



Reluctant Press

Transition Into Skirts

Romana



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN DUKEHART

TWO 'NEW WOMAN' STORIES

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE OPERA

By Romana

A light fog limited visibility on the empty beach about half a mile in all directions. In the distance, a rumbling sound marked the position of either a thunderstorm or a jet aircraft. A lone figure, Larry Richards, jogged down the empty beach just beyond the irregular, surf-washed water line. Sea gulls paid him little heed, but repeating waves of small shore birds rapidly darted out of his way and then landed a few feet behind him.

Larry checked his watch. It was ten before noon. Soon it would be time to turn around and start back to the parking lot. His pace slackened as he reflected on the late Saturday afternoon schedule. He and his wife Peggy would get ready to go to the opera, while their twin girls, Erica and Shawn, would over-prepare themselves for the teen dance in the evening. He gave a hollow sigh, lamenting that his alter ego, Lori, would not be going. Though he had a lean figure and was only five-foot-nine, she still did not pass well, nor would Peggy set foot in the car with her. Someday, perhaps, she just might pull off such an adventure.

Larry's mind was jolted out of his daydream as he tripped and fell to his knees. When he righted himself, he brushed sand from his gray sweat shirt and brown trousers. He turned to see what had caused him to trip. It was an opaque bottle, half-submerged at an angle in the sand. Larry pulled the bottle free. It was over a foot long and reddish in color. It was also very heavy. There were several thin black bands along the length of the bottle, which curiously looked like some kind of reinforcement. The bottle had a strange blue stopper. Larry tried to remove it, but he could not make any sense of it at all. It was time to leave, but he was deter-

mined to figure it out. He pulled as hard as he could, but the stopper would not budge. He was about to give up. As he squeezed the stopper, it suddenly fell off the bottle without any effort. When the bottle began to buzz, Larry got nervous and threw it into the surf. He noticed that all the shore birds around him suddenly took to flight; then there was a flash of light followed by blackness.

A sensation of coolness was the first thing Larry felt as he opened his eyes. The sun was starting to break through the overcast. He was lying on his back, head toward the surf. A wave came, and water surged up around his head as far as his shoulder. Larry jerked to his feet; then he turned and froze.

There was a woman standing in the surf, not more than ten feet from Larry, but she was no ordinary woman. She was almost eight feet tall, with long golden hair. Her skin had a light bronze texture, and her face hinted of oriental features. At first, he thought she was wearing some kind of uniform, but he noticed too many inconsistencies for that hypothesis. She wore a dull-red short-sleeved metallic dress with a knee-high skirt, matching calf-high low-heeled metallic boots, and a wide black belt. She also wore gold arm bands just below the sleeves, and a black and gold head band ringed her head. Strangely, she seemed to have what resembled electronic keypad bracelets around each wrist.

"I would presume you to be a genie," said Larry softly, more to himself than to the tall figure, "but you don't exactly look like someone from the *Arabian Nights*." Larry wondered if he should run, but she did not look menacing. He also doubted that he could outrun her.

The woman was silent, but she was obviously as intrigued with Larry as he was with her. She began to manipulate each keypad, alternating from one to the other. Occasionally, she would pause; then she would continue, as if driven by unseen events.

"Does that allow you to understand me?" asked Larry curiously. "My name is Larry."

There was a long pause; then she spoke, "I am Tremaark of Genrada. I am still learning to speak...your language. You people have...erratic syntax. Though I am still learning, I thank you for freeing me from my prison." Her voice was a low contralto, verging on tenor. Her accent resembled a varying combination of French and German.

"Genrada?" questioned Larry. "I have never heard of it."

"It is another dimensional realm, parallel to your space," Tremaark explained. "Our two cultures and all the beings in them have a common origin. Our legends tell of a woman, born on your world many thousands of your years ago, who had the gift of wizardry. She led her people to a better life in a satellite realm, which came to be known as Genrada."

"This Genrada," asked Larry with a note of disbelief, "just where and what is it?"

"I do not dare to create a graphic to show it to you, because I will suffer an unwanted consequence. Genrada is here, and it is not here at the same time. Our

two realms are kept separated by a process that can be seen through insight, not knowledge. Genrada is very small compared to your universe, but its numerous worlds are much larger than your world. We of Genrada speculate that advanced beings created the realm before your world was formed. They abandoned it when dinosaurs still roamed here. We know this, because they were the last animals that they 'borrowed' from your world. Few of their artifacts have survived. Apparently, they no longer needed Genrada, so they moved on."

