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TRANSVESTIA

Celebrate the gentle art of being a woman.
Because being a woman—is everything.



FIONA

No. 108

1983

For The Heterosexual Crossdresser

No. 108

PUBLICATION POLICY

TRANSVESTIA is composed primarily of material submitted by its readers. Fiction, articles, histories, true experiences, letters, poems, pictures — all are welcome. The greater the variety of material the more interesting the magazine will be for all. It is published for the enjoyment of all heterosexual crossdressers and as your magazine, your support is needed. Material is solicited on the following basis:

1. All contributions resulting in five or more printed pages will be entitled to one free copy of the magazine whether that issue or any other. Such free copies will become payable upon publishing of the material, not upon submission. There is no way to determine in advance which issue a particular piece will appear in, so please do not ask for a free copy of the issue in which your contribution will appear. After it has appeared you will be sent a credit slip for any issue.
2. The Editor must reserve the right to cut or edit submitted material for suitability and the free issue payment will be based on the final printed page. Shorter material will simply be accepted as your contribution to the interest and enjoyment of all readers of Transvestia.
3. Submitted material will not be returned unless requested and stamped envelope provided.
4. Off-color material will not be printed and thus should not be submitted. The Editor reserves the right to be the sole judge of suitability and to edit, alter, delete or refuse material when it is considered in the best interest of the Transvestia to do so.

PURPOSE OF TRANSVESTIA

TRANSVESTIA is dedicated to the needs of those heterosexual persons who have become aware of their "second self" and seek to express it. The magazine provides :

Education — Entertainment — Expression

to help its readers achieve —

Understanding — Self Acceptance — Peace Of Mind

in place of loneliness, fear and self condemnation they have known for too long.

TRANSVESTIA does not condemn nor judge the fields of homosexuality, bondage, domination or fetishism. These are left to others to develop. They are not part of the areas of interest of this Magazine.

TRANSVESTIA seeks to gather information and to disseminate it to interested persons in the medical, legal counseling and scientific professions to further their knowledge about this little understood field.

TRANSVESTIA

For the Heterosexual Crossdresser

9/83

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FOUNDER and EDITOR

EMERITUS

Virginia Prince

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YOUR LETTERS

The following letters are just a few of the many letters that your busy Editor receives in her office each week.



Dear Carol: Two or three years ago Roanoke City was going to pass a law against crossdressing. I got on the phone with the Commonwealth attorney for at least half an hour and also sent him a copy of Understanding Crossdressing. He had thought that all crossdressers were "gay," and the result was the attorney never sent the draft of the proposed law to be voted on. Last year the newspaper started running stories about "queens" in hopes of getting the law put through. I called the attorney again and was told that he had no interest in putting the law into effect providing the newspapers didn't cause too much trouble. I then called the newspaper involved and set them straight as well as sending them a copy of Understanding Crossdressing and our Press Release. It looks like the city and newspaper have wised up. RONA

Dear Carol: I am a hetero crossdresser in my early 40's. Four years ago I married a wonderful girl. I told her before we married that I was crossdressing but that it was behind me. I really thought that I could stop ~~but one day, about five months later, she caught me dressed. I begged her forgiveness and swore~~ ^{NO HURT}

that I would not do it again; I tried, but before long I was crossdressing - again. I did it in secret but the guilt was killing me and the marriage. She didn't catch me again until about a year later. She didn't say a word but went to church and talked to one of the officials who happened to be one of my best friends. I was in real trouble. How could I find some clever way to escape. How could I go on? How could I face my friends - I thought that I would be put out of church. After much agony of thought, my common sense and a strong will to ride out the storm, no matter what, kept me from doing anything foolish.

It was not as bad as I had thought. After much discussion with the church counselor I said I would see a sex therapist to get "cured." I didn't go to see this therapist until two months later when I got caught again. I'm glad that I went. Now I know there is no "cure." On my second visit my wife went with me and now she knows what it's all about. Life is a lot better now and my wife is supportive and even helps me look my best as a girl. She says that if I'm going to do it, I have to look better if she is going to go out with me. I wish this

had happened 20 years earlier when I was younger. VANESSA

Dear Carol: As I sit here, completely dressed and in seventh heaven, it is an absolute wonder to me that I ever desired to stop dressing in the first place. I can't begin to explain the mysterious hold that dressing as a woman has on me nor why I love femininity so much. I only know that for me, from now on, I must express this side of my personality. Without Dacyl, Keith doesn't function well at all. There are few things in life that match the pleasure which is mine when I am dressed and I do not intend to rob myself of the experience again; DACYL

This issue of Transvestia has four more pages than usual. I made up my mind to give our readers the remaining portion of the long story, First Lady. The story is long and I should have carried it over to another issue but because of the indefinite dates of publication of this periodical, I thought it only fair to finish up the story.

Almost exactly twenty-two years ago I appeared as Cover Girl on Tvia No. 8. When I look at the photos and read the text I can only wonder at how much I have changed and developed from the timid girl fresh from her first wild adventure of walking around the city block at night. I was twenty-six years old, but effectively just emerging from a long adolescence. Even my femme name (Joan) had not been chosen by me (you don't need a name if you have no one around to talk to) but had been given to me by one of the friends I had recently discovered through Transvestia.

Now, one hundred issues later, I can look back on a very exciting period of maturation, during which I have long since become Fiona, have married, and have lived and worked in Canada, the United States and Australia, sometimes spending long periods as my femme self, and have some quite incredibly wonderful adventures and experiences to look back on... adventures I would probably dismiss as wishful tv fantasy if I were to read them as somebody else's account, and if I did not have my photos and souvenirs of most of my better times.

I wonder what I will be writing down when I appear as Cover Girl on issue No. 208, and whether I will have a blue rinse in my wig by then?

There is no doubt that one of the turning points in my life was the discovery of TVia. Until then I had been completely alone, still uncertain of my status in a world which seemed to contain many cross-dressers who were quite unlike me, and none who seemed, like me, to be heterosexual males completely devoted to an inner femininity which found expression in the clothes, cosmetics and jewellery typical of



COVER GIRL

*This is 1983, that'll be about 2008
at Carol's rate
(complete age)*

1988 - "Fiona" = John Cummings
AKA "Katherine" Cummings (name change, legally)
Still working as acadence NO SRS surgery yet
(Feb 1989)

"Katherine's Diary" Pub. 1992
POST-Surgery

D. 1935

26 in 1961

46 in 1981 (about when this was written)

51 in 1986

elegant women. I was very lucky that my search for enlightenment led me to a book on impersonation, and correspondence with the author led me to TVia quite early in its history. The first issue I saw was No. 5, with Annette as Cover Girl, and the magazine was both a revelation and an inspiration to me. I subscribed immediately, wrote to as many correspondents as I could contact from its pages, and, as noted above, appeared myself as Cover Girl by the time issue No. 8 appeared.

One of my correspondents was Irene, of Toronto, and we soon found a rapport which resulted in my enrolling for post-graduate work at the University of Toronto, and sharing a flat for a year with Irene. This was a most important experiment, as I had by then discovered the lady with whom I wished to spend the rest of my life, and it was essential that I find out how important tv was to my life. The best way I could see was to take up life for a year in a city far from home, where I could live virtually as I wished, and give my inner femininity real freedom for the first time. It was an interesting experiment. Not only did I meet some of the tv's who have ever since remained among my best and closest friends, but I found that unlimited freedom led to my tapering off my periods of dressing to a point where I dressed quite seldom, and usually only for specific social occasions. Irene and I followed a fairly standard procedure whereby I would escort Irene on one occasion, and Irene's alter ego would escort Fiona on the next. Only on rare occasions such as our visits to the famous d'Eon resort, or on Halloween, did we both go out dressed at the same time. How cautious we were! Now I go anywhere

and do virtually anything, without a moment's qualm, whether I have an escort or am alone or with a girl friend (real or tv).

My year in Toronto was successful scholastically as well as personally, and I returned to Australia, married, and set about my career. I tried, at this point, to give up tv completely, as I thought it would be better for my family if I could do so. Alas, despite having prided myself on my willpower, and my ability to set my own course in life, I was not able to destroy the feminine component of my psyche, and within a year of my wedding day I was in such poor psychological shape that I found it necessary to confess my transvestite compulsion to my wife. She was extremely upset by the revelation (despite the fact that she had seen me perform as a female impersonator in amateur revues), and there were some very bad days immediately following. It is, however, entirely to her credit that she reasoned herself to the point where she came to me and said that it was obvious that whatever made me a tv was part of the person she loved, and that we would work together to make our life work despite a situation she could (quite rightly) see as a complication and a social hazard. Since then we have had a wonderful marriage, with me not indulging Fiona as often as I might wish, and with my wife, not objecting to the occasional feminine fling. Like most aspects of a good marriage, we live by loving compromise. Our children do not know of Fiona, and I see no reason to complicate their lives with a problem which is not theirs, at least until they are adults. On the other hand, most of our friends know (and like) Fiona and nobody I have ever told has ever rejected my other self.

My real development as a tv, however, started with my return to the United States after a few years of marriage and the birth of my first daughter. I lived and worked in the Pacific North West, and became active in the FPE Chapter based in Seattle. They were a wonderful group, led by the inimitable Marilyn, and I still look back on the mad parties of those days with particular affection. One of the best things about the Seattle chapter was their realisation that life did not have to be completely soul-searching and serious. Seattle parties were fun, with wives very much a part of the scene and all kinds of light-hearted foolishness and competition. Fiona learned to come out of her introspection, and also out in public on a few occasions. She thought herself very daring when she allowed a tv friend and his wife to drive her from Seattle to Portland, and even more daring when she posed beside the car as her host repaired a flat tire on the freeway! By the time we moved to the east coast to take up a post in a New Jersey college, Fiona was much more self-confident and had, I think learned a great deal about the art of appearing convincing as a woman. The greatest advantage is self-confidence. If you feel real, who will doubt you?

In the New York area there was even more activity, and for the first time I found myself attending the commercially arranged drag balls of NYC. Of course these were mainly designed for the gay community, and our group usually formed a small island of relative normality in a seething sea of feathers, sequins and aggressively sexual behaviour. Very educational! I also learned how to say 'No,' politely but firmly...a lesson every girl needs to adsorb sooner or later! a paint girls learn at 16, and some TS's are shocked by!



Fiona about to go dining and dancing 1975



Fiona 1979



Fiona, Virginia and "daughter" after Disneyland outing



A paint job 1975

My friends of New York days, of course, were largely drawn from those I had met during my Toronto studies, and I continue to remain in touch with them from this side of the world. I cannot speak too highly of the friends I made through cross-dressing in the USA and will cherish them always. When I returned to the United States for study leave in 1978 I was able to pick up my friendships again as if I had never left, and I hope that I will always be able to do so.

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EJA
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But, I get ahead of myself. In 1973 I returned to Australia for family reasons, and worked for four years for a large university before returning to my hometown, Sydney, and the college milieu in 1977. I continued to indulge myself as Fiona whenever possible, and frequently when away from home on conferences or for seminars was able to spend extended periods dressed. I have always found that the one-night stand is really insufficient for real satisfaction, as it is impossible for me to submerge my male persona completely in the time available, and the event is more like 'dressing-up' than like real life. Given a weekend, or better still a full week, in skirts, the novelty disappears and the real joy begins. I feel more and more comfortable, and more and more feminine, so that the return to masculinity at the end of the time seems like the masquerade for a while. There is also the near-agony which I am sure many cross-dressers have experienced, when the threshold is passed between male and female appearance (for me it is usually marked by the removal of my wig... an act which requires great resolution, as it seems almost like self-destruction).

I should perhaps at this point make the statement that, like many cross-dressers (though few admit it), I have experimented with female hormones

in order to achieve a reasonable breast development, and can wear low cut dresses or swimsuits without recourse to padding or falsies, and have also taken to complete waxing of bodily and facial hair before 'special' or extended occasions, so that I am not reminded of my maleness each morning on waking.* I consider this very much my own business, as my body is my own, and I have as much right to alter it to suit my self-image as any person has to lose weight, gain it, pierce their ears or in any other way modify the form they are born with. Nor do I consider it in any way improper or offensive of me to reveal those parts of me which conform to the female image I so desperately wish to convey, and, where it is appropriate (which is virtually any Sydney beach these days). I will go topless with the other topless ladies. I even went to one of Sydney's two officially sanctioned nude beaches recently, with two real girls who are friends of mine, although I will admit I did not remove my bikini bottom!

Since my return to Sydney I have made the acquaintance of a group of charming and utterly mad people, who indulge in adventures of the greatest fantasy and ingenuity. I made their acquaintance through an American friend who had picked up a Sydney-based ad. in a counter-culture paper and clipped it for me. With some reserve I answered the ad., and found, to my delight, that the person concerned was a life-long friend of my family, who was into cross-dressing and also into what I can only call 'constructive fantasy'. I was rapidly made to feel welcome in the group (not all of whom are cross-dressers; most are fun-loving party givers and goers), and I have probably done more zany things as Fiona in the last five years than I had done in my previous forty-two.

One of the advantages of the group, of course, is that when parties or adventures are set up, not everyone wants to wear skirts! The fantasy adventures are usually fairly well scripted and are carefully planned...but they always go wrong, which is part of the fun! On one of the early outings a group of us were supposed to visit an island in Sydney Harbour, which is a public park by day, but is supposed to be deserted at night. My part was written as a cigarette girl, but I never did find out what the plot was meant to be, as other characters included King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, a Roman centurion, a construction worker complete with hard-hat and a monk. I never found out the plot because at that time, everything went wrong virtually from the outset. King Arthur, the construction worker and I (in micro-skirt, peasant blouse, fishnet tights and high patent stilettos) were deposited on the island by boat, but then everything went hay-wire, with the launch breaking down (the driver of the boat, the monk, had to swim ashore in all his monkly drag); the rescue dinghy capsized with Guinevere and the centurion on board, and they had to swim ashore to join us, and finally, after despairing of any of the remaining cast being able to organise a rescue, we had to signal the water police! I must admit I thought my brilliant career was about to collapse in lurid newspaper headlines the next day, but my nice hostess (Guinevere, a really stunning RG) was so charming to the police that they hardly noticed me at all, and finished up taking us back to Guinever's waterfront apartment building. As the Sergeant in charge said, "I'm not even going to write a report. Nobody would ever believe it." As soon as the launch touched the dock I was over the bow rail and scuttling for the safety of the apartment,



Fiona, the French MAid in Holland 1980



Fiona on her way out to an evening of dinner and dancing 1977



Won't anybody help my friend? Disaster on the freeway between Seattle and Portland



Fiona 1979

I can assure you!

On another occasion I received a cablegram inviting me to Amsterdam for the weekend! I thought that might be going a bit too far overboard, but my wife, with incredible generosity, said, "Go, you'll never have another invitation like that for a long time." So I went. I flew to Amsterdam and went to the Schipol Hilton, as instructed, and found another telegram instructing me to go to the Hotel American and rest for a few hours before phoning for further instructions (the group loves to construct treasure hunts and scavenger hunt type games). When I phoned I was told to change to Fiona and then take the train to a certain station where I would be met by a car. With some trepidation, not being sure of the Dutch attitude towards crossdressing, I switched to Fiona and tottered out of the hotel, boggling the desk clerk as I had checked in as a male and now I was checking out as a female. Then it was on to the train, including one change of trains at Utrecht to the station specified. There I was met by a white Mercedes driven by an Arab who remained silent and drove at high speed through the night - over dikes and down country lanes until he reached a point where he stopped and pointed to a light in the woods. Since I was clearly meant to go on foot from there, I set off (it was January and the ground was frozen hard) until I reached a lantern, which was set down in a clearing and guarded by a monk (who turned out to be the same person who had taken the monk's part in the earlier adventure in the harbour). He grabbed me by the wrist (again without a word being spoken) and dragged me through the woods to a castle, WITH a moat, and the traditional single light burning in the attic! We crossed the moat in a dinghy. The monk battered at a pos-

tern gate before vanishing. My hostess (ex-Guinevere) opened the door and said, "Why, Fiona, how NICE of you to come!" as if I had not been organized from one side of the world to the other. There were two of us who had been brought from Australia. Two others had been brought from Ireland and with the host and hostess we had the best time for a whole weekend that I had ever had.

The servants who usually run the castle, had been sent to London for the weekend - so we had the whole castle to ourselves. On the first day I was allowed to be the castle maid, in a skimpy black dress and skimpy patent heels but after a day of running up and down four flights of stairs I was glad to revert to my real persona as Lady Fiona and allow my host to take over the maid role.

One of the Irish visitors was an attractive crossdresser who, for the purpose of the aristocratic weekend, became a Countess, and my hostess spent the weekend in a gorgeous gown (actually, she changed into many such gowns over the weekend) as Baroness of **** Castle. The other guests played various parts, as butlers, Barons and guests. I was even taken into Amsterdam on Saturday afternoon for tea while the others shopped. My companion for this exercise was a most talented comic actor who could improvise hilariously as a Butler, but preferred a clerical collar as a vicar. We visited all over the city of Amsterdam We visited the Rijkmuseum and viewed the marvelous Vermeers and the famous Night Watch. It was a magic weekend, and, flying home as my male self (after another switch in a hotel as I was NOT allowed to be anyone but Fiona at the castle) I could hardly believe that I had been away from home for five days - halfway around the world to a country I had never before visited and spent two days

in almost non-stop hilarity and masquerade.

Soon after this event I went on study leave to the United States and spent as much time as possible visiting my friends from earlier days in the U.S. and Canada. I was taken to some very questionable night clubs in NYC but two of my most memorable and exciting times came when I was on the west coast on the final run home. In Seattle I again saw dear friends from my Oregon days and stayed with a couple who took me out as Fiona in their luxurious cabin cruiser on Puget Sound. Then I visited Virginia in Los Angeles and she charmingly invited me to stay. While with her I went to a Tri-Ess meeting and was made to feel very welcome. I was chatting to a tall, pleasant sister who had brought his lovely daughter with him to the meeting, and, in passing I mentioned that it had been a long-standing dream of mine to go to Disneyland as Fiona. "We're going tomorrow," said my new friend. "Why not come with us?"

Of course I was delighted to do so and that day will always remain as one of the golden memories for me.

We went as a family, with my crossdressing friend in his male role and me as MOM - with the eleven year old daughter delighted to have a mother once again. This made me feel incredibly maternal and loving towards her. Having three daughters of my own, I am inclined to feel affectionate to little girls and this one was so unaffected and warm, that nobody could have resisted her. We all had a wonderful time and I know that I can never go to Disneyland again (or see pictures of it) without getting a warm glow. I rode terrifying roller-coaster-type rides in the darkness because my "daughter" asked me. We stood in lines for hours, waiting to ride the submarine or go through the



Fiona with Cover Girl Eileen (TVIA No. 16) 1963



Fiona as the Marchioness of Sidney -- party 1981



Gretel and Fiona prepare for an evening at a disco 1982



Fiona dancing at an Artists Ball, Melbourne 1982

haunted house.

I was wearing high heeled sandals (because I didn't have anything more appropriate and not because I didn't know from past experience that D.Land should be approached in jeans and sneakers) and a straight skirt. But even the aches and pains were more than compensated for by the joy of being, for the first time in my life, accepted by all and sundry as the female part of a small family group. My pleasure was further increased by an invitation to go and stay with my "husband and daughter" on my way through San Francisco. Thus I was able to extend my experience as a "wife and mother." I must admit it was an experience I would repeat at any time. No matter what the militant feminists may say, there is a great deal to be said for being part of a loving family unit.

My return to Australia has meant further creative fantasies, including two weekends afloat in small fleets of hired pleasure craft. In 1981 a group of us went away for a three day weekend in four cabin-cruisers, celebrating the naval battle of Trafalgar, with a gala banquet afloat and an evening of fireworks with the four launches rafted together. Out of some thirty guests, there were three crossdressers. We shared a boat intended for five people, but by the time that we had our wardrobes spread out, there was no spare room! Last year I was invited away again, this time to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day and this time we finished up with three cabin cruisers and three mobile houseboats.

Again we had three crossdressers present and we three shared a six-b~~er~~th houseboat.

Houseboats are ideal for entertaining and the "crossdressed boat" threw a party for all and sundry on the first night, with canapes and champagne, streamers and dancing on the flat cabin roof. Great fun! On the

following night there was a progressive dinner, with each boat providing a different course and a Shakespearian Entertainment inbetween courses. I landed the part of Cleopatra (quite right) as well as one of the three witches (boo). And during the hot, sunny days we sunbaked or swam and Fiona improved her tan.

I know that many of you will have read the cover story of my friend Paula who graced issue No. 105. Paula and I have a friendship which goes back about fifteen years or so. I am very ~~fan~~ of that remarkable lady and we have often taken part in public occasions together. We had often spoke of "Doing Something" such as hiring a caravan or boat together, but last year we finally managed to organize ourselves into an "Event."

It turned out that we were both to be in Adelaide at the same time (Paula on a visit - I at a conference) so we arranged to travel together. This involved me flying as Fiona for the first time, as I had to join Paula in Melbourne and there would not be time to change on arrival, and, anyway, flying as Fiona was a challenge. Of course, having been delivered to the airport by a good friend, the first thing I managed to do was break a stilt heel on the escalator. My friend took a photo of me cursing my heel and left chuckling. I had to hobble through the security system, so pre-occupied with my broken heel that I took no notice of the magnetic security screen and handed over my handbag for searching without a moments concern. I guess that the breaking of the heel was a blessing in disguise as I might otherwise have been worrying about being detected and arrested as some form of hijacker!

On the flight down I did a rough repair on the heel with a pair of scissors (using them as pliers to straighten the remaining

nails...very feminine!) and was met by Paula at the airport luggage collection point. We then spent a charming three days driving in leisurely fashion from Melbourne to Adelaide along the coast road, stopping overnight in motels and pausing from time to time to take photos for the album. Our stay in Adelaide was also more^{er} pleasant, as we stayed in the home of a charming English crossdresser. I spent as much time as possible in skirts (or, since his home is virtually on a beach, in my swimsuit).

On our last night, we went to the opening of a Kandinsky exhibition at the State Art Gallery and then went to dinner. I felt very glamorous in a deeply plunging white moiré taffeta blouse and full black moiré taffeta skirt with patent sandals. Paula always dresses exquisitely in the very best of taste and frequently wins prizes for elegance at race-meetings and fashion parades, where she often uses her flair for wearing Edwardian gracious gowns to great effect.

