

THE DREAM

By Sara James



ILLUSTRATED BY CHAS

A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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By Sara James

As I walked down the dingy street, I found myself drawn to the lighted windows that lined the sidewalk. The street was a river of cars and the sidewalk was littered with broken furniture and trash that made passage difficult. In contrast, the windows were a haven of light and color that lifted the weight of an otherwise gray and overcast day.

They were large windows like you would find in a department store. Behind each one was a different scene to be watched and explored. In one, a group of Cub Scouts was gathered at tables, engaged in various activities. Occasionally, a uniformed adult would go to a table and gather some of the boys to go to a different activity. Some of the adults were gathered at a table with a large coffee urn and plates of cookies, but most stood watching and offered instructions or advice as the youngsters worked at their various tasks.

The things to be seen were wildly different from window to window. A wedding with dozens of guests. A family gathered around a large table for dinner. A bar with working class men laughing over their beer. A room full of teenagers that were all paired off into couples except for one boy and one girl who seemed unable to find each other. A group of people around a conference table in business clothing eating Chinese food and watching a man with a pointer explain a large pie chart. Each scene seemed perfectly normal and mildly strange at the same time. It made me hungry to see more.

After a time of wandering down the trash-strewn sidewalk, I became aware of a bright light from across the street. All of the buildings on the far side were empty and dark except for the one directly opposite from where I was standing. The door was open, and the light was so warm and bright that I could not see in. I looked up at the cloud-covered sky, and decided that being someplace warm and bright would be a pleasant change. I crossed a street devoid of cars and walked in.

As I walked through the door, I realized that the room was nearly empty. It looked something like a barber shop, with a long mirror mounted over a counter that ran the length of the left hand wall. The floor was a tan linoleum that shone like it was freshly waxed. There was only one chair. It was placed in the center of the room, and it looked more like it belonged in a dentist's office than a barber shop. It faced a doorway in the back wall of the shop that led to a dimly lit room. The brightly lit front room was very quiet. No one was there.

I turned to leave, only to find that the front of the shop was a single large window like the others on the far side of the street that I had been looking into. It was getting dark outside and the light that had shone so brightly from the other buildings was

now gone. I pondered this for a moment, then headed for the door in the back of the shop to find my way out of the building.

The back room was mostly filled by a large reception desk. Behind it was seated a young woman in a pale blue outfit that looked like something a nurse might wear in a doctor's office. The three walls left open by the desk were lined with couches half-filled by an assortment of young men waiting in silence. One or two sat flipping through magazines, but most simply sat waiting with a resigned air that left them limp and somehow insubstantial. The room itself was not much larger than the desk, and the light only seemed to fall on the people who sat there.

As I stood in the doorway looking around the room, the receptionist glanced up from her work and smiled. "We've been expecting you," she said with a voice like melted sugar. "We'll be with you as soon as we can. Please take a seat." Her blue eyes danced as she smiled at me, as if my being there was the most exiting and wonderful thing in the world to her. As she returned to her work, I noticed that the light shone most brightly on her, and that it made her golden hair shine with a halo of radiance.

She was an exceptionally attractive woman, as were the three others that excused themselves as they moved past me into the dimly lit waiting room. I had not heard them enter the room behind me, but there they were, laughing and joking in quiet tones as they singled out one of the men and waited for him to get to his feet. They wore tight-fitting navy miniskirts and blue tunics like the one the receptionist wore. Maybe they all worked here; they seemed to know each other well, and they herded the man towards the front room with an ease that spoke of much practice. A few gentle touches guided his progress, leaving them free to continue talking. They spoke only to each other, acting as if the man they guided so carefully could not hear.

As I moved aside to let the group pass back into the front room, I got a good look at the man and realized that I knew him. Right after I graduated from high school, I got a job through a temp agency at a local plastics factory. It was mindless work that attracted the kind of people who either had little hope for the future and let the job burn it out of them, or people that were just passing through on their way to something better in life. I passed through, and he was probably still working there, hoping that, in time, he would make supervisor.

His name was Bob, and I never knew much about him except that he like to hang out at the local bar and that he liked to talk about the women that practically fell over each other trying to get into his bed. What was truly amazing about him was that in spite of his blatantly sexist attitude and scruffy appearance, women really *did* seem to find him irresistible.

As he approached me, Bob glanced at my face and broke into a huge grin. "Hey! What are *you* doing here, buddy?" Considering how attractive his escort was, I was mildly surprised that he noticed me. "It's been a long time," he said as he came to a stop. "I can't believe you and I are both here. Small world, huh?"

One of the women, another stunning blonde, was leading him into the room while the other two followed. The trio paused while Bob greeted me, waiting for him patiently as he spoke. He noticed the women as they stood in silence and shifted his smile to them, glancing between them as if uncertain which one he should address. "Is it all

right if he watches?” he asked as he pulled at the fingers of his left hand. He seemed concerned that they might disapprove.

The blonde gave me an appraising glance. “Sure,” she said with a slowly spreading smile. “That sounds like a wonderful idea.” She turned with a small gesture at the chair and stepped back so that Bob and I could take the lead. I glanced at the two other women, a brunette and a redhead, and saw them looking at each other with tightlipped smiles. It made me think of high school girls at a dance sharing secrets while some boy tried to make small talk with their friend.

I fell in at Bob’s side and we made our way toward the chair. He kept going on and on about how good it was to see me. Bob had always lived in the past and talked incessantly about his glory days in high school. As we moved forward, he seemed determined to dig up every conversation we had ever had, reliving all the funny things that had been done and said. It was easy to see why I had never been that close with him; he was just too stuck in the past. As he droned on, I tuned him out and focused my attention on the chair.

