



Reluctant Press presents:

Unfair Exchanges

Laura Sexton



A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

Copyright © 2008, Reluctant Press - All Rights Reserved

Reluctant Press TG Publishers

This story is a work of fiction. Any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. All situations and events herein presented are fictional, and intended only for the enjoyment of the reader. Neither the author nor the publisher advocate engaging in or attempting to imitate any of the activities or behaviors portrayed.

Persons seeking gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy or any other medical and/or body-altering process should seek the counsel of a qualified therapist who follows the Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorder.

Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet!

We need *your* help! We want to keep providing our readers with low cost, professional quality fiction on the Internet. We spend thousands of dollars to edit, illustrate and typeset *each story*. It is important, therefore, that everyone works to help keep professional fiction alive on the Net.

This story is protected by US and International copyright law, and is owned exclusively by Reluctant Press, which retains exclusive rights to publish these materials. The civil penalties for copyright infringement can be severe, including substantial monetary damages, injunctive relief, and liability for attorneys' fees incurred in prosecuting a case. If a court determines that the infringement was committed willfully, statutory damages of up to \$100,000 for each copyright infringed can be awarded. Even if not found to be acting willfully, a defendant can still be held liable for statutory damages of \$500 to \$20,000 for each copyright infringed. **These penalties apply even if money was not charged.** In addition, criminal penalties may be imposed if someone willfully infringes a copyrighted work for commercial advantage or private financial gain. This crime is punishable by up to five years imprisonment, up to \$250,000 in fines, or both. State civil damages and criminal penalties vary from state to state and country to country, but are always severe.

The best way to keep professional illustrated fiction available on the Internet is to do **YOUR** part to protect the author's and publisher's copyright. *You can be part of the solution.* Encourage others to purchase our stories. Never share the access rights you've purchased. **You** make the continued availability of TG fiction on the Internet possible. Thank you for your cooperation!

UNFAIR EXCHANGES

By Laura Sexton

PART I

Oops!

Danny's secret was out. His cover was blown, the cat was out of the bag. He imagined front page headlines with his picture, lead stories on the ten o'clock news, hordes of reporters calling his family, giving his dad a stroke and making his mother go mad. He'd be ostracized, a pariah, embarrassed and shamed forever. He'd lose his friends, his job, his home, and he wouldn't even be able to beg for food. People would stare at him with horror and point, then cross the street to avoid him.

On the other hand, it was kind of a relief.

"I knew there was something about you," said Sue. She had seen the box split open to reveal some of Danny's "things." A heel fell to the floor, as well as a wig and a top. A stocking trailed from the split after he tried to stuff everything back into the box as quickly as possible. Even Alex noticed, especially when Danny sprinted to his room, cradling the box in his arms like an oversized football.

"Like what?" He'd spent the last three hours in his room, quivering with embarrassment. Once he started crying. But Sue stood outside the door and told him it was all right. Finally, Danny found the courage to face his two friends.

"Your knowledge and interest in girly things seemed to be a bit much for your average guy."

Danny turned beet red.

"I had no idea," said Alex, intrigued. "It's all news to me." Although he'd heard of people who did that sort of thing, until now he never knew one personally. He had always imagined "That kind of person" to be sick or perverted. But as his mind began to fit the

new pieces into the picture he had of Danny, certain things began to make sense. The depression, the restlessness, the way Danny rarely opened up. He didn't consider Danny to be much of a pervert, just a really unhappy guy.

"So," said Sue, cutting to the quick. "Do you want to be a girl?"

Danny shrugged. "I'm not sure. I just know that I don't like being me."

"I can see where you don't," said Alex. "I'm not making fun of you. I mean that for as long as I've known you, you rarely seemed happy."

"There are a lot of times when I feel like I was put together wrong."

"How long have you been doing this?" asked Alex.

"I remember sneaking into the closet once when I was nine and trying on clothes. They felt really nice."

"Wow," said Sue. "And you've kept it bottled up like this for . . . nearly thirty years."

"Yeah. I've always been too embarrassed to join the, uh, community. I'd feel as out of place as I do trying to be normal. I mean, I can pretend I'm beautiful, but when I look at myself critically, my shoulders are too broad, my wrists and ankles too thick, my fingers look stubby, even with false nails, and my nose is too big. Nothing adds up, even with the padding and wig."

