

# IN THE NAME OF THE GAME

*By Rae Johnsen*



*ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART*

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A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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## IN NAME OF GAME

By Rae Johnsen

I sit here right now, polishing my nails with my legs curled underneath me in my nightgown on my bed. My mind searches for the words to describe the changes I have gone through over the last one and a half years while I speak into my tape recorder. Though my name only changed one letter from Tony to Toni, I cannot say the same for my physical presence.

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It all started one day during my Freshman year in high school.

My sister Gina had filled out the forms to enter a television game show called Brain Kids. She was a Junior at that time with a lot of potential to evoke and create spectacular events for the school. She was a high school honor student who was also blessed with beauty, charisma, and a popularity that seemed to generate crowds around her.

In her letter to the television station she had set the challenge of the sexes, and had thrown a gauntlet to our cross-town elite that the girls of Lake View could outwit the boys of Lane Tech. The Lane Tech school was an all-boys school, selective to those with high pre-entrance test scores.

I thought she was being vindictive because if she were not a girl her grades and scores would have qualified her for entrance. Also, it was a way to rub in my face my academic prowess, for even though I more than qualified for Lane Tech I had chosen not to attend. I felt the students were snobbish, and thus I elected to attend public school with my sister.

Earlier in my education I had been promoted a year ahead of myself, and thus even though I was a Freshman some of my classes were shared with my sister, who was a Junior.

During the summer I had spent hours speaking with the principal about extracurricular activities, and about taking proficiency exams on some courses. My quest for knowledge seemed to be a never-ending thirst that I kept trying to quench.... My greatest interest crossed between biology and the computer sciences.

So, often during my childhood days I would hear my parents and my sister tease me that I was a mad scientist in the making!

When our principal received a letter of confirmation about the upcoming contest, the staff was delighted. The letter arrived in early October and was scheduled to take place Dec. 6th. Teachers started trying to second-guess the questions and topics that would be covered. My sister was chosen as head of the girls team and was asked to

choose the other two girls to join her. The hours of preparation began with study hours.

It seems the enthusiasm rose to a new peak each day.

Gina did not rush her decision on whom to select as a part of her team on the panel for Brain Kids. She opted to examine the strengths of fellow girls in her honors classes. After a few days, she chose Beth for her knowledge of Literature, and Carol for her knowledge in the Sciences. She complimented the team with strengths in Geography and Social Sciences. Each one of them was brilliant and knowledgeable in many facets.

My sister set up a study session each night for the three of them from 7:00 to 8:30 each school night, and also Saturday afternoon sessions.

On the third Saturday study session, the girls were in the living room bombarding each other with questions to test their knowledge.

I had come up from the basement and my special little getaway science lab and computer room that my parents had set up for me as a gift on my fourteenth birthday.

While I was out in the kitchen grabbing some juice and making a sandwich I could hear their jabber.

Carol threw out a question to Gina about geography.

I blurted out with a mouth full, "wrong, answer is Laos."

Gina then asked Carol a question as I was walking by in the hallway.

After she gave the incorrect answer I spoke with a grin, "wrong, the answer is Lemur."

As I headed down the stairs to my room I could hear them chattering back and forth.

Shortly thereafter a knock on my door was followed by a very sweet, "Oh, Tony!"

I wheeled back on my computer chair to swing open the door. All three of them entered my little getaway with very alluring and charming smiles on their faces.

Gina knew that I was very attracted to Beth and that she aroused in me what I had thought was the beginning of manhood.

So Beth, with a very charming and sweet voice, began to express how much she would appreciate it if I would join them in their study sessions to prepare for Lane Tech. She clicked into my ego as she expressed how much help my vast knowledge and intellect would be to them. While I leaned back in my computer chair, the sparkle of Beth's eyes caught my eyes, and thus a very soft and muted reply of, "I guess so," somehow spewed out.

Thus, a routine was set.

As Gina and I arrived home from the school or library, we would set to the task of homework. After dinner we would help Mom clean up so as to be ready for Beth and Carol to arrive around seven o'clock.

Soon I came to look forward to the study sessions. When the chatter would disturb my father, the four of us would grab our snacks and drinks to head down to my get-away room. Previously I had kept it under lock and key. My security had melted down and I gave my sister a key so she could use the computer.