There were other women in blue tunics surrounding it now. In fact, the room was nearly filled with women chatting in small groups or readying the equipment near the chair. One was tinkering with some kind of machine that looked like a small vacuum cleaner attached to a rod on rollers. The rod was like a stand for an I.V. drip in a hospital, but it was shorter and welded to the bottom of the machine. A long black hose extended from the side of the machine, resting over the shoulders of the woman while she worked. Another pair stood at the counter laying out some stainless steel tools, but the majority were gathered around the chair, wiping it down while they laughed and gossiped. As we approached, they made a few finishing touches before parting to let us through.

It was not a dentist’s chair. It was like a dentist’s chair in that it was padded and seemed molded to the contours of the body, but there were no arms, and the lower half of the chair was divided to support each leg individually. There were also two pieces of metal, one at the end of each leg, that looked like the stirrups used in delivery rooms.

Bob finished sharing his latest “remember when” as we came to a stop at the foot of the chair. He turned to it with a huge grin and a contented sigh. “It is really great to see you. Maybe after we’re both finished, we can go out and have a few beers. It’ll be just like old times!” He turned to me with a grin as two of the women stepped up on either side of him to help him sit down. “We might even get lucky,” he said with a wink.

Like mirror images of one another, the two women reached down and pulled the legs of the chair apart. Taking him by wrist and elbow, they guided Bob back between the legs and sat him down. As they did this, two other women came forward and guided me to the side of the chair farthest from the mirror. The others began to move again, dividing themselves between making sure that Bob was seated comfortably and readying the equipment. There were more people than work, so things went very smoothly.

As the two women who helped Bob sit lifted his legs up to set them on the lower half of the chair, I noticed the hair on his legs and realized he was wearing a hospital gown. I could feel my breath catch as I looked down; I too wore a hospital gown. My

feet were bare, and I knew without a doubt that the gown that hung down to my knees was all that I was wearing. The room was warm, disguising the half-closed opening that gaped at my back.

My head came up on a neck gone suddenly weak to look at the scene before me. I watched as the blonde who had led Bob into the room seated herself on a gray metal stool with rollers. As she made herself comfortable upon the short stool, she wheeled into the space between his legs. Using a set of foot pedals set into the base of the chair, she made the back of the chair slowly recline into a prone position while the legs of the chair bent, lifted, and separated. This done, she turned to the others with a radiant smile. Her eyes moved from face to face while the room filled with an expectant silence.

“Let’s begin,” she said.

I could feel the hair on my neck and arms come to quivering attention as I watched her reach beneath the lower edge of his gown with both hands. Her face took on a serious expression. Her lips pouted into a frown and her eyebrows drew down, causing a vertical line to appear in the middle of her forehead. Hunching her shoulders, her arms began to move as if she was manipulating...something...that was hidden from view by the curtain of the gown.

A few of the women began to whisper in earnest tones. Most of the whispering was around Bob, and I could catch snatches of, “It will all be over soon,” and, “...nothing to worry about.” His breathing was deep, and the pale whiteness of his skin make the rosy flush in his cheeks all the more noticeable. The two women who had helped him sit were now holding his hands and gazing into his face with rapt attention. Others brushed him with light touches, as if to lend him strength.

With an exhaled breath, the blonde raised her head with a satisfied expression on her face. “Here we go!” The others reacted with a relief that turned their whispers into a more normal tone of conversation echoing the rising excitement. All eyes turned to the blonde as she set her feet and began to pull. The muscles in her legs flexed and bunched beneath the smooth expanse of her skin, and her face turned red with the effort. Seated there upon her stool, it was as if she was engaged in a one woman tug of war.

“Almost there!” they encouraged her. “Just a little longer...” The comments raised in volume until they were practically shouting. “Go girl! You’ve got it...” “Looking good!” Near me, one woman turned to her neighbor saying, “She is *so* lucky! Isn’t this *wonderful*?” They smiled at each other and laughed before turning back and adding their voices to the chorus.

I looked at Bob. His face held an expression of rapture. His half-lidded gaze stared past the ceiling, and I could see his chest rise and fall with each deep breath he took. I tried to call his name, to catch his attention, but my voice was lost in the general din. Somehow a group of shorter women had moved between me and the chair. I could still see clearly, but I could not get near it to try to get Bob’s attention.

A rhythmic grunting caught my attention, and I returned my attention to the blonde. Her face was set in a feral expression, and she was lunging backward repeatedly, her hands still hidden by the gown. Each lunge was accentuated by a grunt of

exertion, and a wet crunching sound that was almost like biting into celery. Bob bounced violently against the upraised legs of the chair with each tug, his torso sliding on the smooth plastic as if across a sheet of ice. His back began to arch, and a low moan passed his lips. The women nearest to him made comforting sounds, and assured him that it was almost over.

The blond woman began to slow down. As she slowed, her efforts redoubled; each lunge threw her backward with greater and greater force. A hush fell, and at last she paused. A few stray hairs had fallen into her face. She tilted her head back and shook her head to get them off her face while she caught her breath. Bob relaxed and let out a deep breath. Tilting his head up, he locked eyes with the blond framed between his legs. A few short heartbeats later, they shared a smile. Tightening his grip on the women who held his hands, Bob nodded once, and she returned it solemnly.

The blonde surged backwards.

