



Reluctant Press

Four Ways Of Magic

Laura Sexton



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS

A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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FOUR WAYS OF MAGIC

By Laura Sexton

VOODOO

I

Jennifer and Kristi were pissed off at their new boarder, who they referred to as “Bubba” behind his back. His real name was Eric, a big blond guy of Scandinavian and German ethnic background, but as Jennifer proclaimed, “If it walks like a Bubba, looks like a Bubba, and talks like a Bubba, it must be a Bubba.”

“What should we do with him?” said Kristi. “Toss him out on his ear? It would be a shame to let all that buffness go to waste.”

“That’s true,” said Jennifer, a tall slim woman with medium brown hair. “I’ll admit that when we rented that spare room, his charm overwhelmed me so much I completely forgot to ask for references. Now look at the mess we’re in.”

“You’re not the only one to blame,” said Kristi. She was three inches shorter and had put on a bit of weight the last few years, owing to a diet consisting of morning doughnuts, chocolate bars, and late night pizzas at work. She had honey blonde hair with some reddish strands and had kept all the old clothes that didn’t fit any more, vowing that one day she’d shed those extra twenty pounds. “I should have known those promises of finding a job were nothing more than lies. If we don’t get rid of him, we’ll be reduced to nothing more than maids and food providers. That man is a slob. We need to find a way to make him work. It would be funny to make him our maid.”

Eric, the man in question, lived in one of the two spare bedrooms the girls rented out in order to help pay the mortgage on the house. But after paying his deposit, first and last month’s rent, he had done nothing since. Nothing but eat their food, get up at noon, watch TV until 3 AM, invite drunken girls to his room, and leave messes around the house for them to clean up.

“We have to get even with him,” said Jennifer. “We must teach him a lesson.”

“What kind of lesson?”

“Do you remember the book on magic we found at that estate sale?”

“Of course I remember,” said Kristi. Ever since they bought the dilapidated Victorian house, they’d combed all the garage, yard, and estate sales, all the antique stores and junk shops, in search of furniture and fixtures to make the house look more authentic.

The previous summer, they attended an estate sale that promised furniture, tapestries, paintings, candlesticks, book, silverware, and other valuables. However, when they visited the estate in question, they discovered it held nothing but junk. The furniture had been dinged, scratched, and pitted enough to scare away any of those antique experts on television. The upholstery was faded, torn, and threadbare. Silverware was mismatched, the paintings were done by unknown and marginally talented painters, and the books for sale had been written by dime store novelists.

One book did catch their attention. The Compleat & Authoritative Guide to Magick the gold leaf title read. The cover was black leather with embossings and tracings on it. To the women, it looked both mysterious and slightly goofy, so for the exorbitant price of ten dollars, they bought it.

They added it to the library and read passages together on rainy days they couldn’t work outside and during cool fall evenings. They made their first spell at their Halloween party, where they met their current boyfriends. Paul had been bewitched by the witchy Jennifer, while Jeff had been seduced by the devilish Kristi. Just before Thanksgiving they tried another spell, and soon after, Jennifer got a promotion.

“Coincidence,” Jennifer said, though she felt the hairs rise on the back of her neck.

“Uh huh,” said Kristi, backing away.

They put the book back on its shelf in the library and forgot about it.

Now they needed it again. The two women went into the library, where they quickly found the book. As Jennifer pulled the volume down from the shelf, Kristi said, “What do you want to do to him?”

“I’m thinking that chapter on voodoo might be instructive.”

“I’ve always wanted to be a voodoo priestess,” said Kristi.

“I’m sorry to say, you don’t look mysterious enough,” said Jennifer.

“Thanks a lot,” said Kristi, pretending to pout. “Shall we begin?”

They soon located the chapter on voodoo. Kristi took extensive notes while Jennifer read. They discussed the chapter extensively while they made up a plan.

“We need some of his tissue,” said Jennifer dubiously.

“That should be no problem,” said Kristi. “Have you seen his bathroom?”

“I try not to enter that cesspool,” said Jennifer.

“If we want to do this thing right, we must. I’ll get the rubber gloves.”

Since it was Friday, Eric had gone clubbing. With a few hours before he would return, they snuck into the bathroom. They found hair stuck to his brush, whiskers and

dried spit in the sink, urine on the toilet rim, a couple bits of skin bits and dried sweat on a hankie, and even – much to the disgust of both women – semen where they didn't intend to find any.

“Yuck. The only thing missing is blood,” said Jennifer.

