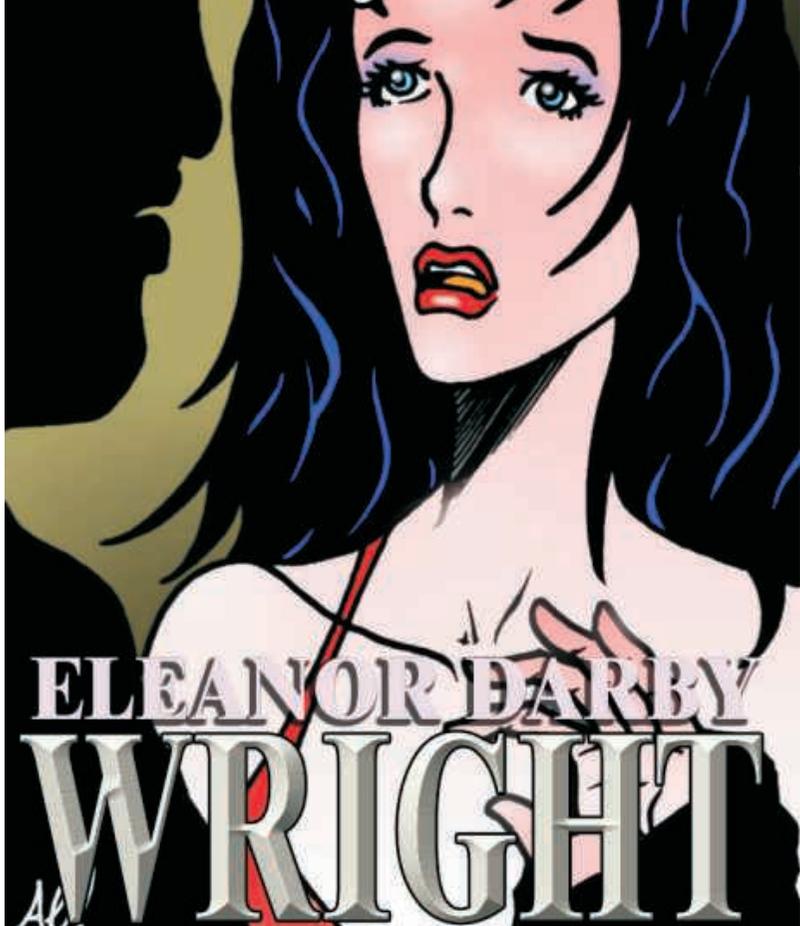


Stunt Double

Small Enough To Be A Girl



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STUNT DOUBLE

Small Enough To Be A Girl

by Eleanor Darby Wright

“Cut!” screamed the director. Even the steady wind blowing along the edge of the fourth-story roof couldn’t prevent that direction from being misinterpreted. Roger Danforth was in a rage once more.

Annette O’Brien, dewy-eyed debutante, star of three major motion pictures in the last year, clung, terror-stricken, despite the harness that held her so safely, to Murray Barton, one of the ‘heavies’ in the scene. Murray gaped at the girl whom he was supposed to fling out of the window at that point.

“I can’t! I just can’t!” Annette wept to the director. “I-I just can’t get closer to the edge!”

Roger Danforth stared at his leading actress. Not a word of blame passed his lips – not yet – but his glittering eyes spoke volumes about what he wanted to say. How could he have known that Annette O'Brien suffered from vertigo? Both she and her agent had read the script more than once. He had all their proposed changes on his own annotated copy and he was a reasonable man. He accommodated where he could but this was just too much. It was the second day of trying to accomplish just this one scene. He could almost hear Bob Marsh, the producer, scream when he told him that they would have to take one more day at this location to get the shot he wanted.

"Another day's payment to those people!" Bob would scream. The owners of the Sandstone Building would be delighted to rent out their property for another day. There was a percentage increase automatically in their contract for shooting past the scheduled date. Bob was furious at himself for negotiating such a clause and having had to pay it out once already.

Roger had talked overnight to Claude Roski, Annette's director on *Evil Hearts*. Claude had filled him in on how difficult Annette had been, even with more than half of the 'special effects' done against green screen projections. It seemed that Annette's imagination worked overtime even in those situations.