Bob slammed into the legs of the chair, and a loud SNAP filled the room. Perched upon the gray metal stool, the blond rolled halfway back to the waiting room before she could stop herself. As she came to a halt, I could see that she had both hands clenched around the hilt of a dagger of some kind. The blade was less than six inches long and covered with a thin sheen of blood.

A gasp went up, and one of the women giggled. Like a proud parent, the blonde released her death grip on the hilt of the blade and held it up carefully by both ends so that everyone could see it. The women began to laugh with delight and gush, saying things like, "How cute!" and "Isn't it the most adorable little thing?" It was as if she were holding up a puppy or a kitten instead of a knife covered with blood. The women began to swarm around Bob, congratulating him on how well he had done.

While the women moved past me to be near Bob, I remained focused on the object that was held so casually in the hands of the blonde. I stared at the blade, realizing that it was slightly curved so that it resembled a miniature samurai sword. Something about it seemed odd, but it wasn't until I saw that the curve of the blade mirrored the curve of the hilt that I noticed what had drawn my attention. The hilt was shaped like a penis.

In fact, the hilt was a penis: Bob's penis.

As I turned to Bob, a path opened for me. I could see Bob in the chair. Someone had put the legs down and back together, as well as tilted the back up to a semi-upright position. Many of the women stood behind him, as if he were royalty in his bed and they were his ladies in waiting. As I moved forward, he held his hands out to me and beamed with joy.

"Are you all right?" I asked.

He seemed surprised by my greeting. "All right? Of course I'm all right. In fact I'm *wonderful!*" He laughed along with the women, and shared a glance with them that seemed to say, "This poor confused child!" He looked at me with concern. "Why *wouldn't* I be all right?"

My jaw dropped open. "They just ripped your penis off!" I tried to say more, but I stammered to a halt before I got a word out. I was dumbfounded. How could he be un-

aware of what had just happened to him? I looked carefully into his face, looking to see his mask crack so that I could be sure he was joking.

“My *penis*?” he said with bemusement. “I don’t have a *penis*.” The women behind him rolled their eyes and muttered comments to each other behind their hands while looking at me. I could hear a lot of giggling, even if I couldn’t catch the eye of anyone doing it.

“Of course you don’t have one; *they tore it off!*” I was beginning to get frantic. Bob looked like he had no idea what I was talking about, and I could see the women dismissing me as unimportant. Some of them began drifting to the counter to gather up the shining metal tools that had been laid out so carefully as we came in.

A wicked gleam came into his eyes. “My penis? Oh yeah...my penis!” The women all seemed to listen when he said this, but my heart sank. I knew that look. “They didn’t cut that off,” he said. “It’s right here where it’s always been!” He patted his crotch, and the women roared with laughter. “Big old thing,” he embellished. “Hangs about this far down my leg.” He held his hands impossibly far apart, and the women went into hysterics.

I looked at the deadpan face he was wearing and the laughter in his eyes and knew he didn’t believe what he was saying. It was the same look he always used to use when he told me his biggest whoppers. He’d worn the same expression, and had held his hands the same distance apart, when he’d told me he was big enough to make a horse blush. That was the same night he’d insisted that Madonna had nicknamed him Clyde on a weekend fling.

I looked around and could see the way that they looked at me. I was an outsider, and they had claimed Bob for one of their own. I looked back to him, but I could tell that he was a willing partner in whatever it was that was happening.

“Hey,” he said, “don’t forget that drink. After your appointment, we have a lot of catching up to do. OK?” He smiled at me as the women surrounding him helped him pull his arms out of the gown. As he sat stripped to the waist, the machine that looked like a vacuum on a sawed-off IV stand was wheeled up next to him. He leaned back with a contented sigh and a large smile. The women closed around him.

I wasted no time fleeing into the back room. No one was between me and the door, and it probably wouldn’t have stopped me if there was. I didn’t understand what was wrong with Bob, and I didn’t think I wanted to know. All I wanted to do was leave. The back room was the closest thing to an exit there was, so that was where I went.

As I stood in the doorway trying to steady my breathing, I looked around at all young men who were waiting there. Why were they waiting so calmly? Didn’t they know what was going on? Didn’t they understand what was going to happen to them if they didn’t try to get away? Hoping to see a door that I had missed earlier, I looked at the walls of the room. There were no doors, and no windows. There was no way out.

I could hear noises coming from the brightly lit room behind me, and tried in vain to block them out. The soft murmur of feminine voices was a thin blanket that failed to cover the more sinister whirring of machinery. The soft droning was occasionally ac-

cented with pops and cracks like the sound of sticks breaking. I stood there between the bright room and the dim, not wanting to go back, and unwilling to move forward.

The receptionist noticed me hovering in the doorway. Her face blossomed with a smile. “Well, you seem anxious to get started. We’ll be with you in just another minute, Miss.”

Just as I opened my mouth to ask her about the way out, I realized what she had just said. “What did you just call me?” I asked, quickly changing tack.

She looked puzzled. “You mean ‘Miss’?”

“Yes,” I said. “Why did you call me ‘Miss’?”

She raised her eyebrows and seemed on the edge of smiling. It was as if she thought that I was playing a joke on her that she couldn’t quite see. “Umm,” she began tentatively, “because you’re a young woman? I mean, *look at you!*” She seemed embarrassed, as if she was saying something obvious that she expected me to know. Her look took me in from head to toe. “What else should I call you? I could call you ma’am, but even our older customers don’t really like that.”

I looked down at myself. Beneath the lower edge of my gown, I could see my two hairy legs sticking out. Even though I never worked out, my arms were fairly well-muscled, and the short sleeves did nothing to hide them. The hospital gown was shapeless, but it was obvious that I didn’t have breasts. To top it off, my hair was short and I needed a shave. I looked back at the receptionist and tried not to mirror the confusion that I saw on her face.



