

## Acting as a Cleaning Lady

By Susannah Donim

### *Chapter 5 – Learning New Skills*

*If Dave is to become Maria full-time, he has a lot to learn.*

So, in gown and flip-flops, my new feminine flesh jiggling disconcertingly, I wobbled along behind Vera down the corridor to the hairdressing salon. As she had predicted, I couldn't seem to stop my new butt swinging from side to side.

At the salon Vera introduced me to Sharon and left me with her. She led me to a chair that looked like something from a dentist's surgery. I soon found out it could be raised or lowered, swivelled or tilted, and there was a dangerous-looking apparatus beside it that looked a little like a dentist's drill.

I sat down at Sharon's invitation and found out for the first time what it felt like to sit on big, round feminine buttocks. They were like high cushions. I was afraid I was going to fall off my own backside.

"Before we start, when did you last use shampoo on your hair?" asked Sharon.

"Thursday night, I think. Why?"

"We recommend you wash your hair between twenty-four and forty-eight hours before we dye it. That allows the natural oils to develop, and then the dye binds to your hair better. Thursday night would be..." She paused to work it out. "...about thirty-six hours. So that's fine. Did you use conditioner?"

"I've *never* used conditioner," I said. "I'm a *guy*... underneath all this, I mean."

She laughed. "That's good too. Conditioner removes the natural oils."

Sharon was a chatty lady who went on to describe what was coming next.

"We've got you down for hair extensions," she said, "because the average young Spanish woman would probably have hair down to the middle of her back. Now there are many different types of extensions. Some are purely decorative, like for a fun night out; others won't work for hair of the length we have in mind for you. It may also depend on how long you'd like them to last. The instructions I've been given are: *to last indefinitely with minimum maintenance*. Does that sound right?"

I nodded glumly. 'Indefinitely' sounded very depressing, but I certainly didn't want to spend my spare time messing with my hair.

"OK," she continued, "so going up through quality and price: there's the instant option – clip-ins, but that obviously won't work for you. Then there are tape-in extensions; they have a line of adhesive along the top of the strip which sticks to the roots of your own hair. Tape-ins are quite good, but you can tell they're artificial if you look closely and you know what you're looking for. Also they only last around a month.

"Next up is micro-rings or micro-beads. These are small clusters of hair extensions which are clamped onto strands of your own hair with a tiny bead or metal ring near the roots. They last for around three months, depending on how fast your hair grows out. The upside of micro-rings is that you don't need

to use glue or heat when you apply them. The downside is that the ring can damage your hair over time, especially if gets hot when you have your hair done.

“Another method is a weave, which is good for thick, coarse hair types. I would braid your own hair tightly and then sew the extension weft to the braid. It needs checking with your stylist every few weeks to make sure the braids are still intact; they may need tightening up. I can do that for you when you come in for waxing and other maintenance.

“Finally, there are pre-bonded hair extensions. The extension hair is bonded in advance rather than using loose hair during a fitting. Pre-bonded extensions are fitted using a heat gun, which melts a small keratin bond to a section of your own hair. The infusion of keratin helps to protect the natural hair it is applied to. It’s usually good for four to six months.”

She paused to let it all sink in. “So what do you think?”

“I’m totally blinded by your science,” I sighed. “What would you recommend?”

“Well, I think clip-ins and tape-ins are probably out. All the others are possible. The pre-bonded extensions last the longest and require the least maintenance, but if you need to remove the extensions, you need acetone to break down the bonds. Of course you can always just get a crew cut. Also you need to avoid excessive heat, though ordinary washing in lukewarm water will be fine.”

“OK, I’m happy to go with that then. How long will it take?”

“Probably about an hour, but then we still have to dye it black and style it. You’ll be here for a while yet, but we can do other things while we’re waiting for it to dry.”

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Sharon put a plastic cape around my neck and helped me get comfortable on the dentist’s chair. After that I don’t really remember much of the next hour. What I had mistaken for a drill was in fact a ‘fusion heating iron’ for melting the keratin bonds and applying the extensions. After five minutes of this treatment I was finding it hard to stay awake. I was still half-cut from Vera’s whisky. Sharon talked incessantly but softly while pressing loops of hair to my head. I dozed off in a fog of alcohol and warmth and chatter.

I was dreaming sweet dreams of Sally and I taking each other’s bras and panties off when Sharon shook me gently awake.