So much for the realism that Roger had stressed to everyone he was aiming for with his current project.

"We'll have to double for her," suggested Art Brinkley, Roger's young and upcoming assistant director, stating the obvious.

There was every safeguard in the world on this shoot, Danforth wanted to snap back angrily, both along the edge and over the side of the building. Annette, however, had only had to look at the edge of the rooftop – or,

worse, up at the sky – or, worst of all, at the neighboring building and she buckled physically at the knees.

Annette's face contorted at that point; sweated-over dialogue disappeared entirely from her mouth. No matter that her animated expression, captured for just seconds on some of the film already shot, was just perfect, perfectly panic-stricken, for the scene. But they were wasting light, wasting the time that they'd already put in on the roof shots. It would be awful to go to back projections now, green screens and trick photography, after the authenticity of outdoor shooting in all the other scenes to date.

"Let her stand-in take over," growled Roger Danforth. "Let's do the stunts first." He turned and walked away, waving to Matt Ronning, the second unit director, on the street below, about what was to take place.

The cellphone chirped and Ronning's voice was sharp in Brinkley's ear. "We have a problem," he said to the young assistant. "Myra did break her arm in the last fall we did and she's damaged her shoulder as well. There's no way that she can do any work for a couple of months at the very least."

"We need a stand-in for Annette," gasped Art Brinkley. "And we need her now."

"The only female stuntwomen we have here are Jill Kleister," said Ronning slowly. She was six feet three and had doubled as a man before, she had laughingly told Art Brinkley, "and Mama Ross."

Mama weighed over two hundred pounds and was great at old women scenes.

"You don't have anyone small and about Annette's size we can doll up?" asked Art Brinkley.

“Not among the women,” said Ronning. “You want me to tell Roger that we can’t go on today?” he asked sympathetically.

“Wait,” said Art Brinkley, seeing Roger screaming on the phone to someone, likely Annette’s agent. What had Jill Kleister said about the scene where she doubled as a man? Oh, yes, the guy she did the stunt with was small and thin. He’d done the girl’s part and been thrown out of the car while she had done the guy’s. All she’d had to do was drive.

“And Mike never had a scratch on him,” Jill said proudly. “Didn’t even ladder his stockings or muss up his lipstick. He should have done the death scene for Alicia Marques then. He really earned it. He looked so cute as a woman!”

Mike, Mike, Mike Sharp! Art Brinkley recalled the name now. And Sharp was on this film, set to do a lot of stunts as a high school kid among others!

“Is Mike Sharp there with you?” asked Art Brinkley as he heard Ronning talking to someone else about another scene he was setting up.

“Mike, yeah, sure,” said Ronning doubtfully. “I’m looking at him right now. He’s ready to do the street scene and fall in front of the car.”

“He’s Annette’s size, isn’t he?” asked Art Brinkley.

“Oh, hold on!” gasped Matt Ronning.

“Well, isn’t he?” asked Art.

“Well, yes,” said Matt reluctantly.

“Tell him to go to Makeup and Costume, then,” snapped Art Brinkley. “And tell him to hurry it up. Otherwise, it’s going to be me and then him flying out of this window! And Roger will make sure the bag is not there on the ground!”

Matt Ronning laughed. "I hope you know what you're doing," he said.

Well, that was the way I heard it from Art Brinkley, going cold all over as he talked about me, being made up to look like a woman again. Tammy Sung, the makeup artist, was waiting behind what looked like a dentist's chair for me as Art gave me the long song-and-dance. "And so now, Mike," Art finished, "you can see why I'm calling on you."

I didn't see, and I had a shoot to do, crowd scenes, one that concentrated almost entirely on me bouncing off cars. "Matt needs me on the street," I tried to say to him.

"Matt knows that you're working with me for a while," Art said. "Look. You were a woman before, Jill was telling me ..."

