

# BUSINESS GIRL

*By Deena Gomersall*



*ILLUSTRATED BY MISTY MALVEAUX*

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**AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL**

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## **BUSINESS GIRL**

**By Deena Gomersall.**

### **Chapter One: DEEP IN DEBT.**

Tony sat down and reflected upon his life. He'd always been unlucky, never had the breaks, well, not really. It seemed to him bad luck had dogged him ever since his birth. His father died of cancer when he was just three years old and his mom was taken from him by an automobile accident nine years later. He had no brothers or sisters and Mom never remarried after his Dad's death.

From the age of twelve to graduation he was in foster care as there was no close family to take him in after he was orphaned. There *was* one person, his great aunt Agnes, but she was fifty-six years old; she would wrap herself in her business and be too busy to look after a young child. Agnes did, however, send money for him each year, in care of his foster parents.

He hadn't really ever known Agnes even when Mom was alive, as she was totally absorbed in running a business she had built up in Detroit; it was her life. She never married; Tony had heard that she had a dislike for men. Maybe that was another reason why she hadn't stepped forward to take him in.

She did attend his mother's funeral, though and Tony remembered her as a very proud, very well-dressed, wealthy-looking woman. From that day to the present, however, he had not set eyes on her. Now, she too had passed away.

The only family he now had in the whole world were two uncles on his Mom's side. None of his Dad's relations had kept in touch with his Mom after Dad's death.

There was his Uncle William and his wife Stella, living in Mexico City and his Uncle Walter and wife Claire who had emigrated to Europe before he was born. He had never seen them as they hadn't attended his Mom's funeral.

Tony was alone, alone with a whole heap of problems; he was deep in debt and in fear of his life, living in the tough Beech Grove area of Indianapolis.

He was turning this over in his head as he read the telegram that informed him of great aunt Agnes' passing. Oh, if *only* she had helped him when he had asked her to.

In fairness, she *had* kept him financially secure during his school years and, when he left, she fixed him up with a place in college to study business management, like she had done. He wasn't *really* interested in that life, but he went along with it anyway.

It was better than relying on state handouts; she was paying for his studies as well as providing him with \$150 a week while he was studying. It was her way of looking

after the boy without taking an active part. She hoped for him to follow in her footsteps, get his own business and set himself up in life.

And yet, although he had done well in school and even got a degree, he did not pursue a career or try to work his way up the corporate ladder. The truth was, he was fine while his great aunt was providing him with a living, but he was just too lazy to work hard, preferring instead to make a quick buck wherever he could. Too often, however, he would just gamble it all away again.

He started to get into debt, the bills started to heap up, “demand” letters started to appear and he turned to a finance company to pay his outstanding debts. He made the assumption that once they were paid and out of the way he could concentrate on paying back the loans sharks.

Once he had some money from the loan in his hands, he felt compelled to try to double it by gambling on “sure things” such as the Powerball or the races. Inevitably, he lost the loan money and so he now owed not only the original bills but the financiers as well.

As the loan company leaned on him for repayment, he turned to yet another loan company to borrow money so that he could pay off the first one. With the first company’s rate of interest, plus their charges for late repayments, he fell short. In order to get their money back, they seized half of the equity he held in his house instead.

That was two years earlier, and since that time, the scenario had repeated again and again until he had lost all of his possessions. He was not able to pay the mortgage and his bank seized his home.

Four different loan companies were chasing him for money he had borrowed; one of them went so far as to hire two gorillas to put him into intensive care as an example to others. Worse still, the most recent company that he had borrowed from was now threatening his life if he did not come up with the money, *soon*.

At this point, though he hardly knew her, he wrote to his great aunt Agnes begging for her help. He didn't know her worth, but he figured that since she owned a company and paid his way through college, she must be reasonably well-off. Her reply dashed any hope he had.

She responded by telling him how disappointed she was in him. After all her trouble to set him up to make his way in life, he had thrown it all away in favor of idling his time away. She was also incensed that the only time he bothered to contact her was not to thank her for all that she had done, but to beg even *more* money from her.

He looked at the letter in dismay. Sure, perhaps it was a *bit* much on his part, but if she was *wealthy*, it wouldn't have hurt her to bail out kin in an hour of need, *would* it ?

But the truth was, she had refused him and with her refusal went his last chance of getting out of the mess that he was in. He had lost his house, almost all of his belongings were gone and, with the financial state that he was in, no one wished to employ him. It seemed he had no other option but to run to another state, try to escape his creditors and start again.

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Tony settled for a while in Milwaukee; after a time there, he received the shock of his life when one of the loan firms that were after him tracked him down just as he was starting to put some money together. He paid them back, losing just about all of the money that he had saved so far. The thought that worried him now though was, if *this* firm could find him, so could the one that threatened to put him permanently out of his misery.

Not daring to take any chances Tony quickly went on the move again, finally renting a room in a broken-down apartment building in the Burbank area of Chicago.

