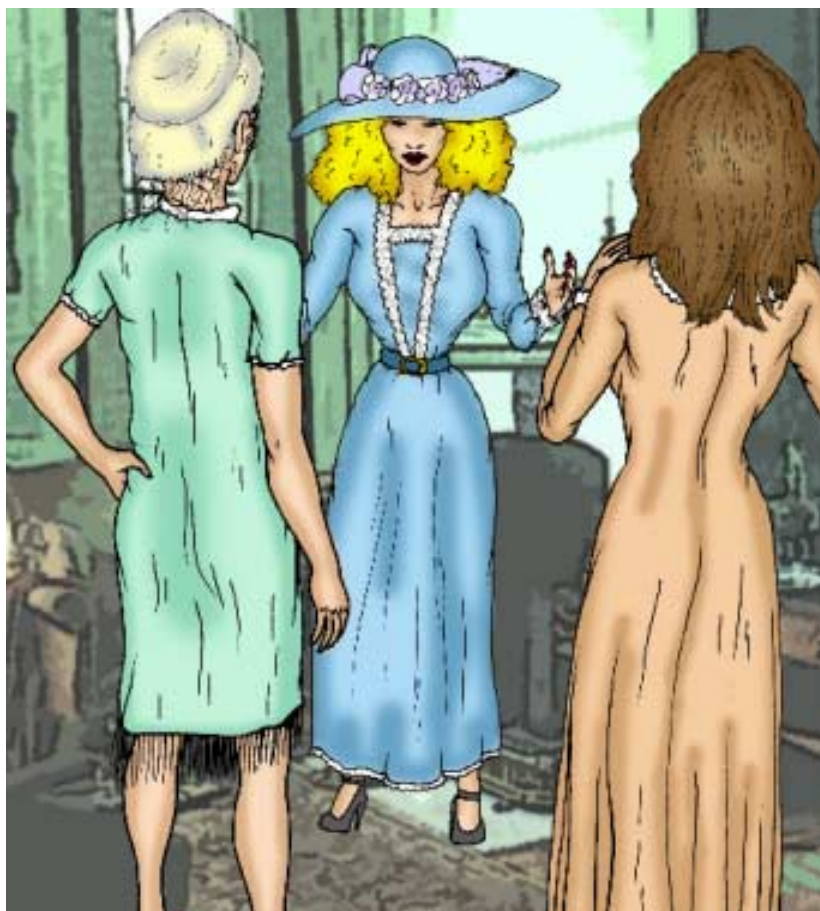


CRUEL AND UNUSUAL

By Sofronia Anne Strong



ILLUSTRATED BY CHAS

A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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CRUEL AND UNUSUAL

By Sofronia Anne Strong

Chapter 1

“Our legal system provides prisons for such brutal miscreants as you. Mr. Gorham. These are places of penance, places where we lock away offenders so that they can no longer offend us, and where they can ponder the nature of their crimes and, hopefully, be reformed into respectable citizens. Not the least of the factors in this reforming process is the loss of privilege that becomes the fate of a felon. Not only does he lose his freedom of movement and the rights attendant upon citizenship, but he loses the right to conjugal relations. In a sense, he loses his manhood, or at least those privileges afforded to men in our society. Your odious crimes against your wife, indeed against all women, argues just such a loss of privilege.

“Mr. Gorham. you have been convicted of a particularly distasteful crime, one for which I am entitled to punish you for a very long time. I am going to do just that, but I am not going to have you incarcerated. I am going to deprive you of your male privileges. A few years ago our legislature, in a rare moment of wisdom, recognized that espousal abuse was not an ordinary crime but one which deserved special consideration. Under statute Number 468-3, Subsection 4, Paragraph number thirteen of 1938. I am declaring you to be a female person. I am ordering you into the custody of your long suffering wife, who assures me that she will see that you comply with the terms of your sentence. Mr. Gorham, you are about to undergo the unusual condition of being deprived of male privilege and made subject to the will of a female.

“Mr. Gorham, you have abused, insulted and demeaned your wife for seven years. Your treatment of her reads like a textbook of marital abuse. I intend to put the high heel on the other foot, so to speak and let it be pressed against your neck for a while.

“For the next seven years you will live under the authority of your wife, exactly in the estate of a woman. You will become precisely the kind of woman that she envisions you should be, serving her exactly as she requires. If you do not please her in everything, she will inform the court and you will be incarcerated - as a *female*, of course, that being your legal status.

“It is our expectation that the loss of all male prerogative and privileges, combined with insult of being confined in all the trappings and finery of female dress will lead you to appreciate what you have lost. The prisoner is remanded into the custody of his wife for the execution of this sentence. May your poor wife take mercy upon you.”

Judge Willoughby had no more than lifted her gavel than my defense attorney, a stunning, chestnut tressed woman, was on her feet objecting. She called the law unconstitutional in imposing “cruel and unusual punishment”, as it is called in our Constitution.

“It is no more cruel than incarceration, Counselor Pennington, and after today it is no longer unusual because it has actually been imposed.” She brought the gavel down, inviting Constance Pennington to appeal the case. I was led, shackled, to a holding room off the courtroom. When my wife, Penelope, was finished talking to the press she came through the door, trailing photographers and reporters. She denied them access to me, however, inviting them to a press conference she has scheduled for late afternoon, just in time for the evening editions.

“Come along, sweetheart,” she grinned, taking me by an elbow. “We have some shopping to do before we can present the elegant Miss Gladys Christine Gorham to the world. You *do* want to look your best, don’t you? Mrs. Strem is waiting for us at her fashion shop. She has just returned from Paris with the latest from Dior, Fath and Balmain. You are about to become the latest example of the New Look.” Thus it was that I became a legal test case; a forced transvestite and my wife’s prisoner, all in the pursuit of justice.

The entire mess had arisen out of a drunken evening at home, during which I had subjected Penelope to a particularly cruel round of abuse. I am not ordinarily an angry drunk, but on this occasion became enraged when she hid the car keys away to keep me from driving in my intoxicated state. I displaced my rage upon the newly decorated living room and threw about a bit of the new crockery that had been installed in the dining room hutch. Penelope locked herself in the bedroom as I went on my rampage. After I had done enough harm for a small army, and had cut myself with a broken dinner plate, opening my right shin, I stumbled out to a cot in the garage and slept off my condition. I subsequently apologized, replaced the broken china and forgot about the whole incident.