"You just don't like belonging to groups," said Alex. "You wouldn't even go with me to that Star Trek convention to make fun of all the Trekkies."

"Trekkers," corrected Sue.

"Yeah yeah yeah," said Alex. "The point is Danny can't admit to liking something that might embarrass him, while others are proud to put on Spock ears and make fools of themselves."

"You're right," said Sue. "So what's your alter ego like? What's her name?"

"We need beers for this," said Alex. "I think Danny will open up only if he's drunk. Or maybe we should mix Danny a sissy drink." He paused, and added, "If that doesn't make you feel too uncomfortable."

"Beer will do," said Danny.

With Alex gone, Sue took Danny's hand. "Listen," she said. "I understand. Right now you're feeling shame and guilt and . . . probably like you're a bad person. But you'll soon feel better now that someone knows. I'll bet you've been dying to talk clothes and makeup with someone. You have, haven't you?"

"I guess so," Danny said. All his life he had tried his best to fit in, even though it made him miserable. He hadn't been the last guy picked for sports, and could spit and belch and fart alongside his buddies, but he never once went hunting, despite his dad being an avid hunter, and he didn't like to fish – not because baiting the hook was yucky – but because it was boring. He was also a half assed carpenter and a rotten mechanic.

He didn't even want to talk about his problems at getting laid.

But now that both Sue and Alex knew, he did feel relieved. It would be nice to see if he was more competent at girl talk, even though Sue wasn't into superficial stuff like celebri-

ties and fashion; topics that did interest him. But Sue did like musicals and those weepy romantic movies – things Alex said made him puke – and there had to be beauty tricks she knew, and maybe, just maybe he would finally get the answer to the age old question of why women went to the bathroom in groups.

“So what is her name?” asked Sue, once Alex had returned.

“Umm, I experimented with a lot of names, but I finally settled for Tami.” He spelled it out for them.

“Let me guess,” said Sue. “A blonde bimbo.”

Both men stared at her. “How do you know that?” asked Alex.

“Duh, I saw the wig,” said Sue. “I get the feeling that Danny wants to become the complete opposite. Since he’s introspective, intelligent, mopey, and kind of cranky, my guess is that he’d go for a bubbly effervescent cheerleader type. Probably a tramp too.”

“Sort of,” admitted Danny. “Except I can’t wear the kind of things Tami would really wear. No low cut tops or what exposes the midriff.”

“You slut,” said Sue, laughing. Then she added. “What about those cleavage making bra things?”

“How do *you* know so much about this?” said Alex. It seemed everybody knew more than he did.

“I never told you before, but I knew one guy who was a drag queen on weekends. Until he began hormone treatment he used to have to push up all the loose skin on his chest and use a special bra thing to give himself cleavage. You should have seen his gowns. I was impressed. And jealous.”

Danny continued. “I’m afraid to go out in public. I’m both fascinated and afraid of hot bimbo chicks. I don’t know if she would actually be slutty, or just one of those free spirit types. You know what I mean?”

“I think we do,” said Alex. “There are the women you take home to Mama, and then there are the others. You have your gold diggers, your tramps, your bimbos – ”

“Wait a minute,” said Sue. “What’s the difference between a bimbo and a tramp?”

Alex gave her a look of abject pity. “You know what a tramp is. A tramp sleeps around. A bimbo can be a tramp, or a horny little nympho with her boyfriend, or she could be saving herself for marriage. A bimbo is one of those helpless females who’s not too bright, like she never paid attention in class.”

“A bimbo’s interests lie in superficial things like beauty and fashion and current songs and hot clubs,” added Danny, who had helped Alex compile his list one night long ago during a bout of drinking. Danny figured that Tami and Alex would probably get along quite well, especially, despite Danny’s actual age, he always made Tami twenty-two years old, an age he considered perfect.

“Exactly. She doesn’t know who the Secretary of State is, and probably thinks that person is just an ordinary secretary . . .”

"And would demand they change her title to Administrative Assistant of State," put in Danny.

Sue spit up her beer.

As soon as Sue stopped coughing, Alex continued. "This is the most important part. A bimbo can get guys to do just about anything for her."

"Most women can," said Sue. "When they want to."

"*When they want to*," Alex agreed. "But a bimbo can get a guy to fix her muffler for free. Loan her money she forgets to pay back. Take her out to lunch and dinner with no chance of getting sex because she's already got a boyfriend. Danny, what was the other one?"

