thing. His father, the workaholic professor at the local college and his mother, a caring teacher at the local high-school, had somehow caused whatever it was that was affecting him since the breakup of his family unit, and he blamed them both equally for different things... and *that* was why he had started to retreat socially.

The psychiatrist nodded his head and took copious notes all through the session, and would later report to Leon's father that a) it was normal for a boy in his circumstances to behave as he was, b) he would bounce out of it and c) if he started to carve the eyes out of pictures, or if neighborhood cats started to go missing that he would prescribe something to help the situation, or call the police, depending on which was easier.

Abe, of course, happily presented the Doctor's findings to his ex-wife and her same-sex partner, soon afterwards and asked that the issue be laid to rest.

As an educator, he knew the downside of a student like Leon being 'labeled' in the system. "It was something, as you know Candace," he said to Leon's Mother, "That once started, can never be stopped, and never goes away."

Candace rolled her eyes. She didn't want her son labeled either, and was put-off by her ex's position that their son was either perfectly fine or totally crazy, but nothing in between.

"Fine," she sighed finally, "We'll do it your way."

Gina's groan of disbelief could be heard a block away.

"What the hell do you mean?" she scolded her partner once Abe had left, "We're just going to do nothing?"

Candace paused before replying, turning to her Leon with a smile. "Why don't you go play some video games dear?" she said soothingly.

Leon nodded. He knew she wanted him to leave the room so that she and Gina could argue about his so-called problem. He pretended like he didn't know and smiled back, "Okay Mom."

He made sure that he closed the door the to his room just a little harder, to signify to his mother and stepmother that it was now 'safe' to talk about him.

"Look," she said to her partner with a stern tone, "Abe's a friggin administrator, he's forgotten all about how to actually help children any more. The only thing he knows how to do is write up suspensions and save money on pencils. He's wrong, and his quack shrink friend is wrong too."

Gina looked surprised at Candace's opening statement. She had expected something completely different.

"You know it, I know it, hell..." she paused then looked up towards Leon's second-story bedroom, "I sometimes think even *he* knows it. But his Dad..." her voice trailed off, "Abe just can't bear to be wrong. It's just not in his DNA."

Gina nodded, she liked what she heard, so far.

"So this is what we're going to do..." She began, as the two of them developed a plan to enroll their son/stepson into the confidence building program that Gina was administering at the high school.



The next day, during his second period spare, Leon, as instructed, went to his Stepmother's second-floor chemistry classroom to attend his first meeting of the 'Confidence Club.'

Why they put chemistry labs on the second floor, I'll never know... he thought to himself, if anything goes wrong, all those chemicals will go flowing down over the heads of whoever is in the classrooms underneath them.

Inside the lab, Leon saw two other students, girls, sitting awkwardly opposite each other, with an empty chair between them.

His gay Step-Mom smiled as he entered, "Leon! Welcome" she motioned him to sit between the two girls. Both looked, like he, to be 'outsiders'. He knew the look well. Frumpy, unfashionable clothing, down-trodden facial expressions, avoiding eye contact... yep, they were certifiable geeks... just like him.

Gina had begun the Confidence Club three years ago, in her first year of teaching at the school. She had convinced the administration that helping kids make the difficult transition from childhood to young adulthood was paramount to the school's mission. What she didn't tell them was how exactly she was going to do it. Even without details, she was given a reluctant blessing from the school principal.

"I first want to welcome you all here," Gina smiled, "To begin our sessions, I've developed a little bit of a team building exercise." She walked the group over to some of the lab's workbenches. There were assembled a few materials. "Let's all work together to make some refreshments." Leon looked at the glass containers for a moment, then turned back towards Gina who was scribbling notes on her clipboard, as if to say 'seriously?'

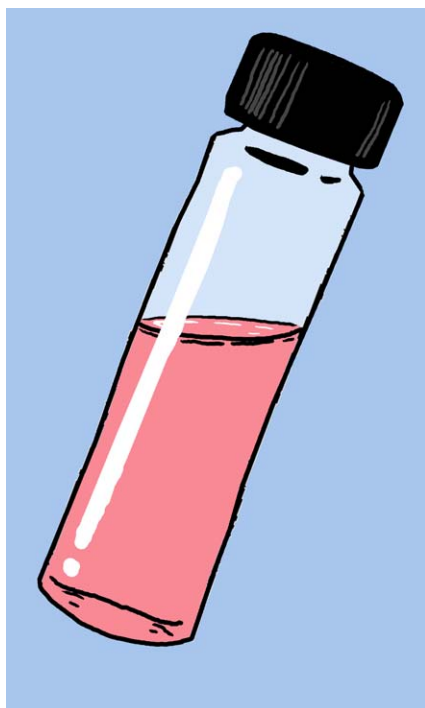
She smiled again, "Go ahead dear." It was more of a command than a request.

Leon looked back at the vials and beakers, paused, then sighed. The instructions were relatively simple. They were making, if he was right, a soda of some sort. His job was to carbonate the drink with a pressurized carbonation device, the red-haired girl's job was to mix together the sugars and acids, and the dark-haired girl's jobs was to mix the flavors. Leon unenthusiastically went about the tasks, and successfully kept the whole exercise from being any fun at all.

He watched as the sweetener concentrate was being made from fructose and phosphoric acid. At the same time, the flavors were mixed together, which were "artificial strawberry substitute" and other oils that usually made up the flavors of soft drinks. One vial, which he couldn't quite identify, was bright pink. He figured it was the artificial coloring. Finally, the girls gave him the result of their work and he put it in the carbonator.

It burned slightly, and tasted of a strong strawberry flavor. They may have been a little off from the recipe. It made his nose tickle and his stomach bubble slightly, but truthfully wasn't too bad.

"Leon," Gina smile as she took the beaker back, "This is Alexandria and Mina," she pointed to the two girls on either side of him. Alexandria, a tall auburn haired freckle-face, offered a nod of 'hello' as she adjusted her thick-rimmed glasses, while Mina's greeting was more subdued, as she looked so completely terrified to be there. Leon





suspected that the dark-haired girl might make a dash for the door any moment.

Not if I get there first, he thought to himself.

“Hi,” Leon offered a friendly wave, “I’m Leon... and it’s five years since my last friend,” he joked with the two to break the ice. Alexandria and Gina both laughed, while Mina continued to stare nervously.

“Hey,” he suddenly realized, “Mina... Gina... Gina... Mina” he motioned back and forth between his step mom and the nervous girl, causing another giggle from lanky Alex.

"Now Lee," Gina said in a serious tone, "As much as I admire you breaking the ice like that," she smiled authoritatively, "You know you have to call me Ms Middleton. We can't have students calling teachers by their first names... no matter *how* confident they are."

Leon nodded in acknowledgement. As he did, his brain felt like it was swimming a little bit in his skull. He felt a little dizzy.

"So since this is our first meeting," Gina began, "I thought we might just watch a quick little video about confidence and what it is, and why we need it. And that will pretty much be it for the day, okay?"

She rolled the TV cart to stand in front of the trio of misfits, and handed them each a pair of headphones, "So we don't disturb anyone else," she smiled as they each placed the set on their heads and began to listen to the short film on why confidence is important.

During the presentation, Leon kept tapping his headset, as he thought he was hearing other voices in the speakers. It became such a distraction, in fact, that the video seemed to be over before he even knew it.

"Well?" Gina asked as she took the headphones back from each of them, "Why is confidence important?"

Alexandra threw up her hand.

"Yes Alex?" Gina smiled.

"Because how others perceive you is based on how you present yourself," she paused to take a breath, looking up into the upper corner of the ceiling, as if the answer was somehow continued there, "and... how you present yourself depends on how much you believe in yourself."

She sat back in her chair looking exhausted.

Leon and Mina scrunched their faces.

"Leon? Mina?" Gina read their confused expressions, "Do you have something to add?"

Mina shook her head vigorously. Leon also responded with a negative head shake. Alex had pretty much said what he was thinking. In fact, she had said *exactly* what he was thinking... right down to the exact words. He looked at Mina, and could instantly tell from her expression that she was having the same sensation.

It kind of freaked each one of them out, just a little. But being introverts, none of them had the confidence to say so.



“So...” Leon’s Mom asked him as they sat down for family dinner that night. It was he, his mother, and her wife at the table. “How was your first Confidence Club?”

“It was good,” he said as he heaped potatoes onto his plate.

“What did you learn?” she continued.

“Oh,” he shrugged, as he stuffed his mouth with food, “Not too much. Just that how others perceive you is based on how you present yourself and how you present yourself depends on how much you believe in yourself.”

He stopped eating and stared at his mother blankly. He hadn’t even thought about what he was saying, the words just came out. He then glanced at his stepmother, who was trying to hide her smile as she cut her chicken breast with a very dull butter knife.

“Oh!” Candace smiled, “Well that’s certainly a lot for the first meeting. What else did you guys do?”

Leon regained his composure and took another bite, “Oh we had some soda thing Gina made us make.”

Candace nearly choked on her food, “What?” She spat, turning to her partner, who was averting her eyes even further.

“Yeah,” Leon continued, “It came out kinda strong, but not too bad really.” He scraped another spoonful of potato from the plate, “In fact... I kind of liked it.”

He shrugged and plopped the utensil into his mouth happily as his mom glared at her wife.

Later that evening, Candace suggested that Leon go play video games in his room and that she would finish his chores in the kitchen. Without hesitation, the boy, as any boy in his situation would do, gladly accepted the offer.

Once Candace heard the door close upstairs, she turned to her partner with a ferocious glare, “You gave him the stuff!”

Gina seemed to back away from her wife, as if fearing for her life, “No hold on a second... we agreed that...”

“Strawberry soda? You gave him the formula! The pink formula! We agreed to help him with his confidence, not to do *this*,” Candace cut her off, “If Leon’s Dad ever found out... he’d *kill* us.”

“Abe will never find out,” Gina dismissed her mate, “Abe isn’t concerned with anything other than himself.”

Candace shook her head, “I don’t know Gina... you’ve never had a boy in the program like this before. You have *no* idea what the outcome could be!”

“Candace,” Gina took her partner’s hand in her own, “The outcome will be a confident, popular child... just like all the others have been.”

Candace recoiled her hand, “But the others have all been *girls* Gina... and I don’t know if you noticed... but my son is not a *girl*.”

With that, she turned and stormed out of the kitchen, leaving her partner standing with a dirty plate in her hand.

Gina sighed. She knew the program was going to help her step-son. She knew it was the best way. So when Leon was the most popular kid in school, Candace would be apologizing for ever doubting her.

At least, she *hoped* that’s how it would go.



The second meeting of the High School Confidence Club took place a week later back in the chemistry room. Mina, Alex and Leon began with a glass of burning, bubbling strawberry soda. “You made so much, and I don’t want to throw it out,” she explained.

Once they had watched the requisite video on how to be confident – again – Gina brought in a ‘special guest.’ The three members of the club were a little confused to see Kelly Woods, the single most popular girl in the school walk into the classroom.

Kelly, by the expression on her face, was equally confused.

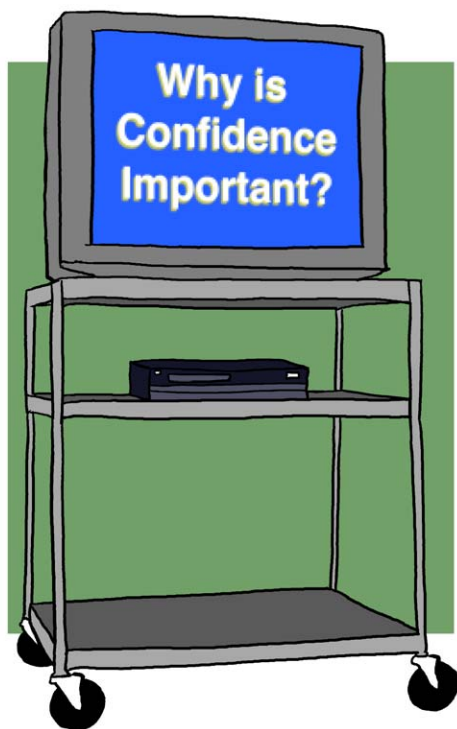
“Um,” she looked at Gina, “What are *they* doing here?” he pointed Mina, Alex and Leon.

Gina grimaced, “*They*... are the students are that I want you mentor on fitting in and being more popular Kelly.”

Kelly had a horrid look on her face, like she had just be asked to pour raw sewage on the floor and walk through it, barefoot.

“But you never said...” she began to whine, but Gina cut her off before the sentence lasted much longer.

“What I *said*...” the chemistry teacher spoke with a stern tone, “was that you could likely pass my chemistry class – which you have



failed to do the first three times – if you helped me coach these... less fortunate students...” she pointed at the surprised trio, “to be as confident and stylish as you are.”

Kelly huffed, “Oh my gawd,” she whined again, “Are you like... blackmailing me or something?”

Gina grinned, “Not at all dear. You can graduate without passing my course, can’t you?”

The popular girl sighed, “No... you know I can’t”

Gina smiled bigger, “All I know... is that I am pretty sure you’ll pass this time around, after all the hard work you’re going to put into my little chemistry project here...” she pointed at the beakers on the counter that the three club members had emptied earlier, “You’d be like...” she paused for a moment to choose her words carefully, “like my assistant. And I can’t fail my assistant, now can I? What kind of a teacher would I be?”

Kelly shrugged, looking defeated, “I dunno... a... bad one?”

Gina looked shocked, “You’re not saying that I’m a bad teacher are you Kelly?”

“Oh-no Ma’am...” the easily confused senior shook her head vehemently.

“Good,” Gina smiled, “So You’ll help me to help Alex Mina and Leon to act and dress a little more like they were popular, right?”

Kelly nodded, “Sure. Whatever.”

“Good,” Gina smirked as she turned to her ‘club.’ “Well, there you have it gang,” she said, “Kelly here is going to be your new style mentor... you guys listen to whatever it is that she says and you’ll be popular and confident in no-time flat!”

The three club members nodded in agreement.

“Um... Ma’am,” Kelly said, “Uh... I’m not sure about Lou there,” she pointed at Leon, “I mean... I can help the girls... but I’m not sure what I can do with a guy.”

Gina called her over and whispered quietly in the bubble-headed girl’s ear.

“Oh!” Kelly said as she turned to look at Leon, “Really?”

Gina continued to whisper as Kelly obviously stared at her, “Oh... wow. Okay,” she nodded then turned to address the club, “Well, okay then girls... and Leo,” she smiled, her vocal tone akin to how a kindergarten teacher address her students.

“Uh,” Leon spoke up, “It’s Leon.”

“Okay dear,” Kelly smiled, as if never hearing him in the first place, “So um... let’s talk about fashion... okay?”

Gina nodded approvingly at the blonde as she began an introductory course on fashion basics for the three misfits.



Days later, Leon approached his mom one early evening with a quandary, “Mom,” he began, “I need some help.”

Candace was surprised. She had never, ever, since her son’s birth, ever head him ask her for help. Never with homework, never even with tying his shoes. He had been painfully independent for his whole life.

So now, for him to ask her for help... she was shocked, and extremely excited to be able to help him.

“What is it dear?”

“Well,” he sighed, “It’s my clothes.”

Candace’s eyes grew wide. *His clothes?* She replied his concern in her head. *The first time he needs help and it’s with his clothes?*

“Your... clothes?”

“Yes, well my clothes aren’t portraying me in a flattering light anymore,” he looked up into the corner of his eye as he spoke, as if searching his memory for what to say, “so I need some help... and some money.”

Candace rolled her eyes. This was obviously part of Gina’s confidence building experiment, “Well,” she smiled, “I think this is something that you should ask your stepmom for help with.”

“Huh?” Leon replied.

“Your stepmom,” she repeated, “You know... Gina?”

“I know who my stepmom is Mom,” Leon shook his head, “I just didn’t expect you to...” his voice trailed off, “No problem...” he stopped and smiled, “I can ask her...”

“Ask her what?” Gina’s voice startled them from behind.

Candace turned to her partner with a sly smile, “Oh nothing... you’re stepson here just needs some help with his fashion sense... and I figured it would be a good bonding exercise for you two to go through... you know... to help build that bond between you two...” she grinned sarcastically. Candace knew that Leon’s terrible fashion sense drove Gina nuts.

“Oh...” Gina forced a smile, “Sure Leon... what did you have in mind?”

“Well,” the boy’s face lit up, “Kelly... from school? She said that I needed some new jeans... that these ones were so... uh... ‘last year’ or something?”

It looked like he wasn't too sure he believed what he was being told... but, yet... felt the need to do it anyway.

It was exactly the kind of behavior that Gina was hoping for.

"Well sure honey..." she smiled at her stepson, then over his shoulder to her partner, "I'd love to help you get some new jeans."

Candace just shook her head and rolled her eyes as the two of them left the room.