He felt safe for the time being, but remained cautious in case anyone else found him. It wasn't long before the hapless man owed back rent on his room and his landlord was all set to kick him out.

To add insult to injury, while he was in Chicago, he had met a girl, dated her and, somehow, she had become pregnant. Her Dad was now expecting Tony to do the "honorable" thing and marry her to provide the unborn baby with a Father.

How the hell was *he* to know that she would get pregnant ? They had only hit the sack *once*... his luck or what ? And, he was expected to *marry her!* That was a laugh, he had zero money, zero job. Hell, he couldn't look after *himself*, let alone some broad with a kid. She wasn't even that good-looking.

That was the signal he should move on again; he was likely to be kicked out of the digs anyway as he had no way of paying. Also, it would be better to keep one step in front of the loan sharks after his blood. It seemed that his life was going to be spent running and hiding from people.

He was packing his belongings when the telegram came. It was no real surprise to receive word of Auntie's death as she must have been pretty old; if nothing else, he didn't have to bother wasting his time trying to beg off her again.

He was pondering what he should do in the short term when the telegram arrived, informing him that someone was coming to see him regarding his great aunt's death. He assumed that they wanted him, being the next of kin, to make some kind of funeral arrangements.

That was a real drag, he wanted to split the joint as soon as he could, not hang on for someone he didn't even know, regarding a relative he didn't care about. Surely, someone *else* could see to the old woman's arrangements... her company, perhaps? What about his two uncles ? He didn't have any intentions of attending it himself, not after she had turned him down!

Something else disturbed him; he hadn't thought of it at first but, if his great aunt's company could trace him in Chicago, so could those two thugs out to cut his life expectancy short.

“Oh, what the hell do *I* care about Agnes, it's not like I *knew* her,” he spoke aloud to no one. “To hell with it, I'm getting out right now. I have no money to pay for her funeral. Let them take it from her business, *whatever* it is!”

He looked again at the telegram and fleetingly wondered if he was letting his Mom down by not taking care of her Aunt's funeral arrangements. The woman *had* tried to get him started in life.

“No damn it, she ain't no use to me *now*, others are in a better position to bury her than me, I've gotta get *outta* here!”

With that decision made, Tony twisted up the telegram, threw it into the fire place, and watched it burn. That done, he packed his few things into a battered, checked the corridor to make sure his landlord wasn't about, then hightailed it out of the building.

The wait at the bus station was hell for Tony. He always felt like this when he was making a run: nervous, impatient and apprehensive. He felt very conspicuous, as though everyone was searching for him. Maybe his landlord would see him with his case as he drove by, maybe it would be the father of the pregnant girl. To make matters worse, the Greyhound bus was running forty-five minutes late.

At long last, after the longest hour of his life, the bus pulled in and passengers began to board.

“Anthony Wesley Bishop?” a voice from behind him suddenly inquired, making Tony's blood run cold.

He turned nervously around to see two men wearing long, gray raincoats standing just behind him, their hats pulled down to partially obscure their faces.

“Sorry Bud, that's not me. I, er, I'm...,” Tony began.

“Mr. Bishop, we've tailed you from your apartment,” one of the men informed him. “We need you to come along with us... please.”

“Are... are you guys from a finance company?” Tony asked nervously.

There was no answer, instead the two men came to either side of him, each taking an elbow to escort him away from the coach station towards a waiting car. His suitcase remained on the sidewalk.

A third man was in the waiting car and, after bundling him into the back, one man joined him while the other got into the front passenger seat.

“Where are you taking me?” was met with a disquieting silence as the car sped off.

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Tony expected to be taken to some run-down part of town and be given a good kicking... or worse. He was therefore surprised when the car drew up outside of one of the city's poshest hotels. He was led indoors, escorted into an elevator and taken to the thirty-fifth floor. During all of this, no word was spoken by any of the men.

Leaving the elevator, walking a short way along the corridor, Tony soon found himself standing outside of a room door as one of the men knocked upon it. The knock was answered by the voice of a woman from within.

Tony was led inside and saw before him an elegantly dressed woman of middle age and a younger, smartly dressed woman.

“Ah, Mr. Bishop!” the older of the two began. “You have led us *quite* a merry dance of late. Will you please come in and take a seat?”

Tony looked suspiciously at the woman. “I would feel a whole lot more like sitting if I knew who the hell you were and why you had your goons force me to come here, lady,” he responded sharply.

“But, of *course!* I have every intention of telling you who I am,” the lady replied as she gestured to a seat. “My name is Beryl Chambers. I was a longtime friend and business partner of your great aunt Agnes. I am on the board of directors in her company.”

“So, you knew my Aunt Agnes? It was *you* that sent the telegram?” Tony asked as he sat on the offered seat. “You're *not* from a loan company?”

“No. Whatever else I may be involved in, I assure you I am *not* from a loan company. Are you in trouble with one?”

“Kind of,” was the short reply.

“Well, I have brought you here about your great aunt's death which you will be aware of, if you read the telegram.”

