



Reluctant Press presents:

Making The Team

Philippa Peters



A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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MAKING THE TEAM

by Philippa Peters

I. ACCEPTANCE

I love basketball. Basketball doesn't love me. When you're only five feet six inches tall, you get laughed at when you say you're a player. You don't get your chance to try out until all the seven footers have gone to the showers. The coach is long gone and you get to perform for one assistant coach.

You sink three pointers and fadeaway jumpers. You alley-oop to the clumsy big guys still hoping for one last look and you take charges by brutes trying to run over you. In just five minutes of play, your team scores over thirty points with you at point guard, running the plays.

"Hey, you're pretty good," say a few of the guys still left and then comes the clincher, "for a little guy."

No, my name was not on the list for the second round of tryouts at Newman Junior College. Not even a stellar year in intramurals in my first term could make the name of Morgan Miller pop out to coaches who already made up their minds.

"Don't fret it, Morg," laughed Al Trent, six four and listed with the guards trying out. "You'll have a great season in intras next year. You'll beat the thirty a game you put up last year, I'll bet. And I'll get you tickets for the front row for all the first team games!"

Al ruffled my hair as he said it. At least, he hadn't called me Stevie as a lot of guys in house league did; my brownish-colored hair was long like Steve Nash of the Phoenix Suns had. In the house leagues, I was as good as Steve Nash. I ran rings around a klutz like Al Trent. I outscored him, I out-passed him. I even out-rebounded him, for goodness' sake, just by positioning better than he did. I led the house leagues in steals. "It's because Stevie is so short," Al laughed to his teammates. "He's so close to the ground, no one can see him."

Other guys were upset when I beat them so easily. I heard Pete Charles say, "It's like playing with a little kid. Does Stevie even shave yet?"

"He must shave his legs," Don Short said and they all laughed at that, not knowing I was just a row away and that my ears were burning. So I wasn't all hairy and thick-muscled like the guys who fancied themselves basketball players. I was just late to develop, I thought. I paid them back, though. I was so motivated in the playoffs that I put up sixty points and outscored Pete and Don's team all by myself. They were pretty nice about it and I felt bad for a while. Then the notice for tryouts went up and I couldn't think of anything but that this was my chance to make the team.

I felt that I would get a longer look this year. I thought someone on the coaching staff would have noticed now that M. Miller was leading the scoring and assist statistics in Intramurals by huge margins. I was confident that I could beat out Al Trent and the other guys from house leagues who were trying out for the college squad in the spring.

But I didn't even get past the first round. I didn't even shower when I saw the list of those who made the second tryouts. I just got out of the dressing room and away from Al Trent's crowing at being chosen, along with three others who'd also played in house leagues all year. They had a shot at making the Newman Bulldogs team. I did not.

After a summer of working as bellhop in the Brenton Hotel, I had just about enough money for a second year in college. "You shouldn't go back to Newman," Jenny, one of the front desk charmers, said to me in a rare, idle moment. "If I were you, I'd go somewhere warm for the winter. I'd go somewhere where they play basketball outdoors all season long."

She had seen me at the park where I spent most of my off days. I played in any pick-up game I could find. I just loved the game.

I lived in the basement of my grandparents' house. My dad I never knew, my mother was gone by the time I was eleven. I lived with two old people who expected me to move out when I was eighteen. I think they were keenly disappointed when I stayed on and went to college at home.

So, I went on the Internet, looking for colleges in warm climates, but I knew it was hopeless. I couldn't afford the tuition anyway. That's when I saw an article in a string of lesser headlines. 'Basketball scholarships still available at Paloma State,' said the headline.

Terry Smith, whoever he was, was quoted as saying that his team needed a point guard. "I don't care about size," Coach Smith was quoted as saying. "Five feet four, five, six, I don't care. I just want someone who can run an offence and get it into the hands of our forwards under the basket. It's the only item we're missing from having a championship team and I'm prepared to look at anybody."

My mouth was dry as I read it. I looked up Paloma State but all it had on its sports pages was information about its winning football teams. I guess the place was a football factory. It was touting several of its current players as 'following in the footsteps' of a bunch of players whom I took to be in the NFL. The site had nothing about basketball.