It was Tuesday, a fortnight after my misdeed, a period in which I had honestly attempted to remain sober and refrained from harsh words, accusations or imputing any motives to whatever Penelope might do, when I opened the mail to find a summons. I was accused on first degree criminal assault. The complaint alleged that I had struck Penelope with a stick during my rampage and had left her bruised and seriously injured. I was ordered to appear for arraignment the following morning. Should I fail to appear, a warrant would issue and I would be arrested and held pending arraignment. Penelope, it seems, had waited only until I passed out and had then checked herself in to the hospital emergency room where she was treated for abrasions and contusions as well as a fractured skull. These injuries were fully documented and duly reported by the staff as required by law.

I begged Penelope to relieve me of the manacles that bound my wrists to my waist. She merely giggled and dropped the key into the cleavage of her bosom. Thus began my odyssey of transformation from male, husband and provider into a new life as a female person, servant and dependent. I would serve four of the years of my sentence, “with time off for ladylike behavior,” as Judge Willoughby chose to call it. In those four years I would discover how profound are the differences between men and women and how completely we are defined by our gender, its expression and our gender identity.

By living those years as a woman I would come to an acute understanding of how much of a male chauvinist I had been, and how presumptuous we males are of our privileges and of the male dominant world we have forced upon women. I would also discover the power inherent in women. My experiences as a woman would greatly deepen my understanding of the roles of the two sexes in life and force me into a deep and abiding appreciation of my wonderful wife Penelope.

As I shuffled off toward the fashion shop as my wife's prisoner, literally, I was terrified of what was obviously to come. Over my most earnest protestations and pleadings I was to head toward a life in dresses and high heels.

Chapter 2

Penelope had lost sufficient trust in me so that she refused to release me from restraint until I had been reduced to a state of sniveling compliance. Still in handcuffs, I was ordered to place my hands over my head. I gasped as the corsetier wrapped about my waist and the tortuous process of tight lacing began.

Penelope was quick to inform me that this was nothing of the sort of lacing that our grandmothers had been subjected to. It was just a suggestion of their figure training, a mere allusion to the nineteen inch waists they had been forced to endure. I writhed, more in a spasm of humiliation and embarrassment than of pain. As they wrapped the stayed, hooked, lace encrusted waist nipper about my abdomen and slowly locked its hooks together at the rear.

"This is so charming," she remarked, as she began to feed the laces at the rear into their eyelets. We haven't seen such girlish figures on our girls for two generations. Shall we lock it on. Madame, or do you think the dear will wear it without protest?"

"Oh, lock it on, by all means, my dear. I won't trust him to be a lady for an instant. He'll be out of that the minute my back is turned, the wretch."

When she had finished with her lacing, which reduced my waist by two inches, from a thirty-four to only thirty-two, she fitted a light steel chain around my waist and locked it in place at the rear with a tiny padlock, which Penelope dropped into her cleavage along with the key to my manacles.

"Oh, that is so delicate, Mrs. Lange, and so final. I like the metaphor of being 'locked in, as it were. Why don't we just sew the laces closed as well? Oh, I just love it. Legally female and helpless to change it."

I squirmed helplessly, hoping I might lower my arms, which I did. As I lowered my arms the waist cinch compressed still more and left me gasping.

Penelope relented at last and removed the manacles from my wrists - but only for the purpose of fitting my brassiere, she advised me. She reassured me that if I did not behave myself they could be placed back and with my hands behind me as well. The brassiere, by Warner's was called a Whirlpool. and consisted of two cups, made of concentric circles of satin cord that came to a severe point. This popular item, which served to provide the girls with sharply delineated, very pointed breasts that rose high upon their torsos, were rudely called "torpedo tits" in the privacy of the men's locker

room, a venue now denied me. I blushed furiously as Madame Lange hooked the brassiere in back and sewed the hooks shut at my wife's instruction. She pulled a tape about my chest and announced it a proud 38 inches. The lace covered hip pads that were attached to my waist cinch give my hips a full 36 inch measurement.

"Hmmm, - 38/32/36... Just what I believe Monsieur Dior has established as an ideal for the ladies in this fall fashion season of 1948. He says the entire 'New Look' we are doing this year was inspired by the elegant fashions worn by his mother and aunt in the Belle Époque. The nipped waist, enlarged bosom and the longer skirts, pleated and ruched are all evolved from that elegant era. It really is a return to femininity and egregiously feminine appearance," Mrs. Lange opined.

"So it is," my wife agreed, "And just in time to ensnare the careless spousal abuser. What better design to deprive a male of his male prerogatives than an ankle length pleated skirt with a petticoat and the new spike heels that have been decreed? The best part is the word 'decreed.' How do you like having female dress 'decreed' for you dear? ...Oh, I decree a lace blouse and a hat with a little veiling for you today, darling. How does that make you feel, honey? Does it make you feel big and mean?" The two of them took to giggling as I squirmed in a blushing fit of embarrassment.

"Please... can we go now?" I blurted out, begging.

"Of course, dear. Where would you like to go next, precious, to the beauty salon or the dress shop? I stood with my mouth open, stunned at this question. The two women were now tittering helplessly. Mrs. Lange added sheer nylon hose to my lingerie, and my trousers, sweater and shoes were returned to me. I made a horrid sight in my white sweater with my huge breasts straining against it.

"A girl's hair is her crowning glory," Penelope observed. "I think we will find you your own crowning glory next." I slumped in the car straining against the pressure on my waist and folding my arms over my huge bosom in a futile attempt to minimize it. "Sit up straight, dear. Pretty girls always sit proudly, shoulders back, chin up, knees together... there, that's better.. .Oh my, you just are going to be gorgeous. Will you want to be a blonde or a red head do you think?" I hadn't thought about it at all. I would soon learn that I mustn't think about anything at all, except to give Penelope what she wanted - and what she wanted was a perfectly beautiful young lady who would wait on her hand and foot.

It is often said that when we get ourselves in trouble it is because we are clueless. I had never thought that there was anything disrespectful or abusive in my treatment of Penelope. I thought I treated her just like all men treat their wives. The new world I was being dragged into would eventually teach me how clueless I had been, as had most of my male friends. I knew I loved Penelope. I knew she was a dear thing of whom I was immensely fond. We had a wonderful sex life together, or at least I did. It had not occurred to me that because I was happy and satisfied she might not be. I would discover that I knew no boundaries, regarded Penelope as something of a chattel and hadn't a clue about it. Judge Willoughby had turned the tables. It slowly dawned on me, staring at my ghastly new pointed breasts and enduring the uncomfortable pinch of my corset that I had become the chattel. The proof of it lay in the keys that Penelope had dropped into her cleavage.

