

# SHIRLEY

*By Susan Hulbert*



*ILLUSTRATED BY C. PITTS*

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A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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# SHIRLEY

By Susan Hulbert

## Introduction

This is a story which I have meant to write while all the details and memories of the feelings are still strong. I never intended that my life take the course it did. I intended to be an academic, to work away quietly expanding human knowledge, but it was not to be.

As I tried to set out on my chosen career, I found myself alone and unemployed. The project upon which my reputation was to be founded was canceled due to a lack of funding. I was living on my dwindling savings in a shabby apartment. Altogether life was bad and I was desperate. I had to get a job. That is where my story starts.

A Job at Last.

“You may go in now,” said the receptionist, “Mrs. Gaskell’s waiting for you.”

I went in, nervously. I had been looking for a job, any job, for a long time, and this was the first interview I had been able to get. It was difficult being alone in a strange town, with no friends and no income. My savings had almost run out and I was getting desperate.

As I walked in, she looked me up and down.

“You’re very slim, and have some potential physically,” she said looking at me as if I was a piece of meat, “but you’ll have to convince me that we could train you to be a decent female impersonator, especially as you’ve no experience.”

“I know,” I stuttered, “but you advertised for anyone willing to train, and I need a job. I need anything, I...I...”

The words failed me. Why was I applying for this job? you may ask. The reason was simple; I needed anything. I had left the university eighteen months before, well qualified, but totally unemployable. The promised research never came up and I reasoned that if I could do something exotic, I could at least write a book about it all, and make a bit of money that way.

So here I was, wondering how to convince Mrs. Gaskell that I was worth training. She owned several clubs and had just opened a new one featuring transvestites everywhere. No one there was what they seemed; even the cleaners were transvestites, as well as the cooks, waitresses, barmaids, glass collectors, stock takers, administrators, and of course, all the entertainers. No dress, no job. And here I was asking for one.

“Right,” she said, deciding quickly, “you’re hired. You’ll start as a cleaner, and live in for at least the first few months. You know the rules; once you’re hired here, there’s

no going back, not even for a minute. If you're sure you can take it, go through that door. Otherwise, go out the way you came in.'

I went through that door, knowing, but not knowing, what was to happen to me. I found myself in a small room with just a table and chair. On the table was a plastic bag. I knew what I had to do; I stripped off all my clothes, then pushed them into the bag. Naked, I went through the other door, into my new life.

I stood there, feeling too excited to be frightened, as I waited for someone to tell me where to go next. I did not have to wait long.

"You're the new girl then," said a burly woman, a cigarette dangling from her lower lip. I say "woman", because I was determined not to say the wrong thing and lose the job I had just obtained. I followed her gesture and found myself in a room which served as a clothing store.

"Cleaner, is it?" she asked, and when I nodded, she turned and started to pick items off the various piles and placed them on the table.

These were to be *my* clothes. Not just my working clothes, but my everyday clothes as well. It was a rule that, once on the payroll, all males had to remain in female dress at all times, even on their days off, even on their holidays. Any deviation and their careers were ended at once. I haven't mentioned the pay, have I? Well, it was good, so good that there were few who weren't careful, but there were also very few who were successful long term. And when they were found out, they were dismissed instantly, with no come back.

I looked at the bundle I had been given, as the wardrobe mistress gave me a robe to put on. She smiled through her cigarette and said, surprisingly gently, that I could dress there. I pulled on the unfamiliar clothes, struggling to fasten brassiere and suspenders, then the dress which had a back zip. I forced my feet into shoes with heels for the first time in my life, and began unsteadily to walk back and forth to get my balance.

"That's not too bad, at least for a first day," said my companion. "The first couple of weeks are the worst of all. If you can survive that, you'll survive anything."

It was just as bad as joining the army, I thought as I looked in the mirror at the ridiculous figure I had become. I knew I was in for a difficult time but, I reasoned, every new job has some problems at the start, and it gets easier as you go along.

"You've been allocated a room on the second floor, I think, under the name of Shirley. We haven't had a Shirley for a few weeks. The last one was caught playing football with the team he was with before he came here and got sacked at once." The wardrobe mistress grinned at me. "Shirley's a name that comes and goes here; we'll see how long you last. Find your room, leave your things there and come down to see the cleaner's supervisor in half an hour."

I left, and went to find my room. What a surprise it was. It was a single room, with bed, table and chair, but it had its own toilet and shower area. There was a hair drier, a big make-up mirror, like in a theater dressing room—which I supposed this really was—and the curtains were open over a big window looking over the garden at the rear

of the premises. The furnishings were in pastel colors, gentle. To me, it seemed to be the epitome of femininity.

I took all this in very quickly, and placed my small bundle on the chair. I hadn't had time to look at what was in it before; now I did so. It contained only a second set of underwear, a small mirror, a hairbrush and comb. I took a few moments to look in the drawers and cupboards, but all were empty. There was no trace of whoever had been there before me, and I set off to find my supervisor.