The following week was tougher for Leon than he had anticipated.

He had gone shopping with his step mom, just like Kelly had suggested, and purchased the latest style in jeans, which Kelly had also suggested... three pairs to be specific, but the effect was not what he had led to believe would happen.

Instead of suddenly being one of the 'cool' kids, the other students at the school seemed to be taunting him even *more*. Leon thought for sure that with his new jeans... and the new shirts he had purchased, that at *least* the taunting and teasing would stop.

But on Monday, his slim-fitting skinny jeans and tight t-shirt had people pointing and laughing, and even elicited the occasional lewd comment. The boot-cut low-riders he wore on Tuesday seemed to garner him a less vocal reaction, with only silent laughs and leering gazes.

By Wednesday, Leon was thankful that his hip-hugging flares and knit white long-sleeve shirt were only causing people to whisper quietly to each other as he passed them in the hall.

His fellow club members, however, were most impressed by his wardrobe changes.

"Oh my goodness," Mina smiled, "I love your jeans," she said as she and Alex met up with the boy. She looked down at his pants... nearly identical to the dark denim pair that she herself had just purchased. She had ditched her frumpy hoodie in favor of a cute midriff-baring camisole top under another long sleeve shirt worn over top, but left nearly unbuttoned.

Leon looked nervous as Alex looked him over. She had worn a nice new pair of cargo pants and a fashionable top that looked very similar to the one that Leon was wearing. Which was a good thing... wasn't it?

Both of his fellow club members seemed to be standing taller than they used to... as if they were more confident in themselves. But Leon wasn't there yet. The three solid days of jeering and leering had actually left him feeling *less*



confident about himself than when he wore his regular old nerd clothes, as Kelly had called them.

“I like your hair,” Mina smiled.

“Uh... thanks,” Leon subconsciously rubbed his earlobe. He had taken extra time that morning to carefully brush it. The result was shiny, longer, and neater looking. It was still quite unruly, yet he was headed in the right direction. ‘It all happens at different paces for different people,’ Gina had said.

Leon hoped it would happen for him soon.

“Hey Leona!” Edgar Canes called mockingly as he passed the group, “I like your fag jeans!”

The football team captain was surrounded by a group of ‘popular’ people, including much of the football team... *and* an uncomfortable looking Kelly Woods. She was his girlfriend, actually. The two of them had started dating in grade nine.

“Don’t be so mean Eddie,” Kelly said, “He’s part of a... program or something. He’s getting better.”

Edgar stopped in his tracks, as if the opportunity to continue the insult was too good to turn down, “A program?” he scoffed, “What is it? A ‘how to be a queer’ program?”

The rest of his group broke into laughter. The rest, that is, except for Kelly. She just rolled her eyes and walked away.

“Wait, Kelly!” Ed called after his girlfriend, “It was just a joke! I don’t think he’s really a homo... it’s just his jeans are...” the footballer’s voice trailed off as he chased after his girl, “Hey Kelly! Wait up!”



The Confidence Club met later that day, with Kelly looking *very* embarrassed as she sat next to Gina as the club’s technical assistant.

“So,” Gina began the conversation after they three members drank up their sodas and watched the club video for the third time, “How was last week? I see that you all have done a great job in listening to Kelly here,” she looked left to the cowering girl, “So how has it been?”

“Well,” Mina began, “I have to say that I feel *great!*” she smiled, “I love my new look and I can’t help but smile at people,” she paused for a moment and blushed, “especially boys.”

Gina laughed at Mina’s reaction, “That’s *great* Mina. Well, you certainly are holding yourself higher and acting like you have more confidence.” She began clapping, which caused the others in the room to join into a small round of applause.

“Alexandra?” Gina turned to the red head to the left of Leon, “How about you?”

Alex shrugged, “I’m okay, I guess.”

“Just okay?”

She shrugged again, “I’m feeling a little better anyway. And I *do* like my clothes now...” She turned and gave a half-smile to Kelly, who in turn nodded

her head and smiled appreciatively, "But I'm not in the same place that Mina is"

"Well," Gina smiled at the progress that was being made, "That's okay. We're all progressing at different rates... right?"

She turned to her stepson, "Leon?" she continued, "How about you? How are you finding things?"

Leon sighed. He could see that Mina and Alex were *actually* getting what she had intended for them to get... but he... he was just getting worse.

"It's been a rough day for Lee," Kelly interjected, "I think we still need some work."

Gina was surprised that the popular girl was sticking up for someone that she previously would have considered 'below her.' "Oh?" She said.

Mina nodded in agreement, "Yeah," she said, "He's still finding himself I think."

Alex nodded with the group, "He's definitely finding himself."

Kelly smiled. She was used to people agreeing with her, but never by actually supporting her argument.

"I think we need to work a little more on his look," she smiled, "Maybe get him some new shoes... fix his hair... you know... stuff like that..."

Gina smiled to herself. The popular girl was offering to help her stepson, the unpopular guy, to be more popular! What could be better?



"We need to go shopping," Gina announced to her spouse as she entered the kitchen that night.

Candace turned and stared at her partner with disbelief, "What do you mean? For Leon? Didn't you just buy him some new things?"

Gina nodded as she poured herself a cup of coffee, "Mmm-hmm," she said, "We sure did, but it's not enough. He needs more stuff."

Candace rolled her eyes, "Gene," she called her wife by her pet name, "You *just* bought him three new outfits. Good lord," she mumbled as she dropped three chicken breasts into the skillet for dinner, "How many clothes does he need to be popular?"

Gina stirred her sugar and milk into the coffee, then added more milk, then stirred again. She looked perplexed that the milk wasn't turning the coffee lighter, so added more milk again, "I don't know," she shrugged, "But I've got

him working with an expert... and she says he needs a few new things... so we're getting them."

"Kelly Woods is *not* a style expert, Gene," Candace replied as she seared the outsides of the breasts, "And we're not *made* of money... as important as this project might be to you... we *aren't* made of money." She watched as Gina took a sip from her mug, then proceeded to spit it into the sink, "Oh, and that coffee has been sitting all day. I made it fresh this morning..." she looked at her watch, "that's *ten* hours ago."

Gina coughed as she poured the remaining 'coffee concentrate' down the drain, "Well I don't care what it costs... I'm not going to let your son..." she paused, "*Our* son, grow up as an outcast."

Candace wrapped her arms around her partner, "I know babe," she whispered in her ear as she kissed her cheek, "I know... but just don't let it get out of control, okay?"

Candace went back to her sizzling breasts. "It's bad enough that I'm allowing you to 'treat' him like the others... don't make it worse by forcing him to dress in a way he doesn't want to..."

Gina chuckled, "But that's just it babe," she said, "I really think he's starting to *like* dressing more in-style. I think he gets a real kick out of it."

Candace shrugged and continued to prepare dinner, "If you say so..."



Later that week, Gina, Kelly and Leon *did* go shopping, much to Candace's chagrin, at one of the popular stores in the mall that Kelly often frequented.

"Do I have to come inside with you guys?" Kelly asked as they approached the boutique.

"Why wouldn't you?" Gina frowned.

"It's just that..." Kelly looked around, "I've got kind of a rep, you know? A reputation?"

Gina furrowed her brow further, "You're going to have a reputation as a girl who failed chemistry and never graduated if you *don't* come with us..." She let her voice trail off, fearing that she was raising her voice too high.

She was.

Kelly sighed, "Oh... all right..."

The three of them soon entered the high-end shop and purchased a few new 'key' pieces as Kelly referred to them as, to help bolster Leon's budding new look.

It was a look that Gina worried, slightly, Leon's Dad would question when Leon went to spend the weekend there. That was this upcoming weekend, as was the norm on alternating months that end in odd days between certain numbers.

...It was complicated.

Abe was certainly aware of the difference in his Son's appearance when he picked him up Friday after school. "Holy moly!" he exclaimed as Leon climbed into his father's German sedan.

Leon looked worried, "Um... hi, Dad," he said.

Abe took a second look at the boy's bell-bottom jeans and new thick-soled black platform shoes with a thick, raised heel, "Well look at you!" he chuckled, "Looking all spiffed up."

Leon's look of worry turned to confusion, "Spiffed?"

Abe maneuvered the car through the streets of their town, "Yeah, spiffed... you know... spiffy. Don't you know what spiffy means? My goodness... the vocabulary that you young folk have today isn't nearly as vast and deep as you'd have us believe it is, now is it? Spiffy..." he paused to make a left turn, nearly cutting off two other cars in the process, "Spiffy... is another word for fashionable... or trendy, as I suppose the new pants and shoes that you've purchased are."

Leon shrugged, "I... guess"

Abe chuckled condescendingly, "Well boy," he scoffed, "You can't 'guess' at being fashionable... you either *are* or you are *not*, and judging by your clothes, I can only assume that the trend of bell bottom trousers and elevated platform shoes has finally come back, and that you are trying to make a statement about your knowledge of the trend by wearing them."

Leon shook his head and looked out the window. He hated these car rides. As much as he loved his dad, because he was, after all, his *dad*... he hated being trapped in a confined space with him for very long. Leon knew, at an early age, why his mom had left.

Abe was an ass.

"You know that I used to have an extensive collection of clothes like those," he pointed at Leon's pants, "In fact, I bet I still have a pair of two somewhere, if I really looked hard for them. I wonder if they would still fit? I'd offer them to you, but I doubt you'd fit in them. You've got your mother's frame, slight and small. You'd never be able to keep the pants from slipping off without a substantial belt."

Leon sighed, "Oh... darn..."

"If the trend is going to be long term though, you might want to check and see if they have any value... you know, at a thrift store," Abe continued, "Those vin-

tage items can often fetch a pretty penny.” He chuckled to himself, “Funny how they call old crap clothes ‘vintage’ huh?”

Leon pondered opening the car door and throwing himself out into on-coming traffic, but instead chose to simply pretend to care, “Yeah Dad... it’s hilarious.”

“Now don’t get cheeky with me boy,” his father’s mood changed quickly from jovial to angered, “That kind of tone might be acceptable with your mother and her ‘special friend’ but it will not be tolerated in *my* household... is that understood?”

Leon placed his fingers around the door latch, paused, then returned them to his lap, “Yes Sir” he sighed.

“Good,” his father smiled, “Now when we get home, I’ll show you where to look for the clothes in question, and you can dig them out, catalogue them, get some pricing based on comparable items online, and determine a value for the inventory, understand?”

Leon rolled his eyes, “Yes Sir,” he said again.

It was going to be a *long* weekend.



School, and all of its ‘complexities,’ even for a student of questionable popularity, was a welcome relief to Leon Monday morning as his father dropped him off.

True to his word, Abe had Leon go through boxes and boxes of old clothes to find if his stash of ‘vintage’ clothes were of any value. Much to Abe’s disappointment, many of the clothes were in fact from the eighties, instead of the seventies, and thus weren’t the goldmine of value that he had hoped for.

Hidden in the stash, however, were a pair of jeans that Leon recognized as something that he could actually wear. They were flared jeans that must have belonged to Leon’s mother... and had somehow been packed away prior to his parents splitting up.

The jeans fit tightly in his waist and butt, and flooded out over his new shoes. He was wearing chunky wedge-heeled platforms along with a three-quarter length sleeved shirt.

Kelly applauded his growing fashion sense when she saw him in the hall.

“That looks awesome, Lee,” she beamed. She was proud to see her ‘student’ was actually starting to gain a fashion sense of his own... even though it *was* a little effeminate. But who cared? Even a slightly effeminate version of Leon was better than the geek he used to look like, as far as she was concerned.

“Yeah, awesomely gay!” Edgar piped up from beside her, “Where’d you get those from Leona, the *queer* shop?”

The football captain laughed at his own joke, looking around to see who else had joined in.

“Leave him alone, Eddie,” Kelly scowled, “He’s not gay. He’s fashionable.” She turned back to Leon, “Those are awesome vintage jeans by the way, what a great score. I don’t wear anything but vintage fashions. They’re way cool.”

Leon sighed looked over at Edgar, “Well at least *some* people think it’s cool.”

Edgar’s eyes flashed with rage and he leapt forward, pressing a terrified looking Leon into the bank of lockers behind him, “What’s *that* queer?”

“Eddie!” Kelly yelped.

“Mister Canes!” a loud voice thundered behind them.

The entire hall turned to see Gina standing, arms on her hips. Ed relaxed his grip on Leon, “Sorry Ma’am,” he smiled, “I misunderstood what he was saying.”

“Ha!” Gina retorted, “Well don’t misunderstand me... if I see you touching another student like that... *any* student, you’ll find yourself in detention for the remainder of the football calendar.”

“Ha!” Edgar replied, “Like Coach would ever let *that* happen...”

“Want to try me?” Gina glared sternly at him.

Edgar glared at the chemistry teacher for a moment. If it weren’t for the fact that she was a hot lesbian – *which he totally digged* – he would have ignored her completely.

That, and the fact that she had already successfully ruined the football career of one of the team’s best running backs, who had repeatedly ignored her warnings to stop banging the heads of the glee-club members into lockers.

She was known as a hard-ass – both literally and figuratively.

“Well?” Gina repeated, “Do you want to try me?”

Edgar decided to relaxed his stance, “Fine...” he took a step back, “You have fun with your little queer-club” he snarled at Leon.

Gina’s eyes grew wide with fury. She wanted to rip the jock’s head off for a comment like that... especially since the recipient was her step-son. But sadly, teachers decapitating students was frowned on in most parts of the world, including this one, so instead she decided to do something *else*.

“Mr. Canes!” she boomed, “For *that* hurtful comment, you’ve earned yourself a detention in *my* room during lunch...”

“What?” Edgar whined.



"Keep it up and I *will* have that little chat with your coach... now run along and don't be late..." she pointed Eddie down the hall.

"Hey Kell," he yelled after his girlfriend, who had abandoned the scene the moment that Gina arrived, "Wait up!"

Kelly looked over her shoulder anxiously, glancing from her chemistry teacher to her boyfriend, to Leon, then continued on her way, with Edgar silently chasing after her to class.

Gina turned and winked at Leon who was composing himself off after having prepared for a severe beating.

“Well I for one,” she began, “Think Kelly is right. Your vintage jeans are awesome! How awesome is it to find something that your Mom... er, or rather that was worn by one of your parents thirty-some-odd years ago? Pretty cool I say.”

Leon nodded. He wasn't sure if it was awesome or cool... or exactly *what* it was. But for now, it was whatever it needed to be. If it made his Mom and Step-mom happy, and if it got him hanging out with a few new friends... some of whom were the coolest in the school, than that was fine by him.



Leon's next lesson in 'cool' was the following Wednesday in the Chemistry Lab. After watching Gina's short video (which incidentally, Leon *still* didn't understand the point of, nor could he remember much from), and a glass of bubbling soda, Gina brought Kelly back into the room to talk about piercings.

Mina, Alex and Leon all gasped. *What the heck kind of club was this?*

“Not *those* kind of piercings,” Gina shook her head after reading their facial expressions, “Earrings... you know...” she turned her head from side-to-side to show off her large hoops. “A popular girl...” she paused, than corrected herself, “person... a popular *person*, usually has pierced ears. Be they a girl... *or* a guy.”

She smiled and hoped that no one would notice her slip-up.

“Um,” Kelly picked up from the Chemistry teacher, “That's right Miss, there are *lots* of guys with pierced ears... thousands... millions of them. It's very, very common.”

“Does Edgar have pierced ears?” Leon asked out of the blue.

Kelly looked at Gina, then at Leon, than back at Gina, “Um...” she began with a long pause, “*No*... he doesn't, but...” she looked again to Gina, as if hoping the Teacher would somehow throw her a life preserver, as she was obviously sinking deep.

“But,” Gina interrupted, “Eddie...” she paused looking up into the corner of her eye as her brain formulated a good reason, “...can't wear an earring because of he plays football.”

Kelly nodded, “Yes... that is right. He can't. There's um... no earrings in football. Not allowed.”

Leon scrunched up his face. He considered himself a fairly astute person, one who could tell when he was being given a load of 'crap,' and there was something about the way that Gina and Kelly were conducting themselves that made him suspect that they might be trying to give him such a load right now.

However, it was true that *lots* of cool guys had earrings... *and* it was true that Edgar played football, which could be dangerous for earring wearing.

"Let's move on," Gina said finally, "Alex, I see you've already gone and had your ears pierced, perhaps you'd like to share you experience with the rest of the group."

The red-headed girl paused and thought for a moment, "Well," she began after careful consideration, "I went... and I got them pierced. And it hurt... at first, but they're fine now." She looked around the group who were still staring at her, "And that's all that happened."

Kelly rolled her eyes and wondered if a passing grade was worth the hassle of what she was going through.

"Anyway," Leon said, "I don't care what you guys say, I don't want my ears pierced."

"Are you sure?" Gina said. "I think you're just a little hesitant."

Leon frowned. "No. There's no way I'm doing that."