Larry had relaxed enough to be more observant. He noticed that she did not look right; for she was very muscular, and her face contained many male features. Also, her voice was too deep for a woman. "Are you a genie?" he asked boldly, deciding not to pursue any gender questions.

"Your language is difficult for me, and your thought patterns and the computer records of your culture are hard to access," Tremaark began, "but, I suppose, to you, I am very much like the fabled, supernatural being of which you speak. Ah, that could mean there have been others."

"Others?" questioned Larry.

"Of my people, exiled to this world of yours. Genrada is a realm of wizards, of whom many are powerful tyrants. Their enemies have been known to vanish. Like them, I was locked in deep sleep in a gravity bottle, set adrift in some remote ocean, where I would either die or be set free. Obviously, I am now free...free to return home!"

"What about all the electronics," asked Larry, as he tried to figure out the source of Tremaark's powers.

"I am not advanced in my powers," she explained, "so I must use the amplifier-coordinator in my head band. The controls are contained in my bracelets. An advanced wizard does not need these tools to effect changes in objective reality."

"If you are from a realm of wizards, can you grant wishes?" Larry asked expectantly.

"I see," explained Tremaark, "the origin of your legends. But I cannot grant any wishes, because I will suffer the consequences of the curse placed upon me."

"You're not actually a woman," suggested Larry.

"I am a man, like you," Tremaark explained. "I fell in love with Erinda, the most beautiful woman in all of Genrada. She was so radiant, and I loved her so much, but it was not to be. She was claimed by Karamased, a high wizard. Our love was forbidden. When he caught us together, he transformed me into this half-woman, half-man state before imprisoning me in your world. I estimate that it all happened more than 2000 of your years in time past."

"Can't you just change yourself back?" asked Larry.

"Like this?" replied Tremaark, as he manipulated his keypads again. His form shimmered for a moment; then his body fattened, his feminine breasts vanished, and his body stabilized into a more masculine appearance. However, the new

looks did not last. Within minutes, Tremaark looked exactly as he did the first time Larry saw him.

“I cannot override the wizard's spell. If I try to make love with a woman or grant anyone a wish, the transformation will proceed to completion. When I return to Genrada, I can continue my studies, so that someday I will become more powerful than Karamased. Then I will be able to restore my body.”

“Is he still alive?” questioned Larry. “It has been more than 2000 of our years, after all! Do your people have such a great life span?”

“We exist for less than 700 of your years, so he, as well as Erinda, would be long dead,” explained Tremaark. “My problems have clouded my reasoning. But his curse is still holding, so he must have descendants. They are the ones that I must overcome!”

“You look like someone who would be better off completing the transformation. After all, there is really nothing wrong with being a woman,” explained Larry.

“Why would anyone want to be a woman!” he exclaimed with contempt. “They have no status, other than existence for procreation and the pleasure of men. It is a dismal life.”

“I can imagine,” replied Larry. “Your society sounds more sexist than mine. Here, cultural conditioning by the male power structure prescribes and creates far more differences between men and women than could ever be defined biologically. Some of us do not like this system!”

“But would you want to be stuck in a woman's body for the rest of your life?” asked Tremaark.

“I wouldn't mind; sometimes I even think that it would be preferable. Women and their lives are my predominant preoccupation. You see, I crossdress. That is, I go out at least once a month dressed as a woman. I've been doing it for twenty years. Granted, I am not very good at it, and I usually just go to the support meetings at the Swanson Gender Center. It is not approved male behavior in my society, and it makes my wife nervous, but I do it anyway.”

“Other males in your society also do this...transformation willingly?” asked Tremaark with a more interested tone.

“Possibly more than ten percent of the male population, and more than that may have more than a passing interest. Some people think it's a coming evolutionary change,” explained Larry.

“That's astounding! You see, Erinda often had me transform myself and pretend to be her sister. In my society, it was considered very perverse and forbidden by law, but we had a lot of fun. We fooled Karamased on many an occasion, but he finally discovered the ruse. In his indignation, he placed this curse upon me,” added Tremaark sadly.

“Will you lose your powers if the transformation proceeds to completion,” questioned Larry.

