



Reluctant Press presents:

Witness Protection

Deena Gomersall



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS

A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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Witness Protection

By Deena Gomersall.

Daniel, like many young boys, grew up with a love of spies and secret agents, he had watched all of the James Bond films and had dreamt about being 007 out on a secret mission, Daniel, unlike other boys, however, made his dreams come true... sort of.

Graduating with honors, he had applied for a job with the CIA. Rather than being on exotic locations, for much of the time, he was based in the suburban area of McLean, Virginia, along the West Bank of the Potomac River.

There, after starting as a technical requirements officer, he gathered and supplied intelligence and kept tabs on known terrorists. It was also Daniel's job to evaluate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorist threats. None of the scantily-clad girls of the Bond movies were to be seen nor was it quite what he had dreamed about as a young boy, but it was interesting.

By the time of his twenty-fifth birthday, he had decided to make a change of occupation and go into the building trade as his dad and grandfather had done before him. He was also looking to settle down with his girlfriend, Sophie Cygleris, who had been none too happy about the risks his job entailed, especially after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It was she who had been instrumental in persuading him to come out of the CIA. They had already discussed a possible move to New York City where Sophie had lived after her family had moved to the States from their home in Plymouth, England.

Six months later, Daniel and Sophie had, at last, made their move. He was now working as a self-employed builder and Sophie had secured a job with the New York Times as a journalist. Sophie and her colleagues were following a spate of minor terrorist bombings in the city. Eighty-seven people had lost their lives and nearly a thousand had been badly injured.

Meanwhile, Daniel was working in a derelict part of town that was currently going through a process of redevelopment; some of the old buildings around where he was working were boarded up and waiting to be either pulled down or given a complete restructuring and refurbishment.

It was on one particular day that he had seen from a third floor window several men of Asian origin entering one of the boarded-up buildings. He was too far away to make out any facial characteristics but he had the training and sense to keep himself hidden from sight as he watched. It was about three hours later that the five men left the building, pulling shut the wooden door behind them and walking out to a main road.

Something told him that all was not right and he felt uneasy for the rest of the day. After he had returned home that evening, he decided to bring the subject up.

“Out of curiosity, Sophie, has there been anything fresh on those terrorist attacks?” he asked his girlfriend over the evening meal.

“Nothing new. It’s been mainly suicide bombers but we believe that with the state of unrest in the Middle East, and the intervention by the USA in some of those countries as a continued fight against terrorism, that some of the terrorist leaders may be planning a larger-scale attack. I’m not saying it will be on a scale like 9/11, but I think we will be shortly receiving a high-alert warning. Why?”

“It’s just something that I saw today that made me a little uneasy. Maybe working in the CIA all those years has made me a little paranoid... but I think I’ll give Chad a ring and see if they have news of anything.”

Chad had been a colleague, working in the same office as Daniel. He still worked with the CIA but, other than a casual interest in what Daniel had to say, he couldn’t report any known terrorists having entered the States recently or that the FBI were any further to putting a finger on known ring leaders for the recent bombings.

“Can’t really say at the moment, buddy. You never know, it may just be a bunch of illegal immigrants or asylum seekers looking for refuge in the derelict areas. But keep a watch for anything suspicious and, if you do find anything, don’t do anything yourself, just get back to me okay? Catch you soon,” Chad told him.

It was two days later when Daniel heard cars pull up in the street below where he was once again working. Looking out, he saw seven Asians around two estate cars. They were talking and scanning the surrounding buildings with their eyes; one man caught sight of Daniel in the window. Rather than dodging out of sight, Daniel pretended not to be taking any notice and made it appear he was just doing his work, oblivious to their presence.

After a long stare at him to see if he was looking, the Asian began talking to the others and Daniel moved away from the window without taking a further look.

When he looked again, the same door was ajar and four of the men were gone. Five minutes later, they returned, each carrying a large wooden box, which they loaded up into the cars. Once this was done, they all climbed into the cars and drove away. Now Daniel really was suspicious.

After some fifteen minutes, Daniel left the building he had been working on and cautiously crossed over to the opposite block. With a pounding heart, he approached the door of the building he had seen the seven men enter and, after a glance around, gave it a push. It was unlocked and, with a slight push, it opened up.

Daniel's ears strained to pick up any kind of sound from within; not hearing anything, he then cautiously stepped inside. The inside of the room was dark and dusty with rubble and broken masonry scattered about the floor. The downstairs rooms were empty.

He was scared of going upstairs but, with a pounding heart, he ascended the stairwell and looked about the three upper rooms. There was nothing, not even signs of anyone squatting.

Daniel's heart didn't stop its rapid beat until he was back safe in his own building; even then he was feeling a little shaken. "Shaken but not stirred," he muttered to himself almost wryly with a slight grin.