Later that night, Gina, Candace and Leon were eating tasty salads when Leon turned to his mother and asked, "Can I get my ears pierced, Mom?"

Both Gina and Candace nearly spit out their spinach.

"What?" Gina asked, with Candace not far behind her.

"Just, you know, because it sounds like having earrings would help me, socially." Gina looked at Leon. Leon looked at Gina, than back at his mom, "Well... it was an idea anyway. You know a lot of popular guys have their ears pierced."

Candace nodded as she chewed her food before she spoke, "Uh-huh..." then she turned her eyes towards Gina, and glared as she spoke, "...and so do a lot of popular *girls*."

Gina laughed nervously. Leon joined in, though not sensing the hostility that was bubbling between his two moms.

"Lee," Candace finally broke the awkward silence, "Why don't you go work on your homework and your stepmom and me will clean up?"

Leon smiled, "Okay Mom," before leaving the table. Candace smiled.

Once her son was out of earshot, however, her smile melted away as she pivoted her head towards her partner, "Earrings?"

Gina tried to look calm, "What? You heard him... *lots* of cool confident guys have them... what's the big deal?"

"The big deal," Candace growled, "Is that my only son... is wearing the same flared jeans and platform shoes that I wore when I was his age, letting his hair

grow longer, and now supposedly wants to get his *ears* pierced... *that's* what the big deal is, *dear*"

"Candy," Gina replied, "You have to trust me on this... I'm just putting him through the same course that I've done for a dozen other kids, remember? Every single one of them has ended up being a *somebody* after joining the Confidence Club. Leon will be a new man when this is all done."

Candace *hated* being called Candy, and she knew that Gina knew that. "Well... Genie..." she used Gina's hated pet name, "*You* don't know what kind of 'man' he's going to end up being because you've never *had* a man in the program before. You've only ever had girls. And I suspect by the way things are going that Leon's soon going to fit *that* bill as well!"

With that, Candace grabbed her plate, and excused herself from the table, leaving Gina to contemplate exactly how far she'd allow Leon to go in the program.



That following weekend, Gina, with Kelly Wood begrudgingly in tow, took Leon to the mall to get his ears pierced. They had agreed that it would be a good idea to get Leon familiar with the salon in the mall, especially since his hair and nails were also in need of some 'maintenance.' And by 'agreed upon,' that meant mean Gina said so. And by 'maintenance', that meant some coloring and a manicure.

Both of the last two items were added after the beauticians had already installed Leon's new silver studs, and without his prior knowledge. Abe, Leon's father, would be the first to see the results when he picked the boy up that afternoon. He saw his son's new piercings, polished nails and most startlingly, a bright, flashy streak of blonde through the middle of this bangs.

"What the hell have those damn lesbians done to you now?" he gasped as Leon got into his Dad's car.

"It's nothing Dad," Leon shrugged Abe's reaction off as he buckled his seat-belt.

"Nothing my ass," Abe mumbled, "You know, when I was your age having *one* earring was cool, but only one. Those who wore two were usually playing for the other team, if you follow my drift. I suspect it's part of a plot for lesbians to take over the world. I mean, they're already taking over television... Ellen, Rosie, and that nasty dyke on that Glee Club show... what's it called?" he paused as he maneuvered the car out on the road.

"Um..." Leon paused, "Glee?"

"Yeah, that's it..." Abe nodded, checking his mirror before he changed lanes, "And what's all about? A bunch of pansies singing songs and acting queer... I tell you, it's all going to hell."

Leon rolled his eyes. *No Dad... hell is being locked in a moving car with you for twenty minutes*, he thought to himself.

Abe decided to try and compensate for whatever hair-brained global takeover scheme his ex-wife and her Lesbian partner were planning for his son, by taking him to a football game. Abe knew everything there was to know about foot-



ball... at least the theory of football, as he had never played so much as a game of scrimmage in his life.

Leon kept still and tried to avoid eye contact with the macho, beer-swilling, obnoxious loud-mouth blow-hards that surrounded him at the stadium... *and that was just describing his father*. The scene of a skinny, balding, bespectacled book-worm know-it-all, yelling at the players on the field, half-a-mile out of ear-shot, was both comical and mortifying to the boy.

Even more mortifying were the strange looks he was getting from the others around him. Disturbingly, Leon thought that they were looking at *him* and not his unbearable father – leeringly glancing Leon over, as if trying to decide on whether to flirt with him or fist-pump him.

It was absolutely strange and a little terrifying. At one point during the game, when it seemed the entire stadium erupted out of its seats, Leon found himself curled up in something of a fetal position, arms hugging his knees, praying that the game would be over and that he could go home and be alone.



“You took him where?” Candace asked. She had met her ex-husband at the door when he dropped Leon back home. Leon was pretending not to overhear the conversation from the next room.

Abe growled as he spoke. “The boy needs some male influences. Needs to do some *boy* things. And whatever voodoo lesbian crapolla that you two are up to, needs to stop,” Abe demanded, “Dressing that boy up in fruity pants and giving him a girly hair-do and sparkly earrings, is *not* the way to help the boy’s self-esteem. It’s just going to get him beaten up.”

“Will you give that ‘lesbians taking over the world’ shit a rest, Abraham?” Candace angrily fired back, “We aren’t trying to recruit men into the club... its girls-only.”

Gina nodded, “We tried it your way Abe, we did the Doctor thing... remember? It didn’t work. *This...*” she made a circle with her index finger, “so-called ‘lesbian voodoo crap,’ is already getting him in with a better crowd and he’s making new friends all the time, so just hold onto your shorts and be patient.”

“Be patient?” Abe retorted, “And watch my boy get turned into some kind of cream puff?”

“And what if being a cream puff makes him happy Abe? Wouldn’t that be okay?”

Abe threw his arms into the air and shook his head, “I can’t even win...” he sighed, “You gals have got it *all* figured out, don’t you? Turn him into a fruity little pretty-boy and make him popular. Fine. But don’t expect me to *like* it.”

"We don't!" Candace and Gina replied in unison.

Leon sighed and continued on his way to his room. *Was he really acting like a fruit cake? Was his Dad really right? Should he have refused to join his Step-mom's confidence club?*

He glanced at his reflection in the mirror, his flared pants, his flaring hips, his sore nipples. *Sore nipples?* He felt his chest once more. His nipples felt tender and inflamed, and were rubbing against the inside of his shirt.

He liked Mina and Alex, and had even grown to like Kelly a little too. So from that perspective, he concluded that the club had been a success. And there wasn't anything *extraordinarily* fruity about his appearance, was there?

He shrugged and sat down at his desk, keeping his knees daintily together, and began his homework, tucking his longish hair behind his ear.

Nope, he concluded, *it's all in my Dad's mind*. He picked up a book and continued on his work.



A few days later, the Confidence Club was meeting again in the chemistry lab. Mina and Alex had gone on a shopping trip with Kelly earlier in the week and were sporting their newest 'cool' clothes... leggings.

Leon looked approvingly at the two girls in their form-fitting leg-covering black spandex pants, worn with longer shirts or mock-skirts. They really looked good. It was something that Kelly had also chosen to wear, to show them how fashion forward they were, though usually she was rarely seen in anything so casual.

The customary ginger beverage, and video aside, Gina began the meeting by complimenting the two girls on their outfits and asking them how they – and others – seemed to like their new attire.

"I'm totally getting checked out," Mina smiled as she nervously played with her dark hair, "It's totally cool. I really *feel* great about myself. And I think my boobs are getting bigger!"

Immediately, every eye in the room went to Mina's chest.

"Uh," Kelly spoke up, "I think that's because we finally got you a bra that fits properly... that, and it's slightly padded."

Mina smiled at Kelly, then at Alex, who was also glowing about getting more attention, "I've had this crush on this guy since grade nine, and he's never even noticed me before, until yesterday... when he actually said 'hi' to me," she emphasized her point by clapping excitedly. Kelly and Mina joined in.

Leon didn't know *how* to react. While he *was* happy for his fellow-club-members at their recent developments, he continued to have a nagging feeling that something was 'off' about this whole thing, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

"Well," Gina broke his train of thought, "I know that Leon's been busy with his new hair and earrings..." she turned to model her step-son's head.

"Ooooo," The other three complimented him, "Nice!"

Leon blushed heavily.

"Well..." Kelly was next to speak, "I've got some pretty big news myself." She waited until the room quieted, and all eyes were on her. She liked it that way.

"Eddie and I broke up."

The room remained quiet. The three members of the confidence club were stupefied. Eddie and Kelly were the school's 'power couple'. They were the very ideal of high-school romance. She, the prettiest girl in the school, and he the captain of the football team. The very thought of the two of them ending their relationship seemed to question the very fabric of the universe.

"Oh come on," Kelly said finally after having grown weary of their reactions, "Its not that big a deal. People just grow apart... you know? We're moving in different directions. And I owe a lot my decision to *you* guys." She smiled around the half circle at Mina, Alex and Leon.

"And you, Ma'am," she smiled at Gina. "Eddie was just such a bully. The way he treated Leon in the hall that day... it just showed me his true colors, and I couldn't keep going like that, pretending that everything was okay, when it clearly wasn't."

Leon's jaw felt like it was resting on his ankles. He couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"Anyhow," she continued, "I just wanted to share and to say thank you. So what's up for next week's meeting Ma'am?"

Gina was still trying to make sense of what she had heard. She wasn't sure if it was good or bad that Kelly had broken up with Edgar. Certainly it wasn't normal.



Over the next few days, Leon began to observe how abnormal Edgar's behavior was becoming. It seemed to him that everywhere he looked, he saw Eddie. At first, he was fearful. After all, it wasn't a stretch for a simple-minded jock like Eddie, to somehow blame a geek like Leon for causing the breakup with his steady girl.

Leon figured that Eddie was going to try and seek retribution, and finish what he had started weeks ago, by stuffing him all the way into a locker. But it never happened.

Instead, Edgar started to smile at him, which freaked him out even *more*. Leon interpreted the smiling to be a taunt, and it meant that a fate far worse than locker stuffing was waiting for him. But that never happened either.

He mentioned it to his Mother that weekend, but Candace wasn't exactly known for her intuition when it came to men. In fact she was pretty terrible at it. "Ask your step mom," she finally said, after Leon dogged her with questions.

Leon sighed. He was afraid she was going to say that.

"Gina?" he called as he left his mother's company to find his 'other' mother.

He found his step-mother upstairs sorting through her closet, as she did monthly, to make room for the new outfits that she planned to buy. She greeted her stepson with a smile, "Hey Kiddo!"

"So," he began, "You know Edgar at school..."

"Yes," she looked at him with a confused expression, "the boy that tried to hurt you last week? The boy who's girlfriend dumped him?"

Leon nodded. Her description of Eddie made him sound like a complete cave dweller.

"He's been *really* friendly lately..." his voice trailed off, "Like... *really*, really friendly."

"Okay... and seeing as how he wasn't so friendly before... this is a bad thing?"

Leon looked confused, "Um, no... it's a good thing I guess. It's just that... well, it's making me feel a little strange... just the way he's looking at me."

"Strange good?" Gina smiled.

"Strange *Strange*," Leon replied.

Gina sighed, "Babe, you know... you're changing... you're growing... as a person. The whole point of the club... is to make you more noticeable to others... and..." she let her voice trail off... "I think that's exactly what's happening here."

"But Edgar's a guy," Leon looked at her with an undignified expression.

"Yeah... so..." Gina shrugged as she tossed another outfit onto the bed, destined to be donated, "And your mom's a girl... so what? This is the twenty-first century babe. Just roll with it."

Leon's eyes grew big. Was this the lesbian voodoo that his dad had warned him about? "Edgar. You know, the big guy? The quarterback? That Edgar. That's the one I'm talking about."

"Yeas, I know," Gina replied matter-of-factly.

"You're not suggesting he's gay, are you?" Leon asked. "And gay for me?"

"Why not? Everyone's taking notice of the new you, Leon." Gina said. "You might have just made Eddie find a new side of himself."

Leon stood on his tip toes to put his hand a foot above his head. "Edgar. He's about this tall. That Edgar."

"Don't get cute," Gina replied. "All I'm saying is that he may just be a little bit fixated on you and your new look."

"That's nuts! He's as straight as a guy can be. You aren't suggesting that he's got..." Leon paused to swallow. "Got a crush on me?"

"I know one way to find out," Gina said, closing the doors of the closet. "Tell you what," she continued, rummaging through the pile of clothes on the bed, "Wear these to school for a week... and if nothing changes... then we'll talk. But if you're suddenly seeing a different perspective on it after a week... than maybe I'm right."

Leon looked at the pair of black tights in her hand, "These?" he pointed at them.

Gina nodded and handed them to him, "Think of them as stretch pants... really *really* stretchy stretch pants, but stretch pants all-the-same. If Eddie notices you more, than we'll talk about how to 'manage' that."

The strange thing was, that he was already thinking of what he'd look like in the tights. Would he have nice legs? What shoes would go with them? Would he look as good as Alex, Kelly and Mina? He knew that he wasn't supposed to be thinking like this, but there was just some irresistible force within him that compelled him to go run to his room to try them on.

The only thing holding him back, besides years of heterosexual male thinking, was the wild look in his step-mother's eyes, which worried him. But he decided to remain hopeful, that she wasn't in fact a crazy lesbian trying to turn her son into a tights-wearing eunuch being courted by a football player.

Even though in reality, she kind of was.



The following Monday, Leon met up with his friends in the hall before class. He had followed Gina's advice, and worn the black tights under a long shirt, with his usual chunky wedge-heeled shoes. The tights made him feel just a little self-conscious, but having Alex and Mina around him wearing similar outfits seemed to somehow help. He enjoyed their compliments, but was worried when he saw Edgar approaching. The footballer stopped when he saw Leon and looked him over. Leon, along with Mina and Alex, were preparing to run for the nearest classroom, but the expected angry outburst never came.

Instead, Eddie just smiled and winked and spoke in a very warm tone, "Hey."

Leon blushed, running his fingers into his hair nervously as he replied back, "Hey."

Eddie nodded, smiled, then walked away, turning his head half way down the hall to see if Leon was watching him.

He was.

What's worse, the whole interaction was making Leon's knees felt weak. His head started to feel like it was spinning. His cheeks were in full flush. In short... he was a mess.



Mina, grinning ear to ear, sensed he might topple over and propped him up with one hand, "Whoah! Take it easy there!" she giggled.

Alex was decidedly less diplomatic. She cocked her hips to one side, placing a hand on her waist, "Well, well, well," she said, "I think our friend here has caught the eye of the captain of the football team!"

Mina grinned larger, "For sure! Did you see the way he was looking you over?"

Leon blushed heavier, "No way, you guys," he muttered.

"Oh totally!" Alex taunted, "He was *all* over you. No wonder Kelly broke up with him..." Alex continued.

Leon held his breath waiting for what he figured would follow next. He figured they were going to tell him that he had turned Edgar gay... but the taunt never came.

"He's more interested in the in *new* hot girl at school!" Mina giggled.

"Me?" Leon whispered.

"Totally!" Alex and Mina said in unison.

The news that Leon was now attracting football captains was the topic of conversation at Leon's home that evening. Actually conversation was an understatement. Shouting match was a better word.

"Are you for real?" Candace shouted at her partner when she told her the news, "Abe's going to go *mad*! He already thinks our relationship is ruining our son... but to have him as the love interest of the football captain... and wearing *your* tights Gina? Really? Are you *trying* to get us hauled back into court by him? You know we only got custody of him by a hair last time... by a *hair*!"

"Oh relax," Gina brushed her partner's reaction off, "There is absolutely *no* proof anywhere that two lesbians can turn a boy gay. Besides... it's not Leon that changed his tune on what kind of mate he wants... it's Edgar. If anything, Abe should be talking to *his* parents."

"Gina," Candace shook her head, "What do you think Abe is going to say when he sees our son not wearing any pants?"

"What do you mean?" she looked at her wife, bewildered, "He's wearing tights... as in... tight pants."

"They're not pants Gina... they're tights!"

"Tight pants."

"Tights."

"Tight pants."

The doorbell broke the conversation.

"Ugh!" Candace moaned as she made her way to the front door, "*Now* what?"

Much to her surprise the bell had been rung by Edgar (Eddie) Canes, who had a bouquet of flowers in one hand and chocolates in the other, "Um..." he began, "Is Lee home?"

Candace did a double take, "Lee? You mean Leon?"

Edgar smiled and nodded. In his head the names were one and the same.

Candace knew something wasn't right, and her motherly instincts kicked in. The most popular jock goes from trying to stuff her son into a locker, to bringing him chocolates and flowers... and something's not wrong?

"He's out with his Dad right now Edgar," Candace lied, "But I'll be sure to pass these along," she said as she reached down to take the boy's gifts.

"Thanks Miss," Edgar smiled as he headed down the walkway towards the street.

