

# MY NEW CAREER

*By Audrey Taylor*



*ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART*

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**A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL**

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## **MY NEW CAREER**

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**By Audrey Taylor**

I sat at the kitchen table finishing my daily review of the want ads, when I spotted the 'college degree & 2 year contract' under a lead in of 'excellent growth opportunity' and called immediately. The woman answering, questioned me about my experience and when I told her about my college curriculum and my waitering and other jobs around school, she suggested I come in and fill out an application.

I kept control of my optimism, as I'd been let down repeatedly hearing every reason in the book why another candidate had been chosen. 'Too much experience, too little experience, too young, too short (I was only 5'4"), too whatever' (they didn't always give the reason). It was getting more and more difficult to keep my spirits up and continue the job search (more than five months since I graduated).

My mother was starting to lose patience with me. "You're being too choosy, find something to get your foot in the door" she advised.

The company was only fifteen minutes from my house and dressed in a suit and tie, I entered the reception area. A woman greeted me, requesting I fill out the application carefully, and then she'd arrange for me to see the personnel manager, who'd answer any questions I had about the position.

What an unusual application. Many of the questions were directed to the female and some of the medical questions actually asked about menstrual cycles, severeness of cramps, etc. Skipping over these, I made sure to show my word processing skills and extensive cooking knowledge (hobby picked up at home) as I wanted to include everything I knew (you never know what may be useful). My major had been in psychology, with a minor in home economics (I enjoyed many of the 'home activities' my mother had taught me). Besides my waitering jobs, I'd also worked in the school dormitories doing laundries and other cleanup projects around campus. I signed at the bottom asserting everything was true, and returned it to the front desk.

Handing me a company brochure the receptionist asked me to have a seat for a moment. I glanced through the brochure, noting that Hertech Industries specialized in nursing homes, rest and rehabilitation facilities and care for the handicapped and disabled. They had been in business over twenty five years and had over 70 locations, mainly in the warmer climates. This was their national headquarters where the central administration and computer center were located. As I admired pictures of some of their properties, an attractive professional looking woman approached me, "Mr. Ira Shipley I presume, I'm Ms. Carter, the personnel manager."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Carter," I said, as I rose and shook her hand, looking up at her warm smile.

“Shall we go to my office where we can talk,” she suggested and I followed her shapely figure through a doorway, past several rooms and into a large comfortable office. It had big curtained windows and a beautiful flowering plant in the corner.

“It seems you worked regularly while you attended college, yet you still attained an excellent grade point average (3.4). Perhaps you can fill me in on your college experiences and give me an idea of what you are seeking in a new position.”

I began by explaining how my father had died in an accident when I was much younger and how my mother had been working hard ever since, to care for my two younger sisters and myself. It seems I was always helping out with the regular chores around the house and had newspaper routes and odd jobs to help meet the household bills. I'd paid for most of my college tuition. My good grades reflected my strong interest in psychology and my determination to reward all my mother's sacrifices over the years. “I'm looking for a position that will utilize my skills, hopefully in a company where I can also pursue my interests. I do want to grow into a position where I can make a meaningful contribution.”

“Mr. Shipley,” Ms. Carter responded, “I'm sure you'll find plenty of opportunity to learn and grow at Hertech Industries. We pride ourselves in our management training program and it's excellent training techniques. Most of our senior executives have successfully been through program. I noticed your minor at college was home economics, which is certainly unusual for a guy. I'll bet you ran into some harassment along the way.”

“Nothing really to speak of,” I replied. “Ever since I can remember I've been helping my mother around the house, caring for my sisters, cleaning up around them, preparing meals, washing hair, you name it. I had to learn how to sew, cook and do many of the other 'domestic arts'. By the time I got to college, my interests were quite strong in areas like cooking, decorating, and knitting; which my mother had taught me when I was eight. It seemed natural for me to pursue them in college. I can't tell you how often I was the only male in a class full of chattering females (I noticed Ms. Carter wince, shouldn't have said that). You can be sure that I'm really quite comfortable around women. In fact, my two best friends are girls. Ms. Carter, if you don't mind, could you tell me more about the position you're considering me for?”

“Sure Mr. Shipley. We have several management trainee positions currently available, as a group of trainees are scheduled to complete their programs in the next several weeks and will advance to new positions at other company locations. You'll find at Hertech, that we are committed to providing the finest in rehabilitation facilities and retirement communities. Our clientele receive only the finest care and you'll find that every employee is committed to assuring complete customer satisfaction. With your psychology background and especially your other interests, you seem ideal for our training program; however, you should know that we usually hire women for these positions (that explains the application).”

“Many of our facilities specialize in care for 'women only', and because we have earned an excellent reputation, the company has concentrated it's expansion in this area. We've found that women prefer being cared for by other women, but that doesn't mean there isn't room for a sensitive, well mannered person like yourself. What I'd

like to do is check the references you've listed on your application and send you home with these brochures to look over. Let's see whether you or I develop any further questions over the next several days. I'll contact you when I've completed my review of all the applicants, probably before the end of next week. I appreciate your coming in to see us," she concluded as she rose and walked me to the door.

"It was certainly nice meeting with you. I'm extremely interested in the position. I do relate well to women and feel confident I can handle whatever the position requires." I smiled at her and walked through the waiting room and out of the building.

I was floating on air as I drove home, wondering if I really had a chance at the spot. She'd said my background was ideal, hadn't she? I forgot to ask about the starting salary or the details of the training program, but I was too elated to let that bother me. I'm sure they pay like all the other large companies and if other people got through their training program, so could I. The 'women only' idea didn't faze me, since I'd been surrounded by females most of my life. I wondered whether being male would be held against me.

