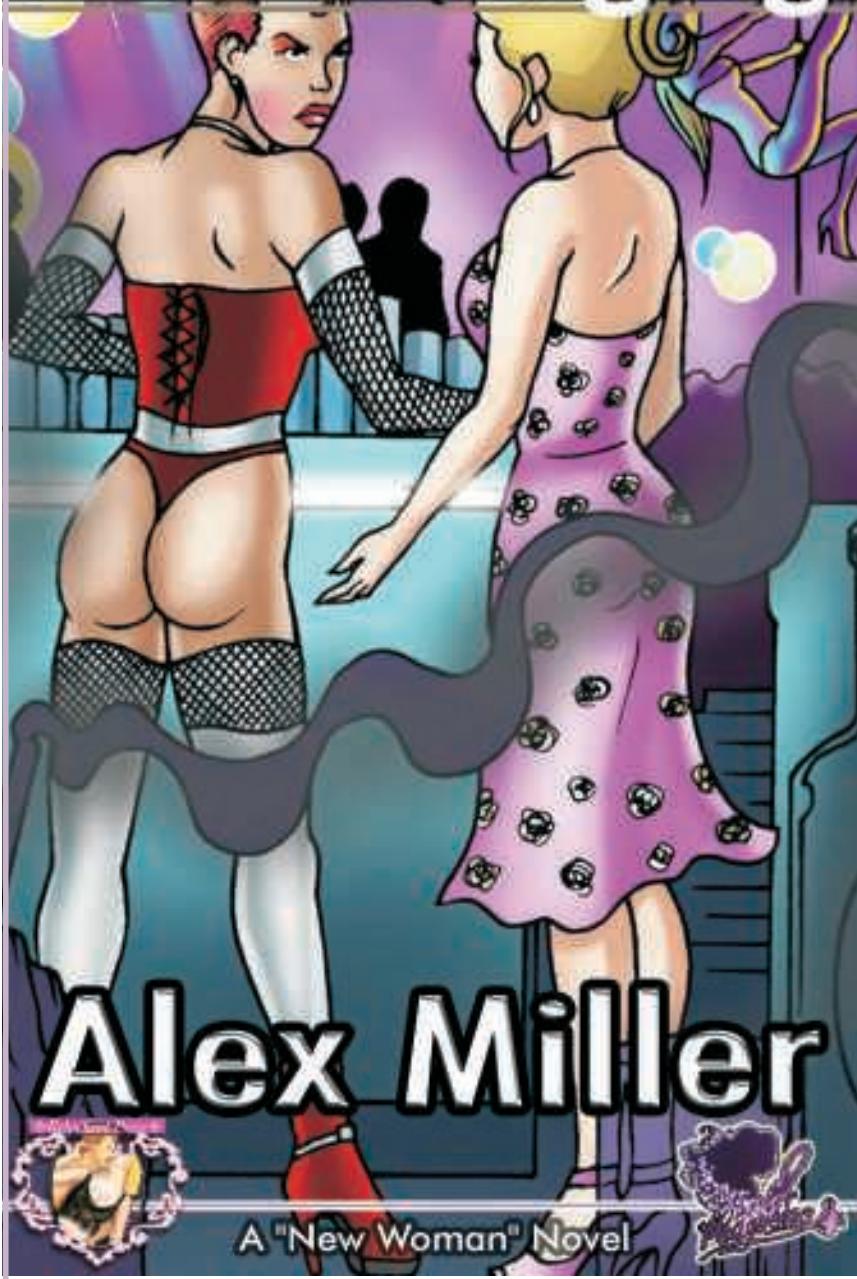


Life Changing



Alex Miller



A "New Woman" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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LIFE CHANGING

By Alex Miller

Everyone has one or more life changing moments during his or her lifetime. Sometimes they are small but come with big consequences. Sometimes they are unavoidable and sometimes they are one's own fault...or maybe it is fate pointing you in the right direction?