Candace turned back into the house, "Gina!" she called, "We need to talk!"



"I need to tell Abe," a very stressed-out Candace mumbled as she removed her glasses and rubbed the sides of her head.

"Tell Abe?" Gina gasped, "Are you crazy?"

"Genie," Candace replied, "You're hypnotizing our son into being a girl, and now you're hypnotizing other boys to like him... don't you think his *father* deserves to know what's happening to his son?"

Gina sighed. Moments ago she had 'spilled the beans' that it was very likely that the program she had developed to instill confidence in nerdy girls at the school, *might* have a moderate feminizing effect on Leon. While she disagreed that he was 'turning into a girl,' as Candace had so crassly put it, she did have to admit that he was certainly taking on some very feminine characteristics.

And as for Edgar, the so-called 'detention' in the chemistry lab had only been done to protect Leon. The boy was likely to kill him. Now, if she had made some 'suggestions' to him that Leon was actually super stylish and cool – or had she said *hot*? – it was Edgar's own latent homosexual tendencies trapped in his subconscious that had filled in the blanks and created a burning desire for Leon... it wasn't intentional.

However, Gina knew that Candace was right about Abe. He was certainly a liability... and if she could somehow make the right 'suggestions' to him as well, she was certain that he would be *quite* understanding.

"I'll talk to Abe," Gina said finally, "It my problem to fix, so I'll fix it."

"Fine," Candace growled after a brief pause, "Just stop using the pink stuff and hypnotizing people Genie, you're going to get in a *lot* of trouble." She had seen Gina use that pink chemical on people before. It was dangerous.

"Oh, I know," Gina replied. She recalled her abrupt career with the military contractor that she had, previously to finding work as a teacher. She knew all about pushing the envelope too far, and what repercussions it might have. Only this time, she was determined not to get caught.

Candace, on the other hand, wasn't sure if she liked the way Gina had answered her last request, but decided to let her continue on. Leon, after all, was certainly acting far more confident and proud than he ever had... which was the point of Gina's cockamamie scheme anyway. So she let it slide.

But Gina's schemes were just getting started.

She knew that Abe would, in fact, go completely nuts if he knew what might be happening to his son, and knew also that she couldn't risk the kind of nuclear-grade fall-out that might follow such a meltdown. Which is why she decided that she had to ignore her wife's pleading for no more mind manipulation (hypnotizing was such a dirty word) and call Abe to the school to meet her at the chemistry lab, under the guise of 'reviewing Leon's progress in her class.'

Abe was predictably too self-absorbed to stop and remember that his son wasn't taking chemistry this semester. The only thing that registered with Abe was the opportunity to confront his ex's new spouse on her home turf.

What Abe didn't know, was that Gina's 'home turf' included a background of top-secret military mental-realignment projects for a top pharmaceutical research firm, prior to her quitting to become a teacher. In fact, only Candace knew of her highly classified past. So, when Abe's meeting with Gina had concluded, Abe's outlook on how to handle his son's recent changes and newfound 'developments' was decidedly different than when he had entered her lab.

"I see exactly what you mean now Gina," Abe nodded, suppressing a burp. He found the strawberry soda Gina had provided for him unusually refreshing. "I can't believe I hadn't noticed before." He had just finished watching a specially prepared video about supporting children with emerging confidence and helping them to adjust to the changing way the world will see them.

He always believed that his son was extraordinary, but now... for him to become fashion-conscious and popular too, was frankly *more* than he could hope for. While it was true that he didn't fully understand why it was okay for a boy to dye his hair, wear tights, and other such things that some might consider to be slightly un-masculine... none of that really mattered. All that mattered was being supportive and helping him to become the person that he was destined to become.

And Abe was going to support him no matter what.



The following morning, Leon was staring into the mirror, sizing up his most recent un-masculine developments. It was the flesh on his chest. It was increasingly sore and swollen, and his nipples felt puffy, tender and engorged. What was worse, as he inspected them further, he felt this odd tingling sensation... almost like a wave of arousal coming over him. He worried about the swelling. He worried about the puffiness. But most of all he worried about the tingling and arousal. It felt like nothing he'd felt before, and concerned him deeply.

Gina caught him staring at himself and asked if everything was all right.

"It's my chest," he sighed, pointed at himself, "It's gotten really... tender..."

"Hmmm," Gina said authoritatively as she came closer to inspect, "I think you might need a brassier or some other kind of support to help you."

"A what?" Leon looked at her dumbfounded.

"A bra."

Leon shook his head, "I can't wear a bra, Gina... I'm a... a..." he thought he had something to say after that, but the word seemed to be blocked from forming, so he eventually gave up.

"I know..." Gina smiled, "Let's go shopping!" She knew that with his Dad on board, there would be no stopping Leon from becoming the most popular person in the school. But it would need to start with some more new outfits.

Leon shrugged, he really didn't have anything better to do, but he wasn't sure he liked the idea, "I don't know Gina..." he mumbled and sighed, "Haven't we been shopping a lot lately? Don't I have enough clothes?"

Gina rolled her eyes. What a boyish response. "If you had enough clothes," she began, "Would you need to be borrowing my old tights?"

He looked down at the spandex leggings that she had 'lent' him to wear, and sighed, "Oh... okay" he reluctantly muttered. Leon found it just so hard to concentrate and pinpoint the exact problem he was having with this situation. Why was it so hard to just get a hold of his thoughts?

Gina grinned from ear to ear, "Great! I'll call Kelly and we'll meet at the mall!"

Leon raised an eyebrow. Surely a teacher calling a student to help shop for another student, who happened to be her stepson, was extremely unorthodox... maybe even inappropriate. But being that he was a guy with pierced ears, wearing tights and pair of wedge-heeled shoes... Leon wasn't so sure that his own moral compass was functioning so well himself.

Kelly, dressed in one of her usual mini-dresses and light-brown heels, met Leon and his blonde lesbian step-mom at the Riverside Mall later that after-

noon. She was all atwitter about the date she had been on the night before, and how ‘stoked’ she was to help Leon *finally* get a look that really worked.

“So then,” Gina asked, “Where do we begin?”

“Oh my God,” Kelly grinned, “We *so* have to fix his hair.”

“My hair?” Leon recoiled. No one had said anything about hair. He thought his blonde streak was pretty cool.

“Fer sure!” Kelly continued, “I mean, that streak might be cool if you were a punk rocker or something... but if you want to be known as Mister Popular... you really need choose. I mean, be a blonde, or be a brunette, but don’t try to be both. It’s so 2001.”

Leon looked at her like she had just slapped him.

“Let’s go to the salon and let him decide there,” Gina said finally, as she ushered him and Kelly out of the food court.

The decision, however, would be as far from his as possible. As would all the decisions that followed, at the clothing boutiques and shoe stores, even back at the food court for a snack. Both Gina and Kelly would ask Leon what he thought, but before he could formulate an answer, they would have already decided for him.

The final results wouldn’t hit the confused boy, until he saw his reflection in the mirror of the mall-doors as they were finally leaving. It caused him to feel weak in the news, and stumble slightly as they exited the building.

That and the new boots he was wearing were exceedingly difficult to walk in.

Both Kelly and Gina grabbed an arm to keep Leon from toppling over as they left the mall.

“Are you okay?” Gina asked.

“I... I...” he muttered, looking more stunned and confused than upset, “I look like... like...” Again his brain was unable to accurately provide the words that it thought were needed to describe what Leon’s eyes had observed, “I’m...” he muttered a third time, “I’m...”

“You’re gorgeous!” Kelly cried, “Absolutely gorgeous!”

Gina worried about using such gender-specific descriptors, especially since the gender that the word was typically used for wasn’t Leon’s, but she knew that Kelly was right.

He *was* gorgeous.

The events of the last several hours had caught Leon up in a whirlwind of energy. As each stop at a store, and as every question was asked of him, he was still working on the ramifications of the previous question or the previous purchase. Quickly, it all just became a blur to him, and he didn’t even really feel like he was living in his own body. It was just a vehicle being driven by the



women who escorted him. Looking back, he could only remember the highlights.

The salon had blonded the boy completely, with a pale golden color, and styled it a very low-maintenance do that he could easily mimic at home. They had also thinned his eyebrows and shaped them, ever-so-slightly. Then to finish his emerging look, they lined his upper eyelid with liner, and coated the top layer of his lashes with black mascara. A hint of pinkish blush on his cheeks – that matched the pink polish on his fingernails – provided just enough color.

That was vital, as most of his natural color had drained from his face once he saw his reflection.

The trip to the boutique afterwards had begun as a mission to find him some new tights, and ended with quite a bit more.

Gina insisted that he wear one of the several pairs of tights that she purchased home, along with a body-hugging tunic-style brown shirt and wide-buckle black leather belt. The black leather theme continued in the new jacket that she purchased for him to wear over the tunic shirt. The shirt itself fell well below his waist, and mimicked the look of a short dress. Gina had purchased several other matching outfits for her step-child, but arranged for them to be delivered directly home.

The final stop on their trip had been the shoe store, where his ratty, worn lace-up wedges were tossed in favor of something decidedly more fashion-forward.

Boots.

And not just any boots... but high-top front-laced boots in a cocoa color that matched the tunic he wore. They had a platform sole, like his wedges had, but instead of a ramped, molded heel, they featured a slender spike that must have been at least four-inches long.

The new heels caused him to compose himself with a much different posture than was normal for a teenaged boy. He now walked, when not stumbling, with a sway to his hips, and thrust out his buttocks and chest – which was now held firmly in place by the ‘brassier’ that Gina had suggested that morning.

So with Kelly and Gina’s assistance, Leon slowly regained his composure and sauntered back to the car, all the while wondering... *what have I done?*

Candace offered a similar comment upon their return home that afternoon. “What have you done?” she groused at her spouse as a high-heeled Leon sauntered past her.

The boutique and shoe store had delivered their wares while Gina drove Kelly home, giving Candace a ‘sneak preview’ at the new image that her wife was planning for her son.

Initially, she had figured that the clothes had been purchased *by* Gina, *for* Gina. But after looking through the sizes, she soon realized that they were too small for her. Meaning that there was only one other person in the household that they could be for.

Her son.

She had unpacked the various tunics, tights, heeled shoes and boots in a variety of colors, only to then realize what Gina had done.

“You’re turning him into a girl... aren’t you?” she blasted. She had waited for Leon to take his new wardrobe upstairs before laying into her spouse, “His fa-

ther is going to *freak*! He'll haul my ass back into court and sue me for full custody Gene!"

"Look, I know he's a messed-up kid, but this is going too far, Gene! He's my son, for Christ's sakes!"

"Relax," Gina smiled, "Abe and I have an understanding. He's completely on board with this. And I'm not turning Leon any which way or another. I'm simply letting his sense of style develop, as it will."

"An 'understanding'?" Candace quoted Gina's comment, "Oh dear God, Gene," she rubbed her forehead, "You didn't start treating *him* with this shit too did you?"

"What's the big deal?" Gina grinned, "But he won't be a problem. He understands the importance of his son's developments."

"Oh God," Candace sighed, "You can't just keep brainwashing people like this. Pretty soon, you're going to have to brainwash the whole town! *Someone's* going to notice that our *boy* is wearing a miniskirt and go-go boots! And *then* what?"

"Candace," Gina placed her arm on her partner's shoulder, "First off it's a not a miniskirt... it's a tunic shirt... though I have to admit those boots are a little... hot... for a teenager. That's a very important distinction."

"Gene!" Candace yelped in exasperation.

Gina suddenly realized how serious Candace was. "No one's going to notice anything."

"How can you be so sure?" Candace asked with a scowl on her face.

"Because," Gina chuckled, "No one knew who Leon was in the first place. Now I admit, that I should have been able to predict that by placing him in the same program as I had used on girls in the past, that it might have some emasculating effects, but he seems to be fine with it. Happy even. And now that Edgar Canes has taken a liking to him..."

"What?" Candace blurted, "When did...? How? Gina, did *you* have something to do *that* too?"

"He was going to stuff our son into a locker Cand," Gina replied, "What did you *want* me to do??"

"Oh, I don't know... maybe what every other normal teacher would do..." she cried, "Have him suspended?"

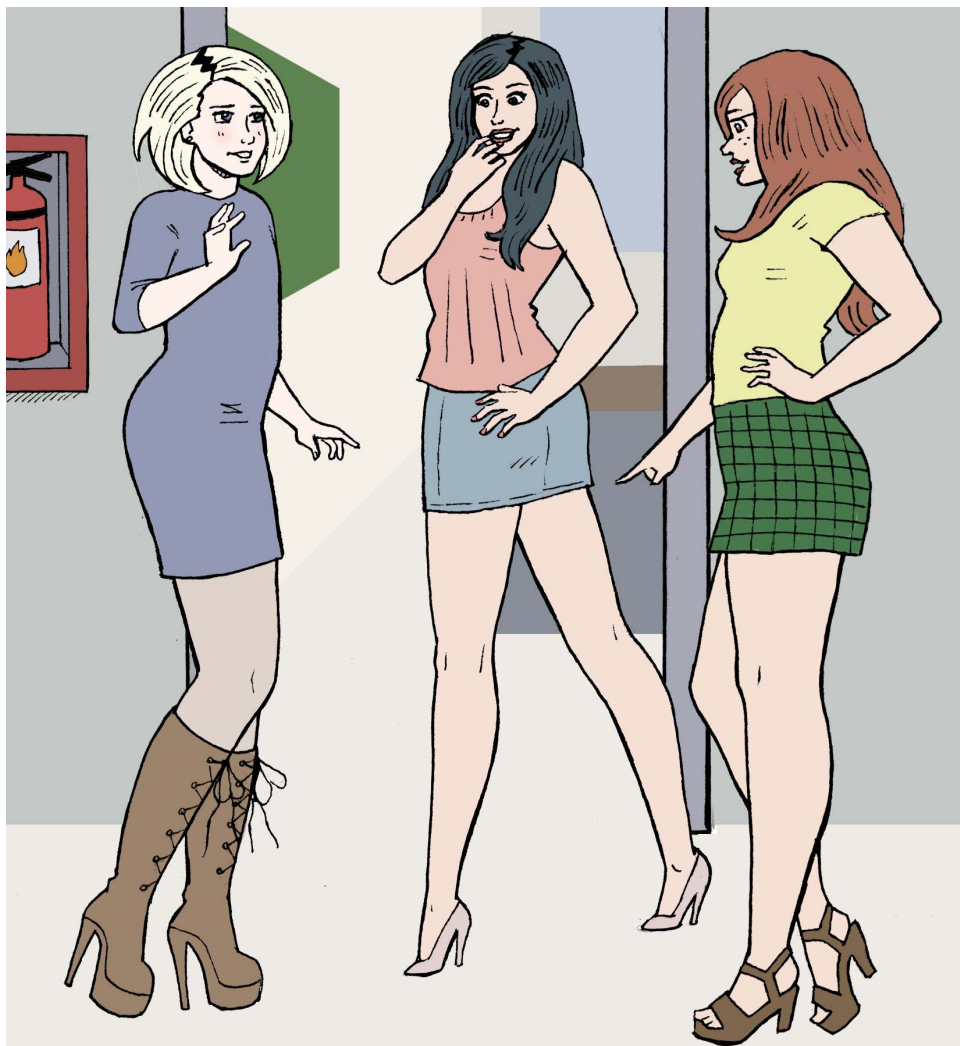
Gina just rolled her eyes. She knew that her methods were somewhat unorthodox, but she was certain that her theories on behavioral modification through clinical, medically-enhanced hypnotherapy was spot-on.

Candace took a deep breath. "I love you, darling, but you're running out of reasons as I shouldn't have you locked up for what you're doing, Gina." She then turned away and exited the room without looking back.



In the weeks that followed, a very different Leon began to emerge. Gina had instructed him to practice his 'strut,' until he had grown exceedingly confident in his heels. Before long, he was casually wearing them around the house. Mina and Alex were at first astonished, and then ecstatic, when he first began to wear his new boots to school.

"Oh my gawd!" Mina proclaimed, "those are the hottest boots I've ever seen!"



Alex agreed whole-heartedly, "I am insanely jealous. I totally need a pair like that. Look at how everyone looks at you when you're wearing them. You look amazing!"

Leon had noticed that the combination of boots with killer heels, plus body-hugging belted tunic, with skin-tight tights, a head full of platinum blonde hair was indeed turning some heads... and no one's head was turning more than Edgar Canes'.

"He's totally checking you out," Alex commented later that day in the cafeteria. Leon's mauve colored tunic ensemble, complete with pale lavender-colored tights and his 'hot' brown suede boots was generating more than a little buzz with the boys in the room. His step-mother had convinced him to try a more noticeable color instead of his customary black, and the results had been predictably fantastic.