I played it down with my mother for I didn't want her to get her hopes up, but that evening she carefully read through the brochures and became interested in the company.

"I hope you made a good impression at your interview," she said. "These large companies have excellent benefit programs and once you're in, you can find a full career just waiting for you. It's important to pay strict attention to their rules and procedures, and to listen carefully to any suggestions your superiors make. Be sure to write this woman in Personnel and thank her for her time."

"Of course Mom, I'll get a letter off right away. Don't get your hopes up, I haven't gotten any offers yet. Meanwhile, what should I do with Beth's pants, sew them or throw them in the rag pile?" I asked.

"Patch it at the knee and then she can use it for the rest of the winter. Be sure and let me know if anything new happens with Hertech Industries, okay Sweetheart?"

"Sure Mom," I said as I went to sit in front of the T.V. with Beth's pants and my sewing kit. I went to sleep that night dreaming of working at Hertech, and slept soundly for the first time in quite a while.

## **Chapter 2**

It wasn't until late the following week that Ms. Carter requested I come in for a second interview.

"Make sure you have all your questions ready so I can answer them and we can assure ourselves that this is the right position for you. We do make quite an investment in each trainee, and we like to be as certain as possible that we'll reap the rewards of the program."

I thanked her, said I would come prepared and leaped into the air, after I hung up.

My mother was ecstatic, insisted I get a haircut (my long hair constantly needed attention), and sat with me going over the questions I would ask at the interview. She

kept coaching me not to be too inquisitive, “trust them, they know what they're doing. They didn't get this big without knowing how to groom young men into successful managers.”

I concurred with her and planned to listen attentively to the details of the program and have faith that it would be positive for me.

When I again walked into Ms. Carter's office, my nervousness was apparent, knowing I had a good chance at the job and not wanting to blow it. She put me immediately at ease with her smile and then requested my questions.

“I'd like to understand the full job responsibilities,” I began, “and where I would be taking the training program.”

“Well, to begin with,” she answered, “the management training program takes approximately two years, and we expect you to sign a contract assuring us you'll complete the full program.”

“If you leave prior to completion, you'll forfeit the 'incentive deduction' made from your paychecks, which is only paid to you at the end of your training program. It's almost like a bonus. We really want to discourage dropping out of the program. It's just so wasteful, as I'm sure you can understand.”

“Your duties will require you to assist the various staff members with their regular responsibilities. You'll learn first hand each and every job function, so you can understand it's importance to the smooth and successful running of each facility. Once a job is learned, you'll move to the next one until you've gained a well rounded background in all phases of the operation. Your past experience with a variety of jobs, certainly shows your ability to handle diversified functions.”

“Initially you'll be at one of several new locations in the South. They need additional help initially to bring the facility up and running efficiently. You're required to live on the premises. We provide you with living quarters as well as meals and necessary uniforms. Since you're a male you'll have to work that much harder at being accepted and becoming an effective staff member.”

“We've had other young men enter our program but only a few have successfully completed it. I hope you'll be in that select group. It won't be easy. It's quite difficult to be surrounded by female leadership, coworkers and clientele and still maintain your discipline and dedicated effort to becoming an effective 'team' member. 'Teamwork' is the key to success at Hertech, and only those people who become good team members will succeed.”

“Your starting salary will be \$23,000, standard for management trainees, however we'll be holding back 25% of each paycheck towards the completion of your training program. It's put aside in an interest bearing escrow account reserved in your name. Periodically you'll be reviewed by your superiors, so you'll understand how you're performing, and based on that review you may receive a salary increase. Performance bonuses are also given, rewarding those people judged to be doing exceptional jobs.”

“Our company policy book, which you should read carefully, will tell you about our excellent benefits programs. Here's an employment contract for your review and signature,” she reached across the desk handing me an envelope. “Please return it by

Friday, so I can make arrangements for you to take your physical. After that we'll make the necessary travel reservations for your first assignment.”

Wow, I was overwhelmed. Before I could find words for the many questions flying around in my head, she'd handed me the company policy book and was escorting me to the door as her next appointment was already waiting.

“Don't worry Mr. Shipley, when you return the contract, we'll spend more time going over the details. You should prepare yourself to be away from home for a two year period, for we discourage home visits while you're in training.”

She smiled at me and shook my hand.

“Hope you decide to join us Ira. I'm sure you could do a wonderful job for us.” Then she turned to a young woman waiting in the reception area, and greeted her as she had me thirty minutes earlier.

I had an actual job offer literally in hand and although my head was spinning with questions, I felt inebriated.

My mother was so thrilled that she actually started crying and then I was sobbing too, as we hugged in the middle of the kitchen. Our relief, after all these months, was staggering. We soon recovered and sipped some tea as we carefully read through the contract and company benefits booklet. It was pretty much as Ms. Carter had explained to me that morning. I hadn't fully realized I would be leaving home for two years and felt a bit apprehensive as it began to sink in.

Yet my excitement at seeing new places, meeting new people and encountering new challenges was overwhelming. My career was finally about to begin. After searching five long and dismal months, nothing, absolutely nothing was going to dampen my enthusiasm.

I signed at the bottom of the last page and decided to return the contract immediately. I left it for Ms. Carter, who was tied up in conference, and returned home to get my chores done.