“But I’m not a *woman*. I’m a *man*. *Look* at me! Can’t you tell?” My rising panic was like a fist squeezing the air out of my lungs. I gestured frantically at myself, trying to make her see me for what I was. “I don’t look anything like a woman.”

For some reason this seemed to make the receptionist relax. A gentle smile returned to her face and her voice took on a soothing tone. “Miss, I know the way you look can be very upsetting, but that’s why we’re here. No matter what you look like now, when you leave here you *will* be beautiful. I promise you, no one will ever mistake you for a man again.” She looked concerned for me. Her whole manner made me feel like she was trying to be my big sister, and that she was watching out for me.

After a moment’s hesitation, I lifted the lower edge of my gown to expose myself. I gripped the fabric in my fists and willed her to see me for what I was. “But *look* at me! I’m *not* a woman. I’m *not!*”

As I heard the words leaving my mouth, I knew how childish they sounded. I could feel myself growing small. It was like an argument with my parents about going to bed, or being old enough to watch a certain TV show. I knew that I was right. But I also knew that being right wouldn’t change the way she saw me.

I focused my gaze on the receptionist. She seemed nonplused by the sight of me naked from the waist down. “I know you may have difficulties accepting that we can really make you beautiful,” she began patiently, folding her hands. “The real test will be after your appointment when you look in the mirror. Until then, why don’t you take a seat? Maybe reading a magazine will help take your mind off things.” Her phone rang, and she reached to pick it up. “Please relax. I promise it won’t be much longer.” She picked up the phone in mid-ring and began talking softly into the receiver, effectively cutting me off.

I lowered the hem of my gown and let out a breath I was unaware I had been holding. I turned to the man sitting in the first chair to the left of the door. “*You* can see, can’t you?” I asked. Like the other men there, he was wearing street clothes that looked much less flimsy than the slit-backed hospital gown that I wore. I could tell that he heard me, but he kept his nose buried in the pages of the car magazine that sat open on his lap. As he turned a page deliberately, I could see his ears glow red. I moved to face him more squarely.

“Can’t you see that I’m a *man*?”

Unable to ignore me, he looked up at my face, not quite looking me directly in the eyes. “I’m sorry,” he said, “but you look like a woman to me.” For a moment, his eyes passed over mine and I thought he would say more. Instead, he sighed lightly and returned to the refuge of his magazine.

My eyes lingered on the man for a moment as I tried absorb what he had said. I turned to face the room and realized that everyone was carefully avoiding looking at me. Moving further down the row of chairs lining the wall, I confronted the next man. “How about *you*?” I said. “Can’t *you* tell that I’m a man?” He hunched his shoulders and didn’t even look up.

Frustrated, I turned and raised my voice to speak to the whole room. “Please, I’m a *man*! Can’t *any* of you see that? Can’t *any* of you see that I’m a *man*?” The receptionist

glanced at me, but was too involved in her phone call to say anything to me. As I stood, looking at the uncomfortable faces that lined the walls, I was sure that no one would answer. For whatever reason, they all saw me as a woman.

The thick silence was broken by a soft, feminine voice. “*I can tell,*” it said. “*I know that you’re a man.*”

My eyes raced around the room. I realized that among the men there was a lone woman seated in a chair on the far side of the room. She was wearing tight blue jeans with white sneakers, and sat with her feet and knees pressed firmly together. Her head was bowed and her long brown hair almost covered the hands she held clenched in her lap. The long hair hid her face, but couldn’t disguise the ample swell of the breasts that were clearly outlined beneath the white cotton of her T-shirt.

I began to move towards her. Like the others, she seemed to sit in a pool of light in the dim room. For a moment I thought that she was an oasis of sanity in a situation that was increasingly strange. Before I had taken more than a few steps, she raised her head, and I realized that I knew her. I saw her every day.

She was me.

I stopped where I was. Her face—*my* face—seemed incredibly sad. All I felt was afraid. I wanted to look away, but found myself searching her face for details that were wrong. She watched me look at her. Her expression was as resigned and empty as the faces of the men that sat there waiting. I didn’t want to believe that she was me. I knew that she and I had the same face, but my mind kept shying away from the implications of my face being attached to that body.

Suddenly, I remembered that I had come in here to look for a way out. A quick glance around confirmed that there was none. I let my eyes rest on the woman again. I tried not to notice her long hair or the way her clothes clung to the curves of her body. She might have my face, but she wasn’t *me*. I was *not* a woman.

I was close to the door so, keeping an eye on the woman, I edged slowly backwards until I could see the other room clearly. It was empty again except for the chair. Wrenching my eyes from the sight of my face framed within that mane of hair, I left the waiting room and returned to the bright place where Bob had gone so willingly.

It was spotless, giving no sign of what had happened there such a short time ago. Taking a few steps away from the door, I paused to look at the front of the shop. I knew that I had come in the front where the window was now. Maybe I could get out the same way. Giving the chair a wide berth, I moved quickly to the window.

The entire front wall of the shop was a pane of glass except for a sill about a foot thick and almost as wide that ran along the floor, ceilings and walls. The light from the shop made it into a mirror that hid the scene beyond. As I moved forward, my shadow grew, forming a hole in the image of the room. I reached my hand out to the mesh-shaped doorway in the light and touched the cool, smooth surface of the glass.