Edgar had been 'checking him out' since the moment he arrived at school, which made Leon's heart race faster, though he wasn't sure why. Hadn't the boy who was stalking him, been the same boy who was threatening to break his nose only weeks ago?

Leon shrugged his thoughts off, and glanced in Eddie's direction again. Still watching.

There was something about having such control over the boy that fascinated him. *Is this what it means to be popular?* He wondered. *Was he finally one of... them?*

And by *them*, he meant one of the popular kids in the school.

Later that week, when checking in for their weekly meeting, the members of the 'Confidence Club' were certain they were getting *close*. Close to being one of *them*.

"You know Carl... in fifth period math?" Mina asked the group after they had watched their video and drank their ginger, "He asked me out yesterday."

"He did?" Alex asked, "Omigod, he's like, the second most popular guy in the school..." she then turned to Leon, "After Edgar Canes."

Leon blushed, "Edgar's not *that* popular," he giggled nervously. "He's bully. Well, he used to be a bully. People were afraid of him."

"Well *you* don't seem to be afraid of him anymore," Alex grinned. Leon just blushed again and rustled in his purple colored tunic shirt.

"It's not like that," he said, quietly, almost silently, to himself.

"Well all I can say is..." Kelly interjected, turning to Leon, "He's all yours if you want him." She then turned to Alex and placed her hand in hers with a smile. Leon, Mina and Gina all lost track of what they were thinking about. It was a declaration. They Alex and Kelly were... A couple.

It turned out that the date that Kelly had been on the day before Leon's mall-outing, hadn't been with another guy... just a gal with a guy's name.

Alexandra smiled back at her new 'friend,' then at Gina, who was *obviously* proud to have brought about such a significant change in a girl who would barely say 'boo' to anyone when the project had started. Though, it was true that she had to have several 'meetings' with both Alex's parents *and* Kelly's... With her special pink refreshments. Maybe it was true what Candace had said about brainwashing the whole town. Maybe that would just be easier, Gina thought to herself.

"Oh," Leon sighed, "I don't know... He's a nice guy and all... but, I don't know if I'm ready for... A... A...."

"Relationship?" Mina interjected, trying to find a word for Leon's thoughts.

Leon wasn't at all sure that's the word he was thinking of, but for the life of him, he couldn't come up with anything else, so he used it. "Right. I don't know if I'm ready for a 'relationship' right now..." He let his voice trail off. He was still coming to terms with growing into a popular person... but taking on Edgar's attentions at the same time... *that* was probably a lot of work.

Gina passed out the cups of strawberry soda. "Let's talk about your feelings towards Edgar, Leon," she said. The others giggled loudly, causing Leon to blush and shift in his shirt once again.

For some reason, Leon found that Edgar's strange attraction to him seemed to weigh on his mind for many days to come.



"My little boy is coming of age," Abe smiled proudly at his Son as he drove them out to dinner.

Leon blushed. He had just asked his Father if he thought it was a good idea to start dating. He had been thinking a lot about Eddie. It seemed that every time he turned around, he was there, with a bouquet of flowers, or a hand-written poem, or box of chocolates. He knew the idea of him dating another guy might not go over well with his conservative father, so he left the question very generic.

"Thanks Dad," Leon faux smiled, "But seriously... I've never even thought about dating someone before... I don't even know what to do." Leon sighed and looked out the window of his Father's car.

"Well... you'll figure it all out in time son. It all just happens, regardless of whether we're 'ready' or not, or whether our parents think it's a good idea or not. I know it's damn near impossible to stop a teenaged boy once he's picked

his 'prey.'" Abe chuckled. Leon turned and nodded. Edgar had certainly picked his prey with Leon, that was for sure.

"Us Childress men are known for our prowess," Abe continued, "So if you're going to vie for the attention of a certain... someone... just remember to be smart about it, and don't make the same mistake that I made with your mother... nothing is going to last for ever in this crazy modern age. The best you can hope for is a relationship that last a few years before you need to move on to the next one."

Leon shook his head. His father gave the *worst* advice.

"Once your mother recognized the signals that I was sending her, she became quite obsessed with me you know. She started wearing those little tiny short skirts and really high heels... started wearing makeup too... and lots of it. It sure got my attention in a hurry, I'll tell you," he chuckled. He pulled the car into parking lot of the restaurant where he and Leon often went for dinner. "It was a little much in retrospect. I would have fallen for her regardless... but it was sure fun to see the other boys' heads turning as Candy walked down the hall. Sweet Candy, that's what we used to call her..." he sighed, reminiscing for a moment. He often missed having Candace in his life, but knew that he was just too much man for her to handle... which was why she chose to play for the other team, he supposed.

Leon nodded blankly. He wasn't even sure what his Dad was telling him. Should he date or shouldn't he? *I should have asked Mom*, he thought to himself.

"Anyhow... you just do what you think you need to do to get this person's attention," Abe continued as he walked across the parking lot of the restaurant with his son – a son dressed in a black sweater-dress and grey tights, with black boots, and silver colored belt. His hair was beautifully styled, his face slightly made-up with lined eyes and dusted rosy cheeks, and small silver hoop earrings in each ear.

Abe seemed oblivious to his child's obviously effeminate attire, but a young man headed in the opposite direction in the parking lot was anything but oblivious. As the two passed him by, he stopped and gave Leon a very intentional once-over.

"Hey buddy!" Abe growled, "That's my son you're checkin' out..."

The young man's face turned the deepest shade of red, as he lowered his eyes and headed for his car in humiliation.

"What's the world coming to?" Abe muttered to himself as he and his son entered the restaurant.

After they had ordered, Abe had questions. "So how's this confidence group thing that your gay step-mother has you in working for you?" He asked in his typically offensive way. "Making any friends yet?"



Leon took a sip of his ice water and nodded, blushing slightly, “Yeah, it’s going okay.”

He thought about Eddie’s unusual behavior, and that of many of the other guys in the school. It made him wonder if it were such a great fashion choice to wear those tight pants and heeled boots to class. Somewhere, he had gotten it into his head that it was a ‘retro’ look, that people had dressed like that in the seventies... or something... and that it was once again trendy... so that made it okay, didn’t it? Was it Gina who told him that?

“Well as long as you’re happy, son.” Abe smiled as he glanced at the desert menu absentmindedly. The triple-fudge dark chocolate caramel peanut explosion looked like a contender. “You gotta wonder,” Abe changed the topic, as he so often did, “How places can still sell stuff with peanuts in them, you know? With all the allergies and stuff? It’s a wonder they haven’t banned peanuts, like they banned asbestos... which I still believe was a conspiracy to shut down those greedy French Canadian bastards up north,” he paused to shake his head in disgust, “Those bastards...”

Leon just nodded. It had occurred to him, yet again, why his father was no longer married, and why he likely never would be. His father – though he loved him dearly – was a bit of an asshole.

Leon sighed at the thought. He was disappointed at what a poor role model Abe had been. Would his life had been any better if there had been a stronger male influence in his life? Would it have mattered? Would it have made any difference?

Did he care?

The server, a handsome young man in his late teens, who Leon thought he recognized from school, brought the father and son duo their plates. Abe a thick, mid-rare steak. Leon and spinach and almond salad. The two ate in silence, each one thinking that the other’s choice in food was foolish, and suffice it to say that no one enjoyed a triple-fudge dark chocolate caramel peanut explosion that evening.

“Dad?” Leon asked his father later, once they had returned to Abe’s modest home, “Do you think there’s something wrong with me?”

“What do you mean?” Abe asked curiously.

“Well...” The boy paused for a minute, “It’s just that... I know since I’ve joined this club I’ve been acting a little...”

Abe’s brow furrowed like a freshly ploughed cornfield, something that was further accentuated by the fact that his thinning hair made his ‘brow’ look twice the size of normal.

“Is that crazy lesbian filling your head with nonsense again?”

“Who? Gina?” Leon asked.

“No, the *other* crazy Lesbian”

“Mom?” Leon shyly spoke. He had never heard to her referred to so colloquially.

“She’s been saying a lot of things about you not fitting in and being too shy and what-not,” Abe shook his head in displeasure as he talked, “But from what *I* can see, you’re turning out just fine, Lee.” Abe smiled at his son and patted him on the head, “now don’t forget to brush your hair before you go to bed or it’ll be a tangled mess in the morning.”

Leon shook his head in disbelief at his interaction with his father as he walked away, *Wow, what's gotten into Dad?* He wondered to himself.

Back in the kitchen, Abe was wondering the same thing, *What the heck possessed me to say that?*



“Makeup!”

The group looked at Gina with an odd expression. They were sitting around the chemistry lab again, as per usual on a Wednesday afternoon. They had just finished watching a new video on non-verbal cues, or body language, or something, when she asked them what simple thing they could add to their look to make them look more confident and popular.

The three members of the ‘Confidence Club’ just stared at each other blankly, so Gina answered the question for them. Makeup.

“Um,” Alex spoke up finally, “What was the question again?”

Gina sighed and shook her head, “Ladies...” she paused, “...and Leon... The question was... What’s a great way to help improve your non-verbal cues?”

The group continued to stare blankly at her. She wondered if the videos were somehow causing brain damage. She remembered using them on soldiers to increase confidence and aggression on the battlefield. There had never been any proven side long-term effects... that she knew of.

“Girls... and boy,” Gina repeated the question, “What’s a great way to help improve your non-verbal cues??”

“Body language?” Mina asked shyly.

“Makeup!” Gina blurted out, “Make up is a great way to improve non-verbal cues. It makes you look ‘together’ and confident and it helps to cover over those spots that you’d like to forget about.”

“Can I use some on my Dad?” Leon muttered.

“Leon!” Gina snapped, “That’s not very nice... and entirely disrespectful to your father...”

Leon sighed. “I know... it’s just... he’s so obtuse sometimes.”

Alex nodded in agreement, “I know what you mean. My folks are the same. One day they’re all like, ‘no dating during the school year’ and then suddenly they’re ‘oh Kelly is such a nice girl... we’re so happy for you’ and stuff.”

Leon shook his head. That wasn’t the same as what he was saying at all. He had to wonder if Alex’s relationship with Kelly was causing her to absorb some of Kelly’s bubble-headed-ness.

Gina was looking anxious. She was losing control of her group, and needed to get it back, “Okay... back to the topic at hand please... what kind of makeup do you currently use?”

Both Alex and Mina proceeded to describe their newfound morning beauty rituals in some detail. Leon tried to remember back when the two girls would arrive at the club meetings wearing only some minor lip gloss and liner. A stark contrast to the heaps of cosmetics they wore now.

“And Leon... how about you?” Gina asked.

Leon scrunched up his face, “Me?”

Gina nodded, “How do you apply your makeup in the morning?”

“But I’m a guy Gina, er... Ma’am,” he corrected himself, realizing he had to be more formal at school with her than he was at home.

“So?” Gina replied matter-of-factly, “Guys wear makeup *all the time*”

Leon just stared blankly at her.

“And you’re wearing some right now... the eyeliner... the mascara... the blusher... it didn’t just put itself on you know.”

Mina and Alex giggled at Gina’s comments. Leon didn’t. He felt his face in panic with his fingers. Was *he* wearing makeup? He turned to the shiny stainless-steel backsplash of the Olympic-pool-sized chemistry room sink. The hazy reflection that looked back, was his... but Gina was right. He already *was* wearing makeup.

He gasped, “Wow... I didn’t even realize...”

Gina smiled approvingly, “Well that’s a good thing Leon. Makeup is supposed to accentuate your already existing features.”

“So...” Mina spoke up, “The more your wear, the more you’re accentuating?”

Gina paused looking at her step-son. She knew she was at a crossroads with his ‘development’, and this would likely be the point where he pushed him over the top. She had been working a long time for this moment. Not just in the last several weeks, either. Gina already been lacing his food with low-level hormones and testosterone blockers – since last year. Just recently had she started to use the full-strength hormones, and his body was responding quickly. The medication and the weekly videos were ‘adjusting’ his point of view on certain issues... but it was going to be his own view of himself that would be the determining factor here. And she could tell that Leon was very close to that view changing.

Now it was time to deliver the trigger word. The word that would unleash everything she had been planting in his mind.

"That's right Mina," she smiled, "The more you wear, the more you are accentuating. It's just like using tight fitting clothes to accentuate your figure, or heeled boots to accentuate your legs."

Leon paused to consider what he was being told, "Heeled boots accentuate your legs?" he asked.

Gina smiled. He was getting it.

"Well yes dear, of course they do... just like a short skirt or tunic top does."

Leon paused, then smiled, turning back to look at his reflection again. For the first time in his life, he was very pleased by what he saw. He had a nice figure, accentuated by tight clothes, nice legs, accentuated by heeled boots, nice hair, accentuated by being blonde, and a nice face, accentuated by makeup... but he really wasn't wearing very much of it. Not like Mina and Alex were. They're faces were *far* more accentuated than his.

He furrowed his brow, than smiled.

Looking on, Gina smiled even wider. It was working. She could tell. In her pocket, she fiddled with the small vile of her pink-colored advanced hypnotic drug. It had been her master work, and now it was proving itself once again. Soon, she would no longer have her house *contaminated* by men. And that was just the beginning.

Leon, however, didn't recognize that his mind had just been gripped by weeks and months of feminine messages or drugs or any of all that. All he was aware of was that he had come to a sort of epiphany. He decided that starting tomorrow, he would accentuate himself to the hilt... so that he would look his very best.

And he did.



Alex and Mina had been meeting Leon before school, in front of the school by the park bench since first becoming friends months ago. It was a quieter in front of the school than at the rear, most mornings. The buses all dropped off at the back, while those few students who walked, or were dropped off entered from the front, along with the staff. They had grown accustomed to seeing him sitting quietly, gazing off into space as they approached. But today, something was different.

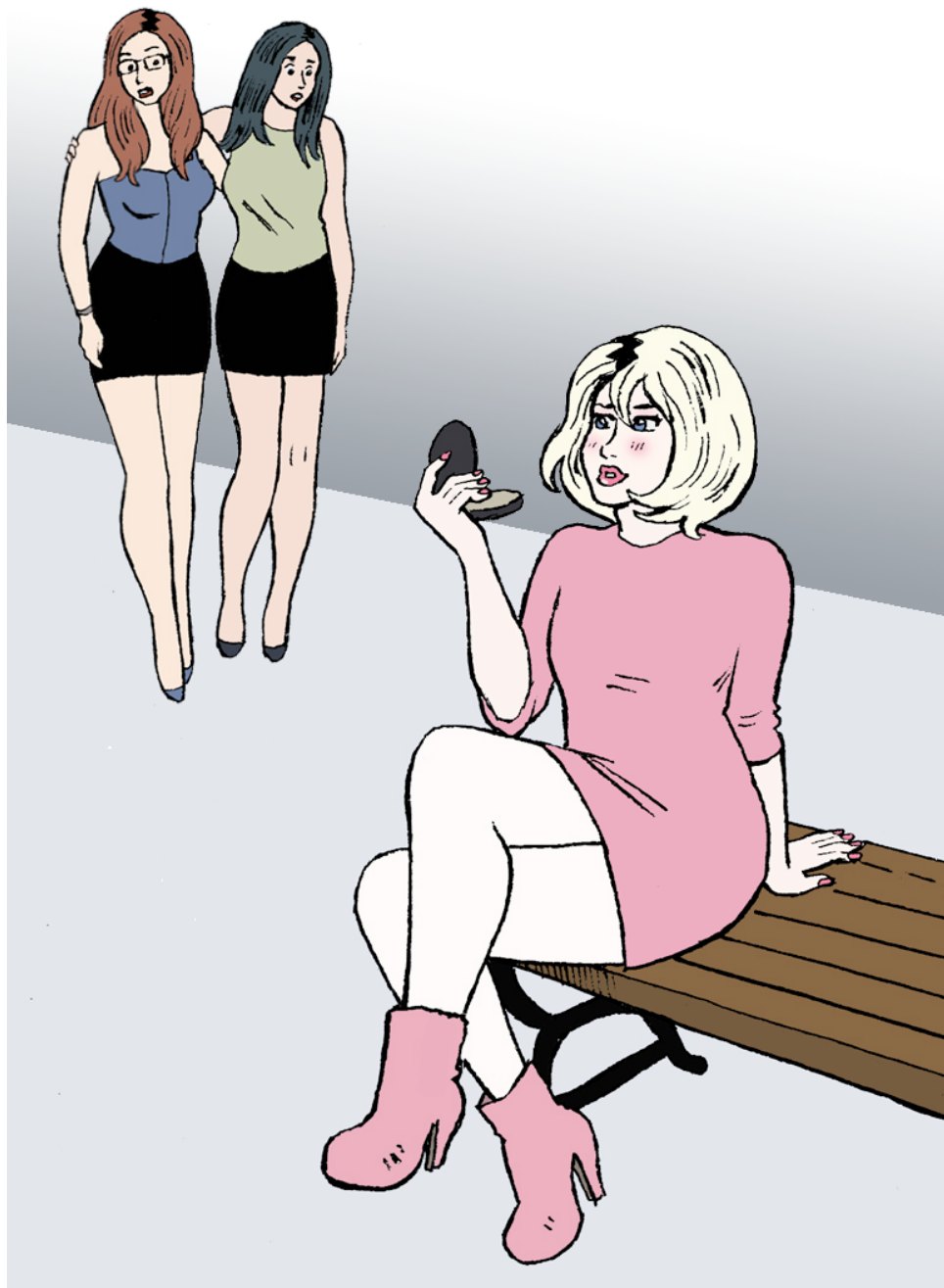
Something was *very* different.