My house duties would have to be turned over to my sisters. Being 9 and 11, they were old enough to take on the added responsibilities. Michelle, the nine year old, handled her homework easily each day, but my mother was going to have to keep a close eye on Beth, the sixth grader who could only think of playing with her friends after school.

Ms. Carter called the next morning and congratulated me on accepting the position. She set up an appointment on Tuesday for my physical and a second appointment on Thursday to see her and finalize my travel arrangements and other incidentals.

### **Chapter 3**

My best friends Marsha and Joan were happy for me. At the bowling alley Friday night Joan offered, “The job sounds fantastic.” She was working at the local newspaper as a messenger eventually hoping to become a reporter. “They'll train you for two years and pay you \$23K plus room and board. Are you sure you don't have to kill someone for them?.”

“Shut up and bowl Joan, it's your turn,” Marsha piped in. She asked me, “Didn't you get any idea what you'll actually be doing? Couldn't they be more specific than 'learning everything' and that most facilities are of the 'women only' variety?”

“Nope,” I answered. “I can only guess, that with rest homes and nursing homes, I'll be learning to cater to a bunch of rich old run-down ladies (I wasn't far from the truth). Kidding aside, it probably takes a lot of hard work to operate these homes, with women constantly demanding attention all day long. I'm sure my psychology training will be invaluable. I'm actually looking forward to learning effective ways of dealing with this increasing segment of the population.”

“Sounds like total boredom to me,” Joan returned from getting a spare. “Now your job Marsha, being a policewoman, that's exciting. Guaranteed to keep you on your toes, day or night. Just stay out of the bad neighborhoods and you might survive until thirty. And of course you have your pick of all those beautiful hunks in blue, only you're guaranteed of being divorced inside of five years, due to the marvelous strains of the job. Makes for quite a rosy future.”

“I still feel I can make a difference,” Marsha retorted, “and I'm starting my master's program next fall, which by the way is fully paid for by the township. Nice fringe, I'd say.”

“You're right Marsh,” I said, “don't let her wear you down, just because you get to carry a gun and she only carries envelopes. I'm sure going to miss you two. Maybe once I've gotten settled in, you'll come visit. I hope you'll keep an eye on my family while I'm gone. Let me know if they need anything, and if the young ones are okay. I feel kind of funny leaving for such a long period of time, but that's the company program.”

Later when we broke up with our little hugs, I felt nostalgic leaving my close buddies. There wasn't much we hadn't been through over the past four years, even though they were girls and I wasn't. I'd always found it easier to talk confidentially to them rather than a guy, as they were so much more sensitive and compassionate and not into macho bullshit.

On my way home, I began thinking about what to bring with me. It was going to be difficult. I was not used to packing for any kind of trip, much less a trip for two years. I would definitely need Mom's help.

## Chapter 4

The doctor's appointment went without a hitch, although she said I was anemic and gave me a vitamin to take daily to remedy the condition. Otherwise I seemed in excellent health. I left her office with a large bottle of the vitamins and she suggested I take them more frequently, if I had any cold or flu symptoms. I drove home with heightened anticipation of my Thursday appointment with Ms. Carter.

She was all ready for me, with the travel documents, numerous vouchers and payroll forms for me to sign. I was scheduled to leave on the following Wednesday, earlier than she had anticipated, for they were badly in need of additional personnel at the new location I'd been assigned to. It was in Louisiana some 50 miles southeast of Shreveport, and had only been in full operation for nine months. Highpoint, as it was



called, was already completely booked and had a substantial waiting list. It was a rehabilitation facility catering only to women, and could handle up to 200 patients at full capacity.

I'd be reporting to Nicole Worthington, the managing director of Highpoint. Ms. Carter described Ms. Worthington as one of the company's finest directors and I was fortunate to be training under her. She gave me a list of items to bring and another list to be sure to leave home, which included pets. I smiled thinking I'd never get our dog Corky away from my sisters Beth and Michelle, and pocketed the lists to be studied later.

She confirmed my clean bill of health, reminding me, "be sure you take your daily vitamin until your anemic condition improves. Each location has it's own doctor on staff, and I would recommend you see her when you settle in, so she can check that your condition doesn't get worse."

I certainly didn't notice any signs of anemia, but I'd decided to take the doctor's advice and pop a daily vitamin tablet. '*Can't hurt*', I reasoned. I left with a large manila envelope full of information and a smiling "Good luck," from Ms. Carter. Once I was home, I did a little jig in the living room, to celebrate.

"Louisiana, a town called Briarcliff," queried my mother, "this is where you're getting your training for the next two years? Seems far off the beaten track, and it's probably hot as baked potatoes just out of the oven. You'd better bring a lot of shorts and bathing suits," and I handed her the list of do's and don'ts for packing. She read it carefully, as I went out to cut the grass. I had to be careful of her for the next week, as I could tell she was starting to miss me already. I was feeling a bit uneasy about leaving my sister and Mom and promised myself I would write every week and maintain contact.

Mom shopped over the weekend as she carefully followed the list they suggested, purchasing toiletries and all the other items I required. She smiled at the brassieres, panties, nightgowns and other feminine apparel, realizing the list was directed towards a woman and never mentioned a thing to me.

On Tuesday night she helped me pack both my bags and said she'd send me anything else I needed once I was settled. I told her I'd arranged to have my monthly paycheck put directly into our bank account, and I'd let her know how much to send me for pocket money. She hugged me tightly, "you're the finest son a mother could ever have. I'm sure you'll do a wonderful job and I only hope they appreciate you half as much as I do. I'll miss you terribly and don't forget you can always count on my acceptance of you and that I'll love you no matter what direction your career takes."