“Women in Genrada also have powers; it is more difficult for them to focus them...for status gaining maneuvers. I am already advanced in my skills, so if I were transformed, my sexual identity might not be a limitation. You are suggesting that I complete the transformation, and continue my battle against the high wizards as a woman, as if to honor my beloved Erinda.”

“You said it better than I,” added Larry. “It is clear to me that the women of Genrada need a champion. Like me, I think your mind is already tilted in that direction. You need only to decide to do it!”

“I have never acknowledged these feelings,” admitted Tremaark. “I always said that it was only a game with Erinda, that it never really meant anything. As a militant woman, I would induce fear in the hearts of every high wizard in Genrada. Yes, that is the way! I will turn Karamased's curse against him. Make your wish, Larry, and let my fate transpire.”

“Oh,” replied Larry hesitantly, taking surprise that Tremaark had given in to his logic. “Let me take a moment to compose myself,” he said with a big grin on his face.

Tremaark nervously adjusted his keypads as he awaited Larry's wish. Larry already knew what he wanted, but he was somewhat embarrassed to ask for it, to waste such a valuable asset on one of his frivolous whims.

“My wish,” said Larry as he took a deep breath, “is to be able to change myself into a complete woman on demand. And, as this woman, I must be able to wear all my wife's clothing. I realize that it is ludicrous,” he added as he struggled for breath, “but it is really what I want!”

Tremaark paused to do more calculations and manipulations with his keypads. After minutes, he finally spoke, “It can be done, my friend, within certain limitations.”

“What kind of limitations?” asked Larry nervously.

“Your wish is for an active device, rather than a passive treasure. Active devices change objective reality on demand. They can do this because even objective reality is not absolute; it is real, but it is also illusory. Active device wishes are more difficult; they have rules. Such as rule one: the transformation will go to completion in about seven minutes. If you do not want the changes to become permanent, you must interrupt the process before completion.”

“Okay, I'll agree to that. Please continue.”

“Rule two:” added Tremaark, “you must clasp hands with a real woman as a model during transformation to create the general body proportions. In your case, this would be your wife. In addition, your imagination will determine what physical features are to be added to this creation. You also might pick up some personality traits from the model.”

“I can live with that,” agreed Larry, “so please go on.”

“Rule three:” continued Tremaark, “a transform finger ring will be the active device. When you place it on your finger according to Rule two, the transformation

will proceed. When you take it off, the transformation will stop. When you put it on again, you will revert to your present form. You must put it back on within thirty-six hours, or else the changes will become permanent. If you lose the ring, or if someone else uses it while you are transformed, the changes will become permanent. You may reverse the use of the ring only twelve times. If you try to use the ring for a thirteenth time, the changes will become permanent. If the transformation becomes permanent, or if there have been thirteen transformations, the ring will lose its powers.”

Larry pondered all the rules. Nervously, he asked “When I am this transformed woman, will I be real. I mean, will the changes just be cosmetic, or will I be just like the model, internally and externally.

“If you follow the rules, you will be the woman that you want to be. I can attest that the changes are not of a cosmetic nature. Your new objective reality will be physically exact, without any exception. In the final stages, the transformation moves to the genetic level. Once that is complete, there is no going back.”

“Why will the ring be good for so few uses?” asked Larry.

“As an active device, it will tie up my powers every time you use it. I do not want to be bound to the ring forever,” Tremaark explained.

“In that case, I agree to those rules,” said Larry as he strained hard to keep all hesitation from his voice and from his mind.

“Wait a moment,” urged Tremaark as he once again manipulated his keypads. Tremaark cupped his hands. There was a bright flash of light; then he held up the ring for Larry to see. An aura of light that surrounded the ring vanished as Larry gazed at it.

Tremaark handed Larry the ring. As he spoke, his voice changed upwards in pitch. When Larry took his eyes off the ring, he realized the Tremaark had physically changed. All the incorrect masculine features were gone. Tremaark looked like a beautiful, proportionally correct eight-foot tall woman.

“Good-bye, Larry. Use the ring well. May it help to make your deepest wishes come true. However, I cannot leave without giving you a true gift of value. When the ring is exhausted, it will transform into a jewel of great worth.”

“Thank you, Tremaark. I hope you have a good trip home.” He thought about how shocked the high wizards would be when Tremaark went about feminizing their society.