So, I wrote to Coach Smith. My hands were shaking as I did it. I didn't lie. I told the coach that I was Morgan Miller and I was five feet six. I sent him copies of the scoring ta-

bles for the intramural programs at Newman. I underlined my name at the head of all the tables for points, assists, steals, as well as the fact that I was sixth in rebounding.

I didn't expect a reply so quickly. "The season starts very soon," Coach Smith wrote me. "If you want to go through with a tryout, you'll have to be here on Friday. If you make the team, I can guarantee you a scholarship for three years. Let me know if you are coming down. I'll have someone meet you."

I couldn't believe it. I read the letter four or five times. I figured out the bus schedule. I would have to leave in the morning if I was going to make the offered tryout and it was going to cost me. If I didn't make the Paloma State team, I was probably going to have to work for a year or more before I could afford a second year, even at Newman. I had to hope that Gran and Grandpa would let me live for a couple more years in their basement.

I was very nervous getting off the bus in Paloma. I had my grey sweats on and I was tired. I had had to change buses twice to get to Paloma; I had slept on the bus, over the three days it took me to get there.

"Morgan Miller?" asked a cultured woman's voice as I got my bag, the last one off the bus, from the driver.

"Yes," I said. My voice was husky after all the travelling. I turned to find a tall woman studying me. She had short blonde hair, dark sunglasses and was probably six feet tall.

"You're not what I expected," the woman said mildly.

I tensed at that. "Coach Smith knows that I'm only five feet eight," I said. I had lied just a little bit in my application to him. "He said he would give me a tryout."

The woman smiled at me. "He said that to you?" she asked, stressing each word.

"Well, Coach Smith wrote me," I told her. "I understand tryouts are today."

"Sort of," said the tall woman, sauntering back into the busy terminal.

"I should get out there right away," I said, seeing that it was nearly two o'clock. The bus had been late. I should have got ten in touch earlier, I thought, shown more urgency to get out and play. The woman looked at me and put her glasses up in her hair.

She had very blue eyes and wore a lot of eye makeup. It didn't hide the wrinkles at the corners of her eyes. She was quite old, maybe thirty-five, thirty-six years of age. "You don't have to hurry," she said. "In fact, you can take your time."

"No," I said, a feeling of apprehension coming over me. "I have to go." I licked my lips and told her the truth. "I have to get out there. It's my last shot at playing basketball at the college level. I know I can play if I'm just given the chance. Coach Smith is giving me a chance. I need to show him what I can do even if practice is going on now and I only get into the last ten minutes."

"The main practice was this morning," the blonde woman said to me. I felt the blood drain from my face. This was my last chance to try out and I had blown it.

"Can you take me out to the campus now?" I asked the blonde urgently. "If I talk to the coach and explain about the bus being late, he'll give me a shot, won't he?"

"You think you're that good?" asked the woman in amusement. "Look, I played on the women's national team years ago. I ate little people like you for breakfast."

"You're a woman," I told her.

"Glad you noticed," she said dryly. "I was beginning to worry about you."

I didn't understand what she meant by that. "You're a woman," I said again. "Women players aren't in my league."

The woman laughed at me. "You have no idea, do you?" she chided me. "Women players these days are only a step behind the very best men. Women players from Paloma State are playing professionally in Europe and in pro and semi-pro leagues across the country. You have no idea."

"Can we just go?" I asked her anxiously, hoisting my bags across my thin shoulder.

She hesitated a moment, then said. "Why not?"

Paloma State wasn't far from the bus station. "Why did you choose here to ask for a tryout?" asked the woman as she slid into a Reserved parking spot outside the gym.

"I read all about your championship football team," I told her, guessing she worked for the university. "I figured it was about time that you had a winning basketball team as well."

"What do you know about our basketball team?" asked the woman, nodding to one or two young people leaving the complex as we entered it.

"Only what Coach Smith said on the Internet," I told her. "The website for the college doesn't say anything about basketball at all. It's just football, football, and more football."

"Yes," said the tall woman with a sigh. "Dressing Room A," she said pointing me to it. "Change and come out to the West Gym." She pointed to gym doors down the hallway on our left. "Coach Smith will meet you down there."

