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## One of the Girls: There is no higher calling than being a beautiful woman...

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What's the prob, Phil?  
You wanted to be one  
of the girls, didn't ya?

Yeah... kinda.  
I do recall  
saying that.

So why the long  
face? You look  
fabulous... If I  
wasn't gay, I'd  
hit you myself.

It's all just... a  
bit too much, I  
guess. It's like  
I really turned  
into a woman...

Well, excuse me for being good at my job.

Phillip was Nancy's little brother. Great bone structure, but not the most manly of males—and just for the record, I do like my males manly. The more muscles, the better. The hairier—well, I digress.

Phil was twenty-one and in his third year of college, but he didn't seem to have many (any?) friends of his own, the way he was always trying to hang with me and my crew. When I wasn't hard at work in the salon, I'd taken to running with Nancy and a few of her girlfriends, all of whom I had styled at one time or another. They were gorgeous and they knew it, but they liked having me around because it's handy to have a guy to deflect unwanted male attention, and obviously I wasn't hitting on them all the time like any heterosexual dude would be if he was still upright and breathing.

Phil was out with us one night for drinks, and he and I got talking while the girls were off powdering their noses. He mentioned feeling like a spare tire, or a third wheel (I suggested 'training wheel', but he didn't like that), and how he wished he could fit in better with his sister and her friends. To that, I might have said something flippant about him needing to be a girl.

"I hear ya. Just for once, I wish I *was* one of the girls." Maybe he'd had one too many and it was the mojito talking, but I *am* a beautician by trade and I was noticing that great bone structure.

"I could make it happen, you know." He looked surprised, so I mentioned a few of the relevant details: fusion hair extensions, electrolysis to get rid of stray face and chest hairs (and perhaps a few more), a full makeover, and of course a sweet set of prosthetics to better mimic the female body. It was his for the asking, I said, if he'd let me document the process for my portfolio.

The girls were returning by then, so I told him to drop by the salon in the morrow and we'd talk. I didn't really expect him to show, but to my surprise he did—and he was sober. He told me he was sick of being on his own. He'd lived with Nancy for two years, but rent went through the roof and she'd moved in with a couple of girlfriends. Phil was stuck living in a basement suite near the campus, renting from an older couple upstairs who mandated complete silence at all times. Great for studying, not so great for a social life. Long story short: the guy was lonely.

Big-hearted sort that I am, I took pity. I told him I could do everything I'd promised, but looking like a pretty girl was no guarantee he'd stop being lonely. I was pretty sure Nancy and the girls would welcome him (or *her*) into their group, but the rest was very much up to him (i.e. *her*).

Again to my surprise, he went for the idea. I'm not sure he knew exactly what he was getting himself into, but whatever. I told him to come to the salon first thing the following Saturday, and in the meantime to shave as much as he could and to moisturize the hell out of himself.

I still wasn't sure he'd go through with it, but I was ready just in case. I'd sourced a long set of extensions in his color, and from an ex-boyfriend of mine who runs a cross-dresser shop I scored a nice pair of boobs that were a good match for Phillip's skin tone. All my ex wanted were the pics I was taking to use in his own advertising (no problemo). He even threw in a vaginal prosthetic that—as far as I could tell—looked pretty damn real.

When he arrived at the front door, I let him in and asked him flat-out: “Are you ready to be a woman? For a period of not less than two weeks?”

He looked nervous. “Yeah, sure. I'm here, aren't I? I did what you said.”

Well, no one can say I forced the guy. I was impressed that he'd shaved his arms and legs, even his bikini zone. I did a fair bit of electrolysis anyway, mostly to define his eyebrows but also so he wouldn't have to worry about his wispy beard for awhile (not much of a loss). I gave him a full six-step facial, then left a hydration mask in place while I installed the extensions. Sectioning his longish hair and gluing in each two-inch weft, all forty of the things, took nearly three hours. Worth every minute, though; when I was done, the kid had a thick wavy mane down to his shoulder blades.

“I can't believe how real this looks,” he said, staring at himself in the wall mirror. In the mask and wearing a salon cape, there was nothing male left to see. “It even *feels* like real hair.”

“It *is* real hair. A few months ago it was probably tickling some *chica's* shoulders in Brazil, who needed the money to feed her family.”

His eyes widened. “Gee whiz, I feel kinda guilty now.”

“Don't. She's not complaining. Hair grows fast on girls. It's probably back down past her chin by now. A cute little pageboy.”