One night as we were all quizzing each other and I was constantly throwing out hypothetical questions that may be asked of them, I became aware of how much the team valued me.

Beth leaned over from her chair and gave me a kiss on cheek as she told me that I was really great for helping them.

My cheeks ablaze, I continued to cover topics that they were weak on. Every time I reached for the chip bowl in the midst of our little square of chairs, my hair fell in my face.

My father had been greatly reluctant months ago to accept my refusal to get my hair cut. My mother, as she so often did, played advocate, and had assured him that it was just a phase of youthful independence and rebellion or a search for an independent identity that I was going through. So at the present time my hair was all one length and parted in the middle, it hung rather floppy an inch or so past my shoulders.

Beth took notice that my hair was in my way and distracting because I kept throwing my head back to get it out of the way. She arose from her chair and walked behind mine. Reaching into her purse, she took out a brush and comb. As she started brushing my hair she told me to keep with the questions, and that she would take care of my hair.

Her fingers pulled and tugged my hair after she had brushed and combed it, to get any tangles out. A short while later she put on one of her elastic bands, and I thought she had pulled it back into a ponytail as I often did in my P.E. class.

She patted my head when she was done with the comment that my hair should be out of the way now, and that she liked the look on me.

My sister and Carol just smiled and nodded in agreement. Both my sister and I had very thick dark hair taking after my father's Italian side.

So I just smiled back, assuming that I had just been given an Italian Stallions mane. *Yeah, right!*

Our session ran late that night, till about 9:45 the time just flew by. My parents had already headed up to their bedroom, and Beth and Carol quietly headed out the door for home.

It wasn't until I was getting ready for bed and brushing my teeth that I noticed that my hair had been put into a very neat French Braid.

My sister knocked on the bathroom door just about same time I had noticed. She entered as I was pulling out the elastic band and shaking my hair loose. Her comment was, "Aww too bad I liked it the way it was."

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The study sessions went on quite well, but around the third week in November my sister, Beth, and Carol were having trepidation as to whether they could conquer Lane's whiz boys. So sessions started becoming longer and more intense.

One night I tried to alleviate some of the tension by bringing in a little humor to our study night. After everyone was in my little study room I excused myself. A couple of minutes later I returned with a paper maché mold of an exaggerated brain I had made, on my head. With a snicker and a smile I poked my head through the doorway with the words, "Careful girls, this is what too much thinking can do to you!"

The room filled with laughter and giggles.

I was surrounded and hugged, followed by kisses on my cheek. Hey, I thought, the rewards for my efforts were bountiful. Beth took my hand and gently squeezed it, telling me that I was the greatest part of the study sessions.

During our last long Saturday session before the show we were tossing questions around as if cramming for college entrance exams, one after another.

Yet Beth was sitting rather laid back that day, working on her nails. When she finished filing hers she looked over at mine. A weird shape formed on her mouth followed by, "Yuk," and, "putrid nails friend."

She slid her chair closer to mine and reached for my right hand. I pulled it back nervously, and yet I would love to hold hands with her. A smile spread across her face followed by an expression to chill out, for she just wanted to make my nails look presentable.

Playing it to the hilt, and rather campy, I extended my hand saying, "Anything for you darling!"

She filed and buffed until both hands had shiny clean oval nails about one-quarter inch long. Beth reached into her purse and took out two bottles of nail polish and held them in front of me, asking whether I would prefer pink or clear.

I replied none thank you, but she opened the clear. She did her own nails, and then reached for my hand telling me that it would just stop them from chipping. When I pulled my hand back with embarrassment she gently took it again as she sweetly told me not to be a prude. So a few minutes later as I reached for a snack my sister remarked that movie stars and rock stars get manicures all the time.

"No big deal!"

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The week was filled with lots of encouragement for the Brain Kids team, and on Friday the whole school filled the bleachers for a Pep Assembly. After Gina, Beth, and Carol took their bows, they called me up for recognition in preparing them for the show.

It was agreed that they would meet at our house and then drive over to the college and the television studio on campus where Brain Kids broadcast from. Gina was pac-

ing with jitters around the living room as I walked by to head for my special room. I tossed out an encouraging, “Blow them away Sis!”