"How do you know?" I asked her, butterflies growing in my stomach. I liked that feeling. I needed butterflies to play well.

"I know," she said to me. "Now, excuse me, Morgan Miller, while I go and round up some players to try you out."

The gym was empty when I went in, a basket of balls was parked in the key. I took one and began to do some warm-ups.

The blonde woman surprised me by appearing next to me when I looked up from stretching. She was in blue shorts and a white singlet. She picked up a ball and whisked it through the nearer net, thirty feet away.

I raised my eyebrows at the fine shot. "The national team," I said, impressed. "I can see why."

"Let's go a little," said the woman. She had a gleam in her eye as she pushed the wagon out of the way and went out to half court, her hands raised for the ball. I tossed her the one I held and she came at me right away.

She was a very good player and I didn't mind warming up with her until the coach got there. She wasn't as quick as me and soon she was puffing very hard. I took it easy on her. I only shot from beyond the three-point line. I didn't pressure her shots and she knew it.

"You don't have to take it easy on me," she snarled. The last game to thirty, she didn't even get a basket and I took only ten shots.

"Enough, enough," she said, doubled over. "You made the team, okay."

I grinned at her, scarcely breathing. It had been a nice little workout. "Only the coach can tell me that," I said.

"That's me," said the woman, panting hard. "Me," she repeated, looking at my uncertain face. "Me, I'm the coach. I'm Terry Smith."

"They have a woman coaching the basketball team?" I asked, disbelieving what I was hearing.

"Why not?" asked the blonde who said she was Coach Smith. "At Paloma State, we only have one basketball team, the women's basketball team, and you just made it, Morgan Miller. Here are a few of your teammates to welcome you to the team."

II. TRAINING CAMP

"You have got to be kidding me!" said Rhonda McKinnon, six feet five in her stocking feet as she looked down on me. The other two girls with her, also over six feet tall, were looking at me as if I was something the cat dragged in.

I agreed with her words completely. Coach Smith had to be insane. I hadn't been trying out for Paloma State's women's team. I hadn't! I couldn't! Didn't the coach see that I was a man? I glanced nervously at the tall women who surrounded me and felt a distinct queasy feeling overcoming me. Any one of these women could make mincemeat out of me in a fair fight if I was critical of them or women's basketball in any way.

"I didn't understand," I stammered. "I didn't know."

"You didn't know?" sneered the coach at me. "You didn't understand? Where have you been the last few years? Hiding under a rock? We here at Paloma State are not exactly unknown, you know."

"We've been finalists in each of the three years I've been here," said a dark-haired girl, slapping a basketball with her hands. "We're going to win it all this year."

"Not without a decent point guard," retorted Coach Smith. "Babs, play with Morgan against Rhonda and Cathy. Half court, two on two."

"I can't," I said miserably but the girls were already lining up. Babs, the brunette, fired the ball at me and I caught it by reflex. Rhonda, the tallest player, was all over me. Well, I

thought, I've played against much taller players before. I dribbled and faded. When she hardly moved after me, a smirk on her face, I elevated and dropped the ball in the basket.

Babs yelped from her side of the court, laughing and pointing at Rhonda and the look on her face. Rhonda took the out and busted down the center. I got my feet planted and she went right through me, over me. The charge was so obvious even a blind coach could have called it. Rhonda went in and laid it up.

"Three-two," said Coach Smith as I got up from the floor.

"That's how we play basketball in the CSAC, little boy," said Rhonda, as Babs took the ball and lined up again.

"The Sissy Athletic Conference?" I asked her and she cackled. She was still smiling as Babs delivered the ball to me. I blew past her and laid it in easy.

"You're the only sissy here," said Rhonda, taking the ball and coming at me again. I got down lower. When she made her step into the key, I swept the ball away. She might at least have tried to keep it a little behind her, out of my reach. She looked pretty funny swatting at the air as I went back to the line and tagged up.

