

# DRESS FOR SUCCESS

*By Diane Woods*



*ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART*

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AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL

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# DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

By Diane Woods

## Chapter One

There was no warning when the ax finally fell. No warning that my life was about to change radically. And as it turned out, losing my job was far from the biggest change I would soon be dealing with.

We had known for a while, of course, that there were going to be reductions in staff in the company. After our recent acquisition, it was accepted as inevitable that some people would be let go.

Still, it was a tremendous shock to get called into Mr. Cosentino's office and be told that, because of our acquisition, our department was being “downsized”. I love that word. Corporations love to find euphemisms for firing people, maybe because the ones who keep their jobs find it painful to think about those less fortunate.

Our company, Prairie Property & Casualty, had been acquired a few months ago by Sierra Insurance Corp. We knew there would be layoffs, because the whole point of such acquisitions was to keep the combined books of business with a consolidated (and reduced) staff.

I had just been hoping that, since I wasn't exactly making a fortune at Prairie as a claim adjuster, I might be kept on at the combined company. But Mr. Cosentino made it clear that this was a forlorn hope.

“I'm sorry, Lee, but they've decided to fold our operations into Sierra's offices. Not a lot of us are being brought over, most of the department is being let go. I'm afraid that includes you.”

Mr. C. was a good guy, a decent manager to work for, and I could tell this process was taking a toll on him. Still, that didn't make it any easier to deal with the huge numb feeling that filled my belly as the news sank in.

“At least you're a young man,” Mr. C. tried to console me. “At 24, you'll have a good chance to catch on pretty quick somewhere else. Another insurer, or a private company, or something. You'll have a lot easier time of it than some of our older folks. At 45 or 50, it can be a lot harder to start over.”

I knew all that was true, but it was damn little solace. Yes, I was glad I wasn't in the shoes of some of the others, people with mortgages and kids in college and all that. But this had been my first real job since graduating college, and while it hadn't been the greatest job in the world, I had viewed it as a steppingstone, hopefully, to bigger and better things. But now I had this slight detour to contend with.

They didn't even let me finish out the day. I cleaned out my desk of my personal things, under watchful eyes (they didn't want anyone taking home files or company property) and, clutching my little box of photos, a paperweight, and a plaque, I headed for the train station.

When I got home to my basement apartment (sorry, "Garden Apartment, as the landlord called it) I didn't know what the heck to do with myself. My refrigerator wasn't exactly bulging with food, and all I had to drink in the place was an old bottle of white wine. So I made a peanut butter sandwich and a glass or two of wine, and tried to get a handle on things.

I knew I would at least be eligible for unemployment, but I had no idea if that would be enough to pay my bills while I searched for a new job. I knew that there would be a waiting period of at least a few weeks before the unemployment kicked in. I would be getting a little severance pay, and a small profit-sharing check. but that wouldn't last any too long. I would have to get cracking on finding something new, and soon.

But I was too upset and stunned to start on that right away. So, after sitting numbly in a chair in the front room for an hour, watching daytime television and sipping my wine, I decided to calm my nerves.

I hit the shower, letting the hot water wash over me for a long time. Then, with my towel wrapped around my waist, I shaved closely.

Inspecting myself in the mirror, I also touched up my eyebrows a bit. It always made me feel nice and feminine to pluck my eyebrows. The minor discomfort actually gave me a little twinge of pleasure, knowing that this was something that girls were supposed to do.

Then, toweling myself off just a bit more, I went over to my dresser and started digging through my "special" drawers.

In a moment, I was stepping into a fresh pair of pink nylon panties. I smiled at how smooth and wonderful they felt on me, feeling my tension and pain dissipate a little. Then I slipped my arms through the straps of a matching pink satin bra, and felt the familiar calming sensation as I fastened the hooks in back. I was quite adept at fastening my bra, and took a certain quiet pride in that.

Into the cups of my bra I slipped my homemade breast forms. I had always enjoyed experimenting with various forms of my own creation. It was something of a hobby with me, actually. These were my latest innovation. I had taken large zip-lock freezer bags and filled each with this slimy kid's toy-stuff they called YukStuff, and it was based on some slimy stuff on a kid's television show. But placed in my plastic bags, and then inserted into a bra, these could be shaped to mimic real breasts quite well. They had a very realistic weight and flow to them, and were a very inexpensive alternative to store-bought breast forms.

That done, I rolled a fresh pair of sheer thigh-top nylons over my legs. Since I had just removed the hair from them the night before, they were still very smooth and soft. My mood was improving considerably now, as I began to get into my transformation. Next I let a silky ivory slip glide down over me, and then I stepped into a pair of black high heeled pumps. Pumps were always my favorite style of shoe, and the feeling of

slipping them onto my nyloned feet, and then feeling my legs stretch and adjust a little as I stood in them, made me feel very good indeed. It always felt so good to get back into heels!

Finally, I stepped to the closet and found a nice dress, not one of my fancy ones, but a nice knit forest green one. That done, I looked in my full-length mirror and twirled around part-way. I was looking pretty good, if I do say myself.