Going downstairs, I was surprised by all the activity now. There were people all over the place, hurrying, preparing for opening time. All were dressed as women, no matter the job they were doing. I knew one or two were real women, the top supervisors who reported directly to Mrs. Gaskell, but it was hard to realize that the majority of the people I now saw before me were men underneath all the clothes and make up. They all looked so perfect.

Then I was standing in front of my supervisor, who eyed me up and down, as if in wonder that anything so coarse could be presented to her.

"You'll have to keep out of sight tonight, that's for sure," she said. "Tomorrow, we'll have to do something with you so that you don't frighten off the customers. Tonight, just keep to the kitchens and watch. Don't get in the way, just watch. And learn."

I was introduced to the kitchen supervisor, who put me beside a dish washing machine. And that was how I spent my first night in the entertainment industry: loading and unloading the machine, dressed in uncomfortable shoes, and sweating into the one dress I possessed. When it was over, I stumbled out into the main bar with the other staff. I was too tired to do more than accept my drink, then stumble upstairs to my room.

In the morning, after I had showered and shaved, I dried my hair and changed into my second set of underwear. I had to retain the same dress and shoes that I had worn the night before; I had no others. Hesitantly, I went down the stairs to see what was expected of me for the day. I reported to my supervisor, who sent me to the wardrobe mistress. I was to be outfitted properly, and "integrated into the team", whatever that meant.

I soon found out when I returned to the clothing store. There was a bigger bundle waiting for me to take to my room and I was instructed to come back immediately because "next door" were waiting for me, who or whatever they were. I returned and was asked to take a card from a pack held out to me. I thought it was a card trick, but when the card was turned over for me to see, my future appearance was spelled out upon it.

I was shown the card. It contained instructions, which I could not understand, for the people next door, who turned out to be a beauty parlor's staff. I went outside for the first time in a dress, and hurried into the salon, nervous, wondering why I had been so desperate for a job. I sat in the chair and handed the card to the lady, who looked at me with gentle amusement. She smiled as she read it, and called instructions to others in the salon.

“You may not know it, but you're a lucky one. They're spending quite a bit on you, you've drawn the best card for the month. You don't know what it means, but you'll soon see. I'm not allowed to tell you what we're supposed to do. You've got to watch, and they'll be watching too, when you go back.

With that, I was taken to a wash basin, where I leaned back for a hair wash. As I relaxed in the unaccustomed luxury of hands stroking my hair, I little realized just what that card held for me. I was seated on a chair in the salon where my hair, which was over my ears and quite long for a man, was carefully trimmed to even it out. Then I sat and watched as various processes unfolded before me.

I had volunteered for this job and I knew I was going to be surprised by whatever they did to me. Even so, I was not prepared for all that was to happen. I settled down to watch, thinking that everyone must get the same treatment. A girl with a plastic bowl brushed some liquid all over my hair, sectioning it out neatly as she did so, to cover it all. Then she covered my head with a plastic cap and left me for a long time as the salon busied itself with more conventional customers.

The ordinary customers knew what the salon did for the club next door, and I found myself the object of curious looks from people coming and going as the time passed. My cap was removed, my hair was rinsed, then the process was repeated. This time I was not allowed to watch anything. Again I sat, being regarded even more curiously by customers coming and going. Then I was rinsed again and, with a towel over my head, taken to sit before the stylist's mirror.

The towel was removed and I felt my hair falling damp against my forehead and cheek. The stylist rubbed it and then combed it all back, adding mousse as she did so. Taking a blow drier, she started to shape the hair. As it dried, I saw the color changing. My dark brown hair had gone, I was looking at someone with blonde hair. As it dried, it turned into a rich shade of light mink blonde, burnished and falling softly around my face and ears as it had never done before.

But the card had given me more than the most exciting hair style of the month. As soon as I was dry, I was taken to the side of the salon where the nail technician worked. I watched in amazement as my short fingernails became crimson talons. In that one step, my hands became feminine. I looked and looked again. I decided this was exciting. This was more than a job, and I was going to be good at it.

As soon as the nails were fixed, I was taken to the back of the salon, where I was told that my card had been completed, but that they would like the apprentice to make me up as a practice. I did not object. I wanted everything at once. Even if it was to be done only by the apprentice, it was more than I had before. I sat patiently while my face was made up in what I would describe as a simple style, very discreet and lady-like.

## **Creating Shirley**

I had been away for over four hours. With more confidence than before, I walked out of the salon, and into the club foyer. There I was met by Mrs. Gaskell herself.

“Well, I heard you'd drawn the bonus card,” she said, smiling, looking me up and down. “I've left instructions for your wardrobe to be suitably enhanced and for other matters to be attended to. I look forward to watching your development.”