“My name is now Erinda. The love of my life shall relive in me. You know, I don't feel weaker; in fact, I feel more powerful. I vow that the high wizards will not appreciate my return. As I gain skill, I will turn all the high wizards into women; they will never suspect who is doing it to them,” she added with a devilish grin. “It is now time for me to depart. Larry, I urge you to move as far away as possible. I am activating the transport field. It is not safe to be too near it.”

A shimmering, ray-framed multicolored field in the shape of a polyhedron formed around Erinda. Taking Erinda at her word, he began to run back towards

the parking lot. He heard the loud hum behind him, but he did not pause or turn, because he could feel the heat generated by the transport field. Momentarily, the heat faded. Larry stopped and turned to look. A hazy, dissipating swirl of light marked the position where Erinda had stood; then even that was gone. Larry was alone on the beach with the shore birds.

He looked at the ring; then he shouted, "But Erinda, it is too small. How will I ever get it onto any of my fingers?" asked Larry, realizing that he was talking to a deserted beach. He had the ring, but its acquisition seemed so much like a dream. Had he hallucinated the whole incident? He did not ponder the question for long. When he looked at his watch, he realized that he was already late getting home. Peggy would be upset. He put the ring in a pocket in his pants and started to jog up the beach as fast as he could make his legs propel him.

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"Dad, which outfit should I wear tonight?" asked his daughter Shawn as Larry headed down the hall toward the bathroom. She held two different outfits in front of her in sequence. Shawn was the taller of their fraternal twins. She was a red-head, while Erica was a brunette. Both the girls were extremely intelligent and got straight A's in school; however, they were also well into the 'raging hormone' stage of their lives.

"The red one," he replied hurriedly.

As soon had he gotten into the bathroom, Peggy came to the door. "Larry, are you finally back?"

"Sorry," he replied, "but I was unexpectedly delayed. I'll explain to you in a moment."

"You'd better hurry, or we'll be late," she urged. "I'll be in the bedroom."

When he reached the bedroom, he gave Peggy a quick kiss. She had not yet completed dressing; she was still wearing a black slip while she combed her shoulder-length red hair. She pointed to his clothes, all neatly laid out on the bed.

"I really hate that suit," he said. "Maybe I can still dress up."

"No way," she replied sternly. "You know that you could never pull it off. Besides," she added with a smile, "it takes you more than two hours to get ready. You'd never make it!"

"Peggy," he began as he approached her from behind and put his hands on her shoulders, "you won't believe what happened today, while I was jogging on the beach."

"Larry," she said as she turned and gave him a sideways smile, "okay, so what happened?"

"It was magic. But I won't waste time in explanation. Let's see if this works." He groped in his pocket until he found the ring.

“Now you're being silly,” she said as he held her hands.

Larry checked to make sure he could see his watch. “All I have to do is hold hands, while I put this ring on,” he explained.

“It's too small. What is this all about?” she asked with a mystified expression.

“Here goes,” said Larry as he worked the ring toward the small finger on his left hand, “so let's see if something happens.”

Peggy just looked at him quizzically. To Larry's amazement, the ring actually slid onto his selected finger. In his mind, he tried to picture the soap opera star, Victoria Majors. He braced himself; the first effect was not slow in coming. His stomach felt like he was in free fall, and every inch of his being was in motion. He glanced downwards, as his chest shrank in girth and his breasts grew in size. At the same time, his waistline almost seemed to flow downwards into his growing hips.

Trying not to lose his thoughts of Victoria Majors, Larry wondered if the transition was spectacular. He looked over at Peggy. She seemed to be getting taller. But he had never seen such an astonished expression on her face, as she stood there with her eyebrows arched and her mouth hanging agape. For a moment, she tried to break his grip, but he held her with all his strength, which was diminishing.

“Your chin...it's receding, and, Lord, your hair is growing!” Peggy uttered weakly.

The pace of the transition was slowing, Larry could still feel something going on inside his body, mostly below his chest. The six minute mark was coming up on the watch. At six minutes and fifteen seconds elapsed time, he released Peggy and hurriedly removed the ring. His transformation stabilized.

“This certainly cures my baldness,” he joked.

Peggy was not amused.