I had him remove his shirt, then installed the breast forms. I did warn him about the medical adhesive and how he'd need the right solvent to remove them, which my ex in the cross-dressing store could provide (for a price, of course), but I'm not sure he was listening. I showed him how to cover the seams with foundation, and how to deepen his cleavage with blusher, then strapped him into a push-up bra to support his new assets.

“Gosh,” he said, his eyes again wide, “they look so *real*.”

“That's the idea.” I asked him if he'd picked out a new name yet; something more appropriate for a person with long hair and D-cup breasts.

“You mean a girl’s name? I never thought about it.”

I regretted not making him blonde. “Give it some thought.”

I got him to strip, then installed the vagina prosthetic. He held the item in place while the glue set, spending the time sneaking sidelong glances at himself in the mirror. “Annabelle,” he said at last. “That’s my name. As in ‘belle of the ball’.”

“Sweet. Not ‘Phillipa’ or ‘Phyllis’ or something like that?” But I had to admit, it sounded about right for a quiet, sweet—and very sexy—girl.

He shook his head. “New name for a new person.”

“Welcome to the world, Annabelle.” The kid sounded more confident already. Maybe there really was some kind of magic to being pretty.

The rest of the transformation went like you’d expect. I layered on the makeup part of the makeover, beautifying his face impressively—one of my better efforts, with the pics to prove it—then had him dress in duds I’d borrowed from Nancy. He put on the lingerie, a black pencil skirt and a cream-colored silk blouse with trumpet sleeves before his brain twigged on the *shoes* of all things. They looked like ordinary pink pumps to me.

“Aren’t these my sister’s heels? They look familiar.”

“They are. She’ll be here in about five minutes to pick you up.” I’d texted her while my latest creation was busy in the dressing room.

Annabelle looked startled and adorable at the same time. “I guess that means she knows, huh? Did she sound mad?”

“As in crazy? Not at all. That was a few days ago, by the way, when I asked her if I could borrow the outfit you’re wearing.” I finishing tidying

my station for the day ahead. “I believe the plan is for a girl’s night out.”

“Seriously? Are you coming?” The kid was managing to look even *more* shocked, but I was starting to wonder if that wasn’t partly an act.

“I’m not one of the girls, kiddo. But as of right now, you *are*.”

I handed her a clutch purse and, feeling gallant, opened the front door for her. “Your wallet’s in there. You won’t be needing boy clothes for awhile, but I’ll drop your stuff at Nancy’s next time I’m over that way.”

She squeezed my hand; gently, from the top, as women often do. “Thank you,” she said, in a voice that was surprisingly close to what you’d expect from someone who looked she now did. “I’m certainly not used to this yet, but... I really *do* feel like one of the girls.”

It’s amazing the stories the human mind can tell itself. But what the hell, if the kid wanted to believe that sporting tits and a pencil skirt, and prancing around in heels made him a better person, who was I to bust his balloon?

“I’m happy for ya, babe. Gimme a shout if you need a tune-up.”

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Not long after that I had to skip town for awhile. I wasn’t fencing stolen goods or wanted for bank robbery or anything like that; just some messy family business. Five minutes into my first shift back, Nancy stormed into the salon and practically bent me over the sink at my station. “I got a bone to pick with you, Arlo.”

I tried to sidle out of the way. “Nice to see you too, Nance.”

“Thanks to *you*, I don’t have a little brother anymore. I got me a *sister*.”

It took me a moment to recall what I'd done. "No kidding. How is Phillip these days? Still dressing-up now and then?"

"Now and then? Dude, he hasn't been *un*-dressed since you had to go and turn him into 'little miss perfect'!" She threw herself into my styling chair. "We have to call her 'Annabelle' now—dumbass cutesy-pie name—and she won't even admit that Phillip ever existed."

I had to think about that. "You mean he's actually going to class like that? I wouldn't think the school would—"

"He dropped out!" Nancy glared daggers at me. "As if *that* wasn't bad enough, she got kicked out of her basement suite. The nice folks upstairs couldn't handle it when mousy little Phil morphed into a fashionista. She had to move in with me and my crew, if you can imagine that. She bunks in with me on a cot."

I went back to cleaning my brushes. "Wow. That's harsh."