“Found some,” said Kristi.

They returned to the office with their samples and began fashioning a voodoo doll, using some white modeling clay Jennifer had bought once. By candlelight, they mixed the ingredients, intoning the chants at the appropriate times. Jennifer used fine blades and picks to make the model as anatomically correct as they could. “I'm going to give him a penis so we can cut it off,” she said.

“You really are a bitch,” said Kristi.

“No, I'm just thinking ahead.”

Eric soon returned with some giggly woman, tromping upstairs into his bedroom. Soon, bedsprings were heard. “I guess you *were* thinking ahead,” said Kristi, as they began the final chant. The clay figure began to turn waxy and take on a glow of its own. As the two women watched in fascination and horror, the figure melted and rearrange itself. The body became more proportionally correct, elongating the legs and broadening the shoulders. Hair sprouted from the top of its head. The eye sockets turned white with blue spots in them. The skin began to feel lifelike and warm to the touch. The penis grew.

“He is hung,” said Kristi. She stroked an arm. She could almost feel tiny hairs.

“Don't do that,” said Jennifer. “You'll just turn him on. Quick, give me the knife.”

“I've got a better idea.” Kristi went into the kitchen and returned with an ice cube wrapped in a baggie. The action upstairs was starting to get fast and furious. With a smile to her lips, she placed the ice directly on the penis. Immediately, the springs stopped squeaking and a high-pitched feminine voice wailed. “What happened?”

They waited for Eric's guest to try to resuscitate the erection, fail, and stomp from the house. Jennifer took the Exacto knife and whispered into the ear of the Eric doll. “You are tired. You are very tired. You will fall into a deep sleep, a deep and restful sleep. When you waken, you will not remember what happened this night.” She put her finger over the eyes. “Remove the ice,” she said.

Kristi did, noticing the penis on the doll had shrunk. “This is weird,” she said.

“I wonder, if we cut it off, do we actually castrate him?”

“Why don't you remove it and store it in the back of the freezer? That way it will seem like it's still attached. But I suppose we'll have to do it magically. Here. I'll put the ice on his head. It'll freeze his brain.” Kristi did and Jennifer pinched the ice cold penis from the doll, making up an incantation as she did so.

“I'm going to put this in the coffin freezer next to the film. That way he won't be likely to find it.”

“I've got an idea too. I'll meet you back here in a few.”

While Jennifer went down to the basement, Kristi went into the attic to fetch a whole slew of doll stuff. When she returned with the box, Jennifer was sitting next to the doll. “What’s that?” she asked.

“When I told my mom all my Barbie stuff might be valuable someday, she put everything in a box and shipped it here. Unfortunately, she added my Suzie Homemaker crap, which, if you’re thinking what I’m thinking, might prove useful.”

“Open the box,” said Jennifer.

Kristi did and they rummaged through it. They found a frilly apron, which Jennifer put on the doll. “There, doesn’t he look much better now?”

Kristi glanced up. “Look what I found.” She held some tiny implements in her hand. There was a spatula, a spoon, a plastic bottle that had the word “cleaner” written on it, and a doll-sized feather duster.

“Great,” said Jennifer, placing the spatula in one hand and the duster in the other. She put the cleaner bottle in a little pocket of the apron, and the spoon next to it. “Voila. It’s a shame we don’t have a mop or something.”

“Will a vacuum cleaner do?” Kristi let a pink plastic upright dangle from her fingertips. Jennifer grabbed it from her fingers with a quick “gimme that” and put it in the hand that held the feather duster, while transferring the duster to one of the apron pockets.

“I think that’s much better,” said Jennifer, holding up the doll. “Now we need a little chant.”

“How about this?” said Kristi. “We’ve changed this doll to do some good. Oh, please change, Eric, if you could.”

“That wasn’t a very good chant,” said Jennifer.

“Can you think of anything better? Cuz if you can, you’d better hurry. I’m getting tired. It’s way past my bedtime.”

“I can’t think of anything off the top of my head,” said Jennifer. “But I don’t think we need to. The doll’s temperature has cooled and it feels like the spatula and vac are glued to his hands.”

“Then it’s gotta work,” said Kristi.

“Good. Blow out the candle and let’s go to bed.”

* * *

Both women woke late to the smells of food wafting up the stairs. It was just after ten. “What the hay . . .” said Kristi, as she looked at the clock and put on her bathrobe. “What’s Jennifer doing cooking? On a Saturday, no less.” She opened the door and stepped into the hall.