This account has been rather rushed and fragmentary, but it is hard to compress twenty years into a few pages. I know that twenty years ago I was physically more attractive than I am now, but I think I enjoy life more now that I have the experience and maturity to enjoy life without guilt. I know who I am and that I am successful on anyone's terms, both in my career and in my reconciliation of the two parts of my life. There are times when I ache to live more fully as a woman, but I accept my responsibilities as husband and father and would never do anything to endanger the family that I love. Australia has been very good to me, too, as it is a wonderful country to live in, both socially and from the point of view of a clement climate. Society's rules are also relaxing greatly so there is no longer any fear of being arrested simply for crossdressing. Many of the catch-all laws

ha!
(from Holly)

ADVICE
FOR
TV
JUST



YOO HOO
JOHN
I'M HOME

FIRST LADY

By Dee Raymond

VI

AND LOVERS, OLD
AND NEW

The nightdress lay untouched upon the bed where Consuela had left it. "I won't wear it," said the young man fearfully. Devoid of wig and makeup, Esteban looked only remotely like his sister. He sat, his body tense, in an old armchair, wrapped in a soft, white, bathrobe. It came only halfway down his thighs, showing off his thin, bare, tanned and shaven legs.

Without eyebrows and with his dark wet hair pushed behind his ears, he looked like a boyish young girl of seventeen or eighteen.

"What is it?" Consuela's voice had a hard edge to it and both the flustered Isabel and Esteban turned to face her.

"He refuses to put on the nightwear you left out for him," Isabel said crossly.

"You make a mistake," said Consuela, and the thin-faced, dark girl turned to her petulantly. "Never refer to him as a 'he,'" she completed softly.

Consuela was aware of the fear radiating out from the partly feminized youth and directed to her. "I won't wear

that!" he exclaimed, his voice strained and high-pitched.

As Consuela touched the nightgown, the frilly panties which went beneath fell to the floor. "Of course you will wear this," said Consuela with certainty.

"I'll do it during the daytime," the youth stammered. "B-But I-I can't wear that." His finger indicated the ribbons along the frilly panties and short nightie.

"Irena always did," said Consuela gently. "She said that pyjamas were for lesbians. You're not one of those, are you dear?"

Esteban gasped and pulled his knees up sharply to him. He was still wearing the dark blue, silk panties Consuela had put on him earlier that day.

"I-I'm not Irena!" he almost screamed at Consuela, the fear evident in his voice.

"Ah, but you must be!" Her tone was equally vehement and brooked no argument. "This may just be a silly game to you, and a great farce to your friend here," she pointed agrily at Isabel, "but it's my life, and Francisco Salluca's, and even your own. Yes, your life is riding on your being as good a coquette as Irena was. Oh, I

know," she smiled bitterly, "you've heard me being insulting about Irena many times. Well, she had no morals, none at all, in politics or in bed. I doubt she truly believed in or loved anything or anyone in her whole life."

"That has nothing to do with 'her' right now," Isabel interrupted, stressing the 'her' so that Consuela understood her.

"It has everything to do with 'her'," Consuela snapped back, indicating the terrified Esteban. "She must convince the Party that she's truly Irena. Then she will be able to do anything - even arrange for our demise. Yes, think about that," she sneered at the surprise in Isabel's eyes. "But before she can do any of that, she has to think like a woman, act like a woman, and be a woman. To do it, she has to accept her role whole-heartedly with no pulling back, or else she'll never capture Irena's essential hold on the people."

Consuela's black eyes glared at Esteban as she approached the sofa where he sat, the nightgown in her hand. "You have to be a very sexy, feminine woman. That's what Irena was. Men knew she was intelligent and aggressive - equal to any of them; but they also found her fascinating. You have to



think of yourself that way or you'll never be right. You are a woman. A woman like you wears feminine frills like this nightie." She thrust the gauzy clothing into the slender hands that gripped the arms of the chair so tightly.

Esteban's lower lip quivered, and he had to bite down hard on it to keep even a semblance of self-control. A man wasn't supposed to show emotion, he thought, trying to make his face impenetrable to Consuela's gaze. But how much longer would he remain a man under her prompting. He cringed at the thought. "I can't," he whispered, a tear squeezing out unbidden from his darkly lashed eye.

"Why not?" Consuela's voice had undergone a dramatic metamorphosis. Now she was gently, constrained, understanding.

"I-I've seen the way you two look at each other when I do something as Irena," the words tumbled out in a flood from his now tasteless lips. "I'm not a woman, or anything else like. . . I'm a man, and I'm going to stay one."

"Ah, I see," said Consuela thoughtfully. "You think that we think less of you as a person because of what we make you do."

"You do," said Esteban, his body still rigid as the soft nightdress brushed against his thigh as it swung in Consuela's hand. It was a remarkably gentle sensation, and he wondered what it would feel like to be clothed entirely in those light ribbons and frills.

Consuela turned abruptly back to Isabel. "She's right," she said. "And I would applaud her stand if it weren't for the desperate situation we're all in." She glanced back at Esteban with a soft, little smile on her own dark-red lips. "I hadn't realized how much this.... how much we really are asking of you."

Esteban felt some of his tension float away. "I can wear my regular night clothes," he breathed, not knowing that he still maintained Irena's vocal register, as Consuela had taught him.

"No," said Consuela regretfully. "Everything I spoke of before still applies. But if you wear this, I promise you much more considerate treatment from Isabel and I."

Isabel turned away and busied herself at the cosmetics table. What was provided for this youth would have been the envy of any real girl in the capital. Isabel didn't dare to look at him, she knew that's what he was, in case he saw her expression. Behind her, she heard the creak of the chair, a soft footstep or two, and then the quiet closing of the bathroom door.

Isabel turned. Consuela was stretching herself out on the femininely furnished bed, her fingers pressing in just above her closed eyes. "He went for that?" Isabel sneered at the prone figure.

Consuela relaxed her hand and opened her eyes. "What else can she do?" she asked quietly, stressing the 'she' again. "But she has to fight us, let us know, or pretend, that she doesn't care. It's only natural. After all, she is, in truth, a man. I hope we're not all leaning, though, on a broken reed, for she has to change. She has to be a real woman, in her own eyes, too, if she intends us to believe it as well."

The bathroom door clicked open. Esteban had put on the clothing. The top came just below his hips so that the frilliness of the 'cute' panties was clearly visible. Despite the lack of any cleavage about the neckline of the nightgown, the slim figure retained a genuine femaleness. The slim legs were rounded and tanned, without the bulky musculature of the male. To all appearances, 'she'

was a short-haired girl in a sexy nightie ready for bed.

Consuela rose from the bed to greet the 'girl.' Esteban stood very uncertainly in the doorway, swaying on the feathery, high-heeled slippers that Irena had worn about her bedroom. He looked warily from one woman to the other, expecting a sneer or a knowing wink. But Consuela stepped over to him quickly. She put her hands on his thin shoulders, noting that he was now the same size as she was. Gently, she kissed him first on one cheek and then on the other. Then, she took him by the hand and guided him towards the silk-sheeted bed.

"Thank you, Irena," she said simply. "I know that this costs you a great deal, and neither Isabel nor I will ever do anything as difficult or dangerous as you are doing for us now. We think more of you now for we trust you, Irena, with our lives."

Esteban could think of no appropriate reply. He nodded, a nervous reaction, and soon the girls withdrew from the and he was alone. The air-conditioning hummed continuously, but other than that, the whole building seemed ominously silent. Lying on a satin pillow, perfumed very delicately, Esteban could look about Irena's room and see all the dainty, feminine things that were now his and that he was supposed to use.

He nibbled at his long thumbnail, surprised by its length and its shape. The warmth of Consuela's greeting as she had pressed the folds of the nightgown against his body, then the candor and appreciation that had been in her voice and manner, had reassured him a little. It was all going to turn out all right.

But then he remembered Irena and how she had really died, and he was suddenly very afraid. He turned restlessly, the

nightwear clinging softly to him, and the ridiculous picture of himself in a woman's nightie overcame his mind, and he wanted the bed to open up and swallow him. The realization came, however, that he was more afraid of being found out as being a boy in woman's clothing than he was of dying in mistake for Irena.

I must be the best Irena I can be, he trembled at the forbidden thought. No-one must ever suspect that I'm Esteban Varga. He shuddered as vistas of how he might be discovered flooded his mind. I'd die, he thought, panic-stricken. I'd really die on the spot. I must learn to think that I am Irena, he thought, his face burning as he lay restlessly on the sensuous bed-clothing. He fought to go to sleep, to leave such thoughts alone, tossing even more restlessly from side to side, causing even more embarrassing thoughts as he was carressed by his new and strange night-clothes.

Salluca was angry throughout the following week with Consuela, leaving her strictly alone with Esteban/Irena. He had blamed her for introducing the discordant note into the dinner with Aguilar. The general had left, Salluca noted, with an icy expression on his face.

Then, too, despite the release of Abrado Camar from San Martin, and the announced support of Gonzalo Diaz for Irena's program of Reconciliation, there was an obvious reluctance by either the Party or the public to accept the sudden reversal of a well-established policy. The news from El Chaco was not encouraging, either. Fights between Internal Police and Regular Army units, both actual and in strategy meetings, had prevented Aguilar from ordering the counter-attack, publicly announced four days before.

The deep shadows under Salluca's eyes and his generally haggard appearance elicited no sympathy, however, from Esteban/Irena. 'She' had been summoned to a morning conference by the Vice President, along with 'her' usual guards, Consuela and Isabel. Wearing the straight uniform skirt and low heels were a little easier for Irena than the swishing, sensual dresses that Consuela kept him in at the hotel apartment. Esteban, though, had had to endure almost a continuous scrutiny of many men, particularly the soldiers loyal to Irena, and who were all trying desperately hard to impress their exotic President with their devotion to her personally. 'She' was, of course, finely made up for the meeting. Consuela had arranged the hair of Irena's wig so that it fell onto the nape of 'her' neck and around 'her' chin, a constant reminder to Esteban of the role he was to fulfill.

"Who is Ricardo?" were Salluca's first words, directed at Consuela.

The Secretary shrugged, but then gave a violent start and snapped her fingers smartly. "Saeyan y Querido!" she exclaimed. "Irena spent two weeks with him at Lago del Pre earlier this year. He must have been the one she had her latest affair with -- the one she was slipping off to meet all last month."

"Her lover?" Isabel's voice held a note of amusement. She was watching the distress creep across the new Irena's feminized features.

Consuela frowned at her but then nodded. "Why did you want to know who Ricardo is?" she asked, turning back to Salluca.

The Vice President sighed and leaned back in the high, leather chair, rubbing a hand across his swollen eyes. "He's sent at least five messages to Irena in the last week, along with those," he indicated a

vase full of gorgeous, red roses. He picked up a folder from his desk. "He wants Irena to meet him," he glanced up at the 'girl' seated so stiffly on the other side of the desk from him, "in the usual place."

"I'll take care of that," Consuela said firmly. "I'll see that his ardor's cooled down quite considerably." She took a quick look at Esteban, noting the lines of anxiety that eyeliner and green eyeshadow could not hide. "You'll have no trouble from that direction," she said quietly to the girl beside her.

"There are other things," said Salluca, turning to a list on his desk. "Margoles is now raving for an interview. . . . as is Gonzalo," he glanced icily at Isabel, who returned him look for look. "Also, the Americans want to send a representative here to talk to you, Irena," he spoke directly to the girl whom he knew was Esteban.

"But why?" It was Consuela who cut in quickly. "Aren't they the ones who financed the reactionaries against us? They're Boca's chief support!"

"Our Foreign Minister does not think so," said the Vice President doubtfully. Again he spoke directly to Irena, stressing each word. "The Americans were apparently as surprised as we at the launching of the invasion. Fuentes says he has been assured that they will apply an arms embargo against all sides, if our friends agree not to supply us."

"What friends?" asked Isabel quickly. "Wasn't this supposed to be an authentic, folk revolution?" She couldn't keep the sneer out of her voice. "This is the only American Revolution without ties to the imperialists of the Right or Left!" Her tone mimicked Consuela's father as she quoted one of his most famous sayings.

Eyes glittering with repressed fury, Consuela turned

away from Isabel so that she faced the demure Irena, who sat, listening to the exchanges, her hands on her lap, gently running her fingers over her manicured, polished nails.

"You cannot be so naive," Salluca was going on, his tone as unpleasant as Isabel's, "as to believe that a modern army and air force could be built solely from the leftovers of the previous regime."

"Oh, you've spent a lot of money," sneered Isabel. "The whole country knows how much you've pampered the Army -- and why," she added darkly.

There was a long silence while Salluca stared at the young woman. When he spoke again to Irena, it was in an overly polite, emotionless tone, that ignored the previous exchange of rhetoric entirely. "There is a meeting set tomorrow, Irena, for you to meet the American, Louis Ward, a Special Envoy, sent here by the U. S. Government." He smiled at her gently, and it occurred to Consuela that the only one being treated as a woman at the meeting was Esteban.

"This will be a different meeting to the others," Salluca went on deferentially, adopting the same speech and manner, a fascinated Consuela noted, to that he'd used to the real Irena. "At the Junta, everyone was preoccupied, of course. And then, we had you swathed in bandages. We could explain each discrepancy. Aguilar not knowing Irena well was also a big factor in getting away with the dinner."

"So, what's the problem now?" Isabel's query was sharply put. Salluca's sudden glance at her made her retreat hastily to the back of her chair. She shuddered as she saw why Salluca was known as the Eagle.

"Fuentes will have to be present throughout the two days Louis Ward is here. This time, he'll have you under close

scrutiny, Irena." Salluca had turned back to Irena as he spoke. "He did say how different you were, how much the bombing attack had disturbed you. I've encouraged him to think that. But he did ask Juan Augusto if he noticed how much younger you looked, how much weight you'd lost since the bombing, and in the wrong places, according to Francisco."

"She fits Irena's dresses now," protested Consuela, while 'Irena' looked away disconcerted by Salluca's continued treatment of 'her' as a woman, when they both knew that 'she' was not.

"I can see that," said the Vice President patiently. "But the resemblance still only holds for a short time to those of us who were closest to Irena. We were lucky in one way that Coronado died so recently." Then he stopped, his eyes contracting thoughtfully as the idea reached all of them that the 'accidental death' of Hector Chuy Coronado, another of Irena's lovers as well as Commander of the Armed Forces, belonged to a pattern of recent deaths that led up to Irena's assassination. Everyone had been reasonably explained, but here they were, the heirs to a revolution of which the front-rank heroes had been wiped away. With Hector Chuy at her side, Irena had always been assured of the complete loyalty of the Armed Forces.

"Margoles, too, you cannot keep waiting, Irena," Salluca went on as the girl shifted uneasily under his gaze. Despite her tight skirt, she crossed her legs, her lightly colored stockings making a gently, feminine noise. "And the Cabinet must meet soon." He frowned at the notes on his desk and sighed deeply. "There is only so much I can do, Irena, on your behalf."

Esteban/Irena nodded. "When," he asked huskily, trying out the more relaxed tone

he'd practiced for the past week and more with Consuela, "do I start to meet these people?"

Salluca's eyes widened in astonishment as Esteban spoke. "Good Lord!" he exulted.

Consuela laughed openly then. "How was that?" she asked, merriment in her dark-brown eyes at Salluca's shock. "It's not as high pitched as Irena's. But it's just as sexy and he intones in the same way. It's a difference even Fuentes will accept." She looked at Esteban/Irena and winked, not realizing how much her unexpected use of the masculine pronoun had upset 'her.' 'She' blushed furiously behind 'her' makeup.

When Consuela had used the 'he,' Esteban had felt the constriction of his feminine undergarments very acutely. His bra, and the padding on his chest, felt particularly restrictive, though not as out of place as his nylon-clad legs. As he glanced at Consuela and Isabel, both in slacks, he realized that he was the only one with makeup and in female dress.

"The Margoles meeting will be at nine," Salluca began to answer Irena's question, admiration for Esteban's deception clear in his manner. Esteban/Irena had to look away from those pleasure-filled eyes. Unsteadily, he uncrossed his legs, keeping his legs tight together, as Consuela had insisted. She smiled at him, recognizing his attempt at femaleness, and the roots of his hair seemed to catch fire.

"The full Cabinet will meet at ten," added the Vice President, consulting his list. "At four, you go out to the Airport to greet Ward and accompany him to the Lorenzo Hotel, where we shall all be staying." He snapped the folder shut. "There will, of course, be the expected dance party at the Lorenzo about eleven. The World Press expects such gestures from our President." He gave a shrug

to Consuela.

"It's too full a day for her," protested Esteban's chief teacher. "She can only keep it up for so long."

"It appears," said the low, husky imitation of Irena's voice, "that I shall have to, or. . ." She paused, giving a sudden, visible shudder.

"Or the Revolution becomes the most laughed-at and ridiculed affair in the world!" crowed Isabel. Her triumphant smile savored the helpless and angry looks directed at her by the revolutionaries but missed entirely the sudden, despairing look that flitted over the face of the hemisphere's only 'woman' President.

VII

THE ONLY WOMAN PRESIDENT.

When Esteban slept, in his pretty frilly babydolls, of course, his sleep was fitful indeed and filled with images of Salluca intoning all the things that 'she' had to do the next day, while Consuela just laughed and crowed that 'he' would be discovered. He just couldn't be a 'she' all day long. Surprisingly, Isabel did not figure in any of his dreams. . . . or were they nightmares?

Whatever they were, they were very vivid. He was at school, just a young school-boy, starting out again at Pujols Academy with Roberto Cadenas, his best friend then. He was starting all over again, and again. . .but somehow the Academy wasn't the same. It wasn't just a 'boys only' school as it had been. There were girls there. Pretty girls, with ribbons in their hair and makeup on despite the fact that they were very young, not more than twelve or thirteen. . .and they were all over the school, even sharing the dormitories with the

boys. . .going to bed in pretty nightdresses, but nobody thought it was odd. . .even though there were some girls and some boys in each of the long sleeping halls. There were female school teachers, too, at Pujols.

But there weren't enough girls when they played games or when they were dancing. . . who'd ever heard of dances at Pujols. . .and some of the boys had to join the girls' side and so they had to dress like them. And Esteban was one of those who had to become a girl, with long hair and a ribbon. . .but everyone was encouraging and no-one thought it odd. . .and the girls tried to teach him how to be like them, and the other boys who were girls, too, but they were better than he was. . . One moment he was a boy and next he was a girl. . .and he was some kind of cheerleader with a lot of other girls, in a skimpy, little dress, like the other girls, a halter like top to show off his figure like theirs. . .and his eyes were so beautifully made up like the other girls. . .Ribbons streamed down his long hair, which was light, almost blonde, onto his bare back. . .He kicked up to show the silk panties all the girls wore. . .and he jumped because something had happened in the game, and his breasts bounced and jiggled up and down just like the other girls. . .

Then it was the dance. . .no, it wasn't. He was in the barn, haymaking with Roberto. . .they always did that in eighth level farm camp and he had done it. . .but he, Esteban, was made up and his shirt, frilly, laced, was open enough to show Roberto his lacy, silk underclothing. . .A slip with thin straps, a bra. . .but it was filled. . .his breasts pushing out and Roberto was salivating as he had when he and Esteban had found that book in the barn. . . but that was gone. It never existed. 'He,' the girl known

still as Esteban, was tearfully explaining to Roberto that his breasts were real and if the boys didn't dance with him at the coming dance, he'd be failed in school and thrown out by his parents. . . And he, Esteban, with long, beribboned hair, was crying, and his makeup was running. . . and Roberto looked really embarrassed and was saying, what would the other guys think. But I am your best friend, Esteban was saying, showing more of his feminine underclothing and breasts to Roberto. Roberto was saying he couldn't do that with Esteban unless he was sure that Esteban would in future. . . but he had to let Roberto touch, you know. . . and he was trying to kiss the long blonde-haired girl, who was Esteban, and his hand was reaching out to touch, which Esteban was aching for him to do. . .

The blonde girl had straw in her hair but the mistress who looked down on the pair in the hay only smiled and seemed to congratulate them as she motioned and the blonde girl began to do up her shirt. . . The dress she wore to the dance was shiny and black with little straps over her bare shoulders. It was very low cut and very revealing. Her makeup was her lips glossy, pouting, and she stood among the other girls who were making a fuss of her. They were angry at the boys who hadn't danced at all with the girl with thick, long, blonde hair, who was Esteban. The girls would dance with him, of course, but weren't the boys stupid, not to realize . . . "She" stared angrily at Roberto but he swallowed and turned away, embarrassed. But then, Aurelio Bustamente — but Esteban had only known that social climber at University, not at Pujols, so how came he here?. . . but Bustamente was asking the blonde girl to dance while

all the while her blue and silver shadowed eyes were staring at Roberto willing him to do what he'd promised. . .but Roberto was agonizing and saying but I didn't really promise, and one of the mistresses was very angry with him. . .and Aurelio was smiling over 'her' in his patronizing, arrogant manner, holding her about her waist and leering over at her. . . and people noticed and raised their eyebrows but the girls were very pleased. . . Then, she was dancing with Luis Daquenta, but Luis was in Spain now, but he held her earnestly. . . Roberto was trying to explain that he'd wanted to be first and he would eventually have got his courage up. . .but she was too beautiful and he'd mentioned 'her' fortune to Aurelio and that guy had said he'd do anything for money. . .but now, she, Esteban, wouldn't listen to his protests or let him touch 'her' as he was burning to do as everyone could see. . .but they all said 'she' was right. . .but even Roberto was relieved when she went off waltzing with Aurelio again because he'd do anything for money, and they all knew that. . .he'd even dance with another man. . .But Aurelio was grinning at her. . . asking if she was going to be real. . .

The mistress, the faceless one. . .No! It was Consuela! . . . thin-faced, thin in body. . . she was pleased that Aurelio and Esteban, the blonde-haired girl. . . but shouldn't they go up to the dormitory. . . it was all right. . . and Aurelio was walking her home to her dormitory, and she was brushing her teeth in the mirror, her long hair loose about her face and her nightie, and when she came into the dorm there were only girls there, but it was smaller, cozier, only six beds, and they all wanted to talk about the dance and they drew the blonde-haired girl in and cuddled her and she told them. . . and they told her. . . and didn't she have so

many pretty dresses . . . but why was Aurelio in her cupboard selecting a dress for her. . . and wasn't she going to go out with him now steady. . . and all the girls were eager. . . really eager, and pleased if it was true, that she, Esteban, had a boy friend at last. . . but why was she a cheerleader again when Pujols had never taken on that American innovation. . . and why was Roberto crying in the stands while she performed and she had boys all over the hallway waiting for her now. . . and she was dressed in a tight black dress and Roberto was saying something. . . But Consuela the mistress was there to tell him that he'd had his chance with Esteban. . . but nothing happened. . . Roberto was saying as 'she' went off between two tall, dark boys from the twelfth level. . . while Consuela smiled in approval and showed her how to walk more like a real woman. . .

And he awoke! His mouth was dry; he felt drawn and haggard, and he knew that he had an erection. For a moment the dream lived on and he expected to have to take off the tight, black dress before he relaxed and talked to Roberto.

"Come on, Irena," said Consuela crossly, returning from the windows where she had thrown back the curtain. "You have a very busy day today in front of you."

She tried to seize the bedclothes and pull them back, but Esteban held onto them in his awakening fright. He did not want her to see his panties, not while the frilly babydolls were shaped the way they were. Realization of the dream was flooding still through his brain as he felt his flat chest, but still the frills at his arms and across his hairless chest and thighs.