“Lana Turner or Veronica Lake, do you think?” Dede asked.

“More Lauren Bacall, it seems to me. Do you like the Lauren Bacall look, darling?” Penelope knew perfectly well that the slinky actress was my favorite. “As long as you admire her so, I think we will take her for a role model, without her slacks. of course. No pants for our Gladys Louise.” I shook my head unconsciously hoping the masses of locks would fall away, but the huge coiffure stayed in place, shimmering with high-lights reflected from the lighted mirror in front of me.

“Oh, Penelope, please...” I pleaded. “Can’t I have something a little shorter?”

“Shorter is out of fashion, doll. Longer hair, longer skirts, higher heels - nothing abbreviated this year. Dior has decreed that we ladies will all be the essence of elegance and style, and you are not an exception. In fact. I think you must be the role model for the rest of us. Now let Dede put a Lauren face on you and we can get on to your wardrobe. “There’s a good girl,” she intoned as the beautician pulled my tresses back and bound them with a scarf She took my chin in her hand and pronounced her expert analysis.

“Cold.. Spring,” she announced. That’s not a forecast doll. It’s your color type. I will do you in cool, fresh colors, all pinks and blues,” she decreed, reaching for a jar of foundation, one of three she would use. As she worked the palette of my face she dictated a make-up plan to my wife, who dutifully wrote it down in a folder bearing the title “My Pretty Face.” As she worked Dede dropped the container of each product into a bag for me to carry home.

Two loud pops announced the piercing of my ear lobes. Dede tied black fishing line loops in them to keep them open while they healed. Dede stepped back to admire her work. Penelope smiled her satisfaction. I stared into the lighted mirror, my crimson lips parted in stupefaction at the sight of the pretty face reflected there. The effect was stunning. There was nothing of a male left to see. I was all artifice, altogether feminine, *completely* transformed.

“Lord, Dede, he’s gorgeous! I had no notion that my domestic brute might make such an adorable little doll.” Hearing myself so described made me cringe and blush as well. Dede sprayed me with Arpege and tore a color photograph of my role model and divine goddess from the current copy of “Vogue”. “There, pin that to the mirror and teach him to copy it.”

“Say, thank you to Miss Sonnerstrom, Gladys Louise. She has made you very beautiful.” It had not occurred to me that I might be expected to express my gratitude for my transformation from a privileged male to helpless girl, but I would be, at every turn. If I objected to expressing gratitude for my humiliations Penelope would remind me that women are grateful for the gift of beauty and I must be, as well, considering that I was now one of them. In the early stages of my penance I had great difficulty with this notion that I was a woman, even if it was only in law. That I would be made to appear as, and express myself as a fashionable and complete woman was becoming horribly apparent.

While I paid a lot of attention to women, finding them endlessly appealing and attractive, I had not paid a lot of attention to the new fall styles that had been introduced the previous summer on runways in Paris. There was a fashion revolution going on as Dior, Fath, Chanel and Balmain responded to their client's clamor for glamour. Dior had met the response first with what the editor of "Vogue" labeled "The New Look." By his own admission Dior acknowledged that the nipped in waists, long flared skirts, underpinned with petticoats, the hats, gloves and fitted bodices all were inspired by the elegant costumes worn by his mother and aunts in the belle epoque when he was a boy. This return to flamboyant display in women's dress was also a response by women to the fashion deprivation of World War II. It was my misfortune to be made to assume female dress just at this time when lady's styles would be at their most feminine and elegant, a condition which has not been repeated since. What awaited me at Strem's Fashion Shop would finish with a flourish the transformation Dede had worked from my neck up and Mrs. Lange has worked upon my figure.

Mrs. Elsie Strem operated a small, well appointed boutique at the South end of Main St. It had windows that were rounded at the top and decorated with Austrian shades. The appointments within were all antiques and the ambiance was that of a small, elegant Parisian salon. Mrs. Strem showed by appointment only and then only to new clients if they were recommended by a regular customer. Penelope shopped there for special occasions, as did most of her friends. As the dresses available were always only one-of-a-kind, none of them met one another coming or going. Mrs. Strem made two trips a year to Paris, where she did all the purchasing of stock for the next season. She also handled reproduced less expensive duplications of dresses illustrated in the fashion magazines. These she rendered in her own shop. It was here that Penelope dragged me with my exquisite new head, wearing a slacks with white sweater, now showing off my new pointed bosom.

A tiny bell tinkled on the door as we walked through it. Eustacia MacTaggart and her daughter Melanie were startled by our intrusion. Melanie, a statuesque red head, the current Queen of the Summerfest, stared incredulously at us. She was standing before a three way mirror modeling a cocktail dress of lavender satin with a scalloped princess neckline and a narrow ankle length skirt. Her waist was incredibly tiny and her figure deliciously ample as she turned slowly before the mirror. Eustacia spoke to my wife as though our arrival had been expected.

"Melanie is considering this little Jaques Fath number for a cocktail supper at the Midland Terrace on Saturday. Do you think it will do at all, Penelope? She's pursuing George Draper. It is her goal to have him at the altar by Christmas. He'd be such a catch, don't you think?"

Melanie would be quite a catch, herself, I thought. I could see it all quite clearly, remembering when I had been snared, within three months of Penelope's coming out at the same Midland Terrace hotel ballroom. Penelope gave the satin ensemble her approval while Melanie preened. I squirmed! I hadn't expected anything like this - not the MacTaggarts, or anyone else for that matter. I simply hoped no one would recognize me in my intermediate gender state. Eustacia responded in the worst way possible.

"This must be the new girl in town, Penelope. Is this what is left of Ralph? Oh, I do like the coiffure, and the nails and make-up are so elegant. Oh, my, you have him in

the new look cinch and the Warner's Whirlpool. I bet. I just heard at Marcia's brunch about his sentence. Gladys, isn't it? What a pretty name. Now, Melanie dear, do try on this little Chanel number and we can make a choice. Oh dear, Gladys doesn't have a choice. I understand. You are fortunate in Penelope, Gladys, dear. Her taste is impeccable. She will have you in the most chic ensembles in town."