With that, she was gone and I went back to the staff area. As soon as I walked in, I was greeted by whistles and hoots of appreciation. All my fellow workers clustered around me to look at my hair and hands. All seemed happy for me. I had drawn something special; normally, staff had to be there for a while before they received the treatment I had. It was explained that, normally, all new recruits are sent to have their hair bleached or dyed as soon as they arrive, but that it was not the super style I had received, just a quick change. The nails were something else entirely; they were usually not given to the cleaners until they were promoted to being bar maids.

And so, after just one day in my new job, I had been transformed more than I could have expected. What were my feelings then? I had deliberately sought the job, regarding the transformation as a means to an end. It was employment, and I intended to write about it in my book. Now, I have to confess, I was really excited. I liked the changes that were being made to me, and I was looking forward to becoming more feminine.

I returned to my room to see what I had been given in the way of clothes. With my new hair, I felt dowdy and uninteresting in the sweaty dress from yesterday. I wondered if real women had such strong feelings about their clothes and appearance. I surveyed the contents of my bundle and chose a short black dress which fitted quite tightly to my rather unfeminine figure. I noticed that I had been given a bag of cosmetics, although I had no real idea how to use them.

I went downstairs to find my supervisor, to see what I was expected to do that evening. I found her and she greeted me warmly, hugging me and kissing me on both cheeks.

“Well, you've changed,” she said, looking me up and down. “I guess you'll not be with me for too long. You'll be transferred, provided your behavior matches your looks.”

She took me into her office and told me that the system was to let new recruits work in her team until they either chose to leave or until management thought that they could be promoted to a more exciting position. Everyone had to start at the lowest level. I was told to collect a uniform from the wardrobe and that my job that evening would be to patrol the club, cleaning up whatever mess was left by the customers, emptying ash trays and the like. I was to be in full view.

The uniform I drew was little more than overalls, but with a tight bodice and short skirt. It was black with a white apron, almost like an old-fashioned maid's uniform, except that the skirt was short and slightly flared. The shoes I was to wear were very high, I thought. I know they were just two inches and I could wear them with ease, but right then they were really daunting. I was instructed to be in the makeup room an hour before the doors opened to the public. Until then, I was free.

I took the opportunity to wander around my new world, speaking to those of my fellow workers who were there. They varied greatly, from the stunningly attractive to the plain, but they all seemed to share an excitement about being there, living in costume

every day. I was introduced to Helena, the star of the show, who was rehearsing with a pianist who ignored me completely and practiced a piece over and over again. Helena was beautiful; I would never have guessed she was a man.

I realize now that she was slightly smaller than I am, but she towered over me, on black stiletto heels; her height was accentuated by the pile of golden wavy hair on the top of her head. Tendrils tumbled across her shoulders and down her back. She wore jeans and a simple white body top, with a scooped neckline, which revealed a surprising cleavage. She saw me looking there, and laughed. She said it had cost her a lot of money, so she liked people to enjoy what they saw.

She was the friendliest person I had met so far, even though she would probably have been the highest paid among the staff. In the next few days, I would learn more from her than from anyone else. I was also to learn her story, which was quite different from mine. It had taken her over four years to work her way through the system of the club; during that time she had done most of the jobs. Now she was rumored to live in a big house, with a girlfriend who had an ordinary job.

She had a genuinely friendly personality, and I felt that I had made a friend already. I could linger no more with her on this occasion, for time was passing. I ran up to my room and changed into my uniform for the evening, then presented myself at the makeup room. There they pinned back my hair and cleaned off what was left of the apprentice's efforts. I was told to watch carefully, and learn what to do. Each evening, I would be made-up for the club, but I would be expected to do my own makeup each day from now on. When I got good enough, I could do my own for the club as well, and then my pay would be enhanced.

This evening, they set about me with gusto. I watched in fascination as I was again transformed. The makeup was heavy and full. I hardly had time to notice all the things they were doing to me; it was such a fast operation in the hands of the skilled "ladies" who did this every night. I only really had a chance to look at the results as they teased up my newly blonde hair into a more elaborate style, then sprayed it stiffly with hair spray.

The woman looking back at me from the mirror was totally different from anything I expected. There was no subtlety in the make up, it was heavy and dark, accentuating the fact that my hair was such an unnatural color. My lips were what I can only describe as a dark coral color; my eyes were also dark, with lashings of heavy mascara on my lashes, and my thick eyebrows accentuating the contrast with my hair.

I was allowed no time to admire this effect, as I was called into the club, given my area to patrol. I was handed a long handled dust pan and brush, then a covered small bucket to use. I was told to return to the makeup room each hour to be checked. Then I was out, on my own, watching the first customers coming into the premises.

That first evening went so quickly, I can hardly remember everything. I was diligent, so I was busy. I remembered to have my makeup checked regularly, although not every hour. I was only one of many transvestites working there, and far from being the most attractive. All the waitresses and the bar maids were more glamorous than I was, and they seemed to have much more poise and self-confidence as they worked.