"I know Mom," I managed through my tears, "I love you too."

## **Chapter 5**

The scene at the airport had been hectic, since we'd gotten caught in a traffic jam and I was frantically rushing to check my bags and hugging my sisters and Mom as they called my plane for boarding. My plane took off twenty minutes late, slowly banking left into the clouds and headed for St. Louis where I had to change planes and continue to Shreveport.

All this pressure was not doing my upset stomach any good. It had been bothering me for the past several days, severe cramps in the morning, but nothing was going to come between me and my flight to Louisiana. I was watching what I ate and hoped it would improve. There was always the doctor at Highpoint if I wasn't better soon. Reaching into my backpack for a book the vitamins rattled and I decided to take an extra one. '*Good for a cold or flu,*' I reasoned it might help with my sore tummy.

In St. Louis I laid over for an hour and a half, so I roamed the airport, enjoying my first excursion away from home. The flight to Shreveport was uneventful and we arrived ten minutes early. I spotted the sign held by the limousine driver 'Shipley', and told him we needed to retrieve my two bags and I'd be ready. We soon had them loaded and were on our way to Highpoint.

He informed me it would take about an hour. He traveled there frequently, as there were many people going to and fro from the airport, mostly women. In fact I was the first man in quite some time. I told him of my new position, and that I was used to being surrounded by women and could handle it. His southern drawl was difficult to understand. He kept up a running commentary with his being born and raised not thirty miles from that very spot. I smiled and sat back enjoying the quiet, cool, comfortable ride, realizing the outside temperature had to be in the high 80's, and it was oppressively humid.

After passing through some marshlands and desolate countryside, we suddenly pulled up to the front gate of a large property, completely fenced in. We were buzzed through and drove up a long circular driveway to the 'Administration' building, as the sign proclaimed. Off to the right were several other buildings surrounded by beautiful lawns and well maintained gardens. A picture right out of the brochure, and completely at odds with the countryside we'd recently driven through. My bags were left at the front door and the driver wished me luck as he drove off.

The woman at the front desk was startled, "You must be in the wrong place, sir. You'd better catch that limo before it leaves."

"I think you're mistaken. I'm Ira Shipley, and if this is Highpoint, then I'm certainly in the right place. If you would please tell Ms. Worthington that I'm here, I'm sure she'll clear up any doubts you have."

She lifted the phone, spoke quickly to someone and weakly smiled and motioned me to sit, "There'll be someone to pick you up in a minute. I'm sorry. It's highly unusual for a man to visit Highpoint, and I wasn't given any warning. I hope you'll forgive me for my poor welcome."

"No problem," I said, as I seated myself and studied the paintings on the wall. Glancing at her occasionally, I noticed she was quite pretty and remembering her accent I wondered, after being here awhile if I'd have one too.

Another lady walked in a few minutes later and came over to greet me, "Hi, I'm Ms. Frank, Teresa Frank and you must be Ms. Shipley, I'm sorry Mr. Shipley," she smirked. "We're all women here, so saying Mr. is a bit unusual," she explained in a beautiful southern drawl.

It looked like southern accents were definitely in and I'd better concentrate on understanding them or I could forget about communicating comfortably with anybody.

She was reaching for one of my bags, "Why don't you grab your other bag and I'll show you to your quarters, so you can settle in before you meet Ms. Worthington who's on an errand right now."

I lifted my bag, smiled at the receptionist and moved after Teresa as she was already out the door and going up the path.

She was quite strong as she handled my bag easily and her gait was a difficult one to keep up with. She stopped a moment at the top of the path and commented on the buildings we could see from that vantage point.

"Let me give you an overview of the facility. That's the dining hall over there with the two statues in front, and just to the right of it is the arts and crafts building. Behind those bushes," she was pointing to the left, "is the Rec. hall where the movies are shown every evening."

Turning to the right, she motioned to a group of buildings which looked like apartment houses, "those are the guest accommodations and behind them are the tennis courts and the sauna and pool areas. Off in the distance," we looked beyond the tennis courts, "you can see the golf course and the riding academy is just to the left of that. Many of our guests board their horses here during their stay. Our living quarters are behind the dining hall. Come on, let's get over there so you can unpack before we find Ms. Worthington."

Beyond the dining hall, we walked down a path towards a group of three buildings.

Teresa mentioned I'd be bunking with Margaret Fythe as we headed to 'B' building and up a flight of stairs to room 14. It was quite a spacious room with two sleeping alcoves on either end and a well furnished living area in the center. Along the back wall between the alcoves were two dressers and a make-up table and off to the right was a small kitchenette with a table and chairs. Over one of the dressers was a picture of a group of women in a park (seemed like a Matisse), and some flowering plants sat near each of the two curtained windows. Really quite homey.

Teresa had a similar room down the hall, #16, which she shared with Sarah Lee Curtis, a new MT (management trainee) like myself, who'd arrived on Monday. I put my bags on the bed as Teresa went to get my bedding from the housekeeper's office in 'A' building.

Unpacking, I hung up my suits in the front closet, which we obviously shared. It was full of pretty uniforms and dresses. My clothes went in the dresser nearest my bed.