“All finished, love. Now I have to move you over to the sink for your tint.”

I tried to get to my feet. My head ached and my mouth was dry. All the changes struck me together. I was heavier, with new wobbly flesh in unexpected places, and there was so much *hair!* It fell in my eyes, down my back, and down my front to my breasts. I saw myself in the salon mirror. I couldn’t see my face for hair – and it was several different shades of brown. It looked weird. I staggered. I was desperate for the toilet.

“Careful, pet!” said Sharon. “Oh, did Vera fill you full of booze for your waxing? I keep telling her not to overdo it. Let me get you some water.”

I drank three cups, which helped and Sharon led me to the Ladies. Well there wasn’t much point in trying to go to the Gents now. I entered a stall and worked my panties down to my ankles. I sat down and again had the sensation of sitting on a pile of cushions. I tried to make sure my *faux* vagina was

pointed generally downwards before relaxing the familiar muscles. The wee caught me by surprise. It came out quickly in a spray, fortunately most of it in the right direction. I grabbed some toilet roll and wiped up the surplus on my legs and the toilet seat. At least I knew where to aim to do better next time.

I pulled my panties back up, fastened my gown, and went to wash my hands. I couldn't help but react at the sight of the unfamiliar freak in the mirror. *Why on earth was I doing this?* Was there really no other way to raise the money for the mortgage payments? Couldn't I sell my blood? Or a kidney?

When I'd got myself back under control and returned to the salon, Sharon showed me to an ordinary hairdresser's chair in front of a sink and a mirror. She swivelled the chair around, tilted it, and pumped the pedal to get me to the right height so that my neck rested comfortably on a smooth recess in the side of the basin.

"First I need to cover your face and neck with grease, especially around your hairline. The dye will stain if any of it runs off your hair onto your skin. With a layer of grease on you, any overspill dye will just wipe off."

She rubbed something that looked and smelt like Vaseline all over my forehead, neck, and where my sideburns would have been if Vera hadn't ripped them out. Then she put on a pair of latex surgical gloves and picked up a small basin which she filled with thick black liquid from a jug.

"I'm going to apply the dye using a toothbrush and a small sponge," she said. "I find it's the best way to make sure that it's applied evenly and that I don't miss any strands. This will take a while. You might want to close your eyes. The fumes from the dye are harmless but they might make your eyes water a little."

I was happy to do that. I could feel Sharon colouring sections of my hair from the roots out, although I couldn't tell the difference between my own hair and the extensions. I think I must have fallen asleep again, because when she announced she had finished, nearly an hour had passed.

"You dozed off again, Maria," she smiled. "I finished twenty minutes ago, and now it's time to rinse."

I quite enjoyed the next stage. She washed my hair in clear, lukewarm water, gently massaging my scalp to make sure there was no surplus dye anywhere. She rubbed my face all over with wet wipes to remove the grease. Then she turned me round.

I saw a mass of long, unkempt, jet-black hair, with my dark brown face peeping out, as though from behind two curtains. How on earth was I going to manage all that hair? I noticed she had also dyed my eyebrows.

"OK, a couple of maintenance hints," Sharon said. "You need to get your wife – or is that your 'mistress' ...?"

She chuckled. I glowered.

"...to dab dark tint on your roots with cotton wool about once a week. I'll give you some of the dye I used. She'll probably know what to do. Secondly, don't try to shampoo your hair for at least twenty-four hours, and the longer you can leave it the better. And don't use a shampoo that contains sulphates. They swell the shafts of your hair and leech the colour out. Now I need to trim your hair and style it. The extensions are theoretically the same length, but they never seem to come out exactly even."

She attacked my new mop of hair with comb and scissors, slipping in hair grips to hold it in place. After about fifteen minutes of this I began to look human, rather than like something from *Planet of the Apes*. My hair was still very wet though, so she put me under the dryer.

"I'll call Charlotte to do your lip fillers next," Sharon shouted over the noise of the dryer. "Here's a magazine to look at while you're waiting."

She handed me a copy of *Woman*. I didn't know if she was joking, or if that was all they had. I suppose it would be sensible to get used to such reading material. Perhaps I should try and find some Barbara Cartland novels in Spanish.

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Charlotte, the nurse, bustled in about ten minutes later. She introduced herself and explained what would be happening and what I could expect.