Just as I was heading down the stairs, Beth arrived, and she expressed that she wished I was going along. I told her that I was working on a unique computer program for a school project.

Her face filled with disappointment.

While I was in the basement the phone rang and rang. Since no one else answered it, for whatever reason, I reached out for it. A few seconds later I leaped up the stairs to tell Mom and Sis that it was the principal who called. With perspiration on my palms and a dry mouth, I started to tell Sis the news that Carol and her parents were just admitted at the hospital for they were in an automobile accident on the way to our house. Someone had run a red light and sideswiped them. Carol was being examined for spinal injuries.

Many tears and despair filled the living room as Gina and Beth hugged each other. My sister called the hospital and spoke to the ER who referred her to the attending doctor. When she hung up the phone we were assured that Carol would recover, but that she would be confined to bed for a while, and then limited activity with a neck brace.

Gina expressed that she hadn't thought of having a back-up for the team. She was getting ready to call the producer and cancel when Beth looked my way and said, “not so fast.”

Beth told her that we still had one hour and a half to “make” a fill-in for Carol. Gina took Beth's hand and pulled her aside to jabber. Then my mother was drawn into the huddle as if a major strategy on field was in progress. All three broke and eyes were upon me as my mother told me to go up to my sister's room, for she had something to talk over with me.

With Gina in front of me and Beth behind me we entered into my sister's bedroom. Beth took my hand and led me to the bed where we all took a seat. Then the pleading for a big favor well beyond the norm commenced.

Beth reminded me of the many hours I had shared with them, getting them ready for the challenge, and she stated that I too was ready!!

I reminded them that it was to be girls challenging the whiz boys of Lane. They both looked at me with pathetic sad eyes replying in unison, “We know.”

When I understood what they were about to ask I scrambled for the door in flight.

As my legs started to move, Beth stepped on one foot and held my hand. With a tear in her eye she asked if I would do it for her and the school.

When I came back with the question of what would I have to do at a minimum to pass, she knew that she had me. She told me just a skirt and sweater. Before I had a chance to even reply my sister blurted, “Come on we can do it, for we are a team.”

My body was trembling and shaking as I expressed that I didn't think that I could do such a great job of acting, for it wasn't my thing.

Without a real confirmation on my part, my sister told Beth to take off my shoes, socks, and pants. She reached on her dresser for her electric razor and took it from the charger. Within just a couple of minutes she had taken off the little hair I had on my legs. I started to reach for one to feel the difference when Gina pulled me up from the bed, and handed me a pair of panties and pantyhose. She told me that I had no time to admire my legs now as she pushed me toward the bathroom telling me to put them on.

The minute I stepped out of the bathroom, Gina whizzed me back to her room. She pulled a skirt up my legs, slipped on and hooked a padded bra, slid a camisole down over my head, and followed it with a sweater. Beth lifted my feet one at a time to slip on a pair of black flats.

Quickly they tugged me to sit at my sister's vanity, but turned sideways so that they could both work on me. Beth took a brush and comb to start once again on a French Braid while Gina took tweezers to shape my brows. A tear fell to my cheek which she wiped away, telling me that she owed me big time for coming to the rescue. Like magicians they worked on my face. Beth put color on one cheek while my sister worked on one eye... Switch... Viola!!

They each took a hand to guide me over to my sister's full-length mirror. The reflection I saw was quite unbelievable. There I stood in a black skirt, turquoise sweater, nylons and flats...

My face was actually pretty.

Beth put a scrunchie that matched the sweater on the end of braid. Then she whispered in my ear that I was adorable and that the boys of Lane would drool over me.

In just over a half-hour we walked back downstairs to enter the living room where my mother stood completely dumb struck for a minute or two. She told my sister that she had had her doubts about their plan before, but now she thought we could pull it off. Mom took me aside to ask me if I was all right with all this.

My head nodded rather as if I was in a trance, for I was still too overwhelmed about how quickly I jumped the boy/girl line.

Just before we left, my Mom went to her room and came back holding a pearl necklace and a pearl ring, telling us that I didn't look complete, and that after all I would be on television.

Mom handed me one of her winter coats and we stepped outside to head for the van.