Next I got out my wig from its case on the top shelf of the closet. Once I had it properly fitted to my head, and brushed out a little, I set to work on my make-up. I never was excessive. I preferred to look as “real” as possible, and over the years I had perfected my skill so that when I was done, there was a perfectly presentable young woman staring back at me. That was better!

As a finishing touch, I fastened some clip-on earrings to my ears and admired my handiwork. I was good, I must admit.

I had been dressing in girl's clothes since puberty. It had begun when I discovered an old nightgown of my mother's, hidden away in a box in the basement. For some reason, I felt compelled to try it on and when I did I was overwhelmed by how good and sexy it made me feel. Ever since then, I had slowly collected more items of female clothing. Until I had gotten out on my own, of course, I was only able to make off with occasional items of my mother's clothing.

As I got older, I learned to buy things on my own.

I got a lot better at it as time went on, of course, and my dressing soon became more extensive, until by the time I was in college I was dressing completely, head to toe, in girl's clothes.

At least, on a part-time basis.

I was fortunate, in a way, that I didn't go away to college. Living at home made it a little easier to keep up with my dressing. By then we had moved to a newer house, with a finished basement, and I could spend long hours “studying” down there, while my father was away at work and my mother and sister were upstairs, watching television.

I took some theater courses while in college, and that helped my skills with make-up considerably. I got a degree in English and Speech (a split major) but upon graduation found the only job available was as a claims adjuster. I had taken it, as I was eager to get out on my own (if for nothing else, to enable me to dress as I pleased in my off hours).

At any rate, once I was dressed, I spritzed on a touch of perfume and straightened up the apartment. Now that I was properly dressed, I could pretty much spend the day this way. My disappointment at the loss of my job had now been replaced by the familiar excitement of being a girl, and now I needed to find things to do as my girl-self.

I had some cash, so I decided to go grocery shopping. There wasn't anything in the place for dinner, so I made up a little list, transferred my wallet's contents to my purse, grabbed my girl's style trench coat, and headed out.

I was always a little self-conscious getting in and out of the apartment, since it was just a little three-flat and the landlord lived on the top floor. I scanned the outside carefully before stepping out. Satisfied that there was no one around to spot me (and perhaps question who this girl coming out of my apartment was) I stepped out the door and walked down the block to my waiting car.

My car was another major expense I would have to worry about, after the rent and food. It wasn't brand new, but it was only a couple of years old, a nice Ford Probe. I settled in, checked myself again the rear view mirror, and headed off to the grocery store.

I was fortunate, my height and build were such that it made it relatively easy to pass. I stood only about 5'10" in my stockinged feet, and I kept my weight down around 150 lb., so fitting into a size 12 dress was no problem. I had nice legs, and a pretty face, and so I had been passing in public since early in college.

My biggest challenge had been my voice. Fortunately, my normal speaking voice was towards the high end for a guy anyway, and with some practice with my tape recorder, I had learned to create an acceptable female speaking voice, avoiding any absurd falsetto.

Doing even ordinary things as a girl was always a pleasure, and so I did most of my shopping as a girl. Mom and Dad hadn't planned on this, I'm sure, but they had given me a first name, Lee, that could be interpreted as a girl's name as well as a guy's. So I could even use my credit card and my checkbook on my shopping expeditions. Still, to me "Lee" was associated in my mind with a male identity, so to myself I was always "Jennifer". I don't know where exactly I had gotten that name from, it just seemed nice and feminine, and I liked the way it sounded, so I adopted it as my *nom du femme*.

At the store, I picked out some pre-made tuna salad, some whole wheat bread, and some canned tomato soup. This would be dinner, along with the rest of my white wine. I also picked up some staples like paper towels, some soap and dish washing liquid, and some feminine articles, like make-up and depilatory.

I still had a little time to kill, so I went into the nearby shopping mall and just window-shopped. I lingered before the window of the lingerie shop, lusting after some of the lovely items on display, but trying to control myself. With the loss of my job, I knew I was going to have to try and budget myself.

Still, I ended up by indulging myself with the purchase of a luscious black nightgown. It was so hard to resist buying such delights, when I was out and about as Jennifer. Still, that reminded me of my looming economic squeeze, and I made no other purchases at the mall. After checking out some dresses and skirts at Penney's, I got back into my car and headed home.

That night, after dinner, I set to work updating my resume. Thank goodness, my folks had bought my computer as a graduation gift for me, so I had a decent system that I didn't owe any money on. It felt nice to sit at the computer, still as Jennifer, typing away. Tomorrow, I would go to the library and start researching companies to which I could send this resume. When I had worked on that for about an hour, I poured myself some more wine and then logged on-line.

This, I knew, was another expense I would have to curtail until I had a new job lined up. But I could afford a few hours on line, I felt, as the pricing plan I was on allowed me a set number of hours at a flat fee. So “Jennifer” logged into the cybernetic “CB” area, and once there I got onto the special channel they had for “Gender Alternatives”.

I had made some friends on this channel in recent months, though most of them were scattered across the country and not very close. I had never actually met anyone in person from the on-line service, but that possibility always kind of intrigued me. I was just kind of cautious, because I had heard from others on-line that girls like me had to be careful, sometimes you could meet up with some less-than desirable people on line if one wasn't careful.