And looked straight at Jennifer, who was equally surprised. “Oh my God,” said Kristi. “It’s Eric!”

“This I’ve got to see,” said Jennifer, grabbing her robe. They trundled downstairs and ran to the kitchen where they found Eric, wearing one of Jennifer’s old flowered aprons (given to her as a joke by an ex-boyfriend) cooking up eggs, bacon, toast, and hash browns. From real potatoes, Kristi noticed and silently pointed out to Jennifer. There were potato peelings and a slicer in the sink.

“Good morning, ladies,” said Eric with a big smile. “Are you ready for breakfast? I’m just about done here.”

“I’m, uh, not really a big breakfast eater,” said Jennifer.

“I am,” said Kristi. “When I was growing up we had breakfasts like this nearly every day. That’s why all the old people in my family are fat.”

“I have some fresh squeezed orange juice in the fridge. And a fruit tray. I had the feeling you might not want anything heavy.”

“We don’t have any oranges,” said Kristi.

“I went shopping. I bought oranges, cantaloupe, grapefruit, strawberries, carrots, and apples. The apples I’m saving for a pie. I also bought a roast, which I’m planning on cooking up for Sunday dinner. You can use the leftovers for sandwiches or make a hot meal plate for work. I know you two don’t eat properly. Especially you, Kristi. Pizzas and donuts do not a balanced diet make.”

“Yes, mom,” said Kristi.

Eric laughed. The two women looked at each other. They hadn’t heard Eric laugh like that before. Whenever he laughed, it had been carnal, or the belly laugh he got while watching the Three Stooges or some other lowbrow slapstick. This was a genuine laugh.

“Tell me,” said Jennifer. “What brought on this new found enthusiasm?”

Eric scratched his head. “You know, it’s kind of funny. I woke up at about seven, all clear-headed and bursting with energy. I came down here to make breakfast and noticed how messy the kitchen was. So I formulated a plan, made out a shopping list, and went to the store. I damn near tapped out my resources,” he said, then added, “I’m really going to have to get a job soon.”

“We can discuss that later,” said Jennifer.

“Your eggs are done,” said Kristi.

“Thanks. I scrambled them because I had the sneaking suspicion that you might not want breakfast, so I got creative. I can use these ingredients to make a breakfast burrito and save it for tomorrow. We used to do that when I was in college. Well, not the saving part. We usually pigged out on everything all at once.”

“Okay,” said Kristi. “Where do you want us?”

“I made some places for you in the breakfast nook.”

“You’re kidding,” said Jennifer. “That place is a mess.”

“I tidied up a bit. I think you’ll find it pleasant.”

The breakfast nook had been cluttered with swatches, drawings, plants in various states of decay, old coffee cups, and half-empty cans of paint, but when the women arrived, they noticed the room sparkled and smelled of lemons. The window had been cleaned on the inside, the swatches and paint cans were boxed up and thrown into the corner, and most of the plants had been removed, except for one that had all the dead parts trimmed. Even the glass and wrought iron table had been covered by a linen tablecloth with lace at the edges. He even used the good silver and china.

They sat down and waited for Eric to bring the plates to the table. “These chairs are uncomfortable,” said Kristi. “Do you suppose we can make an upholsterer next?”

Jennifer laughed. Eric waltzed in like a waiter, with the fruit tray, covered plate of eggs and bacon, toast, decanter of juice. He poured the coffee and juice, and stood around while they tried the food.

“This is delicious,” said Kristi, tasting her eggs. “Wonderful.”

Jennifer stuck with the toast and fruit, adding some of the marmalade to the first. “It’s been forever since I last had fresh squeezed,” said Jennifer.

“Spring break five years ago,” said Kristi.

“Right.” They continued eating.

“Aren’t you going to have any?”

“The cook always eats after the guests have finished. Or in this case, the landlords. Or *landladies*, actually.”

“Why, thank you,” said Kristi. “That’s gallant of you.”

Jennifer, who did not have nearly the hearty appetite that Kristi did, finished long before. When she did, Eric started to take away her plates. She stopped him. “Tell me, Eric. Did you used to be a waiter?”

“I had to get through school some way. My parents couldn’t afford to send me and the college people didn’t think I was smart enough to get a scholarship. I became short order cook, waited tables in some of the better restaurants, bartended, worked on a loading dock during summer break. I had to take nearly a year off when I ran out of money. I waited and bartended by night, worked for an organic farmer by day. Speaking of which, I have some ideas for a compost pile.”