My strongest memory is of watching the floor show for the first time. I stood and watched from the rear, being as unobtrusive as possible. There were the showgirls, dancing, shedding their costumes as the show progressed. The two principal dancers were spectacular creatures who had obviously had something done to their chests. No man could be shaped like that, I thought, as they shook themselves provocatively at the front rows. When the finale of their act came, and they removed their tops to stand naked at the front of the stage, I *knew* they had had something done to them. There was no room for doubt.

The comedienne who followed was quite dowdy in comparison. She was short and, to be kind, plump. She adopted the character of a loudmouthed, aggressive woman and she looked the part. Her humor was too crude for my taste, but the audience seemed to like being insulted by her. They laughed and applauded. As the hours progressed, I found myself becoming less self-conscious with my new appearance. She made rude remarks about the dancers and many of the other staff as well.

Then it was Helena's turn. Her pianist came on first, an unremarkable lady in a black long dress, and sat at the piano. She started to play slowly and contemplatively, setting a quieter mood for Helena's entrance. As Helena came into the spotlight, she took my breath away. She had her hair loose, and it tumbled half way down her back. Her dress was black, with a silver sheen, strapless, and backless, with lots of cleavage on view. Her makeup, even at the distance I was sitting from the stage, was something else. I could see her long eye lashes and finely-shaped features on the monitor screens placed around the club.

Her act was quite wonderful. She sang for about forty minutes, changing the tempo of her songs several times, ending with a rousing rocker. As she moved across the stage with amazing energy, her dress threatened to fall away, showing everything to the audience who were clapping along with her. Then it was quiet again; the show finished and I returned to my duties as softer music played through the speakers. I was surprised to see it was now well into the early hours of the morning. The club would be closing in another hour.

Thus ended my first night in public view as a woman. It had been an altogether pleasant experience, now that I had gotten used to the idea that the customers were there to look at me and everyone else. It was no use being self-conscious when being on display was the purpose of my being there. I cleaned my area and prepared everything for the next night as best I could. The cleaners would deal with the rest. I had seen them briefly and I could understand why they were in that role; in costume, they were not the most presentable of women. I was told that some had stayed there for years, others left quickly, while one or two managed to gain promotion to the evening shift and other jobs.

As I went back through makeup, I was told where to put the clothes I had been wearing for cleaning, and where to collect a fresh set for the next evening. I was tired but happy now, and I sat, enjoying a drink with the other staff, before going to my room.

The rest of my first week passed in the same way. I practiced and practiced with the makeup set I had been given, and borrowed some books to give me more ideas about

how to apply cosmetics successfully. I had no money, and nowhere to go, even if I had the confidence to go out dressed as a woman. I felt I was improving and was pleased to be allowed to do my own makeup for work by my fifth evening.

In those days, I had to work for six evenings, then take three off. On my first three-day break, I could not think what to do, so I stayed inside, practicing with the makeup over and over again. I went out only into the small garden at the rear of the club. I chatted with the other girls and, as they got used to me, I began to learn what had brought them into the club.

Some were genuinely intending to change their sex, but they were a minority. Some were there for the thrill of being performers, and others because they were much more comfortable dressed as women. Most were there because they enjoyed being female impersonators, and could get paid for it. All agreed that the pay was good and that the rules were fair, though strict. When we were “read” on the streets, it was a good advertisement for the club. So, when someone broke the rules, we generally felt it fair that they be dismissed.

My first pay was a revelation. After existing on as little as possible, I now had some money in my pocket. I wondered if there had been some mistake, and I went to see Geraldine, the accountant. On first sight of him in his dark purple dress and half-glasses, I could tell why he was the accountant, but he put me at ease, explaining that the money was right. All my living expenses had been deducted before I was given the money. He explained that I would be expected to spend some of this money on my appearance, and allowance had been made for that. It was Mrs. Gaskell’s policy to encourage individuality amongst her girls. One way of doing that was to pay them.

So there I was, on my first break, with money in my pocket, no where to go, and no one to see. I was fortunate in that I had become involved with learning about make up, so I had plenty to do. I never tired of experimenting and I resolved to speak to the girls in the makeup department about more adventurous things. I learned to dress better and obtained some padding to make my chest look more realistic inside my dresses.

## **A Visit is Arranged**

I was pleased when my resting days were over and I could get back to work. The show changed every week, so Helena was not in the club this day. I was told she was appearing at one of the other clubs, so I was surprised when, just before my next days off, she appeared at my side.

“Would you like to spend a couple of days with me and my partner?” she asked. “I’ll pick you up if you like, about twelve tomorrow.”

“I’d love to,” I heard myself saying, my fear of going outside forgotten for the moment.

With that, she smiled at me and was gone, swaying her hips as she walked past the bar and waving at the other girls as she went. After work that evening, I mentioned this trip. I was told to sign the book to say where I would be, so that I could be checked on if anyone wished. I went to bed that night, full of anticipation, wondering what the outside world held for Shirley.