Closer now, I could see into the darkness. The street was moonlit and empty. I looked up at the cloudless sky and saw the full moon shining down onto the street below. The silver light danced on the edges of the buildings, lending darkness to the shadows where the moonlight did not reach. I pressed my hands flat against the glass

and wished to be there, free beneath the moon. Being someplace warm and bright had seemed like such a nice idea, but the reality was far less comforting.

A felt a touch on my arm and I started with surprise. Turning, I saw that I was surrounded by a wall of women. The women who had filled the room earlier were back. They were taller than I remembered; most were at least as tall as I was, and a few rose above me by as much as a full head.

Directly in front of me were the three that had led Bob into the room. Before I thought to resist, the brunette and the redhead had moved to either side of me. Each one took me by the hand and wrapped themselves around my arm. I could feel the soft flesh of their breasts against my arms and sides. The entire length of their bodies pressed urgently into me. Under other circumstances, I would probably have enjoyed it quite a bit. As it was, it was all I could do to close my lips to choke off a moan of despair.

The blonde moved forward slowly with a lopsided grin on her face until there was barely enough room to slip a hair between us. She was an inch or two taller than I was, and I had to look up meet her eyes. As we stared into each other's eyes, I could feel her put her hand against my stomach. Closing her hand slowly, she grabbed a handful of the thin material of my gown. She worked her fist, grabbing more of the material to get a better hand hold and I could feel the gap in the back of the gown growing wider. The motions of her hand echoed the fluttering of my stomach. My knees seemed watery, and I tried not to tremble.

For a moment I thought, "Why not just enjoy it?" Maybe I could gain some measure of control. The blonde's face hovered close to mine, filling my field of vision. Her lips parted and I could taste the sweetness of her breath. I swallowed my unease, concentrating on how close she was standing, and on the feel of the two women pressed into my sides. I was the only man in the room, and every eye was focused on me. I opened myself up, and willed myself to become aroused by all the attention the women were giving me.

At that moment, I wanted nothing more than to see the surprise on the blonde's face when she realized I had an erection. I stood there, waiting for the shock and dismay to fill her face when she realized that she had to choose between moving back or letting my most private parts press into her.

I waited, but nothing happened.

Her eyes searched my face. She must have seen the failure in my eyes, because her grin only widened. "It's time for your appointment," she said softly. I started to tremble then, and she started laughing. They all started laughing and clapping except for the women that held my arms. Those two contented themselves with clenching me tighter and giggling in my ears.

Using the hand she had wrapped in the front of my slit-backed gown, the blonde turned away from me and began pulling me like a toy wagon through the crowd of women. As soon as I moved away from the window, part of the crowd moved in behind me and began talking about how beautiful I was going to be. The redhead and the brunette made sure I kept pace, moving me along while never loosening the grip on my arms.

I knew where they were leading me and I wanted to resist, but there was nowhere to run. I wasn't even sure I could get my arms loose. My two "escorts" were using their whole bodies to keep my arms pinned to my sides. If I slowed even a tiny bit, I could feel the women pressing into me from behind. When they weren't urging me forward, they were pulling the gap in my gown further apart and discussing my appearance. I wasn't sure which was more upsetting: the way they pushed me forward with no concern for where they touched me, or the way they talked about what parts of me they should change to make me more feminine.

The women parted easily for us as we moved forward, making a path that too soon came to the chair. As we drew near it, the blonde turned to face me, moving backwards as she guided me the last few steps to the foot of the chair. We came to a stop. Letting go of my gown, the blonde reached out with her hands and began smoothing out the wrinkles that her grip had caused.

Hearing a sound, I turned my head to look behind me. Two of the women were straightening up from the legs of the chair. They had been pulled wide apart. The stainless steel stirrups at the end of each leg gleamed in the light of the room. Surrounding the chair, the women watched me with brightly expectant eyes.

Turning to the blonde, I opened my mouth to make some protest at what was happening. No words came. My chest felt tight, and I couldn't force the words out. Instead, I watched dumbly as she ran her hands over the thin fabric of the hospital gown. Stretching the fabric taut, she would watch intently as she removed her hands, only to have the wrinkles reappear when her hands left my body. It was as if the tension she was using to smooth the gown bored itself into my chest, coiling into a tight little ball that grew painfully larger with each touch. At last her hands dropped to her sides. Giving a small sigh of resignation, she raised her head to look at my face.

"Are you ready?"

I tried to move my arms, but the two women were stronger than they looked. "No," I choked out weakly. "This isn't right. There must be some mistake." I tried to move forward, but somehow managed to get my legs tangled with the redhead and the brunette. "I don't belong here."

Raising her arm with a delicate precision, the blonde placed her open hand on my chest near the base of my neck. She looked at me with wide eyes that stared out from a face devoid of all expression. "None of us choose to be here," she intoned with a voice as empty as her face. "Be like us; make of it what you can." Her face slowly blossomed with the smile that I was beginning to hate. "Who knows? You may even come to *like* being beautiful."

Pressing her hand flat, she began moving me backwards between the two legs of the chair. As the space narrowed, the brunette and the redhead stopped moving while the blonde continued to press me back. With my legs still tangled in theirs, they let go of my arms, and I fell heavily into the chair. Before I could even lean forward to try to stand, the hands of the other women were upon me.

Even as I realized my arms were free, a group on either side took hold of them, rendering me as immobile as before. Several women gathered at my head. Reaching out, they began running their hands over my face and through my hair. As I squirmed to

evade their touch, they simply held me firmly to prevent my moving or took advantage of the new position to examine a different part of my head. With the way they hovered over me, it was hard to see anything except their faces.