Instead of Leon seated casually on the bench, there was no sign of him.

Well, there was one person sitting there. She was blonde, wearing a body hugging pink tunic minidress, with white tights, and high-heeled pink ankle boots.

Her nails were slender and varnished pink, and her makeup was pink-perfect, with an alabaster base, pink pouty lips, pink blush and eye shadow over black lined eyes and feathery mascara-coated lashes.

She was gazing into her powder compact as Mina and Alex stopped and stared.



Where was Leon? They wondered to each other in thought.

Then it suddenly dawned on them... he was *right in front of them!*

The pretty-in-pink girl turned and smiled at them, "Hey!"

Alex and Mina recoiled backwards, as if having just been struck by an arrow in the chest, "Um..." Alex mumbled, while Mina just stood silently, her mouth slightly agape.

"What's wrong?" the girl asked, "Is there lipstick on my teeth?" She held up the compact mirror frantically to check.

"Leon?" Alex finally mumbled a coherent word.

Leon looked surprised, "Um... yes Alex?"

"Its nothing, you just look very..."

"Accentuated?" Leon giggled as he filled in the blanks for her.

"Actually," Alex replied, "I was going to say 'pink.'"

Leon giggled, "Well... the makeup I got was all pink... and it didn't match so well with my blacks and browns... so I thought... what the heck. Maybe pink is my color!"

The two girls were in a stupor. They had never dreamed that their friend, the brown-haired loner that had started with the group months ago, was the same person as the hot blonde in a pink mini-dress that was checking her makeup on the park bench before them.

Mina finally spoke her mind, "Wow, Leon," she blurted out, "You look... *great!*"

Leon smiled and blushed a little. It was hard to notice under his thick pale foundation, "Thanks... don't tell me that you're becoming a lesbian too."

Mina chuckled. She didn't fully understand what Leon meant, since he was a guy and she was a girl, and by complimenting *him* it was acting pretty heterosexually. Wasn't it?

Alex laughed louder, "God I hope not!" the red-head said, "There are too many of us already. But she is right, Lee," she nodded in agreement, "You do look disgustingly hot. If I wasn't already seeing someone I'd totally 'do' you."

The three of them paused for a moment to ponder Alex's statement. Wasn't there something off about a lesbian saying she'd do a guy if she wasn't in a relationship already? But the realization would never fully develop with them, as the first bell had just rung. Instead of they all shrugged their shoulders and headed for class.

The walk down the central hall of the old high school, once a tortuous journey whereby the three outcasts tried to lay low and avoid eye contact, was now like three celebrities walking down the red carpet. As their heels clicked and their

nylons wisped, every guy turned and drooled at their appearance, and every girl felt that trademark mix of jealousy and envy that women fell in the presence of another... prettier... girl.

The hallway grew quiet and people started to bump into each other... including teachers. It was scene from some kind of teen-movie, where the characters go from being zeros to heroes to the shock and envy of everyone around... and then the principal of the school stands in the middle of the hallway, with a disapproving glare, and says to them...

"You three... in my office... right now!"

Only it wasn't a teen movie, it was real, and the principal looked pissed.

Minutes later they were all seated in his office while the secretary called their parents. Apparently, their attire was dangerously close to breaking several parts of the student dress code... especially Mina and Alex, who were wearing very tight and very short skirts.

Leon's stepmother was the first to arrive.

"I was expecting Ms Childress," the Principal growled.

"Candace is in a department meeting Sir," Gina smiled to her boss, "She sends her regrets."

She walked across the small office and took a seat next her stepson. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that Gina's outfit was already *very* close to the outfits that Mina and Alex were wearing... and that that could pose a bit of a problem for the principal.

"We're just waiting for a few more parents to show up and then we'll get started," the headmaster muttered.

"Well, being that all of these students are in *my* Confidence Club Sir," Gina smiled, "Perhaps you could give me the condensed version."

He paused for a moment, then cleared his throat, "Very well..."

He stood up from his seat, and buttoned his suit jacket, as if preparing to give a lecture.

"This school has standards... standards for dress, and standards for morality, and these three students are perilously close to breaking many of them with the way that they are dressing and acting. Take your step-son for example, Gina," he pointed at Leon, who was again checking his reflection in the mirror of his powder compact, "tell me that's normal behavior for a boy of his age."

Gina shrugged, "I don't see the problem with it."

The principal's face turned red and his facial muscles tensed, "You what? He's dressing like a damn girl... don't you think there's a problem there?"

Gina didn't flinch, "You know... maybe you're right. Maybe we *should* wait to talk about this with the other parents... just to be safe."

The principal took a deep breath, “Fine” And sat back down.

“And while we’re waiting,” Gina continued, “Can I show you part of the curriculum from the confidence program? I have a new video I wanted you to approve before I used it.”

The head of the school shrugged, “Sure, why not.”

Gina smiled and stood up. She went around to the other side of the principals’ desk, “May I?”

He rolled back away from his computer, allowing Gina to access her files on the school’s central server. Gina bent over, and as she reached for the keyboard, she left a pink streak on the top of his hand.

“What was...?” The principal asked, looking at the smear of pink.

“Oh, I’m sorry, sir.” Gina apologized. “I must have had some residue on my sleeve from class. Here’s a tissue.” She offered him a Kleenex to wipe the material off.

Of course, that was one of the brilliant things about her wonder drug. It didn’t need to be ingested to have an effect. It could merely be put on the skin and it would have the same sort of effects it did when it was taken orally. Just a little milder. Perfect for making quick suggestions. By now, it was already heading straight for the principal’s nervous system. Wiping it off wouldn’t help.

A few mouse clicks and keystrokes later, a video began playing on the computer monitor, “Just watch this, I’ll be right back,” she smiled, then left the office altogether.

When Mina and Alexandra’s parents finally showed up, the principal had just finished watching the video. He shook their hands and congratulated them for the support he assumed they had provided their children in enrolling in the Confidence Club.

“Your daughters are a shining example of what things can be accomplished if we have the confidence to try.” He pointed at the two girls in their tiny skirts and towering high heels. One was quickly becoming known as the school slut. The other, as a lipstick lesbian.

Both parents looked at the principal, then at their daughters, and then at each other, as if to say ‘*this* is what confidence causes?’ Suffice to say, that soon after, Alex and Mina’s parents left the school feeling quite concerned, confused, but also slightly pleased, at least, that their daughters were no longer the geekiest girls at the school.

Later that night, however, one parent in particular wasn’t so pleased.

“Jesus H. Christ Gina!” Candace bellowed, “You hypnotized our boss?”

Gina looked saddened by the reaction, “Candace...” she whined, “He was going to suspend our Son.”

"Maybe so Gene," Candace continued, "But if he finds out that you've been brainwashing people... he's going to *fire* you!"

"He's never going to find out," Gina reassured, "I'm good at what I do, Candy, remember?"

"Don't call me Candy." Candace was rubbing her temples. Her head felt like it was going to explode, "I know you're good at this... but this is getting out of control, dear..."

Gina came to her wife's side to console her, "I know... I won't modify anybody else's thought patterns ever again."

Candace sighed, "Please Gina. This whole thing is stressing me out. It wasn't supposed to stress me out. It was supposed to help our son... that was all. No stress allowed."

Gina nodded compliantly, "Yes Ma'am, no stress, I got it," she walked over to the television in the kitchen, turning it on, "Just relax and watch some TV and I'll make dinner," Gina smiled as she quietly left the room. She hated to see her love in such a state. Just a touch of the pink stuff would help her out. After all, it wasn't really a promise if Candace didn't remember it.



The following Monday, the principal announced some sweeping changes to the school's dress code. The maximum height on heels had been lifted – pardon the pun. As well as the minimum hem on skirts. Any reference to tight clothing, showing off cleavage, or looking sexy in general, was also erased.

For most of the girls in the school, it was business as usual. But for some, including the members of the Confidence Club, it was a major event.

They had been freed from the shackles of dowdy attire, and intended to express their new-found freedom in way that only a teenaged girl could – by dressing inappropriately.

Mina was, of the three, the least most conservative in her mauve colored top and tan skirt. She maneuvered through the halls in her heeled sandals whilst chatting on the phone with one of the three boys she was currently being courted by.

Alex wore a shirt that was slightly lower cut, showing ample amounts of teen-aged bosom, thanks in part to a *really* good bra. Her black skirt was very short, and framed her legs perfectly as they descended gracefully into her pink heels.

She didn't need to worry about having too many guys following her around, because they were no longer interested her. It was only Kelly that she was concerned about.

Leon, or Lee as most were calling him, dressed the raciest of them all, and he wasn't sure why.

It just felt right.

A low-cut white top that gave a hint of his pink bra, amplified his small chest, making it look like he had much more than he really did. A tiny pink pleated micro-skirt, barely covered the tops of his stay-up white stockings. Pink heels, far more substantial than Alex's, adorned his feet, with towering heels and thick platform soles. He had spent thirty or more minutes, getting his hair 'just so,' and decorating his face with lush pink lips and lustrous feathery lashes. It was a look that would drive guys mad... and he should know... he used to be one... well, he still was, but wasn't showing it.

Or was he?

Poor Lee was completely confused as to what gender he was supposed to be representing, but didn't care. All that mattered to him now was looking good and getting attention.

After all, what good was confidence if you didn't use it?

He waved sweetly to Edgar he approached him in the hall.

Eddie nearly dropped his books, "Wow Lee!" he exclaimed, "Are you



even *allowed* to look so good?”

“Oh stop it,” Leon gushed, “Didn’t you hear? The Principal lifted the ban on looking hot.”

Edgar smiled, “I can see that, cuz... you look hot! I mean... *really* hot!”

Leon cocked his head to one side, “Oh... you’re so sweet Eddie.”

He paused to gaze into the football captain’s eyes for a moment. The teen two teen’s lips were eighths-of-an-inch from touching when the second bell rang.

“Oh... I better go...” Leon said, pulling back some, “See you at lunch?” he asked.

“Oh yeah,” Edgar grunted like a caveman.

Leon smiled. His stomach was full of butterflies and his skin was flush. He wondered what it was that had gotten into him as he waved to Edgar and followed his friends to class.

Maybe it was just confidence.



In the weeks that followed, Lee began a meteoric rise to the top of the school popularity charts. At the same time, Leon’s grades began to drop like a stone. Gina noticed he had skipped a few classes, and even caught him in the smoking area chatting with a group of boys. It seemed that Leon was learning to *love* the attention his new look was giving him, to the detriment of his scholastic career.

Instead of studying, Leon was shopping. Instead of doing projects, Leon was chatting on the phone or texting. Instead of focusing on his future, Leon was focusing on his reflection... Lee’s reflection... and not much else. His bedroom, once the stark and dark retreat of loner, was now a crowded sweet-smelling dressing room, where Leon could be found most times of the day – when not skipping classes at school, brushing and styling his hair and practicing his makeup.

Socially, however, things had improved ten-fold.

Edgar and Lee were ‘an item’ though neither would admit they were committed to each other. Edgar had told his friends that he had gone all the way with her. Something that made Leon giggle since he still had all his original ‘equipment.’ But that wasn’t anything that Eddie needed to know. As far as *he* knew, Lee was just the hottest girl at the school.

And Leon... the nerdy kid he tried to stuff into a locker once... didn’t even register.

Soon after the meeting with the principal, the Confidence Club was disbanded. Not for any official reason... just the fact that all of the three former

members were far too busy socially to have time to meet. Gina considered this a wild success. It confirmed everything she needed to know about her methods.

She was also pleased that her stepson had a date to the grad dance. Something that no one would have dreamed was possible this time last year. The fact that it was with another guy wasn't lost on her, but... beggars can't always be choosers.

Everything seemed to be running smoothly.

That is, until the first rejection letter arrived in the mail.

Leon had applied to several prestigious universities in the winter, before his focus shifted from school to... everything *except* school. When the schools began to check on grade-point-averages near the end of term, they – predictably – didn't like what they saw.

And neither did Candace.

"Read this" she held the first letter up to her wife, "then this one" she said, holding up another.

Gina read the letters, gasped, then looked at her spouse, "what... what happened?"

"It gets worse," Candace sighed as she handed Gina another stack of letters.

"Oh my god!" Gina exclaimed once she had finished, "how could he do this? How could he screw this up?"

Candace gave her partner an 'oh really?' glance.

"What?" she responded, "What's that look for?"

"What's that look for?" Candace growled, "Our son... my son, your stepson... was heading for the ivy league... now he can't even get into a community college. And you don't think that you have *any* idea why?"

Gina sunk into her seat.

"Right now... instead of studying for finals... our son... *my* son, is gluing fake eyelashes to his eyelids for a date he's going on... with another boy! And *you* don't think that you have anything to *do* with it?"

Candace huffed and stormed out of the room.

Gina sighed. Maybe she *had* taken this too far. She had kind of enjoyed the process of making her stepson into a stepdaughter. Dammit, he was just so easy to change. And so cute. He had become the daughter she never thought she would ever have.

But Candace was right. Gina *had* let her silly fantasy get in the way... and ruined Leon's chances of college in the process.

She sighed again.

How was she going to get herself out of *this* one?



As the school-year wound down, so did Leon's GPA. The once obsessed-with-high-marks boy was now obsessed only with high-heels. It was so bad in fact, that basically dropped out of high-school with a week to go.

But Leon really didn't care.

The only thing on his mind right now was to look amazing for his prom, and to be crowned prom queen with his date Edgar as prom king. He had spent days finding the perfect dress. And an equal amount of time finding a corset to cinch his body into a shape that allow him to fit into it.

Then there was the hair and makeup. He planned to use hair extensions to lengthen it, and would use fake lashes to accentuate his eyes.

There was the word again... accentuate.

Leon *loved* to accentuate. He was going to accentuate his face and hair with a trip to the salon. Accentuate his hips and ass with a short skirt. Accentuate his legs with smooth stockings and ultra-high-heels. Accentuate his chest with a padded bra and low-cut top. He, in short, planned to accentuate the hell out of his look so that no one else would even dream of being crowned queen.

But prom was a week away, and Leon had to have dinner with his father.

Abe didn't seem the least bit concerned as his 'son' approached the car that afternoon. Dressed in super-short pink mini-dress, with five-inch stiletto platform heels, and a snug top to show off his developing curves, Leon looked anything but the boy he had been at the beginning of the school year.

But he was still that boy... technically.

He sat in the passenger seat and daintily swung his stocking covered legs into the automobile, so as not to show the world more than it needed to see. Then he closed the door and fastened his seatbelt before reaching into his purse to retrieve his powder compact. He dusted his nose lightly, then inspected his makeup and hair.

It was still perfect.

It had been an entire *five* minutes since he had checked last... and a *lot* could have gone wrong in that time.

"So..." Abe began as he motored the car out of the school parking lot, "Prom's coming up, and I hear from reliable sources that you've got a date."

Leon smiled sweetly, "Yes. And I must admit Daddy, I'm *very* excited about it all. I know a lot of people are saying that Brittany Jones or Karen Hart have a shot at being prom queen, but we *all* know who's going to win it this year. Not

that they aren't pretty and stuff, it's just that... come on... who's going to beat Eddie and me?"

Abe looked confused, "So this Eddie... she's a looker is she?" He nudged his son in the ribs.

"Ow! Daddy!" Leon whined, "Eddie's a *he*. Ewww, gross... you didn't think I was turning into a lesbo like Mom and Gina did you? Not that there's anything wrong with it mind you... to each their own and stuff. I mean, look at Kelly and Alex... who knew. Although I gotta say, I'm totally glad that Kelly... you know... switched teams and stuff. Because her and Edgar were pretty tight. We all... and I mean *everyone* thought that they would be the prom king and queen this year, I mean, they'd been dating since like, forever. But, oh well. Like you said, nothing is meant to last for forever." Leon shrugged.

Abe remained speechless. He didn't even know how to respond.

"I sure hope Eddie and me are forever though... I just can't imagine me without him..." Leon paused for a second, "Well... maybe I can... but I know he can't imagine his life without *me*. He told me that."

Abe furrowed his brow. His son had changed, and he didn't like it. He had become something that Abe absolutely despised.

Leon had become the type of person... that dominated a conversation and didn't let anyone else speak.