“I do look different,” he said as he peered into the mirror on the back of the bedroom door. His clothes were now very baggy; they fit him poorly. His shoes had so much slack that he was able to kick them off without untying them. He felt all around his new body. As far as he could tell, all external male parts had really been replaced with the appropriate female parts. It was exciting. He did not resemble Victoria Majors very much; in fact, he was a bit homely, but still very feminine looking. His voice was also pleasantly different. It was not quite soprano, but it definitely did not sound masculine.

“Is that you, Larry?” asked Peggy weakly, as she circled this new woman, who had long hair of the same shade of red as her hair. “How...?”

“It was this genie person on the beach. He/she gave me this magic ring. But I am probably not Larry. I am now really his feminine alter ego, Lori. Guess what, Larry's clothes do not fit me, but your neat outfits do! I'd better start getting dressed, or we'll be late, and I don't even have to shave,” said Lori as she ran her now petite hands across her baby-smooth face.

Lori threw off all of Larry's clothes. She paused for a moment to admire herself in the mirror, reflecting that this is how she had always wanted to look. She paid special attention to her crotch: everything was anatomically correct.

Peggy remained in frozen silence, as Lori systematically went through her drawers and her side of the closet, taking whatever she needed. It was like being loose in a candy store. Red was the color of preference, the color that Larry, like most men, did not get to wear. Lori laid it all out on her side of the bed: red panties, bra, slip, and pantyhose. She selected Peggy's favorite pair of red pumps with the three-inch spike heels, and Larry's favorite of Peggy's many pretty dresses: the red velvet and taffeta party dress. It had short sleeves, a moderate length skirt, and a sweetheart neckline with a Basque front. Earrings were a problem, because Lori did not have pierced ears, so she would have to borrow from Peggy's limited selection. The rest of Peggy's jewelry was, of course, fair game.

"This is going to be different," said Lori excited. "I can finally dispense with the waist cincher, the gaff, and the breast inserts!"

"Is this permanent?" asked Peggy weakly, as Lori began to dress in her clothing. Lori managed to get the bra on after five failed attempts. She had no experience fitting a bra over real breasts.

"I'll become Larry again when we return home," Lori explained. "The ring is good for twelve more transformations. Right now, I'm on a high; euphoria is rampant!" Lori exclaimed as she raised her voice to an unaccustomed pitch."

"All my things fit you?" Peggy asked, as she continued to study the new person who Larry had become.

"We're the same size. I may even have some of your emotions," explained Lori as she rolled up the second leg of the pantyhose.

"Then I would not recommend those shoes," Peggy warned knowingly, as she realized there was nothing she could do or say that would prevent Lori from carrying off this adventure. "Those shoes do not fit well, and we have long ways to walk at the opera house."

"They seem to fit okay," said Lori, as she slid them onto her red nylon-clad feet. She took several steps, trying at the same time to swing her hips gracefully. "They're no problem."

Peggy had regained enough composure to resume dressing. She selected a black sweater dress that had horizontal gold stripes and a wide gold belt. She complemented the outfit with black pantyhose and low-heeled gold pumps. She quickly caught up with Lori. Soon, they were both adjusting their make-up, and then their jewelry. Lori threw Larry's wallet and keys into one of Peggy's petite red purses. The magic ring was lying on the bed; Lori grabbed it and dropped it into a side compartment inside the purse. A lipstick and some other make-up items topped the purse off at capacity. She completed her preparation with a quick nail job. The nails did not look very elegant, but there had not been much to work with.

Lori strutted into the living room, holding her fingers in the air while waiting for the red polish to dry. As she tested the proper gait in Peggy's red pumps, she purposely allowed the purse to swing back and forth.

"Girls, come with me," said Peggy down the hall. "I want you to see your father. He's all dressed up, again."

"Really," moaned Shawn, as her voice carried down the hall.

"Oh gross, he looks just awful when he does that," Erica echoed.

Lori nervously took a gulp, waiting for the twins to arrive, wondering if this was going to be an embarrassing moment. When they entered the living room, Lori faced them and spoke with her most feminine voice, "Hello Erica and Shawn, you both look lovely tonight. I'm Lori. Even though I am now all woman, I am actually your father, but tonight I am different!"

"That's not dad!" exclaimed Shawn.

"Mother, is this a joke?" asked Erica as she stomped her heels and swung her long hair. "Dad's hiding in the closet, right?"