My first step outside in skirts surprised me as the wind blew around my nyloned legs and up the skirt.

The drive over to the television studio was filled with helpful hints from Sis and Beth. Take small steps!! Watch us.. Smile! My sister giggled as we were getting out of the van as she looked at me and told me to remember that we were a beauty and brain combo.



The producer went through the format and rules of the show before placing us at opposing panels with buzzers. Just before the 'on air' light went on, one of the Lane boys gave us a thumbs down gesture, asking if we were ready to go down.

I looked at my sister to whisper, "jerk made the wrong move right, Sis . . ."

The show proceeded with a volley of correct answers back and forth. The expression on Lanes whiz boys faces told that they were caught off-guard by our knowledge and the competition.

Near the end we took a slight lead, and to our great joy held on to win!

The sponsor of the program took us aside after the contest for pictures and an interview. He handed us a check for the school in the amount of \$50,000, and then gave us each a letter awarding us with \$15,000 towards a college fund. His lawyer had us sign a form.

So Sis signed Gina DeGrazia followed by Elizabeth Davidson. When Beth handed me the pen my sister whispered to me with an "i". That rather explains my name change somewhat.

However, my face turned pale when the producer told us he would see us next month. Even my sister didn't know that as the reigning champions we would go on to represent our school again. Even as we stood there, the phone was ringing about how much pleasure our victory had brought so many.

Once we were in the van heading toward home, I tried to find my way out of a rather blank-headed stupor, realizing what just took place, while trying to comprehend that everyone expected me to do it again at a later date.

I was searching for the words to tell my sister to find a replacement for me on the Brain Kids team when my mother, in exuberant glee, mentioned how great we girls were on the show. My mouth screeched a rather pleading, "Mom!!"

She came back with a kinda soothing reply of, "you knew what I meant Tony."

The moment we arrived home, I headed for my room. In an instant I had my sister's clothes off and tossed on her bed. Quickly I dashed for the shower to wash away the girlish make-up I had put up with. Wearing my old sweats, I headed down to my get-away room, and locked the door to be in much-needed solitude.

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Upon the awakening of a new day, I thought I could leave yesterday behind. So off to school I headed, but before long many of my fellow classmates were congratulating me for the contribution I had so bravely made to put the Lane Brains in their place. With each remark I just smiled and rather weakly replied a somewhat appreciative, "Yeah."

Then during third period, I was called down to the office for a meeting with the principal.

My sister and Beth were already there when I entered. At that time I was informed that a reporter was on the way over to take pictures of the team.

Then the principal went on to explain that if they found out I was a fraud “girls team” member that Lane would have the grounds to seek Victory for infraction of Gina's challenge. We were also reminded that we would have to return the \$50,000 awarded to the school along with our college funds.

Beth looked at me and asked me with a smile if I had ever thought of trying out for the cheer leading team??

My reply was a hollow blank come back of, “what are you talking about.”

Gina caught on quickly as they grabbed my hand and we headed toward the gymnasium. Gina had a friend on the cheer leading squad whom she asked to borrow a skirt and sweater from. Thus a short while later I returned to the principal's office in one of our schools cheer leading uniforms with hair again in braids and a little make-up on.

The reporter arrived with a photographer for the story. He questioned us as to how elated we must be, and what we thought of our chances for the next contest. Seems the producer liked the battle of sexes so we were to challenge a Boys Catholic High School next. Our names and grades were jotted down, and thus once again I became, Toni.

My sister handed me my clothes from a gym bag after the reporter left. The principal gave me permission to change in the teachers lounge and washroom. Then it was back to my biology class, but I sure couldn't concentrate at all. Thoughts kept flooding my mind as to what the school expected of me, and where would all this silly idea of my sister's lead me.

Two days later the article on us appeared in the newspaper. It was that evening that our house went into an uproar when my father saw the article and picture. His Italian temper had the house rocking in rage over his son being on television dressed as a ....

My mother, the peacemaker as always, calmly explained how I was the only one that could have helped Gina at the time. Then she retrieved the College annuities from her desk, and opened one for my father to see.

His tone changed when he saw \$30,000 in front of him. Mom went on to explain that if we were to win again our whole college tuition would be practically paid for. His eyes looked back into hers with a very peculiar gaze. My sister and I held our distance not knowing where this would lead. Then Dad asked when the next show was to take place.