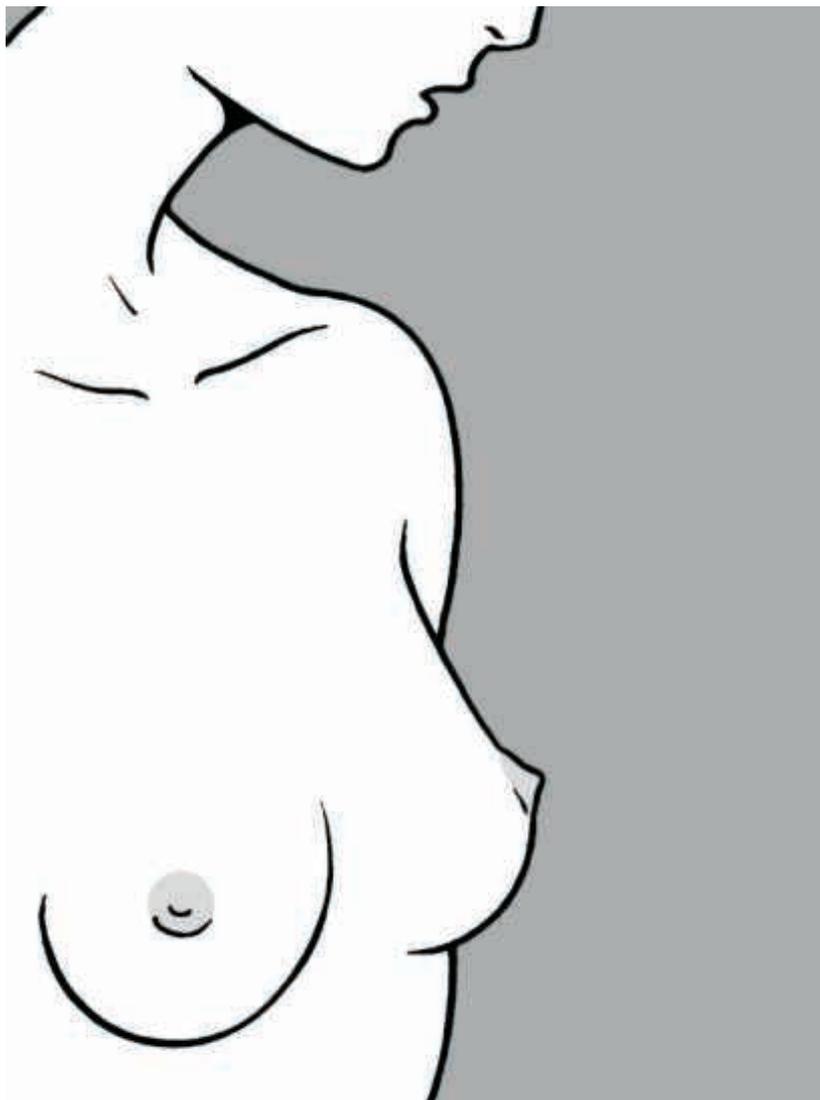
"That was only one scene and all I had to do was fall out of a car!" I protested. No, I wasn't going to remind him about the time I'd done all the stunts in that Canadian movie for Connie Stone. Gosh, how she'd teased me, and always did, telling me that I liked being her, didn't I? And I couldn't answer her back as she always said it when some of the guys were around. She seemed to love how they'd made my life miserable when they'd known it was me in the long hair and tight skirts. I'd resolved never again. I was a stuntman, not a stunt woman.

"This is the same," said Art doggedly, "only this time, you fall out of a window. And, for this, you get a bonus if we get this scene shot today."

"Double bonus whether or not the scene is shot today," I said, knowing what my contract said. Not that I was going to do it, anyway. The bonus for me was two

thousand for every shot that went into the movie that I hadn't already contracted for.

"Done," said Art Brinkley briskly and I knew that I could have settled for more than what was already in my contract. "Tammy, make him look like Annette. I'll send your sister over from Costume with the right clothes. And



hurry it up, people. Roger is ready to throw us all off the building if we don't get this scene in today."

I sat, fuming at my own stupidity, where Tammy had me sit, and she had me take off my t-shirt. "Good, you don't have any chest hair," she said with a smile.

"I'm supposed to be a teenaged kid," I began and she cut me off.

"And now you're a woman," Tammy said with a laugh. "I hope you can walk in high heels, girl, because you know what Annette is like about her stand-ins."