Abe couldn't wait for his dinner with Leon to be over.



Candace was alone tonight. Gina was out with some of her fellow science teachers at a symposium for the weekend, and Leon was... Where the hell was Leon? Out with that Eddie character, she supposed. She took another sip from the shot glass full of whisky beside her.

No, Candace wasn't really alone. She had the bottle – and her thoughts. Where had this all gone so out of control? Was the old Leon really so bad? He was a good kid, just maybe a little out of sync with the world. Did solving his problem really mean she had to basically turn him into a girl?

On the surface, it was a ridiculous thought. But as soon as Candace stopped to consider it, she could hear Gina's voice.

He's better off, she said. He's happy now.

Candace wasn't so sure. Why had she gone along with Gina's plan? How could she have let this happen to her little baby boy?

Still, Gina had a point about Leon. He did seem happier. No did seem to even care about his gender change.

How much of it was due to Gina's meddling with people's minds? How much of their thought, of Leon's thoughts, were genuine? Even worse, how much of her own thoughts were real?

Maybe, Candace thought to herself, maybe it will all work out. Maybe turning her son into a girl wouldn't be so bad.

Candace took another drink.



The night of high school prom came quickly.

Leon had spent the day getting ready. He started at the salon, where he got his hair done... pretty much the same style as usual, only fancier. Then he had them redo his nails – this time, an inch long, and painted with bright pink varnish. Sure they were completely impractical, but accentuated and practical didn't always work well together.

The Salon staff then turned their attention to his makeup, starting with a pale off-white base, long feathery fake lashes, thick eyeliner and heavy pink eye shadow. His cheeks were rouged with pink streaks, and his lips enlarged with pink liner and lip color.

Sure, he could have done it himself, but with inch long fingernails... it might not have gone well for him.

At home, Gina helped him into his tiny pink prom dress. It was a sparkly strapless little thing clung tightly to his torso before spilling out in a short taffeta skirt over smooth white hosiery. With the help of a built-in corset in the dress and padding in the top, Leon managed to make his sprouting A-cups appear nearly twice their size. Killer heels, the highest and pinkest he could find, completed the look, as Gina helped zip and buckle him in.

Leon wasn't satisfied, though. He spent hours looking at his reflection in the mirror, trying to find that one thing would make his look beyond perfect. He turned his head this way and that. He posed. He pouted. He smiled. He pretended to kiss.

Then it hit him. His big moment was going to be the kiss. His lips were the perfect shade of pink, matching his dress and his shoes. But they weren't shiny. They weren't glossy! Leon felt like bursting into tears.

Here he was, all made up for his perfect night, and he was going to be the only one there with dull lips. What could he do?

"Mom!" He yelled out. "Gina!" He called again. He got up from his seat and minced out of his room to find his two mothers. "I'm having a crisis here!" he shrieked. Where were they? Couldn't they sense the serious catastrophe that was happening at this moment?

Then he passed by his mothers' room, and saw the door was open. Walking in, he didn't see any sign of either Gina or his Mom, but did spy something that caught his eye. A drawer of Gina's dresser was just a crack open, but the light caught the sparkling pink inside. Opening the drawer, Leon found a small glass vile of pink stuff.

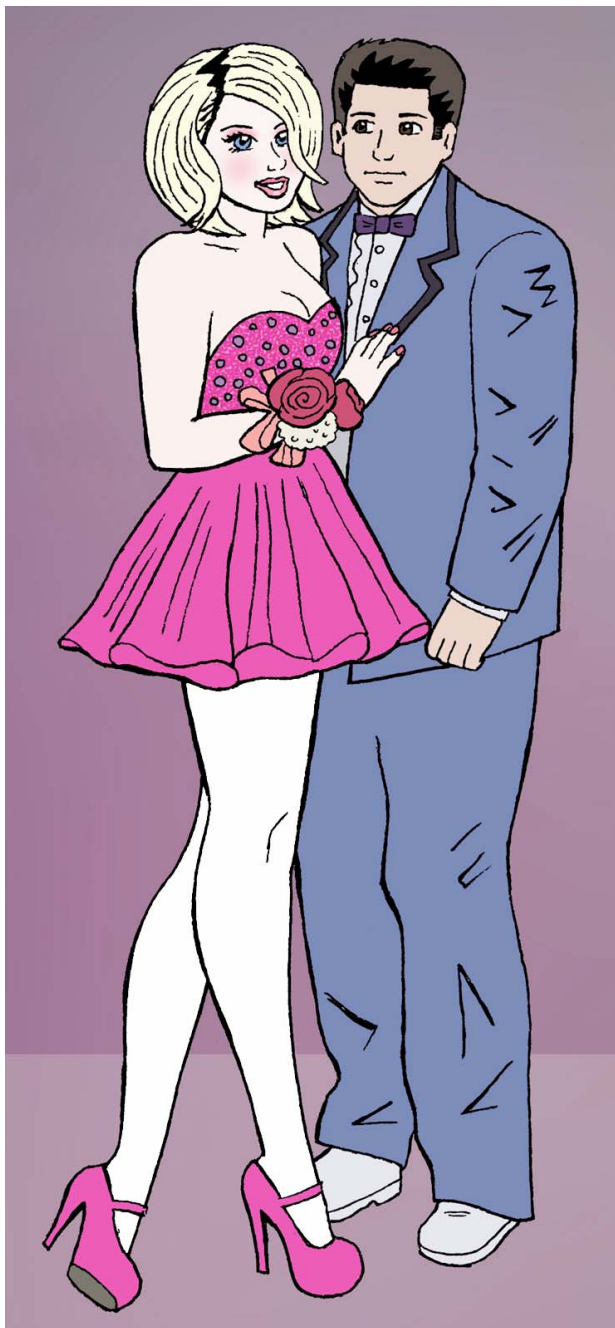
This was perfect! Leon trotted back to his room where he took the glossy pink liquid and applied it to his lips to get that awesome wet look he had been looking for. Now he was ready for his perfect evening. He put the vile into his little purse.

"Aren't you just the perfect little pink princess?" Gina said, arriving to get another look at her handiwork.

"Perfect pink princess," Leon said to himself, in a little bit of a daze. "I'm a perfect pink princess."

When Leon met Edgar at the school gymnasium, he had to admit that the meat-headed football captain cleaned up pretty well in a tuxedo and bow-tie. Eddie's reaction to Leon was predictable. The young man's jaw fell to the ground, and a huge smiled formed on his face.

He closed his mouth long enough to present 'Lee' with 'her' corsage, something that further made Leon feel very much like a princess.



Edgar then spent the night showing his date off to anyone and everyone who would pay any mind, and Lee, Leon, loved every minute of it. In fact the more attention he got... the more he wanted. So when the crowing of the king and queen arrived... as could be predicted, Leon was on pins and needles.

The principal took the microphone and announced the first and second runners up, "Mina escorted by Jacob, and Alexandra escorted by Kelly!" he clapped, then looked shocked as one boy and girl couple and one *girl* and girl couple made their way to the stage to receive their runners up awards.

The look on his face told all. He had figured that 'Kelly' was guy, not a girl.

Moments later, he collected himself and continued on with the proceedings, "And the couple who will be crowned as Prom King and Queen this evening is..."

Leon squeezed Edgar's hand tightly in anticipation.

"Edgar and Leon...?" He grunted to himself to think that a second same-sex couple were going to walk on stage. What was becoming of this country? But he was pleasantly surprised to see it was one student in a tux and one student in a dress. Thank freaking God, he thought. The principal paused and took another look at the card, "Uh... Leah?" he corrected himself, adjusting the name on the card so as not to embarrass himself again, "Edgar and Leah!"

The crowd erupted into applause; the members of the football team began to chant 'Ed-dy, Ed-dy' as the Edgar and Leah made their way to the podium. Moments later, as the crowns were placed on their heads, Leon realized that *this* was what he wanted to do with his life.

Be popular and get attention.

The music swelled, the crowd cheered, and Edgar took Leon's hand and led him out onto the dance floor. Leon rested his head on Leon's shoulder and let the boy lead.

An hour later, and the prom was breaking up. The band had put its' instruments away and the lights had been turned back on for the cleaning crew.

But for Leon, or Lee, or now, even Leah, he never wanted it to end. He was a pretty pink little princess on his perfect night. No, *she* was a pretty pink little princess. If this was what it was like to really be a girl, he would always be a girl, he decided.

"Hey babe," Edgar slurred, "let's go for a drive," he motioned towards the gym door.

Lee looked around the dance floor. There weren't a lot of people there, but she wasn't sure if she was ready to stop being the centre of attention yet, "Do we have to?" she whined.

"Cum'mon..." he staggered and slurred, "less go..."

It was well known that he, and his football teammates, had been sneaking sips of hard liquor all night, and further, that they were all quite hammered. Regardless of whether or not Leah was done with her reign as Queen for the night, which she wasn't, the thought of getting into a motorized vehicle with a drunken Edgar was anything but appealing.

"I don't think so," she replied, "You've been drinking"

"Pish-shaw" Eddie mumbled, "I'm not driving... I got us a limo, remember?"

Lee did recall hearing something about having a ride home in a limo... if they won. And they *had* won... so she *did* deserve her ride. It was what a princess would do.

And I *am* a princess, she thought to herself.

"Oh... okay," she smiled at Edgar, "Let's go"

Eddie smiled and took Leah's arm and they headed out the front door and to the side of the massive white limo that awaited them.

Once inside, Edgar proceeded to help himself to some champagne, while Leah took stock of her carriage. It was a fine ride indeed. Fit for royalty... and none this night were as royal as she.

The limo started to move, and so did Edgar's hands, pawing over Leah's body like a hungry, horny dog.

"Hey!" she shouted, "Cut it out!"

Edgar just gave him a blank look, "What do you mean? Its prom... we're the king and queen..."

"Yuk!" Lee snorted, "I know that... but it doesn't mean that can just grope me all over!"

Edgar was clearly perturbed, "Well okay then princess... how about I do this instead," he leaned forward and started to kiss Lee's exposed neck.

Leah suddenly realized what Edgar's expectations were, and turned to give him a smack on the head, "I said no!"

Edgar looked angry, "You little bitch!" He lunged at her, and pressed his lips onto hers, smooshing their faces together. Leah pushed him away.

"Don't you ever do that again!" Leah cried. "Don't you ever! You will treat me with respect!"

A wash of dizziness took Edgar. The pink from Leah's wet lips was smeared on his face. The chemical was seeping into his skin. "I'll treat you with respect," he said, almost as if in a trance.

Leah adjusted her dress and sat back in the seat. "Now, you behave yourself."

"I will behave myself," Edgar repeated.

"Now," Leah primped her hair. "Tell me how good I look."

"You're very pretty, Lee."

"I like Leah."

"You're very pretty, Leah."

"Like a princess?"

"Like a princess..." Edgar said, before falling asleep.

Leah stomped her foot angrily, "Arrrgh!" she grumbled, "This is *not* how a princess should be treated!" she shouted into the air.



"Well," Candace began, "You've gotten yourself into *some* mess now haven't you."

The blonde nodded, holding her head in her hand.

"But really," Candace continued, "What did you expect would happen? I mean you kind of led him to believe that something was going to come out of all this, didn't you? I don't want to say that you somehow led him along, but the expectation was certainly there... whether implied or otherwise."

The blonde sighed and nodded again. Candace was right. She should have seen this coming.

The blonde... not Leah... but her stepmother Gina, was at her wits' end.

Leon had returned from the prom, a changed man. In fact, he came back not a man at all, but girl... and a very demanding, self-righteous girl, who needed constant attention, and was constantly prepared to go to the next level to get it.

It had been over a month since school had ended, and Leon – or Leah as he now thought of himself as – had become more self-absorbed than ever.

"All I wanted to give him was a little confidence," Gina sighed.

Candace chuckled and looked up at the ceiling, "Oh he's certainly got confidence," she shook her head, "Have you *seen* him lately?"

Gina sighed. She had. She had seen how when a short skirt was no longer enough to get attention, he got a shorter one. And when that wasn't enough, he got a shorter one again. And then higher heels. And then *higher* heels again. And then a lower cut top... and then...

"Yes I'm painfully aware about all the 'confidence,'" she paused to make quotation marks in the air, "that our son now has."

She was of course not referring to actual confidence so much as she massive set of breasts that Leon had purchased for himself, without telling his parents, and by using their credit card, without their knowledge.

Candace shook her head. How had Leah talked her out of the credit card in the first place?

Obviously there was nothing they could do. It's not like he could just take them back. And it's not like they could lock him in his room. Now that Leah had a big set of boobs, she was absolutely determined to show it off.

Wasn't that the point of having them?

Gina sighed again, "Maybe I can get him to watch another video. Try to undo some of what I've..."

Candace cut her off, "*No!* Absolutely not. No Videos... no suggestions, no nothing! You are forbidden from any more of this mind control crap of yours, Gina. You've already gone way too far as it is."

"But Candy..." Gina whined.

"No!" Candace snapped, "You've made such a mess of things Gene, I don't even know what's real anymore... I mean Jesus, Edgar, Abe... our Principal... I'm beginning to wonder if I'm really a lesbian or if you just '*suggested*' that I was... that's how bad this is getting! And don't call me Candy."

Gina gasped. She shot her partner a 'how-could-you' glance, "Candace Childress... how could you even think that?"

"Gina," Candace sighed, "Even you would have to admit... it's entirely possible."

Gina's mouth hung open as she shook her head in disbelief, "Have you forgotten already?"

Candace looked confused, "Forgotten what?"

"It was *you* that came onto *me*... remember?"

Candace blushed, then chuckled, "Oh yeah."

She thought back to the night in teacher's college when Abe and a young Leon had gone camping or somewhere... and how she had been very curious about Gina's 'lifestyle'. How she had invited her over. How they had broken into a bottle of tequila... and how the rest, as they say, was history. That was how it went... wasn't it?

Candace smiled and leaned forward to kiss her spouse, who also smiled with an 'all-is-forgiven' expression.

"Well, we still have to do something," Candace said finally after breaking off the long kiss, "He... she... is on a very dangerous road right now. We need to get her off of it before she gets into more trouble than she can handle"

"Agreed," Gina nodded, "Lets go talk to her..." she motioned that they head upstairs to chat with Leon... Leah... knowing that she had spent the afternoon getting ready to go out on the town with friends. If they talked to her now, they might be able to stop her self-destructive behavior.



As a team, they advanced on Leah's room and entered. Even though it wasn't the first time they had seen her lately, it was still a bit of a shock.

She was wrapped in backless pink halter-style minidress, that barely covered her private areas. White hosiery made her legs look a mile long while the top of the dress, barely contained her massively augmented breasts. On her feet, the

highest heeled platform shoes she could find, forced her buttocks and chest to jut out in a sexy pose.

Her hair was styled into a long blonde bob that hung to just below her shoulders, barely concealing her oversized earrings.

Her pale face had been painted with bright pink highlights around her eyes, on her cheeks, and of course on her perfectly pouty pursed lips. Long feathery fake lashes finished the look, along with long tapered pink nails.

Candace covered her mouth with her hand, while Gina stared in disbelief. She had to be honest with herself, that at one point, the thought of making her nerdy stepson into trend-loving daughter was appealing. She had always wanted a daughter to go shopping with, and do mother-daughter stuff with. And she had, selfishly, thought that Leon's transformation was going to be the best for everyone.

But now, she realized that the person that Leon had become... Leah, was out of control. Candace turned to her spouse with tears in her eyes, "Okay... maybe just one more video... but after that... you're cut off. Do you understand?"

Gina nodded. She knew exactly what she needed to do. She went back to her dresser drawer, and looked for the pink vile. And kept looking.

"It's gone," Gina said, with a bit of desperation and fear in her voice.

"What is?" Candace replied.

"The stuff!" Gina said, keeping her voice low. "My pink stuff!"

Leah, barely even caring that she was being observed, walked over to her purse and took out her cool super-wet lip gloss.

"Well, where did you put it last?" Candace asked.

"I didn't lose it! I know where I put it!"

At the mirror, Gina dipped the brush into the liquid and then applied it to her lips. There was no effect on her anymore. She had used it so many times that her mind was no longer subject to the drug's powers.

"Wait a minute!" Gina said, with a gasp. She spied the vile being popped into Leah's purse. "Is that...?" Suddenly, the horror hit the both of the women simultaneously. No wonder Leah had been able to get the credit card and buy herself breasts. No wonder they had let her get away with it. She was using that wicked mind-bending liquid on her lips!

"How are my favorite two moms?" Leah said, kissing both of them on the cheek, one after the other.

Gina, a look of horror in her eyes, reached for her cheek to try and wipe the pink off. But before she could even raise her hand, she started to feel dizzy. Candace was just a split-second behind her lover in realizing what was happening. But she, too, was beginning to get light-headed.