All three of us in unison answered January 8th.

My father spoke after taking another look at the College money, “Well, Tony, you know Dustin Hoffman did it for money so what the heck go for it!”

Instead of the expected whack for letting him down or the verbal roar, both Gina and I were pulled into his strong arms for a hug.

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The following day at school the picture was posted on the school bulletin board by the auditorium.

While I was looking at it, Ann the captain of the cheerleaders nudged up to me, and she told me that they had cheer leading practice after school today in the wrestling room if I wanted to join them.

During lunch with my sister and Beth I mentioned the offer I had to join the cheerleaders. Gina teased me saying that I was turning into “Miss Popularity”. Beth just smiled and told me that she could see me as one of the best ever, and that I would probably create some innovative ways to spark our school spirit.

In the midst of the last period of the day Gina, Beth, and I were once again called to the principal's office.

I felt this was becoming rather OLD.

Once there we were informed that the Lane Tech principal was coming over after school. He wanted to give us his congratulations personally on defeating his whiz boys.

Since I did not have anything to wear to again perpetrate the hoax, we had the principal call Ann to his office. She was told about the situation. Smiling, she whimsically replied that she had a cheer leading uniform that Toni could use.

The four of us headed down towards the gymnasium. Ann poked her head into the girl's P.E. locker room. She yelled out a familiar phrase of, “Is everyone decent?”

Yeas echoed around the walls.

My hand was taken and I was led into very unfamiliar territory. The situation was explained to the other girls, and once again I was in the hands which were to make me presentable. My hair was braided with two gold pompoms added to the end. Ann handed me yellow underwear and the skirt as she gently shoved me into a shower stall. A very impatient inquiry only minute or so later of are you ready yet. As I stepped out of the shower a bra was wrapped around me, and padded till they thought sufficient. Sweater on... I was sat down on the bench for Gina to work on my face.

One of the girls came over with anklets and white tennies.

She was about to put on the anklets when she looked at me and told me that this wouldn't do, and that I had a case of the stubs. She went to her locker and returned with a battery-operated razor that she ran up and down my legs till they passed her fingertip inspection. With a smile she said that was much better. So on went the anklets and gym shoes.

The sweater I had on was for basketball games and was a sleeveless one with a V-neck. Just as she was getting up to take the razor to her locker something clicked in her mind. She arose and took my hand while she raised my arm. Then she said, “Yup thought so,” and quickly took care of my underarm hair.

I felt as though an army of busy bees had just swarmed over me to make the transformation from Tony to Toni in a whirlwind frenzy. There was a full length mirror on one of the walls by which I was taken, and there I was surrounded by group of girls admiring their work, as if I were a piece of Art.

Ann walked back with us to the school office to meet the principal of Lane Tech. Our principal introduced us to the visiting principal. A friendly hand reached out to us

each in turn. Ann turned to leave, but she slyly mentioned that I was their cheerleader who was the beauty with a brain.

About fifteen minutes later Beth was walking back with me to return the cheer leading uniform. Walking down the hall she reached out to hold my hand, and with very sincere and warm words she expressed how impressed she was by me. She said that my intellect stimulated her, and that she found Toni quite intriguing. With that she teasingly flipped my skirt up from the rear.

I believe my face must have looked like a tomato as I blushed and put my hand back to pull down the skirt.

It took me a relatively very short time to whiz into my own clothes. The raggy blue jeans that once again covered my legs felt much more secure. I wasn't sure I would ever get used to the feeling of breezes blowing across my legs or up a skirt. My floppy old rugby shirt felt much better than the bra and tight sweater that a few minutes ago I wore, and I snickered to myself that they were trying to show off something I didn't have.

On the walk back to our house Gina brought up studying for our next contest. My reply to her was, "If I decide to stay as part of the team."

Her eyes went blank, and then she said, "You have to for the sake of the school at least!"

**-000-**

After dinner that night I retreated down into my safe and secluded little room. Somehow I had to get my mind off of the contest. Thus I started a project in exercise physiology. My research delved into somatotypes and their variances according to sport along with the effects that steroids had on physical characteristics and performance.