“Yeah, I read the telegram but I can't afford to arrange no funeral for her. That's why the sharks are after me; I can't go to the funeral either in case they're waitin' to seize me.”

The woman laughed softly. “Mr. Bishop, the company has already seen to those details. At the wish of your great aunt, she has already been cremated. You can, being family, claim her ashes if you wish, though we were rather hoping that the urn could stay in our boardroom.”

“That's fine by me, lady, no problem,” Tony replied in relief. He had no wish to have the old lady's ashes. “But, if she's already been cremated, what do you want with *me?*”

“I just assumed you would want to know her last will and testament... where you stand as a beneficiary.”

“What! You mean the old lady left me something? How... how *much?*”

The younger of the ladies spoke for the first time. “Actually, Mr. Bishop, your great aunt hasn't left you any money at all, but rather a chance to redeem yourself and make good in life. She was apparently very displeased when you didn't make anything of the College education she paid for and that you chose not to work for a living.”

“Allow me to introduce Ms. Karen Hunter, our legal advisor, Mr. Bishop,” Beryl told him.

Tony shook the proffered hand of the young lady, then got down to more pressing matters.

“So what the hell has she left me for you to bring me out here?” he inquired.

“Like I said, a chance to redeem yourself. You are now offered the chance to show your worth, at least to prove that you can run a business like your great aunt and

your uncles. We want to teach you the ropes in Agnes' company. After six months' training, you will be invited onto the board to attempt to manage the company the way she did," Karen informed him.

"This will be for one year; you will not be allowed to do this without the six months' initial training. During that six months, all of your needs will be catered for. If you accept this, *then* you join the company.

"The terms of the agreement, I stress again, are for you to help run the company for one year; during this time you will receive a monthly director's salary. If, by the end of the year, you have proved your worth, you will be invited to take your great aunt's seat as president *and* you will inherit her estate, which includes her house, her cars, her shares in the company and one-eighth share of her wealth.

"If you do *not* wish to take her company over, or you prove unfit to do so, by decision of the board of directors, *then* you will receive a part of the inheritance money. To claim any of this, you must first agree to the six months' training and to working for the company for the aforementioned term of one year."

"So, basically, what you are saying is, I have to be involved with aunt Agnes' company for one and a half years in order to claim *anything at all?*"

"That's precisely right, Mr. Bishop."

"And the rest of the wealth—who gets the cash without having to lift a finger?"

"That will be divided equally among your two uncles and their spouses, Mr. Bishop; some of your great aunt's money has already been set aside to help with your training and keep you going while you prove yourself to the company."

"But I don't *feel* the benefit of it, I mean not in my *hand*."

"Not 'in your hand' to waste freely on gambling as we believe you have a tendency to do. The benefit is yours, you will live free of charge for eighteen months, unless you want to quit. You *can* quit at any time, but if you do, you lose any inheritance that otherwise would be yours."

"Uh, I have to do all that *and* with conditions while my uncles, who are already wealthy, sit on their fat butts and watch their bank balance increase without any personal commitment."

"If you want to look at it that way, yes. I feel, so long as you go along with the conditions, you will do far better than either of them," Karen quickly informed him.

"Maybe you are not aware of it, Mr. Bishop, but if you are successful, you inherit the company as the major shareholder and President. The company currently is worth twenty-seven million dollars; you could be bought out as a 45% share holder if you sell your shares, or you *could* just sit back, hand over the presidency and live on the annual turnover of your shares."

Tony's face went pale and his heart was racing. "P-p-pardon?" was the only audible thing he could mutter at the present time.

"For such a handsome inheritance, there are one or two other provisos in the will," Karen added. "Your great aunt was keen to ensure that *this* time you work hard and



faithfully for your money and that you put her company before anything else. Her company was what made her tick, what she believed in. Both of her nephews... your uncles, have also prospered in business management. All three are self made, and worked to achieve their success.

“You cannot expect to get rich on your great aunt’s hard work; you have to commit yourself and help make the company work in her stead, for at least the one year period.

“If you stay on, you inherit the lot; back out though, and you receive one-sixth of her personal wealth, roughly one and a half million dollars. If you do *not* agree to the six months of training and the years trial on the board, then you get nothing.”

“So what *is* the salary as a director?” Tony asked.

“It is about \$2,500 per month, but if you are deemed not to be working or caught shirking, you will be voted from the board and receive a much smaller salary.”

“How can I be voted off the board if *I* am the leading share holder with a 45% vote?”

“Because you do not inherit the shares *until* you have been contracted for the running of the company and the Presidency after the one year’s term.”

Tony thought about the offer. “Well, on \$2,500 a month and a third of great aunt's wealth, I can't really say more than ‘I'll give it a shot’. I can't say I want to stay with the company though; you can give the Presidency to whoever and split my shares with the other shareholders, I reckon I can live well enough after my year is up.”

Karen was not happy with Tony's lack of commitment and told him so by the look she gave him.