Next day, I dressed slowly and carefully. I had a plain white shirt, and I wore it with a short denim skirt. I had black stockings and shoes, and carried a denim jacket in case I needed it. I made myself up lightly and brushed back my hair, fluffing it out with my fingers as I did so. It was just over two weeks since I had been to the hair-dressers and dark roots were beginning to show. I would have to go again soon, but not on my free days.

I went down stairs and asked Geraldine for the book, which I duly signed. Not knowing Helena's address, I just wrote that I would be staying with her. Geraldine looked at this and said it was acceptable. Just after twelve, I went to the door as a blue Mercedes sports pulled up. I saw my hostess waving to me through the window.

We drove out of town, through a couple of villages. On the outskirts of one, we turned into a secluded drive which led to an old farmhouse. Helena parked the car in an open garage and I followed her through the court yard, into the kitchen where a woman was preparing tomatoes for a salad. Helena introduced me to her partner, Susan. She smiled and took my hand, then kissed me on both cheeks. I smiled and looked at her, wondering what to say.

"Yes, you may ask," she said, recognizing my dilemma. "I am a real girl, not like him," indicating Helena, who stood and smiled back at her.

"Yes, she's real all right," said Helena. "We've been together for a couple of years. Would you believe I used to date her in High School?"

"Yes, and I left him because he was too rough," came the reply. "He used to prefer boy's games to being with me, I didn't want that kind of relationship."

I had so many questions running in my mind, I could not ask them all. That would be too rude, but here was something I had not expected at all. Helena appeared the complete woman, even down to her breasts, yet here was a *real* woman, who obviously loved him, taking delight in what he was. More than that, she had known him before he joined the club. I decided to wait until a more opportune moment to ask anything at all.

I was shown to the guest wing. It was a small suite over the garage, completely self-contained, yet connected through a conservatory to the main house. I was told I was the only guest, and that I could come and go as I pleased. They offered to lend me a car if I wished, but I had to decline. I was not that confident in my female role, and I did not want to go out unaccompanied. I told them this, and they both laughed. Susan said that one of the things on their program for the weekend was to get me more comfortable and confident.

As we sat and ate our lunch in the kitchen, Helena said that she decided to invite me because she thought I had "star" quality, and that she wanted to help me. When she first appeared at the club, Geraldine wanted to end her career on the stage, and had taught her a lot quickly, so that Helena could take over, and she could retire from public performance. She revealed that Geraldine lived with Mrs. Gaskell, and had for several years.

I was surprised to receive this information, but pleased to be given the opportunity to advance my career, and I said so. At this they smiled at each other, and I guessed

that I had passed their first test. "We've arranged a busy program for you, if you want to make quick progress," Susan said. "You'll hardly have time to turn 'round. Firstly, we shall have to get you some clothes of your own. It's important to develop a style of your own as soon as you can. That way you've a firm anchor, and you can develop from a firm base. Helena will tell you that; his career was stalled until we got together and worked it out properly."

"And I've never looked back since then," he replied, "the whole thing came together so smoothly, I wondered what I had been doing wrong for the previous years."

The discussion continued, lightly, over the rest of our lunch, then after the dishes were cleared, Susan presented me with a list of things to be done. The first was to get a wardrobe of my own together. I was a little reluctant, because this meant going into the town, going into shops, and trying things on, speaking to assistants, and things like that.

"I don't think I'm ready to go shopping yet," I heard myself saying, "I'm going to be read for what I am."

"All the more reason to go now," said Helena, "they'll know anyway when we take you. Where do you think I can hide, so if you're with me..."

I could see the logic of this statement, and agreed. If I was going to be read, I might as well be with these friends who would be taking care of me. It was better than going on my own, and I would have to do it soon anyway. I agreed and soon found myself squashed in the back of the sports car as we drove towards the town. Susan drove while Helena told me about the shop we were to visit first. It was one which had catered for him very kindly when he was starting, so he used it as often as possible to return the favor.

We parked almost outside and, with head down, looking neither right nor left, I went in behind my hosts, who walked nonchalantly through the doors as if they owned the place. It was clear to me that we were expected, for we were greeted at once by an assistant who took us to some rails of clothes which had been put aside specially. Helena had thoughtfully gotten my sizes from wardrobe, and here they had assembled everything which I might like.

Susan took over at this stage, pushing away many items as unsuitable or wrong in color or style. I was left with a small selection, and calculating just how much money I now had, selected accordingly. I confess that one of the first things I bought was a pair of denim jeans and some training shoes. They were comfortable, and not banned, as long as they were worn in a feminine manner. These were the only shoes I got that day, but my wardrobe expanded considerably. I was particularly taken by a green silk dress, which was cut so simply and felt so cool, that I had to have it. I would wear it that evening. From this shop, we carried our parcels to the car. I was about to scramble back in, when Helena restrained me, and we were off again, crossing the road, into a restaurant. It was again obvious to me as soon as we went through the door that Helena and Susan were well known here, and that our visit was planned. They had not told me, because they knew I would be reluctant to enter, and afraid of being read. I need not have worried. They were used to Helena, and perhaps expected to see people like me. Either way, it was a pleasant experience.