"I'm going to give you a local anaesthetic inside your mouth to numb both lips. Because of the way the nerves in your face are formed, the bottom lip is easier to numb, so I'm afraid the top one will hurt a little more."

She used a small Botox needle to give me *four* injections, one in each corner of my mouth. The first one stung a little, but it wasn't too bad. As the anaesthetic went in, I felt a cooling sensation wash over my chin and cheeks. It was a little like drinking cold water straight from the fridge. A numbness crept over my mouth very soon after that.

I have to admit that Charlotte really knew her business. She quickly moved on to the fillers themselves before I had time to think about what was happening, or how much it would hurt. Those injections stung a little more, but they were only uncomfortable, and nothing like as bad as the waxing I had already endured.

My lips felt numb now and from what I could see in the salon mirror they looked quite big. Charlotte assured me this was mostly due to the swelling and that would go down within a couple of days.

"You might get a little bleeding," she said. "Also the filler can cause a reaction and then bruising, but it's usually not a big deal. A little ice can help with the swelling, but you can't do anything about the bruising. You just have to wait till it clears up. You can cover it with a dark lipstick. Your lips will probably be a little sore for twenty-four to forty-eight hours," she added, "and there may be some residual swelling for a week or so, but after that you should have lovely, kissable lips!"

"And how long will it last?" I mumbled, struggling now to form intelligible sounds.

"Eight to twelve months," she said, obviously well-practised at interpreting the mutterings of clients with swollen lips.

"What?" I screeched. "That's *twice* as long as I wanted."

"Oh sorry, dear," she said. "I'm just doing what it says on your treatment sheet. We can reverse it after about a month, you know. Dangerous before that."

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After Charlotte left I tried to read my *Woman*, but my throbbing lips rather spoilt my concentration. Anyway Sharon was soon back.

“OK, let’s get you out from under there. You should be dry by now.”

She lifted the plastic hood and hefted my hair in her hands.

“I’ll just comb it through and get rid of any snags. My instructions are to keep it simple because as a poor immigrant girl, you can’t afford expensive hairdos, and you’ll need to be able to look after your hair yourself. If I do more to it, it’ll be obvious you’ve had a professional styling. But you do need to know how to keep it under control, and out of your face while you’re working.”

She reached for a booklet with colour photographs of girls with a variety of simple hairstyles. Well she *claimed* they were simple.

“Ideally you should be able to do any of these in five minutes,” she continued. “Don’t worry, I’ll walk you through two or three, and you can take this with you. It has detailed instructions for all of them.” She winked. “Every girl likes to choose her style for herself,” she said.

“First, the easiest of all, the old-stand-by, the low ponytail. We’ll probably send you away with this one today. It’s perfect for long, same-length strands, as of course yours are with your new extensions. You can change it to a regular high ponytail quite easily.”

She was twisting the length of my hair round as she spoke.

“It’s possible to keep it tidy like this all day with no artificial aids, but you’ll probably find it easier to use a scrunchie, or even just a rubber band. Also, you have so much hair now that you may want to keep your bangs out of the way with a couple of hair grips. OK, next...”

She untied the ponytail and removed the grips.

“For this one, you make a centre parting, twist the locks that are hanging down at the front away from your face, and pin them at the side. You can use grips or bobby pins.”

That looked quite easy, but it didn’t feel as secure as the ponytail.

Sharon removed the grips again and hair fell forward all over my face.

“For this next one, just twist the front of your hair – the bangs – into a knot and secure it with an elastic band or grips.”

That felt a little safer, but harder to do.

“If all you want is to get your hair out of the way, you can just sweep the hair at the front to the side, and clip it with a bobby pin or two. This one’s very easy, but your hair may be a little too long for it.”

That became obvious when the sheer weight of the hair popped the hair grips out. She had more success with a bobby pin, but it just looked shaggy.

“OK, maybe not,” she admitted.

“Some days you can’t be bothered, so you just brush the front of your hair and your bangs back and pin it all in place. You can get extra volume by a little back-combing.”

That didn’t feel like a hairstyle at all, and I was pretty sure it wouldn’t stay in place for very long. Sharon hurried on to the next.

This one took her a little longer, so heaven knows how long it would take me.

“This is a French Twist,” she said as she finished. “It takes a bit more effort – and skill – but it’s good for long hair like yours, if you really need to keep it out of the way. The booklet shows you how to do a braid. It’s actually easier than it looks, but I suppose most girls learn to braid their hair when they’re little. You should try it sometime though. It’ll look good on you.”