"Harsh? You want harsh?" She leaned forward. "Thanks to you, pal, the lovely Annabelle is better looking than any of us. Now *that's* harsh." She sat back, arms crossed. "The little twerp flounces around at seven in the morning, looking just *peachy* in Janelle's fancy silk nightie, while the rest of us have to sit there with mud-pack facials and towels around our heads. It's like—" She struggled for words. "I dunno. Cinderella and the three mansters. You know, the ugly stepsisters."

I had to bite my lip to avoid laughing. I turned my head, but found myself staring straight into the big mirror. She saw me, of course.

"You don't seem to be taking this too seriously." Her voice went low and dangerous. "We got us a *situation* here, Arlo. My mom's really pissed."

I thought the better of making a joke about her mom's drinking problem; for all I knew she might really have one. Sympathy seemed like the better option. "Parents sometimes do have issues with cross-dressing, that's for sure. But they usually come around. A buddy of mine—"

"Actually, I think she can handle *that*. It's the college thing that threw her for a loop. Phil was supposed to be the first in our family with a higher education. Mom's back home working two jobs to help him out—and the next thing she knows he's out of school and spending his time painting his nails and strutting around town in a mini-skirt."

"Okay... I see your problem. But what am I—"

She hopped up and poked me in the chest. "Uh-uh. *Your* problem, boyo. You fused those extensions into his hair, *you* stuck boobs on his chest and didn't give him the solvent, and now you're gonna fix it."

"Me? What can *I* do? It's not like I'm the guy's big br—"

"Talk to her! God knows why, but she looks up to you. Phillip always did, you know that. You're the cool kid." She eyed me critically. "Maybe you are. I could see that." She poked me again. "I want him—or *her*, I'm not fussy—back in school. Can you manage that, dufus?"

I spread my hands. "I'll talk to him, or her. Whoever she is on the day. I can't promise anything, though. I'm not Harry Potter. No magic wand."

"Don't you?" She picked up a curling iron and pointed it at me. "This has been known to work its magic, in the right hands." She smiled. Her voice was light in tone, but there was a hint of menace in her eyes. "Just do your best, okay?" The implied 'or else' remained unspoken.

We met on a footbridge spanning the River Woebegone, which was really more of a creek. It was a lovely spring day; mid-April, but the air was unseasonably warm. Annabelle wore a dark blue party dress with a tight skirt and enough cleavage to choke a horse. She'd styled her hair for length, with a bit less volume, and subtly altered her look with a different makeup scheme. "I'm not going back, you know." She glided up to me in stiletto heels, like she'd been born wearing a pair of strappy D'Orsays.

I gripped the railing. "Hello to you too. Whaddya mean?"

"I know why you wanted to talk." She rolled her eyes. "Nancy put you up to this, and my Mom probably read you the riot act."

"I haven't spoken to your mom." I was staring at her necklace: a thick mass of pearl strands laced with silver thread, all supporting a large faux-diamond pendant. "Mighty nice bling you got there. I assume the stone isn't real—or did you land yourself a sugar daddy?"

I regretted the words instantly. Her smile was tight. "Trevor isn't quite old enough to be anyone's daddy, Arlo. Unlike some people I could mention."

I leaned on the rail. "Sorry. Bitchiness comes with the territory."

She stared down at the water, our arms barely touching. "I know they want me to go back to college, but that just isn't in the cards. Not yet."

"Still possible, though." I grimaced. "I hope you didn't drop out because of something *I* did. Nancy blames me, of course, and your mom as well. But I never meant for this to become some sort of life-changing—"

She was laughing softly. "Are you kidding? I wasn't even a cross-dresser before you worked your magic. Now I'm about to run away with my boyfriend and turn into a real woman. That's all down to you, mon ami.

You have a gift for feminine beauty."

I hung my head. "I'm sorry. I didn't—"

"Don't be. I'm better off this way."

She ran a slim hand through her hair.

"How obvious can *that* be, right?"

"You do look fantastic." I forced a smile. "So you're gonna be one of the girls for real now, eh?"

"Trevor's already booked the clinic. Once that's done and I change my name, I might go back to school. I still want to have a career, only it'll be something more in line with being a strong, confident woman—as opposed to some nerdy computer programmer."

She leaned in and gave me a peck on the cheek. "Gots to go, Arlo. The boyfriend awaits. In a few days I'll be female, and after that the sky's the limit for Annabelle."

After she left I stared at my hands. It was true, I had a *gift*—and it was high time to share it with the world. Universities were full of guys who'd be better off as girls. It was my sacred duty to help them. ■