Babs broke wide open and I put it in her hands, right where she only had a step to make to lay it in. Rhonda scowled and the game became serious. It was fun, actually. Babs was pretty good at getting in the clear. After I had fed her for four straight baskets, Rhonda instinctively went for my fake at center court. I faded back. I was just inside the half court as I did one of my bombs. It went in, all net.

"Yeah!" screamed Babs, coming up to high five me. "Way to go, girl!" she said. I flushed like mad at that.

"Don't say that," I said. I started thinking of bus schedules. Yes, if I got out of here and got to the bus station by seven, I could save on staying overnight in Paloma. I could really use the money after quitting my job back home to come on what had turned out to be a wild goose chase.

"Seen enough?" Coach Smith asked Rhonda, who was bent over and gripping the bottom of her shorts. Rhonda wiped sweat off her forehead.

"You're crazy," she said to the coach. I agreed with her.

Coach Smith reached over and lifted Rhonda's head so that the two looked at each other eye to eye. "Donalda, Sherry and Misty are gone. We didn't win anything with them anyway," she said. "You've seen the recruits this year. They're all green as grass. The three of you here are the team this year. Do you want to win? Will you do anything to win? Or will we settle for a ten-win year, if we're lucky? No exposure, no offers from Europe for sure and a hard road to get noticed by the pros."

"Morgan Miller? Someone's going to notice," said Babs.

"Margie Miller," said the coach. The girls looked at her and I felt a cold chill go through me. "So," she said carefully. "Are you with me on this or not?"

"Sure," said Rhonda, looking down at me.

"Yes," said Babs, also staring at me.

"If you can get away with it," said Cathy, frowning.

"No," I told them all, backing away from the little confab under the net. "It's the stupidest idea I've ever heard."

I almost fled from the gym and jogged quickly to the dressing room. I was not going to play basketball on a women's team. I wasn't. It was the stupidest idea I had ever heard. I wouldn't mind being famous in basketball but I shuddered as I thought what it would be like to be the first guy on a girls' team. That's what I thought the coach was proposing. Soon, I would find out what she really meant.

There was no one else in the shower. I took my towel out and showered, my mind in a whirl. Why did the coach have to do that, I wondered, play with my mind like that? She should just have told me at the bus station that I'd gotten it all wrong. I could have caught an afternoon connection and be back on the road by now. Silly, stupid woman, I thought angrily. I got out my last clean shorts and T-shirt and reloaded my duffle carefully so that my stinky clothes were in the plastic bag I had brought for my laundry.

I was packed and in my sweats. My wet hair was plastered back on my head when the door opened. The three girls were standing there. They didn't say anything but just looked at me.

"What?" I asked them bitterly. "You want a tip for letting me play against you?"

"Feisty creature, isn't she?" sneered Rhonda.

I didn't like that. I hoped that a bus to town stopped near the Kinesiology Department and that it came really soon. I wanted to get away from the site of another disappointment in my life.

"We're here to show you the dorm where you'll be staying," said Babs then. I stepped back, startled. Not one of the girls was smiling at me now.

"I'm not staying here," I said. My nerves were beginning to jangle as the three big girls filled the doorway. I wasn't getting out that way unless they let me.

"Coach is upping her offer to a full scholarship and a job here at the gym," said Rhonda. "Three years and a full ride. That's pretty fair in exchange for a championship this year. You can skip out on the last two years if you want."

"I'm not joining your team," I told them, shaking. Rhonda uncurled in the doorway and I saw how really big she was. "I'm not a girl, I'm not gay, I'm not one of those trans things. I'm a boy."

"You don't look like much of one," said Cathy, the girl with bleached hair. "Why do you wear your hair so long?"

I hesitated.

Babs clicked her fingers. "He thinks he's Steve Nash," she said. "Without the height or the bad skin."

"Or the hairy legs," added Cathy with a grin. "In fact, you don't look like a basketball player at all. Certainly not a Dove."

A Dove? I looked at the girl and wondered what she was talking about.

"Geez," said Rhonda in disgust. "You come all this way and you don't even know the nickname of the team you're trying out for? This is going to be one awful week, ladies. This rookie has so much to learn."

"I'm not," I began. "Hey!" Rhonda had stepped into the shower and taken my duffle bag right out of my hands. She handed it to Cathy and blocked me as I tried to get it back. "Hey, that's mine!" I called out.