"I really am your father," Lori insisted. "Today, I was given a magic ring that changes me into a real woman. My proportions are modeled after those of your mother, and I attempted to mold my features to resemble Victoria Majors. Shawn, just over an hour ago I helped you select that dress. Erica, you always wear that short black leather skirt because I do not approve of it. And I'm tired of your lack of support for my crossdressing, but tonight you are going to support me. For the first time in my life, I really get to be Lori, and she deserves to have a good time!"

Erica walked up to Lori to take a closer look. "You talk in the same vernacular as dad," she said as she scanned Lori's face. "You don't look very much like Victoria Majors; she has higher cheekbones, a more delicate nose, and a flatter eye-brow line. Besides, she's not that great looking anyway. Good lord, you are dad!"

Shawn excitedly approached Lori. "I see it too," she said with an earsplitting shriek, as she circled Lori. "Change dad's face slightly...and we end up with Lori. I'm taller than you now. My, aren't we pretty in all, that red. Better red, than.... Let me see," she said as he pulled slightly on the front of Lori's dress. "You've got nice boobs. Must feel different than the fake ones, eh?" she questioned sheepishly.

Without so much as a warning, Erica attempted to reach up Lori's skirt. Lori stopped her, but she had to use more strength than she had anticipated.

"Erica! Shawn! Where are your manners!" Peggy groaned.

"I just wanted to see for myself," Erica protested. "I bet dad really misses all that equipment down there."

Lori, who was somewhat visibly embarrassed, remained silent.

"Girls," reminded Peggy, as she pointed to everyone, including Lori, "we all have somewhere we have to be shortly. I suggest we get our coats and go. I'm sure we will have some very interesting conversations in the morning! Lori, of course you have the tickets."

“Uh oh,” replied Lori as she raced into the kitchen to remove the opera tickets from the bulletin board to which they had been pinned.

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“I could have driven,” protested Lori as Peggy selected a place in the parking garage near the entrance to the sky bridge.

“Out of the question,” stated Peggy firmly. “You've never driven in three inch heels, and your driver's license neither has the right name nor the correct picture.”

“Sorry, but this is my big night,” replied Lori apologetically.

“Heaven help me, but I may survive the evening,” said Peggy as she clasped her hands together and looked upwards for a moment.

Lori concentrated on the correct coordination of her feminine body movement as she and Peggy crossed the sky bridge over the street that separated the opera house from the parking garage. A long, curving staircase led to the patterned brick walkway in front of the entrance hall.

Halfway down the staircase, Peggy noticed that Lori was walking extra stiffly and tilting her chest at the same time. “Are you having a problem, Lori dear?”

“These shoes are starting to pinch my toes, and this bra is digging a little,” she replied with a pained voice.

“Welcome to the world of womanhood! Three-inch pumps are almost never comfortable. I'll bet you're only approximately my size,” she continued as they reached the bottom of the stairs, “so the fit of the bra is not good enough.” Lori struggled to hold open a massive door to the entrance hall. Last time, Larry had opened it with no effort at all. “Thank you,” said Peggy; then she added, “and now you see why we women have to try on everything before we buy it.”

After the doorman checked and tore their tickets, Lori strained hard to keep up the pace across the wide, carpeted lobby toward the dining area. Peggy was smiling all the way; she realized that she was going to enjoy the educational part of Lori's adventure.

They walked past another crossdresser, whom Lori had spotted before but to whom she had never spoken. The crossdresser was very tall, but she was also very lean for a man. She wore a gray skirt and jacket, complemented with a low-cut, white camisole top. She was very bold, since she barely passed.

“Tonight, I pass; I'm real,” said Lori coyly.

“That wasn't nice,” objected Peggy as they stepped up to the buffet line. “Be very careful with your tray, because we don't want you to topple over and create an incident.”

Peggy picked a nearby table, on which she placed her tray. While she removed her coat and purse, she watched nervously as Lori balanced precariously before her tray reached the table.

“You're having three glasses of water?” questioned Peggy.

“I always have three glasses of water,” Lori responded.

“But I do not drink much water here. You probably inherited my metabolism, so I would drink as little water as possible,” cautioned Peggy.

“It's such a relief to sit down,” declared Lori as she picked out a table. “Oh, and despite the pain, I think it is great to be a woman. With my feet rested, I soon be able to walk again. Coming here, dressed like this, is a dream come true!”