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When Daniel returned home that evening, he was surprised to find that Sophie had not yet returned home. He usually worked throughout the daylight hours and, it being midsummer, he was often back home two or three hours after his partner. She finally returned twenty minutes after him.

"Where you been, honey? I've started a meal but it's going to be another half hour yet before we can eat."

"I'm sorry, darling, we all got called up to that big bomb blast in Manhattan," Sophie apologized.

"Bomb blast? What bomb blast?" he asked with a bemused look.

"Haven't you heard? Jeez! A twenty-story office block has been blown out this afternoon. No official number has been given yet but casualties are in the hundreds," Sophie informed her boyfriend.

Perhaps phoning Chad again would have been the smartest move for Daniel to make, let him know about his latest observation and if it could be in any way tied with this new attack. But something, rekindled from his childhood, made Daniel want to go out and investigate for himself again later that evening.

With the area now shrouded in darkness, armed with a powerful torch, Daniel returned to the derelict building and, with even more trepidation than before, tried the door and went inside.

Again the inside of the building was silent, deathly silent. This time, though he felt even more scared than before, he made a more sweeping search. It was an area of floor that was not littered with dust and rubble that led to Daniel's discovery of a trap door into a cellar and it was down in the cellar that Daniel discovered an arms cache enough for a small army.

Along with Semtex and other explosive devices, there was at least ten crates containing AK-74 Kalashnikov rifles and even including some of the AK-00 series weapons, boxes of bullets, gas masks and, even more worrying, phials that could contain anthrax, mustard gas or any other chemical or biological agent. Wisely, he was not prepared to check these without proper protection.

Daniel had seen enough, he couldn't get out of the building fast enough and was petrified of being caught down there by anyone. With sweat pouring from his brow, he drove back home, still trying to come to terms with what he had just found.

Chad wasn't at work that evening but he put Daniel through to a colleague on the Internet. Wesley Ryman listened to all that Daniel told him while typing a report he was planning to send to FBI investigators.

"Okay, Daniel, I'm going to send you a batch of photographs of possible Saudi nationalists that we have been keeping an eye on recently. If you recognize any of them, point them out," Wesley told him.

After eight minutes of downloading, Daniel carefully looked through the sets of photographs. His training had taught him how to quickly pick out facial features and, after a further ten minutes he had given three names to Wesley he was sure he had seen around the two cars.

"Okay Daniel, you've done good. FBI agents are already making their way over there, you stay away, okay? One of the guys you have identified is already wanted for terrorist bombings, the two others are big fish in Al-Qa'eda. We are making a trace on the car registrations you supplied. Well done! You never should have left us."

Daniel smiled wryly. "It was interesting but I decided on a more normal life. Trouble is my partner is going to kill me when she finds I didn't give her a lead to a major story before alerting you guys. I'd better wake her and give her the low down now, though, so that her paper gets the exclusive."

Sophie's tabloid did get the exclusive and she was the reporter. The arms cache was seized and four of the Asians, with information from the car registrations, were caught and arrested. Conclusive evidence was later surrendered that the men were connected to the recent New York City bombings.

Now, however, FBI agents were keen to identify the other three Asians, some of whom may have been even bigger fish. To do this, they took Daniel with them to their headquarters to see if he could pick out any more faces from the FBI files. As a former CIA agent, his identification would stand solid in a law court.

"Are you absolutely sure that this is one of the men you saw?" Agent Mike Calderwood asked after Daniel had succeeded in identifying two more men.

"No mistaking that one at all. I felt sure I had seen his face before when I was with the CIA, but he stared straight at me. I saw him best of all."

"He stared straight at you?" Calderwood questioned with a raised eyebrow.

“Yes. He was scanning the area before they went into the building. I know it’s him because like I said, I felt sure I’d seen him before somewhere. Is he known to you?”

“You might say,” Calderwood replied. “He is Osama Bin Laden’s right-hand man. I got to confess, we didn’t even know he was over here. I’m just highly surprised he didn’t have you killed when he saw you.”

“Well, I made it seem like I wasn’t paying any attention at all. If they needed to be quick and didn’t want to draw any undue attention to themselves, maybe that’s what got me off the hook.”

“Maybe. Just regard yourself as one goddamn lucky son of a bitch. That guy is as cold-blooded a killer as any I have ever encountered. If your evidence can prove he is also connected to the bombings and we can put him away, you could get yourself a commendation from the president himself, who knows? From him we may even get enough information to trace Bin Laden himself.”

Daniel grinned. He hardly expected things to be so deep, but he was excited at the possibility of getting some kind of reward from the president and he felt satisfied with himself that he had brought some leading terrorists to task. Something inside him almost felt as if he wanted to get back into terrorist busting.