I didn't and, by the funny feeling starting again in my stomach, I should have guessed then that this wasn't going to be an easy, being a woman. But Tammy was good at her job. She had me close my eyes as she began to attach something like putty on me to make my face look like Annette's. She put some kind of sheathing on my neck and then a sort of breastplate on me. I opened one eye and yes I had woman's breasts on my chest. Or rather, I had a plastic replica of a woman's breasts being attached to me. The way that the nipples looked, so pink and good enough to snack on, made me shudder. They were way too authentic-looking.

Sue-Ann, Tammy's sister in Costume, came grouching into the shack then with a suitcase and several racks of clothing, all of it women's clothing. "Yes, I heard what happened up on the top floor," she said as I tried to explain. Well, I was feeling nervous about the way that I must look with the breastplate on me and the stuff on my face. "How long you going to be, Tammy, before I can get this corset on Annette."

Annette? Corset? I shivered. She meant me, of course, and I was to wear a woman's corset and I was no Annette.

"Open your mouth," said Tammy, pushing some small pads into my mouth between my teeth and my

cheek. "Does that look rounded enough to you, kid?" she asked her younger sister, though each of them were in their forties, I was sure.

"Yeah," said Sue-Ann. "I need time to dress Annette as well," she grouched. "So when you've finished futzing around ..."

Tammy was in front of me, applying different liquids to my face. She reminded me again to close my eyes and I think it was a foundation liquid that she put all over me.

"Mike's got a nice complexion and this won't take long," Tammy said as if it was a compliment. "I've been doing this girl for over two months now and I could do these eyes," I could feel a pencil of some kind and a brush at work on me, "blindfold. Mike, lift your legs a little and let Sue-Ann get those pants off you. See, kid, you're going to have to shave his legs."

"Hey!" I said and got a poke in the back.

"You're standing in for a woman, stupid," said Sue-Ann in exasperation. "Now, shut up and let us work. We'd have had you do this on the first day if we'd known before that you were going to be Annette's stand-in."

So, I sat shivering in the chair in just my underpants, listening to Tammy and Sue-Ann complaining about Art Brinkley, "who does he think he is, ordering us about, the little pipsqueak," while I could feel that false eyelashes were being fastened to my eyes. I hated it that Tammy said my nose was great as it was thin and bobbed, and she could make it look like Annette's in no time! Yes, my whole face was being made up like a girl's while my legs were being gently shaved by someone who seemed like an expert.

The touch of stockings on my legs made me jerk and made Tammy clunk me on the head as she swore at me and told me not to move. Sue-Ann laughed as I shud-

dered at her putting girls' stockings on my legs that stayed up where they were supposed to be. "I'm taking your pants off now," Sue said. "So don't make a fuss, but you will need this padding. You must have seen what a big ass Annette has and you have to have one as well."

It wasn't that I minded losing my underpants for a costume but I usually did it in some privacy and not in front of two women. And I wasn't being made into a woman, either, which I knew would cause me all kind of hazing from John G and the rest of the macho auto stuntmen. Tammy was holding my head still and tweaking my eyebrows then as Sue-Ann seemed to put a cushion about my tush.

"Hey," said Sue-Ann. "Is all this girlie stuff turning on little Mikey?"

"What's the matter?" asked Tammy, holding my eyelids down as she painted them.

"Little Mikey is becoming Big Mikey," laughed the younger Sung sister as I writhed a little as she pushed on my male equipment to make it go back in the panties, I guess, that were what she was sliding over my shaved, stockinged legs. Well, it was her fault, I tried to protest, trying to get her hands off my junk! I didn't need to be in panties, either! "You are going to stick way out in this scene, Mike, if I don't gaff you, and the quickest way for me to do that is with tape. So, get ready to be uncomfortable for a little while."

Uncomfortable wasn't the word for having a woman manipulating my genitals and my penis back between my legs and taping them with packing tape no less, so that I wouldn't show.

"Ah-ah, I can't walk with what you've done," I told Sue-Ann and Tammy grabbed my mouth and started

smearing lipstick, well, I knew it wasn't chapstick, over my mouth.

The women ignored me. I felt soft hair floating over my back as my regular hair was grabbed and Tammy started pinning a wig to me. Well, I had done that with wigs many times. I hadn't had a bra put on me before, though, with or without the breastplate on my chest. I hadn't had a waist cinch put on me so tightly, nor the garter belt that Tammy said that Sue-Ann had to put on me as that was what Annette was wearing when she left in the morning.