I could have died at these remarks. Melanie MacTaggart was one of the daughters of friends I could have left Penelope for. I had actually made a play for her at the Debutante Cotillion the previous spring when she came out. Glorious in white chiffon and gleaming satin, yellow roses cascading from her corsage, I had danced with her, filled with desire. It had been noticeable and Penelope and I had argued about it. My philandering was just one of the abuses she had complained of in her court charges. Again. I had been clueless. I, like all my male friends, thought that whoever we could cajole into bed was fair game and we were obligated, as males, to conquer all the girls we could. I would soon see these things in a new light.

"Oh, yes, ever so fortunate. I have thought ever since the ball that Mr. Gorham would make a very lovely lady. He was so kind and sensitive that evening... sort of nurturing and well... Kind of ladylike. I do think she will make a really gorgeous woman. In fact, she is almost there already. Do you like the lavender satin dress, ma'am, or do you prefer the Chanel?" As she spoke she stepped out of the Fath dress and handed it to me, while her mother zipped her into the Chanel. I was speechless. Melanie lifted the silken skirts of the black taffeta and chiffon dress. "Ooh, isn't this divine!" she cooed.

"We'll take them both," Eustacia announced to Elsie Strem. I stood like an idiot as Mrs. Strem took the slippery Fath creation from my fingers. She smiled indulgently at me as though I were a stupid debutante without enough fashion sense to know what to wear to a cocktail party. In a sense that was an accurate assessment. I was going to make my debut and I didn't have enough sense to know what to wear. She disappeared into the rear of the salon and shortly returned with two white, ribbon tied boxes. She had another ensemble in a clothing bag, which she hung on a hook as she wrote up the MacTaggart's purchases. Melanie, restored to her street clothes - an ensemble consisting of a white angora sweater, a wide, petticoated navy blue felt skirt and suede pumps - plunked herself down in the Louis Seis armchair opposite me and tied her sky blue satin scarf about her neck.

"I just love your perfume," she trilled. "Arpege, isn't it? Melanie never wears anything else. I wear White Shoulders. Do you like it?" It was so intimate, so chatty and confidential. When she told me that she had set her chapeau for George Draper and expected to announce their engagement by Thanksgiving I felt I had been let into a state secret. When she said she hoped I could find something really dressy and chic to wear to her wedding I realized I was being drawn into the world of women like a kayak into a maelstrom. "I just know you will. Penelope is so stylish and has such wonderful taste. Mummy considers her a real fashion maven, you know, and while she would never admit it she consults her about beauty matters all the time. You are going to make a very lovely lady, Mr. Gorham ...Miss Gorham... Can I just call you Gladys?" I nodded. "Oh, thank you," she gushed. "You are just ever so pretty, Gladys. Have Mrs. Strem show you the Charles James ballgown she is making for the Fall Fling at the

country club. You will just adore it, I know! As her mother pulled her away she kissed me on my rouged cheek and welcomed me to the world of women. "You're going to just love being one of us, don't you think?" I hoped that might prove to be true, but as the bell on the door tinkled, Mrs. Strem revealed what was to be my first dress. I nearly fainted at the sight of it.

Mrs. Strem peeled away the garment bag and revealed a ravishingly elegant dress of pale blue silk *peau d'ange*. As she held the hanger aloft and lifted the long skirt with her other forearm. I stepped back, terrified. It had an open collar with a fitted bodice and lapels. The sleeves were one quarter length. The skirt, which had a stiffened underskirt built in to give it shape, would reach my ankles and I could see a pleated flounce sewn to finish it from below the knee. A black satin belt circled the waist. I recoiled, perspiring in a very unladylike fashion.

"It's a Nina Ricci creation. Mrs. Gorham," the fashion consultant intoned. "The bodice is fully constructed and the underskirt allows the skirt a very fluid motion. I think your Miss Gladys will look just divine in it, don't you?" I tried to see myself in the elegant creation and back away from it, holding on to the back of the chair which I had put between me and the dress. The woman handed the dress to Penelope and lifted a hat from a shelf. It was of blue molded felt and was festooned with swatches of black satin that matched the belt. "With the right chapeau, and I do assure you the hats this season are just exquisite and quite mandatory with these styles, your Miss Gladys will be a sensation everywhere."

I didn't want to be a sensation *anywhere*. Mrs. Strem opened a white shoe box and withdrew a pair of black suede pumps with ankle straps. "This year's heels are a sensation also," she added. The narrow spike heel is a new innovation and the new height is 24 eighths. It is simply *de rigeur* to be on one's toes this year.

"Do you want to be a sensation, darling?" Penelope teased. "I dreamed I went to Melanie's wedding in my Nina Ricci dress," she chanted. making a parody of a popular ad series for brassieres that featured models elegantly attired from the waist down in lovely ball gowns, but naked from the waist up except for their Maidenform Bras. I recoiled still further to the back wall of the room. Penelope approached with the dress, hat and shoes. She pointed to the dressing room opposite and handed me the garments. Go over there and become a sensation, darling," she ordered. Moments later I appeared before the two of them in the Nina Ricci ensemble. I wouldn't wear trousers again for some years. The worst part of the Nina Ricci ensemble was that the underskirt was of shot taffeta and I rustled as I moved, whispering my way with every movement I made. Penelope would make this rustling of taffeta my personal trademark.