"I was thinking that maybe we could go out and get me some new shoes, and some boots, and some dresses? Maybe a whole new wardrobe? Oh! And bikinis." Leah giggled. "I need them for the beach!"

No longer in control of their free will, the two women just looked into space. "Let's go, princess," Candace said.

"We need to get Leah a new wardrobe," Gina said.

Leah giggled with delight. She loved her lip gloss. She always had the best luck when she wore it.



That summer was an eventful one for Leah. She spent a few weeks working in her Daddy's new office. He was just setting it up, in his new business.

"Why don't you try being a business guy type person?" Leah suggested, one day, to Abe. "Like one of those stock breakers."

"Stockbrokers?"

"Yeah!" Leah said, with a kiss to her Daddy's cheek, leaving a pink lip print. "Be a stockbroker!"

And oddly, Abe



found himself unable to resist the idea. He quit his teaching job and started to trade stocks from home. Inside of a month, he had opened up an office downtown and was taking on clients. Knowing arcane bits of information on a wide variety of topics was a peculiar benefit to trading stocks of many different companies in many different types of business. Quickly, he was making money hand over fist.

So Leah had helped out answering phones and meeting new clients. Abe had signed up many new, male, clients thanks to Leah's generous portfolio of assets. They seemed unable to resist her charms.

To Abe, he was proud of his boy. He seemed to have a knack for business.

Leah spent the rest of the summer with Eddie on the beach, shopping with Kelley, Mina and Alex, and hanging around the house. It was a great, carefree, summer. But it was going to end soon, and it was time for everyone to go back to school.

"I'm home, mother!" Leah called out when she walked in the front door, one early August evening.

"Oh, hello, sweetie!" replied Candy. She was dressed in a bright yellow house dress, her hair teased out to a voluminous height, and sprayed down with copious amounts of hairspray. Her smile was so wide it seemed to be cutting into her cheeks. She was also wearing an apron, baking up some brownies for the ladies' book club.

And yes, she was called Candy now. She had quit her job at school and decided to become a full-time housewife. Well, not really decided, so much as told to by Leah. "Why can't you just be a normal mom like everyone else has?" was Leah's request, followed by a pink kiss on the cheek.

From that moment on, Candace remodeled her life as a happy home maker. Not only had she given up her job, but she had embraced her new name of "Candy." She even wore little candy-cane earrings to play upon her new name.

Being a normal mother also meant that she should be married to a normal father. Abe was shocked when his ex-wife appeared at his doorstep one night, begging forgiveness for everything she had done. It wasn't long before he had remarried "Candy," as he loved to call her, and moved back into the house.

Of course this also meant that Gina was out of luck. She was unable to comprehend her lover's abrupt turn-around from independent lesbian to dependent wife. Maybe it had something to do with that chemical she was working on. The one that she was going to use to turn all the men in the world into lesbian women? Her plan, as she recalled it, was to test it out on Candace, then high school students, and then on Candace's son. Once she knew it could work, then she'd put it into the water supply...

She shook those thoughts from her mind. She wasn't capable of such a thing – she was no chemist. As Leah would remind her, she was just a teacher. She was

a teacher in a small high school, in a suburb like any other. And Candace never had a son, as far as she could remember. Just Leah.

“Why teach that icky chemistry stuff? Teach fun stuff!” Leah told her a few weeks ago, with a peck on the cheek. And so, Gina had asked for a transfer from Chemistry to Home Economics. “You would have so much fun talking about girl stuff!” Leah said to her.

She was looking forward to the challenge. She had thrown out all her old lab equipment when she moved out of the house and into her new apartment. She was starting over. She bought herself new furniture, some new, more conservative clothes befitting an average, normal, home economics teacher, and dyed her hair back to its’ natural mousy brown.

“And how do you know if you’re really a lesbian if you haven’t tried men, Aunt Gina?” Leah asked her once, with a smooch. It made so much sense. Gina didn’t really know why she had never even given men a try. But now, she spent her nights out at the singles bars, hoping for men to buy her a drink. One of these



days, she was sure she would find mister right.

“So what are we having for dinner, mother?” Leah asked Candy.

“Macaroni and cheese,” Candy replied, looking proudly at the casserole dish in the oven. “It’s my own new recipe! I’ve been working all day on it!”

“Oh, yuk!” Leah replied, rolling her eyes in disgust. “So gross!” She kissed her mother on the cheek. “Let’s have a chicken salad instead, kay?”

“Right away, princess!” Candy replied, taking the dish from the oven and scooping the contents out into the trash. “We’ll eat when your father comes home.”

“Great!” Leah walked on upstairs to the master bedroom, and put her purse away. This was her new room, now. She only had to ask that her parents move out of this large, comfortable master bedroom and into her old room. After all, she needed the closet space for the hundreds of dresses and shoes she had been buying all summer long. Still, it wasn’t enough room. She was surely going to run out soon.

She heard her Daddy’s 1998 Ford pull up in the driveway and decided to go down to meet him. “Daaadddyyyy!” She whined. “We need a bigger house!” She greeted him with a daughterly kiss. “Pleeease?”

“Of course,” Abe replied, “We need a bigger house.” It was a good thing he was making so much money to keep up with Leah’s ever-more-expensive tastes. It was going to put him deep in debt unless he kept earning more money, which meant more work. Still, he couldn’t deny Leah anything. “Could you move your car so I can park?” he asked.

“Yes Daddy,” Leah replied, jumping into her shiny, new, pink BMW convertible. She made room for her father.

“So did you decide on a school yet?” He asked Leah.

“I’m still thinking,” Leah replied with a pout. She technically hadn’t actually graduated from high school, so there was the worry that Leah would never go to college. But whenever Leah interviewed face-to-face at a university, they seemed to magically make room for her. Now, she had five scholarship offers on the table. She was convinced it was due to her lucky lip gloss. She was right. “I’m really close, though. I wanna make the right choice.”

“That’s my boy,” Abe replied. As he walked into the kitchen, he was welcomed home by his wife, who had applied a fresh coat of makeup and changed into an evening dress for him. Presenting his already-stoked pipe for him to smoke, Abe dropped his briefcase and coat for her to put away for him.

“Have I told you how proud I am of our son?” Abe said to Candy. “A chip off the old block, there. A fine young man.”

“Daddy, you’re embarrassing me!” Leah gushed with a fluttery giggle.



One of the curious effects of Gina's pink potion was what happened late at night. Just at the edge of consciousness, just for a minute, as the mind released itself, it allowed a temporary moment of clarity.

For just a flash, it would all come back. All the suggestions and all the persuasion would go away in a blink.

Abe would recall that his son wasn't really a son anymore. He would grip the bed sheets tighter as he understood the full horror of what Leon had become.

Edgar's spine would stiffen in fright when he realized the person he was kissing and humping all these days wasn't a girl at all. He would lock up and lay perfectly still, his bulging eyes straining as if they were about to pop from their sockets.

Candace would recall what she used to be. She used to be respected, independent and in love with a girl named Gina. She recalled what Gina did to her son, and the monster Leon had become. She had allowed it to happen, and allowed it to go too far. She had failed in her basic duties as a mother, and she would pay for it every day until she died, living as a caricature of a woman she despised. Tears would stream out of her eyes and into her pillow for an uncontrollable few seconds before sleep came.

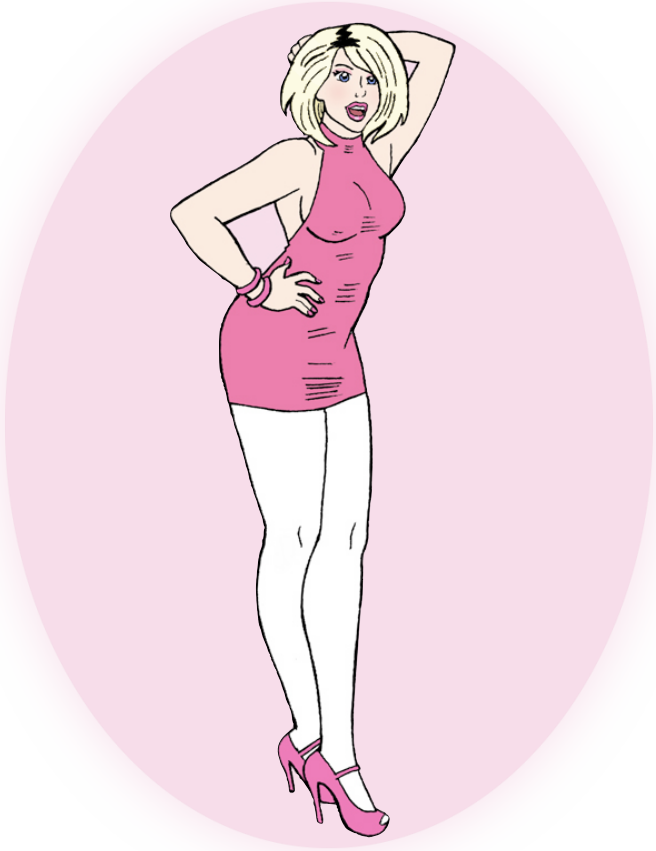
Gina, usually with the beefy, hairy arm of another loser guy wrapped around her, would suddenly call back to her true self, a lover of women and a brilliant chemist. She thought about her ambitions and her plans to remake the world in her image. She'd remember her amazing pink chemical and then just as she thought back to the last time she had seen it, being applied to Leon's lips, she would then succumb to sleep, forever cursed to relive those memories, night after night after night.

Leah, for her part, would remember it all and shiver when she recalled the memory of Leon. But then she would giggle as she put on her shortest minidress and did her makeup, in order to look as hot as possible when she went out that night. That night and nearly every night.

She would smile to herself as she counted her blessings. She was now and forever, a popular girl – *the* popular girl. The pretty pink princess, little mister popular, Leah.

Confidence was everything, she realized.

The End



Next in The Stepmother Series: One Year in Tokyo



Mickey has a problem. Actually, a few problems. First his Mom went on an extended honeymoon with her new husband after selling their house in Long Island. Then Mickey had to go live with his Dad, who he hasn't seen in years... in Japan. Then he found out that his Father had also remarried – without even telling him. And to make matters worse, his new stepmother seems to *hate* him!

Why else would she be constantly taunting him, and making fun of his name? Apparently Mickey in Japanese means 'Beautiful Princess' or 'Priceless Beauty' or something stupid like that. Why can't she just leave him alone? Why is she trying to make his life miserable? Mickey is having enough trouble adjusting to Tokyo's hyper-culture, but to have a stepmom treat him like this is becoming almost unbearable. And all his Dad keeps saying is 'Just go with it and stop making waves.'

Mickey's Mom and Stepdad will be back in the States in only a few more months, and then he can go back to his regular normal life – that is, if he can survive one year in Tokyo.

One Year in Tokyo, by James J. Craft
Brilliantly illustrated by Kwon Lee Tran

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Sick Puppy Comics

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Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. Three college students sign up for a six-month isolation experiment. Things start to get a little strange, and they begin to lose their masculinity day by day. Yet, they don't seem to even notice... Full Color Comic Book / 38 pages

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Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. Asked to look after a supermodel's pet for a while, James finds himself thrust out of his own apartment and into hers. Day by day, it seems like circumstances adapt James to become the resident of a supermodel's lifestyle. Full Color Comic Book / 29 pages

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Story & Art by Joe Six-Pack. When teen goth Brandy gets his drivers' license, he thinks it's a ticket to adulthood. Unfortunately, he's already cashed a ticket in the opposite direction. Full Color Comic Book / 27 pages

Teens Transformed

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"A Little Too Clever" by Joe Six-Pack. Wyatt wanted to help his girlfriend get revenge, but at what cost? As it turns out, a cost greater than any boy could have imagined. Book / 88 pages / 20 illustrations

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"Big in Japan" by James J Craft. Mike and Ken were one-hit-wonder rock stars. Then they discovered they had fans in Japan, so they left to become famous. Then they discovered that the Japanese didn't know they were guys. Book / 77 pages / 26 illustrations

Students, Exchanged

"French Dupe" by Joe Six-Pack. Kelley Sue's convinced a French exchange student to disguise himself as a girl. What happens when she realizes he has no intention of returning back home? Book / 57 pages / 15 illustrations

He's a Valley Girl, Fer Sure

From the files of TGStories.com: "Corey Taylor's Big Bodacious Adventure" by Joe Six-Pack. For Corey, the only way he can get into college is to pretend to be a girl. But when does it stop being pretend? When he's cheerleader? A girlfriend? A beauty queen? Book / 78 pages / 17 illustrations

From Boys to Bridesmaids

"Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Groom" by James J Craft. Two spoiled and privileged boys are about to be put in their place by their new step-mother. And their place is by her side as her bridesmaids and daughters. Book / 77 Pages / 16 illustrations

Tales of Transformation

He's the Wrong Girl

"Office Chemistry" by Joe Six-Pack. James had to fill in at the reception desk. Problem is, the business is a bio-genetics company. And all of the sudden the coffee tastes funny. Book / 53 pages / 14 illustrations

City Boy, Country Girl

By Joe Six-Pack. Richard's long-forgotten aunt is sick, and he goes to care for her. His calls back home leave his wife Janice confused and unsure about his return. So she goes to find him. But is there much left to be found? Book / 64 pages / 25 illustrations

Thames Greene

By James J Craft. Ira wanted something better for his family. A new start. But in Thames Greene, everyone's getting a new start, whether they want it or not. Book / 77 pages / 26 illustrations

Hiding in High Heels

"How Not to be a Sissy" By Joe Six-Pack. Vince was on the run from people who wanted their millions back. Howard was a friend with a funny little idea and a knack for making subliminal CDs. Mini-Pix / 48 pages / 15 illustrations

I'm Your Dolly

"Barbie-in-a-Box" By Joe Six-Pack. Tyler wasn't much of a boyfriend anymore. Jessica wanted to throw him out, but then a better idea came to her, in the form of the Barbie-in-a-Box service. Tyler better get used to pink. Book / 103 pages / 20 illustrations

His Life as a Trophy Wife

"The Puppy Mill" by Joe Six-Pack. Nick had a great life, but then it evaporated. Now he's down on his luck. In steps a wealthy executive willing to pay him handsomely to pretend to be his wife. What can it hurt? Book / 210 pages / 16 illustrations

Male Monday, Girl Friday

"Hey, Cutie!" by James J. Craft. Daniel is going to be promoted from his average life to an exciting executive position. At least, that's what his bosses are telling him. They may not be telling him everything. Book / 58 pages / 20 illustrations

The Happiest Place on Earth

From the files of TGStories.com: "The Fairest One of All" By Joe Six-Pack. Will is a kid looking for a job. He gets one, performing as Snow White at a theme park. For Will, he doesn't suspect that playing the role and wearing the costume is slowly changing him, day by day. Book / 51 pages / 21 illustrations

Hello, Nurse

From the files of TGStories.com: "Quality Health Care" Dane is filling in as a nurse for his pal Jimmy at his new office. Although both are doctors, Dane begins to take to his new role as a nurse. Soon, he feels compelled to be the ideal nurse. Book / 44 pages / 15 illustrations

My Boss, The Bimbo

"If I Were a Betting (Wo)Man" By James J. Craft, illustrations by blackshirtboy. CEO Lucas has a superiority complex. When his long-suffering secretary is able to feed into Lucas' competitive nature, he'll make any bet to prove his dominance over women. Book / 38 pages / 10 illustrations

He's the Girl They Want

"Rallies" by Joe Six-Pack. Spencer has a great new executive job in the food service industry, but first he's got to learn the ropes of the business by waiting on tables. He just doesn't quite fit in with the cheerleader theme. Yet. Book / 63 pages / 22 illustrations

I, Candy

"Sissy Sweets" by James J. Craft, illustrations by rocketdave. Inheriting his family's bakery requires this young man to become the new face of the business. A female face. Book / 45 pages / 15 illustrations

Stories of the Supernatural

Changed and Rearranged

"Wrongs Make Wright" By Joe Six-Pack. Chris and Matt were rivals. Then, Matt decided to show everyone how smart he truly was by impersonating a teacher. But the disguise becomes more and more real, much to Chris' dismay. Book / 74 pages / 19 illustrations

From Pals to Gals

From the files of TGStories.com: "Mandate of the People" By Joe Six-Pack. Teens Jeremy and Stewart are good friends, but a bit thick in the noggin. When they jokingly nominate each other for Prom Queen, they slowly become the perfect candidates, thanks to some magic. Book / 45 pages / 16 illustrations

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"Camp Counseling" By Joe Six-Pack. Brock McCade always thought of himself as a real man, or at least he would be one, someday. After summer camp, he's no longer so sure. Book / 76 pages / 17 illustrations

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By Joe Six-Pack. Harvey had the unusual ability to convincingly imitate a teenage girl. In desperation, he has to use that talent to make some money. But when is enough enough? Paperback / 194 pages / text only



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