The following day, Daniel heard from Chad that from the two new identifications two more of the gang had been picked up. He was impressed by how fast these men were being captured following his information.

During their evening meal, Daniel was telling Sophie all that had ensued when there was some loud knocking at the front door. The knocking was repeated even before Daniel could get up from the table to see who it was. “Okay, okay. Goddamn it, I’m coming already,” Daniel muttered.

Five men were standing at the door wearing hats and long light gray coats. The front man flashed a badge at him that bore his photo and plainly read **FBI**. “Daniel Storage?” the man asked. “Er, yes. That’s me.”

“I’d like you to come with me, sir. Is there anyone else in the house?”

“Yes, my girlfriend, Sophie. What’s all this about? Can’t it wait? We are having our evening meal.”

Daniel gave a look of annoyance as two men brushed past him and went into his home without invitation. “Hey, hold on there one minute. Just what is going on here?”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Storage. I don’t have time to explain right now. Would you please follow me to my car.”

“But, but what about the house? Do I need a jacket?” Daniel asked in a state of confusion.

He was answered by being led by his elbow as if he was some kind of common criminal and ushered out into the street towards a waiting car with passersby watching on. Looking back, he saw the two agents who had entered his house similarly marching Sophie out to a second car.

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Daniel had been taken to an office of the FBI and he was now sitting before a chief agent, Eddy Rankin. Sophie was not there and he had seen nothing of her since his arrival.

“Would you mind telling me what all of this is about?” Daniel demanded angrily. “If this is to do with my observation of the Asian terrorists, which I presume it must be, is this how to treat someone who has just saved New York from terrorist bomb attacks?”

The agent remained silent as he looked steadily at Daniel. Then, putting a file folder onto his desk, he answered. “Yes, I believe it is... if you want to stay alive.”

“What do you mean ‘if I want to stay alive?’”

“What I mean is your information has led to the arrest of six leading Al-Qa’eda terrorists and the probable brains behind the attacks being forced to go on the run. How happy do you think that has made some people? We are talking top terrorists here and our intelligence guys have information that there is now a price for your head, and with those guys, that means literally. It’ll be served on a silver platter.”

Daniel suddenly felt weak and afraid, but there was more. “Further, your girlfriend works as a journalist for the Times and did a cover story about some of the bombings and of the first arrests. Al Qa’eda have already linked you and Cygleris together, both of your lives are in danger.”

“So what do you plan to do?” Daniel asked through an increasingly tightening throat.

“Place you in witness protection, that’s why we had to get you out of your place immediately. Your evidence is vital to put the six suspects away but we need your positive identification on the seventh and most important man. He is an extremely big fish and we cannot allow him to escape. We believe he was involved in the Manhattan plane attacks and the Bali incident but we hadn’t enough evidence. The do-gooders demand we have full evidence before we can convict such killers. Your eyewitness evidence can link him to these latest attacks.”

“So where you putting Sophie and me that will be safe?” Daniel questioned.

“Well for one thing, somewhere separate. There is no way you two can be in any kind of contact with each other. Also, we are going to have to change your identity. Your looks, your papers, everything,” Rankin told him directly.

“But for how long?” Daniel exclaimed.

“As long as it takes, fella, even if after we capture Jaheed Tariq Saad, these guys don’t forget soon. Those people are still hunting for Salman Rushdie for just writing a goddamn book.”

“Well, what if we decide to go into hiding just by ourselves, take our chances? I don’t want to be separated from Sophie, I love her. We’re getting married in the fall.”

“Sorry buddy, it doesn’t work like that. You ought to know, having worked for the CIA; this is a case of national security. You are totally in our hands now. I’m sorry about your girl but chances are you won’t be seeing her again. If you really love her, that’s for her best.”

“You have to be joking, I won’t do it,” Daniel continued protesting.

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Daniel stayed as a “guest” of the FBI in a safe house for the rest of that night and into the following day. He had no choice but to comply, he wasn’t being asked, he was being told.

Mike Calderwood had been assigned to Daniel and was now going through various things with him.

“We have traced six of the seven men and forensic evidence has undoubtedly linked them with the recent bombings. The seventh is a senior level leader with Al-Qa’eda and has connections with the Al-jihad movement He is still out there.

“As well as the armory and explosive material uncovered in the derelict house we found phials containing Anthrax spores and botulism, obviously intended for a bio-terrorism attack some time in the near future. We have put a huge dent in Al-Qa’eda’s plans and there must be some pretty pissed turban wearers out there at the moment.

“It has been decided to move you 500 miles Northwest. You will be renamed Phil Rhinehart, you will be given employment and a whole new history.”

“Don’t I even get to choose myself a new name?” asked Daniel.

