



*Reluctant Press* presents:

# Run For Life

Norman Way



ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. HAIGHT

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A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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# A RUN FOR LIFE

**By Norman Way**

## **PART ONE: THE JOB**

I couldn't believe it had come down to this, but then I suppose there are a lot of men who could say that. I finished my pie and gulped down the last of the coffee as the restaurant's assistant manager walked past me down the corridor on the way to the office. I got up and walked behind him as if heading for the restrooms adjacent to the office. I pulled a ski mask over my head and yanked the .45 from my waistband as I caught up to him. He turned the key in the lock as I jammed the gun in the back of his neck and pushed him forward.

"On your knees and open the safe now!" I ordered as I closed the door behind me.

He crawled over to the safe and began spinning the dial. I removed a small plastic bag from my jacket pocket and tossed it in front of him.

"Fill it up fast if you know what's good for you!" I barked as I pressed the gun harder into his neck. Judging by the smell, he was too scared to give me any trouble; he quickly placed the bundles of cash in the bag. I reached over, yanked the phone cord out of the socket, then grabbed the bag out of his hand.

"Lie face down on the floor and stay put while you count to 100," I said as I stepped back

I shoved the gun in the waistband of my pants, took off the ski mask and opened the door. The corridor was clear. I stuffed the ski mask in my jacket pocket and ran out the back door, then down the alley. When I reached the end of the alley, I turned up the street. I saw the S-10 pull away from the curb and stop abreast of me. I yanked open the door, tossed the money bag in the back and hopped in.

Mac said nothing as he sped to the intersection. Luck was with us as the light was green; he turned right on the expressway and headed for the freeway onramp. It was start-

ing to snow and Mac switched the wipers on as we exited the expressway and headed north. I glanced in the side mirror as we pulled up even with the northbound freeway traffic. I saw the flashing red lights of two squad cars approaching the intersection where the restaurant was located. I knew it wouldn't be long before a description would be out.

"Floor it Mac, the cops are at the restaurant!" I yelled.

Mac punched the accelerator and we merged into the outside lane at the maximum speed limit. Mac's uncle had a cabin in northern Minnesota where we planned to hole up for a few days and then decide what to do.

Twenty minutes later, we left the interstate and headed northwest on a state highway. It began snowing harder and Mac turned the wipers on high speed to keep up with it. I turned the heater fan up as it was also getting colder and the puny fan in this little truck was barely keeping us warm.

A half hour went by. I kept checking the side mirror to see if anybody was following us. It was Sunday night so, once we left the interstate, the traffic was light. Soon we would be off the state highway and there would be hardly any traffic at all.

An hour crawled by, then Mac slowed as we neared the junction of the county road he was looking for. It was snowing harder now and the visibility was much worse.

Suddenly Mac braked, then turned left off the state highway and onto the secondary road.

"Another hour and we'll be there," he announced.

I checked my watch. It would be a little after 11 PM when we arrived at the cabin. Everything had gone pretty much the way we had planned it. No glitches, no trouble and we had scored what appeared to be a substantial sum of money.

The snow was coming down much harder now. You could barely see more than about a block ahead and the snow was beginning to stick to the highway. This little two-wheel drive pickup wasn't going to do us much good once the snow got deep.

"Better slow down a little," I cautioned.

Mac nodded as we rounded a sharp curve. Straight ahead, frozen in the headlights, was a ten-point whitetail deer. Mac hit the brakes and turned the wheel. He avoided hitting the deer but lost control of the truck. We hit the end of the guardrail and flipped over several times landing upright in a creek bed.

I sat still for several minutes, waiting for my eyeballs to stop rattling around in my head. I wasn't hurt, but there was a small trickle of blood coming from a cut on my forehead. I glanced over at Mac. He was slumped over, with his head at a funny angle. I reached over and could not feel a pulse. The cab of the S-10 had been flattened, more so on his side than mine. I was shorter than he was; I guess that saved me from more serious injury.

I tried to open the door but it was jammed. I tried pushing against it several times but to no avail. Finally I slid over to Mac's body as far as I could and pulled back on the door handle while kicking the door with my right foot. On the second kick, the door creaked open. I pushed hard with both hands and it finally swung open.

With the cold air came the sharp smell of gasoline. I reached behind me and grabbed the bag of money. As I stepped out, I sank ankle deep in cold water. I pushed the door shut and began walking upstream to the wooded bluff. I didn't want to stay close to the road. Maybe there was a farmhouse on the other side of the bluff where I could get some help. The snow was blinding and the wind made it seem even colder, so I put the ski mask back on.

I picked my way carefully through the trees and was about half way up the bluff when the S-10's gas tank went up and night turned into day. I stopped climbing and looked back at the little truck engulfed in flames. "So long Mac," I thought. "Thanks for everything."

I knew the fire would bring the authorities soon so I turned away and continued my climb. It was a difficult climb, holding on to the moneybag with one hand and grabbing a tree branch to hang onto with the other. I finally made it to the top but could not see what was on the other side. The flickering light from the burning truck would do me no good on the other side and I was getting cold. I had to find some help quickly before my feet froze.

I began my descent on the other side. About halfway down, there appeared to be an opening in the trees, a narrow corridor to the bottom. I half slid, half walked down this opening. I was only about twenty feet from the bottom when I lost my footing and tumbled the remaining distance, landing on my side against a barbed wire fence. I had kept a firm grip on the moneybag but I had to drop it to try to untangle myself from the barbs that now had me ensnared.

I freed my left sleeve first, then my legs. I stood up and surveyed the area. The fence was about six feet high and the sign in front of me warned that trespassers would be prosecuted. At this point, of course, an arrest for trespassing was the least of my problems. I picked up the moneybag and walked along the fence for a short distance. There was a break in the tree line on the opposite side and I could see the faint lights of a house in the distance.