We returned to the house late in the evening. Sensing that my friends would like some time to themselves, I excused myself and went to my room where I looked at all the clothes I had purchased. I had the green dress, a pair of denim jeans, several tops, a couple of skirts, a pair of trainers, and a nightdress which I put on as soon as I got it out of the bag. Altogether I had enjoyed my first day outside in my new identity. I was tired so I cleaned off my make up, and went to bed happy.

Next morning I was awakened by the ringing of the telephone. Automatically, I answered it, and heard Susan telling me to come to breakfast just as I was, as fast as I could, because they wanted to plan my day with me, rather than talk about me while I was still in bed. I got the impression that they had liked me, and decided to adopt me. It gave me a feeling of security in my new identity to realize I could make friends like this. I went into the kitchen to the warmest of welcomes and soon the discussion turned to what I wanted from my remaining two days with them. Straight away, I told them I needed some shoes, then I was at a loss. What should I ask of them? I was speechless, then Susan took over.

"If you'll let me work with you a little this afternoon, I'll start to teach you how to do your makeup properly. You've done wonders, much better than Helena. He was still daubing it on until I came to live with him. What a mess it was some times."

'She exaggerates, she exaggerates,' exclaimed Helena.

"I do not," replied Susan. Turning to me she confided in a loud voice, "It was a mess. He'd been working in the club for almost two years, but had only graduated to being a bar maid. I knew he could sing, but he looked all wrong. We worked on it together, and he altered out of all recognition."

"Be fair, you changed me out of all recognition," said Helena, taking Susan's hand gently in his, "and I'm just so glad you did."

"Enough of that, we have to concentrate on Shirley today," chided Susan. "If I can do it for you, I can do it for Shirley just as well."

She turned to me and continued, "You see, I've been asking him to spot a new girl, one with potential for me to work with. I enjoyed helping Helena with everything, and now I thought that together we could help another girl through to the top. We've been watching all the newcomers for a few months now, and you're the one we would really like to work with. Will you join us? I'll promise a lot of fun, even more hard work, but at the end, your earnings will be fabulous."

I could not resist the offer. Who could? Having decided to take the job, and commit myself to femininity—for a while at least—here was an offer to help me get it right. I was ecstatic. I had discovered quite quickly that I liked what I was doing, I found it becoming more and more compulsive and I knew I didn't want to stop. I told them all these things and much more. It was wonderful to have friends again.

I was sent to dress. This, you will have to understand, is never a quick process for a transvestite. I showered and shaved, then used the blow drier to fluff up my hair into as feminine a style as I could. I made up my face as lightly as I dared to go out and dressed in my new jeans and trainers, with the white top. I felt comfortable as I walked

back to the kitchen where they were waiting for me. They approved my outfit, and we were off.

Again, they must have telephoned ahead, for we were received most kindly at the shop. Soon I had three pairs of black stilettos of different heights, the highest being a full six inches. I could hardly stand, let alone walk in them, but Susan said it was important to train for them, as if it was a feat of athletics. Looking back, I suppose it was. I also had three pairs of more sensible shoes and a pair of white stilettos, with a heel of about three inches. I wore these as we left the shop, just to annoy Helena, who said that I was being too "obvious". Susan and I just laughed at this statement.

We returned to the farm house for a late lunch, and sat and talked in the garden. I was surprised to see a big BMW turn into the drive. When it pulled up, Mrs. Gaskell and Geraldine got out. I wondered if they were checking up on me; if so I was correctly dressed. As it turned out, they had come to discuss a new contract with Helena and I was left alone while they concluded their business. Then I was included as they came back with a bottle of champagne to toast their new deal. It seemed to please both.

When they left, Susan told me that the new deal was better than she had ever hoped for. They would get more money, more freedom to work in other places and much more free time. That meant there was more time to devote to their project: me.

"We'll start soon," Susan said, "we have our own makeup room here, and I've made some preparations. We guessed you would not refuse our offer, and I think you'll be surprised with what we have in store for you. First, you must shave again and put on a robe, then perhaps we'll have you dressed for dinner about eight. Helena's cooking for us, so we mustn't be late." They smiled conspiratorially at each other as I left the room. They were obviously happy, I could see that, and I was too. I was being given a unique opportunity and I wasn't going to mess it up for any-



one. I took my time shaving carefully and put on the robe as instructed. I went back to the kitchen which seemed to be the nerve center of the house and found them laughing and happy with each other. I wondered if I would ever find anyone like Susan to share everything.

## Shirley and Susan

“Walk this way,” commanded Susan, beckoning to me with her finger, “it's time to start, but before we do, a word of caution. I am an artist. I do not take kindly to criticism as I work. You can talk about anything, but not about what I am doing to you. Is that understood?”

“Yes,” I replied, “that's perfectly clear, I'll not say a word.”