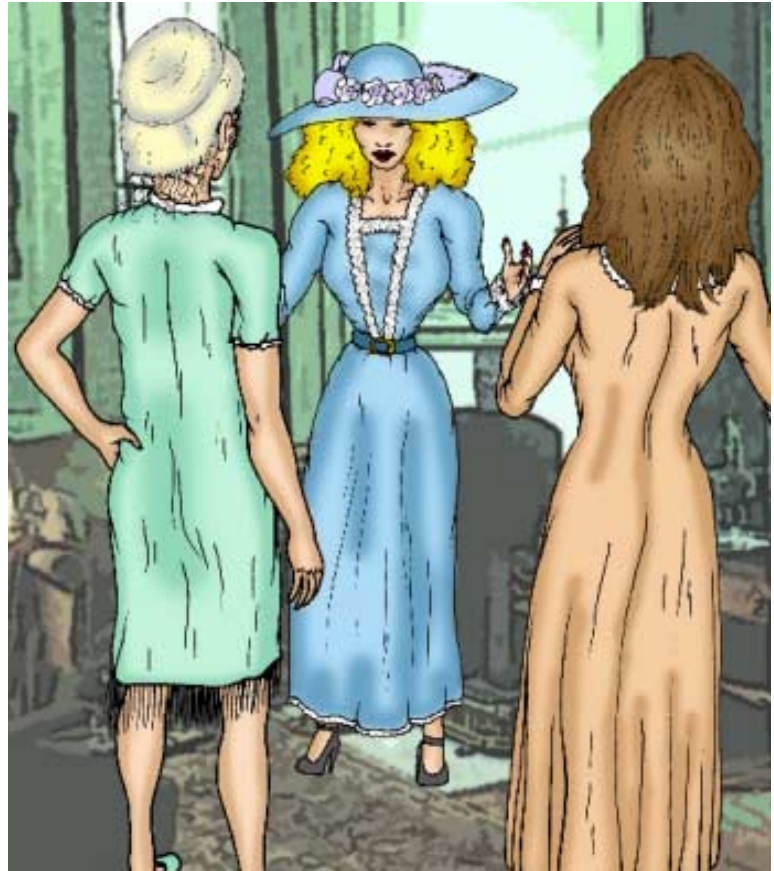
"Rustling silk bespeaks you, darling," she would say. "It whispers of your beauty and your femininity." I thought the Nina Ricci outfit would be as effeminate as I would get, which only showed how naive I was. It was merely the beginning.

Staring in the triple mirror in Mrs. Strem's showroom I was made to realize that my manhood had utterly vanished in the course of one short morning. From the festooned hat atop my glistening blonde tresses, through the elegant feminine curves of my body, fashionably arrayed in the work of a great Parisian couturier, and atop the new spike heels strapped to my ankles, I had become exactly what Judge Willoughby had de-

creed- the complete expression of a beautiful woman. As I gazed at the apparition in the three-way mirror I felt something had died within me, and it had. Ralph was dead.

Chapter 3

Constance Pennington called on the second day after my fall. Penelope invited her to tea to discuss my appeal. In my new role of domestic helper I had to prepare the dainty repast, making cucumber and watercress sandwiches, baking a chocolate hazelnut cake and brewing a pot of Earl Grey. Actually, I have always rather enjoyed cooking and otherwise puttering about in the kitchen. I was clad in a ruffled apron which I wore over a tea gown Penelope had picked for these occasions. It was of flowing silk



crepe with a high collar, fitted bodice and three quarter length sleeves. I wore rounded hips, a new, long corselet with a narrower waist- now down to 32 inches. Rounded shoulders and my massive bust completed the dress save for the ankle length flowing pleated skirt that rustled against the long ruffled petticoat of taffeta. My glowing blonde tresses supported a tiny pillbox hat with a bow on one side. The whole thing was in muted rose tints that matched my face. Perhaps the most difficult thing to get used to were the towering heels which, in this case, were secure to my ankles with crisscrossed straps about my ankles. As I sat demurely on the edge of my straight chair, Penelope poured, ever the perfect hostess. Constance Pennington was, herself, a fashion plate in a two piece suit of black wool with a white wool coat that showed a long flared peplum. The skirt was wide and ankle length. The sleeves of the coat were full length and she also towered on the new stiletto heels fitted to a pair of black suede pumps. Her hat of black wool sported a petit-point lace veil that wrapped about her neck. She looked at me intently and sipped from her cup.

“Thank you. Penelope, and you also Gladys, it is so nice of you to invite me.”

“Not at all,” my wife rejoined. “It is our pleasure, and so good of you to come. I know you have such a busy schedule. Tell me, will you, what you think of our new Gladys Louise. Does my husband not make a very fine lady do you think?”

“I am impressed,” the lawyer replied. “When I heard the sentence I really thought it was both cruel and unusual. Now I am not so sure. How do you feel about it, Gladys? Do you still think it is cruel to put a man in dresses and tresses and require that he look and act the part of a lady?” I was dumbfounded once again. Had she really reconsidered the appeal? Did she really think that to have to sit in front of them boned, corseted, made up and hatted in silk and lace was not cruel? It seemed hideously cruel to me. Why did they have to ask me these things?

“Of course it’s cruel!” I blurted out. “I don’t WANT to be dressed up like this and live as though I were a woman. I hate it!” A silence followed my outburst. I sucked at my tea to calm myself.

“Let me clarify this for you if I can,” the lawyer said, softly. “This is not about what you like or dislike. In fact, it was presumed that you would dislike wearing dresses and heels and acting ladylike. What this is about is your abusiveness toward your wife and about your making amends. Your sentence is an exercise in learning through experience. Personally, I think it is most appropriate. If I am to make an appeal on the grounds that it is cruel and unusual I have to be convinced that the mental suffering from your loss of male privilege is excessive and therefore cruel. As for being unusual, it is. That part is easy.

The statute under which Judge Willoughby sentenced you was passed over a decade ago and has never before been applied. Let me rephrase my question to you. Is the wearing of these effeminate ensembles and being required to live as women do causing you excessive mental anguish?”

“Of course it is!” I shouted. “It deprives me of my birthright, of my true status as a male and demeans me. It makes a second class person out of me, and that is a cruel thing to do to any man.”

“Then you acknowledge that women are second class people! Is that what you are saying?” The clever bitch had trapped me in a truly lawyerly way.

“No, I didn’t exactly mean that. I mean women are women naturally and are raised up to be that way.”

“What way is that?” Constance asked.

“Second class citizens,” Penelope rejoined. “That’s what he means. I don’t see what is cruel about making him live as the other half of the human race does, whatever the class distinctions.”

“Nicely put,” said my counselor. “It is hardly cruel to sentence someone to live as half of humanity already lives. It’s quite neat, really. If he says that living as a woman is a cruelty, then he disproves his argument because the court isn’t going to believe that life is inherently cruel for half of humanity. Sony, Gladys, dear, I think we have no defensible grounds for an appeal, except the unusual argument. I’ll file on that alone.”

“What do you think our chances are?” I asked.

“Difficult to judge. These appeals always are. I know what the prosecutor will say. He will once again argue that if half of humanity lives the way you are then it isn’t ‘unusual’ for anyone to live that way.”

“But that’s absurd,” I protested. “They are born that way. They’re women, I’m not. I’m only female by the judge’s order and that’s what makes it unusual.”