I was running to catch my train home. If I missed that one, I had to wait for the next one, something I desperately tried to avoid. It wasn't a disaster if I had to take that one but I don't like to wait. This was my first day off and I had time. The day before was my last day at work, a long one because my boss had me do some overtime. If I didn't know better, I would have said that she didn't like me. The truth was, *she* didn't know *me*. We crossed each other in the maze that was our department, but I was my own boss. Well not really, but I was the only I.T. specialist for that department. Normally I was part of the tech division, but the boss who wasn't my boss had me on a permanent loan. Her department was too important

to be dependent on the indulgence of the tech division. The fact that the tech division didn't dared to protest was an indication that she was no small fish in the big pond named a company. But I was, and a new one, a reason for them to send me.

A second reason was the fact that I had long black hair and a full beard. It was their way to antagonize Miss Anderson. Not even my glasses, something I wore since my youth, could soften the view. She didn't blink when she saw me for the first time and she would ignore me for the rest of it. But it was clear that the fact that I was able to fit in from the first day was the only reason why she didn't kick me back to where I came from.

The reason for overtime was that her secretary requested me to do a last check-up of everything. This was because half of the department, including me, had a two-week vacation. There were going to be some big structural changes. The department was getting bigger. That meant that Miss Anderson would only get bossier. She had the reputation of never accepting a 'no' and to never giving a 'yes'. The department would get a big makeover. That meant a lot of overtime for the next months. So they gave some of us a vacation before we had to face the apocalypse. I just had to make sure everything was up to date for the tech division to take over for those two weeks. They just needed to do the bare minimum, as did the whole department.

I'd been in that department for two years now. I left my previous job when my wife kicked me out after cleaning out our joint account and savings. There I was, thirty-eight, no place to live, spending rent on a place not worth calling home. The house was my ex's since her grandmother died. I had no money to make a quick fresh start. So I found a cheap place not too

far from work until I had enough money to buy one. Which probably would be never. One could say I had given up hope and I had given up women since I got screwed by my wife. That meant no screwing anymore from then on. That made me realize that I didn't had given up on women, only on relationships.

After spending my first day off in town, I wanted to be back home on time. Yesterday had been hectic enough. I had the whole evening planned with television, relaxing, a beer and a good movie. I preferred the independent movies that asked an effort from the viewer. That always resulted in me watching the film on my own, but I liked it that way. I had spent the day exploring this part of town. It had been at least ten years ago since I had been there. That must have been when I was seventeen on a school trip to the Guggenheim. This time I just visited the usual tourist attractions.

Normally I would have taken the subway, but a power outage made me take an alternate route through the theatre district. It probably wouldn't last long but I had no patience that day. A cab was out of the question. Maybe if I ran I could make it? All that jogging I did could turn out to be useful for more than just for keeping my weight. I just had to avoid bumping into a person, almost impossible in that city, but I was convinced that I could avoid any obstacle, even the human ones. So I wasn't happy when that almost happened.

She came walking out of a building, looking in her purse for a cigarette. The sound of my shoes was loud enough for her to notice me and I got a glimpse of her. I went right while she went left and one can guess what would happen. But before it could, I shouted at her while pointing the right way to go.

“Out of my way, you ugly old drag.”

It was the wrong time, the wrong place and those definitely were the wrong words. I regretted them from the moment they left my mouth. This wasn’t the normal me, not even the abnormal me, just the frustrated me. It was insulting, but it worked. She stepped out of the way. Just to see me bump into the next group of people, her kind of people. I made an attempt to escape from their grabbing hands, but it was no use. Two pair of hands kept me in a firm grip and I was not even a match for one.

“What did you call Jenny?”

I heard voices, but I couldn’t place them. Their lips stopped before I found the one responsible. These women were obviously friends of the person I insulted and of the same confusing gender. But just like with Jenny, calling them old and ugly was telling the truth a little bit too much. I tried to tear myself loose. It was a futile attempt. Those hands belonged to two tall determine ladies hiding a man’s power. And the fact that they were more then a head taller than me didn’t helped either, a reality that was based on high heels, but also on my own height. I was five feet eight and not even close to their measurements.