My feet felt like two blocks of ice and if I didn't get to a warm place soon, I was going to freeze to death, or at least lose my feet to frost bite. I set the moneybag down and stepped on the second line of wire while gripping the top wire. The fence was solid. I tossed the moneybag over the fence. Gingerly, I climbed up and over the fence, and then climbed down the other side. As I stepped down, I slipped and fell against the bottom line of wire and snagged myself again.

As I struggled to free myself, the bright light of a flashlight blinded me momentarily. I heard the growl of a dog and a voice said softly, "Don't move. Do exactly as I tell you. If you do not obey me, I will let go of this leash and Butch will show you why he is the best de-nutter we ever had."

"Okay, I will," I answered. I couldn't see who was speaking to me but I understood the term "de-nutter" quite well.

The flashlight beam moved away from my face and shone on the fence where I was hooked. When my eyes adjusted to the dimmer light, I saw a figure in a long black coat with a hood. Straining at the leash was the biggest Doberman pinscher I had ever seen. The dog opened its mouth and barked once. I thought I was looking down a manhole with

teeth. Shortly, another figure, similarly dressed and also holding a Doberman on a leash, walked up and joined us.

“Check him out,” instructed the taller of the two, who was standing closest to me.

The shorter one walked over to me and began patting me down while the dog sat at my feet. I caught the faint aroma of perfume as her small black leather gloved hand frisked me over. My gun was removed and placed inside the moneybag.

“Get him unhooked and let’s get him back to the house,” ordered the taller one.

After they freed me from my entanglement, I stood up.

“Walk between us to the house,” said the taller one.

The shorter one, holding the moneybag in one hand and the leash in the other, led the way. I followed at a short distance as the taller one fell in line behind me.

I had no idea what I had just stumbled into but now was not the time to get cute and try to escape. It took us about five minutes to get out of the stand of pine trees, then we headed towards the lights of the house.

As we got closer, I saw the house was a large two-story Victorian-style home, complete with gables on four corners. We were approaching from the rear of the house and to the right I saw a large barn and a smaller tool shed. I did not see any vehicles and there did not appear to be any activity around the place nor anyone else waiting outside for us. We stopped in front of a storm cellar door at the right rear corner of the house. The shorter one set down the moneybag and grabbed the handle of the left side door and pulled it open, then did the same with the right hand door.

From a pocket of the long black coat, the short one removed a set of keys; after commanding the dog to sit, the short one walked down a short concrete ramp and unlocked a large wooden door. After pushing it open, the shorter one walked back up, picked up the moneybag, grabbed the dog’s leash and went back inside.

I followed at a respectful distance. The tall one behind me had been silent the whole time; the only noise was the panting of that big dog behind me. Once down the ramp and through the door, we entered a dark corridor.

“Stop!” ordered the tall one.

While the shorter one watched, the tall one behind me walked back up the ramp and closed the storm doors, then closed and locked the large wooden door. The dog behind me never moved but kept its eyes riveted on me. My eyes had just become adjusted to the darkness of the corridor when the tall one spoke again.

“Take off all your clothes, NOW!”

I removed my jacket first, then tried to untie my shoes but the soaking in the creek and subsequent trek thru the snow had frozen them in place. I pulled them off, and then removed the rest of my clothes. The shorter one unlocked a door to my right and stepped back.

“Inside!” she ordered.

I was beginning to shiver as I stepped inside the small room. The basement was better than being outside and this room was adjacent to the furnace room so it was warmer than the outside corridor. The door slammed shut behind me. It was pitch black and I couldn't see a thing until a moment later, when an overhead light came on. Judging by its dimness, it was probably a 40 watts or less. As my eyes became adjusted to the light, I took stock of my surroundings.

The windowless room was eight feet high by eight feet wide and about ten feet long. To my left was a cot with a pillow and a wool blanket. On the other side were a sink and toilet. The gray concrete walls had never been painted. I used the toilet, then lay down on the cot and covered myself with the blanket. I didn't have the foggiest notion of what I was going to do next. I decided the best course of action was to get some rest and play it by ear. Until I found out more about who these people were and where I was, there was not much I could do. It took me awhile but I finally went to sleep.

I did not sleep long. My watch had been removed when they took me prisoner so I had no idea how much time had passed. I dozed off again. When I woke up again, I used the toilet, then filled the cup on the sink with water and quenched my thirst. I lay down again and soon I heard the key in the lock. The door swung open. An attractive young woman with brown hair was standing there. She wore no makeup and was dressed in black slacks, flat shoes and a white short sleeve blouse.

"Sit up!" she instructed

I flipped the blanket back, swung my legs over the edge of the cot.

"Put these on!" she ordered as she tossed a pair of leg irons at my feet.

I slipped on the ankle clasps and locked them in place. There was about two feet of heavy chain separating the two clasps so running would be impossible and walking would be slow.

"Stand up and hold out your arms!" came the next command.

I did as she instructed and she attached a similar set to my wrists. There was only about six inches of the smaller chain separating my wrists. She stepped aside.

"Outside!" she ordered.

I walked slowly out of the cell, passing Butch, who had sat mutely in the doorway, watching all of this.

"Down the corridor and then left at the stairs," was the next instruction.

As I walked down the narrow corridor, I passed the furnace room on my right and several doors on my left. They had no markings of any kind. At the stairs, I turned left and entered a large room. I stopped short just inside the doorway.

This large room was set up like a medieval dungeon. There were numerous torture implements hanging from the wall, as well as an assortment of whips and paddles, a rack, and some other things I was afraid to ask what they were for. This was something out of one of those S& M adult films or nightmare movies that I never cared to see. A sharp crack on my buttocks from a riding crop encouraged me to move forward. I was marched over

to one corner of the room where more restraints were on the floor and hanging from the ceiling.

“Face the corner and raise your arms,” was my next instruction.