Being on-line was very enjoyable. It was nice to be able to “talk” with others around the country, other guys who shared my passion for dressing (and living, at least part-time) as a female. One thing I had learned, though, was that people often lived out their fantasies on-line, and those fantasy lives, although intriguing and exciting, often had nothing to do with their real selves. Even so, some of the people I had gotten to know seemed genuine, and I pretty much believed some of them when they talked about how much of their lives they lived as their female selves. Some of them, apparently, lived a good bit of the time as women. There were some others who claimed to live full-time, and a few of them I had spoken with by phone, and they sounded convincing.

Others, of course, were just guys who were turned on by female clothes, and had little or no hope of ever passing. Still, many of them were very intelligent and witty, and I enjoyed my conversations with them. There seemed to be a lot of very bright people on-line in the Gender Alternatives section, although certainly not everyone there met that description.

The idiots, however, tended to be a minority, at least on the Gender channel. In fact, I had found that it was one of the few places I could have intelligent, revealing conversation. Partly, it helped that I could be completely honest about my desires and lifestyle, since I was mainly talking to people who shared my interests. But it was also that the people there seemed above-average in intelligence, shared a lot of other common interests with me, like science fiction and other kinds of literature. I hadn't found much truly engaging conversation since leaving college elsewhere. Certainly at Prairie Insurance, one didn't have much of a chance to discuss philosophy or history or literature, much less crossdressing and its unique pleasures.

So anyway, about nine o'clock central time, I logged on. At first, I didn't see anyone I knew, and the conversation tended to be pretty shallow and minimal. And there were the usual private messages from guys who were interested in talking to a tv. Sometimes I talked with these guys, sometimes not, depending upon my mood and how they came across in their messages.

After about half an hour, some of my friends appeared. So we talked about what we were wearing, what was new, and the usual small talk.

Jennifer(TV): Anyone else dressed?

Heather(TV): Me!

SatinDoll: I am. I'm in panties, bra, satin slip, satin blouse, black skirt, black nylons, three inch heels, and full make-up.

Heather(TV): Sounds lovely. I'm in a blue silk dress, panties, pantyhose, and heels.

Gonzoboy: Wow, all you ladies sound delightful. Can I buy you a drink?

Jennifer(TV): Sure. White wine, please.

We flirted with Gonzoboy a while, sipping our cyberdrinks (well, I actually had my white wine at home) and talking about all kinds of things, not just dressing.

Jennifer(TV): Rough day, today. Got fired. Really need the wine, Gonzoboy.

Vixen(CD): Oh, poor baby, have a double.

Vixen(CD): Double, I mean.

TVguide: What sort of work did you do, Jennifer?

Jennifer(TV): Claims adjusting for an insurance company.

TVguide: There's a lot of layoffs lately in insurance.

Jennifer(TV): Tell me about it! U in insurance?

Gonzoboy: Who wants to hotchat?

TVguide: Yes, in Maryland, until recently. Opened a new branch office in Illinois a couple of months ago.

Vixen(CD): I hate insurance companies.

Mary Anne (TV) Hello All!

There followed a round of everyone saying hello to Mary Anne, and then Mary Anne inevitably asking what was going on.

We moved on to various subjects, but in a little bit, I got a private send from TV guide.

*If you want, send me your resume by e-mail. You don't have to include your name. I'll check around for any openings, if you'd like.*

I appreciated the offer, and noted his ID number so I could e-mail him, or was it her, later. Since he wouldn't have my real name, I didn't think it would matter sending him the resume. Couldn't hurt.

After about two hours on-line (the time goes fast) I exited the CB area. Before logging off the service, I went into e-mail and drafted up a resume for TVguide and TVLuvr. It seemed like a long shot, but I was willing to give it a try. When I was done, I sent it off into cyberspace.

After I finished another glass of wine, I changed out of my day clothes and into a nightgown. I usually slept every night in nightgowns, and had ever since I got my own place. I had a nice collection of them, and it was nice to know that I could spend every night wrapped up safely in one.

Tonight, I tried on the new black nightgown I had bought during my shopping trip. It felt so good, skimming down over me, hugging me.



The whole cross dressing thing could sometimes be a pain, but sometimes it was sheer delight. I mean, I had kind of avoided getting involved with girls too much, for fear of their discovering my secret. The one girl I had shared my secret with, in college, had been accepting, but ultimately we drifted apart. So since college, my sexuality had been pretty well confined to my clothes. If I couldn't have a pretty girl, I could at least be one. And so much of my time and energy that might have gone into the care and feeding of a girlfriend went into Jennifer, instead. That was pretty much ok with me, if a little lonely sometimes.

I liked girls, although I liked to flirt on line with guys, and sometimes have very sexual private chats with them. I had only tried sex once with a guy, though, and had kind of gotten scared off by it. Not that I didn't like it, I just kind of wasn't ready to deal with all the implications of that.

As I lay there in bed, in my wonderful nightgown, between my satin sheets (another indulgence I gave myself) I thought about tomorrow. With no work to go to, I could spend all day as Jennifer. That would be a nice plus.