"Getting out of traffic tickets. That whole opening jar-lifting heavy boxes thing. Making a man feel like a stud just for helping her out."

"Exactly. With a gold digger or femme fatale it's calculated. With a bimbo it's second nature."

"You added another category," said Sue. "So where do I fit into your study?"

"Confused," said Danny. "You're a bit of an Earth Mother, with a bit of Competent Businesswoman."

"No," said Alex. "It was *Serious* Businesswoman. With leanings toward Free Spirit. Those two conflict big time. You can't be both at the same time unless you own one of those new age stores downtown. You'd sell your crystals and aromatherapy, but only the ones that actually sell."

"I see what you mean," said Sue. "But I'm not into wearing peasant skirts and turquoise jewelry."

"If you got in touch with the Sex Goddess inside you," said Alex, "You could buy that lingerie store that's for sale. All your conflicts would be resolved."

Sue's face turned red. "Let's change the subject. Where would you put Danny, if he was a girl?"

Alex took a long pull of his beer. "That's a good question. That's a really good question."

"You don't need to answer it," said Danny.

"Oh but I do," said Alex. "It's tough, since we haven't seen see Danny's feminine side. He's kind of like that ugly girlfriend who wants to belong, but can't, which makes sense, because he's a guy. If he had one of those Ugly Duckling transformations you'd have to get him drunk to turn him into a slut. I'm pretty sure he'd go all femmy and try experimenting with everything until finally settling for something like Artistic Type."

"That's another category," said Sue. "How many do you have?"

"I don't know. About twenty or so. A lot of them overlap. I wrote them all down, but we were drunk so I can't read half of them."

"So Danny, do you think you're an Artistic Type?" asked Sue.

Danny vaguely remembered that category. It covered everything from painters to jewelry makers to writers to types like Martha Stewart. "I did try to write a romance novel once," said Danny. "I sat down every night for a month, wearing my nightgown – and for four hours a day on weekends. But it sucked. I don't seem to have much of a flair for home decorating, either."

"That's because you don't know what you could become," said Alex.

"In reality, right now you really wish you could go out partying and dancing," Sue said.

"And get laid," added Alex.

Danny let that pass.

"So when are we going to meet this Tami?" asked Sue.

Danny looked flustered. "I uh, I don't know."

"Come on," said Alex. "We're just *dying* to meet her," he said all campy.

Everyone laughed. "Seriously," said Sue. "You don't have to *act* how you think Tami should act. You could be a composite of Danny and Tami. Start out in small steps."

"Tiny, mincing steps," added Alex, laughing.

"You're not helping matters," said Sue.

"Sorry." Alex discovered he wanted to know what Danny looked like as a girl. He wondered what colors Tami liked. He hoped it wasn't brown. Alex hated brown. Red was good. Bright red lips and nails were great, colors worn by bad girls like Tramps, Gold diggers, Femme Fatales, and what was the other? Nymphos? No, that wasn't it. They'd decided to label Nymphos and Sluts as Tramps.

Skin Girls. That was it. Skin girls were women who posed nude for magazines, became strippers, or worked in porn. He had always been fascinated by their motivations. He had even lumped in Slave Girls and Leather & Vinyl Girls and the B & D Girls and S & M Girls into that category.

He knew Danny secretly wanted to be a bad girl, the kind Alex wanted to meet. He suspected that Tami would have bright pink or red lips. Tight sweaters, short skirts, high heels. Long finger nails, big hair. Big boobs. Yes, he was actually keen to meet this Tami, to see what she really was like.

"At least show us some of your things," said Sue. "Bring out some clothes. You needn't model them."

"I suppose I could do that," said Danny.

He returned with two boxes, bringing them down one at a time. Most of his girl clothes were made from satiny material, though he did have three leather skirts. The pumps and sandals he owned all had heels of at least three inches. He had blonde wigs, false eye-lashes, long fake nails, false breasts, and padded panties. His lip and nail color of choice, Alex learned, was fuchsia. Neither pink nor red, but at least it wasn't brown. Alex grew more attracted to the picture he had of Tami. He pictured Danny with shaved legs and prancing around in those black high heel sandals Danny said rose to five inches, but which

hurt to wear. He pictured Tami shaking her butt and making her boobs bounce. He was disappointed to discover Danny's silicone boobs were only a C cup, but Danny also owned a pair of enhancers that could fill up a D cup.