After doing so, my wrist chains were removed and my wrists were attached to the overhead restraints. When she finished, she removed my leg irons and attached my ankles to two of the wall restraints. Shortly, I heard the soft hum of a motor and noticed that the overhead restraints were pulling me up and the wall restraints were pulling my legs apart. I was about to scream as they got tight but the motor was shut off. I was trussed up spread-eagle and it hurt like hell.

“Stop jerking around like that, you’ll only make it worse. We’ll be finished with you in no time,” said the voice behind me.

I wasn’t sure exactly what “finished with you in no time” was going to involve but I wasn’t going anywhere trussed up like this; that was for sure.

In a few minutes, I heard several women talking as they entered the room. Because I was facing the wall, I couldn’t see who they were but they stopped directly behind me. One of them reached up and tested the chain to be sure it was tight.

“Good job, Lauren, and a nice welt too,” commented one of them. “He is a beauty.”

I felt a light touch on my right buttock where I had been struck with the riding crop. Shortly, two women walked around to face me. The first was a tall silver-haired woman. She was elegant. Regal. Her perfectly coiffured hair and the dark red manicured nails that matched her dark red lipstick, gave her a commanding presence as she glared at me. Next to her was a short, black haired woman who was equally well dressed and made up. They were looking me over as if I were a specimen in a bottle rather than someone they had just taken prisoner. The gray-haired woman turned from me and said to the other two, “Girls, I think we have a real winner here. I’m so glad he stumbled into our midst. You were both right in not turning him in to the police. I think he is going to be a welcome addition to our organization.”

I knew I had to speak and it was now or never. I had kept silent during my capture but I had to know what was going on.

“Excuse me ladies but I must ask you just what...”

I never got the chance to finish the sentence as the riding crop caught me across the left cheek. It stung like hell and my eyes were watering. The tall silver-haired woman got right in my face. With my genitals firmly gripped in her right hand, she squeezed them hard as she got eyeball to eyeball with me.

“There seems to be a little slack in these chains, Lauren, please tighten them up a bit.”

The motor hummed again and I felt my limbs being stretched to the max as well as the pain in my groin from her iron grip.

“That’s enough, are you more comfortable now?” she asked.

“Actually no, I am quite *uncomfortable*. I just wanted to know what’s going on here and...”

She gave my genitals a hard yank.



“Shut up, you worthless piece of scum,” she screamed in my face. “You will speak only when you are spoken to and you will do exactly as we tell you at all times. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, of course. It’s quite clear,” I stammered as she gave my manhood another yank.

“Good. I am *so* glad we understand each other. I was about to turn you over to my two associates, who when it comes to pain, have unlimited imaginations and the resources to make you sorry you were ever born.”

She let go of my genitals and stepped back.

“He’s perfect, let’s get started. Bring my kit.”

A few minutes later, I felt the cool swab of alcohol on my buttocks and the sharp pick of a needle. I dared not say anything. My limbs felt numb already. I had no idea what they were injecting me with but I was not going to ask any more questions. The motor started humming again and the chains became slack. I was freed from my shackles. After the original ones were back in place, I was brought back to the corridor and we walked back to my cell.

Escaping from this little corner of hell was going to be more difficult than I thought. There were three of them and the dogs to contend with. I sat down on the cot. Since I had no idea what I was going to be “perfect for,” I had no way to prepare a defense against it. I would have to bide my time, doing what they told me for now. Then when the opportunity presented itself, I would have one chance to go for it and make a break for freedom.

For the rest of the day I was left alone. I hadn’t eaten since the night of the robbery and the hunger pangs were sharp. I used the toilet once and drank a couple cups of water to fill my stomach while I waited. I couldn’t hear what was going on outside the thick cell door. With the furnace going on and off periodically, it probably wouldn’t have mattered anyway. With nothing to do, my mind wandered back to my childhood and what had brought me this far. My recollections came back easily as if they were only yesterday.

## **PART TWO: THE PAST**

I always hated the term “trailer trash.” My parents worked hard and tried their best to provide for me. My dad drove over the road while my mom tended bar and waited tables at a truck stop not far from the trailer court.

About the time my dad’s truck was paid for, he had to get another one because the leasing companies always wanted him to have later model equipment. Keeping a mobile home heated in the winter was no easy chore either and they were expensive to air-condition in the summer as well.

My dad was gone a lot. When he did get home for a few days, he was either working on his truck or sleeping off a drunk. Sometimes I couldn’t get to sleep because of my parents arguing and his ranting and raving. On more than one occasion, I put some ice cubes in a damp washcloth and held it against my mom’s face to ease the pain of a shiner.

I stayed out of his way most of the time. I would often hike down the road and through the woods to the truck stop to watch the trucks and people moving in and out. The truck stop and motel were on one end of the plaza, the restaurant where my mom worked was in the middle, and a hardware store was on the other end.

There weren't many kids in the court my age; we had moved around quite a bit so I hadn't made many friends over the years. At school I was picked on a lot because I was short for my age. Also, the fact that I had a pretty face ("pretty enough to be a girl" commented one teacher) made me a target.

At my first school, I settled a problem with the local bully. The summer before beginning the sixth grade, I enrolled in a beginner's self-defense class taught by one of the women in the mobile home court. After being cornered in the restroom, I sidestepped a punch and flipped the guy into the sink, cracking his skull. After a few more encounters at other schools resulting in broken bones and missing teeth, the big guys left me alone.

When I turned sixteen, I got a driver's license but we couldn't afford a car or insurance so my mom got me a trail bike at a police auction. I used it to ride back and forth to the plaza. I applied at the hardware store and I was hired to do stock work full time over the summer and part-time during the school year. I also got hired as a dishwasher and gofer at the restaurant.

One night just after school was out for the year, I rode my bike through the woods and was watching from the bluff overlooking the truck stop. A van occasionally parked near the bottom of the bluff; several hookers would go among the trucks parked at the far end to solicit business. I saw one girl stop a tipsy driver. He said no and as he turned away, she hit him on the side of the head. He fell unconscious to the ground. She bent over him and removed the contents of his wallet, then headed back to the van. A short time later, he got up and walked to his truck. I couldn't do anything to help him from my vantage point but I did wonder how much money the girls took in a week.