“Everything is by the book. We leave for your new location tomorrow. Your file is here. Read it, memorize it. When you get to your new home, try to quickly settle down and make friends, get yourself a new woman friend. Act natural.”

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“Hi Phil, how’s things going with you?” Ross Stansfield asked in a friendly voice.

“Going great, Ross. Hey, I’ll get up to your place tomorrow and do that pointing you asked me to do. Okay.”

“Sure. That’d be swell. By the way, while I’m thinking on it, there’s been some guy going around the town asking questions. He wanted to know if there were any strangers about or anyone moving into the town lately. Well, I mentioned you but then told him no more because I didn’t like the look of him. Your name didn’t seem to make much to him, but I thought I’d tell you.”

“Really! What did he look like?”

“Swarthy guy. Stood about five ten, 210 lbs, dark-skinned. Looked like one of those Middle Eastern types to me, dark eyes and bushy beard graying at the sides. You recognize the description?”

“No, don’t know any Arab types. Didn’t he know who he was supposed to be looking for?”

“He never said. Anyway, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

In spite of what he had said to his new neighbor, Daniel felt very uneasy. He immediately got in touch with Calderwood.

“Stay easy. Don’t forget you are going under a new name now. Your hair is dark brown now rather than blonde and you are wearing it a lot longer, not forgetting you are now sporting a mustache. All your papers and records show you are Phil Rheinhart, twenty-eight years old and that you originate from Seattle. There’s not a lot to link you with your former identification. He could be looking for anybody, it is probably Daniel Storage he is looking for, but I’ll get some agents up there to try track him down. Like I say, don’t panic and continue acting natural.”

Whether Calderwood had sent any agents or not, none approached him the following day. After working through the day in his new IT job, that evening Daniel had something to eat, then went to do the pointing job he had promised to do for his new friend and neighbor, Ross Stansfield, while there was still light.

Daniel was three-quarters up a ladder at the apex of his friend’s house. Ross’ wife, Miriam, came out of the door to ask him if he fancied a cold beer. He was forced to look down to reply and, at that moment, a loud zip passed his ear followed by a cracking noise against the brickwork as a piece of masonry flew off and stung him on the cheek.

“What the!!” Daniel exclaimed as his ladder began to slip sideways. He lost his balance and both he and the ladder crashed into bushes below. The fall prevented Daniel from hearing more gunshots ring out. Two FBI agents were discharging the bullets and a man of Asian origin was lying dead inside a car parked a little further down the street.

The fall into bushes, although causing some scratching and bruises, prevented Daniel from any serious injury. Intelligence officers couldn’t believe how lucky he had been for a bullet, fired from a handgun with a silencer, to miss him by a fraction of an inch.

“You seem to have a charmed life,” agent Eddy Rankin told Daniel as they sat in his office. “But these people seriously seem to want you dead, they must have gone to extreme measures to track you down and identify you. I guess you owe your life to that neighbor of yours.”

“I guess I do. When I get back home, I’ll do that pointing for free,” Daniel stated.

“Back home?” Rankin exclaimed in disbelief. “You won’t be going back there again. That safe house is no longer safe. The town folk now know a bit about you and what happened yesterday. You would be putting their lives in danger by returning. You would implicate them.”

“Oh great. So what happens now? Move again? Take on another identification? Learn another new job, have to make friends all over again with a whole bunch of strangers?”

“Life sure sucks, doesn’t it, but it’s better than being dead. Anyway, you have now moved up to Code Red.”

“Code Red? And just what is Code Red.”

“High-risk protected witnesses. You were found after just six months, the people that are after you mean business. You will now be forced to undergo a total change of identity in order to try protect you.”

Daniel smirked wryly. “What exactly is ‘total change?’” he asked.

“To transform you as far removed from your original self as possible. Your new identity will be as a woman.

“What!! Are you kidding me? No way, man. No way. You are joking, right?”

“No joke, Daniel. This is top priority. Only the very highest levels of protection program candidates are requested to change gender.”

“I’m not doing it. It was bad enough breaking from Sophie, taking me away from all my family and not being allowed to contact them at all, but this... this goes way over the top. I’m not doing it.”

“You are going to have to. This comes right from the White House. It’s not so much us protecting you anymore, it’s protecting National Security. Six months, just six months to track you down and, when they did, you were shot at and survived. They were not trying to kill you; it turns out that you were shot at by a dart, a dart meant to put you out, not kill you. Having tracked you for six months, if they had wanted you dead, they would have used a professional hit man, used a powerful weapon with sights, silencer and real bullets. Their man did not know we had agents tracking him.”

“So, why didn’t they want to kill me? I don’t understand.”