“What do you think, Jenny? Should we teach this person some manners? Teach him how a man should treat a woman?”

“I think that it wouldn’t be a bad idea to do so. But how?”

“The same way we learned it. The hard way.”

“Does that mean what I think it means?”

“I think so. Let’s have some fun.”

People didn’t even care what was happening. They all ignored me and my attempts to escape. I had given up struggling and listened to their conversation with growing surprise. From what I had heard, I knew that what awaited me was not a fast and easy way home. I couldn’t guess what they had in mind, but it would definitely make me miss my train. One thing I was sure of was that I wouldn’t be the one that would have fun. They led me through the entrance straight into the lobby and auditorium of a theatre that seamed not to have changed since World War Two.

Before I knew it, we were standing in a dressing room. The only thing that didn’t look original was the shower I could see through an open door. I looked everywhere and saw nothing. Nothing that was important to me, anyway, like a way out. The door I came through was blocked by a half-dozen women of a male demeanor.

“Ok, strip.”

I never looked as surprised as then, but they weren’t laughing. That meant that they weren’t joking, so my surprise changed into panic.

“What do you mean? Are you crazy? I can’t strip here.”

“Why not? We are all guys here. No need to be embarrassed.”

“I refuse. You can’t do that. I’ll tell the police. This is abuse.”

“Oh yes we can and go ahead. Some of them are good friends of us. We won’t have much trouble to convince them.”

“They will never believe that I am a threat to you all.”

“No, but that you tried to grope Jenny, they will, especially her sister. She’s a cop and she doesn’t like it when someone treats Jenny with disrespect. She can be here in five minutes. So what is it going to be?”

“I still won’t get naked before you all.”

“Ah, don’t be a sissy. You’ll do it or we do it for you. But we won’t go easy on you or on your clothes. I’m afraid they’ll get ripped.”

I looked around in the hope to find some kind face that would take my side, but they all looked as if they could skin me. Insulting Jenny was obviously not easily forgiven. I ran every possible scenario through my mind and all left me naked. So I slowly removed my jacket and sweater. Their piercing eyes made it clear that I couldn’t stop there. A lot of minutes later I stood naked in the middle of the dressing room. I was covering my private parts with my hands while they were checking all the rest.

“Umm, he has the figure for it. Not bad. We can do something with this. Even better, we can make a whole new person out of him. One even he won’t recognize. The decision is yours, Jenny. The whole works or do you think he already has learned enough?”

“Maybe, but it doesn’t matter anymore. I would love to see him our way. Let’s do it and go all out with him.”

“That’s our girl and soon he will be too.”

They all laughed, but I didn’t know why. I could easily guess, but I didn’t dare, because I didn’t like the obvious answer.

“We have almost an hour before we have to take the stage. Enough to prepare his body to fit our standards for beauty. First a shave.”

“What? You are not going to shave my beard off. Forget it. I’ll hit the first one who touches me. Whatever the consequences are.”

I only saw smiles on their faces and the many hands grabbing me told me why. My hands were held tight behind my back. The struggle even let me forget what they had been hiding seconds before.

“You better not move your head or the scissor will cut you accidentally and we don’t want to ruin such a pretty little face.”

That warning was more than enough to hold me as stiff as possible, one part excluded of course. Big chunks of hair fell on the ground. An electric shaver made sure that every evidence of its existence was gone. I was glad that they hadn’t used a razor blade.

“We are going to give you a laser treatment so your beard won’t grow back immediately. It will make your skin as smooth as a baby’s behind. If you want it to be permanent, you’ll have to come back.”

“As if. If I am coming back, it will be with my lawyer.”