“Oh, by the way, there's just one other small condition in the clause,” Karen added with a smile appearing on her pretty face. “Well, a *major* clause, actually.”

Tony's own wide smile began to fade. “I should have known this was too good to be true... what *is* it?”

Karen took a breath before replying. “You have to work at the company as a female,” she told him.

“I gotta WHAT? Baby, you have *got* to be joking. Who the hell thought up *that* hair-brained idea?” Tony scoffed. “Take a close look at me, Babe! I am all man. I may not have the body of an athlete, but I can assure you, I am no Goddamn sissy and there is *no* way I am dressing up as one!”

“Well, actually, the ‘hair-brained’ idea is your aunt's,” Karen informed him.

“Huh, I might have known. The bitch never intended me to inherit a dime! Why *should* she, she never really knew me or anything. She put this stupid clause in so that she could cut me out and it can all go to my already-rich uncles. She *knew* I would refuse the condition and that way, it'll be *my* fault that I don't get anything.”

“No that isn't the way it is,” Beryl interjected. “If you care to sit down, Mr. Bishop, I'll explain to you.”

Tony, although unhappy with the sudden turn of events, did as he was requested.

“Your great aunt Agnes, as you probably knew, was a self-made woman. She never married, preferring instead to build up her business empire. As I understand, she once had a lover when she was in her early twenties, but he hurt her very badly, so badly that, from that point forward, she had a mistrust for all men.

“She went into business designing and making ladies undergarments. In 1939, she bought a small store in Detroit where she could sell the things she made.

“The money came pouring in and she was able to widen her venture by buying a workshop where she employed women to make her creations.

“As time went on, Agnes opened stores in other towns across the state, enlarged her workshop and opened others across the country. As fashions changed, Agnes hired a team of lingerie designers and, from there, they progressed onto the world market.

Last year, Ferndike’s Fashion Lingerie Incorporated boasted twenty-seven factories in five different including Great Britain and France; it owns over six hundred stores and employs 5,860 people.”

“Impressive figures. I had no idea,” Tony replied “I’ve heard of Ferndike’s Fashion lingerie, I’ve seen ads on TV, but I never realized it belonged to my great aunt Ferndike. I still don’t get why my uncles both receive handsome inheritances, while *I* get offered a *job*... and one where I have to be disguised as a woman. Why?”

“Well, your great aunt, never had any children or grandchildren who could take over the reins of her business. Her Sister... your Grandmother Abigail, as you know, *did* marry and had two sons and one daughter. Lingerie, obviously, is a woman’s market and your great aunt dearly hoped for girls on her sister’s side of the family in the hope that it could be made into a family business.

“Your Mom was Agnes’ first hope, but she had you at an early age and never got to work for her aunt; then, when your Daddy died, she was too busy raising you. She never remarried, so no daughters were forth coming. Then, of course, she died at an early age.

“You may or may not know about your two uncles’ lives as you were never close. Your Uncle William was badly injured in the war and, due to his injuries, was unable to produce children. Your other uncle, Walter, married your aunt Stella and, although they were keen to start a family, Stella miscarried twice. Her doctor recommended that they not try again. To your great aunt’s sorrow, there never was any natural female line of succession in the family to run the business, no female beneficiaries.

“Although your great aunt had a general dislike and mistrust for all men, you were the only child to come from her sister’s children. Your great aunt’s wish was to bring all the family into the business market, including your Mom. Fate prevented that on your Mom’s part, but both your uncles became business directors on their own merits.

“You were the last of the family and that’s why Agnes set you up in college to learn business studies. She hoped that you would follow in her and your uncles’ footsteps by setting up your own business. I can tell you that she was immensely pleased when you graduated with a degree, but, you never followed it up. You never used what you learned to make something of yourself.”

“No, I didn't, and great aunt Agnes never bothered to contact me to say how ‘proud’ she was of me, either,” Tony replied bitterly. “I tried, really tried, but she *never* said ‘well done’, never ‘I’m proud of you’. She never contacted me at all, about *anything*; it was as though I didn't exist.”

“But, she *was* proud, Tony and for Agnes to be proud of a male's achievements is accolade indeed. Remember, at that time you were still living with your foster parents and she didn't want to offend them or meddle too much in your upbringing. She only wanted to open an opportunity for you to make your own way successfully in life.”

“Yeah, I was living with foster parents. Tell me, if she was so proud of her family and wanted to help her sisters children and me, why didn't she look after me when Mom died. Why put me in the care of strangers?”

“There are two reasons for that, Tony. First, she was a very busy, active woman who threw herself into her work, her business, and she felt she wasn't getting any younger.

“For Agnes to try to take care of an energetic twelve-year-old boy would have been too great a burden on her. Ultimately both her health and her business would have suffered,” Beryl explained.

“Well, okay, but what about when I contacted her asking for some financial help a couple of years back? She flatly refused me. I wouldn't have contacted her if I hadn't been *really* desperate. My life was in danger. Still is, actually.”