“Of course it’s absurd, but that won’t prevent them using it. Still, it’s worth a try.” Penelope slipped a slice of cake on to her plate

“Frankly,” Penelope began, “I don’t see what is so distressing about his sentence. Admittedly, he has been made to surrender some of those cherished male prerogatives, privileges which lie abused whenever he abused me. He isn’t allowed to be aggressive or competitive or to slob around in his jockey shorts belching and cussing. He isn’t allowed to leave dirty clothes lying around anymore. Heavens, you would think there was something precious about the right to be a slob. I suppose that making him sit up straight and refresh his lipstick is cruel if you never had to pay attention to your comportment before. Of course his corselet is uncomfortable and he is embarrassed by his pointy chest and swishing petticoats, but I think it is a perfectly wonderful way to make him aware of what privileges men have and how he abused them. Sit up straight, dear, and keep your knees and ankles together. There’s my precious. Isn’t he darling, Constance, in all that silk crepe?”

“Oh, my yes,” my lawyer replied. “Judge Willoughby could have done worse. She could have sent you to prison, Gladys. I think you are really much better off sitting here drinking tea with a couple of ladies than in jail, even if you do have to do it in heels and a petticoat. Am I right?”

“Yes, ma’am,” I replied, lowering my shaded eye lids and dabbing at my crimson lips with a lace edged serviette.

Constance smiled at my demure mannerism. “You really are quite beautiful you know. Everyone is saying it. Is it so bad to have to be beautiful? Most of us girls have to work very hard at it. It’s a very precious gift and you have been given it- the right to be pretty. Perhaps you can take solace in that- the art of being a beautiful woman. It is the one right we have kept to ourselves and we are sharing it with you. I think you should be grateful.”

“Oh, my goodness,” Penelope blurted. “You are right, Constance, the judge has offered him a wonderful alternative to imprisonment, the chance to learn how to be beautiful and all he can do is whine and complain about having to wear stylish dresses and wear long beautiful locks and gorgeous makeup, all things any real woman treasures above all else. Well, my darling, you no longer get to be big shot in charge of all and everything, calling the shots and coming up a winner. You get what’s left - you get to practice being beautiful. Either you master it or I complain to the judge and you go to jail. Your dresses and tresses and high heels are your “get-out-of-jail-free” card, Sweetie. What’s it going to be, Gorgeous Gloria or Ralph the Jailbird?” I squirmed in discomfort, trying to breathe deeply to ward off team. The cinch straightened me as Penelope signaled me to clear away the tea things. “Well.” she demanded to know. Would I practice to be beautiful or not? Considering the alternative I assented to the demand that I become a beautiful woman.

“Good!” she rejoined. We will start you in Beauty School on Monday and Modeling School as well. Constance, let’s forget the appeal. Gladys obviously doesn’t want to run the risk of upsetting the court, or anyone else for that matter. She wants to devote her

full energy to becoming the most beautiful girl in the country, don't you, dear?" The thought appalled me. Where was she going with this - how far? Whatever she had in mind I didn't want to go there, but had no choice.

"Yes, ma'am," I sighed, resignedly. I caught a glimpse of myself in the hall mirror. I WAS beautiful - already. Penelope was right. I had better own it, make it mine, embrace it. It was my only way out, as it had been for countless women before me. Judge Wiloughby had made me a female. As such beauty had become my main, if not my only asset. I decided I had better seize upon it.

Counselor Pennington put a perspective to it.

"You can't compete anymore. It isn't ladylike. Nor may you be aggressive, and certainly you must never allow any hostility to show. You have to achieve your ends through passivity and gracious acceptance. Not all women are possessed of physical beauty, a fair skin, long waving tresses and a good figure. You, somehow, are naturally blessed with these feminine assets. That's just genes. How you display that beauty, how you use it to get what you want will be the challenge you face. Some lovely women abuse these gifts. There is an ethical use of beauty. I suggest you discover it and use it because, darling, it's all you have left to use. Good luck! Be pretty and have fun. That's the best advice I have.

She threw her sables over her shoulder and pulled on her gloves. "What a waste. You should have been a girl and we could have made a life together." She kissed me on the cheek and moved toward the door.

"He IS a girl and we do have a life together, dammit," Penelope protested.

"Quite so! Enjoy it, girls. It has been an honor to represent you." She giggled and stepped out the door. Penelope sighed and so did I.

"You are just plain damn gorgeous, you know," Penelope announced.

"Yeah. I do know, dammit," I replied. "It's all you people have left for me, darling."

Chapter 4

I lay on my back on the satin counterpane of my new bed, in my very effeminate boudoir, looking up at the ceiling, trying to avoid the sight of the two huge mounds on my chest. In a sense they spoke more definitively about my condition than several other impositions I endured, save perhaps the long tresses. Both the protuberances on my chest and the long, clinging, perfumed blonde locks made it impossible to avoid an awareness of my female status. I was contemplating what Constance had said about the ownership of beauty, about the right to be pretty being preserved for women only, and their unwillingness to bargain about it.

Constance and I had been in college together - she in marketing, fashion merchandising, precisely, and then, at her family's insistence, continuing on to law school. She was a brilliant woman. She wrote songs and poetry, did some watercolors of merit and ended up in a law firm where she represented underdogs like me in bizarre cases like mine - cases that gave rise to constitutional issues. She had argued before the Su-

preme Court at least four times in a short career. I had been quite mad about her but she sensed my tendency to alcohol abusiveness.

She went on to law school and I went on to flying airplanes for a living, a degree in aeronautical engineering tucked in my pocket. I had done a stint in the Navy, flying off carriers and then on to a major airline where I met Penelope in the cabin of our Lockheed Constellation somewhere about 12,000 ft. over the Atlantic Ocean. She was serving cocktails. When we got to Amsterdam she served me. Now I was serving her. What goes around is said to come around again, isn't it?

When Penelope served the complaint against me I first called Constance and then called my employer for a leave of absence, which they were happy to grant with the admonishment that I had better keep the whole thing pretty quiet. The case was hardly newsworthy - "*Husband Abuses Wife*" - No headline in an age when newspapers were still not into reporting abuse. However, *Husband Made Female, Ordered into Dresses* "" was another matter. The media was still not comfortable with it. even as they had not been with Christine Jorgenson. She, however, turned out to be a grand lady and very polite press. The problem with me was how to make it polite. Constance made them a deal. She would refrain from libel suits so long as they didn't identify me by name or mention my employment. That worked. There were newspaper stories and television coverage, but I was never identified fully.