“That would be fine,” said Kristi. “My dad used to compost. There’s that space in the back of the yard that must have been a garden at one time. I’d love to try my hand at gardening again.”

“You told me you hated it when you were growing up,” said Jennifer.

“I was a kid. What did I know?”

“Eric, we’ll take the coffee in the office. We have work to do.” The two women left, giving Eric a chance to eat and clean up. When they entered the office, they shut the door behind them. The Eric doll and box of doll stuff was still on the desk.

“We’ll have to hide this from him,” said Kristi. “We don’t want him to gain the knowledge of our power.”

“I agree,” said Jennifer. She unlocked the desk and carefully placed the doll inside one of the drawers. “This should do nicely. That way he can’t stumble upon it.”

“What do we do with him now?” said Kristi. “You should have tried the eggs.”

“Ugh. That cholesterol. I don’t want heart disease by the time I’m forty.”

“I want to be a fat innkeeper when I grow up.”

“Quit lying. You don’t want to be an innkeeper at all.”

“I don’t know now. The idea does have its merits if we can keep Eric. Imagine having a cook and housekeeper, all rolled into one.”

“We don’t know yet if he can keep house.”

“Come on. You saw what he did with the breakfast nook. And that was only in an hour. If we have him working ten hours a day, seven days a week, we won’t have to lift a finger.”

“That’s illegal.”

“Not if it’s his choice,” said Kristi, with a smile. “Let’s say we offer him free room and board and a salary. We might have to put in another bath in the attic and make it the maid’s quarters. Or do something to fix up that carriage house.”

“That carriage house should be condemned.”

“It can be repaired. Josh, when he was living here, drew up some plans.”

“Josh is an idiot.”

“His dad’s a contractor.”

“Oh, let’s not argue.”

Kristi thought a moment. “I don’t think we can afford to hire him as a maid,” she mused. “We need a paying tenant. If we’re going to have a maid, we need to rent out more rooms.”

“Fine. I’ll move into the master bedroom. We’ll keep Eric on as a maid and cook, and rent out two of the other bedrooms.”

Kristi felt tears forming. This was the one area of their friendship that they rarely dared bring up. Who gets the master bedroom? In the early days, they shared it. Later, when each had to have her own room, they rented the master bedroom out to couples. Finally, they converted it to an office.

“How about this?” said Jennifer, noticing the tears. “We rent out the master bedroom and two back bedrooms, convert the attic to a maid’s quarters, and use the money to pay the mortgage.”

“That’s brilliant,” said Kristi, brightening. “Why didn’t I think of that before?”

“We didn’t need to,” said Jennifer. “Of course, all this is dependent upon Eric working out.”

“There’s always a catch,” said Kristi.

II

It was Thursday. The two women had spent much of the previous week observing Eric's progress. His energy seemed inexhaustible. Up around six making breakfast, cleaning all day, making dinner for when they returned from work. He built a compost container for out back by where the garden was going to be, and took all the peelings and shavings out to it at the end of each day. On Wednesday, he rented a rototiller and dug up the ground for the garden, then bought starter plants, keeping them on the sill because they were still expecting a late season frost or two.

Kristi was not idle either. Working for a small ad firm, she got one of the other employees, a guy named Doug, to design a letterhead for their company. J/K Enterprises, they had decided to call it. Kristi took pictures of the house, promising to take better ones once the trees started blooming. She began work with Doug on a brochure for the B&B/Galleria during the spare minutes while on lunch or waiting for phone calls or for the boss. Their emails flew fast and furious.

At lunch one day, Doug said, "You're a good photographer. How come you're stuck doing clerical?"

"Nobody's asked me to snap before," she said.

"It would beat having to hire out that snotty Rafael," he said.

Kristi laughed.

"I'd show those pics to Stevenson if I were you. I'm sure you could get some assignments."

"I have enough problems with Accounts Receivable, thank you very much."

"What are you doing this weekend?"

Kristi blushed. "I have a boyfriend," she said. "Kind of."

"Oh." A pause. "It wouldn't have to be a date, you know. Make it a bring-the-gang kind of thing."

"Thanks, but I think I have plans."

Meanwhile, Jennifer had gotten her boyfriend to help her clean out the Master Bedroom. Most of the office stuff went into the library, while the nonessentials went downstairs. She bought an antique brass bed and brought the matching antique dresser and nightstand that she refinished down from the attic. Then two chairs, a mirror stand, lace curtains, flowers, and an old oil painting of a flower garden. They turned the nursery into a reading room. When Eric saw what had been done, he remarked, "You're going to have to spring for some polish."