“It’s quite obvious. We are not dealing with some sandal-wearing camel riders who have an IQ of zero, you know. These are highly intelligent, educated people who have a reason behind what they do. They were smart enough to trace you, but not kill you. Obviously, they now know you were formerly with the CIA. Yes, they want you dead, but if they can get hold of you, torture you and extract vital information from you before doing so, all the better for them. Through you, they could learn what we know about them, where our Middle East operations are, our intelligence sources. I’m sorry, Storage, but we have not just to protect you but to ensure, at all costs, that they do not get you.”

“But... live as a woman! I can’t do that. This is some kind of bad dream,” Daniel responded in near panic and with an increasingly heavy heart. “It’s foolish, I

look nothing like a woman. If they trace me again, they will tell right away I am not a woman. If you want to insure that I am never identified again, why not give me plastic surgery to change my appearance? I wouldn't be crazy about that either, but it beats the hell out of living as a woman."

"Trust me. We have a special program and experts to insure you fit the bill. We have done this thing countless times, to some very high profile and famous people who were thought to have just mysteriously disappeared. These terrorists have their own intelligence officers. If they have photos of you, believe me, they would expect things like plastic surgery. They will work out all possible changes that could be made to your appearance, facial features and hair. What they will not expect is for you to live as a woman. They will not be looking for a female."

"But how long for? How long would I need to... to live as a woman? You aren't... Oh, my God! You aren't going to change my sex, are you?"

Rankin smiled. "There should be no need for that. As for how long, again, as long as it takes."

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Daniel had been taken to another, temporary, secure house that was being guarded. There he spoke to Mike Calderwood who was briefing him.

"We are keeping a twenty-four hour watch on this place but tomorrow you will be moved to your new, permanent location. It is highly unlikely that you have been traced here but, just to make absolutely sure, you will leave here tomorrow in your new identification, just in case anyone managed to follow us and has been watching who comes and goes."

Daniel looked at Calderwood forlornly. "What do you think of this stupid idea? If I try pretending to be a woman, I'm going to stick out like a sore thumb and I'll be bound to bring attention to myself. I know nothing about being a woman, how to look like one or how to act like one."

Calderwood tried to give Daniel a reassuring smile. "We know what we are doing, we wouldn't be doing anything that we thought would not work or will give you away. This evening you will have a visit from one of our female operatives. She is going to be your constant companion and it will be her job to train you and to insure you look the part."

"Oh well, that's just dandy. A woman is going to see me all dolled up in women's things, how embarrassing," Daniel sighed.

"She won't think twice about it, she's already been briefed, she's a professional and will just be doing her job."

Daniel glanced at his watch; it was twenty after two in the afternoon. "So, I guess I don't have much time left being a man, do I?" he sighed again.

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Daniel had hardly eaten anything, he'd hardly done anything. He had just sat and brooded while the hours slowly ticked by. Calderwood had left some time ago; half an hour ago he had glanced through the window to see the two agents, in their trademark hats and long raincoats sitting in their car a little way up the street.

He was suddenly startled as someone knocked on the door. He looked between the drawn curtains to see the two FBI guys still sitting there, but looking towards the door, they didn't seem unduly concerned about anything.

"Hello?" he called through the door.

"Mr. Storage? Hi there. My name is Mandy Collins. I have been assigned to help you with your new identity. Here's my card," a pleasant-sounding, young female voice told him.

Through the glazed glass paneling of his door, Daniel could now see an identity card being held up and could just make out the face of an attractive female with long, permed, shoulder-length blonde hair.

Unlatching the door, he looked at the woman who now stood before him. She was no more than in her early twenties, maybe twenty-one or twenty-two. She had a pleasant smile on her face.

"May I come in?" she asked after a long silent pause.

"Sorry, yes, if you must."

"Not pleased to see me then?" she countered, still wearing her smile. "I have that effect on men".

"You've come to disguise me as a woman, haven't you? Can't say I'm exactly enthralled about it." Daniel replied. "So, what happens now?"

"You have just said it, we disguise you as a woman and start the process of perfecting your looks, your deportment and your mannerisms. I have a trunk in my car with various items of clothing in. I'll bring that in shortly but first, shall we settle a little? We'll have a coffee and get to know each other a bit before starting."

Daniel was informed by the woman what he had already heard from Calderwood; she was assigned to him for the foreseeable future as a regular companion. He would not learn how to disguise himself as a female overnight or even in a week; it was going to take work. Mandy was a very strong, forceful type who took immediate control of things. She would tell him what she wanted him to do and he would be expected to do it.

After bringing in the case of female things, Mandy told Daniel she wanted him to have a bath, not a shower but a long soaking bath. She accompanied him upstairs to start running the water into the tub and she poured the contents of several bottles into the pouring water. There was a strong smell of perfume that began filling the air and a white bubbly froth was forming on the water.

“So, have you given thought to a name yet?” Mandy asked.