"These forms cost nearly \$300 a pair," Danny explained. "My wigs usually cost around \$100. I didn't buy any of the really cheap ones, but none have real hair. I wish I could afford some of those."

"Where'd you find the clothes?" asked Alex.

"Catalogs," replied Danny. "And online. I'm afraid to shop for shit in stores."

"There's no slacks," pointed out Sue. "No pants, no jeans, nothing casual. How often do you dress up?"

"I haven't been able to do it for months now," admitted Danny. "I used to dress up nearly every day off I had. I lived for three-day weekends. Now as I grow older the fantasy is less obtainable. When I moved in, you guys were always around and I didn't have enough money to go away for the weekend. It's been tough."

Sue stood up and patted Danny's knee. "We don't mind if you dress up," she said. "Or at least I don't."

"I don't mind either," put in Alex. "In fact, it might be interesting." Alex found himself horny as hell. Fortunately he was positioned so neither of them could see his erection pressing against his pants.

"You don't even have to act like Tami. You can just be yourself if you want to. Maybe you'll finally find out who you really are. I promise I won't make fun of you and I won't try to do anything to embarrass you."

"Thanks," said Danny.

"But right now I have to go to bed. I've got to work tomorrow."

"So do I," said Alex, realizing that it was after eleven.

Danny took his things back to his room and got ready for sleep, relieved that events hadn't gone as badly as they could have. He picked out a pink satin nightgown he often wore and crawled into bed, falling right to sleep, a smile on his face. He decided he would dress up for them after work.

Meanwhile, Alex was disturbed that the feelings he'd discovered for Danny/Tami excited him. Usually desires such as those brought on worrisome thoughts, since Alex was insecure about his masculinity. At five feet seven, he was two inches shorter than Danny, and never could seem to draw women's gazes away from the athletes or musicians or even the guys in suits.

As Alex considered the future transformation of Danny into Tami he wondered what was getting him excited. Was it the fantasy girl Tami? Or the idea of Danny dressing up like a girl? Alex imagined Danny's compulsion to dress up growing so great he couldn't stop and had to wear girl's clothes all the time.

Alex shook his head. This is ridiculous, he told himself. He set his mind trying to think about work. If there was anything to take his mind off of sex, it was his job.

He went underneath the covers, finding he was getting harder. Jesus, he swore to himself. Am I turning fag? He had never considered having relations with a guy before, but then he had never known a guy who dressed up like a girl. In fact, he had been revolted when his channel changing journeys paused on Ricki or Jerry Springer and the topic was something like *Help! I'm In Love With A Drag Queen*. He had never been turned on by movies like *Some Like It Hot* or *Tootsie* or the more recent drag queen ones.

Then why Danny/Tami? What was it about him that made him so horny he couldn't sleep? An image of him taking Tami/Danny from the rear took him by surprise. He tried to shake it, only to have it replaced by him/her sucking him off.

Alex couldn't take it anymore. Those feelings were making him crazy. The urge to visit Danny/Tami's room grew stronger, knowing full well that he/she had most likely put on something silky. Considerably distressed, Alex jumped into the shower, turning the cold spray full on his penis. Only after his member became flaccid did he return to bed.

Sleep did not provide him any comfort. His dreams still held the power to control his subconscious mind. The sexual energy and tension he had managed to quell with cold water returned, and it was sometime in the middle of the night when Alex experienced his first wet dream in years.

Alex saw Danny holding up a little gold number he had shown them earlier that evening. The ensemble consisted of a satin top and short leather skirt with some kind of shiny finish to it. He had a pair of four-inch sandals in his other hand. He was beaming.

Then with a shimmering, Danny languorously morphed into Tami, becoming a blonde in the gold outfit, with long fuchsia nails and gold jewelry. Tami smiled, but her smile looked much different from Danny's, and even though it didn't look like Danny behind that makeup, Tami didn't look entirely authentic or entirely female. But she still looked good, kind of like a slutty secretary.

Then Tami began moving and vamping, swinging her hips and blowing kisses, turning around and sticking her butt out. Sashaying down the path, laughing, a little bumping, a little grinding. When she approached Alex as though to kiss him, Alex woke up.