“Yes, I know about that and I must remind you again and ask you to understand just how bitterly disappointed she was when you wasted all the money she paid for your studies.

“She had been sending you \$150 a week to help you and you abused that money by spending it on gambling. Rather than trying to get employment using your business degree, you chose just to lounge about and draw government checks.”

“Yes, maybe so, but she *could* have answered me in my hour of need... I could be dead now for all *she* cared. I *still* have guys out after me which is precisely why I have to keep on the move.”

“And now, all of your troubles could be over,” Karen spoke up. “You *could* be set up for the rest of your life running the business created by your great aunt, inheriting a huge share in a highly prosperous company and, in time, sit at the head of the boardroom and be a multimillionaire!

“Yeah, right. All so long as I do it as a *woman*! I don't *think* so! No dice, lady, you put that clause in on purpose to make sure that I turned it down and lose what should rightfully be mine. Why the hell do I need to appear as a woman just to work in the stupid company?”

“Because your great aunt's company is lingerie. It's a female market as I told you and females are more suited for it. Other businesses in lingerie prefer to deal with women executives rather than men. I'm sure you'd agree this is quite understandable. After all, what do *men* know about women's undergarments?”

“The directors of the company are all women, some of them are feminists... as your great aunt was and they would not be too happy having a male presiding over them. Also, your great aunt thought that, for you to understand her market, you would be better equipped if you could draw from your feminine side.

“She also believed that having to live as a woman would help settle down your rather wild lifestyle. Accepting the conditions in full also shows that you do have the firm's interest at heart rather than just financial gain for yourself,” Beryl explained.

“You two both know that I am a man Are you not both feminists like the rest of the board?”

“You misunderstand me, Tony. It is not who on the board knows or doesn't know your real sex; we are neither trying to pretend nor have secrets from them. It is that you merely present yourself in the female gender for them, rather than as a man. Then there can be no complaints.

“For my own part, as well as being the company's vice president, I was also Agnes' closest friend and confidant. She asked me specifically that, if you to accept the terms and conditions, it be me who guides you into being a convincing... and I do mean a *convincing*, female,” Beryl told him.

“Just hold on one minute! Now, I am not accepting anything here, but just what does ‘convincing’ entail?” Tony inquired.

Beryl studied the young man before replying. “ ‘Convincing’ means being fool-proof, convincing enough that nobody would believe other than that you were a real woman by birth.

“You... you aren't suggesting a *sex change*, are you?”

“My dear, for the kind of inheritance we are talking a sex change would be a small forfeit, but no... not necessarily. What we *do* expect, though, is that you go on a course of hormone treatment to help enhance your femininity.”

“But that would mean my developing *tits*, wouldn't it ?”

Beryl looked indignantly at Tony as she replied. “Breast development *would* occur, yes.”

“No. *Wrong!*” Tony responded. “Do I *really* look to you like the kind of guy that would want to have a pair of jugs on his chest ? No dice, lady! I won't do that for *any* money, I'd be mutilated and sissified.”

“As I see it, it would do you good. It might get some of that sexist, male chauvinistic attitude out of you.”

“Lady, do you know why women go through the ‘change?’” Tony smirked.

Knowing that she would be better off not answering, Beryl hesitantly asked why.

“It's to give us men a pause.” Tony said with a laugh.

Looking indignantly at the man, Karen continued with the business at hand. “Anyway, Mr. Bishop, that's the deal. You accept what's been offered or you don't get a dime!”

“Just take time to think about it,” Beryl suggested in a more friendly tone. “Think what you will be giving up. 45%, your aunt's luxury mansion and her Mercedes... all for undertaking a few changes. You could easily end up as President of your own company and be wealthy for the rest of your life. What better offers have you got now?”

“Here’s my card. I urge you to think about it and call me.”

At that, Tony was allowed to leave. His request that Beryl lend him some money to tide him over while he considered the offer was dismissed.

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“No... I *can't*,” he told himself as he thought of how much money he could have. “I *cannot* pretend to be a female! I'm nothing like one, I'd look and feel foolish. I don't want to dress as a woman... it's a *stupid* idea.”

Tony was adamant as he left the hotel that he was *not* going to go along with the hair-brained idea, yet this turn of events had now stopped him from making a clean getaway. He did not want to return to his old apartment where he still owed back rent and he *certainly* did not want to bump into that girl’s father.

It wasn’t until he was on the sidewalk outside the hotel that he realized he didn’t have his suitcase. Totally fed up with life and his head whirling with all he had been told, Tony booked himself into a cheap motel just outside of town until he could decide on his next move and get things into perspective. Trouble was, his money was running very low.

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That night, in the safety of his motel room, Tony reflected on the day's events. So much money, more than he had ever dreamed of, was his for the taking. It was so much that it just seemed unreal, like a dream. He, Tony Bishop, could *never* have that kind of wealth, it was all just so unreal!