As I unpacked I considered the fact that I was to casually accept the idea of having a female roommate. Since I had lived my life surrounded by females, I considered this arrangement as a part of our new integrated unisex society. *'Well, if it is good enough for the army.'*

To my amazement, I found Mom had packed some new nylon panties (an assortment of feminine colors), several brassieres (A cup) and even some nightgowns (flowery cotton prints). I should have remembered what a stickler she was for the rules, and I'm sure those items had been on the list of 'must' things to bring. I put them quickly in a bottom drawer (a bit embarrassed) and realized I had only two pair of my own underwear and no pajamas.

*How did I miss that when we packed? Did Mom actually think I would wear the panties and nightgowns? Why else did she buy them? I guess she wanted to be sure I met all the requirements, even if it meant wearing feminine underwear and nighties. What a Mom.*

Teresa returned, so I put aside my new living arrangements and clothes dilemma while she helped me make my bed, giving me pointers on how to do the hospital corners. "You'll learn the complete rules when you rotate to housekeeping. There are many rules for the staff and the sooner you learn them, the easier the job will be."

She'd been transferred to Highpoint when it opened, and had almost completed her training program, only two more months to go. She loved the challenge of making this the best facility in the company. "Ms. Worthington's a super boss, tough but very fair. She takes care of the staff members who give their best effort, especially when she needs it."

Teresa enjoyed her current assignment on the welcoming committee, and was looking forward to kitchen duties which she was scheduled to begin on Monday.

As we finished straightening out my area, I admired Teresa's lovely figure in her uniform dress with it's puffy short sleeves, well defined bust line and a skirt that reached just above her knee (she looked no more than 23 or 24). She smiled at my attention as we pushed my empty bags under the bed.

I washed up and combed my hair before we went in search of Ms. Worthington.

"She was in the kitchen earlier helping one of the new MTs get acclimated to her duties (what's this kitchen duty?)."

After admiring the girls in the kitchen, who were preparing for a meal (all dressed alike in a cute functional uniform), Teresa and I followed Ms. Worthington's trail back to the admin building.

The cute receptionist smiled as we passed on the way to the inner offices. Teresa peeked into a large corner office and motioned me to follow her as she entered.

"Hi Ms. Worthington, I've brought you some fresh eager hands, that can't wait to get started. This is Ira Shipley," looking at me, "and this is Ms. Worthington, the director of Highpoint."

"I'm happy to meet you, Mr. Shipley," Ms. Worthington greeted me with a deeply accented throaty voice, as she put aside some papers she'd been reading. "Won't you have a seat? Thank you Teresa. You can continue with next week's outline and I'll see you later."

Teresa left us alone.

“It's a pleasure to meet you Ms. Worthington and I'm certainly ready to begin my management training program.”

“Good, that's nice to know. Since Teresa has already gotten you settled in, we can start reviewing the company philosophy.” She pulled out a booklet from her desk drawer and handed it to me. “All the company rules are in there. Study them carefully. I understand you're rooming with Margaret Fythe. She's the riding academy supervisor, and I'm sure she'll be happy to answer any questions you have. It's your responsibility to know and abide by the rules. I don't enjoy disciplining anyone, but I do insist that everyone adhere properly to company policy.”

“One of the first rules you must learn is the correct way to address the guests, as well as your fellow employees. We always use Ms. or Mrs. and the person's surname, especially while on duty.”

“You must also make an immediate effort to develop the proper accent for this area. You'll need it to be easily understood by the guests. Listen carefully to the girls for guidance.”

“I know you're a man, but we'll have to change your outward appearance at once, so it doesn't disturb the guests. You see, most of the women chose this facility because of the 'no men allowed' rule, wanting to leave behind any hint of their previously demoralizing relationships with men. They certainly need no reminder from you. It's important we avoid any complaints from the guests (I remembered the receptionist's reaction), so your image must change immediately to that of a female.”

She watched the astonishment register on my face and continued, “You were told previously that this facility was constructed with the female gender in mind. Bathrooms and changing rooms for ladies only, activities strictly geared to women like sewing, crocheting and make-up classes. You name a feminine interest and we pursue it here. Can you imagine a guest's reaction seeing you enter the bathroom dressed as you are?”

She had me thinking.

“I've asked Cecile, who's on her way over, to assist in your initial transformation. I hope you'll give her your full cooperation, as the change is imperative for your stay here.” She must have seen the look of anguish on my face as she advised me, “Give it a chance. I think you'll be surprised at how easily you'll adjust if you don't fight it, and just go along with it.”

“Tomorrow morning when you're ready and you've studied all the rules, we'll begin your training at the sports academy. Come see me first so I can check you out. Be sure to read the guest brochure and familiarize you with the variety of activities we offer. Cecile will fit you for your uniforms and you must be sure to care for them properly. Don't forget, the most important lesson at Highpoint; 'the guest always comes first!' Once you've completely absorbed that, really deep down in your bones, your successful career at Hertech will be assured. Have you any questions?”

I stared at her with disbelief, “This is quite a shock. Ms. Carter never mentioned this aspect of my appearance at our interview, although she did tell me this was a 'female only facility'. I never realized I'd be expected to alter my appearance,” and I

smiled, “although my mother must have had an inkling since she packed some girls underwear without telling me.”

Then anxiety hit, “I won't have to make any other changes, will I?”

“Of course not. We're only concerned with your outward appearance, changing it enough to convince the guests. How feminine you become is your own business. At a minimum you must appear to be a girl with perhaps some masculine traits, not a feminine boy. This will mean some subtle changes on your part and I do hope you'll make your best effort to develop the right image. It'll be so much easier for you to progress through our training program, as I'm sure you can understand what a hindrance your male appearance would be.

“Ah, here's Cecile now.” she said as a tall blonde strolled into the office.