Rhonda and Babs were both grinning as they toyed with me, not letting me out of the dressing room. My money, my clothes, and my ID were in that bag. I got past them and dashed to the door. There was no sign of Cathy.

"She's gone to the dorm," said Babs, clicking up to me. No wonder she looked taller. It was the high heels she was wearing. She actually looked pretty nice in the chocolate brown and white dress she was wearing. "If you want your bag back, we'd better go after it."

Babs and Rhonda swung into the 'Ethel Hubbard Building: For Women Only.' They walked me past a few girls who looked at me in surprise. We entered an elevator. As I looked back, the girls we had passed were laughing to each other.

"This is our floor," said Rhonda when we got to the fifth. She walked me down to the end of the hallway and round the corner. There was Cathy standing outside an open doorway. A key on a hoop was twirling around her finger.

My duffle bag was sitting on the bed, looking out of place with the frilled curtains on the windows, the pink sheets on the bed and the frilled, multicoloured quilt folded several times on the foot of the bed. Even the lightshades were pink. A dressing table with lights around the mirror above it dominated most of the rest of the room.

"This has a private shower," said Cathy. "It's a senior's room, really, but seniors are in short supply this year so no one will object."

"I'm not staying here," I said, heading into the room to get my duffle.

"But how are you getting out?" asked Cathy. I may be quick on the basketball court but I wasn't quick enough to grab the door. She pulled it shut and I was locked in the pink room.

I banged on the door, screamed and hollered. All that gave me was bruised knuckles and a hoarse throat. It was nine o'clock that night when they came to see me again. I was starving. Babs brought me a bowl of tomato soup, crackers, a glass of water and nothing else.

"You're on a restricted diet," said Babs.

"You're holding me against my will!" I screamed at them. "That's kidnapping and a federal offence. You're all going to be in big trouble when I get out of here!"

"Oh, don't be silly, Margie," said Rhonda to me. "You'll tell one story and the three of us and the coach will tell another." She lay back on my bed; her feet touched the end of it as her head was on the pillow. "Who do you think the police will believe, girls like us or you, a strange boy, trying to pass himself off as a girl to get into our dorm?"

I tried to make a run for it but Cathy slammed the door shut. Babs held me off until Rhonda's powerful arms grabbed me from behind. "Dump the soup," said Rhonda, turning and depositing me back on the bed.

"Are you sure?" asked Babs as she did what Rhonda had said. "He's pretty thin as it is."

"She's pretty thin," Rhonda retorted. "Take her bag," she said to Cathy who did just that. I struggled but it was useless as Cathy put the bag outside the door. She brought in a little blue suitcase that went on the quilt at the end of the bed.

"That's for you, Margie," said Rhonda, grunting as she held me steadily. "You get dressed in your nightie and you get breakfast tomorrow. Don't and you will face the floor monitor, Babs. It's a rule that you don't sleep in the raw on this floor. We don't take kindly to girls sleeping in boy clothes on this floor, either. So decide, Margie, when you want to eat next."

They must have thrown a circuit breaker somewhere outside the room I was in after they left, because all the lights went out suddenly. I was alone in the dark. The windows opened but there were iron grilles on the outside. I was five floors up. I would have broken my neck if I had jumped from a window.

I slept on top of the bed and woke with a raging hunger. In the nightcase, as Cathy had called it, were cosmetics as well as toothpaste and a toothbrush. There was also a long, white nightie and a pair of panties that had the same pattern on them as the nightie. Would they really not feed me if I didn't put this stuff on?

They didn't. "Same thing at noon," Rhonda said with a grim smile. "We might feed you if you're sitting pretty, like a good girl should."

So I caved. I was starving and I caved. Thin tomato soup and two saltines had never tasted so good. Sitting there at the dressing table in a long, flowing nightie and frilly panties was so silly. I felt weird. But the girls didn't laugh at me when they came in to see if I was going to cooperate.

I shivered when I finished; my bare shoulders were beginning to feel the cold. I wished I was back in the warmth of the bed but that reminded me of how the nightie had felt soft and silky about me.