“Me, President of a booming company, a multimillionaire, living in a mansion and driving a Mercedes, Nah, it *has* to be a dream. It’s just too big to be a reality—that’s why the ‘femininity’ thing was thrown in there,” he thought to himself.

Tony pondered his present situation. Homeless, penniless, no change of clothing. He was on the run from a lot of people, his life was threatened and he owed a lot of money. The very *least* of his problems was that some schmuck wanted to force him into marrying his daughter who was pregnant; he didn’t even *like* her, she was a dog!

He smiled grimly to himself. There was one good thing about disguising himself as a woman—those goons would never find him.

If only his great aunt's inheritance didn't involve him swapping gender, all of his troubles and cares would be over. He would live in opulence for the rest of his life and he wouldn't have to marry that girl nor support her whining baby. He'd have his own home and his own car... and *what* a home and car! A mansion and a Mercedes... if *only*.

“Wait a minute here,” he thought aloud. “I'm thinking of casually throwing away an fortune just to avoid putting on a bra and panties! Hell, nobody said I had to wear anything *too* feminine, just so long as it doesn't look manly. It ain't gonna harm me physically and, if nobody knows it's *me*, how can anyone laugh, poke fun or call me a sissy?”

“I could be my own boss in charge of my own business and never have to run away and hide again. I wouldn't have to live in fear of my life. This time next year I could either be a millionaire or laid out in a wooden box. Some choice!”

Tony sat up and scratched his head. “Gee, I don't even have to go along with those dames. I could do this training thing, work for a couple of months—hell, after even just two months I would have \$5,000 in my pocket. I could split then; if I see the year out, I'm in for a million and a half dollars. Eighteen months dressing as a broad and I'm set for life!”

Tony fingered the card that Beryl had given him as he tried to make a decision. He knew, deep down, if he didn't take the opportunity he would regret it for the rest of his life... how ever long *that* might be. Just how bad could it *be* pretending to be female?

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## Chapter Two: OKAY, I ACCEPT.

Tony took a deep breath to compose himself as his heart pounded. He had just agreed to meet with Beryl again for more discussion.

He phoned as soon as he had gotten up the following morning just in case he lost the courage later. He didn't *want* to live as a woman, the idea appalled him, but he certainly *did* want to be a millionaire and that was now a real possibility.

For the rest of the morning he idled around his hotel room trying to imagine what living as a girl would be like. He supposed that it would be embarrassing and that he would feel foolish and nervous at first. He figured sooner or later, he would at least get used to it; then, maybe, he would not feel so conspicuous or absurd.

In the afternoon, he made his way back to the hotel room where the goons had taken him the day before. Once again, he found both Beryl and Karen in the room.

“So, congratulations, you've decided to be wise and take up the offer!” Beryl greeted him.

“Does she have to be here?” Tony asked in embarrassment as he looked at Karen. It was bad enough for a man to agree to dress as a woman in front of *any* woman but, in front of a young attractive female he wouldn't mind going to bed with? It was humiliating! What *must* she think of him?

“Oh yes, Mr. Bishop, it’s imperative! Karen is our corporate lawyer, we cannot agree anything here and make it binding without her. Your signature of acceptance has to be lawful; after all, it’s worth a hell of a lot of money to you. You also need to know what is required, all terms and conditions that have to be met and agreed upon. *Are you accepting?*”

“I... I don't know,” he said hesitantly. “How long do I have to do it, did you say? I mean, pretend to be a woman.”

“It's not so much ‘pretending’ as ‘appearing to be’.” Karen corrected. “At least within the company. You cannot just pull on a skirt and begin, either. You have to be trained, not just in how to be a convincing woman, but in the company policies and knowledge of ladies’ lingerie lines.

“The training period, will be six months during which time Beryl has agreed to be your tutor along with various professionals. You will be unsalaried, but your needs will all be catered for. At the end of your training, you will be offered a contract with Ferndike's Fashion Lingerie Inc. and invited to join the board of directors. At that time, you will be salaried at \$2,500 a month.

“You will be expected to hold this position for the next twelve months, when, hopefully, you will be comfortable in your role and totally familiar with the running of the company. During this time, Beryl will be the acting president. If at the end of the year you are deemed capable, Beryl will relinquish her position and *you* will be invited to take your great aunt's former position as head of the board.

“If you are *not* deemed ready, you may remain on the board until such time as the board agrees that you are. You do not receive your aunt's inheritance until you become President and sign the relevant contracts; you will just remain salaried for the position that you are in. The whole idea was designed by your great aunt to make you show your worth and work for the inheritance.”

“So, I have to live as a woman for the whole year and a half?” Tony grumbled.

“At the very least, yes. That ensures that you do get a one-sixth share of the inheritance money, but we would be very disappointed if you had the ability to make President and just took the money and ran.

“The idea was to get you into a position to make something of your life as well as keeping the family seat. That is what Agnes Ferndike wished for but, it *is* non-binding. If you *do* wish to go after eighteen months, there is nothing forcing you to stay. Do remember though, if you quit before that time, you get *nothing*.”