A week after I had applied, I was hired by the hardware store and began doing stock work. I unloaded the trucks, unboxed the merchandise, applied the security stickers and price tags, then put the stuff out on the floor. Sometimes I worked nine to five and sometimes one to nine, occasionally staying late to get everything out on the floor in time for the next sale.

A week before the July Fourth weekend, I came home late. My dad's truck was tearing out of the court entrance. When I got inside, I found my mom sitting on the couch, crying. I put another ice pack on her face and we talked about getting the hell out of there. Things were not going to get any better and, though she was afraid of a divorce, we both knew it was necessary.

I continued to work the rest of the week. I let mom know I would be late Friday, Saturday and Sunday night. She had contacted a lawyer and was proceeding with the paperwork for the divorce proceedings.

Money was always a concern and now with just her income, she wasn't sure how we were going to make it. She had smiled through teary eyes when I told her I would help out with my part-time job, even though I knew it might not be enough. "Desperate times call for desperate measures," someone once said and I believed it.

That Saturday night, I worked later than usual. As I pedaled the back parking lot to the trail that led up the bluff, I passed a trucker on his knees, trying to get up. I helped him up and walked with him to his truck.

He smelled like booze and after I helped him into the cab, he slurred a thank you and passed out in the seat.

I got back on my bike and continued on. At the bottom of the bluff, near where my bike trail began, sat the van. Several girls were walking towards the semis that had just pulled in. I pedaled past them and then up the bluff a short distance where I got off my bike and laid it down in the grass.

I carried half a railroad spike wrapped in duct tape in my pocket, just in case there was trouble. I took it out and crept back to the van. I yanked the driver's side door open with my left hand. The driver was facing away from me and as he turned around, I hit him in the face and jaw several times until he slumped forward. There was an open briefcase full of money on the passenger seat. I shut the case, grabbed the handle and took off running for the bluff. I found my bike and put the case in the front basket. Pedaling like mad, I made it out of the woods, back on the highway, and home in record time.

After parking my bike beside the storage shed, I picked up the case and crept quietly inside the house.

Once inside my room, I moved my bed out from the wall. I slipped the case behind a sheet of paneling that had come loose along the wall and moved the bed back. I showered and went to bed but I couldn't sleep. My heart was still pounding but after several hours, I finally dozed off.

I took a different route to work, coming down the bluff at a different place. That night after work, I did the same thing but stopped near the first trail. The van wasn't there but had parked further down the lot closer to the trucks. I headed home and continued to use the alternate route for the rest of the week.

I doubted if the man had gotten a good look at me; even if he had, he wasn't going to call the police.

I just had to be careful not to cross paths with him again. I had the next weekend off and I told mom I needed to talk to her Sunday morning. She had an appointment with an attorney on Tuesday and we hoped to be out of there before the end of the month. My dad had been gone about two weeks and probably wouldn't be back for another two but we couldn't take any chances.

Saturday night while she was at work, I took the case out of the wall and put it on the bed. After opening it up, I counted out the money. I found I had just under four thousand dollars in small bills. I also found several small packages of a white powder and some marijuana cigarettes. I promptly flushed all that stuff down the toilet.

I didn't sleep well that night. I heard my mom get home from work. I slept on and off the rest of the night. I wasn't sure exactly how I was going to tell her. I didn't want to have to lie but I knew she wouldn't be happy with me breaking the law either.

After breakfast, I retrieved the case and set it down on the kitchen table in front of her. I decided to tell her the truth and she nodded as I related how I had come into the money. Her face was calm and she didn't get angry. I hoped she would understand that I had done this for us, and that we needed it more than the pimp did.

"I appreciate what you did for us more than I can say," she said softly. "But you must promise me, you will never do anything like this again. We'll just forget this ever happened, understood?"

"Okay," I said.

She counted out three thousand dollars in stacks of five hundred dollars and put rubber bands around them, then placed them back in the case. She handed me the rest of the money.

"Don't spend this just yet. Put it away for now. After I meet with the attorney, we will be leaving here. I don't know just where yet but we have to get ready to move fast before your dad comes back, understood?"

I nodded as I took the stack of bills from her. That night I put the money in two stacks, one of five hundred and one of three fifty and hid one of them behind the wall and the other behind some books on the shelf over my bed.

Papers were drawn up that week and the attorney said she would be able to take care of everything without us having to contact my father again and that we should stay in touch with her.

Several weeks went by and I was getting concerned with the timing of my dad's return and our escape. He would sometimes call when he would be home but not always. The waiting was not easy for either of us. We wanted to be out of there before he arrived; once he was served with papers, we didn't want any further contact with him.

It was close to a month later when he finally did call. He had a breakdown in Arizona and was going to be home the next day. We decided to wait until he hit the road again before we left town for good.

The next night when I got home from work, he was sitting on the couch, drinking beer and watching a baseball game. He said nothing when I walked in. I went to my mom's bedroom and she was OK. I cleaned up and went to bed. The next several days were uneventful. Saturday night, after another loud argument, he left, saying this trip would be about six weeks, maybe even longer. The last words I heard him say were "Try to keep this dump clean and get that kid a haircut, he's starting to look faggy."

We waited a whole month before we both gave two weeks' notice to our respective employers. During those two weeks, we began boxing things up for the move. Mom sold our old minivan and rented a van to haul our stuff in. The only thing left in the trailer was a few clothes. Monday night, we finished loading the van and spent our last night in the trailer.

"I need you to do one more thing for me to help us get out of here," she said after we finished our supper of take-out.

"Sure," I replied. "What do you want me to do?"

"First, take a shower and put on the pajamas I left on your bed while I take out the garbage."