He discovered his pajamas warm, wet, and sticky. He went into the bathroom, removing his pajama bottoms and washed them in the sink. He took a towel to his privates, dwelling on the weird dream. On the one hand he couldn't believe it had happened, but the pleasant feelings were still with him.

"I'm thirty four," he said to his reflection, "Unmarried, without a steady girlfriend even. Does it really matter I seem to be attracted to a transvestite? I mean, I've known Danny for five years. I invited him to come out here when things fell apart back home. I know I'm not attracted to Danny as himself. But as Tami . . . well, I guess that makes me more of a pervert than him." Even though he didn't like the idea of being a pervert, still he smiled as he went back to bed.

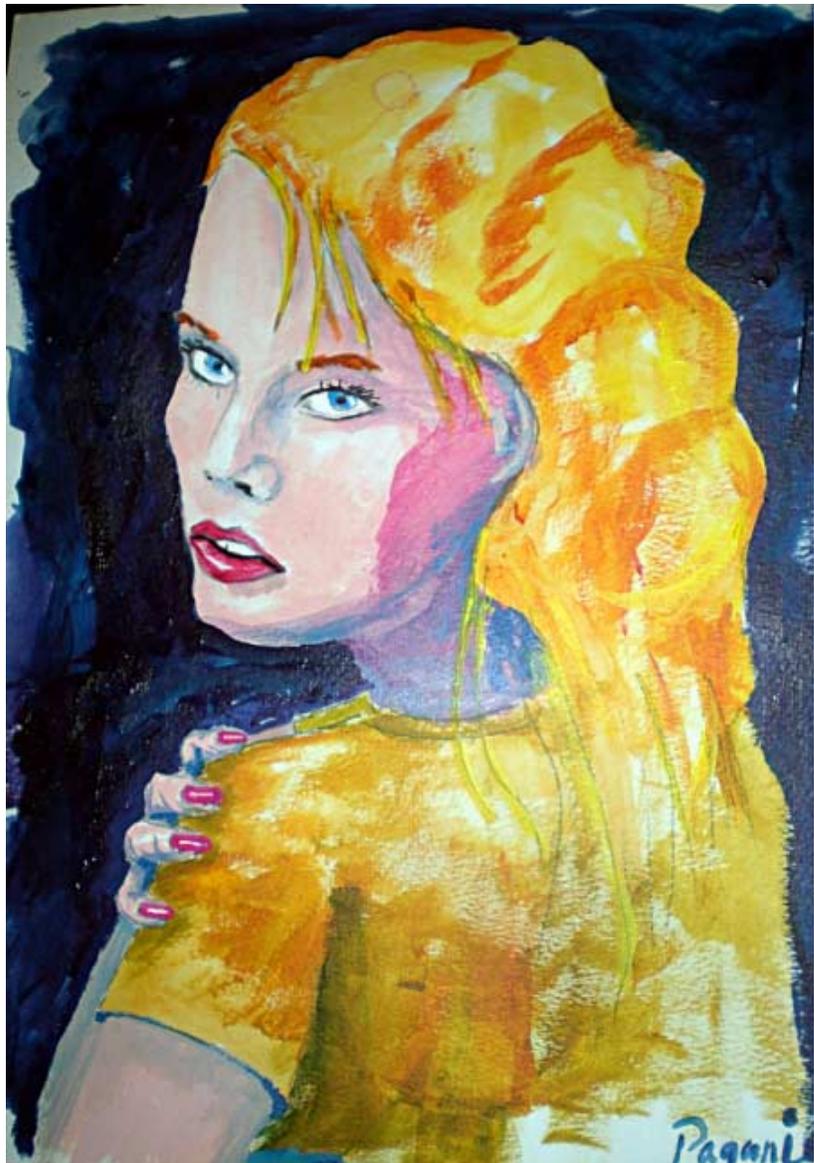
Introducing Tami

At the same time that Alex had his wet dream, Danny also dreamt. In one dream he lost his clothes and had to wear a pink business suit and platinum blonde wig, hoping he could make it home unnoticed, but with every turn people got in his way, and at each corner some new humiliation met him. He finally woke after he had managed to lose most of his clothes by various means and was standing in panties, bra, pantyhose, and shoes, his wig gone, makeup smeared, and one of the fake boobs missing.