I tested the grip the others had on my arms. Each of my fingers seemed to be held in separate fists, and my arms were just as tightly held. I could feel hands poking and caressing my arms and chest in a pattern that was similar to the way my head was being probed. My knees were forced together between the legs of the chair, and I could tell by the pain and pressure on my feet that they were being stood on to keep me from moving.

The pain of a woman pulling my hair brought my attention back to the women around my head. A finger tapped the place where my hair met my forehead. "This will never do," a thin-faced Asian woman said disapprovingly. "The shape is all wrong. At least the follicle density is OK." She ran her fingers through my hair with a frown as if doubting her own words.

"It's no where near long enough," added a pale-skinned woman with a mane of thick black hair who also had her hands in my hair. "Look at it! It's so butch." As if to demonstrate her point, she wrapped a lock around her finger and gave a sharp tug. I groaned in pain and annoyance and yet another woman peeled my lips back to look in my mouth.

"Her teeth seem fine," she said. Letting go of my lips, she tucked a stray strand of light brown hair behind her ear as she considered. Cupping my chin, she added, "The jaw seems a little thick, and the shape is almost as bad as the hairline." The women muttered agreement among themselves while she tilted my chin first one way, and then the other.

A square-faced blonde with green eyes leaned over me from behind and grabbed my ears. "These don't seem *too* bad, but I think we can do better." She began pulling them and curling them between her fingers as if deciding on the best shape and position for them. As she was doing this, I felt the touch of cool metal surround my ankles.

I moved my head to try to see the foot of the chair. The women obligingly removed their hands from it and parted to give me a clear view. While I had been distracted by the other women, the redhead and the brunette had put my feet in the chair's stirrups. A boot-shaped metal clamp had been placed around each stirrup to keep me from removing my feet. Even if I managed to pull my arms free, the clamps held me tightly to the chair.

I was trapped.

The two women who had done this to me stood shoulder to shoulder between my legs with smug looks on their faces. Turning their backs on me, they moved to join the other women. The blonde reappeared, rolling her short metal stool between my legs. She seated herself, smoothing her skirt as she lowered herself to the stool. Wheeling towards me, she reached out with one leg, and my chair began to move.

I knew from before that she was using the pedals set into the base of the chair to control its position. That knowledge didn't make it any less unsettling as the chair forced my legs to lift and separate. The legs of the chair were concave, cupping my legs

and hindering movement. I tried to press my knees together, but the shape of the chair and the clamps on ankles only let me move them a few inches. It was a futile struggle made ridiculous by the increasing distance between my legs. As I tried in vain to spare my dignity and my manhood, the back of the chair began to tilt back, and the women closed around me once again.

Their hands returned to my face and chest as I slowly reclined into a prone position. The touching was less aggressive now. The woman who had yanked my hair now smoothed it back as if comforting a small child. It was small consolation as the chair forced me into a position that made me feel like I was squatting while lying on my back.

The fabric of the chair rubbed against me as it moved. Its soft, slippery texture was a gentle counterpoint to the indignity of the position it was forcing me into. The women above me murmured nonsense about how wonderful this would be, and how much I would appreciate it when it was over.

Abruptly, the chair stopped moving. A hush fell over the women, their heads turning to the place where the blonde was hidden from view. "Is everyone ready?" I heard her ask. The faces above me nodded, and I heard a few soft replies. "All right then; why don't we get started?" The women's attention returned to my face, and they began to reassure me how quick and painless everything was going to be.

Hidden from my eyes, I could feel the blonde adjusting the edge of my gown, pushing it even farther up my legs and leaving my groin exposed. For a moment, it seemed as if the breath of all the women stirred in my short hairs, a warm exhalation that made me tremble with anticipation. Like a rabbit caught in the open, I was scared to move for fear of drawing attention to myself. A vain hope; I knew as I laid there that I was beyond the point where I could escape the will of these women.

Like a confirmation of my thoughts, I felt the hands of the blonde wrap themselves firmly around the base of my penis. With deliberate care, she made minute adjustments to guarantee that she had a good grip. Closing my eyes to shut out the smiling joy on the faces above me, I could envision the blonde in my mind's eye, holding me like some kind of amazon samurai in heels and makeup. Her adjustments slowed, and finally stopped.

I knew what to expect next, but the sudden violence of it caused my eyes to fly open as I heard myself give a surprised gasp. The women seemed to confuse my startled demeanor with ecstasy as their expressions beamed approval and sympathy in equal measure. At first, the pressure was constant, pulling me tightly into the legs of the chair. It was less painful than I had expected, but I was not ready for the way that the tugging seemed to reach inside of me. It was as if a giant hand had lodged itself in my insides and was trying to turn me inside out. I wanted to breath deeply, but my lungs would only take tiny, shallow breaths.

At last the pressure eased, but before I could relax, it returned with renewed vigor and even greater intensity. As I slid across the smooth material of the chair and slammed against its legs, I bit my lower lip in a desperate attempt to hold back the moan welling up inside me. The voices of the women melted together into a murmur-

ing din that was filled with restrained enthusiasm. I squeezed my eyes shut once more, silently denying the truth of my sensations.

With every breath, the tension inside of me seemed to build, until at last there was a faint sensation, as if the tiniest thread in a massive cord had snapped. After a momentary hesitation, it was followed by another grudging thread giving way before the pressure ceased once again. There was no rest; the pressure returned immediately. Again I was pulled with a slap against the chair's restraints. Immediately, the sensation of threads giving way continued. As the moments slipped by, the rate of their surrender increased, until again there was a pause in the pulling.