“Now that we have a moment,” said Peggy as she sat down, “perhaps you could explain this...shall we call it an event?”

While they ate, Lori told the story of the bottle that had contained the genie named Tremaark, who later became Erinda after granting the wish that Larry had asked. Lori carefully went over all the rules for the ring twice in succession.

“This version of you, Lar...er, Lori, is not permanent, I hope,” questioned Peggy.

“Not if I have any choice. I did not have a very good focus on the appearance I wanted. To me, these new features are just barely acceptable,” explained Lori.

I'm asking these questions because I want to get some idea of your plans. This affects us and our relationship. I understand your transgendered nature better than you think I do. Given this magic ring, I know that sometime in the future you will want to become Lori permanently.”

“I had not thought much beyond the moment,” Lori admitted. “I have to become better at guiding the transformation. The ring will eventually lose its power, in which case I will have to make an important choice. I don't mind being male, but I would rather look like a woman. However, the ring does a total transformation, even down to the genetic level.”

“The transformation may be straight forward, but what problems would you have afterwards?” questioned Peggy. “What about your job? What will our parents think? You might be able to prove that Lori is still really Larry, but what if your fingerprints are different? How would it affect your life insurance; men and women have different actuarial tables, you know? And what about health insurance? Will our pictures be plastered across all the supermarket tabloids? It all sounds a little humorous, but you know the ordeal that transsexuals all go through. Maybe we still want to have another child, a son, possibly.”

Peggy paused, as she tried to remember ever having heard Lori say she wanted another child. Peggy had always lamented about the painful birth of the twins.

“What about our love life,” asked Peggy with a tone of seriousness.

“Once a month is not exactly a heated relationship,” Lori reminded Peggy.

“It could be better if you changed your expectations,” Peggy explained.

“You mean if I did not burden you with crossdressing?” asked Lori in an annoyed tone. “You complain about all the annoying habits associated with my male personality, while at the same time you want nothing to do with my feminine side. It's not fair!”

Peggy did not reply, so Lori continued, “A permanent transformation will obviously take a lot of planning time. As far as my job as a computer trouble shooter, many women do the same work as I at the Reynolds Corporation. Some even work in dresses and skirts. If I ration the use of the ring, I can delay the final transformation for years,” offered Lori. She was not sure if she wanted to wait more than a decade.

As soon as Lori was finished eating, she announced. “I have to use the rest-room. Watch my stuff; I'll be right back,” she urged as she stood up and turned.

“Wrong way, Lori dear,” warned Peggy with a grin.

“Right, the ladies room is the other way. Well, here comes a real enlightening experience,” said Lori as she teetered in place for a moment and then slowly walked toward the ladies room, still struggling to maintain correct body motion.

After Lori returned, Peggy spoke rapidly, “Now you watch my things while I use the rest-room. I won't take quite so long as you did?”

“But I had to wait,” Lori protested. “There was hardly anyone there, and I still had to wait!”

After Peggy returned, the two of them went up the elevator to the floor where the pre-opera lecture was to be given. They were early, but the room was already filled to half capacity. “

I think that man back there was staring at me,” said Lori as she spread her coat out on the chair and then sat on it.

“Lori dear, many people have been staring at you; you've just been too involved with yourself to notice,” explained Peggy at a volume level just above a whisper. “You are all dolled up to the hilt, and, if I must say it, you still do not entirely pass. This is a crossdressing town, so everyone is suspicious, even if they don't acknowledge it. Two of your crossdressing friends passed us as we were leaving the elevator. They both gave you a suspicious glance!”

“I just hate it when you refer to all crossdressers as my `friends'. But I really am a woman tonight!” sighed Lori softly, as she crossed her legs and waited.

Using the mirror of a compact, she checked her make-up and applied some more lipstick.

Ten minutes later, a young man arrived to give the lecture. He was a music teacher from a local high school. He was one of Lori and Peggy's favorites, because his presentations were always brimming over with enthusiasm.

The opera for the night was Beethoven's *Fidelio*, staged in modern times.

The heroine, Leonore, disguised as a young man, Fidelio, has successfully infiltrated a prison, from which she hopes to liberate her husband, Florestan. To free

her husband, Leonore must overcome the evil Pizarro and his band of neo-nazi thugs, while at the same time she must fight off the amorous advances of the warden's daughter.