“If he needs a treatment, he is always welcome. Now that is done, we need to get rid of his body hair. Cream him up, ladies, and make sure every part of his body below his neck is covered.”

When minutes later many hands covered in cream wandered over my body, I went catatonic, shutting this world out. A burning feeling over my whole body pulled me back to this world.

“What are you doing to me? I’m burning up.”

“Making sure that it works and making sure that you feel Jenny’s pain. Now you know how painful those words were.”

“I’m sorry, OK? I didn’t mean it that way. I promise never to say it again. Just let me go. You have taken this far enough.”

“We can’t do that. I’ll believe you now, but can I believe you tomorrow? We started this and we will finish this. You’ll come out of it as a better person, a more beautiful one anyway.”

Before I could say anything, I was standing under the shower. With every drop of water, the pain flowed away. I didn’t even notice that it also took all the hair of my body with it. I wrapped the towel I used around me. It made me feel less vulnerable.

“Sit down. Make sure that you sit comfortable. You will be sitting here for a while. There is still a lot of work to do.”

The chair was high and had arms, but comfortable it was. Well, until they started to tie me down to it. Luckily they used ribbons. That didn't mean that they weren't effective at holding me.

"What is the meaning of this? What are you going to do with me?"

"Don't worry. We have a show to do. This is just to make sure you can't run away. While we are gone, Cindy will give you a laser show. Don't struggle and keep your eyes closed. We only have one pair of glasses left and you have such lovely brown eyes."

A moment of panic bubbled up, but I pulled myself together very quick. Her words reminded me of my own glasses. They lay on the dressing table out of my reach, but that didn't matter. I didn't need them here, only when I went outside. I looked at Cindy. I was no match for her, *him*. Even if I had struggled she would have pinned me down at the spot. Another moment of panic passed by, my mind went crazy. Here I was, as good as naked in unknown territory, surrounded by hostile natives. Well just one, but she carried a dangerous weapon and sunbathing glasses.

"Here, this will keep your eyes safe. You won't see anything with them. But you better keep your eyes closed, just to be sure."

I felt with my eyes closed how the laser did its work when she pressed the machine on my skin. I felt how she wiped that same skin clean every time. How long it lasted I didn't know, but she was done minutes before the rest came back.

"Perfect, he is ready for the next stage. Um, that reminds me. We don't know your name. You need a name."

“My name is Andrew. Some call me Andy.”

“Angie, yes that’s a nice name. We’ll call you Angie.”

“No, that’s not it. They call me ...”

A hand smothered the rest I wanted to say and made me clear that I had no choice about it. I was going to be an Angie. What I already knew but was afraid to admit was the future they had in mind for me. If I only had taken the subway, ran a little faster, slower. Anything that would have steered me on to another path. I wouldn’t have been here.

“We’ll keep the glasses on until the last patches. It will make your surprise even bigger. Even if you know what we’re up to.”

I didn’t really have a choice. I could protest but I already knew what I would get as an answer. So I accepted my fate and decided to endure everything. Anyway, it would be over in an hour or two and I could go back to who I was. There would be no reason for them to keep on torturing me like this when their desire for justice had been satisfied. When this was over, there were two weeks ahead to forget this adventure.

I shivered when I felt a cold fluid touching my body. It was followed by something that was pressed onto my upper body, twice. I didn’t need much imagination to know what it could be. The choices were limited when you took in consideration whom I had to deal with.

“These are leftovers. They are too small for us to use but for you they are a nice fit. And don’t pull, they are glued on.”

My scream filled the room.

“Wow, that’s some nice pair of lungs you got. But don’t you worry. It will come off tomorrow evening. So will the bottom part.”

Lies, but I had no reason not to believe them. What did I know of gluing things onto my body. But it wouldn’t stop there. I felt more than one hand grabbing a part of my body that was reserved for my chosen one. Normally it would have protested in a straight way, straight away, but not this time. Those hands belonged to the wrong gender and my mind wasn’t blind to it. That meant that they had no problem down there.