“That would be boring,” said Susan, “just do not make any critical comments. *I* know what I'm going to do. *You* have no idea at all.”

Thus admonished, I followed her through to the makeup room which was a big airy space on the first floor of the house. The room itself was well-equipped with lights and mirrors all over the place. The cosmetics were arranged most carefully in drawers which could be lifted out for immediate use. The room was clinical in its perfection. I guessed this was Susan's area. She ruled this room, and what went on in here. No wonder that Helena always looked so great.

I was seated in a sort of dentist's chair, but without all the instruments and drills. It could tilt and swivel wherever Susan wished. She cleaned my face again thoroughly and talked to me about my own adventures with makeup as she did so. She told me that this was not a lesson, she just wanted to experiment on my face, to see what she could do. She said she would want to do this several times, or more, to get things right, just as she had done with Helena. I thanked her and said I was willing, whatever she wanted to do.

I lay back in the chair and relaxed as she studied my face closely. She began with a moisturizer which she stroked all over my face and neck, carefully and almost lovingly, making sure that each pore was covered. It gave me a lovely feeling of relaxation as I lay back contentedly in the chair.

As Susan worked, I watched and we chatted. She was so easy to talk to. Whereas I had been a little hesitant about telling her my background, I now found it easy. I told her how I had jumped at the chance of a job at the club simply because I wanted a job, justifying it to myself by saying I would make money from a book about it. As I had experienced different things, I found myself becoming fascinated by the changes I could make to myself, and wanted to go on. Susan seemed happy with this explanation and as she worked, in between periods of silence while she concentrated, parts of Helena's story emerged. They had been very close at school, but she had parted from him reluctantly when he became, as she put it, obsessed with sport, and did not spend enough time with her. They parted for some years and although they kept in touch, they had not met again until he had been working at the club for about eighteen months.

Before they met again, they had talked several times on the telephone and she was prepared for both his new name and appearance. The name had been difficult at first,

particularly on the telephone, but it became easier once they had met again. As to the new appearance, she was at first appalled to see what he had become, but then realized some things. This was the person she wanted to be with, that was beyond doubt. Whatever she thought about his way of life, he was making good money, more than he could have done in any conventional job.

The major realization, however, came later. After they had met a couple of times, she began suggesting ways he could improve his appearance. She gave him different cosmetics and books about makeup technique. She advised him on hair styles and quickly got him to tone down his brightly bleached hair to a more attractive shade. It was when she found herself shopping for his clothes, that she realized that she, too, was fascinated by the woman he had become, at least externally.

Realizing this was a shock to her, and she took time to adjust. Then her course was clear and she proposed that they buy someplace to live together. She would manage his career and make sure that he was the best paid of all the acts. He would have to trust her and allow her to change whatever she wanted to change. In short, she would take over his life and they would be a team. Susan had been successful with him; now they had time for another project. That was why he was there.

As she talked, she was slowly toning my face. She was using two shades of foundation, blending them carefully, then shading his cheekbones, slimming his face, and shaping it into a more gentle appearance. When she was satisfied, she took a big brush, and applied a dusting of translucent powder, brushing off the surplus with another soft brush. This completed, she stood back and looked intently at me, as if measuring her next action.

“When I first started to do this with Helena,” Susan said, “it was so difficult. I had not learned enough myself and I had to read and practice over and over. It must have nearly driven him mad, but we got there.”

“Doesn't he do his own make up?” I asked.

“Sometimes, but I always check it,” she replied, “If he goes out looking really terrible, it may affect his reputation. It's hard really, because he's got to have a routine for every day, working or not, to take care of hair, nails, skin, everything in fact and with the rules about dress, we must be careful. It's in the contract that he should always appear in public as an advertisement for the club, no matter what he does.”

“Do you think I really can look as good as Helena?” I asked, looking up at Susan. It was the question I really wanted to ask. And the answer I got was what I wanted too.

“If you are willing to do everything as I ask you, then I'm sure we can make you into a fabulous woman, but you'll have to work hard, and do *exactly* as I tell you. I'm not having things done badly, or half done if I'm responsible.”

This seemed like it was a caution to me to be compliant. I assured her that I would do as she asked. Of course I would. I wanted this transformation more than anything. I knew it would take time, but I was prepared to work and wait. It was much more fun than I had ever anticipated.

Having cleared up this matter, Susan started to look intently at my face again, as if measuring her next move. Taking a big palette of colors, with a brush rack attached,



she began to shade my eyes. I watched in the mirror, and saw taking shape something entirely different from that which I had been able to achieve. She highlighted under my brow with a different shape then, progressively, she darkened the colors to my eye-lashes.

She kept checking, left and right, as she worked, looking at me, then at my reflection in the mirror. She fell silent with concentration, and I dared not speak for fear of interrupting a chain of thought. Then she paused.