“This is your kind of opera, isn't it,” whispered Peggy as she gently poked Lori in the side with an elbow.

“Society celebrates when women crossdress, but when men do it, everyone just groans,” whispered Lori back.

Soon, the lecture was over. Lori and Peggy had to go up another set of stairs to reach their seats in the upper balcony. The staircase was steep and narrow.

For the first time, Lori had some sympathy for Peggy's complaints about the climb.

When they reached their seats, Peggy spoke to a familiar lady seated nearby.

“Hi, my husband could not make it tonight. This is my cousin from Nebraska.”

“We don't know anyone in Nebraska,” whispered Lori, feeling slighted that Peggy wanted to shove her so far from home.

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In the final moments of Act One, Pizarro ordered the warden, accompanied by Leonore, to dig a grave for Florestan.

As the curtain fell and the overhead lights were turned on, Peggy said, “The best thing that I can say is that you pass better than the lady playing the part of Fidelio.”

Lori was not interested in discussing the subject, as she hastily said, “I've got to get to the ladies' room! I'll be back shortly.” She grabbed her purse; then she tried to reach the aisle as fast as possible. With her less-than-usual strength, she found it difficult to push and shove a path through the growing crowd. Halfway down the second-balcony lobby, she stopped in disbelief. As fast as she had moved, she was at the end of an already long and continually growing line. She estimated that she was at least twenty-five feet from the entrance to the women's rest room.

“I can hardly see the doorway,” she muttered to herself softly.

An older woman, ahead of her in the line, turned and said, “It's always like this. The men who designed this arrangement should be taken out and shot!”

“Men never look at things from our point of view,” replied Lori as she took a gulp. She perceived that the woman might be scanning her with suspicion, but she pretended not to notice. Finally, the woman turned her gaze back towards the entrance to the women's rest-room. Lori had not brought a watch, so she resorted to counting in her head, in an attempt the estimate how fast the line was moving. It suddenly occurred to Lori that she was already thinking in her new voice, that

she was rapidly growing accustomed to her new identity. The inner satisfaction with her new role was so elating, that she scarcely worried that it was all going to come to an end in a few hours.

Lori finally reached the door, but she was still ten places from the end of the line. At this point, she was praying that she could hold out for a few minutes longer. She had not had much experience with the new bladder arrangement. In her mind, she already imagined that it was dripping. Soon, the end-of-intermission gong would sound and the entry doors would be closed, as the next act of the opera began.

Having reached a stall just in time, Lori was through and back in the lobby within three minutes. She had plenty of time, but her mind was running in panic mode. Momentarily forgetting how she was dressed, she attempted to run through the dwindling crowd. There were two coffee and liquor bars in the lobby, and both of them were located away from the railing that overlooked the larger first balcony lobby below. As she attempted to take a short cut between one of the bars and the railing, she tripped on a rubber extension cord shield. When she tried to stop her fall by grabbing a potted tree, both she and the tree hit the carpet.

“Thank you,” she said as someone helped her up. She was determined not to be fazed by the mishap, though such an embarrassing moment was every cross-dresser's nightmare.

“Are you okay, lady?” asked the bartender as he restored the tree to its original position.

“No damage,” she replied confidently. However, her right ankle hurt slightly, she had a run in the pantyhose at her right calf, and she had broken the heel off the right pump. “If I had had long nails, I suppose I would have broken some of them too,” she said to herself at a whisper. Having taken both shoes off, Lori was forced to limp slowly back to her seat.

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The final curtain came down on Act Two.

Leonore, armed with a pistol, had revealed who she was during a confrontation with Pizarro to prevent the murder of her husband. At the same moment, the President and his troops had arrived. They arrested Pizarro and secured the prison.

“I'm not going to reveal who I am,” declared Lori jokingly as the applause diminished. She and Peggy stood up to allow others to reach the aisle first. Lori was in no shape to do any dashing around. “Sorry about your shoes,” apologized Lori.

“Lori dear, I never liked those shoes or that dress. Remember, you had me buy them. It was your fantasy that I should wear them. You basically picked them out for yourself. It's sort of ironic that you're now wearing that outfit,” explained Peggy.

“Where's my purse?” asked Lori as she searched around her upright seat.