“Well, we glued your thing down, partly anyway and we covered it then with silicone skin. You just have to use the toilet sitting down, like every woman. Besides, when we are done, you won’t use the men’s room.”

“What skin? What have you done down there?”

“Like I said, silicone skin. We use the skin when we want to show more by showing less. Beside, you look great with your new additions, like a new woman.”

I only heard them laugh as they had kept the glasses on me. I was kept in the dark as long as possible. It didn’t make it easy to put on panties but they had many hands to make sure it reached its end goal. Well, I assumed it was panties. A bra seemed unnecessary until they pressed me in a dress immediately after.

“Oh yes! You can keep everything. The clothes and all the accessories are too small. We don’t use them anymore, but they are still nice enough to let you

shine. But the panties are plain. You don't have to pay for them or bring them back. They're all yours."

That didn't make me any happier, but it was good to know. I just wished she had warned me about making holes in my ears. Before I knew what they were doing, the pain made it clear. The second time I was prepared and I was able to hold in my scream.

"You already scream like a girl and soon you will look like one, but if I was you, I wouldn't say too much to strangers. They don't like surprises like you and your voice gives it all away. The only thing we can do is hide your Adam's Apple, but first your hair and makeup."

Whatever they were doing with my ears was done. Now my breasts weren't the only thing being pulled at. I tried to keep my mind onto other things while they kept busy with my body. They kept going and I hadn't noticed that they stopped when they removed the glasses. I was standing before a mirror that was filled with women. I kept on searching for my reflection and I failed. It wasn't until they took a step back that I realized that the woman in the center was me. It had to be because her hands did exactly what I wanted mine to do. I could have denied it, but when she smiled when I did, blinked when I did, I accepted it as the truth.

"Yes, that's you and I must say that the result is way better then we ever imagined. If you ever look for a job, this theatre can use a pretty face like you in more than one way."

Before I could see my reflection in more detail, they had covered it. If it had still been there, I would have seen a woman. How could she not have been? She was barefooted but her toenails were pink, probably

to match her fingernails and lipstick. The dress she was wearing was short. It barely covered her, *my* bottom. It was one of those sparkling silver party dresses. Luckily it had a halter neckline so her bosom was covered, but not her back. Her hair was not as long as it had been, but that was because it was curled. The shape of her eyebrows was consistent with the pain I had felt. Her eyelashes were a nice touch, as were the earrings. The holes were filled with little hoops covered with diamonds and on those hoops hung some more diamonds, creating a chandelier earring. My fingers told me what my eyes couldn't. It surprised me that I knew that. I learned more from my wife than I would have guessed. And as they promised, the dead giveaway that I was a man was covered with a diamond collar necklace, tightly wrapped around my neck. They were all fake diamonds, even I knew that. The result was perfect, but unwanted. I wasn't happy with the way I looked, but I *was* happy with how I looked. If I had to be a woman, I could live with this view. But I didn't want to be one, so I couldn't wait to leave this place and get the train home.

“Are you all satisfied now? Can I go?”

“Well, I am and I think the rest are too. You can go when we have found you something to wear on your feet. We don't want to throw you on the streets without shoes. The problem is that you don't have big feet. Which is good if you want to buy women's shoes, but bad if you want to borrow some from us. We only could find these boots. You can go if you agree to wear them. Otherwise you have to stay a little longer.”

What she held in her hands were thigh-high boots. The kind that gives men the wrong impression of the one wearing them. Boots I couldn't wear and not only

because of the look, but also because of the high heels.

“Are you nuts? I can’t wear those black boots. They have heels and what will people think when they see me walking by?”

“Of course they have high heels. You’re a woman now who only looks good with high heels. What are you crying about? They are only three inches. Every woman can walk with such low heels.”

Three or ten inches was too high for someone who wore nothing but sneakers almost his while life. But what choice did I have? I wanted to leave as soon as possible. I wanted to run before they found something else to turn me into. So I grabbed the boots and pulled them up my legs.