I went to my bedroom and, after showering, I found a pair of pink girl's pajamas on the bed. I put them on and walked out to the living room,

“These are girl’s pajamas! Why do I have to wear them?”

“If he comes looking for us, he won’t think to look for a woman and her daughter. He’ll be looking for a woman and her son. You’ll only have to be in disguise for a short time. Just long enough for us to get settled and then we can be ourselves again.”

I wasn’t sure about this but I knew we had to make our escape and we wanted to be safe in our new surroundings so I nodded in agreement. That night I slept well; I must admit I enjoyed the sensuous feel of the satiny fabric against my smooth, almost hairless body.

The next morning we were up early. Mom was already dressed and had everything else loaded in the van except one suitcase for each of us and her makeup case.

“Take off your pajamas and put these on,” she said as she handed me a pair of pink panties.

I undressed and put on the panties. Next was a matching pink padded bra that she hooked in the back. From a hangar, she removed a pink cotton dress and held it up by the hem. I was apprehensive about this but I said nothing as I slipped the dress over my head and turned around so she could zip me up. After I put on a pair of pink cotton socks and a matching pair of pink patent leather shoes she called “Mary Janes,” she stood back and looked at me.

“So far so good,” she announced. “I was afraid the shoes might be too small or the dress too big but they both fit well enough for a short time.”

From the makeup case she removed a lipstick. She took the cap off and, after turning the base, pushed the tube against both cheeks. With her finger, she smoothed the pink makeup over my cheeks, giving me a “blush” look. Next,



she combed my hair over my forehead to give me some bangs and clipped a pink bow at the top. She placed my driver's license, the pink lipstick and a compact in a small pink purse and handed it to me.

"You're all set. Take a look at yourself in the mirror."

I walked back to her bedroom and looked at my reflection in the full-length mirror on the closet door. Standing in front of me was a very pretty girl. I could hardly believe my eyes. I was almost tempted to reach out and touch the glass to see if it was really me. Because I was short, I could almost pass for twelve, even though I had just turned sixteen.

When I walked back to the living room, mom had donned a black wig and a large pair of sunglasses.

"We're all set. Now remember to walk slower than you usually do. You have to maintain a ladylike appearance at all times. When you sit, remember to smooth your skirt before you sit down. You don't have a deep voice but speak softly when you talk and be polite. No matter what might happen, keep your composure and we'll be fine. Now, walk across the room and sit down, then get up and walk around some more and sit down again. I want to be sure you've got it right."

I did as she instructed and she smiled briefly when I finished my third trip around the room.

"Very good! You've picked up on this very well. Now of course, since you're going to be my daughter for a while, in addition to dressing and acting like a girl you will have to answer to a girl's name. Since your name is Charlie, I think Charlene would be appropriate. We will be Tammy and Charlene Anderson, a divorced woman and her daughter from Minneapolis, Minnesota. We are traveling to Rochester, Minnesota where I will be looking for work. Do you have any questions before we get on the road, Charlene?"

"No," I answered.

"Good. Let's get going."

I followed her out to the van. I stepped inside the front seat and remembered to smooth my dress before I sat down. After I fastened my seatbelt, she started the engine and we pulled out of the driveway. We left the trailer court and several miles down the road, we hooked up with the interstate highway just west of the truck stop plaza.

About an hour later, mom pulled off the interstate. We stopped at a drive-through restaurant and had egg sandwiches and coffee for breakfast. We continued south and stopped at a wayside after another hour. I swung my legs out first and smoothed the skirt of my dress as we headed for the restrooms. I almost walked into the men's room but mom nudged my elbow and we entered the ladies room next to it.

For the first time in my life, I had the experience of pulling up my dress, sliding my panties down and having to sit down to pee. When I finished, I joined mom at the sinks; after washing my hands, she told me to apply fresh lipstick. I was a bit unsure of myself but I removed the tube from my purse and did as I was told. There were several other women there but they paid no attention to me. Apparently I was passing as a young girl with no trouble at all.

We walked outside in the sunshine and entered the van to continue our journey south. It was nearly noon when we stopped near the outskirts of Rochester for lunch. Again we used the drive-through to purchase some burgers, fries and soft drinks. We ate in the parking lot, then continued on for another forty-five minutes or so, finally arriving at an inexpensive motel on the south side of town shortly before 2 PM.

Mom went inside and registered us for a week. She came back out and, after we parked in front of our assigned room, I helped her with our luggage. We watched some TV, then she left to get something for our supper. After she returned a short time later, we ate pizza and soft drinks. We were both pretty tired from the trip so we washed up and turned in early.

The next morning, mom picked up breakfast. After we finished eating, she dressed up to go job hunting. The want ads had several prospects; I figured she'd be gone most of the morning. I stayed in my pink pajamas and watched some daytime TV, along with reading the paper.

Mom returned with sandwiches for lunch; she seemed pretty upbeat about getting a job. One of the women she knew had a relative at a retail store near where we were and there was an opening. I could only hope for the best, as I wanted to get settled as soon as possible.

I spent the next several days bored out of my mind with nothing to do but wait for my mom to return from her job-hunting expeditions. I was also getting tired of the fast food, as mom was a really good cook. I missed her home cooked meals.

Thursday, the phone rang. When I answered, I took a message for mom to call back a place called Kids Costume Korner. I hoped this would be good news for us; as it turned out it was.

When Mom returned that evening, I gave her the message. When she returned the call, she was informed that she had been hired as a saleswoman at the store.

We celebrated by going out to eat and taking in a movie. I was happy for her and even happier that we would finally be able to return to a normal lifestyle. I would be able to ditch the feminine apparel and go back to being my real self again, though I must admit I did feel a thrill when one of the men in the restaurant and a couple of young boys in the theatre made admiring glances in my direction.