The blonde began to grunt as she increased her pace. Each tug was shorter and more violent than the last. Each pull slapped me against the seat of the chair and the leg restraints. I tried to ignore the wet crunching sound that I began to hear, but it was the perfect echo to the tearing that I felt inside. I moaned at last, not caring how it sounded to the women.

A hand swept across my forehead, trying to smooth the wrinkles from my brow. I felt my cheeks grow wet with my tears, but couldn't bring myself to care. As the intensity mounted, I continued to be slammed against the legs of the chair. Each tearing jerk came more quickly, making me feel as if I was bouncing up and down. Every thrust was a nail in the coffin of my self-identity, leaving me unsure of who I was.

At last, the blonde began to slow down. Inside, I could feel the much diminished cord struggling to maintain itself. With weary resignation, I opened my eyes and raised my head to look between my legs. Catching my eye, the blonde paused to rest. She was breathing heavily, her face gone slack with exertion. After a moment, her eyes lit up, and a slight smile turned up the corners of her mouth.

I expected some warning, some indication of what was to come, but there was none. The blonde surged backwards, and I felt and heard a sharp SNAP. I watched with detached fascination as she drifted farther and farther backwards, my penis held tightly in her grasp. The cord within me was gone; in its place was a warm hollow that felt as if a tennis ball sized space had opened up within me. I could sense it settling in, making itself at home in the space below and behind my bellybutton.

I tried to muster some outrage as my penis was held up like a kitchen implement for the cooing adoration of the women, but I was as empty as the new space inside me. The women seemed to recognize my resignation and loosened their grip on me. There were no hands holding me down now, but I just laid there, wondering what else they could do to me. My eyes remained locked on the root of my former identity as the women crowded around me with their congratulations. The space began to fill up with women, clouding my vision, until the sight of it was lost in a sea of female bodies.

One of the women used the foot pedals to return the chair from its prone and squatting position to something more closely resembling that of a recliner. Ignoring my apathy, the women returned to their earlier assessment of my appearance. Using a clear liquid and some cotton pads, a short-haired brunette began to gently clean the area between my legs. There was much less blood than I had expected and, except for the unsettling memory of the tearing sensation, there had been no pain. She finished quickly, and adjusted my gown to a more modest distance above my knees.



As she was finishing up, the machine that looked like a vacuum cleaner attached to a sawed off I.V. stand was wheeled up. A woman began to methodically check it over just as two blondes with long straight hair appeared on either side of me. They looked like twins, and even mirrored each other as they leaned forward to help me sit up. Not knowing what else to do, I followed their lead as they delicately untied the back of my gown. Helping me to remove my arms, they folded the material carefully down until I was exposed to the waist.

Sitting back, I watched with detachment as a dark-haired woman with a round face approached me. She was holding an L-shaped bar that had a small attachment on the short end of the L. She glanced quickly around. "Is everyone ready?" A chorus of "all set" and "ready" rang out from the women. Meeting my eyes, she leaned over and spoke with quiet confidence. "This won't hurt at all." She smiled with reassurance. "It

might feel a little strange, but there won't be any pain. Just lean back and relax." I returned her smile with a weak one of my own, and she turned her attention to my navel.

Setting the attachment on the short end of the L against my bellybutton, she began to bear down gently. She was right; it felt strange. It was like my bellybutton was a tiny mouth that was swallowing a grape. The attachment didn't have far to go. After going a couple of inches in, she stopped pressing down and began to move the long part of the L from side to side. Sinking in another fraction of an inch, the attachment seemed to catch on something. Taking a firmer grip, she began to slowly turn the handle.

Something inside me flipped like a switch. As I looked down at my chest and legs, nothing seemed to change physically. What had changed was the way I felt. My body seemed liquid to me. I was afraid to move my arms and legs for fear that they would bend someplace other than at the joints. I envisioned my skin as a great big water balloon, holding its shape out of mere habit.

With a quick tug, the dark-haired woman removed the metal L from my navel. The women around my head waited impatiently while a large group of women moved forward. They were carrying four pieces of what looked like silky smooth aluminum foil with long laces attached. Not daring to move, I watched as two smaller pieces were wrapped around my arms. They fit like long gloves that covered me from fingertip to shoulder. Whatever the material was, it wasn't aluminum foil. Wrapped around my arms, it felt as solid as rock.

The smallest piece was wrapped around my neck. It covered me from chin to shoulder. Just before they laced it shut, one of the women who had been examining my Adam's apple put a smooth metal strip shaped like an oversized shoe horn on my throat.

Most of the women in the group were busy wrapping the third piece around my torso. They began by sliding it between my back and the chair. One flap went over each shoulder, the front closing like a shirt, except with laces instead of buttons. After it was all pieced together, it was almost like wearing a turtleneck shirt with gloves sewn to the end of the sleeves. Aside from the laces, the biggest difference was the two tear-shaped ovals cut out of the front, leaving my chest exposed.

While some of the women supported my arms from below, others began tightening the laces. They started at the hands and wrists, taking their time to tighten each inch of the arms to some specification that I didn't fathom. I could feel the pressure around my arms, but there was no discomfort. The only thing I felt was a building tightness in my chest and head. I tried to relax, but the feeling didn't go away.

One of the women around my head said, "That's enough." Out of the corner of my eye, I caught a hint of a nod, and the laces that held the neck piece together began to be tightened. I panicked for a moment, thinking I would choke, but I calmed down when I realized that I could breathe as easily as before. I swallowed in relief, and there was a single loud POP. Curious, I swallowed again, but nothing happened.