"She needs her privacy this morning," sneered Isabel, lounging against the doorframe of the open door that led to the

room's antechamber.

Consuela's dark eyes glittered as she flicked a glance in Isabel's direction. But she did bring a negligee, a pink, filmy thing, for 'Irena' to slip on. Esteban could feel the fire rising in his face as he slipped his bare, shaven legs carefully out of the bed and into pink, high-heeled, fluffy slippers waiting for his feet. Painted toenails peeped through the open toes of the slippers--his painted toenails. . . He pulled the negligee about him quickly, but he couldn't walk quickly for it seemed that he'd forgotten how to walk in high heels after the night he'd gone through.

The bathroom was a welcome refuge from Isabel's taunts, Consuela's rigid face, and the vivid impressions his dream had left in his mind. He was still 'living in the dream' for quite awhile after he entered the bathroom. His heart fluttered strangely as he stared at the 'girl' in the wall mirror -- but it was no girl there -- only an effeminate, grotesque Esteban Varga, not at all the 'girl' of his dreams. 'She' had been so perfect it would have almost been worth being a girl to be 'her' he thought. Horror rose in his mind as he realized what he was thinking. Flushing, he forced himself to look at himself, exposed there in the mirror. He stared at the ridiculous Esteban, so silly in his 'cute' girlish clothing. He stripped the pyjamas off and looked at a strange, hairless, young boy, whose face, figure and nails would be laughed at by any girl or boy who saw him. He took a bath, welcoming the oblivion that his body found beneath the suds. He felt relieved but fluttery all the same to know that he was who he was. There was a padded bra on a chair near the door, but still he had to run a hand over his flat chest to reassure himself that the vision in the barn was not he. . . but he had looked

so delightful with the straw in his mussed-up, blonde hair, he thought, drowsing in the warm bath water. Only when he had lingered there for over fifteen minutes, feeling the perfumed water cleansing every pore of his body, did he realize that he was daydreaming again about the strange, newly-created world of the Pujols Academy. He had begun to jump to his feet, visions of girls surrounding and comforting him, encouraging him to be just like them, when a livid Consuela stormed into the bathroom.

She was not at all gentle, like in his dream, as she bade him lie down again while she washed and set his hair. "I know you'll wear a wig," she snapped as he nervously asked why she was setting his hair in small rollers. "But accidents can happen, darling Irena. And if such does happen, you'll still look pretty and girlish, nevertheless."

Consuela did not leave 'Irena' alone for one second not even while 'she' disguised 'her' masculinity. If anything, she tightened Irena's waist-cinch and bra much more than she had previously, even tightening the garter belt that held up the light, skin-colored stockings she insisted that the President must wear.

She was very annoyed with 'Irena' and the dark shadows under her eyes. "You should have asked for a sleeping pill," she scolded when 'Irena' tried to explain that she'd had a bad dream. "This is far too much makeup for this time of day. You're going to have to take better care of yourself, my dear, if you want to keep your young-girl good looks, like Irena."

The addition of the wig and a dark, full-skirted dress, veiled over the shoulders, chest and upper arms changed 'him' most definitely to 'her' as even one, quick, sidelong glance to 'her' mirror showed Irena. It was almost a relief to look 'real'

again. Her black, open-toed high heels were new, like everything 'she' possessed.

"Hardly breakfast wear," mused Consuela, making the girl spin before her, before giving her the dark, button earrings which she attached right away to her ears. "But Raul Margoles is a man you should impress, if you want the Party behind you through this change Salluca thinks you can pull off."

Raul Margoles, Secretary-General to the Party of the Revolution, was indeed very impressed by Irena Varga, as he always was. Maybe it was the dream living on, but 'Irena' was 'different,' in Salluca's words to Consuela, more like her real self as a woman. Margoles hung on every word the vivacious President uttered to him, promising her that the Party faithful would support 'her' in whatever direction she wished the Revolution to move, even to extending membership in the Party to any former Democrat who would just take the Oath of Allegiance to Irena. He left with the promise that Irena would save at least one dance for him at the reception that night.

"The old fool," said Francisco Salluca, as the smiling, beautiful, feminine figure, stepped back lithely from the door to which she had accompanied Margoles as he left the small, private dining room at the Lorenzo.

Irena's bright smile disappeared and she swayed just a little on 'her' high heels as she came back hastily to sit in the armchair where she had before. Salluca frowned and moved along the sofa to be beside 'her.' He stared at 'her' intently as 'she' adjusted her rustling dress beneath and around her smooth legs. There were high spots of color on 'her' cheeks as she pushed blonde-streaked hair over her shoulder, exposing her small

earrings.

"He was sent by the deputies to express their concerns about your new policy," said Salluca, reaching over to pick up her hand, frowning at the long, darkly colored nails that seemed so genuine and so feminine. "Even swearing oaths to you won't make Democrats into Revolutionaries, and we all know that. But if we take them into the Party, either they'll democratize us or we'll revolutionize them. Either way, the country should win.

"Don't ever forget, Irena, that the real difference between the Democrats and us is nothing but social class. It's the merchants, the farmers, the academics, the middle class, whose support we had to overthrow Reyes, that this move wins back for us."

The girl shifted in her soft, silky dress as she tried to slip her hand from his. Salluca's smile was dark and sardonic as he held the feminized hand more tightly while 'she' kept her heavily madeup eyes diverted from him.

"Francisco," cut in Consuela Romo's iciest tones. "There is a Cabinet session awaiting you and your girlfriend." The anger in her face was evident to both President and Vice President, but at whom the anger was directed was hard to tell.

Blushing, Irena-Esteban leapt to 'her' high-heeled feet, her skirts swaying softly about her stockinged legs, a sudden, pleasant sensation that only added more to the confusion on her face. She didn't dare to look at Consuela.

"She needs to fix her makeup," said Consuela, relenting from her anger when she saw how upset 'Irena' was. She reached out to help pry his fingers from the grasp he still had on 'her' hand. The smile on Salluca's face left no doubt that he was enjoying the discomfigure he was giving

to 'Irena.'

With his hand in Consuela's, 'she' demurely minced after 'her' Secretary. 'She' sat where she was directed by Consuela as she straightened 'her' dress. "You're going to have to watch out for Francisco," she said as she redid 'his' makeup, making his eyes gleam with white and pink highlights. "He likes to crush people---to prove he's so much superior to them. He had a funny relationship with Irena. Even I don't know if he did actually ever love her. She kept him in his place, and he didn't like it. He only likes people around who adore and respect him---which is why I won't last long here, mark my words. Soon, you'll be dealing with the Eagle one to one, and you, girl, will then be very clearly put in your place. You'll learn then, girl, to behave exactly as he wishes it. If that's what you want. . . ." Her voice trailed off as she shrugged and then stepped back to critically examine the 'Irena' face she had refreshed. The arrival of a bored Isabel Ortega, bored with being cooped up in the Presidential rooms with Salluca's men seeing to it that she saw no one he didn't want her to see ended the warning. Salluca was going to drive her crazy, she said. She saw how Irena was trembling as Consuela smoothed out her dress and put more perfume on her neck and arms.... but then she thought bitterly what could you expect from a little queen like Esteban Varga?

"She did well again," said Francisco Salluca when they rejoined him in the dining room. "Margoles really does think that Irena is the loveliest woman he has ever seen."

"Please," said Consuela, seeing how Irena nervously licked at her bright, shiny mouth, and fidgeted with the bracelets at her wrists. "This is no way to prepare her for a Cabinet meeting. Are you trying to have her give herself

away?"

Salluca shrugged. "We're over the worst of it," he said simply. "If she wants to, she can even miss this meeting entirely."

Consuela was bewildered. "What brought this on?" she asked. "You said she had to attend. It couldn't wait...."

"It's the deal he's worked with the Democrats," said Isabel Ortega with a sneer. "Didn't he tell you that the Democrats are now a part of the Party of the Revolution?"

Consuela gasped as she looked at Salluca. She saw his eyes narrow as he glared at Isabel. Consuela turned to the other feminine figure in the group. "When did this happen?" she asked Irena softly.

"He and Gonzalo worked it out last night," said Irena. She tried to speak in Esteban's voice but it was too difficult. 'She' had spent too long doing nothing else but trying to sound like Irena. Consuela had corrected every slip 'she' had made. And now he could do nothing but speak in a woman's tone. "It will be a split on lots of programs and positions," 'she' said, trying hard to make Esteban's voice come from Irena's mouth. "One will divide up the spoils, the other gets to choose first."

Consuela smiled grimly in understanding. "And the Army?" she asked, thinking how right Ernesto Figueroa had been. Even she, the person most responsible for the beautiful 'Irena' who kept the State together, had not been consulted.

"Not to be touched," growled Salluca.

"Ramon says that the Army's not to be embroiled in politics at this level," Irena said hastily, giving up any attempt to be Esteban while the soft, silky slip quivered about his silk, lacy panties. 'He' could sense every thread it seemed of his frilly garter belt and the tight stockings

that gripped his legs, but the sense of enjoyment he was getting from the soft sway of the dress against his stockings or the touch of long hair on 'his' earrings or softly veiled shoulders was the most disconcerting sensation of all. He just wanted to get away from all the politics and the business and go for a walk, in a loose dress, high heels and makeup.... but again his mind went numb at the way the strange thoughts were taking over....it was like his dream, again....and he was in the barn, in his silky underthings, with straw in his long, blonde hair....and he spun....but he really did have high heels on....and he was a real girl.... and he wasn't going to wake up.....

It was hard, thought a grim-faced Consuela Romo, as she shepherded the shivering, lovely 'Irena' from the room, finally relinquishing 'her' to the arrogant Salluca, who put his hand under her arm so possessively, to reconcile the confident womanly performance 'she' was now giving with her naive statements. It was clear to anyone with a brain in their head that Francisco Salluca was in the business of at least changing the Revolution as Consuela and the Party knew it. The way he looked at Irena made it certain, too, that, despite the fact that this was a boy, 'she' was soon going to be Senora Salluca. Consuela's mouth was dry as she saw Salluca put his arm about 'her' waist and lean over to say something into 'her' ear. She saw the girl start as the arm hugged her, saw the fear in the upturned, feminine face, saw 'her' lipsticked mouth tremble, but then turn to a smile at whatever Francisco 'the Eagle' had said. Then 'she' turned to glance over her shoulder at Consuela, as if looking for her approval. But Consuela only grimaced at 'her,' and was pleased to see the girl nervously shake

her long mane of blonde-streaked hair.

"Be a good girl in there," she snapped, and was pleased to see 'her' tense, her figure becoming more feminine as she held her breath, and 'her' chest heaved forward. It was funny that 'he' was so responsive to Consuela, the secretary thought, so eager for her praise. Yet 'she' was so indifferent to Isabel Ortega, to whom Esteban was supposed to have ties. Consuela brooded on that and saw perhaps a way to counter Salluca's influence over 'her' in the future -- but when she thought of the youth she had seen that morning in the bathroom, how he had looked before 'he' became feminine and beautiful, her lip curled in distaste.

VIII

..... IN A MAN'S WORLD

The Cabinet was a large, diverse group, and, when all twenty-five members were present, was usually a rancorous affair. The Junta, still the official power of the State, would one day give up its power, and then this group would take over the direction of the State, the heavy hand of the Army having been removed.

'Irena' was not really prepared to be inspected and received by twenty-five pairs of eyes all at once, many of them hostile to 'her'. The hand about her waist steadied her for a moment and gently guided her to the chair where Irena always sat to preside over the long, interminable Cabinet meetings. 'She' didn't doubt that Salluca wanted them to think that he and 'she'. . . she shuddered as her black, pleated dress rustled beneath her as 'she' sat. She glanced at the long agenda laid in 'her'

place, and long hair fell in front of her face and about 'her' neck. 'She' shivered again as she pushed back 'her' hair and her tight bra pulled and her arm had to move oddly. It was funny how different it was to be a woman. Her lacquered fingernails shone as she reached for the paper in front of her. . . and she had trouble moving it as her long nails got in her way. She felt herself flush, and put her hands down. . . into the soft silky lap, right on top of her stockings where the slip ran over the tops of her bare thighs. She was blushing as she thought how nice, how female, 'she' looked in 'her' dainty, feminine underwear.

She knew she had color in her face as she glanced up and about, through dark, thick, long lashes. 'She' blinked but then 'her' eyes fastened on one man who was staring at her, his mouth agape. Abrado Camar! Waht was he....but, of course, it was 'she' who had appointed him as new Justice Minister....And there was Gonzalo Diaz beside him, a Minister 'without portfolio.' No wonder the people about the table were so tense and had such strained looks on their faces.

"Forgive me, Senora," said a soft, masculine voice. Like 'her' they all turned to look at the balding, brown-skinned Abrado Camar. "I should not stare. It was most impolite," the white-haired professor went on. "I was struck, however, by the strong family resemblance.....You see, I knew your brother, Esteban, and you and he.....well, the Varga blood must run strongly in both of you."

'Irena' could feel the vein at her temple pumping so hard that 'she' thought 'she' might burst at any moment. She didn't dare to speak, just nodding and giving the man a polite smile. Beneath the level

of the table she pressed her stockinged knees together and then carefully arranged the hem of her skirt and the embroidered slip that 'she' wore just below 'her' dress.

"Our President has asked me....." began Francisco Salluca, a proud smile on his lips. But it was not going to be that easy.

"Senor Salluca," cut in Osvaldo Tucuman, the militant Minister of Mines, "Our President is the Chairman of all Cabinet meetings. We have always agreed this."

Salluca glowered at the challenge, and seemed on the point of an angry rebuke when he looked suddenly at Irena. She gave a shake of her long, blonde hair, and her red, glossy mouth quivered just a little.

"I-I will then take the chair, Francisco," she said in 'her' low voice. Her delivery was relaxed and slow, as Consuela had stressed that 'she' had to speak. 'She' touched the light-colored bandage at her throat and more than one Minister was reminded of the attempt on her life. It was interesting to 'her' to see which eyes fell away from 'her' face after that. 'She' almost forgot all about her femaleness and 'her' feminine dress as indignation rose in her mind at those who seemed obviously implicated in some manner in the attack upon 'her'.....for a moment she almost was Irena, prepared to call for the Revolutionary Guard, now the Interior Police, to take care of 'her' enemies.

'Her' darkly outlined eyes had hardly a chance to glitter at 'her' enemies before a familiar whine drew 'her' back into realization of who she was--not a woman despite her panties, stockings, dress, high heels and such---and definitely not yet 'Irena.'

"Senora Presidente," whined Ernesto Figueroa. "I demand to know why members

of the traitorous and proscribed party, the Center Democrats, are present at this meeting?"

'Irena' swallowed hard, looking down quickly as she was sure they must see the adam's apple in 'her' throat. "I-I take it," she said huskily, when she could delay an answer no longer, and when Camar and Diaz were thoroughly unnerved, "that you-you refer to D-Dr. Camar and....."

"You know well to whom I refer!" Figueroa's voice had risen to a high-pitched scream. Even Tucuman was wincing as the man went ranting on. While all those present became slowly more uncomfortable as his diatribe went on, 'Irena' finally was able to take charge of all of her emotions, masculine and feminine. She began to look as she felt, cool, gorgeous and female in her black, silky dress. "I ask leave of this meeting," thundered Figueroa, in ending, "to bring my men into this chamber, at this moment, to arrest these enemies of the Revolution!"

There was a gasp from someone close to Salluca, possibly the Foreign Minister, Fuentes, one of my former lovers, thought Irena ironically, marvelling at herself that she didn't blush at such a thought. The rest of the Cabinet were now eyeing the Center Democrats with suspicion, verging on hostility. Both men looked decidedly uncomfortable, clearly wondering if they hadn't been set up for this meeting, for just such a purpose, to be scapegoats for the blows the Revolution had suffered of late.

Irena leaned back in her chair, letting her long hair fall in front of her, to rest on her breasts. She did not hurriedly push the stray locks back this time, but enjoyed the sensations of softness about her neck and upper chest. She caught the glance that Tucuman threw her way, and felt some of the power Irena had always

known. The men about the table sat there quietly awaiting her word, while she, she crossed her lovely, stockinged legs, enjoying every touch of silk against nylon.

"Gentlemen," she said slowly, precisely, femininely. "The party known as the Center Democrats has ceased to exist, owing to our proscription of that party. It will not be resurrected. These gentlemen," she leaned forward in the high-backed chair, her blonde hair like a halo about her striking features, "have taken the Oath of Allegiance, as have you all." There were many glances interchanged within the group, most of outright surprise. "I want you to welcome Dr. Camar and Senor Diaz, not only to posts in the Cabinet as is proposed by me," she paused to let that sink in, "but also to welcome them as new members of the Party of the Revolution, whose principles they have accepted." Figueroa's face seethed with indignation and he waved for recognition, but Irena was looking away from him. "I shall broadcast tonight to the people on this new broadening of the base of the Revolution."

Figueroa was on his feet. The word 'protest' was brandished but drowned out in the sudden round of applause led by Vice President Salluca and Foreign Minister Fuentes. It was observed by many that the Defense and Munitions Ministers immediately followed their lead. In no time, the outburst was general, save for the 'militant' group, seven of whom, however, deserted their nominal leader when the found themselves under the close scrutiny of the Defense Minister.

With the plain support of the Armed Forces, Irena's proposals for increased taxation, for the formation of new armaments factories outside the capital, for a general increase in production, and for more

stringent application of the rationing laws, were wholeheartedly approved. The rejection of the necessity for a draft of men for the Army was a surprise to all, save Gonzales and Echevarria.

As Irena left the chamber, Fuentes' involved explanation of diplomatic moves to end the invasion completed, she had to pass Ernesto Figueroa. He grabbed her arm above the elbow as she swayed by, a grim-faced Salluca behind her.

"You are not Irena!" blurted out the irate Interior Minister, staring wildly into the darkly-outlined, feminine eyes. Figueroa's beetle brows were furrowed with emotion. His black eyes blazed with hate at the attractive girl.

Irena stopped at the words, not even struggling against the hand that held her. She stood still, frozen with such a look of fright on her madeup face that Gonzales left the conversation he was having with the new Minister of Justice and bounded from one end of the room to the other to be at 'her' side.

"You are not Irena Varga," repeated the Interior Minister. "She would not betray the Revolution in this manner. We shall build a monument to the true Irena at her death—to the 'Little Sister' of the Revolution. All this," his hand did not touch her as he indicated her black silk veiled dress and button earrings with distaste, "has seduced you from the true Revolution." There was quiet in the Cabinet Room until Salluca spoke.

"Already," he said, taking Irena's quaking hand in his, "there has been one attempt on the life of the President. If there is another," he glanced about the room, and even Tucuman had stopped talking to watch the Vice President in shock and amazement, "these gentlemen here today, Senor Figueroa, will no doubt recall

your threat."

With that, he hustled the shivering Irena from the room, so that possibly only Irena herself, with her face thrust so close to that of Ernesto Figueroa, saw the blank astonishment that clouded the man's eyes, before the hate returned as Salluca pushed the unsteady Irena away.

"He knows about me," Irena/Esteban gasped at Salluca as soon as they were clear of the Cabinet Room.

"Nonsense," said The Eagle, signalling to Consuela and Isabel to join them in the long gallery that served as an antechamber. At either end, watchful guards under the command of Salluca's brother-in-law also watched the impromptu conference.

"He knows," Irena's face was shrouded in fear. Consuela quickly stepped in front to conceal the expression from 'her' guards.

"What is it?" she hissed, and quickly Salluca told them both the details of Figueroa's last remarks.

"It's nothing," Consuela agreed. "He just feels betrayed, as many do," she added darkly, with a glance at Salluca.

"I agree, too," Isabel put in, with a cool nod.

Irena/Esteban looked from one to each other in the group. Her artificial breasts were heaving rapidly beneath the light, filmy neckline of her silk dress. Her eyes were almost hysterical, enhanced by the expert, feminine touch Consuela had given to 'her' makeup.

"Why are you so frightened?" It was Salluca---irritated and snappish. "You could lose your life here, and isn't that more terrible than someone just knowing your true sex?"

Consuela was watching Irena's face closely as Salluca spoke. She saw the answer

Irena's eyes gave, and was shocked. Irena feared the discovery of her secret even more than she feared for her own life! Now it was Consuela's turn to become paralyzed by the events of the moment.

"Look at her now!" Isabel Ortega took charge. "She's in no condition to meet the American Envoy, or to converse privately with Fuentes. She must rest immediately. You, Eagle," there was a sneer in how she used the Vice-President's nickname, "You must greet the Envoy."

Salluca looked from one to the other, shaking his head, but one glance at the white-faced Consuela, who nodded to him frantically, caused him to reconsider.

"But how will it look...." he began. Irena was so fine in that dress. She was like the Irena of old, but without the faults. She even let him hold her hand tightly as they stood there. He could accompany her there to see the Envoy.

"A relapse!" Isabel hissed urgently. "Brought on by a difficult Cabinet meeting. You always have the wound to refer to!"

Salluca was silent. He eyed Irena savagely. He could feel her hand tightly in his, pressed in the folds of her dress. She seemed to really need him now, this Irena. "All right," he said reluctantly. "I will go. The conference with Louis Ward is not set until four. Maybe Irena will be recovered by then." With those words, and a formal bow to Irena, he released 'her' hand, walked from the gallery, receiving a formal salute from the Colonel in charge of the Guard, and paused only to look back and give an enigmatic smile in their direction.

It was Consuela who suggested that they return to the Presidential suite 'to replenish our makeup' and so it was that they heard nothing of the explosion nor the com-

motion in Revolution Square, when the car ordered to carry the President to the Airport, became a flaming torch in the instant that it crossed an old sewer conduit on its route. There were no survivors---"Naturally," said the steel-faced vanguard Colonel who brought the news to the already distraught President later in the day.

IX

.....AN OLD FLAME.....

"We might as well land anyway," said Louis Ward to the aide who brought him the urgent message. "You can let the Press have it, but keep them away from me for awhile."

The youthful aide nodded and withdrew with obliging swiftness. He would have been surprised, like everyone else, if he had seen Louis Ward in the instant after he had left. The lined, tanned face had a look upon it of utter dismay. Tears changed that look to one of grief, and Ward left himself for awhile out of control until the grief was right out of him. Then, he mopped his eyes with great care and straightened his thinning white hair.

He had known Irena Varga now for nearly ten years---from her years as an ever-smiling, grenade toting, young revolutionary, to the last two years of her increasingly autocratic rule. Having at one time been under the spell of that attractive and vivacious girl, he was quite well aware of her appeal to the masses of her people. Not that there'd ever been anything improper between he and Irena. There hadn't, though not for the lack of the attempt on his part.

He hadn't realized how eager he had been to get back to El Monte to see her again.