“A name?” Daniel asked dumbly.

“Uh huh. You are going to be living as a woman, you need a woman’s name. Any ideas?”

“Er, no. I hadn’t thought about that side of things. Last time, it wasn’t left to me. I guess something like Danielle or Danni maybe?”

“No, way too close to your own name. We need something entirely different and something that has no masculine connection. How about Tara or Celeste? Maybe Chloe?”

Daniel grimaced. “Aren’t they all a bit girlie?” he asked.

“Yes, they are meant to be. Like I said, I want nothing that could be shortened to masculine or sound masculine. I like Tara but how about Tina? Yes, we will go with that. Now, we need a surname?” Mandy suddenly stated, without asking for his thoughts or approval.

“Tina Marie Webster. I used to know a girl called Webster at University. Karen Webster, nice girl. I wonder what became of her?” Mandy stated again without seeking approval. Now she was giving him a second name in the bargain.

“Is that it or do I get a choice?” Daniel asked as Mandy turned off the water.

“That’s it. We’ll stick with that, otherwise we will be at it all night and our people have to start the process of giving you a new ID. After we have got you dressed and made-up, I’ll take some photographs to go on your personal cards,” she informed her charge as she handed him a round jar of cream.

“Okay, I’m going to leave you to your privacy. Rub this cream all over your body after you have washed and soaked thoroughly. Treat your arms, your legs, chest, and your groin if you want to but not on your neck or face. It smells pretty bad and it will give you a burning sensation but persevere. Then get back into the tub and wash it all off. When you are done, pat your body dry, wrap a towel about yourself, then give me a shout. Okay?”

Daniel had never felt so vulnerable, so naked or embarrassed. His skin gleamed a rosy pink and it was totally hairless; it felt really strange, supersensitive to the touch. His body had a sweet scent permeating from it as he emerged from the bathroom; a towel wrapped around his waist, to call Mandy and tell her he was finished.

“Okay. Come on downstairs, I have some things ready for you to wear,” Mandy returned.

Daniel entered the living room looking decidedly embarrassed and extremely reluctant to participate in whatever was to come next.

“That... that cream you gave me... it’s dissolved all of my body hair. I’m hairless!” Daniel exclaimed.

“Are you sure? Did you check to make sure you’ve got it all?”

“No. You never told me it would do that. I don’t want a hairless body. I’ve had hair on my chest, arms and legs since high school. I feel naked.”

“Good. When was the last time you saw a woman with a body covered in hair?”

“Well, that doesn’t matter. I’ll be wearing clothes, that would cover the hair. Who would know?”

“Anyone who saw you wearing a short skirt or a sleeveless dress. The only way to make this work is by 100% disguise, from the inside out. This is not some dress-up game, this is for real and there are some very dangerous killers out there just itching to torture you before killing you in some grizzly way. Not just you but your girlfriend; her life also depends on your success because they want her for what she wrote in one of the newspapers and for whatever else she may know.”

Daniel hardly heard the last statement; his mind was on something else. “Skirts? Dresses? Why do I have to wear anything like that?” he asked.

“Because you are being disguised as a woman Duh!”

“Yes but lots of women wear jeans and slacks these days... men’s type of clothes. Sophie only has two skirts and she hardly ever wears them. She used to borrow a lot of my things.”

“Yes, and Sophie is a woman. We are disguising you as a woman which means we have to work that much harder to make you look naturally feminine. You are not going to have much success in looking like a woman if you continue wearing men’s style clothes. Oh, and by the way, that towel is wrapped wrongly.”

Daniel glanced down at the towel that was wrapped around his waist. “Why?”

“Because it should be wrapped from underneath your armpits downward to cover your groin area and your breasts.”

“But I don’t have breasts!”

“So everyone can see. But shouldn’t you if you are a woman? Therefore they should be concealed. And, because women have breasts, you will have your own, too. Oh, don’t look so alarmed. We will merely be attaching some very realistic silicone ones to your chest, the type used for women who have had a mastectomy. They will be well-stuck to your skin, though, so that you can’t be tempted to not wear them at any time and force you to maintain a feminine-looking chest.”

“This thing is starting to be a horrible nightmare. I can’t do it. I’m sorry but I can’t bring myself to dress and disguise myself as a woman, let alone live as one.”

“And I’m sorry but like you have been told, you have no choice. We could lock you up in a prison for the duration. Even there, unless you were in solitary, you could be got at, but that will not save Sophie.

“Now, we really must press on. Put these on to cover yourself. I am going to start working on your appearance. I’ll tell you everything I do as I apply cosmetics to your face and I want you to take note. This is a lesson, a lesson you must learn so that you are able to do it all by yourself at some stage... the sooner the better.”