"Local Man to Wear Dresses in Bizarre Sentence"

Accompanying pictures of me in my long tresses were printed, but once I was fully en femme and had posed for the cameras the story began to be supplanted. The airline was not willing to extend my leave of absence for the term of my sentence. They gave me early retirement and a good severance.

* * * * *

The school uniform was nothing unexpected. It consisted of a wide black faille skirt supported by a single petticoat. The blouse, of ivory satin, had poet sleeves with ruffled cuffs and a high collar with a stock tie that bore wide lace edges. I wore black kid maryjanes with two inch heels. In the center of the tie was a gold pin edged with rhinestones and on my left breast I wore a pin of gold wire showing my name, Gladys. A black double flat bow of satin was pinned into my hair above my left ear to hold it away from my face. It lay in a wave upon my right cheek and curled over my right breast. Pearl ear rings completed the ensemble along with a black suede belt. Penelope flounced the skirt, handed me a clutch purse and motioned me to the door.

Miss Olgivana Ogilvie, Headmistress of the Ladysmith Academy (how apropos, I thought) was an awesome sight. She may have stood 6 feet in her nylons, but at least six and a half feet (or so it seemed) in her stiletto heeled pumps. Se wore a dress of maroon velvet, ankle length in the skirt. Her pumps, of gold filigree with ankle straps, set off against the gold chains that dangled from her belt in swaths from one him to the other. Gold bracelets and earrings completed the costume, save for her flaming red hair which had been set in curls and piles atop her head and showed a long French braid that lay on one shoulder. Her face showed the exotic new bright colors of make-up with her eyes heavily shaded in blue and heavily lined in black. Her lipstick was a

glaring crimson and the arch of her brows gave her a look of perpetual questioning, or anticipation of an answer. She appeared to be about forty. She treated us quite graciously, complimenting me on my appearance and commenting to Penelope on how beautifully I was done up. She served us coffee - or rather her receptionist brought some in, which she poured in an elegant service. Penelope grinned widely and I swallowed hard as the woman explained the curriculum and a little bit about the school.

She Explained that Ladysmith was English in origin, having begun in the eighteenth century as a finishing school for the members of the newly emerged middle class who needed schooling in court manners and speech. Eventually it became a school for the children of the same class. The proprietor of the school eventually moved to the colonies and set up in Philadelphia. The school moved to its present site in the suburbs in the 19th Century. Miss Ogilvie. it seems, is descended from the original proprietor. She commented on the surge of interest in charm, manners, beauty and gracefulness that has followed the wartime period as people longed to return to polite and gracious living.. She reassured us that beauty and charm are not dead, they are preserved at Ladysmith.

Penelope explained that I was a woman by legal decree. Olgivana said she understood that and therefore looked upon me as a special challenge. That made me nervous. Penelope said she had read Miss Ogilvie's article in Vogue on The Elements of Beauty and said she wanted me to master them all. Miss Ogilvie smiled, sipped at her coffee and leaned forward on her chair.

I will make it lily special project to see to it that Gladys Louise makes each of the elements her very own personal achievement," she decreed. "I will tutor and mentor her constantly until she is the very picture of feminine loveliness. Is that what you want, my dear?" I thought the question was addressed to Penelope but realized she was looking directly at me from behind her long silky lashes.

"Uh. . .yes. I guess so... .I mean it's what Penelope wants and the judge says what she wants is what I have to do, so yeah, I'll learn to be beautiful, sure."

The Headmistress' face fell, and she scowled at me disapprovingly. "I am afraid this isn't going to work, Mrs. Gorham. Gladys lacks the necessary enthusiasm to properly acquire the kind of beauty we teach, the kind of loveliness we engender in our students. You will remember that attitude is the tenth of my elements of beauty. Gladys will have to have an attitude of positive desire to acquire beauty or it will elude her, I am afraid."

"Attitude - Positive, receptive, cheerful and helpful, Gladys." We hadn't gotten there yet. "Tell Miss Ogilvie that you positively, absolutely are just dying to learn how to be drop-dead gorgeous and not because I expect it or Judge Willoughby ordered it but because you want to own your own beauty and be as lovely as you can. Can you adjust your attitude a little here, or do I have to tell the judge about your bad attitude?" Penelope wore a scowl to match the Headmistress. It was apparent that I was going to learn to be beautiful and would begin with a new, beautiful attitude. I stiffened on the edge of my chair, folded my hands in my lap, elevated my chin and smiled prettily. This much I already had learned.. I lowered my eyes and forced a smile.

“Oh, Ms. Ogilvie, Madame Headmistress, that is. and you as well, Penelope, dear. I am so sorry. I seem to have forgot myself for a minute. I have committed to learning how to make a beautiful presentation and to behave beautifully as well. Madame is so stunning in her own right that I am afraid I became discouraged of ever attaining such loveliness in myself. Oh. please, I DO want to come to school and learn the art of beauty. I will be ever so cooperative and diligent, if you please. Do let me come to school, Madame. It will be such a privilege to be your special student. Thank you ever so much. It is so terribly kind in you. I promise not to disappoint you if you will reconsider and take me.” Penelope began to smile as though she were amazed at how much Iliad already learned about graciousness. Miss Ogilvie’s eyes twinkled. She looked like a cat that had just caught a mouse and was about to play with it.

“Of course, my dear I am pleased to reconsider. In fact, after such a lovely speech I can’t resist having you for my own special pupil. We will have you through cosmetology and modeling in record time, I am sure. Gladys really is basically a very lovely girl. We only need to develop some new skills in her and rehearse and train until she is a finely honed lady. In fact, I should think she is lovely enough for the beauty contest circuit - or will be by the time I am done with her. Have you ever considered if you would like to be a beauty queen, my dear. Had you thought of it at all, Mrs.. Gorham?” Penelope’s face fell.

“No... not really. I never thought in those terms. I thought if Gladys could just discover that she is quite beautiful and used that as a tool to get through this period of helplessness, it would make things easier for her, but beauty contests no the thought never....”

“In all due respect, ladies, I have just agreed to become beautiful as a woman is, but I don’t think I’m contest material... .Besides I’m really a male underneath it all.” Ms. Ogilvie came about as close to a laugh as she allowed herself (the guffaw is not allowed to ladies, I later learned.)