But now, at the news of Irena's death, he knew. At last, his grief under firm control, he stood up, straightened his tie, put his jacket back on, and walked forward, out of his cabin and into the Press portion of the plane. The area was in a state of hubbub as the reporters tried to digest the implications of the report from El Monte.

"With Irena Varga dead, will you even bother to land?" was the first question thrown at Ward by an earnest, long-haired, young reporter.

Ward gave him one of his renowned glacial stares, but the young man stared back, smiling and unabashed.

"If Irena Varga is dead, said the Envoy stiffly, "then I shall wish to pay my respects to one of the most dynamic political figures this country has ever known."

Joe Lipper, older, portly, and a contemporary of Ward's, had elbowed to the front of the reportorial pack. "If?" his deep brass reverberated in the narrow cabin. "Is there doubt as to the authenticity of this?" He waved the copy of the radio message that Ward's eager aides had already xeroxed and passed around. "Is it still possible that Irena Varga is not dead?" boomed Lipper, his eyes hooded, his expression sour.

As always, thought Ward wryly. Joe Lipper was perhaps the most suspicious and cynical man he'd ever met.

"I didn't mean that, Joe," he said, giving the heavy figure a sardonic smile.

Lipper nodded and rolled up one shirt sleeve as he poised a notebook and pencil ready for Ward's statement.

"I just meant to tell our friend here," Ward nodded at the grinning youngster, "that we'd be landing no matter what. We have to," he said raising his tone so that all the reporters got the message clearly. "To try to end this threat to peace

and stability of the Western Hemisphere, we must be prepared to talk to all sides in the dispute."

"Even to murderers?" Lipper's question was just a murmur, but such was the natural depth to his voice that every curiosity-heightened face turned to Ward to watch him answer.

Louis Ward brushed a hand across his forehead, sweeping away an imaginary, wayward lock of white hair. But he already knew his answer to that one. "We shall try," he said slowly and emphatically, "to impress upon whoever it is who controls El Monte that there is more to be lost than to be gained by continuing the war in El Chaco, and particularly by launching any kind of offensive against Boca and the states that have supported him."

It was Francisco Fuentes, grim-faced, who was waiting for Ward on the tarmac in front of the plane. Ward knew the Foreign Minister slightly. Yet, he knew that Fuentes, by reputation, was a fun-loving, affable enough gadfly. But there at the airport, Fuentes was curt, serious, wary with an eye on every rooftop as if watching for snipers.

"I have been asked to convey you and your party to the Hotel Lorenzo," Fuentes had said formally, without, Ward noted, reference to whom the request had been made by.

Ward had walked with the bulky man to the waiting limousine, noting with surprise the number of Regular Army men in position about the car. Usually, that was a task reserved for the infamous Interior Police, but they were notably conspicuous by their absence.

As the Foreign Secretary ducked to get into the automobile, Ward suddenly realized

the reason for the man's out-sized appearance. The serious-faced Francisco Fuentes was wearing something beneath his shirt, almost certainly a bullet-proof vest. Ward did a fast calculation. The death of Irena, plus the elimination of Figueroa's Interior Police, would mean the seizure of power by the Army---but that wasn't expected until later. Perhaps, it was the Army behind the assassination and that was why Fuentes, a 'moderate' leader, was so clearly upset.

Ward's unease grew as the limousine sped silently along almost empty streets. Yet, Regular Army troops were in control of the major intersections. There were detachments in parks and at large, obviously governmental buildings.

At the Hotel Lorenzo, these were supplemented by a large number of plainclothed guards, who regarded the American party with great suspicion. Fuentes conveyed Ward immediately and alone to the elevator, thence to the Third Floor and the Presidential Suite.

In the antechamber, Fuentes and Ward were frisked without comment by a quick and expert plainclothes man. A small pistol was removed from Fuentes' inside pocket and stored in the belt of the searcher. Ward knew he could have successfully protested the search, but that would have taken time. Better to submit with good grace and get on with his mission.

The searcher nodded to the guard at the far door. Sullenly and still with great caution, the guard opened the door and beckoned Ward and Fuentes forward.

"Mr. Ward," Irena Varga was seated on a long sofa, the plush greenness of which accentuated the slim blackness of her long skirt. There was a glass coffee table in front of

her on which coffee had just been served.

Louis Ward could feel that his mouth was agape. "B-But," he spoke shakily. "We have a report of your death."

A shadow fell across Irena's beautiful face, still so youthful. Pale-green eyeshadow brought out the dark tan of her soft skin. "Our Eagle," she said in a low, throaty voice, "was on his way to greet you in my place. He is dead."

Comprehension dawned upon Ward. "Vice President Salluca," he said slowly. "Please accept my condolences on your country's loss." He regarded Irena closely as he spoke. She seemed as young as when he had first known her. Age had not lined her face or neck, not wrinkled her hands. She sat gracefully on the chair, aware of his inspection, but letting him take her measure once more. The high-necked, black blouse hugged her figure tightly and she might have been slimmer now than he remembered. She wore black-tinted stockings and black high heels, and Ward recalled that she would have to show mourning for her dead Vice President. He'd read in the reports supplied him that the two were close politically but that Irena often treated Salluca with disdain on social occasions.

Then, Ward became aware that Irena was not alone. On her right, in a single chair, was a dark-haired woman dressed in a black pant-suit. Her face might have been pretty, but for her awful, grim expression.

"Consuela Romo," said Irena gruffly, causing Ward to frown at Irena. He'd heard that she'd been injured in the bombing. He saw the neck bandage as she turned her head, the blonde-streaked hair shaped just that afternoon to turn under at the base of her neck, masking the injury to some degree. Irena had changed since he'd known her, but so had he.

"Consuela is the Assistant General Secretary of the Party and serves as one of my two Private Secretaries," Irena finished, swinging her dark, attractively madeup eyes back to Ward. She'd changed, Ward told himself agreeably, but it all seemed for the better, in her looks at least.

He had recognized the Secretary's name, of course. The daughter of the founder of the Party of the Revolution looked at him with unveiled hostility. Plainly, thought Ward, she followed her father's precept that there should be no truck with the 'twin pillars of Mammon' — American capitalism and Marxist dogmatism. He wondered how much influence this woman had with Irena. But Irena in the past, for all her friendliness to American men, to all men, Ward thought bitterly, was the epitome of Romo's counsel. She had always been a pragmatist, and had been anti-American because that was what she had to be, Ward was sure.

She was 'prepared to achieve social justice by any appropriate means' in the dictum of Romo. The phrase had been true of Carlos Coronado, the first President of the Revolution, and of his brother, Hector Chuy, both renowned however for the high moral scruples they showed in their politics. With a sigh, Ward regarded the second generation of 'revolutionary' leaders. Even Irena was not to be ranked with the previous men. As Ward had seen before, she was an apologist for whatever faction held power at any particular time. Perhaps her pragmatism could work for peace, however, if Ward could convince her that it was in her own interest to have peace.

"I knew your father," said Ward slowly to Consuela.

Taking Hormones?

Men with heart disease have more of a female sex hormone than healthy men, according to a new study that casts doubt on whether high levels of cholesterol cause heart disease.

The study found that men with heart disease have elevated levels of estradiol, one of the female hormones known as estrogens.

If this is true and the high estrogen levels are indeed the major factors leading to heart attacks, what we would have to determine is whether lowering these levels will reduce heart attacks. This information is from Dr. Gerald Phillips of Columbia University.

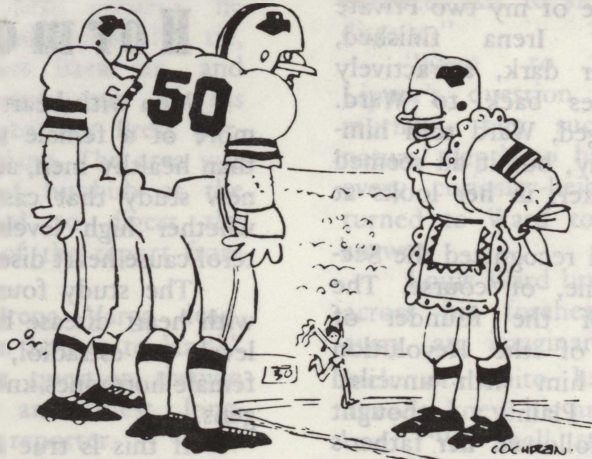
"I would guess that cholesterol is a secondary phenomenon that is elevated because of the sex hormone changes," Phillips said.

In Phillip's study, he measured the levels of estradiol and testosterone, a male sex hormone. All men have some female hormones in their system.

Phillips had decided to look into the matter after observing that some of his clinic patients with heart disease had certain feminizing traits, such as decreased frequency of shaving, a little breast tissue and decreased sex drive.

The reason for this article being published in *Transvestia* is that your Editor wonders if those gals who take Estrogen (for experimentation purposes) run any greater risk to their health than those who do not take the hormone. So many crossdressers are or have taken "the pill" for one reason or another that there might be some concern of the long term effects of taking Estrogen. Possibly not, but it would be nice to know for the benefit of those who wish to take Estrogens for their emotional needs.

FUN 'N' GAMES with COCHRAN!



"Why can't you just wear a towel in your belt like the other quarterbacks?"

"Oh," Consuela's reply was icy.

"Yes," Ward smiled. "He was very kind to me when I was one of his students at Davila. The University," he added, as Consuela changed not one iota of her expression.

"Really," she said at last, glancing over to Irena, a worry-frown suddenly creasing her forehead.

Ward, too, glanced back to the President. She had not risen when he entered, and he was not quite certain what this informality was being staged for.

"Come. Sit here, Mr. Ward," said Irena gently, almost as if responding to her Secretary's glance. Consuela stood and indicated to a chair for Fuentes, who sat down silently, almost sullenly.

"You haven't changed at all, Irena," said Ward as he sat beside the President and nodded as she offered coffee. "Well, your hair's different, naturally," he laughed as if at some private joke they both shared. "but you do look younger than the last time we were together."

Given as a compliment, the words had a surprising effect on Irena. The coffee

cup in her hand shook noticeably as she stared at him, a most guarded look in her eyes. Close to, she was even more attractive than his memories of her. The responsibility of political office had changed her only in that she had lost that excessive, flirtatious sensuality that he remembered best of all. It had been wearing that she was constantly the coquette with every man about her, seemingly attracted to anything in pants to an equal, high degree.

Now, she raised a well-shaped eyebrow in a familiar gesture as she smiled tentatively at Ward. "The Revolution has kept me young," she murmured lamely.

Ward frowned. "That must have been quite a wound," he said. "You are lucky you can still talk at all."

Irena nodded, turning away from him as Consuela stepped over to assist with coffee. "This," said Irena, touching the neck bandage, "and my damaged vocal cords are the result of the first attempt on my life. The gunman was from your country."

Ward froze, his face registering his shock and dismay. The beautiful face had no accusation on it. "You have

proof?" he asked incredulously.

Irena nodded. "We have used the bombing to conceal that there must also have been assistance to the would-be assassin from high Party members." There was no fright in her calm eyes as she spoke huskily of such frightening matters to Ward.

"And this latest bomb? It was intended also for you?" Ward asked, wanting to reach out and take those soft, well-manicured hands.

Irena nodded, her hair disturbing long, black earrings. "It appears so," she said huskily. "Since the bullet in my throat didn't kill me, they tried something else." Her emphasis on the incident made Ward appreciate why she sounded a little different to her former self.

"An inch or so the other way with that bullet," put in Consuela, "and this conference would not have been possible."

"Surely you don't think that the U.S. Government...?" Ward began, but the shake of Irena's blonde-streaked hair was enough on that topic. "Have you any idea who is behind these attempts?" he asked guardedly, thinking of the American support behind Boca in the past.

"Several arrests have been made," said Irena with a delicate shrug. She shifted rest-



Paula MD-8-M

lessly in her long skirt, crossing one heel over the other, showing Ward slim, dark-stockinged ankles.

Ward sipped at his coffee, thinking hard. If Boca, or even worse, his backers across the border, were proved to have been involved in the assassination attempts, there would be no-one who would blame the revolutionaries if they counter-attacked right across the border. And that could lead to a general war.

Consuela was once again signalling to Irena. Irena then stood and moved gracefully to the antechamber doors. "The conference which the American Government requested will begin immediately in the Conference Hall here. If you will accompany me, Mr. Ward..."

Louis Ward jerked to his feet, and slipped his arm through the silk-covered arm of the President. He scented the musk that Irena always wore. His eagerness brought a faint, almost scornful smile to Consuela's lips. Ward ignored it. He would very much liked to have put his arm about the slim, feminine figure beside him. He had to adjust his stride to her short steps, the skirts rustling as she swayed, supported by his arm to the Meeting Room.

Fuentes followed behind, as they went through the antechamber, now crowded with American staff and reporters. Ward rather enjoyed the look of astonishment on Joe Lipper's face as he escorted Irena through the group. Irena smiled gracefully as photographers flashed bulbs in their direction; but Ward thought that she was very nervous for someone so long in the public eye. Perhaps the assassination attempts had unnerved her after all, he speculated.

"No. No questions," he replied firmly to cries on all sides. He held on to Irena's arm and then to her hand, which caused her to jump

nervously at first as he followed the guards to the Conference Hall. Later, in the Press Room, wherever that would be set up, he knew he'd have many difficult, if not impossible, questions to answer.

X

A PROPOSAL

As soon as they were safely back in the bedroom of the Presidential Suite, Consuela removed Irena's new wig, put it on a block and began to tease the hair with a short-toothed comb. Isabel had returned from an afternoon tryst somewhere and she unzipped the black skirt and undid the blouse for Irena/Esteban. Without the wig, in a black slip over his bra, panties and garter belt, Esteban resembled Irena more closely than he had at first. Perhaps it was the false eyelashes that Consuela had tried on him, or the black, long, earrings, but, whatever it was, thought Isabel, as Esteban relaxed on the bed, weariness written all over his feminine makeup, it was getting easier to think of him as a 'her' now.

"How did the arrests go?" Consuela asked.

Isabel cast a warning glance at 'her' as she frowned at Consuela. "Franco seemed to be expecting it, according to Juan Augusto," she said quietly, watching Irena for signs of anger at not being told everything done in her name. She motioned to the 'girl' to sit up so that she could help 'her' with 'her' slip. "But Ernesto tried to put up a fight and had to be subdued."

"We should dispose of them immediately," said Consuela angrily, crossing the room to the bathroom. She leaned in to reach for the taps and start a bath.

"Abrado will not hear of

anything but the correct process of law," said Isabel wearily, leaving it clear, that she, personally, agreed with Consuela.

In bra, panties, garter belt and stockings, the illusion of femininity slipped from Esteban. Isabel removed the foam inserts from the bra and panties, leaving Esteban looking very freakish. His face was still like a woman, but his thin youth's body was incongruous to women's underclothing.

Consuela came back to assist Esteban in removing his stockings, while Isabel took away his false eyelashes and wiped off most of his makeup.

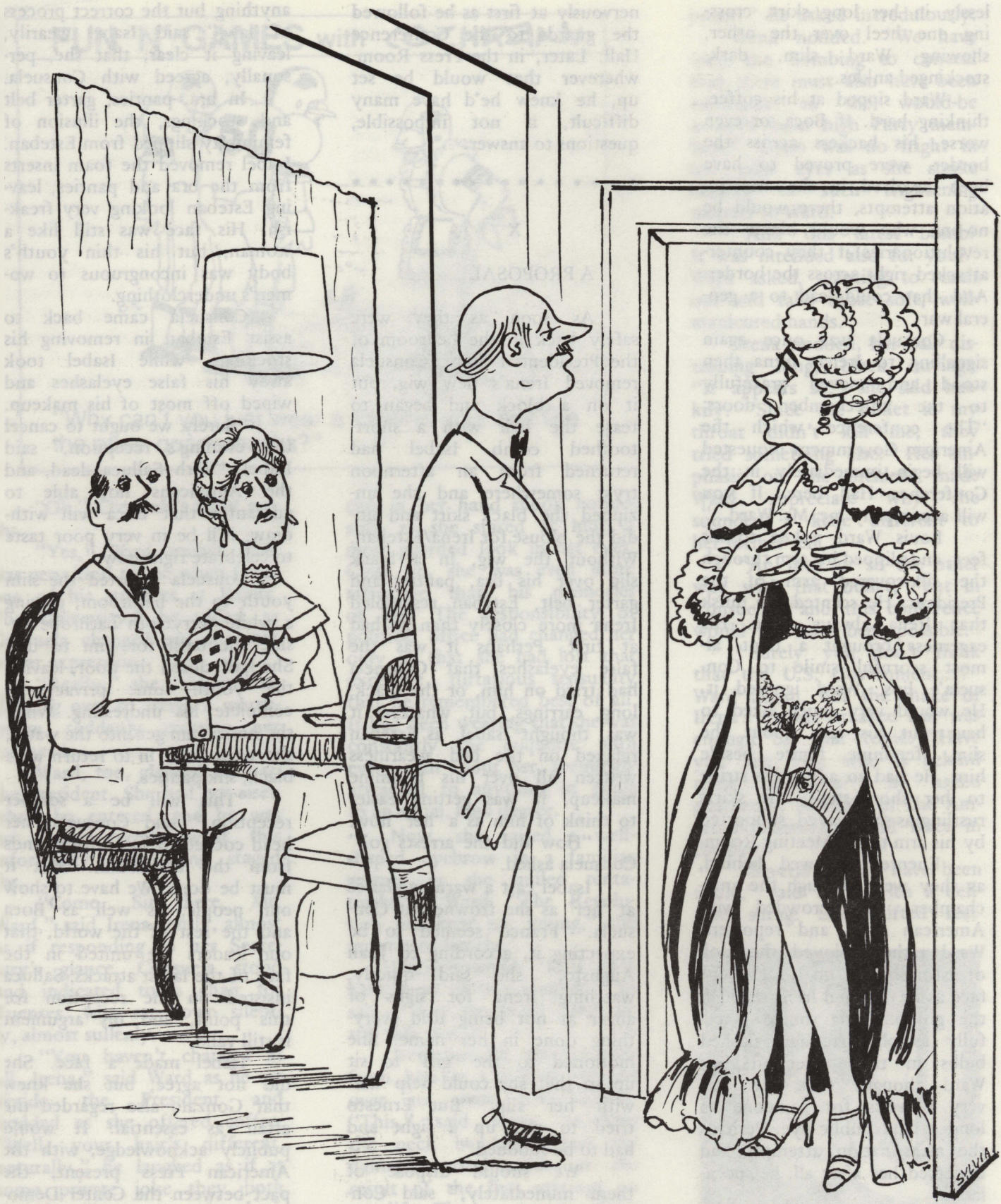
"Surely we ought to cancel this evening's reception," said Isabel. "With Salluca dead, and the Americans not able to guarantee that Boca will withdraw, it'll be in very poor taste to celebrate right now."

Consuela escorted the slim youth to the bathroom, placing a white terrycloth bathrobe beside the bath for him to use. She half closed the door, leaving the youth some privacy to complete his undressing. When she heard him get into the water, she went back in to return with black, silk panties.

"This will be a somber reception," said Consuela, her head cocked to listen for sounds from the bathroom. "But it must be done. We have to show our people, as well as Boca and the rest of the world, that our leaders are united in the face of the latest attacks. Salluca insisted on the reception for this point, and his argument is still valid."

Isabel made a face. She did not agree, but she knew that Gonzalo also regarded the affair as essential. It would publicly acknowledge, with the American Press present, the pact between the Center Democrats and the Party of the Revolution.

There was the sound of water splashing from the bathroom. Consuela went to the



WHY ROBERT, IT'S ME, STANLEY, WHEN YOU SAID I WAS INVITED TO A FULL DRESS PARTY, I THOUGHT YOU MEANT DRESSED LIKE THIS!

wardrobe where Irena's clothes were stored. She chose a long, dark evening gown and placed it upon the bed. "Why don't you get ready now?" she asked Isabel. "I can see to her." She nodded towards the bathroom.

Isabel hesitated. She'd left Irena a lot in Consuela's company of late and she was aware that the boy preferred the company of the older woman to Isabel. Finally, she shrugged, nodded and went to the connecting door the bedroom beyond Irena's. Consuela followed her and locked the door as soon as the brunette had left.

The sound from the bathroom indicated that Esteban had gotten out of the bath. She went quickly to him, but he was already towelling himself, his face devoid of make-up. The air of the room, and doubtless Esteban as well, was fragrant with the aroma of scented bath water. Nude, the youth's body was slim, tanned and obviously male. He smiled uncertainly at Consuela though continuing to dry himself.

Consuela turned her attention to the bath. The water was still piping hot, scented and clean. She hesitated, thinking of the time it would take to run another. "I might as well bathe here, too," she said, taking off her dark jacket top. She returned to the bedroom, pulling off her clothes as she went. She thought little of what she was doing, until, nude as well, she returned to the bathroom and brushed by the nervous youth, one of her ample breasts touching his arm. His slight start at her touch, and his avoidance of her eyes made her uneasy, and she realized what she was doing. This was treating him too much as a 'her.' She touched him on the arm to reassure him, and he turned to face her, his eyelids slowly, tortuously, opening to meet her gaze.

He had been trying to hide it, but suddenly she was aware of the sexual torment her unexpected nudity must have aroused in him. Jerkily, he put out a hand and touched her on the arm, demanding and caressing.

Consuela was caught. As he came forward and his body came into contact with hers, so she, too, realized how long it had been since she had slept with a man.

She pulled his head toward her, letting their lips meet in harsh compression. She felt his tongue searching for an opening. For a moment, she was about to reject him, to turn away completely, but what was the point, she thought, as she relaxed and let him continue the French kiss. The boy deserved some sympathy, and they both could use the release from the tension they had been under all day.

"Let's go to the bed," she said huskily, placing his hand under her right breast. It didn't take too long for either of them to reach the release they wanted. Esteban, to Consuela's surprise and delight, was experienced enough to wait for her to reach satisfaction before he found his own release.

Breathless, in the arms of the youth, Consuela engaged in a little gently caressing. Almost instantly, she found a response again in the youth, and again, to her astonishment, she found herself replying. As usual, with the first rush over, she found the second bout of lovemaking intensely more pleasant, as did Esteban.

They were finally parted by an insistent rapping on the door which led to Isabel's room. Regretfully, Consuela pushed the youth away. Now, his relaxed face, wearing a blissful expression, was a certain giveaway to Isabel as to what had gone on. "Get into your bathrobe," said Consuela, slipping off the bed, straightening it, and heading

herself for the bathroom.

Doing as she said, Esteban was unable immediately to hide his desire. "Tell Isabel I decided to get ready first," hissed Consuela, immersing herself in the lukewarm water.

The boy smiled at her, his hair stuck to his forehead. The white bathrobe made him appear browner than he really was. He winked at her mischievously, his eyebrows thin and femininely curved, as he stepped over to Isabel's door.

"What took you so long?" asked Isabel suspiciously. She was already dressed in a dark-blue, strapless evening gown, and an ever darker wrap. "Why aren't you ready yet?"