As Jennifer, I could still do productive things in my job hunt. I could get copies made of my resume, go to the library and get names and addresses of other insurance companies, scan Sunday's paper for job ads, all while dressed in a dress, (or maybe a nice skirt and blouse). Well, at least there were some compensations to being unemployed.

Then my happy thoughts burst, as I remembered that I really should get to the unemployment office right away. That would mean dressing as a guy, at least on the outside, while I went in and took care of that. I wasn't even sure where the unemployment office was. I decided I would spend the day as Jennifer, and look up where the unemployment office was, and get there promptly the next day. That was a good compromise, I thought. And so I happily rolled over, my nightgown caressing me to sleep.

It was kind of nice, the next morning, to not have an alarm waking me up. I slept in a bit, not really rousing myself until it was going on nine. Then I got up, hit the bathroom (sitting down, of course), threw on a silky robe and some fluffy slippers, and made some tea. That, along with a bit of yogurt, prepared for my day.

While working on my second cup of tea, I went through my wardrobe, selecting an outfit for the day. Enjoy it while you can, girl, I told myself. Soon enough, it'll be back to suits and ties.

Fortunately, I had a pretty good wardrobe for Jennifer. I didn't want to be too dressy, of course, but I also didn't want to look grungy. So, I selected this nice two piece outfit I had. The top was a chenille cardigan, in a kind of olive color, and my skirt was a kind of subdued paisley, made of rayon. It was long, going down to just about my ankles, but it had a nice slit in the front, to show a bit of leg.

In fact, I really only paid much attention to clothes for Jennifer. Guy clothes just never seemed very interesting. Mr. Cosentino had suggested to me that I might want to invest in a new suit for my job interviews. I knew he was right (even though the impli-

cation that I didn't dress all that well kind of bothered me), guys who paid a lot of attention to their clothes had always struck me as kind of vain. Besides, it was difficult to allocate my meager funds towards expensive male clothes when there were so many luscious girl's clothes I could buy instead. Girl's clothes were sexy, exciting, thrilling, and, as an added attraction, the ultimate in forbidden fruit for a boy.

So I showered, touched up my legs and arms and chest with a razor, shaved my face closely, and then raced to enjoy my own personal forbidden apple once again. As I felt the familiar joy of my girl's clothes embrace me, I thought that I had better be careful. At the rate I was going, I might not want to find a job anytime soon. Not if it meant going back to plain old shirts and ties and sport coats. It might be all too easy to be seduced into spending most of my time as Jennifer, at the expense of my job search. Still, I was working on searching for a new position, even if I was doing some of it as Jennifer.

When I was done with my wig and my make-up, I checked myself out in the mirror. God, I looked so good! I gave myself a happy, kind of seductive smile, and set out.

## Chapter Two

My first stop was the library. There, I could research addresses of other insurance companies that had local claims offices. I would also be able to look at the prior Sunday's want ads, as I had not kept my copy of the paper.

My own local library didn't have much of a selection of the kind of things I wanted, but I was able to find out from the librarian the name of a suburban library that would have more of what I needed, along with directions. Before I left, I went through the Sunday paper.

Fortunately, there were a lot of ads for insurance people. Unfortunately, only some of them were for claims people. Still, I photocopied the section of the paper and put it in my case.

It only took me about forty minutes to get to the other library. This one had an extensive collection of business reference books, so I got a lot of good leads on insurance companies. I also realized that I needed to find a library that subscribed to insurance trade publications, as these often had job ads that didn't appear in the regular paper. The librarian checked, and told me a third library that had such publications.

*One more trip, I thought. Well, what the heck, I have the time.*

By the time I was done, it was lunch time. I had a little cash in my purse, and so I went to a fast-food restaurant and had a salad and fish sandwich. I liked my figure, after all, and didn't want to mess it up with greasy burgers.

Some of the guys eating there clearly appreciated the way I looked, judging from their stares. That always gave me a kind of thrill, because that was the ultimate test of how good a job I was doing. I avoided making eye contact with them, as I really didn't want to start anything I couldn't finish.

It's kind of strange, the way I felt about guys. I mean, as far back as I could remember, I had been kind of a sensitive, refined (some would say effeminate, I guess) boy. I can vaguely recall being fascinated with lingerie and nylons, even when I was real little. I hadn't been sexually attracted to guys.

At least, not when I was a guy.

Ever since I had been able to go out in the world as a girl, and be accepted by the world in general as such, I had kind of had different feelings. There was some part of me that wanted to respond somehow to what I saw in the faces of guys when I was Jennifer. I hadn't acted on these feelings, of course. I was scared to death about what might happen, or what those feelings might really mean. But there was an incredible pleasure in seeing the reaction I could produce in guys. Only someone who's experienced it can appreciate how special that makes you feel. As a guy, I had never been noteworthy, never been the object of attention. But as a girl, I could count on being able to catch the attention of any man within 100 feet.

Anyway, on my way back home, I did a little more grocery shopping. I got some more soup, and some lunch meat. I checked my make-up carefully before going in, as I wanted to be sure there was no trace of beard showing through. There wasn't, thank God. My beard has always been extremely light, and I'm good at my make-up, but one has to be careful.

That night, I worked on printing out my resume and cover letters, and addressing envelopes. I also made a list of phone numbers to call from the ads. That done, I watched some television, then logged online, just for a little bit.