With my arms and neck tightly wrapped in the unyielding material, the women turned their attention to my chest. As they began to methodically pull on the laces with the same exacting care they had shown on my arms, I could feel the tightness be-

neath my skin ooze out of my chest and into my hips and legs. With dawning horror, I saw that each pull on the laces caused my lower body to swell grotesquely larger. The women gathered around my legs seemed intent on using metal tools resembling thick spoons to mold the swelling into the shape they wanted, while others made adjustments to the shiny metal ski boots that held my feet. With the intensity of master craftsmen, they poked and prodded at my hips and legs, forcing them to conform to their vision of my final form.

As the tightening around my chest continued, the women began to put more effort into the task. Like attendants wrestling with a Victorian corset, they heaved and strained to make my shrinking waist smaller and smaller. Impossibly, I could feel my pelvis stretching, giving way with the sound of a heavy door creeping open on unoiled hinges. Even more unnerving were the sounds that came from my rib cage. Each time the women pulled, their heavy breathing was accompanied by a popping that reminded me of knuckles cracking. Every few pulls, my breastbone would make a similar sound, marking time as my torso grew reluctantly smaller.

Not waiting for the others to finish, the women around my head began attaching a vicious-looking device. It was made up of flat plates and metal rods that were attached to a frame by long screws. Too overwhelmed to resist, I watched as two clamps were put so far into my mouth that I almost gagged. The screws that connected them to my metal “hat” were gradually tightened, pulling the corners of my mouth apart and leaving me with the impression that my head was being cracked open like a nut.

There wasn't an inch on my head and face that didn't feel like it was being poked and prodded into some new shape. More clamps dug into my chin and jaw, and a piece of metal that looked like a mold was slowly trying to push my nose into my face. Out of sight, I could feel more adjustments being made to the back, top and sides of my head.

After a minute or so that seemed more like an eternity, the screws and clamps were undone, and the apparatus was removed. It might have been my imagination, but everything seemed more in focus, more real somehow. Things that were nearby were closer, and things in the distance seemed farther away. It made the room seem even more surreal than it already did. Not that it wasn't strange enough already.

The other women were still working on my chest, pausing frequently to examine their handiwork. I marveled at how large my hips had grown, and I tried to recapture my sense of panicked horror. It eluded me. It was hard to be horrified by something that didn't hurt at all. Ever since the “switch” had been thrown in my navel, I felt as if I had been floating in a pool of warm water, detached from my body and the world around it. I could still feel my body; the sensation of my chest gradually oozing into my hips and legs was especially unsettling, but there was no pain.

The Asian woman who had been so concerned with my hairline leaned over me. “Let's see if we can do something about this.” Her words were soft, and didn't seem intended for me. She reached up with both hands and I could feel her fingers in the fringes of my hair. The tips of her fingers began to massage my scalp with small circular motions. Her fingers crept lower over my forehead, constantly rubbing, but never

seeming to leave the fringes of my hair. When her fingers had massaged a large portion of my forehead and almost reached my temples, she stopped with a satisfied smile.

Giving my hair a little fluff with her fingers, she nodded to the woman who stood at my other side. It was the dark-haired woman who had pulled my hair earlier. I winced as she reached up, but relaxed when she ran her fingers through my hair. Together, the two women began to finger comb my hair with long, smooth strokes that covered my entire scalp.

Moving behind me as they continued to massage my scalp, they made way for several others who began to work on my face with smaller versions of the spoon-like pieces of metal that were being used to sculpt my legs. The device that had been put on my head must have done most of the work for them, because they were done fairly quickly, finishing at the same time as the women who were tightening the shiny metal corset around my chest.

I expected them to begin removing the metallic cocoon from around my chest and arms, but instead, they began tying off the laces. A few of the women at my left stepped aside so that the machine I had seen earlier could be wheeled forward. The woman who had been cleaning it was the one who moved the machine into place near my armpit. Leaning over me, she turned her attention to the two tear drop-shaped holes that left my chest exposed. Satisfied by what she saw, she made a cursory examination of the metallic fitting that capped the machine's black plastic hose.

Holding the hose in one hand, she used the fingers of her free hand to pull the skin around my left nipple taut. After a few moments it had grown into a circle exactly the same size as the end of the hose. Putting the fitting against my nipple, she pressed gently until there was a soft click. Taking her fingers from my skin, she reached up and flipped a switch. The machine came alive.

It sounded just like a vacuum cleaner. I half expected it to stretch my nipple like a piece of taffy, but nothing seemed to happen at first. Then she flipped another switch near the base of the hose. The skin of my chest began to ripple before snapping tight, like the sail of a ship catching the wind. I felt a rushing sensation. I could feel a liquid warmth growing beneath the skin, pushing it outward. Slowly, my chest—no, my breast, for that was what it was becoming—began to swell.

After a dozen heartbeats, I seemed to be of average size and I expected her to stop. Instead, she continued to watch my breast swell. She finally turned off the switch at the base of the hose after another dozen heartbeats had gone by. Looking at the curve of my skin from all angles, she frowned slightly, then flipped the hose back on for another few seconds. Looking satisfied with the results, she turned the machine completely off and disconnected the hose with a popping sound like a cork coming out of a wine bottle.

The aureole was ridiculously large and swollen. It was easily three inches across, and perhaps as wide as four. The nipple itself was like the tip of a pinkie sticking out from the skin. A white liquid, possibly milk, was weeping from it. While the woman with the machine began to hook the hose up to my other nipple, a woman with long dark hair leaned over my shoulder to blot away the milk with a cotton pad.