"It was my idea," called Consuela, scrubbing herself quickly in the cool water. "I've been relaxing here for awhile."

"Well," said Isabel cuttingly. "She could at least have put on her underclothes. Or her make-up."

Consuela hopped from the bath and pulled a towel about her. She could see Esteban now standing back by the bed, a most unhappy look about him. Consuela felt very strange, too. Her sympathy for the youth was now completely genuine. She remembered his strong, experienced lovemaking. How hard it must be for him to appear as an elegant, well-dressed woman to the world, she thought, particularly to accept the compliments and courtesies of other men, when he was likely strongly attracted to the girls whose manner he was aping.

She signalled to the youth to come into the bathroom. He came quietly and she handed the underclothing to him. Their eyes met and she was not surprised to see the frustration there that brightened his dark eyes. I hope, she thought shakily as she brushed his lips with hers, that he doesn't begin to hate me forever for what I have to make him do.

* * * * *

The presidential reception was very late in starting. Not only was the President herself late in arriving, but so was the American, in whose honor the reception was nominally being held. There was time for the other guests, men and women, to get together in small groups to discuss the news releases and events of the last ten days. In the background, a mariachi band did its best to overcome the constant hum of voices, but the music was to little avail. The arrival of the serious Louis Ward, and his poker-faced chat with the Foreign Minister, did nothing to lessen the discussions.

The trumpet call over the P.A. system, signalling the start of the Presidential Anthem, caused the hubbub to die away in a second. Then, the lovely President appeared at the entrance to the reception room. Her arms were bare, save for the golden armlets about her upper arms. Her dress was black, as befitted the occasion, the skirt long, sweeping to the floor in layers of dark silk from the narrow, pinched-in waist. From her neck to her bust, she wore a dark veil, hiding her neck wound, of which everyone was aware, as well as modestly covering up any hint of cleavage. She was beautifully made up as usual, pink lips and light blue eyeshadow, as well as dark, thick lashes, her dark, brown eyes attractively outlined. For the evening, her blonde-streaked hair was piled atop her head, kept in place by a demure, black ribbon.

There was a hushed moment as she entered the room and stood alone, appearing so young and lovely, yet her chin held up in determination, in command of the situation. Then, the applause broke out and rippled through the audience. Margoles was there, beaming happily, as was Juan Augusto

Gonzales, the Defense Minister. Fuentes, too, puzzled by the way Irena kept him at arm's length, not even divulging her private intentions for the meetings with Ward, joined in the applause, as did Gonzalo Diaz, Abrado Camar and other Center Democrats, recently released from the confinement of San Martino prison.

As the applause and the Anthem subsided, Irena moved gracefully forward and went to greet the American Envoy. They shook hands cordially while the bright flash of exploding camera bulbs was all about them. Ward smiled at the woman President, who smiled back, showing her fine, white teeth. Her dark, tasselled earrings moved as she looked about for her constant companions, Consuela and Isabel. They were right behind her, along with the guards, originally selected by Salluca, looking uncomfortable in their dark suits.

Ward took Irena by the hand, after the necessary photographs had been taken, and led her towards the Presidential table. A waiter intercepted them however, and Irena smilingly accepted a glass of white Chubey, the dry, sparkling wine of the southern coastal hills. Ward appeared to wish to speak to Irena, but the crush of people trying to offer their condolences for Salluca and their gratitude at her escape, was too much. With a shouted, "I must talk to you later," Ward retreated from Irena's side, giving her up to her people. He found Joe Lipper at his elbow, looking decidedly frustrated in his 'monkey suit.'

"Revolutionaries, huh," Lipper boomed out the deprecating words and many people turned to scowl at him.

"Now, Joe," said Ward quietly on a conciliatory tone. He did, however, see what Lipper meant. Here, people still 'dressed up' for the big occasion,

revolutionary fatigues left at home. Women wore bright make-up and equally dazzling dresses. The men were smartly dressed, even the soldiers in fine uniforms.

There was little drabness to El Monte, and the Revolution had not tried to change the social habits of the people at all. "Enlightened Pragmatism," Carlos Coronado had declared as his rule in taking office as the first elected President. Irena's election two years before, ostensibly because the Right and Left Wings of the Junta could not tolerate each other's candidates, had been less of a victory, in that, by then, the Democrats were protesting against election irregularities, while Boca's People's Party, despite its name the conservative political party, had been struck from the ballot completely. Within a year of Irena's election, there had been just the one legal political party — hers.

"You think this alliance will last," asked Lipper, nodding toward Irena, whose hand was currently being grasped by Abrado Camar, who kissed her gently on the cheek, to the delight of the official wives clustered near to Irena. Juan Augusto, smiling broadly, replaced Camar and repeated the gesture, while Irena looked suitably embarrassed, a curious reversal of her normal behavior.

"They shouldn't it?" asked Ward in return.

"They want to fight," growled Lipper, draining off what appeared to be a triple Scotch-on-the-rocks. "Go ou and talk to these people anywhere, and you'll find they all want someone to push the button and lead them against Boca, and even across the border. If she doesn't do it, she's gonna get her pretty little head blown off!" Lipper nodded toward the glamorous President, now receiving minor functionaries of the regime, along with wives and friends. Consuela

Romo stood beside her, and every now and again would engage the President in a brief exchange.

"I don't like that kind of talk," said the Envoy firmly. "The government here has behaved very wisely in not retaliating against the Boca invasion. Their decision to contain the rebellion to Ciudad Rodrigo has been most statesmanlike."

"And I can quote you on that," said Lipper, reaching for two Scotches from the tray of a passing waiter, which he then united in one glass.

"Of course," said Ward lavishly.

"You're a damn fool," said Lipper, draining his glass. "This is all for show. They're papering over cracks."

Flushed, the Envoy was prevented from replying as several members of the Chamber of Deputies surrounded him, all asking earnest questions about Boca, and if he would withdraw voluntarily from El Chaco.

There was dancing at one end of the room, in typical fashion for one of Irena's receptions. Renowned as a dancer herself, there was always provision for such at her affairs. Tonight, however, she did not dance with anyone, inflicting quite a bitter look upon one of her Personal Secretaries when she returned from a rather sedate waltz.

Soon the word spread that Irena had gone on with the reception despite Salluca's death so that the new alliance could be forged in public, but she still deeply mourned the death of her Vice President, and there would be days of official mourning very soon.

It was quite later when Louis Ward finally managed to catch Irena by herself, as she left a group of junior officers of the Vanguard Division, all of whom had vied outrageously for her attention.

"Irena," said the Envoy

to the smiling, beautiful woman, "Can't we get away for a few moments to talk?"

Irena glanced about. Both Consuela and Isabel were engaged by different people in what appeared to be animated conversations. "Please, as a favor to an old admirer," said Ward, with a grin.

Instantly, Irena stiffened and stared at him very closely. Under that fearful, penetrating look, Ward had a distinct impression of youth. How much like a girl of eighteen Irena was, he thought, despite her heavy makeup and stylish dress. He admired her soft, unflawed, girlish skin. He hoped she wasn't into any kind of treatment or cosmetic surgery -- but her tan seemed to give the lie to that idea. Slowly, she nodded and, allowing the Envoy to take her arm, she went with him towards the salon at the end of the reception room, near to the raised stage area.

"Irena!" A tall, dark man with finely chiselled features stepped between Ward and the President, breaking the grip Ward held on her bare arm. Not young, the man was handsome, with a strong, firm jaw, and just a touch of grey at the sides of his hair. Irena looked at him blankly, and he reached out, putting his arm protectively and possessively about her. "Why haven't you answered the notes I sent you? Surely you know how much I want you!" His hand slipped about her waist to squeeze her in a very familiar manner.

Ward gripped the other man's arm. "Excuse me, whoever you are," he snapped, noting the convergence of Irena's bodyguard in their direction. "The President is about to enter into a conversation with me that is most important. So..."

The sneer on the man's lip showed what he thought of Ward. "Darling," he said in a lower, more intimate tone

to Irena's stricken face. "When I saw you tonight like this, after you told me you'd never cut your hair, or wear it up, even for me. . . Well, I know now that you must really need me, especially with your lackey dead. Aren't I right?"

Irena eyed him wordlessly. The grasp about her waist tightened. "What notes?" she rasped at length. "What notes did you send me?"

The hand withdrew almost immediately as she spoke. There was stunned amazement on the man's face. "You.....you're...." he began, but then a dark woman in a black dress slipped between Irena and him.

"Ricardo Venha de Saeyan y Querido," Consuela drawled out the name. "I wasn't aware that you received an invitation to this reception."

His head did not move at all from the incredulous staring position with which he had transfixed Irena. "I gate-crashed," he murmured absently. Then he broke his stare to glare at Consuela bitterly. "I knew that you would have intercepted my letters and yet I wanted to see Irena so much."

"And now that you have," said Consuela lightly, "perhaps you will accompany me and I will explain about the letters."

"My pleasure." The words came automatically. Quickly, he took another glance at Irena, then took Consuela's arm gallantly as the body guard arrived and Consuela waved them off, and, with a shake of his head, swept Consuela imperiously through the milling throng.

"I don't know how you do it, Irena," sighed Ward, taking her arm anew. "Maybe it's all these handsome men who keep you looking so young." Despite the lightness of his touch, Irena almost jumped away from him. For one moment, there was panic again in her eyes. She shivered, but the polite mask she'd worn all night finally won out though

the effort was costly. Louis Ward was regarding her with frank curiosity.

"Th-that was someone I didn't want to meet," she stammered. "I guess I didn't know how much that would affect me when I met him again."

"Of course I told him," said Consuela to the astounded Isabel and the trembling Irena when they were alone in the President's bedroom. "He knew that you weren't Irena. You only fooled him until you spoke and then he looked at you more closely. He thinks you are excellent in your part, but lovers, after all, should be able to tell one another."

"So what's he going to do about it?" Isabel demanded tensely.

Consuela glanced at the still darkly-dressed Irena, seated on the end of the bed, her skirts raised just about her ankles to show her black spike heels and dark hose. "I'm not sure," said Consuela carefully. "But he does want to see our new Irena again."

"You didn't tell him who she really is, did you?" hissed Isabel threateningly.

"Of course not!" snapped Consuela. "What do you take me for? A fool?" She didn't need to say more. They had all gathered that Ricardo Querido was bright and intelligent. He would want a part of the action, that was certain.

"So, where is he right now?" asked Isabel.

Consuela jerked her head towards the door connecting to Isabel's room. "He's waiting in there," she said.

There was a stillness in the large room. "He doesn't know that she's not a real woman?" she asked again in disbelief.

Consuela snorted. 'Irena' was unreadable as a youthful

Esteban to her, never mind to one who had no reason to suspect what was really beneath those well-formed breasts and delicate, feminine appearance. "She should change into something more comfortable," she said slowly. She looked hard at the tense Irena, twisting the edge of the bedsheet anxiously in her red-tipped fingers. "You'll be earning your keep with this one, honey," she said to the 'girl' in front of her.

Irena took of the dress woodenly, puppet-like, as if she were indeed a man in woman's clothing and knew it. Ricardo Querido, however, would not have suspected that the shapely girl in the long, red negligee wasn't a real girl, wasn't even the real Irena, until he got very close. Then, he would see that this new 'Irena' was much younger than the Irena he had made love to. With Consuela's tart reminder that 'she' was a woman and must act like one, there was so much of Irena in 'her', that when Ricardo entered the bedroom, he wanted to seize her and caress her right away.

"All right, Ricardo," Consuela's voice cut across his compliments to the new Irena's loveliness. "I brought you in here to talk to Irena. Now, you can say what you have to say."

Ricardo reluctantly released the soft hand with the long, lacquered nails. The girl's face registered her apprehension. He smiled confidently at her. She really had no idea what he was about to propose, but the outrageous proposal that had formed in his mind as he sat in the other room, scheming how to turn this unbelievable turn of events to his advantage, looked to have some very desirable side benefits.

"I loved Irena," he said, keeping his eyes on the girl who had taken her place. She had let her blonde hair down, fluffing it out at the nape of

her neck. "I wanted to marry her, but she laughed at my suggestion of such a thing. Now, I think it's the right time for her to say yes." He was pleased at the stunned, terrified look on the girl's beautiful face. "I think that you girls," he glanced patronizingly at Isabel and Consuela, "need someone strong like me, now that Salluca's gone, to help you run the government."

There was a shocked silence. "We don't need anyone!" Consuela's furious voice trembled as she spat out the words. "Ask for something else."

Ricardo shook his head. He held out his hand to Irena who shrank back on the long sofa away from him. The negligee parted to show off her beautiful, still stockinged, slim calves and thighs. "Lovely," he grinned, his eyes running over her feminine form from her red, high-heeled slippers to her blonde-streaked hair. "All the benefits Irena ever gave me without having to listen to those interminable political lectures." He advanced quickly and sat beside the girl, seizing her arm.

"No," she said, fear showing plainly in her outlined eyes.

Ricardo pulled her to him and slipped his arms about her very thin waist. Even though she tried to push him away, he was able to take a kiss, from the soft, shiny lips before Consuela pried them apart in fury.

"Just a little on account," Ricardo smiled, as he stood up and strolled back towards Isabel's room. "We'll let The Eagle lie in state for a few days before we make the announcement." He pointed vehemently at Consuela, shaking herself as she tried to comfort the distraught Irena, who looked on the verge of tears. "But we will make the announcement. I will marry Irena Varga or she won't be Irena any

longer." His grim face was the image left behind as he strode jauntily from the President's bedroom.

"It's all right, dear," murmured Consuela, patting Irena's soft back and shoulder. "We'll do something about him. We really will."

"Perhaps we should let him marry her," sneered Isabel, pouring a drink from the bottle she'd brought from her own room. "It'd serve him right, and then we'd have him trapped, too."

She frowned at the aghast glances she received from the other two women. How would that be any different from what they were asking 'her' to do already? The poor kid might as well have a little fun if 'she' could get it, Isabel thought.

ONE OF THE 'GIRLS'

Irena/Esteban's personal crisis had prevented Consuela from finding out immediately what Louis Ward had had to see her about so urgently. It wasn't until Isabel had retired in a huff, and they had relieved their tension again through ardent lovemaking, Irena's feminine nightwear adding to rather than detracting from their enjoyment, that Consuela remembered to ask what Ward had spoken to 'her' about.

"The El Chaco offensive has been launched at last," said Irena in her gentlest voice. 'She' sat in front of her dressing-table mirror while Consuela arranged a sleep-wig for 'her.' 'She' sat on the satin-covered chair, now in a long, white nightdress that was gathered tightly about her legs. 'She' wore a sleep-bra too, so that the image in the mirror was totally feminine, from bare shoulders, past narrow waist and graceful form. For the first time since Consuela had been dressing 'her,' 'she' didn't seem to mind what Consuela was doing for her.

"The Americans have found out," stated Consuela. "Are they upset by that?"

"They didn't expect us to strike," murmured Irena, feeling a lump rise in 'her' throat as Consuela tied a very wide, pink ribbon about his hair, a pink like his panties.

"Th-they'd h-hoped for a negotiated settlement," Irena's voice pattern went on hesitatingly, as Consuela ran her hand down Irena's arm in affection. "Ward said we're destroying the basis for a lasting peace settlement in. . . ."

"What did you say to that?" interrupted Consuela. She sat quickly beside the beautiful girl, incredibly so, since there was no makeup on 'her' face. It was a marvel how she'd recovered her feminine cool after the shock Ricardo, and then Isabel had dealt her. But the arduous lovemaking session with Consuela had somehow restored 'Esteban's' belief in himself, but it was so hard to think of 'her' as 'him' anymore for Consuela. She had to clench her fists to remind herself that this was a man in front of her -- not a pretty, young girl, ready for her bed.

"I told him that I would recommend to the Junta that our offensive halt at the border," Irena answered naturally in her soft, feminine tones. She sat gracefully, staring through lashes that seemed more heavily fringed since she'd become Irena's mirror image. With tiny, thin eyebrows, hardly thicker than an eyelash, it would take a long time, 'she' knew, to restore the boy to his original appearance -- if he ever had to return, of course, which didn't then seem likely.

"Have you been in touch with Ramon?" Consuela tried to keep her mind on politics, the reason behind this action Sal-luca had started. But it was hard when she wanted to take the youth she knew was inside the female form and let him

make love again to her.

Irena shook her head. "I should do that now," she said. She stood, allowing the folds of the nightdress to fall to her ankles. She stepped into white, high-heeled slippers. Then, she took a white, silk negligee from the rack of clothes in the walk-in cupboard by the wall. She slipped her arms through the filmy material, tying the satin ribbon about her narrow waist. Even in the loose clothing, she minced across the white carpet to the door to the antechamber.

Consuela watched 'her' move. He really is 'Irena' now, she thought starkly. She's acting, thinking and looking like a woman. She could even marry Ricardo and probably keep him guessing for quite awhile, Consuela thought bitterly, but couldn't think why she was so upset by the thought.

Irena spoke in a low tone to one of the officers in the antechamber. Consuela had followed her to the bedroom door to watch. She realized that Irena had just moved off to deal with the staff herself, without Isabel or Consuela intervening. Irena sat down at the communications set, the microphone in front of her, the nightgown smoothed about her legs. She smiled her thanks to the officer who contacted Aguilar's headquarters at Ciudad Domingo for 'her.' The officer responded to her smile with one of his own. The poor guy, thought Consuela. He was actually staring at Irena in admiration -- the poor fool -- but Irena shouldn't be encouraging him as she was.

"Good evening, General," Irena said calmly into the mike. Consuela moved closer to hear. Without Irena's beautiful image in front of him to remind him of Irena's femininity, the General might suspect something in the voice. But she didn't have to worry. Irena's voice was clearly 'hers.' "This call is scrambled. We can talk freely,"

'she' said huskily.

"Irena!" Aguilar's voice was harsh and tense. "We have smashed them! Macias' force has already taken Terencia. We have cleared Rodrigo, and Boca lies between us!" His voice was exultant.

"General," Irena turned to look at Consuela as she spoke into the mike. "We all rejoice at your news! We shall praise the Armed Forces of the Revolution to the World Press tomorrow!"

Aguilar had noted the calmness of her speech. "What is it?" he asked sharply. "Have there been more assassinations in the capital?"

"No," said Irena, leaning back on the chair while the officer eyed her feminine form avidly. What dreams he'll have tonight, thought Consuela sourly. "We have not really resolved what will occur after El Chaco is clear of reactionary forces."

"We will chase the invaders right back to Gran Tenaco!" Aguilar's voice boomed out of the speaker.

"No," said Irena calmly. "I do not think we should do that."

There was a silence from the speaker. Consuela willed the youth, she was willing herself to think of 'him' that way, to speak first, but Irena didn't. She even looked down at her clear, though polished nails and frowned at a tiny catch. Just when the silence became overpowering, Aguilar spoke again. "I didn't receive your last message clearly," he said. "Would you repeat it?"

"The armed forces of the Revolution are to halt the advance at Rio Caches," said Irena in a surprisingly firm, feminine tone to Consuela's ears. My God, how she sounds like the real Irena, Consuela thought wildly. She's handling him just the way Irena handled Hector Chuy, but they were lovers!

"We cannot halt at the

border," said Aguilar shakily.

Consuela now expected the typical Irena answer—"The President orders you....." delivered in the haughty, grandiose manner that Irena loved to use to show her dominion over her men friends.

"Ramon," 'she' spoke the word in a reproachful, husky, female tone, which Consuela saw now was the greatest skill she'd been taught. Even this close, in a white, silk negligee, without makeup, the communications officer regarded her as if she were the most beautiful woman in the world. "Ramon," she repeated. "We are playing here for more than our national pride. The peace of this part of the world is in our hands. The smashing victory on El Chaco will invigorate the people, while our restraint will bring us international friends as well as the hearts of the masses of people in our own country and our neighbor's."

There was a pause again over the communications set. Irena flicked a few strands of hair back over her shoulder. She looked so young with that ribbon. I shouldn't be doing that now, thought Consuela angrily. He's learning enough girlish tricks as it is.

"What guarantee is there for peace?" Aguilar's voice was subdued. He was yielding to her, thought Consuela incredulously.

Irena gave the mike a warm smile. "The Americans made an offer to help us repair our economy. That was providing we made no offensive. I asked them for more if we halt at Rio Caches. They were shaken that I would bargain. Now they know the offensive is launched, they want to talk about that immediately, before we cross the border." There was laughter in her voice. "You could help by making loud noises at the front while I work on Mr. Ward for guarantees and finances."

"We could always proceed if Ward doesn't satisfy you," said Aguilar in an eager tone of voice.

Irena bit nervously at her lower lip, a familiar gesture of both Vargas. Consuela was amazed! Irena had done it! In just a few moments of conversation, she had brought the Junta, for that was what Aguilar meant, onto her side once more. She was going on to exchange pleasantries with Ramon Aguilar, promising him dinner, without her secretaries, when he returned to the capitol.

"Take care, Irena," Aguilar had ended, his voice worried. "That Salluca thing was meant for you."

Irena spoke softly in return. "We have Ernesto in custody. Camar insists that he will make a complete investigation and get to the bottom of this business. I am, of course, surrounded by excellent guards." She smiled at the officer who blushed a little and seemed to swell out in his uniform.

Aguilar was still concerned. "Listen. I'm not sure about that. I don't see what Ernesto could hope to gain. He knows how I feel about him. You're better for him alive, I would have thought.

"I tell you -- I'm going to give orders to Macias about the border. I'm superfluous now anyway to the Corps Commanders. I'll head back to the capitol in the morning. Right now I'm going to call Fernandes at Vanguard H.Q. and get him to throw an even tighter ring around you. We can't afford to lose you now."

He sounded so eager to please Irena that Consuela was sickened, particularly when she glanced at Irena, smiling herself and basking in the General's flattery. She was squirming girlishly on her chair while she exchanged closing banter with Aguilar.

"You really enjoyed that," said Consuela angrily when they

were back in the President's bedroom, the door safely shut. Irena slipped off the negligee and tossed it over the bed. Then she glided over to the bed, sat just below her pillow, took off her heels and slipped into bed. She smiled in ecstasy as the nightie wrapped itself tightly about her.

"I enjoyed what?" she asked, indicating to Consuela to join her in bed.

Consuela remained where she was. "You enjoyed being a woman!" Consuela shouted. She picked up her own wrap from the chair beside the bed. "I'm going to bed, darling," she snapped. "My own bed." She flashed her eyes at the wide-eyed girl in the bed. "I don't sleep with young women or people the same sex as me. I only sleep with men!"

She turned on her heel and strode to the connecting door that led to Isabel's room and then on to hers. She had to report on the call to Aguilar anyway. And it would be nice to talk to Isabel woman-to-woman, she thought angrily, than to talk to Esteban woman-to-woman. She couldn't understand why she felt so bitter, and that upset her more. She'd been so sure that the boy could never carry off such a deception. How could she be so disappointed when he was succeeding so magnificently in doing what she had taught him to do?