“Let's get this right. You said earlier that I have to present myself as a woman when at work, right ? So, when I am *not* at work, I can dress in my own clothes and go out and be a man, yeah ?”

Karen shook her head. “No, sorry. The only way you can achieve the total convincing femininity required is for you to live full-time as a female; you’ll never do it by switching on and off. You will be required to dress full-time during your training anyway, or you will never learn. Anyway, you’ll need to deal with clients and business personnel both in and out of work hours.

“You will be far more successful if people from outside the company believe Agnes’ successor is a real woman, and, it would be a disaster for us if one of them discovered that you were not what you appeared to be. It could *ruin* us!”

Tony groaned. “But, why *me*? Why do *I* have to do this ? Why can't I just inherit a lump sum like my uncles?”

“You are the only natural successor to your great aunt's position as you have no family or ties, plus your uncles are too busy running their own companies. Also, where they are aging, you have youth on your side. *I'd* see it as an opportunity rather than a hardship.”

“So... which is it going to be?” Beryl pressed.

With a heart that felt like it was loaded with lead, Tony sighed deeply and nodded yes. He had no idea how he would get through it or what he was letting himself in for. He did know, though, he had nothing else going for him at the moment. At the end of *this* road, however, was a very tempting pot of gold.

“Very good. I assure you that you have made the right decision. The sooner we get things rolling, the better,” Beryl told him.

“You mean, I have to start right away?” Tony asked in shock.

“In creating you a new, feminine character, yes. You haven't anything *more* pressing to do, have you?”

“Well, no, but... I would rather have liked time to adapt to the idea, sort of prepare myself you know? It's a big step.”

“And time for you to reconsider, to bail out of it. No, the sooner we get this thing underway, the better. Now, have you anything that needs seeing to before you start your life anew ?” Beryl explained to him that in order to get things off without a hitch, he should sort out any outstanding business he might have, and tidy up any loose ends.

Tony thought about all the debts he owed, the girl who was carrying his kid, his digs and the back rent he owed. *To hell with them all!* he thought, *They can search for me all they want, they certainly won't be looking for a woman. I'm disappearing for eighteen months and, when I reemerge, I'm outta here with a wad of money.* “No, nothing,” he replied.

He told her that there wasn't really anything outstanding. He had no intentions of paying his back rent or leaving any forwarding address with anyone. He had nothing in the bank, no job, no relatives to get in touch with; he didn't even have his suitcase of clothes anymore.

Moments later, he found himself having to sit down and sign all kinds of forms and agreements that bound him to the company for the stated period of time. They recapitulated that failure to complete the agreed period would result in his losing his share of the inheritance, the money to go back into company funds.

The final forms were the usual employee/employer forms for him to sign to work for the company during his learning period. The name and address part of the form was



left blank and he was instructed not to fill anything in there just yet. When all was done, he handed them to Karen for her to countersign and rubber stamp.

“Okay now, regarding your name and abode. I think I am right in believing that other than the apartment you were staying at, you don't have your own home? Even so, we would obviously prefer you to move into the area where the company is located and live as close to it as possible. For the period of your training, Beryl has kindly offered you the use of her own home where you will live and be trained,” Karen told him.

“You will not be able to take up residency of your great aunt's house until you have achieved your objective and become company President. If you leave Ferndike Industries then you *also* leave the house. In the agreement, you will see that your great aunt has passed on her home to whoever is the current President of the company.”

Tony was far from worried by that ruling; he didn't intend to stay any longer than it took to get his million-plus. After that he could buy a house in whatever state he chose.

“Now, as for a name. I expect that you realize that you cannot be called ‘Tony’ while living and working as a female. It would be foolish with the way that we intend to have you look. As I have already mentioned, outside clients and reps will believe that you are what you appear to be. Do you have any preference for a new name?”

Tony shook his head dumbly. “Nah, I've never given that any consideration. I don't think I have a favorite.”

“Well, how about something close to your own name... say, Tonya, for instance?” Karen suggested.

Tony didn't really want to be called by *any* girl's name but, if he *had* to choose, he would prefer something similar to his own that he would be more likely to remember. “Yeah, okay, *whatever*. It'll do... I suppose.”

“It's always nice to have a second name, too,” Beryl interrupted. “While we're on the subject of names, you may care to take your great aunt's middle name in memory of her. It was Elizabeth.”

Tony didn't want to appear churlish so he shrugged his shoulders in way of acceptance.

“Finally, on this matter, we need to make it legal and binding, especially since you will need to fill out official forms, contracts and documents. To this end, you will have your name changed by court petition; if you ever wish to quit the company, you only need to change it back in the same way.

As we plan to change your name legally, do we retain your own surname or do we change that, as well? In short, you can enter the company as Tonya Elizabeth Bishop, or perhaps take your great aunt's name and become Tonya Elizabeth Ferndike. The latter would be much more in keeping with the company and show clients that you are a blood relative of our late President.”