When I did, there was a prompt telling me I had some e-mail. It was from TV guide. At any rate, he said he had gotten my resume, and would try and help if he could. That was a bit encouraging. And, as I recalled, he had said he had opened a branch of office somewhere in Illinois. I was in Chicago, so the odds seemed good that his Illinois office would be somewhere in the metropolitan area. The only thing was, I had learned enough about people on the computer to be skeptical. People lied and exaggerated a lot there. Even if this person wasn't, I wasn't sure I really wanted to combine my work life with Jennifer. I had always kept Jennifer separate from everything else in my life.

I only stayed on an hour, chatting with a few friends and the usual assortment of strangers. Then I got changed (into a nice silver nightgown) and settled in to watch a little television. Feeling bored, I turned in before Letterman was over. I wasn't looking forward much to the next morning, because I would have to go as a male to the unemployment office. Still, I knew it had to be done.

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In the morning, after I had showered and shaved, I changed into a dark blue shirt, and tan slacks. Of course, beneath this, I was at least wearing panties, nylons, a bra, and a slip. Then I drove over to the unemployment office, which was about twenty minutes away.

That place was pretty depressing, let me tell you. I felt like such a loser, being there, and a lot of the other people there sure seemed to fit that description. It bothered me to even be there, but what could I do.

I spent a lot of time waiting in lines, which is a lot of fun. And the people who worked there weren't exactly dynamic go-getters. Instead, they were like bureaucrats from hell. But finally, around noon, I was finished there. My benefits wouldn't kick in for about three weeks, assuming I was still unemployed then. The benefits would last, at maximum, six months. But the monthly amount was well below what I had been earning, so I was a little concerned. I had better find something else, fast.

When I got home, I changed into Jennifer right away. If I was going to have all this time on my hands, I was determined to not waste any of it. So I put on a denim skirt and a white cotton blouse, after filling my bra with my breast forms, and putting on my padded girdle. Then I stepped into black two inch heels, did my make-up, and put on my wig. With a spritz of perfume, I felt completed.

That done, I worked the phone for a bit, responding to some of the ads in the paper. But no one was interested in scheduling any interviews. They all said to send in my resume, and then to follow up. So I worked those up and got them in envelopes, ready to be mailed out. By then, it was almost four o'clock.

Another day was almost gone, and I felt like I had made little progress in solving my real problem, which was finding a new job. Still, I was getting a lot of resumes out there, and I felt sure that this would pay off soon. In the meantime, I could spend some intensive time as Jennifer. Not a bad little vacation, as long as the money held out. And even if it took a while to land a new job, the unemployment would kick in soon and help tide me over.

So I cleaned and vacuumed the apartment. It's funny, but I actually enjoyed doing domestic stuff like that when I was Jennifer. It made me feel like some kind of housewife or something, I guess. When I was done with that, I made a little something to eat. After I had done the dishes, I was feeling a little restless, a little lonely.

So I called my Mom.

She lived out south of the city, near the Indiana border, about two hours away. I didn't get out there as often as I probably should have, but I at least tried to call regularly.

"Hi, honey. How are you?" she asked when she heard my voice.

"Okay, Mom. Hanging in there," I replied, trying to sound as cheerful as I could.

"What's the matter, you sound a little sad?"

So much for my efforts at hiding things. "Ah, well, I got laid off the other day, I guess maybe I'm kind of down about that."

"Oh, honey, I'm so sorry. What happened?"

I explained about the merger and all, and how it wasn't over anything I had done personally (which was kind of an important point to me). Mom was sympathetic and all, asking if I needed anything.

“No, I'm fine,” I answered. “I have some severance pay and some profit sharing coming, and if I need it, I've already applied for Unemployment. But I'm getting a lot of resumes out there, so I'm hoping it won't take too long to find something else.” “Well, I hope you didn't make a mistake getting a place of your own so quickly. These things happen when you're just starting out. Remember, if you need it, you've always got a place here to stay.”

I appreciated her offer, really I did. But I also knew that moving back home would make it a lot more difficult to spend time as Jennifer. Heck, that had been a good part of my motivation in moving out as soon as I had.

So I told her thanks, and I'd keep that in mind if I needed it, but that I was planning on just getting a new job as quickly as possible.

My Dad wasn't there; he and Mom had split up about two years ago. Actually, he had run off with a waitress, and was now living somewhere up in Wisconsin with her. So I didn't hear too much from him. But at least that meant one less person I had to explain my situation to at the moment.

My sister lived not too far from Mom, with a husband and two kids of her own already. She was four years younger than I, but had gotten married young. We kept in touch, but weren't exactly close.

And frankly, I didn't have any close friends at the moment, either. I had made some friends at work, but that connection was now severed. And I really hadn't kept in touch with friends from college, either. So I was kind of adrift at this point. I guess I would have been lonely, except that I had my life as Jennifer to occupy me, and I had always been a bit of a loner, anyway. I didn't need a lot of people around to keep my occupied, I had always been good at getting along by myself.

So now, having made the only phone call I felt obliged to make, I tried to figure out what I was going to do with myself.