"So when she floats through the air," said Sue-Ann sardonically, "her skirt is going to fly up and show off all the lingerie that she's wearing?"

"That's our Annette," said Tammy with a short laugh. "Leg and boob shows all the time. She wouldn't be in movies without them. You've got the right skirt and top for the window scene."

"Of course," said Sue-Ann, consulting a list. "Here, read it for yourself."

Tammy was working on the hair on my head, completely blocking any view that I might have of the mirror. In front of me, my legs looked girlish and I had definite funny feelings as Sue-Ann attached the garter belt to the stockings and I felt them move against me. I don't know how Sue-Ann was able to do it but she got a top, I would have called it a blouse with no sleeves, onto me, along with jewellery, earrings that hurt like the devil, a necklace that bounced around my neck and bracelets on my arms.

She was wiggling the skirt about me when Tammy moved away from her sister and I suddenly got a look at the woman in the chair. Oh, gods, it was a woman in the chair. It was Annette O'Brien, as ravishing and teenager girlish as she looked every day on the set.

I had to stand up and women's shoes were there which I had to step into while Sue-Ann tightened the swishing skirt about my waist. Oh goodness, it felt so weird against my legs. I actually looked like a woman wobbling on her high heels. More than that, with the way the makeup had been put on me, I looked like a dewy-eyed Annette O'Brien in the flesh. It was a sickening feeling.

"I think we did it, kid," said Tammy, looking at the shuddering me skeptically, still moving strands of hair about my face so that the wig looked as neat as the way that Annette wore her hair.

"Yeah," said Sue-Ann sourly. "I think that we just saved Brinkley's job. Now, you know how to move in those heels, don't you, Annette?"

She supposed that I didn't. Well, I was used to shoes with lifts but she insisted that I cut my walk in half. "That's how Annette walks," said Sue-Ann. "Like a model on the catwalk. She puts one foot down in front of the other in small, mincing steps. It will make your tush shake as well like a girl. Not as much as she does, because she puts it on, but if you walk like that, Annette, you'll pass. Now, let's go and face the music."

Face the music? What did they have to face? I had to walk out of the shack and across to the building where the scene was being shot. I had to mince up three floors, past all the actors, stuntmen and hangers-on, who were gawking and smiling at me and the way I looked in a skirt and with boobs. I had to sashay right up to the director of the film and run through the scene with everyone staring at me. I knew as well that they were all laughing at me and probably thinking that I was some kind of queer as well to be dressed as I was and doing a scene as Annette O'Brien.

I trembled as I tried to walk as the Sung sisters had showed me. "Oh, hi, Miss O'Brien," said one sparkly-eyed, young woman from Script, coming out of the building and passing us. She must have been blind, I thought. I was totally embarrassed by the skirts swishing all about my shaved legs, giving me the strangest, girlish feelings as I tried to practise walking as the Sung wanted me to.

"Well, here's Annette," said Bob Marsh as we entered the right room where all the technicians were set up for the shot. "We'll be able to do this after all as soon as the stand-in gets here."

I felt Tammy's hand on mine, squeezing it as if to tell me to say nothing. Art Brinkley and Roger Danforth stood up from their chairs and, while Roger escorted Bob out of the room that was being used, Art led me to the place where the scene had been aborted that morning.

"You're looking so much better, Annette," said Art cheerfully to me. I wondered what the heck the man was talking about. "Those pills have really perked you up, haven't they? Let's just run through the scene again once more with Murray and George."

The other actors looked at me a little quizzically. "We've got the voice done," said Art to me as I stood there in woman's skirts and heels, long hair flowing over my back. "So we'll just play that back and all you have to do, Annette, is the physical part. Here, we track in after you, your back to us, and Murray grabs you. You push free and go over to the window, teeter and then you go through the window. Murray won't actually touch you at all."

He went on and on about the marks and so on and I saw Murray frowning at me. I shivered and wondered why Art didn't explain to Murray and George and the

technicians as well just who I was and what I was and what I was going to be doing. He even got on his cell and explained to Matt Ronning what was going to happen.