“You can see what I'm doing,” she said, “it's just a first attempt really, so don't expect miracles this time; that will come later. I'm just trying to envisage what I can do later when I've gotten used to your face. I think we shall do well eventually. You have a good deal of space over your eyelids, unusual for a man.”

“I'm fascinated to watch,” I replied rather lamely, “I wanted to improve what I was doing, but I didn't know where to turn for help. The others at the club are secretive about their make up routines, as if they're afraid that I'll get better than them and take the better job.”

“Well, we'll get you the better job, and quickly, if I've anything to do with it.”

With that, she took a bottle and brush and outlined my eyes with a thin black line, so meticulously drawn that I could not believe how precise she was. Susan handed me a small magnifying mirror to look at the eye so far. It looked very different from the effect I had been making. It was wider and more open. Words fail me to describe the difference, but it was wonderful to see.

Susan seemed to be both resting for a while and considering what to do next. She looked at me again, silently, and walked around me. “All right,” she said, “we'll go for it tonight. I wasn't going to do this, but we'll see how it looks.”

She turned and opened some cupboards, searching, then turned to me, holding out two boxes of false eyelashes. A short set of under-lashes and a longer set to be worn over the eyes. I had seen these in the other girls' makeup kits and had intended to get some, but had not had the courage to try them yet. Now they were to be fitted for me. I sat excitedly, waiting for Susan to apply them.

Taking the lashes with a set of tweezers, she applied glue to the under-lashes first and set them aside while she peeled the larger lashes from their plastic base and applied glue to them as well. Taking a thin plastic stick, she squeezed some glue from the tube and dabbed it in small dots under each of my eyes. Then she took the first under-lash and carefully fixed it in position. It felt so strange, but not uncomfortable. I had no time to get used to this before she was fixing the second under-lash, pushing it into place with tweezers and an orange stick. When both were fixed, I looked in the mirror and could see the difference. I looked very strange, with just under-lashes fixed.

We laughed at the effect so far, then Susan indicated that I should get ready for the main false lashes. Once again, she squeezed a little glue onto a thin stick and dabbed onto my eyelid where the lash was to be fitted. She repeated this with the second eye; then, taking her tweezers again, picked up the lash and carefully located it in position. When she was satisfied, and before I had time to look, she was fitting the second one. She stood in front of me, obscuring my view of the mirror, checking her work. It

seemed that she stood there for an infuriating length of time, before she nodded and moved to the side.

And then I could see the effect of the false eye lashes. My heart missed a beat; it was incredible the difference they made. My eyes were so big and so lavishly made-up, I could have cried with the excitement of it all. This was a wonderful transformation. Susan approved as well.

“I think they suit you,” she said, “although we'll do it differently next time.”

She did not elaborate on “next time” and I was too pleased to ask what she intended. She began to work on my lips next, using a pencil to outline a shape larger than my lips really were. Then, looking from my face to my reflection in the mirror, she filled in the shape with a paler shade than I had ever used. I could see the reason she had chosen this shade, because the balance of my face in the mirror looked so right.

“Well, that's all I'm doing today,” she said, “now it just remains to dress you for dinner. Come with me.”

I followed her into the next room where she had laid out clothes for me. I stood, removed my robe and stood quite naked before her. Then I moved at her command as she prepared me thoroughly. All the underwear was creamy white. I stood quite still as she fastened a suspender belt around my waist and raised each foot as she unrolled stockings over them and up my leg. I felt her fastening each dangling suspender to the stockings and I stepped into creamy white panties with extravagant lace edges.

Looking into the full-length mirror at the end of the room, I made a strange sight, with my extravagantly made-up face, and just the bottom part of female underwear. I felt half-transformed, and strangely naked. I wanted to be female more than ever. I stood and held out my arms as a deep brassiere was fastened around me. It was padded and stood away from my chest. Susan roughly pushed some padding into each cup, making the proportions more or less right. I was beginning to emerge, and I felt a new thrill of anticipation.

Susan left the room and I could hear her moving things like clothes hangars in the next room. She returned with a dress in dark red and black. A formal dress, with a low-cut neck line and relatively thin shoulder straps. It was just about knee-length and quite wonderful. It looked too small for me; I would not have chosen it, as it was too skimpy. I was a prude, it showed too much flesh. Yet I could not wait to put it on.

Susan undid the back zipper and held the dress for me to step into. I did so carefully and she pulled it up, over my hips, where it was quite tight and up to my shoulders. The neck line was a little too low; my padding was almost visible and I was conscious of it there. Susan assured me that she could not see it and she doubted if anyone else would, unless they were standing extremely close.

Susan turned and came back with a pair of black stilettos. I looked and wondered how on earth I was supposed to stand in them. The heels were frighteningly high. She placed them on the floor and guided my right foot into the shoe. I wobbled as I put my weight onto the foot, and held on to the back of a chair. As I did so, Susan held out the left shoe and I lifted my foot and it slipped on. Then I stood, determined to stand and walk as well as any woman in these shoes, whatever it took.