“Hi Ms. Worthington, this must be the new MT who needs some modification with her masculine appearance.”

“Yes, Ms. Cecile Baker, meet Ms. Irene Shipley. No more Mister.” she said to me as an aside (I noticed how she'd subtly changed my name), “She's ready for your assistance.”

I slowly nodded my head (*give it a chance, she did kinda say a 'masculine girl' was okay*).

“Cecile's the manager of the clothing store which takes care of all employee uniforms as well as the extensive clothing needs of the guests. She does a marvelous job, and I'm sure she'll do wonders with your transformation. I suggest you don't delay, staff dinner is served promptly at 5:30.”

“I'm happy to meet you,” Cecile said as she offered her hand in greeting. “Let's get moving,” she said, giving Mrs. Worthington a goodbye wave and leading the way out.

Ms. Worthington gave me an encouraging smile, as I followed Cecile towards the Arts & Crafts building.

Cecile led me around to the right, to a large picture window displaying a variety of women's wear, beneath a sign that read 'Petticoat Junction'.

The store took up the whole ground floor under the arts & crafts section. As she opened the front door and reversed the 'back in a minute' sign to 'open',

I felt myself entering a new world.

“Take off your clothes so I can measure you and get the proper undergarments to help your disguise. Go in the changing room over there while I get the measuring tape.”

Things were going so fast I had difficulty realizing what was happening. Ms. Worthington's advice kept running through my mind (*just go with it, you'll be surprised at how easy it will be*). I was down to my underwear when she entered the changing room and began measuring me, noting it on a pad.

“You'll have to remove everything, as I've got a special contraption for you to wear to hide your male organs safely away.” She handed me a rubber-like panty which she told me to put on first, while she left to get me some clothes.

I removed my underwear and pulled the rubber contraption up my legs with difficulty. When I had it in place, it totally flattened my male equipment so that nothing showed through, as the full length mirror confirmed. It felt extremely tight and would take some getting used to.

Cecile returned and smiled “that's certainly a good start,” as she placed my arms in the straps of a white brassiere, fastening it behind me. “Put these panties on,” handing me a matching white nylon pair, “and remember to wear the 'flattener' whenever you leave your room.”

The panties looked lovely with no unsightly bulges as I examined the results in the dressing room mirror.

She assisted me into a uniform dress, different from what she was wearing, “this is the style for the sports academy. You're able to move more freely with the pleated skirt and the closely fit bosom. It looks like you're a size 10,” her hand went over my waist and hip, “however until your figure changes, we'd better get you a girdle to nip in your waist. (*until my figure changes?*) Take the dress off and relax a minute.”

In a moment I struggling into a panty girdle while she set up an appointment for me at the beauty salon. It almost reached my brassiere and had a front zipper, which Cecile tugged closed as I held my breath. From another package she pulled out two of the most realistic looking breast forms and settled them into my empty bra cups.

“These should add some authenticity,” she offered and I tried adjusting my breathing to my upper chest. When the dress was on again, it fit much more snugly in the bosom and was smoother at the waist. “Your appointment at the beauty salon is in ten minutes. Let's get you some socks and shoes.

“Starting immediately, I suggest you speak like the other women. Copy their accents and the high pitch of their voices. It will sound strange at first, but if you persist, you'll get used to it no time. Let me hear you try. Don't worry about sounding silly. Come with me as I get some clothes for you to use over the next several days.”

As I followed her around the shop watching her select an assortment of undergarments and uniforms in my size, I gave her a running history of my college days, in the sweetest voice I'd ever used. She found some socks and shoes for me to wear and carefully coached me with my accent. After I got over the initial embarrassment I soon settled into a higher register.

Ten minutes later we left the shop, with me carrying two large bags of clothes and wearing a hat to hide my hair and face. She lead the way down a path toward the medical center. I felt strange in the dress and heels (2") and talking in my new voice, but had little time to be concerned, as I hurried to keep up with her.

The beauty salon was on the side of the medical building actually occupying the ground floor beneath the doctor's offices. I was quickly ushered into a corner cubicle before anyone could notice me, as I'm sure I looked unusual in my dress and male features. Before being seated, I traded my dress for a pink gown, which was short and left my legs available for inspection.

Soon my hair was being shampooed and conditioned while other hands were creaming my legs and giving me instructions not to move even if they started feeling a

little warm. My legs were spread apart with my toes rested lightly on the foot stand, my gown having been tucked neatly out of the way. My hands rested in soaking dishes and while my hair was still damp a pretty girl named Gina began cutting and creating the new me.

“Your hair is so fine and because it's long, we have a lot of options. Because of the time constraints, I'll only do some preliminary shaping now. Set up an appointment for a permanent sometime early next week and we'll really work on you. With a permanent, your new style will hold much better and be a whole lot easier to care for.”

I told her 'sure' as I peeked in the mirror, becoming aware of my foamy legs and my pink girdle being right out there for all to see. I couldn't move my hands, legs or head, so I blushed and shrugged it off. No unusual bumps were showing, thanks to the 'flattener', so I just fit right in.

Gina kept snipping and combing, and we had a running conversation with me concentrating on developing my new accent, responding to her many questions. I was actually beginning to think in a soft feminine southern accent and she encouraged me to remain in that thought process. “If you constantly think and speak in this voice,” she offered, “it will soon be natural and you won't have to give it any further thought.”