I distinctly heard Matt saying, "Isn't she going to be attached to the safety harness this time?"

"No," said Art. "Annette's fortified with some pills to help her concentrate and so we'll be doing this as authentically as we can. You get your shot in as well, right?"

Roger Danforth came back into the room and stood in the doorway, staring at me, making me shiver all over. That was awful as it made my skirt move as well against the women's stockings I was having to wear.

"Roger," said Art hesitantly and I think he was about to explain it all to him.

"No, you go right ahead," said Roger and there was a trace of a sneer in his voice. "You seem to be getting along well with Annette. Whenever you're ready, Mr Brinkley, start the shot and let's all do it right and get the heck out of this place."

Art licked his lips and looked at me. I wished that I could have done that but I had lipstick on my lips. I wanted, more than any of them, I must say, to get out of there as well. I could feel the hurts all over me, particularly between my legs as I teetered on high heels and walked through the scene with Murray, trying to keep my steps short.

I glanced over the edge of the window and the bag was in place. The cameras were all set, on the roof and on the ground. "Places, everyone," Art Brinkley was saying nervously. "And we do have film in the cameras, right, Berg?" It was a weak joke that made one of the cameramen roll his eyes and look heavenward. If Art was trying to relax everyone, he had just done the very opposite.

I clicked in those darned heels over to where I was in position one and Murray Barton loomed in front of me. He was frowning and then comprehension seemed to flood all over him. "You're not Annette O'Brien!" he said loudly and George Millen, the other actor in the scene, gave me an open-mouthed look then.

I shook my head, feeling the hair swinging about my neck and the earrings bobbling at my ears. That wasn't as bad as the pull of the garters on the stockings on my legs or the tightness of the corset about me. It wasn't as bad as the swish and swirl of the skirt about my legs and the airy feeling I had on my legs. I felt like a ballet dancer as well, the way that I was standing on the stupid high heels I was wearing.

I put up a hand as if I was pushing on Murray and there were the red, sticky-tape nails on my fingers that Tammy had insisted that I had to wear as well. I had to be careful, she had said, or they would break off if I jammed them into someone.

"And action!" called Art, his voice unnaturally high, I thought, for someone who wasn't dressed entirely as a woman as I was. Art Brinkley didn't have two actors staring at him and undoubtedly wondering what the heck they were doing playing this scene out to a drag queen as I must appear to be.

But Murray Barton was a pro and he reacted to the call to Action. He snarled his lines again and I slapped at his face, actually touching his face as he pulled back, making sure that the force of the blow went by him. He pushed on my extended arm. That was where Annette before had started screaming and had grabbed him. I propelled myself towards the window and grabbed onto the sill as she should have done.

I know. I've seen the scene many times since. I didn't intend to have the skirts fly over my back as they did and reveal the seamed stockings with the black tops and the black suspenders and panties I was wearing. I really didn't intend that and the scene could have been doctored there but, of course, they didn't do that.

I teetered over the edge as I was supposed to and felt the wind on my face and blowing through my hair. I looked up and tried to put on a frightened expression but really I was checking again that the cameraman hanging over the roof's edge was getting his shot. He appeared to be.

I whirled around as fast as I could and flung myself back at Murray. In the movie, it looks as if we did have a terrible fight while George Millen was just standing there, laughing at us. Well, most of that was indeed the real Annette, going hysterical as she clawed at Murray and tried to hold onto him. The poor guy had scratch marks all over his neck and face. That close-up, as we pretended to hit on each other, I could see where his skin was painted over with makeup, even down under his shirt and tie.

I let Murray put his hands on my chest, on my phoney breasts then, which made him stare at me in surprise. I flung myself backwards and just managed to get my derriere over the windowsill. The screaming you hear in the film wasn't me. That was all Annette. The scene I did with Murray was mostly silent as he stared at me as if I was mad as I did the usual stuff, clinging to the curtains, bouncing my feet off the sill and the wall outside. In high heels, that was much harder than I thought that it was going to be.