“Well, we shall see,” she observed. Certainly we can make you successful as a fashion model. The world is full of lovely men who model women’s fashions. If you can succeed on the runway it could be a stepping stone to the beauty circuit. We have already had one Miss Pennsylvania with your kind of plumbing and she made First Runner-up at the Miss America Pageant. I know for a fact she was the real winner, because I was one of the judges. The committee vetoed it because she was a male, so you see it could happen.” My knees turned rubbery. Miss Ogilvie rose, shook Penelope’s hand and put her arm around my shoulder. “Let’s get pretty and have some fun, shall we?” she invited me. I left clutching my first textbook, *“A Woman ‘s Face*. “It was a manual of facial care and make-up procedures. “Memorize it,” she admonished, giggling. You won’t pass until you can recite it. I thanked her sweetly, curtsied smoothly and went home to read it. Beauty - owning it - was going to be my salvation, I thought. It was all I had going for me and I needed it to get through this ordeal. I found myself anticipating the morrow and my cosmetic classes with real enthusiasm.

There were leaks. Word was getting around and all of it was not positive. In the 1950's the word for my condition was *transvestite*. It had been coined in 1910 by the English psychiatrist Havelock Ellis. Dr. Ellis was working to have the practice of wearing clothes other than those deemed appropriate to one's assigned sex, decriminalized. He felt such men should be in his consulting room and not in court or in jail. Ellis was himself a homosexual and had a practice consisting of other homosexuals. I thought it ironic that a few decades later I would become a transvestite precisely in order to stay *out* of jail.

Curiously, it was not until Ellis medicalized transvestitism did anyone begin to condemn it. While homosexuality had long been a violation of canonical law, the wearing of women's clothes by men had a long and distinguished history that included Achilles, Hercules, Julius Caesar and the Chevalier d'Eon. In the seventeenth century a noted Church historian, the Abbe' d'Choissy served his parish in elegant lady's court attire. In the mid 19th century two London gentlemen named Boulton and Park got themselves arrested outside a theater in the Strand, all decked out in lady's evening attire. They spent a night in jail and the papers had a field day with the story. They were charged with public indecency, but a jury failed to see what was indecent about being dressed from neck to shoes in overlying layers of lace and taffeta. They were acquitted. They were apparently homosexual and maintained club rooms for other gay gentlemen where they could store their fancy wardrobes and dress up in privacy. They may have been sensational, but they were not criminal, nor were they criticized for their crossdressing, certainly not on moral grounds.

Somehow, transvestitism became taboo, however. Moralists quoted Deuteronomy and cited II Corinthians, railing against men in female attire. It remained pretty much a matter of criticizing homosexuality, which it was (and is) firmly believed to be a practice exclusively of gay males who do it to attract erotic partners. We now know that most men who do crossdress are exclusively *heterosexual*.

At any rate, there began to appear letters in the papers objecting to what I was doing, notwithstanding the fact that I had no choice in the matter. Other writers sympathized with my situation, while still others pronounced my sentence as appropriate and fair. It became quite popular to spout off about me. Christine Jorgenson had gone public in 1953. but I was a little before her. Further, she was a transsexual - the first - and I was as transvestite. That I was not one by choice seemed to make little difference, however. Over time a consensus emerged that my sentence was fair and reasonable, that I deserved my suffering and, curiously, that I made quite a beautiful woman. This last opinion sustained me as I became Olgivana Ogilvie's special and personal student.

When she admonished me to memorize the contents of the textbook on cosmetology she meant it. Each morning, after curtsying demurely and being handed a cup of tea, the drill began with Madame holding the book open in her lap and me reciting verbatim the several pages I had been assigned to memorize. She stopped me whenever I made a mistake, patiently corrected me and assigned the task of writing out the corrected version a hundred times before the next morning. I can quote one of these yet.

“The first step is taking care of your skin - what are your skin’s assets and liabilities? Why bother? Because it makes me feel pretty, as when I put on a party dress.

The Headmistress proved not only to be a fine exemplar of the beauty she taught, but to be a kind and caring instructress. She gave me little peace, but then relaxation and repose were not what I was in school for. I was there to learn the art of beauty and of beauty culture. I was there to claim my right to be beautiful, but I had to learn this art and Madame meant to see that I did. Most students had an assigned partner and partners worked on one another in the classroom. My partner was Mandy Forsythe and we did not meet in the classroom. We met in Madame Ogilvie’s office where she instructed us personally. Mandy had been assigned as my partner because she had been placed on probation for department violations. Mandy was a large, busty farm girl from North Dakota whose father had been made ambassador to the French government and Mandy was being ‘finished’ so that she would know how to behave in Paris. They were having some difficulty cleaning up her rude language and rough behavior.

“Watch Gladys Louise, Mandy,” the Headmistress would admonish her. “If she can sit as a lady should, I think you can do so as well. There’s my little lady - knees and ankles together, chin up... smile.. .Oh, my yes, that’s much better.”

“Shit!” Mandy would mutter under her breath. It was her favorite invective. “Do you know how much I hate having to do this prissy missy shit?”

“Do you think I like doing this, Miss Forsythe?” I asked softly. “I’m not even a girl.”

“Shut up, bitch!” she shouted.

“Thank you so much, dear,” I replied.

“For what?”

“For not calling me a son of a bitch, Mandy doll. That was very kind of you.”

The shouted epithet brought Madame Ogilvie back into the room. She scowled at Mandy and rubbed a wet cloth with bar soap. At Madame’s direction I held Mandy’s hands behind her as the Headmistress stuffed it into her gaping mouth. She then tied it in place with a wide silk ribbon. Mandy had another demerit to work off by being detained after school to write impositions. This sort of corporal punishment was rare at school, but the threat of it had a leveling effect on the potentially boisterous behavior of the girls. We all understood that we would be deprived of the offending part as the appropriate correction for the offense. Mandy’s profanity lost her the use of her mouth. One day I refused to present my hand for a manicure and spent the day without the use of it. Madame tied it behind me. Such punishments were always mild. We were never struck, merely limited so as to teach us the value of the offending member. The worst humiliation was to be officially declared “UGLY”. This meant, of course that one had done something that deprived them of their beauty. Those so labeled were required to wear a paper bag over their head with the word “ugly” written on it. I wore the bag just once after I had cried in despair that I would never learn to be truly beautiful.

“Then you can just be ugly, dear,” Madame decreed, slipping the bag over my head. I couldn’t see, of course and was confined to my vanity for the afternoon. I must say the experience focused my attention on my beauty work powerfully.