I was beginning to realize that, without work, I didn't exactly have a lot of things to occupy my time. It wasn't as if I were some factory worker who could go off deer hunting or something while the plant was shut down. My only hobby, really, was being Jennifer. I smiled to myself at the realization that, with the exception of this morning, I had spent the past two days as a girl. That was a nice side benefit of this whole situation. And except for occasional job interviews, I could be spending some extended period of time this way.

The thought of spending entire days in skirts, heels, and perfume was a very pleasant prospect. But I knew I would have to do something about a job. I just wasn't the kind of person who could sit around doing nothing. (Even if I could afford it, which I most definitely could not.) So I knew I had to find something.

One thought that occurred to me was that I could also utilize this time to pursue another dream of mine, a dream that had been abandoned since college. I had always wanted to write. But after some attempts at short story writing in college, I had kind of given up on it. Now might be a chance to work on it, since I would have some free time.

Seizing upon that thought, I made up my mind to head out to the bookstore and pick up the latest edition of Writer's Market, a book that listed publishers and the kind of material they were interested in. I threw on my jacket, as it was a cool April evening, and headed out the door.

But in my haste, I nearly bumped into the landlord. He was coming in the front entrance just as I was hurrying out. He looked at me with a puzzled look.

"You visiting what'sname, the guy in the basement?" He asked, looking sideways at me.

My heart was beating like crazy. Fortunately, I didn't spend much time talking with him, even after living here for a year. Usually I just left the rent payment in an envelope slipped under the door of his apartment, on the top floor.

So I just nodded and smiled.

"Man, looks like it's fixin' to rain out there," he continued. "Is he down there now?"

I prayed silently that my female voice was as good as I thought it was. "Mmmmm, no. He was going out the back, I think."

"Ah. Well, tell him I'll be out of town next week, but he can leave the rent under the door. My son will pick it up."

I nodded again, and headed off toward my car, relief washing over me. I seemed to have pulled it off. All my extensive practicing had paid off. Of course, the fact that I made a pretty good looking girl didn't hurt, either. Sometimes I felt sorry for other cross-dressers, who because of their build, their weight, or their facial features, didn't make very convincing females. I had been blessed with a pretty face, a decent figure, nice legs, and a reasonable height. (I was a little tall for a girl at 5'10", but not too much so. Nowadays, I saw lots of girls that tall, occasionally taller.)

The bookstore wasn't crowded, and I found my book with no problem. But I lingered at the store, as I enjoyed browsing their huge selection of magazines and books. I had always been something of a reader, and it was easy for me to spend hours wandering the aisles of a large bookstore.

Books were almost as much fun as lingerie.

I leafed through several women's magazines, as well as other, more esoteric publications. And I even picked up a copy of Cosmopolitan to purchase. I knew I was drawing admiring glances from a couple of guys there, and that gave me a warm feeling inside. But no one spoke to me, they just gave me these lingering sideways glances while they looked at their magazines.

Like I said, I knew I was pretty enough to attract guys, that hadn't ever been a problem for me. But figuring how I wanted to respond, that was something I was very ambivalent about. I sometimes fantasized about what it would be like to be taken out on a date, to be pampered and catered to. That would be nice, being treated like a real girl by a guy. But I wasn't sure how I would handle anything that might come after the pampering and catering.

As for girls, it was odd, I had often been attracted to pretty girls when I was a guy, but as often as not it was their look, their clothes and make-up, that intrigued me.

And as Jennifer, I had no real erotic interest in girls. And the more time I spent as Jennifer, the more I found that she monopolized my interest.

Well, anyway, I eventually got home from the bookstore. They stayed open surprisingly late, until 11:00 p.m.. I left a little after ten, though. I watched the end of the evening news on television, then started looking through my Writer's Market. There were a lot of publishers out there. Now all I had to do was actually write something.

I changed into a nightgown and settled down to look through Cosmo. Some interesting articles, as usual, as well as great ads that gave me ideas for improving my own image. I read until almost midnight, then turned out the light and fell asleep.

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The next morning began what was to become a routine over ensuing days. I slept in later than I had when I was working. I had never been a morning person anyway. After showering, shaving my body and my face, I had some tea with lemon and honey, a small container of low-fat yogurt, and picked out an outfit for Jennifer to spend the day in.

Even though I had been spending most of my weekends as Jennifer while I was working, I now realized that I really didn't have enough regular day-to-day girl clothes. I hated spending money when things were so tight, but I also didn't want to waste this opportunity. I had some room on my charge card, so I decided that I would have to buy some more clothes. Regular daytime type stuff, dresses and skirts and blouses, that was what I needed. I had more fancy-type stuff than I did everyday stuff. For the moment, I decided to improvise. I put on my denim skirt again, and topped it with an oversize sweat shirt I had. This was technically a guy's sweat shirt, but I had bought it with the knowledge that I could, if needed, wear it as Jennifer also. It was big enough on me so that it was in style, and the design was sufficiently androgynous so that I didn't feel butch in it.

Of course, I had on panties, nylons, a bra, a camisole, and a half slip underneath it all, and I put on make-up and my wig, along with earrings, so I still felt properly feminine. I slipped on my low heeled pumps, and luxuriated in how nice that felt, as opposed to clunky old guy's shoes.