"What do you mean?"

"Brass bed. Come on, I'll have to polish it once a week. I also need some good wood polish for this dresser. It'll make this room really shine."

“Good. But hurry, so Kristi can take a picture for the brochure.” Jennifer smiled. Everything was going according to plan. Even her secret side project. Jennifer had some of Kristi’s “art” photos from college framed and priced, much to Kristi’s surprise when she came home on Thursday to find half a dozen pictures hanging in various places around the house.

“Oh wow!” said Kristi. “This is so thoughtful. Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

“You’re welcome. However, we have a problem. Come into the office.” She started toward the master bedroom, then stopped, turned around, and went into the library.

“What’s wrong?” asked Kristi.

“Eric. I approached him with an offer to be a full-time housekeeper and cook and he didn’t seem too amenable to the idea. He said he was thinking of starting his own cleaning or catering business.”

“Damn,” said Kristi. One of the problems with opening a B&B had been staffing it. They knew that one of them would have to quit her job. Jennifer was making too much money at the telecommunications company. Kristi had the least to lose, but she didn’t want to be an innkeeper. She would also lose that free work on the brochure and stationery that Doug had been working on. “We have to find a way to keep Eric.”

“How? Do you know what his degree is in? Business Administration. He wants to put his degree to work. And since he’s found his life’s work, he wants to start a maid service.”

“I knew there was a flaw in our plan. We should never have gotten that book on magic.”

“You’re right,” said Jennifer. “Except for that promotion, which could have as easily come from hard work and competence, our magic hasn’t worked out as expected.”

“What do you mean?”

“How do you feel toward Jeff?”

“I love him. I think I do, anyway.”

“How does Jeff feel toward you?”

Kristi shrugged. “Hard to tell.”

“Paul’s afraid of the C word.”

“He looks the type,” admitted Kristi. “So we enchanted two stiffs who are having second thoughts. I think the trouble lies with the spell itself. We merely wanted to find two guys who would become enchanted with us. We didn’t ask for life partners. With Eric we make him want to stay. Tie him to the house in some way.”

“Literally tie the doll to the house?”

“That’s an idea. Although he wouldn’t be able to go shopping for us.”

“Maybe we can work out a trade. Give him an office here from which to run his business. We can contract his employees. He can answer phones for both us and his own company, as well as show guests and potential guests the accommodations.”

“Too tricky,” said Jennifer. “Besides, we’d be paying him twice. Once for the maid service, and again to answer phones and act as innkeeper.” She paused. “God, he’s still a bastard. Even after I refunded his deposit and last week’s rent for the job he’s done here.”

“You’re still keen on revenge?” said Kristi.

“I don’t know if you’d call it ‘revenge,’” said Jennifer. “He’s standing in the way of our dreams. We have to make him help us.”

“He’s such a good maid,” said Kristi.

“We should make him a real maid and then see how he likes it.”

“What?” said Kristi, intrigued. “You mean like a real French Maid, some Fifi with the short black dress and high heels? ‘Oui, Monsieur, I vill do ze dusting and ze vacuuming but only for you.’”

Jennifer laughed. “That would be perfect.”

“That would be cruel.”

“Look what he’s doing to us!” complained Jennifer.

“He’s not doing it on purpose,” countered Kristi. “Besides, we’ve done him a favor. Let’s leave it at that.”

“I don’t *want* to leave it at that. I want to be vindictive.”

“Let me guess. Paul hasn’t called.”

“Not since Saturday.”

“Let’s compromise. Why don’t we give him a hobby?”

“What do you have in mind?”

Kristi reached into the box of doll stuff they hadn’t yet returned to the attic. She drew out a pair of white stockings, then found a little pair of panties. “Will this satisfy your craving for revenge?”

“You mean make him wear women’s clothes?”

“Just the underwear,” said Kristi. “Stuff which can be hidden underneath his regular clothes.”

“Okay,” said Jennifer. “I find that acceptable for a start.”

They waited for Eric to go to bed before bringing out their voodoo supplies, and begin their chant. Within minutes, the doll began to grow more lifelike, warming up and feeling real to the touch. Soon they placed the doll clothes on the body. “That’s good,” said Jennifer. “But how are we going to tell if it works?”

“We plant some clothes for him to try on. Remember all that stuff up in the attic?”