My legs started burning and Cynthia, the manicurist, got a wet washcloth and proceeded to remove the cream from my burning legs along with all my hair (I guess hairy legs weren't an asset at Highpoint). She soon had my smooth legs dry (and tingling), and after replacing my socks and shoes, returned her attention to my hands. She'd pulled down the pink gown and received my silent 'thank you' for returning me to decency. I admired her protruding bosom when she leaned over as the 'flattener' worked overtime to keep me under control.

Donna came by and booked an appointment for me on Tuesday at 1 P.M., for a permanent and a pedicure. I thanked her and wondered if I would be able to get time away from whatever I'd be doing at the sports academy.

Meanwhile Gina was blow drying my hair, which hung down close to my shoulders. Cynthia was applying pink polish to my fingernails, saying she would match my toenails when I came in on Tuesday. The aromas from the salon were intoxicating, as Gina plucked my eyebrows, “just to straighten them out a little,” is how she put it. Several minutes later she put some lipstick carefully on my lips, sprayed my hair and turned the chair around, “meet the new Irene?”

If Cynthia hadn't been holding my hand, I might have hit the ceiling. Staring at me through the mirror, was an attractive brunette. She had soft bangs with flowing curls covering her ears and I continued searching for a hint of my former self. “I can't believe it's me,” I said as I watched her lips move. “I'm so changed.” I moved my head and watched her movements match mine. She smiled as I appreciated her attractive appearance watching her stand up and seeing how lovely she looked in her uniform.

“Talk a little higher, and watch out for your nails until they're completely dry,” she reminded me.

I watched her lips respond, “Thanks Gina, I can't believe that is really me.”



Cynthia smiled at me as I admired my new pink nails and she helped me back into my dress. My bare legs felt strange in the slight breeze as all of us hurried to the dining hall. They carried my clothing bags so my nails could dry.

We walked up some stairs with me using care in my heels and entered a large dining room. At least fifty women were already seated and eating and the noise level was deafening. They all wore some kind of uniform, similar to mine and it was easy to see the uniform colors at Highpoint were different combinations of pink, yellow and lavender.

We picked up trays and entered the kitchen. I followed along, absorbing everything. We got to choose between chicken and fish for an entree. With vegetables, dessert and drinks, we returned to the dining room and found seats at a table that was currently filling up. I noticed many of the girls wore name tags on their uniforms as I met the girls at our table being introduced as Ms. Irene Shipley, a new MT just arrived today.

It felt strange, looking at my food over the curves of my breasts, and I smiled to myself as I glanced around and saw that everyone else had similar curves to deal with. I definitely fit in. It was difficult to enjoy the meal, as the tight girdle compressed my stomach. Remembering my cramps in the morning, I felt comfortable with the limited amount of food I consumed.

After dinner, Cynthia and Gina went to their rooms. It was a lovely evening with the sun just beginning to set, displaying its many colors before disappearing over the horizon. I strolled towards the Rec Hall getting used to my new appearance, the bounce of my bosom (the falsies really had some weight) and the strange feel of the clothes.

For the first time I saw guests as they walked past me down the Rec. Hall steps. They certainly seemed fit enough and in good spirits, some of them wiping sweat off with towels hanging over their shoulders. They paid me no heed, easily accepting my new appearance as a woman. Inside other women were on a volleyball court, packing up to follow the first group I'd just passed.

Off to the right there were ping pong tables, two indoor squash courts and an exercise room. As I walked by I noticed, a variety of the latest equipment; and one lonely lady just getting off the treadmill and wiping down. I hesitated as she smiled at me and our eyes met, returning the smile I noticed my feminine reflection in the glass. "Whew, what a good workout." she said to me as she left the room walking towards the locker room. I followed along.

"I'm glad you enjoyed it, Ma'am," I responded in my carefully accented voice. "You certainly look in fine shape," she had to be in her early thirties, "and I'm sure a hot shower will feel perfect now, before dinner."

"You're right and thanks for the compliment," she answered as she pushed the locker room door open and motioned me ahead of her. "You're new here aren't you? I'm Mrs. Ann Saunders and who are you?" she inquired. "I don't see a name tag."

"I'm Irene Shipley and you're right, it's my first day here." I started feeling uncomfortable as she began undressing right there in front of me. "I was just walking

around checking out the Rec. hall.” My soft accent still sounded strange to my ears, as I watched her remove her shirt and then her brassiere. Both were dripping with sweat. Her large breasts stood out firmly, and caused an immediate reaction in the crotch of my panty girdle.

“That's nice,” she smiled at me. “It's a pleasure to meet you and if you've got some time later, I'd be happy to show you around the grounds.” Her voice was lovely to listen to and she spoke rather slowly so I could follow her easily, even though she was distracting me in other ways. “I've been here almost six months, so I know my way around. I'll probably be ready by nine. If you're game, I'll meet you outside 'Petticoat Junction', that's the clothing store in the Arts and Crafts building. Are you familiar with it?” She pulled down her shorts and panties, grabbed a towel, and looked for my response.



I was mesmerized, as she seemed unaware of her nudity. I begrudgingly looked away. “I picked up my uniforms there earlier so I should be able to find it again. I'll meet you there at nine.” I answered hastily almost forgetting my accent, and watched her walk to the shower (what a perfectly shaped rear end). Then I turned to escape from the locker room, feeling quite skittish from my first intimate encounter at this 'all women' facility.

By the time I reached my building, I thoroughly understood why my male appearance was unacceptable. I made a firm commitment to myself to avoid discovery at all costs. I was actually getting accustomed to the tight girdle and brassiere, and enjoyed the skirt brushing against my smooth thighs as I walked. Mrs. Saunders' nude body popped into my mind and I realized I'd probably be seeing a lot more naked females in the future. This job was certainly going to be a strain on my libido and my flattener.