Daniel glanced in dismay at what he was being handed, a soft terry robe and a pair of red satin panty briefs. "Please don't make me look too feminine," he pleaded desolately.

Mandy had Daniel sit in a high chair and began by putting a liquid cosmetic onto his face and blending it in with a make-up pad. After that, she used a whole range of brushes and color pallets on him and even used tweezers to pluck away at his eyebrows.

"Your hair isn't too bad a length, Tina," she told him using, to his chagrin, his new feminine name. "We could style it into a short modern feminine style, but for now I want you looking different from normal and a wig is as good a disguise as anything. However, let your hair grow out because we can do so much more with it. Also, grow your finger nails, natural are far better than false."

Through a mirror that was opposite him, Daniel watched his face being transformed from that of a man to a woman. The use of foundation, powder and blush gave him a healthy feminine glow and changed the shape of his face. His eyebrows, to his dismay, had been plucked to give a fine, feminine arch that altered his whole brow line and made his eyes look wider. Eye pencil and blended blue and gray eye shadows made his eyes look feminine and expressive. Lip liner, lipstick and gloss made his lips appear full, pouting and sensuous.

The icing on the cake was the fitting of a long wig of fine, straight, golden blonde hair that fell about the sides of his face and over his shoulders. This last part really did alter his appearance and make him look, startlingly, like a woman.

"How is it possible. I look like a chick! I have never looked remotely feminine, I have always had a masculine face," he stated in utter disbelief and with a distinct uneasiness.

"Don't kid yourself. I've only used the paints, the canvas has always been there," Mandy said. "Anyway, let's press on. I want you dressed so that we can leave here. We have a long drive ahead of us."

Daniel's embarrassment grew steadily worse as he was forced to let Mandy fasten a bra around his chest and it increased when she filled it to give a feminine shape. The "breasts" looked all the more startling when he was given a soft, feminine blouse to wear with little printed rose motifs. It was utterly strange, not only buttoning the blouse the wrong way around but fastening the buttons over the twin protrusions on his chest.

He was mortified when he was then given a blue denim skirt to wear but he knew this was no time to start complaining. The waistband fastened perfectly but poor Daniel was aghast that the skirt didn't even reach his knees. There was some light relief when he was given a pair of flats to wear... though the shoes were in an unmistakably feminine style with pointed toes.

Standing Daniel up, Mandy inspected him critically. She ran a brush through his new long locks of blonde hair, then went to a small attaché case to retrieve a slender golden lady's wristwatch and a few dress rings.

“Hmm. Plenty of room for improvement but good enough for you to leave the house. If anyone has been observing you, they should see two women leaving and believe that Daniel is still inside. Our guys will remain outside the house for a few days to give the impression they are still guarding someone inside. Are you ready to go?”

“No,” Daniel replied, shaking his head pitifully.

Daniel was so petrified of going outside being dressed as he was that, when Mandy opened up the front door, his legs refused to move. He could not believe what was happening, what he was being forced to do. His bare legs, revealed as they were in the short denim skirt, had never felt so bare or as exposed to him as they did now.

“Can’t I just stop here and be guarded by those men?” he asked pleadingly.

“Oh sure. Those guys would just love being parked up outside a house all day long for the rest of their lives, let alone the cost of their wages to the public sector. And who’s going to buy all your food? No, you have to leave here and start yourself a new life, looking after and being responsible for yourself,” she told him.

“A new life as a woman, though. I can’t live as a woman, go about my every day life as though I was a woman. I know I can’t.”

“Well, all I know at the moment is we have to leave here. I’m here to help and guide you, but I think you’ll be surprised at what you are able to do for yourself and how easy it will all become.”

“I don’t want it to become easy, that’d be like surrendering my masculinity, becoming happy with what you intend to make me,” he grumbled as he drew up every ounce of will power he could muster to step to the door and look outside. He had never felt more nervous or embarrassed.

The street was clear except for the car parked facing the house. It was a different two agents from the previous evening who were sat in the car. They watched as Mandy led Daniel over to her convertible, Daniel stooping low as he walked in an attempt to conceal himself and hide his face. He looked over at the two agents expecting to see them smirking at him because of the way he was dressed, but they didn’t

“Tina, straighten up.” Mandy chastised. “If you are hoping to hide yourself, that is the quickest way to draw attention to yourself.”

Daniel did as he was told, making an almighty attempt to lift his head upwards. As Mandy opened her car door and unlatched his side, she quickly told him how to sit.

“Do not lead with your left leg. Place your bottom on the seat, legs together, then swing them both in, making sure you have pulled your skirt down and smoothed it as you sit. Hmmm, not bad but we’re going to have to put a lot of work in for you to pass as a woman in public.”

“Yeah, probably a lifetime,” he grumbled as he fastened his seat belt, finding the unusual obstacle of his right breast in the way.