Actually, it did. Perhaps I *would* try it when I had a little time. If little girls could do it, so could I!

“OK, you might find this one a bit of a challenge. It’s called a Braided Pompadour. You might want to try it for a night out.” She chuckled. “I’m sure your wife would love to help you with this.”

The hell she would. Not Sally’s scene at all. I didn’t think Maria would ever sport a ‘Braided Pompadour’.

“Finally, you might just find it easier to use a headband some days,” Sharon said. “It’s especially good for girls with thick bangs – like you. Just put on an elastic headband, leaving some hair loose in front, then roll back the loose hair and tuck it under the band to hold it in place.

I thanked her for the instructions and the booklet and privately resolved to keep my hair in a ‘high ponytail’ for as long as I had to be Maria.

“Right then,” Sharon said, brightly, “are you ready for me to do your facial prosthetics and make-up now?”

“Ready,” I muttered, semi-intelligibly, “if not actually prepared... owww!”

“Oh, are your lips hurting?” she said sympathetically. “No lipstick today then. They look red enough already.”

She wheeled over a trolley full of paints and pastes. Prominent on the top shelf were some strange-looking, flesh-coloured pieces, presumably of the same material my boobs and bum were made from. She picked up one of them and started smearing adhesive on it.

“It only takes a minute or so for the glue to set,” she said, as she pressed the thing down on top of my nose, “but I need to keep holding it in place. Try to breathe through your mouth.”

She let go and then dabbed around my newly-enhanced nose with a wet wipe.

“I need to make sure there’s no overflow of adhesive,” she explained. “I’m pretty sure I didn’t get any up your nostrils. Believe me, getting glue off your nose hairs would be no fun at all, but we don’t want any around the join either.” Apparently satisfied, she reached for a stick of make-up. “This is just to cover the edge between the prosthetic and your face.”

“I assume that’s the same ‘permanent’ make-up Vera used on my cleavage?” I said, painfully.

“Yep,” she said, and sat back to examine her handiwork, “and that nose is part of you now. It makes quite a difference.”

She moved away to let me see myself in the mirror. At first I was horrified. I saw a monstrous new conk that seemed to dominate my face, but after a few moments’ adjustment I realised it wasn’t that bad. It was noticeably bigger than my own nose, yes, but it wasn’t all out of proportion. It suggested a change of racial type. With the long black hair, I was starting to look more Mediterranean, less

Anglo-Saxon – exactly as we wanted, and what Ingrid had promised. But now it was the colour of my eyes that caught the attention. They were too pale blue for a Hispanic girl.

Sharon turned her attention to two smaller pieces.

“These will make your cheeks a little plumper.”

I saw they were mirror-images of each other. She painted each of them with adhesive and stuck them on my cheeks. Before I had a thin face on a fat body; now they were beginning to match.

Sharon was painting adhesive onto a longer strip of fleshy plastic, which at first sight looked a little like a skinny banana.

“This piece is designed to make your chin rounder, more feminine, and a little... er...”

“Fatter?”

“...*plumper*,” she said, “to fit with your overall figure. This will have to be removed when you come in for your next waxing, because of course your beard will continue to grow underneath it even with the anti-androgen cream Vera gave you. It will probably get a little itchy.”

She held the thing in place for a minute, then repeated her activities with the wet wipes and the make-up. When she eventually let me see myself, I was truly impressed. My face was completely different now. I was *all* plump little Maria. Dave Jackson was nowhere to be seen.

“Make-up next,” said Sharon. “I’ll explain everything I’m doing as I go, because you’ll need to be able to reproduce it for yourself. I’m only going to do a basic daytime make-up. I suggest if you want a heavier, evening look, your wife can help. I’ll give you a full set of cosmetics for your colouring.

“First, I’m going to dye your eyelashes the same dark colour as your hair. You probably won’t need any mascara on them then. They’re quite long for a man anyway, and you’re not trying to be a fashion model, are you?”

“Absolutely not,” I confirmed, “and please keep the make-up to a minimum generally. I don’t want to attract attention – least of all *male* attention.”

That was the most I had said since my lip filler injections, and it was painful.

“Ah you say that *now*,” she grinned, “but just wait till you’ve been a woman for a while...”