A few days later I brought in some preliminary rough sketch thoughts on a computer disk. I handed it to my biology teacher, who seemed to be quite impressed with my detail.

She looked at me with the sort of pride that a pet owner has when just observing a well performed trick. She asked if I wish to further my study in the area. I acknowledged the interest of pursuing the research. She went to the phone and called the University, and after a conversation with the Exercise Physiology Dept., I was given the privilege to work and share facilities on campus.

My spirit rose from the melancholy that the Toni episodes had brought on. Quickly I shared my excitement with my sister, and I even agreed to study sessions with her and Beth if she felt we needed them.

The three of us agreed to Tuesday and Thursday evenings along with Saturday afternoons to study and try to second-guess the questions which may be asked. That left me with Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings to work at the University.

I spent the first week in the Physiology lab on the computer going over their vast studies and references to chemical alteration.

At present they were about to start a counseled group and the effects of Steroids (testosterone) to a suppressant (testosterone inhibitor). The doctor in charge, Dr. Alichia, was looking over my shoulder as I viewed her thesis. She asked if I was interested.

I responded affirmatively.

Before I left that night she handed me a sheet of paper and mentioned that I could be part of the group if I wanted, but because of my age I would need my parents' consent. This would give me a chance to study even my own blood samples, and to keep scientific notes as to any physiological changes personally.

During our study session the next night I came across the consent form. I mentioned the study to Gina and Beth then walked to the kitchen where Mom was cleaning up after baking some cookies.

She turned towards me asking what I needed, and I explained the study. All she came back with was a reference once again to how she had given birth to a mad scientist. She quickly grabbed a pen and signed and handed the papers back to me.

The next night at the lab Dr. Alichia Langley went over the thesis with me personally. She explained that the majority of the subjects in the control group were college athletes or a few scientists such as myself. However, I was being instructed in procedures and theory because she felt I was gifted enough to have comprehension of the data.

I was taught how to read blood samples, how to evaluate physiological changes, entries to computer logs, etc.... To say that my mind was elevated to soaring elation was an understatement.

My chemical was to be Spironolactone at a dosage of 50 mg a day. The chemical was used in patients with prostate cancer, but the side effects of the testosterone suppressant were to be studied with the effects of the steroids.

Two weeks into the study I started to meet some others in the study group, and I was caught off-guard when two female athletes showed up at the lab to get their steroids. Their muscle mass made me look like a marshmallow. I would have estimated their body fat around six percent.

**-000-**

With focus on my new endeavor I just went through the motions of study with my sister and Beth, absorbing facts as if through osmosis. We had now only a week before the Brain Kids contest against Gordon Tech.

With papers strewn all over my getaway room covering a wide range of topics, we took a break. To the kitchen we went to gather assorted foods to fuel our brains. Beth said we needed to chill out and relax, and she brought along some needed items.

She brought down into my basement domain a travel bag. Her hand reached in to retrieve some plastic vials, and glass jars... I had no idea where she was coming from or where she was going to lead us, but Gina did a 180 turn around. She returned with three hot steaming towels and washcloths.

Beth had taken our chairs and placed them in a triangle close to each other with one chair in the middle. As my sister sat me down in one of the chairs she told me I would enjoy this. My feet were placed on the chair in the middle while my head was leaned back on top of my chair and a hot towel was placed on my face.

Soon all three of us shared the same position. Beth told me that first we had to open our pores. I asked what we were doing, and she replied that we were going to have facials. I was informed that basically we were to remove dead skin and imbedded impurities from our skin. About five minutes later I was told I could remove the towel.

While I was still in my very relaxed state, Beth came over to my chair and pulled my hair back with an elastic band, and then she used her fingertips to spread a thick cream all over my face. Putting a small mirror in front of me, she chuckled, showing me my green face, and laughingly said, "all in the name of beauty."

Once again all three of us lay our heads back for the mask had to dry.

At that time I brought up the show, and what clothes we were going to wear. I pleadingly asked if we could all wear pants and a sweater. Hoping that somehow I would find some relief from the progress of my ensuing femininity of late.

Then my sister replied with a very empathetic and sincere regret for my plight, "Sorry little brother the school has given all three of us clothes in our school colors for the television show. Just yesterday the principal handed them to me. In fact, when we are done here we should try them on."