As Mandy steered her car out onto the street and drove up the road, a car pulled out of a side street and followed them. “We are being followed!” Daniel exclaimed in panic.

“Don’t worry, it’s some of our guys, they are escorting us until we get to the state border,” Mandy explained. “You see how important you are to us?”

By now they had come out onto a main road where there was much more traffic about plus many pedestrians walking the streets. “Can’t you put the top up?” Daniel asked, feeling all the more exposed.

“What, on a hot day like this? Get the wind through your hair, girl. Besides, you need to get used to being seen as a woman and this is the safest exposure you can get. Let’s see how many people give you a double take, recognizing you as a man.”

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It seemed as though they had driven for hours and hours and Daniel’s legs were feeling cramped and stiff. He wasn’t sure just when the FBI agents had stopped tailing them but they were now gone.

“It’s getting late and I’m feeling a bit tired,” Mandy told him. “We’ll check in at a motel pretty soon.”

The “pretty soon” was to be another hour of driving but finally Mandy pulled into the front parking lot of a motel located just off the roadside. Daniel immediately started feeling nervous again, thinking that he would have to reveal himself.

“Just wait here while I go check us in,” Mandy told him and jumped out of the car. Daniel didn’t know what might be worse, going in with Mandy or sitting in the open top convertible on his own, even though it was now quite dark.

Soon Mandy was back. “Okay Tina, I got us a room that has separate bedrooms. Be a dear and carry the trunk for me.”

Mandy led the way to the twin room she had booked and let Daniel inside. “I’m famished,” she stated. “You make some coffee and I’m gonna go see if I can fix up some sandwiches for us. Oh, and give your hair a brushing. You can change into something more comfortable while I’m gone.”

Daniel had soon located the kitchen and the coffee pot, then went to see what was in the trunk of clothes. Everything in there was ghastly feminine, no pants or jeans at all. The best things he could find were a pair of shorts that had a “cut off” design and a feminine pattern around each leg opening plus a skinny knit brown jumper that had a low-cut neckline. He put both of these on but still felt overly exposed, especially his legs which he was now revealing even more of.

Before Mandy came back with two large, well-filled baguettes he had the two mugs of coffee ready. In no time, the two of them were eating ravenously.

“What I want to do before we turn in, Tina, is to give you a few quick lessons in walking and holding your body. I don’t want to see you stooping or hunching your shoulders when you walk like you did earlier, okay?”

“But I really don’t want to get into walking like a girl, even if I could train to. I mean, what if I can’t undo what I do? When I go back to being myself again, I’m going to be prancing about like some sissy or faggot,” Daniel complained.

“One thing I think you had better understand, quickly, is that this isn’t just some dress-up game. It isn’t something you are going to be doing for a short while until the heat dies down. This is your new identity, Woman. It is an identity that you will have for a very long time to come. Don’t you think you would be well-advised perfecting it?”

“Just how long a time is ‘a long time?’” Daniel asked. He had asked the question before but the answer he had received gave no time frame.

“I really do not know, it’s not even like it would end if we got all the guys who may be after you like in a normal protection situation. Even if we got hold of Jaheed Tariq Saad or Bin Laden himself, there are hundreds of thousands of fundamentalists out there ready to do whatever to fight their so-called Holy War. Sure, I think in time, you will be forgotten about or they may give up and move onto other and much bigger targets, but that is some time off. I reckon you will be required, by the US government, to maintain your new identity for at least a number of years.”

That statement came as a huge blow to Daniel. Maybe he could have lived as being Phil Rhinehart for a number of years but then, he wasn’t really all that different in that disguise; he wore his usual clothing and he felt the same. None of that would be so in the guise of a woman, he didn’t feel the same at all and the clothing he had to wear were entirely different, not to mention the long hair and make up he had to wear. On top of all that, it also meant that he would not see Sophie again for years... if ever. He feared that they would most likely grow apart in time.

“Come on then, Tina, let’s start by learning poise and how to walk elegantly and ladylike. I want heel-to-toe steps from you, not big masculine strides. Square your shoulders and straighten your back,” Mandy instructed.

Mandy put Daniel through the paces for over an hour. He felt as if he had gotten nowhere but she seemed pleased. “Normally, you would quickly forget all that I have told you and just get straight back into your normal gait but, if we keep at it, as I intend to, it will all start to become normal to you, you will just walk, sit and stand lady-like without thinking. Okay, enough for now. Let’s get our heads down.”

Daniel balked when Mandy produced a long, flowing black nylon nightgown for him to wear to bed. It had puffed shoulders and lots of lace and ribbon around the bosom.

“Once again, Tina, you will be wearing things like this *every* night from now on. Get used to it, adjust,” Mandy told him forcefully.