I tried to act as if I was frightened and that was the hardest part of all. That and trying to keep that bouncy skirt from exposing all the female underwear that I had

on. Well, I wasn't successful at that, was I? When I had done thirty seconds of bouncing off the wall and George had reacted at last to try to rescue me, as he was supposed to, I let go and did the usual stuff on the way down, flailing away with my legs and arms, hair blowing right over my face so that you couldn't see that it was me at all but of course that skirt, that I wasn't used to at all, was blowing all over the place. I wish they hadn't used that shot so much in the promo for the movie. It made me shiver a little each time I saw it. More than a little, I suppose.

I landed as we had all been taught, flat on my back. It's still a jolt to the whole system and you think for a moment that the bag is going to go, smack, right down onto the concrete below, but it never does and it didn't that time. I did what I normally do and just lay there for a moment and said a silent prayer of thanks for a successful jump.

Matt Ronning's head then appeared over the side of the bag as it bounced slightly and I sat up. "Great work!" enthused Matt. "I had three cameras on you as you were dancing on the wall! And not a harness or safety rope in sight! We're going to get great footage out of this."

Matt grinned at me. "Do you think you could put your skirt down, Annette!" he said then as some others of his crew were coming over to help me off the landing bag. "I'm an old man with a weak heart and looking at you in your undies is really turning me on!"

I flushed and pushed down my skirt so that at least my panties and stocking tops were covered. Of course, sliding over the bag didn't help to keep it in place. But there were several guys to help me off the bag beside the grinning Matt Ronning.

"Wonderful job, Miss O'Brien," said one of the men who put his hands on my waist and lifted me down just

as if I was a girl. I looked up furiously at him, Ben I think his name was, sure he was making fun of me. To one side, I heard Matt Ronning laugh but, surprisingly, he didn't correct Ben about who he was holding onto. Furiously, I refused his help, wobbled and tried to get my balance again in women's high heels.

"She was great, wasn't she?" called Matt. "Okay, guys, here comes the call from upstairs. All right, I'll tell her," he said into the phone. "Everyone thinks they got great shots," Matt said then to me, "but you know how it is with Roger." He raised his voice to the people standing around. "All right, everyone, take two. Get ready! As soon as Annette gets back upstairs, we get to do it all again."

I didn't open my mouth. I should have but I was so furious with Matt Ronning, teasing me like that. I didn't know what the rest of my fellow stuntmen must be thinking of me. They couldn't be missing me too much yet as Matt was the one who was supposed to be supervising the shooting of the street scenes. I was supposed to be one of the scattering pedestrians and such as Annette, who lands in the back of a garbage truck in the film, goes careering down the street, knocking over the usual shopping carts and garbage cans. All the while, stuntmen dive away from the car or do their specialty like me, hanging on to the car and throwing myself away as if I had been badly hit.

I shuddered as I thought of John Q, Bim and Rocky Jim watching me and laughing at me. I knew I was going to be teased awfully even if I got out of all the stuff that I was wearing. They would see the rushes of what I had just done and they would know it was me. The word would be out and I could almost hear the comments they would be making about my legs in the stockings I wore

and especially I would hear about the panties that were flashed as I fell.

The Sung sisters grabbed me as soon as Ben, who still didn't seem to know I wasn't a woman, escorted me back to the house, telling me again how great a scene I, 'Miss O'Brien', had just performed.

Sue-Ann was smiling at me and at the man who accompanied me, his hand touching my skirt at the back. I didn't know how to handle that except to tell him to get lost, which I didn't do, as I guessed how much it would shock him when he heard the voice that came out of my mouth.

"I think I made up the girl too well," said Tammy as she took my hand and Ben was left to return to the bag where it was being readied again for another fall.

"She's laddered her stockings," said Sue-Ann as if I was a girl and both of them scolded me then for the way I had been walking with Ben.

"Not just in the shot," said Tammy as we went up the stairs to the third floor again. "You have to walk like a woman all of the time. You never know around here when they will want a casual shot of you to insert into a scene."

We got back to the room where Murray Barton, I could see, was in a quiet but heated discussion with Roger Danforth who looked rather grim and was nodding away even as he watched me enter the crowded room.

"Let me touch up your makeup," said Tammy which wasn't so bad as she re-arranged and sprayed my hair. But still that made me shiver as she started on my eyes and eyebrows again, powdering my face and then re-doing my lipstick.