Babs went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. She came and took some shampoo out of the nightcase along with something called body lotion and something else. I knew what Nair was. Pro ballplayers used it, several teammates had told me. No one likes hairy-legged basketball players or track athletes. Swimmers said that having no body hair made them faster.

Babs put it on the shelf for me. "JDo under your arms and across your chest. But don't do your face. We've got something else for that. The lotion will take away the odor of the Nair. You'll be glad you used it."

I smelled of roses and some other womanly perfume after I finished using it; no amount of showering could get the scent out of my nostrils.

Babs brought me a towel. She put Nair on my chest and under my arms as I protested. I protested when she reached in the shower and poured almost a whole bottle of the stuff over my back and across my abdomen and pubic hair.

"Hey!" I yelled at her. To make matters worse, she had turned the water off. We struggled a bit and she smiled.

"Mmm, roses," Babs said. "I love that aroma. It suits you. You should use it all the time."

I couldn't believe the amount of hair that peeled off me. I couldn't believe how my pubic hair vanished. I looked like I used to when I was thirteen.

"That's good," said Babs seriously. I tried to avoid her but she was spilling lotion all over me again. The scent of roses almost overpowered me. I clutched at the towel to give myself a little decency in front of this tall girl who wanted to check out my legs.

"Margie is all yours, Cathy," Babs said cheerfully as I staggered back into my room. Where the nightie and the panties were on the bed before I had gone into the shower, there was now a dark pink bag with a pussy cat on the front. I could guess where the nightie had gone. I looked over to the chair for my sweats and my last T-shirt. They were gone.

On the rack where my clothes should have been hanging, there was a line of clothes, brightly-colored clothes, girl clothes, dresses and skirts.

"We had so much to buy for you. It's been fun, really, shopping on Coach Smith's credit card. Now you have so many things you needed, Margie."

Babs opened the other side of the closet; there was stuff on the shelves that made my hair stand on end. There were bras and panties and packages with stockings and pantyhose in them. There were shoes, high-heeled shoes in red and black. On the top shelf were two wigs, one blonde, one brunette.

"I-I'm not wearing those things!" I protested.

"You're right," said Babs. "I don't think you should wear a wig, either. You can't wear it on the court. Luckily, Cathy did hairdressing last year. She can get you ready to get out of this room."

I clutched the towel about me as Babs pushed and pulled me to sit in front of the dressing table mirror. "What are cheerleader outfits doing in the closet?" I asked her, certain of what I had seen.

"It's one of the traditions here at Paloma," said Babs. "The men come and do the cheers at our games and we go and do the cheers at theirs. It's why so many girls come out for basketball and why the last two or three on the team are chosen for their looks. It counts as a credit course too. Apart from basketball, you'll find your academic load here quite light, in comparison to the main student body."

Cathy then put another towel over the mirror so I could not see what she was doing to me. But I did feel the hot wax she put on my face

"Leave it," Cathy snapped, taking my hand and looking critically at my fingers. "At least you don't bite your nails like Barbara Watson over there. We can shape them a little and paint them." Cathy wiggled her fingers. They were long, curved and red. "These are

acrylics," she went on. "You can't have long nails for playing basketball. When we go out, we girls always put on acrylics. I'll show you how to do it and you can choose a shade to match your lipstick."

"I'm not wearing lipstick!" I said furiously. I couldn't say much more as Cathy chose that moment to begin removing the wax strips and cover my face with some kind of lotion. She used a Q-Tip and began to put some liquid on my eyebrows, below and above them.

"What are you doing?" I yelled at her.

"Getting you ready to go out," said Cathy. "Now be still while I do your hair or this will really hurt, I promise you."

It didn't really hurt. She was doing something with every strand of hair on my head, or so it seemed. I smelled some funny liquids as Babs came up with a stool and talked to me about basketball. She distracted me from what Cathy was doing while she questioned me about breaking the trap. Babs told me the zone formations that Coach Smith employed most and the little wrinkles that the coach had added against certain hot players.