Since I was going to be spending some time as Jennifer, I also decided I could work on my nails. My own nails I had usually kept at a slightly feminine length, but nothing too noticeable. So now I gave myself a bit of a manicure, and then put some nail polish on. For a change, I wouldn't have to worry about having to take it off soon.

After my second cup of tea, I worked the phone a bit more, following up on some of my contacts at other insurance companies. But that didn't prove productive, so I grabbed my purse and my jacket and headed out the door.

I shopped for a couple of hours, and by the end I had spent nearly \$500 on new things for Jennifer. I got several new skirts, some nice blouses, three casual dresses, two sweaters, replenished my stock of thigh top nylons, and even got some new costume jewelry.

I could feel a little knot of anxiety in my stomach as I contemplated that bill, for I knew I was pushing my luck a bit. Still, this opportunity to really spend extended time as Jennifer wasn't likely to come again anytime soon. So I splurged.

I went back home for lunch, feeling suddenly frugal. My answering machine showed no incoming messages. It was too early to expect responses, I knew, but I kept hoping.

After lunch, I zapped my resume onto the Internet. One had to try everything, even that seemed to be a real long shot. Then I spent some time chatting with friends on my online service. It was nice to have someone to talk to, even if it was just over the computer.

Later, I tried to work on a story. I had always gravitated to science fiction, so I kind of began reworking an old story idea of mine, involving virtual reality in a utopian future. But after a couple of hours of that, I needed a break.

The truth was, I was getting a little bored. I knew of people who had really let themselves go when they were unemployed, ending up just sitting around the house, drinking beer, not shaving, kind of vegetating and sinking into a depression. When I sometimes watched daytime television, I would shudder as I saw ads that seemed targeted for these types. Ads for lawyers, pitching personal injury claims, or for auto salvage yards, promising cash for old clunkers. I really didn't want to end up that way.

I was really ready to climb the walls. I needed something to do, something to remind myself that I was still alive. But what? Go to a movie? That was ok, I sometimes did that, but it was Friday, and the theater would be full of couples, and I didn't want to be reminded of my aloneness right then.

Then inspiration hit me. My little apartment was less than a mile away from this big dance club place. I had passed it a million times, and even stopped in once as a guy. It was cavernous, with lights flashing and lots of women my age dressed in their best, drinking and talking.

I had never gone there as Jennifer. But what was stopping me? It might be fun. And if I were really lucky, I might not even have to buy my own drinks. No harm in having a drink or two, maybe even dancing a little, just to get out from the four walls of my apartment.

At last, here was something to get my blood racing a bit. Something to be excited about! I had gone out as Jennifer, of course, but not to nightclubs or bars much. I had just been a little intimidated at that, so I had confined myself to shopping trips, movies, that kind of thing. But spending the past few days almost exclusively as Jennifer had bolstered my confidence, I guess, as well as whetted my appetite for a little adventure.

Dressing for this kind of outing, I had a bit more of a selection from my closet. To prepare, I hit the shower again, this time first prepping myself with depilatory lotion, so I would be absolutely smooth and hairless, without even stubble. That done, I dusted myself all over with scented powder. Then I pulled on freshly-laundered black panties from my lingerie drawer, and then a fresh ivory bra. This was followed by a fresh ivory camisole. Then I donned a fitted white lace blouse, new-from-the-package black thigh top nylons, my padded girdle to give me curves on my hips and rear, and a



short black satin skirt. With the addition of my three inch pumps, I shivered in delight when I looked in the full length mirror. Yum yum.

Now I was really glad I had done my nails earlier. I shaved my face carefully again, then got to work on my make-up. I used foundation, eye liner, mascara, a little eye shadow, lipstick, face powder, and blush. Then a few spritzes of perfume in strategic places, then I styled my wig carefully. Once that was on my head, I knew I was gorgeous. My wig was my own natural light brown shade, but much longer and fuller, of course. My artificial tresses cascaded down well past my shoulders. I added some dangle silver earrings and a bracelet, and I was set.

I transferred my keys, change, and ID into a smaller, dressier purse, pulled on my trench coat, and headed out the door.

“Here goes nothing,” I whispered to myself as my heels clicked on the pavement. It took only a few minutes to drive there, although parking was a problem. I ended parking around the block from the club.

I must admit, in spite of all my practice, I was nervous as I walked in. There was a line backed up as I entered, because someone there was checking ID.

I panicked. I had ID all right, but the picture on it was definitely male. I wanted to head back out, but there were so many people behind me that it would have been difficult. Instead, I was kind of swept forward with the crowd.

I noticed he wasn't carding everyone, so I hoped maybe I could slip past. In fact, he seemed much more interested in carding guys than girls. Pretty girls, in particular, seemed to be waved right in. I hoped the same would hold for me.

And it did. He just looked me up and down, took my three dollar cover charge, and motioned me to come in.

*Thank you, God,* I prayed in my head. And then I was in.

The place was really busy. Some couples were dancing, but most were standing around at tables, sipping on drinks. I noticed right away that just about everyone was in groups, mostly girls with girls, guys with guys. The pairing off, or attempts to do so, were just in the early stages.