Consuela did not sleep well. When she finally called upon Isabel and they went together to help Irena dress for breakfast, she still felt depressed. Perhaps she shouldn't have left the 'girl' alone that night. But when she found that Irena was missing from her room, in her sudden spasm of grief and fear, she knew how wrong she'd been to turn down the opportunity to share the bed with the sensitive boy-girl.

Despite Consuela's taunts, which had made his stomach dance with the qualms he felt, Esteban was happy as sleep came upon him. It felt very good to be pandered to after so many years of being shunted aside. He didn't doubt that Consuela would let him make love to her again. He was beginning to enjoy, too, the admiration and compliments he received from others. He was such a good actor that they didn't even recognize him! He tried not to think of Ricardo Querido, but that was another example of how successful he was at being Irena. The silk nightdress felt so soft about his hairless body and legs. He wished Consuela had stayed. He had kept on his bra and panties so that he felt very feminine as he lay on his frilled pillow, his hair gently rubbing against his neck. Sleep came easily.....

Waking came hard. His throat felt extraordinarily dry, and the hot air about him was almost unbearable. There were hard boards beneath him, jerking and bumping, while an engine roared close to his gold-pierced ear. "She's coming out of it," a strange guttural voice said. Esteban, trying to remember he was Irena and a woman, forced his eyes open. He was lying in the back of a truck, still in his nightdress, on a dark rug.

Two people were watching him -- a thin man with a thick, dark mustache, and an even thinner woman, who resembled the man in facial features closely.

"Wh-where am I?" Esteban mumbled, trying out his Irena voice as sitting up came difficultly, dizziness engulfing his brain.

The thin, deeply tanned man snickered, but the woman stood up, swayed with the truck's motion, and brought a canteen of lukewarm water over to 'Irena.' "You worried us,"

she said, concern on her thin face. "You've been out longer than we expected."

Esteban took a drink of the warm water. His head swam and he felt very dirty, more so perhaps because of the scented baths Consuela had him taking several times a day. "Where am i?" he whispered again.

"You are our prisoner," the thin man leered. As Esteban's eyes focused properly, he saw that the man's skin was pock-marked and very dirty.

The woman gave the man an angry glance. "We need the money desperately," she said apologetically. "You were chloroformed, wrapped in this old rug, and delivered to us outside the Lorenzo. We are taking you up to Arricos," she named the center of the north-eastern coal-mining area, "where we are being paid to deliver you."

Esteban leaned back against the side of the truck to think, the hair of his wig clustering at his neck, his nightdress tight about his legs. The thin-faced man leered at Irena, and Esteban instinctively put his arm across his padded bra.

"I have clothes for you," said the woman hurriedly. She indicated the forward portion of the truck to where a blanket, hung on a cord from one side to the other, created a separate, partly private section.

The woman assisted 'Irena' to her feet and led her behind the blanket screen. The clothing she had for Irena was not particularly clean. Yet the skirt and petticoats were very bright.

"I-I can't wear these," whispered Esteban, guessing how he might appear.

"You must," murmured the woman quietly. "Or he will make you." Her eyes darted warily over her shoulder. She patted Irena on 'her' hip and retreated back behind the screen.

Esteban-Irena suddenly became aware of the precariousness of his position. These people, whoever they were, still thought that he was Irena. He had to protect that belief as much as he could, he thought, waves of fear flooding through his mind.

He kept on his frilly panties and his sleep-bra. There was a black garter belt and black stockings among the feminine clothing the woman had given him, as well as a black, silk bra and panties. He put on the garter belt and stockings quickly and without a second thought, before he slipped off his nightdress. He slipped on the only full-length petticoat over his head. It pinched in tight at his waist and then flared out in a wide, beribboned skirt.

The woman poked her head over the blanket. "Put on all the petticoats," she said, "and the dark wig. I'll do your makeup then."

Esteban had again instinctively covered up his suggestion of cleavage, this time with the red silk dress, when she had eyed him speculatively. When she withdrew her head, Esteban found a number of waist petticoats in the clothing. Reluctantly, he put them on and the silk dress on top. The soft ribbons bouncing on his thighs as he moved made him feel breathless, yet very tense. He became aware of the feminine underwear and how natural it felt to be dressed as a woman. He rustled as he moved, the sound seductive to his masculine ears.

There was a wig of long, black, curly hair in a box against the front of the truck. There was no-one watching him as he unpinning the Irena wig and donned the other quickly, using the pins as Consuela had taught him. He stored the long-blond hair in the box just in time. The woman tore down the blanket to reveal the new,

dark girl to herself and her companion.

"There are shoes for you too," said the thin woman. She came close to Irena and hammered on the frong partition of the truck. Then, she reached down to a pack stored against the front wall of the truck and took out a pair of black, high heels, open-toed.

The truck lurched to a stop, slightly at an angle as if it had pulled over, partly off the road. 'Irena' put on the high heels, feeling her new, black hair brush the top of the truck. The back of the truck went up. A heavy-set man, black mustache, yet partially bald, grunted to the pair in the back. "She give you any trouble?"

The thin, pock-marked man stood, stretched and shook his head. "She's been a good girl," he sneered, showing yellow teeth. "She still don't know what's going on."

The thin woman took Irena's arm and dragged her forward. "Sit there," she said, pointing at the end of the truck.

Esteban hadn't realized how groggy he was. He staggered as the woman pulled him. The stocky man on the outside reached up as Irena came forward. He put his hands about her waist and lifted her down onto the gravel road. The petticoats pressed against Irena for a moment as the man held her, staring into her eyes. A light breeze swirled about her nyloned legs and ruffled the petticoats as the black mustached man stepped back and the thin woman began to work on the hair of the wig.

The woman worked in silence. Esteban could see little down the road but a poorly maintained, gravelly road, and the grey bark of dead conifers as if a forest fire had swept down both sides of the road. There was no sign of people nor of houses.

The wig was combed out,

curls being brushed tight and feathery against Irena's neck, cheeks and forehead. Then the woman applied makeup. Esteban could almost feel the extra thickness as everything was applied liberally--far too liberally, he was sure.

The thin man giggled. "Now she looks like one of Conchita's girls," he sneered at the brunette girl, who shivered and flushed under his leering eyes.

"Come on," said the heavier man. "Get her up into the cab, and look alert. There'll be a patrol for sure at the bridge crossing."

Irena swayed, her head reeling, as she was walked beside the old, dirty truck to the front cab. She could see that it was late afternoon, the sun setting behind her over the distant blue mountains. They were headed up a winding mountain road, new, smaller pines growing between the grey stumps of dead trees. The bald man jumped up and opened the cab door. The thin man came behind and lifted Irena up. As she stepped into the cab, he ran his hands down her sides, flattening petticoats against her garters. Then he caressed her legs, and she lunged forward, her head pounding after the sudden movement, into the cab.

"Jorge," snapped the thin faced woman, climbing in after 'her.' "Leave her alone. She'll get enough of that at Conchita's."

* * * * *

XII

CASA CONCHITA

* * * * *

"Kidnapped!" Isabel Ortega was white-faced with shock and anxiety. "But why didn't they just kill her?"

Aguiar frowned. "There was still some loyalty left," he

said, referring to the members of Irena's bodyguard who'd been in Army hands since noon that day. "They were supposed to kill her. Lieutenant Frias, who was the communications officer here last night, somehow feels it makes a difference that he didn't, or couldn't assassinate her as she slept."

Abrado Camar leaned forward in his chair. "Now will you let the Justice Minister, myself, see these men?" he asked quietly, dark, intense eyes staring at the General.

The Chief of Staff relaxed in the big chair that would normally have been filled by Irena for this impromptu meeting of the political and military leaders of the nation. "You would not have this information without my men obtaining it for you," he said just as quietly, staring back at the Justice Minister.

"Perhaps not," said the ex-professor wearily. "But even these men have rights. And I must insist....."

"Insist!" Francisco Fuentes was furious. "All we need to know is whether Irena is alive or dead. Can you answer that for us, General Aguilar?"

"I believe her to be alive." The words echoed across the tense, hushed room. "Frias bundled her up in a rug and delivered her to his brother, Jorge, who was waiting in the Servants' elevator." He paused. "The terms were to deliver her body to Gabredon," he named a village on the outskirts of the capitol, "so that her body would be found by the World Press after they were tipped off. But something went wrong. Frias thinks that his brother won't do the killing, as he's supposed to, until he gets more money out of the Paymaster, the name he gave to his contact." He fell silent for a moment, reaching for a coffee.

"Then, Jorge Frias may also contact us," Consuela Romo

spoke up for the first time. "We should announce that we will meet the price for her return right away. We can outbid anything the other side offers. We must!" Her eyes were alight with emotion. "As well, we can guarantee no reprisals after to Frias."

"If she is still alive," Francisco Fuentes put in quickly. Consuela and Isabel both glared at him so fiercely that he soon sat back, looking suitable cowed.

"It's an attractive course to follow," Aguilar mused, fidgeting with a thick pencil in front of him. He gave Consuela an understanding nod. "But no, we can't do that."

He was suddenly alert, decisive. He straightened up, his dark eyes grim as he looked about the select group. He had made up his mind. "If this is done openly, it could scare those who hold her into killing her right away. What government could survive long a public announcement that it would bargain with terrorists, after all? They'd have to suspect a trap. What we must have now is a secret, intense investigation, and if contact is made.....well, I think we will negotiate then." He turned to Abrado Camar. "You must head the search for Irena," he said. "You can call upon all the resources of the state and the Army. Anything you need will be given to you."

A stricken Isabel Ortega waited for the room to clear before she spoke to Consuela. "What were you thinking of?" she asked, her face wrinkled with lines of frustration. "We have to keep this as quiet as possible. If they ever find out that Irena is now a man....." She shuddered.

"Oh stop thinking of your own neck for once!" snapped Consuela. "Try thinking of that poor boy. Don't you think we've put him through enough? What do you think they're doing

to him now? And can you imagine what will happen if someone finds out what he really is? Then there's Ricardo." She turned away from Isabel so that the other girl would not see the tears which came unbidden to her eyes.

* * * * *

The room into which the brunette was pushed was barred at the windows. The thin she'd been called Maria by the driver, stayed with her even though the door was locked from the outside. By the noises from downstairs and the high-pitched squeals from excited women as they went along the passage outside the door, it was clear to Esteban that 'Conchita's' was, in fact, a brothel. He'd been given little chance to see much as he was hurried, his high heels clacking on stone cobbles, from the dark cab to a back entrance to the 'casa.'

"I'm sorry," whispered the woman, her shoulders slouched in resignation. "I've no change of clothes for you. But I can fix your hair, if you wish."

Esteban waved off her attentions. He was hungry and tired. He felt dirty in the red, silk dress that wasn't his. It seemed that the tight slip was not so tight as it had been. "Can I lie down?" he asked in Irena's lilting tones, indicating the wooden bed.

The woman nodded and sat down in a chair where she could watch Irena. The bed was hard and the covers were used and dirty. Esteban unfastened the dress and slipped it off, conscious of the woman watching the rustle and sway of petticoats about him. There was a bowl of water on an unpainted table against the wall. He washed his hands, noting that his nails were still shiny from the previous night's application of varnish. He began to wipe off some of the thick

makeup, but the woman stopped him.

"You're not to do that," she said wearily. "We don't want anyone to remember any resemblance at all."

Esteban hesitated, and then left the facecloth where it was. He might have overpowered the woman with him, but what would happen then with Jorge and the driver might be worse than he was being treated now.

The brunette girl could not sleep with the garters on, and 'she' would have laddered the black stockings even more if she lay down in them. So she sat on the not-too-clean covers, slipped off high heels, raised 'her' petticoats and began to unfasten the garters and the garter belt. It was funny that he should feel so unlike Irena. Now, he knew that he was just Esteban rolling black stockings down his slim, smooth legs. Despite the bra and clinging slip, he had lost a lot of the feeling of being a girl even though this clothing was in many ways more sensual than Irena's clothes.

He had to stand to slip the garter belt out of his panties, and as he did so, he heard the key turn in the lock. He had just smoothed down the long petticoat slip, when another woman came in, along with Jorge and the truck driver.

The woman was older and heavily made up. She wore heavy jade jewelry at her neck, ears, on her fingers and at her wrists. She even wore a heavy silver brooch, inset with jade.

"Didn't we tell you no-one would recognize her, huh?" snickered Jorge. "Didn't we tell you Conchita?" He seemed anxious to please her. The raven-haired, older woman turned and gave him a cold stare, but that only set him to jiggling more. The woman then turned her gaze back to the slim, garishly madeup brunette, seated now quite demurely at the end of the wooden bed.

"I know you're over thirty," she rasped, after staring at 'Irena' for over a full minute, "but you don't look a day more than eighteen to me. That's money for you, I suppose." She snorted. "We gotta preserve the heroine of the Revolution, ain't we?"

Esteban looked down at the dusty hem of the women's black dress. He quaked inside his petticoats as she came closer, making a detailed inspection of 'her' face and figure. "You're right," the woman said grudgingly over her shoulder towards the others. "She don't look anything like the President now." She leered at Esteban. "She looks like a proper little slut --- just like one of my girls." She raised her hand as if to strike 'Irena' and laughed at the fear that showed in Esteban's black lined eyes as he shrank away from her.

"All right," she said, turning back to Jorge. "I'll let you keep her here until your brother makes the new deal. But I want my cut and a head start across the border before youtake her out of here."

The slight pause was enough to send a cold shiver up Esteban's spine. How could he have been so stupid as to let Consuela think that he preferred death to discovery. Now that death seemed certain, he wanted to scream and cry out who he was, never mind the contempt they'd show him. But he knew they'd kill 'him' right away. Only as 'she,' Irena, did Esteban have a chance of staying alive for just a little longer. Inside his brain, a little voice was sobbing as he thought of death. Every part of his body was cold, and he shivered uncontrollably feeling his panties slip against the soft nylon of his petticoats.

"Don't worry," giggled Jorge. "If we don't get our money from the Paymaster, we

can always make a dollar on her downstairs, can't we?"

* * * * *

Esteban found himself very closely guarded in the next few days. Either Maria, Pablo, the driver of the truck, or Conchita, often called Madame by the others, an odd jumbling of the languages, watched 'her' every move. He found himself striving for a femininity that he didn't know he possessed in his efforts to conceal whatever masculinity might have given him away. Dressing in even more exotic clothes provided by Conchita, he tried to remember every gesture Consuela had made, even as she had put on her stockings. His parody of her, if he had but known it, was almost exact.

Hair and makeup were done for 'her' by Maria, or occasionally Conchita, neither of whom bothered to remove the brunette wig. Irena's hair was combed and then the heavy makeup was applied so that his eyes became dark caverns in his head, his lashes heavy with the layers of mascara applied to them.

His dresses varied from the mid-calf, red silk that he'd worn for Maria to frilled, ankle-length, evening gowns. "You know," said Conchita to Maria, after watching the delicate way in which 'she' smoothed a gaudy, flowered silk dress over 'her' hips, "she could make a really sweet working girl. She's got the looks."

Esteban felt his stomach muscles knotting. The bra and panties seemed to cling tighter. The huge, shell-type earrings rattled against his neck as he shook nervously. "She's got class," said Maria quickly. "Too much not to be obvious in the cantina."

A crafty look came into Conchita's eyes that brought a lump to Esteban's throat, the black, velvet bow he wore

constricting as if under pressure. "I think we ought to take her downstairs, don't you, Maria?" she asked belligerently, cowing the thin-faced woman. "She deserves a little fun for being such a good girl, doesn't she?"

"N-Now Conchita," stammered Maria cautiously. "We've got to keep her out of sight. Jorge and....."

"Oh, forget them," snarled Conchita, hauling herself up from the old, deep armchair where she'd supervised the re-dressing of 'Irena.' "I should think that you were fed up of being stuck in here anyway."

"Y-Yes, but....." Maria began.

Conchita had crossed the bare, wooden boards to where Irena was standing, her scarlet red lips quivering, by the bed. Conchita took her by the arm. "Come, my dear," she smiled, showing several gold fillings. "Let's go downstairs. You ought to see how the other half lives, at least once, in your life."

With Maria objecting and looking very anxious, Irena was pushed through the doorway, down a dingy hallway and into a brightly-lit room with a long bar at one end. At each of the tables, there were several brightly dressed girls, though, as Esteban got closer, he could see that their thick makeup, often more so than his, didn't conceal the fact that most were not young at all.

"Hey, Conchita. What you got there?" A big, fat man in a brown suit and tan shirt stood up and placed fat, pudgy hands on the brunette's bare, upper arms. He looked surprised when the cheaply scented girl pulled away from him, clearly distressed.

"A new girl, Marcos," said Conchita with a secretive smile. Her bulk intervened between the beribboned girl and the portly, perspiring businessman.

"She'd be too much for you, I think," she added sarcastically.

Marcos gave her an unpleasant sneer. He reached past the brothel owner and touched the brunette girl's trembling chin. "Just about eighteen, huh," he grunted. "Why do you let these girls wear so much makeup, Conchita? Trying to fool us that they're older and more experienced, huh?" He shook his head. "But it ages 'em to quick. I like 'em with clean skins Conchita, nice and innocent, like this one. It helps if they're a bit frightened." He smiled at the fear in the brunette's face, as she bit at her sticky, scarlet lips. "I'll lay you a hundred for this one right now."

"American?" Consuela's face took on a calculating look. "Ah, no," she said regretfully, not seeing how the brunette paled beneath her rouged cheeks. "Can't do it, Marcos. She's worth a lot more than that to another party. And I did promise her clean."

Marcos pursued them to the bar, arguing with Conchita, and steadily raising his price to two hundred and fifty, much to the amusement of the painted 'girls' at each of the tables. When the nervous brunette sat beside Conchita at the bar, gracefully poised with her high heels barely touching the lower rung of her stool, Marcos grabbed her thigh, massaging her stocking, garter and the hem of her panties even as she fought to push him away.

Even Conchita joined in the laughter as Marcos turned his attention to the brunette's upper body, cupping his hands under her padded breasts and kissing her perfumed neck and shoulders. She struggled intensely while guffaws rang out in the crowded room, both the girls and their clients amused by the brunette's efforts to protect herself in what seemed a losing cause.

It was thin Maria who finally came to Irena's aid. A heavy bottle of dark red wine shattered over Marcos' head as the angry woman freed the brunette, sobbing now from the firm, unbreakable grasp of the portly man. Such was the force of the blow that it was hard to tell which rivulets were blood and which were wine as the heavy man slid, moaning, to the floor. But that only made the clientele laugh all the harder.

"Come on," hissed Maria. "We must get her back to her room."

"What, now?" chortled Conchita. "No, we have to celebrate your victory. Virtue triumphs again! Lopez! Bring us brandy at the end table!" The morose bartender nodded and reached for a tray.

Conchita took Irena by the hand and pulled her over towards the table. She sat the quaking girl down, clasping her wrist firmly. "Just how old are you?" she asked, staring into the young 'girl's' eyes, noting the smooth skin of 'her' neck and face. "Hey, Maria," her eyes narrowed. "You don't think someone could have pulled a fast one, do you? How do you know that she really is the one she's supposed to be?"

Maria was startled. "It's that wig," she murmured, looking about to see that no-one overheard her. "And those ribbons you put about her hair and neck. She looks younger. And with her makeup different, she's bound to look different from the way she did in the truck."

Conchita was only partly placated. "Well?" she snapped at the brunette. "Who are you, truthfully?"

Esteban swallowed hard. His thighs, his hips, his chest and neck, everywhere that Marcos had touched, felt bruised and swollen even under the soft touch of his women's clothing. "I am Irena Varga,"

he whispered, unable to look at Conchita. Near to the bar, Marcos had now wobbled to his feet. Several girls called out to him to join them with his two hundred and fifty. They held out their arms and ran pink tongues over red lips. Esteban shuddered and looked down at his stockinged ankles. Marcos snarled at the girls, winced, touched his head and then stared at the blood on his hand. He glared at the people nearest to him, who made mock signs of surrender, while still laughing shrilly and making derisive comments to the crestfallen businessman. He finally stomped out of the bar, passing Jorge and another man on the way in. The new arrival was tall, thin, prematurely grey-haired, his expression predatory. Esteban shivered. He'd seen that look on the faces of his bodyguards at the airport and on the faces of the Interior Police. The man with Jorge was a killer, he didn't doubt it.

One of the girls got up and flounced over to Jorge and the slim man. While Jorge laughed, the man made a contemptuous remark that made the girl back away, white-faced, to her companions near the door.

Jorge led the man through the bar to the stairs from where Maria and Conchita had brought the brunette girl with them. Jorge pointed to the way. The grim nod given by the slim killer made Esteban shiver visibly in his frilled gown, and Conchita turned her attention away from berating the slowness of the bartender to see what had made her shiver so.

"Who's that?" she snapped at Maria, catching just a glimpse of Jorge and his companion ascending the stairs, neither having given a glance across the crowded bar.

Maria had also seen Irena's shocked movement. She frowned at the girl and then stood. "I'll see," she said quickly, darting away after Jorge.

Now or never, thought Esteban wildly. Conchita was still holding his wrist, but slackly since he had not protested the grip at all. His earrings bobbed as he looked about quickly. He would have to fight Conchita but the others might let the brunette girl past if she did it quickly. He was reaching for the almost empty brandy bottle when Pablo, the truck driver, came strolling through the outer doorway. He saw Irena right away, and stopped, doing a slow doubletake. He had just started towards them when there came the roar of an explosion from the stairwell where Maria had disappeared after Jorge and the slim man.

There was dead silence in the bar for a moment. Every head turned instinctively to the stairwell. Everybody saw the body of Jorge Frias crash down the stairs, red liquid streaming from the side of his head. A scarlet smear swept down the whitewashed wall where his head brushed against it in his fall.

There was a mad stampede for the exits, women and men shouting and screaming as they ran. The din of voices was only interrupted by the smashing of glasses and bottles as tables were overturned in the panic. The sound of more shots only heightened the panic, and Irena suddenly felt herself free, released, as Conchita, too, fled with the others.

Surprisingly, Irena, for she thought of herself now as such, was quite calm. 'She' guessed that Irena's assassin had taken care of Jorge, and probably Maria in his disappointment in not finding Irena Varga. But the murderer would soon be on 'her' trail. Irena gathered skirts in hand, and ran as quickly as her heels would let her after two black-dressed girls who headed back behind the bar and into the wine cellar beyond. She went as fast as

her dress, not made for running, and spike heels would allow. The tightness about 'her' upper thighs kept 'her' run to a feminine stride, while the hem of the wide skirt threatened to trip 'her' at any moment.

Suddenly there was a flash of brightness ahead of her, as if a door had opened and closed to the outside. She went there blindly through the dark cellar, groping past rough, wooden casks until she came to an opening. She swung the door open to hear a flurry of female, cursing voices in front of him.