The letter of intent to hire arrived the next day and we spent the weekend looking at places to rent. Neither of us wanted to return to a mobile home court. The money I took in the robbery did us in good stead and shortly we had a two-bedroom furnished apartment. The apartment complex was less than a mile from the mall where mom worked and on the bus line to the school I would be attending in a few short weeks.

After unloading the moving van, mom took it back to the rental agency and got a short-term lease on a new car.

I applied for several part-time jobs at stores in the mall and a hardware store hired me immediately, based on my work at the truck stop plaza store. I started working right away and mom and I got into a normal routine once again.

I registered for school and was soon busy between school and my part-time work. Mom enjoyed her sales job finding costumes for kids and helping mothers pick out pageant and quinceanera dresses for their daughters. It was a pleasant change from waiting on tables and tending bar.

The first half of the semester was almost over when mom asked me about my work schedule for next month. I told her I probably wouldn't have it for another two weeks, as my bosses didn't like to schedule things too far in advance. It kind of puzzled me but looking at the calendar, I could see nothing important around that first week in January. I thought maybe her question had something to do with the divorce proceedings; she hadn't said anything about it since we left and I had seen no mail from the attorney.

School ended for the holidays and I spent more time at the store earning a few more bucks. I stopped in to the costume shop once or twice to join my mom for lunch on my days off. One time, I overheard one of the women remark about "being pretty enough to model for us." I wasn't sure who she was talking about.

We had a quiet Christmas and that year we had a lot to be thankful for. We had escaped a hellish existence and managed to better ourselves. We were both working, we had a roof over our heads, control of our bills and our lives, as well as being in good health. I went to bed that night, hoping this wasn't a dream I would wake up from.

The week between Christmas and New Year's was busy with returns and the after-the-holidays sales. Sunday night, just before school started again, mom sat down next to me on the couch with a concerned look on her face.

"Do you remember my asking you about your schedule several weeks ago?" she said.

"Yes I do. In fact I should be getting my schedule Friday when I get to work. What's going on?"

"One of the girls that was going to be a part of the style show towards the end of the month has cancelled and two of the other girls have come down with the flu. We don't know if they will be feeling well enough in time for the show. I was wondering if you would mind being my niece this one time so we won't have to be looking for someone at the last minute. I would let you know about a week in advance but I would prefer you had that Friday, Saturday and Sunday off so we could count on you just in case."

I wasn't real happy about this but we had struggled to get this far and I couldn't see any harm in doing this one time to help out mom and her boss.

"Okay, I guess. I'll check with the boss before he makes out the schedule so I can be sure I have that three-day weekend."

"That's wonderful. I knew I could count on you!"

The next couple of weeks went by quickly and as the weekend approached, I asked mom about the other girls.

"Well, the girl who cancelled has moved out of town, one of the sick girls is still in the hospital while the other is recuperating at home so we still need you. I will get you ready Friday evening after supper, then take you to the store Saturday morning."



That Friday night after supper, mom dressed me in pink again and, after the addition of a brown wig, she drove me to the plaza. Next to the store was a beauty salon; we arrived there about 7 PM. A lady was just paying her bill when we walked in. I took a seat in the waiting area and mom talked briefly with the manager who occasionally glanced in my direction. When she was finished, the manager came over and introduced herself as Ms. Watson and she invited me to come with her. I got up and followed her as one of the beauticians locked the front door and turned out the front lights.

Mom unzipped me and helped me out of my dress. I felt a little funny standing there in a pink bra and panties. I removed the Mary Jane shoes and my pink socks.

“Spread your legs apart and stand perfectly still, this won’t take long,” instructed the manager.

I did as I was told as two beauticians, one on each side of me, began removing what little hair I had with their electric clippers. When they finished, they wiped my body down with damp towels, and then they proceeded to cover my legs and arms with wax strips. I winced as they pulled them off a few minutes later.

“Okay Charlene, take a seat,” ordered one of the beauticians.

I sat down in one of the chairs. The manager stood close and with a scissor-like device, she curled my eyelashes. Then, with a tweezers, she plucked at my eyebrows. She stepped back with a smile on her face and said, “Looks good!”

She turned away as a beautician began working on my nails. A short time later, my manicure and pedicure was completed. My finger and toenails now sported two coats of pink nail polish and a topcoat of clear polish.

“She’s all done,” announced the manager.

I put on my socks and shoes, then mom helped me put the dress back on and zip it up the back.

I waited until she paid the bill and we both left the shop. We arrived at the store about 8 PM. We went to the back room where I took off my dress again. The store’s assistant manager measured my bust, waist, hips, sleeve length, glove size, then had me try on several pairs of high heels to determine my shoe size. She put a pair of black, 3-inch heels in a bag and handed it to my mother.

“Since your niece has never worn heels before, have her practice a little at home tonight. Be back here tomorrow morning about 7 AM to get dressed for the shoot.”

Mom nodded and we left. I had said nothing throughout this whole ordeal. I felt I should just keep my mouth shut and do as I was told since I knew nothing about that was going on anyway. Once back at home, I put the heels on and under mom’s watchful eye, I practiced my walk back and forth in the confines of the apartment.

We were up early the next morning and after breakfast we headed to the store. We arrived just before seven to find the photographer and her assistant setting up their equipment while several store employees set up a makeshift stage in the front window display. The sign out front said, “Closed for inventory.”

We went into the back area where several girls were sitting at a table with lighted make-up mirrors. I sat down and mom instructed me in applying the makeup I should wear for the shoot. After makeup, she helped me undress and helped me put on a short leg panty girdle and a pair of panty hose. A long line bra replaced my regular one. Then she placed two gelatinous forms in the cups in place of the pads I had used; these were to give a little more bounce to my walk as well as to hold up the strapless dresses a little better.

A middle-aged woman came over and introduced herself as Jane Hall, the owner. I smiled and politely offered her my best limp handshake. The photographer's assistant came back and said they were ready when we were. Mom placed several petticoats one inside the other, then I put them on. My first dress was a pink chiffon party dress. After zipping it up, mom helped me into a pair of three-inch heeled, open toed sandals. She attached a pink sissy bow to the top of my wig, then handed me the matching purse.