Tony considered this proposal for a while. Did keeping his own surname *really* matter when his Christian name was changed and he was even being given a second femi-

nine one ? Ferndike *did* seem in keeping with the business and he felt sure old clients would be happier about it, too.

It was a fact that he would be losing his own identity, but was that so bad ? Without his former name to compare with, there would be nothing for anyone chasing him to connect to his new alter ego. Also, he would feel much better about having to appear as a woman if he wasn't using any part of his real name.

“Okay. I'll go along with that. I'll become Ferndike for my aunt's memory,” he said, not too truthfully.

“Fine, very good! Well, that just about wraps it all up. Welcome aboard Ferndike's Fashion Lingerie Incorporated, Tonya.”

Tony screwed up his face at being called Tonya. Obviously, being called by that name was going to take a *whole* lot of getting used to.

“There is just one other thing,” he added. “You have said that I am not trying to fool anyone inside the company with regards to my real sex, that I should allow people out of work to believe that I am really a girl. Do you seriously think they will? I mean, I look nothing like a girl, I *act* nothing like a girl, I have a flat, hairy chest, my voice is deep and my legs are skinny.”

Beryl smiled. “Don't fret, it *will* work, we have given ourselves six months to get you just right and you'll be surprised at just what money can achieve. There has been a special budget set aside just to make you *perfect*.”

Tony remained unconvinced. “I've lived the whole of my life as a man, acting like a man and doing manly things, I can't just sweep all of that under the carpet and suddenly start acting girlish, no matter *how* much money is spent.”

“You can, through psychiatry. Nobody is expecting you to suddenly start behaving like a woman; it will be a gradual process, yet one I'm sure we can achieve in the time allowed.”

With the papers and agreement forms all signed, things were pretty much taken from Tony's hands from there on. As he had no place of work, no family, no home and very few personal possessions, they decided to drive him out to the Rochester Hills area of Detroit where Beryl lived. He had no matters to attend to, nothing to close and nobody to report to. Ferndike's would take care of everything else for him.

Beryl lived in a very plush, eight-bedroom home set in twenty acres of land. She had obviously done very well for herself.

Before Tony had time to fully digest what was happening to him, they were driving the 275 miles to Detroit. On their arrival six hours later, the middle-aged woman took Tony on a tour of her house and showed him the bedroom he would be using for at least the next six months.

“Well, Tonya...” (Tony was not to hear himself being referred to as 'Tony' by anyone again) “It's late and we have had a long tiresome journey. What say I have the maid fix us a hot beverage and then we settle down for the night? We're going to have a lot to do tomorrow; it promises to be a busy day.”

Tony yawned in way of agreement. He felt both mentally and physically exhausted.

“Uhm, just one last thing, Beryl, my luggage bag. I left it in Chicago and it has my nightwear in it, among other things.”

“Ah, yes, your luggage. Don't worry yourself over that; there can't have been anything in it that is going to be of any use to you after today. I'll get you fixed up with something to wear in bed... I don't suppose you'd be up to wearing a nightie?”

Tony rapidly shook his head “No.”

“No, I thought as much. Not to worry; as I said, we shall wean you in gradually. I know that it's going to be hard and strange for you. You'll be allowed to dress in androgynous attire for the present, with a bias towards the femme. However, socks, shirts and ties are strictly all out from now on.”

“I rarely wear a tie anyway but what's wrong with my wearing socks? Women wear socks.”

“That may be but we have to achieve a feminine image for you. Wearing masculine clothing would make that all the more difficult to achieve. The more ways we can ‘nudge’ you toward the feminine and away from the masculine, the better. When you are deemed ready, you will wear nylons; until then, you should wear shoes bare-foot—less manly but not overly feminine.”

The vision that Tony had in regards to the clothes he would wear certainly did *not* included such delicate garments as nylons. *Real* women wore nylons. He could not envision himself wearing such feminine things, let alone with things like high heels and short skirts. No, Sirree! He would get out of *that*, one way or another.

The bed wear that Glenda, the maid, brought for him were silk pajamas, pink-colored with red trim on the collar and cuffs. They had a feminine cut, but they were definitely better than wearing a *nightie*.

He sipped at his hot malt drink while Beryl told him some more about Ferndike Fashions. Then, with bleary, tired eyes, he took his leave and went to his bedroom, pulled on the soft slippery pajamas and slid gratefully between the crisp, clean sheets.

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Tony was awake by a gong sounding from somewhere. He half-opened his lids, still between sleep and wakefulness, and, for a moment, wondered where he was. His befuddled mind wondered whether or not he had checked into some motel; if so, he had never slept in such a comfortable bed before, his body felt so relaxed and sensuous.

He then realized that most of his comfort and pleasure was derived by what he was wearing; he now recalled the silk pajamas that he had on.

“Oh No!” he groaned. “Today's the day I have to start acting like some dumb broad!”

He remained concealed under the sheets, hoping that nobody would disturb him. He really had no desire for this day to begin.