At that point my mind just raced, wondering what they had purchased in colors of blue and white. My exasperated "Great" surely expressed my opinion on the subject.

About ten minutes later I was handed a warm wash cloth to wash off the now dry cream. Then I was told to follow suit as they both dipped cotton balls into an astringent to remove the last of the dirt. Next, a cream was placed on my fingertips as I was shown how to work it into my skin. While hand cream was squirted into my palms, my sister suggested we go up to her room.

Just about then I felt my only way out was to enlist in the Foreign Legion, and seclude myself in some forsaken unknown place. Yet, I followed Beth and my sister upstairs all the while muttering that they were really pushing me to the limit. I insisted that all of this was getting to be too much. I explained that I wanted out.

It all landed on deaf ears.

The three of us entered my sister's room, and she closed the door behind us. She retrieved three plastic bags on hangers, three square boxes, and three shoe boxes. At that point she told us to have a seat, she would go first. Opening the square box she pulled out a white lacy bra, white matching panties, and a white camisole. Next she opened the garment bag and laid out on the bed a blue velvet skirt and a white angora sweater with her name *Gina* embroidered on in blue letters. Lastly, she opened the shoe box to display a pair of white opaque nylons and a pair of two-inch blue pumps.

My sigh, followed by a sob, brought both of them over to me. With a hug, Beth very sweetly told me it would be all right, and that the three of us will look great, "together."

I started to tell her, “ I don't think I...,” but, she placed a finger over my lips as she looked into my eyes telling me she would be right there with me. She reminded me of the financial rewards for the school and for my future college education.

My sister handed me a Kleenex to wipe my tears.

While Beth sat with me to console my fears and anguish, my sister pulled the closet door half-open so she could have some modest privacy from me. After she had on her new underwear, she stepped out. In just a few minutes she had on the whole outfit. Beth followed the same procedure. Both their eyes upon me, without words, suggested it was my turn.

Beth reached over to my box and withdrew the lingerie, handing it to me with her right hand as she pointed to the closet door with her left.

With a sunken feeling of despair, I took the underwear and stepped behind the door. A little while later I was dressed as the third part of the matching trio.

Two parts of the trio were delightfully pleased with the new outfits, and as for myself it was once again an outlandishly absurd plot to get me entrapped in femininity. I thought of what amazing things I would do for money.

With all three of us facing my sister's full-length mirror, we took in the reflection of our matching team outfits.

Then my sister heard mother's car pulling into the garage. She took my hand, gave it a tug suggesting that we go down and show our mother the new outfits. Gina in the lead, myself in the middle, and Beth bringing up the rear, we met my mother coming out of the kitchen.

She smiled as she saw us and she said that we were really putting forth team effort and image.

**-000-**

I tried to let all of the experiences of the day fade away in my sleep. When I awoke the next day, I tried to focus on my schoolwork, and also on my project at the college.

At the end of the day I headed off to the college campus to get myself into lab study and computer logging of statistics. While at my lab station, Dr. Langley approached me to discuss the study. She informed me that she would like to expound the effects of steroids on the body. Since we were statistically recording physiological changes from synthetic testosterone, she would also like to examine the effects of a synthetic estrogen on body mass. She asked if I would be willing to do a short-term study of three to six months on the effects.

I knew the projected results, yet after all that was going on with the television show, school, and so on I just replied, “Sure.”

With that, she handed me another vial of pills and told me to take one a day. She handed me a brochure on the study of the effects of Premarin.

**-000-**

On Friday the day before the show, we were called into the principal's office. He greeted us with the smile of a proud parent who has just witnessed his child's first

step. The pep speech was lengthy and he reminded us often how much the school was behind us. He looked at me specifically as he told us that our time sacrificed for extra study and our extra efforts were very much appreciated by many.

With that he dismissed us, but he took Gina aside and handed her a sheet of paper.

Outside of his office I asked my sister what all the whispers were about. She showed me the certificate from one of the parents for the three of us to have our hair styled and a makeover tomorrow before the show.