“Damn, girl, you look hot. The men will eat you alive.”

That was not what I wanted to hear but I was already on my way straight to the emergency exit. They and their cell phones had been busy with taking pictures.

“Wait, you have forgotten something, your wallet.”

I expected not only its content, but the wallet too. They gave its female version, a clutch. For a moment, I didn’t know what to do. Then my self-preservation kicked in and moved my feet to the exit, leaving a lot of smiling women or what looked like them, behind. They were happy and I was panicking with every step. How did women walk with these boots? My mind said ‘fast,’ but my feet said ‘slow.’ They had trouble working together to keep me stable. I had no

other choice than to take short steps if I wanted to avoid a sprained ankle.

When I opened the door, I noticed that my ordeal had lasted longer than expected. Night had already fallen. Standing outside, I came to my senses and realized that my troubles had just begun. I had to reach the train station looking like this and what about when I reached home? Maybe I could have bought some new clothes but my mind wasn't working logically at that moment.

All I could think of was reaching the station. I wasn't familiar with the area. Every street was a mystery I couldn't solve. No map and no phone because I wanted to have a message-free day, which my boss would have ruined if I had my phone with me. I could take a taxi but I didn't want someone to see me like this for longer than a second. A few minutes had passed, but I hadn't put much distance between me and the source of all evil. The boots were killing me and I realized that I had forgotten my glasses. I could go back but that was the last thing on my mind. So I wasn't far away yet, which meant that I could hear Jenny's voice very clear. She stood outside, holding the door in one hand and my glasses in the other. If she let the door go, she couldn't get back in. She'd have to walk round for a big part of the block.

"That's the wrong way. You have to go to the other side. Come back. You'll get into trouble if you go that way."

She was the wrong person to convince me of my mistake ...and a mistake it was. I hadn't noticed that I had crossed the alley and that the exit was on the other side. So West had become East and that was not the way to go. Jenny kept on yelling and I kept on

walking until the sound of the city became louder than her voice.

I was relieved that that was over. It was a misplaced feeling, but I couldn't have known what kind of ordeal still was waiting for me. Every step was bringing me closer to it and with every step I had to endure some snappy remark. I could rarely see the person responsible, not clearly anyway, except when they were close enough. Having no glasses made it difficult to recognize anything from the neighborhood. Not that it would have helped a lot, it all was still a mystery for me. The fact that I was enraged and therefore didn't watch my environment was the main reason why I made a big mistake.

After a while I could hear and smell that I was nearing the water surrounding this island. But that was not all I was nearing. I had reached a part of the city that was known for its women and the services they delivered. It took some time for me to accept my new situation. I couldn't understand how I got there or where I was. But it was a reality that stared me in the face when I walked around a corner. Jenny was right, I had been going the wrong way and things kept on going the wrong way.

“Hey bitch, keep on walking. This is my place.”

I ran, not because of her words, but because of the knife in her hand. The problem was that I ran in the wrong direction. Instead of turning back, I had gone further into this colorful neighborhood. If there ever was a moment to start panicking, it was then and so I did. I was flipping so hard that I didn't notice the police car pulling up next to me. Before I knew what was



happening, I was pushed into the car by a police-woman. She hadn't cuffed me. Not that it was necessary. With those heels, I couldn't have outrun a snail. Being in the back of the car had a strangely calming effect. At least I was safe, well from the world outside anyway. Now I had to deal with a fierce-looking policewoman. I just had to tell her what had happened. It took the whole ride to make her stop laughing. She turned around, facing me with a smile.

"That's a nice excuse. I haven't heard that one before. I never guessed that you were one of that type of a girl. You look even better than my niece and she's a model. Well, she tries to be."

"I'm not. Like I said, this wasn't my choice. They made me. This is not what I want to be. I just want to go home to change."