I was feeling pretty awkward and out of place, so I headed over to an unoccupied little table. It was a tall round black table, with tall stools around it, so you could stand comfortably at it and have your drink. In a few minutes, a harried waitress came by and asked me what I wanted. “Wine cooler,” I said, as femininely as I could. She made a note on her pad and was off.

There was loud thumping music playing, so loud it was hard to hear anything else. The lighting was on the dim side, which at that point was a comfort. I could kind of disappear into the dark and the noise. Or so I hoped.

The arrival of my wine cooler gave me something to do with my hands, for which I was grateful. I tried to force myself to relax. I was here to have a good time, I reminded myself. Still, I felt tense.

A guy about my age, maybe a little older, smiled at me from a nearby table. He, too, was by himself. He had dark hair, was clean shaven, and stood about 6'2", with a nice build. I smiled back. What else could I do?

He sort of sauntered up to my table.

"Having a nice time?" he asked, over the music.

"What? Oh, yes, I think so. I just got here," I replied.

"I know. I saw you come in. I don't think I've ever seen you here before."

I shrugged a bit. "First time. Thought I'd check it out."

"It's nice. I come here every once in a while. My name's Rich, by the way."

"Jennifer," I told him, trying to be heard over the music.

"That's pretty. I like that," he said, in a typical guy effort at small talk. Still, it was better than standing there all alone.

"Thanks," I muttered. He smiled again, and his eyes locked onto mine. He had nice eyes, I decided.

"Care to dance?" he finally asked.

I thought about it for a millisecond, then nodded. What the heck, I had come here to have fun.

I had often practiced dancing as Jennifer at home, watching myself in the mirror, comparing myself to girls I saw on television. And with fast music, it wasn't so difficult. As a guy, I had never been much of a dancer, but as Jennifer I felt free to move with the music. I started to feel good.

We danced for maybe three songs. I was actually enjoying myself. He would look into my face and smile, and I would smile back. I got the distinct impression he liked my outfit, especially my legs. He kept staring at them, making sure I saw that he was staring, gauging my reaction. What the heck, it was nice to be admired.

When we got back to the table, he ordered us both another drink. I thought that was pretty cool. Not having to pay for drinks was kind of nice.

"So what do you do," he asked me.

"Well, until this week, I was a claims adjuster. But I got laid off."

"Oww. That's no fun. Any leads yet on something new?"

"No, but I'm working on it. How about you, what do you do?" He smiled. "I work at a bank. Not too exciting, but it pays the bills."

"Right now, paying the bills doesn't sound bad," I admitted. "I hate being out of work."

"You'll find something, I'm sure." He smiled some more at me, and I caught myself enjoying the scent of his cologne.

"I'm sure. It's just unsettling to be between jobs, y'know?"

“Yeah. You know, my bank is looking for tellers. The pay isn't great, but it's better than nothing. If you want, you could stop by and apply. I could steer you to the lady who does the hiring, she likes me.”

“Thanks,” I said, without taking him too seriously. Still, that might be better than nothing. I hated the thought of being a bank teller, that seemed even less of a serious job than claims adjuster. But still, it was a job. Then I realized, how could I apply as a guy, when this guy would be looking to recommend a girl?

The thought crossed my mind that maybe, just maybe, I could apply as a girl. That was intriguing, but also intimidating. I hadn't really thought much about that, except in fleeting fantasies.

“Well, that's a thought, you know. Where do you work, Rich?”

He gave me his card. Smooth move, I thought. Still, it might be a lead. So I put it in my purse.

I finished off my second wine cooler, and Rich and I danced some more. I was starting to feel quite relaxed and at ease with this now. Jennifer seemed to be doing just fine.

Rich and I drank some more. I began to lose track of just how many wine coolers I had. But soon I was feeling very mellow. We danced several times, and I laughed at Rich's jokes. I had to go to the ladies' room a couple of times, but that was cool. I checked my make-up in the mirror, and noted once again how much nicer women's rest rooms were than those for men. I adjusted my skirt, checked my nylons for runs, and headed back to Rich.

As the evening wore on, I got more and more mellow. Rich danced not only to fast songs, but to some slow ones as well, and I didn't mind. He felt very reassuring against me, with his big body and strong arms. And as I already said, I liked his cologne. His hands occasionally would brush against my legs or my rear, and I surprised myself when I realized I didn't mind.

Before I knew it, it was getting late. I was a little drunk, and didn't care. I needed to get a little drunk. So when Rich asked me for my number, I gave it to him before I even thought about it. What the heck, he had been nice all evening, and had bought me all my drinks.

“Want to go out sometime?” he asked. I was just drunk enough to say yes.

“I know it's short notice, but how about tomorrow? Got any plans?”

I leaned my chin into my hand, my elbow resting on the table, and gazed into his eyes. “Not really. What did you have in mind?”

“How about we get something to eat, and then a movie?”

I thought about that. Well, why the hell not. “Sure. That sounds nice.” I felt so relaxed and warm, I would have agreed to go the moon, I think.

“Great. Pick you up around...seven. How's that?”

“S'great. Seven. Okay.”

“I'll call you tomorrow, and you can tell me where to pick you up, okay?”