I could feel that Cathy was pinning my hair all over my head in tight little bundles, slathering my hair in liquid. She kept me leaning back so I wouldn't get it near my eyes. When she finished that, Cathy suddenly straddled the chair, sitting on the towel. She was grinning at me as she took brushes and makeup from the nightcase and began to put makeup around my eyes and on my face.

"I'm not going out looking like this," I thundered. Cathy looked at Babs who shrugged.

"You're not going out naked through the Women's Dorm," Babs said. "You'd have the campus police charging you with attempted rape before you got down the elevator. And since all your male clothes are gone – girl, did they ever stink! – the only way you can get out of here is in a dress and some makeup. So you see, we are only trying to help you."

"You're not trying to help me at all," I snapped at her and her friend who seemed to be enjoying herself as she put lipstick on my mouth and showed me how to move my lips and spread it about. She had some kind of blotter with her that she used to 'dampen the effect,' or so she said.

Cathy did something more to my eyes and eyebrows, then sat back against the dressing table. "Momma Smith was quite right," she said in wonder as she powdered my face. She reached in her pocket and put heavy, square earrings that pinched me awfully on my ears.

"I am a genius," said Cathy, looking at me.

"You are a genius," said Babs, moving so that she could see my face as well.

They moved the towel so I could look at what they had done. A girl who looked a little like me stared back at me. Her hair was in cornrows; several hung at the back of my neck, tiny ribbons or beads at the end of each.

The cornrows made my pink-rouged and powdered cheeks seem softer and rounder. The black eyelashes, blue just above the upper line of the lashes, another line below my lower set, made my face startlingly attractive. My eyebrows had almost vanished into a thin line arched femininely above my eyes. The pink lips, formed into a cupid's bow, set my heart jangling. I would love to kiss a girl with lips like that. My ears glinted as I moved

and Cathy was putting a necklace, metallic and cold, about my neck. I looked like a girl from the neck up. Worse, I looked like a pretty girl.

"What have you done to me?" I protested but they just grinned at me.

"When we take the cornrows out," said Cathy with a smile, "your hair will be all wavy and much more feminine. You'll see a real girl when you look in the mirror then."

Cathy was taking away my towel but still the girlish image remained. I looked like a girl getting ready for a date with the way she had made me up. Babs reached around me and I watched as the girl, me, had a bra attached to her chest. Round, heavy pads were put in them and the bra bulged on my chest.

"I can't do this," I said weakly. My hands were trying to prevent the girls from looking at my tiny manhood and making comments about how puny I was. The girl's face might be fascinating to look at but I had to protest. It was idiotic if they thought they could make me into a girl so that I could play basketball with them. Oh, what a fool I was, I realized in panic. That was exactly what they were trying to do.

"This is the hard part," said Babs sympathetically. "This is going to hurt but you'll thank me later that you have no pubic hair any more." She had a roll of tape in the hands and Cathy grabbed my arms.

"No! No! No!" I screamed. I wiggled and tried to kick her as she taped my manhood back between my legs. She pushed my genitals back into a cavity in my body I didn't even know that I had.

I moaned and screamed with the discomfort of it all. "Can she possibly play basketball taped like that?" asked Cathy. She held me against the chair while Babs slapped my legs and got the pink panties on me.

"She better," said Babs. "It's the only way out of Paloma State for me and some dreary assistant's job for years. We get a championship and the three of us, and Margie here too, can write our own tickets for anything we want to do in basketball."

"I'm having some doubts now," said Cathy suddenly but her vise-like grip on me didn't slacken at all.

I wriggled as Babs put a garter belt on me. Then she took each of my legs in turn and rolled on stockings, attaching them to a garter belt.

"Are you going to cooperate as we put a slip and a dress on you, Margie, or shall we call for Rhonda to come and hold you while we do it?"

"It hurts," I moaned at her. Babs looked sympathetically at me.

"You have to get used to it," she said. "You're going to be taped up a lot this season. You'll be glad about it when you're leading the cheers."

"Oh, Margie will be on top of the pyramid," said Cathy with a smile. "That will make Rhonda real snarky. She hates looking up some girl's skirt at her panties, she always says. I wonder if she will mind looking up Margie's skirt?"

"She'll love it," laughed Babs.