"Is that you, Rosa?" one of the dark shapes at the top of a small flight of steps asked. There was sky all about her, and Irena realized that she was outside the brothel.

"No," she said confidently. One of Irena's garters had snapped as she ran. She felt just a little odd and lopsided because of it. She picked her way up the little dirt hill above the steps as her heels threatened to give way. The girls ahead of Irena were already scurrying off in different directions.

Irena/Esteban looked around. The two-story, bar-cum-brothel was behind her, and she didn't want to go back that way. On either side, there were many old trunks and pickups, dark mounds in the fading light. She recognized one immediately as her previous transport-Pablo's. To the right there were other houses, lights shining from opened doorways as people began to emerge and stare at the girls fleeing from the cantina.

Irena made up her mind quickly. Esteban would have dithered in a crisis, she thought grimly, as she turned to her left, away from Conchita's, gunmen and people. In the darkness, pine tree branches were cruel to her as she hurried by into the trees. The air was cold, as she breathed hard, confirming that she must be very high in the mountains, likely the



"DON'T DENY IT ARTHUR, DON'T LIE!
YOU ONLY MARRIED ME FOR MY WARDROBE."

Cadunes. She willed herself to ignore the cuts on her bare arms. Only when the occasional branch caught at her dress was she compelled to stop and tear away the material to free herself.

The sound of running feet to her right --- feet running on pavement --- froze Irena beside a small, bushy spruce tree. She stopped, panting, listening to the feet. She was breathing so hard that she felt her bra tighten as she exhaled. Irena also sensed that Esteban's nipples were enlarged and pushing against the bra's inserts, which were soft, but sensitive just the same. 'She' smiled grimly, allowing a few shivers to settle 'her' tense body. She glanced down at her heaving chest. Irena would look very convincing about the bust if there were someone to admire her now.

The running sound suddenly changed to a thrashing as whoever it was plunged off the hidden roadway to Irena's right, and into the under-brush. There was a sudden cry, a thump, followed by several curses. The runner, a man, must have fallen over a tree root. He continued cursing, moving more slowly, and Irena hugged her skirt tightly about her as she followed his noise through the brush.

With her night sight improving, Irena could see a dark figure limping along the path he'd found between the dark of the trees. Incredibly, the twilight was disappearing, almost in one moment, from the sky. The path was coming to an end, however, as the crunch of gravel told Irena that the man had found some sort of roadway again. There was a metallic click of a car door handle, and suddenly Irena became aware of the low purr of a running automobile engine. She crouched low, nylons and garters straining. In the flash of light from the opening

of the car resting there, Irena realized that the car was parked in a lay-by, a graveled area just off a road. The light, too, revealed the runner. It was the slim man who had accompanied Jorge into Conchita's.

Irena also saw the other man, the one who had kept the car idling, waiting for the killer to return. This man was stocky, his beard trimmed into a neat Van Dyke, his grim expression changing to chagrin and then to violent anger as the slim man spoke urgently to him. He motioned savagely for the would-be assassin to get in and close the door. The light went out and the car slid forward across the gravel until it reached the road, where the tires began to whine in protest as the car sped away to Irena's left. Irena's confidence had evaporated as she saw the man in the car. She shivered, felt sick, and remembered that she was only Esteban after all. The slashes and cuts from 'her' mad scramble through the pines all began to hurt at once. But all the confusion and dizziness in Esteban's mind, was he really Irena as he'd felt he was just for a few minutes there, could not keep him from shivering as he thought of the identity of the man with the Van Dyke. He had been Irena's lover; or so he was told. Why now would Francisco Fuentes want her dead?

* * * * *

XIII

"YOU CAN'T DO THAT!!!
I'M A MAN!!!!"

* * * * *

Patroller Antonio Pascual caught the brunette girl just as she reached the Rivas-Cadune Breja road junction. She was clearly exhausted as well she might be to have come such a distance from the fracas at

Conchita's. She must have walked all night. She was stumbling when he first saw her, the heel of one shoe gone, her flowered dress torn and tattered but the way each tear showed a little of her underclothing was interesting, even sexy. Antonio Pascual felt the stirrings of something deep within him.

"I am Irena....." the last word was breathlessly garbled by the girl. The relief on her face as she looked at his uniform was almost palpable. "I need to get to a telephone."

The patrolman smiled broadly. She couldn't see that her makeup was smeared or non-existent in places. Her eyes, however, still retained most of the liner and shadow, and Antonio liked girls like that. He extended his hand to help her into the radio van. She had a soft, slim hand with fine polished fingernails, a little dirty after scrambling through the forest, no doubt. She was young, too. Definitely more than a twenty-a-night, which was the usual at Conchita's, figured Antonio Pascual.

"I'll get you to a telephone," he said slowly, baring his straight white teeth. Most girls found that irresistible. He only rarely had to visit a place like Conchita's. "You must be one of Conchita's girls," he added, smiling in understanding.

She straightened in the car seat, her round determined chin lifted. "No, I am not one of her girls," she said firmly, in a sultry, husky voice that reminded Pascual of someone he'd heard before but he couldn't place it. He hadn't started the van. "Could you please get moving?" she asked while he looked at her in astonishment. Girls like her did not make requests of policemen. "I have a very urgent call to make," she added. Her brunette hair was fuzzy and a mess, rumped, but Antonio didn't like his women too well groomed.

"Oh, you'll get your call..... sooner or later," he smirked. Suddenly the girl's large brown eyes filled with alarm. She had received the message.

"No....." she started, anger in her voice as well as a little fear.

"Yes," he said, smiling, undoing the clasp of his heavy leather belt.

"Look," her husky voice trembled. "I have money. You can earn ten thousand if you get me to a phone right now."

Pascual laughed. She would pay him for not doing what other men paid her to let them do!! He unbuckled his gun and set it down in the open glove compartment in front of him. "Now where would a girl like you get ten thousand?" he sneered. "Now, just come on and be a good girl, darling. You do this every night for your living, I know. You just be good and grateful for the fact that I will be getting you out of here."

The brunette reached hastily for the door, but Pascual was too quick for her. "No!" she screamed, but Pascual had her over the back of the seat, pressing both her arms against the partition of the van.

"Let's go in the back," Pascual whispered fiercely. "We can be much more comfortable."

The girl began to struggle hard, writhing under him, which only made Pascual smile more with pleasure. "How dare you?" she croaked, pulling her head away from his. "Haven't I told you. I'm Irena Varga. I was kidnapped! You have to help me.....Oh....."

Pascual had forced open the partition. He threw her back over the seat and onto the floor. He pressed his body down on her, kissing her throat and face. Still he kept her arms pinned tightly.

"I'll have you shot," the girl gasped, but Antonio Pascual

only laughed through clenched teeth.

"Only after you've been a good girl," he panted, trying to kiss her lips, but she was able to keep her head twisted away. He forced her legs apart, his knees holding her in place, but she began to thrash even more wildly. Her stockings were laddered but they were still dark as Pascual ran his hand slowly over them. He ripped up her skirt and petticoat. Her flesh was white, soft and inviting above the stockings to her dark, blue silk, frilled panties.

She suddenly stopped writhing against him which he'd enjoyed so much. She let him kiss her and began to cooperate with him, her legs caressing his partly naked thighs and hips.

"That's better," he breathed, releasing one of her hands cautiously. She put it round his neck to pull him closer, her breasts hard against his chest. He caressed her body, her soft thighs and suspenders as she squirmed delightfully under his touch. His mouth was buried in hers. He let her other arm go so that she could hold him even tighter. Yes, she was definitely more than a twenty-a-time girl. He was trembling in anticipation. This could be something to brag about for months.

He pushed himself up from her to take down his pants completely. She lay on the deck of the radio van, her thighs pinned by him, her skirts torn even more and gathered up about her waist. He put a hand on her panties and garter belt. There was a funny smile on her face, as if she were laughing at him. Antonio Pascual felt the anger rise in him. So she didn't think much of his technique, did she? His hand moved about, caressing her panties. Suddenly, he understood why the pretty brunette girl had smiled at him in such a queer way.

"You're a man!" Shock,

amazement, disgust, self-revulsion and contempt were all mirrored in the patrolman's young face.

"Yes," said the girl simply. She pushed herself up on her elbows. "Now, will you take me to where I can please make my phone call!"

Pascual stared at 'her,' now so cool, arrogant and smug. Twenty-a-time girl, he snarled to himself, thinking she'd really put one over on him and now he'd do whatever 'she' wanted. But others must have willingly gone down on this one and she must have serviced them in 'her' own way. Now she could show him her real talents. He pushed her back flat on the deck and lowered his body onto 'hers' again. His mouth found her soft, yielding lips and he kissed her firmly. He knew full well now that 'she' was a man beneath him, but she tasted and felt like a real girl.

"No!" she screamed, beginning to fight again, her legs, spread apart, flailing at him. "You can't do that! I'm a man!"

"So?" grunted Pascual, gritting his teeth again, as he pinned her arms with his. "You got me up this far, girly, now you can get me down. Just like you do with your boyfriends and your tricks." He kissed her again bruisingly, and she tried to roll away from him, but he lay on her, laughing as her face contorted with the effort. He even let her hands go. She tried to scratch him, but he buried his head in her bosom, kissing her chest. He wondered if she had real breasts. He'd heard that some men like her did. He fought with her in the attempt to get her panties off. She seemed then to relent for a moment, letting go as his hands dug hard into her hips, under her panties, tugging them down. He'd almost uncovered her, her legs rigid, when he became dimly

aware that she was reaching backward to the lower workbench. He remembered the heavy microphones, stored, unsecured there, just as the side of his head exploded in dazzling lights and stabbing pain. But it took three blows of the microphone before the partly-clad body of the patroller went limp.

Sobbing, shaking, his skin creeping with goosebumps, Esteban Varga pulled himself away from the would-be rapist. His thighs ached from where the man's knees had held them apart. His face and neck were burning from the roughness of the patroller's beard. Trembling, Esteban sat up on the metal stool anchored to the van deck. What a fool Irena had been to think that such a man could be put off by the revelation of her true sex. Esteban shuddered, hugging what was left of his dress about him.

There were large radios on either side of the van, but he had no idea how to work one to find a frequency that could help him. He was crying, and angry, trying to put out of his mind the man's clear longing for him, even when he knew just who Esteban was. His hands shook as he looked at the fallen, shallow-breathing patroller.

His dress was clearly beyond repair, but it was all he had, and he could do little else but hug it about him, as he climbed back into the forward compartment of the van. The drivers' mirror showed him a flushed, red-faced girl, her eye makeup just a little smudged and streaked. Still shaking, 'she' eased herself into the drivers' seat, slipping off the broken high heels. He had to rearrange his panties and garter belt after the mauling they had taken, smoothing what was left of his petticoats under him so that he sat down to a feminine rustle. The dress caressed other

hurts tenderly. A glance to the driving mirror showed him that he'd lost one earring in his struggles. 'She' looked a trifle odd to his eyes, with just one heavy shell earring against her neck to remind her what kind of girl she was.

* * * * *

The telephone call set many processes in motion, not the least of which was Consuela Romo's instant departure for Rivas by helicopter. She commandeered the whole top floor of the only cantina worth a name in the place, and set about the task of reproducing Irena Varga from the tatters of a frilled, flowered dress and wisps of brunette hair.

As soon as she and the dark girl were alone, however, she had immediately taken 'her' to bed, where the story of Pascual's attempted rape was soon dispersed in Consuela's more successful, gentle attainment of the same objective. Surprisingly, Esteban could not help sobbing, shaking and quivering as he clung to Consuela, bringing out every reassuring gesture possible from Consuela.

Without the brunette wig, the Irena look was soon restored to Esteban's face and body, but Consuela refused to let the youth wear another wig. She set, bleached and styled his hair herself, while Esteban fluttered with anxiety that she was going too far.

"When we tell how the kidnappers cut off your hair to disguise you, everyone will understand," said Consuela, as the youth sat, in new, sparkling white panties and white bra, his hair under a drier, his face clean of makeup.

Esteban nodded doubtfully. "What's happening in the capitol?" he asked, trying to turn the topic away from his embarrassments. He sat so femininely that Consuela was amazed. He hadn't needed one reminder so

far from her to act like a woman. Perhaps the abduction had solved that problem for her.

"Ramon has been in command since you were taken," said Consuela darkly. "He was ordering Fuentes' arrest even as I left."

"And the war?" Irena's voice asked, as thin eyebrows were raised in concern.

Consuela was surprised. "They didn't tell you?" she asked. "We cleared out the reactionaries. But our forces did not cross the border. The American, Ward, has been praising you to the World Press ever since for your statesman-like restraint. He is begging for another interview. He arranged a truce on the other side, too." She smiled grimly. "I forged Irena's signature."

"My being kidnapped...." Irena even frowned prettily.

"No-one knows," said Consuela softly. She stopped the drier, let out the girl in just her bra and panties, and began to take the rollers from her hair, shaking out soft curls. "We didn't tell anyone outside the Junta," she said.

As Consuela combed Irena's hair into a wavy, page-boy style, Esteban began to tremble as he thought of the problems Irena had faced before 'she' was kidnapped. "Querido!" he exclaimed, jerking his legs together stiffly. "What has been done about him?"

Consuela smiled. "Ricardo gets along very well with Isabel now that we've added him to the Presidential staff. He's not so eager, I think to marry Irena after all. But we won't know for sure for awhile." She studied her handiwork on Esteban/Irena's shining hair. "But if he sees you like this, he'll likely forget about Isabel!"

Consuela expected the youth to react in the frightened, upset fashion like he normally did. But 'she' didn't. 'She' just smiled knowingly at Consuela,

opened the suitcase she had brought with her, and took out a pair of panti-hose. It astonished Consuela that 'she' dressed eagerly and without any urging from her in very feminine clothing. The white, lace-trimmed slip and then the white dress fitted Irena almost perfectly. 'She' checked the fit 'herself' in the mirror, even checking to see that the slip was concealed when 'she' sat in the tight dress, just as Consuela herself had done in Esteban's presence before.

Consuela helped 'her' with 'her' makeup, mainly because the 'girl' wasn't satisfied until her eyes were shaded and outlined perfectly, changing them from being merely attractive to being very strikingly female. 'She' was poised and confident as 'she' selected white, high-heeled shoes to walk with Consuela down to the waiting limousine. The soldiers outside gave 'her' a great cheer, crowding 'round the car as she smiled at them and gave them all a gentle wave. Just like the original Irena, Consuela thought shakily. My God, she really thinks that she is Irena!

XIV

NOTHING IS FOREVER

The bitterly fought 'Chaco War' was now largely a memory thanks to the leadership of President Irena Varga in the preceding year and a half. The chanting crowds that massed in Revolution Square would not go home, after the first, truly free, elections in the country's history, until Irena had presented herself to them one more time from the balcony overlooking the Square.

Irena was quite serious as she went forward. She wore a long, white dress, but with

a modest veil over her well-formed cleavage up to a silver collar at her neck. She waved a slender arm, bringing roars from the crowd, the floodlights glinting off her diamond ring and the slender, silver bracelet at her wrist. Beside her, the ex-General Ramon Aguilar, dark-faced, smiled broadly and took her other arm to raise it to the crowd, bringing forth even greater cries of adulation. Still Irena did not smile.

She had let her hair grow a little since the terrible assassination/kidnapping plots of Francisco Fuentes, the opportunist who had tried to split the Revolution between the Left, the Party Regulars and the Army, believing that he would finally benefit from the rupture. Irena's hair now rested, shining, waved and lacquered, on the base of her neck. A heavy fringe, curled across her forehead, was also held stiffly in place; yet, her blonde streaks shone in the light of flashing camera bulbs.

She turned and went to the glass doors leading back to her rooms in the Palace of the Revolution. Cheers erupted wildly again as she brought forward Ernesto Figueroa and Osvaldo Tucuman, leaders of the People's Labour Party, newly formed, that had lost the election that night.

They both smiled at her and shook hands with the new Prime Minister while the crowd screamed its approval. Whether a form of parliamentary democracy, the constitutional government the Revolutionary Junta had ceded its powers to, would work in El Monte, was not yet certain, but there was a spirit in the air, as if something new and historically important was being achieved in the American republic.

Only when Aguilar raised the hands of his ex-comrades in the now dissolved Party of the Revolution did Irena part her pink lips in a beautiful

smile. It had been Figueroa's condition for a peaceful election that she remain as Head of State with the army at her beck and call. She had wanted to give up the Presidency and retire to private life, and, when that desire was known, she had become more popular than ever.

"They'll carry on most of the night," said a smiling Louis Ward as she stepped back into the long room. He had pulled almost every string in the book to be appointed Ambassador to El Monte.

"I know," she said, sighing. She looked into the gilt-edged mirror over the fireplace, slipped off her glittering high heels, and then took off her earrings. She still looks so young and fresh, thought Ward. It was incredible that she should still appear to be a young girl of twenty or so.

Her permanent secretary, Consuela Romo, also well dressed in a dark evening gown for the occasion, came over to join them, bearing glasses of champagne for Irena and herself. "Ramon will find the next six months harder than tonight," she said cryptically eyeing the President's grooming. Her blue eyeshadow was overdone for closeup work like in this room, but it must have been very effective for the mob scene outside.

"He's a hard worker. He'll get by." Irena murmured huskily. She still hadn't recovered full control of her voice tone, Ward noted, since that first attempt on her life.

"Will you get by without real power?" asked Ward in a bantering tone, but Irena took it seriously, as she did everything since the Chaco War. She had really changed.

"I won't be Head of State forever," she said quietly. Her complexion was so soft that Ward felt an almost irresistible urge to reach out and stroke her. "Abrado would be a better

President than I, and he can step in as soon as our situation has been normalized." She smiled at Louis Ward suddenly, a smile so bright that the American found himself staring at her, open-mouthed, as if he were a heroine-worshipping youth. She swept past him with a little lift of her feminine eyebrows as she went to speak to others in the crowded room on Aguilar's victory evening.

Consuela was annoyed with her when they prepared for bed that night. "You shouldn't treat Mr. Ward like that," she scolded. "He's in love with you, you know."

Irena had turned the bed down and was putting out the baby doll nightdress she liked to wear. "I know," she said, returning Consuela's huffy glance with an impish smile. "But he understands he can't have me. Will you undo my dress for me, dear?"

Consuela crossed the room and stood behind Irena. She unhooked and unzipped the long dress. As she had suspected, Irena was wearing only the flimsiest of under-support bras. The hormone program she was on had changed her in many ways, but most notably in giving her the suggestion of full, rounded breasts. She wiggled out of the dress, letting it slide over delicate women's underthings that hugged her soft-skinned body lovingly. Consuela rested her hand on Irena's bra, unhooking it for her, and then removing it. Irena smiled as Consuela sat on the bed eyeing Irena's feminine torso.

"Well?" she asked archly, putting a hand under her breast to show its increased size to her secretary. Consuela pulled a face and lay back on the bed as Irena stripped slowly, luxuriating over each piece of feminine lingerie that she removed. Her panti-hose were slipped off slowly, drawing Consuela's attention to her more rounded

derriere and thighs, her body now feminine in aspect, certainly not to be called boyish even when she was undressed, like now, save for white, silk panties. Irena's waist was, if anything, narrower, certainly shaplier, and she was fuller in the face, her hair thicker and shinier, in so many ways a woman.

Irena pulled the nightie over her head and slipped into bed beside the watchful Consuela. She put her arm over the other girl's body immediately and her mouth reached eagerly for Consuela. The secretary lay back and let Irena make love to her. She would soon make Irena shiver and shake in a moment by caressing her soft panties, or she might really arouse the 'girl' by gently stroking 'her' breasts.

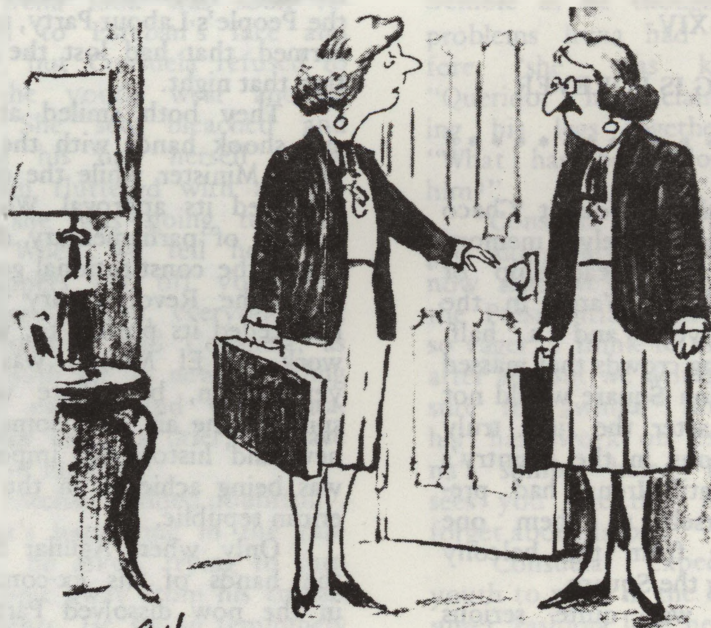
Consuela no longer thought of the beautiful girl, hungrily kissing her as 'Esteban' or even as 'he.' It had been Isabel, in a wicked moment when Ricardo wasn't paying the attention that he should, who had proposed hormones for 'Irena' to make the deception more secure, she said. Esteban hadn't argued, and, from the flirtatious way that 'she' sometimes be-

haved now, she seemed to enjoy the effect the prolonged light doses had produced. 'Her' picture, in a string bikini, its top just the tiniest piece of material, taken on the only holiday they'd had that year, just before the election, had appeared everywhere. Now it was being worn on T-shirts by the youth of El Monte, often with suggestive slogans. If only they knew, mused Consuela cynically, touching Irena on her hips, delighting to feel 'her' quake in anticipation of further caressing, 'his' soft thighs locked about and matched with hers.

"Esteban," she said, a giggle in her tone. There was no reply and so she ran her hands under the nightdress top to fondle the President's narrow waist, tugging gently at the top of his panties. "Esteban," she said again, trying to sound reproachful.

"He doesn't live here anymore," the girl mumbled, starting to agitate as Consuela's hands went higher. "You should know that, Consuela," she went on. "After all, you're the one who made me the woman I am today."

*****END*****



"This rivalry has got to stop, Harold!"

**An Experienced
COSMOTOLOGIST
Tells Our Readers
About Skin Care
And Makeup**

A WORD ON THE LIPS.....

The mouth is a feature that does so much all by itself. The mouth is expressive: we use it to talk, to laugh, to smile, to kiss, to grimace. It shows approval and disapproval. We broaden it to grin, contract it when we pucker, distend it when we pout (which I hope is not often). There is no other feature that is quite so mobile; it doesn't need much help from us. I would almost say that the more you use your mouth, the less makeup it needs.