In the end, I convinced her just to use some foundation to conceal my coarse male skin, and a little eyeshadow. She gave me some lipstick that she was confident was the right shade for Maria, but by mutual agreement we didn’t apply any to my sore, swollen lips. When she’d finished she swung me back round to look at the finished product.

“OK, what do you think, Maria?”

I took off the plastic hairdresser’s cape. In the mirror was an unmistakably feminine figure in a pink woman’s dressing gown, under which, I knew, I was wearing only a pink bra and knickers. (Why this obsession with pink, I wondered. Was this a psychological ploy to get me accustomed to my new gender?)

I grunted approval and tried to smile. It was the best I could do with my swollen lips. But my disguise was completely convincing. I could see no masculine indicators at all. There were no remaining obstacles to taking up my new career as a Spanish immigrant cleaning lady.

Yippee.

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Sharon took me back to Ingrid's office. I was sobering up now. My butt-swinging wiggle felt completely natural, even though I was wearing flip-flops. No doubt it would be even sexier if I ever wore heels. I couldn't help wondering what Sally would think when she saw me.

"Ah there she is," said Ingrid, "and what a transformation!"

I thanked her and Sharon with as much enthusiasm as I could muster.

"My pleasure," said Sharon, with a warm smile. "Do drop by and see me next time you're here."

To my surprise she quickly kissed me on the cheek and left. As a newly-minted girl I supposed I'd have to get used to kissing hello and goodbye.

"I have your contact lenses here," Ingrid continued. "Have you ever worn contacts before?"

"Yes, I needed them for a play I was in once," I said. "I was playing a vampire so they were bright red. They took a bit of getting used to."

"Well these aren't corrective at all, so they shouldn't change your vision, but they'll darken your eyes to match your skin and hair colours. They're soft, so you should find them quite comfortable. You can wear them throughout the day, but take them out at night and store them in this fluid to clean and disinfect them."

She gave me a plastic bottle and a little case with two tiny round basins.

"Also once a week you need to soak them overnight in enzymatic fluid to get rid of the protein deposits. You dissolve one of these tablets in ordinary saline solution. The instructions are in the leaflet."

She gave me a packet of what looked like aspirins and another plastic bottle.

"They're monthlies, so I'm giving you a pack of six."

I slipped them in and was a little surprised that they didn't seem to change my vision at all; not even to make everything seem darker. I looked in Ingrid's cupboard mirror. The lenses were the final piece of the jigsaw. Everything about me now said: *Hispanic*.

"I've called your wife, and she'll be back to collect you very soon. You've just got time to get dressed."

She indicated the suitcase Sally had brought which was on a table in the corner of the office. I opened it up. I wasn't surprised to see that my loving wife had packed a white, floral dress for me. There were also nude tights, a red cardigan, and Sally's old handbag. What was missing were shoes.

Ingrid saw my concern and quickly understood the problem.

"I think we can help with shoes, Maria. What are you? A man's size eight?" I nodded. She had a good eye. "You get dressed. I'll go and find something for you."

So I found myself putting on a dress again, struggling to do up the zip behind my back. Are all women double-jointed, for Pete's sake? Memories of Fifi's maid uniform surfaced. I had to admit it: I had actually missed this. I particularly loved the feeling of nylon on my waxed legs. I've always been hooked on dressing up, I suppose, but this was special. There was no chance of being recognised as a man now, let alone as Dave Jackson.

Ingrid came back with several shoe boxes.

"I've got some flats for you and some low heels, both wide-fitting," she said. "Sit down and you can try them on. You can have one of each with our compliments, as you've been such a great customer."

I thanked her but that worried me a little. Just how much had we spent today?

All of the shoes Ingrid brought fitted fairly well. I picked out an especially comfortable pair of black flats and a pair of white heels to match my dress.

"You should wear the heels home," she said, "for practice."

I put them back on and checked myself out in the mirror.

"The original owner of those clothes was an older lady, wasn't she?" Ingrid said. "I think you need to get some outfits more suited to a twenty-something. I can't imagine a younger woman wearing a dress like that, except maybe *ironically*."

I had to agree, but of course we had no spare money for an age-appropriate wardrobe for Maria.

I examined myself more closely in the mirror. I twirled, seeing my skirt whirl outwards. I caught Ingrid watching me with a sardonic smile on her face. I stopped immediately, embarrassed.

I was now playing the part of Maria full time, and I couldn't take my costume off.