"Remember to walk gracefully and smile for the camera," she instructed.

I followed the other girls out into the store, to the makeshift stage at the front where, one at a time, we walked up the steps, turned around and smiled as we were photographed. For the next several hours, I was in and out of a variety of dresses, matching shoes and handbags. I followed the instructions of the photographer with each dress and was pleased to receive her compliments at our first break.

We paused briefly for soft drinks about nine-thirty and then continued until about eleven-thirty when we broke for lunch. We all sat down at the makeup tables and ate take-out salads with our soft drinks. I sat with mom and her boss and though most of the conversation from the other tables dealt with fashion, makeup and boys, ours was mainly about how well I had done with no modeling experience. I just smiled and gave my mom the credit for teaching me the right moves and proper use of makeup.

The afternoon was more of the same. I was more confident of myself and had no trouble when I changed to four-inch heels for some of the gowns. We finished up around 4:30; Mom helped me undress and take off the make up. The day's shoot was for pageant and party formals for girls 12-16. I wouldn't be needed on Sunday when the 5-11 year olds would be photographed.

I was quite relieved to be out of there, though I had to admit that I got a terrific erotic charge out of the feel of nylons against my smooth, hair free skin as well as the sensuous swish of chiffon and rustle of petticoats under taffeta. I was pleased with my ability to pass myself off as a girl not only visually but to be generally accepted by the other girls and the staff.

Mom and I didn't talk on the ride home. Once back in the apartment, I undressed. She put my wig and girl things away. I removed my nail polish, and then took a shower. Though I hadn't started to shave my face yet, I splashed a little after-shave lotion on after my shower. I wanted to remove even the slightest hint of perfume or smell of makeup before reporting to work on Monday.

Several days later, I received a thank you card from Mrs. Hall for helping her out as well as a fifty-dollar bill. She closed out her remarks with the note, "I know you are only

visiting over the holidays but I would appreciate it if you would be available to help us out in the future if we needed you."

I told mom that I didn't want to do this anymore and that we should tell that to Ms. Hall. She just smiled and said, "We'll see. You do make a pretty girl and don't tell me you couldn't use the extra money."

I didn't answer her but enough was enough. I had done what they asked me to do and that should be the end of it, as far as I was concerned.

School started up again and I got back into the routine of classes, work, and study. No more mention was made of my brief sojourn into modeling. Except for a few itchy days when my body hair first grew back, I was none the worse for wear and tear.

The semester went by quickly and I passed all my exams. I was looking forward to working full time over the summer. This would probably be my last summer here as I would be a senior in the fall; after graduation next year, I didn't want to hang around here. I was not exactly sure what I wanted to do but I definitely didn't want to stick around there any longer than I absolutely had to.

The last day of school let out at noon on Friday. After getting my report card, I hurried home. I checked the answering machine and saw a message from a number I didn't recognize as well as one from the attorney that handled my mom's divorce. Mom was still at work so I did some laundry and put a hot dish in the oven for supper.

After supper, I suggested we see a movie but, with a worried frown on her face, she shook her head no.

"Go ahead if you want. I have some things to do here."

"Is this about the phone call from your lawyer?" I asked.

"Well, yes," she answered. "The child support checks have stopped coming. We have a little savings to fall back on but I don't want to touch that until we really need it. We're getting by for now. The attorney has been unable to locate him. He may not even be driving anymore or he could have found out about us and is headed this way. I'm scared."

I sat down on the davenport next to her and put my arm around her.

"I guess that means we will have to be careful with money and keep a watchful eye out for him," I said.

She nodded in agreement.

"We made such a good start here. Everything was going so well. It was almost too good to be true," she lamented.

"I know," I answered. "Look, let's just continue our lives as best we can. We may be worried about nothing. Like you said, we made a good life for ourselves here. Don't worry about what might happen. We can't allow ourselves to be tied up by what we don't know and can't control."

She looked up at me and smiled. "I guess you're right. Oh, by the way, the other phone call was from a modeling agency asking about you, I mean Charlene. Apparently, the photographer who did the shoot for us mentioned you to her boss when she got back."

I shook my head. "Call her back and tell them Charlene died in a car accident."

"It pays a thousand dollars for a one-day shoot but because you're under 18, they need my consent. Are you *sure* you're not interested?"

My mind was racing. A thousand dollars was a lot of money for a 16-year-old. It was a lot of money for anybody! I would have to work a month at the hardware store to make the same amount. Then there was the tough situation we were in. Against my better judgment, I decided to do it.

The next day, mom called the agency back and we set up a Saturday appointment. I had that Saturday off and was through work at five on Friday so I would have time to get ready to be Charlene again.

The week went all too quickly and, though I really wasn't looking forward to it, I knew we might need the money. I didn't want to go back to a truck stop banging pimps on the head to get money, that was for sure.

Friday night after work we ate supper, then mom helped me get dressed. This time, after donning the brown wig, I wore a pink cotton peasant blouse tucked into a blue jean miniskirt over my pink padded bra and panties. I slipped on a pair of pink clogs and mom drove me to the beauty shop where once again I got my nails done, eyebrows plucked, lashes curled and I was waxed pretty much all over.

We went back home. While my mom watched TV, I soaked in a hot bath instead of my usual shower. This time I used my mom's perfumed soap to lather myself up. I loved the slippery feel of my smooth skin and I luxuriated in the warm water a little longer than I should have.

"You okay in there?" called out my mom.

"Yes. Just soaking my muscles," I replied. "I moved a lot of stuff around at work today, I am a little stiff."

I dried myself off and stood in front of the mirror over the bathroom sink. With thinner eyebrows and curled eyelashes, I definitely had a feminine appearance. After brushing my teeth, I put on my pink girly pajamas and went to bed.