His second dream consisted of being caught in drag, so he had to hurriedly put on his male clothes over the dress and pretend that nothing was wrong, even though he had the wig stuffed underneath a baseball cap, his eye makeup hidden under dark shades, the boobs (affixed to his skin with adhesive) projecting out in his sweater, and bright red lips.

The third dream took place on stage. Everyone in the audience was clamoring to see Tami; they all wanted to meet her and say hello. Danny then found himself in the dressing room applying makeup, his gown hanging on a hook next to him. He next found himself at a dinner party, acting the part of Tami. Then he went dancing, and then found himself kissing some guy full on the lips at the stroke of midnight

Danny awoke sweating and got up. He heard movement downstairs and slowly opened his door. It was Alex, rinsing something out in the sink, by the sound of it. Danny sat on the edge of the bed, waiting for Alex to go back to bed. He didn't want Alex to come upstairs. Thinking back on the last dream, that guy he kissed bore some kind of resemblance to Alex, though he seemed much taller and broader shouldered, and had one of those trendy goatees. Danny remembered having to look up to make the kiss.



It had been forever since he last dressed up, Danny realized. He began to feel the urge, quite strongly this time, and decided that today he would have to do it, go all out, and put on a Tami outfit. The mere thought was getting him horny. He wondered how he could get out of work, then decided he couldn't afford to miss a day, even though he wasn't sure he could wait that long.

His clock read 4:35. Sue would get up at six, and Alex would arise around 6:30. Danny usually waited to the last moment after they were finished, but knew he wouldn't get any more sleep that night. The desire to dress up was growing stronger.

Maybe if I took a bath, he thought. A nice long bubble bath. I can shave off the hair I'd let grow. When I return from work I'll have one less thing to do before I change into my girl clothes. It had been a long time since he had the luxury of a bubble bath. He hoped he wouldn't wake Sue. She shared the bathroom with Danny and as part of her morning ritual, held the bathroom for a little over a half hour starting at ten minutes after six. That gave Danny an hour and a half.

He quickly started the water and grabbed his girly things. Shampoo, soap, bubble bath, loofah, pedicure and manicure set, moisturizing lotion, and pink razor. He filled the tub with hot steamy water, liberally adding a large dose of bath oil, so that when he finally stepped into the tub the bubbles had reached the top.

Danny set to work immediately: shaving, scrubbing, moisturizing, and soaking. It took nearly an hour, and when he finished he felt refreshed. He put on his satin robe, noticing how much nicer it felt now that his skin was again smooth and silky. Nice, he thought, looking at his reflection while applying shave cream to his face. Did he look just a little bit different today? The dreams certainly made him feel so. He inspected himself, imagining that yes, indeed, his neck was slimmer, his shoulders narrower, his lips slightly fuller, his nose a bit smaller, brow somewhat different. It was probably just the effect of losing that weight recently.

Danny shaved his face and returned to his bedroom, where he applied some of his expensive special occasion lotion on his skin and painted his toenails a bright fuchsia. He applied the women's antiperspirant to his underarms.

By this time Sue had woken and had gone into the bathroom. Danny put on a pair of padded satin panties and a waist nipper, tightening it as tightly as he could. He attached a special pair of sheer nylon stockings to the garters and went through his wardrobe trying to decide what would look good. The print dress? Gold top and skirt? Pink outfit? He took the gold outfit from the closet and hung it on the back of his door. He put on the bra, and had his falsies in his hands when he stopped.

What am I doing? I've got to go to work today. I can't be wearing this. Although, I suppose I could get away with putting on a loose sweater. He imagined how sexy he would feel wearing the waist nipper, panties, and stockings under his regular clothes, calculating how much time it would save that evening.

As he fantasized about wearing woman's underwear underneath his work clothes he didn't notice he was applying adhesive to the breast forms and pressing them against his skin. Tonight is going to be so great, he thought as he grabbed the gold blouse from the hanger and put his arms through the sleeves, shivering as he buttoned it. He stepped into

the leather skirt, tucked in the blouse, and zipped it up. Upon finishing he admired himself in the mirror. I look pretty good, he thought, taking the gold sandals and stepping into them. He sat on the edge of the bed to buckle them. When he finished he admired himself again. "You know," he whispered, "I don't think my legs have ever looked better."

He had spread foundation on his face when he stopped. "Oh my God," he said.

A voice came from the other side of the bathroom door. "Is something the matter, Danny?"

"I'm wearing a skirt," he said. "And I'm putting on makeup."