Passing several girls in the hallway, I reached my door and bumped into a tall brunette rushing out of the room. “Hi, I'm Margaret, I'll be right back,” and she scurried off to the right before I could respond.

I threw my bags on the bed and settled in on the couch throwing my legs up on the ottoman to give them relief from the heels. My calves were killing me. I browsed

through the guest brochure and was impressed with the list of activities. They actually included a library, water-skiing and ballet classes. It seemed, almost any leisurely activity a woman could think of, was available at Highpoint. There were even weekly square dances.

From a daily activity sheet distributed in the evening at dinner, the guests could review the next day's choices. There were daily activities like tennis and swimming, while water aerobics and canoeing had regular weekly times. Special events like stage shows, picnics and tournaments were announced separately.

Just then Margaret walked in, came over and shook my hand with a big smile, "Welcome. I'm Margaret Fythe and you must be the new MT." She was close to six feet tall, was holding a bottle of shampoo, had a statuesque figure, long flowing hair and was much younger than I had anticipated for the supervisor of the riding academy. She couldn't be more than twenty eight.

"Yes, I'm Irene Shipley, and it's a pleasure to meet you. I start the management training program tomorrow. I must tell you that I'm really a man. Ms. Worthington suggested I'd fit in better disguised as a woman, especially around the guests, so therefore this is what you see." I stood up raising my arms and doing a full pirouette. I was using my newly acquired accented voice without any effort. I watched her face go through a range of emotions and finally her broad smile returned as full realization sunk in.

"So, Irene is not all she appears to be, interesting. You definitely look authentic. Is this the first time you've dressed like this?"

"As a matter of fact, it is. It feels so strange, and I hope I can handle all the subtleties this disguise requires."

"I'll help where I can. Your voice sounds very good, you've really gotten the accent down pat. Where are you from anyway," she asked, "and what's in the bags?" approaching my bed and peeking in.

"I'm from upstate New York as a matter of fact, right outside of Rochester, not fifteen miles from the corporate headquarters. Cecile packed me clothes to wear for the next couple of days until she can put together additional uniforms and clothes in my sizes."

Getting no response I asked, "How long have you been here? I hope you don't mind my being your roommate. I assure you I won't take advantage of the situation." That sounded strange after I said it, as she was so much bigger than I, and maybe I should be getting assurances that she wouldn't take advantage of me. "I've got to study the rules tonight. Later I'm meeting with one of the guests who offered to show me around the place."

She smiled as she went through and pulled out my new clothes from the bags, examining them as she straightened them out. "I've been with the company for five years; at Highpoint since it opened, and I don't mind rooming with a man, as long as you don't behave in their stupid macho ways. I used to have a steady boyfriend, until he began to show me off like one of his possessions, buying me revealing dresses and

parading me around in front of his friends. Men are so dumb, it astonishes me. But don't get me started."

"Learn the rules. It's important to get off on the right foot. If you have any questions just ask me, I'll be happy to help. What time are you meeting your guest?" She was hanging up my new uniforms in the closet, cautioning me to take good care of them, "The uniform allowance is not too generous."

"I'm meeting Mrs. Saunders at nine," I answered from the couch. "She's quite nice. Thanks for hanging those up for me."

She shrugged, "No problem. Mrs. Saunders's one of our more classy guests. I'm surprised you hit it off with her. She's been strictly a loner, very unsociable." She put my new underwear away in my dresser sorting my underwear from home in with the new stuff Cecile had provided. "Be sure you carefully read the rules about 'fraternizing with guests'. I'd hate to see you get in trouble on your first day."

She was finished putting away my clothes and grabbed a huge towel heading for the bathroom, "I've got to wash my hair."

I heard her singing in the shower, as I turned my attention to the handbook. She was nice, and seemed quite comfortable with my unusual circumstances. I checked my watch and saw I had an hour to study, and didn't look up again until Margaret called from the bathroom, asking me to get her nightgown and robe for her. "They're hanging on a hook in the closet."

I found them easily, and reached past the partially opened door with the flimsy nylon set, receiving a pleasant 'thanks' for my effort. I was back at digesting the 'guest do's and don'ts', when Margaret came out of the steaming bathroom with her hair wrapped in a towel and her body outlining the pink nylon robe I had recently given her. I momentarily lost my composure as I stared at her voluptuous curves, totally understanding why her boyfriend had been impressed. She frowned at me and sat at the vanity, beginning to brush out her hair. I finally looked back at my book, a flush coming to my cheeks. This was going to be difficult to handle on an everyday basis, my penis straining for release from my flattener and girdle, and my whole body feeling tense and explosive. How was I going to live so intimately amongst women, and keep control of myself? I hadn't anticipated this aspect of the job.

"Do you know where there's a phone I can use to call home? I told my mother I'd let her know I arrived safely," I said.

"Sure, there's one at the end of the hall, just make a left when you leave the room," she directed.

Ten minutes later I was back, having reassured Mom that everything was fine. I'd dropped the accent which hadn't been easy (I was already thinking in my high feminine voice) and omitted telling her how I was dressed and about the whole female appearance thing. She'd only worry unnecessarily.

Returning my attention to the rules booklet, I queried Margaret, "Do you think it's all right to be walking around the grounds alone with Mrs. Saunders tonight. This rule about no intimate relationships between guests and employees worries me."