I heard my mom get up before the alarm went off, so I got up too. After breakfast, we got dressed and mom checked me over before we went out the door.

The agency was located across town and it took about thirty-five minutes to get there. We parked in the rear of the building and walked in the back door to the directory. The agency was on the first floor about two doors down from us. Mom tried the door but it was locked. She rang the buzzer and a minute later, a tall blonde woman who introduced her self as Mrs. Nelson, the owner, opened the door. We followed her inside and walked through the offices to the back room where the studio was.

"I am so glad you could make it," Mrs. Nelson began. "Our regular Junior Miss model cancelled at the last minute and Julie, one of our freelance photographers, mentioned your name and said you might be available."

“Charlene is visiting me this week while school is out. Her part-time job in a retail store doesn’t pay much and this will go a long way toward her school expenses,” explained my mom.

Mrs. Nelson gestured to a small room adjacent to the main studio.

“You can change in there. Your mom gave me your measurements over the phone so I think you will find the foundation garments I’ve selected to be just about right. I have some other things to attend to in the office. I will be back shortly.”

I opened the door to the small room and stepped inside. After I kicked off my pink clogs, mom helped me out of the peasant blouse and skirt. I took off my bra and panties and stepped into a long girdle. I heard my mom giggle as I struggled to pull it up. The garment had side panels to give me hips I didn’t have. Next, I rolled up each stocking, slipped it over my foot and attached it to the garters at the bottom of the girdle. After I put my arms through the straps of the long line bra, mom placed gelatinous forms in the cups for weight and bounce, then adjusted the straps.

“Okay, that looks good,” she announced, “now step over to the table and let’s get your makeup on.”

I felt squeezed in by the tight fit of the foundation garments but said nothing. I had to keep thinking of the thousand dollars I was getting at the end of the day.

With deft strokes, mom applied my eye make up and blusher. After outlining my lips with a lip pencil, she filled them in with bright pink lipstick.

“Press your lips together and we’re done,” she said

Mrs. Nelson and another woman returned from the office. I stood up from the table as she introduced us.

“This is Betty, the photographer who will do today’s shoot,” she said.

“I’m pleased to meet you,” I said, extending my hand and giving her a girly limp handshake. My mom shook her hand as well and we proceeded over to a rack of wedding dresses in front of a small circular stage with a white wooden arch.

“I can see you’re going to be a perfect Junior Miss Bride!” she exclaimed as she walked behind the camera.

Mrs. Nelson selected the first dress from the rack and unzipped it. I stepped inside the white satin sheath garment, then put my arm through the sleeves. The feeling of sheer nylons on my smooth, freshly waxed legs was one thing, but the feel of the satin on my hairless arms and body was another. Despite being a male, I felt absolutely delicious. She zipped me up. Next, I tried on several pairs of white, four-inch heel pumps before finding the right size. Last, she fitted the veil on top of my wig and pronounced me ready.

I walked carefully up the two small steps, then to the center of the arch and turned to face the camera. I felt completely at ease as I placed one hand on my hip and smiled for the camera. Betty took several frontal shots, then one from each side and a back view. Both mom and Mrs. Nelson smiled their approval.

I walked back down to the rack and they helped me out of the gown and into another one. This procedure continued throughout the morning until about eleven when we took a

break. Mrs. Nelson handed me a pink chiffon robe to slip on while we had an early lunch. I was ravenous but pretended to enjoy the small salad and diet soft drink. I even remembered to take small bites and chew the food slowly.

After lunch, I slipped the robe off. Mom touched up my makeup and we began again. This time I would be modeling the bridesmaids' dresses. The first group of dresses was all sheath styles, both long- and short-sleeved. The next group was all tea-length, necessitating the wearing of a petti-slip underneath to flare out the skirt of the garment. Again, the feel of satin and taffeta against my skin was delightful. I picked up my skirts and practically floated up the steps to the stage, feeling totally and completely feminine as I posed for the camera.

The last group of pictures was of a variety of bridal veils and bridesmaid hairpieces. These were shot from the neck up as I sat in a chair. Finally we were done.

"You were great, Charlene," commented Mrs. Nelson. "I'm so glad you came!"

"Double for me!" chimed in Betty as she removed the camera from the tripod.

"Come out to the office when you get dressed and I will give you a check." With that, Mrs. Nelson walked out.

I slipped off my high heels and walked back to my changing room. I removed my stockings and mom helped me out of my foundation garments and back into my bra and panties. After putting on my blouse and miniskirt, I stepped into my pink clogs and we walked back to the office. We both signed the release and I got the check.

We stopped to pick up some burgers and fries at a drive-through on the way home. It was about 6 PM when we walked in the apartment. I took off my feminine apparel and mom helped me remove the makeup and nail polish. After we finished eating, I took a hot shower and once more splashed some aftershave on to cover any feminine scent of the makeup.

I was hoping this would be the last of my feminine appearances. I couldn't believe the check in my hands. Mom had it made out to "C. Anderson" so the bank wouldn't question it. I really didn't want this to continue but the money was certainly good. I was still confounded by the way I felt when I was completely dressed and made up like a girl. The soft fabric of the dresses, the sound of the petticoat rustling under the tea length dress as I walked, even the feel of soap against my smooth, hair-free skin while soaking in a hot tub made me wonder if maybe I should have been born a girl. Why would a man enjoy such feminine things?

The rest of the summer was uneventful. What little body hair I had, grew back. We still had no word about my dad; I put in longer hours at the store and managed to save most of it. I was trying to save enough money to buy and insure a car. Once in a while, mom and I went out to eat. It was one of the few indulgences we could both enjoy.

School started up again in the fall. I made good grades and we were still getting by financially. There had been no mention of any further trips into femininity. On occasion, though, I had to admit I missed the thrill of presenting the illusion of femininity as well as the joy of soaping my smooth, hairless body in a hot steamy bath afterwards.