"No kidding. I thought I heard you taking a bath earlier. Have you decided to come out as a girl today?"

"I'm supposed to go to work," he said, picking up the black eye lining pencil.

"And you want to go in a skirt and heels?"

"No, I do not. But I can't control my actions."

"I don't understand."

He had finished his left eye. "I can't make my hands stop. It's like I have this compulsion – no, it's like I've been brainwashed by some evil scientist." He had often fantasized about being brainwashed into acting like Tami, strapped to a chair with a modified beauty parlor hair dryer sending rays into his brain while he stared at some kind of brainwashing beam. In these fantasies, the mad scientist would always test Danny by making him do something embarrassing, like passionately kiss some hunk, before sending Danny out to do his bidding. In his fantasies, Danny had rarely gotten beyond the kiss, though lately he'd wondered what oral or anal sex would feel like, a concept that had disturbed and frightened him until recently.

His fantasy had bogged down when he tried to figure out why the mad scientist would want to brainwash a transvestite when a brainwashed woman could do a much better job. He finally decided that the mad scientist's equipment only worked on men. Women were immune to its power.

In some versions the scientist made Danny look and act more feminine and desirable. Sometimes he injected his nipples with serum, Danny watching in horror as his breasts grew larger and larger, the mad scientist laughing maniacally. "Now nobody will confuse you with D— ——" he would say, with Danny being unable to recognize his own name.

Usually the transformations involved some weird kind of science not yet in existence. There was the transformation coffin, in which Danny's body would change over time while instructions were piped in. Sometimes he wore prosthetic devices that melded with his flesh, other times he wore restricting garments that altered his figure. In each case some kind of restraining device changed his appearance to make him unrecognizable as himself.

Occasionally the mad scientist made him seduce men in order they be brainwashed in the mad scientist's effort to control the world. More often though, the mad scientist merely wanted beautiful women he could control. Danny even had a twist on the *Stepford Wives* theme, where the wives ordered perfect little copies of themselves so that they could as-

sume new identities. In these fantasies Danny sometimes imagined himself replacing different women at work, becoming a perfect little Stacey or Rebecca or Carla – embarrassing when he met Carla’s husband and to his horror found himself getting an erection.

In his fantasies, forgetting became a delicious sensation, being unable to control his actions a spine tingling high. The reality the current situation disturbed him. His heart pounded while he felt his arms move without him willing them to. He finished lining his eyes and had put the first coat of mascara to the lashes. “Although, I do admit I look pretty good.”

“I’m sure you do.”

“I bet I could pass.”

“Your voice sounds funny,” said Sue.

“It does? Oh no, I’m getting Tami’s voice.” He really felt his heart pound. All the blood rushed through his head. He started doing his eye shadow. In a minute or so he’d go for the false eyelashes.

“It sounds serious. Is there anything I can do?”

“I don’t know. There’s nothing I can do. Maybe if you tied me down so I’d stop . . .” In his wildest fantasies he’d never considered being tied down in order to not become Tami.

“I don’t know, that sounds kind of kinky. Do you want me to call in sick for you?”

“Yes. No. I don’t know.”

“I guess our conversation last night really got to you. Maybe you’re in the process of discovering yourself. Maybe you do need a day off from work. I’ll call in, tell them you’ve got a fever.”

“Oh would you? That’d be a dear,” he said.

“Sure thing, Tami,” said Sue. She laughed.

Danny felt his stomach lurch. “Don’t say that,” he said. He pursed his lips, applying lip liner, followed by the lipstick. Except for the brown, thinning hair on top of his head, he didn’t look like himself anymore.

“I’m done with the bathroom . . .Tami,” said Sue. “It’s all yours.”

“Stop doing that.”

“Sure thing Tami. Tami Tami Tami.” Sue laughed as she left.

Within a few minutes Danny had completed his makeup, and as he sashayed into the bathroom he picked up a pair of tweezers. His face looked blank as a manikin’s, but inside he screamed because he could not will his hand to stop. The tweezers went straight for his brow and with his mind screeching he began to carefully pluck his eyebrows, thinning his brow, hair by hair. After a couple minutes Sue returned. “I called in for you,” she began, then caught sight of him. “What are you doing?”

“I’m plucking my eyebrows.” Danny noticed through the mirror that Sue’s eyes were wide.

“Why?”