The next morning I was awakened by my sister with a jab, "come on sleepy." I heard her say something about Beth is already here. Half asleep I pulled on a pair of jeans, sweater, and my mountain boots as I proceeded down the stairs sluggishly to meet the two of them. Out to the van we headed. Once in I snuggled back into a sleeping mode. When the van stopped once again I was awakened, and then as I looked out and saw the Salon I remembered the certificate. I told the two of them to go ahead and that I would just wait outside, they could just braid my hair again....

My sister tugged and insisted that I not pass up a FREEBIE..

Beth backed her up saying, "go for it!"

All three of us entered the Salon, but I definitely did not fit in dressed as I was. When the owner approached us my sister handed her the certificate as she introduced us.

Cathy looked at me and teased me that I must be in a Tomboyish phase.

Beth laughed and told her she had that right.

The show was not till late afternoon; thus we had nearly eight hours before we were even expected at the television station.

Cathy started to explain what she had planned for us, but then she stopped and told us to just enjoy all the complimentary lavish pamperings ahead.

All three of us were taken back to a cubicle at the rear of the salon. One of the stylists handed each of us a pink smock and instructed us to put it on while pointing to the cubicle. Beth took hers and entered, then my sister.

I started to hand mine back, but a hand pushed it back into my grasp along with a nudge towards the cubicle.

At that point we were each taken off in different directions.

My morning found me experiencing a RUSH.

I was asked to lie down on a table. Soon a warm gooey mixture was smeared all over my legs and up on my thighs. She told me that we had to let it dry. As we waited she ran her finger across my upper lip, and commented that I had a few unwanted hairs that should be removed.

A machine with a lamp was wheeled near the table and she put little glasses on my eyes. She was jabbering on about how girls don't look good with hair on their face... zap zap... then she ran her fingers over my eyebrows.. I heard her say, "While I'm at it I might as well give these a little shape."



When a tear rolled down my cheek she sweetly replied that the pain was worth the results.

*Oh, she didn't know why the tear was trickling... How could she?*

The machine was rolled back. Her hands felt my legs and then she proceeded to peel off the dried goop. When she was all done, her fingertips ran up and down my leg which was followed by the remark they would now be silky-smooth for weeks.

Inside myself I echoed another, *'Wonderful!!.'*

This woman escorted me over to table with a light and a lot of nail polishes. Well, it sure did not take my genius to figure out the next new addition to my femininity. Beth was just leaving and she held her hands up and wiggled her fingers.

I expected my hands to be worked on so there was no alarm when my hands were placed in a tray of warm water, but I panicked when she lifted my feet into a larger tray of warm water. The nail-technician started to ask me, "What I," then she stopped and asked if I had ever had a French manicure.

I shook my head no for I didn't know the French had different ones than Americans...

She started to fill, buff, add tips, buff... when she finished, the first nail extended from my finger was a creamy white nail. So then I knew. After all ten nails were finished and shinning, she took my feet out of the tray. I told her she didn't have to, but I was told to just sit back and enjoy. When she took my foot into her lap and started to massage lotion on my foot, in and out of my toes, it sure did not take long for my complaints to subside. The pedicure made my feet almost feel foreign to my body.

Another lady came over to lead me to a chair with a sink behind it. A large towel was placed around my chest as my head was tilted back to the sink. Her deft fingers started to scrub and massage the soap into my scalp, and then her palms spread a conditioner through my hair all the way to the tips. While she was doing this she told me I should use a conditioner more often for I had some split ends. Almost as though talking to herself she mumbled, "We'll take care of them when we trim your hair."

She asked me when the last time I had my hair trimmed, and I replied about a year ago. At this point my hair hung like a mop of all different lengths just past my shoulders. Her fingers lifted here and there as she studied my hair.

Her scissors trimmed about one-half inch all around the back and sides. I was told that rather than a blunt cut she layered a little, so that it would lay better. She mentioned that I could still wear braid or tail, that she had not taken off much. Then she started to finger the hair in front. In her opinion, feathered bangs would show off my face a whole lot better. She proceeded to clip here and there as she snipped. I saw some significant chunks off hair fall in front of me, and once again a tear fell on my cheek. She took a Kleenex and wiped the corner of my eye as she affirmed that my hair would look fabulous. When she turned the chair around for me to face the mirror I was in awe as to how much a trim and bangs had altered the appearance of my face...