Many women are unhappy about their mouths. The best thing for them to do, and for everyone, is to color the mouth simply and lightly and to play up the other features. To me the most attractive part of the face is from the nose up. I pay much more attention to the eyes, as a makeup artist and as a man, than I do to the mouth. All that is necessary for the mouth is that it shows sufficiently, that it is present in the geography of the face. One should never feel overpowered by the mouth.

In keeping with my philosophy of a natural approach to makeup, I believe you should follow the natural contour of your mouth. Using lipstick to make the mouth look either fuller or smaller is one of the worst makeup mistakes a woman can make. Worrying about your mouth is an exaggerated worry; recontouring your mouth is exaggerated makeup. I'm against both.



**A GUIDE
TO CORRECT
MAKEUP**

It is true that a number of tricks are used in photography to enhance a model's mouth, but these are impractical in everyday situations. You are constantly using your mouth, talking and eating away lipstick. A corrective application would be gone in the first bite of breakfast.

There is, however, one trick that will work rather well for a thin or weak upper lip. With a very fine brown pencil lightly touch up the points of the center of your upper lip, the "M" we all have. With a fine cotton swab blend the pencil into your lip, softening any hardness at the contour. When you add your lipstick the brown won't show, but its effect will, adding body to the lip without showing any effort.

Remember that the mouth should never dominate the face; it should never be drawn in falsely to look like a carica-

ture instead of two beautiful lips.

Trying to make too little of your lips is as bad as its reverse. Both are signals that tell everyone you are self-conscious about your mouth. I have noticed that black women who may be very full-lipped often try coloring only halfway within the contour of their lips; I disapprove of this. Any woman who wants to minimize the size of her mouth should do so inconspicuously. This is best achieved by using a gloss only or a very light shade of lipstick or no lipstick at all. Try all three methods to see which will be best for you.

As long as I've mentioned the possibility of wearing no lipstick, I should discuss it in regard to everyone. Although this practice was in vogue several years ago, and did work terrifically for some women, I was never really fond of it.

For minimizing the lips, yes; for very young faces, yes; for some great faces, to dramatize magnificent bone structure and emphasize the eyes, yes; for every woman, no. Too often no lipstick tells the person looking at you that you have simply forgotten or tried to erase your mouth; it is not a correct look. Fortunately, the cosmetics industry countered this trend with gloss--for a natural shine without color. Many women still use it alone.

Often the question depends on individual preference. I feel that most women could use the little bit of help that lipstick does provide. It's a cosmetic that's fairly easy to use, and none other has as wide a range of colors from which to choose. The possibilities for experimenting are endless and a lot of fun. You can even create your own colors by blending two prepackaged ones. A marvelous new shade of lipstick puts a touch of color into a dull day, a monotonous situation, a tired face. A new lipstick can give an instant lift that many women will find therapeutic. What can put a bright and instant smile on a face if not lipstick?

Of all the makeup products in use today lipstick disappears fastest from the face--its only drawback. But its great advantage is the moisturizing effect most new formulations have on lips. Old lipstick formulations--those dark purples and garish oranges of the twenties and thirties--were practically indelible, as they were made from harsh, harmful dyes. Today's formulas are softer, creamier, lovelier, as are today's colors. But how fast it disappears!----faster than last season's fashions. Yet every time you put it on again during the day or night you will add to its beneficial, conditioning effect.

At times the lips require even more soothing protection. Like the rest of your body,

they are exposed to wind, cold, heat, and other drying elements such as air conditioning, which can all cause peeling, cracking and chapping. Lipstick's creamy formulations help, but you may want to supplement their effectiveness by using other products. An eight-hour cream has marvelous moisturizing qualities. Lip lubricants, such as pomade will help keep the lips smooth. Lips need a great deal of lubrication; use pomade or moisturizers as often as you can, even when you're at home, even when you have no other makeup on. An especially good time is when you're using a mask.

.....APPLICATION.....

Putting on lipstick is a very simple thing. You can, if you wish, use a pencil to outline the lips before coloring in with a stick. If you do, be sure that the pencil is as close as possible in color to the lipstick. You don't want any contrast between them. The pencil can be especially helpful if you have a problem with lipstick running into the tiny lines in the skin above the upper lip. The pencil will prevent this spreading.

If you forego the pencil, simply apply lipstick first to the contour of your lips and then fill in. Fill the entire area, blot with a tissue and apply again to help set the color.

You can use a lipstick brush for a velvety smooth application and a more professional look. The brush tip, being finer than that on the lipstick, will give you a nice degree of control once you get used to handling it. Brushstrokes agree with the texture of the lips as the artist's brush agrees with the canvas--a lovely approach and a helpful tool.

For some women, a light coat of face powder before the lipstick goes on may help the color to last longer. For others,

often the more you apply, the faster it disappears. It all depends on your lips--their texture and condition. Unfortunately, you can rarely do without freshening lip color--always in thin, smooth applications.

COLOR

COLOR is a very important consideration. I love color that is compatible with the rest of the face. You do not need seventy different shades to match everything in your wardrobe. I like a light color for the brightest hours of the day; a pale, murky shade for a no-lipstick look; two or three brighter shades for evening.

While I don't believe in matching what you wear on your mouth to what you wear on your body, there must be a color compatibility. Lipstick, unlike eye shadow, must be coordinated with your clothes; they should never clash.

Bright colors first. If you are wearing green, you can wear orange and brown shades.

For red I suggest a complementary red or brownish shade. Avoid pinks.

Light, bright or dark blues in clothing go very well with the clear reds, pinks and stronger colors. The one to avoid here is orange.

For an orange outfit, however, you should have at least a suggestion of orange in your lipstick. It doesn't have to be bright; it could be a lovely shade of mandarin or apricot or coral. A pink or red--especially one with blue tones--will clash awfully.

Brown takes very well to shades of coral and a wide range of pinks and reds. All of the tawny colors work well here.

Lavender and purple shades can take light pinks or wonderful burgundies. Brown burgundy is good with formal haute couture, as are all the smoky shades.

GLOSS

For black clothes practically any bright color will do. It should be strong enough to balance this strongest of all neutrals.

Whites, bones and pastels work best with misty, rosy shades of lipstick, which are flattering and can be worn by almost everyone.

When we think of marvelous lips, we think of such words as "luscious," "wet," "kissable." The suggestion of something infinitely desirable and romantic should be there, and that's why I don't like dark, dark shades of lipstick at any time. Reds, pinks, corals—they're all so much more beautiful on you.

As I hinted briefly, you can create custom colors yourself—a trick I learned from Elizabeth Arden herself. We in the cosmetics industry can create an endless array of colors, but once the color is set, that is it. But you can go on to create infinite combinations by applying two shades and blotting them together to form one.

You can create your very own shade which no one can duplicate, your very own exclusive. There's another advantage as well: color correcting. Often when you buy a beautiful lipstick color that looks wonderful in the tube, it turns out to be wrong on you. By changing the tone slightly you can perfect the color. A beige or pink will lighten a red that looks too bright. A brown shade can tone down a pink that is too pink. In fact, any lip color can be easily modified.

The application of two lipsticks is no more difficult than applying one. Always put on the most important color first, the color whose statement is stronger. The second, modifying color goes over it. The first color takes on your lips; the second sets and corrects it—a finishing touch.

I love the look of gloss. The shiny mouth is always most appealing, most attractive. Unfortunately, gloss wears away with the lipstick under it and needs frequent reapplication. But the appealing look it gives is well worth the effort. A tip from models is to use gloss on the ridge of the bottom lip, the area least used when talking. Keeping it looking shiny there is less of a problem.

The gloss I use most often on my clients is a clear, colorless shiner. It works on the same principle as the translucent face powder; it doesn't cause any color buildup no matter how often it's applied. It keeps the mouth moist and luscious, as it fights off the lines and cracks that often plague the lips.

Gloss works well during active sports when you may not want to bother with lipstick. It goes well with casual clothes and casual occasions. It offers good protection

against sun and wind, especially for the woman who prefers going without lipstick altogether.

Because so many women do use gloss alone, it is made in a great range of shades as well as the colorless varieties. Some sound more like delicious desserts than cosmetics—plum, strawberry, peach. A woman's mouth **SHOULD** suggest a sweet, delectable treat.

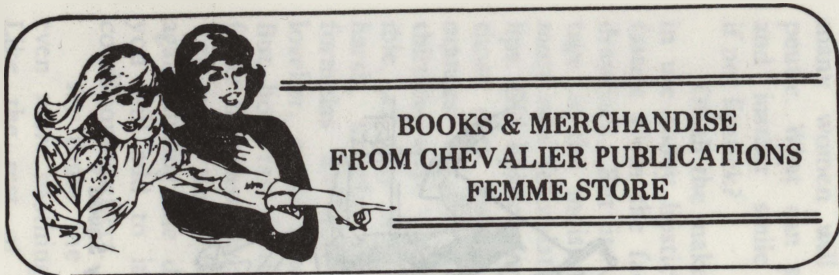
A truly wonderful lip product is the new gloss and lipstick in one, giving you only one thing to apply, and the choice of shades is growing each day.

All glosses are available in easy-to-carry forms—little pots, tubes and sticks. I prefer the tubes, from which you squeeze out a small amount onto a finger for quick application.

And there you have a simple approach to smooth, soft, shiny lips and the way to use a little to make you look a lot better.



"It all started when I was assigned to the 'Decoy Squad' to impersonate a woman . . ."



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SEPARATE BOOKS

THE TRANVESTITE AND HIS WIFE ... A discussion from both points of view. Includes many letters from understanding wives. Written simply, fairly and directly to help wives, parents, others to understand \$7.00

HOW TO BE A WOMAN THOUGH MALE ... A complete guide for the cross dresser. Everything you need to know about body alteration, clothing jewelry, wigs, feminine attitudes, behaviour patterns, public conduct, legal aspects and change of status \$10.00

UNDERSTANDING CROSS DRESSING ... The only book ever published which examines the subject of cross dressing in depth, its possible causes, its problems and its satisfactions. An understandable explanation for both cross dressers and interested outsiders \$8.50

FATED FOR FEMININITY ... Fascinating story of a high school boy who wanted to be a cheer leader, but ended up as school beauty queen, most popular girl, and eventually the bride of another pretty girl ... Illus. \$7.00

TALES FROM A PINK MIRROR ... This book was not published by Chevalier, but is available to readers. It is a long story, profusely illustrated about a boy's conversion to a girl in a special school Illus. \$7.50

THE BIRTH OF BARBARA ... Paul and Amy's marriage was falling apart till they decided to switch roles. Paul eventually becomes Barbara, finds he likes the role, the housekeeping, the clothes. They live happily as sisters with Amy earning the living and Barbara the housewife..... Illus. \$7.50

THE TURNABOUT PARTY ... A neighborhood turnabout party with a valuable prize leads George's wife to decide they **MUST** win. She converts George to Sally and they do and find a lot of new FP friends too.....
Illus. \$7.50

IF YOU CAN'T LICK 'EM JOIN 'EM ... A high school boy finds himself outclassed by a girl, wears her clothes as a penalty, required to maintain role by sisters, joins a sorority. Accepted by his family he gets job, meets girl, falls in love, reveals all, they become engaged. In two parts.

PART I DOWN TO DEFEAT Illus. \$6.50
PART II MARILYN MAKES IT Illus. \$6.50

SCHOOLGIRL IN THE SECRET SERVICE ... Two young boy cousins become girls, attend girls' school to work with British Secret Service, which leads to many adventures as girls. Illus. \$5.00

HIS AND HERS EQUALS THEIRS ... Steven gets fed up with his wife's borrowing his things, decides to show her how it is and borrows hers. Neither will give up and things progress until Steven becomes Stephanie ... and stays that way \$4.00

SPLENDORA (cloth edition-251 pages) ... Timothy Coloridge vanishes from town and returns 15 years later as "Miss Jessica Gatewood", a refined librarian who takes the town by storm. Timothy had been driven into his disguise by (1) a feminizing grandmother who thought that he should have been a "French bed-doll" (2) schoolmates who made fun of him (3) the ladies of the town who agreed he was 'too pretty' to be a boy. Aided at every delectable turn by a cast of relentless eccentrics, our heronine endures spectacular adventures, high drama, torment, ecstasy and a technicolor happy ending. The town of Splendor is a most unusual town...one that goes berserk over our refined librarian who, in turn, entertains a house guest so bizarre that her friends decide "we got to get this one up the hill fast before somebody spots her." A first rate tale!

IDEAL MARRIAGE ... Dee Raymond: 3 vol.

Part 1: THE WEDDING - Richard hopes that marriage will end his TV problems, but finds that wife likes his crossdressing. His growth as "Janice" is described.

Part 2: LUCY'S PARTY - Continues Janice's activities to the point where the wife begins to regret her feminization of Richard.

Part 3: WEEKEND AT STANDED - Delightful and complex gender surprises and eventual healing of wounds and a place for "Janice" in the marriage. \$4.50 each.

TRANSVESTISM: A Handbook with case studies for Psychologist, Psychiatrists and Counselors. H. Brierly, Consultant Clinical Psychologist — 259 pages . . . \$16.75

This is one of the best books written concerning crossdressing and is especially valuable since it is written by a professional in the field who is very up-to-date with his information. For those who are especially interested in the scientific research concerning transvestism, it is suggested that you get a copy of this book. It is enlightening, easy to read, satisfying, vindicating and sheds much light on what has been done research-wise, over the years regarding transvestism.

LOOKING TERRIFIC (Cloth edition)

Has all the answers ! You and the language of clothing come together in a very practical sense as, with Emily Cho's guidance, you begin a total process of change, from the inside out. You'll first learn the basics—how to disguise body faults and enhance assets. Then, considering your special needs, you'll plan a wardrobe that will serve you 24 hours a day. Your clothing will express the image you've been looking for. \$5.95

MAN, WOMAN; BOY, GIRL

By: Money & Ehrhardt

How do men become men and women become women? How does a child establish gender identity? By what process is the human being directed towards reproductive maturity as either female or male? The authors have drawn upon the findings of many specialized disciplines. \$6.95

DRESS AND UNDRRESS (Cloth edition)

By: Elizabeth Ewing.

In effect a history of women's underwear, this book is exceptional for its emphasis on materials, techniques and manufacturing processes. It is unusual in that it covers the changing styles of women's underwear from 3000 B.C. to the present day. It is all here, bikinis to bumrolls, girdles and garters, Du Pont and Dior, whalebone and Wonderbra. Elizabeth Ewing describes the underclothes of each period in history and the manner in which this clothing evolved. \$14.95

MERCHANDISE

M2 JELLY KIT, FOR INSERTS: Consists of two chemicals—one liquid, the other a powder. When the powder has been soaked in water overnight and injected into the inserts, followed by the liquid and enough water to fill them properly, a soft, non-flowing jelly results. This may be colored to skin tones with liquid makeup. The jelly-filled inserts give the breasts a natural softness and weight. Worn in an elastic strap bra they bounce and flow as one walks just like a natural breast. Full instructions provided, also suggestions for producing "cleavage." JELLY KIT \$9.00

M4 REGULAR INSERTS ALONE: To be used with the jelly kit. Can be worn with any bra. INSERTS, PER PAIR \$9.00

M5 "PHANTOM PHANNY": Two separate shield-shaped plastic foam pads, beveled and made concave to fit and cover the buttocks cheeks. Worn under a girdle they will enhance one's derriere to more feminine proportions. They are washable, comfortable and undetectable. One size only.

PER PAIR, \$8.00

M8 MASTECTOMY INSERTS: For those desiring a larger bust, it is possible to obtain the type of inserts intended for breast replacement after a mastectomy operation. These are larger than the regular type and have an extended part that fits under the arm where the lymph glands have been removed by surgery. This provides fullness in this area that no ordinary falsies of any type can give, thus being more natural on a larger figure.

INSERTS, PER PAIR \$9.00

NOTE: M9, M10 and M11 are cut out of urethane foam plastic. They are supplied to you as "blanks". That is, they are cut to size and shape but are left in a rough finished state to be trimmed to final smoothness and shape by the user. This may be done with any sharp scissors. To supply the items in finished smooth condition would require much more time and consequently a much higher price and they might still not exactly fit the needs of the purchasers.

M9 HIP PADS: Two rather oval shaped pads of foam plastic cut into approximately the right shape and with edges beveled. Since the exact shape and size desired will vary, they are intentionally left in a rough finished condition to be further shaped, trimmed and smoothed to the desired contour by the wearer. Easily cut with scissors. When worn under a girdle, they add about an inch of "hip" on each side. These are "wrap-around" pads, not just a narrow piece of foam worn over the hip. Under a girdle with the front pad (which they are designed to match with) they give an entirely feminine and smooth pelvic outline**PER PAIR, \$9.00**

M10 FRONT PAD WITH GROOVE: A "T"-shaped foam pad preshaped and beveled and with a groove and pocket in front to hold the male organs up against the stomach. Rough finished to allow for further trimming to individually desired shape and smoothness. Use of this pad will give the "flat-front" look so much desired without binding and discomfort. There is a "tail piece" that fits back between the legs and fills this area when worn under a pantie and girdle or a pantie girdle. If it is not wanted it can be cut off.
PAD, EACH \$8.00

M11 SMALL FRONT PAD: Designed to cover the male organs when they are worn tucked between the legs. Intended to be worn under bathing suits, short, tight slacks. Gives smooth, rounded feminine control.
PAD, EACH \$4.00

All items are sold on a cash in advance basis. C.O.D. and open account orders can not be honored. Canadian subscribers should make payments in U.S. funds by postal money orders or bank drafts not by personal checks.

Other foreign customers should pay by checks from their bank drawn on a U.S. correspondent bank and in U.S. funds. Allow extra money for postage and a credit slip for the excess will be returned with the order. Foreign postage is higher than the 15% applicable to domestic postage.

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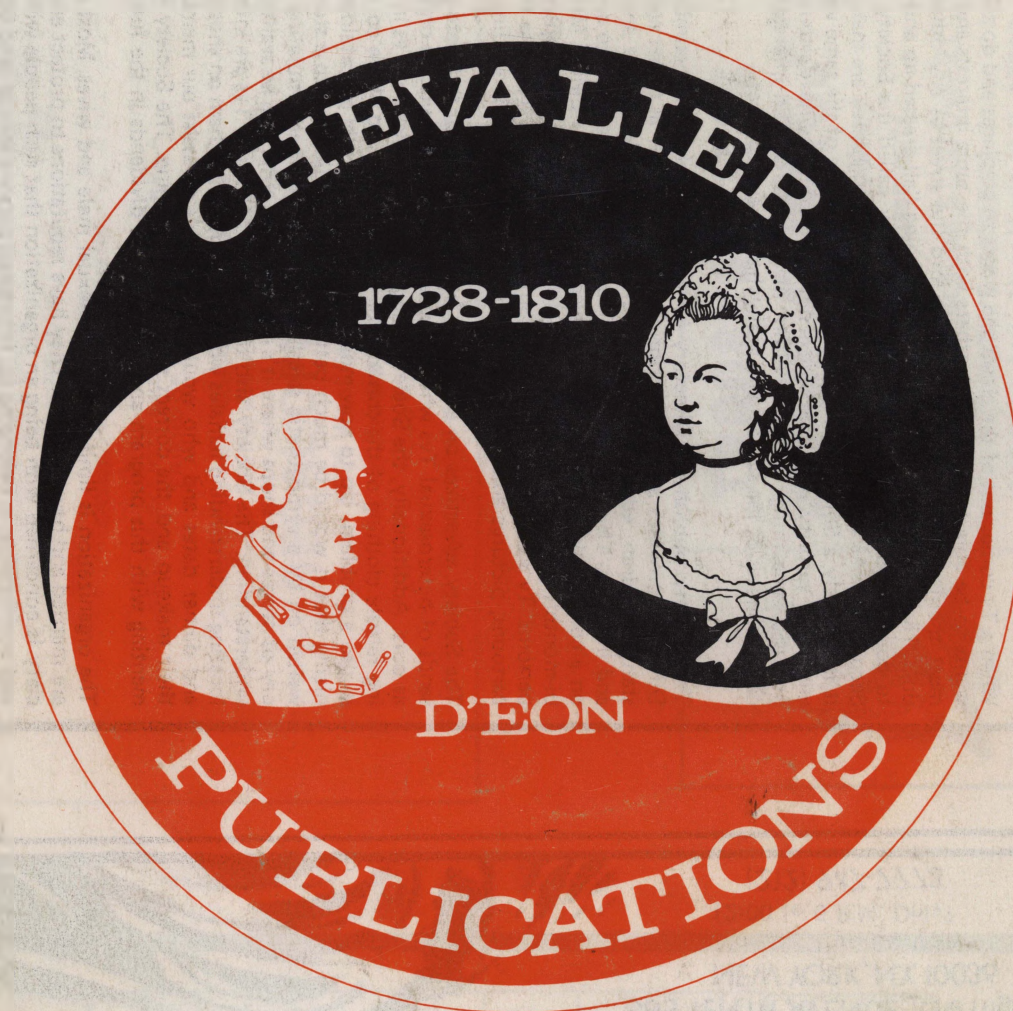
THE SOCIETY FOR THE SECOND SELF

When a Tv comes out of the closet she wants to go places and do things. She wants to be able to read about others with the same interests and possibly meet them. She may want to go out into the street as any other women does. However, there is the old story of being "all dressed up and no place to go." Therefore, we have formed a Society called the Society For The Second Self. As an organization for women, although they are male-women, it is properly a Sorority and it tries to provide some of the same values that any other sorority would provide. They learn that they have sisters who are into the same things and with whom they can safely and interestingly discuss all phases of the subject and with whom they can meet.

The Society publishes a Directory of members (using code numbers). The Directory provides a brief description of the member as to her age, marital status, children, education, level of dressing, attitude of wife and hobbies and interests. This provides an opportunity for the members to correspond on a compatible basis. The Society also publishes the FEMME MIRROR, a bi-monthly magazine which includes stories, news of various chapters, poetry personal Tv experiences, articles about Tv life, letters from the members, cartoons, pictures and other features that make enjoyable reading.

The Society advertizes on a national basis in an attempt to locate the thousands of heterosexual Tvs who are usually looking for such an organization as ours. Additionally, the Society recognizes the problem of Tvs in purchasing female clothing of the correct size. Purchasing a wig of the correct style is also a problem. Up to now most Tvs have had to rely on catalogs. Recognizing that it would be much better if the Tv could go into a store and be waited on by a sympathetic saleslady, the Society is accumulating a Directory of stores and shops where it's members can enter and be waited on with understanding. The Society also recognizes that many Tvs are interested in locating understanding females who will go out with them on shopping trips and dinner dates and who would also be able to assist our members with their makeup and the correct selection of clothing. The Society is experimenting with this program and expects large dividends in the future.

The organization is limited to heterosexual male and wives. Most members are married and have children. They have reputations to protect and the Society is concerned with being an organization that such people will feel safe and comfortable in belonging to. Interested persons should send 50 cents in stamps for a package of information about the Sorority. Letters should be addressed to Carol Beecroft, Box 194, Tulare, California 93275.



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