“You mean that junk those loser roommates left behind?”

“He could probably fit into some of Angie’s stuff. Maybe one of my old bras or a pair of your stockings.”

“Good idea. But I want more proof.”

“Like what?”

“I’m thinking we can put that Halloween lipstick and nail polish to good use.” The two women had shared a scarlet shade for use on the Halloween costumes, then put it in the “bad makeup” box.

“You’re saying we let him paint his nails and color his lips. I don’t know about that.”

“Listen. We can change it back tomorrow night if we have to.”

“Oh, all right.”

Within minutes, Jennifer was putting the final touches to the Eric doll, applying a tiny coat of lipstick to the lips and polish to the fingers and toes, using a tiny painter’s brush. When the doll began to cool to the touch, they blew out the candle and went to retrieve some underwear they thought might fit Eric. After scouring the attic and bedrooms, they filled a box with multiple pairs of stockings, garter belt, bra, and panties, and placed the box on the desk in the library. They put the lipstick and polish next to it. Then they went to bed.

The alarm came too quickly for each woman. They were bleary eyed as they got ready for work. When they went downstairs for coffee they found Eric, looking equally tired. “Hello,” he said.

“Are you all right?” said Kristi.

“I’ve been tossing and turning all night. I couldn’t sleep. I feel just awful.”

“Are you sick?” said Jennifer.

“I don’t think so,” replied Eric. “It’s just that, that . . . oh I don’t know.”

Kristi added, “I hope you feel better, but if you don’t, call either of us if you need anything.”

Before they left, Jennifer said, “We gathered some old stuff we were thinking of sending to Goodwill. It’s nothing we can use. Tell us your opinion. We left the box in the library.”

“I’ll take a look at it.”

“Okay.” The two women left.

“My goodness,” said Kristi as they walked to their cars. “You’re nasty.”

“I’m just hoping he’ll get the hint.”

“He did look tense,” Kristi remarked.

“I was thinking of coming home for lunch today. Just to see, you know.”

“I can’t afford to. Tell me how it comes out.”

* * *

It turned out quite well. Jennifer didn't go home for lunch, but did get off work early, skipping the FAC. When she got home, she noticed Eric dusting. When he turned around, his lips were bright red. Scarlet, in fact.

"Uh hello," said Jennifer, startled.

"Hello yourself," said Eric, giving Jennifer a big smile. "I was just . . . what's wrong? Oh. This." He put his hand to his lips. His fingertips were also bright red. "I was going through that box of stuff when I suddenly realized what was wrong."

"Oh really?" said Jennifer. She noticed the outline of a bra under his sweatshirt.

"Yes. It's so obvious. I took a class on the subject in college. All my life I've been living out a kind of masculine ideal. You know, football, beer, working on the docks, I had completely neglected my feminine side. It hit me as I was thinking about all the women I've gone out with. They all followed the same pattern. Not feminine in a positive, nurturing sort of way."

"I see," said Jennifer. "Was this some kind of psych class?"

"No," he said. "An alternate requirement in Humanities. Jung, Campbell, Freud, gender roles, sexual differences, cultures. I can't remember the name, exactly but it was something like 'Discovery of Gender in Society and Culture' or something. I remember there were a lot of chicks in the class."

"Now you're getting in touch with your feminine side."

"Exactly. Once I started doing housework, the unconscious feminine side bubbled into my consciousness. I began to realize the women I'd been with were a kind of negative force. I suddenly wanted something positive. But I couldn't figure exactly what. When I looked at the box, it struck me. I didn't know who I was any more. On a lark, I decided to take some of the things you had in there – I hope you don't mind, but you said you were going to give them away – and try them on. Then I saw the lipstick and polish, and well, you know the rest."

"How do you feel?" asked Jennifer. She was feeling slightly queasy. While Eric explained himself, she noticed that he was beginning to act quite feminine. His expressions got bigger, and well, more expressive. He moved his red-tipped hands when he talked. He wiggled his butt. It was too much.

"I feel great. I feel like I've been set free. It's wonderful."

Oh great, thought Jennifer. I've created a fem boy. She wondered if he would eventually turn gay. She was starting to get a headache. "How long do you think this experiment will last?"

"I don't know. I was wondering if you had some spare makeup or maybe some clothes that didn't fit. And shoes. These tennis shoes don't go with the stockings at all."

"I'll see what I can do," said Jennifer. "Right now I need a drink."

"You wait here. I'll get you one. You like margaritas, don't you?"