"Sure. Whatever you say, but you can't go home yet. You have to stay for the night. We have a nice cell for a girl like you."

I stumbled behind her when she dragged me into the police station, firmly holding my arm. Before I knew what awaited me, she had taken my fingerprints. I didn't dare to resist, only to protest. Who could I ask for help? She was the one I had hoped would get me out of this predicament.

"You can't do this, fingerprinting me. I haven't done anything wrong. I just was walking around when you arrested me. You have no reason to hold me. Or is looking like this a crime?"

"Maybe I can't do this, but I am still going to. Besides, you were walking around in the wrong neighborhood, looking like you belonged there. And for the record, looking that good as a non-woman, yeah,

that's a crime. They did a good job on you. Even you have to admit that.”

I admitted it, but I would never say it out loud. That was like saying that they had done a good thing. It was the wrong thing and I wanted to get out of it. Now I had to wait another day before I could turn back to my old self. Maybe that wasn't as bad as I thought. Maybe I could use the time to buy some men's clothes and change before going home.

“I have the right to telephone someone, don't I?”

“You do. Here take this.”

She gave me the first telephone she could get her hand on. I froze while holding the phone. There was no one I could call, not looking like this. Friend or family, they would never stop laughing.

“What's the matter, girl? Boyfriend trouble? Doesn't he likes it when he has to come to the police station to find his girl behind bars.”

“I don't have a boyfriend. I like girls.”

“That's obvious when I look at you, but I assume that you mean liking them in a more romantic and intimate way.

“It doesn't matter. It's time to show you your suite for the night. You're lucky. It's a quiet night. You only have to share it with one other guest. You should feel yourself at home with her. Or is it *him*? ”

It was a her *and* it was a him. She was what I wasn't, the real deal. Shanya was her name and she already had the breasts to show how committed she

was. She only needed money to pay for the last operation.

I told her what happened without going into details. For as far as she knew, I wanted the same thing she did.

“Are you kidding me? There is no God. How unfair. You’re a newbie and you already look as if you were born as one. There is something very wrong with this world and it is not only the men on it.”

“What will happen to me? I never have been arrested before.”

“A newbie hasn’t much to fear. They’ll probably try to scare you out of this ungrateful business and I can’t blame them. You’re not like me.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You can find much better ways to get the money for your transition. I went for the fast money, but not the easy way. You don’t have to do that. Men will line up for you.”

That was the last thing I wanted. The second to last thing was staying like this. I just had to survive the night and if this woman was right, I would be let go in the morning. That would be the perfect time to take a train and get home before anybody I knew could see me like this.

“No, no. I like women, always will.”

“OK, but you make it hard for yourself to find a woman who likes a woman like you. Not that we can choose who and what we want. And that’s not the only problem. You don’t sound like one yet, but that

will change. I can teach you how and we have the whole night to get it right.”

I could have refused, I *should* have refused, but I didn’t dare. This was enemy territory and a friend was useful. So I played along to keep her as a friend. I couldn’t tell how long I slept after I finally succeeded to sound female. Maybe one, maybe two hours, it didn’t matter. It had been sufficient. Shanya woke me up. She pointed at the door. It was open. The police-woman was waiting. I still didn’t know her name, but I didn’t want to know it anyway. She was the enemy, for me anyway.

“Bye, my beauty and don’t forget, pitch and tone. That’s what’s important when you want to sound female, pitch and tone.”

I waved and was a little sad to leave a friend behind in such bad circumstances. She wasn’t a newbie and wouldn’t be treated as one and I would soon find out how they treated one.

“Follow me, you’re free to go. You better have learned your lesson. A little cell time gives people the opportunity to think about what they have done. I hope you did too.”

“How many times do I have to say it? You had no reason to put me in jail. I haven’t done anything wrong.”

“Tell that to Jenny.”

Everything came clear to me. This was payback.

“You’re her sister. That explains a lot. You had no right to do this. You are taking advantage of the fact that you are a cop.”